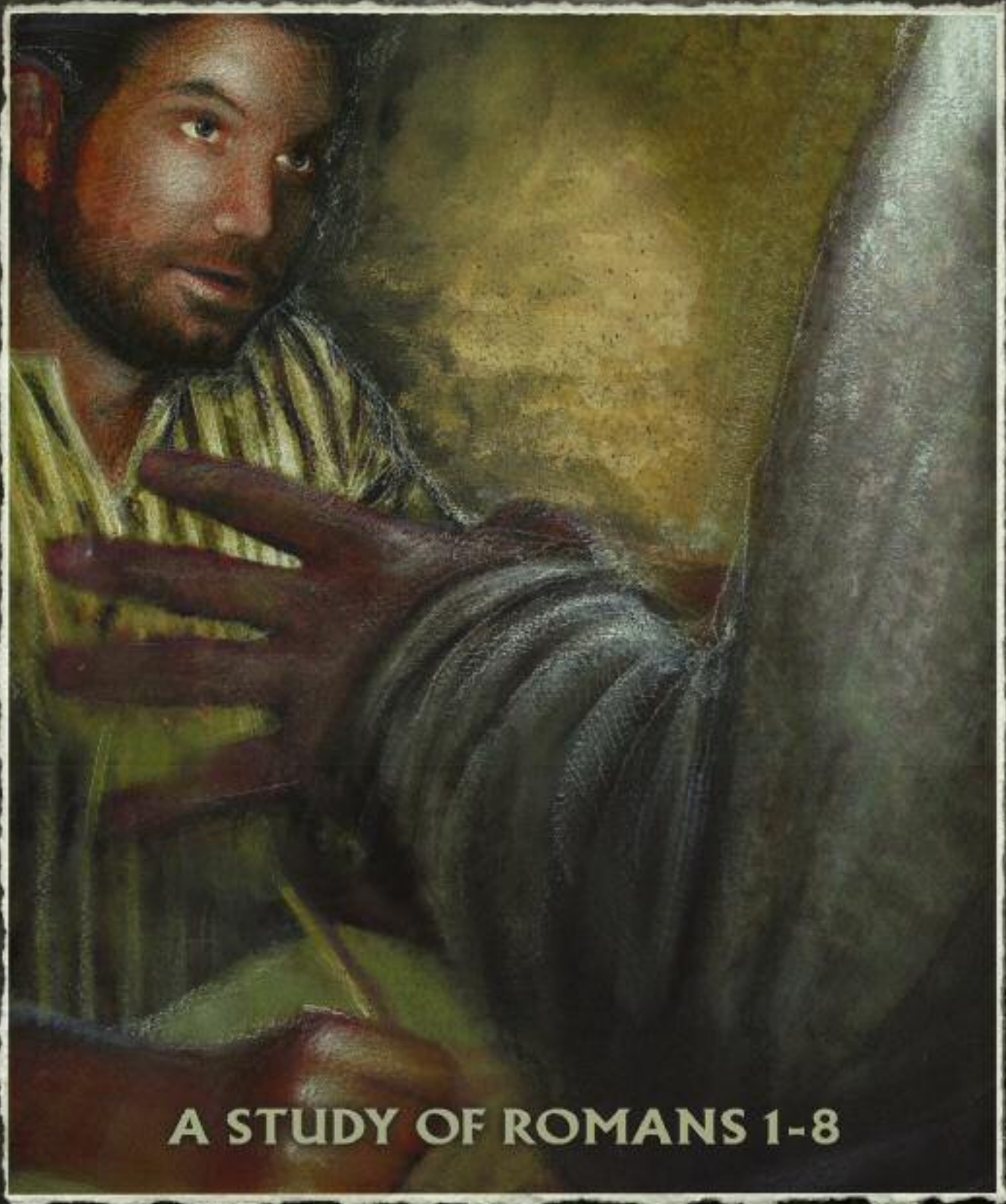


The POWER of The GOSPEL



A STUDY OF ROMANS 1-8

WRITTEN BY TOM KELBY

THE POWER OF THE GOSPEL

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Written by Tom Kelby

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I dedicate this book to my parents, Dave and Jinny Kelby.

*Your love for the Lord and his service is evident to
all who know you. I love you both very much. - TK*

I dedicate this book to my best friend and wife, Kelley.

*Thank you for all your love, support,
encouragement and creativity. - MY*

ABOUT THE COVER

When Tom approached me with this project, it didn't take long for me to get excited about creating the cover. Tom thought that getting a glimpse of Tertius writing down the words given to him by Paul could be intriguing. To be honest, I had never given any thought to the scribes when reading the books of the Bible. But now I was trying to envision the interaction between the author Paul and Tertius, his trusted scribe. I pictured Paul walking back and forth and laying out the inspired word of God, thought for thought. Paul, I imagine, was intense and deliberate. In turn, Tertius was carefully and quickly writing down each and every word. I imagine it was a long and grueling process. What was going through Tertius' mind? Anxiety? Frustration? Awe? Probably all of them at any given moment. One thing we do know is that he was obedient. The finished work of Romans is a testament to that.

To create the initial artwork, I first did a photo study with a good friend of mine - Kraig. He had a beard, which made me wonder if Tertius actually had a beard. By doing a little research, we learned that a Roman citizen of his standing probably was clean shaven. But, thinking about this event, we believed that Tertius worked day and night for what could have been several days. I don't think that shaving was high on his priority list. So, I pictured that when Paul finished dictating, Tertius was wearing a beard of some sort. Other elements that seemed important were the stylus and the papyrus. By the time the final composition fell together these items became so small that they held little focus. However, the lighting technique was a concern. I pictured Tertius and Paul working late into the evening with the only light coming from a couple of candles strategically placed to aid Tertius. Hopefully, the final artwork reflects this kind of mood.

After completing the art, I started thinking about the design and composition of the cover. I wanted to keep the torn edge of the watercolor paper to emulate the papyrus that Tertius was writing on. It gave the design a more hand-crafted feel. The background was a collaborative effort. I picked up the overall texture from Paul's clothes in the artwork. My wife, Kelley, had the idea of marrying the Greek type with the textured background. And thanks to the help from another friend, Mike, I was able to get the first couple paragraphs of the book of Romans in Greek. I believe it adds a nice touch. The artwork on the back cover illustrates how the letter may have looked when it was delivered to Rome. It's important for me to realize that at one point the letter of Romans was just one hand-written document sealed and hand-carried to the people of Rome, but meant for all believers for all times.

When all is said and done, I realize that unless something is anointed by God it is useless. My prayer is that God will use this study to educate, enlighten and encourage you, the reader. Enjoy the journey.

Thank you Father,

MARK

INTRODUCTION

It is not overstating the facts to say that the book of Romans has shaped life in the modern world more than any other individual book (with the exception, of course, of the entire Bible itself). The ideas found in Romans have dramatically altered lives, cultures, countries and even entire continents.

Consider the following far-reaching changes wrought by this book: The truths in the book “formed the seedbed”¹ of Augustine’s faith. The reformation began (although it had been in an incubating stage for many years) as Martin Luther grasped the implications of Romans 1:17 - “The righteous will live by faith.” John Wesley’s heart was “strangely warmed” as he listened to William Holland reading from Luther’s Preface to Romans. This is the same Wesley whose preaching was thereafter to transform all of England. Wesley’s “Methodism” soon crossed the Atlantic Ocean and brought revival to the United States as well.

In terms of content, the book of Romans is, in many scholars’ minds, the crown jewel of the New Testament.

[T]here is a calmness, a magisterial confidence in this letter to Rome, the longest he ever wrote, which distinguishes it from those to Galatia and Corinth. It contains some of [Paul’s] profoundest, most difficult writing and much of his most beautiful.²

Romans contains the fullest treatment of Christian doctrine found in the Bible. William Tyndale’s prologue to this Epistle, which appeared in the 1534 edition of his English New Testament, bears testimony to the depth of the truths unlocked in this book. His prologue is nearly as long as the letter itself!

Listen to the importance Tyndale ascribes to the book. ‘Forasmuch as this epistle is the principal and most excellent part of the New Testament, and most pure Evangelion, that is to say glad tidings and that we call gospel, and also a light and a way in unto the whole scripture, I think it meet that every Christian man not only know it by rote and without the book, but also exercise himself therein evermore continually, as with the daily bread of the soul. No man verily can read it too oft or study it too well: for the more it is studied the easier it is, the more it is chewed the pleasanter it is, and the more groundly it is searched the preciouser things are found in it, so great treasure of spiritual things lieth hid therein.’³

For Tyndale, the letter to the Romans wasn’t just the preeminent part of the New Testament; it was also the perfect introduction to the Old Testament, and the key to understanding its pages. ‘Wherefore it appeareth evidently, that Paul’s mind was to comprehend briefly in this epistle all the whole learning of Christ’s gospel, and to prepare an introduction unto all the Old Testament. For without doubt whosoever hath this epistle perfectly in his heart, the same hath the light and the effect of the Old Testament within him. Wherefore let every man without exception exercise himself therein diligently, and record it night and day continually, until he be full acquainted therewith.’⁴

This, then, is our prayer for this study. That we “exercise ourselves in the book diligently, until we are fully acquainted with it.” I would encourage you to allow yourself the time to soak in these lessons, meditating on the truths you find. God’s truths are best received in a peaceful heart and at an unhurried pace. This is Webster’s meaning of the word “muse.”

*To ponder; to think closely; to study in silence.*⁵

I like his third definition of the word muse even better.

*To wonder.*⁶

1 John Pollock, *The Apostle - A Life of Paul* (Colorado Springs: ChariotVictor Publishing, 1985), p. 229.

2 Pollock, *The Apostle - A Life of Paul*, p. 229.

3 F.F. Bruce, *Tyndale New Testament Commentaries: The Epistle of Paul to the Romans* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1976), p. 9.

4 Bruce, *Tyndale New Testament Commentaries: The Epistle of Paul to the Romans*, p. 9.

5 Noah Webster, *American Dictionary of the English People*, 1828 edition.

6 Webster, *American Dictionary of the English People*, 1828 edition.

Musing is not something most of us naturally gravitate towards. We are more likely to “amuse” ourselves, feeding our minds on things which have no power to actually change us. Force yourself to muse over the verses covered here. Start each lesson with prayer, asking the Holy Spirit to help you understand the riches he placed within Romans.

You will not find every verse in each chapter covered. Nor will you find all your questions answered. However, I trust as you spend time “musing” on Romans, you will see the glory and wonder of Jesus in a way that will, like Augustine, Luther, and Wesley before you, change your life forever.

Tom

HOW TO USE THIS STUDY

There are four parts to this eight-week study: Scripture reading, study questions to answer, study notes to read, and a weekly journal to record insights the Holy Spirit has taught you. All four are important. You will not get nearly as much out of this study if you skip any of the four. Also, do the lessons in order. Paul builds on his arguments in each chapter. You may be wondering about the truths in Romans 7, for instance, and how they apply to a victorious Christian life, however, do not study this chapter until you have studied and understand the six chapters before it. Chapter seven is extremely difficult to understand without an understanding of chapter six. The same is true for each chapter in the book of Romans. We need to follow the process Paul follows, for we will miss basic truths that are foundational to our understanding if we jump ahead.

Here’s how I would recommend using this book:

On day one of each week, read the appropriate chapter(s) of Romans we have printed in the book. (The first lesson, which is background on Paul, does not begin with a chapter of Romans.) We have printed the actual chapters in this study book for three main reasons. First, we believe you will be able to more freely write notes and questions in the margins, which is something you may not be comfortable doing in your “everyday” Bible. Second, most Bibles break down the chapters for the reader, even titling the different sections. We have printed the chapters without these breaks as it is important that you dissect the chapter for yourself. Finally, many Bibles include study notes. These are helpful, but they can keep you from “wrestling” with the passage yourself.

Read the chapter(s) slowly. Once you have read through the chapter, read it through a second time. God has a great deal he would like to show you in his word. As you read, ask the Lord for wisdom. Why is this chapter significant? What is the truth Paul is trying to get across in this chapter? How do the thoughts in this chapter relate to those in the chapters before it? We have printed the chapters with enough spacing so that you have the room necessary to write your thoughts and questions regarding the chapter, however, do no writing your first time through the chapter. Simply read the chapter slowly. Your second read-through of the chapter should be different. This time, pay close attention to the themes Paul is developing. Circle repeated words or phrases. Underline major themes. Break the chapter down into smaller sections and title these sections. Write down other verses that relate to truths Paul is teaching in this chapter. Avoid the use of a Bible commentary or the notes in a study Bible at this point. Do the work yourself. The Lord will give you wisdom.

On days two through five, answer the study questions. The questions will often bring you to other passages that will further illuminate the verses you are studying.

On day six, read the study notes. These notes will give you my perspective on the chapter. Oftentimes in the notes you will find verses referred to, but not printed. These verses are important. Please take the time to look these verses up. It will help you in your overall understanding of Scripture.

Finally, after you’ve read the notes, write down any truths the Holy Spirit has taught you over the previous week.

You will find an additional section for notes in the back of this book.

WEEK ONE

ROMANS BACKGROUND

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ROMANS BACKGROUND

DAY 1

Who wrote the letter to the church in Rome, and how was it written?

Romans 1:1; Romans 16:22

Imagine you are a Christian in a church in the first century. You would not read the words of the letter to the Romans yourself. Rather, you, along with the rest of the local church, would hear them read to you, but not by the person who actually wrote the letter. How would this change the way you received the letter? What frustrations would hearing rather than reading the letter give you? Do you see any benefits to hearing rather than reading the words?

There is another important difference between believers today and those in the first century. Today, when we read our Scriptures from the New Testament, we do not question the books' validity, for the early church leaders accepted them as inspired by God long before our time. However, in the first century, the New Testament writings had not yet been completed, let alone collected. As a first century believer, what importance would you place on knowing whom the letter was from? How would you know the letter was authentic? How would you know the letter was from God?

Since Paul normally had someone else physically write his letters as he spoke the words, how did he prove that the letters actually came from him?
1 Corinthians 16:21; Galatians 6:11; Colossians 4:18; 2 Thessalonians 3:17

It is not known whether Paul included a hand-written greeting at the conclusion of the letter to the Romans. Assuming that he did not, how would people know that this letter actually came from Paul? *Romans 1:1; Romans 16:1-16*

DAY 2

The following verses include some important biographical information about the apostle Paul. Using these verses, describe Paul and his life as completely as possible.

Philippians 3:4-6

Acts 22:2-5 (see also Acts 5:34)

Acts 13:9

Acts 9:1-2

Acts 22:23-28

Acts 23:16

Romans 11:1

2 Corinthians 11:22-33

DAY 3

Paul was, in his own words, a Pharisee. Based on Jesus' own words, how would you describe the typical Pharisee? *Matthew 23:1-39*

Jesus told his disciples to "watch out for the yeast of the Pharisees." By this, he was referring to the teaching of the Pharisees. What does yeast do? What do you think he meant when he compared the teaching of the Pharisees to yeast? What, specifically, were the disciples to watch out for? *Matthew 16:5-12*

In what ways was Paul, prior to his becoming a Christian, a typical Pharisee? *Acts 7:54-8:3*

What were the events surrounding Paul's dramatic conversion from Jesus Christ's

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enemy to his follower? *Acts 9:1-19*

Have you, like Paul, confessed Jesus as Lord? If so, describe the events of your conversion. If not, why haven't you?

DAY 4

Based on *Acts 16:35-39* and *Acts 22:22-29*, what are some of the benefits a Roman citizen was entitled to receive? How difficult was it for a person to receive Roman citizenship?

Why was it important that Paul, when compared to the other apostles, had Roman citizenship? *Galatians 2:7,8*

What was Paul's prior relationship with the church in Rome? *Romans 1:13; Romans 16:1-16*

What were Paul's motives for wanting to visit the church in Rome?

Romans 1:11-15; Romans 15:23,24

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Why do you think he wrote this letter to the church in Rome prior to his actual visit?

Paul's passion was preaching the gospel (*Romans 1:11-17*). What is your passion?

DAY 5

Read *Romans 1-8*, preferably in one sitting. Don't take any notes as you read, just take the time necessary to slowly read the chapters. When you are finished, write any thoughts these chapters leave you with in the space below.

DAY 6

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ROMANS BACKGROUND

Read the “Background” study notes.

BACKGROUND

Where do we begin studying such a magnificent book as Romans? Let’s start with the term “book” itself. It is important to understand that the book of Romans is not a book at all. It is a letter (Romans 16:22).

Ancient letters are a unique type of literature with their own rules. Normally there were six parts of the letter:

1. name of the writer (e.g., Paul)
2. name of the recipient (e.g., to the church of God in Corinth)
3. greeting (e.g., Grace and peace to you from God our Father...)
4. prayer wish or thanksgiving (e.g., I always thank God for you ...)
5. body
6. final greeting and farewell (e.g., The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with you ...)⁷

Reading the letter to the Romans is a little like reading a letter you find in a box in your grandparents’ attic. If you do not know the person who wrote the letter, and you do not know the circumstances that prompted the letter, you will have a much more difficult time understanding the content of the letter itself. Beyond that, the letter in your grandparents’ attic is two generations removed from your own generation. The people in your grandparents’ generation were dealing with different issues than you are dealing with today. They had different world-views than you have today. Therefore, in order to understand the letter you find in the attic, it is important to get as much of the background information as possible.

How much more difficult is it to understand a letter written to a group of people you do not know, from a man you do not know, to a culture you do not know, all of which are 50 generations removed from you and the things you understand!

I hope this illustrates how critical it is to understand the background. Fortunately, there is an abundance of information that will help us a great deal.

THE AUTHOR

Along with 12 other letters in the New Testament, you’ll find Paul’s name at the very beginning of the letter to the Romans (1:1).

It is important to understand that Paul did not write the words of the letter himself. He *spoke* them. Like many scholars of his day, Paul relied on an *amanuensis*, a “person whose employment is to write what another dictates.”⁸

As you read through this letter, imagine Paul, perhaps pacing the floor, speaking the words and his amanuensis Tertius furiously writing on a scroll, trying to keep up. It was not Tertius’ role to add his own thoughts to the letter. In fact, it was not until the very end of the letter that he, probably with Paul’s permission, adds his own greeting. By this greeting, we realize that Tertius was a fellow believer.

I, Tertius, who wrote down this letter, greet you in the Lord. Romans 16:22

Was Paul a fast speaker, making the job difficult for his amanuensis? How often, as he was dictating this letter, did Paul need to repeat words or concepts that Tertius missed or did not understand? Did he often pause, searching for just the right word? Were there points when Paul, moved by the Holy Spirit, could barely speak as he considered the truths he was uttering? How many different sessions did it take to finish the letter? These are all questions we just can’t answer; however, we do know that all the words, while spoken by Paul and written by Tertius, were inspired by God,

⁷ Gordon D. Fee, Douglas Stuart, *How to Read the Bible for All its Worth* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1993), pp. 46-47.

⁸ Webster, *American Dictionary of the English People*, 1828 edition.

and recorded precisely as God intended (2 Timothy 3:16).

THE SIGNATURE

It is not indicated if, as was his custom in other letters, Paul personally wrote the concluding lines of Romans - the lines immediately following Tertius' greeting (Romans 16:23-27).

While Paul regularly relied on an amanuensis, his personal signature was an important element in his letters, as can readily be seen at the conclusion of several letters (1 Corinthians 16:21; Galatians 6:11; Colossians 4:18).

The importance of the signature can be seen by the problems that developed in the church in Thessalonica when the church received and believed a letter falsely attributed to Paul (2 Thessalonians 2:1-2). Paul felt it necessary to write his second letter to the Thessalonians to refute the teachings found in the false letter.

Notice how he ended this letter to the Thessalonians, seeking to prove to them that this new letter was, indeed, written by Paul himself:

I, Paul, write this greeting in my own hand, which is the distinguishing mark in all my letters. This is how I write. 2 Thessalonians 3:17

While Paul may not have concluded his letter to the Romans with a personal signature, the letter itself included sufficient proof to the Christians in Rome that it was, indeed, written by Paul. Of course, Paul is listed as the author in Romans 1:1. Beyond this, in chapter 16 Paul "sends personal greetings to twenty-six individuals and five households or 'house-churches'." This level of intimacy would not be possible, let alone desirable, in a forgery. And because of their intimacy with Paul, these people would have been able to quickly verify whether the words of this letter were "Pauline" or not. The Christians in Rome did accept the words as Pauline, and the letter was, as can be seen below, known, loved and used by the church in Rome.

The copy which was taken to Rome was certainly treasured in the church of that city, and survived the persecution of AD 64. About AD 96 Clement, 'foreign secretary' of the Roman church, shows himself well acquainted with the Epistle to the Romans; he echoes its language time and again in the letter which he sent in that year on behalf of the Roman church to the church in Corinth. The way in which he echoes its language suggests that he knew it by heart; it could well be that the Epistle was read regularly at meetings of the Roman church from the time of its reception onward.¹⁰

PAUL'S EARLY YEARS

Many bits and pieces of Paul's life may be picked up from the book of Acts and from his letters (Acts 13:9; Acts 22:3; Acts 22:22-28; Acts 23:16; Romans 11:1; Philippians 3:4-6).

From the preceding verses, we are able to put together a fairly complete picture. Paul was a Jew of the tribe of Benjamin, although he was born in the non-Jewish city of Tarsus. He was circumcised on the eighth day of his life, indicating that his family members were serious about their faith. Paul was not his only name; he was also called Saul. He had at least one sister. While Paul was a devout Jew, he was also a Roman citizen. In fact, he was "born" a citizen. Paul was "brought up" in Jerusalem and trained under the well-respected teacher Gamaliel. Paul was very zealous for the law; so zealous, in fact, that he carried the title "Pharisee."

TARSUS

Tarsus is located in what is now modern day Turkey. It was, according to Paul, "no ordinary city" (Acts 21:39). It was in this city's remarkable man-made harbor, just a few decades before Paul's

⁹ Bruce, *Tyndale New Testament Commentaries: The Epistle of Paul to the Romans*, pp. 266-267.

¹⁰ Bruce, *Tyndale New Testament Commentaries: The Epistle of Paul to the Romans*, pp. 18-19.

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birth, that Cleopatra stepped ashore to meet Antony, “while all Tarsus marveled at silver oars, a poop of beaten gold, and purple sails ‘so perfumed that the winds were lovesick with them.’”¹¹

If your Bible includes maps, you will find a map titled something like, “Paul’s Missionary Journeys.” To find Tarsus, locate the Mediterranean Sea on this map. Israel is located on the far eastern shore. From Israel, travel north through Syria, following the coast. When you reach the northernmost portion of the sea, turn west. In less than 100 miles (about one finger’s width on your map!) you will find Tarsus.

SAUL OR PAUL - WHICH IS IT?

Paul’s Jewish name was Saul, and this was the name he answered to in his early years. However, as Saul was also a Roman citizen, he also “had a full Latin name which would have been threefold (cf. Gaius Julius Caesar). The first two names were common to all the family (in Caesar’s case, Gaius Julius) but are lost because Paul’s life story was first written by his Greek colleague and no Greek could understand Latin names.”¹² The last of these three names would have been Paullus, or more personally, Paul. This is the name Paul used on his missionary journeys.

ROMAN CITIZENSHIP

While Paul, given his nationalistic bent, would probably have preferred to grow up in Jerusalem, his upbringing in Tarsus was not without its advantages. Indeed, his family, somehow, had received Roman citizenship. Roman citizenship brought many benefits to its holders, as can be seen from Paul’s experiences outlined in Acts 16:35-39 and Acts 22:22-29.

From these verses, we see that Roman citizenship was no mere trifle. It was highly honored, even among those of great importance. It guaranteed the citizen a trial before punishment, a right that was not guaranteed to non-citizens. Of all the apostles, Paul was the one most needful of citizenship. It was to provide him with a means of escaping torture in several instances - torture which could have killed him. Obviously, God knew the value citizenship would be to Paul’s ministry, because God is the one who set Paul apart as a preacher of the gospel even from birth (Galatians 1:15-16).

PAUL THE SCHOLAR

As a young boy, Paul undoubtedly spent a great deal of time in the synagogue in Tarsus. The training Paul received in his early days would surpass that received by most university graduates today.

The school attached to the Tarsus synagogue taught nothing but the Hebrew text of the Sacred Law. Each boy repeated its phrases in chorus after the *hazzan* or synagogue keeper until vowels, accent, and rhythm were precisely correct. Paul learned to write the Hebrew characters accurately on papyrus, thus gradually forming his own rolls of the Scriptures. His father would have presented him with another set of rolls, on vellum: the Greek translation of the Old Testament known as the Septuagint, from which the set readings were taken in synagogue each Sabbath. By his thirteenth birthday, Paul had mastered Jewish history, the poetry of the psalms, and the majestic literature of the prophets. His ear had been trained to the very pitch of accuracy, and a swift brain like his could retain what he heard as instantly and faithfully as a modern “photographic mind” retains a printed page.¹³

After this “primary education,” Paul was deemed ready for more serious learning. There was a university in Tarsus, but that was no place for a God-fearing Jew. The only choice for a young man with Paul’s mind was Jerusalem. It was probably in his thirteenth year when Paul made the journey

11 Pollock, *The Apostle: A Life of Paul*, p. 15.

12 Pollock, *The Apostle: A Life of Paul*, p. 16.

13 Pollock, *The Apostle: A Life of Paul*, p. 17.

to Jerusalem to receive further instruction from the well-respected rabbi Gamaliel (Acts 5:34).

It was probably here that Paul learned to do the very things that were so repulsive to Jesus. In other words, he learned to “tie up heavy loads and put them on men’s shoulders” (Matthew 23:4). He became a “blind guide,” who would “strain out a gnat but swallow a camel” (Matthew 23:24).

... Paul learned to dissect a text until scores of possible meanings were disclosed according to the considered opinion of generations of rabbis, who had obscured the original sense by layers of traditions to protect an Israelite from the least possible infringement of the Law; and, illogically, to help him avoid its inconveniences.¹⁴

However, Paul’s training at the feet of Gamaliel did provide him with yet another tool for his ministry toolbox. He learned to debate using a question-and-answer style called the “diatribe.”¹⁵ Public debate was an area in which Paul excelled. When he became a Christian, he frequently “baffled the Jews” by proving that Jesus is the Christ.

In addition to his knowledge of Judaism, Paul was well acquainted with the outside world, and highly knowledgeable of Greek literature. Consider Paul’s message, recorded in Acts 17:22-34, to the “Men of Athens.” In this brief conversation, Paul proved that he could “be all things to all people” by using the Athenians’ own prophets, poets and literature as the basis for his arguments.

He began tactfully and appropriately, using a rare word (translated “objects of worship”) which would have awakened immediate echoes of the passage in the Eumenides of Aeschylus where Athene tells how the Court of Areopagus came to be instituted. Later he echoed Plato’s reference, in the Tenth Book of the *Republic*, to the great Architect of the Universe who “makes everything which grows out of the ground and animates all living things.” He also introduced direct quotations from the Cretan poet Epimenides and Aratus the Cilician, and a touch of Euripides.¹⁶

Paul again demonstrated the breadth of his learning when, later in life, he was rescued by Roman troops in Jerusalem. In his brief conversation with the Roman commander (recorded in Acts 21:37-39), Paul impressed the man with his use of the Greek language, his education and his quick wit, quoting Euripides¹⁷ in his answer to the commander’s questioning.

In his letter to Titus (1:12), Paul again demonstrates his remarkable learning by quoting the poetry of Epimenides.¹⁸ In 1 Corinthians 15:33, Paul even quotes from “the Greek comedy *Thais* written by the Greek poet Menander, whose writings the Corinthians would know.”¹⁹

From these examples and others, it is obvious that Paul’s years of study in Jerusalem, while not spent serving the Lord, were still years of true ministry preparation. God used them to increase the usefulness Paul would one day bring to his kingdom.

PAUL’S RETURN TO TARSUS

Paul probably spent five or six years learning from Gamaliel. At that point, he would have returned to Tarsus in order to learn a trade, which, based on Acts 18:3, was likely tentmaking. This wasn’t

14 Pollock, *The Apostle: A Life of Paul*, pp. 17-18.

15 Pollock, *The Apostle: A Life of Paul*, p. 18.

16 Pollock, *The Apostle: A Life of Paul*, p. 153.

17 Pollock, *The Apostle: A Life of Paul*, p. 252.

18 D. Edmond Hiebert, *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Volume 11, Titus* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978), p. 432.

19 Note on 1 Corinthians 15:33 from the NIV Study Bible, New International Version © 1985 by The Zondervan Corporation.

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because he was failing as a rabbi. All Jewish rabbis were expected to master their own trade.

We are not given any information about Paul's years in Tarsus. It is likely he married during this time. Most Jews married, and parenthood was a requirement for membership in the Sanhedrin, the ruling body in Jerusalem. If Paul had aspirations of membership in the Sanhedrin, which is likely, he would have certainly married. However, if Paul did marry, we are not told what happened to his wife. Whether she died in Tarsus is never answered. Whatever the case may be, it is evident Paul returned to Jerusalem during the days of the early church, as he was present for the stoning of Stephen (Acts 7:58).

PAUL'S EARLY CHRISTIAN LIFE

Paul's conversion to Christianity was miraculous. He breathed out "murderous threats against the Lord's disciples" (Acts 9:1), persecuting Christians to their death (Acts 22:4). However, as he was traveling on a trip to destroy the church in Damascus, the Lord Jesus revealed himself to Paul, saying, "Saul! Saul! Why do you persecute me?" (Acts 22:7). This one encounter with the Lord Jesus was enough to change Paul's life forever, transforming him from an enemy of the church of Christ to the hardest-working apostle (1 Corinthians 15:10). However, Paul's conversion is no more miraculous than that of any sinner who has turned to the Lord Jesus. The church has a saying that reflects this attitude.

The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost. 1 Timothy 1:15^{ESV}

Do you recognize the state you were in before you believed in Jesus? You were an enemy of God (Colossians 1:21), "worthless" (Romans 3:12), and "full of cursing and bitterness" (Romans 3:14). Even your best acts were as filthy rags before the Lord (Isaiah 64:6). In other words, like Paul, you were the foremost of sinners. But Jesus came to save even you.

If you haven't turned your life to Jesus, now is your time of salvation. Join the millions of "foremost sinners" who have had their sins washed away by the blood of Jesus. The key is belief.

"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." John 3:16

After his conversion, Paul spent three years in Arabia and Damascus. He then returned to Jerusalem (Galatians 1:17-18).

Paul's stay in Jerusalem was brief. The apostles were afraid that he was not a true believer. However, with the help of Barnabas, he finally met the apostles. He then began "speaking boldly" in the city. This created quite a stir. So much so, that the Grecian Jews tried to kill him. In order to save his life, the "brothers" then sent Paul back to Tarsus (Acts 9:26-30).

Paul may have spent up to ten years in Tarsus and the surrounding areas. This period of his life isn't mentioned in the New Testament, although inferences can be made.

From Galatians 1:21-24 (cf. also Gal 2:2, 7), it is certain that in some way Saul continued preaching after leaving Jerusalem and that this was known back in Jerusalem. Perhaps the five lashings he received at the hands of the synagogue authorities (2 Cor 11:24), together with some of his other afflictions and hardships enumerated in 2 Corinthians 11:23-27, occurred during those days in Tarsus, for they find no place in the records of his later missionary endeavors. If so, this might indicate that in Tarsus and its environs he was trying to carry on a Gentile ministry within the Cilician synagogues and was getting into trouble for it. It also may have been during this period that he began to experience the loss of all things for Christ's sake (cf. Phil 3:8) through being disinherited by his family. Perhaps the ecstatic experience of 2 Cor 12:1-4

should also be associated with this period of his life as well.²⁰

We don't hear Paul's name again until Acts 11:25-26, when "Barnabas went to Tarsus to look for Saul, and when he found him, he brought him to Antioch." The Greek verb translated "to look for" "has the idea of searching for human beings with an implication of some difficulty."²¹ Why was it difficult for Barnabas to find Paul? A likely reason is because he had been disinherited because of his faith and was no longer welcome at home. This may also be why his wife, if he had one, left him. The years of his exile in Tarsus were probably very difficult ones.

PAUL THE APOSTLE

From the time Barnabas finally found Paul to his execution at the hands of Nero in AD 67-68, Paul traveled on at least three missionary journeys and wrote 13 epistles. The first nine of Paul's letters listed in the New Testament are addressed to churches, and are arranged from longest to shortest. The final four letters are addressed to individuals; these are also arranged from longest to shortest.

THE LETTER TO ROME

The letter to the Romans, probably the sixth letter Paul wrote, was addressed to "all in Rome who are loved by God and called to be saints" (Romans 1:7). Paul did not found the church in Rome, and it had been established for several years by the time of this letter (Romans 15:23). The church was well known around the world (Romans 1:8). According to the epistle, Gentiles were predominant in the church at Rome, but there were also Jewish believers. The believers were numerous and met in several places (Romans 16:1-16).

The city of Rome was founded in 753 B.C. By the time of Paul, the city had over one million inhabitants, most of whom were slaves.

Scholars are unclear as to who first preached the gospel in Rome. Some believe the first Christians were Jews from Rome (Acts 2:10) who heard Peter preach the gospel on the day of Pentecost. Acts 2:41 indicates that 3,000 believed and were baptized on this day. There is a good probability that some of this number were the "visitors from Rome" mentioned in Acts 2. These new believers would have then made the more than 1,500-mile journey back to Rome, where they would have repeated the things they had first heard in Jerusalem. Whether this is how Christianity first reached Rome or not, there is no question that by the time of this letter to Rome there was a large population of Christians in the city.

Roman historian Cornelius Tacitus wrote the following statement about Nero's first great persecution of the Christians at Rome in A.D. 64.

[F]irst those who confessed [that they were Christians] were arrested, and on the basis of their testimony a great number were condemned ...²²

Notice, Tacitus refers to a "great number" of Christians who were condemned for their beliefs.

Christianity greatly impacted life in the city, so much so, that, at one point, the first Christians were forced to leave their homes in Rome and move elsewhere. Acts 18:2 indicates that the Jews (at that time, Christianity was considered by the Romans to be a "Jewish sect," not a separate religion), for some reason, had been expelled from the city of Rome.

There he met a Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, who had recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had ordered all the Jews to leave Rome. Acts 18:2

The Roman historian Suetonius, writing 70 years after this event, provides us with the reason Claudius felt compelled to expel the Jews from Rome - "riots at the instigation of Chrestus..."²³

Most historians agree that "Chrestus" is none other than "Christus," and that

20 Richard N. Longenecker, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Volume 9, Acts* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981), p.402.

21 Cary M. Perdue, *Acts Analyzed and Explained* (Manila, R.P.: 1983), p. 96.

22 Justo L. González, *The Story of Christianity* (Peabody, MA: Prince Press, 1999), pp. 34-35.

WEEK ONE

ROMANS BACKGROUND

what actually took place in Rome was that Christian proclamation caused so many riots among Jews that the emperor decided to expel the lot. At that time, Romans still saw the conflict between Christians and Jews as an internal matter within Judaism.²⁴

It was probably not until the death of emperor Claudius that the Christians were allowed to return to Rome. However, by the time of Paul's letter to the Romans, the church was once again drawing attention; this time not for the riots they were stirring, but for the people they were evangelizing. Consider how Celsus, a Roman writer, viewed the Christians and their habit of preaching among even the lower classes of society.

[T]heir aim is to convince only worthless and contemptible people, idiots, slaves, poor women, and children. They behave like mountebanks and beggars; they would not dare to address an audience of intelligent men ... but if they see a group of young people or slaves or rough folk, there they push themselves in and seek to win the admiration of the crowd. It is the same in private houses. We see wool-carders, cobblers, washermen, people of the utmost ignorance and lack of education.²⁵

The Christians' love also drew attention. Emperor Julian himself wrote about his concerns that "atheism" was being advanced by the way these "atheists" lived and cared for the poor. (Romans believed that Christians were atheists, because they did not worship many gods.)

Atheism has been specially advanced through the loving service rendered to strangers, and through their care for the burial of the dead. It is a scandal that there is not a single Jew who is a beggar, and that the godless Galileans care not only for their own poor but for ours as well; while those who belong to us look in vain for the help that we should render them.²⁶

Paul probably wrote in the winter of AD 56-57.²⁷ This was near the end of his third missionary journey. At this point, he had been a Christian for at least 25 years and was now in his late fifties. The letter was probably written from Corinth for the following reasons:

1. The letter was apparently carried to Rome by Phoebe of Cenchrea (Romans 16:1), which was located just seven miles from Corinth.
2. Gaius, one of the most prominent of converts in Corinth (1 Corinthians 1:14), served as Paul's host as he wrote the book of Romans (Romans 16:23). He sent his greetings to the church in Rome, indicating that he was present with Paul when this letter was written.
3. Erastus, mentioned in Romans 16:23, also wished to send his greetings. Erastus is described by Paul as "the city's director of public works" (Romans 16:23). His name has been linked to Corinth by archaeologists. "At Corinth archaeologists have discovered a reused block of stone in a paved square, with the Latin inscription: 'Erastus, commissioner of public works, bore the expense of this pavement.' This may refer to the Erastus mentioned here."²⁸

Antioch had been the base of operations for Paul's first three missionary journeys. These journeys were all to eastern provinces. Now Paul had run out of places to work. He wanted to visit the western provinces, particularly Spain, and needed a base of operation (Romans 15:24). Rome was to be Paul's new base. The Christians in Rome would then, like the Christians in Antioch before him, be able to assist him on his journeys to the west. Paul had never visited the church in Rome, but he was certainly no stranger to the Christians in that city. He knew many of them by name, personally greeting 26 people at the conclusion of the letter. The Roman church probably

23 Longenecker, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Volume 9, Acts*, p. 481.

24 González, *The Story of Christianity*, p. 32.

25 Ruth A. Tucker, *From Jerusalem to Irian Jaya* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1983), p. 27.

26 Tucker, *From Jerusalem to Irian Jaya*, p. 27.

27 John Drane, *Paul* (Great Britain: Harper and Row, 1976), p. 66. Scholars arrive at this date by starting with Paul's stay in Corinth, which can be dated with some precision. Paul was in Corinth at the same time as Gallio, the proconsul of Achaia (recorded in Acts 18:12). The time of Gallio's year of service (AD 51-52 or AD 52-53) in Corinth is indicated in a letter from the emperor and a stone inscription found in Delphi.

28 Note on Romans 16:23 from the NIV Study Bible, New International Version © 1985 by The Zondervan Corporation.

included many of his close friends and former associates. Travel was peaceful and easy in those days, and Rome was the center of the empire. It is only natural to expect that many of Paul’s friends had eventually made their way to Rome.

It was a journey he, too, hoped to make soon.

WHAT ABOUT YOU?

Paul’s journeys often led him toward danger, rather than away from it. He willingly suffered disgrace and discomfort for the kingdom of God. What about you? What has been the pattern of your life? Have you abandoned everything for Christ? Can you say, like Paul, “to live is Christ” (Philippians 1:21)? May today be the day that you offer yourself to God unreservedly.

*Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God - this is your spiritual act of worship.
Romans 12:1*

DAY 6 (CONTINUED)

This week, the Holy Spirit has taught me ...

Lined writing area for Day 6 reflections.

DAY 1

Read Romans 1:1-2:29 through twice. The first time through the chapters, simply read the text. Do not write any notes regarding the chapters at this time. The second time through the chapters, circle or underline key words or phrases and write down any questions or thoughts the chapters

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ROMANS 1 & 2

leave you with in the margin. If the verses bring any related Scriptures to mind, please write them in the margin.

ROMANS 1:1-2:29

Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle and set apart for the gospel of God— [2] the gospel he promised beforehand through his prophets in the Holy Scriptures [3] regarding his Son, who as to his human nature was a descendant of David, [4] and who through the Spirit of holiness was declared with power to be the Son of God by his resurrection from the dead: Jesus Christ our Lord. [5] Through him and for his name's sake, we received grace and apostleship to call people from among all the Gentiles to the obedience that comes from faith. [6] And you also are among those who are called to belong to Jesus Christ.

[7] To all in Rome who are loved by God and called to be saints:

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ.

[8] First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because your faith is being reported all over the world. [9] God, whom I serve with my whole heart in preaching the gospel of his Son, is my witness how constantly I remember you [10] in my prayers at all times; and I pray that now at last by God's will the way may be opened for me to come to you.

[11] I long to see you so that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to make you strong— [12] that is, that you and I may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith. [13] I do not want you to be unaware, brothers, that I planned many times to come to you (but have been prevented from doing so until now) in order that I might have a harvest among you, just as I have had among the other Gentiles.

[14] I am obligated both to Greeks and non-Greeks, both to the wise and the foolish.

[15] That is why I am so eager to preach the gospel also to you who are at Rome.

[16] I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile. [17] For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: "The righteous will live by faith."

[18] The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness, [19] since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. [20] For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse.

[21] For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. [22] Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools [23] and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles.

[24] Therefore God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another. [25] They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator—who is forever praised. Amen.

[26] Because of this, God gave them over to shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural ones. [27] In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed indecent acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their perversion.

[28] Furthermore, since they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, he gave them over to a depraved mind, to do what ought not to be done. [29] They have become filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed and depravity. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit and malice. They are gossips, [30] slanderers, God-haters,

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ROMANS 1 & 2

insolent, arrogant and boastful; they invent ways of doing evil; they disobey their parents; [31] they are senseless, faithless, heartless, ruthless. [32] Although they know God's righteous decree that those who do such things deserve death, they not only continue to do these very things but also approve of those who practice them.

[2:1] You, therefore, have no excuse, you who pass judgment on someone else, for at whatever point you judge the other, you are condemning yourself, because you who pass judgment do the same things. [2] Now we know that God's judgment against those who do such things is based on truth. [3] So when you, a mere man, pass judgment on them and yet do the same things, do you think you will escape God's judgment? [4] Or do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, tolerance and patience, not realizing that God's kindness leads you toward repentance?

[5] But because of your stubbornness and your unrepentant heart, you are storing up wrath against yourself for the day of God's wrath, when his righteous judgment will be revealed. [6] God "will give to each person according to what he has done." [7] To those who by persistence in doing good seek glory, honor and immortality, he will give eternal life. [8] But for those who are self-seeking and who reject the truth and follow evil, there will be wrath and anger. [9] There will be trouble and distress for every human being who does evil: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile; [10] but glory, honor and peace for everyone who does good: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile. [11] For God does not show favoritism.

[12] All who sin apart from the law will also perish apart from the law, and all who sin under the law will be judged by the law. [13] For it is not those who hear the law who are righteous in God's sight, but it is those who obey the law who will be declared righteous. [14] (Indeed, when Gentiles, who do not have the law, do by nature things required by the law, they are a law for themselves, even though they do not have the law, [15] since they show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts now accusing, now even defending them.) [16] This will take place on the day when God will judge men's secrets through Jesus Christ, as my gospel declares.

[17] Now you, if you call yourself a Jew; if you rely on the law and brag about your relationship to God; [18] if you know his will and approve of what is superior because you are instructed by the law; [19] if you are convinced that you are a guide for the blind, a light for those who are in the dark, [20] an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of infants, because you have in the law the embodiment of knowledge and truth— [21] you, then, who teach others, do you not teach yourself? You who preach against stealing, do you steal? [22] You who say that people should not commit adultery, do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols, do you rob temples? [23] You who brag about the law, do you dishonor God by breaking the law? [24] As it is written: "God's name is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you."

[25] Circumcision has value if you observe the law, but if you break the law, you have become as though you had not been circumcised. [26] If those who are not circumcised keep the law's requirements, will they not be regarded as though they were circumcised? [27] The one who is not circumcised physically and yet obeys the law will condemn you who, even though you have the written code and circumcision, are a lawbreaker.

[28] A man is not a Jew if he is only one outwardly, nor is circumcision merely outward and physical. [29] No, a man is a Jew if he is one inwardly; and circumcision is circumcision of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the written code. Such a man's praise is not from men, but from God.

DAY 2

Read Romans 1:1-17

Romans 1:1-17 refers to the gospel six times. According to these verses, what is the gospel and

what is Paul's relationship to it? What significance does Paul give the gospel?

Jesus said that his followers must do something for the gospel. What is it?

Mark 8:34-38

How is this possible?

Romans 1:2 says that the gospel was "promised beforehand through the prophets in the Holy Scriptures" (meaning the Old Testament). How is this confirmed in the following passages?

Luke 24:25-27; 44-47

Acts 2:22-36

Acts 3:17-24

Acts 8:30-35

Acts 17:1-4

Acts 18:27-28

Acts 28:23

DAY 3

Read *Romans 1:18-32*

In *1:18*, Paul stops talking about the gospel and righteousness, and begins talking about God's

WEEK TWO

ROMANS 1 & 2

wrath and the wickedness of man. Why do you think Paul addresses this topic, and why does he do it at this point in the letter?

God is just. He cannot act unjustly. All his actions are based on truth. Why is God justified in pouring out his wrath on mankind?

DAY 4

In what ways has God made himself known to man? *Romans 1:20; Psalm 19:1-4* (referred to in *Romans 10:16-18*); *Job 36:24,25; Colossians 1:23; Titus 2:11-12*

Why has God made himself known to man? *Acts 17:24-27*

How does this understanding impact your view of man's responsibility?

How does this understanding impact your view of sin?

How, specifically, is God's wrath "being revealed" against men? *Romans 1:18-32*

What is the result of this wrath being revealed? *Romans 1:18-32*

DAY 5

In chapter two, Paul doesn't describe God's wrath as "being revealed." He talks about God's wrath that "will be revealed" on "the day of God's wrath." What will happen on this yet future "day?" *Romans 2:5-16; Matthew 11:20-24; Matthew 12:38-42; Revelation 20:11-15*

People have not all heard or known the same truths about God - for instance, some have received the law (Jews), and some haven't (Gentiles). How will God sort out these differences?

Romans 2:5-29

The word gospel means "good news." Chapters one and two contained far more "bad news" than good news. Now that you've read chapters one and two, explain why the message of the "bad news" needs to be part of the telling of the "good news."

Romans 1:17

When did you come to a realization in your life that you were a sinner and needed a Savior?

DAY 6

Read the study notes for chapters one and two.

ROMANS 1 AND 2

As with all the lessons in this study, each verse of Romans 1 and 2 will not be covered in these notes. Rather, the main force of Paul's argument will be examined. This does not mean that the verses I have not covered here are insignificant and do not include important information. The opposite is true, they are God-breathed Scriptures, and useful for "teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness" (2 Timothy 3:16). I would encourage you to dig through these chapters more thoroughly than I have done in these notes, finding God's truths and applying them to your life.

ROMANS 1:1-17 - INTRODUCTION

The first paragraphs of this letter include the details you would expect to find in a letter such as this, including the sender's name and title (verse 1), the name of the recipients (verse 7), and a blessing (verse 7). What you might not expect to find in a letter like this, written to a church Paul did not found and to people he, for the most part, did not know, is the emotional passage where Paul informs the Christians at Rome of the depth of his feelings for them (verses 8-13). This is proof that a calloused "professional" did not write this letter. Paul wrote from his heart. This is true of all his letters. Notice the depth of feeling Paul had when he wrote his second letter to the church in Corinth.

For I wrote you out of great distress and anguish of heart and with many tears, not to grieve you but to let you know the depth of my love for you.
2 Corinthians 2:4

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ROMANS 1 & 2

While Paul did not know the people in Rome as well as he knew the Corinthians, he was, nonetheless, deeply concerned for them. Notice that Paul, even though he had never been to Rome, prayed for the church “at all times” (verse 10). He longed to see them, and “many times” (verse 13) planned to visit so that both the Romans and Paul might be strengthened.

In these first 17 verses Paul uses the word “gospel” six different times. The word itself means “good news.” Christians use the word fairly regularly today. But, by carefully looking at how Paul used the word, we can see that he had a far richer definition than most would give the word.

First, notice the comment Paul makes in verse one about his unusual connection to the gospel.

Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle and set apart for the gospel of God ... Romans 1:1

The Greek word for “set apart” indicates that God himself “marked boundaries” in Paul’s life, indicating precisely where Paul was to focus. That focus was to be the gospel. The good news is so significant that God deems it necessary to set people apart, even from birth (Galatians 1:15-16), to ensure that the gospel will be fully proclaimed. If you spent any time with Paul at all, he would have presented this “good news” to you. He was, in a very real way, its servant.

I became a servant of this gospel by the gift of God’s grace given me through the working of his power. Ephesians 3:7

Isn’t that interesting? Not only was Paul God’s servant and Jesus’ servant; he was also a servant of the gospel message itself. He didn’t control the message. The message controlled him! It was his responsibility to make sure that he preached the message whenever and wherever he could. He had been set apart for the gospel.

In verse two we learn something else about this gospel.

... the gospel he promised beforehand through his prophets in the Holy Scriptures ... Romans 1:2

Here we see that this gospel was not something new, which, when finally fully developed, replaced the “old message” taught in the Old Testament. This message is so old that the prophets wrote about it in the Old Testament as early as Genesis 3:15.²⁹

But this good news the Old Testament prophets were forthtelling wasn’t just any good news. It was the good news about one specific subject.

... the gospel he promised beforehand through his prophets in the Holy Scriptures regarding his Son ... Romans 1:2-3

The good news is centered on God’s only Son, Jesus. The same truth is reiterated in verse nine.

God, whom I serve with my whole heart in preaching the gospel of his Son ... Romans 1:9

The Old Testament prophets prophesied about Jesus with stunning accuracy.

In the Old Testament there are sixty major messianic prophecies and approximately 270 ramifications that were fulfilled in one person,

²⁹ The gospel is even older than that, for, as Revelation 14:6 proclaims, the gospel is eternal. It is the very oldest of messages, never having a beginning.

But Jesus is not just an occasional visitor to the Old Testament pages, appearing for a brief prophecy here or there and then exiting just as quickly; he is the focus of the entire Old Testament. The Old Testament was divided into three sections: the Law of Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms. According to Jesus, all three of these sections were written about him (John 5:39; Luke 24:25-27; Luke 24:44)!

It is important to know that the Old Testament was the Bible Paul used to prove that Jesus was the Christ (Acts 17:1-3). The Old Testament was the Bible Apollos used to prove that Jesus was the Christ (Acts 18:28). The Old Testament was the Bible of the early church. To them, it wasn't full of old news. It was full of the good news about Jesus!

By the time Paul wrote this letter, he was likely in his fifties. He had been ministering for many years in many different locations. He had suffered greatly under both the Jews and Gentiles. Yet, even after all these years of proclaiming the gospel message, the thought of preaching the gospel still excited him. Just listen to Paul describe his emotions when he thinks about preaching the gospel in Rome.

*That is why I am so eager to preach the gospel also to you who are at Rome.
Romans 1:15*

Paul wasn't bored by this message he had been preaching for more than two decades. He *couldn't wait* to preach the gospel to those in Rome. The thought of it filled his prayers and plans. You can just imagine Paul saying, "Father, open the door to Rome. I need to preach the gospel in Rome."

Why was Paul so excited about this old message? He knew the preaching of this good news would result in the accomplishment of the task he had been given. He knew that telling people the story of Jesus' life, death and resurrection would result in changed lives.

Many people are reluctant to preach the simple gospel, perhaps because they believe it is not enough to bring about change in a person's life. It is, as Paul termed it in 1 Corinthians 1:18, "foolishness" in many people's eyes. Nonetheless, as Paul goes on to say in verse 21 of the same chapter, "God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe."

Why is all this significant? Because it shows where Paul's trust lay. Paul did not trust in methods. Rather, he trusted in the message. He wasn't looking for "what works in Rome." He already knew what would work in Rome; the same message he had preached in Corinth.

When I came to you, brothers, I did not come with eloquence or superior wisdom as I proclaimed to you the testimony about God. For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. I came to you in weakness and fear, and with much trembling. My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power, so that your faith might not rest on men's wisdom, but on God's power. 1 Corinthians 2:1-5

Paul knew that only one thing changed people's lives. That was the gospel itself. Paul's charge wasn't changing people. That is a task no human can complete. Paul's task was to present the gospel. When the gospel is presented, people will change.

30 Josh McDowell, *A Ready Defense* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, Inc., 1993), p. 210.

WEEK TWO

ROMANS 1 & 2

Jesus explained the awesome, yet mysterious, power of the gospel in the parable of the growing seed.

“This is what the kingdom of God is like. A man scatters seed on the ground. Night and day, whether he sleeps or gets up, the seed sprouts and grows, though he does not know how. All by itself the soil produces the grain - first the stalk, then the head, then the full kernel in the head. As soon as the grain is ripe, he puts the sickle to it, because the harvest has come.” Mark 4:26-29

Paul had experienced the truths spoken in this parable. He had preached this gospel, and people’s lives had changed. That is why he wasn’t ashamed to preach this simple message of Jesus. It worked.

I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile. Romans 1:16

Salvation is a rich word. The full meaning of the word goes far beyond merely “saving” one from imminent danger. It also includes the idea of then placing that one where growth and life are normal and most easily take place. In other words, God saves us from danger, and he saves us to good.

The next verse adds to our understanding of salvation further, explaining that God literally gives righteousness to those who believe on the name of Jesus.

For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: “The righteous will live by faith.” Romans 1:17

Righteousness is “the character or quality of being right or just.”³¹ A pidgin version of the New Testament used in New Guinea explains the meaning in this simple way: “God ‘e say ‘im alrite.”³² This is the verse that puzzled Martin Luther so. He knew he wasn’t righteous. He was conscience of a great load of sins. But he finally realized that by faith in the name of Jesus and the work he did by his life, death and resurrection, he, Martin Luther, would be *made* righteous. He would receive, as a gift, the righteousness of God. I like how Paul says this in 2 Corinthians 5:21,

God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

I received righteousness when I believed in Jesus, trusting in him alone for my salvation. I didn’t earn it. My good works could never have earned it. God *gave* me righteousness. Have you received this righteousness? Have you been declared “right” by God. If you haven’t, Paul clearly spells out the path to receiving this righteousness. The key is the word used in verse 16, “believe.” Paul uses the same word in Romans 10:9.

That if you confess with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.

Belief in Jesus, trusting in him alone for your salvation, is the key to receiving forgiveness and eternal life.

At this point, Paul probably would like to talk in greater detail about this life and the glories it holds for those who believe. But, perhaps reluctantly, he backtracks, turning his mind to a subject that may seem entirely unrelated to the gospel - God’s wrath.

ROMANS 1:18-32 - GOD’S WRATH BEING REVEALED

31 W.E. Vine, Merrill F. Unger, William White Jr. *Vine’s Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, Inc., 1996), p. 535.

32 Bruce, *Tyndale New Testament Commentaries: The Epistle of Paul to the Romans*, p. 78.

Paul begins verse 18 with a vengeance, abruptly bringing the reader from some of the most glorious verses in the New Testament to some of the most horrific.

The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness ... Romans 1:18

Why does Paul launch into such an attack on humanity at this point? The reason is simple. In this letter he aims to give a full treatise of salvation. But before discussing salvation, he needs to prove that people actually need a Savior. That is why Paul sets out, in the next few chapters, to prove, slowly and methodically, that man needs saving and is utterly helpless to save himself.

Not only is man helpless to save himself, and therefore in need of God's help, man is also in great danger from God himself, for God's wrath, as Paul indicates in Romans 1:18, is being revealed. It is important to understand that this wrath is not an outburst from God. He doesn't suddenly "snap" when a man has pushed him too far. The Greek word for wrath used here suggests a "more settled or abiding condition of mind, frequently taken with a view to taking revenge. [It] is less sudden in its rise ... but more lasting in its nature."³³ This type of wrath does not quickly rise, and it does not quickly subside.

Most of us know God as a loving God, but here he is revealed as a wrathful God who is already active in pouring out his wrath. It is "being revealed." In other words, it can be seen, a little at a time. This is a sobering and frightening thought. What is God so angry about? Why is his wrath being revealed from heaven? In verses 18 through 32, Paul reveals why and how this wrath is being revealed.

First, let us consider why God's wrath is being revealed. Verse 18 indicates God's wrath is being revealed against "the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness." Godlessness is disregard and defiance toward God. It is primarily an attitude. Wickedness is more of an action. By both attitude and action, men have suppressed God's truth, *even though they know better*.

Some might say, "But that's not true, people haven't known God. If they did, they wouldn't act this way." Despite what anyone may say to the contrary, people naturally do know there is a God, for God has made himself known to all men. According to verse 20, "God's invisible qualities - his eternal power and divine nature - have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made".³⁴ Living in this world and seeing God's creation, is, in and of itself, enough to convince men of the invisible God. In fact, Paul says that because of this men are without any excuse before God. It is enough to make men responsible.³⁵

What does God do when people who should know him refuse to acknowledge him, and instead exchange "the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles" (verse 23)? His response is not to stop the sin. It is, almost unbelievably, to "give them over" to sin. He gives them over to sexual impurity (verse 24), and to a depraved mind (verse 28). Why does he do this? Why is God so angry that he would deliver men over to more sin? It is because they exchanged "the truth of God for a lie" (verse 25). The NIV translation uses the word "a lie" in this verse, but the verse literally reads, "the lie." What is the lie? It is the lie that puts anything else in the place of God. When men refuse to acknowledge God, and when they put other "gods" in his place, God gives them over to sin. This is one way God's wrath is being revealed. False religion is God's judgment for abandoning true religion (Acts 7:42).

Some might say that God is not just in revealing his wrath in this way. However, we must remember that one of God's characteristics is justice (Psalm 36:6). He cannot do wrong. He cannot do anything unjust. He only can do what is just. Throughout this passage, man is portrayed as active in sin. He is not the victim.

33 Vine, Unger, White Jr., *Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*, p. 26.

34 See also Psalm 19:1-4, Colossians 1:23, and Titus 2:11.

35 Jesus furthers this thought in His parable of the rich man and Lazarus recorded in Luke 16:19-31. In verse 30 and 31 we read that if a person won't listen to the Scriptures, he will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead. As the maker of man, God knows best what man will respond to. He has provided us with enough to make us responsible. We do not need miracles in our lives to convince us of God and his truths. We have the creation. We have his word.

WEEK TWO

ROMANS 1 & 2

The pattern here is idolatry leading to immorality. When a person believes the lie and places something else on the throne instead of God, God's wrath is revealed in his life and he deliberately gives that person over to more of what he wants. God doesn't stop the sin. Quite the opposite is true. God punishes the sinner by giving him over to more sin. The floodgates are opened and the velocity of his sin increases. This is not freedom for the sinner. It is wrath.

As verse 28 indicates, humanity tested God and did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of him. Since they rejected God, he rejected them and gave them over to a disapproved mind, which led them in turn to commit all kinds of sin.

Again, people may argue that this does not seem right. How can people receive wrath for actions when they didn't know these actions were against God's laws and deserving of wrath. Verse 32 indicates that people not only know that God exists, they also know that those who do evil deserve death. But in spite of all this, they continue doing evil and encourage others to do the same.

Paul is building his case here. None should escape. However, as he speaks and Tertius writes, he imagines some who, instead of shuddering at the thought of this wrath being revealed, are smiling and nodding their heads vigorously. They agree that people who do these wicked things deserve God's wrath. However, no one, apart from Christ, is safe from God's wrath. In this next chapter Paul dashes the hopes of these self-righteous people, proving that all are under condemnation (2:1) and storing up wrath against themselves (2:5).

ROMANS 2:1-29 - GOD'S WRATH TO BE REVEALED

In chapter one, Paul discussed God's wrath that is "being revealed." This wrath can be seen today. In verse five of chapter two, Paul reveals a second type of God's wrath. This wrath is not *being* revealed. It *will be* revealed. It is a wrath reserved for a future date.

But because of your stubbornness and your unrepentant heart, you are storing up wrath against yourself for the day of God's wrath, when his righteous judgment will be revealed. Romans 2:5

This is a more terrible type of wrath than the first type. The first type is a progressive "worsening" of man's condition, however, it is reversible based on repentance and trust in Jesus. However, there is a day coming when God's wrath will be total and irreversible. On this day, he will "give to each person according to what he has done" (2:6). It is a day when God "will judge men's secrets through Jesus Christ" (2:16). What an awful day this will be.

Strange as it may sound, the idea of the eternal judgment is foundational to the good news. As may be seen in the verse below, it is an elementary teaching about Christ.

Therefore let us leave the elementary teachings about Christ and go on to maturity, not laying again the foundation of repentance from acts that lead to death, and of faith in God, instruction about baptisms, the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment. Hebrews 6:1

Jesus commanded his followers to "testify that he is the one whom God appointed as judge of the living and the dead" (Acts 10:42). As a preacher of the gospel, Paul obeyed Jesus' commandment, using the judgment as a tool in his preaching. Acts 24 describes what happened when Paul talked about the judgment with the Gentile governor Felix.

As Paul discoursed on righteousness, self-control and the judgment to come, Felix was afraid and said, "That's enough for now! You may leave. When I find it convenient, I will send for you." Acts 24:25

Governor Felix chose to ignore the rapidly approaching day of his judgment. Many, however, when they hear of the judgment to come react in the opposite way, running to the only one who can save them from receiving the full force of God's wrath - the Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul reveals at least five principles of judgment in this chapter:

First, God's judgment is based on truth (2:2). God, the all-knowing, all-wise God, knows all facts, and these facts will form the basis of the judgment.

Second, God's judgment is based on a person's deeds (2:6). But this doesn't mean simply actions that have been done. "Deeds" also includes inward thoughts and attitudes. According to Matthew 5:28, for instance, just looking at a woman lustfully is enough to condemn a person with the charge of adultery.

There will be trouble and distress for every human being who does evil: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile ... Romans 2:9

Third, there is no favoritism with God (2:11). No one, rich or poor, small or great, Jew or Gentile will receive more favorable treatment.

Fourth, God's judgment is according to the knowledge a person has received (2:12; Matthew 11:20-24). Some may claim that they did not know God's laws, expecting their ignorance to exempt them from God's wrath. But this argument is vain, for, "All who sin apart from the law will also perish apart from the law" (2:12). Beyond this, Paul indicates that God's law is written in the heart of man (2:15). Therefore, there is no escape for those claiming ignorance of God's ways. But those who have God's laws will also face the judgment, for, "All who sin under the law will be judged by the law" (2:12). The judgment for those who have had the law will be stricter than for those who have not heard.

Finally, God's judgment will be through Jesus Christ (2:16). He is the central character in the judgment.

"For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son to have life in himself. And he has given him authority to judge because he is the Son of Man."
John 5:26,27³⁶

The thought of the impending judgment should send people running to God and begging for mercy. The reason is simple. All have sinned. None are righteous. No one may claim exemption from judgment. Any claim of ignorance of God and his ways is clearly vain, for each person has received some light from God. Any claim of exemption based on "righteous" behavior and "perfect" obedience is vain, for those who condemn others in fact do the same things (Romans 2:1). Any claim of exemption based on nationality is vain, for God does not show favoritism (2:11). He looks beyond the outward characteristics to the inward reality of the heart (2:29). The day of God's wrath will truly be terrible. Revelation 20 describes this day in detail.

Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. Earth and sky fled from his presence, and there was no place for them. And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to

WEEK THREE

ROMANS 3

with in the margin. If the verses bring any related Scriptures to mind, please write them in the margin.

ROMANS 3:1-31

What advantage, then, is there in being a Jew, or what value is there in circumcision?
[2] *Much in every way! First of all, they have been entrusted with the very words of God.*
[3] *What if some did not have faith? Will their lack of faith nullify God's faithfulness?*
[4] *Not at all! Let God be true, and every man a liar. As it is written:*

"So that you may be proved right when you speak and prevail when you judge."

[5] *But if our unrighteousness brings out God's righteousness more clearly, what shall we say? That God is unjust in bringing his wrath on us? (I am using a human argument.)*
[6] *Certainly not! If that were so, how could God judge the world?* [7] *Someone might argue, "If my falsehood enhances God's truthfulness and so increases his glory, why am I still condemned as a sinner?"* [8] *Why not say—as we are being slanderously reported as saying and as some claim that we say—"Let us do evil that good may result"?* *Their condemnation is deserved.*

[9] *What shall we conclude then? Are we any better? Not at all! We have already made the charge that Jews and Gentiles alike are all under sin.* [10] *As it is written:*

"There is no one righteous, not even one;

[11] *there is no one who understands,
no one who seeks God.*

[12] *All have turned away,
they have together become worthless;
there is no one who does good,
not even one."*

[13] *"Their throats are open graves;
their tongues practice deceit."*

"The poison of vipers is on their lips."

[14] *"Their mouths are full of cursing and bitterness."*

[15] *"Their feet are swift to shed blood;*

[16] *ruin and misery mark their ways,*

[17] *and the way of peace they do not know."*

[18] *"There is no fear of God before their eyes."*

[19] *Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be silenced and the whole world held accountable to God.* [20] *Therefore no one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of sin.*

[21] *But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify.* [22] *This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference,* [23] *for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,* [24] *and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.* [25] *God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood. He did this to demonstrate his justice, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished—* [26] *he did it to demonstrate his justice at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus.*

[27] *Where, then, is boasting? It is excluded. On what principle? On that of observing the law? No, but on that of faith.* [28] *For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from observing the law.* [29] *Is God the God of Jews only? Is he not the God of Gentiles too? Yes, of Gentiles too,* [30] *since there is only one God, who will justify the*

circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through that same faith. [31] Do we, then, nullify the law by this faith? Not at all! Rather, we uphold the law.

DAY 2

Read *Romans 3:1-8*

Paul begins chapter three by focusing on the Jews. A Jewish reader of the first two chapters may have wondered at Paul’s reasoning to this point. After all, if the Jews were God’s chosen people, yet they, like the Gentiles (who were not God’s chosen people), are under God’s wrath, what is the advantage in being a Jew? This is a good question. What is the answer Paul presents in verse 2?

Why were God’s words given to the Jews? Where were these words supposed to lead the Jews?
Galatians 3:24

Jesus claimed the Jews placed a wrong emphasis on the Scriptures. Why did they study God’s words so diligently? *John 5:39-40*

How could they have used God’s words? *Psalms 78:1-8; Isaiah 42:6-7*

DAY 3

Read *Romans 3:9-20*

What do these verses teach us about the condition of man without Christ?

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ROMANS 3

How is this condemnation of man confirmed in the following passages?

Jeremiah 17:9

Mark 10:17-18

Isaiah 6:9,10

Ephesians 4:18

Isaiah 64:6

Based on the verses you have studied today, how would you answer someone who told you that they hoped to enter heaven because they are a good person?

DAY 4

Read *Romans 3:21-31*

In *Romans 3:21* Paul says that “righteousness” has been made known. Look up the word

“righteous” in a dictionary or Bible dictionary and write the definition below (keep in mind that your dictionary is not inspired and this definition, as well as others you will look up, will not include all that the Bible meant by the word):

Carefully look through verses 21 and 22 and answer the following questions about this righteousness:

Where is this righteousness from? (See also *2 Corinthians 5:21*)

Who is this righteousness for?

How is this righteousness received?

Look up the following verses and focus on the words “faith” and “believe.” How would you summarize the importance of faith for the Christian? *John 3:16-18; Romans 3:23,26; Romans 5:1; Romans 10:9; Galatians 3:5; Ephesians 2:8-9; Hebrews 10:38; Hebrews 11:6*

Why do you believe faith is so important?

Where have you placed your faith?

DAY 5

Look up the word “justify” in a dictionary or Bible dictionary and write the definition below:

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ROMANS 3

Where does this justification come from, and what does it result in? *Romans 3:24; Romans 5:1*

What is the confidence a Christian can have in this justification? *Romans 8:31-34*

Look up the word “redeem” in a dictionary or Bible dictionary and write the definition below:

Who did this redemption come by, and what type of redemption is it? *Hebrews 9:11-12*

Why is this thought so comforting and strengthening for the Christian?

In verse 25 we read that God presented Jesus as a sacrifice of atonement. Look up the word “atonement” in your dictionary or Bible dictionary. What does the word mean? What is this sacrifice designed to do?

Rewrite *Romans 3:23-24* in your own words using the definitions you have looked up.

What do you think verses 25 and 26 mean? How do they relate to you?

DAY 6

Read the study notes for chapter three.

ROMANS 3

Paul began Romans 1 by briefly foreshadowing the glory of the gospel, which is the theme of this great book, then quickly changed courses, using the rest of chapters one and two to prove that Jews and Gentiles alike are under sin and facing the wrath of God both now and, in increased measure, in the future.

It may seem, by following Paul's reasoning to this point, that there is no advantage in being a Jew or in circumcision.

What advantage, then, is there in being a Jew, or what value is there in circumcision? Romans 3:1

The question seems logical. After all, if Jews and Gentiles alike are under God's wrath, and if the outward and physical actions required of the Jews by the law are not enough to bring the Jews out from under this wrath, what advantages did the Jews receive from their association with God?

For Paul, the answer to this question is very simple. There are many advantages in being a Jew.

Much in every way! First of all, they have been entrusted with the very words of God. Romans 3:2

The first and most important advantage is that the Jews have been entrusted with God's words.³⁷ Obviously, the words are only an advantage, however, if they are heeded. These words are to be a "lamp to our feet and a light to our path" (Psalm 119:105). The words should lead a person, not to outward action alone, but to the faith that is always accompanied by works. God's words should lead a person to faith. This is the value of having the words - they should ultimately lead you to Jesus. But did they lead the Jews to Jesus? Tragically, they did not. For the most part, the Jews missed the entire message of the Scriptures.

"You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me, yet you refuse to come to me to have life." John 5:39-40

³⁷ This is the only advantage of being a Jew that Paul lists in this chapter. In Romans 9:4-5 he adds several more advantages to this list.

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ROMANS 3

The Jews claimed to love God's words, yet they refused to see and respond to the true message of the words - the message of Jesus. The words were meant to draw people to Jesus, yet the Jews refused to accept the message of these words.

Notice, in these words recorded in John 5:39-40, Jesus didn't say the Jews were merely ignorant, as if there was a viable excuse for their lack of understanding. Jesus said that the Jews "refuse to come to me". In other words, they willfully chose to disobey the very words they claimed they loved.

Whose fault is this? Jesus clearly placed the blame on the Jews. They refused to come. God's words were given to lead people to Jesus! Scripture is very clear about this.

So the law was put in charge to lead us to Christ that we might be justified by faith. Galatians 3:24

Is it God's fault that the Jews, for the most part,³⁸ never followed those words to the place they logically led? God's words should have led to faith. But what if they didn't? What if some did not have faith? Should their lack of faith somehow be blamed on God? Never!

What if some did not have faith? Will their lack of faith nullify God's faithfulness? Not at all! Let God be true, and every man a liar. Romans 3:3-4

God's requirement has always been faith. It was his requirement in the Old Testament. It is his requirement today. If people do not have faith, this does not somehow nullify his faithfulness. God is always faithful, and the faithlessness of man cannot change God's character. What man's faithlessness does, however, is vindicate God when he judges.

As it is written: "So that you may be proved right when you speak and prevail when you judge." Romans 3:4

The Old Testament verse Paul quotes here is from the Psalm in which David confesses his sin of murder and adultery to God. Here is the verse in its original context.

For I know my transgressions, and my sin is always before me. Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight, so that you are proved right when you speak and justified when you judge. Psalm 51:3-4

Was God somehow blameworthy because David did not keep God's laws? Certainly not. David knew who was at fault. He knew that he had sinned against God and that God was completely just in judging his sins. David's sins proved God "right." In other words, his sins showed God's righteousness very clearly (Romans 3:5).

But if our unrighteous actions actually bring out God's righteousness more clearly,³⁹ can we not argue that we should increase our sin all the more as it enhances God's glory? This was an argument some were apparently using.

Someone might argue, "If my falsehood enhances God's truthfulness and so increases his glory, why am I still condemned as a sinner?" Romans 3:7

Certain people went so far as to claim that Paul actually taught, "Let us do evil that good may abound" (Romans 3:8). This "logic" is so preposterous that Paul doesn't even bother answering it. He merely says, "Their condemnation is deserved" (Romans 3:8).

38 There are many notable exceptions that did understand the words and obey them. Simeon and Anna in Luke 2:25-38 are two examples.

39 God cannot grow in righteousness. He is infinitely righteous. Therefore, our sins do not increase his righteousness. They merely "bring out God's righteousness more clearly."

ROMANS 3:9-20 - THE UNIVERSALITY OF DEPRAVITY

What is the conclusion of all this? Paul's summary of the last chapter and a half is that "Jews and Gentiles alike are all under sin" (Romans 3:9).

In case, however, the magnitude of the sin problem is not quite clear to his hearers, Paul confirms this statement by quoting six different Old Testament passages. These may be the strongest indictments ever spoken against man.

"There is no one righteous, not even one" (verse 10) - No one is right before God. None of us, on our own, pass His inspection. At the very core, in the heart, man is desperately wicked.

The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Jeremiah 17:9

In Mark 10:17 and 18, a conversation is recorded between Jesus and a rich young man. In this conversation Jesus makes a revealing statement about the true condition of the human race.

As Jesus started on his way, a man ran up to him and fell on his knees before him. "Good teacher," he asked, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?" "Why do you call me good?" Jesus answered. "No one is good - except God alone." Mark 10:17-18

Notice the universality of Jesus' observation: "No one is good - except God alone." In this statement, Jesus was not saying that he is not good. He is God therefore he is good. But apart from Jesus, no man is good. This is peculiar, for at the Creation man was called, "very good" (Genesis 1:31). Somehow, between Genesis 1 and Mark 10, man's inner condition changed from "very good" to "no one is good." This change took place when Adam sinned. At the very moment he bit into the forbidden fruit, Adam died spiritually (Genesis 2:17). This sin didn't affect Adam alone. Every person born after Adam inherited the condition of Adam's heart - "deceitful," "beyond cure," "no one is good."

"There is no one who understands, no one seeks God" (verse 11) - For all the supposed brilliance of man, there is a complete lack of understanding about the most important issues of life. He has eyes, but cannot see, and ears but cannot hear (Isaiah 6:9,10). He is darkened in his understanding and ignorant (Ephesians 4:18). Man has no connection to God, and does not even seek his presence. Left on our own none of us would seek after God.⁴⁰ We would live in a state of perpetual ignorance to God and his ways, utterly helpless to change our condition.

"All have turned away, they have together become worthless" (verse 12) - I have a power sprayer in my garage that does not work. There is a hole in the hose, and, because of this, the sprayer does not fulfill the function it was created for. It was created to wash at high pressure. Because of the leak, however, the engine will not run and cannot wash anything. In its present condition, it has absolutely no value to me. In other words, it is worthless. This is exactly how man is described - worthless, unable to fulfill the function he was created for. Notice, the verse says man has "together become" worthless. Man was not *created* worthless - he *became* worthless. And man became worthless *together*. When Adam sinned, *all* sinned.

Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned... Romans 5:12

"There is no one who does good, not even one" (verse 12) - Some might argue that, while man at his core may be wicked, surely there must be some good in him. His "righteous" actions, for instance, must be pleasing to God. The truth, however, is that even these righteous acts are as "filthy rags" before the Lord.

WEEK THREE

ROMANS 3

⁴⁰ If no one seeks God's presence, how do any of us ever find God? We cannot, and we do not. We do not find God. God draws us to himself. "We love because he first loved us." 1 John 4:19; "No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him..." John 6:44. See also the second half of 1 Corinthians 12:3.

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All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags ... Isaiah 64:6

The Hebrew word for filthy rags implies that this is a menstrual cloth being described in this verse. This is a most disturbing analogy, graphically depicting how God views the “righteous” works of man apart from Christ. If all of this leaves you feeling nauseated, you are not alone. Paul is exposing man for what he is - completely wicked, unwilling to seek God, and unable to do any good.

Paul goes on, describing more of man’s actions:

“Their throats are open graves; their tongues practice deceit.” “The poison of vipers is on their lips.” “Their mouths are full of cursing and bitterness.” “Their feet are swift to shed blood; ruin and misery mark their ways, and the way of peace they do not know.” “There is no fear of God before their eyes.”

Romans 3:13-18

Paul may have added several more verses from the Old Testament, but, perhaps mercifully, he stops. He has proved his point. Man is totally wicked and completely separated from the life of God. How can such a man enter the kingdom of God? He obviously cannot expect automatic inclusion in the kingdom, for he is not righteous. In fact, the opposite is true - he is “under sin” (Romans 3:9). He cannot earn his way there, for even his righteous acts are as filthy rags. Based on this evidence, it would appear that man cannot be saved. Indeed, carefully examine Jesus’ words in the following verses.

But Jesus said again, “Children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.” The disciples were even more amazed, and said to each other, “Who then can be saved?” Jesus looked at them and said, “With man this is impossible, but not with God; all things are possible with God.” Mark 10:24-27

This is an astonishing statement. Jesus said that it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God! This comment shocked the disciples. I can just imagine the stunned looks on their faces. “Jesus can’t mean what he just said. After all, if he did, how can anyone be saved?” Jesus’ next comment indicated that, yes, he did mean what he said - “With man this is impossible” (verse 27). Apart from God, man cannot be saved. It is an impossibility.

Some have attempted to soften Jesus’ statement in these verses. I remember hearing a sermon in which the pastor explained this passage by describing how camels entering the city of Jerusalem were forced to crawl through the “Needle’s Eye,” which was, supposedly, a very low gate in the city’s walls. The pastor’s point was that salvation was difficult to obtain, but, like the camel crawling through the gate, it could be won by great effort and perseverance. The problem with this interpretation is that it is wrong.

It is often said that there was a gate in Jerusalem known as the “Needle’s Eye,” which camels could go through only by kneeling, and with great difficulty. The point of this “interpretation” is that a camel could in fact go through the “Needle’s Eye.” The trouble with this “exegesis,” however, is that it is simply not true. There never was such a gate in Jerusalem at any time in its history. The

earliest known “evidence” for that idea is found in the eleventh century (!), in a commentary by a Greek churchman named Theophylact, who had the same difficulty with the text that we do. After all, it is impossible for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, and that was precisely Jesus’ point.⁴¹

Jesus meant what he said. Man gaining salvation is as impossible as a camel going through the eye of a needle. However, while salvation is impossible for man, it is not for God. All things, even the salvation of man, are possible with God. He, then, is our only hope. We are in need of a miracle from God.

ROMANS 3:21-31 - THE MIRACLE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

Paul introduces this miracle with the first two words of verse 21: “But now”. After presenting the bad news of man’s condition before God for the majority of the last chapter and a half, Paul turns the corner with these two little words which should bring great relief to anyone reading or listening to the letter: “But now”.

Just listen to the good news described in verses 21 through 25.

But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood. Romans 3:21-25

This is your salvation - the very greatest truth a man could ever learn! Before I continue you need to know what happened between the time I wrote this last sentence and now. Just minutes ago, as I was writing this, on June 11, 2003 at 2:30 pm, a young man entered my office and I explained these very truths to him. This young man gave his life to Jesus! It is as if God underlined, in bright red marker, the truths we are studying here. There is power in the gospel. I cannot state this strongly enough. “[I]t is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes” (Romans 1:16). Praise God for the salvation found only in Jesus!

If we are to grasp the ramifications of these verses, we need to understand the words found within them. This passage includes eight of the most important words a Christian can know: righteousness, faith, glory, justification, grace, redemption, atonement and blood. Let’s look at these words one at a time. Let the definitions sink into your heart. A proper understanding of these words will change your life!

1. RIGHTEOUSNESS - This is a word that can be difficult for our minds to grasp, not because the meaning is obscured, but because our minds, which are often coated by years of non-Biblical thinking, have a hard time grasping the truth here. Carefully read Paul’s words in verses 21 and 22.

But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. Romans 3:21,22

Righteousness is “the character or quality of being right or just”.⁴² In other words, righteousness is perfect conformity to God’s will. Keep in mind, Paul has just gone to great lengths to prove that no one is righteous (verse 10), but here, just 11 verses further, he says that, “righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe.” The righteousness

⁴¹ Fee, Stuart, *How to Read the Bible for All its Worth*, p. 21.

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he is discussing is *from God*, meaning it is not from man. It *comes to* all who believe. This righteousness doesn't start with you; it comes to you. God gives righteousness to all who believe in Jesus Christ. This is not a "grade B" type of righteousness being discussed here. It is the very righteousness of God.

God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. 2 Corinthians 5:21

It is critical to understand that this righteousness is not earned. Indeed, it cannot be earned. After all, how can righteousness be attained when wickedness is the starting place? How can truth spring from error? Can a can of red paint ever have enough white mixed into it to be made truly white? As Jesus said, "a bad tree cannot bear good fruit."⁴³ Righteousness can only spring from rightness. God is the only one who is right. Therefore, righteousness can only come from God. And God gives righteousness to all who believe in Jesus Christ. If you are a Christian, you are righteous. It is your very nature. Say it aloud, let this truth sink into your heart: "Because of Jesus, I am righteous!"

2. FAITH - Notice how this righteousness comes: through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. Faith means, "firm persuasion."⁴⁴ This firm persuasion is to be in the living person of Jesus Christ. But the New Testament meaning of faith includes much more than just firm "mental" persuasion. True faith goes far deeper than that. It goes to the heart.

The main elements in "faith" ... are (1) a firm conviction, producing a full acknowledgement of God's revelation or truth e.g., 2 Thess. 2:11-12; (2) a personal surrender to Him, John 1:12; (3) a conduct inspired by such surrender, 2 Cor. 5:7.⁴⁵

To be real, this firm persuasion includes total surrender, which will necessarily affect your conduct. If I firmly believe a fire is going to destroy my house, I will drop everything I am doing and I will act! I will make sure my family is safe. This sort of faith holds nothing in reserve. True faith is absolute trust in Jesus and abandonment to his will. The importance of faith cannot be overstated. "[W]ithout faith it is impossible to please God" (Hebrews 11:6). Our faith is not in a concept. It is in Jesus. Carefully look at the words in the verse below.

"We who are Jews by birth and not 'Gentile sinners' know that a man is not justified by observing the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by observing the law, because by observing the law no one will be justified."
Galatians 2:15-16

Our faith must be placed in Jesus Christ. Where is your firm persuasion? To whom have you surrendered? Who is inspiring your conduct? If the answer to these questions is not Jesus, you will surely fall.

3. GLORY - In Romans 3:23, Paul indicates that our sin has caused us to fall short of God's glory. Glory encompasses God's nature and attributes - his love, goodness, holiness, purity, power, beauty, honor, distinction and righteousness. Wherever God is, there you will find his glory. The glory of God is so weighty it can be felt. Many saints have seen and felt this glory, at least in a measure. D.L. Moody, the 19th century American evangelist, had just such an encounter with the Lord one day while he was walking the streets of New York.

"Ah, what a day! - I cannot describe it, I seldom refer to it, it is almost too sacred an experience to name - Paul had an experience of which he never spoke for fourteen years - I can only say God revealed Himself to me, and I had such an experience of His love that I had to ask Him to stay His hand."⁴⁶

42 Vine, Unger, White Jr., *Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*, p. 535.

43 Matthew 7:18

44 Vine, Unger, White Jr., *Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*, p. 222.

45 Vine, Unger, White Jr., *Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*, p. 222.

We were created for God's glory (Isaiah 43:7). In the same way that you desire people to know the real you, God desires us to know the real God, in all his glory! He wants us to see him and know him as he really is.

Unfortunately, sin has caused man to fall short of this glory. I believe this is part of the emptiness man feels. We were created for much more than we have ever known. Like a race horse that has spent its entire life in a stable, never allowed to experience the thrill of running free and testing the limits of his legs and lungs, we were created to be revelers in and partakers of God's glory; yet sin has closed the door, keeping us from the very thing we were created for.

I want to know this glory and experience it and live in it. Moses had this same desire. He asked to see God's glory, yet he was only allowed to see God's back, for, as God explained in Exodus 33:20, "... you cannot see my face, for no one may see me and live." This experience alone, while it was only a partial viewing of God's glory, was enough to make Moses' face glow and frighten the Israelites! Imagine what it will be like when we see God's face! The wonder of Romans 3:23 is that if sin is what causes us to fall short of the glory of God, then righteousness must be what causes us to be restored to a position where we can see and know his glory, albeit only in part here on earth, but at the coming of the Lord Jesus, we will know him fully! What a day that will be!

4. JUSTIFICATION - In verse 24, Paul indicates that those who believe are "justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus." This word means "the legal and formal acquittal from guilt by God as Judge, the pronouncement of the sinner as righteous, who believes on the Lord Jesus Christ."⁴⁷ It is important to notice that justification is much more than just being declared not guilty. Justification is also the declaration, by God himself, that you are righteous! Think about this! God has examined you and declared you righteous in his eyes. If God is for you, who can be against you (Romans 8:31)?

It is God who justifies. Who is it that condemns? Romans 8:33,34

5. GRACE - Grace describes the "friendly disposition"⁴⁸ behind God's giving. God delights in blessing for he is the "compassionate and gracious God" (Exodus 34:6). He gives with joy, liberality, and favor. The ideas of debt, works and repayment are totally foreign to the idea of grace. As Ephesians 2:8 says, "For it is by grace you have been saved". Praise God for his grace. If this were not his disposition, none could be saved.

6. REDEMPTION - In ancient times, slaves were often freed from their owners by the payment of a ransom. In the same way, our Redeemer, the Lord Jesus Christ, paid a heavy ransom to free us from our bondage to sin and death. Let the weight of this thought sink into your heart. Your justification did not come cheaply. Someone needed to pay a ransom to free you. If no one came to pay the ransom, you would remain a slave. That someone was Jesus. He died to set you free. The purchase price he paid will not be paid again. Those who have been set free are free forever, for the ransom Jesus paid obtained eternal redemption for you.

He did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves; but he entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood, having obtained eternal redemption. Hebrews 9:12

7. ATONEMENT - Jesus' death paid the price for your sins because it was a sacrifice of atonement (NIV). Other Bible versions may use the word propitiation (KJV, NAS, ESV). The idea of a "sacrifice of atonement" and a "propitiation" is the same: "The act by which God restores a relationship of harmony and unity between Himself and human beings."⁴⁹

⁴⁶ Lyle W. Dorsett, *A Passion for Souls - The Life of D.L. Moody* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1997), p. 156.

⁴⁷ Vine, Unger, White Jr., *Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*, p. 339.

⁴⁸ Vine, Unger, White Jr., *Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*, p. 277.

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We must remember that God does not need to be reconciled to man. It was not his desire or any action on his part that caused separation. Man sinned against God. The enmity exists on our part. God is just. He cannot simply ignore or cover over the penalty for sin. God's justice would not have been satisfied if he simply erased the penalty for sin. The price for sin needed to be paid, and it needed to be paid by a man, as man was the guilty party.

For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. 1 Corinthians 15:21

For this reason, God himself, in the person of the Lord Jesus, was born a man, so that he might become that "sacrifice of atonement."

We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all. Isaiah 53:6

The iniquities "of us all" were laid on Jesus. Therefore, his death and resurrection established "grounds for reconciliation"⁵⁰ for all who will accept what he has done through faith in his blood.

8. BLOOD - The final word we will look at is blood. It is strange to think that blood, something we normally recoil from, actually was the "currency" that purchased our freedom. But blood and forgiveness go hand in hand.

For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect. He was chosen before the creation of the world, but was revealed in these last times for your sake. 1 Peter 1:18-20

... without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness. Hebrews 9:22

Jesus' blood, unlike the sacrifices required by God in the Old Testament, is not a temporary solution. It is not a bandage that hides a gaping wound. His blood doesn't merely "cover" our sins; it totally washes them away!

"Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool." Isaiah 1:18

And this is not a temporary solution. Jesus' blood will never lose its power. Jesus obtained eternal redemption for us! We were redeemed, not by the perishable, but by the imperishable blood of Jesus! If God is eternally satisfied with this sacrifice, who are we to question its efficacy? If he washed your sins and guilt away by the blood of Jesus, why hold on to them any longer?

The Christian has eternal redemption by the blood of Jesus! What a glorious thought! Just think what awaits us in heaven!

To him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy ... Jude 1:24

If you have confessed Jesus as your Lord, say this verse aloud, for the reality of it must sink in. "I will be presented before God's glorious presence without fault and with great joy!" What a day that will be!

⁴⁹ Jack W. Hayford, *Hayford's Bible Handbook* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1995), p. 549.

⁵⁰ Hayford, *Hayford's Bible Handbook*, p. 737.

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you with in the margin. If the verses bring any related Scriptures to mind, please write them in the margin.

ROMANS 4:1-25

What then shall we say that Abraham, our forefather, discovered in this matter? [2] If, in fact, Abraham was justified by works, he had something to boast about—but not before God. [3] What does the Scripture say? “Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.”

[4] Now when a man works, his wages are not credited to him as a gift, but as an obligation. [5] However, to the man who does not work but trusts God who justifies the wicked, his faith is credited as righteousness. [6] David says the same thing when he speaks of the blessedness of the man to whom God credits righteousness apart from works:

*[7] “Blessed are they
whose transgressions are forgiven,
whose sins are covered.*

*[8] Blessed is the man
whose sin the Lord will never count against him.”*

[9] Is this blessedness only for the circumcised, or also for the uncircumcised? We have been saying that Abraham’s faith was credited to him as righteousness. [10] Under what circumstances was it credited? Was it after he was circumcised, or before? It was not after, but before! [11] And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised. So then, he is the father of all who believe but have not been circumcised, in order that righteousness might be credited to them. [12] And he is also the father of the circumcised who not only are circumcised but who also walk in the footsteps of the faith that our father Abraham had before he was circumcised.

[13] It was not through law that Abraham and his offspring received the promise that he would be heir of the world, but through the righteousness that comes by faith. [14] For if those who live by law are heirs, faith has no value and the promise is worthless, [15] because law brings wrath. And where there is no law there is no transgression.

[16] Therefore, the promise comes by faith, so that it may be by grace and may be guaranteed to all Abraham’s offspring—not only to those who are of the law but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham. He is the father of us all. [17] As it is written: “I have made you a father of many nations.” He is our father in the sight of God, in whom he believed—the God who gives life to the dead and calls things that are not as though they were.

[18] Against all hope, Abraham in hope believed and so became the father of many nations, just as it had been said to him, “So shall your offspring be.” [19] Without weakening in his faith, he faced the fact that his body was as good as dead—since he was about a hundred years old—and that Sarah’s womb was also dead. [20] Yet he did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God, [21] being fully persuaded that God had power to do what he had promised. [22] This is why “it was credited to him as righteousness.” [23] The words “it was credited to him” were written not for him alone, [24] but also for us, to whom God will credit righteousness—for us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead. [25] He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification.

DAY 2

Read Romans 4

Abraham is the predominant character in this chapter. According to the following verses, what

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importance did the Jews place on Abraham and how did they describe their relationship to him?
Matthew 3:7-10; Luke 1:46-55; Luke 1:67-79; Luke 13:10-17; Luke 19:1-9; John 8:39-58

How does Paul use the Jews' love and respect for Abraham to his advantage in this chapter?

In *Romans 4:3*, Paul quotes from *Genesis 15:1-6*, which records a conversation between Abraham (then known as Abram) and God. How would you summarize this conversation?

What similarities do you see between Abraham's faith and the faith required of the Christian today?

DAY 3

Read *Romans 4:1-8*

What are the main differences between a wage and a gift? Why is the distinction between

the two important when it comes to the topic of justification?

Verse three says that “Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.” The word credited is an accounting term. Use a dictionary to look up the word “credit” and write out the “accounting” definition of this word below.

How many times do you see that word, or a word implying the same thing, in this chapter? In what context do you see the word used?

According to verse five, what *is credited* to the one who believes? According to verse eight, what *is not counted* against the one who believes?

Review the definition of *Justification* from the Romans 3 notes. How does that definition fit with your answer from the previous question?

DAY 4

Read *Romans 4:9-12*

In this section, Paul addresses the subject of circumcision and its relation to justification. This

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was a subject Paul was forced to deal with frequently. Read *Acts 15:1-21* and summarize the controversy surrounding circumcision.

Why do you think it was difficult for the Jewish Christians to accept the fact that those who were not circumcised were saved? *Genesis 17:14*

How does Paul prove that circumcision did not save Abraham?

What are the “circumcision issues” today - that is, the things that people are trusting in for their salvation rather than God’s grace alone? Did you have anything like this in your life? Do you now? Why are these supposed “methods of salvation” so hard to let go?

DAY 5

Read *Romans 4:13-25*

In verses nine through 12, Paul discusses circumcision. In this section, he brings up another thing

that people often trust in for their salvation. What is it?

Based on what we have studied in Romans thus far, why can no one be justified by keeping the law?

What does the attempted keeping of the law result in? *Romans 2:12; Galatians 3:10*

False teachers infiltrated the church in Galatia, a church that Paul planted, and persuaded the people there that their salvation must be based on the keeping of the law. Paul's letter to the Galatians addresses this issue. What was his response to those who had abandoned grace and were instead relying on the law? *Galatians 1:6-9; Galatians 3:1-14*

In *Romans 4:13-15*, how does Paul prove that Abraham was not saved by works?

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In verses 18-21, Paul recounts the story of Abraham's faith. Describe the circumstances surrounding Abraham's belief in God's promise.

Abraham had many potential excuses for doubting, yet he believed. Do you think anyone has a legitimate excuse before God that would excuse his or her refusal to believe? Why or why not?

Romans 4 is perfectly summarized in *Ephesians 2:8* and *9*. Please write this verse in the space below, and if you have not already done so, memorize it word for word.

DAY 6

Read the study notes for chapter four.

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Many things changed in Paul's life when he became a Christian. One of the most dramatic would have been the way he read and understood Scripture. I can imagine Paul eagerly rereading the Scriptures after his encounter with Jesus on the road to Damascus. After Paul's conversion, he "did not consult any man ... but ... went immediately into Arabia and later returned to Damascus" (Galatians 1:16, 17). Paul's time in Arabia almost certainly included a great deal of time studying the Scriptures. His "born again" eyes would have seen things he had never seen before. His now righteous heart would have soared at the truths that he had somehow always missed. The Law, the Prophets and the Psalms, all three portions of the Old Testament, would have new, far deeper meanings attached to them.

This new knowledge was not for Paul alone. God was equipping Paul with a most effective tool for his ministry toolbox. Paul frequently relied on the Old Testament Scriptures (remember, there was no New Testament at this time) to prove foundational truths of the gospel.⁵¹ This was extremely important in his preaching to the Jews.

As we consider Romans 4, for a moment, put yourself in the first century Jew's place. All your life, you have been taught certain truths. These truths are deeply ingrained. Change does not come easily for you. So even though Paul's arguments in the first three chapters make sense, something is holding you back from totally committing to Paul's way of thinking. That something is your past. Paul is teaching something new, it seems.⁵² But your beliefs have been forged by over 2,000 years of Jewish history.

If Paul is to convince you that what he is saying is true, he will be greatly helped by proving his point through the same history that you rely on. Can this be done? Can Paul prove that we are declared righteous by faith alone by appealing to the Old Testament? This is exactly what he sets out to do in Romans 4. And to prove his point, Paul turns to the one name that carried more weight than all others for the Jews - Abraham.

The Jews treasured their title as "sons of Abraham" (Luke 3:8). By the time of this letter, the Jews had carried their pride in Abraham to unbiblical lengths, viewing him as a savior of sorts. In the minds of many Jews, their relationship to Abraham guaranteed their entrance into the kingdom of God.

He was constantly invoked as though he could hear the prayers of his descendants, wherever they were; and he was pictured standing at the gate of paradise to receive and embrace his children as they entered, and the whole family of his faithful descendants was gathered to his arms.⁵³

Misguided though they may have been, Paul used the Jew's great respect for Abraham to his advantage, proving that justification, even for one as great as Abraham, is not by works, but only by faith.

If Abraham, a man so famous for works, so eminent in holiness and obedience, was nevertheless justified by faith only, and not by those works, how much less can any other, especially any of those that spring from him, and come so far short of him in works, set up for a justification by their own works?⁵⁴

ROMANS 4:1-8 - JUSTIFICATION ... NOT BY WORKS

Paul begins Romans 4 by asking the reader what Abraham discovered in the matter of justification. In answer to his own question, Paul recounts a portion of a conversation between Abraham and God that is recorded in Genesis 15. In order that we might have a little more background than Paul

51 See Acts 17:2-3 and 1 Corinthians 15:3-4.

52 The teaching, of course, is not new. The gospel is eternal (Revelation 14:6).

53 Merrill F. Unger, *The New Unger's Bible Dictionary* (Chicago: Moody, 1988), p. 16.

54 Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2001), p. 2201.

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gave his readers, I have included the entire conversation here.

After this, the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision:

“Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your very great reward.”

But Abram said, “O Sovereign LORD, what can you give me since I remain childless and the one who will inherit my estate is Eliezer of Damascus?” And Abram said, “You have given me no children; so a servant in my household will be my heir.”

Then the word of the LORD came to him: “This man will not be your heir, but a son coming from your own body will be your heir.” He took him outside and said, “Look up at the heavens and count the stars - if indeed you can count them.” Then he said to him, “So shall your offspring be.”

*Abram believed the LORD, and he credited it to him as righteousness.
Genesis 15:1-6*

Read the last verse again, for this is the verse Paul focuses his attention on in Romans 4. He uses this verse to prove that Abraham’s righteousness was given to him, not because of Abraham’s works, as the Jews believed, but through faith.

At the time of this conversation, Abraham did not have any children. God had already promised him that he would make him into a great nation (Genesis 12:2), and, through him, bless all peoples on earth (Genesis 12:3). This promise had been further expanded in Genesis 13.

The LORD said to Abram after Lot had parted from him, “Lift up your eyes from where you are and look north and south, east and west. All the land that you see I will give to you and your offspring forever. I will make your offspring like the dust of the earth, so that if anyone could count the dust, then your offspring could be counted. Go, walk through the length and breadth of the land, for I am giving it to you.” Genesis 13:14-17

Notice, God had promised that he would make Abraham’s offspring like “the dust of the earth.” This is truly a magnificent promise. However, years passed and Abraham still had no children. How could these promises of many children come to pass without any children? At the time of this conversation, Abraham’s heir was a slave. Did God intend to fulfill these promises through this slave, who wasn’t even physically related to Abraham?

No, God did not intend to fulfill these promises through Eliezer of Damascus. “This man will not be your heir, but a son coming from your own body will be your heir.” Abraham was an old man. The thought of a son from his body was certainly a miracle by itself. But God didn’t stop with a little miracle. He directed Abraham’s gaze to the heavens. “Look up at the heavens and count the stars - if indeed you can count them. So shall your offspring be.” Abraham turned his eyes heavenward. The night sky was filled with stars. What went through Abraham’s mind as he stared at the stars? Did he start counting? How long did he stare before he trusted in God’s word? Abraham knew he couldn’t produce this miracle. After all, he couldn’t even produce one child. And yet, as he stared at the stars, Abraham “believed the LORD”. Peace flooded his soul. He knew the promise was true. He trusted in God alone to bring his promise to pass, and God “credited it to him as righteousness.”

Notice the similarities between Abraham’s faith and that which is required of people who would come to God today. Abraham’s righteousness came by faith. Our righteousness comes by faith. He trusted in God’s word in the same way that we must trust in God’s word. The connection between our faith and Abraham’s does not stop here, for we must consider the focus of Abraham’s belief.

Abraham trusted in the promised “offspring,” we, too, must trust in the promised offspring.

The nature of Abraham’s faith was essentially the same as that of the NT believer despite the difference in time. (Abraham looked forward to something God would do, whereas the Christian looks back to what God has provided in Christ.) Can we go further and say that the object of faith is the same, implicit in the promise to Abraham, explicit in the gospel?⁵⁵

Abraham’s trust was in God and his divine promise of “offspring,” or, as it is worded in other translations, “seed.” Notice, this word is singular, not plural. Who is this singular seed? Galatians makes it clear that this seed is none other than Jesus!

The promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. The Scripture does not say “and to seeds,” meaning many people, but “and to your seed,” meaning one person, who is Christ. Galatians 3:16

Abraham’s faith was in the coming of Jesus! Some may ask, “Did Abraham really recognize the coming of Jesus? After all, the coming of Jesus was more than 2,000 years in the future.” He absolutely did. Jesus himself made this clear in a conversation with the Jews.

“Your father Abraham rejoiced at the thought of seeing my day; he saw it and was glad.” John 8:56

In the same way that we look back to the cross and place our faith in the finished work of Christ, Abraham looked forward, placing his faith in the coming work of Christ. This faith was credited to Abraham as righteousness.

It has been said of Abraham that he “believed” ... and God added it up to him for “righteousness” That faith was a full inward surrender to the Lord; it was a trust in the divine promise which was later repeated to the other patriarchs and to David, Solomon, and their line. The divine promise was the object and content of their faith.⁵⁵

Abraham did not work to attain this righteousness. God was in no way obligated to grant him righteousness. He trusted God and his faith was credited as righteousness.

Not content with simply proving his point through the life of one man, Paul turns his attention to another Jewish hero, King David. According to Paul, David knew this same truth that Abraham had discovered - that righteousness is credited to man apart from works. In fact, David wrote about this in Psalm 32, which Paul quotes from in Romans 4.

*“Blessed are they whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man whose sin the Lord will never count against him.”
Romans 4:7-8*

At first glance, it is difficult to find exactly where David speaks of righteousness apart from works, for the words “righteousness” and “works” never appear in these verses. What does appear is the Greek word “logizomai,” which is translated “count” in Romans 4:8. The word also appears in Romans 4:3, where it is translated “credited.” This Greek word is a precise bookkeeping term.⁵⁷ It is used when an amount is credited to an account. This word is extremely critical to our understanding of righteousness, and appears in verses 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11, 22, 23 and 24.

Altogether, logizomai occurs 11 times in this one chapter alone. In fact, almost half (19 of 41) of its occurrences in the NT are in the Book of Romans. This accords with the central theme of Romans, justification by faith. The Greek word is used only 6 times in the NT outside of Paul’s Epistles. He is the theologian

55 Everett F. Harrison, *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Volume 10, Romans* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976), p. 48.

56 Unger, *The New Unger’s Bible Dictionary*, p. 212.

57 Ralph Earle, *Word Meanings in the New Testament* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1986), p. 157.

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who is particularly concerned with the forensic aspect of redemption.⁵⁸

Bookkeepers do not work with abstract ideas. They work with realities. They are required to be totally accurate. There must be no mistake in their computations. God is the keeper of the “heavenly books.” He, too, doesn’t deal with abstract ideas or pretend numbers. He works with realities. And the reality is that when a person believes God, God *does not* credit that person with sin, and *does* credit that person with righteousness.

In Romans 4:3, righteousness was *credited* to Abraham. That is, in Abraham’s “ledger book,” he was credited as righteous. Abraham did not make this deposit of righteousness himself. Works had nothing to do with it. Abraham’s faith was credited to him as righteousness. However, even though Abraham did not earn this righteousness, it was, and still is,⁵⁹ nonetheless real, for God himself is the one who credited righteousness to Abraham’s account.

In Romans 4:8, the word is used in a slightly different context. Here, David describes the blessedness of a man “whose sin the Lord will never count against him.” Notice, sin is never counted against this man. This is not a “deposit” into his “ledger book,” but it is not a withdrawal, either. God simply washes away his sin. It is as if it never existed. In this blessed man’s “ledger book” there is no entry of sin.

Is any of this starting to sound familiar? It should, for this is the meaning of the word *justification*, which we examined in our notes on Romans 3. Remember, justification means “the legal and formal acquittal from guilt by God as Judge, the pronouncement of the sinner as righteous, who believes on the Lord Jesus Christ.”⁶⁰ Justification is twofold: it is the declaration, by God himself, that you are not guilty (Romans 4:8), and the declaration, by God himself, that you are righteous (Romans 4:3)!

These realities in the life of the Christian are so real that God describes them in bookkeeping terms! Aren’t you glad your righteousness is not an abstract “concept,” where one day you are considered righteous, and the next you’re guilty? Praise God for his heavenly accounting! As verse eight says, “Blessed is the man whose sin the Lord will never count against him.” We should be happy indeed!

ROMANS 4:9-12 - JUSTIFICATION ... NOT BY CIRCUMCISION

Now that Paul has proved that man is not justified by works, he moves on to the subject of circumcision.

Is this blessedness only for the circumcised, or also for the uncircumcised? We have been saying that Abraham’s faith was credited to him as righteousness. Under what circumstances was it credited? Was it after he was circumcised, or before? It was not after, but before! And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised. So then, he is the father of all who believe but have not been circumcised, in order that righteousness might be credited to them. And he is also the father of the circumcised who not only are circumcised but who also walk in the footsteps of the faith that our father Abraham had before he was circumcised. Romans 4:9-12

⁵⁸ Earle, *Word Meanings in the New Testament*, p. 157.

⁵⁹ Because of this righteousness, Abraham is alive and well in heaven today. See Matthew 22:31,32.

⁶⁰ Vine, Unger, White Jr., *Vine’s Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*, p. 339.

Circumcision was a topic that brought great division to the early church. In fact, at one point, a council of apostles and elders in Jerusalem met to consider the question of whether Gentiles must be circumcised in order to receive salvation. At this council, the “pro-circumcision” Christians stated their case plainly.

Then some of the believers who belonged to the party of the Pharisees stood up and said, "The Gentiles must be circumcised and required to obey the law of Moses." Acts 15:5

It is not hard to understand why some of these early Christians would require new Gentile converts to be circumcised. After all, the Jews had been taught that circumcision is essential to walking in God's covenant. The Jew who was uncircumcised would be "cut off from his people" as a covenant-breaker.

"Any uncircumcised male, who has not been circumcised in the flesh, will be cut off from his people; he has broken my covenant." Genesis 17:14

This council meeting was not a short one. People felt strongly about their opinions. "After much discussion" (Acts 15:7), Peter addressed the people. Notice how he answered the question as to the necessity of circumcision.

"Brothers, you know that some time ago God made a choice among you that the Gentiles might hear from my lips the message of the gospel and believe. God, who knows the heart, showed that he accepted them by giving the Holy Spirit to them, just as he did to us. He made no distinction between us and them, for he purified their hearts by faith. Now then, why do you try to test God by putting on the necks of the disciples a yoke that neither we nor our fathers have been able to bear? No! We believe it is through the grace of our Lord Jesus that we are saved, just as they are." Acts 15:7-11

Read Peter's last statement again, for it is the very heart of the gospel. "It is through the grace of our Lord Jesus that we are saved". The apostle Paul was one of those in attendance at that council meeting. Peter's words must have filled his heart with joy. I am so glad the early believers fought for these foundational truths.

The "fight" over circumcision wasn't settled in one meeting. The truth of the matter has always been settled, but men are constantly looking to add works to the gospel. Paul fought this way of thinking vigorously everywhere he went.

In this chapter, Paul proves that circumcision was not a prerequisite to righteousness by looking at the timing of Abraham's justification in correlation to that of his circumcision. Which came first, justification or circumcision?

Under what circumstances was it credited? Was it after he was circumcised, or before? It was not after, but before! Romans 4:10

We read about Abraham's righteousness being credited to him in Genesis 15:6. The fact of Abraham's circumcision was not recorded until Genesis 17:23-24, at least 14 years after he was credited with righteousness. This proves that Abraham was made righteous without circumcision. Let me say it a different way. Circumcision had absolutely nothing to do with his receiving of righteousness.

ROMANS 4:13-17 - JUSTIFICATION ... NOT BY LAW

But what about the law - did the keeping of God's law have anything to do with the receiving of the promise in Genesis 15? No, this too stands in opposition to God's grace.

WEEK FOUR

ROMANS 4

*It was not through law that Abraham and his offspring received the promise that he would be heir of the world, but through the righteousness that comes by faith.
Romans 4:13*

If God's promise to Abraham and his offspring were conditioned on Abraham's keeping of the law, it could never have come to pass. The law leads to judgment and wrath, for "all who sin under the law will be judged by the law" (Romans 2:12). Man cannot keep the law. Paul has already proved this in Romans 3. Beyond this, if God's desire was to bless Abraham, but his *requirement* for the blessing was obedience to his laws, which inevitably leads to wrath, God's grace would be short-circuited by God's judgment.

Fortunately, Abraham did not receive this promise by keeping the law, but through the righteousness that comes by faith.

*Therefore, the promise comes by faith, so that it may be by grace and may be guaranteed to all Abraham's offspring - not only to those who are of the law but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham. He is the father of us all.
Romans 4:16*

Praise God for his grace! The receiving of his promise is not based on works, but on faith, that it may be "guaranteed to all Abraham's offspring". If I am one of Abraham's offspring, then the promise is *guaranteed* to me. Who are Abraham's offspring? "Those who are of the faith of Abraham" (Romans 4:16).

Consider Abraham: "He believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness." Understand, then, that those who believe are children of Abraham. The Scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, and announced the gospel in advance to Abraham: "All nations will be blessed through you." So those who have faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith. Galatians 3:6-9

In terms of your justification, works count for nothing. Think about this in regards to religion, as you have known it. Think about conversations you have had with friends and even pastors. Think about things you may have said or thought yourself. Can you see how easy it is to try to "earn" our justification? The Jews relied on their relationship with Abraham. That, they thought, was enough to guarantee their justification. The Jews relied on their circumcision. They believed it earned their justification. They relied on their adherence to the law. They believed that, too, earned their justification. Today, many rely on baptism, confirmation, church attendance or good works to "earn" their justification. None of these have any value. Justification is by God's grace alone. Paul summarizes this quite nicely in his letter to the church in Galatia.

For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any value. The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love. Galatians 5:6

ROMANS 4:18-25 - JUSTIFICATION ... BY FAITH ALONE

In verses 18 through 22 we find a description of Abraham's faith. What an incredible man of faith he was.

Against all hope, Abraham in hope believed and so became the father of many nations, just as it had been said to him, “So shall your offspring be.” Without weakening in his faith, he faced the fact that his body was as good as dead—since he was about a hundred years old—and that Sarah’s womb was also dead. Yet he did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God, being fully persuaded that God had power to do what he had promised. This is why “it was credited to him as righteousness.” Romans 4:18-22

Abraham had no reason to hope. He knew he could no longer produce children. He was almost 100 years old! Sarah herself gave him no reason to hope. Her womb was also dead. She had gone through menopause. Abraham did not ignore these facts. He did not pretend they did not exist. But he did not put his trust in these facts, either. He put his trust in the promise of God, *for God’s promises override earthly realities*. He “gives life to the dead and calls things that are not as though they were” (Romans 4:17).

Abraham wasn’t double minded. He was firmly convinced that God’s word would come to pass. He was “fully persuaded that God had power to do what he had promised. This is why ‘it was credited to him as righteousness’” (Romans 4:21,22).

These words were not just written for Abraham. They were also written for us. God will credit righteousness to all who “believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead” (Romans 4:24).

In verse 25, Paul once more goes over the foundations of Christianity.

He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification. Romans 4:25

Never forget the price that was paid for your salvation. It cost the Father dearly. His only Son was killed, and it was the Father’s will that this would happen. It cost the Son dearly. The perfect sinless one was oppressed and afflicted. All the world’s sins were laid on him. He suffered for the entire world. What a tragedy. What a triumph.

I pray Paul’s words here have given you a deeper understanding of the salvation we have in Jesus Christ.

For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith - and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God - not by works, so that no one can boast. Ephesians 2:8-9

I leave you with the heartrending yet glorious words of Isaiah 53. Isaiah wrote these words more than 500 years before the death and resurrection of Jesus, yet each word was precisely fulfilled. Even if you have read these verses before, read them again - slowly. Meditate on each phrase. This is your salvation.

But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed. We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth. By oppression and judgment he was taken away. And who can speak of his descendants? For he was cut off from the land of the living; for the

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ROMANS 4

transgression of my people he was stricken. He was assigned a grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death, though he had done no violence, nor was any deceit in his mouth.

Yet it was the LORD's will to crush him and cause him to suffer, and though the LORD makes his life a guilt offering, he will see his offspring and prolong his days, and the will of the LORD will prosper in his hand. After the suffering of his soul, he will see the light of life and be satisfied; by his knowledge my righteous servant will justify many, and he will bear their iniquities. Therefore I will give him a portion among the great, and he will divide the spoils with the strong, because he poured out his life unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors. For he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors. Isaiah 53:5-12

DAY 6 (CONTINUED)

This week, the Holy Spirit has taught me ...

Lined writing area for notes.

DAY 1

Read *Romans 5* through twice. The first time through the chapter, simply read the text. Do not write any notes regarding the chapter at this time. The second time through the chapter, circle or underline key words or phrases and write down any questions or thoughts the chapter leaves

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ROMANS 5

you with in the margin. If the verses bring any related Scriptures to mind, please write them in the margin.

ROMANS 5:1-21

Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, [2] through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. [3] Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; [4] perseverance, character; and character, hope. [5] And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us.

[6] You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. [7] Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die. [8] But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

[9] Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him! [10] For if, when we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life! [11] Not only is this so, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

[12] Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned— [13] for before the law was given, sin was in the world. But sin is not taken into account when there is no law. [14] Nevertheless, death reigned from the time of Adam to the time of Moses, even over those who did not sin by breaking a command, as did Adam, who was a pattern of the one to come.

[15] But the gift is not like the trespass. For if the many died by the trespass of the one man, how much more did God's grace and the gift that came by the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, overflow to the many! [16] Again, the gift of God is not like the result of the one man's sin: The judgment followed one sin and brought condemnation, but the gift followed many trespasses and brought justification. [17] For if, by the trespass of the one man, death reigned through that one man, how much more will those who receive God's abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ.

[18] Consequently, just as the result of one trespass was condemnation for all men, so also the result of one act of righteousness was justification that brings life for all men.

[19] For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous.

[20] The law was added so that the trespass might increase. But where sin increased, grace increased all the more, [21] so that, just as sin reigned in death, so also grace might reign through righteousness to bring eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

DAY 2

Read *Romans 5:1-5*

According to *Romans 5:1*, what is the result of having been justified through faith?

Since this is a result of justification, what is the condition a person must be in before this justification? See also *Romans 5:10*

If you are a Christian, describe the difference in your relationship toward God from *before* the time you believed in Jesus to *after*. How did your feelings toward God change?

Peace with God is attained *through* our Lord Jesus Christ. How many times in this chapter do you find the word *through* associated with Jesus? What, specifically, does the Christian have or receive *through* Jesus?

What does this teach you about the significance of Jesus?

Verse two lists something that the Christian rejoices in. What is it? What do you think this means? Consider the following verses and how they might apply to this question. *2 Corinthians 3:18; Isaiah 26:8; 2 Thessalonians 1:10* and others.

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ROMANS 5

Is this something you find yourself doing?

Verse 3 indicates that, “we rejoice in our sufferings.” Why would a Christian rejoice in suffering?

Has the suffering in your life produced the results Paul says that we should expect from suffering?

DAY 3

Read *Romans 5:6-11*

How does God demonstrate his love to mankind?

How does sending *Jesus* to die demonstrate *God the Father's* love?

When did you first realize that God loved you?

DAY 4

Read *Romans 5:12-19* and *1 Corinthians 15:20-49*.

In this section, Paul discusses Adam and how he is a pattern of Jesus. In what ways was Adam like Jesus?

What is the title Paul gives to Jesus in *1 Corinthians 15:45*?

Read *1 Corinthians 15:45-49*. According to these verses, in what ways are Adam and Jesus very different?

Why did God need to send Jesus as a man? Why didn't he save mankind in some other way?
1 Corinthians 15:21

DAY 5

Read *Romans 5:20-21*

What was God's purpose in giving the law? See also *Romans 3:20* and *Galatians 3:19,24*

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The reign of grace is compared to the reign of sin in verse 21. How has sin reigned? What effect has this reign had?

How might the reign of grace be different?

DAY 6

Read the study notes for chapter five.

ROMANS 5

Reading Romans 4 should have left no doubts in the reader's mind that justification is by faith. Paul has proved it theologically (Romans 1-3), and he has proved it historically (Romans 4).

Now that Paul has proved the method of receiving justification, he moves on to teach the benefits of receiving justification. Consider that justification is the change in one's position before God from guilty to not guilty, and from unrighteous to righteous. What, practically speaking, do these changes mean to the believer? How is the believer's life impacted? This is the general direction Paul follows in the first half of this chapter.

ROMANS 5:1-11 - THE RESULTS OF JUSTIFICATION

Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. Romans 5:1-2

Paul starts Romans 5 with the word "Therefore", as he is convinced that he has proven that justification is by faith and is now ready to move on to the practical implications of justification. "Since we have justification by faith, we have peace with God". This is an interesting thought, for it implies that those who have not been reconciled to God in Christ Jesus are not at peace with God. They are actually God's enemies.

In case you think that I am overstating the facts, consider the following verses:

For if, when we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life! Romans 5:10

Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior. Colossians 1:21

“He who is not with me is against me, and he who does not gather with me scatters.” Matthew 12:30

Those who have not placed their faith in Jesus Christ are God’s enemies. They are living in a state of war with the Creator of the universe.

Peacetime conditions are always different from the conditions found in war. In war, tensions are high, fear and uncertainty abound, and freedoms are drastically curtailed. In peace, attitudes and actions are much different. There is greater freedom and less fear. Peacetime conditions should be normal. Wartime conditions should be rare. However, in this world, the opposite is true. Most people are living in a constant state of war against God. Because of this, inner tensions are high, fear abounds, and freedom is curtailed. The only hope of peace is a relationship with the “prince of peace” - Jesus. Those who know Jesus are walking on “the path of peace” (Luke 1:79). Those who do not know Jesus do not know peace, and are walking in the way of death.

It is a great blessing to finally be at peace with God. No longer am I struggling against an unbeatable foe. Instead, I am actually a child of his, walking in harmony with him. God wants what is best for me, and I want what is best for him!

Notice how this peace comes - “through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand” (Romans 5:1,2). *Through* is a word that is consistently used in connection with Jesus Christ. Everything we have is through him.

... yet for us there is but one God, the Father, from whom all things came and for whom we live; and there is but one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom all things came and through whom we live. 1 Corinthians 8:6

For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit. Ephesians 2:18

Jesus answered, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.” John 14:6

“I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. He will come in and go out, and find pasture.” John 10:9

In the same way that we could not enter a room except through the door, we cannot enter into a relationship with God except through Jesus Christ.⁶¹ In Romans 5, you’ll find the word through associated with Jesus in verses 1, 2, 9, 10, 11, 17, 19 and 21. Obviously, this is an extremely significant truth to grasp.

Our peace with God is not “by” our own good works. It is “through” Jesus. And through him, “we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand” (Romans 5:2). This word “access” carries a rich meaning in the Greek. It literally means “a leading or bringing into the presence of.”⁶² It is associated with “the thought of freedom⁶² to enter through the assistance or favor of another.”⁶³

61 It will help your understanding of the Trinity to carefully consider the prepositions associated with each member of the Godhead. In the New Testament, you will frequently find the words “for” and “from” associated with God the Father, the word “by” associated with the Holy Spirit, and, as I have already mentioned, the word “through” associated with the Lord Jesus.

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ROMANS 5

The word also includes the idea of a lesser person approaching “someone in high station, especially a royal or divine personage.”⁶⁴ We are the lesser persons. God the Father is the greater. How do we enter into God the Father’s presence? We enter only through the assistance of Jesus Christ. He leads us into grace and the presence of God the Father. We are able to approach God with freedom and confidence (Ephesians 3:12, Hebrews 4:16) solely because of his introduction.

In him and through faith in him we may approach God with freedom and confidence. Ephesians 3:12

Now that I am at peace with God, and, through the introduction of Jesus, standing in grace, what are the conditions that should be “normal” in my life? The first concerns my attitude and actions regarding the glory of God.

And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. Romans 5:2

The literal Greek word used for “rejoice” here means “to boast or glory.”⁶⁵ We are to glory in and boast about the glory of God! Obviously, we wouldn’t have done this when we were God’s enemies, but it should be a normal “peacetime” activity for us to rejoice, boast about and glory in God’s coming glory.

Is it for you? Do you find yourself boasting about the glory of God? Do you glory in the coming revelation of God? If not, why don’t you? This should be a normal activity for those who are at peace with God. The words of John the Apostle should frequently be found on the lips of every Christian, “Come, Lord Jesus.”⁶⁶ What a day that will be, when I finally see my Savior in all his glory!

Another normal peacetime attitude or action is rejoicing in sufferings.

Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us. Romans 5:3-5

Rejoicing in our sufferings? This might sound merely theoretical to you, as if no one practices this in reality, but this is not the case. We are to rejoice in our sufferings. It should be normal for the Christian. This is exactly what the apostles did when they were flogged.

They called the apostles in and had them flogged. Then they ordered them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. The apostles left the Sanhedrin, rejoicing because they had been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the Name. Acts 5:40-41

This is also what Paul and Silas did when they were flogged in Philippi.

The crowd joined in the attack against Paul and Silas, and the magistrates ordered them to be stripped and beaten. After they had been severely flogged, they were thrown into prison, and the jailer was commanded to guard them carefully. Upon receiving such orders, he put them in the inner cell and fastened their feet in the stocks. About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening to them. Acts 16:22-25

Paul didn’t just praise God in the midst of his suffering. He actually wanted to suffer!

I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead. Philippians 3:10-11

62 Vine, Unger, White Jr., *Vine’s Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*, p. 7.

63 Vine, Unger, White Jr., *Vine’s Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*, p. 7.

64 Bruce, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries: The Epistle of Paul to the Romans, p. 123.

65 Vine, Unger, White Jr., *Vine’s Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*, p. 268.

66 Revelation 22:20

Why would anyone delight in suffering? One reason is because it is a great privilege anytime we are allowed to participate with the Lord in his sufferings. Recently I was in Southeast Asia. On this trip I visited with several pastors who had all been jailed for their faith. One of these pastor's wives said with a smile, "It is such a privilege to suffer for our Lord Jesus Christ." These saints were living out Jesus' words in Matthew 5.

"Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you." Matthew 5:11-12

Another reason to delight in suffering, which is the reason that Paul focuses on here, is the good it does for you. Suffering is beneficial to the Christian because it produces perseverance.

Certain characteristics naturally appear in the life of every Christian. The fruit of the Spirit are among these. Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness and self-control are natural characteristics found in every Christian.⁶⁷ Even if you do not see these characteristics operating in the life of the Christian, they are present, for they are given to a person when he or she is born again. If these attributes are not seen, it is not because they are absent, it is simply because they need to be allowed to operate.

However perseverance is not a fruit of the Spirit. It doesn't automatically *appear* in your life. Rather, it is *produced* through suffering. That is why I am glad I suffer, for if I didn't I would have no perseverance.

Aluminum is a metal without much perseverance. It is very strong as long as it is not bent too far. However, bend the aluminum too far just once and it is substantially weakened. Bend it repeatedly and it will break. It cannot withstand much bending. God is not interested in building a kingdom of aluminum Christians who crack at the first sign of trouble. He is seeking warriors - men and women of valor who stay in the battle and emerge victorious even after repeated setbacks. He is seeking men and women of perseverance.

Perseverance is not an end in itself. Like suffering, it also produces something - character. As I suffer, I develop perseverance, and the effect this process has on me is I become a person of tested and proven character.

Think of the Old Testament saints. How did they become men and women of God? How did Moses become Moses? He became who he was, in a large measure, through suffering. This suffering in him developed perseverance. Finally, after he had become a man of perseverance, he eventually became a man of tested character. At that point, he was useful to his master prepared for any good work. How long did this process take in Moses' life? Evidently quite long, for God didn't appear to Moses in the burning bush until Moses was 80 years old!

God is not interested in building disposable Christians. He is building quality. This takes time. Like any commander in chief, he has no interest in building an army that cannot stand the battle. He is interested in the finished product.

... the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything. James 1:3-4

One might expect that this suffering would produce bitterness. Not so for the Christian. Character produces hope - joyful expectation. Why are Christians hopeful even after going through so many difficulties? Romans 5:5 gives us the answer.

67 See Galatians 5:22-23

WEEK FIVE

ROMANS 5

And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us. Romans 5:5

I can have hope because God has given me the Holy Spirit. He lives in me (Romans 8:11). He testifies with my spirit that I am a child of God (Romans 8:16). He is a deposit in my life, guaranteeing my inheritance (Ephesians 1:14). I have great expectation for the future, because God has already given me the down payment! The Holy Spirit in my life is my guarantee that God loves me and that greater things are in store for me!

We were God's enemies, and totally powerless to change our situation (verse 6), but in spite of this, at just the right moment, Jesus died for us. This is how God demonstrates his love to us. Even while we were sinners, Christ died for us (verse 8).

Since we have been justified, we are also saved from God's wrath through Jesus (verse 9). God will pour His wrath out on all the ungodly. This is a terrible fact. But I have been justified - declared righteous. Therefore, I will not face God's wrath.

For God did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ. 1 Thessalonians 5:9⁶⁸

Many Christians are terrified of the days ahead. This should not be so. We can have confidence in the future, knowing that Jesus has saved us from God's wrath. My justification was purchased by his death. My continued safety is guaranteed by his life! As long as Jesus lives, I live. I have great days ahead!

ROMANS 5:12-21 - ADAM AND JESUS

Verse twelve is a natural break in the chapter. This break is indicated by Paul's use of the word, "Therefore", and the dramatic subject change. Up to this point, Paul has been discussing justification from a personal sense, that is, how it relates to individuals. At verse twelve, Paul begins looking at justification in a more global sense, that is, how it relates to humanity as a whole.

Verse 12 is a verse of great significance, revealing a profound truth about sin and the nature of man.

Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned... Romans 5:12

Notice, Paul says that "sin" entered the world through one man. Up to this point in Romans, Paul has talked about "sins." Sins are evil actions - lying, adultery, stealing, etc.. But when Paul uses the word sin in the singular, he is not talking about evil actions, he is talking about an evil condition.

Adam was the first of our race. He sinned and became a sinner. That was his condition. But when he sinned, he affected all of humanity, for his condition is mankind's condition. He is, in a sense, mankind itself. Adam is our race. All humans, apart from Christ, are "in Adam." Everything Adam was is passed on to all who are related to him. A man is a sinner not because he happens to sin, but because he is born a sinner. It is his very nature.

68 See also 1 Thessalonians 1:9-10

Sin brought death to all men, for death is the natural offspring of sin. Adam physically died when he was 930 years old. But the fact is, short life or long, he did die. But this physical death wasn't the first death Adam experienced. He spiritually died many years before his physical death. He spiritually died the day he broke God's command and ate the fruit.

And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, "You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die." Genesis 2:16-17^{ESV}

Paul does not complete the statement he is making in verse 12. It appears as if he is going to compare Adam's action with those of Jesus at this point, but instead he momentarily turns to the subject of the law. He does this, perhaps, because he is imagining one of his Jewish listeners having trouble with the idea that all are sinners because of one man's action.

"What about the law?" the Jewish man might ask. "You seem to be teaching that men are sinners without any regard to keeping the law whatsoever. How can this be?" As you read the next two verses, remember the point Paul made in verse twelve - that Adam's sin brought sin and death to all men. This is the background for verses 13 and 14 - they are explanations for verse 12.⁶⁹

... for before the law was given, sin was in the world. But sin is not taken into account when there is no law. Nevertheless, death reigned from the time of Adam to the time of Moses, even over those who did not sin by breaking a command, as did Adam, who was a pattern of the one to come. Romans 5:13-14

Our Jewish friend might argue that man couldn't be considered a sinner unless there were laws that could be broken. And since God didn't give his law until the time of Moses, therefore those before Moses' time (with the exception of Adam who did break a law) could not be considered sinful.

This logic is faulty because it does not take into account exactly who Adam was. As I said before, he is, in a sense, mankind itself. Men and women are not considered sinful just because they themselves are guilty of breaking a specific command God had given them. They are considered sinful because they are in Adam. Mankind's relation to Adam is enough to make every man and woman a sinner. For those who would doubt this, they need only consider the worldwide reign of death. Death's reign is proof that sin is in the world, for death is the natural offspring of sin.

God invested a tremendous trust in Adam, for he was to be the father of all humanity. Adam's actions would, for good or evil, affect all. As we all know, Adam sinned. He never fulfilled the purpose God had for him. But what options did God have left to him since he had already entrusted the fate of the human race to the first Adam?

When one man fails in the accomplishment of God's purpose (as, in a measure, all did), God raises up another to take his place - Joshua to replace Moses, David to replace Saul, Elisha to replace Elijah. But who could take the place of Adam? Only one who was competent to undo the effects of Adam's sin and become the inaugurator of a new humanity. The Bible - and, indeed, the history of the world - knows of one man only who has the necessary qualifications.⁷⁰

That man, of course, is Jesus Christ. He is the only one with the capacity and credentials to fulfill the role of an "Adam." Jesus is not called the second Adam, as if he were subservient to the first Adam, and as if he was but the second in a string of potential Adams to choose from. As Paul indicates in 1 Corinthians 15:45, Jesus is the last Adam. There will be no other "Adams" after Jesus. The first Adam is a pattern of the last Adam (verse 14). Paul uses the remainder of this chapter to compare and contrast how the actions of these two Adams impacted humanity.

69 The KJV, interestingly, places verses 13 through 17 in parenthesis, treating verse 18 as the conclusion of Paul's thought in verse 12.

70 Bruce, *Tyndale New Testament Commentaries: The Epistle of Paul to the Romans*, pp. 125-126.

WEEK FIVE

ROMANS 5

In verse 15, we see the first comparison.

But the gift is not like the trespass. For if the many died by the trespass of the one man, how much more did God's grace and the gift that came by the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, overflow to the many! Romans 5:15

“The many” died by the trespass of Adam. His actions impacted all who would follow him. In an even greater measure, God’s grace and the gift that came by Jesus’ grace overflowed to “the many.” This does not mean that all will be saved. Paul has already proved that “righteousness comes through faith to all who believe” (Romans 3:22).

Notice, death came by the trespass of Adam. However, God’s grace does more than just gently come by Jesus; it overflows to us! Like water pouring over a dam, God’s grace and the gift that came by Jesus rush into our lives, soon covering everything. The effect of grace in our life should be more profound than the effect of sin. Oh, if we could only grasp the greatness of our salvation! It is far greater than we have ever known!

My mouth will tell of your righteousness, of your salvation all day long, though I know not its measure. Psalm 71:15

David talked about the salvation of the Lord all day. Even though he didn’t understand the full measure of salvation, he knew of its greatness. This is what Paul is revealing to us in Romans 5. He is trying to bring his readers to a new and richer understanding of our salvation.

Consider the power of the gift of eternal life.

Again, the gift of God is not like the result of the one man's sin: The judgment followed one sin and brought condemnation, but the gift followed many trespasses and brought justification. Romans 5:16

Adam’s one sin, in itself, was enough to condemn all people. If that is the power of one sin, how much more powerful must the Son of God be? For his one action, though it followed many sins, wiped out sin forever and brought righteousness in its place for all who would believe! There is no comparing the magnitude of the two events. If Adam’s sin has altered human history, and it undeniably has, consider how much more Jesus’ act of righteousness has altered human history and will alter all eternity to follow.

Adam’s sin brought a new ruler to the throne - death. Death is all around us. Like a stubborn dictator refusing to leave the throne, death has ruled since the time of Adam. None escape its power. That is what makes the truth revealed in the next verse so astonishing, for here we find death contrasted with new rulers whose rule is even more pervasive than death’s. Who are these new rulers? Believe it or not, the new rulers are those who receive God’s grace!

For if, by the trespass of the one man, death reigned through that one man, how much more will those who receive God's abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ. Romans 5:17

Death reigns today, but *how much more* will the Christian reign in life “through the one man, Jesus Christ.” The impact of the Christian’s reign in life will surpass the impact death has had! Consider that for a moment!

What will life be like when there is no more death? I have a hard time imagining all that life will be without death, for death is all around me. But I know it will be wonderful. A day is coming when death will be no more.⁷¹

Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. Revelation 20:14

I think about the Lord's coming quite often, imagining the day when I will see the Lord face to face. No more death, no more sorrow, no more pain. Instead, Christians will be reigning in life with Christ over us, and with God the Father over all! All glory to him forever and ever!

However, while the Christians reign will not be completely realized until after the return of our Lord, this doesn't mean that we are not reigning now. Even now, Christians are proving themselves victorious over death. The light of the gospel is bringing light and life to all corners of the world today. We are more than conquerors today! Every time the gospel is preached and a person responds to the Lord, death has lost another of its victims.

All authority in heaven and earth has been given to Jesus, and he has passed that authority on to his followers (Matthew 28:18). So while we are waiting for the ultimate victory to be realized, we are, by our lives, proving the validity of that victory day by day.

Verses 18 and 19 neatly summarize the truths Paul has just presented.

Consequently, just as the result of one trespass was condemnation for all men, so also the result of one act of righteousness was justification that brings life for all men. For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous. Romans 5:18-19

I was in Adam. Because of my relation to Adam, I inherited his spiritual condition. However, I am no longer in Adam. I am no longer a sinner.⁷² I have changed my relation from the first Adam to the last Adam - Jesus. Because of my relation to Jesus Christ, I have inherited his spiritual condition. I am now a saint. He is righteous. Therefore, I am righteous. He has a perfect body, and one day I will have a perfect body.

As was the earthly man, so are those who are of the earth; and as is the man from heaven, so also are those who are of heaven. And just as we have borne the likeness of the earthly man, so shall we bear the likeness of the man from heaven. 1 Corinthians 15:48-49

I am not of the earth or the earthly man. I am no longer in Adam. My relation is to my Lord Jesus. I am in Christ. My spiritual condition is his spiritual condition. Do I sometimes happen to sin? Yes. But that doesn't make me a sinner, for I am now a saint, related to the man from heaven Jesus Christ. His nature is my nature! As he is, so I am!

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! 2 Corinthians 5:17

Paul concludes chapter five by returning to the subject of the law. Here he makes an interesting point about the adding of the law. Why was it given?

The law was added so that the trespass might increase. Romans 5:20

71 1 Corinthians 15:26

72 This does not mean that the Christian never sins. It means that the Christian's inner nature has been changed from "sinner" to "saint". If you have placed your faith in Jesus, you are a new creation. Your "heart of stone" has been replaced with a "heart of flesh" (see Ezekiel 36:25). A sinner is one whose inner nature has not been changed by God. A saint is a holy one - not holy because of his or her own actions, but holy because of the blood of Jesus.

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The law was not given to eliminate sin. In fact, the opposite is true. It was given that sin might increase. This does not mean that God wants people to sin. The opposite is true. He wants people to recognize their sin and their need for a Savior. This is precisely the point Paul was making in Romans 3:20.

Therefore no one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of sin. Romans 3:20

The law increases our consciousness of sins and should lead us to the Savior.

So the law was put in charge to lead us to Christ that we might be justified by faith. Galatians 3:24

As sin increases, grace increases even more. Sin will never overpower the grace of God.

But where sin increased, grace increased all the more, so that, just as sin reigned in death, so also grace might reign through righteousness to bring eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. Romans 5:20-21

Everything Adam's sin has done, God has undone in a greater measure. And if the reign of sin has been great, the reign of grace is even greater! Thanks be to God for the salvation found only in Jesus Christ - the last Adam!

DAY 6 (CONTINUED)

This week, the Holy Spirit has taught me ...

DAY 1

Read *Romans 6* through twice. The first time through the chapter, simply read the text. Do not write any notes regarding the chapter at this time. The second time through the chapter, circle or underline key words or phrases and write down any questions or thoughts the chapter leaves you with in the margin. If the verses bring any related Scriptures to mind, please write them in the margin.

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What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? [2] By no means! We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer? [3] Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? [4] We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.

[5] If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection. [6] For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin— [7] because anyone who has died has been freed from sin.

[8] Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. [9] For we know that since Christ was raised from the dead, he cannot die again; death no longer has mastery over him. [10] The death he died, he died to sin once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God.

[11] In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus. [12] Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires. [13] Do not offer the parts of your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness. [14] For sin shall not be your master, because you are not under law, but under grace.

[15] What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? By no means! [16] Don't you know that when you offer yourselves to someone to obey him as slaves, you are slaves to the one whom you obey—whether you are slaves to sin, which leads to death, or to obedience, which leads to righteousness? [17] But thanks be to God that, though you used to be slaves to sin, you wholeheartedly obeyed the form of teaching to which you were entrusted. [18] You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness.

[19] I put this in human terms because you are weak in your natural selves. Just as you used to offer the parts of your body in slavery to impurity and to ever-increasing wickedness, so now offer them in slavery to righteousness leading to holiness. [20] When you were slaves to sin, you were free from the control of righteousness. [21] What benefit did you reap at that time from the things you are now ashamed of? Those things result in death! [22] But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves to God, the benefit you reap leads to holiness, and the result is eternal life. [23] For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

DAY 2

Read *Romans 6:1-7*

In verse two, Paul answers the question he asked in verse one. What is the question he asked in verse one and what is answer he gives in verse two? Is this the answer you would have expected Paul to give?

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According to verses 3-6, exactly how did we die to sin?

Does Paul present this death to sin as a fact that all Christians have attained or a hope that all Christians can attain? Why is this significant?

Why were we “buried with him through baptism into death” (verse 4,5)?

DAY 3

Read *Romans 6:8-14*

Given that you are, if you are a Christian, “dead to sin,” what is the action Paul encourages you to take? *Romans 6:11*

What is the difference between knowing you are dead to sin (verse 6) and counting yourself dead to sin (verse 11)?

According to verses 12 and 13, whose responsibility is it if sin reigns in the life of a Christian?

As a Christian, you are commanded not to offer the parts of your body to sin (verse 13). What, instead, is the Christian to do? Have you ever done this? *Romans 12:1-2; Ephesians 4:22-24*

DAY 4

Read *Romans 6:15-18*

If you sin as a habit, what is your relationship to sin? *John 8:34; 2 Peter 2:19*

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What does slavery to sin result in? What does slavery to obedience result in? *Romans 6:16*

According to verse 18, the Christian has been “set free from sin” and has become a “slave to righteousness”. If this is true, why do so many Christians still seem to live as slaves to sin? Please use both this chapter and your own life as a basis for your answer.

DAY 5

Read *Romans 6:19-23*

Please compare the results of a life led in slavery to sin and a life led in slavery to God.

The Christian is called a slave of God in this chapter. The Christian is also called free. How do you reconcile these two very different descriptions? See also *Psalm 146:7; John 8:32; 1 Peter 2:16*

Paul used the slavery metaphor, “because you are weak in your natural selves”. What do you think he meant by this statement? *Romans 6:19*

Can someone not be a slave to sin, and yet not be a slave to God either? Is there, perhaps, some sort of middle type of slavery that Paul doesn’t mention here? *Matthew 12:30; Revelation 3:14-18*

Are you living as a slave to sin or as a slave to God?

DAY 6

Read the study notes for chapter six.

ROMANS 6

The truths outlined in Romans keep getting better. Just when you can’t imagine how our salvation could get any richer, Paul explores another layer. It is almost like eating a several course meal,

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where each course is the best you have ever tasted, yet each successive course surpasses the last.

The truths outlined in Romans 6 have changed my life. I see myself differently because of the truths revealed in this chapter. I live differently because of the truths revealed in this chapter. My prayer is that the same will be true for you.

The chapter demands careful reading, for in it Paul makes a dramatic change in how he refers to our relationship with Jesus.

The emphasis in chapter 5 is on what has been done for the believer through Christ and his saving work (5:1, 2, 9, 10, 11, 17, 18, 19, 21; cf. 3:24), whereas in chapter 6 Paul deals with what has happened to the believer together with Christ (6:4, 5, 6, 8) and what he enjoys in Christ (6:11, 23).⁷³

As you study this chapter you'll see why this change is so significant.

ROMANS 6:1-14 - THE SOLUTION TO OUR SIN PROBLEM

Paul starts the chapter by talking about sin.

What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? By no means! We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer? Romans 6:1-2

As Paul has said in Romans 5:20, when sin increases, grace increases all the more. However, the fact that grace increases when sin increases is no license for the Christian to sin. Paul is appalled at the thought. But notice Paul's reasoning for why the Christian should not sin. He does not say, as we might expect, that we should not sin because it is wrong. Paul's reasoning for why we should not continue to sin is that we died to sin.

What a shocking revelation this is! My belief is that most Christians have never heard this truth before, let alone understood it. This must change, for this is one of the greatest truths of the gospel. When you became a Christian, you died to sin.

Paul explains this death in verses three through seven. Please don't rush over these verses. Read them slowly. See if you can find exactly what Paul is talking about when he says we died to sin.

Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life. If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection. For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin - because anyone who has died has been freed from sin. Romans 6:3-7

How did I die to sin? According to Paul, this death happened when I was I was "baptized" into Christ Jesus. The Greek word that is translated *baptize*, "consists of the processes of immersion, submersion and emergence ..."⁷⁴ Paul is teaching, then, that we were immersed *into* Christ Jesus and, consequently, were united *with* him in his death, burial and resurrection.

Paul speaks in such a way that we know this was no theoretical concept to him. He literally *assumes* every Christian was immersed into Christ Jesus.

⁷³ Harrison, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Volume 10, Romans*, p. 55.

Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? Romans 6:3

Jesus literally died, was buried and rose again. The Bible clearly teaches that all of these are historical facts. But did you know that the Bible teaches, just as clearly, that you died, were buried and rose again? You may say, "How did any of this happen? I never died. I was never buried." Ahhh, but if you are a Christian, you did die, and you were buried, for you are in Christ.

I like the illustration Watchman Nee used in his classic book, *The Normal Christian Life*, to teach this concept of what it means to be "in Christ."

Many a time when preaching in the villages of China one has to use very simple illustrations for deep divine truth. I remember once I took up a small book and put a piece of paper into it, and I said to those very simple folk, "Now look carefully. I take a piece of paper. It has an identity of its own, quite separate from the book. Having no special purpose for it at the moment I put it into the book. Now I do something with the book. I mail it to Shanghai. I do not mail the paper, but the paper has been put into the book. Then where is the paper? Can the book go to Shanghai and the paper remain here? Can the paper have a separate destiny from the book? No! Where the book goes the paper goes. If I drop the book in the river the paper goes too, and if I quickly take it out again I recover the paper also. Whatever experience the book goes through the paper goes through with it, for it is still there in the book."⁷⁵

What is true of the paper in the book is also true of the Christian in Christ Jesus. When I confessed Jesus as Lord, the Holy Spirit baptized me into Christ. This baptism into Christ was not something I earned over time. It was an historical event that took place the moment I confessed Jesus as Lord.

For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body ... 1 Corinthians 12:13

The Holy Spirit put me in Christ. I do not have to pray that I be placed in Christ. I do not wake up in the morning and plead, "Oh God, put me in Christ today." Like the paper in the book, I am in Christ. My destiny is wrapped up with his destiny.

In the same way that I do not have to pray that I might be baptized into Christ Jesus, I do not have to pray that I might be baptized into his death. I don't have to plead with God that my old self might be crucified, for it has been crucified! This, according to Paul, is an historical fact. If I believe it, it is true, and if I disbelieve it, it is still true. My old self was crucified with Jesus.

For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin - because anyone who has died has been freed from sin. Romans 6:6-7

This is all significant because it directly relates to sin and the control it has over us. Our old self was crucified so that, "the body of sin might be done away with". The phrase, "done away with", does not mean that sin is completely eliminated and can have no possible influence in your life. We know this is not the case, for all Christians happen to sin. What it does mean is that sin is no longer the controlling force in your life. It has been, as the NIV text note for the verse reads, "rendered powerless".

74 Vine, Unger, White Jr., *Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*, p. 50.

75 Watchman Nee, *The Normal Christian Life* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale, 1977), p. 44.

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Why is it, then, that many Christians never walk in this victory? The more they fight sin in their life, the more it seems to increase. The more they strive for holiness, the more they find wickedness. Sin has not been “rendered powerless”. Instead, it seems to gain in power.

Perhaps this has been the experience of your life. As a Christian, you realize that losing your temper is wrong. However, the more you attempt to control your temper, the worse your temper seems to get. Why is this true for so many?

I do not believe the problem is a lack of love for the Lord. Many, many dear Christians love the Lord with all their hearts, yet they are losing the battle to sin. The problem for these Christians is their lack of knowledge. As Hosea 4:6 says, “[M]y people are destroyed from lack of knowledge.” God has given us everything we need for life and godliness, but it is activated in our life *through our knowledge of him*.

His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires. 2 Peter 1:3-4

You cannot place your faith in something that you do not know. And if you do not know - that is, if you are not absolutely convinced - that your old self was crucified with Christ, you will live as if sin is still in power, *even though it has been rendered powerless in your life*.

Notice verses six through nine. Read each word carefully.

For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin - because anyone who has died has been freed from sin. Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. For we know that since Christ was raised from the dead, he cannot die again; death no longer has mastery over him. Romans 6:6-9

The question I have for you is do you know these facts? Do you know that your old self was crucified with Jesus? Do you believe that because you died with Christ you will also live with him?

This knowledge is a critical part of faith. Faith, in some ways, is like a coin. On the one side of the coin you find knowledge. Knowledge, in this sense, is the firm persuasion that something is true. Without knowledge there can be no faith. On the other side of the coin you find the deeds that proceed from this knowledge. As James said, “[F]aith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead” (James 2:17). Therefore, if we are to walk in faith, we need both knowledge and the action that springs from this knowledge.

Verse six outlines the knowledge we are to have - that is, the first side of the coin.

For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin ... Romans 6:6

Verse 11 details how we are to put this knowledge to work in our lives - the second side

of the coin.

*In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus.
Romans 6:11*

How do you put this knowledge that you were crucified with Christ and are therefore dead to sin to work? You count yourself dead to sin. You are to mark it down as a reality in your life. Counting yourself dead to sin is a deliberate action you must take. In the same way that you write the current balance in your checking account, you are to “write” *dead to sin* in the ledger book of your life.

“I am dead to sin. My old sinful nature does not exist anymore, for it was crucified with Jesus. I have been freed from sin.”

You cannot write the balance in your checking account if you do not know the balance to begin with. Writing the balance requires knowledge of the balance. In the same way, you cannot count yourself dead to sin if you do not know that you actually are dead to sin.

In a helpful passage in *The Normal Christian Life*, Watchman Nee describes the years of struggle he went through because he made that very mistake; he tried to *count* himself dead to sin before he actually *knew* that he was dead to sin.

For years after my conversion I had been taught to reckon [that is, to count himself dead to sin - reckon is the word used in the KJV]. I reckoned from 1920 to 1927. The more I reckoned that I was dead to sin the more alive I clearly was. I simply could not believe myself dead, and I could not produce the death. Whenever I sought help from others I was told to read Romans 6:11, and the more I read Romans 6:11 and tried to reckon, the further away death was: I could not get at it. I fully appreciated the teaching that I must reckon, but I could not make out why nothing resulted from it. I have to confess that for months I was troubled. I said to the Lord, “If this is not clear, if I cannot be brought to see this which is so very fundamental, I will cease to do anything. I will not preach anymore; I will not go out to serve thee anymore; I want first of all to get thoroughly clear here.” For months I was seeking and at times I fasted, but nothing came through.

I remember one morning - that morning was a real morning and one I can never forget - I was upstairs sitting at my desk reading the Word and praying, and I said, “Lord, open my eyes!” And then in a flash I saw it. I saw my oneness with Christ. I saw that I was in him, and that when he died I died. I saw that the question of my death was a matter of the past and not of the future, and that I was just as truly dead as he was because I was in him when he died. The whole thing had dawned upon me. I was carried away with such joy at this great discovery that I jumped from my chair and cried, “Praise the Lord, I am dead!” I ran downstairs and met one of the brothers helping in the kitchen and laid hold of him. “Brother,” I said, “do you know that I have died?” I must admit he looked puzzled. “What do you mean?” he said, so I went on: “Do you not know that Christ has died? Do you not know that I died with him? Do you not know that my death is no less truly a fact than his?” Oh it was so real to me! I longed to go through the streets of Shanghai shouting the news of my discovery. From that day to this I have never for one moment doubted the finality of that word: “I have been crucified with Christ.”⁷⁶

After years of struggling to suppress sin and walk in holiness, what brought about the change in

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Watchman Nee's life? The change came when he finally knew that he was dead to sin. And once he was convinced of this fact, he was able to count it as true in his life. Faith had come, and his life was never the same after this point.

What about you? Do you know that you are dead? Many people have loved and served the Lord for years and years without this knowledge. The lack of this knowledge has greatly hindered their effectiveness.

Consider the life of Hudson Taylor, the founder of the China Inland Mission. Like Watchman Nee, Taylor wondered why he couldn't live the victorious life as a Christian. In a letter to his sister Amelia, he outlined the need in his heart.

My mind has been greatly exercised for six or eight months past, feeling the need personally, and for our Mission, of more holiness, life, power in our souls. But personal need stood first and was the greatest. I felt the ingratitude, the danger, the sin of not living nearer to God. I prayed, agonized, fasted, strove, made resolutions, read the Word more diligently, sought more time for retirement and meditation - but all was without effect.

Every day, almost every hour, the consciousness of sin oppressed me. I knew that if I could only abide in Christ all would be well, but I could not. I began the day with prayer, determined not to take my eye from Him for a moment; but pressure of duties, sometimes very trying, constant interruptions apt to be so wearing, often caused me to forget Him. Then one's nerves get so fretted in this climate that temptations to irritability, hard thoughts, and sometimes unkind words are all the more difficult to control. Each day brought its register of sin and failure, of lack of power. To will was indeed present with me, but how to perform I found not.

Then came the question, "Is there no rescue? Must it be thus to the end - constant conflict and, instead of victory, too often defeat?" How, too, could I preach with sincerity that to those who receive Jesus, "to them gave He power to become the Sons of God" (i.e., God-like) when it was not so in my own experience? Instead of growing stronger, I seemed to be getting weaker and to have less power against sin; and no wonder, for faith and even hope were getting very low. I felt I was a child of God: His Spirit in my heart would cry, in spite of all, "Abba, Father." But to rise to my privileges as a child, I was utterly powerless.⁷⁷

What a wonder this is. Here we have another Christian hero - a founder of perhaps the most influential mission organization in the nineteenth century - and he finds no power in his life to live a godly life. He prays for victory, he even fasts for victory, but victory eludes his grasp.

Thankfully, the story did not end here for Hudson Taylor. He did find rest. He did find victory over sin. The revelation that changed his life was the revelation that he was one with Christ. He had, of course, heard this truth many times before, he had even preached it to others, but he did not *know* this truth as a reality in his own life. When he did finally know this truth as a reality in his life, he was able to act on this knowledge, and this changed everything about his life. Here is how he shared this new understanding of his oneness with Christ with Charles Judd, a fellow CIM missionary.

76 Nee, *The Normal Christian Life*, pp. 64-65.

77 Vance Christie, *Hudson Taylor* (Uhrichsville, OH: Barbour Publishing, Inc., 1999), pp. 173-174.

“I have not got to make myself a branch.⁷⁸ The Lord Jesus tells me I am a branch. I am part of Him, and have just to believe it and act upon it. If I go to the bank in Shanghai, having an account, and ask for fifty dollars, the clerk cannot refuse it to my outstretched hand and say that it belongs to Mr. Taylor. What belongs to Mr. Taylor my hand may take. It is a member of my body. And I am a member of Christ, and may take all I need of His fullness. I have seen it long enough in the Bible, but I believe it now as a living reality.”⁷⁹

We live beneath our privileges as sons and daughters of God when we do not see ourselves in Christ. When he died, we died. When he rose, we rose. As verse eight says, because I died with Christ, I believe I will also live with him. I am in Christ, alive to God in Christ Jesus.

Knowing this is true, I have counted myself “dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus” (verse 11). Since I am dead to sin, it no longer is master over me. Instead of yielding to sin, I now offer myself to God and the parts of my body to him as instruments of righteousness.

*Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires. Do not offer the parts of your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness. For sin shall not be your master, because you are not under law, but under grace.
Romans 6:12-14*

When I was “in Adam” I could not stop sinning for it was my very nature. But now, I do not have to sin. Sin is no longer my master. I am under God’s grace!

ROMANS 6:15-23 - SLAVES TO SIN OR SLAVES TO RIGHTEOUSNESS?

Paul begins the second section of this chapter in much the same way he began the first. First, he asks the question, “Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace?” (Romans 6:15). As in the first section, he answers using the strongest possible language - “By no means!”

What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? By no means! Don’t you know that when you offer yourselves to someone to obey him as slaves, you are slaves to the one whom you obey - whether you are slaves to sin, which leads to death, or to obedience, which leads to righteousness? But thanks be to God that, though you used to be slaves to sin, you wholeheartedly obeyed the form of teaching to which you were entrusted. You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness. Romans 6:15-18

As a Christian, how can you even consider continuing in sin? The Christian has been set free from sin and has become a slave to righteousness. However, while it is true that the Christian is no longer legally a slave to sin, it is also true that many Christians still live as slaves to sin. How can this be?

When I was in grade school in the 1970’s, a man named Robert Sadler spoke at one of our chapel services. Mr. Sadler was a former slave, and had worked on a plantation in the south into the early 1900’s. Slavery had, of course, been abolished decades earlier, but Mr. Sadler, along with the other “slaves” on the plantation, did not know this. These poor people continued serving their “master” even though their master’s reign over them had been legally ended. They were legally free, but they did not live free lives. Their old master still ruled over them.

⁷⁸ Hudson Taylor is referring to the passage in John 15 where Jesus compares himself to a vine and the Christian to a branch.

⁷⁹ Christie, *Hudson Taylor*, p. 176.

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How many Christians is this true of today? They died with Christ. They are no longer legally owned by their old master. Yet, they continue serving sin as if it were their master, not because they love sin - indeed, they hate it - but because they do not know that its rule over them has been abolished. They have not understood all the ramifications of their salvation. For the Christian, sin's rule has been forever abolished. We are not called to live as slaves, but as free men and women!

*You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness.
Romans 6:18*

But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves to God, the benefit you reap leads to holiness, and the result is eternal life. Romans 6:22

Do you know that you died to sin? Do you know that you are in Christ, and that when he rose to new life, you also rose to new life? Do you know that you are free? If you don't, by all means learn this truth. Pray that God would give you insight. For you to walk in victory, these truths must be written in your heart and acted upon.

God's plan is that you walk in holiness. Holiness is not attained by great struggle and strain. Holiness naturally springs forth in those Christians who:

1. Are firmly persuaded that they have died to sin.
2. Have counted themselves dead to sin.
3. Have offered themselves and the parts of their body to God.

Notice, none of these steps involves work. You, on your own, can never attain holiness. You can, however, by your faith, live in Christ and the victory he won.

May today be the day that you take your place in Christ.

DAY 6 (CONTINUED)

This week, the Holy Spirit has taught me ...

DAY 1

Read *Romans 7* through twice. The first time through the chapter, simply read the text. Do not write any notes regarding the chapter at this time. The second time through the chapter, circle or underline key words or phrases and write down any questions or thoughts the chapter leaves you with in the margin. If the verses bring any related Scriptures to mind, please write them in the margin.

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ROMANS 7

Do you not know, brothers—for I am speaking to men who know the law—that the law has authority over a man only as long as he lives? [2] For example, by law a married woman is bound to her husband as long as he is alive, but if her husband dies, she is released from the law of marriage. [3] So then, if she marries another man while her husband is still alive, she is called an adulteress. But if her husband dies, she is released from that law and is not an adulteress, even though she marries another man.

[4] So, my brothers, you also died to the law through the body of Christ, that you might belong to another, to him who was raised from the dead, in order that we might bear fruit to God. [5] For when we were controlled by the sinful nature, the sinful passions aroused by the law were at work in our bodies, so that we bore fruit for death. [6] But now, by dying to what once bound us, we have been released from the law so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit, and not in the old way of the written code.

[7] What shall we say, then? Is the law sin? Certainly not! Indeed I would not have known what sin was except through the law. For I would not have known what coveting really was if the law had not said, “Do not covet.” [8] But sin, seizing the opportunity afforded by the commandment, produced in me every kind of covetous desire. For apart from law, sin is dead. [9] Once I was alive apart from law; but when the commandment came, sin sprang to life and I died. [10] I found that the very commandment that was intended to bring life actually brought death. [11] For sin, seizing the opportunity afforded by the commandment, deceived me, and through the commandment put me to death. [12] So then, the law is holy, and the commandment is holy, righteous and good.

[13] Did that which is good, then, become death to me? By no means! But in order that sin might be recognized as sin, it produced death in me through what was good, so that through the commandment sin might become utterly sinful.

[14] We know that the law is spiritual; but I am unspiritual, sold as a slave to sin. [15] I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. [16] And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good. [17] As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me. [18] I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. [19] For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing. [20] Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it.

[21] So I find this law at work: When I want to do good, evil is right there with me. [22] For in my inner being I delight in God’s law; [23] but I see another law at work in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within my members. [24] What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? [25] Thanks be to God—through Jesus Christ our Lord!

So then, I myself in my mind am a slave to God’s law, but in the sinful nature a slave to the law of sin.

DAY 2

Read *Romans 7:1-6*

How is the Christian’s relationship with the law similar to the Christian’s relationship with sin (as Paul discussed in *Romans 6*)?

How did the Christian die to the law?

Is this presented as a fact for the Christian, or as something that needs to be attained?

What is the point Paul is trying to make by his example of the married man and the woman?

DAY 3

Read *Romans 7:7-13*

What is this “law” Paul is talking about? What is the nature of this law?

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How does sin use the law to its own advantage?

What is the intended function of the law? *Galatians 3:24*

DAY 4

Read *Romans 7:14-20*

Can you identify with Paul's words in this section? If so, in what way?

Do you believe these verses describe Paul's experience as a Christian, or as a non-Christian? Please explain your answer.

DAY 5

Read *Romans 7:21-25*

Do you believe struggling with the law in the way Paul describes here must be a life-long battle for the Christian? Why or why not? Use verses from this chapter to prove your point.

Where does Paul find his relief from this problem with the law? *Romans 7:25*

DAY 6

Read the study notes for chapter seven.

ROMANS 7

Whew! Here we are at Romans 7. This is one of those chapters that many have wished Paul had never written, for in it he says some things which, at first glance, seem contradictory to statements he has made elsewhere in the book. However, I am glad Paul wrote this chapter, as difficult as it may appear to be. It is not a bad thing to wrestle with a passage. It is not a sign of ungodliness. In fact, it can be a sign of real strength.

Like the truth we learned in Romans 6, the truth in Romans 7 is little known. But the fact that it is little known does not make it of little importance. Quite the opposite is true. If you grasp the truth taught in this chapter and apply it to your life, you will experience a joy, freedom and effectiveness in serving God that you have never known before. Romans 7 may very well become one of your favorite passages, for in it the secret of effective service is explained.

Romans 6 proves that the Christian is dead to sin. This death happened when “our old self was crucified with him” (Romans 6:6). However, even though I have legally been freed from sin’s control and it is no longer my master, I can still allow sin to rule over me *as if it were my master*. It is a little similar to receiving a call from a telemarketer. These people call at very inopportune times, trying to sell things that you do not want, all the while demonstrating by their words that they do not respect you or your wishes. In spite of this, through their aggressive actions, telemarketers are able to keep you on the phone even when you tell them you are not interested. When this happens, you become a “slave” to them and their timetable, even though they have no legal power over you. How many of you have been “enslaved” in this way? What is the solution? It is to *recognize* that you have the power to end the conversation at any time you choose, and to *use this authority* in your conversation. In other words, state that you are not interested, and hang up.

Sin’s control over the Christian is similar to this. It has no legal authority over me, yet it will act as if it does have authority, and, if I do not know that I am dead to sin and do not count myself dead to sin, it will gain some control over me. But, praise God, if I know that I have died to sin (6:6), I can then count this as a fact in my life (6:11) and begin operating in my life with this truth functioning as a reality.

What freedom this truth brings! Sin is no longer my master! I now belong to Christ. Instead of

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offering the parts of my body to wickedness, I now offer them to God as instruments of righteousness.

Some might say, “Isn’t this enough? Shouldn’t we then be able to take this truth and serve God completely and fully?” The answer, we learn from Romans 7, is an emphatic no. Deliverance from sin is not enough. We also need deliverance from the law.

ROMANS 7:1-13 - MY PROBLEM WITH THE LAW

The problem is not the law itself, for the law Paul is referring to in this chapter is actually God’s law. The problem is the nature of sin and the nature of “the flesh.” The nature of sin is that it is opportunistic, and it uses the law almost like a lever to actually increase sin in our lives.

But sin, seizing the opportunity afforded by the commandment, produced in me every kind of covetous desire. Romans 7:8

The nature of the flesh (the “sinful nature” in the NIV) is that it doesn’t have the ability to fulfill the law.

I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. Romans 7:18

The only solution, then, is that we die to the law in the very same way we die to sin. This is the only solution to the problem we have with the law, for, as Paul says in the first verse, the law holds no authority over a dead man.

Do you not know, brothers - for I am speaking to men who know the law - that the law has authority over a man only as long as he lives? Romans 7:1

To prove this, Paul gives us an example from everyday life.

For example, by law a married woman is bound to her husband as long as he is alive, but if her husband dies, she is released from the law of marriage. So then, if she marries another man while her husband is still alive, she is called an adulteress. But if her husband dies, she is released from that law and is not an adulteress, even though she marries another man. Romans 7:2-3

In this example, the wife is bound to her husband and is not free to leave this man because of the marriage law. If she did leave him and marry another man, she would be called an adulteress. However, if he dies, she is released from the marriage law and is free to marry whomever she chooses. The husband’s death breaks the power the marriage law has over the wife.

In the next three verses, Paul explains how this truth applies to the Christian.

So, my brothers, you also died to the law through the body of Christ, that you might belong to another, to him who was raised from the dead, in order that we might bear fruit to God. For when we were controlled by the sinful nature, the sinful passions aroused by the law were at work in our bodies, so that we bore fruit for death. But now, by dying to what once bound us, we have been released from the law so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit, and not in the old

In Paul's illustration, the man dies, and it is the woman who is released from the law of marriage. However, in Paul's explanation, you are the one who dies. The purpose of your death is so that you might, like the woman, belong to another. This is necessary if you are going to bear fruit to God and "serve in the new way of the Spirit, and not in the old way of the written code" (verse 6).

God wants you to belong to his Son, but you cannot belong to his Son if your first allegiance is to the law. God cannot do away with the law, for it is eternal (Matthew 5:18). Therefore, he did away with you. You died to the law so that your binding relationship to the law might be canceled and that you, instead, might belong to Christ.

God's earnestness in ending the law's control over you may make it seem as if the law is sinful. Paul forcefully refutes this idea.

What shall we say, then? Is the law sin? Certainly not! Indeed I would not have known what sin was except through the law. For I would not have known what coveting really was if the law had not said, "Do not covet." But sin, seizing the opportunity afforded by the commandment, produced in me every kind of covetous desire. For apart from law, sin is dead. Romans 7:7-8

The law is not sin. As Paul says in verse 12 it is, "holy, righteous and good". We learn what sin is through the law. However, while it does serve to identify sin, the law also provides sin, as we have already discussed, with an opening to "spring to life."

Once I was alive apart from law; but when the commandment came, sin sprang to life and I died. I found that the very commandment that was intended to bring life actually brought death. For sin, seizing the opportunity afforded by the commandment, deceived me, and through the commandment put me to death. So then, the law is holy, and the commandment is holy, righteous and good. Romans 7:9-12

I remember when I was a boy at camp, I saw a bench with a "wet paint" sign on it. I immediately walked over to the bench and placed my hand on it to see if the paint was truly wet. Why did I touch the bench? I would have had no desire to touch the bench if the sign had not been there. But the sign ignited something in me, and created a desire to touch the bench. This is what the law does.

Paul does admit that there was a time in his life when the law was not a problem for him.

Once I was alive apart from law; but when the commandment came, sin sprang to life and I died. Romans 7:9

Paul does not say when this time was that he was alive apart from law, but it was probably before his bar mitzvah. The bar mitzvah is, "the ceremony in which a Jewish boy at the age of thirteen becomes a 'son of the commandment', i.e. assumes personal responsibility to keep the law."⁸⁰

Before that time, Paul lived in a carefree way. He was, in his own words, "alive." However, the day came when he assumed the responsibility to know and to keep the law. Did this produce holiness in him? On the contrary, "when the commandment came, sin sprang to life and I died" (verse 9).

The law has never produced holiness in anyone. Indeed, it was never intended to. It does not serve to defeat sin,⁸¹ but rather, the law was, "... put in charge to lead us to Christ that we might be justified by faith" (Galatians 3:24).

⁸⁰ Bruce, *Tyndale New Testament Commentaries: The Epistle of Paul to the Romans*, p. 147.

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ROMANS 7:14-25 - VICTORY THROUGH CHRIST

Up to this point, Paul has been speaking in the past tense. However, for the rest of the chapter, Paul uses the present tense.

We know that the law is spiritual; but I am unspiritual, sold as a slave to sin. I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good. As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me. I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing. Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it.
Romans 7:14-20

Some would say, “These can’t be the words of a Christian, for the Christian’s life is victorious.” I agree that the Christian’s life should be victorious, but that is a very different thing than saying that it is victorious. There is a great difference between the normal Christian’s life and what should be the normal Christian life.

I do not believe Paul is writing about an experience he has imagined. He writes as a man who knows what he is talking about. Paul writes as a man in anguish. He can’t understand why he does the things he does. Paul’s words here are very familiar to me, for I have thought them myself. Who among us can’t relate to Paul’s comments here? Who among us hasn’t struggled with a sin that we cannot overcome?

Several days ago I had a conversation with a man who has been struggling with the sin of pornography. This man is a Christian; he knows that pornography is evil. He has made commitments that he will not look at pornography again. Yet he has repeatedly found that he cannot keep these commitments.

This man has a serious problem, doesn’t he? He is not living the victorious Christian life. However, lest we think we are somehow above him, take the word pornography out of the previous paragraph and insert a different word, perhaps gossip, unforgiveness, laziness, hatred, anger, lust, drunkenness, gluttony or bitterness. Could I then have written the previous paragraph about you? Have you cried and prayed for victory but cannot attain it? Paul is speaking about something all of us have dealt with at one time or another. We want to do right, but we cannot find the power.

What Christian hasn’t made commitments to read the Bible more diligently and to pray more fervently? What Christian hasn’t felt condemnation because of failure? Why is it that we cannot do these simple things? Is it a lack of will power? Do we need to just try harder? No. We need to stop trying altogether. The solution to our problem with the law is not effort. It is death.

As long as I am alive, I will have problems with the law. Prayer won’t eliminate my problem with the law. Effort won’t solve my problem with the law. Promises won’t solve my problem with the law. Only death will bring about the victory I need. Once I am dead, my problems with the law will cease. And that is my victory, for I am dead! I died when Christ died! Why keep something that I am dead to? My old self was crucified with Christ so that I might die to the law. Read verse four again aloud.

So, my brothers, you also died to the law through the body of Christ, that you might belong to another, to him who was raised from the dead, in order that we might bear fruit to God. Romans 7:4

keep the law, who will?” Jesus keeps the law. He is the perfect law keeper. You are in Christ, so in him, because he perfectly keeps the law, you are able to keep the law.

Christ’s role as the perfect law keeper was pictured in the Old Testament by the Ark of the Covenant. The Ark of the Covenant was a gold covered chest used in temple worship. It was about 3 3/4 feet long, 2 1/4 feet wide and 2 1/4 feet high. This chest was made of acacia wood and overlaid with pure gold, both inside and out. The cover of the ark is called the “atonement cover,” for this is where atonement was made for the people’s sins. This is also the place where God promised to meet with Moses (Exodus 25:22). The ark was placed in the Holy of Holies - the most sacred room in the temple.

The ark is a picture of Jesus Christ. We could discuss many aspects of the ark and how each one pictures Christ, but I want to focus on the items placed in the ark, for they illustrate who Jesus is and what roles he fulfills.

Behind the second curtain was a room called the Most Holy Place, which had the golden altar of incense and the gold-covered Ark of the Covenant. This ark contained the gold jar of manna, Aaron’s staff that had budded, and the stone tablets of the covenant. Above the ark were the cherubim of the Glory, overshadowing the atonement cover. Hebrews 9:3-5

Inside the ark were placed four different items: a gold jar of manna, Aaron’s staff, and the two stone tablets containing God’s laws. Each of these items is significant.

The gold jar of manna was placed in the ark, not because the manna from heaven was particularly important in itself, but because the manna from heaven symbolized the true bread of life - Jesus.

“For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.” John 6:33

The manna that gave life to the Israelites in the desert was a picture of the true bread of God that gives life to the world! Without manna, the Israelites had no hope of life. Without Jesus, we have no hope of life. He is our sustenance. He is our strength. Daily he provides us with all the grace we need.

Aaron’s staff was placed in the ark because it symbolized who God’s true chosen leader was - Jesus. The story behind the budding staff is fascinating. The Israelites had been grumbling against Moses and Aaron and questioning their leadership. God hates rebellion. Many had already died because of this attack against his chosen leadership. To settle the question, once and for all, of who was the Lord’s chosen leader, God prepared a test.

The LORD said to Moses, “Speak to the Israelites and get twelve staffs from them, one from the leader of each of their ancestral tribes. Write the name of each man on his staff. On the staff of Levi write Aaron’s name, for there must be one staff for the head of each ancestral tribe. Place them in the Tent of Meeting in front of the Testimony, where I meet with you. The staff belonging to the man I choose will sprout, and I will rid myself of this constant grumbling against you by the Israelites.”

So Moses spoke to the Israelites, and their leaders gave him twelve staffs, one for the leader of each of their ancestral tribes, and Aaron’s staff was among them. Moses placed the staffs before the LORD in the Tent of the Testimony. The next day Moses entered the Tent of the Testimony and saw that Aaron’s staff, which represented the house of Levi, had not only sprouted but had budded, blossomed and produced almonds. Numbers 17:1-8

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How did the people know Aaron was God's chosen leader? They knew it because his staff sprouted. Notice that only one staff sprouted. God did not choose many men, but only one man as his chosen leader. What does this have to do with Jesus? He is the one man God has chosen. He is the leader. He alone, like the staff that grew almonds, has life in his leadership. This is why, unlike the Jewish teachers of the law, he taught as one who had authority. Jesus is God's chosen man! This is why the staff that budded was put inside the ark. It symbolizes the authority Jesus alone has as God's chosen leader. Others may attempt to raise themselves up, claiming that they, too, are chosen by God; however, God has already chosen his man, and that man is Jesus. He was, "chosen before the creation of the world, but was revealed in these last times for your sake" (1 Peter 1:20).

The last items in the Ark of the Covenant, and the items I want you to focus on, were the stone tablets of the covenant. These tablets had God's laws written on them. We have already learned that no man can keep God's laws. No man, that is, save one. Jesus is the perfect keeper of the law. He is the only one able to keep God's holy and righteous commands. This is why the tablets were placed inside the ark. Placing the law in the chest symbolizes that the law is in Jesus' heart. I cannot keep the law, *and I am not even expected to keep the law*. Jesus keeps the law; it is his responsibility!

What freedom this brings! If you have been struggling and striving to keep God's commands, it is time to give up the fight. You cannot keep them. This is why Paul concludes the chapter as he does. He recognizes that in him lives no good thing. Instead of fighting this recognition, Paul revels in it, for only upon understanding this is he able to fully give himself over to Jesus. Paul recognizes that he is helpless and needs rescuing.

*What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?
Thanks be to God - through Jesus Christ our Lord! Romans 7:24-25*

My deliverance is found in the same place Paul found his - through Jesus Christ our Lord. As Romans 6:14 says, sin is no longer my master, because I am not under law, but under grace.

*For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.
John 1:17*

God does not demand that I keep the law. Jesus keeps the law for me. I do not need to grow stronger; I need to grow weaker. The more I depend on Christ, the more I walk in victory.

*That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships,
in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.
2 Corinthians 12:10*

You might ask, "what does it practically look like in our lives when we let Jesus keep the law for us?" That is a good question. The following story from a book by Corrie Ten Boom called *Tramp for the Lord* will help you understand this truth.

Corrie Ten Boom was imprisoned by the Germans in World War Two for hiding Jews in her family's home in Holland. After her release, Ms. Ten Boom traveled the world as, in her own words, a "Tramp for the Lord," preaching the gospel everywhere she went. On one occasion, while preaching in Germany, one of her former prison guards approached her after a meeting.

The place was Ravensbruck and the man who was making his way forward had been a guard - one of the most cruel guards.

Now he was in front of me, hand thrust out: “A fine message, Fraulein! How good it is to know that, as you say, all our sins are at the bottom of the sea!”

And I, who had spoken so glibly of forgiveness, fumbled in my pocketbook rather than take that hand. He would not remember me, of course - how could he remember one prisoner among those thousands of women?

But I remembered him and the leather crop swinging from his belt. I was face-to-face with one of my captors and my blood seemed to freeze.

“You mentioned Ravensbruck in your talk,” he was saying. “I was a guard there.” No, he did not remember me.

“But since that time,” he went on, “I have become a Christian. I know that God has forgiven me for the cruel things I did there, but I would like to hear it from your lips as well. Fraulein,” - again the hand came out - “will you forgive me?”

And I stood there - I whose sins had again and again to be forgiven - and could not forgive. Betsie had died in that place - could he erase her slow terrible death simply for the asking?

It could not have been many seconds that he stood there - hand held out - but to me it seemed hours as I wrestled with the most difficult thing I had ever had to do.

For I had to do it - I knew that. The message that God forgives has a prior condition: that we forgive those who have injured us. “If you do not forgive men their trespasses,” Jesus says, “neither will your Father in heaven forgive your trespasses.”

I knew it not only as a commandment of God, but as a daily experience. Since the end of the war I had had a home in Holland for victims of Nazi brutality. Those who were able to forgive their former enemies were able also to return to the outside world and rebuild their lives, no matter what the physical scars. Those who nursed their bitterness remained invalids. It was as simple and as horrible as that.

And still I stood there with the coldness clutching my heart. But forgiveness is not an emotion - I knew that too. Forgiveness is an act of the will, and the will can function regardless of the temperature of the heart. “Jesus, help me!” I prayed silently. “I can lift my hand. I can do that much. You supply the feeling.” And so woodenly, mechanically, I thrust my hand into the one stretched out to me. And as I did, an incredible thing took place. The current started in my shoulder, raced down my arm, sprang into our joined hands. And then this healing warmth seemed to flood my whole being, bringing tears to my eyes.

“I forgive you, brother!” I cried. “With all my heart.”

For a long moment we grasped each other’s hands, the former guard and the former prisoner. I had never known God’s love so intensely, as I did then. But even so, I realized it was not my love. I had tried, and did not have the power. It was the power of the Holy Spirit as recorded in Romans 5:5, “... because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.”⁸²

WEEK SEVEN

ROMANS 7

Ms. Ten Boom could not keep the law of forgiveness, but, when she surrendered herself to God, Jesus kept it for her. This should never surprise us, for Jesus came to fulfill the law. It is written in his heart.

“Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them.” Matthew 5:17

Ezekiel 36 provides such a rich picture of our salvation. We have already looked at these verses in relation to other aspects of our salvation. Now, I would like you to focus on the last sentence.

“I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols. I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws.” Ezekiel 36:25-27

Who is the one who moves us to follow God’s decrees? It is not we ourselves. It is God’s Spirit. God has taken the responsibility for the law keeping upon himself!

If I try to keep the law myself I am living in the old way of the written code. However, my desire is not to live in the old way. I have lived that way and it produces condemnation and defeat. I want to live in the new way of the Spirit. This is where God’s life is found.

But now, by dying to what once bound us, we have been released from the law so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit, and not in the old way of the written code. Romans 7:6

God is not seeking your efforts. As noble as they might appear to be, they are doomed to failure. He is seeking worshipers who worship in spirit and in truth.

“Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth.” John 4:23-24

We cannot worship when we are under condemnation due to our failed law keeping. Stop trying to keep the law. You died to it long ago. It is God’s responsibility. Once you know this as truth, count it as true in your life. Mark it down in your life’s checkbook registry. “I am dead to the law.” For it is when you are dead that you are most truly alive.

Corrie Ten Boom provides perhaps the perfect conclusion to the truths we have learned in this chapter.

Always when I say that I am not able, I get the same answer from the Lord. He says, “I know you can’t. I have known it already a long time. I am glad now you know it for yourself for now you can let Me do it.”⁸³

DAY 6 (CONTINUED)

This week, the Holy Spirit has taught me ...

82 Corrie Ten Boom, *Tramp for the Lord* (New York: A Jove Book, 1983), pp. 54-55.

Lined writing area with horizontal blue lines.

DAY 1

Read Romans 8 through twice. The first time through the chapter, simply read the text. Do not write any notes regarding the chapter at this time. The second time through the chapter, circle or underline key words or phrases and write down any questions or thoughts the chapter leaves you with in the margin. If the verses bring any related Scriptures to mind, please write them in the margin.

WEEK EIGHT

ROMANS 8

Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, [2] because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death. [3] For what the law was powerless to do in that it was weakened by the sinful nature, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful man to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in sinful man, [4] in order that the righteous requirements of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the sinful nature but according to the Spirit.

[5] Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. [6] The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace; [7] the sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. [8] Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God.

[9] You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ. [10] But if Christ is in you, your body is dead because of sin, yet your spirit is alive because of righteousness. [11] And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit, who lives in you.

[12] Therefore, brothers, we have an obligation—but it is not to the sinful nature, to live according to it. [13] For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live, [14] because those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. [15] For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father." [16] The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. [17] Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.

[18] I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. [19] The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed. [20] For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope [21] that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God.

[22] We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. [23] Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. [24] For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what he already has? [25] But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently.

[26] In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express. [27] And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God's will.

[28] And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. [29] For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. [30] And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.

[31] What, then, shall we say in response to this? If God is for us, who can be against us? [32] He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? [33] Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. [34] Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus, who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right

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ROMANS 8

hand of God and is also interceding for us. [35] Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? [36] As it is written:

*“For your sake we face death all day long;
we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.”*

[37] No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. [38] For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, [39] neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

DAY 2

Read *Romans 8:1-17*

What do you think it means to live according to the Spirit?

What is some evidence that a person is living according to the Spirit?

In what ways does Paul describe the Spirit's role in the believer's life in verses 1-17?

How does a person positively know whether he or she is a child of God? See also *1 John 3:24*

DAY 3

Read *Romans 8:18-25*

In verses 17 and 18, our present sufferings are contrasted with the glory that will be revealed in us. Use the following verses to describe God's glory and our relation to that glory.
Exodus 33:17-23 and 34:29-35

Habakkuk 2:14

Romans 3:23

Romans 9:23

2 Corinthians 3:18

2 Corinthians 4:17

Colossians 1:27

1 Peter 5:1

2 Thessalonians 1:10

2 Thessalonians 2:14

In verses 18 through 25 Paul portrays creation as “waiting” for the sons of God to be revealed.

Why is creation waiting for this event? What do the sons of God have to do with creation?

Genesis 1:26-30; Genesis 3:17-19

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According to verse 23, we are waiting eagerly for the redemption of our bodies. When will this event take place? *1 Corinthians 15:35-58*

DAY 4

Read *Romans 8:26-27*

What is the believer's weakness?

How does the Holy Spirit help this weakness?

Practically speaking, how do you think this intercession works? Have you seen this in your own life? If so, when and how?

DAY 5

Read *Romans 8:28-39*

In verses 28-39, Paul lists many reasons why we as Christians can have confidence that God is for us. List as many of those reasons as you can find in these verses. Are you living as if these are, in fact, true?

DAY 6

Read the study notes for chapter eight.

ROMANS 8

Romans 8 is not the last chapter in Romans, but it is the last chapter we will cover in this study. It is an excellent chapter to end on, for it may very well be the most loved chapter in the entire Bible.

In ways, Romans 8 may be thought of as a summary of Romans 1-7. However, Paul goes far beyond merely summarizing the first seven chapters. Here he describes the glories of salvation, the future for the believer, and the love of God for the believer in a way that is not found anywhere else in the Bible.

ROMANS 8:1-17 - LIFE ACCORDING TO THE SPIRIT

The first four verses are a summary of the truths we have learned up through chapter seven.

Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law was powerless to do in that it was weakened by the sinful nature, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful man to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in sinful man, in order that the righteous requirements of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the sinful nature but according to the Spirit. Romans 8:1-4

What are the benefits of this salvation we have received? There are more than we know, but certainly the greatest benefit is that there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. Notice, this state of “no condemnation” is only reserved for those who are “in Christ Jesus.” Those who are in Christ Jesus are those who have placed their faith in him and in the work he accomplished through his death, burial and resurrection.

The world is in the opposite position. Indeed, each person without Christ is already condemned. Paul clearly teaches this in the first three chapters of Romans. But this teaching of worldwide condemnation isn't new with Paul. This is exactly what Jesus said to Nicodemus in their nighttime conversation.

“Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and

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only Son.” John 3:18

Our passage from condemned to righteous is because, “through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death” (verse 2). As we have discussed before, everything we have is through Jesus Christ. Through him, we have died to the law of sin and death, and been brought under the influence of a different kind of law - the law of the Spirit of life. This law enables us to live “according to the Spirit” (verse 4).

How does one live “according to the Spirit?” It is simply living from your heart. God is not looking for slaves who worship him only out of a sense of duty or obligation. God has greatly longed for a people who would worship him because it is the greatest desire in their heart. This is worshipping in Spirit and in truth.

*“Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth.”
John 4:23-24*

If you have served the Lord out of obligation alone, allow yourself to love him from your heart. Love him as a person, not as a religion or a force. God is a person (not a man, mind you, but a real personality) and wants to be loved and known as such. He wants to have a relationship with you! Your relationship with God should be the most real relationship you have because God himself resides inside you in the person of the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit is referred to only four times in the first seven chapters of Romans. However, in the eighth chapter, Paul refers to the Holy Spirit 19 times! Oh, how the church needs to know and welcome the presence of the Holy Spirit. Just as our life is *through* our Lord Jesus, it is *by* the Holy Spirit. Without the Holy Spirit, we have no life.

Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace; the sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God’s law, nor can it do so. Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God. Romans 8:5-8

In these verses, Paul compares those who live according to the sinful nature with those who live according to the Spirit. How do I know if I am living according to the Spirit? The answer is simple. My mind will be set on what the Spirit desires. I will be filled with life and peace. As Jesus said in John 6:63, “The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing.”

Power for victorious living comes only from the indwelling power and presence of the Spirit of God. Some may ask, “How can the Spirit control your mind? Does this mean you walk around in a trance-like state, avoiding contact with anything that is not godly?” No, it definitely doesn’t mean that. Jesus ate and drank with sinners. He loved the people. Yet, at the same time, he was filled with the Holy Spirit, even from birth. How did Jesus maintain his Spirit-led life? How do we attain our Spirit-led life? The answer is found in verse nine.

You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you. Romans 8:9

Notice Paul’s wording here - *If the Spirit of God lives in you, the Spirit of God controls you.* Paul states this as a fact. The Spirit of God lives in the Christian. That is an undeniable truth. Where the Spirit lives, he will always bring his influence to bear. That, too, is undeniable. It is not only undeniable; it is also very comforting. For from Paul’s words I gather that the Spirit-controlled life is

not difficult to live. For where the Spirit is, there life is also found (John 6:63).

However, I know from personal experience, and from seeing it time and time again in the body of Christ, that the Spirit's influence can be rejected and resisted. When the Spirit is resisted, he will draw back, allowing you to function in your own strength. This should not be normal! Not only that, it is not natural. It is more difficult for a Christian to live a life in resistance to the Holy Spirit than for a Christian to live a Spirit-controlled life. When you were born again, you were "wired" to follow the Holy Spirit! This is what God himself says in Ezekiel 36:27.

"I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws." Ezekiel 36:27

Are you controlled by the Spirit? Are your desires in line with his desires? Do you ever think about what he wants? The Spirit-controlled life is the normal Christian life. Like an engine that is not running well, if a Christian is not being controlled by the Holy Spirit, something is wrong and needs fixing.

Notice Paul's words in verses ten through 15. Carefully examine how he describes the Christian's relationship with the Spirit and the deeper relationship portrayed here - the Christian's relationship with God the Father.

But if Christ is in you, your body is dead because of sin, yet your spirit is alive because of righteousness. And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit, who lives in you. Therefore, brothers, we have an obligation - but it is not to the sinful nature, to live according to it. For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live, because those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father." Romans 8:10-15

My spirit - that is, my heart - is alive because of righteousness. The Holy Spirit is living in me, and he gives life to my body so that I can please God. By the Spirit I put to death the misdeeds of the body. I do not do this on my own. He helps me. The Holy Spirit - the Spirit of Christ - leads me away from death and brings me to places of life.

He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters, he restores my soul. He guides me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake. Psalm 23:2-3

God's sons are naturally led by God's Spirit. This is not because these sons read their Bibles everyday, pray a certain length of time, or go to church regularly. God's sons are led by God's Spirit because they have received the "Spirit of sonship." If you are a Christian, God supernaturally placed the Spirit of sonship in your heart! You are a son of God. Inside, you are crying out to your Father, "Abba, Father." Abba means daddy. This is the most affectionate term Paul could have used here.

My girls call me "dad" sometimes. That is fine with me, because that is what I am. But there is something special when they call me "daddy." It says much more to me, because it encapsulates, in one word, what the girls think of me: they trust me, they love me, and they're not embarrassed to show their affection for me. Given a chance, they'll jump on my back and ask for a piggyback ride. By calling me "daddy" my girls are telling me that they need me and enjoy spending time with me.

Do you realize that God put the Spirit of sonship in you? Your heart cries out for God like my girls

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cry out for me! *Daddy! Daddy!* Now here's the problem. Many Christians refuse to live in that way. They never give in to their heart; instead, they develop an unnatural relationship with God the Father. Their entire relationship is based on the "legal" fact that they are sons, but affection never enters the picture.

When I was young, I knew a boy who always called his dad "father." This always struck me as funny. It seemed so stuffy. By calling him "father," the boy was acknowledging the legal relationship he had with his father, but he was also acknowledging that the relationship ended there. There was no deep emotional connection between this boy and his father. They never had a good relationship. They were always at odds with each other.

What do you think God wants from you? Do you think he wants the legal relationship, or does he prefer the "daddy" type of relationship? HE WANTS THE DADDY RELATIONSHIP! How do I know this? I know it because that is the type of spirit he put within us. We are "geared" to operate in that way. If you are a Christian, God gave you the Spirit of sonship. Your now righteous heart is crying out, "Abba, Father." "Daddy, I love you ... I need you ... let's spend some time together."

Does this describe your relationship with God? If not, why not? Perhaps you fear that God will let you down. I have seen this fear many times in those who did not have a good earthly father. I am sorry if you did not have a good father. You deserved a good father. However, even if you did not have a good father, you surely can imagine what a good father would have been like. And God is the best Father. You do not need to fear putting your trust in him, for he did not give you "a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship" (verse 15).

How do I know I am one of God's children and that he loves me? The Holy Spirit tells me that I am a child of God.

*The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children.
Romans 8:16*

*And this is how we know that he lives in us: We know it by the Spirit he gave us.
1 John 3:24*

If you talk with many people and ask them if they are going to heaven someday, they will answer, "I hope so." They are hopeful that they have a relationship with God and a place reserved for them in heaven, but they are not convinced of it. Many people have even set out to serve the Lord without this inner witness of the Spirit; they try to tell others the way to God without an assurance that they themselves have found him. John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, recorded his own experience in his diary; recounting a conversation he had with a Moravian named Gottlieb Spangenberg. Wesley had asked Spangenberg for advice regarding the pastoral and missionary work he was undertaking. Here is Wesley's own record of that conversation.

He said, "My brother, I must first ask you one or two questions. Have you the witness within yourself? Does the Spirit of God bear witness with your spirit, that you are a child of God?" I was surprised, and knew not what to answer. He observed it, and asked, "Do you know Jesus Christ?" I paused, and said, "I know he is the Saviour of the world." "True," replied he; "but do you know he has saved you?" I answered, "I hope he has died to save me." He only added, "Do you know yourself?" I said, "I do."

As a postscript to that conversation, the young Anglican pastor commented: "But I fear they were vain words."⁸⁴

Two years later, on the night of May 24, 1738, Wesley finally experienced this inner witness of the Holy Spirit that the Moravian was talking about.

In the evening I went very unwillingly to a society in Aldersgate Street, where one was reading Luther's preface to the Epistle to the Romans. About a quarter before nine, while he was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone for salvation: And an assurance was given me, that he had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death.⁸⁵

My girls do not have to look at a birth certificate to be convinced that they are part of our family. They just know it. They take their place at the dinner table with confidence, knowing that they belong there. In the same way that my girls know they are part of our family, we should know with absolute certainty that we are part of God's family. We know because the Holy Spirit testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. We know it on the inside.

Now if we are children, then we are heirs - heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.
Romans 8:17

If the Lord doesn't return before my wife and I die, our children will one day receive everything we own. They are our heirs. We are not passing our property on to the neighbor children or to our friends, as nice as they may be and as much as we might love them. We are passing everything on to our children.

In the same way, God is passing everything on to his children. We are God's heirs and co-heirs with Christ. Because we are in him, we receive everything he receives.

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. Ephesians 1:3

Read Romans 8:17 again, for the second half of this verse seems to indicate that this promised inheritance is conditional, that is, that we are heirs only if we share in his sufferings.

Now if we are children, then we are heirs - heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.
Romans 8:17

The Greek wording here is not conditional, as the English might suggest. It is more a statement of fact. You *will* participate in Christ's sufferings therefore you will also share in His glory.

Suffering should not surprise the Christian. It is part of the normal Christian life. If you are in the family of God, you will share in the sufferings of Christ. This is clearly taught throughout the New Testament.

Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed.
1 Peter 4:12-13

In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted ... 2 Timothy 3:12

"We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God ..." Acts 14:22

ROMANS 8:18-39 - THE GLORY TO BE REVEALED

The fact that you share in Christ's sufferings is proof that you will also share in his glory.

84 Justo L. González, *The Story of Christianity, Volume 2* (Peabody, MA: Prince Press, 1999), p. 210.

85 González, *The Story of Christianity, Volume 2*, p. 212.

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I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. Romans 8:18

Notice where this glory will be revealed - in us. Of all the definitions of glory, I like the word “weight” best. Glory is the “weight” of God’s goodness. Where God is, there you will find his presence. His presence is so overwhelming it has a weight to it. Imagine goodness so real and so overpowering that you can actually feel it. This is God’s glory.

God will not yield his glory to another (Isaiah 42:8, 48:11). No one can take it from him. But God gladly gives it to his children! Indeed, you were created for it! Someday soon you will experience it, not in measure, but in fullness!

Glory is the Christian’s future. He has prepared the Christian in advance for glory (Romans 9:23). We will share in the glory to be revealed (2 Thessalonians 2:14, 1 Peter 5:1). In fact, as we previously read in Romans 8:18, Christ will be glorified “in his holy people” (2 Thessalonians 1:10). The troubles you are experiencing now are achieving an eternal glory for you that “far outweighs them all” (2 Corinthians 4:17).

Just as we are all too familiar with sin and its effects, one day soon “the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea” (Habakkuk 2:14). Oh Lord Jesus, come soon! What a day that will be! All Christians should be eagerly looking forward to that day. But did you know that we are not the only ones excited about that day? Even creation, according to Paul, is eagerly expecting this glorious event.

*The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed.
Romans 8:19*

Why is creation waiting for this event with such anticipation? Paul answers the question in the next two verses.

For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God. Romans 8:20-21

Creation is waiting in anticipation because it is subjected in frustration. The word translated “frustration” here means “emptiness as to results.”⁸⁶ Creation is not producing the fruit it was created to produce. And notice, creation became fruitless, not by its own choice, but “by the will of him who subjected it”. Bible scholars have long wondered exactly who is the one that subjected nature to frustration. Is it Adam? Satan? Perhaps sin? I believe, by the context, that the answer is clear - God himself subjected nature to frustration. God did this because of Adam’s sin. This subjecting of nature is recorded in God’s conversation with Adam in Genesis 3.

*“Because you listened to your wife and ate from the tree about which I commanded you, ‘You must not eat of it,’ ‘Cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat of it all the days of your life. It will produce thorns and thistles for you, and you will eat the plants of the field.’
Genesis 3:17-18*

But God didn’t just leave all of creation mired in frustration. God also offered hope of deliverance. In the Bible, hope is not wishful thinking, as in, “I hope it doesn’t rain.” Hope is faith in the future. It is expectation that something will surely come to pass. Just as God subjected the creation to frustration, he also held out a hope that deliverance from this bondage would surely come. Creation is waiting in expectation for its release from frustration, knowing it will certainly come to pass!

86 Vine, Unger, White Jr., *Vine’s Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*, p. 658.

God announced this hope at the same time he announced the curse.

“And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.” Genesis 3:15

In this verse, God announced the coming of Jesus! He is the one who would crush Satan’s head. Jesus’ promised victory has already taken place, but we have yet to see the full results of that victory. Until that moment, creation is groaning like a woman in labor, waiting to be released from her bondage.

We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. Romans 8:22

But creation isn’t groaning alone. We, too, have not yet seen the full effects of the salvation Jesus bought for us with His own blood.

Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what he already has? But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently. Romans 8:23-25

If you have ever wondered why nothing *completely* satisfies you here on earth, it is because you *cannot* be entirely satisfied here on earth. You were created for God’s glory, and, while you are a reflector of God’s glory now (2 Corinthians 3:18), you will not fully house this glory until your adoption as one of God’s sons. This adoption will be at the moment of the redemption of your bodies. Do you know that your body will be changed someday to be like the Lord’s own body?

And just as we have borne the likeness of the earthly man, so shall we bear the likeness of the man from heaven. 1 Corinthians 15:49

Better days are ahead! But until that day, we groan, waiting eagerly for the day when there will be “no more death or mourning or crying or pain” (Revelation 21:4). This hope helps us persevere through our suffering. Not only that, this hope purifies us.

Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. Everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself, just as he is pure. 1 John 3:2-3

As you think about the day of the Lord, the day when your body will be made like his glorious body, you are purified. This hope helps you wait for that day patiently and in purity.

But hope in the redemption of our bodies and the glory to come is not the only help we have been given. God has also given us the Holy Spirit.

In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express. And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God’s will. Romans 8:26-27

There are many passages in the Bible detailing how the Holy Spirit helps us. However, only in this

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passage do we hear about the Spirit interceding for us. The Holy Spirit intercedes for us because we have a weakness. This weakness is that we do not know what we ought to pray for. What a weakness this is. We don't know everything that is going on in the world. We think we know the situation at times, but even then we do not have all the details. We are trying to carry loads that we cannot handle. The encouragement here is that the Spirit helps us in our weakness.

Most Bible scholars see the Holy Spirit's help coming as he partners with us in prayer. A key to this understanding is the definition of the word "help."

This word for help occurs in the NT in only one other passage (Luke 10:40). Martha had more than she could handle in the preparation of the meal and asked the Lord to bid her sister Mary come to her aid. We can paraphrase the request like this: "Tell her to help me by taking hold of her end of the task."⁸⁷

Martha never received her help, but the Christian is not left alone. The Holy Spirit is our helper. He knows our weakness in knowledge, so he carries the greater part of the burden, helping us pray things we do not know. Sometimes we cannot even articulate these prayers, they are prayed with "groans that words cannot express".

Many times I have felt a burden to pray, yet I have not known about whom or what I am to pray. This is a definite weakness. How can I pray when I am limited by my understanding? I can pray because the Holy Spirit takes hold of his end of the task. He helps me pray. Sometimes I haven't been able to use words at all. Words cannot describe the depth of feelings in my heart. Instead, groans and sighs escape my lips. Are these effective prayers? They are, "because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God's will" (Romans 8:27).

While this is the interpretation favored by the majority of commentaries, and it is certainly true that the Holy Spirit helps us in this way when we pray, I am not completely sure this is the truth Paul is teaching *in these verses*. It very well might be that Paul is saying that the Spirit is interceding for us *without our having anything to do with these prayers*. In his helpful book, *From Condemnation to Glory - an Exposition of Romans 8*, Dr. Maurice Irvin, former pastor, teacher and editor of *Alliance Life* magazine, suggests that this may be exactly what Paul is teaching in this passage.

[A]s I have read these verses over and over and as I have read the commentaries, I have had a persistent feeling that the Word of God may be saying at this point quite another thing [than the view held by the majority of commentators]. And my careful examination of the language indicates to me nothing that denies another possible interpretation.

I submit that the Word may be saying here that the Holy Spirit intercedes not only through us, but for us and not with yearnings and sighs we express but with groanings that cannot be uttered because they are expressed by the Holy Spirit apart from us.

The Bible says that Jesus now intercedes for us in heaven at the right hand of God. Can our text be telling us that here on earth the blessed Holy Spirit intercedes for us, prays for us, without our even being conscious of it or involved?⁸⁸

... What a wonderful teaching if this text is stating that God the Holy Spirit whom Jesus called the Paraclete, our guardian, is praying for us every day like that.

⁸⁷ Harrison, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Volume 10, Romans*, p.96.

Does it not lift your spirit to consider that the Spirit of God, this mighty, divine One, is constantly bearing us up in prayer? Does it not stagger your mind to think that, with a vast universe to uphold and eternal purposes to pursue and international activities to control and angels to supervise, Christ Jesus intercedes for us, the Holy Spirit busies Himself to pray for us and God the Father waits in heaven to hear these prayers and answer?⁸⁹

What a glorious thought this is. Even in my weaknesses, the Holy Spirit is within me, praying for me in exact accordance with God's will. When you feel weak and are about to quit, remember that the Holy Spirit is praying for you. And he is praying the perfect prayer for your situation. You may not know how to pray about your situation, but he does. There will come a day when we no longer see "but a poor reflection as in a mirror" (1 Corinthians 13:12). We will see and know clearly. However, until that day, the Spirit is helping us in our weakness, interceding for us with groans that words cannot express.

Whatever the ultimate meaning of these two verses might be - whether they are teaching that the Holy Spirit helps us pray by taking hold of his end of the task and praying with us, or whether they are teaching that the Holy Spirit prays for us without our taking part in these prayers at all - we are to be encouraged. Our weakness is not debilitating. God has more than covered our weakness by giving us the Holy Spirit.

We have seen how hope helps us in our suffering and how the Holy Spirit helps us in our weakness. But these are not the only ways God is helping his children. In every circumstance God is working for our good.

And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. Romans 8:28

No matter what I am going through, God is working for my good. God is not doing this for everyone. He is doing this for those "who love him, who have been called according to his purpose." I love God. I love him with all my heart. He called me for his purposes. I know this. I also know that he is actively working on my behalf. Praise God! He is not interested in my failure. Quite the opposite is true. He predestined me "to be conformed to the likeness of his Son" (verse 29).

For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified. Romans 8:29-30

These verses "speak of five great phases of divine redemption: foreknowledge, predestination, calling, justification, glorification."⁹⁰ Paul's purpose here is not to overwhelm you with complex theological terms. His purpose is to prove that God is for you.

The great danger in these verses is missing the forest (Paul's main point) because you are too busy dissecting the trees (the five terms themselves). Paul is not interested in explaining how God foreknew you, only that he did foreknow you. The same is true for his predestination, calling, justification and glorification.

While Christians may differ in how they see God undertaking these five actions, there is no question that he has done all of these things. This is great comfort indeed. How can any Christian,

88 Maurice R. Irvin, *From Condemnation to Glory: An Exposition of Romans 8* (Camp Hill, PA: Christian Publications, 1996), p. 109.

89 Irvin, *From Condemnation to Glory: An Exposition of Romans 8*, p. 111.

90 Earle, *Word Meanings in the New Testament*, p. 182.

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after hearing what God has done just for them, doubt that he is for them? This great thought leads Paul into some of the most comforting and strengthening words in the New Testament.

What, then, shall we say in response to this? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all - how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus, who died - more than that, who was raised to life - is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? As it is written:

“For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.”

*No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.
Romans 8:31-37*

God is for you. He is not against you. And since he is for you, who could possibly be against you? God proved his great love for you by giving his own Son so that you might have life. If he would do that for you, why would you ever doubt that he would give you everything else you need? God chose you. He justified you. He wanted you for himself! Who can condemn when God himself, the Righteous Judge, has chosen you?

But God the Father is not the only one on your side. Christ Jesus is, at this very moment, at the Father's side interceding for you. Jesus is talking to the Father about your needs! He doesn't want to see you fail, and he is doing everything he can to ensure your success. Jesus died for you and now he is living for you!

What could separate us from love like this? Imagine the very worst that could happen in this life - trouble, hardship, persecution, famine, nakedness, danger or the sword. Christians have experienced all of these for the last two thousand years. But none of these things have ever separated a believer from Christ's love. Not one. Even in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.

Paul isn't through yet, for his desire is to absolutely convince his readers of God's love for them.

For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord. Romans 8:38-39

Can you hear the Father speaking to you even right now, calling you, and telling you that he loves you? Today you know it by the Spirit within you, but one day very soon you will see the Father face to face and he will tell you himself. He will wipe away every tear from your eyes. Until that day let us live like the heroes before us have lived, “longing for a better country - a heavenly one” (Hebrews 11:16). May that day come soon. Come Lord Jesus.

DAY 6 (CONTINUED)

This week, the Holy Spirit has taught me ...

and we have used many tools (Scriptures) to disassemble the various parts. Hopefully, the tools feel somewhat comfortable in your hands. The book of Romans, at least the first eight chapters, should feel like an old friend by now.

These two selections I will be leaving you with are different, for they do not take us deep inside the engine. Rather, they take us outside the hood altogether. The two selections are from children's stories. Both are from the pen of C.S. Lewis.

The first selection is from *The Silver Chair*, the sixth book in Lewis' *The Chronicles of Narnia* series. Early in this story a girl named Jill searches for a stream to quench her great thirst. She finds the stream, but that is not all she finds. For lying next to the stream is a great lion named Aslan. The lion, as you will undoubtedly see in the selection below, is representative of Jesus. Here, in a simple, yet profound way, we learn great truths about the way to Jesus and his response to those who would come to him.

"Are you not thirsty?" said the Lion.

"I'm dying of thirst," said Jill.

"Then drink," said the Lion.

"May I - could I - would you mind going away while I do?" said Jill.

The Lion answered this only by a look and a very low growl. And as Jill gazed at its motionless bulk, she realized that she might as well have asked the whole mountain to move aside for her convenience.

The delicious rippling noise of the stream was driving her nearly frantic.

"Will you promise not to - do anything to me, if I do come?" said Jill.

"I make no promise," said the Lion.

Jill was so thirsty now that, without noticing it, she had come a step nearer.

"Do you eat girls?" she said.

"I have swallowed up girls and boys, women and men, kings and emperors, cities and realms," said the Lion. It didn't say this as if it were boasting, nor as if it were sorry, nor as if it were angry. It just said it.

"I daren't come and drink," said Jill.

"Then you will die of thirst," said the Lion.

"Oh dear!" said Jill, coming another step nearer. "I suppose I must go and look for another stream then."

"There is no other stream," said the Lion.⁹¹

People, like Jill, have a tremendous thirst for Jesus. Many times they don't know that it is Jesus that they are thirsting for, but it is Jesus. He is the only spiritual thirst-quencher. However, even when a person has found that the answer is Jesus, a difficult choice remains. For at that moment we are left to decide if we truly want Jesus. Do you want his presence in your life? Those who would come to him are forced to endure his abiding presence. Like the lion, he will not go away. He will not give

you his life apart from himself. He will not turn his eyes from your life. He loves you too much. If you step into his light, his light will shine on your sin and burn away the darkness. What is left is a reflection of him. This is why Jesus said that we must carefully consider the cost before we come to him. We are not to make a decision for Jesus in a fit of emotion. We are to sit down and count the cost of this relationship (see Luke 14:25-33). It does cost a great deal. There has never been a life that didn't change when it was given over to Jesus. He has swallowed up men and women, boys and girls. They disappear, yet he remains. Don't be afraid. Come to him and drink the water of life. Drink deeply. Let him bring refreshment to your soul.

When we come to Jesus, we do not change ourselves. We cannot change ourselves. The process of how we are changed is beautifully described in Romans. But I also like this little incident that took place in *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*, the fifth book in Lewis' *The Chronicles of Narnia* series. In this story a boy name Eustace turns into a dragon. I will not go into the reasons why Eustace turns into a dragon, but his "dragonness" is fairly representative of any life apart from the Lord (remember Romans 3:9-18). In the selection you are about to read, Eustace describes how he was "undragoned" by the great lion named Aslan. As you read, think about your own life and, if you know the Lord, how you were undragoned by him.

"I knew it was a well because you could see the water bubbling up from the bottom of it: but it was a lot bigger than most wells - like a very big, round bath with marble steps going down into it. The water was as clear as anything and I thought if I could get in there and bathe it would ease the pain in my leg. But the lion told me I must undress first. Mind you, I don't know if he said any words outloud or not.

"I was just going to say that I couldn't undress because I hadn't any clothes on when I suddenly thought that dragons are snaky sort of things and snakes can cast their skins. Oh, of course, thought I, that's what the lion means. So I started scratching myself and my scales began coming off all over the place. And then I scratched a little deeper and, instead of just scales coming off here and there, my whole skin started peeling off beautifully, like it does after an illness, or as if I was a banana. In a minute or two I just stepped out of it. I could see it lying there beside me, looking rather nasty. It was a most lovely feeling. So I started to go down into the well for my bathe.

"But just as I was going to put my feet into the water I looked down and saw that they were all hard and rough and wrinkled and scaly just as they had been before. Oh, that's all right, said I, it only means I had another smaller suit on underneath the first one, and I'll have to get out of it too. So I scratched and tore again and this underskin peeled off beautifully and out I stepped and left it lying beside the other one and went down to the well for my bathe.

"Well, exactly the same thing happened again. And I thought to myself, oh dear, how ever many skins have I got to take off? For I was longing to bathe my leg. So I scratched away for the third time and got off a third skin, just like the two others, and stepped out of it. But as soon as I looked at myself in the water I knew it had been no good.

"Then the lion said - but I don't know it spoke - 'You will have to let me undress you.' I was afraid of his claws, I can tell you, but I was pretty nearly desperate now. So I just lay flat down on my back to let him do it.

"The very first tear he made was so deep that I thought it had gone right into my heart. And when he began pulling the skin off, it hurt worse than anything I've ever felt. The only thing that made me able to bear it was just the pleasure of

feeling the stuff peel off. You know - if you've ever picked the scab of a sore place. It hurts like billy-oh but it is such fun to see it coming away."

"I know exactly what you mean," said Edmund.

"Well, he peeled the beastly stuff right off - just as I thought I'd done it myself the other three times, only they hadn't hurt - and there it was lying on the grass: only ever so much thicker, and darker, and more knobbly-looking than the others had been. And there was I as smooth and soft as a peeled switch and smaller than I had been. Then he caught hold of me - I didn't like that much for I was very tender underneath now that I'd no skin on - and threw me into the water. It smarted like anything but only for a moment. After that it became perfectly delicious and as soon as I started swimming and splashing I found that all the pain had gone from my arm. And then I saw why. I'd turned into a boy again. You'd think me simply phony if I told you how I felt about my own arms. I know they've no muscle and are pretty mouldy compared with Caspian's, but I was so glad to see them.

"After a bit the lion took me out and dressed me - "

"Dressed you. With his paws?"

"Well, I don't exactly remember that bit. But he did somehow or other: in new clothes ..."⁹²

If people do not come to Jesus and allow him to "undragon" themselves, they will remain dragons forever. If any man, woman, boy or girl will but come to Jesus, he will remove their old scaly skin and put a new heart in its place. He then dresses that former dragon in robes of righteousness. What a glorious thought! Why live like a dragon when the Lion of Judah is waiting to "undragon" you and clothe you like a prince?

These are the greatest truths that have ever been spoken. Do not be deceived into thinking that these truths are not for everyone. There is no plan B. The glorious gospel is all we have. The church has been entrusted with this gospel. It is our duty to proclaim this good news of Jesus wherever we go. Where the gospel goes, life always accompanies it.

Now to him who is able to strengthen you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery that was kept secret for long ages but has now been disclosed and through the prophetic writings has been made known to all nations, according to the command of the eternal God, to bring about the obedience of faith - to the only wise God be glory forevermore through Jesus Christ! Amen. Romans 16:25-27 ^{ESV}

92 C.S. Lewis, *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader* (New York: Scholastic Inc., 1995), 107-110.

NOTES

Lined writing area for notes.

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