

- **Also a more general letter**
 - Personal remarks largely constrained to the beginning (1:1-15) and the end, (15:14-16:23)
 - Some scholars have therefore even speculated whether the end of Romans should occur. The end of 14 or 15 or 16?
- **Influence of the Epistle to the Romans on the Church**
 - Some would argue that the Christian Church is more defined by Paul than anyone else, save Jesus—and that Christian theology is basically Pauline.
 - **Augustine:**
 - Derived his understanding of “original sin” from Romans 5
 - **Martin Luther:**
 - Teaching a class on Romans, Luther was influenced by Romans 3-4, “justification by faith alone”
 - **John Calvin:**
 - Doctrine of double predestination, Romans 9-11
- **Placement within N.T.**
 - However, Romans did not have its pre-eminent position after the Gospels and the Book of Acts until after the 4th century.
 - Most of the Greek manuscripts had Romans following the more general letters of James; 1 and 2 Peter; 1, 2, and 3 John; and Jude.
 - It was perhaps felt that Paul’s letters such as Romans were too individual in terms of specific churches and people and not as universal as other letters.
 - Romans is the largest epistle and the later canon or ordering of the Biblical books ordered the N.T. epistles roughly in the order of size.
- **The Church in Rome**
 - **Mixed Roman church: Jewish-Christian and Gentile-Christian**
 - Jews were expelled from Rome by Emperor Claudius in 49 A.D.
 - Most likely founding members of the Roman church, Jewish-Christians, were therefore likely expelled during this time (like Priscilla and Aquila, Acts 18:2)
 - Friction in the Roman church likely erupted when returning Jewish-Christians returned to a growing Gentile-Christian population that now played a more significant role in the Roman church than before.
 - Paul will counsel these Gentile-Christians to be more tolerant of Jewish believers and their distinctive practices (Rom 14:3, 5-6, 14).

BACKGROUND TO ROMANS: JEWISH-CHRISTIANS & GENTILE-CHRISTIANS (“GREEKS”)

- **Some “lenses” to interpret Romans**
 - **Need for Paul to authenticate his apostleship**
 - We hear this in his other letters
 - **Need to justify his mission to the Gentiles**
 - Collection for Jerusalem and the Jewish-Christians an important overture (15:25-26)
- **Importance of the Jerusalem Jews who followed Jesus**
 - **Peter** with the other disciples who were the earliest followers of Jesus became the obvious leaders of a quickly growing movement.
 - Also, Jesus’ own family members would assume roles of leadership, the most famous being James, the brother (or cousin?) of Jesus, sometimes called **James the Just**.
 - **TODAY:** The descendants of Jesus’ family would later be called the Desposyni (“of or belonging to the Lord”) → Leading to modern day speculations such as found in the book/movie, *The Da Vinci Code*.
 - An important feature of the Jerusalem Jews, particularly James the Just, was their **adherence to Jewish law and Temple worship**

WEEK #1 OF 5 “ROMANS—INTRODUCTION” (HANDOUT #2 OF 2)

Mid-Week Lenten Class: Epistle to the Romans—By Pastor Daren Erisman

- **Growing struggle: Jewish-Christians and Gentile-Christians → How “Jewish”?**
 - As the minority group of Greek-speaking Christians grows (particularly Gentile converts to Christianity) there is a natural strain on the community that has been almost exclusively Aramaic-speaking Jews in and around Jerusalem.
 - These Greek-speaking Christians tended to diminish the value of the Temple and its associated laws and this brought antagonism from the Jewish authorities (towards all Christians, Jewish-Christians and Gentile-Christians)
 - The **martyrdom of the Greek-speaking Stephen** is a prime example of Jewish authorities punishing a voice from what was looking less and less like a benign Jewish sect.
 - One of the Jewish authorities was a Pharisee named Saul who in a conversion experience on the way to Damascus would become Paul, the missionary to the Gentiles.
 - **Paul and the mission to the Gentiles**
 - **Church at Antioch**
 - Antioch a natural “second home” for the Church and the place where “Christians” got their nickname.
 - A Greek-established, Greek-speaking city, the capital of Syria with a large Jewish population (perhaps 1 in 5 citizens)
 - The first mixed-race church with Jewish and Gentile Christians
 - Big debate within Christianity: Circumcision required to be Christian?
 - In Antioch: “No!” In Jerusalem: “Yes!”
 - Paul had been sent to work with Barnabas in Antioch before the circumcision debate and had established numerous churches in Asia Minor (Turkey)
 - **Pax Romana** and the opportunity for a nascent Christian Church
 - In ~47 CE, Jerusalem Christians came to Antioch to offer mass circumcisions to the Gentile Christians
 - **Jerusalem Council of 48 CE → The Break from Judaism**
 - Paul shared the stories of all the churches that had been established among the Gentiles and countered the requirement of circumcision.
 - Amazingly, James, Peter and John agreed.
 - **This was a critical turning point of the church**
 - Up to this point, Jewish-Christians had simply been a Jewish sect and were largely able to participate in Jewish worship, etc.
 - Now, with the full inclusion of uncircumcised Gentile-Christians, **Christianity had differentiated itself from Judaism.**
 - **After the Jerusalem Council of 48 CE**
 - Allowing uncircumcised followers of Jesus to be part of the early Church was a momentous **change and concession.**
 - **For conservatives Jews**, this concession was a slippery slope for Christianity becoming an apostate sect for Jews who did not want to be Jews any more.
 - **James the Just** (brother or cousin of Jesus) asked Peter to change his position on eating with Gentiles.
 - **Peter** agreed, followed by **Barnabas**. Paul was enraged, calling them hypocrites.
 - James the Just tried to compromise with a kind of four-point version of the Law of Moses that would allow Gentile Christians to be clean enough to eat with.

- **For Paul**, the calling of the Gentiles was God's direction for the followers of Jesus.
 - Paul spent his days establishing churches all over Asia Minor and Europe.
 - Opponents of Paul toured his churches teaching the benefits of the law provoking Paul to write his letters of encouragement and chastisement to these new churches.
 - These **letters or epistles**, a side-product of his work, became the earliest written documents of what would become the New Testament.
 - **Romans was likely written around 55-57 CE.**
 - **Paul returned to Jerusalem in 57 CE** with large monetary gift collected from his churches to give to James the Just's church, which was in need at the time.
 - Paul was in Jerusalem for less than a week when he was recognized and a riot broke out. He was arrested, imprisoned in Caesarea for two years. Then claiming his status as a Roman citizen, he appealed to Caesar's court and was **sent to Rome**.

- **Summary of Paul's Gospel: Rom 1:16-17**
 - ¹⁶For I am not ashamed of the gospel; it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who has faith, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. ¹⁷For in it the righteousness of God is revealed through faith for faith; as it is written, "The one who is righteous will live by faith" [OR: *The one who is righteous through faith will live.*"]

- **Romans compared to Paul's other letters**
 - **Some similar themes as Paul's other letters**
 - Failure for the world to know God in God's terms (Rom. 1:18-32; 1 Cor. 1:18-25)
 - Justification by faith rather than by works of the law (Rom. 3; Gal. 3; 4; Phil. 3)
 - Abraham (Rom. 4; Gal. 3);
 - Adam and Christ (Rom. 5:12-21; 1 Cor. 15:21-22, 45-49);
 - The church as the body of Christ (Rom. 12; 1 Cor. 12).
 - **Absent in Romans as compared to his other letters**
 - Nature and extended defense of his apostleship
 - Cataloging of his trials that authenticate Paul's ministry
 - **Unique to Romans**
 - Past and future destiny of Israel (Rom 9-11)

- **Brief Outline of Romans¹**
 - I. Introduction and summary of Paul's gospel (1:1-17)
 - II. Wrath now revealed on all (Gentiles, Jews, ...) (1:18-3:20)
 - III. Righteousness now revealed to all (3:21-4:25)
 - IV. The life of righteousness by faith (5:1-8:39)
 - V. Objection: why be a Jew? and Paul's answer (9:1-11:36)
 - VI. God's righteousness in the daily life of the believer (12:1-15:13)
 - VII. Paul's travel plans (15:14-29)
 - VIII. Conclusion (15:30-33)
 - IX. Appendix: recommendation, greetings, warning against false teachers (16:1-23)
 - X. Letter closing (16:25-27)

¹With my own modifications, this is from Paul J. Achtemeier, Publishers. Harper & Row and Society of Biblical Literature., Harper's Bible Dictionary, 1st ed. (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1985), 876.

WEEK #2 OF 5 "ALL HAVE FALLEN SHORT" (HANDOUT #1 OF 2)

Mid-Week Lenten Class: Epistle to the Romans—By Pastor Daren Erisman

Review last week

- Jewish/Gentile Christian tensions and opportunities

PERSON OF PAUL

- From the **Book of Acts** (Luke-Acts) → Paul himself does not provide details
 - There are some discrepancies between details in Acts and from Paul's letters (such as when Paul went to Jerusalem during the circumcision controversy)
- Paul born around **10 AD**
- **From Tarsus** (Acts 21:39)
 - A Hellenized city (located in what is now Turkey), close to Syria
 - Famous for being the place where Antony met Cleopatra
 - Sophisticated and prospered from Roman rule
- Paul likely gained **Roman citizenship** through his father or grandfather
 - One speculation is that during the earlier Greek rule, citizenship was granted to new Greek colonists and to Jews, then was extended during Roman rule
- Paul may have been educated in Tarsus, but more likely was sent as a youth to Jerusalem for training
 - "at the feet of Gamaliel according to the strict manner of the law of our fathers" (Acts 22:3)
 - Paul a Pharisee
- The late 2nd-century apocryphal *Acts of Paul and Thecla* describes Paul's physical features:
 - "And he saw Paul coming, a man little of stature, thin-haired upon the head, crooked in the legs, of good state of body, with eyebrows joining, and nose somewhat hooked, full of grace: for sometimes he appeared like a man, and sometimes he had the face of an angel."
- **Persecution of the Christians** (Acts 8)
 - Saul/Paul persecutes the Christians, even in foreign lands
- **Conversion** (Acts 9)
 - Around 34 or 35 AD
 - Blinded by Jesus on the way to Damascus, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" asks Jesus.
 - Ananias in Damascus also plays a role in Paul's conversion by laying his hands on Saul so that he regains his sight.
 - **Saul → Paul?**
 - Not necessarily a change of names but the emphasis of one of his names, his Roman name: "Paul"
 - Paul was likely known as "Saul" in the Aramaic-speaking Jewish Community (perhaps a nickname during his Jewish education?)
 - Acts 13:9 "But Saul, also known as Paul..."
- **Missionary Activity**
 - The sequence of Paul's travels is not known exactly with some differing accounts between the Book of Acts and Paul's Letters.
 - What is clear is that Paul was incredibly active in spreading the gospel throughout the eastern part of the Roman Empire (Rough sequence from Harper Bible Dictionary—not meant to be complete):
 - Arabia → Nabatea (Gal 1:17); Jerusalem (Acts 9:28); Syria and Cilicia (Gal 1:21); Cyprus central Asia Minor → Antioch of Pisidia, Iconium, Lystra and Derbe (Acts 13, 14); Galatia, Philippi and Thessalonica (1 Thess. 1:2 – 3:10); Corinth (Acts 18:11); Jerusalem (Gal 2:1-10; Acts 15:1-21) → Circumcision requirement removed (50, 51 AD?); Antioch (Acts 15:30; 18:220) where Peter withdraws support of table fellowship with Gentiles after word from Jerusalem;

Ephesus (52-54 AD?) writing most of Corinthians and being imprisoned (2 Cor. 1:8-11); Troas, Macedonia (2 Cor. 2:12-13), Corinth (55,56 AD?) (Acts 20:2-3) **writing Romans**; Jerusalem (Acts 20:3 – 21:16; 21:27 – 23:30); Caesarea (Acts 23:31 – 26:32); Rome (27:1 – 28:31).

- **Paul executed in Rome**
 - A Roman citizen, Paul makes his appeals and ends up in Rome where he is eventually executed around 62 AD.

ROMANS 1:1 – 1:17

- **Romans in a nutshell (1:16, 17):**
 - ¹⁶For I am not ashamed of the gospel; it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who has faith, to the **Jew first and also to the Greek**. ¹⁷For in it the **righteousness of God** is revealed **through faith** for faith; as it is written, “The one who is righteous will live by faith” [OR: *The one who is righteous through faith will live.*”]

ROMANS 1:18 - 3:20 **Radical equality** → **“All have fallen short”**

- **Sin**
 - Gentiles fall short
 - Don't acknowledge God in creation.
 - Idolatry leads to unhealthy behaviors.
 - Everyone else falls short, including the Jews
 - Ironically, those who judge are condemned
 - Diagram → Falling into the pit
 - **Radical equality**
 - **Romans 2:11-12**
 - For God shows no partiality. All who have sinned apart from the law will also perish apart from the law, and all who have sinned under the law will be judged by the law.
 - **Romans 3:10**
 - “There is no one who is righteous, not even one...”
 - **Romans 3:20**
 - For ‘no human being will be justified in his sight’ by deeds prescribed by the law, for through the law comes the knowledge of sin.
- **Views of Sin and “Original Sin”**
 - The Abrahamic faiths by-in-large view sin in terms of bad personal choices that are destructive in nature (harm the self or the other)
 - There are differences of opinion however on the nature or capacity for humans to deal with sin → the human condition
 - Is sin inherited? Systemic? Personified?
 - **Which one?**
 - **Exodus 34:6-7**
 - ⁶The LORD passed before him, and proclaimed, “The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, ⁷keeping steadfast love for the thousandth generation, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, **yet by no means clearing the guilty, but visiting the iniquity of the parents upon the children and the children’s children, to the third and the fourth generation.**”
 - **Ezekiel 18:20**
 - The person who sins shall die. A child shall not suffer for the iniquity of a parent, nor a parent suffer for the iniquity of a child; **the righteousness of the righteous shall be his own, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be his own.**

WEEK #2 OF 5 "ALL HAVE FALLEN SHORT" (HANDOUT #2 OF 2)

Mid-Week Lenten Class: Epistle to the Romans—By Pastor Daren Erisman

- **Views of Sin and "Original Sin" cont...**
 - **"The Fall"**
 - Adam and Eve are tempted and defy God's command not to eat from the Tree of Knowing Good and Evil. They are subsequently made mortal and banished from the Garden of Eden. (Genesis 3)
 - Result: Difficulty, death.
 - **St. Augustine's writings largely shape the view of "Original Sin"**
 - The concept of original sin may have come from Tertullian, but the expression and the later impact comes from Augustine's writings
 - **Connects "Original Sin" with Adam [and Eve]** → A key verses
 - **Romans 5:12**
 - ¹²Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death came through sin, and so death spread to all because all have sinned
 - **Romans 5:19**
 - "For just as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous."
 - **"The Fall" is interpreted as the "Original Sin"** that has and continues to permeate humanity (and creation).
 - Humans are born into this sin and it is the seed of future evil choices and effects.
 - Only **God's grace** can overcome Original Sin
 - **Solution: Baptism**
 - **According to Augustine, the effects of Original Sin are transmitted by sexual reproduction:**
 - "...now when this [the Fall] happened, the whole human race was 'in his loins' [Adam]. Hence in accordance with the mysterious and powerful natural laws of heredity it followed that those who were in his loins and were to come into this world through the **concupiscence** [lustful desires] of the flesh were condemned with him."
 - Original Sin is therefore associated with **concupiscence** (lustful desires)
 - Many folks misunderstand Augustine as saying basically that "our bodies are bad" and "sex is evil."
 - This is too simplistic...read on
 - **Roman Catholics** → **"Original Sin"** → **Privation of sanctifying grace**
 - Influenced by Augustine's perspective, but nuanced
 - **Original Sin imputes a guilt** that passes from generation to generation, but is removed by Baptism
 - Catholicism is clear that **original sin does not mean the corruption of human nature** (which is good), **but the "privation of sanctifying grace** in consequence of the sin of Adam... **It is the death of the soul"** ("Original Sin," *Catholic Encyclopedia*)
 - **Concupiscence**
 - Adam and Eve were originally free from concupiscence, "so that their sensuous appetite was perfectly subject to reason;" (*Cath. Ency.*)
 - "The Fall" caused the loss of this gift, but not the corruption of human nature.

- **Eastern Orthodox → “Ancestral Sin” → Death**
 - Interpret “Original Sin” as “The Original Sin”
 - Adam and Eve, represent humanity's ongoing struggle to exercise free will
 - “Ancestor Sin” = death, **not imputed guilt for what Adam did**
 - Humans are still made in the image of God, but it is distorted by Ancestral Sin
 - Conceive of God and humans more in synergistic terms (cooperative, a degree of mutuality)
- **Protestants → “Original Sin” ...with emphasis on “Grace”?**
 - Shaped by Augustine’s perspective
 - Luther (Augustinian Monk) and Calvin
 - Protestants emphasize the grace part of the equation, but are largely Augustinian in their approach to sin
 - Radical Grace = Radical Sin AND Racial Sin = Radical Grace
- **Jews → Do not believe in “Original Sin”**
- **Muslims → Not “Original Sin” but a human mistake**
- **Conclusions**
 - Each view of sin and original sin has it’s own set of interpretations and modifications so these should not be considered as monolithic.
 - Each view works as a different “system” where names may be the same across views, but they may have different meanings or emphases.
 - Basically, everyone struggles with:
 - Bad things that happen to us, to others, and to the world
 - The meaning of death
 - God’s role
 - Our role

WEEK #3 OF 5 "GRACE MAY ABOUND" (HANDOUT #1 OF 2)

Mid-Week Lenten Class: Epistle to the Romans—By Pastor Daren Erisman

ROMANS 3:21 – 3:31

- **Paul's main argument**

- (1:17) God alone is righteous
- (3:10) We are not
 - "There is no one who is righteous, not even one"
- (3:23) All fall short of the Glory of God because all have sinned.
- (3:20a) We are not justified by what we do
 - "no human being will be justified in his sight' by deeds prescribed by the law"
- (3:20b) The law only condemns us and reveals our sin
 - "for through the law comes the knowledge of sin."
- (3:22) Righteousness of God comes through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe
- (3:22) But there are no distinctions (Jews, Greeks, whatever...) because, again, all have fallen short (3:23)
- (3:24) And... all are justified by God's grace as a gift through Christ's death and resurrection
- **Overview**
 - Human brokenness (sin) → Estrangement from God → Effect: death
 - Everyone is caught in sin whether a Jew or non-Jew—all fall short
 - New relationship of grace offered → Christ dies for our sin
 - Righteous God makes us righteous through faith in Christ
- **Question: What if I don't have enough faith?**

- **Martin Luther**

- **Luther was "stuck"**
 - Luther squashed in his pursuit of holiness by a righteous God who punishes the unrighteous
 - Misunderstanding of Rom 1:17
 - Misconstrued Paul's words that the righteous live by faith as meaning that one must be righteous in order to be given faith.
- **Psalms Lectures (1513-15) → "Passive Righteousness"**
 - **Revolutionary:** Luther speaks of two aspects of God's righteousness (not just one)
 - Psalm 72 Lecture
 - Luther previously had only been taught that God's righteousness was God's possession and a quality by which sinners were judged wanting.
 - Now Luther taught that God's righteousness was also something that God gave to believers and by which he made them acceptable in his presence
- **Romans Lectures (1515-16)**
 - **Church at time → Synteresis:** Leftover spark of the divine: "Image of God"
 - Conscience that felt guilt
 - Help people to do better next time
 - This spark could be "fanned"
 - Luther removes the idea of synteresis
 - **Replaces with a radical understanding of sin**
 - Sin = selfishness (so selfish we cannot see it in ourselves, only by God's grace)
 - → Even our spiritual practices become selfish
 - → It takes faith to believe in our "hereditary" sinful nature
 - Romans 1-4 shows that we all fall short (Jews, Gentiles, everyone)
 - Therefore: **NO FREE WILL with regard to our faith in God—it is pure gift.**

- **New understanding of humility**
 - Old understanding: Humility as a condition of salvation
 - New Understanding: "The whole task of the apostle and his Lord is to humble the proud and bring them to a realization of this condition, to teach them that they need grace, to destroy their own righteousness so that in humility they will seek Christ and confess that they are sinners, and thus receive grace and be saved."
- **Christ alone**
 - Luther's Teachers: Faith a leftover virtue of the fall which when augmented by the sacraments brought salvation.
 - Mystics: Faith exercised by leaving ourselves and approaching God in mystical union.
 - Luther: Faith alone → Christ alone
 - The law with the gospels drives us to Christ alone
 - Rom 3:28 "A PERSON IS JUSTIFIED BY FAITH APART FROM WORKS OF THE LAW."
- **Righteous sinners (Saint/Sinner) → "Healthy in hope"**
 - Example of sick man (Luther) "... under the care of the physician; they are sick in fact, but healthy in hope and because they are beginning to be healthy in fact, that is, they are being healed."
 - Living in the promise that God will deliver us from sin and completely cure us.
 - Luther: "let whoever comes to confession not suppose that he is laying down his burdens, so he might live quietly, but let him know that with the burden laid down, he fights in God's army..." (p. 98)
 - Luther loves dialectical tensions! (The aesthetic of the day)
- **Theology of the Cross**
 - It is at the cross where we meet the truth about God and ourselves.
 - That God's only son has died for you, all of you, 100% of you.
 - And it is on our knees at the foot of the cross, aware that we are sinners, in broken relationship with God, that we discover that in God's grace that we are 100% saved, 100% loved, 100% God's child.
- **Good Works**
 - We do not do good works so that we become justified, righteous or worthy before God.
 - We do good works because by God's grace, we are free to do them.
 - We do not do good works for the sake of our salvation or for appearances or even to make ourselves feel good.
 - We do good works because God has done the work of salvation already, and living in that reality, we freely do good works for the sake of others.
 - Luther: "In the presence of God it is not by doing just works that one becomes just, but, having been made just, one does just deeds."
 - In actuality, **God works through us to do good works.**
 - **The good works we do are not our own.**

WEEK #3 OF 5 "GRACE MAY ABOUND" (HANDOUT #2 OF 2)

Mid-Week Lenten Class: Epistle to the Romans—By Pastor Daren Erisman

ROMANS 4:1 – 8:39

- **Abraham's righteousness → Through faith (Romans 4)**
 - Abraham an example of being justified by faith alone and not works.
 - Abraham is blessed before he is circumcised (4:11)
 - His eventual circumcision is "a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised." (4:11)
 - Therefore, **Abraham is the ancestor of those who are uncircumcised as well as those who are circumcised because of the example of Abraham's faith.**
- **Jesus the New Adam (Romans 5)**
 - Through Christ, we are justified by faith and
 - ...have peace with God (5:1)
 - ...boast in our sufferings, which produces endurance, which produces character, which produces hope (5:3-4)
 - Importantly, Christ dies for us "while we still were sinners" (5:8)
 - Just as one person, Adam, brings condemnation, so one person, Jesus brings the free gift of justification. (5:17)
 - **Key text for Original Sin (or Ancestral Sin) → discussed last week.**
- **Why not just sin if grace abounds? By no means! (Romans 6:1 – 7:6)**
 - Paul responds to the charge (3:8) that the gospel of grace encourages sinning.
 - **Paul responds with three examples:**
 - **Baptism (6:3-11)**
 - We are attached to Christ's death and resurrection
 - We die with Christ and are raised to new life with him
 - **Slavery (6:16-22)**
 - From slaves of sin to slaves of righteousness
 - **Marriage (7:1-5)**
 - After the husband dies, the widow is free to marry another man
 - Previously bound to the husband under the law, but after his death, free!
 - Paul: Why would you want to sin?
- **Is the law sin? By no means! (Romans 7:7–13)**
 - **Uses of the Law**
 - The law gives order and is good unto itself (covenant in Genesis)
 - The law reveals our sin (7:7) and magnifies our sin, bringing death (7:11)
 - Beyond this section → Law drives us to Christ and the foot of the cross
- **Life in the Flesh and in the Spirit (Romans 7:14 – 8:17)**
 - Battle between the flesh and the spirit (mind)
 - Very Greek in this dichotomy → classic struggle → virtue
 - Would have made perfect sense to the Romans
 - Akin to the concupiscence discussion (Romans 1:18-32)
 - Therefore, caution should be exercised in interpreting this text
 - Flesh does not mean "bad"
 - Spirit or mind does not necessarily mean "good"
 - Remember: "All have fallen short"
 - Ultimately, what is important is not our spirit or mind, but God's Spirit within us, that declares us "children of God" (7:17)
- **All of creation waits for future glory (Romans 8:18 – 30)**
 - All of creation has been "groaning in labor pains until now" (8:22)
 - **Not just human creatures, but all of creation!**

Radical Sin! Radical Grace! Radical Love! (Romans 8:31—39)

- **God as Love**

- Love of a different kind
- Children of God
- Not something we can control or harness its power
 - Because it is something to be given away with abandon
 - Something to enter into in vulnerability
 - Something that takes everything from us, even our life, so that we may truly live life in abundance
- Prodigal Father → Love (Lk 15:11-32)

WEEK #4 OF 5 "THE JEWS?" (HANDOUT #1 OF 2)

Mid-Week Lenten Class: Epistle to the Romans—By Pastor Daren Erisman

THE HOLY LAND: A SERIES OF OCCUPYING EMPIRES

- **Egyptians**
 - Controlled the area of Palestine many times over the centuries
 - The Hebrew people or "Israelites" emerged as a people from their bondage in Egypt (~1300 BCE)
- **Surrounding smaller empires**
 - **Philistines** (David and Goliath, ~1000 BCE)
 - **Phoenicians** (controlled the seas)
- **Assyrians**
 - Conquered the northern Kingdom of Israel and sent the members of the social elite into diaspora (722 BCE)
- **Babylonians**
 - Conquered the southern Kingdom of Judah (588 BCE), destroyed the 1st Temple in Jerusalem and sent the social elite to Babylon (called the Babylonian captivity)
- **Persians**
 - After conquering the Babylonian Empire, the Persians allowed Jews to return to Jerusalem (537 BCE) and for the temple to be rebuilt (2nd Temple).
- **Greeks**
 - After conquering the Persians, Alexander and later, his generals occupied the land, but more importantly brought Greek language and culture.
 - In revolt to decrees by a Seleucid King, an independent Jewish Kingdom arose (165 BCE to 63 BCE) called the **Hasmonean Dynasty** (also known as the **Maccabees**).
- **Romans**
 - Involved during the Hasmonean Dynasty, the Romans began to actively control the region during the **Herodian Dynasty** (37 BCE – 92 CE) and was responsible for the expulsion of Jews from Jerusalem in response to Jewish revolts (~70 & 132 CE)

PERSECUTION OF THE JEWS

- **Diaspora** = "dispersion"
 - In order to literally dismantle a people's resistance or influence, and/or out of punishment, conquering powers would disperse the conquered people into other lands—a Diaspora.
 - Assyrians (722 BCE): Exiled Jews from the Northern Kingdom of Israel ("10 Lost Tribes")
 - Babylonians (~588 BCE): Exiled Jews from the Southern Kingdom of Judah (70 yrs)
 - Romans (70 CE & 132 CE): Jews exiled from Jerusalem after revolts
- **Under Emperors (Early Christian Church)**
 - Constantine (4th century): Capital punishment for teaching the Torah or encouraging conversion to Judaism.
 - Theodosius & Justinian: Jews could not testify against Christians or gather in public.
- **Middle Ages**
 - Crusaders (1096-1292): Jewish communities slaughtered by Crusaders and others
 - 1215: Jews have to wear different clothes than Christians
 - Driven out of England (1290), France (1306 & 1394), Austria (1420), and Spain (1492)
- **Reformation & Counter-Reformation**
 - Protestants and Catholics (1500's): Persecute Jews and segregate them into ghettos and many Jews end up in Poland
- **Late 1800's up to WWII**
 - Russians: Numerous "pogroms" (anti-Jewish riots) against Jews in Russia and elsewhere

- Nazis (1930's to 1945): Holocaust of Jews resulting in the death of 6 million
- Soviets under Stalin carry out programs that lead to the death of an estimated 10 million Jews
- **Reflections on Anti-Semitism**
 - Jews have continually been oppressed, openly persecuted, driven from their homes and killed.
 - **The reasons for persecution include:**
 - Being a minority community: Jews, as a minority population who often isolated themselves from the majority population (for their own protection and maintaining of identity) became scapegoats for any problems, including the bubonic plague!
 - Jealousy and greed: Jews traditionally took on the role of bankers (because loaning with interest, "usury," was forbidden for Christians at the time (and for Muslims), therefore Jews also often served as the trade brokers between Christians and Muslims. Nations would drive out the Jews to avoid paying their debts.
 - **Two large groups of Jews:**
 - **Sephardic Jews:** Largely flourished under Islamic rule in Spain (700's – 1300's) and driven out by Ferdinand and Isabella of Spain (1492), they settled in the Ottoman Empire and other places in Europe.
 - **Ashkenazic Jews:** Named from the Hebrew word for "German," these Jews settled in Poland, which by the 16th century extended to the Baltic Sea and into the Ukraine.

WHAT DO CHRISTIANS DO WITH THE JEWS?

- There have been a number of responses
 - **Earliest followers of Christ were Jews**
 - Jews who understood Jesus as the Messiah, a Jewish sect
 - With Gentile converts, there became a Jewish-Christian, Gentile-Christian distinction
 - Jewish religious leaders (obviously early on!) realized the distinctive claims of Jewish and Gentile Christians regarding Jesus as the Son of God
 - Any connection of the emerging Christian church being "Jewish" was being lost certainly by the 60s and definitely the 70s after the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem
 - **Persecute the Jews**
 - As Christians gained power and became a majority instead of a minority, they unfortunately used the Jews as their "scape goat" using Jesus' crucifixion centuries before as reason enough to treat Jews with disdain, de-humanizing language and treatment, as well as active pogroms that moved or destroyed whole Jewish communities—as well as stealing their land and resources.
 - Between **Hitler and Stalin** during the 30s and 40s it is estimated that some 16 million Jews were killed. Enough said.
 - There are a number of Anti-Semitic organizations (who also understand themselves to be Christian) at work today that use similar or the exact same language as the Nazis to dehumanize the Jews and other groups such as LGBT and currently in the news—Muslims. Groups like the KKK, Skinheads, and Arian-Nation related groups are overtly active in their persecution of Jews and these other groups.
 - Interestingly, despite the enmity caused by the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Jews in the U.S. are in the beginning stages of publicly defending the rights of **Muslims** who are the current targeted group for defamation of character, dehumanization and active hate crimes. Jewish Americans are realizing that this kind of treatment is all too familiar...

WEEK #4 OF 5 "THE JEWS?" (HANDOUT #2 OF 2)

Mid-Week Lenten Class: Epistle to the Romans—By Pastor Daren Erisman

- **Supersessionism**
 - Treat Judaism as simply the foreshadowing of Christianity, a stage in the development of Christianity
 - This in effect is to treat Judaism as a kind of former religion, one that was useful but gone astray and therefore not really valid by itself.
- **Christianize the Jews**
 - Actively proselytize Jews
 - This has been the hope of Christianity from its beginnings (certainly in Paul; Rom 10:14-17)—that the Jews would claim Jesus as their Messiah.
 - **Martin Luther** thought that his new understanding of the gospel in terms of justification by grace through faith alone would cause Jews to embrace Christ, but later he became bitter when it did not happen.
 - In 1973, the "**Jews for Jesus**" movement began in the U.S. as a Christian evangelical expression of Judaism. Members understand themselves as Jewish and either have Jewish ancestry or are married to a Jew. They are "Jews for Jesus" in that they believe Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God and part of the Holy Trinity. Their mission is to actively proselytize all the Jews and they are evangelical in their approach and in their relationship with other Christian groups. The Orthodox, Conservative, Reformed and Reconstructionist Jewish communities are publicly critical of the Jews for Jesus movement.
- **Jews are the People of God's Continuing Covenant**
 - Jews have been and will be the beloved chosen people of God's covenant (also very Pauline; Rom 11:1-5).
 - There are variations on this theme:
 - Following Paul, some believe that it is through the Christians that the Jews will eventually (inevitably?) turn towards Christ and be saved (Rom 11:11-12).
 - Others believe that God would simply not forsake God's covenant with God's people—even if they have broken that covenant (also Paul; Rom 11:25-26). Therefore, the Jews will be claimed as God's children just because it is God's will (Paul leaves this option open; Rom 11:28-36). "For who has known the mind of God?" (Rom 11:34).
- **The destiny of Jews and Christians are bound together in the modern State of Israel**
 - A growing group, particularly comprised of evangelical Christians, believe that Judaism as expressed in the modern-day State of Israel plays a key role with Christians in the **End Times**.
 - Using a selective reading of the Biblical Books of Daniel and Revelation (particularly Rev. 20:4-6), combined with a concept developed in the mid-1800s called "**dispensationalism**" by John Nelson Darby, and with observations about the creation of the modern State of Israel, these Christians perceive the world as ending in this sequence:
 - Christ returns for the "**rapture**" that extracts the true believers instantly into heaven (interpreted from Mt. 24:36-42).
 - The remaining people (who are not true believers—nominal Christians, the Jews, and everyone else) suffer through a time called the "**tribulation**," an apocalyptic time where some feel that the Jewish Temple must be rebuilt in order for Christ to return again.
 - After the Jewish Temple is built, and among other things, an unblemished calf is sacrificed, etc., Christ will return and establish an

earthly kingdom for 1000 years, hence “**millennialism**,” which will conclude with the general resurrection of the dead and the Last Judgment.

- These Christians believe that the creation of the modern State of Israel is a sign from God that the End Times are upon us, that Christians are to work to convert the Jews, work with the Israelis to rebuild the Jewish Temple, and hope to be among the chosen for rapture.
- This conception has been popularized in the *Left Behind* book and movie series. It is alive and well in America and plays a key role in religious and political perceptions.
- **We just don't know. Love them?**
 - Christians naturally tend to use their own Christian lenses when viewing Judaism. This means a few things:
 - We view Judaism in terms of 1st century practices as seen through the Bible and miss the two millennia that have followed.
 - We transfer our own expectations of faith, worship and piety upon the Jews (and other religions), which distorts our perceptions and understanding.
 - We tend not to really “listen” to Jews because we “already” understand them.
 - Treat Judaism as a separate religion unto its own.
 - Christians miss the obvious point that we are the odd duck among the monotheistic faith traditions with our Trinitarian language for God. This does not mean that we should not claim Christ as our Lord and Savior with every fiber of our being, but rather, we should not miss (as our Bible declares) that this appears as “foolishness” to the world. Therefore, it is in humble faith that we declare Christ as God, not in pride, but as Paul says, “in awe”.

“So do not become proud, but stand in awe.” (Rom. 11:20b)

WEEK #5 OF 5 “REFLECTING ON ROMANS” (HANDOUT #1 OF 2)

Mid-Week Lenten Class: Epistle to the Romans—By Pastor Daren Erisman

THE DIVERSITY OF CHRISTIANS IN COMMUNITY

- Paul addresses his Roman audience amidst its diversity, particularly with regard to Jewish-Christians and Gentile-Christians.
 - **He consciously shapes much of his Epistle with regard to these two groups:**
 - Gentiles fall short (1:1 – 32)
 - Jews fall short (1:18 – 2:29)
 - Righteousness by faith, first the Jews then the Gentiles (3:21 – 31)
 - Place of the Jews and role of the Gentiles (9:1 – 11:36)
 - Gospel for both the Jews and Gentiles (15:7 – 13)
 - **Paul also makes further delineations within the Christian community.**
 - A diversity of gifts:
 - Prophecy, ministry, teaching, exhortation, generosity, leading, compassion (12:6 – 8)
 - Differing dietary practices:
 - Those who “eat anything” and those who “eat only vegetables” (14:2)
 - Differing fasting practices:
 - Eating or abstaining on particular days in order to honor the Lord (14:5 – 6)
- **Paul’s point:**
 - **Don’t judge! Don’t put unnecessary stumbling blocks in front of people to dissuade their faith in Jesus.**
 - Jesus adds his two cents to this (Mark 9:38 – 42) when the disciples are all bent out of shape because someone else is casting out demons in Jesus’ name.
 - Jesus goes on to say that if “any of you put a stumbling block before one of these little ones who believe in me, it would be better for you a millstone were hung around your neck and you were thrown into the sea.” (Mark 9:42)
 - People often interpret “little ones” as being children and connect it with the blessing of children (Mark 10:13 – 16), but this text comes significantly afterwards.
 - **More accurately, Jesus warns not to put a stumbling block in front of those who seem not to be “one of us” yet claim Christ, or we will find a millstone around our neck!**
- **Lastly, what’s missing from this conversation? → Slavery!**
 - Christianity was extremely popular among those who had little power in society, especially slaves.
 - Slavery was also such a part of the fabric of society, particularly Roman society, that Paul does not highlight the diversity in wealth and power among the Christians in Rome.
 - Furthermore, Paul reinforces these societal power structures by saying that governing authorities are not to be challenged, that “those authorities that exist have been instituted by God.” (Rom 13:1)
 - This text has been used for centuries to both maintain public order and suppress anyone who revolt against authority or governance.
 - Martin Luther used this text when he told the Nobility to brutally put down the revolt of the Peasants.
 - Slave owners in the 1800s justified their ownership of humans partly from this text and also from the relative silence of the Bible regarding slavery.
 - A good reason to pay your taxes! Explicit in Romans 13:6-7.

SIN AND GRACE

- **“For there is no distinction, since all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God...” (Rom 3:22 – 23).** This summarizes Romans 1:18 – 3:20.
 - **Gentiles, or as Paul sometimes refers to, “Greeks,” have fallen short.**
 - They should have known better. They should have recognized God in creation and regarded themselves as God’s creatures, but instead they worshipped everything else but God and this led to all sorts of bad behaviors born out of concupiscence, out of excessive lust and desire.
 - The Gentiles have thus fallen short, however, as Paul goes on, so have those who pass judgment on them!
 - Paul goads them, “do you despise the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience?” (Rom 2:3)
 - **The Jews have fallen short.**
 - Are they so much better because they are circumcised? No says Paul.
 - Are they so guaranteed a free pass because of their diet. No says Paul.
 - All have fallen short.
- **“...they are now justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus...through faith” (Rom 2:24 – 25)**
 - Paul stresses that it is by faith that we are justified before God, just like Abraham was before he was circumcised; his faith made him right before God.
 - This means that not only the Jews, but the Gentiles are capable of such faith, and therefore being right before God through Jesus Christ. Yes!
- **Original Sin and Ancestral Sin**
 - **Original Sin**
 - This may be one of the hardest concepts for a modern person to grasp, let alone accept.
 - Not a new idea, but one particularly formalized and named by **St. Augustine of Hippo (354 – 430 CE)** in the early stages of a Christian Church that was working hard to Christianize a Roman Empire with its multiple religions and philosophies.
 - Because in ancient times they literally conceived of human conception as a male implanting a complete, tiny baby within a woman, then it makes sense that Augustine (and Paul?) would describe sin and its consequences, death, as being passed down from the “First Adam” (Rom 5:12, 19) and then being redeemed by the New Adam, Jesus.
 - “The Fall” of Adam (and Eve) is the “original sin.”
 - **Why is this hard for a modern mind? Here are a few reasons:**
 - We don’t think of ourselves as particularly “bad” or that a baby is born a “sinner” → they’re so cute!
 - Augustine will tie sin to pro-creation, which results in subsequent Christian traditions having a slightly skewed understanding of human sexuality exhibited most profoundly in the American mind, through Puritanism.
 - The following sequence of thought becomes popular:
 - Puritanism → Sex is a sin → Puritanism is crazy!
 - Also, declaring people as witches and killing them → Puritanism is crazy!
 - Original sin → crazy or at best, old fashioned
 - Augustine’s thought will affect the Western Church (not the Eastern Church) and particularly Protestantism.
 - **Roman Catholics: Original Sin imputes a guilt** that passes from generation to generation, but is removed by Baptism

WEEK #5 OF 5 "REFLECTING ON ROMANS" (HANDOUT #2 OF 2)

Mid-Week Lenten Class: Epistle to the Romans—By Pastor Daren Erisman

- **An alternative to Original Sin: Ancestral Sin**
 - Eastern Orthodoxy would not be influenced by Augustine in the same way
 - They would view the "Original Sin" as "**The Original Sin**," something that happened in the past, but only its consequences were passed on: death (not imputed guilt for what Adam did as Roman Catholics believe)
 - Adam and Eve, represent humanity's ongoing struggle to exercise free will
 - Humans are still made in the image of God, but it is distorted by Ancestral Sin
 - Conceive of God and humans in synergistic terms (cooperative)
- **Protestants → "Original Sin" ...with emphasis on "Grace"**
 - Protestants emphasize the grace part of the equation, but are largely Augustinian in their approach to sin
 - **Radical Grace ↔ Radical Sin AND Racial Sin ↔ Radical Grace**

CONCUPISCENCE

- Romans 1:26-27 is often used in anti-gay/lesbian language, but this is a poor choice of texts if you are seeking such a position.
 - **This section is about concupiscence**, about excessive desire and lust that pushes one beyond "natural" barriers.
 - Paul describes such actions as caused by idolatry, and part of a Gentile Roman culture that blurred all boundaries between humans, animals and nature.
 - In other words, as witnessed in the multiple religious cults of the Roman world, *heterosexual* people, caught up in frenzied states of concupiscence were not to have same-sex behavior with each other, nor with animals, etc.
 - Where does this leave homosexuals engaged in long-term relationships? Good question. Some translators will add the word "homosexual" or "homosexual behavior" to texts such as this one in their Biblical translations or commentary, but interestingly, the word "homosexuality" was coined in the 19th century and is not found in early translations of the Bible such as the King James Version.
 - The Biblical understanding of same-sex behaviors seems to be limited to short-term expressions of concupiscence, especially around cultic ritual, hence Paul's association with idolatry. Homosexuality as a long-term, same-sex attraction, let alone relationship does not seem to be on the Biblical radar. And, treating such long-term homosexual relationships as some kind of prolonged concupiscence seems inadequate—ask any heterosexual couple who have been together for more than 50 years if their relationship is sustained by concupiscence!
 - To be honest, I think we are living in a time when we don't really understand all the biological, chemical, psychological, sociological nor theological variables that shape this complex and emotionally charged issue. I really don't like adding terms to the Bible that weren't there before, nor am I appreciative of those who simply want to dismiss the Bible and its perspective on creation, our relationships and what it means to live in Jesus Christ.
 - Getting back to our particular text in Romans, to be fair to everyone, homosexuals should not be excluded from the point of this text any more than heterosexuals: **Everyone, regardless of sexual orientation should be wary of excessive lust and desire that mutates a relationship into only self-gratification and thus idolatry, and not self-giving love.**
 - When one succumbs to unbridled concupiscence, you will know it through the results of selfish behavior: covetousness, malice, full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, craftiness, gossip, slandering, God-hating, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventing evil, rebellious toward parents, foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless (Rom 1:29-31).
 - If you observe this behavior, you are witnessing the effects of idolatry.

END TIMES

- Christ will come again. Yes.
- We don't know when. Yes.
- There will be signs to indicate Christ's imminent return. Yes.
- Those signs have been occurring the past two millennia. Yes.
- We must be ready. Yes.

JUDGEMENT

- Whenever we self-promote ourselves to a higher plane of existence, or worse yet, of judgment over others, we find ourselves at the "pointy-end" of the gospel, that not only condemns our better judgment, but crucifies it.
 - Think about Jesus' words to the Pharisees, or Paul's condemnation in Romans of those who somehow believe that they are better (Rom 2).
 - Those who judge are condemned already. All have fallen short.
 - And then resurrected... Christ has died for all, everyone, your friend, your enemy and most startling, you.
- I can't help but think we can learn something of a lesson from the Nazi's judgment and corresponding dehumanizing treatment of those who were non-Aryan, non-Christian, non-heterosexual, non-German, etc.
 - Do we put yellow stars on those who appear different than ourselves, or whose difference makes us question our own place in the world?
 - Was the death of all those soldiers, of families, of villages, of whole religious communities simply for naught?
 - Do we truly believe we are both saint and sinner?
 - Do we own Luther's anti-Semitic language later used by the Nazis to justify their mistreatment of so many groups of people?
 - The question we should keep on asking ourselves (particularly as saint/sinners) is who are the people that we consciously or unconsciously place yellow stars on? Who places them on us?

OTHER RELIGIONS

- "So do not become proud, but stand in awe." (Rom. 11:20b)

Development of Millennialism and Premillennial Dispensationalism

"**millennialism**" → Those martyred for the faith come to life and reign with Jesus for 1000 years.

Rev. 20:4-6 ⁴ Then I saw thrones, and those seated on them were given authority to judge. I also saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their testimony to Jesus and for the word of God. They had not worshiped the beast or its image and had not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ a thousand years. ⁵ (The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended.) This is the first resurrection. ⁶ Blessed and holy are those who share in the first resurrection. Over these the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ, and they will reign with him a thousand years.

"**pre-millennialism**" → ("pre" = Jesus reigns at beginning) Jesus will return and establish an earthly Kingdom for 1000 years

--Pre-millennialists believe that humanity and the world will increase in evil and decay, leading up to cataclysmic events. (**Tribulation**)

--Noah's Flood is their poster child.

--LEFT BEHIND: Premillennialists

"**post-millennialism**" → ("post" = Jesus reigns at end) The church will evangelize the world so that all may believe and Christ will return.

--Particularly popular after Augustine's *City of God* in which Christ has already inaugurated his rule through the Church (& corresponds to the Christianizing of the Roman Empire in the 400s)

--Liberalism and Social Gospel, but idea lost traction particularly with atrocities of WWI

"**a-millennialism**" → (really "non-millennialists") No literal 1000 year reign but a transcendent spiritual fulfillment of Christ's ultimate triumph.

--Christ's reign is said to already be in effect through the Church.

--No secret rapture, but one public and general resurrection.

--Scripture: Mt 24:29-31; 1 Thes 4:15-17, 2:1-3; Rev. 1:7

"**tribulation**" → time of trial before millennial time period

"**pre-tribulation**" → Period before Christ's reign

--Christ secretly returns to **rapture** the faithful at the beginning of the tribulation (interpreted from Mt. 24:36-42).

--LEFT BEHIND: Premillennialists and Pretribulationists

"**mid-tribulation**" → The church will only experience part of the tribulation and then Christ will return to save the church from the more severe part of the tribulation.

"**post-tribulation**" → Christ comes for church only after the tribulation

--NO rapture.

"**preterists**" → Biblical prophecy (Daniel, Revelation) already taken place in history.

--Most of the expected eschatological events already took place in the 1st century A.D., particularly with the fall of the Jewish Temple in 70 A.D.

--Scriptural support: Mt. 10:23, 16:27-28, 24:34, 26:64; Mk 9:1; Lk 9:27; Rev. 1:1-3.

"**historicists**" → Biblical prophecy (Daniel, Revelation) already taken place in history and is still occurring in today's headlines.

--An understanding that became popular with the Protestant Reformers who sometimes viewed their conflict with the Catholic Church in apocalyptic terms.

"futurists" → Most of the prophecies will come to pass in the future at the close of the age.
 --Idea developed in the 1800s in American Protestantism, especially in conjunction with dispensationalism.
 --LEFT BEHIND: Premillennialists, Pretribulationists, Futurists

"idealists" → Events in the books of Daniel and Revelation are to be understood as symbolic and timeless truths.

"dispensationalism" → Ways or economies in which God has ordered the world (as evidenced in the Bible)
 --Primarily a way of interpreting scripture as literally true and though not all symbols are to be taken literally, a plain sense interpretation is favored.
 --Arose in mid 1800's
 --The 2nd coming of Jesus is viewed as a literal kingdom in which the scriptures for the Jews are fulfilled.

"Premillennial Dispensationalism"

- Begun with John Nelson Darby's Biblical interpretation and periodizations or "dispensations":
 - 1) Innocence (Gen 1:28 to Fall)
 - 2) Conscience (Gen 3:7 to Flood)
 - 3) Human Government (Gen 8:15 to call of Abraham)
 - 4) Promise (Gen 12:1 to Mt. Sinai Covenant)
 - 5) Law (Ex 19:1 to death of Christ)
 - 6) Grace (Pentecost to Christ's 2nd Coming)
 - 7) Kingdom (2nd Coming to the great white throne judgment)
- Popularized by Cyrus Scofield's *Scofield Reference Bible*
 - His notes inserted side-by-side with scripture texts providing instant authority and assimilation
- A dichotomy between the Jews and the Church
 - A portion of the Jews (144,000 Jewish evangelists and their converts) will be saved after the Tribulation
 - A portion of the Church (the "true Church") will be raptured and spared the Tribulation

