

Journey in the Word Study Series

Romans

Truth for Every Culture, Every Day

A 22-Session Study Guide for The Book of Romans



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INTRODUCTION TO THE BOOK OF ROMANS

Romans is a letter written to converts to Christianity with its roots in words that spread from Pentecost (Acts 2). Much has been written about this letter since it is perhaps the most influential treatise of Christ-centered, Gospel-centric doctrine in the Bible. Many lives have been changed over the years while contemplating and studying Romans. St. Augustine as a lust-filled, vile 32-year-old man, wrapped only in the prayers of his Christian mother, read Romans 13:13-14 and bowed his knee to Christ.

Martin Luther, the great Protestant Reformer, hated God because of Romans 1:17 as an impossible feat to live in perfect righteousness, he discovered there was righteousness outside of himself, not earned by good works but through faith in Jesus Christ – it opened to him the "gateway to paradise!" F.F. Bruce, the imminent New Testament scholar, wrote, "Time and again in the course of Christian history, it has liberated the minds of men, brought them back to an understanding of the essential Gospel of Christ, and started spiritual revolutions."

The authorship of Romans is arguably certain as the Apostle Paul. Most historians put Paul in Corinth around AD 57 writing to the church in Rome. His intent is to make it to them personally on his way to Spain (Rom. 15:28). For Paul, his mission is to take the Gospel to the ends of the earth. For the Romans, he wants them to know the Gospel, live the Gospel and share the Gospel. To know the Gospel is to know the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ. The righteousness of God is the great theme of the letter (1:16-17). Paul is also concerned that the Romans live the Gospel by the mercies of God and as living sacrifices, not being conformed to the world but transformed by renewing their minds (12:1-2).

When Paul writes to the Romans, he writes to a church of Jewish and Gentiles converts, with Gentiles being the majority. Phoebe of Cenchrea is the one who takes the letter from Paul to the Romans (16:1). One of the great desires of Paul in writing this letter is to unite both Jew and Gentile converts as one body.

In John Stott's commentary on Romans, he breaks down Romans into four major sections: (1) The Wrath of God (1:18-3:20); (2) The Grace of God (3:21-8:39); (3) The Plan of God (9-11); and (4) The Will of God (12:1-15:13). Stotts calls Romans

"a kind of Christian manifesto. It is also a letter detailing the particular situations in which the apostle and the Romans found themselves at that time." Stott alludes to the fact that this letter is not written, as some theologians account, as a separate treatise of Christian doctrine void of the contemporary association. Instead, Paul seeks to establish a relationship with the Romans and touch on their current need for unity among Jews and Gentiles, not to mention their need for clarity about salvation.

Timothy Keller writes, "The Book of Romans is the most sustained explanation of the heart of the gospel and the most thrilling exploration of how that gospel works in our hearts." Daniel Akin summarizes Romans 1-16 in this brief statement:

Paul develops a theological masterpiece in the book of Romans as he expounds the doctrine of salvation fully. The whole world is guilty of sin and worthy of spiritual death, but God has provided salvation through the atoning sacrifice of His Son, Jesus Christ. This salvation will supernaturally mature through sanctification until we are conformed to the image of Christ. Until then, we must present ourselves to God as daily sacrifices in His service.

The central themes of Romans spell out the wonderful truth of the Gospel, that God justifies sinners by his grace so that those who come to faith in him escape the wrath of God poured out on Jesus and are, therefore, sanctified into a transforming walk with Christ for spiritual service which is our daily worship. In reading Romans and applying the truth daily, God will do big things in you as you hear, read, study and use this letter.

Romans

Session One

 Truth for Every Culture, Every Day

Introduction to Romans

Romans 1:1-17

Opening Purpose for Studying ROMANS:

“Time and again in the course of Christian history it has **liberated** the minds of men, **brought them back** to an understanding of the essential Gospel of Christ, and **started** spiritual revolutions.” – F.F. Bruce, *Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, 1975. (That is what I hope to accomplish!)

Tony Merida, pastor and author at Imago Dei, wrote in the opening words to his commentary on Romans, “When people read, study and hear the Book of Romans, big things happen.”

Down through the years, many lives have been changed while contemplating and studying the book of Romans. St. Augustine as a lust-filled, vile 32-year-old man, wrapped only in the prayers of his Christian mother, read Romans 13:13-14 and bowed his knee to Christ. Martin Luther, the great Protestant Reformer, hated God because of Romans 1:17 as an impossible feat to live in perfect righteousness, discovered there was a righteousness outside of himself, not earned by good works but through faith in Jesus Christ – it opened to him the “gateway to paradise!”

God will do Big Things in all of those who hear, read, study and apply this letter to their lives. In this section, we want to explore The Purpose of the Letter, The Priority of the Gospel, The Person Behind the Letter and the Power of God for Salvation.

- I. **The Purpose of the Letter to the Romans** (on the surface, it's hard to know exactly why. (1) There was Paul's desire to take the Gospel to Spain (15:22-29), (2) He wanted to gather support for the journey, (3) He wanted to establish his apostolic credentials for sharing the Gospel, (4) He needed to confront the theological issues between Jews and Gentiles who had come to faith in Christ (16:1-16 Some believe the divisions are represented in the house churches mentioned in this chapter (Stott, 34).

John Stott, in his commentary on *Romans*, wrote concerning Paul's position as a former Pharisee (Law-based) and minister to the Gentile (Gospel-based), “So he was in a unique position to be an agent of

reconciliation. He was determined to make a full and fresh statement of the apostolic gospel, which would not compromise any of its revealed truths, but which would at the same time resolve the conflict between Jews and Gentiles over the covenant and the law, and so promote the unity of the church" (Stott, 35).

A. **To explain the substance of the Gospel's message** – Paul's purpose is to explain that the Gospel is about reconciliation, that justification of guilty sinners is by God's grace alone in Christ alone, through faith alone and apart from any good works.

B. **To explain the scope of the Gospel's impact**

- **On our personal transformation** – we are no longer under the condemnation of God's wrath but under grace.
- **On our community's transformation** – that together, we are not defined by our descent, circumcision or culture, but according to faith in Jesus, "so that all believers are the true children of Abraham, regardless of their ethnic origin or religious practice" (Stott, 36).

C. **To explain the possibilities of the Gospel's reach**

- Paul's major aim is to get the Gospel to Spain – he did not want to build on another man's foundation, but desired to go to places where the Gospel had not yet penetrated (15:22-29).
- Paul wants Rome to be a unified base of operations for his mission to Spain.
- Paul shows us that the Gospel is written for ordinary people who can be used by God to do extraordinary work for the kingdom (Chpt. 16).

II. The Priority of the Gospel (1:1-7)

A. **This is God's GOOD NEWS (1:1)** – Leon Morris writes, "God is the most important word in this epistle. Romans is a book about God. No topic is treated with anything like the frequency of God. Everything Paul touches in this letter he relates to God".

- B. Promised in the Old Testament (v. 2)*
- C. Concerning Jesus (vv. 3-4)*
- D. Given to bring the obedience of faith to all nations (v. 5)*
- E. To those who are called to belong to Jesus Christ (vv. 6-7)*

III. The Person Proclaiming the Gospel (1:1, 8-15)

- A. Paul is a set apart, called, servant of Jesus Christ for the gospel of God (1)*
- B. He is a man with a personal walk with God (v. 8)*
- C. He is a man with a passion to see the Gospel proclaimed throughout the world (v. 8)*
- D. He is a man who performs his service to the Lord willingly (v. 9)*
- E. He is a man who persistently prays for people (v. 9-10)*
- F. He is a man with a profound love and need for God's church (vv. 11-13)*
- G. He is a man with a perspective that the Gospel is for everyone! (vv. 14-15)*

IV. The Power of God for Salvation through the Gospel (1:16-17)

Paul's thesis for **Romans is 1:16-17** – This is the “Nerve-Center” of the letter (Bird, Romans, 40), the righteousness of God.

- A. Righteousness is the lens through which you see the Gospel...**
 - 1:18-3:20 – We see that no one is righteous.
 - 3:21-5:21 – We see that by faith in Christ one is declared righteous.
 - 6:1-8:39 – We see that Christians are now “slaves to righteousness”.
 - 9:1-11:36 – We see Paul's defense of God's righteousness.
 - 12:1-15:13 – We see what a righteous life looks like in the church and in the world.

Romans basically tells the unrighteous how to be positionally righteous before God and then how to live in that righteousness that comes through faith in the only righteous One, Jesus Christ.

Merida writes, “For Paul, the gospel is not just what tips a person into the kingdom, only to then leave them on their own to straighten up and fly right. Rather, the gospel shapes the very life of the believer and empowers the believer for service.” It’s what Tim Keller means when he says, “The Gospel changes everything.”

- The Gospel will shape your love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness and self-control. It will not leave one stone unturned in your life. The Gospel will impact every facet of your life and inform every affection in your life so that you hunger and thirst for Christ to be gloriously displayed in you and through you.
- Merida goes on to say, “The Gospel is God’s good news, promised in the OT, centered on Jesus, designed to bring all to the obedience of faith for the sake of Christ’s name, transforming everyone who believes.”

B. Confidence is the lens through which we proclaim the Gospel...

C. God’s power is the lens through which we can believe the Gospel...

D. Everyone is the lens through which we relate to the Gospel...

Questions:

1. How does our character as men influence the impact we could have with the Gospel?
 2. There are at least seven characteristics of Paul in 1:8-15. Which of those stood out as traits in which you need work?
 3. What does it mean for you to be unashamed of the Gospel?
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Romans

Session Two

Truth for Every Culture, Every Day

God's Wrath Revealed
Romans 1:18 – 2:29

Sinclair Ferguson told the story about a college ministry group in England who published Romans 1:18-32 in the college newspaper without verses or reference, simply written in contemporary English. The college authorities called up the students, told them they would be censored and demanded that they know the source of the offensive words.

Without a doubt, this may be the most offensive part of Romans, perhaps even the entire Bible. Most modern people find this section of Romans as offensive as many parts of the OT and Jesus' teaching on Hell or His exclusive claim to be the Way, Truth and Life.

Kent Hughes points out in his commentary on Romans, that Harry Emerson Fosdick, a leading voice in progressive Christianity in the 1920s and 30s, taught that God was slowly improving over His early bouts of anger, arguing that all the major figures of the Bible had a God who was mainly bloodthirsty and filled with rage. Even Jesus, who brought a better sense of brotherhood still believed in God's judgment through Hell.

This is the Word of God! Paul's arguments are completely consistent with the whole of Scripture. As Merida points out, "Paul is not trying to give us a nice back rub here! He is telling everyone about the nature of sin and its consequences." @ When I was a kid and got sick, my mom would fix what she called, "A green dragon." It was filled with vitamins, protein powder, alfalfa and orange juice. It literally was green and it tasted AWFUL! But it was for my good! The text might seem to go down bitter but Paul is giving this truth for our good. We have to understand how depraved we are before we can realize how loved we are at the same time!

This section of Romans has to be taught together because Paul is making an argument that Gentiles are sinful and in line for God's wrath, but also, Jews, who think of themselves as righteous are also just as guilty. God's wrath is coming on everyone, no matter who you are or what you have done!

I. God's Wrath is Against the Religiously Unrighteous (1:18-32)

John Stott writes in his work on Romans, "The wrath of God, then, is almost totally different from human anger. It does not mean that God loses his temper, flies into a rage, or is ever malicious, spiteful or vindictive. The alternative to wrath is not love but neutrality in the moral conflict. And God is not neutral. On the contrary, his wrath is his holy hostility to evil, his refusal to condone it or come to terms with it, his just judgment upon it."

We've condoned evil and sin and now God's wrath is being revealed through an explosion of sin manifested in violence, abuse, deception, corruption, natural disasters and human disasters!

- A. **Who suppress the truth (v. 18)** – this is where God's wrath is directed. Stott describes them this way; "It is not just that they do wrong, though they know better. It is that they have made an a priori decision to live for themselves, rather than for God and others, and therefore deliberately stifle any truth which challenges their self-centeredness."
- B. **Who have no excuses for their unrighteousness (vv. 19-20)** – *God is like an artist*
- C. **Who know God but refuse to worship Him (vv. 21-23)** Merida, "There is a sense of God in the conscience of an image bearer of God." When we refuse to worship God, we adopt pitiful substitutes, idols that capture our hearts...idols in which we put all our hopes. Tim Keller puts it this way, "We should remember that humans are worshipers. The question is not, Do you worship?, but to Whom or what do you worship? Idolatry involves looking to something other than God to give you what only He can give you." Merida continues: "Those things we seek in idols involve joy, security, provision, peace, freedom, satisfaction, fulfillment, love and beauty. But only in the God who made us do we have these things. Idols can involve money, sex, approval, achievement, power, family, and a host of other things than can actually be good things when viewed rightly."
- D. **Who have been given up by God to their passions (24-29)** – God gave them

Why did God single out homosexuality (He lists other sins later, but this one is different)?

Merida, "Homosexuality is contrary to God's divine design. To go against nature is therefore to go against God. And God's design is a good design. This is not a fluid cultural matter; it is an unchanging creation matter. It is timeless. God is

infinitely good and wise, and his designs are best and for our good, for our flourishing. Homosexual activity is contrary to God's will, it is a violation of the created order, and it is another example of the...departure from a true knowledge of God and the worship of God." (The issue from person to person might be complex, but it is clear that biology and biography work together to cause a person to walk in a different path, but there is hope. We see it in **1 Cor. 6:9-11**).

“Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God” (1 Cor. 6:9-11)

II. **God's Wrath is Against the Religiously Self-Righteous (2:1-29) –**

“Therefore” – Leon Morris wrote: “Jews would have agreed heartily with all that Paul has had to say about the Gentile world. They were always ready to condemn the Gentiles, but they saw themselves as on a much higher plane.”

A. Who need to humble themselves before God (2:2-16)

Scottish Professor and Pastor, Dr. Sinclair Ferguson, in a sermon on Romans, outlined truths that can help us organize our thoughts around these verses in chapter 2.

1. Because God's judgment is right (2:2)
2. Because God's judgment is without exceptions (2:3) – if you think you are an exception it will keep you from humbly repenting!
3. Because God's judgment leads to His kindness if you do not presume on it (2:4)
4. Because God's judgment will be revealed against the unrepentant (2:5)
5. Because God's judgment is against who we really are and what we have actually done (2:6-10)
6. Because God's judgment has eternal consequences (2:7-8)
7. Because God's judgment is universal toward each person (2:9)
8. Because God's judgment is impartial (2:11)
9. Because God's judgment is on all those who only hear the law or possess the law without doing the law (2:12-15)
10. Because God's judgment exposes the secrets of our hearts through Christ (2:16)

This is why the Gospel is so important and has to be powerful and the power of God.

- B. Who cannot hide behind their religious privilege (2:17-29)
 - 1. Because knowing the Law without doing the Law is useless and misleading (2:17-24)
 - 2. Because hypocritical living dishonors God (2:23)
 - 3. Because only the people whose heart has been changed by the Spirit lives inwardly and outwardly for Christ (2:25-29)
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Questions:

- 1. Why do people today find Romans 1:18-32 so offensive?
 - 2. What does it mean that man has no excuse when faced with God's wrath?
 - 3. How are the religiously rebellious and the religiously self-righteous in the same boat?
 - 4. Why is Romans 2:17-29 so important for religious people to understand?
 - 5. What are your personal takeaways for application?
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Romans

Session Three

Truth for Every Culture, Every Day

No, Not One: Why Everyone Needs the Gospel**Romans 3:1-31**

In chapter 2, Paul gave a devastating argument against the Jews who believed that their adherence to the Law and their sign of circumcision were enough to be justified by God. *Stott pointed out, "As he undressed his fellow Jews, he also undresses us, stripping away our misleading confidence in having God's word and our "right" affiliations. For all mankind, Jew and Gentile alike, true righteousness is a matter of the heart...for a Jew is one inwardly, and circumcision is a matter of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter" (2:29).*

@ Everyone is familiar with the story by Hans Christian Anderson, *The Emperor's New Clothes*. (Con men are commissioned...invisible clothes only to pure...).

I. Everyone is Accountable to God for their Sin (1-20)**A. *Even though many have incredible advantages (3:1-2)*****B. *Even though many put up irrational objections (3:3-8)*****C. *Even though many seek to justify themselves before God by what they do (3:9-20)***1. *The argument against self-justification (3:9)*2. *The evidence against self-justification (3:10-18)***Tim Keller lists seven effects of sin in this list (Romans 1-7 for You)**

(1) Sin has affected our Legal Standing – “No one is righteous” (Eccl. 7:20)

(2) Sin has affected our Minds – “No one understands” (Ps. 14:2)

(3) ... our Motives – “No one seeks God” (Ps. 53:1-3) – **C.S. Lewis**, in *Surprised by Joy*, “Amiable agnostics will talk cheerfully about ‘man’s search for God’. To me, as I then was, they might as well have talked about the mouse’s search for the cat.” **Merida** follows this up by saying, “If you are currently seeking God, realize you are doing so by His grace.”

(4) ... our Wills – “All have turned aside”

(5) ... our Tongues – “Their throat is an open grave”

(6) ... our Relationships – “Their feet are swift to shed blood”

(7) ... our Relationship to God “No fear of God before their eyes”.

3. *The verdict against self-justification (3:19-20)*

- **Everyone is guilty** – “The entire human race suffers from a radical inner corruption” (Hughes). **Ivan Turgenev** admitted: “I do not know what the heart of a bad man is like, but I do know what the heart of a good man is like, and it is terrible”. This is Paul’s final conclusion and verdict that all have sinned. For the Jews who had the law, their advantage was that they knew what God thought and had decided about sin; they knew the seriousness of sin’s impact on humanity and its cost before God.
- **No one has a defense** - The law stopped everyone from boasting in themselves and pointed out that the whole world was accountable to God.
- **The law cannot save you** - He points out that the law’s purpose was not to justify but to expose or give us the knowledge of sin. Why? So that we would long for a Savior who was other than us, greater than us, holier than us and able to bear the weight of our sin.

Is there any hope for humanity? BUT NOW...

II. Everyone has the Gift of God’s Grace Available to Them (21-)

Paul shifts to the what **Donald Grey Barnhouse** described as “the most important verse in the Bible.” **Kent Hughes** called this section: “The Miracle of Righteousness.” **Leon Morris** called these verses, “possibly the most important paragraph ever written.” **C.E. B. Cranfield** called it “the center and heart” of the whole letter.

- A. **Through the righteousness of God (21)** – this negates any self-righteousness which Paul clearly exposed (1:18-3:20)
1. *This righteousness of God came apart from the Law.* So, if you put your faith in the Law, you will not be justified because you cannot live it perfectly and by the Law you gain the knowledge of sin. It exposes, not saves!
 2. *This righteousness has been manifested* (aorist verb – meaning that it took place historically in one moment and has ongoing consequences...which means Paul is referring to the work of Jesus Christ on the cross).
- B. **Through faith in Jesus Christ (22-23)** – Paul makes sure we get the point by saying it in two ways (through faith for all who believe).

There is no distinction between people, traditions, conduct, you name it: all have sinned and all are justified only through faith in Jesus Christ for all have sinned!

C. Through grace as a gift of the redemptive work of Christ (24-26) –

Jesus was our propitiation. What does that mean? It means that Christ was the mercy seat (Ex. 25:21-22...above the ark between the two cherubim, God would speak to them. Beautiful picture of Christ being our access to God so that we can hear Him & know Him).

This is how God can be just to His character and accept sinners into His presence at the same time. As **Tim Keller** puts it:

“God is both the Judge, who cares enough about the world to set standards and hold us accountable to them; AND the Justifier, who has done everything necessary to forgive and restore us. He is a Father worth having, and he is a Father we can have. The cross is where, graciously and liberatingly, we see that he is ‘just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus.’”
(Romans 1-7 for You)

Jesus is the ONLY One who could represent us as sinners and representing God in giving us perfect righteousness. That’s why Paul would say to the **Corinthians**: “He who knew no sin became sin for us so that we might become the righteousness of God in Christ Jesus” (**2 Cor. 5:21**).

D. Through the humility that brings about unity (27-31)

For those in Christ, there is a realization that they have no reason to boast. The work of Christ on the cross is so clear that they could do nothing to earn their forgiveness and God’s redemption that they humble themselves before the Lord. That is the key to faith in Christ. From this comes also the realization that God way for the Jews to be saved is the same as God’s way for the Gentiles to be saved. Like the old song says, “The ground is level at the foot of the Cross, no one stands higher than I.” Christian unity is based on a salvation that centers on grace through faith in the finished and redemptive work of Jesus Christ.

As redeemed people baptized in the Spirit of God, we are empowered to live in obedience to the commands of God and live the Word of God.

Questions:

1. Why is this chapter so critical to the storyline of the entire Bible?
 2. How does 3:1-18 get encapsulated in 3:19-20?
 3. Why is the phrase "But now" in 3:21 to significant?
 4. How should the redemptive work of Christ to humble us and unify us crush human pride and promote a unifying diversity?
 5. What is one way you could apply this passage to your life this week?
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Romans

Session Four

Truth for Every Culture, Every Day

Solo Fide

Romans 4:1-25

In chapter 3, Paul clearly spelled out that God's righteousness could not come through the Law because the Law had no power to redeem, only to reveal man's sinfulness, but in their sinful, the righteousness of God was revealed through the Person and work of Jesus Christ. In chapter 4, Paul will further his argument through the example of Abraham, who believed God before any works of the Law or circumcision and was declared justified before God.

There is a scene in the now-classic animation movie, *Finding Nemo*, where Dory, a blue-tang, absent-minded, early stages of dementia fish, says, "When life gets you down, you know what you gotta do? Just keep swimming!" That's not bad advice, but when it comes to salvation, we take that to mean if I just keep trying, keep working, keep attending, keep praying, keep doing good things more than more things...I'll make it!

Just like most people throughout human history, most people believe that their salvation is tied to their efforts or their level of morality or good deeds. For Jews, they believed Abraham was the prime example of a man justified by his own works. Kent Hughes points out that in the Mishnah's third division Kiddushin (4.14) they interpret Genesis 26:5 wrongly by concluding: "and we find that Abraham our father had performed the whole law before it was given, for it is written, 'Because that Abraham obeyed my voice and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes and my laws' ...The earlier Book of Jubilees (B.C. 100) says, "Abraham was perfect in all his deeds with the Lord, and well-pleasing in righteousness all the days of his life." The Book of Manasses concluded that Abraham never needed repentance (Hughes, Kent. *Romans*, 89-90).

Paul turns the table on that kind of thinking to remind us that Abraham was Saved through Faith Alone, David was Saved through Faith Alone, Gentiles are Saved through Faith Alone, and Everyone who trusts in Christ is saved through faith alone.

I. **Abraham's Righteousness is through Faith Alone (4:1-5)**

A. *Abraham was a BIG deal! (4:1; Genesis 11-25)*

B. *But, Abraham had nothing to boast about before God (4:2-3)*

C. Abraham is himself ungodly and needs the gift of God's grace (4:4-)

"Nobody can produce new evidence of your depravity that will make God change his mind. God justified you (so to speak) with his eyes open. He knew the worst about you at the time when he accepted you for Jesus's sake; and the verdict which he passed then was, and is, final" (Packer, J.I., *Knowing God*).

II. **David's Righteousness is through Faith Alone (4:6-8)**

A. As he describes it from *Psalms 32:1-2* (4:6) "Blessed is the one whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man against whom the Lord counts no iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no deceit."

B. David does nothing and can do nothing to atone for his sin.

Religion is built on self-atonement. For example, Mormons believe that certain sins are unforgiveable without a self-atonement, such as with Gary Gilmore. Gilmore committed murder and in Utah at that time, they had execution by firing squad as an act of mercy to all those who had shed blood so they could be atoned for their sins. Paul is saying that David had nothing and could give nothing to atone for his sin of adultery and murder.

Hughes writes, "David's case was hopeless. There was nothing he could but cast himself on God's mercy. FF Bruce said, "And if we examine the remainder of the psalm to discover the ground on which he was acquitted, it appears that he simply acknowledged his guilt and casts himself in faith upon the mercy of God."

III. **Gentile's Righteousness is through Faith Alone (4:9-15)**

A. Abraham is declared righteous before he becomes a Jew (9-11a)

We are not declared righteous based on the good things we have done or have done to us. Tony Merida writes, "Unbelievers may do some good things in life, people may do some religious things in life, but those things will never be the basis for justification. Indeed, the world is a better place when people go about doing good things, but those things are never the basis for right standing before God. Our right standing with God only comes by grace alone through faith alone."

B. So that, all would know they could be made righteous through faith alone (11b-12)

C. *And, would through the promise, inherit the world (4:13-14)*

God didn't say to Abraham, "Obey the law and I will bless you", but, "I will bless you; believe My promise." (Stott, 131).

God does not bless based on our obedience. He blesses us based on His promise, and through faith we obey.

D. *Rather than inheriting the wrath of God (4:15)*

IV. Everyone Justified by Christ is through Faith Alone (4:16-25)

A. *It is guaranteed because it rests on grace (4:16-18)*

F.F. Bruce calls this a summary principle "that what God provides by his free grace can be appropriated by human beings only through faith."

John Stott says that "the fixed point is that God is gracious, and that salvation originates in his sheer grace alone. But in order for this to be so, our human response can only be faith. For grace gives and faith takes. **Faith's exclusive function is humbly to receive what grace offers.**" We have no room to boast!!

B. *It provides hope against hope (4:18)*

How does this contrast to unbelievers who have no faith in Christ? (**Eph. 2:12** "remember that you were at the time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.") – **Merida** states, "Saving faith is hope-filled faith. Abraham believed God could do the humanly impossible, and God fulfilled his promise to Abraham, making him the father of many nations."

C. *It gives strength when you feel weak (4:19)*

Abraham's faith remained strong even when the circumstances of life around him remained bleak. "I don't know how God is going to work through me, but my lack of comprehension does not negate His promise!" What He said He would do, He will do!

D. *It causes you to grow strong as you give glory to God (4:20)*

When you live with faith, your life naturally glorifies God and people see in you the life of Christ and the greatness and faithfulness of God.

E. *It causes you to be fully convinced that God is able to fulfill His promises (4:21; Gen. 17:21-27)*

One writer challenged us with these words: "We are not being called simply to admire Abraham here; we are being called to believe in the life-giving God of Abraham" (**Merida, 68**). Trusting God is about believing that God is totally sufficient and reliable. Do you believe that God is reliable? Do you believe that in any and every situation, God is faithful, that He is trustworthy? If you don't, then you don't really know Him. To know Him is to trust Him!

- F. It causes you to realize that this faith justifies us in Christ Jesus (4:22-23)
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Questions:

1. Discuss how Paul uses Abraham as an example of saving faith.
 2. How does God's promise nullify our efforts to somehow justify ourselves in the sight of God?
 3. How can God declare the ungodly to be righteous? How is this message different from other world religions?
 4. What effect should justification on the people of God?
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Romans

Session Five

Truth for Every Culture, Every Day

The Great Reversal**Romans 5:1-21**

“We are told that Christ was killed for us, that His death has washed out our sins, and that by dying He disabled death itself. That is the formula. That is Christianity. That is what has to be believed.”

C.S. Lewis

Heading into [Election Day](#) on November 2, 1948, it seemed like Thomas Dewey had the U.S. presidency in the bag. Numerous polls and pundits predicted a win for the Michigan native, New York governor and prominent gang-busting attorney. But, as a now-famous photograph would show, everyone—including the editors of the *Chicago Tribune*—got it wrong. The surprise victory of the plain-spoken Democratic nominee, [Harry S Truman](#), would become one of the [biggest upsets in U.S. presidential history](#)—and it would forever be memorialized, thanks to an embarrassing newspaper gaffe.

The election of Harry S. Truman surprisingly defeating Thomas Dewey is among many reversals where one outcome was never realized because of another. Like when Wellington defeated Napoleon...or when Trump defeated Clinton. Reversals are a part of the human story. There are some that don't bring up great memories, like the Falcons losing a 25-point lead in the Super Bowl or Georgia losing to Alabama in the National Championship. On the positive side, two events in basketball stand-out: NC State's Cinderella win over Houston in 1983 and Duke's win over UNLV in the Final Four in 1991.

Paul uses this next section of the letter to build on the blessings of our justification through faith alone and describes the GREAT REVERSAL for humanity.

I. Our Relationship to and with God is Reversed through Faith (1:1-11)

Paul gives us SIX benefits of justification that prove how God in Christ reversed our situation and standing before God:

- A. *So, now we can enjoy peace with God (5:1)* – In Christ, we have been justified so that we can have peace with God that allows us to experience the peace of God. @ [Rick Lail walked in my office with a box full of witch craft materials and a restlessness that caused him to shake. When he left my office, he left with Jesus Christ as his Savior and a peace with God that caused his shaking to completely go away.](#)

B. *So, now we can have access to God's grace (5:2)* – **F.F. Bruce** writes, “Access denotes the privilege of approaching or being introduced into the presence of someone in high station, especially a royal or divine personage.”

C. *So, now we can live with joy amidst our sufferings (5:2b-5a)*

Merida writes, “Believers do not look at God as some means to an end. We see him as glorious. We see him as beautiful. He is the end for which we have been created, to glorify him and enjoy him forever...Genuine faith leads to a deep love for God. A Christian has been awakened to the beauty of God” (Merida, Romans, p. 82).

That is why the Christian rejoices...

1. Knowing that they have hope in what is to come
2. Knowing that their present sufferings are making them stronger!

D. *So, now we can experience the love of God (5:5-8)*

The Daily Bread produced the story during the Revolutionary War about a faithful preacher of the gospel named Peter Miller who was hated by a local member of the community. This man would rail hatred toward Miller and the church regularly. However, the man was also found guilty of treason and sentenced to death. When Peter Miller heard of it, he journeyed to beg for this man's life before General George Washington. Washington heard his plea and responded by saying that he could not pardon his friend. “My friend! He is not my friend! In fact, he's my worst living enemy.” Washington said, “What! You have walked 60 miles to save the life of your enemy? That in my judgment, puts the matter in a different light. I will grant your request.” With the pardon in hand, Miller hurried and just as the executioner was walking the man to the gallows, the man saw Peter Miller approaching. “Old Peter Miller has come to have his revenge by watching me hang!” But he was astonished as he watched Miller step out and produce the pardon. Peter Miller demonstrated an unbelievable love but it pales in comparison to Christ who then died in our place!

E. *So, now we can have His protection from His wrath (5:9-10)*

There is a scene in the movie, “Hulk,” where an innocent girl is caught in the crossfire of those trying everything, they can to stop the Hulk. A fiery bomb is headed toward her and the Hulk completely covers her and shields her from the fire. Not only did Jesus shield us from the fire but He died making sure we would not get burned by God's wrath.

F. So, now we can rejoice for having received reconciliation (5:11)

Paul is saying that our reconciliation with God causes us to rejoice, to live in consistent and life-giving joy! Joy is knowing the contentment and fulfillment of life as God intended even when things are not going all that well. This is the gift you have by faith through justification. This the great reversal of depending on your feelings to get you through. Now, you have God, and He is all you need!!

Are you rejoicing in God? Tim Keller gives us 6 Signs that you are rejoicing in God:

- (1) Your mind is deeply satisfied with the doctrine of justification by faith. You rejoice in it by studying it and speaking about it to others.
- (2) You only think of your past in terms of it. You don't say, "What a mess I made it there! Instead, you say: Me, a Christian! Despite my deep flaws, despite my record! Yes, it is absolutely true!"
- (3) When you discover in yourself some surprising new character flaw, a fearfulness or a lack of self-control, etc. the discovery does not make you doubt God's love. Rather, it makes you feel closer to him, and his grace for you becomes more precious in your sight.
- (4) When you conscience accuses you and says: How could God love you after what you've done? You don't try to answer with reference to your performance. In other words, you don't say: I had a bad day! Or I was under pressure! You say something like: Even if I hadn't done this thing, that would not have made me acceptable in God's sight anyway! Jesus died for me, and his blood can cover 1,000 worlds filled with people 1,000 times worse than me!
- (5) When you face criticism, you don't say: This is totally unfair. You rejoice gently inside with thoughts like: Well, I'm really a much worse sinner than they know, but... 'Well may the Accuser roar, of sins that I have done; I know them all, and thousands more; Jehovah knoweth none!"
- (6) When you face death, you do it with serenity because you going to a friend!

II. Our Reign with Sin is Reversed through Faith in Christ (5:12-21)

A. Reversing the ruin sin caused universally (5:12-14)

1. Sin entered
2. Sin destroyed
3. Sin spread

Paul's point (in v. 13) is that sin did not come with the Law but before the Law. Even those who could not understand or were not willing to understand the full seriousness of sin had to be confronted by it! [Chuck Swindoll told the story as a](#)

boy who had a paper route. The route took him through neighborhoods and at the corner houses, he would ride through the yard to the next street. He even wore a path in the grass. He knew it was wrong but did it anyway. One day, the corner house homeowner put a sign in the yard that read: "Keep off the grass! No Bikes!" When Swindoll saw the sign, he rode right past it into the path of the homeowner. After a few choice words, he realized that the owner was serious! (Boice, Romans, 116).

B. Reversing the impact of one man's sin (5:15-19)

1. By giving us the free gift of grace (5:15)
2. By giving us freedom and forgiveness (5:16)
3. By giving us life through the one man, Jesus Christ! (5:17-19)

C. Reversing the power of sin's hold on humanity (5:20-21)

1. By countering the law's exposure of sin with grace (5:20)
2. By giving us eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord (5:21)

Questions:

1. How would you sum up the message of this chapter in one single sentence?
 2. What does it mean to have peace with God as opposed to the peace of God?
 3. How does the reversal of sin and what justification produce in us impact the way you experience God, love Him and live life?
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Romans

Session Six

Truth for Every Culture, Every Day

The Christian Life**Romans 6:1-23**

The Christian life in a nutshell is simply your character and conduct in Jesus Christ. If we could go one step farther to explain, the Christian life is all about knowing who you are in Christ or your identity, and knowing how to live your identity in a spiritually hostile environment or your actions. Paul has introduced grace as the victory given to every Christian over the reign of sin. In Christ, grace reigns supreme giving us continual victory over sin and opened our hearts to a new way of living that is no longer controlled by the dictates of sin but now controlled by the Gospel of grace that frees us from the condemnation and power of sin.

With this new revelation and power, Paul knew what was being whispered in the corners of the room or asked when two people were alone: Are we to continue to sin, that grace may become more potent or more abundant? In other words, if grace is what is preached, want that give people permission to sin even more than they can get even more grace? Paul rejects the teaching of Antinomianism, that says God's grace in salvation gives people the license to live lawlessly.

He walks the reader through why grace is not a license to sin by revealing the implications of the Christian's character and then demonstrates how these implications work in the Christian's conduct.

I. Character: Knowing Who You Are in Christ Jesus (Romans 6:1-10)

- A. *You have died to sin (6:2) – (1) Even though the desire remains; (2) Even though you will continue to be influenced by sin; (3) Therefore, sin is no longer your master – “The moment you became a Christian, you are no longer under the ruling power of sin” (Keller, 139).; (4) Therefore, you have a new power at work in your life (Acts 26:18 Jesus is quoted as saying to Paul that he is sending him to the Gentiles, “to open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in Me.”) This is the power of the Gospel so that having died to sin, you can live for Christ (even though you may be harassed by sin's influence). @ Good army invades Bad...Harass parts*

- B. *You are united with Christ in his death through baptism (6:3)* – Tim Keller writes, “Paul is referring to the spiritual reality to which water baptism points. Paul has already taught us (5:12-21) that we are in union with Christ. When we believe, we are united with Christ, so that whatever is true of him is now legally true of us. Since Christ died, and dead people are freed from sin, so we are freed from sin.”
- C. *You have been raised by his resurrection to new life (6:4-5)* – Kent Hughes points out that “we actually did die with Him and truly were raised with Him, so that we now share in his resurrection life.” You died with Him just as if you were there when Jesus died and rose. Hughes goes on to say, “Whereas before we had only a solidarity with Adam’s sin, now that has been broken and we have a solidarity with Christ, the Second Adam, in his death and resurrection (Hughes, 124). This means we can **experience victory over sin!** We have a new life in Christ! Having new life means a new way of living, not as in the old ways, but now living for the values of Christ, reflecting in your decisions, relationships and attitudes the character of Jesus Christ. This also means, we can **experience certainty** in this new life so that we know sin no longer has power over us. We can change! We will change!
- D. *You are a new person set free from sin (6:6-7)* – Our old self, the unconverted person you used to be in Adam was crucified. So that, the body of sin might be brought to nothing. What is “**the body of sin**”? – NOT referring to our sinful bodies (that was Gnostic dualism), but our flesh, our sinful, self-centered desires. Keller adds, “A Christian’s ‘old self’ is gone completely. The old ‘ego’, the old self-understanding, the old stance of the whole person toward God and the world—all that is gone. It has died—I died—and “anyone who has died has been freed from sin. As a Christian, “I” my truest self, really seeks God and loves his law and holiness. While sin remains in me with a lot of strength, it no longer controls my personality and life. It is still able to lead me to disobey God, but now, sinful behavior goes against my deepest self-understanding” (Keller, 141-142). Sin in the Christian’s life should be as foreign in the way it feels as trying to breath under water! Does it? That’s the question.
- E. *You are guaranteed absolute victory over death! (6:8-10)* – This victory is who we are in Christ. Our lives are divided into two! @ BC/AD

II. Conduct: Knowing How to Live the New Life in Christ Jesus (Romans 6:11-23)

This is a major theological section of Romans that includes imperatives for living for Christ now that you are free from the control of sin and living in new life. Tony Merida's work on Romans (Exalting Jesus in Romans) gives us three broad ways to break down Paul's weighty statements for how to live the new life:

A. *Consider yourself dead to sin and alive to God in Christ (6:11)*

To consider (logizomai) means to regard or look upon the reality of what happened when Jesus justified us by faith, that we died to sin just like Jesus died on the cross and just as Jesus was raised to life, we have been raised to live for God. We've been through a resurrection. We are not the same person! A transformation, an exchange has happened. It does not erase the ability to sin but it raises a new question: do I have to be controlled by sin? Do I have to be identified by it? NO! "Our identity in Christ is our most fundamental and important identity. It should shape everything. It should stimulate our affections for Christ, give us a deep sense of gratitude, and fill us with hope as we live for God's glory in this fallen world" (Merida, 102).

B. *Offer Yourself to God (6:12-19)* – Paul is so clear in this section. The unrighteous present their bodies to their sinful desires for sexual immorality, for greed, for "evil, covetousness, malice, envy, murder, deceit, strife, gossiping, slandering, hating God and the people of God, inventing all kinds of evil, being disobedient to parents, foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless and approving of people who do the very same things (1:29-32).

Paul is calling Christians to **declare war on sin...not to cozy up to it like a pet**, but to realize that sin is your mortal enemy! **We don't offer how best times, our best thoughts, our best resources, our best affections to sin!...No, we offer ourselves to God (6:13)!!**

We are no longer slaves to sin, SO do not live like it! (14-16)

We never have to say yes to sin. We have the power to say NO! (17-19)

This is the process of Sanctification. It is a call to action (against the pull of sin).

Phillips Brooks, former minister of Boston's Trinity Episcopal Church, is perhaps best known as the author of "O Little Town of Bethlehem." He was a very busy pastor, yet he always seemed relaxed and unburdened, willing to take time for anyone in need. Shortly before Brooks died, a young friend wrote to him and asked the secret of his strength and serenity. In a heartfelt response, Brooks credited his still-growing relationship with Christ.

He wrote, "The more I have thought it over, the more sure it has seemed to me that these last years have had a peace and fullness which there did not used to be. It is a deeper knowledge and truer love of Christ....I cannot tell you how personal this grows to me. He is here. He knows me and I know Him. It is the most real thing in the world. And every day makes it more real. And one wonders with delight what it will grow to as the years go on." (Our Daily Bread, October 14, 1994).

C. *Remember the superior benefits of serving God (6:20-23)* - Paul tells that the fruit of their lives, while it could have been good, produced death. He was not saying that the unrighteous never did good things, but that saw no real reason to continue to do what was right. Their motivation for doing right was self-motivated, not God-motivated.

All of this led to the two major benefits of following Jesus:

(1) Sanctification – being more and more like Jesus

(2) Eternal Life – life forever free from the despair and death sin brings and life with Christ in heaven without the influence or consequences of sin!

Verse 23 is the Ultimate contrast: Penalty and Gift!

Questions:

1. Explain and discuss the meaning and implications of Justification, Sanctification and Glorification.
 2. Why is knowing your identity in Christ so important when it comes to sanctification?
 3. What does it mean to be dead to sin and alive to God?
 4. What does it mean to be slave to God?
 5. What is one practical application you (personally) can make for this week as a takeaway?
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Romans

Session Seven

Truth for Every Culture, Every Day

Wretched, Released and Delivered**Romans 7:1-25**

Perhaps the most famous speech in the 20th century that helped to change a country's course socially was Martin Luther King's speech on August 28, 1963 delivered to over 250,000 in Washington, DC. The speech was the most important speech since President Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation at Gettysburg. Halfway through the speech, King left his notes and spoke about the "dream":

"I have a dream that one day on the red hills of Georgia, the sons of former slaves and the sons of former slave owners will be able to sit down together at the table of brotherhood.

I have a dream that one day even the state of Mississippi, a state sweltering with the heat of injustice, sweltering with the heat of oppression will be transformed into an oasis of freedom and justice.

I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character. I have a dream today." That speech for freedom racially and socially can be heard with even greater significance as Paul speaks of our freedom we have from the power of sin and finally able to get a right perspective on the purpose of the Law!

Tony Merida reminds us that "the Law reveals the holiness of God. It shows us our sin. It condemns us. It cannot acquit us or change us" (Exalting Jesus in Romans, 108). So, Paul continues to argue that the Law has no power to save but serves the valuable and necessary purpose to reveal our hopelessness so that we would fall on the mercy and grace of Christ. When we die to the law which holds us captive, we are released to serve the Lord by the Holy Spirit.

III. Released to Remarry (7:1-6)*A. The Principle of our Release (7:1-3)*

1. The Law is legally binding until death (1)
2. Marriage is a good illustration for the legal binding of this principle (2-3)

B. The Application of our Release (7:4)

1. Death frees us to remarry

Keller writes, "We are married to Christ! To be a Christian is to fall in love with Jesus and to enter into a legal, yet personal, relationship as comprehensive as marriage. When you get married, no part of your life goes unaffected. So, though Christians are now not 'under law,' they have every aspect of their lives changed by the coming of Jesus Christ. No area is untouched. Being married to Christ is the final answer to the question: Can a Christian live as he or she chooses? No, because we are in love with Christ!" (Keller, Romans 1-7 for You, 157.)

2. Marriage to Christ frees us to bear fruit for God (everything is in Christ)

- Col. 1:9-14
- John 15:1-8
- Gal. 5:22-23

C. The Contrast of our Release (7:5-6)

1. While in the flesh, the law aroused our sinful passions bearing fruit for death (5) – the law was a burden, so weighty that it caused frustration in our life and caused our sinful flesh to rebel which caused us to sin more and more! The Law was good but trying to live up to it in our flesh only caused us to rebel more! We needed something or Someone greater than our flesh to rescue us!
2. BUT NOW, we are released to serve "Christ" His way (in the Spirit) (6) - which Paul will expand in Romans 8.

We are no longer under the law, but in Christ. That means, our motivation to obey the Law does not come from a place of obligation or salvation, but out of joy for the One who has loved enough and been powerful enough to free us from our captor. If your incentive to follow the Law came from fear of being rejected by God, then you would be under the law, but now that your incentive has changed and empowerment to obey has changed, you do the law out of joy and love.

As Keller writes, "We obey who we offer our service to. We live to please who we are married to. We were once slaves to sin – we obeyed it. We were once married to the law; controlled by our sinful nature-whether pursuing self-righteous religion or self-centered license – we lived to please it... We are slaves to God – how could we, and why would we, sin? We are Christ's." (Keller, 158).

IV. Thankful to be Delivered (7:7-25)

Paul anticipates the natural response to his argument that the law's purpose was to reveal our need to die with Christ so we could be joined to Christ. The question would naturally come: "Is the law, then, sin?" He emphatically says, "No!" And states unequivocally that the law is holy and good. **As Keller put it: "Sin is the killer; the law, which is good, is its weapon" (Keller, 167).**

A. *From the power of the law (7-8)*

1. That explains sin for us (7)
2. That exposes sin in us (8,13) – the greatest need for the human heart is for the law to expose the grossness and awfulness of sin. Without which, we have no incentive or motivation to turn to Christ. We simply 'don't see it', we don't see the need for Christ.

In the same way, if you had something on your face that you would be embarrassed to know was there, but when someone pointed it out, you refused to believe it, the only way you would be convinced is if someone put a mirror in your face and revealed it. The law is that mirror!

B. *From the corrupting and violent nature of the law (8-13)*

Paul expresses his vulnerability to the corrupting and violent nature of the law's work by saying that he was unaware of the real problem with coveting until coveting was shown to him to be evil, and then his flesh could not covet enough!

Your flesh will always want to do what it knows not to do. That is the sinful nature!

Augustine, in his *Confessions*, gave this helpful and insightful story:

"Near our vineyard there was a pear tree, loaded with fruit, though the fruit was not particularly attractive either in color or taste. I and some other youths conceived the idea of shaking the pears off this tree and carrying them away. We set out late at night...and stole all the fruit that we could carry. And this was not to feed ourselves; we may have tasted a few, but then we threw the rest to the pigs. Our real pleasure was simply in doing something that was not allowed. I had plenty of better pears of my own; I only took these ones in order that I might be a thief. Once I had taken them, I threw them away, and all I tasted in them was my own iniquity, which I enjoyed very much." Augustine explained here that the motivating factor for sinning is to play God, to do to others, against others or withhold from others, that which God could do or withhold, but in their sin would do or not do just the opposite.

As if Augustine is talking to God Himself, wrote this: "In a perverse way, all men imitate you who put themselves far from you...What then was it that I loved in

that theft of mine? In what way, awkwardly and perversely, did I imitate my Lord? Did I find it pleasant to break your law...unpunished...and so producing a darkened shadow of omnipotence? What a sight! A servant running away from his master and following a shadow! Could I enjoy what was forbidden for no other reason except that it was forbidden?" (Confessions, Book II, chapter 6)

Paul's conclusion, then, is that the law had a wonderful purpose by exposing the sinfulness of sin! The violent purpose of the law to kill was not the law killing, but raising our awareness that our disobedience to God by sinning had to be exposed and had to condemn if we had any chance to be redeemed. Therefore, the law proved to be holy, righteous and good (v. 12).

C. From the wretchedness of our conflicting minds (14-25)

Paul makes clear that the Law is not unspiritual or sinful but his flesh that is sold under sin causes him to live in a conflicting way.

1. Is Paul speaking as an unbeliever or believer?
 - Verb tenses change from 7:7-13 from 7:14 ("it was" to "I am")
 - Situation changes (from being killed by sin to struggling against it)
 - Desire changes (unbelievers do not delight in the law of God 7:22)
 - Paul's awareness of the reality of his heart (7:18) – Unbelievers do not have this awareness.

2. Is there any hope for the wretchedness that Paul feels? (24-25)

"O wretched man that I am!" - Keller writes this insightful comment: "This is the Apostle Paul talking! If we ever perceive ourselves to be "over" sin, if we ever feel ourselves to be pretty good Christians, we are deceived. For the more mature and spiritually discerning we get, the more we see of the sin in our hearts. The more holy we become, the less holy we will feel. This is not false modesty. Even when we know and see ourselves making progress against many bad habits and attitudes, we will grow more aware of the rebellious, selfish roots within us. The holier we are, the more we cry about our unholiness" (Keller, 170).

You have to love and admire Paul's transparency; his humility. This is what Jesus meant when He said, "Blessed are the poor in spirit." For us to come to a saving knowledge of Christ and truly be born again, we have recognized that we are utterly depraved and utterly lost. We have to know that without Christ, there is no hope. You have to see that you are wretched and broken beyond repair and that God is not wretched and the Only One who can change you permanently.

We all know about Humpty Dumpty. No one could put him together and no one can put you together except Jesus Christ!

Questions:

1. What does Paul mean when he says that "the law is binding as long as he lives"? How has Paul already explained this in Romans 6?
 2. How does entering into the covenant of marriage replicate entry into a covenant relationship with Christ? How does it change you, your character and conduct?
 3. Compare the two types of fruit in 7:4-5. What are some examples of each type?
 4. What is Paul referring to when he says "that we serve in the new way of the Spirit?" What are some practical new ways he might be talking about?
 5. What do Paul's words in 7:14-25 mean for you? Do they comfort you or trouble you? Why?
 6. What is one major takeaway from this chapter?
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Romans

Session Eight

Truth for Every Culture, Every Day

**Life, Love and Glory:
What It Looks Like to Live in the Freedom of Christ (Part One)
Romans 8:1-11**

In 2001, Russell Crowe played mathematician, John Nash, in the film *A Beautiful Mind*. Nash was a genius but was caught up in a cryptography investigation that takes a radical turn for Nash. In the end, you realize that Nash is schizophrenic and has been moving between two completely different lives the whole time. The pull of the other life working for the government is extreme but only through intense therapy was he able to live in one world. The last scene, John is walking with a university colleague as they discuss John teaching again. The man asks, "Are they...gone?" He looks to his right and says, "No. No they're not gone. Maybe they never will be. I've gotten used to ignoring them, and as a result, they've kind of given up on me."

What Paul says at the end of Romans 7 is that we have two natures. One is sinful and wants to do anything that appeals to the flesh and opposes God, but there is another nature that is new, changed, wants God and desires to live holy. Both exist and can make life even more difficult if we don't live in accordance to the Holy Spirit. It's through the Spirit's empowerment that the flesh is overcome and the life Christ created you to live can truly be realized.

The key is realizing that while the flesh is not gone and simply ignoring the flesh with its temptations will not work, the Spirit of God has come to give you a new power, a new will, new life that is far more powerful than anything the flesh can do!

In chapter 8, Paul goes nuts! He packs so much theology in these words that we could spend months, every day, working through the theology and implications of the theology. Every verse could be examined under a microscope or peered at through a jeweler's lens for its beauty. ***What is this beautiful life Jesus offers?***

I. THE PRINCIPLE of NEW LIFE (8:1-2)

NO CONDEMNATION – you have no debt, no one can charge you for a debt owed. (Romans 5:16, 18). It doesn't exist anymore! @ Some Christians are "In and Out Burger" Christians. Do you know In and Out Burger? They believe you are IN

the grace of God when you confess your sins, but as soon as you sin again, you are OUT of God's grace.

What a turnstile of emotion! You're not in and out of condemnation! You are NO Longer Under the Condemnation of God's wrath!

Q1: What happens if we forget the incredible reality of 'No Condemnation'?

Keller suggests: "On the one hand, we feel far more guilt, unworthiness and pain than we should. From this may come drivenness from a need to 'prove ourselves'; great sensitivity to criticism, defensiveness; a lack of confidence in relationships; a lack of confidence and joy in prayer and worship; and even addictive behavior, which can be a reaction to a deep sense of guilt and unworthiness. On the other hand, we will have far less motivation to live a holy life. We have fewer resources for self-control, ...and only obey out of fear and duty" (Romans 8-16 For You, 13).

Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones illustrated the difference between a sinner sinning before God and a Christian sinning before God (violation against the state versus a violation against your spouse – one is a violation of the law and the other a violation of love. In both cases you have sinned, but in your marriage, you have sinned against the heart. You may feel ashamed, yes, but condemned as under the law, no.

The sentence against us has been read and we have been found NOT GUILTY, not because we were Not Guilty, but because Christ's work on the cross secured it and the Holy Spirit has declared it by removing the chains.

II. THE PRIVILEGES of YOUR NEW LIFE (8:3-8)

- A. God sends His Son in the flesh as a sin offering – v 3 INCARNATION –** Paul uses the word, "likeness". The early church dealt with a heresy surrounding this word called DOCETICISM. It meant that Jesus was so divine that his physical body was only an illusion.

"For early church fathers, the problem with docetism was that if Jesus wasn't fully human, then he couldn't really live, die, or be resurrected. If his body was an illusion, then so was the redemption he offered. The hope of the gospel and the salvation Christianity professed was completely based on Jesus' physical death and resurrection." John wrote in his letter combating this heresy, "By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God" (1 John 4:3-4). And then, in 2 John 7 "For many deceivers have gone out into the world, those who do not confess the coming of Jesus Christ in the flesh."

Paul is stating in Romans 8 that Jesus came as God in the flesh and He had to in order that He might be our perfect High Priest. **Heb 4:14-15** says, "Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin."

In His humanity and deity, Christ came as our sin offering! We read about the sin offering in Leviticus, Numbers and Ezekiel. Jesus was the final sin offering. **Heb. 9:28** "So Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who eagerly wait for Him."

- B. God produces in us a holy life** – v 4 --- The entire point of Christ's death, burial and resurrection was to nullify the legal requirement against us, paying the debt with His blood and then, to empower us by the Spirit to live like Christ in every way.

John Stott wrote in *Men Made New*: "We are set free from the law as a way of acceptance, but obliged to keep it as a way of holiness. It is as a ground of justification that the law no longer binds us...But as a standard of conduct the law is still binding, and we seek to fulfill it as we walk according to the Spirit" (82-83).

This gives us the full picture of Christ's purpose for us, that is, that we live holy lives, thereby, fulfilling the righteous requirements of the law." God paid for our sins so we could obey His law (even though we won't do it perfectly) in His power and for His glory! Jesus didn't come to condemn the law but fulfill it! Therefore, "whenever we sin, we endeavor to frustrate the aim and purpose of the entire life, death and ministry of Jesus Christ! If this doesn't work as an incentive for living a holy life, nothing will" (Keller, 15).

- C. God gives us a new mind (v. 5-8)** – "set your mind" – it means to focus, not simply to think about it, but to focus intently.

Q2: Read 8:5-8 - What does it mean in YOUR life to set your mind on the flesh and the Spirit? What attitudes or actions result from both? Give real life examples.

@ If you have ever flown through **Amsterdam Schiphol Airport**, as you approach the moving sidewalk, the voice you hear as you exit says, "**Mind your step.**" It means, focus on what you are doing, the walkway is about to end, you could get hurt if you are not paying attention.

Paul says here that if you are not focused on the Spirit, the choices of the flesh will hurt you. Don't get distracted by the temptations of the flesh, that is, "our fallen, ego-centric, sin-dominated self".

- **Paul is contrasting at this point, the Christian and Non-Christian.** Moo states, "To become a Christian involves being transferred from a realm dominated by the flesh into a new realm dominated by the Spirit."
- **Contrasting realities (v. 6) Life and Death**
- **Contrasting attitudes (v. 7-8) Peace and Hostility**

Paul is encouraging the believers to get your mind right, be preoccupied with the things of God in Christ, and have your imagination completely captured by the Spirit of God. @ **The former Archbishop of Canterbury William Temple** said, "Your religion is what you do with your solitude" (Keller, 16). Keller followed up by saying, "Wherever your mind goes most naturally and freely when there is nothing else to distract it-that is what you really live for. That is your religion. Your life is shaped by whatever preoccupies your mind." Where is your mind set?

D. God indwells us through the Holy Spirit (8:9-11)

Q3: What three realities about the Spirit of God in the believer's life are described in 8:9-11?

These verses point to three realities about the Spirit of God in the believer's life:

1. *The Spirit of God guarantees that believers belong to Christ (v. 9)*
2. *The Spirit of God guarantees that believers have life because of the righteousness of Christ (v. 10)*
3. *The Spirit of God guarantees that believers will be raised to new life after death because the Spirit of God dwells in them (v. 11) – No one will be raised to new life who does not have the Spirit of God dwelling in them.*

@ Merida, "Ponder this for a moment: The same Holy Spirit who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, believer! This is astonishing and assuring!"

III. THE PRESENT RESPONSIBILITY in YOUR NEW LIFE (8:12-13)

A. To live by the Spirit (12) – We owe our lives and our freedom to Jesus Christ who has given us life (8:11). Therefore, while we live in the flesh, we have no obligation to obey his call to sin! We listen to another call, a call to live for Christ. Only by living in Christ by the Spirit can we live.

B. To put to death the deeds of the flesh (13) – **John Owen** famously would say, "Be killing sin or it will be killing you."

John Stott wrote: "If temptation comes to us through what we see, handle or visit, then we must be ruthless in not looking, not touching, not going, and so in controlling the very approaches of sin. Positively, we are to set our minds on the things the Spirit desires (v. 5), set our hearts on things above, and occupy our thoughts with what is noble, right, pure and lovely. In this way 'mortification' (putting evil to death) and 'aspiration' (hungering and thirsting for what is good) are counterparts." {Saying NO to sin and YES to God!}

Conclusion: We are no longer under condemnation, but we will wrestle with this old flesh. How can know victory is certain? @ Crab grass is a pain, but it's nemesis is Zoysia grass...plugs, the Crab Grass' days are numbered!! Still there for a while but one day it will be gone!

Questions for Small Groups:

7. Discuss the relationship between Romans 7:6 and Romans 8:1-13.
 8. How does the phrase "no condemnation" relate to the doctrine of justification?
 9. What are some ways you have set your mind on the flesh and how would you describe what it produced in your life?
 10. Describe the kind of life where sin is dealt with seriously and where you find pleasure in the pursuit of holiness.
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Romans

Session Nine

Truth for Every Culture, Every Day

**Life, Love and Glory:
What It Looks Like to Live in the Freedom of Christ (Part Two)
Romans 8:14-25**

Intro. The greatest picture of the privilege of being a Christian is the picture of adoption. In ancient Rome, adoption was carried out by wealthy people who did not have an heir. Children, youth or adults could be adopted, and at their adoption, all debts and legal obligations were eradicated, they received a new legal name, they became heir of all the estate, and the new father was instantly liable for all their actions. The new son or daughter also had the obligation to honor the new father with their life.

I. The Personal Nature of Adoption (8:14-15)

A. Your identity is new (v. 14) – Children or Sons is mentioned in 8:14-17

Sinclair Ferguson wrote: "The notion that we are children of God, his own sons and daughters...is the mainspring of Christian living...our sonship to God is the apex of creation and the goal of redemption." – "You are not your own! You have been bought at a price..." (1 Cor. 6:19). @ Identity in our culture is all based on how a person feels, but our identity is based on a legal reclamation of us from slavery to sin, to sonship with God through Jesus Christ.

B. Your position is received, not earned (v. 15a) – when a person is adopted, they are not adopted because they campaigned for the attention of a new parent. They were adopted because they were chosen. They brought nothing to the relationship but was given everything. Jesus said in John 15:16 "You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should remain, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you."

C. Your adoption is communal, not solely individual (v. 15 "as sons" – plural)

@ Tony Merida describes one of his five adopted children going to visit his adopted grandpa one Christmas. "Papa, are all these people our family?" "Many view the church as a building you visit occasionally or as an event you attend for a few hours. While events and buildings are important, the church is fundamentally a family."

Q1: How does the biblical teaching of adoption impact a Christian's identity, community and purpose?

II. The Privileges of Adoption (8:15-17)

1. **Security** (v. 15a "FALL BACK into FEAR" – once you became a son or daughter of God, you cast off the fear of being ousted out of the family, like the fear an employee might have)
2. **Authority** (v. 15b "SONS" – slaves have no authority, you are sons. "There should be a confidence and a poise about believers because they operate under the authority and name of Christ.")
3. **Intimacy** (v. 15c "ABBA! FATHER!" – our approach is one of familiarity and closeness. We "cry" ...like a child in a sea of people who spots their mom or dad, and the parent hears that voice, runs to them and the one crying knows they are safe!)
4. **Assurance** (v. 16 "SPIRIT BEARS WITNESS" – when we are close to the flame, we feel the warmth; @ When we are in a foreign country and all we hear is a foreign language; to hear our own language in that moment is like a taste of home and we are drawn to talk with them. Probably an even better way to explain it: Gk. "Testify or bears witness" = Martyria or Martyr. Originally, the word meant an authoritative witness who solves a difficult case and put the verdict beyond doubt. @ Trial that could go either way, and defense brings in an eye witness whose testimony acquits the defendant beyond a doubt.) We can see it. We know we are His!
5. **Inheritance** (v. 17 "HEIRS of GOD" – In ancient culture, the heir was the oldest who would get the lion share of the family wealth. The others were loved but they got what was left or distributed. What Paul is saying is **AMAZING!!** He is saying that ALL Christians are heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ. In other words, "what is in store for us is so grand and glorious that it will be, and will feel, as though we each had alone gotten most of the glory of God!")
6. **Discipline** (v. 17 "SUFFER with HIM" – Parents use a milder form of discipline when needed to correct their children so they do not have to experience a harsher correction later in life. They do this out of love (Heb. 12:9-10). God does the same. The disciplines us so we learn to live without so many of the self-inflicted wounds that sin delivers.)
7. **Family Likeness** (v. 17 "SUFFER with HIM, GLORIFIED with HIM" – Christians are not immune to suffering but actually resemble Christ

when they suffer because Christ has had to suffer. Peter was closer to this than he realized when he denied Jesus, but we must not deny Him, and embrace Him no matter what it costs. –

1 Pet. 4:12-16)

Q2: How can a Christian who is no longer a slave but a son, have the “spirit of a slave again”? What does that look like? What has it looked like in your life?

Discussion: Knowing your relationship with God is sonship now, discuss the difference in how you approach life with the relationship based on unconditional love rather than performance standards.

III. The Perspective of Adoption (8:18-25) – What does it mean? It’s worth it!

It means...

- A. **God’s glory awaits even though we still suffer (v. 18)** – John Newton describes this from the perspective of a person traveling to the city of New York to take possession of a huge estate. His carriage breaks down one mile from the city and all he can do is complain about his broken-down carriage! We only have ONE-MILE to go! ---- In another perspective, Theresa of Avila, “In light of heaven, the worst suffering on earth will be seen to be no more than one night in an inconvenient hotel” (Bird, Romans, 277).

Q3: What two aspects of redemption do we see now in 8:19-22, what is their order of redemption and what is the purpose?

- B. **Creation will be freed from its corrupted state (v. 19-22)** – Paul is not talking about everything that God created, but the physical world of matter, animals and plants. @ Boice says, “His argument is that nature is in a presently imperfect state, but that it is longing for the day of liberation. Paul means that nature is not yet all that God predestined it to be.” And, creation is incomplete without God’s image-bearers being complete. The Creation is waiting for this fulfillment. As Phillips translates this, “The whole creation is on tiptoe to see the wonderful sight of the sons of God coming into their own.” And yet, they await for their own deliverance and perfection.

C. Every believer's hope is in the redemption of our bodies (v. 23-25) – just like the creation groans to be delivered, our bodies groan. @ Paul says in 2 Cor. 5:2 “For in this tent we groan, longing to put on our heavenly dwelling, if indeed by putting it on we may not be found naked. For while we are still in this tent, we groan, being burdened – not that we would be unclothed, but that we would be further clothed, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life.”

Ray Stedman writes: “Our lives consist of groans. We groan because of the ravages that sin makes in our lives, and in the lives of those we love. Also, we groan because we see possibilities that are not being captured and employed. And then we groan because we gifted people who are wasting their lives, and we would love to see something else happening. So, we groan in our spirits – we groan in disappointment, in bereavement, in sorrow. We groan physically in our pain and our limitation. Life consists of a great deal of groaning.”

And yet, we are on tiptoe looking over the brink for that city whose builder and maker is God.

Until then, we must walk faithfully and run the race God intends for all of us who know Him!

Questions for Small Groups:

1. Why is adoption the best way to describe what Christ has done through our justification?
 2. Knowing the privileges of adoption, how does it impact the way you function as a Christian?
 3. What evidences do we see of creation's groaning and what are the Christian's responsibilities as stewards of creation?
 4. How does knowing that the frailty of our bodies will give way to new bodies in eternity impact the way you view life and death?
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Romans

Session Ten

Truth for Every Culture, Every Day

**Life, Love and Glory:
What It Looks Like to Live in the Freedom of Christ (Part Three)
Romans 8:26-30**

Intro. A university student was seen with a large "K" printed on his T- shirt. When someone asked him what the "K" stood for, he said, "Confused." "But," the questioner replied, "you don't spell "confused" with a "K." The student answered, "You don't know how confused I am."

A teacher was handed the following note by one of her students: "Dear Teacher, Please excuse Harriet for missing school yesterday. We forgot to get the Sunday paper off the porch, and when we found it on Monday, we thought it was Sunday."

Life can be confusing! But, God knows us at our core and He has given us a gift to help us in our weaknesses!

I. God Helps You in Your Weakness (8:26-30)

- A. ***With the Spirit's intercession (26-27)*** - To pray for the right words – we don't know what to pray; we don't know the Lord's will about whether to pray for healing or endurance, to stay under persecution or leave a situation.
- Often, we do not know what God's will is in the moment, which is our weakness, but in God's grace, He intercedes because He knows the mind of the Lord.
 - Believers pray in the Spirit (**Eph. 6:18 "praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication".**) – Bruce: "The Spirit makes intercession within the lives of believers whom He indwells".

@ **Douglas Moo**: "Our failure to know God's will and consequent inability to petition God specifically and assuredly is met by God's Spirit, who himself expresses to God those intercessory petitions that perfectly match the will of God" (*Moo, Letters to the Romans*, p. 526). What an encouragement when you feel lost, confused or you don't know which way to go. Move in the direction that is toward the glory of God. You will always know that the direction away from God's glory or toward pride is not the will of God.

John Piper in *"The Spirit Helps Us"*, says, "You are not expected to know the secret will of God in every situation, but there is One who knows! Be comforted by the fact that God knows your heart, that God is working for you, and that the Spirit's prayers are always effective."

- B. With the certainty of God's providential care (28)** – "And we know" – we just talked about that there are some things we cannot know, but here is one thing we CAN know! @John Stott helps us with five insights of things we can know:
1. We can know that God works (or is at work) in our lives.
 2. We can know that God is working for the good of His people.
 3. We can know that God is working for our good in all things (17, 22).
 4. We can know that God is working for the good of those who love Him.
 5. We can know that God is working in those who are called.

@ **Stott** follows up by saying, "Life is not the random mess that which it may sometimes appear."

Q: Knowing that life can seem messy and hard to understand when you are close to it, how does perspective help you gain a better view of what God is really doing and how does this help you gain a better view of His love for you?

Example: When Jesus died on the cross, those close to the event did not see it has a joyous, life-changing event, but disastrous. It was not until later down the road that we saw how impactful His death truly was!

Sometimes, we do not see how wonderful the love of God is because we can only see how hard life is. But then, we see later what we could not see up close and there we clearly see how wonderful is the love of God!

But, let's not get ahead of ourselves by believing that God simply works life issues out in an abstract, general way. The next two verses point this out.

- C. With the knowledge of God's complete salvation (29-30)** – Now, to understand all of what is meant in v. 28, we have to see what is meant by "God's purpose" which is answered in vv. 29-30.

What Paul is teaching here are 5 REALITIES of God's purpose in our salvation:

1. **He Foreknew His People** - Let's be clear: God didn't look down through the ages and see who would trust in Him and then on that basis

predestine those who would believe. He is speaking of a particular group of people who would believe on whom He would lavish His grace. **As Tony Merida writes**, “Paul is speaking of God’s personal, intimate knowledge of individual persons. It speaks of God’s decision to set His love on His saints. God fore-loved individual believers.” That is the meaning of the word “know” – to care or to love.

Deut. 7:6-8 Moses told the people of Israel: “For you are a people holy to the LORD your God. The LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for his treasured possession, out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth. It was not because you were more in number than any other people that the LORD set his love on you and chose you, for you were the fewest of all peoples, but it is because the LORD loves you and is keeping the oath that he swore to your fathers, that the LORD has brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you from the house of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt.”

2. **He Purposed Them to be Conformed to the Image of Christ** – we first need to deal with the word, “predestined”, to make a decision beforehand.

Question: Does this mean that we have no freedom to decide in our salvation?

John Stott helps us here: “Clearly, then, a decision is involved in the process of becoming a Christian, but it is God’s decision before it can be ours. This is not to deny that we ‘decided for Christ’, and freely, but to affirm that we did so only because he had first ‘decided for us’.” – That is, our salvation is all of God and we know that in our hearts, even if we deny it with our arguments.

Dr. J.I. Packer, “Christian people believe in God’s sovereignty in salvation, even if they deny it. Two facts show this. In the first place, you give God thanks for your conversion. Now why do you do that? Because you know in your heart that God was entirely responsible for it. You did not save yourself; He saved you...There is a second way in which you acknowledge that God is sovereign in salvation. You pray for the conversion of others...You ask God to work in them everything necessary for salvation.’ So our thanksgivings and our intercessions prove that we believe in divine sovereignty. On our feet we may have arguments about it, but on our knees we are all agreed.”

Question: What are the two purposes of predestination?

Now, the **first purpose of predestination** is **PASTORAL**: to be conformed to the image of His Son. @ [Template or Blueprint](#). The process of sanctification is God

chipping away or sanding away the pieces that do not belong so that the finished product will start looking more and more like Jesus here but finished when we get to Heaven.

The **second purpose of predestination** is **COMMUNAL**: “the firstborn among many brothers.” – salvation doesn’t just make you legally a child of God, but God infuses His DNA, God’s very nature in us, that we as **2 Peter 1:4** says, “so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire.”

3. **He Called Them to Awaken Their Faith** – **Stott**, “The call of God is the historical application of his eternal predestination. His call comes to people through the gospel, and it is when the gospel is preached to them with power, and they respond to it with the obedience of faith, that we know God has chosen them. So, evangelism is indispensable, because it is the very means God has ordained by which His call comes to His people and awakens their faith.” – God’s effectual call (called according to his purpose – those raised to new life, not call to the gospel, but the call that brings death to life). @ Lazarus heard the call of God!
4. **He Justified Them to Become Righteous in God’s Sight** – this has been Paul’s theme since the beginning. We have His righteousness conferred on us so that we can be known, cared for, by Him!
5. **He Glorified Them with New Bodies Fit for Heaven** – glorification is a future reality for people living now and for those who have gone before us, it is still something to be seen in full measure at the coming of Christ. To be glorified means to receive a body like that of Jesus Christ, eternal, perfect, without blemish and beyond the ability to be marred by sin.

Here is the process by which God foreknows us, predestines us, calls, justifies and glorifies us! This is the complete look at our salvation.

Questions for Small-Group Discussion:

1. How does the Spirit helping you with living in the will of God when you do not know what to even pray liberate you from anxiety?
 2. Describe a time in your life when you could not pray. What does it mean that the Spirit intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words?
 3. What have you learned about predestination that has helped you from this lesson?
 4. How does verses 29-30 help you understand v. 28 in its proper context?
 5. How can you see God conforming you into the image of Jesus? What are some markers that you have noticed?
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Romans

Session Eleven

Truth for Every Culture, Every Day

Life, Love and Glory:
What It Looks Like to Live in the Freedom of Christ (Part Four)
Romans 8:31-39

Intro. Group of botanists looking for a rare flower found it in a South American remote village. The problem was that it was down a steep cliff. Asked a young boy to climb down with a rope. He ran into the village and brought back an older man. "I will get the flower but this man must hold the rope. He's my dad."

Our confidence in Christ...Paul asks the question that is the central question of the Christian life: **Am I secure in this relationship with Jesus Christ?**

Everyone looks for security in life. We want to know that we are secure in our relationship with our spouse and with our children. We want to have security in our jobs so we can pay our bills and enjoy life without constant stress. We want security for our retirement so we can have enough money to enjoy living after we cannot work or are forced out of work. We want security living in our homes so that we feel safe from intruders or those who could do us harm. Most importantly, we want to have security for our eternity so that when we die, we will not come to death with fear.

Paul has just explained that God foreknew us and predestined those who come by faith to Christ to be conformed to the image of Jesus and put together an unbreakable chain of life through His call, justification and glorification. To make sure that his readers understand that this chain is unbreakable and that they are eternally secure in Christ. Therefore, every Christian should live with extreme confidence, not in themselves, but in the One who has secured this life for them.

Now, before Paul launches into these questions, he asks a preliminary question that is a segue from what he has taught to the remainder of the letter, with (8:31-39) being a summary of the Gospel's impact. Let's do a quick run-down:

- The Gospel is rooted in the Old Testament (1:1-6)
- He writes to the saints who are loved by God and called to be saints under grace and peace (1:7)
- But, the whole world is under the righteous judgment of God because no one is righteous but God alone (1:18-3:20)
- However, through faith in Christ there is peace with God having been justified by Christ and His work on the cross with God's love having been

poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us (3:21-8:30).

Paul asks five questions to give us this confidence:

1. **Who can be against us – if God is for us? (31)** – central message of Romans

Throughout the entire bible, we are presented with a God who is all-powerful! We see Him creating the world with a word, flooding the earth, yet saving one family, and moving nations, raising up kings, bringing down nations and doing countless miracles. Just look at **Psalm 8:1-9**.

O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth! You have set your glory above the heavens. Out of the mouth of babies and infants, you have established strength because of your foes, to still the enemy and the avenger. When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, what is man that you are mindful of him, and the son of man that you care for him? Yet you have made him a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honor. You have given him dominion over the works of your hands; you have put all things under his feet, all sheep and oxen, and also the beasts of the field, the birds of the heavens, and the fish of the sea, whatever passes along the paths of the seas. O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth!

If God is for us, who do we have to fear?

Tony Merida writes: “In this fallen world there will be pain and hardship, but we must not let the pain and hardship deceive us. If we are in Christ, we can be assured that God is for us. In our Christian experience we will encounter spiritual warfare. But though all the powers of the evil one may come against us, they will never prevail since God is on our side” (Merida, 147).

Ps. 56:9 “Then my enemies will turn back in the day when I call.
This I know, that God is for me.”

The reality of this verse should strike down any fear that raises its head against you! No matter the tribulation or distress you face or persecution or famine or danger (v. 35), God is for you and you have nothing to fear!!

“If the Lord be with us, we have no cause of fear. His eye is upon us, His arm over us, His ear open to our prayer – His grace sufficient, His promise unchangeable.”
– John Newton (Grace Quotes)

2. Who can take things away from us – if God graciously give us all things? (32)

- Look at the massive gift that was given by God to provide for our greatest need: “He...did not spare His own Son, but gave Him up for us all”.
- Without a doubt, God is the greatest giver (**John 3:16**).
- Jesus spoke of God's generosity in **Matthew 6:26** When he mentions the birds and flowers being cared for without anxiety. He taught this to teach them that if God cared so much for the birds and flowers, how much more do you think God cares for those He made in His own image. **THEREFORE, you do not have to Worry!**
- Paul makes the point that God did not even spare His own Son! So, what makes us think that God will not take care of the small things in our lives! BUT, it's not the little things we worry about like money, health, retirement income and the comforts of life that typically cause us so much anxiety that Paul is speaking of here.
- **What is it that God wants to provide us?** What are the “all things”? Everything we need to be conformed to the image of His Son (**8:17-31**). THAT keeps us from going too far with this verse and thinking that Paul is saying God is obliged to give us whatever we want. *We will suffer, we will struggle, we will not have all the riches of the world, but what we will have is of far greater value than anything of this world: to be like Jesus!!*

David Powlison, in *Worry: Pursuing a Better Path to Peace*, wrote: “If you just get the big things straightened out, you will have what you need in the little things. What everyone in the world is obsessed with, God makes a distant second. He'll give you what you need to live on if you need Him in order to live.”

3. Who can bring a charge against us – if God has justified us? (33)

Paul uses legal terms here to relate the message that believers have been justified in a legal sense; that the highest court of all is not with man but with God. If God has declared us justified, free from the guilt of our sin, then we are free indeed! No one can prosecute us again! @ There is no double jeopardy with God's court! Why? He paid the penalty of our guilt with His own life!

Paul is going back to **Isaiah 50:8-9** “He who vindicates me is near. Who then will bring a charge against me? Let us face each other! Who is my accuser? Let him

confront me! It is the Sovereign Lord who helps me. Who will condemn me? They will all wear out like a garment; the moths will eat them up."

@ Carmen, the singer from the 80s, used to say: "When Satan reminds you of your past, remember him of his future!"

4. Who can condemn us – if Christ intercedes for us? (34)

Paul says basically the same thing, except he reminds us of 8:1 that we are no longer under condemnation – we have been set free by Christ who is our attorney, interceding for us when anyone tries to accuse us!

@ Moo wrote: "Which such a defense attorney, it is no wonder the prosecution loses its case."

Meditate on this verse a minute: "Christ died for us!" Think of the love of God – He is Emmanuel, God with us! He is with us, but He also died for us! He was crucified but God raised Him up. The Lord vindicated Christ! Because of this, **Christ's victory is our victory!**

@ When Argentina won the World Cup in Soccer recently, it was like the whole nation won the victory on the field. The team played the game and fought the battle, but their victory was the entire country's victory! In a more infinitely important way, Christ's battle on the cross and victory over death became our victory!

5. Who can separate us from God's love – if NOTHING truly can? (35-39)

This question was the climax of Paul's argument. This is the question every human soul longs to know and find security in. Is there anything that can separate me from God and God's love? To show this, Paul gives them 7 scenarios that were currently causing Christians angst: **Tribulation (hardships), Distress (uncertainty), Persecution (imprisonment or pain), Famine (hunger), Nakedness (extreme poverty), Danger (risky living), Sword (death)**. There was a disregard for Christian's lives but a willingness to suffer for Christ!

Paul found victory in spite of the hardships, risks and uncertainties through the love of Christ. He uses the word, **Hyper-nike** (more than conquerors), to describe the overwhelming position of victory we live in as a child of God. Paul was so secure in the love of God, that he was convinced with that **NOTHING** (in the human experience, the spiritual realm, in time, in space or all of creation) ...will be able to separate him from God's love. That is absolute security!! It's absolute VICTORY!

Tony Merida writes: "So not only can we endure these sufferings and be assured of Christ's love in the midst of them, but we can also know that God is using them for our good and His glory." I.e., God is turning your trials into strengths so that rather than getting down, you are lifted up knowing that in God's love, He is

producing in you character and endurance and hope that will stand up to any test of your faith!

III: Scene from Unbroken (the story of Louis Zamperini) – In one hard to watch, but inspiring scene, Louis is forced to hold a log over his head or he would be shot. He holds the log for hours even though every fiber of his body is writhing in pain, until finally he lifts it high over his head and screams. That courage, spiritual strength and spiritual endurance is ours in Christ!

Questions for Small-Group Discussion:

- 1) Looking back over the five questions Paul asks, which one stands out as the most inspiring to you at this point in your life?
 - 2) Why is the phrase “God is for us” and good summary for Romans 1-8?
 - 3) Why do you think Paul spends so much time on the security Christian's have in the love of God? How is it helpful to Christian living today?
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Romans

Session Twelve

Truth for Every Culture, Every Day

God's Sovereign Plan
His Choice to Give You Grace Despite Your Depravity
Romans 9:1-29 (Part One)

Intro. TWO SCHOOLS of THOUGHT: Prescient View (Man Chooses God) & Augustinian View (God Chooses Man). One makes God the helper and the other makes man realize he is helpless.

Before we step into this major section of Romans 9-11, we need to look at the words of Jesus from **John 6**, that addresses the principles behind predestination and election. Let's focus in on **John 6:41-44**. Jesus drops a bombshell on the people: **"No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him" (44)**. What are the implications? What does this mean and what does it mean for us? (Sermon by Timothy Keller, Arguing About Predestination):

- 1) **We would never seek for or choose God unless first God sought after and chose us.** (John. 15:16 "You did not choose Me, but I have chosen you...".)
 - You would never seek after God on your own if God had not first sought after you and chose you, and opened your mind and heart to the beauty of His truth that you are repressing and resisting.
 - Here's the teaching: **You're not chosen because you believe, you believe because you are chosen.**

When we think about this there are three problems we have with this doctrine: (Perplexing, Unfair, Insulting)

A. Perplexing: What does that mean? "We no longer have free will!" We're perplexed by that.

@ Two choices to eat: one the right you have filet mignon, potatoes and chocolate cake; on the left is a plate with monkey brains, maggots and molded bread. Choosing has nothing to do with free will...you can choose either one. The question is not choice but desire.

- This is the condition of every human heart – because sin has invaded the human heart and because the god of this world has blinded the eyes of those who believe, you see what is good for you as putrid and awful. What is needed is an intervention. Someone to take the scales off. Listen, no one will remain blind who desires to see.

B. Unfair: “It seems that God is not choosing everyone. If God were a God of love and justice, then He would give everyone the same thing (whether they want it or not...is what we logically have to say).” How do we respond to this?

➤ “We know so little about God’s choosing and we are not in a position to judge, but what little we do know shows that He is vastly fair.” – First, look at the little we do know: **John 21:20-22** (I never tell you anyone else’s story but your own). The reason why we trip on this doctrine is that we so concerned about everyone else. We want to know everything about how God works not realizing the infinite knowledge of God that will always be out of our reach because He is God! – Here’s what we do know: **(1) James 2:5** “Listen, my beloved brothers, has not God chosen those who are poor in the world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom, which he has promised to those who love him?” **(2) 1 Cor. 1:26-31** “For consider your calling, brothers: not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, so that no human being might boast in the presence of God.” Christianity is the only religion that cannot be explained by human ingenuity and self-reformation. In general, God has chosen the poor because it migrates away from power! We don’t know much about why God chooses but we can clearly see that God chooses differently than who the world chooses. **What the world declares as fair doesn’t sway the heart of God and influence His decisions.**

C. Insulting: we are insulted by the declaration of our depravity. For everyone who has struggles with God’s divine sovereignty, it’s because they are insulted that God says they are depraved and that we as human beings are not intrinsically capable of being our own Savior.

2). God is a God of Sheer Grace. (John 6:44) God’s grace is unconditional, and I can never lay claim to what has never belonged to me or of anything that I could contribute on my own. A dead person does not contribute to life until they are raised first! (“No one can come to Me...”)

Young lady: I hate this teaching!

Professor: Why are you a Christian? A lot of people aren’t. Why are you?

YL: Cause I repented

Pr: Good, why did you repent and so many other people haven’t?

YL: Because I admitted that I was a sinner.

Pr: Why did you admit?

Keller: "If I am chosen because I believed, then that means that I think that I am little better, a little wiser, a little more in touch...then there is something in me that brought the grace of God in my life and if I lose that, then I lose it. BUT, if I believe because I am chosen, then that means the love of Jesus Christ has come into my life unconditionally. It means that is nothing I can do to lose it and nothing about me that makes me any better than anyone else."

Isaiah is referenced by Paul in **Romans 10:20** "I have been found by those who did not seek Me; I have shown myself to those who did not ask for me."

Acts 13:48 "And when the Gentiles heard this, they began rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord, and as many as were appointed to eternal life believed."

Many people say, "I'm saved by grace...because...". No! You only submitted yourself because you were saved by grace.

When Moses is telling the people of Israel why God chose them, listen to what he said in **Deut. 7:6-10** "For you are a people holy to the LORD your God. The LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for his treasured possession, out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth. It was not because you were more in number than any other people that the LORD set his love on you and chose you, for you were the fewest of all peoples, but it is because the LORD loves you and is keeping the oath that he swore to your fathers, that the LORD has brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you from the house of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt. Know therefore that the LORD your God is God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments, to a thousand generations, and repays to their face those who hate him, by destroying them. He will not be slack with one who hates him. He will repay him to his face."

3.) Election happens because you are drawn (not driven) – Hosea 11:4 "I led them with cords of kindness, with the bands of love, and I became to them as one who eases the yoke on their jaws, and I bent down to them and fed them."

@ **Jonathan Edwards** – pondering people who say they are Christians but give up on it after a while with no real change in their life and others who stick with it through every kind of life situation and crisis. What's the difference? He said that he found people who were driven to believe in Christ. They saw what he offered: forgiveness for their sins, relief of guilt, peace of mind, respect from the people in this Christian society, balance and structure in my life so that it goes right.....Then, the people who were drawn. They were people who followed merely because they saw the beauty in God Himself, they saw the beauty in His

holiness, His forgiveness, His compassion and they were drawn to Him, not the things He could offer them.

Think back to Deut. 7. Why did God say that He loved Israel? Was it anything good in them? NO! He loved them because He loved them! Circular logic? Yes! But every definition of love has to be circular or its not real love!

Ed Clowney pointed this out. @ Married...do you love me? Why? If they give you any reason based on your looks or your performance, what happens when it's all gone? Clowney goes on to say: "Don't you see that if you have a God who loves you because you're keeping the Ten Commandments, because you're following the golden Rule, because you're keeping up a good moral standard...that's not real love! You will never love a God you believe loves you because you are servicing Him, you're being good, because you being faithful to Him." If that is the only kind of relationship you have with God then you are only two consumers consuming from one another and that is not love. Election is all about God's love for you!

Questions and Discussion:

1. Why does election have to teach grace over works? How does this doctrine keep you from believing that you are better than others?
 2. Discuss this thought in light of someone wondering if they elect of God: "A distressing sense of God's absence might be the proof of His presence."
 3. How does election humble you and give you a sense of security?
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Romans

Session Thirteen

Truth for Every Culture, Every Day

God's Sovereign Plan
His Choice to Give You Grace Despite Your Depravity
Romans 9:1-29 (Part Two)

Paul steps off the mountain top before Chapter 12 to speak from the heart about his concern for Israel. He wanted to remind his readers that God is sovereign and that His word has not failed to do for Israel what God promised all along. This was critical to know that they could and should trust in the sovereignty of God and the trustworthiness of God's word.

John Calvin, "There is no erratic power, or action, or motion in creatures, but that they are governed by God's secret plan in such a way that nothing happens except what is knowingly and willingly decreed by Him."

I. God's Sovereign Plan Continues to Work through the True Israel (9:1-13)

A. Look at what Israel received (9:1-5)

B. Despite what they received, not all of Israel is the True Israel (9:6-8)

C. True Israel is Saved by God's Grace (9:9-13)

"I believe in the doctrine of election, because I am quite sure that if God had not chosen me, I never would have chosen him; and I am sure he chose me before I was born, or else he never would have chosen me afterward."

~ Charles Spurgeon (Merida, 163).

Merida explains the angst we often feel around the implications of election by saying, "Of course, affirming God's sovereign election does not mean we believe humans are puppets in God's hands, having no personal responsibility. We affirm several truths that are hard to reconcile; for example, Christ's divinity and humanity as well as the divine and human nature of Scripture. We also affirm God's sovereignty and human responsibility. They are friends, not foes."
 (Merida, 164).

II. God's Sovereign Plan Continues to Work through His Sovereign Mercy (9:14-18)

- A. **Even though some did not think of God as fair or just (14-15) - Ex. 33:19**
- B. **That is not dependent on human will or works, but on His will.** – the facts around salvation are that God has the final call, and saves some while allowing others to remain in their sin.

As John Stott writes: "The wonder is not that some are saved and others not, but that anybody is saved at all. For we deserve nothing at God's hand but judgment....The fact is, as Paul demonstrated in the early chapters of his letter, that all human beings are sinful and guilty in God's sight (3:9, 19), so that nobody deserves to be saved. If therefore God hardens some, he is not being unjust, for that is what their sin deserves. If, on the other hand, he has compassion on some, he is not being unjust, for he is dealing with them in mercy" (Stott, Message, 269).

III. God's Sovereign Plan Continues to Work through our Natural Design (9:19-23)

Paul raises a question that many people were asking (and still are asking): "If God is sovereign, why do I get the blame for wrongs done? Who can resist His will in this case?"

Paul responds to the complications of human responsibility and divine sovereignty by not trying to resolve it!

A. Who are you to answer back to God? Our natural design is as the created ones not the Creator (20)

B. Has the potter no right over the clay? Our natural design must submit to the One who designed us (21)

C. Why would God endure with patience people who willfully reject Him? Our natural design for God's creation is to glorify Him above all (22-23) *God can do whatever He desires in showing His power; He has every right, but what you see with God is that He shows patience ("Not willing that any should perish that all come to repentance" (1 Pet. 3:9)).*

John MacArthur writes about verses 21-23 "God says I prepare vessels for glory, but vessels are prepared for destruction. And what is happening there in the Greek tense, is God is taking one step away from the responsibility of preparing a person from His creative act for hell. God doesn't take that responsibility. He

says there are vessels that have been prepared for destruction. And if you study the Bible very carefully you will see that everywhere in Scripture the responsibility for such preparation lies right in the very heart of the man who goes to hell. Is that right? Jesus said, "You will not come to me, that you might have life." At the end of the Book of Revelation He says, "Come, and let him that is athirst come." And so God says, I fit for glory, but vessels are fitted for destruction. Judas was not created by God to occupy hell."

If God has restrictions, restrictions that we would put on Him to justify our version of justice, does not God cease to be God?

One writer: "In the case of the vessels of wrath, Paul raises a hypothetical—a "what if"—to remind readers that God has the right to make such choices if He so desires. But Paul stops short of asserting that God is making such choices. Paul's point is that God has the right to have mercy on whom He chooses and harden whom He chooses (Romans 9:18), but that is different from asserting that God chooses some not to be saved. Paul isn't addressing *that* question; he is making a point about God's sovereign authority. Thus, if someone is not receiving a blessing because God didn't promise him that blessing, neither God nor His Word has failed. If He is indeed the Creator, He has the right to bless whom He will, and He has the right to harden whom He will. If He is the Potter, how He deals with vessels of wrath prepared for destruction is His prerogative."

IV. God's Sovereign Plan Continues to Work through the Remnant of Jews and Gentiles (9:24-29)

Paul makes the point that no all Israel is Israel...it's about grace and not race. Just because a person is a member of Israel does not mean they are in the covenant of Israel and a part of believing Israel.

When John the Baptist was preaching to the religious leaders, he said, "Bear fruit in keeping with repentance. And do not presume to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father', for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children for Abraham" (Mt. 3:8-9).

Schreiner wrote: God's word has not been frustrated through their unbelief of the majority of Jews (9:6). He planned that only a remnant of Jews would believe and that many Gentiles would confess Jesus as Messiah in order to maximize his mercy."

Chosen not for good in me, wakened up from wrath to flee, hidden in the Savior's side, by the Spirit sanctified – Teach me, Lord, on earth to show, by my love, how much I owe.

~ Robert Murray M'Cheyne

Questions for Small-Group Discussion:

1. What is the burden Paul expresses at the start of this chapter? Do you share the same burden? If not, why not?
 2. Doug Moo writes: "Divine sovereignty and human responsibility in salvation stand in some tension, but they are not logically contradictory." What does he mean by that and how can these two truths be compatible?
 3. How does God's sovereignty help to increase your faith and motivate you to share His love and grace with others?
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Romans

Session Fourteen

Truth for Every Culture, Every Day

Bearing the Burden**What it Takes to Reach this Culture and the Nations****Romans 9:30-10:21**

Intro. Who was the first person to truly show you the beauty of Jesus and what life was like in Him?

Paul is going to bear His soul in this portion of the letter and share with his people, Israel, his intense desire for them to know Christ, how they can see their clear need for Christ and why he wants everyone to know Christ.

Andrew Murray said, "Sharing Christ is an essential part of the new nature. We see it in every child who loves to tell of his happiness and to bring others to share his joy. Missions is the automatic outflow and overflow of love for Christ. We delight to enlarge our joy in Him by extending it to others. As Lottie Moon said, 'Surely there can be no greater joy than that of saving souls.'"

What it Takes to Reach this Culture and the Nations is...

I. An Intense Desire for Others to Know Christ (9:30-10:4)

1. **Who have stumbled over faith in Jesus Christ (9:30-32)** –the Jews struggled with this because they were trying their best to live a good life before God while the Gentiles were doing their best to live a completely awful life before God! One was Religiously Lost and the other was Irreligiously Lost!

Richard Lovelace put it this way: "We all automatically gravitate toward the assumption that we are justified by our level of sanctification...We start each day with our personal security resting not on the accepting love of God and the sacrifice of Christ but on our present feelings or recent achievements in (religion). Since these arguments will not quiet the human conscience, we are inevitably moved...to a self-righteousness which falsifies the record to achieve a sense of peace."

So, Paul brings up **Isaiah 28:16** - the stone laid in Zion was obviously Christ; the Jews stumbled over Christ because they would not believe. Although, the stone was meant to grab their attention (**Speed Bump or Warning Sign they ignored**)

1 Pet. 2:4-8 “As you come to him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious, you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. For it stands in Scripture: “Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious, and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame.” So, the honor is for you who believe, but for those who do not believe, “The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone,” and “A stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense.” They stumble because they disobey the word, **as they were destined to do.**” @ **Curtis Vaughn**: “This does not mean that God has appointed men to disobedience, but that he has foreordained stumbling to be the punishment of disobedience.” (Commentary on 1 Peter).

Tony Merida: “Works-based righteousness seems to be the default approach of the human heart. We cannot earn God’s grace with religious rituals and good deeds, yet look at the world’s religions and consider how many people live under oppressive works-based systems. The good news of the gospel is that Jesus Christ lived the life we could never live, obeying God perfectly, then died the death we should have died, and rose conquering the enemies we could not conquer. Now, by faith in him, we can have right standing with God. Works-based salvation is a dead-end road. Faith in Christ is the road to life and glory.”

2. Who have insisted on establishing their own righteousness apart (10:1-4)

Paul longed for Israel to know Christ. He felt heartbroken over their lostness!

@ **C.S. Lewis** wrote: “I have two lists of names in my prayers, those for whose conversion I pray and those for whose conversion I give thanks. The little trickle of transferences from list A to List B is a great comfort.” (Ryken, “C.S. Lewis the Evangelist,” 8)

- a. ***It’s not a person’s zeal (or passion or sincerity) that is the measure of their righteousness toward God (10:2)*** – “It doesn’t really matter what a person believes as long as you are sincere.”
- b. ***But the person’s correctness in the direction they are placing their faith (10:2)***

@ Middle School game, I shot the ball in the wrong basket at the tip!

- c. ***And, when their faith is in Christ Jesus and not in themselves, they are changed! (10:3)*** Look at what Paul says to **Timothy (1:13-14)**: “Though formerly I was a blasphemer, persecutor, and insolent opponent. But I received mercy because I had acted ignorantly in unbelief, and the grace of our Lord overflowed for me with the faith

and love that are in Christ Jesus." THAT is the transformation Paul hoped for Israel! And, that is the faith we should hope for every person we encounter!!

d. ***For Jesus Christ is the end of the Law!***

Merida: "It is possible to be a lost religious person or a lost irreligious person. One can be lost in legalism, or one can be lost in hedonism. Whether you are a rule follower or a rule breaker, Christ alone saves. The focus of this text is on the religious person who seeks salvation the wrong way – through religious works."

e. ***Therefore, everyone we look eyes with not only matters to God, but should matter to us!***

**What it Takes to Reach this Culture and the Nations is...
An Intense Desire for Others to Know Christ (9:30-10:4)**

II. A Clear Understanding of the Need for Faith in Christ (10:5-13)

1. We cannot save ourselves by fulfilling the Law (10:5)

Galatians 2:15 "We ourselves are Jews by birth and not Gentile sinners; yet we know that a person is not justified by works of the Law but through faith in Jesus Christ...".

2. God in Christ has done what we could not do on our own (10:6-7)

This is the story of God's message to mankind and His hope for all of us that continues to cause us to stumble because we do not want to submit to God.

Deut. 9:4 "Do not say in your heart, after the Lord your God has thrust them out before you, 'It is because of my righteousness that the Lord has brought me in to possess this land.' Whereas it is because of the wickedness of these nations that the Lord is driving them out before you. Not because of your righteousness or the uprightness of your heart are you going in to possess their land, but because of the wickedness of these nations the Lord your God is driving them out from before you, and that he may confirm the word that the Lord swore to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob."

3. He has put the word of faith in our mouths (10:8-10) – Drawing off

Deut. 30:11, 14 "For this commandment that I command you today is not too hard for you, neither is it far off...But the word is very near you. It is in your mouth and in your heart, so you that you can do it."

What was the word? V. 9! Salvation is not about our zeal, passion or sincerity but about the object of our faith! Unless our faith is in Christ, then the object of our faith is insufficient to truly and eternally change us, because the goal is not to be a better version of you,

but to be like Jesus Christ! He is the model! He is the blueprint! He is the righteousness of God!

4. He has offered it to everyone who calls on His name (10:11-13)

Steve Fernandez writes, "A Church that says no to missions is not just saying no to men. It is not just a matter of leaving men in their sins. It is saying no to God's greatest concern: the spreading of His glorious name among the people of the world. This is His passionate concern; it must be ours."

What it Takes to Reach this Culture and the Nations is...

An Intense Desire for Others to Know Christ (9:30-10:4) and a

A Clear Understanding of the Need for Faith in Christ (10:5-13)

III. An Intentional Practice of Sharing the Gospel of Christ (10:14-21)

- 1. Every link in the chain is critical to people hearing and knowing the truth (10:14-15)**
- 2. But realize that not everyone who hears will obey and receive (10:16)**
- 3. That does not stop believers from being messengers for Christ (10:17)**
- 4. God will do whatever it takes for people to hear and know, even if in the end, they refuse to believe (18-21)**

Questions for Small-Group Discussion:

1. What are the two types of righteousness Paul refers to in this passage?
 2. What are ways people seek to establish their own righteousness before God?
 3. What are some reasons Christians struggle to have a burden for the lost? What could be some of your own struggles with having a greater burden for lost people?
 4. Since the message of the Gospel is to everyone who believes from every race and nation, how should that change the way you look at race and reaching the urban areas of our nation and the world?
 5. Carl F.H. Henry stated: "The gospel is only good news if it gets there on time." What are the implications of this statement?
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Romans

Session Fifteen

Truth for Every Culture, Every Day

Has God Rejected Israel?**Romans 11:1-36**

Intro. This may be the most knotty and difficult section of Romans. There is here a continued:

- (1) Passion for the lost
- (2) Passion for unity in the church among Jews and Gentiles
- (3) Passion for communicating the sovereignty of God and his control over all!
- (4) Passion for worship that comes through solid theology!

What is the future for Israel given the context of 10:21?

I. God Chose a Remnant by His Grace (11:1-10)

A. **Paul is a witness of this grace (11:1-2a)** – He is one of them, he is a Jew! If God had forsaken Israel totally, he would never have been drawn to faith in Christ.

B. Elijah is an illustration of not understanding the grace of God (11:2b-6)**C. Ethnic Israel chose to seek their own righteousness (10:3) through works while the elect of Israel chose the gift of grace (11:7-10)**

What does it mean that they were hardened? Paul is not saying that they had no will and were used as puppets, but that “Israel sought the righteousness of God earnestly but wrongly, except for the elect. As a result, the majority were hardened....We must remember that hardening does not necessarily mean bitterness, wrath, and hostility toward Christianity per se. It does not necessarily mean harshness. A hardened person is someone who is completely obtuse to the gospel of free justification and adoption.”

@ Suppose a person desperately wants to know the Lord and is pursuing the Lord but cannot believe that the grace of God is the way to go. It seems to them too far-fetched and unfair of a prospect in the context of measuring people's spiritual pursuits. For example, that person might

compare him or herself to a murderer and say that there is no way a person like that could be accepted in the same way a person who has worked for years to do good for God and others would be viewed! Like **Matthew 20 Laborers!**

Keller explains this section this way: “Therefore the hardening we have here is a ‘judicial’ hardening, **a punishment for having a proud heart that rejects the message of grace**. Again, Paul quotes from the Old Testament, because he wants to show that this is how God has always treated ethnic Israel – if they hardened themselves, he hardened them, giving them a ‘spirit of stupor, eyes so that they could not see and ears so that they could not hear’ (v. 8). Notice what Paul is doing by selecting this particular quote. He is quoting from Isaiah, who himself was paraphrasing Moses’ words in Deuteronomy. So Paul is saying: Moses warned Israel in his day that their rebellion resulted in God giving them spiritual blindness...Isaiah told Israel that this had continued ‘to this very day’...now I am telling you that this hardening is still ongoing.”

(vv. 9-10) Retribution is a punishment that exactly fits the crime. Israel set their table (their direction or purpose) against God and in their pride, their hearts were hardened by God as a punishment for their rejection of His grace. “Rejection of God leads to rejection from God. Though God executes it, it is a natural consequence.”

Q1: Have you met people who have such a high view of God's holiness that they cannot accept grace?

II. God Continues to Work Out His Redemptive Purposes (11:11-32)

- A. **Israel's rejection meant the Gospel spreading to the Gentiles (11:11-16)** – Paul sets up his argument in three stages: **(1) (v. 11)** Here is what Paul is saying, “If all the Jews had accepted Jesus, then Jesus would have been viewed as an ethnic renewal of the Jewish laws and traditions.”; **(2) (v. 11-14)** Paul's purpose was to make the Jewish people jealous of what was happening with the Gentiles so they would come to Christ. @ John Stott explains this type of envy:

“Not all envy is tainted with selfishness, because it is not always either a grudging discontent or a sinful covetousness. At base, envy is the desire to have for oneself something possessed by another, and whether envy is good or evil depends on the nature of the something desired and on whether one has any right to its possession. If that something is in itself evil, or if it belongs to somebody else and we have no right to it, then the envy is sinful. But if something desired is in itself good, a blessing from God, which he means all his people to enjoy, then

to 'covet' it and to 'envy' those who have it is not at all unworthy. This kind of desire is right in itself, and to arouse it can be a realistic motive in ministry" (*The Message of Romans*, 297).

@ Everything that Israel was supposed to be (*Deut. 15:4-5*), the Gentiles were becoming and being! The result was either jealousy that led to conversion or bitterness that led to hardening.

(3) (v. 12-15) Paul speaks about acceptance by the Jews which he will outline further in vv. 25-27.

Q2: Tim Keller points out that Paul calls out the Gentiles (v. 13) to inform them that God has not given up on the Jews and neither should they (or we). The challenge for the Church today is this: Are we creating a community that is the fulfillment of what God had called Old Testament Israel to be? Would a devout Jew look at our church and be aroused to envy, and give the gospel a hearing?

- B. **The Gentiles reception of the gospel should not lead them to pride in themselves but a reinvigoration of faith in Israel (11:17-24)** – if an olive tree was not bearing fruit, a wild olive branch would be grafted in, and with this new shoot, the root of the tree would be nourished and reinvigorated so as to produce fruit once again. In other words, Paul's metaphor is that with the Gentiles coming to faith in Christ, it would stir up the faith of the Jews to believe which was their core way of knowing God since Abraham!
1. **To the Gentiles, remember that you are beneficiaries of Israel's covenant promises with God (v. 18; 9:1-7)** – Gentile Christians should have the utmost respect for the Jewish people on whose shoulders we have stood to know Christ. We have a Jewish bible and a Jewish Messiah!
 2. **Remember that you have no room to be arrogant (11:19-20)** – Israel's unbelief allowed Gentiles to hear and respond in faith to the gospel.

@ **Our Adoption Story** "Your no allowed us to say, 'Yes!'" While we would not want anyone to say no to Christ, because some Jews refused to believe, faith in Christ became something more than simply an add-on to their traditions. There was a clear choice for them to make, showing that faith was more than incorporation of a set of beliefs but a radical appropriation of a Person who would change everything about you. This struggle allowed the gospel to move beyond the Jews to the world and through the gospel's proclamation, the Gentiles would know Him!

- 3. Remember that faith in Christ is not about your race but about your relationship to Christ that is evidenced in your perseverance of faith (11:21-22)** – Paul warns the Gentiles of the same thing he warned the Jews (9:6-8; 10:1-4)

- C. Israel that believes can be grafted back in to the Vine (11:23-32)** – Paul says that Israel's future is not set to perpetual defeat. If they do not continue in the unbelief, God will graft them in again!

What does Paul mean in verses **26-27 that "all Israel will be saved"**? – Paul is urging the continued evangelization of the Jewish people, rather than leaving them to fend for themselves. [John Stott writes a helpful article on this topic:](#)

It is understandable that since the holocaust Jews have demanded an end to Christian missionary activity among them, and that many Christians have felt embarrassed about continuing it. It is even mooted that Jewish evangelism is an unacceptable form of anti-Semitism. So, some Christians have attempted to develop...a 'two-covenant theology'...namely that there are two different salvation tracks – the Christian track for the believing remnant and believing Gentiles, and the track for historical Israel which relies on God's covenant with them...Romans 11 stands in clear opposition to this trend because of its insistence on the fact that there is only one olive tree, to which Jews and Gentile believers both belong. Jewish people 'will be grafted in' again 'if they do not persist in unbelief.' [We are to be afraid at what unbelief has done to some of them.] So faith in Jesus is essential for them...The two-covenant theology also has the disastrous effect of perpetuating the distinction between Jews and Gentiles which Jesus Christ has abolished...'The irony of this', writes Tom Wright (in *The Climax of the Covenant*), is that the late 20th century, in order to avoid anti-Semitism, has advocated a position (the non-evangelization of the Jews) which Paul regards precisely as anti-Semitic. It would be quite intolerable to imagine a church at any period which was either simply a Gentile phenomenon or consisted only of Jews."

Christians are to look at unbelieving Jews exactly how they would look at unbelieving Gentiles! The gospel is for all who will hear and believe!! Our mission is not one for some and another for others. Our mission is the same because people are people! @ Airport in New York headed to Tel Aviv – Jewish students sitting. I went over and sat down with a young 20-year-old to discuss faith.

(v. 32) Paul is not teaching universalist salvation (that all will eventually be saved), but that God does not make distinctions. All, both Jews and Gentiles

have been disobedient, and all those who come to faith in Christ, both Jews and Gentiles, will find (or be found by) God's mercy.

Keller writes, "God's mercy is coming to all means that, as F.F. Bruce puts it, it is coming 'on all without distinction, rather than on all without exception.'"

Q3: How does God motivate the Gentiles to perseverance in 11:17-22?

III. God's Ways are Unsearchable and Perfect (11:33-36)

We learn from these verses that theology can never be divorced from worship not worship from theology. When we begin to contemplate the depths of the riches of God's wisdom and knowledge, we are moved to a greater joy and praise of God!

Implications:

A. God is infinitely smarter than anyone! (11:33-25)

1. Isaiah 40:13 – Babylon may be in power but they are no match for God!
2. Job 41:11 questions God asks Job. @ Schreiner applies the Job passage to Paul's argument: "Just as Job doubted God's wisdom and ability in his suffering, so too the Roman Christians might be inclined to question God's wisdom in terms of his saving plan for world history. Job's vision of God's greatness was too circumscribed. God accomplished his plan with respect to Job in wisdom and justice, and so too his plan to save some Jews and Gentiles is wise and just. He is debtor to no one's wisdom, strength, or goodness, and he has accomplished his purposes by his own initiative."

B. God is the source of all things and must be the exclusive focus of our worship (11:36)

C. God is to be worshiped even though we may not be able to understand everything!

Tony Merida concludes this section with this exhortation:

"So let's glorify God in evangelism as we share Paul's burden for the salvation of people. Let's glorify God in unity as we live lives marked by humility, gratitude, and the fear of God. Let's glorify God as we live in the hope of our coming Deliverer. And let's glorify God in worship, praising him for his infinite wisdom, his

matchless mercy, his astonishing sovereignty, his self-sufficiency, and his saving purposes in Jesus our Messiah."

Q4: What does Paul's transition from theology (11:1-32) to doxology (11:33-36) teach us about studying theology?

Questions for Small Group Discussion:

1. Have you met people who have such a high view of God's holiness that they cannot accept grace?
 2. Tim Keller points out that Paul calls out the Gentiles (v. 13) to inform them that God has not given up on the Jews and neither should they (or we). The challenge for the Church today is this: Are we creating a community that is the fulfillment of what God had called Old Testament Israel to be? Would a devout Jew look at our church and be aroused to envy, and give the gospel a hearing?
 3. How does God motivate the Gentiles to perseverance in 11:17-22?
 4. What does Paul's transition from theology (11:1-32) to doxology (11:33-36) teach us about studying theology?
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Romans

Session Sixteen

Truth for Every Culture, Every Day

Not I, But Christ: Living the Christian Life**Romans 12:1-2**

Intro. Everything, we have studied in Romans has led us to these two verses. What Paul is going to say from this point forward can be captivated in

Galatians 2:20 "I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me." NOT I, BUT CHRIST. Those were also the words of John the Baptist when he said, "He must increase, but I must decrease." **That is the essence of living the Christian life.** @ As Stephen Olford wrote in his book, *Not I, but Christ*, "So, the Christian life is nothing less than the 'outliving of the indwelling Christ' on the principle of dependent faith".

Christianity is a focus on Jesus and the Christian life is a life lived for the glory of Him alone!

Romans 12-16 teaches us that...

The Christian life is not so much about what you do but why you do it.

Your orthopraxy will flow out of your orthodoxy (Indicatives to Imperatives)

People will do good things and have no belief in Christ, but the Christian does good for the glory of Christ. That is the central theme of Paul's doctrine; not that we will know what God has given but that we will live all that God has given us!

I. The Christian Life is an Offering of our Body for Worship (12:1)

A. *The appeal to live for Christ is based on the mercies of God that are afforded to us through our salvation in Christ*

Tony Merida writes, "Believers are exhorted to live in view of these mercies – that is, to build their lives on the mercies of God, to be motivated by God's saving provision in Christ and to recognize the power and hope they now enjoy, enabling them to live committed to God in worship and obedience."

1. Divine love
2. Grace
3. The Holy Spirit
4. Peace
5. Faith
6. Comfort
7. Power
8. Hope

9. Patience
10. Kindness
11. Share in His glory
12. Share in His honor
13. Righteousness
14. Forgiveness
15. Reconciliation
16. Justification

17. Security
18. Eternal life
19. Freedom
20. Adoption
21. Sonship

B. The appeal to present your body as a living sacrifice

- Paul teaches us here that our bodies, that have been the problem (this is, our flesh), is what God requires for us to present in worship. Our bodies, our lives, we're devastated by sin. Listen to **Romans 3:13-18** "Their throat is an open grave; they use their tongues to deceive.' The venom of asps is under their lips. Their mouth is full of curses and bitterness. Their **feet** are swift to shed blood; in their paths are ruin and misery, and the way of peace they have not known. There is no fear of God before their **eyes**."

Q: Have our bodies reflected the redeeming power of Christ when we have interacted with people, our family, our friends or our co-workers?

- Paul also taught us in **Romans 6:12-13, 19** "Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions. Do not present your members to sin as instruments for righteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments of righteousness...For just as you once presented your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness leading to more lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness leading to sanctification."
- In other words, Paul teaches us that in light of the mercies of God, we are **to give to your whole self to God** (Schreiner, 642). The primary and ultimate part of the Christian life is about offering ourselves to God!
- As a '**living sacrifice**' – a sacrifice was anything consecrated (dedicated) and offered to God. The OT records how priests would take dead animals regularly into the temple, year after year as an atoning sacrifice. However, when Jesus came, **Hebrews 10:11** says, "He...offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, and he sat down at the right hand of God." **When this happened, He made those who were dead alive in Christ.** Other religions offered dead sacrifices in their temples with priests but Christians were to live their lives holy and acceptable to God. In other words, they were to live in such a way that their character and conduct honored the Lord.
- **Micah 6:6-8** said, "With what shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before God on high? Shall I come before Him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? He has told you, O man, what is good; an what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?"

- **Amos 5:21-24** "I hate, I despise your feasts, and I take no delight in your solemn assemblies. Even though you offer me your burnt offerings, I will not accept them; and the peace offerings of your fattened animals, I will not look upon them. Take away from me the noise of your songs; to the melody of your harps I will not listen. But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream."
- God doesn't want part of us or our religious activity devoid of obedience in our everyday lives. He wants ALL of us! **1 Cor. 6:19-20** "Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. Therefore, glorify God in your body."

Q2: What does it mean to be a living sacrifice? What does a living sacrifice look like in practical, everyday life?

II. The Christian Life is an Offering of our Mind to Know God's Will (12:2)

The pull and tug of the Christian life is the constant pull and tug to be conformed to this world against the work of the Spirit to be transformed.

Emil Brunner, the imminent professor of systematic and practical theology at the University of Zurich, wrote about this verse:

If we belong to God we no longer belong to the world. The Christian faith does not indeed take men out of the world-it rather places them even more in its midst-but it looses them from their attachment to the world. The law of the world, the way of the world, can no longer be theirs after they have become God's. The surrender to God is simultaneously a break with the old ways of the world. One cannot please the world and God at the same time. The entire life, therefore, must be reconstructed according to a new building plan. The Christian man must now adopt the architectural style of God and do away with the style of the world. It will still require hard work until this reconstruction has been completed in every single detail! But the important thing is that one shall know God's building plan in general. Thus, the renewal must commence at the centre, with the knowledge of the divine will – whereby God's will is to be understood now quite concretely as that which God wants from me now, to-day and here.

1. **Do not be conformed** – "Do not be conformed to the pattern of this world." The word pattern is the word schema (scheme) and the world is

better translated 'age' or this present age or time. "Do not be conformed to the schemes of this evil age."

J.B. Phillips famously translated this verse: "Don't let the world around you squeeze you into its own mold, but let God re-mold your minds from within, so that you may prove in practice that the plan of God for you is good, meets all his demands and moves towards the goal of true maturity."

Two patterns are held us for us to view: the world's pattern and God's pattern. Too often, the lines are blurred between these two.

The world's pattern is characterized in **1 John 2:15-17...**

"Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world- the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life – is not from the Father but is from the world. And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever."

Q1: Based on earlier passages within Romans, contrast a Christian worldview with a secular worldview. Where does thinking with a secular worldview impact how you live your life?

Q: Knowing that conforming and compromise are so subtly done, how can you recognize when we are being manipulated?

2. **But be transformed** – means metamorphosis (to be changed from one form to another), used in **Matthew 17:2 and Mark 9:2** at the Transfiguration. But also used in **2 Cor. 3:18** "We, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord."

Speaks to a change of character and conduct; a change from our old, self-centered mindset to a new, Christ-centered mindset. How does this happen? ----

- **By the Renewal of our mind** - by the Holy Spirit. **Rom. 7:6** "We are released from the Law...so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit"... **Rom. 8:5** "For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh but those who live according to the Spirit set their mind on the things of the Spirit. For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace."

@ Keller points out that we are to "have our minds **inflamed with the truth** about Christ!" Why? So that...as we learn how to think God's way,

- **So that we are able to clearly think the way God wants us to think** – to test means that the Spirit gives us the ability to see all around an issue clearly

so that we can do everything that is pleasing to the Lord and do it as an act of worship!

Merida points out **Four Ways the Spirit** renews our mind:

1. By giving our minds to that which is good, right and beautiful (Phil. 4:8)
2. By not allowing our minds to think like we used to (Eph. 4:22-32)
3. By filling our minds with the truth of Scripture (Ps. 119:37; Eph. 6:17; Col. 3:16)
4. By meditating on the glory of God in Christ (2 Cor. 3:17)

Q1: Based on earlier passages within Romans, contrast a Christian worldview with a secular worldview. Where does thinking with a secular worldview impact how you live your life?

Q2: Knowing that conforming and compromise are so subtly done, how can you recognize when we are being manipulated?

Q3: What are some ways you are renewing your mind that you can share with others?

Questions for Small Group Discussion:

1. Explain the importance of knowing and living in the mercies of God. How does it or does it impact your worship?
2. What does it mean doctrinally and practically to be a 'living sacrifice'?
3. How is the world attempting to press you into its mold?
4. What are some practical ways for you to renew your mind?
5. What are your biggest challenges or pressures you face with operating with a renewed mind?

Romans

Session Seventeen

Truth for Every Culture, Every Day

God's Gifts of Grace to His Church

Romans 12:3-8

Intro. In his book, *Life in the Body*, Gary Inrig wrote: "Several years ago, two students graduated from the Chicago-Kent College of Law. The highest-ranking student in the class was a blind man named Overton and, when he received his honor, he insisted that half the credit should go to his friend, Kasprzyzak. They had met one another in school when the armless Mr. Kasprzyzak had guided the blind Mr. Overton down a flight of stairs. This acquaintance ripened into friendship and a beautiful example of interdependence. The blind man carried the books which the armless man read aloud in their common study, and thus the individual deficiency of each was compensated for by the other. After their graduation, they planned to practice law together."

(The Message – Romans 12:3-8): "I'm speaking to you out of deep gratitude for all that God has given me, and especially as I have responsibilities in relation to you. Living then, as every one of you does, in pure grace, it's important that you not misinterpret yourselves as people who are bringing this goodness to God. No, God brings it all to you. The only accurate way to understand ourselves is by what God is and by what he does for us, not by what we are and what we do for him. In this way we are like the various parts of a human body. Each part gets its meaning from the body as a whole, not the other way around. The body we're talking about is Christ's body of chosen people. Each of us finds our meaning and function as a part of his body. But as a chopped-off finger or cut-off toe we wouldn't amount to much, would we? So, since we find ourselves fashioned into all these excellently formed and marvelously functioning parts in Christ's body, let's just go ahead and be what we were made to be, without enviously or pridefully comparing ourselves with each other, or trying to be something we aren't. If you preach, just preach God's Message, nothing else; if you help, just help, don't take over; if you teach, stick to your teaching; if you give encouraging guidance, be careful that you don't get bossy; if you're put in charge, don't manipulate; if you're called to give aid to people in distress, keep your eyes open and be quick to respond; if you work with the disadvantaged, don't let yourself get irritated with them or depressed by them. Keep a smile on your face."

Q1: Why can spiritual gifts be so uniting on the one hand and dividing on the other?

I. God's Gifts of Grace to His Church Require Accurate Thinking (v. 3)

- A. Don't think too high or too low of yourself (v. 3a)** – people trend toward self-inflation rather than self-deflation. Keller said, “Most of the world's religions have identified humanity's worst problem as stemming from inflated views of one's own importance, abilities and rights (Buddhism). We are all prone to exaggerate our own wisdom, competence, sincerity and power. As Christians we must avoid this.” C.S. Lewis said that he knew no one, except Christians who ever admitted to be proud and conceited.
- B. Think soberly (v. 3b)** – this means to think “rigorously accurate, completely in touch with reality.” He's not talking about humility that reprimands healthy thinking about what we CAN do, but to recognize that God has given us gifts to utilize so we can serve the body.
- C. Think of yourself as equal to one another in Christ** – “measure of faith” from the word Metron (meter), which does not mean amount of faith but the standard of measurement. In other words, everyone who has come to faith in Christ have all come to faith the same way. **Our standard is Christ alone**, not the amount of faith one person possesses as opposed to another. “Regardless of our background, abilities, etc, we are all saved in Christ. God loves us equally in Christ” (Keller).

We think too highly of ourselves when we do not see our need for Christ and we think too lowly of ourselves when we do not see our salvation in Christ. The Gospel is what brings balance in our lives. ----- That is how we measure our lives. No one will be able to exalt himself over another because of their gifts or abilities when we stack ourselves against the Person and work of Jesus!

- D. Think of yourself as unique within the body of Christ (v. 4-5)** – the Church is a group of called-out people who are all one in Christ, but not clones. We are different, with varying abilities, backgrounds, experiences and gifts. We are inter-dependent so that we will lock arms with one another for the common build-up of the body of Christ and His kingdom!
- **Eph. 2:10** “We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.”
 - **1 Cor. 12:12-26**
 - All of this is by God's grace (**Eph. 4:7-12**) to build up the body of Christ!

Q2: What are 3 to 5 practical advantages of gift diversity in the local church? What gifts has God given to you? How are you using them in his church?

II. God's Gifts of Grace to His Church Require Applicable Usage (12:6-8)

There are, generally speaking, three categories of spiritual gifts:

(1) Speaking gifts (prophecy, teaching, exhortation and knowledge)

(2) Leading gifts (government, administration, and wisdom)

(3) Serving gifts (giving, mercy, hospitality, miracles, tongues, interpretation, and healing). Some might put miracles, tongues and interpretation in another category called 'Sign gifts.'

- A. Prophecy** – while prophecy causes us to think of the prophets of the OT who delivered messages from the Lord directly, when you get to the NT, you rarely if ever see it. Rather, what you see are the Apostles being placed positionally above the gift of prophecy (1 Cor. 12:28). Here is why: The word Paul uses when describing how prophecy is used in the church, he says, **“in proportion to our faith.”** (What does this mean?)
- Proportion does not mean 'AMOUNT'.
 - Proportion literally means **“according to the analogy of his faith”**. That word means **“the standard”**. He means that a prophet must not teach anything that contradicts Scripture (or the doctrine laid down through the Apostles). This gift is about preaching or anointed utterance.
- B. Service** – from the word diakonos (to kick up the dust). It means to give your time, energy and resources for the practical tasks of administration and meeting needs. They do not need the spotlight or pats on the back.
- C. Teaching** – this gift helps to make clear and understandable the truths of Scripture. Learning the bible should never be boring! A good teacher may not make a good preacher, but both are needed in the church at all levels of age and need.
- D. Exhortation** – the word is 'parakaleo'. A good translation is 'Encouragement' or counseling and support. This gift can be used to be greeters, ushers, advisors, supporters, or any number of ways to interact with people.
- E. Giving** – the meaning of this word is obvious but it goes deeper to speak of a joy in giving and a wisdom in how they utilize their money. What they do

with their money is fruitful. A person with this gift will not be showy with their generosity.

- F. **Leads** – this gift happens in a person who can rally people to a vision and get them to follow. They do not lead brutally or gently and with passion.
- G. **Acts of Mercy** – this gift is used by people who are compassionate toward the poor, the sick, the under-served to the point that they act intentionally.

Tony Merida put an exclamation on the point of the gifts:

“So in all the detailed discussion and debate about spiritual gifts, let me underscore the obvious point here: use your gifts for the good of the body. You need to be in a local church to be edified by the gifts of others, and you need to be in a local church because others need to be edified by your gifts. Gifts are not given for one’s own enjoyment, for self-exaltation, or to build one’s platform. A Christian has no right to withhold his or her gifts from the church. God gave us these gifts because he loves the church, and we are to use our gifts for the good of our brothers and sisters.”

Q3: How do we discern our own spiritual gifts? Discuss the approach Paul gives us in this passage as well.

Ways to discern your spiritual gifts:

1. Self-examination. “But to think with sober judgment”

- Heart - this means that we look at our heart. What fills our heart with joy and passion? What do I enjoy doing? What kind of ministry is the most satisfying?
- Eyes – What do we see in our church or community that needs to be addressed? Do I sense that how God has wired me fits the need before me?
- Effectiveness – Am I good at what I enjoy? Are people getting helped by what I am providing?
- Ask people who know you to give you their thoughts

2. Experience. “let him use it”

- Gifts are learned as you go not prior, most of the time.
- Use the experience you have to benefit the body of Christ and then see if there are other places your experience can be utilized.

3. Study the Lists in God’s Word.

4. Just Do It. Gifts are not to be hoarded and the best way to know what gifts you have not been given is to be active.

Questions for Small Group Discussion:

1. What is the importance of having sober judgment in your thinking?
2. How could thinking too high or too low of oneself be unhelpful in the Church?
3. How have these verses changed the way you view yourself?
4. How will these verses change the way you view the church and your place in it?

Romans

Session Eighteen

Truth for Every Culture, Every Day

The Christian Who Impacts Their Culture**Romans 12:9-21**

Intro. Al Mohler, "Is it our task to force the biblical doctrine of God to answer to modern culture, or (is it our task) to address modern culture with the biblical doctrine of God? If modern culture-or any culture-establishes the baseline for the doctrine of God, such a doctrine will certainly bear little resemblance to the God of the bible."

Paul moves from the grace gifts bestowed on people for the purpose of serving to the marks of genuine faith in Jesus Christ. He gives us a litany of commands for how to live out our faith.

- | | |
|---|--|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Love genuinely. 2. Hate evil. 3. Love one another 4. Outdo one another in showing honor 5. Do not lack zeal 6. Be fervent in spirit 7. Serve the Lord 8. Rejoice in hope 9. Be patient in tribulation 10. Be constant in prayer 11. Contribute to the needs of the saints 12. Seek to show hospitality 13. Bless those who persecute you 14. Bless and do not curse 15. Rejoice with those who rejoice 16. Weep with those who weep 17. Live in harmony with one another 18. Do not be prideful 19. Associate with the lowly 20. Never be wise in your own eyes 21. Repay no one evil for evil | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 22. Do what is honorable in the sight of all 23. Live peaceably with all 24. Never avenge yourselves 25. If your enemy is hungry, feed him 26. If your enemy is thirsty, give him something to drink 27. Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good. |
|---|--|

I. Christians Live Counter-Culturally with a Renewed Mind (Romans 12:9-16)

A. Counter-Cultural Christians Love Sincerely (12:9)

1. **“Let (‘your’ implied) love be genuine”** – lit. to be unhypocritical; we are not to be kind, nice and warm on the outside but ruthless, mean and heartless on the inside. @ Caulk and molding are used to cover areas that don’t match-up properly. It’s a Veneer that covers up what is underneath.

Q1: What are some veneers in our own lives where we might cover up an attitude on the inside with a fake pleasantness on the outside?

2. **“Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good”** – lit. to hate what is evil and cling. In other words, to literally be horrified by evil and literally glued to what God calls good. Why is this so critical and why did Paul say it this way? Love can get distorted. We can make love mean and make us believe and do all sorts of things. Think about song lyrics like these: “If loving you is wrong, I don’t want to be right! Or It can’t be wrong, if it feels so right!”

When love becomes distorted or abused, it turns a good thing into an ultimate thing. The problem is not only that it replaces God’s love but creates an emotional dependency that can lead toward doing evil things in the name of love or refusing to confront others who are going down the wrong path.

Tim Keller is his commentary wrote: “Real love is about truth. Any love that is afraid to confront the beloved is not really love, but a selfish desire to be loved. This kind of selfish love is afraid to do what is right (toward God and the beloved) if it risks losing the beloved’s affection. It makes an idol out of the beloved. It says, “I’ll do anything to keep him or her loving me!” This is not loving the person. It is loving the love you get from the person. In other words, it is loving yourself more than the person. So, any ‘love’ that cuts corners morally, or fails to confront, is not really love at all.”

Q2: How do Christians then love others, especially, those who are hard to love? Consider C.S. Lewis’ explanation: “Do not waste time bothering whether you ‘love’ your neighbor; act as if you did. As soon as we do this, we find one of the great secrets. When you are behaving as if you loved someone, you will presently come to love him.”

B. Counter-Cultural Christians Love Practically (12:10-16)

1. **Love others like they were family by putting the needs of others above your own (v. 10)** – Phil. 2:3-4 “Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.”

2. **Love others with such a fervent activity that as you serve the Lord on their behalf you are able to rejoice in hope, be patient in times of trouble and face every situation with constant prayer (v. 11-12)** @ “Paul is exhorting us to use all our spiritual resources not to give up on our Christian brothers and sisters.”

3. **Love others with a whatever it takes attitude that is backed up with whatever it takes action (12:13-16)!** Paul is teaching that Christian love is not a bunch of words we say but actions we live. {We give our money to those in need, we open our homes to people (not just those we like), we bless those who mistreat us, we speak well of people even when they gossip about us, we are happy for people even when they get what we wanted for ourselves, we cry with people in their loses, we live in peace with others, we refuse to live so high and mighty that we cannot live in relational humility, and we refuse to take ourselves too seriously.} @ **Just Like Jesus!**

Q3: Which of these three are the most challenging for you to live?

II. Christians Live Counter-Culturally with a Renewed Heart (Romans 12:17-21)

After the issue of love for others is established, Paul tests it with a scenario about how to treat your enemy.

Jesus said this in the *Sermon on the Mount*: “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy’, but I say to you, ‘Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven’. For he gives sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same?” (Mt. 5:43-46)

A. Being committed to living right at all times (12:17) –

{Civil ethics, decorum, human decency, and true heroism are hard to find in our current society. We are living in a ‘values vacuum’ of relativism where everything that good cannot be defined as good.} About 30 years ago, two books addressed this problem: (1) *The Closing of the American Mind* by Allan Bloom; and (2) *The Day America Told the Truth*. Bloom wrote that he believed the educational system goal in America was to pursue the common good of society.

But today, Blooms says, “people no longer believe that there is a higher, absolute truth or good to be discovered, especially in education, and as a result the whole educational enterprise is in chaos.” James Boice commented on Bloom’s summation:

In order to pursue a goal, there must be a goal. To have a strong moral society, we must have moral absolutes. Otherwise, all we can have is what is pragmatic or expedient, which is what education, politics, and American life as a whole have come to. It is why we do not have any heroes today and why we do not have any moral leadership in this country. A generation or two ago there were heroes, people like Charles Lindbergh, Babe Ruth, Henry Ford, Douglas MacArthur, George Washington Carver (Martin Luther King, Jr.). Today’s heroes are celebrities – people like Michael Jordan and Madonna. Why are there no heroes? The Day America Told the Truth says, ‘There are no heroes because we have ceased to believe in anything strongly enough to be impressed by its attainment’.

Doing the right thing is about honoring parents, respecting our elders, treating people of all races fairly, living by the laws of the land, loving our neighbor, fair treatment of employees and all areas of social justice!

B. Be committed to living at peace with everyone (v. 18)

Jim Eliff writes, “To put a wall between you and others is to build a wall between you and God.”

C. Be committed to the wrath of God and to the grace of God (19-21)

Tony Merida wrote: “At the cross Christ loved his enemies. He has made us, former enemies, his friends (Rom. 5:10). And one day he will have the final word on all those who oppose him and his people. So we can focus on blessing, not vengeance, now. We can be people of grace, peace, and honor until the final day. So let’s live this way and humbly trust our God.”

Questions for Small Group Discussion:

1. What is the importance of having a counter-cultural mindset as a Christian?
 2. Why can it be such a challenge to experience genuine love in the church?
 3. What was your biggest takeaway from this section of Romans 12?
 4. How will these verses change the way you live and interact in our culture?
-

Romans

Session Nineteen

Truth for Every Culture, Every Day

Living and Loving in the Hard Places of our Present Culture**Romans 12:17-13:1-14**

Intro. Tony Merida, in his work on Romans, writes, "Paul wants the gospel to saturate every aspect of the Roman believers' thinking and living. For Paul the gospel not only brings the dead to life, but it shapes the way believers interact with one another and how they live out their faith in the wider culture."

Q1: What are some of the biggest challenges we face in living out our faith in this present culture?

In this passage, Paul says that Christians have to address four areas in our present culture: (1) Our enemies; (2) the government; (3) our neighbors and (4) the temptation in the world.

Christians live in this world but are not of this world. There is coming a day when we will stand before God to give an account for how we lived in this world. Paul is encouraging us to live each day thinking about the coming day. *As Martin Luther quipped: "I have two days on my calendar, this day and that day."*

I. We Live for God in the Hard Places of our Present Culture as Peaceable Citizens (12:17-21) – leaving vengeance to God.

A. Live honorably in the sight of all (v. 17) – rather than seeking retaliation.

1 Th. 5:15 "See that no one repays anyone evil for evil, but always seek to do good to one another and to everyone."

B. Live at peace with all, so far as it depends on you (v. 18) – (Jer. 29:7)

Q2: What is the key to living an honorable and peaceful life?

C. Live without taking revenge on others (v. 19-21) – (Deut. 32:25; Pr. 25:21)

Living this way is only possible if you believe in God's wrath. Listen, you are not God's hitman. God calls believers to bless and not curse (v. 20).

Merida: "The way you overcome the enemy is not by vengeance and vitriol but by grace and goodness. This kind of life is motivated by Christ's work for us on the cross in the past, and it is motivated by our belief about the coming day in the future. At the cross Christ loved his enemies. He has made for us, former enemies,

his friends. And one day he will have the final word on all those who oppose him and his people. So, we can focus on blessing, not vengeance, now. We can be people of grace, peace, and honor until the final day. So, let's live this way and humbly trust our God."

Q3: What is the most difficult part to staying out of God's business when it comes to seeking revenge?

II. We Live for God in the Hard Places of our Present Culture as Submitted Citizens (13:1-7)

Q4: Why is this section of Scripture viewed more negatively than positively? Why do people who live in free speech countries struggle with authority?

A. Because God instituted them (cf. 1 Pet. 2:13-14) "For the Lord's sake"

When are we not to submit? When the commands of our government oppose the clear teaching of the Lord's directives (**Acts 5:29** "Peter said, 'We must obey God rather than men.'") A helpful way to view this relationship is through the lens of marriage. The husband takes the lead role in leading the family but if his leadership is leading away from the will and work of God, then the wife does not have to submit to his leadership.

B. Because God set them in place for the common good (v. 2-4)

C. Because God has put in our conscience to obey the laws (v 5-7)

John Stott concludes this section with these words:

"Paul gives us in these verses a very positive concept of the state. In consequence Christians, who recognize that the state's authority and ministry come from God, will do more than tolerate it as if it were a necessary evil. Conscientious Christian citizens will submit to its authority, honor its representatives, pay its taxes and pray for its welfare. They will also encourage the state to fulfill its God-appointed role and, in so far as they have opportunity, actively participate in it."

Q5: Knowing that there will always be abuses, when should Christians speak out against government? How do Christians resist making an idol out of a particular political party? What are some action steps for Christians living as resident aliens?

III. We Live for God in the Hard Places of our Present Culture as Loving Citizens (13:8-14)

A. Love others perpetually (8-10) – because we owe this love to them.

1. The most basic way we love others (fellow citizens) is to be a good citizen – pay your taxes, don't become a burden on the system, don't incur debts you cannot pay.
2. The most important way we love others is to love them as ourselves – with the same care and intensity that we care for ourselves.

B. Love them by living in light of the Day (11-14)

1. *Wake up and know the times*

2. *Live appropriately in the times*

- Cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light (12b)-get dressed for battle, it's not a time to sleep!
- Live with the right moral ethic (13)
- Put on the Lord Jesus himself so you resist the flesh's desires (14) – You find in him all you need rather than looking to the world to satisfy your cravings.

Merida concludes: "Make no provision for the flesh. Instead, direct your mind to the promises of God in Scripture. Direct your mind to the beauty of Christ! Follow the lifestyle of the Savior in this present age. Direct your mind to the glory that is to come. We have a wonderful Savior who satisfies our human longings and empowers us for this kind of obedience. Jesus is better than sin-the sin of retaliation, the sin of dishonoring the government, the sin of failing to love our neighbors, and the sins of the flesh. One day soon he will come and eradicate the world of sin once and for all, and we will no longer wrestle in these bodies of flesh."

Q6: What are 3 to 5 things we could and should be doing as Christians in this culture knowing that we are in a spiritual battle right now?

Questions for Small Group Discussion:

1. What is the importance of living in light of the return of Christ and should it change our day-to-day living?
 2. What are a few major responsibilities we have to the government?
 3. What was your biggest takeaway from this section of Romans 13?
 4. What is your strategy for staying alert and awake for the battle against yourself and your community?
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Romans

Session Twenty

Truth for Every Culture, Every Day

What's Love Got to Do with It?**Romans 14:1-15:13**

Opening Question: Is your character one that tends to want to rule all matters as being disputable, or no matter as being disputable?

Intro. Psalm 133 says, "Behold, how good and pleasant it is when brothers dwell in unity! It is like precious oil on the head, running down on the beard, on the beard of Aaron, running down on the collar of his robes! It is like the dew of Hermon, which falls on the mountains of Zion! For there the Lord has commanded the blessing, life forevermore!"

III. If a football team is unified, it's not because they are playing the same position, but headed toward the same goal. If an orchestra is playing harmoniously, it's not because they are playing the same instruments but playing the same song. If a choir is singing with great harmony, it's not because they are singing the same parts, but adding their parts to the same song. It's the goal that produces unity. Unity is not sameness. Unity has to do with the same purpose.

Unity in the church is the essential to the Christian witness making progress in the world. When Christians are disunified, the church are disunified and the community suffers! **ROMANS 14-15** are primarily about JUDGING one another.

@ **Kent Hughes** said, "Judging one another is one of the favorite indoor sports of Christians today. We are great grocery list makers – for others!"

Leslie Flynn writes in his book, **Great Church Fights:**

Wide disagreements exist today in our churches over certain practices. A Christian from the South may be repelled by a swimming party for both men and women, then offend his Northern brother by lighting up a cigarette. At an international conclave for missionaries, a woman from the Orient could not wear sandals with a clear conscience. A Christian from western Canada thought it worldly for a Christian acquaintance to wear a wedding ring, and a woman from Europe thought it almost immoral for a wife not to wear a ring that signaled her status. A man in Denmark was pained to even watch British Bible School students play football, while the British students shrank from his pipe smoking.

Poem: "Believe as I believe; No more, no less; that I am right, and no one else, confess; Feel as I feel, Think only as I think; Eat what I eat, and drink but what I

drink; Look as I look, Do always as I do; Then, and only then, will I fellowship with you.”

Q1: Why is it so critical to keep unity among church members? How have you seen you tear churches and families apart?

In this passage, Paul says that Christians have to address three areas in our church body:

(1) Liberty (14:1-12); (2) Love (14:13-23); (3) Living the Example of Jesus (15:1-13)

Context is the diversity of the church: Some Jews and mostly Gentiles. Paul teaches the church that the issues are not moral issues (they all should agree on those) or salvific issues (they all agree that their salvation is not based on works). The main issue is concerning the weaker believers lack of understanding about the new covenant teachings that do not require adherence to the law; primarily, the laws that have to do with dietary, cultural and social practices.

I. Liberty (14:1-12)

- A. **Refuse to criticize one another (14:1-3)** – Paul urging the church not to argue or break fellowship over about debatable nonessentials. **Merida** wrote: “Paul wants the strong to welcome the weak into fellowship, and the weak to welcome the strong, and no one to disrupt the unity of the church over disputable matters.”
- B. **Honor the Lord (14:4-12)** – stop making the stronger Christians feel guilty for their freedoms that you think are liberal. It's the Lord who causes a person to stand or fall. The main thing you need to do is honor the Lord (v. 6). WE ARE the LORD'S! (vv. 7-9)
- **1 Cor. 10:23-33**
 - **Eph. 4:29-32**

Remember that when you stand before the Lord, it will not be the people in your church who will stand as judge, but God Himself.

Live for him and you will live with others well

II. Love (14:13-23)

Paul wants us to think about **three things**:

A. **The damage we could do to our weaker brothers (14:13-15a)**

“The apostle adds that when the stronger Christian eats what he or she is free to eat in front of the weak, the strong are hurting, distressing, or causing pain to the weaker brother. Peer pressure and flaunting one's freedom in front of the weak

may lead the weak to violate their consciences or perhaps even walk away from the fellowship."

What is the goal of all this? UNITY! Not a homogenous country club!

- B. **The fact that Christ died for him too (14:15b-16)** – this is where love settles!

Q2: Why is this fact alone the most critical? What are the implications?

- C. **The impact to the kingdom of God (14:17-23)** – keeping the unity of the faith is essential for a solid, contagious witness in the community. What is that church known for?

"In essentials unity, in nonessentials liberty, but in all things charity!"

Q3: What are some nonessentials you have seen make a negative mark on a church?

III. Living the Example of Jesus (15:1-13)

- A. **Others before you! (15:1-6) – Phil. 2:3-10**
- B. **Accept rather than turn away (15:7-13) -**

Questions for Small Group Discussion:

1. Why should the reality of the Lord's final judgment have an impact on how we relate to one another in the church?
 2. This take great self-awareness, but can you see you any area in which you may be a weaker believer? (I.e., Do you still wrestle with nonessentials that can sometimes get in your way of sharing community with other believers?)
 3. How do 14:20-22 and 15:3 work together for unity in the church?
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Romans

Session Twenty-One

Truth for Every Culture, Every Day

Cultivating a Missional Heart**Romans 15:14-16:16**

Intro. Mike Bird, "Romans is theology written from the frantic frontline of the mission field, not in the serene surroundings of a seminary professor's office." Merida writes, "Romans is written from the missional trenches, and we should never think of it as purely containing doctrine devoid of mission."

Q1: What is the church's mission, and what is your mission as a Christian?

Matthew 28:18-20

I. Missional Hearts Seek the Spiritual Progress of Others (15:14-21)

- A. **Through encouragement and reminders (14-15).** Four Marks of a Healthy Church:
1. Goodness
 2. Knowledge
 3. Able to instruct others
 4. Reminding one another of the Gospel's influence on us.
- B. **Through leading people to authentic obedience as an act of worship (16-18) -**
1. The Gentiles are to live out their lives as a living sacrifice (16; Rom 12:2).
 2. Everything Paul does is in Christ Jesus, so all the credit goes to the Lord! (v. 17)
 3. They are to proclaim God's word through Gospel proclamation and compassionately care for the needs of others (v. 18)
 4. Be the person God can use to fulfill the ministry of the Gospel of Christ (v. 19)
- C. **Through having a holy ambition for what the Lord desires (v. 20-21)**

N.T. Wright wrote: "Did Paul ever get to Spain? There is no evidence whatever that he did. But his desire to do so, and the fact that he wrote Romans as part of the preparation for such a trip, points out an extremely important lesson for us all. Perhaps God sometimes allows us to dream dreams of what he wants us to do, not necessarily so that we can fulfill all of them – that might just make us

proud and self-satisfied-but so that we will take the first steps towards fulfilling them.

And perhaps those first steps (as they appear to us) are in fact the key things that God actually wants us to do. Paul may not have got to Spain. That didn't matter; the Gospel got there fairly soon anyway. What mattered then, and has mattered enormously in the whole history of the church, is that, as part of his plan to go to Spain, he wrote Romans. We should never underestimate what God will do through things which we see as small steps to a larger end.

Q2: What is the significance of having 'holy ambition'? What can God do through you, your family and our church if we have holy ambition?

II. Missional Hearts Fulfill their Ministry on the Way to New Opportunities (15:22-33)

- A. Some opportunities run their fruitfulness where you are free to move on (22)**
- B. Some opportunities are helpful stepping stones (v. 24)**
- C. Some opportunities are fulfillments of spiritual debts out of gratitude (v. 25-27)**

Q3: Have you ever gone out of your way to show gratitude for someone has done for you spiritually?

John Stott wrote: "The significance of the offering (the solidarity of God's people in Christ) was primarily neither geographical (from Greece to Judea), nor social (from rich to poor), nor even ethnic (from Gentiles to Jews), but both religious (from liberated radicals to traditional conservatives, that is, from the strong to the weak), and especially theological (from beneficiaries to benefactors). In other words, the so-called 'gift' was in reality a 'debt' (v. 27)."

- D. Some opportunities are holy ambitions that we may or may not have the chance to see fulfilled (28-29)**

Q4: Have there been things you hoped to do for Christ that you haven't seen happen to this point and may never?

- E. Every opportunity is a chance to include others who will partner with you in prayer (v. 30-31)**

Stott: "The purpose of prayer is emphatically not to bend God's will to ours, but rather to align our will to his. The promise that our prayers will be answered is conditional on our asking 'according to his will' (1 John 5:14). Consequently,

every prayer we pray should be a variation on the theme, 'Your will be done' (Matthew 6:10)."

III. Missional Hearts Invest in Sacrificial Partners Who Do the Same (16:1-16)

- A. Remember that you will rarely do exceptional things for the Lord alone**
- B. Remember to honor people who have invested in you**
- C. Remember that no one in your life is insignificant**

Q5: If you listed the people in your life whom you should honor, who would they be and what would you say about them?

Questions for Small Group Discussion:

1. What is your biggest takeaway from this section?
 2. What challenged you the most?
 3. How can you apply the truths of this passage in your daily life?
 4. How will you specifically apply this lesson this week?
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Romans

Session Twenty-Two

Truth for Every Culture, Every Day

Paul's Final Word to the Romans**Romans 16:17-27**

Intro. Final words – What words have you shared with your children that you hoped had meaning in their life?

I. Watch Out and Avoid False Teachers (16:17-18)

Reading Paul's final words is like a parent giving their last-minute instructions to their child as they drive off for college.

- D. They cause divisions and obstacles to the truth** – how can you spot false teaching? (v. 17 "they teach things contrary to the doctrine that you have been taught") 1. Does it square with historical orthodox teaching? 2. Who is Jesus in this teaching? 3. Is salvation by works or by grace? 4. Are there extra-biblical resources that are given authority as Scripture? Merida writes: "Many false teachers will say some things that sound good ("love your neighbor," "honor people," "serve the poor"), but they may deny essential truths of the faith, like the atonement, the resurrection, justification by faith alone in Christ alone, and so on."

There are two other ways to spot false-teachers:

- E. They are self-seeking and deceptive** – Paul describes these teachers in **Phil. 3:17-19** "Brothers, join in imitating me, and **keep your eyes on** those who walk according to the example you have in us. For many, of whom I have often told you and now tell you even with tears, walk as enemies of the cross of Christ. Their end is destruction, their god is their belly, and they glory in their shame, with minds set on earthly things." – And then, there is **1 Timothy 6:3-5** "If anyone teaches a different doctrine and does not agree with the sound words of our Lord Jesus Christ and the teaching that accords with godliness, he is puffed up with conceit and understands nothing. He has an unhealthy craving for controversy and for quarrels about words, which produce envy, dissension, slander, evil suspicions, and constant friction among people who are depraved in mind and deprived of the truth, imagining that godliness is a means of gain."

Another would be **2 Peter 2**

Henry Ward Beecher, "Whatever is only almost true is quite false, and among the most dangerous of errors, because being so near truth, it is the more likely to lead astray."

Martin Luther, “The most damnable and pernicious heresy that has ever plagued the mind of man was the idea that somehow he could make himself good enough to deserve to live with an all-holy God.”

Vance Havner said, “The early Christians condemned false teaching in a way that sounds almost unchristian today.”

II. Maintain Your Character (16:19-20)

- A. **Keep on obeying** – Paul says something similar in **1 Thessalonians 1**
- B. **Keep on doing good and staying away from evil** – no complacency and no compromise. Stay focused. Reminds you of **Romans 13:11-14**
- C. **Keep trusting that God crushes Satan’s work every time the Gospel is preached and received** – reminds us of Gen. 3:15. Jesus crushed Satan at the cross and continues to crush him when people receive grace!

III. Glorify God through the Gospel of Jesus Christ! (16:21-27)

- A. **The Gospel is able to strengthen you** – this means that the Gospel doesn’t just get us started with God, but it informs everything in our lives. (1:16 – The Gospel is the power of God for salvation)
- B. **The Gospel is all about Jesus** – Keller writes, “The center of the gospel is Jesus, the divine man who died and rose to rule as the Christ over all creation and for all eternity; the gospel is Jesus.”

What should we do with this gospel? Make Him known to all the nations!

Questions for Small Group Discussion:

1. What is your biggest takeaway from this section?
 2. What challenged you the most?
 3. How can you apply the truths of this passage in your daily life?
 4. How will you specifically apply this lesson this week?
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