

Romans 1:1–7

Paul's apostleship and commission

(*The Lutheran Study Bible*, page 1908)

Look

Verse 4 “*According to the Spirit of holiness*”—The ESV interprets *Spirit* as the Holy Spirit. The meaning would be that the Holy Spirit was instrumental in raising Jesus from the dead. If the word *spirit* is used (without the capital letter) it would refer to Jesus’ spirit, that is, his new and glorified existence he had after he rose from death. This seems to make better sense in the context. The contrast then is between Jesus’ humility and his exaltation.

Verse 5 “*Nations*”—This is a Jewish term referring to all non-Jews.

“*The obedience of faith*”—This means obeying God when he tells us to believe in his Son for salvation. It means giving up our own righteousness and submitting to Christ’s righteousness.

Discuss

1. Examine this section on the basis of the following key words:

- *Paul*
- *servant*
- *Christ*
- *Jesus*
- *set apart*
- *apostle*
- *gospel*

2. In verses 2 and 3, Paul tells us the message he preached to the world. What was that message?

Apply

3. Are you a saint?

4. Could Paul greet us in the same way he greeted the Romans?

Paul introduced himself and his message and wished the Romans God’s grace and peace.

Romans 1:8–17

Paul wants to preach the powerful gospel at Rome

(*The Lutheran Study Bible*, pages 1908–1909)

Look

- Verses 10, 13 “*Now at last . . . have been prevented*”—Paul had wanted to visit the Christians in Rome, but his duties in Asia Minor and Greece had kept him from doing that. He wrote this letter from Corinth. From there he planned to go to Jerusalem and then sail to Rome. He wrote this letter to ground the Romans in the faith so he could use them as a base for mission work in Spain.
- Verse 13 “*Gentiles*”—Paul’s main work was to preach the gospel to non-Jewish people.
- Verse 14 “*Greeks and to barbarians . . . the wise and to the foolish*”—Just as there are Jews and Gentiles, Greeks divided the world into Greeks (wise) and barbarians (foolish).
- Verse 16 “*To the Jew first and also to the Greek*”—The Jews were God’s chosen people. Jesus came to call his people to faith, and only secondarily did he give the gospel to Gentiles (although they were sometimes singled out as examples of great faith). Only after Paul preached in the synagogues to Jewish people did he do his main work of preaching the gospel to the Gentiles.

Discuss

1. According to verses 11 and 12, what two things would happen when Paul visited the Romans?
2. According to verses 16 and 17, why is the gospel the power of God for salvation?

Apply

3. When Paul observed the faith and lives of the Roman Christians, he first of all gave thanks to God. How can your congregation apply this example to how it recognizes the contributions (financial and otherwise) of its members?
4. Paul continually prays for the Roman Christians. Why should we follow Paul’s example?
5. Often churches try to gather members by offering something that appeals to the needs in their lives. Why does this miss the mark and depart from Paul’s mission method?

Paul longed to visit the Romans and preach the gospel among them.

Romans 1:18–25

The wrath of God is being revealed in our world: Part 1

(*The Lutheran Study Bible*, pages 1909–1910)

Look

Verse 20 *“So they are without excuse.”* Paul is speaking about all people. In other words, not just some people reject the truth of God’s existence, all people do this, and therefore all people are without excuse.

Discuss

1. In verses 16 and 17, Paul spoke about the gospel being revealed. He will speak much more about the gospel beginning in the middle of chapter 3. However, he must first speak about something else being revealed. What is this? (verse 18)
2. What sin (Paul calls “ungodliness and unrighteousness”) does God condemn? (verses 18–20)
3. Instead of acknowledging and worshiping the Creator, what do people do? Think about examples of this in Christian societies, and in non-Christian societies. (verses 21–23)
4. Sometimes we look at sin as something people do that deserves God’s judgment. In verses 24 and 25, Paul looks at sin in another way. Explain.

Apply

5. The theory of evolution is one of the main examples of people suppressing the truth, for which God reveals his wrath. What does the theory of evolution do with the evidence of God’s eternal power and divine nature?
6. Sometimes people accuse God of injustice. They say it is not fair for God to condemn people who never had a chance to hear the gospel. Based on Paul’s words in these verses, how would you respond?

God reveals his wrath over people’s suppression of the truth. He gives people over to their sins.

Romans 1:26–32

The wrath of God is being revealed in our world: Part 2

(The Lutheran Study Bible, page 1910)

Discuss

1. In verses 26 and 27, Paul continues to speak of sins that God allows people to fall into because they are committing idolatry. What sins is he talking about here?
2. What are some of the other sins God sends on people because of idolatry?
3. In verses 18–20, we learned that people know God through what he has made. In verse 32, we learn that by nature, people know something else about God. What is that?
4. What do people do with this natural knowledge of right and wrong?

Apply

5. What might be one example of the “due penalty” homosexuals receive for their perversion?
6. Those who support homosexuality claim that when Paul speaks of “lusts of their hearts” and “dishonoring of their bodies,” he is talking about perversions of homosexual sins that go beyond normal homosexuality. Evaluate this interpretation on the basis of Paul’s words.
7. Sometimes Christians stigmatize people given over to homosexual sin. They imagine that this sin is somehow special and beyond God’s forgiveness. What do you think?

The sin of homosexuality and other sins (and their results) serve as punishments for idolatry.

Romans 2:1–16

Doing, not merely hearing, the law is what matters in God's sight

(*The Lutheran Study Bible*, pages 1910, 1912)

Look

Verses 9, 10 *“The Jew first and also the Greek”*—In chapters 1 and 2, Paul has two groups of people in mind. In chapter 1 Paul seems to have the Gentiles in mind. In chapter 2 he seems to have the Jews in mind.

Discuss

1. There are some who are not touched by these sins (described in 1:26, 27) and whose lives are not marred by the penalties attached to them. What do these people often do? (verse 1) What does God say about their attitude? (verses 1–4) When will God punish them? (verse 5)
2. At first glance, in verses 7–11 Paul seems to be teaching work-righteousness. Compare these verses to Matthew 25:31–46. How does Jesus there say the same thing Paul says here?
3. In verses 12 and 13, Paul comes to his main point. What does he want to teach us?
4. The Jewish people possessed God's laws. The Gentiles, however, did not possess God's laws. Or did they? What does Paul tell us in verses 14 and 15?

Apply

5. When someone commits a crime and doesn't feel remorse, what two things might be wrong?
6. What does verse 16 teach us about the sin of hypocrisy?

God will judge all people on the Last Day. Those who have rejected him will be punished.

Romans 2:17–29

What it means to be a Jew at heart

(*The Lutheran Study Bible*, pages 1912–1913)

Look

Verse 24 “*Blasphemed*”—To blaspheme means to say wicked and evil things about God.

Verse 25 “*Circumcision*”—In some respects, this was the main Jewish law. It was the first law a young boy observed. It carried a special meaning. The skin of the male organ was cut away, symbolizing the cutting away of the sinful nature that happens through faith.

Discuss

1. Paul pointedly addresses the Jewish people. What did the Jews claim about themselves? How did their actions negate their claims? (verses 17–23)
2. How does the Old Testament passage Paul quotes answer all the previous questions?
3. How can Gentiles (most of us are Gentiles) become “circumcised” and true Jews?
4. Describe these two phrases and contrast them:
 - “by the Spirit”
 - by “the written code”

Apply

5. See question 4 above. Are our lives based on the first principle or the second? How is it possible to slip into a religion that is “by the written code”?
6. Read Matthew 6:16–18 in the light of this passage. Why do those who shape their religion by “the written code” look for praise from men? Why are those who live “by the Spirit” content to have God alone praise them?

Many of the natural Jews broke the law yet prided themselves in their knowledge of the law. Paul pointed out that a true Jew is one whose heart is circumcised and who wants to keep God’s law.

Romans 3:1–8

Paul answers Jewish questions and silences Jewish objections

(*The Lutheran Study Bible*, pages 1913–1914)

Discuss

1. With his arguments in chapter 2, Paul has pressed the Jewish legalist into a corner. He anticipates that the Jewish person will come back at him with various arguments. Analyze these eight verses and see if you can find the Jewish arguments and Paul's responses. (Note: The arguments are similar and have been broken down in various ways. Here we are breaking them down into four arguments.)

- Argument 1 (verses 1, 2)

Paul's response

- Argument 2 (verses 3, 4)

Paul's response

- Argument 3 (verses 5, 6)

Paul's response

- Argument 4 (verses 7, 8. This is really a continuation of the third argument.)

Paul's response

Apply

2. Some people say you should never argue about faith, for arguments only cause contention. Evaluate this thought.

Paul answered Jewish objections to what he had just said about the meaning of circumcision.

Romans 3:9–20

No one is righteous

(*The Lutheran Study Bible*, page 1914)

Look

Verse 9 Paul, speaking as a Jew, asks a question. This question is translated as “Are we Jews any better off” than the Gentiles? No, Jews were no better than they. From what Paul said, it is clear that the Jews had sinned terribly. The sentence could also be translated as “Are we Jew any worse off” than the Gentiles? No, Jews were no worse, for Gentiles rejected the natural knowledge of God and fell into many sins just as the Jews rejected God’s revealed law.

Discuss

1. Paul’s quotes are from the Old Testament. Following his theme, he chooses some that refer specifically to Gentiles and some that apply specifically to the Jews. All stand under God’s judgment. Paul uses Scripture to condemn everything the sinful nature does. Look at the following verses. What part of our lives does each of these verses touch?
 - Verses 10–12
 - Verses 13–14
 - Verses 15–17
 - Verse 18
2. Paul brings his section on the law to a close. He approaches his conclusion from two standpoints: “everyone” and “no one.” In verse 19 what does Paul say about everyone? In verse 20 what does Paul say about no one?

Apply

3. React to this statement: I was searching for God all my life, and now I have found him.

Paul concluded his section on the law by pointing out that the law condemns everyone.

Romans 3:21–25a

The righteousness that comes by faith: Part 1

(*The Lutheran Study Bible*, page 1914)

Look

- Verse 21 “*Righteousness*”—A state of being right. Here *righteousness* refers to a person’s having the same perfection as God.
 “*Apart from the law*”—A righteousness that does not come from keeping the law.
 “*Manifested*”—This righteousness must be revealed to us. If it were a righteousness we had accomplished, we would have known about it already.
- Verse 22 “*Through faith*”—The righteousness from God comes to us when we believe that Christ won it for us.
- Verse 23 “*The glory of God*”—God’s glory is his love and ability to do everything right. Since we sinners do everything wrong by nature, we fall short of his glory and are not worthy of fellowship with such a glorious being.
- Verse 24 “*Justified*”—To be declared not guilty. This word describes what a judge does in a courtroom when he declares a defendant not guilty of a crime.
 “*Grace*”—God’s undeserved kindness.
 “*Redemption*”—We have been “bought back” from sin. To buy us back to God, Jesus paid the necessary ransom: his own sinless life.
- Verse 25 “*Propitiation*”—This word has also been translated “atonement.” Break this word down into its parts: *at-one-ment*. We have been made “at one” with God through the death of his Son.

Discuss

- Below is a paraphrase of this section, with some thoughts added to fill out the meaning. Fill in the blanks in your own words. You can use elements from the definitions of the words above (not the words themselves).

But now _____ from God has been _____. This is nothing new. In fact, the law and the prophets _____. This _____ comes to us through _____ in Jesus Christ. This is the only way anyone can be saved because all have _____ and cannot measure up to _____. In Christ, all are _____ without any cost, strictly because of God’s _____. In Jesus Christ _____. God sent his Son to the cross _____, making us _____ with him through faith in _____. Jesus shed on the cross.

Paul teaches the glory of the gospel: the righteousness that God gives us through faith in the work his Son, Jesus, did on the cross.

Romans 3:25b–31

The righteousness that comes by faith: Part 2

(*The Lutheran Study Bible*, page 1915)

Look

Verse 30 *“Circumcised . . . uncircumcised”*—It is hard for us to understand what the Old Testament law did to the relationship between Jews and non-Jews. It kept them separate. It made them into two separate groups of people. The Jews were given the laws that reminded them of their sin and pointed them to the Savior. Not that they were saved by observing those laws. But not observing them meant cutting themselves off from the grace of God to which those laws pointed; for example, the Passover lamb. And these laws were for them alone. But this separation came to an end in Christ. Paul was appointed as an apostle to the Gentiles to tell them this wonderful news.

Discuss

1. God might be termed unjust. First, he accepted people into eternal life in Old Testament times, people like Moses, Hannah, and David. These people were sinners, yet they were pronounced innocent. How can a holy God do that? And he does the same thing today. He pronounces sinners to be innocent and takes them to heaven. That is not just either. How did God answer these charges of “unjust!” through his Son, Jesus?
2. Why can no one who is saved boast in his or her salvation?
3. Why does salvation by faith make it possible for Gentiles to become God’s children? for Jews to become God’s children?

Apply

4. All this talk about faith! It seems as if Paul is downplaying the law. It seems as if he is throwing it out the window. Imagine that today one person talks only about the law and another talks only about faith. Who is really serious about the law?

God demonstrates his justice by giving us salvation as a gift of faith, making it possible for us to want to keep the law out of love for God and to stand before him as law keepers.

Romans 4:1–15

Abraham and David provide examples of faith

(*The Lutheran Study Bible*, pages 1915–1916)

Look

Verses 1, 6 “*Abraham . . . David*”—These are two of the greatest people in the Old Testament. Whose side are they on? The Jewish legalist’s or Paul’s? If Paul can show that his teaching about faith is nothing new, he can clearly prove his point.

Discuss

1. How did Abraham find salvation and peace with God? How did David find salvation and peace?
2. What point does Paul make in verses 9–11a?
3. The Jewish people prided themselves in being children of Abraham. Why can the Gentiles take pride in that same thing?
4. If people attempt to find their hope through the law, what does that do to Abraham’s experience with how God works?

Apply

5. Agree or disagree. The best thing a Christian can do is to refrain from doing good works.
6. What is the greatest lesson we can learn from Abraham’s life?

Paul teaches that we are saved by faith alone. He uses Abraham and David as examples of Old Testament people who lived by faith and rejoiced in God’s gift of forgiveness.

Romans 4:16–25

Abraham is our pattern; he believed in God, who raises the dead

(*The Lutheran Study Bible*, page 1916)

Look

- Verse 17 “[*God*] who gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist.”
This phrase is the heart of this section, especially of all that follows. Paul wants to compare Abraham’s faith with ours. First Paul describes how Abraham believed that God gives life to the dead and was willing to admit that God can do the impossible. Then Paul shows that we share that same faith.
- Verse 25 “*For our trespasses . . . for our justification*”—Substitute “because of” for *for*. The sentence makes more sense. He was put to death because of our sins. He was raised to life because our justification had been accomplished.

Discuss

1. Our faith stands on the foundation of these four pillars: promise, faith, grace, guaranteed. Explain why they must *all* be present or *none* will be present.
2. Why is Abraham the father of many nations?
3. There are two things that can happen when you are told to believe the impossible. What are they? Which did Abraham choose? (verses 20, 21)
4. What impossible thing did Abraham believe?

Apply

5. What impossible thing do you as a Christian believe, and what is the result of your faith?

Paul compares Abraham’s faith to ours and says we both are justified by faith.

Romans 5:1–11

We have peace with God because Christ died for the powerless

(*The Lutheran Study Bible*, pages 1916–1917)

Look

- Verse 6 “*At the right time*”—This is a key phrase in Paul’s whole discussion. There was only one time when God could pour out his love on us and have his love shine in all its brilliance. That was when we were still powerless.
- Verse 7 “*Righteous . . . good*”—Paul’s main point is clear. People will not die for righteous people, but for a good person someone might die. (“Good person” can also be translated as “good cause.” To a Greek, good was better than righteous, because it denoted something that was absolutely noble and was of great benefit to the state.) But God does something that amazes humans—completely the opposite of what we would do.

Discuss

- Describe our relationship with God now that we have been justified by faith.
 - According to verse 1
 - According to verse 2
- Why does a Christian rejoice in suffering?
- The ESV separates verses 5 and 6 with a paragraph break. But in the Greek, they are one sentence. In verse 5 Paul tells us why hope does not disappoint us. It is because God’s love has been poured out into our hearts, that is, we have come to know the depth of God’s love. In verse 6 Paul describes the depth of God’s love. What is the basic point Paul makes in verses 6–8?
- Verses 9 and 10 underline the point Paul made in verses 6–8. What great example of God’s love is given in verse 9? in verse 10?
- Paul already named two things in which we can rejoice. What is the third? (verse 10)

Apply

- Give an example of how suffering has been a blessing in your spiritual life.

We have been justified by faith. We have peace with God, who has shown his love by sending his Son to die for powerless sinners.

Romans 5:12–21

Adam brought death to all; Christ brought life to all

(*The Lutheran Study Bible*, pages 1917–1918)

Discuss

1. Understanding the phrase “because all sinned” is the key to understanding the first verses of this section. Does Paul mean that we have all sinned because we have committed deeds that go against God’s law? Or does Paul mean that we have all been credited with someone else’s sin? Work through the following phrases to arrive at an answer to this question.
 - “sin came into the world through one man”
 - “death spread to all men”
 - “sin is not counted where there is no law”
 - “yet death reigned”
 - “the transgression of Adam”How would you interpret the phrase “because all sinned”?
2. Based on this, can you guess why Paul tells us that Adam is a pattern of Christ?
3. Skip to verses 18 and 19. In what way is Adam a pattern of Christ?
4. The verses we skipped (verses 15–17) tell us that in some respects Adam and Christ are completely different. Match each of the statements below to the verse that makes that point.
 - Judgment came through Adam’s one sin, but Christ’s sacrifice for the sins of the world brought justification to all.
 - Adam’s sin enabled death to reign, but Christ’s righteousness enables life to reign.
 - Death came through Adam, but life came through Christ.
5. Evaluate this statement: God gave the law so we would realize how sinful we are.

Apply

6. Why can you be certain that your sins are taken away?

Adam was a type of Christ. His sin is credited against all people in the same way that Jesus’ holiness is credited to all people.

Romans 6:1–14

We died with Christ and rose with him; our lives are to reflect this truth

(The Lutheran Study Bible, pages 1918–1919)

Discuss

1. Our sinful nature wants to find reasons to keep on “doing its thing.” What does it argue in verse 1?
2. What happened to us at the time of our baptisms?
3. What happened to us after we were baptized?
4. How does our journey into Christ’s death and resurrection influence how we think about sin?
 - Verses 5–7
 - Verses 8–11
5. What should we do because we have died to sin and have become alive to God in Christ? (verses 12–14)

Apply

6. Sometimes Christians fail to see the lifelong benefits of their baptisms. On the basis of this section, express Baptism’s lifelong effect.
7. In verses 13 and 14, Paul makes what seem to be opposite statements. He says, “Do not present your members to sin.” Then he says, “For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace.” On the one hand, he tells us not to let sin be our master. On the other hand, he says sin will not be our master. Explain.

We died with Christ in Baptism and rose with him. We share in the benefits of his death (justification) and his resurrection (a new life). We are to shape our lives around that truth.

Romans 6:15–23

We are no longer slaves to sin but slaves to righteousness

(*The Lutheran Study Bible*, pages 1919, 1921)

Discuss

1. Our sinful nature again wants to find reasons to keep on “doing its thing.” What is its argument in verse 15?
2. In the previous section, Paul had answered our sinful nature by telling us that in Baptism we died and rose again with Christ. That is reason not to sin. What picture does Paul use in verse 16?
3. What kind of slavery were we in? What kind of slavery are we now in? What made the difference?
4. What is the result of being a slave to sin? What is the result of being a slave to righteousness?
5. Paul has been saying that if you act as slaves to God, the benefit leads to holiness and the result is eternal life. How does verse 22 make it clear that Paul is not saying that our holiness leads to eternal life? Compare this verse with 2:7.

Apply

6. Slavery is not a state people normally like to be in, is it? How do you feel about being a slave to God and a slave to righteousness?

We were slaves to sin, but now, in Christ, we are slaves to God. The result of this slavery is a life of service to God, who will give us eternal life as a gift.

Romans 7:1–6

We are free from the law in Christ

(*The Lutheran Study Bible*, pages 1921–1922)

Look

Paul has now given two reasons why Christians want to give up sin. The first is because in Baptism we have died with Christ and have risen with him. The second is that we have been freed from slavery to sin that leads to death and have become slaves to God, which leads to holiness and eternal life. Now Paul will give us a third way of looking at a Christian and sin.

Verse 6 *“The new way of the Spirit”*—Note 2:29. There Paul had hinted at how a true “Jewish” person lives, one who is circumcised in the heart. Here Paul explains fully what serving in the new way of the Spirit means.

Discuss

1. What simple point does Paul make with his picture of marriage in verses 1–3?
2. To whom (or what) had we been “married” before we came to faith in Christ? What was the result of that marriage?
3. What freed us from that marriage?
4. Who is our new spouse? How does this new marriage shape how we want to live?
5. Contrast the new way of the Spirit with the old way of the written code.

Apply

6. Often, when we think about why we should serve God, we say, “Because he has forgiven all my sins” or “because he loves me so greatly.” These are certainly fine answers. But can you take those answers a bit deeper based on Paul’s words beginning at 6:1?

Paul presents a third way of looking at our relationship with Christ. In Christ we have died to the law. Now we serve God with a willing spirit.

Romans 7:7–25

Even in Christians, the sinful nature still uses the law to stir up sin

(*The Lutheran Study Bible*, pages 1922–1923)

Look

The sinful nature tries another approach. “Paul,” the sinful nature says, “I thought the law was given so people could keep it and find life. If what you say is true, then the law must be bad, because it provides the impetus for sin. And we know that cannot be the case. So, Paul, you must be mistaken.” In verses 7–13, Paul answers that objection.

Discuss

1. It is true that God’s commandments define sin so we know it when we see it. But the commandments make sin real to us in an even more forceful and direct way. Explain.
2. What is the real culprit within us?
3. What fact reveals the terribly wicked nature of sin? (verse 13)
4. Paul looks into his heart and sees a terrible struggle going on. Even as a Christian, he sees his sinful nature using God’s good commandments for its own evil purposes. Examine this struggle by putting an “O” or “N” in each blank to designate whether Paul is referring to his old sinful flesh or the new person created in him by the gospel.

For we know that the law is spiritual, but I () am of the flesh, sold under sin. I () do not understand my () own actions. For I () do not do what I () want, but I () do the very thing I () hate. Now if I () do what I () do not want, I () agree with the law, that it is good. So now it is no longer I () who do it, but sin that dwells within me. For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh. For I () have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out. For I () do not do the good I () want, but the evil I () do not want is what I () keep on doing. Now if I () do what I () do not want, it is no longer I () who do[es] it, but sin that dwells within me.

5. What is the “law,” or principle, Paul finds always at work in him? (verses 21–23)
6. Who has rescued us from this damning dilemma? Will the problem (“law”) Paul speaks about in verse 21 ever be fully solved in this life?

Apply

7. Can you identify with Paul?

Paul described the lifelong struggle that went on within him.

Romans 8:1–8

Christians are justified, and Christ lives in them: Part 1

(*The Lutheran Study Bible*, page 1923)

Look

Christians are not condemned; they are in Christ Jesus, who is God’s answer to sin and death. In the first half of Romans chapter 8, Paul speaks much as he did in Romans chapter 6, where he spoke about our being raised with Christ and made slaves of God. If that is our status, we cannot but live in step with the Holy Spirit.

Verse 3 *“He condemned sin in the flesh.”* This phrase carries a double meaning. It can refer to Jesus, who as a human being took on himself our sins and so became a sinful man. It can also refer to us sinners. Jesus condemned sin in himself by suffering and dying for our sin, and at the same time, he condemned sin in us.

Discuss

1. Explain each of these phrases, and describe the difference between these two states:
 - “the law of the Spirit of life”
 - “the law of sin and death”
2. Why was the law powerless to bring about our salvation?
3. How did God bring about our salvation?
4. In verse 5 Paul says that what is on our minds (and in our hearts) is based on whom we are following. What do we think about if our lives are ruled by the sinful flesh? What do we think about if our minds are led by the Spirit who has brought us to faith in Jesus?
5. What is the end result of being ruled by each of these powers?

Apply

6. The Lutheran church teaches a doctrine called “total depravity”—that spiritually speaking there is nothing good in us. Some churches teach that there is some good within us, some quality that God loves and rewards. In which camp does Paul find himself?

We have been redeemed by Christ. We are not condemned, and we live according to the Spirit.

Romans 8:9–17

Christians are justified, and Christ lives in them: Part 2

(*The Lutheran Study Bible*, pages 1923–1924)

Look

There are only two stances a person can take regarding Christ. Either believe in him or reject him. Those who reject him have rejected his Holy Spirit. Those who believe in him have God's Spirit living in them. If we have Christ's Spirit in us, we will live according to it. The faith that gives us life cannot be separated from the life we live by faith.

Verse 17 *“Provided we suffer with him”*—If we live *with* Christ, we will also live *for* him. Paul will begin to speak about suffering, so here he introduces that theme. If we suffer with Christ, we will share in his glory.

Discuss

1. We have been set free from the law of sin and death, and we have received the Spirit of life. All this has been given to us by Christ. We must never think that since we are not condemned, we can go on sinning. Who now controls us?
2. Note the contrast Paul strikes between our flesh and our spirit. Remember what the sinful nature leads us to do and how our new being fights against its desires (chapter 7:14–25). What becomes of our mortal bodies because of the sinful nature in us? What else do we see in us, and what results from that? What will happen to our bodies because Christ's Spirit lives in us?
3. In verse 13 Paul looks at our salvation on the basis of whether we live according to the flesh or put to death the deeds of the flesh. Can Paul be accused of teaching work-righteousness?
4. If we are led by the Spirit and live by the Spirit's desires, what is true about us? (verse 14)
5. What does God's Spirit lead us to know about our relationship with God? (verses 14–17)

Apply

6. What is the danger if we link good works and faith too closely together? What is the danger if we separate them too far apart?

Paul continues linking together our faith and the way we live. Those who are led by God's Spirit will want to keep in step with the Spirit.

Romans 8:18–27

We live amidst sufferings and yearn for eternal life

(*The Lutheran Study Bible*, pages 1924–1925)

Look

This section talks about the suffering that Christians go through as they await Christ’s second coming. But it also speaks about how the Holy Spirit helps us pray for help.

Verses 20, 21 *“Subjected to futility . . . bondage to corruption”*—Creation wants to praise and glorify God, but many things keep it from doing so. Disease, destructive forces of nature, and pollution all frustrate creation from living as God intended and from praising God for the many blessings he has poured out on it.

Verse 22 *“Groaning together in the pains of childbirth”*—This phrase not only expresses the pain felt by the creation. It also pictures the creation about ready to give birth to a new and perfect creation, brought forth by God. This will happen when God destroys this present creation.

Verse 23 *“Firstfruits of the Spirit”*—The Spirit is the first blessing we experience as God’s people. In other places, Paul calls it a down payment guaranteeing that we will receive the rest of our inheritance.

Discuss

1. When was the creation “subjected to futility?” Why was it subjected to futility? Who subjected it?
2. What do we groan for?
3. Why does the fact that we “hope” for our deliverance support the reality that in this world we will continue to suffer?
4. Who else groans? Why does he groan?

Apply

5. Relate a time when you suffered for your faith. How does verse 18 help us endure suffering?
6. When Satan points to difficulties and says that they prove God is no longer with us, how can we answer him on the basis of verses 24 and 25?
7. What can we always remember at those times when we don’t know what to pray for?

All creation suffers as it waits for the day when Christ will return and replace this world.

Romans 8:28–39

We are God's elect; nothing will separate us from his love

(*The Lutheran Study Bible*, pages 1925–1926)

Look

In this section, Paul closes with final words of triumph and joy. No suffering can prove that God does not love us. Nothing in all creation can separate us from God's love.

Verse 37 *“More than conquerors”*—Not only are we not defeated by the sufferings that come our way, but they bring us blessings.

Discuss

1. For whom does God work for good in all things?
2. Verses 29 and 30 teach us that nothing can stop God's grace from doing its work in our lives. Explain how each of these terms or phrases teaches God's unconditional grace in Christ.
 - *foreknew*
 - *predestined*
 - *called*
 - *justified*
 - *glorified*
 - *who can be against us?*
 - *but gave him up for us all*
 - *who is to condemn?*
 - *is interceding for us*
3. Pretend you are reading verse 36 to a friend. What words would you emphasize to bring out the meaning clearly?
4. Why will none of the things Paul lists in verses 28–39 ever separate us from God's love?

Apply

5. If the Spirit always intercedes for us according to God's will, is there anything that has ever happened to us that we (the Spirit praying within us) did not ask God for? What about the tragedies in life?

In this beautiful section of Scripture, Paul makes it clear in a number of ways that nothing will separate us from God's love in Christ.

Romans 9:1–15

God's gracious choice

(*The Lutheran Study Bible*, pages 1926–1927)

Look

Paul returns to the issue he began speaking about in chapter 3:1–8: What about the Jews? If Paul was right, namely, that a Gentile could enjoy true circumcision of the heart, then what about the Jews who had outward circumcision but no faith? Had God failed? In chapter 3, Paul quickly put down Jewish arguments against his teaching and simply affirmed that God was faithful.

However, Paul concluded chapter 8 by saying that God elected us to come to faith and nothing can undermine that election. Nothing can separate us from God's love. So again, what about the Jews? Weren't they God's chosen people? Is their lack of faith proof that they have experienced what Paul said was impossible and have been cut off from God's grace? In the next three chapters, Paul will deal with this question, and in the process, he will unfold a marvelous plan of salvation that reaches Jews and Gentiles alike.

Verses 13, 14 *“Esau I hated. . . . Is there injustice on God's part?”* The teaching that all people are completely set against God and have no inclination to seek him and find him plays heavily into what we learn in verses 10–14. The “total depravity” of every human being means that all deserve God's judgment, and if God saves any one of us, he is good and gracious beyond what we could expect. Esau had every chance to come to faith and be saved, but he rejected God's invitations and sold his birthright. This is normal human activity, deserving God's anger and judgment. God, however, loved Jacob in Christ and called him to faith. Esau only received what he deserved. Jacob received what he did not deserve. In this context God is not unjust. He would be unjust if there were some good in Esau that he discounted, but there was none.

Discuss

1. What were the advantages of being a Jew?
2. Paul anticipates objections. If his teaching about predestination and the certainty of never being removed from God's love is true, then has not God failed in regard to the Jews? So many of them do not share in the faith of Abraham. What is Paul's answer?
3. What two illustrations does Paul offer to prove that people become Christians by God's grace?
4. If we are saved by grace alone and not all people are saved, it would seem that God is unjust. He favors some but not others. What is Paul's answer to that objection?

God gave the Israelites all they needed to remain faithful to him. And he did not fail. God's elect among the Jews do come to faith. This seems to suggest a certain unfairness on God's part, but Paul says that God, who shows compassion, is not unfair.

Romans 9:16–29

God's elect are saved; those who reject God's grace are condemned

(*The Lutheran Study Bible*, pages 1927–1928)

Look

Verse 22 *“Vessels of wrath prepared for destruction”*—The Bible never says that God prepared some people for destruction. That is what they are when they are born. They are objects of his wrath and prepared for destruction because their sinful nature does nothing but resist and rebel against God.

Verse 23 *“Vessels of mercy, which he has prepared beforehand for glory”*—God in his grace chose some people to come to faith. He prepared them for glory. They are objects of his mercy. The Bible does not reveal how these two statements can stand side by side. Man has the power to reject God, yet only by God's grace does a person come to faith. Why doesn't everyone reject God? Why doesn't God bring everyone to faith? We don't know. All we can do is talk about God's gracious mercy on some and the wrath and destruction that others bring on themselves, as Paul does in this chapter.

Discuss

1. How much of our salvation depends on God? How much on us? (verse 16)
2. Why did God raise up Pharaoh? Could Pharaoh have come to faith and done God's will?
3. Why does God lead a person to faith? Why did he harden Pharaoh?
4. If this is the way it is, someone might ask, then why does God blame us? Who can resist his will? Is this a legitimate question?
5. For what gracious purpose does God use those whom he ultimately hardens? Relate this to how God used Pharaoh.
6. What blessing did God graciously bestow on the elect Gentiles?
7. What did most of the Jews do with God's blessings? What kept them all from doing this?

God uses those who reject him to further his kingdom among his elect.

Romans 9:30–10:13

Israel tried to be saved by works; the new Israel is saved by faith

(*The Lutheran Study Bible*, pages 1928, 1930)

Discuss

1. Fill in the blanks:

The Gentiles were not looking for righteousness; in fact, they were quite content to remain in their sins. Yet God in mercy gave them Christ's righteousness, which they received _____.

The Jews tried hard to become righteous. But they fell short because they tried to become righteous through _____.

2. Who is the stumbling stone that caused the Jews to fall? Why is he called a stumbling stone?
3. Why is the phrase "submitting to Christ's righteousness" a good definition of faith?
4. In what sense is Christ "the end of the law"?
5. How do each of the following phrases describe how easy God's plan of salvation is?
 - "Do not say in your heart, 'Who will ascend into heaven?' "
 - "or 'Who will descend into the abyss?' "
 - "the word [of faith] is near you"
 - "confess with your mouth"
 - "believe in your heart"
 - "everyone who believes in him"
 - "bestowing his riches on all who call on him"

Apply

6. Why do people reject such an easy way to find salvation?
7. Evaluate this statement: Deeds, not creeds, are the most important aspect of true religion.

Salvation through Christ Jesus is a free gift from God. Those who try to find salvation by their own works lose out on it.

Romans 10:14–21

The message of the gospel has been preached throughout the world

(*The Lutheran Study Bible*, pages 1930–1931)

Look

Verse 21 *“All day long I have held out my hands to a disobedient and contrary people.”* At this point it would be good to stop and retrace Paul’s steps so far. Paul has been telling us that God’s Word has not failed regarding the Jews, because God’s elect, whom he has chosen from all eternity, have been brought to faith. God has mercy on whom he wants to have mercy. Many, however, like Pharaoh, have resisted God. They could have believed, but they stubbornly chose to reject God, and so God used them for another purpose, namely, to show his power through them to others who would come to believe in him.

But did God want the Jews not to believe? Or did he keep the gospel from them in order to make them objects of wrath, whom he would use as he used Pharaoh? No, the Jews themselves rejected the gospel and lost Christ’s righteousness.

Discuss

1. At the end of verse 15, Paul writes, “How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!” What point does Paul make by quoting this passage from Isaiah chapter 52?
2. The Israelites did hear the message. How do the following four passages quoted by Paul show that God was absolutely serious about saving every last member of his chosen nation?
 - “Their voice has gone out to all the earth.”
 - “With a foolish nation I will make you angry.”
 - “I have been found by those who did not seek me . . . [or] ask for me.”
 - “All day long I have held out my hands.”

Apply

3. What good news can Gentiles take away from this section? What good news can Jewish people take away from this section?

God graciously called the Gentiles to faith. And he was not unjust toward the Jews, many of whom had fallen away. He did everything he could to give them the hope of eternal life through faith in Christ.

Romans 11:1–10

There has always been a remnant chosen by God's grace

(The Lutheran Study Bible, page 1931)

Look

It is important to review Paul's line of thought. First, Paul said that God's Word did not fail. It called to faith everyone whom God chose to come to faith. Those who rejected it, like Pharaoh, were used by God to display his patience and power to those who would believe. That's Paul's argument in chapter 9. In chapter 10, Paul made it clear that God was serious about leading the Israelites to know him. For hundreds of years he called to them, imploring them to trust in him. But Israel refused. Now in chapter 11, Paul arrives at his conclusion. In this section, verses 1–10, Paul makes two points: (1) God always has his elect who will be saved. (2) Just as he did with Pharaoh, so he does to those who harden their hearts against him—he hardens them in turn.

Discuss

1. How does Paul answer the question: "Has God rejected his people?"
2. How does the situation in Paul's day (and in any day, for that matter) parallel the situation in Elijah's day?
3. What does Paul mean by saying that Israel sought God's salvation so earnestly?
4. What does Paul say God did to those who continued to reject God?

Apply

5. Agree or disagree. Unless we understand the teaching of election as God choosing to bring certain people to faith, we cannot truly understand the meaning of God's grace.
6. Read Matthew 13:9–16. Discuss why Jesus told parables. (Note: In these verses Jesus is saying the same thing Paul says here in Romans chapter 11.)

God did not reject his people, the Israelites. He still had a group of elect whom he would bring to faith (as he did with Paul). He hardened the hearts of Israelites who rejected him.

Romans 11:11–24

The Gentiles stand by grace alone

(*The Lutheran Study Bible*, pages 1931–1932)

Look

Verse 11 *“Did they stumble in order that they might fall?”* The Jews did fall beyond recovery, for God hardened their hearts. But the point is this: God did not want the Jews to fall. They were hardened because they rejected God. God used this as an opportunity to give the gospel to the Gentiles. Also, he used their hardening to give the gospel back to the elect among Israel who would hear it by way of the Gentiles.

Verse 16 *“If the root is holy, so are the branches.”* The root is Abraham, a man of faith. He was also the father of the Jewish people. If he is holy, so are they. That is, God has a special place in his heart for them and wants nothing more than that they come to faith.

Discuss

1. What does Paul mean when he says he makes much of his ministry to the Gentiles? How will Paul’s making much of his ministry to the Gentiles help the Jews? (verses 12–15)
2. Who are the natural olive branches? Who are the wild olive branches?
3. What error does Paul anticipate the Gentiles might fall into when they hear him say the natural branches were broken off and they, the Gentiles, were grafted in?
4. What would rob the Gentiles (that’s us) of the place they have received in God’s kingdom?
5. What would restore a Jewish person to membership in God’s New Testament kingdom?

Apply

6. What does this section of Scripture say about anti-Semitism?
7. What role can you play in the conversion of the Jews?

Paul explained the relationship of the Jews and Gentiles in God’s plan of salvation.

Romans 11:25–36

How God brought the elect among the Jews to faith

(*The Lutheran Study Bible*, pages 1932–1933)

Look

- Verse 25 *“A partial hardening”*—Some, but not all, of the Jewish people are hardened.
- Verse 26 *“In this way”*—Paul does not say “then” all Jews by birth will be saved. “In this way,” means, namely, through the process God has established of hardening part of Israel so that the gospel could go through the Gentiles back to the Jews.
- “All Israel”*—Some commentators interpret this to refer to spiritual Israel. However, after Paul is finished quoting an Old Testament prophecy, he says “As regards the gospel, they are enemies of God for your sake” (verse 28). The word *they* clearly refers to the Jews. It refers back to the people spoken about in the prophecy, which refers back to the “all Israel” of verse 26. “All Israel,” therefore, refers to the elect among the Jews who are going to be saved.
- Verse 28 *“For the sake of their forefathers”*—God has not taken away his love from the people of Israel. His promises to the patriarchs still stand. Although Israel as a nation and its laws no longer play a role in God’s plan of salvation, God’s heart still yearns for the Israelites’ salvation.

Discuss

1. In verses 28–32, Paul gets to the heart of how God brought his elect from among both Jews and Gentiles to faith. Trace Paul’s reasoning to understand this beautiful and wise plan.

2. How does Paul conclude this entire section? (verses 33–36)

Apply

3. Has God ever let you sink into disobedience and then graciously shown you his mercy?

Paul concluded this section with insights into how God sees to it that his elect are saved. He praised God for his wisdom and love.

Romans 12:1–8

God wants us to serve him as living sacrifices

(*The Lutheran Study Bible*, pages 1933, 1935)

Look

In chapter 12, Paul begins to address our lives in Christ. The foundation of God’s grace in Christ has been laid.

Verse 1 *“Living sacrifice”*—This is in contrast to the sacrifices under the Old Testament law that ended up dead on the altar. Christians sacrifice too, but they freely sacrifice their lives to God.

Verse 2 *“Be transformed . . . that you may discern.”* The key to knowing and doing our Lord’s will is to be transformed in our minds. This happens when we go from being under the law of sin and death to being joined with the law of the Spirit of life. The Spirit teaches us to love. The Spirit guides us, enabling us to do what pleases God and to make choices according to his will.

Verse 6 *“Prophecy”*—Prophecy is the gift of communicating God’s Word. In Paul’s time, those with the gift of prophecy often received revelations directly from the Lord and shared them with the church. When we think of prophesying today, we think of preaching and teaching God’s Word.

Discuss

1. In verse 1 Paul looks backward and forward. Explain.
2. What are Christians more apt to do, underestimate their spiritual gifts or overestimate them? Which is more detrimental to the church?
3. Look at each of the gifts Paul mentions. What are those gifts? As you look at each gift, note the advice Paul gives about how we are to use each one.

Apply

4. Paul says that each member of God’s church belongs to all the others. What can you do for your fellow members in Christ? How do Paul’s words help shape your motivations as you carry out the work you are doing now?
5. Sometimes we think of spiritual gifts as the ability to do formal things like preaching, teaching, or doing congregational evangelism work. Which gifts are of a more informal nature? If you have one of these gifts, how might you use it?

Paul points us back to God’s grace. He begins encouraging us to live lives in service to God.

Romans 12:9–21

Ways to show love

(*The Lutheran Study Bible*, pages 1935–1936)

Look

Verse 20 *“Heap burning coals on his head.”* “Burning coals” describes the feeling a person has when he or she has treated another person badly and that person does only good in return. The person feels bad and may repent. In this way Christians overcome evil with good.

Discuss

1. In verse 9, Paul places the words *love* and *abhor* close together. Why does he do this?
2. Zeal is important. But a “fervent spirit” must accompany zeal. What is a fervent spirit, and why must it always accompany zeal?
3. Verse 12 captures the essence of the Christian life. Describe the lives of Christians who shape their lives according to Paul’s words in this verse.
4. How would our sinful nature like to change Paul’s words in verse 15?
5. Agree or disagree. If I don’t get revenge on that person who harmed me, he will get away with it.
6. Why does Paul qualify his words in verse 18 with the words “if possible”? How might our sinful nature try to misuse those words?

Apply

7. Paul tells us to be devoted to one another in brotherly love. How does that shape the way we view our fellow worshipers on Sunday morning?
8. Is there someone “lowly” in your church with whom you might strike up a friendship?

Paul continues teaching us how to show our love as people who have received God’s grace.

Romans 13:1–7

A Christian attitude toward the government

(*The Lutheran Study Bible*, page 1936)

Look

Verse 1 *“Instituted by God”*—Note that Paul twice makes the point about the relationship between God and the governing authorities, once from the negative side (“no authority except from God”) and again from the positive side (“those that exist have been instituted by God”). Paul wants to make this point as strongly as possible. The governments that exist have been established by God, even the evil ones.

Discuss

1. When a person rebels against the government, what is the real sin that person is committing?
2. What is the government’s purpose?
3. Who has given the government the right to “bear the sword”?
4. Up to now, Paul has been addressing Christians in the same way he would address anyone—if you do wrong, you will be punished, because the government has the responsibility and power to do that. In verse 5 Paul addresses Christians and gives them another reason to honor the government. What is that?

Apply

5. To what people or branches of government do we owe the following?
 - taxes
 - revenue
 - respect
 - honor
6. Evaluate: When the anti-Christian Communist party was in power in the former Soviet Union, that country did not have a government sent by God.
7. Read Acts 4:19–20. What is the only God-pleasing reason for not obeying the government?

Paul encourages Christians to honor and obey the governmental authorities.

Romans 13:8–14

Love your fellow man; be clothed with Christ

(*The Lutheran Study Bible*, pages 1936–1937)

Discuss

1. How does it feel to be in debt? What debts should we pay off? What debt should we never consider as being paid off?
2. In John 13:34, Jesus told his disciples that he was giving them a new command: to love one another. Use these verses of Romans to explain why that was a new command. (Hint: The “newness” refers not to the action the person performs but to the motivation behind the action.)
3. What does *night* refer to in verse 12? What does *day* mean?
4. What beautiful gospel message is there in the word *daytime*? What should the message of that word lead us to do?
5. Describe the “armor of light.” (See Ephesians 6:10–18.)

Apply

6. What does Paul mean by *sleep*? (verse 11) If you wish, share a time in your life when you were slumbering. Did the Lord use some special event to wake you up?
7. To which of the temptations listed in verse 13 are Christians most susceptible?
8. How do we clothe ourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ? What effect does that have on our daily plan of activity?

Paul encourages us to love one another and to keep watch, for our eternal life is near.

Romans 14:1–12

Showing love to the weak: Part 1

(*The Lutheran Study Bible*, pages 1937–1938)

Discuss

- In verse 1 Paul refers to a person “who is weak in faith.” Pick the statement below that best expresses what Paul means. (Hint: Read verses 2–4 and look at examples Paul gives.)
 - The one person has faith, and the other does not.
 - The one person has a strong trust in the Lord, and the other does not trust him much.
 - The one person understands what he can do in Christian freedom, and the other does not.
- Paul does not want strong Christians to pass judgment on weak Christians. Nor does he want weak Christians to look down on strong Christians. Describe what Paul means by each of these commands.
- What is a disputable matter? Pick out the disputable items in the following list: (1) Believing Christ is the Son of God. (2) A person should refrain from work on Sunday. (3) A Christian should practice church fellowship principles. (4) A person may drink beer. (5) The Bible’s teaching on the roles of men and women applies today as it did in the early church. (6) A church should refrain from using anything but an organ in worship services.
- Complete the following paragraphs and think through Paul’s line of thought:

(Verse 4) The weak Christian should not pass judgment on the strong Christian and consider what he is doing as a faith-destroying sin. He must be sensitive to what sin is and what it isn’t. The weak Christian may have a hard time imagining that what he thinks he himself cannot do is permissible for someone else to do, but he must do just that. The strong Christian is God’s servant, and God will enable him _____.

(Verse 5) When it comes to disputable matters, it is not important whether or not we agree with the practices of our fellow Christians, but whether or not we are all fully convinced that _____.

(Verse 6) It is not so important that I accept the practices of my fellow Christians but that we both _____.

(Verses 7–11) On the day of judgment, it will not matter whether I have chosen to use or not use a disputable item, but whether I have _____.

Weak and strong Christians should live together in love. Both are serving God in their own way.

Romans 14:13–23

Showing love to the weak: Part 2

(*The Lutheran Study Bible*, page 1938)

Look

In these verses, Paul speaks especially to the strong Christian. In fact, one thing we notice as we work through these verses is that Paul does not say much to the weak Christian. The strong must always defer to the weak. The very nature of things says it cannot be the other way around.

Verse 23 *“Whatever does not proceed from faith is sin.”* The word *faith* here probably does not refer to saving faith in Christ. In this context it refers to whether a person has faith (knowledge) that what he or she is doing is right in God’s eyes.

Discuss

1. Regardless of whether something is right or wrong, if a person thinks it is wrong to do it and still does it, he or she sins. Explain.
2. According to verses 15b and 16, what might happen if I insist on doing something another Christian thinks is wrong?
3. When it comes to living in God’s kingdom, what pleases God? What is God not concerned about? (verses 17, 18)

Apply

4. A friend of yours belongs to an “evangelical” church that teaches it is wrong to drink alcoholic beverages. While it is true that his church takes a position that is not supported by God’s Word, you know your friend is following the dictates of his conscience when he refuses to take a drink. You find yourself beginning to argue with him. What words from this section of Romans might help you do the right thing?
5. Jane does not think it is right to do any physical labor on Sunday. She was taught that in one of the churches she belonged to earlier in life. You think to yourself, “I should really teach her the right way. After all, I have a duty to build up my fellow Christian.” What should you do? Consider Paul’s words in verses 22 and 23.

Christians live in righteousness, faith, and joy in the Holy Spirit. They do not force weak Christians to do what goes against their consciences.

Romans 15:1–13

Showing love to the weak: Part 3

(*The Lutheran Study Bible*, page 1939)

Look

Verse 13 *“Hope”*—The word here does not contain an element of doubt, as it does in this sentence: I hope it doesn’t rain tomorrow. A Christian’s hope is a certainty. The only reason we call it hope is because we don’t yet have the fulfillment.

Discuss

1. What three things does the Lord want us to do when dealing with a weak Christian?
 _____ the failings of the weak
 not _____
 _____ our neighbor
2. Who is to be our model and our source of strength as we work for our neighbor’s good?
3. Why are endurance and encouragement such important qualities in God’s people? Why is a spirit of unity such an important quality?
4. In verse 7, Paul told the Romans to accept one another. Scan the next verses. Based on the passages Paul quoted, what two groups of people did he have in mind? Picture a congregation in which Jews and Gentiles were working out God’s will for their lives. What problems may have arisen? How can we apply this to our lives in a congregation today?
5. How alone can we achieve the ability to live in peace with one another? (verse 5)

Apply

6. Consider what it means that Christ accepted you. Who in your life should you accept—someone you are not accepting right now?

Paul encourages us to accept one another and do what leads to peace as we serve the Lord together in his kingdom.

Romans 15:14–22

Paul explains his relation to the churches at Rome

(*The Lutheran Study Bible*, page 1940)

Look

At this point Paul begins to bring his letter to a close. Paul had not met the Roman Christians. He wants to explain why he wrote this letter.

Discuss

- Imagine you are a member of the Roman congregation. A pastor you do not know writes a letter thoroughly explaining Christian teaching. You might have some concerns. Paul anticipated those concerns and answered them. Read the concerns. How did Paul answer them?
 - Verses 14 and 15 “We have pastors and teachers in our congregations. Why are you writing these things to us? Do you think we are ignorant?”
 - Verse 16 “What authority do you have to bypass our pastor and teachers and write to us directly?”
 - Verses 17–22 “Paul, why haven’t you visited us before?” Answer this question by filling in the blanks in the paraphrase of Paul’s answer below.

I have not acted on my own initiative. I glory in what _____ has done through me. He has blessed his ministry to the Gentiles by enabling me to lead the Gentiles to obey him (to accept Christ’s righteousness) by giving me the power to _____ his Word and perform _____ and _____ to verify the truth of his Word. He has given me power to preach the gospel beginning in _____ and going as far as the region of _____. However, as an apostle who has been given the work of laying the foundation of Christ’s church, Christ wanted me to preach only in _____. Since you Romans knew the gospel, God has not yet allowed me to come to you.

Apply

- The Roman Catholic Church claims that Peter served in Rome for the last 25 years of his life, which would mean he was in Rome when Paul wrote this letter. Evaluate that claim based on the content in this section.

Paul looked forward to his trip to Rome and explained to the Romans why he wrote this letter.

Romans 15:23–33

Paul's plan to visit Rome

(*The Lutheran Study Bible*, pages 1940–1941)

Look

Verse 26 *“Macedonia and Achaia”*—This is shorthand for the churches Paul started in Philippi, Thessalonica, and Corinth. When Paul wrote this letter, he and a group of representatives from these churches were ready to deliver the offering.

Discuss

1. In the last lesson, we noted several questions Paul anticipated being asked by the Roman Christians. We add one more. How did Paul answer it?

Verses 23, 24 “If you have been hindered from visiting us in the past, will you ever be able to visit us?” (Note three answers found in verses 23a, 23b, and 24.)

2. How would the Romans be able to help Paul fulfill his primary duty: to preach the gospel where it had not been preached before?
3. What does Paul mean by calling the offering from the Greek churches “fruit”?
4. For what did Paul ask the Roman Christians to pray?

Apply

5. How does this letter prepare us for mission work?
6. When Paul asks people to do something, he always has in mind that they are Christians in whose hearts the Holy Spirit is living and who know the love of Christ. Note verse 30. Paul urges his readers to pray for him “by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit.” How can church leaders today follow Paul’s example?

Paul alerted the Romans to his plans to visit them.

Romans 16:1–16

Fellow workers and friends

(*The Lutheran Study Bible*, pages 1941, 1943)

Look

- Verse 1 “*Phoebe*”—Recall that Paul wrote this letter from Corinth. Cenchreae, Phoebe’s hometown, was a port city for Corinth. She may have delivered the letter.
- Verse 3 “*Prisca and Aquila*”—This husband and wife team played a vital role in Paul’s work. We saw them first in Corinth when Paul started the church there on his second missionary journey. They went with him to Ephesus and assisted him in the work there on his third journey. Sometime during Paul’s third journey, they had returned to their hometown, Rome, and were serving the church there.

Discuss

1. As you read through these verses, find information to help you answer the following questions:
 - Where did the churches meet in those days?
 - In the book of Romans, Paul included no statement on the roles of men and women. However, this section gives us a number of insights into his attitude toward women. Because Paul upheld God’s will about the roles of men and women, some have accused him of being a chauvinist. On the basis of these verses, do you think he was? Explain.
 - Sometimes we get the idea that Paul was a “one man show.” Evaluate that on the basis of his greetings.

Apply

2. Agree or disagree. Because women cannot be pastors or exercise authority over men, they have less influence than men on the growth of the church and the spiritual nurturing of its members.

Paul greeted many people in the congregation at Rome. Many were fellow workers or people who had helped and supported him in various ways in his mission work.

Romans 16:17–27

Conclusion and farewell

(*The Lutheran Study Bible*, page 1943)

Discuss

1. The apostle Paul tells us to do two things in regard to false teaching. What does Paul mean by “watch out”? What does he mean by “avoid”?
2. Paul’s description of those who teach false doctrine is rather strong. Some have been tempted to think Paul’s words in verse 17 apply only to those who teach serious heresies. React to that thought. (verse 18)
3. Notice Paul’s tact. He knows the Romans are serious about their faith. However, he is not naïve about a Christian congregation’s strength. He knows it is possible to become lax and drift from the truth. In this context, what does it mean to be wise about what is good and innocent about what is evil?
4. How does God establish us in the faith and keep us strong? What lesson is there for us in this fact? (verse 25)
5. Although God gives us his grace for our eternal good, what is the ultimate goal and result of all he has done for us in Christ?

Apply

6. This letter was written to prepare the churches in Rome to help Paul on his way to Spain. How does unity of doctrine and practice foster mission work?

Paul concluded his letter, encouraging the Roman Christians to keep away from those who distort the truth. He commended them to God, who is able to keep them strong in the gospel and faithful to Jesus Christ.