

The Book of Romans



Explained Chapter by Chapter

by Bruce R. Edwards

RIGHTEOUS BY FAITH
THE BOOK OF ROMANS
EXPLAINED CHAPTER BY CHAPTER

By Pastor Bruce R. Edwards

**THE BOOK OF ROMANS
EXPLAINED CHAPTER BY CHAPTER**

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Preface

In my more than forty years of ministry, I have come to see the profound impact that a clear understanding of the Word of God has on a person's life. Teaching in Bible colleges, pastoring in a church of over 15000 members, and leading countless classes and seminars, I have witnessed the transformative power of Scripture in strengthening faith, restoring hope, and deepening the walk of believers with their Creator. Among the many books of the Bible that have shaped the lives of Christians, the book of Romans stands out as a foundation for understanding the depths of God's grace, the power of His salvation, and the promise of a life lived by faith.

Paul's letter to the Romans is a cornerstone of Christian theology, offering profound insights into the nature of God, the human condition, and the path to redemption. Its message of grace, faith, and justification through Christ is as essential today as it was when Paul first penned it, and its teachings resonate deeply with those seeking to live a life centered on Christ. My heart has always been to help believers of all ages and walks of life connect with these truths, strengthening their faith and grounding them in the promises of God.

In this book, I have endeavored to make the teachings of Romans accessible and relatable, breaking down complex theological concepts into practical insights that are easy to understand and apply. My hope is that, whether you are a seasoned believer or new to your faith journey, you will find clarity and encouragement in these pages. Let Romans inspire and challenge you, and may its words draw you closer to the God who calls us to live boldly and humbly by faith.

As you read, I pray that the truths of Romans will take root in your heart and transform the way you live, think, and believe.

Introduction

The Book of Romans stands as one of the most profound theological writings in the New Testament—a letter in which the Apostle Paul delves deeply into the mysteries and transformative truths of salvation by grace. Romans addresses life’s most fundamental and universal questions: How can we, flawed and fallible, be made right with God? What role does faith play in our salvation? How does the gospel impact our daily lives and relationships? These are not simply intellectual inquiries; they are the heartbeat of the Christian experience. Every believer, no matter their background or journey, grapples with these questions at some point. And it’s in the Book of Romans that Paul provides answers, offering a foundation that has strengthened and emboldened Christians for centuries.

The Book of Romans Explained is my attempt to come alongside you as you read through Paul’s letter, acting as a guide to illuminate the path he carefully maps out for us. With over forty years in ministry, teaching in Bible colleges, and pastoring congregations, I’ve seen firsthand how a deeper understanding of Romans can transform lives, not just by providing clarity on doctrine, but by rooting believers in the unshakeable assurance of God’s promises. This book is designed to help you engage with Romans on a personal level, to experience the timeless truths of the gospel in a way that enriches your faith and strengthens your understanding. I encourage you to use this as a study guide, following along chapter by chapter as we explore Paul’s letter in depth.

Each chapter of this book corresponds to a chapter of Romans, breaking down Paul’s key themes and arguments into digestible, relatable insights. I start each chapter with a brief overview before going through the chapter verse by verse and then end each chapter with a brief summary.

Romans is not a letter to be skimmed; it’s an invitation to reflect deeply, and each chapter builds upon the last as Paul guides his readers from the problem of sin to the breathtaking

solution of salvation by grace. We'll look closely at what it means to be justified—declared righteous by God through faith alone; sanctified—progressively transformed by the Spirit to reflect Christ's character; and ultimately glorified—assured of the hope that awaits us as co-heirs with Christ. I have structured this book in such a way that as you read, you can pause to ask questions, jot down thoughts, and explore how these truths intersect with your own life. Romans is not just theology for the mind; it's food for the soul, shaping us from the inside out.

Romans is a letter that speaks not only to our intellect but also to our deepest needs and desires. It stirs our hearts, calls us to worship, and challenges us to live out our faith with assurance and purpose. In writing this book, my desire is for you to engage fully—not as a passive reader but as an active participant in the journey Paul lays before us. I encourage you to bring your questions, your doubts, and your hopes. Let this book be a companion as you open Romans and allow the Spirit to speak through the words of Scripture. Each insight and explanation in these pages are intended to point you back to the source itself, empowering you to understand Romans' message and live it out confidently.

Whether you're new to the faith, a seasoned believer, or simply curious about the message of Christianity, *The Book of Romans Explained* is crafted to deepen your understanding and anchor your confidence in the gospel. Don't rush through this; let each chapter of Romans, paired with this study guide, be an invitation to pause, reflect, and allow these truths to challenge and transform you.

I encourage you to approach this journey prayerfully, allowing God's Spirit to work through Paul's words and speak to your heart. My prayer is that this book will not only equip you with theological knowledge but also stir your soul, helping you live boldly in the assurance that you are saved by grace, justified by faith, and empowered by the Spirit to walk in the newness of life.

BACKGROUND

The Apostle Paul wrote the Book of Romans. He wrote and sent this letter from the city of Corinth in AD 57. His primary audience is the Jewish leadership that oversees the church in Rome however, the church consists mostly of Gentile believers. Paul had never been to Rome when he wrote this letter, but he was planning to go to Rome. (Acts 19:21)

By the time of this letter, Paul had already written Galatians, 1 & 2 Thessalonians, and two letters to Corinth. The leaders in Rome were wondering why Paul had not visited or at least wrote to them. So, the first part of his letter is to establish his relationship with the leaders and prepare the way for him to come to Rome.

The letter to the Romans stands as the clearest and most systematic presentation of Christian doctrine in all the Scriptures. The primary theme running through Paul's letter to the Romans is the revelation of God's plan of salvation and of righteousness by faith.

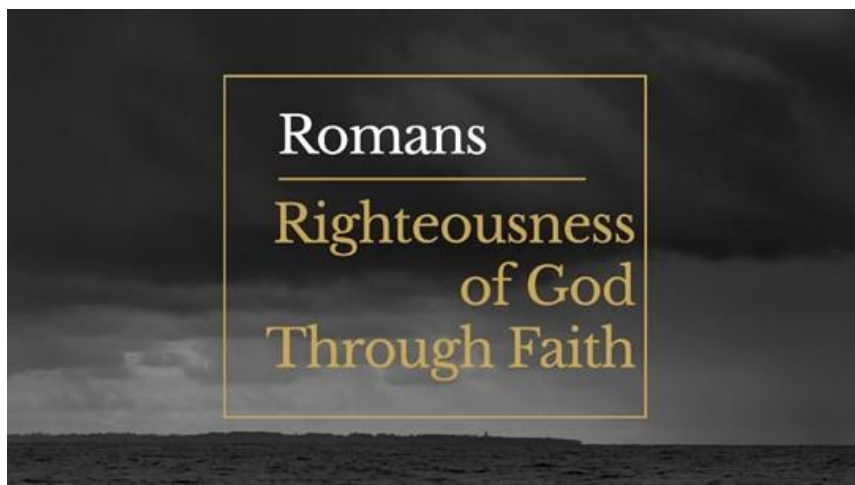
Romans can be broken into two major parts. The first part, chapters 1-11 explain the basic truths of the gospel. The second part, Chapters 12-16, is devoted to the applications of those truths in our lives. The truth this book focuses on is how we are made right with God and then how we are to live right.

So, let's begin our journey through the Book of Romans one chapter at a time.

CHAPTER ONE

GREETING AND

RIGHTEOUSNESS BY FAITH



Introduction

Romans 1 is Paul's introduction to his letter, presenting key themes that he'll expand on throughout Romans. He addresses the power of the gospel, the nature of humanity, and God's righteous judgment. From a Pentecostal perspective, Romans 1 lays out a foundation for understanding God's power, the need for salvation, and the importance of living a Spirit-led life.

The Gospel for Rome: (vv. 1- 15)

Since Paul lacked a relationship with this church he couldn't speak in his typical personal terms. So, he carefully opens this letter in a way that builds his relationship with the leaders and his position of authority. He skillfully writes and shares in a way that will help connect him with the readers.

Paul identifies himself to his Roman readers in three ways. First as a servant. Paul refers to himself very humbly as a servant of God, having chosen to submit himself willingly to the purposes of God. Second as an Apostle. God called him an apostle when Christ visited him on the road to Damascus. Thirdly as a preacher. He shares how God set him apart as a chosen vessel to bring the gospel to the Gentiles (Acts 9:15). This was the purpose of His life and calling, and he did it with great perseverance and steadfast labor, despite vast difficulties and persecution.

Beginning in verse 8, Paul wanted to let them know that even though he had been with them, he was genuinely concerned for them. He expressed his thanks for them, prayed for them, and reiterated how eager he was to visit them (v. 15).

Paul's rather lengthy introduction was to help prepare

the way for his visit. There had been false teachers who were accusing Paul of being anti-law and saying he was a traitor to the Jewish nation. Others were twisting his teaching about grace. No wonder Paul was eager to get to Rome! He wanted to share with them the fullness of the gospel of Christ. (v. 15)

The Power of the Gospel - Verse 16

Paul had unwavering confidence in the message he taught and preached. He makes a strong declaration, “I am not ashamed of the Gospel”. He gives several reasons why.

1) **It was from God** – this good news came from the Son of God, the gospel of Christ.

2) **It had power** - Paul was bringing to sinful Rome the one message that had the power to change people’s lives! He had seen the gospel work in other wicked cities, such as Corinth and Ephesus, and he was confident that it would work in Rome. It had transformed his own life, and he knew it could transform the lives of others.

3) **The Outcome** - Paul was not ashamed of the gospel because it produced salvation. The word salvation carried tremendous meaning in Paul's day. Its basic meaning is “deliverance,” and it was applied to personal and national deliverance. The gospel delivers sinners from the penalty and power of sin. Salvation is a major theme in this letter; salvation is the great need of the human race. If men and women are to be saved, it must be through faith in Jesus Christ as proclaimed in the gospel.

God does not ask people to behave in order to be saved but to believe. It is faith in Christ that saves the sinner. The message of the gospel is for everyone – Jew and Gentile. Eternal life in Christ is one gift that is suitable for all people, no matter what their need may be or what their station in life.

Theme of the Book of Romans: verse 17

Romans 1:17 is the key verse of this book. Paul declares the theme: “**the righteousness of God by faith.**” The word righteousness or a form of it is used over sixty times in this letter (righteous, just, and justified). God's righteousness is revealed in the gospel.

The gospel reveals a righteousness that is by faith. The Old Covenant taught man he was not able to obey God's law and meet His righteous demands. The law only showed the sinfulness of man. It did not have the power to redeem man. Paul quotes Habakkuk 2:4: “***The just shall live by his faith.***” This verse is quoted by Paul three times in the New Testament: Romans 1:17; Galatians 3:11; and Hebrews 10:38. Romans explains “the just”; Galatians explains “shall live”; and Hebrews explains “by faith.” There are more than sixty references to faith or unbelief in Romans, because the only way a sinner can become just before God is “by faith.”

“**The Just Shall Live by Faith**”. The problem this revelation and teaching creates is “How can a holy God ever forgive sinners and still be holy?” The gospel provides the answer. Through the death and resurrection of Christ, God is seen to be both “just, and the justifier” (Rom. 3:26). Jesus took our place and paid the price for our sin. God accepted Jesus' sacrifice as the lamb of God and thus justice was satisfied.

Paul wanted to explain to the Romans (*for that matter to all of the church then and now*) how man is justified apart from the law through grace and by faith whether Jew or Gentile. Thus, the main purpose of the Book of Romans.

Man Needs Righteousness by Faith

Gentiles Need Righteousness by Faith: verses 18-32

Now that Paul has introduced himself, he changes his focus and tone. Remember the theme of Romans is the righteousness of God by faith. Paul is going to explain how man apart from Christ is hopeless. There is no way he can ever become righteous on his own.

One of the best ways to approach the study of Romans is to think in terms of a courtroom where attorneys present their case and evidence. Paul is going to judicially present his case for the Gospel. He will begin by showing just how unrighteous mankind is. Until a person knows he is a sinner, he cannot appreciate the gracious salvation God offers through Christ.

Paul first presents the law that brings guilt and condemnation, then grace and salvation. He begins by showing how the Gentiles are guilty, then the Jews, and sums it all up proving that all people are sinners and need Jesus Christ. Paul is going to prove how “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (3:23). Then he will go on to explain how man can become righteous through God’s marvelous plan of salvation—justification by faith.

The description Paul gives of man is not a pretty one. These verses do not teach evolution, that humans started out in some sort of low status and then evolve into a higher state. It is the exact opposite, it is the “decline” of man: Man began in high position and, because of sin, sank lower than the beasts.

Paul begins by describing the wickedness of the

Gentiles or non-Jews. He does this to set up his Jewish audience. He outlines four stages of the downward spiral of the human race.

1. Awareness and understanding (vv. 18-20)

Human history began with people knowing God. Human history is not the story of a beast that worshipped idols, and then evolved into a person worshipping one God. Human history is just the opposite: People began knowing God. They were aware of and understood God, but they turned from the truth and rejected God. God revealed Himself to humankind through creation, the things that He made. From the world around them, humans knew that there was a God who had the wisdom to plan and the power to create. Humans realized too that this Creator was eternal ... “His eternal power and Godhead” (Rom. 1:20), since God could not be created if He is the Creator. These facts about God are not hidden in creation; they are “clearly seen” (v. 20). *“The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament show his handiwork”* (Ps. 19:1). Men knew the truth about God, but they did not allow this truth to work in their lives. They ignored it in order that they might live their lives the way they want to and not be convicted by the truth. As a result, man so abandoned the truth that they became like beasts in their thinking and in their living.

2. Ignores God (vv. 21-23)

The second stage in the downward spiral of the human race is their denying God. They did not want to know God or honor Him as God. Instead of being thankful for all that God had given them, mankind to give Him the glory He deserves. They enjoyed the blessing of God, but they were not willing to worship and praise God for His gifts. The result was an empty mind and a darkened heart. Man, the worshipper became man the philosopher, but his empty

wisdom only revealed his foolishness. Paul summarized all of Greek history in one dramatic statement in Acts 17 verse 30 - “*the times of this ignorance*”

When man refuses to give God glory it leave them without God! If man does not worship the true God, he will worship a false god, even if they have to manufacture it themselves. Mankind exchanged the glory of the true God for substitute gods that they themselves made. They exchanged glory for shame, incorruption for corruption, truth for lies. They worship themselves and creation rather than the creator. (vs.25)

3. Depravity and self-indulgence (vv. 24-27)

The third stage is immorality – indulgence (debauchery). When man is his own god, he thinks he can do whatever he pleases and fulfill his desires without fear of judgment. Man moves from idolatry to immorality in just one short step. They believe the “lie”. “The lie” is that man is his own god, and he should worship and serve himself and not the Creator. It was “the lie” Satan used in the garden to lead Eve into sin: “*Ye shall be as gods.*” Satan has always wanted the worship that belongs only to God, and in idolatry, he receives that worship (1 Cor. 10:19-21).

The result of this self-indulgence and gross sin “*God gave them up - to their vile passions*” (Rom. 1:24, 26), which means that He permitted them to go on in their sins and reap the sad consequences.

4. Unrepentant and hard-hearted (vv. 28-32)

The fourth and final stage is hard-heartedness – depravity. Instead of repenting and seeking God, man did the exact opposite, he abandoned God and grew worse. Man did not even want to retain God in his knowledge! So, “*God gave*

them over - to a “depraved mind” (Rom. 1:28), which means a mind that cannot form right judgments. As a result, they now abandoned themselves to sin. Paul names twenty-four specific sins, all of which are with us today.

Things would even get worse. How? Men not only committed these sins in open defiance of God but encouraged others and applauded them when they sinned. We see the same thing today in most cultures. Here is how sin progresses –

1. Overlook Sin
2. Permit Sin
3. Promote Sin
4. Celebrate Sin
5. Persecute those who still call it sin.

Look how far man fell!

- He began glorifying God but ended up exchanging that glory for idols.
- He began knowing God but ended up refusing to keep the knowledge of God in his mind and heart.
- He began as the highest of God’s creatures, made in the image of God, but he ended lower than the beasts and insects because he worshipped them as his gods.

The verdict? “**Man is without excuse**” (Rom. 1:20) and is lost.

So, God turns the heathen over to their own vile passions. (vs.26) They (the heathen Gentiles) worship the creation instead of the creator. They live a life of immorality and total depravity. They deserve God’s judgment and death. (vs. 32) Paul has presented a very compelling case. What does it mean?

Summary

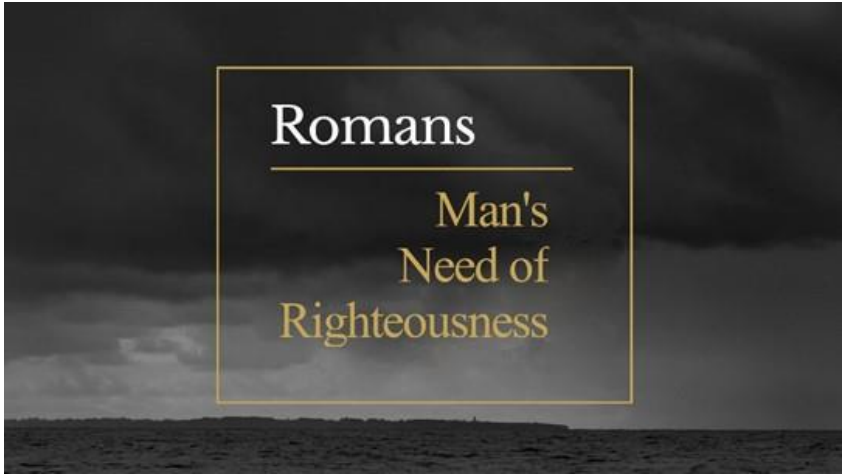
In summary, Romans 1 lays the foundation for understanding God's righteousness, humanity's need for salvation, and the power of the gospel. From a Pentecostal perspective, this chapter underscores the necessity of a Spirit-filled life to overcome sin, live in righteousness, and be a witness to God's truth in a fallen world.

Before we go on I want you to turn to Romans 3:21. There is a huge transition that takes place here. Verse 21 says, ***“But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets,”***

It is important for you to see and understand the big picture, otherwise, you will not understand what Paul is teaching in chapters one and two. Paul is describing man under the law both Gentile and Jew. It is not a good situation. Paul is being very strategic in presenting his case. He wants his readers not only the Romans but us too to see how lost man is without Christ. Verse 21 says – **BUT NOW!** Now what? Now that Jesus has come and died on the cross and rose on third day everything has changed. Please take note of this as we continue on, and we will pick this up when we get to chapter 3.

CHAPTER TWO

MAN NEEDS RIGHTEOUSNESS BY FAITH



Introduction

Romans chapter 2 explores themes of judgment, hypocrisy, and the true nature of righteousness before God. Paul addresses both Jewish and Gentile audiences, challenging their assumptions about morality, law, and God's impartial judgment. He emphasizes that mere knowledge of the law is not enough; true righteousness is demonstrated through obedience, and God will judge everyone according to their deeds.

While the Book of Romans is written to all the church in Rome Paul is primarily addressing the Jewish leaders in the church. So, Paul wisely began his case by chastising the Gentiles for living like the devil. The Jewish readers would have been fervently amening Paul. They would have been applauding Paul's condemnation of the Gentiles. In fact, Jewish national and religious pride encouraged them to despise the "Gentile dogs" and have nothing to do with them. However, Paul is about to burst their arrogant bubble because he is going to show how Jews need righteousness by faith too.

Paul will deal with 4 attitudes the Jews had that made them think they were right with God. 1) Jews are God's chosen people, 2) Jews are specially blessed by God, 3) Jews had the law, 4) Jews have circumcision.

1. Jews are God's Chosen – (vv. 1- 11)

The Jews held onto the belief that their special status as God's chosen people exempted them from judgment. However, Paul argues that God's judgment is based on truth and impartiality. God doesn't have one standard for Jews and another for Gentiles.

One who reads the list of sins in Romans 1:29-32 cannot escape the fact that every person is guilty of at least one of them and Paul unloads on the Jews. In verse 3 he says to them, *“But do you suppose this, you foolish person who passes judgment on those who practice such things, and yet does them as well, that you will escape the judgment of God?”* Here, Paul highlights the hypocrisy of condemning others while practicing the same sins. In other words, the very things the Jews condemned the Gentiles for they themselves were practicing!

This message calls to mind the saying, “When you point a finger at someone, three more are pointing back at you.” Paul reveals that those who judged the Gentiles were guilty of the same actions, showing that mere affiliation with God’s people does not absolve one from accountability. Just as a badge doesn’t make someone a good police officer, calling oneself “chosen” does not make one righteous.

2. Jews are specially blessed. (vv. 12-16)

The Jews had indeed received special blessings and privileges from God. Yet, as Paul clarifies, these blessings don’t grant immunity from judgment. It did not make them right with God or save them. In fact, they bring greater responsibility. God’s kindness and patience should have led the Jews to repentance, but instead, they rebelled against God. God extended mercy to them repeatedly, yet they did not repent. As a result, they have been under God’s judgment for thousands of years. They are lost. Their deeds did not make them righteous. God judged them as wicked as those Gentiles. One day God will restore Israel – we will see how in chapter 11.

Paul warns that God will judge all people (Jew and

Gentile) according to their deeds. (vs.16) Despite the blessings, the Jews found themselves equally in need of mercy and forgiveness just as much as the Gentiles.

An illustration of this might be a child who grows up in a home with every opportunity to succeed—yet, if that child chooses to waste those blessings, their accountability is even greater. In the same way, Israel’s spiritual privileges didn’t guarantee righteousness; if anything, they intensified their obligation to live faithfully.

3. Jews have the law. (vv. 17-24)

The Jews prided themselves on possessing God’s Law, which set them apart from their pagan neighbors. But as Paul explains, it’s not simply knowing the Law that makes one righteous; it’s living by it. The Jews knew God’s commands but often failed to obey them fully, thus invalidating their own claims of righteousness. Paul states, “*You who boast in the law, do you dishonor God by breaking the law?*” (Romans 2:23). Knowing the law is only helpful if it leads to obedience.

Those who wish to be judged by the law must be prepared to keep it. Only those who keep God’s law perfectly should expect to be justified – made righteous. God does not give credit for effort.

Imagine a doctor who lectures on the importance of health but personally neglects his own health. His knowledge is undermined by his own inconsistency. Likewise, the Jews’ knowledge of the Law made them accountable but did not make them righteous unless they followed it.

4. Jews were circumcised. (vv. 25-28)

Circumcision was the ultimate sign of God's covenant with the Jewish people, dating back to Abraham. Yet Paul reminds his readers that this physical sign means little without a true transformation of the heart. God desires an inner, spiritual transformation more than outward signs. He states, "A person is not a Jew who is one only outwardly... but a Jew is one inwardly, and circumcision is circumcision of the heart" (Romans 2:28-29).

Paul's message here is especially pointed. To illustrate, consider a wedding ring. While it symbolizes marriage, the ring alone doesn't create a loving, faithful marriage. Likewise, circumcision without obedience is an empty symbol. God values a sincere heart over mere outward formality. A Gentile who obeys God from the heart is more pleasing to God than a Jew who relies on circumcision but fails to follow God's commands.

Summary

Righteousness Is about Obedience, Not Rituals

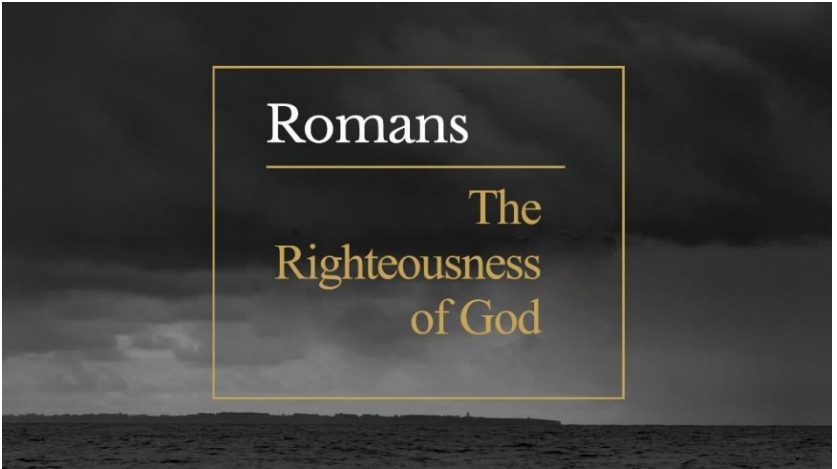
In Romans 2, Paul underscores that true righteousness isn't about one's heritage, religious rituals, or possession of knowledge but about genuine obedience to God. God's judgment is rooted in truth and impartiality. He is not swayed by outward symbols or associations; He looks for a heart that is transformed and committed to Him.

Through these teachings, Paul reveals the universal need for God's grace. No one—Jew or Gentile—can claim righteousness based solely on lineage, law, or ritual. Each person is accountable before God, and only those who seek a relationship with Him marked by humility, repentance, and

faith will find true righteousness. Paul's message ultimately points forward to the need for a Savior—Jesus Christ—who provides the righteousness we all fall short of achieving on our own.

CHAPTER THREE

THE RIGHTEOUS OF GOD - JUSTIFICATION



Romans

The
Righteousness
of God

Introduction

Romans chapter 3 is a pivotal chapter in Paul's letter, where he builds on the themes of human sinfulness and the need for God's righteousness. Paul addresses both Jewish and Gentile audiences, concluding that everyone is guilty before God and in need of salvation. He then presents justification by faith as the foundation of God's plan to reconcile humanity to Himself through Jesus Christ.

Jews are Guilty (vv. 1-8)

Paul has effectively made the case that not only are the Gentiles guilty of sin and unrighteous, but so are the Jews. Chapter 3 opens with Paul being confronted by the Jews debating what Paul has said. They raise three specific questions.

- (1) Verse 1 - "What advantage then is there to being a Jew?"

Paul's answer: Yes of course, especially because God gave you His Word;

- (2) Verse 3 - "Does Jewish unbelief cancel God's faithfulness?"

Reply: Absolutely not—God is always true;

- (3) Verse 5 - "If our sin is used to show His righteousness, how can He judge us?"

Reply: We do not do evil that good may come of it. God judges the world righteously.

So, Paul sums it up in verse 9. He says we Jews are no better than the Gentiles. We both are guilty of sin. We are lost.

The Whole World is Guilty (vv. 9-20)

Paul goes on to say not only are Jews and Gentiles guilty of sin the whole world is guilty. There is NOT one person right with God – no one is righteous. (*Remember Paul is presenting the case against man that is apart from Christ*) He then quotes several Old Testament verses that give a detail picture of how lost man is. Paul proves that there is no debate – when compared to God’s perfect righteousness, no human being is sinless, because no one can be made right with God by following the law. The law only shows us our sin. Some try to argue, but to no avail. There is no debate or defense. The whole world is guilty, Jews and Gentiles, The Jews stand condemned by the law of which they boast, and the Gentiles stand condemned on the basis of creation and conscience.

Verse 20 gives us the reason why the whole world is guilty. Paul basically says there is not a person who can keep the law. No one can be justified by trying to do the works of the Law because no man can fulfill the Law and keep all of the points of it.

So, why the law? The Law exposes sin, and it makes it perfectly clear how we have fallen short of God’s standards of perfection and holiness. It shows the need for a savior. Paul has proved that all people are sinners, so his next step is to show how sinners can be saved.

SALVATION – THE GIFT OF RIGHTEOUSNESS (vv. 21-31)

Everything changes from this point forward. Romans 1:18 through 3:20 Paul showed how wicked and lost mankind

is without Christ. Paul described the condition of man, Jew, and Gentile without Christ. He explained how there is nothing man can do in his own strength and power to be right with God and even the law could not make him right with God. Man does not have the ability to keep the Law thus it makes it impossible for any man to fulfill righteousness through the Law. So, is there any hope for man?

The answer is yes, but how? What man couldn't do, God did through sending Christ. Roman's 3:21 –

But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed,

NOW – everything changes. There is NOW a righteousness apart from the law"! What is it?

Verse 22 –

**the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus
Christ,
to all and on all who believe.**

The righteousness of God is received through faith in Jesus Christ! It is obtained by believing in Christ and putting faith in His work as Messiah rather than in our own works. This is how a person becomes born again. It is the first step in the process of salvation, it is called "JUSTIFICATION" by faith.

1. JUSTIFICATION EXPLAINED (3:21-31)

It's Apart from the law (v. 21). Under the Old Testament law, righteousness came by people behaving, but under the gospel, righteousness comes by believing. The law showed us what God's righteousness was and required, but it

could not provide it for sinful humanity. Only Jesus Christ could do that (see Gal. 2:21).

It's Through faith in Christ (v. 22a). Faith is only as good as its object. All people trust something, if only themselves, but the Christian trusts Christ. Law righteousness is a reward for works. Gospel righteousness is a gift through faith. Many say they believe in God, but that does not save them. It is only through personal, individual faith in Jesus Christ that saves and justifies the lost sinner. Even the demons from hell believe in God and tremble, yet this does not save them (James 2:19).

It's for all men (vv. 22b—23). God gave His law to the Jews, not to the Gentiles, but the good news of salvation through Christ is offered to all men. All men need to be saved. There is no difference between the Jew and the Gentile when it comes to condemnation. “*All have sinned and are coming short of the glory of God*” (Rom. 3:23, literal translation).

It's by grace (v. 24). Grace means receiving what you don't deserve. God is also merciful. Mercy means not getting what you deserve. We deserve judgment, but because of God's mercy we don't get what we deserve. We don't deserve righteousness, but by grace we receive the gift of righteousness. God in His mercy does not give us what we do deserve, and God in grace gives us what we do not deserve. We are justified without a cause! There is no cause in us that would merit the salvation of God! It is all of grace!

It's at a great cost to God (vv. 24b—25). The gift of righteousness (salvation) is a free gift, but it is not cheap. Jesus had to die on the cross in order to satisfy the law and justify lost sinners. Only after Jesus paid the price for man's sin was a just and holy God able to freely forgive those who come to Christ.

It's perfect in justice (vv. 25-26). God cannot break His own law or violate His own nature. "God is love" (1 John 4:8), and "God is light" (1 John 1:5). A God of love wants to forgive sinners, but a God of holiness must punish sin and uphold His righteous law. How can God be both "just and the justifier"? The answer is in Jesus Christ. When Jesus suffered the wrath of God on the cross for the sins of the world, He fully met the demands of God's law and also fully expressed the love of God's heart.

It's to establish the law (vv. 27-31). Anticipating an objection about the worthlessness of the Law, Paul explains its purpose. Justification by faith is not against the law, it establishes the law. The Law is not nullified through faith. Jesus did come to do away with the law, but to fulfill the law. (Mt. 5:17) The Law is the Law; it just so happens that righteousness comes apart from the Law. What faith does is establish the Law, showing it to be of value and of God. Its purpose is that it shows man that he cannot keep it. Thus, faith is the perfect conclusion to the work and testimony of the Law, establishing its purpose and design.

Justification means that God declares us righteous. It means just as if we had not sinned. When a person receives the gift of righteousness a great exchange takes place. Jesus takes our sin and give us His righteousness. ***"For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him."*** (2 Corinthians 5:21)

Summary

In Romans 3, Paul presents a powerful argument that everyone stands in need of God's grace, and that faith in Jesus Christ is the only means to be made right with God. This chapter is central to Paul's theology, establishing that salvation is a gift of grace through faith, accessible to all people equally, and reflecting both God's justice and mercy.

CHAPTER FOUR

FATHER ABRAHAM – JUSTIFICATION ILLUSTRATED



Romans

Justification
Illustrated
(father Abraham)

Introduction

Romans chapter 4 is a foundational text for understanding the concept of justification by faith in Paul's theology. In this chapter, Paul uses the example of Abraham to illustrate how righteousness comes through faith, not works and explains how this truth applies to all believers. From a Pentecostal perspective, the chapter highlights the importance of living by faith and recognizing the promises of God that come through a living, active relationship with Him.

Paul has just finished explaining how all men are sinners and there is no way they can get right with God except through faith in Jesus Christ. Paul knew the Jewish Christians would immediately question this new teaching. This was a huge revelation and different from what they had learned in their Jewish faith. So, he presents a very credible witness that will corroborate what he just shared.

Abraham – is the key witness (vv.1-2)

Abraham is the father of the Jewish people. Paul shows them how Abraham was made right with God and what role the Law played in him being justified (saved), if any? Paul begins by asking the question, “***Was Abraham justified by works***, (by obeying the law)?” (verse 2)

The answer is no and Paul shares from the scripture two important facts about Abraham's salvation that prove that his spiritual experience was like that of believers today.

1) Abraham was justified by faith, not works, vv. 3

According to the scriptures Abraham was justified because he believed God. (Genesis 15:6)

2) **Abraham was justified by grace, not the law, vv. 9-18**

Abraham was also justified before the law was given and before circumcision. Abraham was justified by believing God's promise, not by obeying God's law, for God's law through Moses had not yet been given. The promise to Abraham was given purely through God's grace. Abraham did not earn it or merit it. The law was not given to save people, but to show them that they need to be saved (Rom. 4:15).

Abraham is also the Father for all who Believe

The fact that Abraham was justified by grace and not the law proves that salvation is for all. Abraham is the father of all believers, both Jews and Gentiles. Paul explains how Abraham is not only the natural father of Israel, but spiritually the father of all who "believe". This is the fulfillment of Genesis 17:5: "*A father of many nations have I made thee.*" (vs. 17) So, Abraham is the father of all who have saving faith.

Abraham Kind of Faith – Saving Faith vv. 18-21

Abraham sets a remarkable example of faith, and thus he serves as a great example of saving faith. Through the witness of Abraham Paul shows us 4 keys to real faith.

1. vs. 18 – Against all Hope. Real faith is not based upon feelings. You may feel hopeless, but faith believes the promise of God over how we feel.
2. vs. 19 – Did not consider the Circumstances. Things may look impossible. All the natural evidence and facts may be contrary to the promise, but faith doesn't look at the facts it looks at Jesus the author and finisher of our faith. Abraham did not deny the facts just believe God was bigger than the circumstances.

3. vs. 20 – Did Not Waver in Doubt and Unbelief. If our feelings and the circumstances become our focus doubt and fear will begin to consume our thoughts. We will begin to question God – did God really say...? James 1 says the person who doubts is unstable and will not receive anything from God. Abraham did not waver, but rather got stronger in his faith. How? By giving glory to God.
4. vs. 21 – Was Fully Persuaded God had the power to do it. Real faith is fully confident the God will do exactly what He said He would do regardless of the circumstances or situation.

Abraham did not walk by sight; he walked by faith. He demonstrated to all that what God promises, He performs. All we need to do is believe. While Paul is specifically talking about how anyone is saved – justified – made right with God, this is a truth for every promise of God. The way we receive what God has provided and promised is by faith. This example of Abraham’s justification serves as an example for us who are credited the righteousness of Christ if we believe in God who raised Jesus from the dead.

The gospel is “the power of God unto salvation” (Rom. 1:16) because of the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. Romans 4:24 and Romans 10:9-10 parallel each other. Jesus Christ was “delivered up to die on account of our offenses and was raised up because of our justification” (Rom. 4:25, literal translation). This means that the resurrection of Christ is the proof that God accepted His Son’s sacrifice, and that now sinners can be justified without God violating His own law or contradicting His own nature.

The key, of course, is “if we believe” (Rom. 4:24). There are over sixty references to faith or unbelief in Romans. God’s saving power is experienced by those who believe in Christ (Rom. 1:16) His righteousness is given to those who believe (Rom. 4:23), We are justified by faith (Rom. 5:1) The object of our faith is Jesus Christ who died for us and rose again.

Summary

Romans 4 teaches that faith is the foundation of righteousness, modeled by Abraham, whose trust in God made him the spiritual father of all believers. From a Pentecostal viewpoint, this chapter inspires believers to embrace an active, Spirit-led faith that believes in God’s miraculous promises and lives in the power of Jesus’ resurrection.

HOW WERE PEOPLE SAVED BEFORE CHRIST

I get this question often. Some think it was - “By keeping the law.” The Bible says, “that by the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified.” (Romans 3:2) Others say, “they were saved by bringing sacrifices to God”. Wrong. The Bible says, “that the blood of bulls and goats cannot take away sin,” (Hebrews 10:4) So, how were they saved? **THEY WERE SAVED BY FAITH – the same way people are saved today!** Twenty-one times in Hebrews 11 you find the words, “by faith”. Always talking about one of the Old Testament saints.

If you are a Jew, you are a child of Abraham physically, but not spiritually. Abraham is the father of all who believe on Jesus Christ and are justified by faith. If you are a Gentile, you can never be a natural descendant of Abraham, but you can be one of his spiritual descendants. Abraham “BELIEVED GOD AND IT WAS COUNTED UNTO HIM FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS”. (Rom. 4:3)

CHAPTER FIVE

Results of Justification



Romans

Blessings
& Basis
of Justification

Introduction

Romans 5 offers a powerful exploration of the results of justification through Jesus Christ, contrasting Adam's sin with the redemption brought by Jesus. Paul explains how believers are freed from condemnation and blessed with peace, grace, hope, and a secure future. From a Pentecostal perspective, Romans 5 emphasizes the transformative power of Christ's sacrifice, the role of the Holy Spirit in our lives, and the hope we have in eternal life.

It is a pivotal chapter in Paul's letter, highlighting the incredible impact of Christ's righteousness on humanity. It's a message of hope, reminding us that through one man's obedience, many will be made righteous.

This chapter emphasizes the unity of all believers, both Jews and Gentiles, as one people justified by faith in Christ. It's a call to embrace one another and glorify God together.

In this text, I'll jump into the profound truths found in Romans 5, exploring how Christ's act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all who believe. We'll see how this chapter sets the stage for the practical application of living as one body in Christ.

Peace and Joy Through Justification

Romans Chapter 5 emphasizes the peace and joy that believers experience through justification by faith in Jesus Christ. It highlights the reconciliation between God and humanity achieved through Christ's death.

Access to Grace

Paul explains that "we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand" (Romans 5:2 NKJV). This access to God's grace is a direct result of our justification through faith.

Some key points about access to grace:

- It's by faith, not by works or merit
- We stand firmly in this grace, not in our own strength
- This grace gives us confident access to God's presence

In Christ, there's no more barrier between us and God. We can boldly approach His throne of grace to "obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need" (Hebrews 4:16 NKJV).

Rejoicing in Hope and Trials

Not only do we have peace with God, but we also "rejoice in the hope of the glory of God" (Romans 5:2 NKJV). Our justification gives us a confident expectation of sharing in God's glory for eternity.

But we don't just rejoice in future glory. Paul says, "We also glory in tribulations" (Romans 5:3 NKJV). We can rejoice even in trials because:

1. Tribulation produces perseverance
2. Perseverance produces character
3. Character produces hope

This hope will not disappoint us, because "the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit" (Romans 5:5 NKJV). God's love gives us the strength to rejoice, even in life's toughest challenges. Also, we are not to blame God for the troubles we encounter in this life. God uses all things for our good.

So as justified believers, we have every reason to live with confident peace and unshakeable joy. Our hope is anchored in God's love, secured by the finished work of Christ.

Christ Died for the Ungodly

One of the most striking aspects of God's love is that Christ died for us while we were still sinners. "But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8, NKJV). This selfless act underscores the extent of God's love.

Consider these points:

- Christ died for us when we were "without strength" and "ungodly" (Romans 5:6)
- His sacrifice was not based on our merit but on His boundless love
- This love is unparalleled, as rarely would any one die for a righteous person (Romans 5:7)

Saved from God's Wrath

Through Christ's death, we are saved from God's righteous wrath. "Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him" (Romans 5:9, NKJV). This assurance of salvation is a result of God's demonstrated love.

Here's what this means for us:

- We are justified and made right with God through Christ's blood
- God's wrath against sin was satisfied through Christ's sacrifice
- We have peace with God and are reconciled to Him (Romans 5:1, 10)

God's love, demonstrated through Christ's death, rescues us from the consequences of our sin and gives us new life.

Reconciled to God

I'm filled with joy because of my reconciliation with God. Christ's sacrificial death has made this possible.

Rejoicing in Reconciliation

I can rejoice even during tribulations. Why? Because I'm convinced of God's faithfulness and unconditional grace. As Romans 5:3-4 says, "And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance, character; and character, hope." (NKJV)

Hope and rejoicing are closely linked. I can't rejoice in hard times without hope. And my hope is anchored in:

- God's love
- Christ's finished work
- The promise of future glory

Paul boasted in (not about) his sufferings because he knew they eventually produced hope. Those who struggle to rejoice in trials may not be fully convinced of God's faithfulness. But I choose to glory in tribulations, knowing they lead to unwavering hope.

Death Through Adam, Life Through Christ

Adam's choice in the Garden of Eden led to devastating consequences for all humanity. Through one man's disobedience, sin and death entered the world, affecting every subsequent generation.

Sin Entered the World Through One Man

Adam's sin in the Garden of Eden wasn't an isolated event. Its repercussions echoes through history, introducing sin and death to the human experience. As Romans 5:12 states, "*Hence, just as through one man sin entered the world, and*

death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned.” Adam’s choice set in motion a tragic cycle of sin and mortality that has plagued humanity ever since.

Paul teaches that through the one sin of the one man, Adam,

- Sin entered the world. 5:12
- Death entered the world. 5:12
- Death comes to all men. 5:12
- Death reigned. 5:14
- Many die by the trespass of the one man. 5:15
- The judgement followed one sin. 5:16
- And brought condemnation. 5:16
- Death reigned through one man. 5:17
- Condemnation for all men. 5:18
- Many made sinners. 5:19
- Sin reigned in death. 5:21

Paul will go on to teach us that through the one man, Jesus Christ, all of the above is reversed.

The Reign of Death from Adam to Moses

From Adam to Moses, death reigned unchallenged. Even those who hadn’t sinned in the same way as Adam were still subject to death’s power. As Romans 5:14 explains, *“Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those who had not sinned according to the likeness of the transgression of Adam, who is a type of Him who was to come.”*

Consider these key points about Death’s reign:

- It lasted from Adam until Moses
- It affected everyone,

- It foreshadowed the coming of Christ, who would break death's power

The reign of death during this period underscores the dire need for a Savior. Only through Jesus Christ could the curse of sin and death be broken, offering hope and life to all who believe in Him.

Contrast Between Adam's Trespass and Christ's Gift

A significant portion of Romans 5 compares and contrasts the consequences of Adam's disobedience with the benefits of Christ's obedience. Let's dive deeper into this powerful truth.

Grace Abounding More than Sin

Where sin increased, God's grace abounded all the more. Romans 5:20 states, *"Also the law entered that the offense might abound. But where sin abounded, grace abounded much more."*

God's love is so amazing that His grace is always greater than our sin. We can't out-sin God's grace, but we can reject it. This does not mean grace covers the sin. Grace is God's power and ability in our life to resist sin. No matter how great the temptation God's grace is sufficient to resist it. Now if you reject God's grace and give into temptation and sin – the good news is God's MERCIES are new every morning. The more we grow as a Christian the more we will tap into His grace.

Grace reigns through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ. Sin once reigned in death, but now grace reigns supreme.

The law exposes our flaws and sin, like a backdrop that makes a precious stone's imperfections stand out. My sinful heart is drawn to cross the lines of right and wrong, so the law actually stirs up more sin in me.

But God's grace is more than enough to:

- Resist temptation
- Subdue my sinful nature
- Reign through righteousness
- Bring eternal life through Jesus

The reign of sin is like a cruel tyrant, but the reign of grace is like a just and gentle prince. Grace shines even brighter against the backdrop of sin's oppression.

Here are some key points about sin and grace:

- Sin reigned like a tyrant, bringing death and condemnation
- The law made sin's power evident, causing it to increase
- But God's grace is far greater than sin's power
- Grace super-abounds over abounding sin

I'm in awe of how God's grace conquers sin:

“That as sin reigned in death, even so grace might reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.” (Romans 5:21 NKJV)

Grace reigns through:

1. Righteousness – Grace produces right living, not more sin
2. Jesus Christ – Grace comes through Jesus alone, not our efforts
3. Eternal life – Grace brings everlasting life, triumphing over death

Conclusion

Christianity is based on grace every other religion is based on works. Through the years many have tried to add works to Christianity. It is not grace plus works. Don't even go there! We are not made right by our works. It is by grace and grace alone that we are saved.

There are now only two peoples among humankind:
those in Adam, those in Christ –
those not saved, those saved

Point of Clarification

No one goes to hell because of someone else's sin. People don't go to hell because of Adam's sin. Adam's sin brought a curse upon the whole human race and as a result all men sin. So, a person goes to hell because of their sins and only if they have rejected Christ. Jesus came to earth, died on the cross, and arose on the third day to redeem man. Jesus is our redeemer. (Galatians 3:13) He took our sins and gave us His righteousness. (2 Corinthians 5:21) The whole point of Paul's arguments in these chapters is to show how every person regardless of who they are, or their religious beliefs, nationality, gender, or background no person can ever earn or deserve their righteousness. We all need a Savior. Only faith in Christ makes a person right with God. "*There is none righteous no not one.*" (Romans 3:10) We are justified before God when we become born again by grace through faith. (Ephesians 1:8) The whole book of Romans is a revelation of this truth – righteousness by faith.

CHAPTER 6

New Life in Christ *A life of victory*



Romans

How to
Live a life
of Victory

Introduction

Romans chapter 6 deals with the transformative power of salvation through Christ, focusing on the believer's new life in Him and the break from sin's control. This chapter emphasizes the believer's victory over sin, new identity in Christ, and empowered walk through the Holy Spirit. It offers insights into practical holiness, freedom from sin, and the spiritual empowerment that enables believers to live out God's will.

If you've ever been to court or watched a trial on tv you will have seen times when the attorney for the defendant or the prosecution often rise to their feet and say, "Your Honor, I object!" Some of the Roman Christians would have felt like objecting as they heard Paul's letter being read. Paul anticipates their thinking and in chapters 6 to 8 Paul defends the doctrine of justification by faith by addressing three main objections:

1) If God's grace abounds when we sin, we should continue sinning so we can experience more grace" (Rom. 6:1—14);

2) If we are no longer under the law, then we are free to live as we please. (Rom. 6:15—7:6).

3) If this is right, then God's law is now made sinful" (Rom. 7:7—25).

These objections demonstrate how the people did not understand law nor grace and it is the same today. They were going to extremes: legalism on the one hand and license on the other. So as Paul defends justification by faith, he begins explaining **sanctification**. Sanctification is the process of

“working out your salvation” (Philippians 2:12). It is the “saving of your soul”. (1Peter 1:9) Justification is instantaneous, the moment you are born again your spirit because a new creation. Spiritually and positionally you are right with God. It is a one-time experience. You don’t get born again over and over. However, once you are born again you begin to be conformed to the image of Christ. It is the renewing of your mind. All of which is part of the process of “sanctification.

So, Paul explains how we can live lives of victory (Rom. 6), liberty (Rom. 7), and security (Rom. 8). He explains our relationship to the flesh, the law, and the Holy Spirit. In Romans 6, Paul gave three instructions for attaining victory over sin.

1. Know (6:1—10)

The repetition of the word know in Romans 6:3, 6, and 9 indicates that Paul wants us to understand a basic doctrine. Christian living depends on Christian learning; duty is always founded on doctrine. If Satan can keep a Christian ignorant, he can keep him impotent.

The basic truth Paul teaches - is the believer's identification with Christ in death, burial, and resurrection. Just as we are identified with Adam in sin and condemnation, so we are **now** identified with Christ in righteousness and justification.

At Romans 5:12, Paul makes a transition from discussing **“sins”** to discussing **“sin”**—from the actions to the principle, from the fruit to the root. Jesus Christ not only died for our sins, but He also died unto sin, and we died with Him.

Justification by faith is not simply a legal matter between me and God; it is a living relationship. It is “justification which brings life” As believers we are in Christ and identified with Him. Therefore, whatever happened to Christ has happened to us. When He died, we died. When He arose, we arose in Him. We are now seated with Him in the heavenlies (see Eph. 2:1—10; Col. 3:1-3). Because of this living union with Christ, the believer has a totally new relationship to sin.

The believer is dead to sin (vv. 2—5). “I am crucified with Christ” (Gal. 2:20). If a drunk dies, he can no longer be tempted by alcohol because his body is dead to all physical senses. He cannot see the alcohol, smell it, taste it, or desire it. In Jesus Christ we have died to sin so that we no longer want to **“continue in sin.”** But we are not only dead to sin; we are also alive in Christ. We have been raised from the dead and now walk in the power of His resurrection. We walk in “newness of life” because we share His life. “I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless, I live” (Gal. 2:20). The believer is also assured of their future resurrection (Romans 6:5) and we share in His resurrection power today! (Romans 6:4)

The believer has died to the old life; he has been raised to enjoy a new life. The believer does not want to go back into sin anymore. Therefore, the believer cannot deliberately live in sin since he has a new relationship to sin because of his identification with Christ,

Then Paul introduced a second fact. The believer should not serve sin (vv. 6—10). Sin is a terrible master, and it finds a willing servant in the human body. The body is not sinful; the body is neutral. It can be controlled either by sin or by God. But man’s fallen nature, which is not changed at conversion, gives sin a beachhead from which it can attack and then control: Paul expressed the problem: “For I know that

in me (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not (Rom. 7:18).

A tremendous fact is introduced here: The old man (the old ego, self) was crucified with Christ so that the body need not be controlled by sin. The word destroyed in Romans 6:6 does not mean annihilated; it means “rendered inactive, made of no effect.” The same Greek word is translated “loosed” in Romans 7:2. If a woman’s husband dies, she is “loosed” from the law of her husband and is free to marry again. There is a change in relationship. [the law is still there, but it has no authority over the woman because her husband is dead.

Sin wants to be our master. It finds a foothold in the old nature, and through the old nature seeks to control the members of the body. But in Jesus Christ, we died to sin, and the old nature was crucified so that the old life is rendered inoperative. Paul was not describing an experience; he was stating a fact. The practical experience was to come later. It is a fact of history that Jesus Christ died on the cross. It is also a fact of history that the believer died with Him, and “he that is dead is freed from sin’ (Rom. 6:7). Not “free to sin” as Paul’s accusers falsely stated, but “freed from sin.”

Sin and death have no dominion over Christ. We are “in Christ”; therefore, sin and death have no dominion over us. Jesus Christ not only died’ “for sin,” but He also died “unto sin. “That is, He not only paid the penalty for sin, but He broke the power of sin. This idea of dominion takes us back to Romans 5:12—21, where Paul dealt with the “reigns” of sin, death, and grace. Through Christ we “reign in life’ (Rom. 5:17) so that sin no longer controls our lives.

The big question now is, “I believe the facts of history,

but how do I make this work in daily experience? This leads to Paul's second instruction.

2. RECKON (6:11)

In some parts of the United States, “to reckon” means “to think” or “to guess.” “I reckon” is also the equivalent of “I suppose.” But none of these popular meanings can apply to this verse. The word reckon is a translation of a Greek word that is used forty-one times in the New Testament—nineteen times in Romans alone. It appears in Romans 4, where it is translated as “count, reckon, impute.” It means “to take into account, to calculate, to estimate.”

To reckon also means “to put to one’s account” which is perhaps the best translation. It simply means to believe that what God says in His Word is really true in your life. Paul didn’t tell his readers to feel as if they were dead to sin, or even to understand it fully, but **to act** on God's Word and claim it for themselves. Reckoning is a matter of faith that produces action. It is like endorsing a check: If we really believe that the money is in the checking account, we will sign our name and collect the money. Reckoning is not claiming a promise but acting on a fact. God does not command us to become dead to sin. He tells us that we are dead to sin and alive unto God and then commands us to act on it. Even if we do not act on it, the facts are still true.

Paul’s first instruction (“know”) centers on the mind, and this second instruction (“reckon”) focuses on the heart. His third instruction deals with the (“will”).

3. YIELD (6:12—23)

The word yield is found five times in this section (Rom.

6:13, 16, 19) and means “to place at one’s disposal, to present, to offer as a sacrifice.” According to Romans 12:1, the believer’s body should be presented to the Lord as “a living sacrifice” for His glory. The Old Testament sacrifices were dead sacrifices. The Lord may ask some of us to die for Him, but He asks all of us to live for Him.

How we are to yield (vv. 12-13). This is an act of the will based on the knowledge we have of what Christ has done for us. It is an intelligent act (a decision/choice)—not the impulsive decision of the moment based on some emotional stirring. It is important to notice the tenses of the verbs in these verses. A literal translation is “Do not constantly allow sin to reign in your mortal body so that you are constantly obeying its lusts. Neither constantly yield your members of your body as weapons [or tools] of unrighteousness to sin; but once and for all yield yourselves to God.” That once-and-for-all surrender is described in Romans 12:1.

There must be in the believer’s life that final and complete surrender of the body (flesh) to Jesus Christ. This does not mean there will be no further steps of surrender, because there will be. The longer we walk with Christ, the deeper the fellowship must become. But there can be no subsequent steps without that first step. The tense of the verb in Romans 12:1 corresponds with that in Romans 6:13—a once-and-for-all yielding to the Lord. To be sure, we daily surrender afresh to Him, but even that is based on a final and complete surrender.

Why does the Lord want your body? To begin with, the believer’s body is God’s temple, and He wants to use it for His glory (1 Cor.6:19—20; Phil. 1:20—21). But Paul wrote that the body is also God’s tool and God’s weapon (Rom.

6:13). God wants to use the members of the body as tools for building His kingdom and weapons for fighting His enemies.

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The Bible is filled with stories (testimonies) of people who allowed God to take and use them (their bodies) to fulfill the will and purposes of God. God used the rod in Moses' hand and conquered Egypt. He used the sling in David's hand to defeat the Philistines. He used the mouths and tongues of the prophets. Paul's surrendered "feet" carried him from city to city as he proclaimed the gospel. The apostle John's eyes saw visions of the future, his ears heard God's message, and his fingers wrote it all down in a book that we can read.

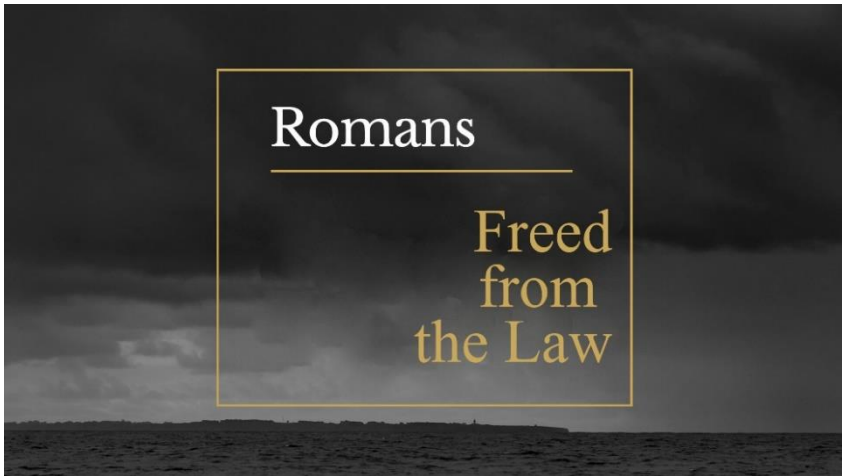
But you can also read in the Bible accounts where there were times people chose not to surrender to the will of God and their body was used for sinful purposes. David's eyes looked on his neighbor's wife; his mind plotted a wicked scheme; his hand signed a cowardly order for the woman's husband to be killed. As you read Psalm 51, you see that his whole body was affected by sin: his eyes (Ps. 51:3), mind (Ps. 51:6), ears (Ps. 51:8), heart (Ps. 51:10), and lips and mouth (Ps. 51:14—15). No wonder he prayed for a thorough cleansing (Ps. 51:2)! |

SUMMARY

In Romans 6, Paul calls believers to recognize their new identity in Christ and to live victoriously over sin through God's grace. For Pentecostals, this chapter is a reminder of the Spirit's power at work within believers, transforming them into Christ's likeness, empowering them for holy living, and guiding them toward eternal life in communion with God.

CHAPTER 7

FREED FROM THE LAW



Introduction

In this chapter, Paul wants to show believers how the Law should be assessed from the perspective of a Christian, someone who has experienced salvation in Jesus. He aims to clearly illustrate the great difference between life under the law (as a Jew) on the one hand, and life under grace (as a Christian) on the other. Paul uses marriage to illustrate how the law works.

Verses 1-6 – Released from the Law

Paul uses marriage to illustrate how the law works. The premise is - the law has jurisdiction over a person only as long as he lives. The law only applies to those who are alive. Just like a married woman is bound to her husband by the law only as long as her husband lives. If her husband dies, she is released from her duties to faithfulness to her husband.

Through Christ, believers die to the law and become alive in Christ. The Law shows men their sinfulness and causes them to choose to “die” in Christ by trusting in Him by faith. The Law only has the right to enforce its consequence as long as the person is alive in their old nature and in their sin. When we trust Christ by faith, our old man dies by being crucified with Christ. As believers, we are released from the Law because we died according to it.

Verse 6 starts with the **“BUT NOW”**. I love those powerful words. Now as believers, we serve in the newness of the Spirit and not in the oldness of the letter of the Law. In other words, we do not try to earn our way to God by keeping the law. Now, we let the Spirit guide us and lead us into all truth and righteousness, and He will enable us to honor God apart from the Law, though not in contradiction to it.

Rom 7:7-13 The Purpose of the Law

Paul then anticipates the question that would logically follow, “*What then shall we say? That the law is sin?*” Paul immediately answers the question, “*Certainly not!*” Hence, the law of God is not or was it ever the problem...the problem was those who by their very nature broke the law, and that includes you and me.

So, what is the purpose of the law? The law shows us that we are sinners and unable to save ourselves. The law should make us run to the cross. The law acts like a mirror. When you look close into a mirror the mirror will show you where the dirt, smudges, and other flaws on your face are. The mirror can do nothing about it. It only reveals the problems. You have to take soap and water and wash away the dirt to make yourself clean.

The law is the same. It only shows you all the dirt and problems in your life but can't do anything to fix it. That is the problem with the law. We're all guilty before the law. BUT... now we have the blood of Jesus through the grace of God that can wash us and make us white as snow. The law clearly shows what sin is. It does not bring about sin but brings sin's true character to light.

Romans 7:14-25 The Law Cannot Save You

Having explained what the law is supposed to do, Paul now explains what the law cannot do.

The law cannot change you (v. 14). The character of the law is described in four words: holy, just, good, and spiritual. That the law is holy and just, nobody can deny, because it

came from the holy God who is perfectly just in all that He says and does. The law is good. It reveals God's holiness to us and helps us to see our need for a Savior.

What does it mean that the law is "spiritual"? It means that the law deals with the inner man, the spiritual part of man, as well as with the outer actions. In the original giving of the law in Exodus, the emphasis was on the outward actions. But when Moses restated the law in Deuteronomy, he emphasized the inner quality of the law as it relates to man's heart. This spiritual emphasis is stated clearly in Deuteronomy 10:12–13. The repetition of the word love in Deuteronomy also shows that the deeper interpretation of the law relates to the inner man (Deut. 4:37; 6:4–6; 10:12; 11:1; 30:6, 16, 20).

Our nature is carnal (fleshly), but the law's nature is spiritual. This explains why the old nature responds as it does to the law. It has well been said, "The old nature knows no law, the new nature needs no law." The law cannot transform the old nature; it can only reveal how sinful that old nature is. The believer who tries to live under the law will only activate the old nature; he will not eradicate it. The law cannot enable you to do good (vv. 15–21). Three times in this passage Paul stated that sin dwells in us (Rom. 7:17, 18, 20). He was referring, of course, to the old nature. It is also true that the Holy Spirit dwells in us; and in Romans 8, Paul explained how the Spirit of God enables us to live in victory, something the law cannot help us do.

The many pronouns used in this section by Paul has caused different theological interpretations to be offered to try and explain the meaning of these verses. Many when they read these verses think; *That's my story; that's my experience*. Their instinct is right, but their interpretation is wrong.

True believers do not have some kind of **split personality**. Salvation makes a man whole. Paul was **not** saying that he was a liar, thief, and murderer and that there was no way to stop himself from breaking God's law.

However, what he was saying was that in and of himself he could not **obey** God's law. In Chapter 6 Paul's approach was, "How can I stop doing bad things?" and here in Chapter 7 it is "How can I ever do anything good?" The answer is we can't in our own strength.

The legalist says, "Obey the law and you will do good and live a good life." But the law only reveals and arouses sin, showing how sinful it is! The law is good, but it is impossible to obey the law therefore it cannot save you. The law cannot enable us to do good.

Romans 7:21-25 The Law Cannot Set You Free

When a person puts themselves subject to the law, it only puts them in bondage because "the strength of sin is the law" (1Cor. 15:56). Instead of equipping us and giving us the power to overcome, the law acts like a magnet that draws out of us all kinds of sin and corruption. The inward man may delight in the law of God (Ps. 119:35), but the old nature delights in breaking the law of God. No wonder the believer under law becomes tired and discouraged, and eventually gives up! He is a captive, and his condition is "wretched." The law cannot set you free.

So, is there any way to be set free? Absolutely! There is someone who can and will set you free —Jesus Christ our Lord! When you receive Christ, you become dead to the law and no longer under its authority. The believer is alive to God

and able to draw on the power of the Holy Spirit. In the next chapter, we will see the full explanation of this victory in Jesus.

The final sentence in this chapter does not teach that the believer lives a divided life: sinning with his flesh but serving God with his mind. This would mean that his body was being used in two different ways at the same time, and this is impossible. The believer realizes that there is a struggle within him between the flesh and the Spirit (Gal. 5:16–18), but he knows that one or the other must be in control.

Concluding Thoughts

In spite of the clear words in the New Testament that state that Christians live holy lives, time and time again we meet people who want to refer Romans 7 to the inner struggle of a Christian. They do this without noticing that they are actually identifying themselves with an **unredeemed** person who does not experience God's power.

The attitude described in this chapter is that of a person who wants to do what is good, but finds he is unable to. This person does not justify his sins but suffers under the burden of his inability to do what is good. Sadly though, Romans 7 is frequently and gladly used by people in the religious world to justify their own sins, saying: "It was the same with Paul...."

To refer this passage to Christians is to completely invalidate the salvation Jesus brought us. How can we speak of salvation in the case of a person who is incapable of doing good and who is still tormented by the misery of being enslaved to sin?

Paul does use some very strong and sometimes confusing language to as he describes the problem with the law, with statements such as: “I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing”, or “I know that nothing good dwells in me.” However, if we compare these statements with other passages throughout the New Testament, even those in the same letter, it is evident that he does not intend to teach that man is incapable of doing anything good. Quite the contrary, these statements express the attitude of someone who is deeply aware of what his sins mean in front of God and is humbly and desperately seeking the solution to his problems. (“Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me....”).

Verse 25a (“Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!”) offers us the answer: salvation in Jesus. In verse 25b he summarizes everything once again, in order to make the transition to his description of Jesus’ triumphant victory (beginning from 8:1) and the resulting liberation from sin and death.

The best is yet to come! Romans 8 explains the work of the Holy Spirit in overcoming the bad and producing the good

CHAPTER EIGHT

FREEDOM IN THE SPIRIT



Romans

How to
Live a life
of Victory

INTRODUCTION

If I were required to pick a favorite chapter in the Bible, it would be this chapter. Romans 8 shows us how the Holy Spirit empowers the believer to live the victorious Christian life. The chapter begins in verse 1 with “no condemnation” and ends in verse 39 with “no separation.”

Paul provides a complete look at the Christian life in this one chapter. In verses 1, 30, and 33, he gives us justification. In verses 2-17, he covers sanctification. And in verses 18-39, he tells us about our glorification. This chapter is rich in doctrine, yet so practical, as the whole chapter is about daily Christian living. It is an entire chapter about the spiritual victory and the eternal security that we have in Jesus Christ.

The first half of Romans 8 is all about the Holy Spirit’s work in our lives as Christians. The Holy Spirit is mentioned nineteen times in the first twenty-seven verses. This is the only way a believer can live out the life to which God has called him to. No one can live the Christian life in their own strength. The only person who ever could was Jesus Christ Himself. The only way that you and I can live the Christian life is by the power of God’s Spirit, which He has put within us.

The unsaved person is alive physically, but dead spiritually. They may be moral, and even religious, but they lack spiritual life. Those who are saved are alive spiritually. They have been redeemed and restored to God. They have PEACE with God. The unsaved are at war with God and they have no peace. (Isa. 48:22). Their inner man is dead toward God and does not respond to the things of the Spirit.

As a believer, you have the spirit of God and He lives on the inside of you. (Rom. 8:9). You are also a child of God (Rom. 8:16). The question that needs to be answered, are you living in the flesh or in the Spirit? Are you in Adam or in Christ? Are you of the world or of Christ? Are you lost or are you saved, unconverted or converted? Have you been born again? Are you birthed by the Spirit of God into the kingdom of God?

Romans 8 showcases the Spirit-filled life, emphasizing the Holy Spirit's power to enable believers to overcome sin, live righteously, and experience profound intimacy with God. Let's take a look at some of the key revelations in this chapter

Verses 1–4: Freedom in Christ through the Spirit

The Apostle Paul highlights the freedom and liberation that believers have in Christ Jesus. He begins by emphasizing the profound statement that there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ. This concept is central to the Christian faith, as it reflects the grace and mercy that God extends to His followers. The forgiveness offered through Christ's sacrifice on the cross enables believers to be set free from the guilt and penalty of sin. Through faith in Jesus, believers are justified before God, and there is no longer a sentence of condemnation hanging over them.

Paul goes on to explain the transformative power of the Spirit, who gives life and sets believers free from the law of sin and death. This contrasts the restrictive nature of living under the law, which exposed human frailty and inability to attain righteousness on their own. The law, though holy and good, could not provide the means for salvation because of human sinfulness. However, through the redemptive work of Jesus Christ, God demonstrated His love and mercy by

sending His Son as a sin offering. Jesus, in taking on human form, identified with humanity's struggles and ultimately became the sacrificial lamb who bore the punishment for sin.

The condemnation of sin was dealt with decisively through Christ's sacrificial death on the cross. He fulfilled the righteous requirement of the law, which demanded a perfect sacrifice for the forgiveness of sins. Through Jesus' atoning work, believers are now considered righteous in God's eyes, not based on their own efforts, but through faith in Him. This righteousness is not achieved through adherence to the law but through a life led by the Spirit. Those who walk in the Spirit, guided by His power and transformation, fulfill the righteous requirement of the law because their lives are aligned with God's will and purpose.

This passage underscores the foundational Christian belief that salvation is a gift of God's grace, received through faith in Jesus Christ. It highlights the victory over sin and death that believers experience through Christ's sacrifice and the empowering presence of the Holy Spirit. The themes of freedom from condemnation, the role of the law, the redemptive work of Christ, and the righteousness imputed to believers are central to the overarching narrative of the Bible. This passage in Romans 8 connects back to the broader biblical storyline of God's plan of redemption, culminating in the person and work of Jesus Christ, who brings reconciliation between God and humanity.

Verses 5–8: The Mindset of the Spirit vs. the Flesh

The passage in Romans 8:5-8 is divided into two main sections. The first section, verses 5 and 6, speaks about the mindset of the flesh versus the mindset of the Spirit. It tells us that those who live according to the flesh set their minds on things of the flesh, leading to death, while those who live in accordance with the Spirit set their minds on things of the

Spirit, leading to life and peace. This contrast between the flesh and the Spirit is a recurring theme in the Bible, emphasizing the importance of living a life that is guided by the Spirit rather than giving in to worldly desires. This mindset of the Spirit brings about a transformation in how we perceive things and ultimately leads to a life that is aligned with God's will.

The second section, verses 7 and 8, delves deeper into the consequences of the mindset of the flesh. It states that the mindset of the flesh is hostile towards God, does not submit to God's law, and cannot please God. This emphasis on the enmity between the fleshly desires and God's ways underscores the need for believers to constantly align themselves with the Spirit in order to please God. The Bible consistently warns against the dangers of being governed by the flesh, as it leads to disobedience and ultimately, separation from God.

When we think about the broader context of Romans 8, we see a beautiful progression of thought. The chapter begins with the declaration that there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus (Romans 8:1). This sets the tone for the rest of the chapter, where Paul goes on to speak about the power of the Spirit, adoption as children of God, and the future glory that awaits believers. Believers should continually walk in the Spirit, allowing their minds to be transformed and renewed by God's truth, as verses 5-8 serve as a reminder.

Throughout the Bible, we see numerous examples of individuals who faced the struggle between the flesh and the Spirit. From Adam and Eve yielding to the temptation in the garden of Eden (Genesis 3) to the apostle Paul wrestling with his own sinful nature (Romans 7), the battle between the flesh and the Spirit is a universal human experience. However, the key takeaway from Romans 8:5-8 is the assurance that through Christ, we have the power to overcome the desires of

the flesh and live a life that is pleasing to God. This passage calls believers to a higher standard of living, one that is governed by the Spirit and leads to eternal life.

Verses 9–11: The Indwelling of the Spirit

These verses reveal the contrast between living according to the flesh and living according to the Spirit. It emphasizes the importance of having the Spirit of God within us, which signifies our belonging to Christ. This Spirit is what brings life and righteousness, despite the mortality of our bodies due to sin. The reference to the Spirit of God who raised Jesus from the dead points to the power and life-giving nature of the Holy Spirit residing in believers.

The first part of this passage stresses the need for believers to live in the Spirit rather than in the flesh. This echoes the ongoing biblical theme of the battle between the flesh and the Spirit, as mentioned in Galatians 5:16-17, where Paul speaks of how the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and vice versa. This internal struggle is a common theme in the Bible, highlighting the need for believers to seek spiritual guidance in their lives.

The mention of the Spirit of God and the Spirit of Christ emphasizes the Trinity – the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – all playing a role in the life of a believer. This underscores the interconnectedness of the Trinity and their work in the salvation and sanctification of believers. It also reflects the unity and partnership within the Godhead for the redemption of humanity.

Furthermore, the passage speaks of the Spirit giving life because of righteousness. This ties in with other biblical teachings about the righteousness of God being imputed to believers through faith in Christ. Romans 3:22 declares that this righteousness comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all

who believe. Therefore, it is through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit that believers are empowered to live a righteous life in accordance with God's will.

The final part of the passage brings a message of hope and resurrection. Just as God raised Jesus from the dead, believers can have confidence in their own resurrection because of the Spirit living within them. This assurance of resurrection speaks to the future hope of believers in Christ, knowing that death is not the end but a passage to eternal life with God. Romans 8:9-11 serves to remind believers of the transformative power of the Holy Spirit in their lives, the importance of living in accordance with the Spirit rather than the flesh, and the hope of resurrection that comes from being united with Christ through his Spirit. It underscores the central role of the Trinity in the life of a believer and the assurance of eternal life through the indwelling of the Spirit.

Verses 12–17: Adoption as Children of God

Verse 12 is a continuation of the theme of living in the Spirit that has been emphasized throughout the earlier parts of Romans 8. The Apostle Paul is urging believers to remember their new identity in Christ and to live in accordance with the Spirit rather than being controlled by their worldly desires.

In verse 13 Paul contrasts the consequences of living in the flesh versus living in the Spirit. Living according to the flesh leads to spiritual death and separation from God, while living by the Spirit enables believers to overcome sinful behaviors and experience true life in Christ. This echoes the verses in Galatians 5:16-17, which also discuss the battle between the flesh and the Spirit.

Romans 8:14-16, highlight the believer's identity as a child of God through the Spirit's work of adoption. The Spirit establishes a close, intimate relationship with believers by

adopting them into God's family, enabling them to address God as "Abba, Father," a term of endearment and familiarity.

Paul goes on to underscore the incredible inheritance that believers have as children of God. They are not only heirs of God's kingdom but also co-heirs with Christ, sharing in His suffering and glory. This concept of believers sharing in Christ's sufferings is a recurring theme in Paul's writings, emphasizing the union believers have with Christ in all aspects of life. [Romans 8:12-17](#) serves as a powerful reminder to believers of their identity in Christ, the importance of living in the Spirit, and the incredible privileges that come with being children of God. It encourages believers to walk in obedience to the Spirit, put to death the deeds of the flesh, and embrace their role as heirs of God's kingdom through their union with Christ. The passage reinforces the ongoing theme of faith, sanctification, and the transformative work of the Spirit in the lives of believers, offering hope and assurance of their eternal inheritance in Christ.

Verses 18–25: Future Glory and Present Suffering

These 8 verses can be broken down into 3 sections.

1. Verses 18-21 contrast the present sufferings of the world and the glory that awaits believers in the future. It speaks about the temporary nature of suffering in this world compared to the eternal glory that will be revealed to those who belong to Christ. The mention of creation groaning and eagerly longing for the revealing of the sons of God reflects the broader theme of redemption and restoration that runs through the Bible. This idea of creation groaning is seen as a consequence of the fall, when sin entered the world through Adam and Eve.

2. In verses 22-23 Paul talks about how not only is creation groaning, but believers also groan inwardly

as we wait eagerly for our adoption to sonship, the redemption of our bodies. The concept of adoption to sonship is significant as it signifies the believer's full inheritance as children of God. This adoption was made possible through the sacrificial death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, through whom believers become heirs to God's kingdom (Galatians 4:4-7).

3. In verses 24-25, the theme of hope is emphasized. It talks about how we are saved by hope, and that hope that is seen is no hope at all. For who hopes for what they already have? This points to the idea that our hope as believers is in the unseen, in the promises of God that are yet to be fully realized. This resonates with Hebrews 11:1, which says, "Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see. Romans 8:18-25 is a passage that speaks to the tension between the present suffering and the future glory that believers will experience. It encourages Christians to hold onto hope and trust in God's promises, even in the midst of trials and tribulations. It also underscores the interconnectedness of creation with the fate of humanity, highlighting the cosmic scope of redemption that God is working out through Christ.

Verses 26–27: The Spirit's Intercession

Paul now dives into the topic of the Holy Spirit's role in aiding believers in their prayers. In verse 26 Paul acknowledges human limitations in prayer. We often find ourselves unable to articulate our deepest needs or even comprehend the full extent of what we should be praying for. The Holy Spirit steps in as our divine Helper in these moments of weakness. The Spirit understands the intentions of our hearts and communicates them to God on our behalf through

incomprehensible intercession.

This concept underscores the profound relationship believers have with the Holy Spirit. The Spirit's intercession ensures that our prayers, even when tangled by our limitations, align with God's will. This aligns with the broader biblical theme of God's provision and care for His people. We see a similar sentiment in 1 John 5:14-15, where it is affirmed that if we ask anything according to God's will, He hears us. The Holy Spirit's role in our prayers highlights the Trinitarian nature of God, where the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit work in unity for the good of believers.

In verse 27, Paul emphasizes that God, who searches hearts and minds, fully comprehends the Spirit's intercessions. The Holy Spirit's prayers are not arbitrary but are deeply rooted in God's perfect will. This speaks to the unity within the Godhead as the Father, Son, and Spirit are perfectly aligned in purpose.

Furthermore, this passage reflects the believer's assurance that their prayers are not in vain. The Holy Spirit's intercession guarantees that our petitions are in harmony with God's plans and purposes, ensuring that they will be answered according to His divine will and timing. This aligns with the assurance provided in Romans 8:28, where it is stated that all things work together for good to those who love God and are called according to His purpose. Romans 8:26-27 offers comfort and confidence to believers in their prayer lives. It reminds us of the Holy Spirit's intimate involvement in our spiritual journey, guiding our prayers and aligning them with God's will. The profound truth revealed in these verses underscores the depths of God's grace and His desire for a close, interdependent relationship with His children.

Verses 28–30: God’s Purpose and Assurance

Paul assures the reader that God is at work in the lives of believers even in the midst of trials, tribulations, and challenges. He explains how God is at work behind the scenes helping to orchestrate all things for the ultimate good of His people. It provides comfort and hope that all circumstances, whether favorable or unfavorable, are ultimately working together for the benefit of those who have been called according to God’s purpose.

The concept of God working for the good of those who love Him echoes throughout the Bible. Joseph speaks to his brothers in Genesis 50:20, acknowledging the hardships he endured but recognizing that God had a greater plan in place for him. This theme is also reflected in Jeremiah 29:11, where God promises His people a future and a hope despite their current trials. It is a reminder that God’s ways are higher than our ways, and His plans are ultimately for our welfare.

In verse 29 Paul explains clearly the concept of predestination. God has predestined all believers to be conformed to the image of Christ. The idea of being conformed to the image of Christ emphasizes the process of sanctification in the life of believers. It is through the work of the Holy Spirit that Christians are molded and shaped to reflect the character and nature of Jesus. This conformity is not merely external but extends to the inner character and spiritual maturity of the believer. It is about becoming more like Christ in thought, word, and deed.

Verse 30 goes on to explain the sequence of events in God’s redemptive plan for His people. The progression from predestination to calling, justification, and glorification underscores the unbroken chain of God’s saving work in the lives of believers.

When God calls us into a relationship with Himself it is not based on human merit or effort but by grace through faith in Christ, believers are justified, declared righteous in God's sight, and reconciled to Him. This justification is a legal concept that signifies the forgiveness of sins and the imputation of Christ's righteousness to the believer.

The final stage of glorification points to the future hope of believers when they will be fully transformed and conformed to the image of Christ. This ultimate glorification awaits believers in eternity, where they will experience the fullness of God's presence and be united with Him in perfect holiness and bliss. t.

Verses 31–34: God's Unbreakable Support

Verses 31-34 can be broken down into 4 powerful messages about God's love, protection, and intercession for believers.

1. Verse 31a asks the question, "What, then, shall we say in response to these things?" This rhetorical question serves to direct our attention to all the previous discussion in Romans 8, where Paul has been outlining the incredible benefits and assurances that come with being in Christ. The answer to this question leads us to an affirmation of God's ultimate care and provision for His people.

2. Verse 31b makes this powerful declaration, "If God is for us, who can be against us?" This statement is a bold proclamation of the assurance believers have in God's unwavering support and protection. It is a powerful reminder that no opposition or challenge can ultimately prevail against those who are in Christ.

3. Verse 32 goes on to highlight God's sacrificial love by sending His Son, Jesus Christ, to die for our sins. If God went to such lengths to reconcile us to

Himself through the death of His Son, how much **more** will He provide for our needs and sustain us in every aspect of life? It shows the immeasurable extent of God’s love and care for His children. Paul continues in verse 33 emphasizing the security of believers in the face of any accusations or condemnation. The idea presented is that God, the ultimate Judge, has declared believers righteous through faith in Christ.

4. Finally in verse 34 Paul asks, “Who then is the one who condemns? No one. Christ Jesus who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us.” This verse conveys the incredible reality that Jesus, who not only died but was also resurrected and is now seated at the right hand of God, serves as our advocate before the Father. He intercedes on our behalf, presenting His finished work on the cross as the basis for our justification and salvation.

Verses 35–39: The Unshakeable Love of God

Paul concludes this chapter by challenging believers to consider the vastness and steadfastness of God’s love. Paul highlights that no matter what struggles or tribulations believers may face, nothing can sever the bond between them and the love of Christ. Paul triumphantly declares that in all these things, **“we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us.”** The term “more than conquerors” suggests a resounding victory, not just a mere survival. This victory is not earned through personal strength or abilities but is attributed to the love of Christ that empowers believers to overcome even the harshest of trials. This verse serves as a source of encouragement for Christians, assuring them that they have the support and strength of Christ to navigate life’s challenges victoriously.

Paul concludes this chapter with the firm conviction that nothing in all creation can separate believers from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. This all-encompassing statement reinforces the eternal nature of God's love and how it transcends all human limitations and circumstances. Believers find solace and reassurance that they are eternally secure in the love and grace of God as they meditate on these verses. This passage serves as a climactic moment in Paul's discourse on the victory and assurance that believers have in Christ in the broader context of Romans 8.

CHAPTER NINE

WHAT ABOUT ISRAEL? ***Israels Past***



Introduction

Remember at the time Paul wrote this letter to Rome, the church was quickly becoming a Gentile organization. The church started out primarily as a Jewish movement in Jerusalem, but it quickly began to spread and was now largely centered in Asia Minor among Gentiles. The vast majority of Jews had rejected Christ as their Messiah and were persecuting those who declared Jesus as Messiah. So, the question was being asked, “What about Israel? Is God rejecting His people?”

So, for the next three chapters, Paul focuses on answering that question “**What about Israel?**” In Chapter 9 Paul reviews Israel’s past relationship with God. In Chapter 10, he moves to explaining Israel’s present circumstances examining God’s plan for Israel during this time having rejected their Messiah and finally in Chapter 11 Paul reveals God’s future plan for His people Israel.

Before we start explaining Chapter 9, I want you to take a brief look at the opening of Chapter 12 and compare it with the ending of Chapter 8. Why? I want you to notice how those two chapters flow together almost seamlessly. In fact, if I removed Chapters 9-11 from your Bible, you would never have noticed they were missing.

Paul’s discussion of righteousness flows smoothly from the end of chapter 8 into 12. This affirms for us that these next three chapters are a sidebar in Paul’s main discussion. Paul suspends his explanation of righteousness by faith while he deals with the very important question “what about Israel”.

So, we will spend time in the next three chapters getting a Biblical view of why Israel is so important to God and to us as Christians.

Did God Make a Mistake?

It seems strange that Paul would interrupt his discussion of salvation and devote a long section of three chapters to the nation of Israel. Why didn't he move from the doctrinal teaching of Romans 8 to the practical duties given in Romans 12—15? A careful study of Romans 9—11 reveals that this section is not an interruption at all; it is a necessary part of Paul's argument for justification by faith.

To begin with, Paul was considered a traitor to the Jewish nation. He ministered to Gentiles, and he taught freedom from the law of Moses. He had preached in many synagogues and caused trouble, and no doubt many of the Jewish believers in Rome had heard of his questionable reputation. In these chapters, Paul showed his love for Israel and his desire for their welfare. This is the personal reason for this discussion.

But there was a doctrinal reason. Paul argued in Romans 8 that the believer is secure in Jesus Christ and that God's election would stand (Rom. 8:28–30). But someone might ask, "What about the Jews? They were chosen by God, and yet now you tell us they are set aside, and God is building His church. Did God fail to keep His promises to Israel?" In other words, the very character of God was at stake. If God was not faithful to the Jews, how do we know He will be faithful to the church?

The emphasis in Romans 9 is on Israel's past election, in Romans 10 on Israel's present rejection, and in Romans 11 on Israel's future restoration. Israel is the only nation in the world with a complete history—past, present, and future. In Romans 9, Paul defended the character of God by showing that Israel's past history actually magnified the attributes of God. He specifically named four attributes of God: His faithfulness

(Rom. 9:1–13), righteousness (Rom. 9:14–18), justice (Rom. 9:19–29), and grace (Rom. 9:30–33). You will note that these divisions correspond with Paul’s three questions: “Is there unrighteousness with God?” (Rom. 9:14), “Why doth he yet find fault?” (Rom. 9:19), and “What shall we say then?” (Rom. 9:30).

1. God’s Faithfulness (9:1–13)

It is remarkable how Paul moved from the joy of Romans 8 into the sorrow and burden of Romans 9. When he looked at Christ, he rejoiced, but when he looked at the lost people of Israel, he wept. Like Moses (Ex. 32:30–35), he was willing to be cursed and separated from Christ if it would mean the salvation of Israel.

What a man this Paul was! He was willing to stay out of heaven for the sake of the saved (Phil. 1:22–24), and willing to go to hell for the sake of the lost.

His theme was God’s election of Israel, and the first thing he dealt with was the blessing of their election (Rom. 9:4–5). Israel was adopted by God as His own people (Ex. 4:22–23). He gave them His glory in the tabernacle and the temple (Ex. 40:34–38; 1 Kings 8:10–11). The glory Moses beheld on Mount Sinai came to dwell with Israel (Ex. 24:16–17). God gave Israel His covenants, the first to Abraham, and then additional covenants to Moses and to David. He also gave them His law to govern their political, social, and religious life, and to guarantee His blessing if they obeyed. He gave them “the service of God,” referring to the ministry in the tabernacle and the temple. He gave them the promises and the patriarchs (“the fathers” in Rom. 9:5). The purpose of all of this blessing was that Jesus Christ, through Israel, might come into the world. (Note that Rom. 9:5 affirms that Jesus Christ is God.) All of these blessings were given freely to Israel and to no other nation.

But in spite of these blessings, Israel failed. When the Messiah appeared, Israel rejected Him and crucified Him. No one knew this better than Paul, because in his early days he persecuted the church. Does Israel's failure mean that God's Word has failed? (The Greek word translated "taken none effect" pictures a ship going off its course.) The answer is, "No! God is faithful no matter what people may do with His Word." Here Paul explains the basis for Israel's election.

It was not of natural descent (vv. 6–10). As we saw in Romans 2:25–29, there is a difference between the natural seed of Abraham and the spiritual children of Abraham. Abraham actually had two sons, Ishmael (by Hagar) and Isaac (by Sarah). Since Ishmael was the firstborn, he should have been chosen, but it was Isaac that God chose. Isaac and Rebecca had twin sons, Esau and Jacob. As the firstborn, Esau should have been chosen, but it was Jacob that God chose. And Esau and Jacob had the same father and mother, unlike Ishmael and Isaac, who had the same father but different mothers. God did not base His election on the physical. Therefore, if the nation of Israel—Abraham's physical descendants—has rejected God's Word, this does not nullify God's elective purposes at all.

It is not of human merit (vv. 11–13). God chose Jacob before the babies were born. The two boys had done neither good nor evil, so God's choice was not based on their character or conduct. Romans 9:13 is a reference to Malachi 1:2–3 and refers to nations (Israel and Edom) and not individual sinners.

God does not hate sinners. John 3:16 makes it clear that He loves sinners. The statement here has to do with national election, not individual. Since God's election of Israel does

not depend on human merit, their disobedience cannot nullify the elective purposes of God. God is faithful even though His people are unfaithful.

2. God's Righteousness (9:14–18)

The fact that God chose one and not the other seems to indicate that He is unrighteous. “Is there unrighteousness with God?” Paul asked, and then he replied, “God forbid!” It is unthinkable that the holy God should ever commit an unrighteous act. Election is always totally a matter of grace. If God acted only on the basis of righteousness, nobody would ever be saved. Paul quoted Exodus 33:19 to show that God’s mercy and compassion are extended according to God’s will and not man’s will. All of us deserve condemnation—not mercy. The reference in Exodus 33 deals with Israel’s idolatry while Moses was on the mount receiving the law. The whole nation deserved to be destroyed, yet God killed only three thousand people—not because they were more wicked or less godly, but purely because of His grace and mercy.

Paul then quoted Exodus 9:16, using Pharaoh as an illustration. Moses was a Jew; Pharaoh was a Gentile, yet both were sinners. In fact, both were murderers! Both saw God’s wonders. Yet Moses was saved, and Pharaoh was lost. God raised up Pharaoh that He might reveal His glory and power, and He had mercy on Moses that He might use him to deliver the people of Israel. Pharaoh was a ruler, and Moses was a slave, yet it was Moses who experienced the mercy and compassion of God—because God willed it that way. God is sovereign in His work and acts according to His own will and purposes. So, it was not a matter of righteousness but of the sovereign will of God.

God is holy and must punish sin, but God is loving and

desires to save sinners. If everybody is saved, it would deny His holiness, but if everybody is lost, it would deny His love. The solution to the problem is God's sovereign election. A seminary professor once said to me, "Try to explain election, and you may lose your mind; but explain it away and you will lose your soul!"

God chose Israel and condemned Egypt, because this was His sovereign purpose. Nobody can condemn God for the way He extends His mercy, because God is righteous.

Before leaving this section, we need to discuss the "hardening" of Pharaoh (Rom. 9:18). This hardening process is referred to at least fifteen times in Exodus 7—14. Sometimes we are told that Pharaoh hardened his heart (Ex. 8:15, 19, 32), and other times that God hardened Pharaoh's heart (Ex. 9:12; 10:1, 20, 27). By declaring His Word and revealing His power, God gave Pharaoh opportunity to repent, but instead, Pharaoh resisted God and hardened his heart.

The fault lay not with God but Pharaoh. The same sunlight that melts the ice also hardens the clay. God was not unrighteous in His dealings with Pharaoh because He gave him many opportunities to repent and believe.

3. God's Justice (9:19–29)

This fact of God's sovereign will only seems to create a new problem. "If God is sovereign, then who can resist Him? And if one does resist Him, what right does He have to judge?" It is the age-old question of the justice of God as He works in human history.

I recall sharing in a street meeting in Chicago and passing out tracts at the corner of Madison and Kedzie. Most of the

people graciously accepted the tracts, but one man took the tract and with a snarl crumpled it up and threw it in the gutter.

The name of the tract was “Four Things God Wants You to Know.” “There are a few things I would like God to know!” the man said. “Why is there so much sorrow and tragedy in this world? Why do the innocent suffer while the rich go free? Bah! Don’t tell me there’s a God! If there is, then God is the biggest sinner that ever lived!” And he turned away with a sneer and was lost in the crowd.

We know that God by nature is perfectly just. “Shall not the Judge of all the earth do, right?” (Gen. 18:25). It is unthinkable that God would will an unjust purpose or perform an unjust act. But at times it seems that He does just that. He had mercy on Moses but condemned Pharaoh. Is this just? He elected Israel and rejected the other nations. Is this just? Paul gives three answers to this charge.

- a) Who are we to argue with God (vv. 19–21)? This is a logical argument. God is the Potter and we are the clay. God is wiser than we are, and we are foolish to question His will or to resist it. (The reference here is to Isa. 45:9.)

To be sure, the clay has no life and is passive in the potter’s hand. We have feelings, intellect, and willpower, and we can resist Him if we choose. (See Jer. 18, where this thought is developed.) But it is God who determines whether a man will be a Moses or a Pharaoh. Neither Moses, nor Pharaoh, nor anyone else, could choose his parents, his genetic structure, or his time and place of birth. We have to believe that these matters are in the hands of God.

However, this does not excuse us from responsibility. Pharaoh had great opportunities to learn about the true God and trust Him, and yet he chose to rebel. Paul did not develop this aspect of truth because his theme was divine sovereignty, not human responsibility. The one does not deny the other, even though our finite minds may not fully grasp them both.

- b) God has His purposes (vv. 22–24). We must never think that God enjoyed watching a tyrant like Pharaoh. He endured it. God said to Moses, “I have surely seen the affliction of my people ... and have heard their cry ... for I know their sorrows” (Ex. 3:7). The fact that God was long-suffering indicates that He gave Pharaoh opportunities to be saved (see 2 Peter 3:9).

The word fitted in Romans 9:22 does not suggest that God made Pharaoh a “vessel of wrath.” The verb is in what the Greek grammarians call the middle voice, making it a reflexive action verb. So, it should read: “fitted himself for destruction.” God prepares men for glory (Rom. 9:23), but sinners prepare themselves for judgment. In Moses and Israel, God revealed the riches of His mercy; in Pharaoh and Egypt, He revealed His power and wrath. Since neither deserved any mercy, God cannot be charged with injustice.

Ultimately, of course, God’s purpose was to form His church from both Jews and Gentiles (Rom. 9:24). Believers today are, by God’s grace, “vessels of mercy” that He is preparing for glory, a truth that reminds us of Romans 8:29–30.

- c) All of this was prophesied (vv. 25–29). First Paul quoted Hosea 2:23, a statement declaring that God would turn from the Jews and call the Gentiles. Then

he cited Hosea 1:10 to prove that this new people being called would be God's people and "sons of the living God." He then quoted Isaiah 10:22–23 to show that only a remnant of Israel would be saved, while the greater part of the nation would suffer judgment. Romans 9:28 probably refers to God's work of judgment during the tribulation, when the nation of Israel will be persecuted and judged, and only a small remnant left to enter into the kingdom when Jesus Christ returns to earth. But the application for today is clear: Only a remnant of Jews is believing, and they, together with the Gentiles, are called of God (Rom. 9:24). The final quotation from Isaiah 1:9 emphasized the grace of God in sparing the believing remnant.

Now, what does all of this prove? That God was not unjust in saving some and judging others, because He was only fulfilling the Old Testament prophecies given centuries ago. He would be unjust if He did not keep His own Word. But even more than that, these prophecies show that God's election has made possible the salvation of the Gentiles. This is the grace of God. At the Exodus, God rejected the Gentiles and chose the Jews, so that, through the Jews, He might save the Gentiles. The nation of Israel rejected His will, but this did not defeat His purposes. A remnant of Jews does believe and God's Word has been fulfilled.

So far, Paul has defended the character of God by showing His faithfulness, His righteousness, and His justice. Israel's rejection had not canceled God's election; it had only proved that He was true to His character and His purposes.

4. God's Grace (9:30–33)

Paul moved next from divine sovereignty to human responsibility. Note that Paul did not say “elect” and “nonelected,” but rather emphasized faith. Here is a paradox: The Jews sought righteousness but did not find it, while the Gentiles, who were not searching for it, found it! The reason? Israel tried to be saved by works and not by faith. They rejected “grace righteousness” and tried to please God with “law righteousness.” The Jews thought that the Gentiles had to come up to Israel’s level to be saved; when actually the Jews had to go down to the level of the Gentiles to be saved. “For there is no difference: for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3:22–23). Instead of permitting their religious privileges (Rom. 9:1–5) to lead them to Christ, they used these privileges as a substitute for Christ.

But see the grace of God: Israel’s rejection means the Gentiles’ salvation. Paul’s final quotation was from Isaiah 28:16. It referred to Christ, God’s Stone of salvation (see Ps. 118:22). God gave Christ to be a Foundation Stone, but Israel rejected Him and He became a stumbling stone. Instead of “rising” on this Stone, Israel fell (Rom. 11:11), but, as we shall see, their fall made possible the salvation of the Gentiles by the grace of God.

We need to decide what kind of righteousness we are seeking, whether we are depending on good works and character, or trusting Christ alone for salvation.

God does not save people on the basis of birth or behavior. He saves them “by grace, through faith” (Eph. 2:8–9). It is not a question of whether or not we are among God’s elect. That is a mystery known only to God. He offers us His salvation by faith. The offer is made to “whosoever will” (Rev. 22:17). After we have trusted Christ, then we have the

witness and evidence that we are among His elect (Eph. 1:4–14; 1 Thess. 1:1–10). But first we must trust Him and receive by faith His righteousness that alone can guarantee heaven.

No one will deny that there are many mysteries connected with divine sovereignty and human responsibility. Nowhere does God ask us to choose between these two truths, because they both come from God and are a part of God's plan. They do not compete; they cooperate. The fact that we cannot fully understand how they work together does not deny the fact that they do. When a man asked Charles Spurgeon how he reconciled divine sovereignty and human responsibility, Spurgeon replied, "I never try to reconcile friends!"

But the main thrust of this chapter is clear: Israel's rejection of Christ does not deny the faithfulness of God. Romans 9 does not negate Romans 8. God is still faithful, righteous, just, and gracious, and He can be depended on to accomplish His purposes and keep His promises

CHAPTER TEN

ISRAELS UNBELIEF



Introduction

Chapter 9 explained how Israel's prideful and self-deceived heart caused them to reject Jesus not because of God's lack of faithfulness. In Isaiah, God foretold that His people would make this mistake. In v.33 Paul quoted Isaiah saying the Lord lays a stone of stumbling and rock of offense before Israel, all referring to Jesus. The prophet's point is the Lord brought Jesus to Israel just as He promised. So, we see how God kept His promise to Israel. He did exactly as He promised, so we can't fault God's faithfulness to His promises

The problem was Israel's hard heart. They stumbled over Jesus rather than receive Him. Israel's rejection of Jesus was according to their own sinful choice. As a result of Israel's rejection of Jesus the Lord shifts His mercy in favor of the ignorant Gentile over the stubborn Jew. So, with those thoughts in mind, let's move to Chapter 10 where Paul addresses 4 logical questions regarding Israel's present condition.

- (1) Wasn't Israel's zealotry for God proof they deserved to receive their Messiah?
- (2) Did God trick Israel by failing to explain His plan to His people?
- (3) Did He make it too easy for Gentiles to receive His mercy while sending Israel on a wild goose chase?
- (4) Is God unfairly keeping Israel in the dark now even as He opens the door to Gentiles?

Paul begins his teaching by reassuring his audience he is in Israel's corner— Israel's present circumstances

Romans 10:1-4 Paul's desire for the salvation of Israel

Paul realizes the Jews reading this would question his objectivity. So Paul reminds them that he truly desired to see his people saved. He laments Israel's rejection of Christ and shares how he is praying to the Lord that Jews be saved.

Paul recognizes the Jews zeal for God, but he points out that sincerity wasn't their problem; it was knowledge. In other words, you can be very sincere in your pursuit of God, but if you don't pursue Him according to the truth, you're just sincerely wrong. In v.3 Paul says Israel's zealousness lacked the understanding that salvation comes only by God's righteousness.

We know from our study of earlier chapters that only a righteousness equal to God's righteousness may enter Heaven. God's righteousness is perfection so if we are to enter His glory, we must obtain His perfection. No matter how many hours we pray or sacrifices we make or good works we do, we can't erase a single sin and one sin is enough to disqualify us from Heaven. That's why we must obtain God's righteousness and the only way to that is through Christ who is the righteousness of God according to 2 Cor 5:21 by faith.

Israel sought to establish their own righteousness because of their pride didn't recognize that only God could accomplish the Law perfectly. Paul is using Israel plight to show us how you can either seek to make yourself righteous or you can give up on that path, turn and accept the free gift of God's righteousness available by faith in Christ. You can't choose both paths, because they go in opposite direction.

In verse 4 Paul reminds us Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believe. So to the first question, Paul says Israel's zealousness for the Law wasn't

cause for God to reward them but rather it's the very reason for their downfall. Israel did not surrendered themselves to Christ even now they still remain committed to the Law as a means of righteousness, therefore, God has been just in denying them salvation. Which moves Paul to the second question: did God withhold this important detail from His people?

Romans 10:5-13 Salvation by grace is for all Jew and Gentile

Did God lead Israel into misunderstanding the purpose of the Law, thinking it was a means of obtaining righteousness? Paul answers this concern by quoting repeatedly from the Law itself. In verse 5 Paul begins with a quote from Leviticus 18:5. This verse in its entirety say *“So you shall keep My statutes and My judgments, by which a man may live if he does them; I am the Lord.”*

In other words, a person can live if he or she does all of the law. Conversely, failing to keep them all will mean death, which refers ultimately to an eternal outcome. This is an impossible high standard for anyone. The Law itself set perfection as the minimum standard for obtaining eternal life. One mistake, one failing is enough to disqualify you from heaven. Paul is reminding us that Israel heard from the beginning that observing the Law was not a viable means of becoming righteous. The Law wasn't intended to trick Israel. The Law itself warned Israel not to misuse it. Furthermore, the Law told Israel that righteousness wasn't outside their reach.

Now Paul quotes Deuteronomy 30:12-14 in verses 6-10. He explains how Moses said no one needed to go to Heaven to obtain the righteousness required to keep the Law, nor do we need someone to search to the ends of the earth for such perfection. Paul emphasizes that righteousness based on faith

never says these things. If you understand how God appoints righteousness, you don't ask these questions because you understand that the solution isn't found in our personal efforts or merit. You realize that keeping the Law is fruitless.

In verse 8 Paul refers to the Gospel message as the "word of faith". It's a word or message that declares faith is the means of righteousness. Then in verses 9 and 10 Paul explains how Moses was describing the confession of faith in the Gospel. Paul describes two parts needed for real, one - the mouth must speak and two - it must be from the heart, not just mentally agreeing. Paul wants to make sure it is understood you need both. So, just saying you believe in Jesus is not enough. Just agreeing in your head is not enough. Faith requires speaking and believing in your heart.

Paul says that true righteousness says what others say about the identity of Jesus, and believes what others believe about His work. We agree Jesus is Lord, He is God incarnate, and we believe He died and rose again to prove His claims.

In verse 10 Paul says the same thing as he did in verse 9 except reverses the order. In verse 9 he says we say and then believe and verse 10 he says we believe and then say. Paul wants to make sure we know that these two things work together for a person to be saved. Clearly, being righteous and having salvation are one and the same thing. You can't have one without the other, Paul wanted to make sure this was clear that our confession of faith is all that is necessary to be saved. He starts with a confession of the mouth followed by belief in the heart. Paul isn't describing two discrete steps in a process. Rather he's describing two elements working together in a single moment.

Paul summarizes the point in v.11, where he quotes

Isaiah, the one who won't be disappointed in eternity is the one who believes in the Messiah. The heart and mouth work together to express belief in the Messiah and when we do we receive what we hope for -righteousness. We won't be disappointed, Isaiah says, unlike those who depend on their own righteousness.

So how can we blame God for Israel's current state of unbelief when He told them what to expect beforehand and kept His promise faithfully. No one could claim that Israel was set up for failure. Their own Law declared that a man can't find righteousness in doing the Law and that righteousness was simply a matter of a confession of faith. Isaiah confirmed that belief in the Messiah was the key, furthermore, Israel had no less opportunity to know these things than did Gentiles. Paul says in v.12 that on this point, there is no difference between Jew and Gentile. The Lord is the Lord of both.

God didn't hide the way to righteousness for Israel nor did He make it unnecessarily complicated it was plainly explained in the word of God, and it was as easy as a confession of faith. This is far more advanced notice than Gentiles received, so once again, we see that Israel's present circumstances are the result of their hard hearts, not because God failed to keep His word. It was His word to Israel that explained the path to righteousness, yet Israel chose another path, a path of self-righteousness.

All this leads us to the third and final question...perhaps Israel hasn't received adequate opportunity to know that Jesus was their Messiah? Perhaps this is just a big misunderstanding. If only the apostles like Paul had explained these things to Israel, then the nation would have recognized their error and received Christ. So is God unfairly withholding this explanation from His people, thereby preventing them

from coming to faith in Jesus? Paul answers this question in the following verses.

Romans 10:14-21 Israel's rejection of the message

To key to understanding this passage is recognizing that Paul has assumed his audience's perspective, but he doesn't agree with it. Paul's audience has just learned that Israel still had opportunity to be saved as Moses directed. It was a good news–bad news story. The good news was that Israel's rejection of Jesus didn't close the door on their opportunity to be saved. Just like Gentiles, Jews still had opportunity to be saved if they too confessed Christ. This would have come as great relief to Paul's Jewish readers who longed to see the Jewish nation receive their Messiah.

But the bad news was that despite how easy it was to find salvation, very few Jews were choosing to follow that path. As a result many believing Jews continued to seek an explanation for Israel's continued persistent unbelief.

Unfortunately, most of the reasons they came up with still placed the blame on God. So, Paul deals with their first argument by asking several questions so he can refute them. Beginning in verse 14 Paul asks these 4 questions –

- 1) Why have the Jewish people failed to call upon the name of the Lord so as to be saved?
- 2) How can the people of Israel call on the name of the Lord if they have not first believed in Jesus?
- 3) How would we expect them to believe in Jesus if they have never heard about Jesus and how will they hear about Jesus if no one is preaching to them about Jesus?
- 4) How will preaching take place if the Church isn't sending preachers to the people of Israel?

Notice the progression of logic in these questions. The Jewish people believe that Israel sits outside God's mercy merely because of a communication breakdown. God had everything set up for His people's salvation, until at the last minute someone didn't get the memo. Preachers weren't sent to the right places, and because of a lack of information, God's people were forsaken even though God had promised to send His good news to Israel. Therefore, it's God's fault. He failed to keep His promise to Israel to tell them about the good news of their Messiah's arrival.

Of course, this is an absolutely false and inaccurate observation which Paul demonstrates as he responds with scripture, beginning with another quote from Isaiah 53 and 55. In verse 16 Paul says while some of Israel heeded the good news, that is the remnant God had promised to preserve, the majority of Israel rejected what they heard.

Isaiah says that the message of the Messiah's arrival will be heard and seen by those who had no preparation to receive it and then asks - who has believed the prophets' message? Isaiah is lamenting that Israel always ignored the words of their prophets. So, while even though Paul's audience assumed Israel could yet be convinced if only the message went out to them, Paul says no they wouldn't. When the message of the Messiah was delivered as God promised, most ignored it just as the Lord said would happen.

Paul now assumes their logic response would be, surely Israel never heard the message? Maybe there's still a chance they could hear and receive Christ? To which Paul shuts the door on this excuse in verse 18 where he quotes from Psalm 19 when David declares that the creation itself reveals the truth of God.

Paul's point isn't that Israel should have deciphered the message of the Gospel from staring at the night sky even though they could have because God did clearly communicate to all of mankind through creation, but Israel had the privilege and opportunity to hear about Christ through the specific revelation of the word of God.

The Jewish people were entrusted with the word of God, so they of all people should have known what was coming. They knew it far better than the Gentiles, who received Christ despite only having access to general revelation like Creation.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

GOD IS NOT THROUGH WITH ISRAEL



Romans

Israel
Future

Introduction

Paul addressed Israel's history in Chapter 9. He explained how God dispensed His mercy selectively within the nation of Israel and we discovered why only some in Israel embraced their Messiah when He appeared to them. Then we saw how the Lord shifted His mercy away from the Jewish nation to the Gentile nations.

Then in Chapter 10, Paul addressed Israel's present circumstances and how they are intent on obtaining self-righteousness rather than the righteousness that comes by faith. Israel remains intently focused on following God and while still awaiting their Messiah's arrival. For now the Lord in His providence has elected to leave Israel in their disobedience for a time to extend mercy to Gentiles

Now in chapter 11 Paul deals with Israel's future. He opens the chapter with the logical question he knew his readers would have: does this mean God has rejected His people, Israel? God is not done with Israel.

Paul devotes all of Romans 11 to presenting proof that God is not through with Israel. We must **not** apply this chapter to the church today, because Paul is discussing a literal future for a literal nation. He called five "witnesses" to prove there was a future in God's plan for the Jews.

1. Paul Himself (11:1)

"Hath God cast away his people? God forbid! For I also am an Israelite." If God has cast away His people, then how can the conversion of the apostle Paul be explained? The fact that his conversion is presented three times in the book of Acts is significant (Acts 9; 22; 26). Certainly Dr. Luke did not write

these chapters and repeat the story just to exalt Paul. No, they were written to show Paul's conversion as an illustration of the future conversion of the nation of Israel. Paul called himself "one born out of due time" (1 Cor. 15:8).

In 1 Timothy 1:16 he stated that God saved him "that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting."

The accounts of Paul's conversion tell very little that parallels our salvation experience today. Certainly none of us has seen Christ in glory or actually heard Him speak from heaven. We were neither blinded by the light of heaven nor thrown to the ground. In what way, then, is Paul's conversion "a pattern"? It is a picture of how the nation of Israel will be saved when Jesus Christ returns to establish His kingdom on earth. The details of Israel's future restoration and salvation are given in Zechariah 12:10—13:1. The nation shall see Him as He returns (Zech. 14:4; Acts 1:11; Rev. 1:7), recognize Him as their Messiah, repent, and receive Him. It will be an experience similar to that of Saul of Tarsus when he was on his way to Damascus to persecute Christians (Acts 9).

This is why Paul used himself as the first witness. The fact that he was saved does not prove that there is a future for Israel. Rather, what is important is the way he was saved.

2. The Prophet Elijah (11:2–10)

Israel is God's elect nation; He "foreknew" them, or chose them, and they are His. The fact that most of the nation has rejected Christ is no proof that God has finished with His people. In his day, Elijah thought that the nation had totally departed from God (see 1 Kings 19). But Elijah discovered

that there was yet a remnant of true believers. He thought he was the only faithful Jew left and discovered that there were seven thousand more.

Paul referred to this “remnant” in Romans 9:27, a quotation from Isaiah 10:22–23. At no time has the entire nation of Israel been true to the Lord. God makes a distinction between Abraham’s natural children and his spiritual children (Rom. 2:25–29). The fact that the Jews shared in the covenant by being circumcised did not guarantee their salvation. Like Abraham, they had to believe God in order to receive His righteousness (Rom. 4:1–5).

Note that this remnant is saved by grace and not by works (Rom. 11:5–6). Note also the parallel in Romans 9:30–33. It is impossible to mix grace and works, for the one cancels the other. Israel’s main concern had always been in trying to please God with good works (Rom. 9:30—10:4). The nation refused to submit to Christ’s righteousness, just as religious, self-righteous people refuse to submit today.

If a remnant had been saved, thus proving that God was not through with His people, then what had happened to the rest of the nation? They had been hardened (a better translation than “blinded” in Rom. 11:7). This was the result of their resisting the truth, just as Pharaoh’s heart was hardened because he resisted the truth. Paul quoted Isaiah 29:10 to support his statement, and also referred to Deuteronomy 29:4. We would expect a pagan ruler to harden himself against the Lord, but we do not expect God’s people to do so.

Romans 11:9–10 are cited from Psalm 69:22–23. This psalm is one of the most important of the messianic psalms and is referred to several times in the New Testament. (Note

especially Romans 11:4, 9, 21–22.) Their “table to become a snare” means that their blessings turn into burdens and judgments. This is what happened to Israel: Their spiritual blessings should have led them to Christ, but instead, they became a snare that kept them from Christ. Their very religious practices and observances became substitutes for the real experience of salvation. Sad to say, this same mistake is made today when people depend on religious rituals and practices instead of trusting in the Christ who is pictured in these activities.

Paul made it clear that the hardening of Israel is neither total nor final, and this is proof that God has a future for the nation. “[Hardness] in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in” (Rom. 11:25). The existence of the believing Jewish remnant today, as in Elijah’s day, is evidence that God still has a plan for His people. Paul did not imitate Elijah’s mistake and say, “I only am left!” He knew that there was a remnant of Israel in this world who trusted God.

3. The Gentiles (11:11–15)

In Romans 2:1–3 Paul used the Gentiles to prove the Jews guilty of sin, but here he used the Gentiles to assure Israel of a future restoration. His logic here is beautiful. When the Jews rejected the gospel, God sent it to the Gentiles, and they believed and were saved. Three tragedies occurred in Israel: The nation fell (Rom. 11:11), was lost (Rom. 11:12, “diminished”), and was cast away (Rom. 11:15). None of these words suggests a final judgment on Israel. But the amazing thing is that through Israel’s fall, salvation came to the Gentiles. God promised that the Gentiles would be saved (Rom. 9:25–26), and He kept His promise. Will He not also keep His promise to the Jews?

It is important to understand that the Old Testament promises to the Gentiles were linked to Israel's "rise"—her entering into her kingdom. Prophecies like Isaiah 11 and Isaiah 60 make it clear that the Gentiles will share in Israel's kingdom. But Israel did not "rise"; she fell! What would God then do with the Gentiles? God introduced a new factor—the church—in which believing Jews and Gentiles are one in Christ (Eph. 2:11–22). In Ephesians 3, Paul called this new program "the mystery," meaning "the sacred secret" that was not revealed in the Old Testament. Does this mean that God has abandoned His kingdom program for Israel? Of course not! Israel is merely set aside until the time comes for God's plans for Israel to be fulfilled.

Paul stated that the Gentiles had a vital ministry to Israel. Today, the saved Gentiles provoke Israel "to jealousy" (see Rom. 10:19) because of the spiritual riches they have in Christ. Israel today is spiritually bankrupt, while Christians have "all spiritual blessings" in Christ (Eph. 1:3). (If an unsaved Jew visited the average church service, would he be provoked to jealousy and wish he had what we have—or would he just be provoked?)

There is a future for Israel. Paul calls it "their fulness" (Rom. 11:12) and their "receiving" (Rom. 11:15). Today, Israel is fallen spiritually, but when Christ returns, the nation will rise again. Today, Israel is cast away from God, but one day they shall be received again. God will never break His covenant with His people, and He has promised to restore them. (See Jer. 31:35–37, where God links His promises to Israel to the sun, moon, and stars.)

4. The Patriarchs (11:16–24)

From looking at the future, Paul next looked to the past to show Israel's spiritual heritage. From the beginning, Israel was a special people, set apart by God. Paul used two illustrations to prove his argument that God was not finished with the Jews.

(1) The lump of dough (v. 16a). The reference here is to Numbers 15:17–21. The first part of the dough was to be offered up to God as a symbol that the entire lump belonged to Him. The same idea was involved in the Feast of First fruits, when the priest offered a sheaf to the Lord as a token that the entire harvest was His (Lev. 23:9–14). The basic idea is that when God accepts the part He sanctifies the whole.

Applying this to the history of Israel, we understand Paul's argument. God accepted the founder of the nation, Abraham, and in so doing set apart his descendants as well. God also accepted the other patriarchs, Isaac and Jacob, in spite of their sins or failings. This means that God must accept the "rest of the lump"—the nation of Israel.

(2) The olive tree (vv. 16b–24). This is a symbol of the nation of Israel (Jer.11:16–17; Hos. 14:4–6). Please keep in mind that Paul was not discussing the relationship of individual believers to God, but the place of Israel in the plan of God. The roots of the tree support the tree; again, this was a symbol of the patriarchs who founded the nation. God made His covenants with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and He cannot deny them or change them. Thus, it is God's promise to Abraham that sustains Israel even today.

Many of the Jewish people did not believe. Paul pictured

them as branches broken off the tree. But he saw an amazing thing taking place: Other branches were grafted in to the tree to share in the life of the tree. These branches were the Gentiles. In Romans 11:24, Paul described this grafting in as “contrary to nature.” Usually a cultivated branch is grafted into a wild tree and shares its life without producing its poor fruit. But in this case, it was the “wild branch” (the Gentiles) that was grafted into the good tree! “Salvation is of the Jews” (John 4:22).

To say that the olive tree, with its natural and grafted branches, is a picture of the church would be a great mistake. In the church, “there is no difference”; believers are “all one in Christ Jesus” (Gal. 3:28). God does not look on the members of Christ’s body and see them as Jews or Gentiles. The olive tree illustrates the relationship between Jew and Gentile in the program of God. The “breaking off of the branches” is the equivalent of “the fall” (Rom. 11:11), “the diminishing” (Rom. 11:12), and “the casting away” (Rom. 11:15). To read into this illustration the matter of the eternal destiny of the individual believer is to abuse the truth Paul was seeking to communicate.

Paul warned the Gentiles that they were obligated to Israel, and therefore they dared not boast of their new spiritual position (Rom. 11:18–21). The Gentiles entered into God’s plan because of faith, and not because of anything good they had done. Paul was discussing the Gentiles collectively, and not the individual experience of one believer or another.

It is worth noting that, according to Bible prophecy, the professing Gentile church will be “cut off” because of apostasy. First Timothy 4 and 2 Timothy 3, along with 2 Thessalonians 2, all indicate that the professing church in the last days will depart from the faith. There is no hope for the

apostate church, but there is hope for apostate Israel! Why? Because of the roots of the olive tree.

God will keep His promises to the patriarchs, but God will break off the Gentiles because of their unbelief. No matter how far Israel may stray from the truth of God, the roots are still good. God is still the “God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob” (Ex. 3:6; Matt. 22:32). He will keep His promises to these patriarchs. This means that the olive tree will flourish again!

5. God Himself (11:25–36)

Paul saved his best witness for the last. He proved that the very character and work of God were involved in the future of Israel. People may dispute about prophecy and differ in their interpretations, but let everyone realize that he is dealing with God’s people, Israel.

- **God’s timing** (v. 25). What has happened to Israel is all a part of God’s plan, and He knows what He is doing. The hardening (or blinding, Rom. 11:7) of Israel as a nation is neither total nor final: It is partial and temporary. How long will it last? “Until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in” (Rom. 11:25).

There is a “fulness” for Israel (Rom. 11:12) and for the Gentiles. Today, God in His grace is visiting the Gentiles and taking out a people for His name (Acts 15:12–14). Individual Jews are being saved, of course, but this present age is primarily a time when God is visiting the Gentiles and building His church. When this present age has run its course, and the fullness of the Gentiles has come in, then God will once more deal with the nation of Israel.

Romans 11:25 is one of several “until verses” in the

Bible, all of which are important. (Read Matthew 23:32–39; Luke 21:24; and Psalm 110:1 for other references.) It is reassuring that God knows what time it is and that He is never late in fulfilling His will.

- **God's promise** (v. 26). The reference here is Isaiah 59:20–21, and you ought to read Isaiah 60 to complete the picture. God has promised to save His people, and He will keep His promise. There are those who interpret this as meaning salvation to individuals through the gospel, but it is my conviction that the prophet has national conversion in mind. “All Israel shall be saved” does not mean that every Jew who has ever lived will be converted, but that the Jews living when the Redeemer returns will see Him, receive Him, and be saved. Zechariah 12—13 gives the details. It seems to me that there are too many details in these Old Testament prophecies of national restoration for Israel for us to spiritualize them and apply them to the church today.
- **God's covenant** (vv. 27–28). This is, of course, a continuation of the quotation from Isaiah 59, but the emphasis is on the covenant of God with Israel. God chose Israel in His grace and not because of any merit in her (Deut. 7:6–11; 9:1–6). If the nation was not chosen because of its goodness, can it be rejected because of its sin? “Election” means grace, not merit. The Jewish people are “enemies” to the believing Gentiles because of their hostile attitude toward the gospel. But to God, the Jewish people are “beloved for the father's sakes.” God will not break His covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.
- **God's nature** (v. 29). “I am the LORD, I change not” (Mal. 3:6). “God is not a man that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent” (Num. 23:19).

God's gifts to Israel, and God's calling of Israel, cannot be taken back or changed, or God would cease to be true to His own perfect nature. The fact that Israel may not enjoy her gifts, or live up to her privileges as an elect nation, does not affect this fact one bit. God will be consistent with Himself and true to His Word no matter what people may do. "Shall their unbelief make the faithfulness of God without effect?" (Rom. 3:3, literal translation).

- **God's grace** (vv. 30–32). "Because of the unbelief of the Jews, you Gentiles were saved," said Paul. "Now, may it be that through your salvation Israel will come to know Christ." Note that Paul repeatedly reminded the saved Gentiles that they had a spiritual obligation to Israel to "provoke them to jealousy" (Rom. 10:19; 11:11, 14). Israel's hardness is only "in part" (Rom. 11:25), which means that individual Jews can be saved. God has included all in unbelief—Jews and Gentiles—so that all might have the opportunity to be saved by grace. "There is no difference." If God can save Jews by His grace and mercy today, why can He not save them in the future?

We must remember that God chose the Jews so that the Gentiles might be saved. "In thee shall all families of the earth be blessed," was God's promise to Abraham (Gen. 12:1–3). The tragedy was that Israel became exclusive and failed to share the truth with the Gentiles. They thought that the Gentiles had to become Jews in order to be saved. But God declared both Jews and Gentiles to be lost and condemned. This meant that He could have mercy on all because of the sacrifice of Christ on the cross.

God's wisdom (vv. 33–36). Having contemplated God's great plan of salvation for Jews and Gentiles, all Paul could do was sing a hymn of praise. As someone has remarked, "Theology becomes doxology." Only a God as wise as our

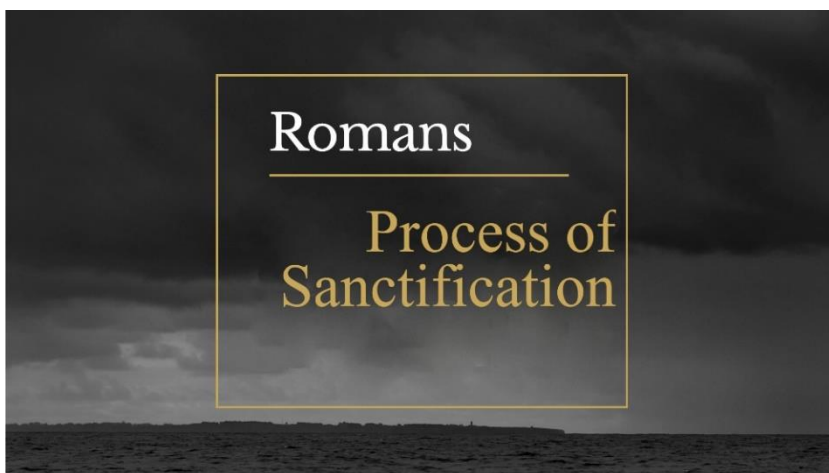
God could take the fall of Israel and turn it into salvation for the world. His plans will not be aborted, nor will His purposes lack fulfillment.

No human being can fully know the mind of the Lord, and the more we study His ways, the more we offer Him praise. Are we to conclude that God does not know what He is doing, and that the nation of Israel completely ruined His plans? Of course not! God is too wise to make plans that will not be fulfilled. Israel did not allow Him to rule, so He overruled. Paul summoned five witnesses, and they all agreed: There is a future for Israel.

When Israel recovers from her “fall” and enters into her “fullness,” the world will experience the riches of God’s grace as never before. When Jesus Christ returns and sits on David’s throne to reign over His kingdom, then Israel will be “reconciled” and “received,” and it will be like a resurrection.

CHAPTER TWELVE

THE PROCESS OF SANCTIFICATION BEGINS



Romans

Process of
Sanctification

Introduction

In Chapter 12, Paul moves from explaining how we are saved to an exhortation for how we should live in light of our salvation. We leave the teaching about **justification** (Chapters 1-8) and move on to the teaching about **sanctification**. The focus of this teaching is still righteousness, but now it will be about living right rather than how we were made right.

UNDERSTANDING THE PROCESS OF “SALVATION”

Justification - Spirit - happens when we are “born again”. This is a one time instantaneous experience that happens the moment a person believes in their heart and confesses Jesus as Lord. In that moment a miracle happens. The Holy Spirit comes and “baptizes” you into Christ. You become a new creation in Christ. You are “JUSTIFIED” before God – just as if you had never sinned! *“For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.”* (2Cor. 5:21) This is the complete salvation of your Spirit.

Sanctification - Soul – happens over time – from the moment you are born again until you go home to be with Jesus. *“...receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls.”* (James 1:21) The soul is your will, mind, emotions, they are saved over time by the renewing of your mind as you receive the Word of God.

Glorification – Flesh – happens when Jesus returns. The body we live in while on earth must be crucified. (Gal. 5:4) One day every believer will get a new body. Those who have died will receive new resurrected bodies. Those who are alive will be caught up to be with Jesus and their bodies will be changed into new glorified bodies. (1Cor. 15:50-55; 1Thes. 4:13-17)

So, “salvation” is a process; we become born again, our souls are sanctified through the Word and one day we will receive new resurrected bodies.

Chapter 12 verse one ties back to the end of chapter 8. It would read like this, ***“Rom. 8:38-39 “For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. ----- Rom. 12:1 Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship.”***

So, Paul is saying nothing in this world or the next world can ever separate you from the love of God, **THEREFORE**, you don’t need to waste your energy on earning God’s mercy...you already have it! What you need to do instead is - work on these things! What things? The way we live our life as Christians – now that we are the righteousness of God. Paul organizes his discussion on these things in a very careful and strategic manner. He breaks it down into 4 areas of living our life –

1. Our relationship with God
2. Our relationship with other believers
3. Our relationship with unbelievers
4. Our relationship to authority (government)

As we go through Paul's teaching on sanctification - remember we're talking about our righteousness lived out before people, not our standing before God. Our righteousness before God is obtained solely by our faith in Christ. When we believe in Jesus, we receive His righteousness by faith, which is a perfect righteousness. That's what Paul spent the first 8 chapters explaining in detail – "righteous by faith". So, from the standpoint of God's judgment, we are already 100% righteous by faith alone. BUT – with the gift of righteousness come responsibility.

Our Relationship with God – Romans 12:1-2

Paul begins his discourse on the process of sanctification with our relationship with God. He tells us that we should purpose in our hearts to reject living in conformity to the ways of the world and instead be transformed to living for the kingdom of God. Paul gives us two keys to accomplish this;

1. Present our bodies a living sacrifice.

Our flesh is not redeemed. When we become born again our Spirit is redeemed. It becomes a new creation, however the flesh cannot be trusted. The Bible tells us to NOT put any confidence in the flesh. No matter how long you have been saved, how much you have prayed, or how sanctified you think you are you can never trust the flesh. So, what do we do with the flesh?

We present it as a "LIVING SACRIFICE". In the Old Testament, an animal sacrifice would be offered upon the altar. Because the animal was dead, it could only be presented to the Lord once as a sacrificial offering. But in the New Testament, we are urged to present

ourselves to God as a *living* sacrifice. Our flesh will crawl off the altar and try to take charge. Everyday even several times a time we have to put our flesh on the altar and crucify it. This simply means renewing our choice to surrender our will to the will of God.

Our spirit is perfect relationship with God. When need to guard that relationship by allowing the flesh to rule and dominate our life. We must present our bodies to God as a living sacrifice

2. Renew our minds.

Our mind is referring to our soul. The soul is our mind, will, and emotions. A major part of the process of sanctification is getting our minds renewed – to get our thinking lined up with the way God thinks. We renew our thinking through God’s Word and then allow that new thinking to generate new righteous behaviors.

What we think leads to what we believe and what we believe leads to how we act. If your thinking is wrong, your believing will be wrong, and if your believing is wrong, your behavior will be wrong.

James 1:21 says, “*...receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls.*” Notice this says when you feed on the Word of God your soul is saved. This is not talking about being born again. This is talking about being transformed as a believer into the likeness of Christ by getting your mind renewed with the Word of God.

Paul says we will be transformed from living like the world by renewing our minds with the Word of God

and we will know exactly what God perfect will is.

Each of the 4 areas builds on the next. If we ignore our personal relationship with God we won't be successful in our relationships with other believers. If we bypass our relationships in the body of Christ we won't have the power to be an effective witness for Christ in the world. The strength we gain from each area prepares and equips us for the next. With that in mind lets move on to the next area.

Our Relationship with Other Believers – Romans 12:3-13

Paul begins his teaching on relationships within the Church with a lesson on spiritual gifts. These are called “Motivational Gifts”. For the purposes of this course what is important to realize is every believer is given a gift for the benefit of the Church – other believers. These are gifts to be used to serve.

Paul says believers should serve in the body based on how they have been gifted. We need to remember these gifts are given by God so we should not think too highly of ourselves. All gifts are important and needed. That means you are important and needed.

Paul's teaching on serving others with our gift provides three important principles that can help guide us with our relationships in the body of Christ.

- The first principle – and probably the most important – is we are not to live as “islands” isolated from other Christians. We need other believers in our life. “*As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another*”. (Proverbs 27:17)

- The second principle – is our relationship in the body must include “serving”. When we serve others it produces spiritual growth. Serving is key to achieving God’s purpose for our life
- The third principle – is we must adopt and maintain an attitude of humility in all our relationships in the body of Christ. All glory goes to God.

So, are relationship with other believers must be built on a foundation of serving other believers with the gift that God has given us and with a spirit of humility. Now Paul moves on with specific instructions on how we are to act. They are listed in verses 9-13. These five verses include 13 commands on how we should relate with one another in the body of Christ.

The list begins with love. This is the God kind of love. It means love that is an action, not a feeling. Love will motivate us to put others first. It is the kind of love that is not selfish or self-serving.

Next Paul says we must hate what is evil and hold on to that which is good. This sounds reasonable and simple, but we still live in the “world” and the world calls evil good and good evil, so this instruction becomes much harder to follow outside the safety of the Church. We see it today more and more, good being called evil and evil good. Not only does the world confuse good and evil believers are often confused. It is important to be part of a strong Bible believing fellowship of believers.

In verse 10 Paul says are relationship with other believers is to be one of brotherly love and our relationship with our brothers and sister in Christ should take priority.

Why? These relationships are for eternity. You may have other relationships – family members, co-workers, etc. but unless they are saved once life on this side of eternity those relationships cease. We should seek for ways to accommodate the needs of both and always walk in love and honor others when possible.

In verse 11 Paul says we should never be lazy but, work hard and serve the Lord enthusiastically. In other words, we are to serve each another with a consistent effort and earnest desire for the ultimate purpose of serving Christ and we are to do it in the right spirit. Our service is to be directed toward the Lord, not people or projects. If we are serving in the church for recognition, position, reward, etc. we aren't serving for the right reasons.

In verse 12 Paul adds rejoicing in hope, persevering in tribulation and devoted to prayer.

- Hope - When the Bible speaks of our “hope,” it's always referring to our expectation that we will be resurrected. Resurrection from the dead is the hope of Christianity.
- Persevere in tribulation – what does Paul mean? As believers we will have encounter trials and tribulations in this world. Jesus said so. (Jn. 16:33) BUT, we will overcome because Jesus overcame. Mature believers don't quit or give up.
- Pray – regardless of circumstance keep praying. Part of growing as a believer is the development of our prayer life.

Lastly, in verse 13 he tells us we should be giving to the needs of the church. Part of our responsibility as a believer is helping support the church.

This completes Paul's exhortation on how we should relate with other believers. We are to serve the church and to interrelate with our brothers and sisters in Christ in way that honors them and God.

Our Relationship with Unbelievers – Romans 12:14-21

Successful relationships with unbelievers begins by understanding they are not our enemies...they are our mission. Verses 14-21 explains how we should respond to unbelievers. Every instruction in this list is directed at enhancing our mission of winning the lost for Christ.

We must remember we're not better people than the world are. We didn't find Christ because we were smarter, nicer or more deserving. God gave us grace while we were still His enemy just like everyone else. We must guard against becoming judgmental towards the lost.

Paul tells us to set aside our prejudices against unbelievers and live among them, showing a true appreciation for their life's circumstances. Being at peace with all men is our goal because it furthers our mission in bringing the Gospel to the world. We can't witness to the world for Christ if we are embroiled in conflicts with the world, but at the same time, we can't be effective witnesses if we don't stand for something different than the world stands for.

Preserving our witness for Christ will sometimes lead to unavoidable conflicts that are outside our control. We are bound by scripture and by our conscience to do what's right before God. We cannot compromise our faith. As we hold to our witness, we may spark a conflict with the unbelieving world.

Paul began these instructions by reminding us that unbelievers are naturally opposed to us and our mission. It is likely they will persecute us, the righteous. The natural state of an unbeliever's heart is to oppose God and His word and therefore to oppose God's people.

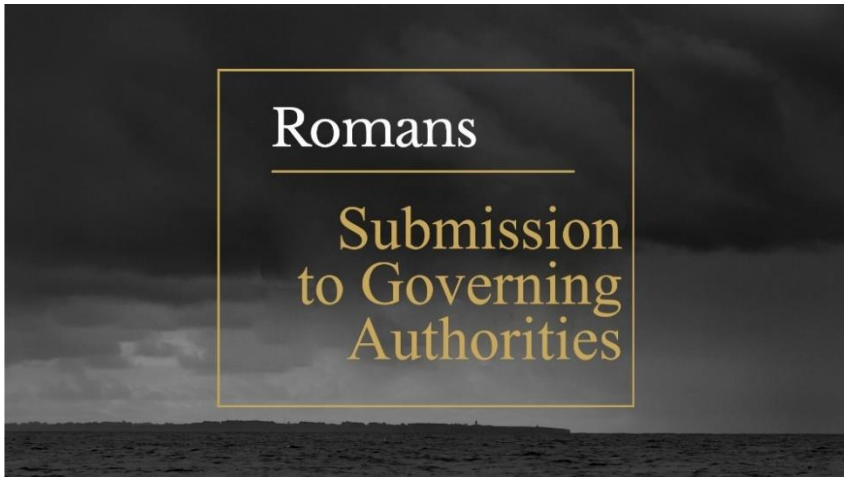
Jesus warned His disciples of this in John 15:20, *“Remember the word that I said to you: ‘A servant is not greater than his master.’ If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you;...”* We need to anticipate their opposition and use it as opportunity to do something they don't expect.

So, what are we suppose to do? When they persecute us, we bless them, loving them despite their hatred. Bless them in this way and watch the effect it has on their receptiveness to the Gospel. Paul is telling us how to conduct ourselves in ways that keep avenues open for reaching people with the truth of Jesus.

Finally, Paul warns us in verse 21 not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good. Doing what's right in the sight of all men cannot become an excuse for participating in the world's sin. As we engage in the unbelieving world hoping to win some for Christ, be careful they don't pull you down.

CHAPTER 13

SUBMISSION TO GOVERNING AUTHORITIES



Introduction

Paul continues his teaching on sanctification in chapter 13. He has been sharing how as believers we are to live right. In previous chapters Paul explained how we become right with God – by faith in Jesus. So, now that we are right, we need to live right. Learning to live right is a process of growing spiritually, a big part of that process is the different relationships we have as believers. Paul has been explaining how we should relate with 1) God, 2) with other believers, 3) with those who are not saved, and now 4) he is going to talk about our relationship with government.

Our Relationship to Authority - Government

As Christians our citizenship is no longer of this world. We are now part of the Kingdom of God. Unfortunately, Christians have misunderstood this truth and used it as a license to disobey authority on earth. They reason since we have overcome the world and have a different eternal future than the rest of society, we then are not under obligation to respect society's rules. These views are wrong and unhelpful to the Church's mission. So, Paul explains the proper view of our relationships with the authorities in place within the cultures that we live in in this world.

Beginning with verse 1 Paul clearly and unequivocally states as Christians we are to be subject to governing authorities. Government is instituted by God and for a purpose. The essential role and purpose of government is to exercise justice. Governing authority is now responsible for executing judgment upon those who do wrong. (vs.4)

Government has the potential to bring both great benefits and unparalleled risks for society. In the best situations those in power will ensure peaceful and just coexistence for

everyone, but in the worst cases, government becomes an instrument for evil hearts to oppress society. In practice, most governments fall somewhere in between these two extremes.

So, how does a Christian properly submit to the government? What about ungodly governments and leaders? Should we pay taxes?

First, Paul starts out by saying as Christians we should seek every opportunity to obey those in authority. We are to respect and obey government as an instrument of God for the sake of righteousness. In fact, in verse 2 he says those who rebel will bring judgment on themselves. *(Paul is referring to judgment by civil authorities on earth, not an eternal condemnation of our soul. He's making the obvious point that the Christian who makes a habit of rebelling against governing authorities will suffer the penalty of civil law.)*

Second, not everyone in authority is legitimate. There are many examples in the Bible where authority is deemed illegitimate or in rebellion against God's divine will. Paul doesn't say authorities represent God, just that they have an appointed role in God's plan. So, the logical question is, when do we have liberty to disobey the governing authorities? We only disobey authority when government demands we disobey God's principles and even then, we willingly submit to the consequences of disobedience. Our supreme duty is to obey God. Since God tells us to also obey human laws, we should. But, when they come in conflict, we are to *"obey God rather than men."* (Acts 5:29)

2 Specific Examples

1. Daniel prayed when the government said not to pray. (Daniel 6)
2. Peter & John spoke the name of Jesus even when the government said not to speak the name of Jesus. (Acts 5)

Resisting God and resisting what God has ordained are two different things. Paul has chosen to be very precise in his wording in Romans 13. If he meant to say people are resisting God if they resist authority, he would have said that. Instead, he said that those who resist authority are resisting what God ordained or put in order. God may have established the leaders of Judah but they rebelled against God. At that point people must resist that which God ordained because people corrupted it.

There is a day coming when Jesus will rule and reign. In that day, we will have a perfect government and perfect ruler with a perfect law. In the meantime, we have human government with all its flaws. God raises up imperfect rulers to accomplish His will and we submit to these rulers because we have complete faith in God.

We trust that God can achieve His good and perfect will using ungodly and wicked men. As Christians we are to maintain a heart inclined to obey government, not one seeking to find excuse for disobedience. Paul did not start out looking for exceptions that permit us to disobey authority, but instead began with the rule: *obey the government*.

Paying Taxes

What about paying taxes? Paul sets the issue to rest quickly in verse 6 saying we must pay taxes. This should come as no surprise, since it's like any other law. When in doubt, refer to Rule #1: obey the government.

Finally, in verses 8-11 we are told to show love to everyone and we should do so expecting nothing in return. When we walk in love we protect Christ's reputation and honor among all people.

Paul ends this chapter with a final argument that's part exhortation and part warning. He tells us that Jesus return is near and in light of that truth he gives us 3 admonitions:

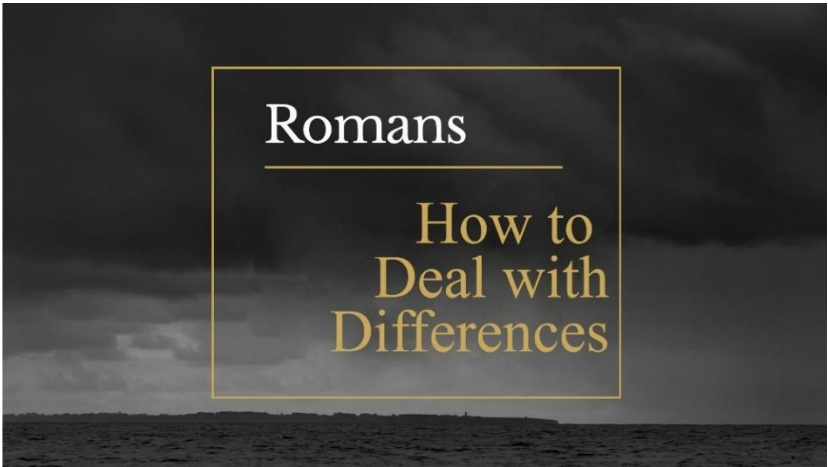
1. Wake up vs. 11 – don't be caught unaware.
2. Clean up vs. 13 – don't be found in dirty garments
put on righteousness
3. Grow up vs. 14 – become more like Jesus.

Chapter 12 and 13 could be summed up in this simple statement –

“Right relationships mean right living!”

CHAPTER 14

Embracing Differences with Grace and Humility



Introduction

Chapter 14 explains how we are to love one another while living out the freedom we have in Christ. Paul encourages us to consider everything we do as if we are doing it for the Lord. He instructs or challenges us to live in a way that leads to peace and mutual edification within the body of Christ.

We are not to condemn or judge the behavior of those who maybe weaker in faith, but we should be fully convinced of what is acceptable in our own minds, as everything that does not come from faith is sin.

We will need much wisdom, love, maturity, and humility in order to know how to exercise our liberty in many situations. We should be happy to exercise our liberty in ways (and contexts) where no harm is caused to a brother who differs with us, but we should also be willing not to do things that may cause my brother to stumble” (1 Cor. 8:13).

Romans 14 does not say that Christians should refrain from judging a believer who is engaging in obvious sin. Paul is simply explaining how as a Christian we can and should balance the freedom we have in Christ with our responsibility to be sensitive to others.

The problem which precipitated this chapter was the tension between Gentile and Jewish believers in the church of Rome. Before conversion the Jews tended to be legalistic and the pagans tended to be immoral.

Remember, this chapter is addressed to sincere followers of Jesus. It is not addressing or referring to carnal believers

(cf. 1 Cor. 3:1).

The result of these difference was creating disunity within the church. Disunity has always been a major problem with God's people. Even the Old Testament records the civil wars

and family fights among the people of Israel, and almost every local church mentioned in the New Testament had divisions to contend with.

Unfortunately, we continue to have similar problems today with many gray areas of life that are not clearly right or wrong to every believer. Some activities we know are wrong because the Bible clearly condemns them. Other activities we know are right because the Bible clearly commands them.

Romans 14 teaches us the need to accept and not judge those with whom we differ on matters of *opinion*. Some have tried to expand the scope of this chapter to include matters of *faith*. However, we are not to tolerate departures from the faith (cf. Jude 3; Galatians 1:6-9; 2:3-5). Yet on matters of *opinion*, we need to be sure we understand and apply what Paul wrote in this chapter

Many decisions in the Christian life don't come with absolute, yes-or-no, one-size-fits-all answers. On major issues, God's Word is clear. But on less important subjects, Christians might find it necessary to agree to disagree. How to live out that kind of unity is the focus of Paul's comments here. The context of Romans 14 is about matters of opinion in which no sin is involved. In these cases, neither opinion is wrong – either the “more strict” view or the “less strict” one.

In this chapter Paul gives us some guidance and clarification on how believers can disagree on nonessentials and still maintain unity in the church. He gives us three important observations -

1. First – Accept One Another (14:1-12)

Paul gives us four reasons why we should accept and welcome believer who we may not agree with –

a) God has received us (vv. 1-3).

Because God has accepted us, we should accept others. God accepts us as we are. It is not our place to decide the requirements for acceptance in the church family; only the Lord can do this. To set up man-made restrictions on the basis of personal prejudices (or even convictions) is to go beyond the Word of God. In every church there are weak and strong believers. The strong understand spiritual truth and practice it, but the weak have not yet grown into that level of maturity and liberty. The weak must not condemn the strong and call them unspiritual. The strong must not despise the weak and call them immature. God has received both the weak and the strong; therefore, they should accept one another.

b) The Lord makes us able to stand (v. 4).

Our success in the Christian life does not depend on the opinions or attitudes of other Christians. God is Judge, and He is able to make us stand. Paul points out we are “servants” and as such we should be busy working for the lord. People who are focused on building the kingdom and winning souls to Christ have more important things to do than to investigate and judge the lives of other saints! God is our source and the one who sustains and keeps all of us – weak and strong alike.

c) Jesus Christ is Lord of both weak and strong (vv. 5—9).

No Christian has the right to “play God” in other Christian’s lives. We can pray, advise, and even admonish, but we are not to take the place of God.

Whenever we become critical of other believers practices and actions (that is for things that are not essential or forbidden by the Word) we exalt ourself in to the place of lord. The church is divided and weak because we don't allow Jesus to be Lord. So, Paul reminds us of our union with Christ: "Whether we live, therefore, or die, we are the Lord's" (see Rom. 4:8). Our first responsibility is to the Lord. If Christians would go to the Lord in prayer instead of going *to* their brother with criticism, there would be stronger fellowship in our churches.

- d) **It is Jesus Christ who is Judge (vv. 10—12).** Paul asked the weak Christian, "Why are you judging your brother?" Then he asked the strong Christian, "Why are you despising your brother?" Both strong and weak must stand at the judgment seat of Christ, they will **NOT** judge each other—they will be judged by the Lord. We need to guard against becoming judge of others we disagree with. When Christ is truly Lord we will trust and permit Him to deal with His own servants as He decides.

2. Second, Do What brings peace and helps others (14:13—23)

If we stopped with Paul's first observation it might give us the impression that Christians are to just leave each other alone and let the weak remain weak, but Paul's second observation moves to our relationship with one another as brothers in the Lord. His first instruction was from the perspective of "master-servant". However, if we walk by love, we will seek to build each other up in the faith. In next several verse Paul explains how.

- a) Understand how are actions affect each other (vv. 13-15). We can cause others to stumble, grieve others, or even destroy others.
- b) Learn to stay focused on the majors and not the minors.
- c) Realize we need to help each other grow (spiritually).
- d) Don't try and force our "OPINIONS" on others.

We can cause others to stumble, grieve others, or even destroy others. Paul was *speaking* of the way the strong Christian can affect the weak Christian. Paul dealt with a similar problem in I Corinthians 8-9, where the question was, "*Should Christians eat meat that has been offered to idols in heathen temples?*" Here he pointed out that knowledge and love must work together. "Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up" (1 Cor. 8:1 NIY). The strong Christian has spiritual knowledge, but if he does not practice love, his knowledge will hurt the weak Christian. Knowledge must be balanced by love. Knowledge plus love helps the weak person grow strong.

"There is nothing unclean of itself," Paul wrote (Rom. 14:14). No foods are unclean, no days are unclean, no people are unclean. What something hon to a person determines its quality. The issue is not "How does it affect me?" so much as "If I do this, how will it affect my brother?" Will it make him stumble? Will it grieve him or even destroy him by encouraging him to sin? Is it really worth it to harm a brother just so I can enjoy some food? No!

Christians must have priorities (vv. 16—18). Like the Pharisees of old, we Christians have a way of majoring on the minor things (Math. 23:23—24). I have seen churches divided over matters that were really insignificant when compared with the vital things of the Christian faith. I have heard of

churches being split over such minor matters as the location of the piano in the auditorium and the serving of meals on Sundays. “The kingdom of God is not meat and drink” (Rom. 14:17). “Food does not bring us near to God; we are no worse if we do not eat, and no better if we do” (1 Cor. 8:8)

It’s not the externals but the eternals that must be first in our lives: righteousness, peace, and joy. Where do they come from? The Holy Spirit of God at work in our lives (see Rom. 5). If each believer would yield to the Spirit and major in a godly life, we would not have Christians fighting with each other over minor matters. Spiritual priorities are essential to harmony in the church.

Christians must help each other grow (vv. 19—21). Both the strong believer and the weak believer need to grow. The strong believer needs to grow in love; the weak believer needs to grow in *knowledge*. So long as a brother is weak in their faith, we must lovingly deal with it in love. If we are walking in love, we will our brother to grow. It is wrong for a Christian to remain immature, having a weak conscience.

An illustration from the home might help us better understand what is involved. When a child comes into a home, everything has to change. Mother and Father are careful not to leave the scissors on the chair or anything dangerous within reach. But as the child matures, it is possible for the parents to adjust the rules of the house and deal with him in a more adult fashion. It is natural for a child to stumble when he is learning to walk. But if an adult constantly stumbles, we know something is wrong.

Young Christians need the kind of fellowship that will protect them and encourage them to grow. But we cannot treat them like babies all their lives! Older Christians must exercise

love and patience and be careful not to cause them to stumble. Younger Christians need to "grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 3: 18).

As they mature in their faith, they then can help other younger believers to grow. The weak must learn from the strong and the strong must love the weak. The result will be peace and maturity to the glory of God.

3. Third, do not force your opinions on others (22-23).

There are certain truths that all Christians must accept because they are the foundation for the faith. But areas of honest disagreement must not be made a test of fellowship. If you have a sincere conviction from God about a matter, keep it to yourself and do not try to force everybody else to accept it. No Christian can "borrow" another Christian's convictions and be honest in his Christian life. Unless he can hold them and practice them "by faith," he is sinning. Even if a person's convictions are immature, he must never violate his conscience. This would do great damage to his spiritual life.

For example, the mature Christian knows that an idol is nothing. But a young Christian, just converted out of pagan idolatry, would still have fears about idols. If the strong believer forced the new Christian to eat meat sacrificed to an idol, the younger Christian would experience problems in his conscience that would only further weaken it (see 1 Cor. 8-9).

Conscience is strengthened by knowledge, but knowledge must be balanced by love; otherwise, *it* tears down instead of building up. The truth that all foods are clean (Rom. 14:14, 20) will not of itself make a Christian grow.

When truth is taught in an atmosphere of love, the younger Christian can grow and develop a strong conscience. Believers

may hold different convictions about many matters, but they are to hold them in love.

SUMMARY

At the heart of Romans 14, Paul teaches that unity doesn't require uniformity. It's possible to have deeply different convictions yet remain closely connected by honoring the essence of our faith in Christ. This message is particularly relevant today, as Christians navigate diverse views and backgrounds. It encourages a community where we can openly express and uphold our beliefs without alienating those who may differ. True Christian community, according to Paul, isn't about avoiding differences, but about cultivating a spirit of love and understanding that transcends them.

All Christians should keep disagreements about non-essential convictions and practices between themselves and God. Instead of using their freedom, or a holier-than-thou attitude, to "rub it in the face" of those who disagree, they should humbly choose not to offend a brother or sister in Christ.

A key component of this teaching is the fact that we have no place to judge each other. A judgment day is coming for Christians when Christ will examine all our works. He will determine which of our deeds were worthwhile and which were worthless. Though our salvation in Christ is secure, each of us will give an account of ourselves to God for how we spent our days. We will not be judged according to the preferences of other believers (Romans 14:10–12).

Paul wrote, "*So then we pursue the things which make for peace and the building up of one another*" (Romans 14:19). Let us unite around God's word and not divide on other matters.

CHAPTER 15

THE POWER OF UNITY IN CHRIST



Romans

The God
of
Hope

Introduction

Romans 15 provides powerful guidance on how Christians should live and serve, unified in purpose and rooted in the example of Christ. Paul speaks directly to the Roman church about putting others first, understanding that the good news extends to all people, his mission to the Gentiles, and his hope to visit Rome. Let's look at these four key themes.

1. VV.1-6 Pleasing Others, Not Ourselves

Paul opens Romans 15 by calling Christians to bear with the weaknesses of others, prioritizing their good and growth in faith over personal preferences. This selflessness builds up the church and fosters unity among believers.

In **verse 3**, Paul presents Christ as the ultimate example of selflessness, reminding the Romans, “For even Christ did not please Himself.” Jesus, who had every right to seek His own comfort and recognition, instead chose the path of service and sacrifice. He accepted us even at our worst, bearing our burdens and willingly taking the consequences of our sin upon Himself.

Christ's example is central here. He did not come to be served but to serve, even when it meant suffering. Paul's message is that if Christ, the Son of God, could accept us unconditionally—despite our failures and weaknesses—then we, too, should put aside our personal desires to support others in their faith journeys. Paul's call to “please our neighbors for their good” is an invitation to adopt the same love-driven attitude that Christ demonstrated toward us.

Paul emphasizes that selfless love builds unity, which in turn glorifies God. This mirrors Jesus' approach—He didn't please Himself but rather sought to do the Father's will, even to the point of sacrificing His life for others. When believers

follow Christ's example by putting others first, they create a culture of support and mutual encouragement.

Illustration: Imagine an older sibling who, despite being skilled at a game, takes time to teach a younger sibling, patiently helping them grow and improve rather than focusing on their own game. Likewise, Paul calls believers to help and encourage those who may be weaker in faith, creating a nurturing environment where all can grow. Just as Christ accepts each of us, we are called to reflect that acceptance toward others, leading to unity and glorifying God.

2. VV. 7-13 -The Good News is for Jews and Gentiles

In these verses, Paul underscores the inclusivity of the gospel. He reminds the Romans that Christ's salvation is not limited to a particular group but is offered to both Jews and Gentiles alike. This was a radical idea for many in the Jewish community, who viewed the Gentiles as outsiders. Paul's message to the Roman church is that, through Christ, the Gentiles are no longer "outsiders" but full members of God's family. This is not just a theological statement but a call for practical unity in the church. Jewish and Gentile believers are to accept one another as family, just as Christ accepted each of them.

This message of inclusion is grounded in the life and ministry of Jesus, who broke down barriers and fulfilled God's promises to all people. Paul reinforces this by saying, "Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God." Here, Paul is calling both Jewish and Gentile believers to embrace one another fully, without prejudice. Paul's teaching is clear: acceptance in Christ is not conditional on background, ethnicity, or former beliefs. Jew and Gentile alike, if they believe, are equally welcomed into the body of Christ.

To support this, Paul quotes passages from the Old Testament to show that God’s plan always included the Gentiles. When Paul declares, “The root of Jesse will spring up, one who will arise to rule over the nations,” he’s affirming that Jesus, the Messiah, is Lord over all people. Paul’s prayer here, for joy, peace, and hope to fill believers through the Holy Spirit, is an invitation to rest in this inclusive, all-encompassing love of God.

Illustration: Picture a house with two rooms divided by a wall, with people gathered in each room. When Christ came, He tore down that wall, creating one large room where everyone could gather together as one family. This is what Paul is communicating to the church in Rome—through Christ, everyone can now come together as one people, with no need for division. The only requirement for acceptance is faith in Christ.

Encouragement in Hope: Paul concludes this section with a powerful prayer that the God of hope will fill believers with joy and peace as they trust in Him. This blessing emphasizes that true unity and hope are made possible by the Holy Spirit, uniting people from all backgrounds into one body in Christ.

3. VV. 14-21 - Paul’s Ministry to the Gentiles

In the next section, Paul reflects on his own ministry to the Gentiles. He describes how God appointed him specifically for this mission, to be a minister of Christ to the Gentiles. Paul isn’t boasting about his accomplishments; instead, he’s acknowledging that it’s by God’s grace that he has been given this task. He sees himself as called by God to bring the gospel to those outside the Jewish community, regarding this mission as a noble and sacred duty.

Paul views his work with the Gentiles as a “priestly duty,”

emphasizing that he is not just a preacher but one who offers the Gentiles as a “sanctified” gift to God. For Paul, this is a calling from God Himself, and he is deeply committed to carrying it out faithfully. He reminds the church in Rome that he has carried out this mission “fully” (verse 19), leaving no part undone in his effort to reach those who haven’t heard the gospel.

Paul’s commitment to this calling isn’t casual; he carefully chose to go to areas where the message of Christ was unknown, intentionally working in new fields. This deliberate approach shows Paul’s humility and respect for others’ ministries. His mission is marked by integrity and a strong sense of purpose, rooted in God’s guidance.

Paul defends his mission with diplomacy, recognizing that some may have questioned his ministry to the Gentiles, Paul diplomatically but firmly defends his calling. He points out that he is not seeking to take credit for others’ work, but rather to break new ground where Christ’s name has not yet been known. By quoting Isaiah 52:15, Paul explains that his mission aligns with prophecy, fulfilling God’s vision of bringing the gospel to the nations.

Paul’s ministry to the Gentiles wasn’t his own ambition; he viewed it as a mission given by God. He describes his work as a “priestly duty” in bringing the Gentiles to God. For Paul, this mission involved not just preaching but helping Gentiles live lives that are “acceptable to God, sanctified by the Holy Spirit.” Paul wants his readers to understand that ministry is not merely about converting others but guiding them to grow in holiness and devotion to God.

This passage reveals Paul’s deep commitment to pioneering work. He is dedicated to reaching people who have never heard of Christ, deliberately choosing places where the gospel hasn’t been preached. Paul saw this as his purpose—to

lay the foundation in new territories for Christ.

Encouragement to the Roman Church:

In verse 14, Paul shares encouraging words about the Roman church, affirming that they are “full of goodness, filled with knowledge and competent to instruct one another.” This commendation is a testament to the church’s maturity and spiritual strength. Though he hasn’t visited them yet, Paul has heard of their faith and is confident in their ability to live out the gospel. These words were not only affirming but likely gave the Roman believers a sense of pride and encouragement, motivating them to continue growing in faith.

Analogy: Imagine an ambassador appointed to introduce two nations that have had limited contact. Paul saw himself as a divine ambassador, building bridges where none had existed before, bringing the Gentiles into the knowledge and love of Christ. His dedication to this mission serves as a model of faithfulness, showing how we too can fulfill our callings with integrity, even if they lead us into unfamiliar or challenging territory.

Paul’s approach was unique because he intentionally sought out places where the gospel hadn’t yet been preached. He wanted to reach those who had no previous knowledge of Christ. This idea of taking the message to uncharted territories reflects Paul’s desire to see the Gentiles experience the fullness of God’s promises. His mission wasn’t simply about building communities; it was about establishing a relationship between those communities and Christ Himself.

4. VV. 22-33 - Paul’s Plan to Visit Rome

Finally, Paul outlines his travel plans and his hope to visit Rome. This wasn’t merely a casual trip; Paul saw his visit as part of his greater mission. He had been longing to visit the

Roman believers and encourage them in their faith. But Paul's plans also included a stop in Jerusalem to deliver a gift from the Gentile churches for the poor in the Jewish community.

Teaching on Fellowship and Partnership: Paul's eagerness to visit Rome reflects his heart for fellowship within the Christian community. He views his relationship with the Roman church as part of a larger, interconnected mission, knowing that mutual support and encouragement are vital for spiritual growth. His visit to Rome isn't just a personal desire but part of his broader calling to serve the global church.

Before going to Rome, however, Paul is committed to delivering a financial gift from the Gentile believers in Macedonia and Achaia to the Jewish Christians in Jerusalem. This act of giving is profound; it demonstrates the Gentiles' appreciation for the Jewish believers who, through the heritage of Israel, made the message of Christ possible for the Gentiles. By supporting the Jerusalem church, the Gentiles affirm their solidarity with their Jewish brothers and sisters, reinforcing that they are now one family in Christ.

Analogy: Think of Paul as an ambassador on a mission, traveling from one country to another, bringing messages of goodwill and solidarity. His journey to Jerusalem with a gift showed the unity of believers across different cultures and backgrounds. It was an act of love and support, showing that the Gentile believers were committed to helping their Jewish brothers and sisters in need.

Dependence on Prayer: Aware of the challenges awaiting him in Jerusalem, Paul humbly asks the Roman church to pray for him. He knows that not everyone in Jerusalem is receptive to his ministry and that he may face opposition. His request for prayer highlights his vulnerability and dependence on the support of other believers. For Paul, prayer is essential—it unites believers across distances, binds

them together in purpose, and invokes God's strength in times of need.

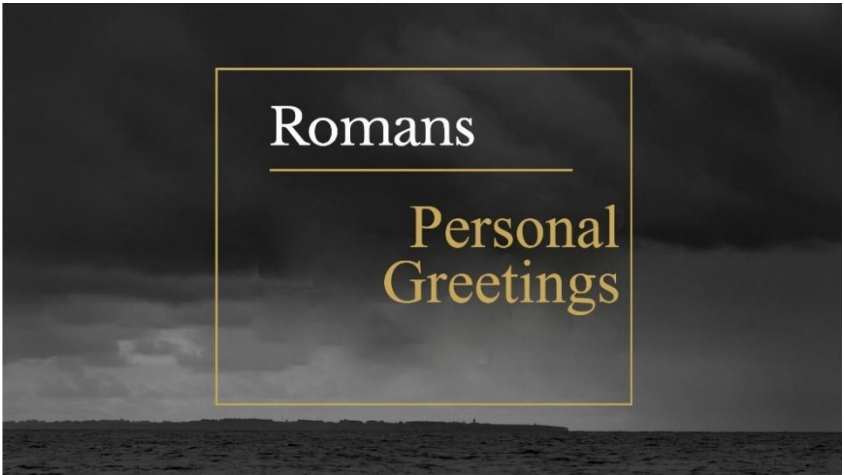
Paul's mission to visit Rome is a reminder that Christian life is a journey best walked in fellowship. His plans exemplify how believers can build each other up, even from afar, through encouragement, support, and mutual prayer. His message challenges the Roman church (and us today) to embrace a global view of the gospel, understanding that faith isn't isolated to individual communities but extends across all people and places where Christ is named.

Conclusion

In Romans 15, Paul paints a picture of a life dedicated to God and others. He calls believers to selflessness, unity, and a commitment to sharing the gospel with all people. His passion for spreading the good news to the Gentiles and his desire to unite Jewish and Gentile believers in love and support set a profound example. Through these words, Paul reminds us that our faith isn't just about personal growth but about lifting others up, embracing diversity, and working together to further the kingdom of God. His life demonstrates that even the most ambitious plans, when guided by the Holy Spirit, can lead to meaningful impact and glorify God.

CHAPTER 16

PAUL'S PERSONAL GREETINGS



Introduction

We come to the final chapter of this incredible theological masterpiece that provides us with the clearest and most systematic presentation of Christian doctrine in all the Scriptures. Paul spent the first 8 chapters walking us down the Romans Road, carefully explaining the way to salvation through faith in Jesus Christ. Then Paul spent 3 chapters - 9,10, and 11 revealing to the readers the mystery of God's plan for His people Israel. Paul then takes the next four chapters 12 through 15 to teach us how the church should walk in the light of our salvation. Finally, we come to the final chapter.

In Chapter 16, Paul mentions 36 names, 8 of whom are with him in Corinth and the rest of whom he greets in Rome. He mentions 27 men and 8 women. He also mentions two households and three churches. Most of the names are Gentile, reflecting the growing number of Gentiles in that church.

When you come to a section of Scripture like Romans 16 with its long list of names, it's good to keep in mind, "*All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.*" (2 Timothy 3:16-17)

God inspires these verses for our spiritual profit to equip us for every good work. So rather than skip over them quickly, we need to think about, "What food for my soul is here for me?" You have to dig a bit, but when you do you come up with some nuggets that make the search worthwhile.

Paul isn't deliberately teaching here. Rather, he greets his friends in Rome and sending greetings from some who were with him in Corinth. But the Holy Spirit inspired Paul to write these greetings to teach us.

So, what is the significance of this? First, it shows that Paul was a friend-maker as well as a soul-winner. He did not try to live an isolated life; he had friends in the Lord, and he appreciated them. They helped him personally and in his ministry. Second, the church is made up of ordinary, diverse people who know the Lord, grow in Him, serve Him, and love one another.

I have observed that those whom God uses the most are people who make friends. They multiplied themselves in the lives of their friends and associates in the ministry. While there may be a place or a season of to draw away to be alone with God, it is my belief that most of us need each other. We are sheep, and sheep flock together.

In this chapter Paul emphasizes the power of personal connections and unity in the body of Christ. It is a testament to the many unsung heroes who worked with Paul in the spreading of the gospel. It also serves as a warning to maintain unity and stay alert to divisive influences. The final doxology serves as a reminder that it is God who strengthens us, as we strive to follow the gospel and the proclamation of Jesus Christ. Let's take a look at this chapter as we break it down into four major points.

1. VV. 1-16: Personal Greetings and Commendations

In vv. 1-16, Paul offers personal greetings to various individuals and households in the Roman church. These greetings provide a rare glimpse into the relationships and roles within the early Christian community.

Paul's greetings are more than polite acknowledgments; they reflect the interconnectedness of the body of Christ. The church in Rome included a wide variety of people: men, women, Jews, Gentiles, wealthy individuals, and slaves. By addressing people from diverse backgrounds, Paul emphasizes the unity and equality believers share in Christ.

Paul begins with a commendation of **Phoebe**, whom he refers to as a “servant” (or deaconess) of the church in Cenchreae. Phoebe was likely the letter’s carrier, entrusted with delivering it to the Romans, and Paul’s words indicate his high regard for her service. Paul’s greetings also recognize others such as **Priscilla and Aquila, Andronicus and Junia, and Rufus**. Each mention often includes a specific note of appreciation for their faith, hard work, or significant contributions to the church, showing that he values the distinct roles each person plays.

Illustration: Think of a team made up of players from different backgrounds and with various skill sets. Just as each member contributes uniquely to the team’s success, each individual in the Roman church played a specific role in building up the church community. Paul’s greetings are like a coach’s call-out to each team member, recognizing their value and contribution.

Notably, Paul’s list includes many women, such as Phoebe, Priscilla, Mary, and Junia, showing their respected roles in the early church. He praises their labor and leadership, illustrating the inclusive nature of the gospel, which honors both men and women as co-laborers in Christ.

By greeting each person by name, Paul underscores that the church is not merely an institution but a family in which each member is known and valued.

2. VV. 17-20: Warning of Divisions and Stumbling Blocks

In these verses, Paul shifts from greetings to a serious warning. He urges the Roman believers to watch out for those who cause divisions or put stumbling blocks in the way of others. His warning emphasizes the importance of unity and doctrinal integrity within the church.

Paul’s concern is that false teachings or divisive attitudes

could disrupt the unity of the church. These “divisive people” might introduce teachings that deviate from the gospel message or sow discord among believers. Paul warns that such people do not serve Christ but their own interests, using “smooth talk” to deceive the unsuspecting. His directive is clear: the church should avoid such individuals to protect the integrity and peace of the community.

This warning is not just a practical directive, but a theological reminder of the spiritual threat posed by division. Paul recognizes that unity is foundational to a thriving Christian community, and anything that undermines that unity ultimately undermines the church’s witness to the world.

Analogy: Imagine a garden where each plant relies on the others for stability and growth. If weeds are allowed to grow, they can choke out healthy plants. Paul’s warning is like a gardener urging vigilance against weeds (division and false teachings) that could damage the health of the garden (the church). By avoiding these harmful influences, the church can grow and thrive in unity.

Encouragement and Hope in Victory: Paul concludes this warning with a message of hope, saying that “the God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet.” This statement reassures the church that, though they may face challenges, God will ultimately protect them and overcome any force that threatens their unity. Paul’s words echo the promise of Genesis 3:15, in which God promises to crush the serpent’s head—a symbolic reminder of the ultimate victory believers have through Christ.

3. VV. 21-24: Additional Greetings

Paul then includes greetings from his co-workers and companions. In these verses, he mentions people like **Timothy, Lucius, Jason, and Sosipater**—individuals who

are well-known within the Christian community. These greetings show the broader network of early Christian leaders and the camaraderie among them.

Significance of Additional Greetings: These names might seem like a simple list of people, but they reflect the deep bonds formed in the early church. Paul and his companions supported each other's ministries, prayed together, and often traveled as a team, sharing the gospel and building up churches. Including these greetings reminds the Roman church that they are not alone; they are part of a larger family that spans cities and regions, united by their shared mission and faith.

Illustration: This network of greetings is like receiving a letter with notes from mutual friends, reminding us that we belong to a community that stretches beyond our immediate surroundings. The early church was interconnected, supporting one another across distances, like a tightly woven net that upheld and strengthened all its members.

Role of Tertius: In verse 22, we also see a unique note from **Tertius**, who wrote down Paul's words. Paul often used an amanuensis (scribe) to pen his letters, and Tertius takes this moment to add his own greeting to the Roman church. This small detail highlights the collaborative nature of Paul's ministry and the personal touch behind each letter. It's a reminder that each person, even behind the scenes, contributes to the work of the gospel.

4. VV. 25-27: Benediction and Doxology

The closing benediction is the longest one Paul ever wrote. It reflects his special ministry to the Gentiles. "The mystery" has to do with God's program of uniting believing Jews and Gentiles in the one body, the church (see Eph. 3). This was Paul's special message. It was because of this

message that the Judaizers persecuted Paul because they wanted to maintain Jewish privileges. Both Jews and Gentiles in the Roman churches needed to know what God's program was.

Some of this Paul had explained in Romans 9—11. Christians are established by the truth, which explains why Paul wrote this letter: to explain God's plan of salvation to Christians so they would be established, and so they would share the truth with the lost. After all, we cannot really share with others something we do not have ourselves. This means that our own study of Romans should make us more stable in the faith, and more excited to share Christ with others. And the result? "To God only wise, be glory through Jesus Christ forever."

Teaching on God's Glory and the Mystery of the Gospel: Paul's doxology celebrates the "mystery" that has now been revealed. This mystery, hidden for ages, is the revelation of salvation through Jesus Christ—a plan that includes both Jews and Gentiles. This theme, woven throughout the book of Romans, is the message that God's grace is available to all people, and it is now fully revealed in Christ. The "obedience of faith" is a call for both Jews and Gentiles to respond to God's grace with trust and allegiance to Christ.

Emphasis on God's Eternal Wisdom: Paul's final words underscore the wisdom and glory of God. He praises God as the one who is able to "establish" believers according to the gospel, meaning God is the one who strengthens and sustains them. This benediction serves as a reminder that the work of salvation is God's alone; it is by His power, wisdom, and love that we are brought into His family.

Illustration: Imagine reading a novel where a mystery slowly unfolds, and in the final pages, everything comes

together in a surprising and satisfying resolution. For Paul, the gospel is this ultimate “reveal”—a divine mystery that, once hidden, is now fully known. The ending of Romans serves as this resolution, tying together the themes of God’s righteousness, justice, and mercy with the triumphant message that salvation is now available to all through Christ.

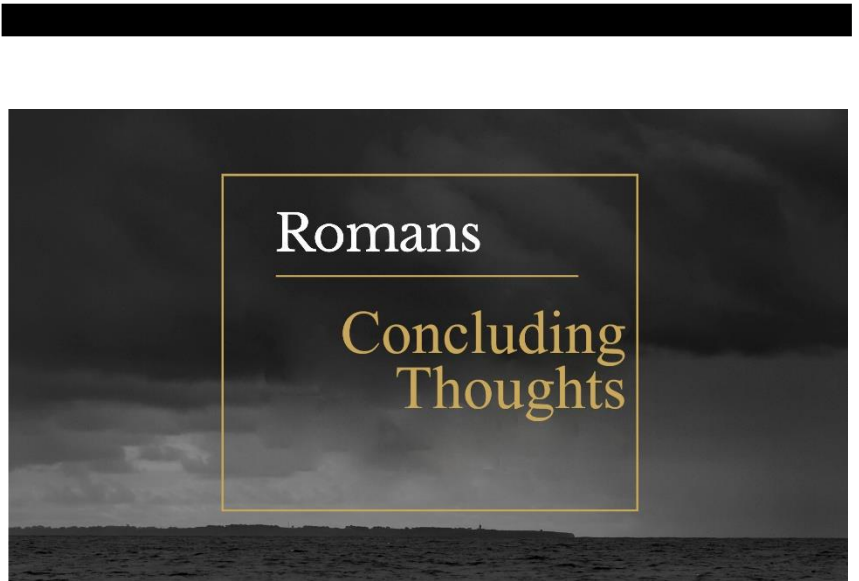
Application of Doxology: By ending with praise, Paul models an attitude of worship and reverence. For the Roman church, this doxology would serve as a final reminder that their faith journey is grounded in God’s grace, established by His power, and ultimately directed toward His glory. It’s an invitation for believers to live in gratitude, awe, and commitment to the God who has made such a wonderful salvation known.

Conclusion

Romans 16 serves as a powerful conclusion to Paul’s letter. Through his greetings, Paul demonstrates the relational and inclusive nature of the early church. His warning against divisions highlights the importance of unity and doctrinal integrity. The additional greetings reveal a broader network of support and community, while the doxology points believers to the majesty and mystery of God’s plan in Christ. Together, these elements remind us that the church is not just an organization, but a family of believers committed to supporting each other and bringing glory to God.

Paul’s words in Romans 16 challenge us today to embrace a selfless, welcoming faith, to protect the unity of our communities, to value each member’s contribution, and to live with a sense of reverent awe at the mystery and grace of the gospel. Through Christ, God’s plan is revealed, and in Him, we are called to participate in a family that spans generations and nations—one that ultimately brings praise and glory to God.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS



As we close this journey through Paul's letter to the Romans, we reach the heart of his message—a message that is both universal and profoundly personal. Romans isn't just an ancient letter; it's a blueprint for the Christian life, addressing our fundamental questions about faith, salvation, and how we're meant to live. Let's reflect on Paul's main points, key verses, and what he aimed to accomplish with this remarkable book.

The Grand Themes of Romans

Paul's message can be understood through several core themes, each building on the last like layers of a foundation. He moves from the brokenness of humanity to the breathtaking gift of salvation through Jesus Christ, leading us into the mystery of God's grace and the call to live transformed lives. Here are the main themes:

1. **The Universality of Sin (Romans 1-3):** Paul doesn't hold back in his opening chapters, tackling humanity's universal need for salvation. In one of the book's most famous verses, he declares, "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). This diagnosis sets the stage for the good news of the gospel.
2. **Justification by Faith (Romans 4-5):** With Abraham as his example, Paul introduces the concept of faith as the key to being justified—declared righteous—before God. This is a righteousness that is given, not earned. "Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Romans 5:1).
3. **Victory over Sin (Romans 6-8):** Paul guides us into the reality of a new life in Christ. We are no longer slaves to sin but are given a new identity and purpose. Romans 8 is a crescendo, proclaiming that nothing can separate us from God's love: "For I am convinced that neither death nor life...nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God" (Romans 8:38-39).

4. **God's Sovereign Plan (Romans 9-11):** Paul wrestles with the mystery of God's relationship with Israel and the Gentiles. God's promises remain true, and His purpose is to reconcile all people to Himself. "For from him and through him and for him are all things. To him be the glory forever!" (Romans 11:36).
5. **Practical Christian Living (Romans 12-16):** Paul brings theology into everyday life, urging believers to "offer [their] bodies as a living sacrifice" (Romans 12:1). He calls for humility, love, unity, and faithfulness in all relationships, ending with a warm and personal greeting to his fellow believers.

Paul's Objectives for Writing Romans

Paul's intentions in writing to the Romans go beyond delivering a theological treatise. He has a pastoral heart, and his primary objectives for writing can be summarized as follows:

1. **Clarifying the Gospel Message:** Paul wanted to ensure that the Roman church understood the heart of the gospel—that salvation is by faith in Christ, not by works. He meticulously explains how faith in Jesus brings a right standing with God.
2. **Unifying the Church:** With a diverse congregation of Jews and Gentiles, Paul aimed to promote unity within the Roman church. He highlights how both groups are part of God's redemptive plan, encouraging them to embrace one another.
3. **Guiding Christian Conduct:** Paul lays out the ethical implications of faith in Christ, providing a roadmap for how to live in a way that honors God and reflects His love to others. The "living sacrifice" he describes is a life transformed, marked by love, humility, and service.
4. **Preparing for His Visit:** Paul hoped to visit Rome on his way to Spain and saw this letter as a prelude to his arrival. He wanted to foster a relationship with the Roman believers, laying a foundation for mutual encouragement and support.

Embracing the Gospel Today

As Paul concludes, so do we—with a call to action. Romans isn't just history; it's a living message. It's a book that invites us to consider what the gospel means for us personally, how we can live it out, and how we can share it with a world in need. Like the believers in Rome, we are called to live lives transformed by grace, to seek unity, and to carry this message to those around us.

Romans has given us both rich theology and practical wisdom, and through it all, Paul's message rings clear: in Christ, we are free, forgiven, and loved beyond measure. It's up to us now to carry this truth forward, living lives that echo the words Paul penned to the Romans long ago. And as we do, we participate in God's grand story—a story that is as alive today as it was then.

Key Verses to Remember

Throughout Romans, Paul provides several memorable verses that encapsulate his teachings. Here are a few worth reflecting on:

- **Romans 1:16:** “For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes.”
- **Romans 3:23-24:** “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.”
- **Romans 5:8:** “But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”
- **Romans 6:23:** “For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”
- **Romans 8:1:** “Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.”
- **Romans 12:2:** “Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.”

The Book of Romans



Righteousness by Faith

The book of Romans stands as the clearest and most systematic presentation of Christian doctrine in all the Scriptures. The apostle Paul reveals the mystery of the Gospel and covers several key New Testament insights.

KEY TOPICS COVERED

- The gospel shows God's righteousness
- Righteousness Provided by faith not the law or works
- God's wrath against sin is just
- God has a plan of salvation
- Our faith brings hope
- God provides for Israel and the Gentiles
- Paul gives instructions for everyday living

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