

PAUL'S LIFE AND TEACHINGS

Lesson 23

Romans

A dear childhood friend of ours recently learned that his wonderful wife has a malignancy in her body. This fine Christian woman lost her mother to cancer just weeks before her marriage to our friend some 20 plus years ago. After prayer and counsel in such a difficult situation, our friends decided to seek out the medical care and attention of the M.D. Anderson Cancer Center. The *U. S. News and World Report* ranks M. D. Anderson number one in the country in cancer care. In the scary waters of life and death matters, there is reassurance in knowing one is getting the very best in care and attention.

Important matters deserve the best. Important questions deserve the best answers; important decisions deserve the best information. What could be *more* important than the place of one's soul before God and the questions pertaining to the very fiber of the church, the body of Christ? In such situations, one should quickly seek out the *number one* source of insight and information available. For us, that means the insight into Holy Scripture and comfort brought about by the Holy Spirit.

Can you imagine the awe of appreciation that would flow from knowing God had sent *you* a specific message clearly addressing your core problems and issues? That is the blessing given to the Christians in Rome in the mid-first century! This was a church in turmoil. God used that situation to deliver a message that would reverberate again and again throughout history as a message to inform and shape the church and the individual believer.

This week, we consider Paul's message to the Romans. Paul wrote the church a letter inspired by the Holy Spirit that God has providently placed into Holy Scriptures. We will place this letter into its historical context before dissecting it in a preliminary fashion by considering the entire letter in one class setting. This is a letter deserving of rich study and countless months of attention; but, our consideration in this class will be quite brief. We will return to this letter later, however, to read Paul's views on a number of theological issues that will command our attention later in this class.

THE SITUATION AT ROME

Scripture does not tell us the origins of the church at Rome. We do know that there were Jews from Rome in Jerusalem during Pentecost. Acts 2:10 tells us that “visitors from Rome” were among those who heard the apostles speaking in tongues and heard Peter’s first sermon that first opened the kingdom of God to mankind on Pentecost when God added to his church “about three thousand souls” (Acts 2:41). We also know there was a thriving Christian community there at the time Paul wrote his letter to the Romans, even though Paul had never personally been to the Empire’s capital.

Secular history does not give us the church’s origins in Rome either. C. Suetonius Tranquillus (ca. AD 70 – post 130) around 119 A.D. wrote a history of the lives of the Caesars. Suetonius was well suited to write such a history. Under Trajan, who ruled the Roman Empire from 98 to 117, Suetonius served as Director of the Imperial Archives. Later, Suetonius was the personal secretary to the Roman Emperor Hadrian in 119 – 121. Suetonius finished his work on the lives of the Caesars during this time.

We have the *Lives of the Caesars* still available today. In book five, we read of Claudius, who ruled the Empire from AD 41 to 54. This was the stretch of time that included Paul’s second missionary journey. Suetonius reported that Claudius expelled Jews from Rome because “the Jews constantly made disturbances at the instigation of Chrestus.”¹ This is consistent with Luke’s history in Acts when he wrote of Paul’s first encounter with Priscilla and Aquila in Corinth, “And he found a Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to leave Rome. And he went to see them” (Acts 18:2).

We also know that the Jews were later allowed to return to their homes in Rome. By the time Paul writes his Roman letter, Priscilla and Aquila have returned and he sends them his greetings (Rom. 16:3).

This information tells us a great deal behind the situation at Rome that Paul addressed in his letter (we should add here that this is the first letter we have

¹ The Loeb Classical Library, *Suetonius II*, LCL vol. 38 (Harvard University Press 1997 ed.) translated by J. C. Rolfe at 25.4. Most scholars consider Suetonius’s use of the name “Chrest” instead of “Christ” to be a spelling error on his account. See the *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. 12 at 350.

studied of Paul's that he wrote to a church where he had never personally visited!²). Consider the likely situation at Rome:

- Jews who hear Peter preach in Jerusalem start the church
- The church grows to include a large number of both Jews and Gentiles
- The Jews begin the church, and one may reasonably surmise, have the core leadership positions
- The Jews are forced to leave Rome and the church
- During the time the Jews are gone (likely several years), the converted Gentiles are the leaders that control and direct the congregation
- The church's first members, the early authority and leadership, returns likely ready to resume their positions of leadership
- Yet, the Gentile Christians no doubt recognized that God had continued working in the church while they were its leadership and core constituency.

One can readily understand how such a church could have issues that need answers and insight from the Lord. Into this situation comes this letter from Paul. Paul has left Ephesus and gone on to Corinth. Paul writes from Corinth. Paul writes to set the church on its core foundations. Paul gives insight into the position of the Gentile and the Jew before God. Paul knew that as the believers understood their respective place before God, their personal interactions and church roles would logically follow.

THE LETTER

Chapter 1

Paul begins the letter as a “servant of Christ” whom God called into the role of an apostle. God had set Paul apart for His “gospel” (the proclamation of the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ for the sins of mankind³). The death and resurrection of Christ was the fulfillment of centuries of God's work and promises. Jesus, who physically descended from King David, yet at the same time is the very

² That said, Paul did know many people in the church in Rome. Reading Paul's personal notes in chapter 16 of the letter impresses us with the number of people and church workers in Rome who were close to Paul. Some scholars are not so ready to attribute Paul's letter as prompted by a need to address issues. They typically see it more as a treatise that Paul wrote as a way of Paul introducing him more fully to a church he had never visited.

³ See the terms Paul used in reference to the “good news” or “gospel” as he set out in 1 Corinthians 15. Paul does not use the word “gospel” indiscriminately. We err if we think that Paul is referencing stories of the life of Christ when Paul uses “gospel.” While we rightly consider the first four books of the Bible “gospel accounts,” Paul means something very specific by his use of the term. Paul makes this clear in 1 Corinthians when he writes to remind the Corinthians of the terms in which he preached the “gospel.”

Son of God as we witness by His resurrection. This is the truth that establishes the faith and obedience of Christians among *all* nations (Gentile or Jew!).

Paul thanks God for the Romans' faith that was proclaimed throughout the world! (It was such that the Jews in reaction created an adequate disturbance that Claudius evicted them from Rome!) Paul wanted to visit the church at Rome badly. He wanted to bring them spiritual blessings as well as receive the encouragement of first hand interaction with their faith.

Paul wanted to come to Rome and preach Christ's death and resurrection as God's means of forgiveness for Paul's sins as well as those of others. This message was not one that shamed Paul in any way. Paul knew that through the death and resurrection of Christ came God's power to save everyone! It came first to Jews, but it is the same gospel, the same death and resurrection, the same power that God had to save the Gentiles. The cross of Christ and the empty tomb revealed God's own righteousness. In it, we see a fresh aspect to the prophet Habakkuk's revelation that "the righteous shall live by faith" (Hab. 2:4).

Humanity has a problem. The ungodliness and unrighteousness of mankind is properly subject to God's wrath. God did not make man, nor did he make the world, for evil and destructive behavior. One can clearly discern God and "right" merely by reflecting on the world and humanity. No one has an excuse for behaving as man has. The evidence of God is in us as well as the world, but rather than honor God, man gave himself over to futile thinking and foolish hearts. Man exchanged the incomparable glory of the Creator for sorry images of animals or humans.

God let man's choices take man to the logical ends. Man walked in impurity and darkness worshipping created things rather than the Creator. It is most clearly seen in the basest of perversions and sins. Mankind practices all types of sin, and approves those who do likewise. Think about it: Practicing homosexuality, evil, envy, malice, murder, strife, deceit, insolence, arrogance, boasting, disobedience to parents, foolishness, faithlessness, and ruthlessness. These sins are worthy of death! This is not what God intended for his most precious creation – for man made in His image!

This fact of sin allows us to point out God's righteous judgment on others, but it also places each of us under God's judgment as well! Just because we have tasted God's kindness and know of his patience does not make us any less culpable for our sins! God has a principle of judgment that is clean and simple. You do right, you live eternally in his care. But if you sin, you are condemned. This is true whether you are a Jew or a Gentile; it really does not matter! Gentiles may not have God's law, the Torah, but God has made clear right and wrong through

nature and the conscience of man. Barring someone living perfectly their entire lives, Gentiles are condemned before God.

Now Jews, just because you received God's holy law, his Torah, do not think yourself better off! You may have the light of scripture, a guide for the blind, and God's very embodiment of truth, but it is not what you *have*, it is what you do! Even circumcision is no magic cure all for sin. The law sets out God's holiness, and failure to live it 100 percent is failure.

Chapter 3

Does this mean there is no difference at all between Jew and Gentile? Of course not! The Jews were blessed with something special in the scriptures. These are the very words of God. These words show God's faithfulness even though the Jews were unfaithful in following it. The key is understanding that while God has always been faithful, mankind has not! So in terms of our standing before God, there really is no difference between Jews and Gentiles.

We read this in the Holy Scriptures. We read that *no one* is righteous; no one understands God or seeks for Him. There is not anyone who even manages to do one pure good deed! (See Psalms 14:1-3 and 53:1-3!).

While God has a principle of judgment, salvation for the pure, and damnation for the sinner, we can readily see that Jews and Gentiles alike are in trouble if left to their own devices. Hence, the good news:

Righteous God has set out righteousness for mankind that is found apart from following God's law perfectly!

The Old Testament testifies to this. It is God's righteousness that comes through faith in Christ to all who believe, whether Jew or Gentile. Just as everyone has sinned and failed to measure up to God's standards, so everyone has a gift of redemption by the blood of Christ. To use legal terms, the blood of Christ was satisfaction as a penalty for our sin. By faith, we receive a redemption that satisfies God's character and righteousness.

By the way, God had to offer Christ up on Calvary as an atonement of sin whether there would ever be a Christian believer or not! God had passed over sins in the Old Testament times with his divine understanding that Christ would die and cover those sins! The death of Christ is God's power to save people *before* Christ died just as much as it is the power to save *after* Christ died.

As a result, we have salvation that comes apart from works of law. God has another equally righteous principle of judgment beyond rewarding purity and condemning evil. But in this righteousness, there is no longer any reason for

people to boast! This is a common salvation to Jew and Gentile. It is not one that destroys the law or makes it superfluous; however, it is one that makes it possible to uphold the law!

Chapter 4

This is really not a new idea. Think about Abraham. Was Abraham justified by what he did or by his faith? In Genesis 15:6 we read, Abram “believed the Lord, and he counted it to him as righteousness.” Now, this was two chapters *before* Abraham was circumcised and it was 400 years before the Law was given to Moses. Abraham did not get this because he deserved it; it was a gift. This is the same idea behind David’s Psalm 32 where he writes:

Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven, and whose sins are covered; blessed is the man against whom the Lord will not count his sin.

Righteousness was never for the one who lived perfectly. Even the circumcision served as a seal of the righteousness that came from trusting in faith, God, and his promises. God promised Abraham to be the father not only of Jews, but also of the faithful, Jew and Gentile alike.

If we could ever get our righteousness through our own merit in following God’s rules, then there is no point to faith and God’s interaction with Abraham. God made Abraham a promise through faith, and Abraham lived in trust on that promise, fully convinced that God would follow through. God was not only faithful to Abraham in giving offspring through Sarah, but even more faithful in delivering Jesus as an atonement making Abraham the father of all who have faith, Jew and Gentile alike. God secured his interaction with Abraham in scripture for our benefit!

Chapter 5

This is where our peace before God comes from. We have been justified by faith. Through Jesus Christ and his death, we have access by faith into this wonderful grace in which we stand. This gives us joy even in suffering because we know in the end God and his Holy Spirit pours his love into our lives in ways that produce perseverance, character and hope (taking ultimate care of us).

Think about it...it is very, very rare that one will die for someone, especially someone who is vile and seemingly unlovable. Yet, Christ did this very thing. At a time when we were *not* seeking him, not asking for help, not standing up for goodness or God, Christ came and gave his life on our behalf. God saved us while we were his enemies! Now that we have this blessing, how much more must we understand his love and caring for us as his saved children!

God has worked this salvation in ways that are profoundly mirrored in history. Our sin itself came into the world through one man, Adam. Death came to us through that same sin and has reigned since. In a mirrored opposite sense, we see the work of Christ. Through the one man Jesus, salvation and life have come into the world. Through the obedience and sacrifice of Christ, this righteousness has spread freely to all who have faith. The sin of one led to the condemnation of man; yet, the righteousness of Christ led to man's justification and eternal life.

Chapter 6

Some might say, "Wow! We might as well live in sin! If anything, it makes God's forgiveness even a greater deed!" Such an idea is preposterous! A major point behind the cross is that we are joined in the death of Christ, and we die to the sin that put Jesus there. That is a major significance of baptism. When we were baptized into Christ, we were baptized into his death. In the same sense, we were raised from baptismal waters as Christ was raised from the dead, into a new life!

This has eternal implications of our sharing his eternity, but it also has earthly implications. We have died to sin! We should never let sin rule or control our lives! We should live as God's instruments for righteousness. That we have no law over us frees us to live without sin. It is not a license to sin! We are bound to righteousness and we see God at work bringing sanctification and purity into our lives! Sin is death; the gift of Christ Jesus is life!

Chapter 7

Think about the law for a moment. It applies to people who are alive. For example, a woman married, under the law, has obligations to her husband. But should her husband die, she is released from those obligations. She cannot go live with another man while her husband is alive without becoming an adulteress. But if her husband should die, she is free to remarry and live with another man.

In the same way, once we have died to the law, we may then belong to someone else! In that sense, we are free from the law; but the key here is to understand that we are free to live holy in the Spirit of God!

That is not to say that there was a problem with the Law. The Law was never sinful. In fact, the law served a wonderful purpose of showing our sin so we understood the need for a Savior! It was through the law that we most clearly understood we were inadequate before God.

The sin was already there; the law just highlighted it. This is our continuing frustration over our former slavery to sin! We still find ourselves doing things we do not want to do. We similarly find ourselves unable to do the things we want to do. It happens over and over. For all the wonderful things God can do in us and through us, we find evil is always close by. It is a war going on deep inside us as we struggle constantly to live according to the calling he has placed on us! How

wretched! Where can there be deliverance from this internal civil war? From God in Jesus! We can serve God in our minds and hearts, even as we find ourselves still in constant struggle with the sin that comes as part of our lives in this still fallen body.

Chapter 8

In Christ, there is no condemnation! Through Jesus, the law of the Spirit has set us free from the vicious cycle of sin and death. God is working out our sanctification (holiness) even as he worked out our salvation! God has found us righteous in Christ for eternity, something the law could never give. In this same act of atonement in Christ, God has also set his Spirit on us in ways where we are no longer enslaved to sin, but are free to follow God's leading. God frees us to cry out to him as our dear Father. He offers the earthly care, protection, and guidance a Father should, just as he ensures our eternal inheritance.

The sufferings we endure today are small compared to what glory God will unfold in our lives in eternity. We long for that; we groan for that. We eagerly wait for that day when our struggles with sin and its effects are over (not just us, but the whole earth struggles for the day of its restoration to the condition God intended!).

Until then, we are not left alone. We have God's Spirit helping us. Even as we pray, God's Spirit intervenes with groaning too deep for words. As the Spirit intercedes on our behalf, we are confident that God's hand is on us for good. No matter what happens in this life, we confidently know God is at work to bring ultimate good to his children. God has known us from before time. God has always intended us to bear the image of his Son. He has called us to himself and justified us. He will not now leave us helpless. He will bring us into his glory.

In light of this, what real obstacles are there? With God fighting for us, how can we lose? God has shown he will pay the ultimate price for us (Jesus); will he now fail to tend to our needs? Will he let anyone condemn us for imperfections (Jew or Gentile)? No! Will he let anything separate us from his love for us? Of course not! Nothing at all – tribulation, distress, persecution, physical needs, or danger – nothing can ever remove us from His love! We are more than conquerors; we are His children and inheritance! Not even an angel, a ruler, not death, not life, no height, no depth, nothing here, nothing coming, nothing at all will ever be able to pull us from God's love for us in Jesus!

Chapter 9

This brings up an agonizing issue. If only the Jews would en masse receive Jesus as Lord, it would almost be worth Paul personally being cut off from Christ. As Israelites, they have so much promise. They received God's promised adoption and care, the glory and covenant from Sinai, the Law, the Temple and worship, the promises and prophecies, the history of direct interaction with Almighty God.

We should never think, however, that in some way, God or his word failed the Jews. The promises never came to all Abraham's physical offspring anyway. God directed the promises through Isaac, rather than Ishmael. Similarly, God selected Jacob as the child of promise, not Esau. This shows that the true offspring of Abraham, for the sake of God's promises, are not simply the genetic offspring. What is more, God made the choice of Jacob over Esau before either child was born, before they had done anything either good or bad. This is the same issue we see today. God's people are not those who earned it, they are those to whom God has promised eternal life.

Now, some may raise issue over God making choices as if God is unjust. God is not unjust! God has always had mercy and compassion where he chooses. That God has chosen to extend it to those who have faith in Jesus, rather than those who hope to achieve it on their own merit, their own choice, has always been God's *modus operandi*. God raised up Pharaoh, hardened his heart, so that God could show mercy and power in the Israelites.

While this explains God's placement of the faithful in his eternity, some may challenge the idea by claiming God has no right to find fault with those who refuse Christ. For who can resist God's will? This is not really the right question to be asking! God is the potter. He makes the pots for his purposes. Those that show his glory are the faithful, whether Gentile or Jew. God has patiently waited to destroy those that do not choose Jesus, those destined for destruction.

As Jews and Gentiles try to understand their places in the church, they should remember that God has said all along that he would choose not only from Jews but also from Gentiles. Through Hosea, God said, "Those who were not my people I will call 'my people'" (Hos. 2:23). Isaiah also indicated that among the innumerable Jews, God would only save a remnant.

Net net? This means that the Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, have attained it by faith. But Jews, who have tried to attain righteousness through their own merit, have not found God's righteousness. They have stumbled over the very plan of God for their eternal souls – the cross.

Chapter 10

This truth moves Paul in prayer. Paul's desire is for the Jews to be saved en masse. There are those with true zeal for God who are ignorant of God's righteousness in Christ. These are people who seek to make themselves righteous before God. Rather than live freed from the law, these people live seeking to meet the law's requirements and set their own deeds before God as their righteousness.

By faith, the righteous do not seek to command Christ down from heaven or back from the dead. The righteous are content with confessing Jesus as Lord with faith

in their hearts. These are righteous people who will not be put to shame. They will call on the name of the Lord and be saved.

A logical implication of this is the need for people to hear about Christ. This means people need to be out preaching the good news. It is a beautiful thing to spend time and energies taking the gospel out to the ends of the world. This gospel goes beyond the boundaries of Israel, politically and socially.

Chapter 11

God never did this as an explicit rejection of Israel as his people. Paul himself is an example. Paul is a Jew. In spite of appearances, God has always had his people among Israel. Remember when Elijah thought he was the only Jew faithful to God? God told Elijah, “I have kept for myself seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to Baal” (1 Kings 19:18). Similarly, there is a remnant of believers among the Jews, but it is a remnant justified by grace, not works!

The Jews that refused God’s righteousness were turned over to a spirit of stupor, but God was not simply responding to their disbelief. Through God’s actions and their hard hearts, God came into the hearts of many Gentiles. So many, in fact, that a number of Jews grew jealous over God’s choosing of Gentiles. Of course, if the Jews’ exclusion brings about such blessings, then would not their inclusion be even more wonderful?

The Gentiles need to consider this, to think about the importance of the Jews. For Paul, a missionary to the Gentiles, wants ever so much more to see Jews saved also. Jews were like an olive tree. Some of the branches were alive and fruitful. Others were dead. Gentiles were like grafted branches onto the tree. Grafted branches should never ignore the original tree! No Gentile should consider himself (or herself) the end all for God. Just because some Jews had their branches snapped off the tree because of their disbelief, should not make the grafted Gentile limbs arrogant! God can snap the grafted limbs off just as easily!

No one should assume God is finished harvesting Jews, either. If Jews turn in faith to Jesus, God will reattach them to the tree! There is a mystery here that few understand. God has a love for the Jews. While the Jews are partially hardened toward God, once the fullness of the Gentiles comes in to the church, God will reach out salvation to Israel. While the Jews are enemies of the gospel, they are still loved by God as descendants of some very godly faithful people. The Jews are in a time of disobedience, but a time of mercy is coming.

We must pause and recognize there are immeasurable depths to the riches of God’s wisdom and knowledge! Glory to God forever!

Chapter 12

Because of all this, the Jews and Gentiles in Rome who are wondering about who has what right in the kingdom and church need to come together and all present themselves to God as a living sacrifice. Instead of thinking like the world thinks, instead of acting like the world acts, let the body of believers be different, be changed! Rather than simply muddling through life, look at things; think about them; measure them out by what you know is right and good. Decide what God's will is. Let me give some practical examples:

Do not get arrogant and start thinking too highly of yourself. As you see others, do not measure your gifts against theirs. It is not for one to see themselves in a more prestigious role in the body of Christ than another. God has placed all where they need to be, giving them the gifts he needs them to use for his purposes.

This should be the way you act and treat each other: Love genuinely, hating evil; care for each other; work hard to serve God; rejoice in hope; be patient with tribulation; rejoice with the joyful; weep with the saddened. Do not deal in the currency of evil, even when dealing with evil people. Let God be your defender and avenger. Feed your enemies; do not abuse them. Do not let evil take charge of your life or heart. Overcome evil with good.

Chapter 13

As the Empire's capital church, the church in the Emperor's home city, remember that God has allowed authority over you. Do not resist it. Do good, and pray for the governing officials. (This is the same reason, by the way, you are to pay your taxes!)

Do not be borrowing from each other. The only thing you should owe your neighbor is love! This is so powerful; it actually is a synopsis of all the commandments! If you love your neighbor, you will not take his wife (or her husband), you will not murder, steal or covet!

We need to wake up from slumber. Time is passing moment by moment. Gone is the time of blindly sleeping through darkness. Put on the light of God's armor and walk in ways that are appropriate for all to see.

Chapter 14

Some are still going to be weak in their faith now. Those people need to be loved tenderly, not abusing their weakness by flaunting your freedoms (like in the area of dietary laws). Whether some see certain days as more holy than others is another issue of which to be mindful. The core here is to honor the Lord with your own life by honoring his children around you. Christ died out of his love for us; we should similarly give of ourselves out of love for others.

Chapter 15

This is really true Christianity, true Christ-likeness. Christ lived to take care of others, not himself. We should do likewise. That will certainly come easier as

God gives endurance and encouragement, and the hope that comes with it. May God give that as well as the unity that brings Him glory.

As Jew and Gentile seek to live in a reconstituted church, with Jews back in Rome, there must be acceptance of each other. Christ has become a servant for the Jews, to whom God made promises thousands of years earlier to the Patriarchs. This has come to mean praise for God from the Gentiles as well. So all Christians, Jew and Gentile alike, are ready for God to fill them with joy and peace, ready to overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. May God make it so!

Even though this letter is bold, it is simply out of duty to proclaim the gospel, something Paul has done from Jerusalem all the way around Asia Minor into Macedonia and Greece. It means, even though Paul generally likes to start the church, he is still hopeful to come into Rome, where a strong community already thrives to work for God. First, Paul needs to get back to Jerusalem with the contribution the Greeks have set aside for the needy there. Then, hopefully there is time for Rome, and even Spain!

Chapter 16

Before Paul closes, there are a number of personal notes reflecting individual needs and recognition of others. In so doing, Paul makes a subtle point that reinforces his message on the Jew/Gentile issue. Paul writes of the “churches of the Gentiles” gratitude toward Priscilla and Aquilla (Jews). He gives a final warning against following the smooth talk of any who try to divide the church on a Jew/Gentile basis.

We see in Paul’s personal notes the great number of people in the Roman church Paul already knows, along with the interaction between the Roman church and other Christian communities. Paul closes with the assurance that God will crush Satan. Glory to God through Jesus, the source and object of our faith!

POINTS FOR HOME

1. The gospel “is the power of God for salvation of everyone” (1:16).

That is the truth, the gospel truth! It is a fact that anyone saved—anyone—is saved because Jesus Christ paid the price for their sins. This is simple, and yet most profound. It applies to people under the old covenant that lived before Jesus. It applies to people today. It applies to the tragic death of an infant. It applies to the death of a stalwart believer. No one may come to the Father unless his or her sins are forgiven through the atoning sacrifice of Jesus.

2. “But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify” (3:21).

We miss something if we do not carefully read this passage (it is much easier to get this point if directly reading from the Greek!). God’s righteousness is apart from “*law*.” The translators do not capitalize “law” the first time it is used in this verse because Paul means *any law*, not just the Old Testament/Torah. There is no principle of meriting before God. There is no righteousness that comes from fulfilling a list of do’s and don’ts. There is righteousness only through faith in Jesus Christ. This is a truth testified to by “*the Law and the Prophets*.” Here, the translators capitalize *Law* and *Prophets* because Paul is referring to the Old Testament Law and Prophets bearing witness to the salvation through faith.⁴

3. “Offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God” (12:1).

God did not save us to have us run around as slaves to sin. Sin is most serious. Only the sacrifice of Jesus is adequate to atone for sin’s curse. How foolish of us not to take seriously this horrendous power that had us enslaved before the Spirit set us free. What sane person should be resubmitting to such bondage? We must reckon ourselves dead to sin, and let God’s Spirit work through our lives the daily victory over the matters we struggle against. This is our devotion and worship to God our Father.

⁴ In Greek, this is accomplished through the use of the definite article and its absence. When Paul speaks generally of “law,” the construction is termed “anarthrous.” This means there is no definite article and we might translate it “*a law*.” In the second usage, Paul inserts a definite article because he is referring to *the Law*, as opposed to just any law.