

# **Bible Study for Paul's Letter to the Romans**

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# **Romans Bible Study**

## **Introduction**

### **Romans 1:1-15**

*"Romans has been seen . . . as the theological letter par excellence in the Pauline corpus. The need to expound his understanding of the gospel to a congregation that was not familiar with it gave Paul the opportunity to set out in detail his doctrines of justification by faith and the work of the Spirit in the believer." – I. Howard Marshall<sup>1</sup>*

*Romans "is most important as being the first well-developed theological statement by a Christian theologian which has come down to us, and one which has had incalculable influence on the framing of Christian theology ever since – arguably the single most important work of Christian theology ever written." – J. D. G. Dunn<sup>2</sup>*

#### **I. Authorship:**

- A. Paul identifies himself as the author in Romans 1:1.
- B. Paul's authorship of Romans was affirmed by early church leaders and accepted with little debate among Biblical academics even today.
- C. Paul was assisted by a scribe named Tertius (Romans 16:22).
  1. It is believed that Paul's eyesight was failing and we see evidence in many of Paul's letters that he required (or at least acknowledged) help in writing. Paul's advanced education would have equipped him to write his own letters so the use of a scribe possibly reveals a physical hindrance.
  2. Tertius is otherwise unknown to us as he does not appear anywhere else in the Biblical record and rarely do we see him in early church documents.

#### **II. Date of Writing:**

- A. This letter was definitely written before Paul's visit to Rome (Romans 1:11-13). If Paul had visited Rome before he accepted Christ it is not recorded in Acts. It is for sure, however, that Paul never visited Rome (or the church there) after his meeting with Jesus in Acts 9 and before his arrival in Acts 28.
- B. Based on Paul's statements in Romans 15:23-29, the letter seems to be written near the end of Paul's third missionary journey before his last visit to Jerusalem.
  1. Paul's description of his personal situation here is very similar to Acts 20:1-6, 16. Paul has fled Ephesus in light of the violent riot led by Demetrius (Acts 19). He travels through Macedonia and Greece for over three months, perhaps spending most of his time in Corinth due to the many problems that church faced after Paul planted the church on the second missionary journey (see 1 and 2 Corinthians).
  2. Paul was preparing to go to Jerusalem to do several things:
    - i. Deliver an offering to the Jerusalem church from the churches he had planted. Paul had been leading a collection for the Jerusalem church since Acts 11 in light of a prophesied famine.
    - ii. To celebrate Pentecost in Jerusalem (Acts 20:16). Though Paul was an Apostle to the Gentile he maintained many Jewish traditions and appreciated his Jewish heritage.
    - iii. To report to the church leaders in Jerusalem about his ministry. This was also a pattern in Paul ministry.
    - iv. To follow the leading of the Spirit (Acts 20:22). Paul comments that he is following the leading of the Spirit concerning his trip to Jerusalem. His

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<sup>1</sup> I. Howard Marshall, *New Testament Theology* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2004), 342.

<sup>2</sup> J. D. G. Dunn, "Letter to the Romans," in *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, ed. Gerald Hawthorne, Ralph P. Martin, Daniel G. Reid (Downers Grove: IVP, 1993), 838.

determination to go is not simply by his own design but by the leading of the Spirit. Paul demonstrated in Acts 16 that he is willing to follow the Spirit even if he is led in a direction he did not necessarily plan to go.

C. In light of the textual evidence, we can assume that Paul wrote this letter between 55-57 AD.

### III. Paul Plans to Visit Rome

- A. While Paul was writing his letter to the Romans it seems as if he was not aware of the trouble that would find him in Jerusalem. Although he recognizes the potential for trouble there (Romans 15:31) he is planning on leaving Jerusalem free and in good shape for a fourth missionary journey to Rome and Spain.
- B. However, after Paul writes this letter and begins that journey to Jerusalem, he quickly discerns that there will be great trouble awaiting him (Acts 20:22-25; 21:4, 10-15).
- C. Paul does make it to Rome as he predicted in the letter to the Romans. The circumstances of his travel, however, turned out to be very different from what Paul had planned. He planned to go as traveling missionary. He actually arrived as a captive prisoner.
- D. Paul wrote to the Romans that he expected to “come in the full measure of the blessing of Christ” (Romans 15:29). When he arrived he came as a prisoner (Acts 27:1) who barely escaped starvation (Acts 27:33-38), execution (Acts 27:42-43), shipwreck (27:41), and drowning (Acts 27:44) on the way. He survived all that only to be bitten by a lethal snake. We may not call that arriving “in the full measure of the blessings of Christ” but when Paul arrived he was able to preach “boldly and without hindrance” (Acts 28:21). For Paul, I think he would still say that he came “in the full measure of the blessings of Christ” despite his physical condition because suffering was not a sign of diminished blessings (2 Corinthians 12:10). The full measure of Christ’s blessings were experienced in his spiritual success in the midst of and despite his physical problems. Rome would eventually take Paul's head and end his life but not before Paul enjoyed fruitful ministry in that city "in the full measure of the blessings of Christ." We must not allow our physical sufferings to prevent our enjoyment of the "full measure of the blessings of Christ" in our life.

### IV. Place of Writing:

- A. As we mentioned above, Paul wrote from the region of Greece or Macedonia.
- B. He possibly composed this letter in the city of Corinth where there would have been access to letter writing materials and an easy path for the letter courier to take.
  - 1. The transport system between Corinth and Rome was well developed and well-traveled.
  - 2. Paul’s commendation of Phoebe from Cenchrea also puts the writing of this letter in Corinth since Cenchrea was less than 15 kilometers from Corinth. She may have been the letter carrier.

### V. Intended Recipients

- A. “To all in Rome who are loved by God and called to be saints.” (Romans 1:7).
- B. Paul intended this letter to be read by the church (or churches) in Rome.
  - 1. Paul did not plant this church. This is one of two letters that Paul wrote to a Christian community that he did not start (the other was Colossians).
  - 2. How did the church in Rome begin? We do not know with certainty but there are three probable theories:
    - i. It may have started when people from Rome who were saved on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:10) returned home with the Gospel. We do see evidence of other believers going out from the Pentecost event to plant churches independent of the Apostles in Acts 8 and 11.
    - ii. It may have started by Priscilla and Aquila (Romans 16:3). They lived in Rome before being expelled by Emperor Claudius and moving to Corinth where they met Paul (Acts 18:1-3). They traveled with Paul to Ephesus where Paul stationed them to help launch the ministry there (Acts 18:19, 24-26). They appear to be back in Rome by the time Paul wrote this letter. Perhaps

Paul sent them from Ephesus to Rome to plant the church (or help the already established church) after he returned to Ephesus.

- iii. It may have started when other disciples went to Rome with the Gospel after the scattering of the church due to persecution in Jerusalem (Acts 8:1-4). Paul seems to be aware of many people in the Roman church (Romans 16) perhaps indicating other colleagues went there to plant churches before him.

- 3. This historical record indicates the presence of the church in Rome as early as 49 AD (about fifteen years after the Pentecost event in Acts 2). The Roman historian Suetonius wrote that conflict broke out between the Jews in Rome in 49 AD due to a dispute over the Messiah. This is also mentioned in Acts 18:2.

#### C. Information about Rome:

- 1. Rome was the capital and largest city of the Roman Empire. During the time of Paul, there was an estimated 1,000,000 people living in Rome.
- 2. This was an ancient city but also very advanced in the time of Paul. By 14 AD, the city had running hot and cold water, a sanitation system, a police service, a fire prevention unit, law courts, and major road systems.
- 3. Rome was a diverse city with people representing cultures from all over the world.
  - i. Jewish people and culture were well represented in the city having arrived nearly 200 years before Paul and established synagogues.
  - ii. During Paul's time, there was an estimated 40,000 Jews living in Rome.
- 4. The city was the center of polytheistic Roman religion and the worship of many gods (not only Romans gods) took place there in numerous temples.
  - i. Roman families also worshipped their gods at home with personal shrines and idols.
  - ii. Roman religion and government were very closely connected. To attack the Roman religion was also as an attack on the Roman Empire.
  - iii. Regarding Roman religion, Mark Reasoner describes it as "in essence the performance of ritual. . . Roman religion taught that if one followed the rituals correctly, a contract would be made that obtained the 'peace of the gods.'"<sup>3</sup>

#### D. Jews and Gentiles

- 1. Paul wanted to ensure that the church in Rome did not favor only Jews, especially since it was located in the Gentile capital. Thus, Paul emphasized that the Gospel was also for the Gentiles. This was the theme of his ministry throughout his missionary career (Acts 13:44-48; 18:4)
- 2. This was also Paul's spoken message to Rome when he finally reached the city in Acts 28:17-31.
- 3. Paul's statement, "To all in Rome who are loved by God and called to be saints" was language that would have been considered appropriate for Jews but not for Gentiles. Paul uses this language to describe both.
- 4. See also Romans 1:16; 2:9-10; 3:9, 29; 9:24; 10:12; 11:13-15, 25-26; 15:18.

## VI. Purpose (Reasons for Writing):

### A. Paul had a Missionary Purpose

- 1. Although Paul recognized there was a Christian presence already in Rome, he still desired to see the Gospel preached more in Rome and even to preach there himself.
- 2. In this letter, Paul lays out in writing his missionary strategy and preaching content. Paul wrote to the Romans what he had been preaching in every city as he traveled. Although Luke records much about the movements of Paul, he does not report very extensively the teaching of Paul as he traveled. This letter most likely summarizes what Paul was preaching and teaching in those cities as he traveled in Acts.

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<sup>3</sup> Mark Reasoner, "Rome and Roman Christianity," in *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, ed. Gerald Hawthorne, Ralph P. Martin, Daniel G. Reid (Downers Grove: IVP, 1993), 852.

3. Paul also wanted the church to support him in his other missions endeavors, especially his plan to preach in Spain (Romans 15:23-24).
- B. Paul had a Apostolic Purpose
1. Paul may have sought to fill an apostolic void that existed in Rome. There is evidence that he wanted to help strengthen their apostolic foundation. It was also the practice of the early church to send an apostle to a new work to help them start strong (see Acts 8:14 and Acts 11:22). Rome may not have had this advantage.
  2. Paul also wanted to ensure the city received the whole and pure Gospel since false or incomplete gospels were being preached by false or bad teachers (see Galatians 1:6-9 for an example).
  3. Paul was the Apostle to the Gentiles (Romans 11:13; Galatians 2:8; and 1 Timothy 2:7). Paul understood his calling involved Gentiles and Rome was a capital city for the Gentiles.
    - i. In Acts 22:21 and 26:17, Jesus told Paul he was called to reach the Gentiles.
    - ii. Paul taught for years in a mixed congregation of Jews and Gentiles in Antioch (Acts 11:20-26).
    - iii. Paul's missionary ministry focused on reaching Gentiles from the beginning (Acts 13:16).
    - iv. Paul expressed a priority for the Gentiles during his missionary ministry (Acts 13:46 and 18:6)
    - v. Paul defended the Gentiles believers from the Judaizers as an Apostle at the Jerusalem council in Acts 15 and in Galatians.
    - vi. Thus, Rome was a priority for Paul.
- C. Paul had an Apologetic Purpose
1. Apologetics is the task of presenting a rational and intelligent basis for the Christian faith and a defense of that faith against objections or attacks
  2. Paul felt that the Gospel may be questioned or under attack in Rome and in need of defense or justification (Romans 1:16; 3:8; 9:1-2).
  3. Paul sought to intellectually defend Christianity against the attack of:
    - i. Jews - Paul had to demonstrate to them that Jesus was the Messiah and the New Covenant was both authentic and a reality.
    - ii. Gentiles - Paul had to prove the truth of monotheism in the midst of polytheism and that the God of Christianity was the one true God who alone can and will save.
- D. Paul had a Pastoral Purpose
1. Paul seems to be writing to resolve and/or heal potential or real division and disputes among the church(es) in Rome (Romans 12:1-15:6)
  2. A lack of pastoral leadership may have led to misunderstandings, debates, and divisions and Paul sought to heal those wounds as a concerned pastor.
- E. Paul had a Theological Purpose
1. Since Paul was unable to teach the truth in person he felt it necessary to thoroughly develop this teaching into a letter that could be read and studied in depth.
  2. Paul, as an educated Jew, was able to speak with authority to the Jews. With a record of love for Gentiles, he was also able to speak with credibility to the Gentiles. Thus, his writing could be potentially accepted by all.
  3. In all of Paul's letters we see where his theology informs his writing. His practical response and instructions to real problems in the church reveal the theological framework within which Paul thought and worked. This theology may not always be clear in his writing but it was always at work behind the scenes. However, in Romans, we see clearly his theology. Here we do not see only the practical application of Paul's universal and underlying theological principles, we see a (somewhat) systematic explanation of Paul's theology. This makes this letter quite unique as it is more of a textbook than a letter in some places.
  4. See "Overview of Theological Teaching in Romans" on page 6.

## VII. Paul Describes Himself

- A. A Servant of Christ Jesus – a common and humble description of himself (see also Galatians 1:10 and Titus 1:1)
- B. An Apostle
  1. Although Paul did not meet the initial requirements for an Apostle as set out in Acts 1:21-22 he was considered by himself and others to be a true, foundational Apostle.
  2. The word “apostle” comes from the Greek word *αποστολος* which simply means “messenger” or “sent one.”
  3. In Christianity, however, Apostles were considered Christians leaders of special importance as they were the ones who had been with Jesus personally and able to teach with the most accuracy and authority on matters of Christianity.
  4. Paul describes the nature of his apostleship in 1 Corinthians 15:7-10.
  5. Paul also uses this title in 1 Corinthians, 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Colossians, 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, and Titus.
- C. Set Apart for the Gospel
  1. The idea of being “set apart” is a common Biblical theme for a special calling by God.
  2. The language here reminds us of Acts 13:2 where Paul and Barnabas were “set apart” by the Spirit for missionary ministry.
- D. Having Great Love for the Romans
  1. Paul was a Roman himself (by birth in legal terms – see Acts 22:25-29). He had a heart for this city and this empire.
  2. His love for the Romans was not diminished because they were Gentiles but rather affirmed because of this. Paul knew God had called him to reach the Gentiles, even Romans (the enemies of many Jews). See Romans 1:5; 8-15.
  3. Though Paul had never been to the city or seen many of its people, he prayed for them often and longed for their spiritual well-being.
  4. Paul had attempted to visit Rome in the past but was prevented.
    - i. Perhaps Paul has been prevented physically. The cost of going to Rome may have been an obstacle. The physical strength needed to make a journey to Rome may have also been an issue considering the poor condition of Paul’s health at that time (see 2 Corinthians 11:23-33)
    - ii. Perhaps Paul had been prevented by the Spirit. We see in Acts 16 that Paul had planned to go north into Asia but the Spirit stopped those plans and led him west into Europe instead. Paul’s prevention in going to Rome may have been an act of the Spirit and Paul was committed to following the Spirit even when it meant sacrificing his own plans.

## VIII. Paul Describes the Gospel

- A. The Letter of Romans contains the word “Gospel” (*ευαγγελιον* in Greek) more than any of Paul’s letters and more than any other book in the New Testament.
- B. Definition:
  1. The word in the Greek literally means “good news.”
  2. Before the word was used in Christianity it was a Greek military term used to describe the winning of a battle or victory in war over an enemy.
  3. In terms of literature, a “Gospel” is a collection of narratives (stories) about Jesus including his notable sayings and deeds.
  4. Paul, however, discusses “Gospel” in Romans as a theological concept.
- C. “of God”
  1. Paul’s gospel message is not his own nor is it from any man alone, it is from God.
  2. Paul describes this concept with great enthusiasm in Galatians 1:6-12.
- D. “Promised beforehand through his prophets in the Holy Scriptures.”
  1. For Paul, the Gospel was not solely a New Testament concept. It had been introduced and foretold in the Old Testament. It was that to which the Old Testament

pointed. Thus, anyone truly loyal to Old Covenant Judaism would naturally accept this New Testament Gospel.

2. Later in Romans, Paul will describe specifically some of the places in the Old Testament where the Gospel is presented and preached.

E. “Regarding his Son”

1. The primary component in God’s Gospel is God’s son.

2. The Gospel is expressed in and through Jesus who is the Word (John 1:1)

## **IX. Paul Describes Jesus**

A. He is the Son of God.

1. Paul’s description of the sonship of Jesus is described in Colossians 1:15-20.

2. Although Paul gives little explanation here, we can see from the Colossians passage that Paul did not see Jesus as less than the Father or as a created being. Sonship describes his special relationship with the Father, not his creation or his inferiority.

B. He was human.

1. While Paul affirms both the humanity and the deity of Jesus, he emphasizes the humanity of Christ here as he prepared to compare his humanity with our humanity later in the letter. We failed to honor God in our humanity but in Jesus we see a human who perfectly obeyed and honored God.

2. As a human, Jesus was born to the family line of David and thus was qualified to serve as the Messiah according to Old Testament prophecies.

C. Resurrected

1. As mentioned in 1 Corinthians 15, Paul saw the resurrection of Christ as a priority in both affirming the Gospel and giving hope to believers.

2. The resurrection of Christ demonstrated that Jesus was who he said he was and that he can do what he said he can do. He is all-powerful (omnipotent) and eternal (never ending nor beginning).

# Overview of Theological Teaching in Romans

## Mankind's Need for God

1. Human Sinfulness – Romans 1:18-2:11
2. Fallen Humanity is Prone to Sin – Romans 7:15-21
3. No Excuse for Sin Among Jews – Romans 2:17-27
4. No Excuse for Sin Among Gentiles – Romans 2:12-16
5. No one is Made Righteous by Works – Romans 3:9-18, 23
6. Humans are Unable to Obey the Law – Romans 7:8-14
7. Sin Causes Death – Romans 6:19-23

## Identity of the People of God

1. People of Spiritual Circumcision, not Physical Circumcision – Romans 2:28-29
2. People who have Faith in God – Romans 9:30-32
3. Ethnic Jews are in need of salvation – Romans 10:1; 11:1-12
4. Example of the Grafting Olive Branches – Romans 11:13-24
5. God wants Jews to be saved, they are not abandoned – Romans 11:25-32

## Holy Living

1. Sin does not bring glory to God, only holiness does – Romans 3:3-8
2. Sin is powerless over the believer (believers are dead to sin) – Romans 6:1-2
3. Believers have power over sin – Romans 6:11-18
4. The Holy Spirit assists us in overcoming sin – Romans 8:5-17
5. Believers are living sacrifices to God – Romans 12:1
6. Life a life patterned after God, not culture – Romans 12:2
7. Testimony to the world – Romans 13:1-14

## The Old Testament Law

1. The Law is unable to save – Romans 8:3
2. The purpose of the Law is to make humanity aware of their sins – Romans 3:19-20; 5:20; 7:7
3. Now humanity should hold onto Jesus, not the Law – Romans 7:1-6
4. By faith in Jesus, we will keep the moral Law of God – Romans 3:31
5. Fulfilled in Jesus – Romans 10:4

## Salvation by Faith Through God's Grace

1. God's Plan of Salvation – Romans 3:21-26
2. God's Work so None can Boast – Romans 3:27-30; 12:3
3. Example of Salvation by Faith in the Old Testament (Abraham) – Romans 4:1-24
4. Quotes Genesis 15:5 three times in Romans 4
5. Salvation accomplished through faith in the believer – Romans 10:8-13

## The Work of Jesus

1. Jesus became a Sacrifice for Atonement (reconciliation/restoration) – Romans 3:25
2. Jesus died so that our sins could be forgiven and rose again (finished the task) for our justification (to make us innocent) – Romans 4:25
3. Jesus died in the place of evil sinners – Romans 5:6-8
4. Jesus reconciles sinners – Romans 5:10-11
5. Jesus lives to save – Romans 5:10
6. Jesus removes condemnation – Romans 8:1-2
7. Jesus justifies (make innocent) believers – Romans 5:9
8. Incarnation for Salvation – Romans 8:3-4



### The Benefits of Salvation

1. Peace/Reconciliation with God – Romans 5:1, 10
2. Becoming Christ-like – Romans 8:29
3. Access to God – Romans 5:2
4. Hope for Future Glory – Romans 5:3; 8:30
5. Indwelling of the Holy Spirit – Romans 5:5
6. Justification (made innocent) – Romans 5:9; 8:30
7. Ability to Endure Suffering – Romans 8:18
8. Adoptions as Children of God – Romans 8:23
9. Assistance from the Holy Spirit – Romans 8:26-27
10. Membership in a community of unity and love – Romans 12:4-21, Chapters 14-15

### Significance of Water Baptism – Romans 6:3-10

#### The Status of Creation

1. Corrupted by Sin – Romans 8:20-22
2. Awaiting Redemption – Romans 8:19

#### Already/Not Yet Theology - Romans 8:24-25

#### Comparison of Adam and Jesus – Romans 5:12-16:

1. Adam
  - a. Produced Sin
  - b. Produced Death
  - c. Caused Many to Die
  - d. Produced Condemnation
2. Jesus
  - a. Forgives Sin
  - b. Offers Eternal Life
  - c. Causes Many to Live
  - d. Offers Justification

## **Romans Bible Study**

### **Romans 1:16-32**

*"In the proclamation of the Gospel God is actively at work in reaching out to the hearts of the people. . . It is not a lifeless message but a vibrant encounter for everyone who responds in faith." – Robert H. Mounce<sup>4</sup>*

#### **I. Romans 1:16-17:**

- A. Many see this passage as Paul's thesis statement or summary statement for the theological content of the letter. Everything written from here until Romans 15:22 connects to, explains, or defends this statement.
- B. Five broad themes or topics appear in this passage that dominate the content of Romans:
  1. Gospel – The message and work of Jesus, particularly in the establishment of the New Covenant
  2. Salvation – the eternal result of believing the Gospel
  3. Everyone who believe – the universal scope of the Gospel (although the Jews are a priority and received the message first, the Gentiles are as much the recipients and targets of the Gospel as the Jews).
  4. Righteousness from God – this statement has to be unpacked quite a bit in Romans (see summary below).
  5. By Faith – this has become a primary theme for Paul since the teaching of the Judaizers threatened the Gospel message in Acts 15 in Antioch and Galatia. Paul's encounter with these false teachers forced his to develop his doctrine of Justification by Faith Alone which indicates that God accepts us by our belief and not by our works or a mix of belief and works. Good works are the result of salvation but not the prerequisite.
- C. Righteousness from God – what is that?
  1. The Possibilities:
    - i. Possibility 1: The attribute or quality of God, his uprightness or his character.
    - ii. Possibility 2: The law of God, his requirements for holy living.
    - iii. Possibility 3: The justice of God, his judgement of the sinful and evil creation.
    - iv. Possibility 4: The gift of God, a status given by God to those who respond to him in faith.
    - v. Possibility 5: The faithfulness of God, action taken by God to keep his promises and make things right.
  2. Robert Mounce sees Paul's uses of this statement as encompassing several of these aspects. He writes, "There is no question that righteousness is an attribute of God, and God clearly is actively involved in declaring righteous those who turn to him in faith. The result is that people of faith are declared to be righteous. They have laid hold of the righteousness from God. With the major emphasis remaining on the status of the one declared righteous, there is no reason to deny that [the other aspects] are integrally related and should not be excluded from the larger view of the issue."<sup>5</sup>
  3. In reality, the Gospel can highlight all the various aspects of the "righteousness from God." For those who believe it describes the good news of God's righteousness being extended to us as God's act of salvation. For those who do not believe it describes the bad news of God's righteousness condemning and preparing people for his justice and wrath.
  4. F. F. Bruce writes, "When the righteousness of God is revealed in the gospel, it is revealed in a twofold manner. The gospel tells us first how men and women, sinners as they are, can come to be 'in the right' with God; and second how God's personal

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<sup>4</sup> Robert H. Mounce, *Romans* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1995), 70.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid*, 73.

righteousness is vindicated in the very act of declaring sinful men and women ‘righteous.’”<sup>6</sup>

D. Habakkuk 2:4

1. Paul quotes this text in Romans 1:17 to offer Old Testament support for his doctrine of Justification by Faith Alone. The idea that the most appropriate response to God is faith is not just a New Testament concept. It has always been the way by which God wanted his people to respond to him.
2. Paul also quotes this in Galatians 3:11.

## II. The Wrath of God

- A. See scriptural diagram for a presentation of this text.
- B. Rather than dwelling on the good news presents in Romans 1:16-17, Paul immediately begins discussing the bad news of God’s coming wrath. Paul is following the Biblical pattern of first describing mankind’s problem and need for God then presenting mankind with the solution to the problem. Paul knows that the good news can only be fully appreciated when the bad news is also adequately explained.
- C. In conjunction with God’s righteousness being revealed through the Gospel, God’s wrath is also being revealed to the world.
  1. The revelation of God’s wrath should not be interpreted as individual events or natural disasters that affect certain people at certain times. Much of the events we would ascribe as God’s wrath affect both believers and non-believers.
  2. Paul is speaking in more general terms. God is moving the course of human history towards a final judgement of the world. The gospel, therefore, is preached not for us to escape the normal, natural problems and calamities of the fallen world but the eternal condemnation that awaits all who reject God.
  3. Also, keep in mind that even though God’s wrath is mainly described in chapter 1 as being directed towards Gentiles, Paul will state in chapter 2 that God’s wrath is also being stored up for unbelieving Jews. Just as the Gospel is for all who believe, God’s wrath is for all who do not.

## III. Natural Revelation

- A. Paul describes in Romans 1 what has been termed in theology “Natural Revelation.”
  1. The term “revelation” in Christian theology is defined as information made known to humanity about God.
  2. In Christian theology, there are two types of revelation:
    - i. Natural or General Revelation
    - ii. Special Revelation
  3. Natural revelation is information revealed by God about himself through his creation which is available to everyone.
  4. Special revelation is information revealed by God about himself through special, supernatural communication and is primarily found in the person of Jesus and the in Scripture.
- B. As Paul writes, natural or general revelation is sufficient to testify to humanity of God’s existence and his nature. It is also sufficient to testify to his righteousness requirements (right and wrong). Thus, everyone is guilty of sin based on God’s revelation of himself to the world via his own creation.
- C. However, natural or general revelation is not sufficient to bring someone to salvation. It was not designed to do so. Natural revelation for the Gentile is like the Old Covenant for the Jews, it was given by God to prepare humanity for the special revelation found in Jesus and the Gospel.
- D. John Calvin wrote that natural or general revelation is like lamps burning in the distance. “So many lamps shine for us in the workmanship of the universe to show forth the glory of its

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<sup>6</sup> F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle of Paul to the Romans* (Grand Rapids: Tyndale, 1977), 78.

Author. Although they bathe us wholly in their radiance, yet the can of themselves in no way lead us into the right light” even though sometimes they do “strike some sparks.”<sup>7</sup>

#### IV. The Terrible Exchange

- A. Here we see a New Testament retelling of the Garden of Eden (even though the events in Romans 1 are not limited to a certain people or a certain time).
  - 1. God establishes the world and gives his commands.
  - 2. Mankind exchange the truthful word of God for the deceitful word of the serpent. (Just as in the Garden of Eden, we see both man and woman described individually as practicing sin).
  - 3. Mankind is handed over to the curse that follows their sin and disobedience.
- B. Thrice Paul describes mankind exchanging the truth for a lie or foolishness.
  - 1. Romans 1:22-23
  - 2. Romans 1:25
  - 3. Romans 1:26-27
  - 4. In each of these cases, the act is likened to idolatry and results in both foolish behavior by mankind and righteous judgement by God.
- C. After each case of mankind’s exchange we see God “handing over”
  - 1. The handing over of mankind by God to sin describes a God involved in our lives. He is not passively allowing us to slip farther away from him, he is actually involved in giving us away to own sin and its consequences.
  - 2. We should see this, however, not as an acts of God’s of anger but God’s act of love. As seen in 1 Corinthians 5:1-5, the purpose of being handed over (in the context of mankind’s sin and God’s response) is for their eventual and ultimate salvation, not destruction. God has allowed us to experiences the consequences of our sin for a time so that we might return to him and enjoy the benefits of our salvation of eternity. The Gospel being given in the confirmation of that plan of God.

#### V. Homosexuality

- A. There can be no question that Paul saw homosexual sexual relationships as sinful and undertaken by those who have rejected the right ways and knowledge of God. Although some have made arguments to the contrary, they have little strength when the whole of the passage is read in context.
- B. David F. Wright writes that homosexuality was very common in Rome and this fact was well known throughout the world, especially to the Jews who publically condemned this practice in Rome. Thus, Paul focused on homosexuality not to expose it as a chief sin but rather uses it as just one example of how the Gentiles had chosen lives “so self-evidently contrary to God’s creative purpose.” Nevertheless, Wright concludes that, “Paul does not single out same-sex intercourse as specially perverted or monstrous. He list it alongside theft, drunkenness and perjury, as well as adultery and murder.”<sup>8</sup>
- C. The Jews may have seen the homosexuality of the Romans as being evidence of the complete absences of knowledge of God in Rome. Paul sees it, however, as evidence of the rejection of knowledge about God. It may have been scandalous that Paul would even offer them the gospel message.
- D. Doulas Moo writes that Paul does not emphasize homosexuality here because “he regards it as a more serious sin than others but because he sees it as a particularly clear illustration of the violation of the created order. In any case, we are clearly called on to offer the same love and hope through the gospel to homosexuals that we offer to any caught up in any forms of sin.”<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> John Calvin, *Institutes*, 1.5.14.

<sup>8</sup> David F. Wright, “Homosexuality,” in *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, ed. Gerald Hawthorne, Ralph P. Martin, Daniel G. Reid (Downers Grove: IVP, 1993), 413-414.

<sup>9</sup> Douglas J. Moo, *The NIV Application Commentary: Romans* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 67.

## **Romans Bible Study**

### **Romans 2**

*"A man's destiny on Judgement Day will not depend on whether he has known God's will but on whether he has done it." – A. M. Hunter<sup>10</sup>*

#### **I. The Wrath of God**

- A. In Chapter 2, Paul continues his discussion on the wrath of God. We have to keep in mind that what Paul is writing is not only his opinion of man, it is also God's opinion. God sees humanity as Paul describes.
- B. Wrath, therefore, is not the overblown response of an angry God. It is the appropriate response of a just God. Paul makes this clear by pointing that we have no excuse for our behavior (Romans 1:20; 2:1). If God acted in wrath when we were with excuse (innocent) that would indicate that he was not the loving God we claim him to be.
- C. God's love is actually seen in the midst of his wrath. Although it is ready to be poured out, it is delayed by God in anticipation of our repentance and salvation.

#### **II. An Unexpected Turn**

- A. The previous comments directed towards Gentiles (Chapter 1) would have been expected and shared by the Jewish readers of Romans. Other Jewish writers (both Christian and non-Christian) wrote very similarly to Paul concerning Gentiles and God's wrath towards them. In a book called "the Wisdom of Solomon" composed most likely in the first century BC, the writer makes statements so similar to Paul that some believe Paul may have been influenced by this work.
- B. The next section, however, would come as a shock and unwelcome surprise to the Jewish reader. The same wrath that God was ready to pour out on the Gentiles was also being stored up for the Jews.
- C. Although the Jews were perhaps not presently guilty of the same sins of the Gentiles, their sins were still real and offensive to God. Even though they were Jews and God's chosen people, they still stood guilty of their sins. Their ethnicity was not an excuse or a protection from God's wrath. In fact, their priority in receiving the truth of God would result in their priority in receiving the wrath of God when they neglect or reject that truth.
- D. Paul will continue to discuss the Jews as deserving of God's wrath except for a brief return to Gentiles and General Revelation in Romans 2:14-15. Here Paul writes that God's law may not be known to Gentile minds but is somehow written on Gentiles' hearts. Their consciences may not instruct them on God's law but it makes them aware of their sin and bad decisions.

#### **III. Paul, the Prophet**

- A. At this point, Paul stands in the long tradition of Jewish prophets rising up to pronounce God's coming wrath on both the Gentiles around Israel and Israel itself.
- B. In the Old Testament, we find both announcements of condemnation and calls to repentance from the Jewish prophets. Though Paul never calls himself a prophet, he serves in that role here as he states the present situation and foretells of the coming consequences.

#### **IV. The Old Testament System of Salvation**

- A. Although Paul speaks several times of the Old Testament law and its system in Romans 2, Paul's summary of this system is found in 2:6. A similar statement is actually found in Psalms 62:12 and Proverbs 24:12.
- B. For those who have taken seriously what Paul has written previously to this statement, whether Jew or Gentile, this is actually a statement of bad news. This is not quite the Gospel message that Paul will proclaim. This is very much a summary of the Old Testament system

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<sup>10</sup> A. M. Hunter, *Romans* (London: SCM, 1955), 36.

were obeying the law was the only method of salvation. That God would “give to each person according to what he has done” means we are deserving and expecting wrath.

- C. Paul knows that the struggle between New Covenant living and Old Covenant beliefs is real. Here Paul is attempting to prepare the reader to understand the place of the Old Covenant in New Covenant salvation. Paul is bringing his readers to the point of crisis before discussing the Gospel solution.
- D. For now, however, Paul wants the reader to remember the system under which they lived as members of the Old Covenant community. Each person will be judged on what they have done (or failed to do).

## V. Jewish Priority

- A. Jews saw their priority in receiving the truth from God as a demonstration of God’s intention to save them. Paul, however, points out that their priority in receiving truth was a demonstration of God’s intent on saving all.
- B. Paul rebuked the Jewish reader for not fulfilling the calling that accompanied their priority. Jews were called to be (but failed to be):
  - 1. A Standard Bearer of Truth (Superior Ways)
  - 2. A Guide for the Blind
  - 3. An Instructor of the Foolish
  - 4. A Teacher of Infants
- C. Paul pointed out that the Old Testament prophets also rebuked Israel for failing to be God’s witness to the world (In Romans 2:24 he quotes Isaiah 52:5). Leviticus 18:5 also makes this clear.
- D. Jesus also often rebuked the Jewish religious authorities for neglecting their duties. They put too much energy into maintaining their superiority and too little energy into being the light they were called to be. Robert Mounce points out that “People have a fatal tendency to substitute passive agreement for action. But God does not pronounce people righteous because their doctrine is correct. Only those who do what God requires are declared righteous.”<sup>11</sup>
- E. Thus, while Gentiles shall receive the wrath of God because they suppressed or rejected the truth, Jews shall receive the wrath of God because they hid or squandered the truth.
- F. Having the law did not make the Jews exempt from God’s wrath, the only thing that makes one stand righteous before God was obeying the law; the Jews had a history of now doing that very well.
- G. Robert Mounce writes that Paul here is giving “a warning to the Jews not to assume that their national identity was sufficient to provide them a right standing before God.”<sup>12</sup>

## VI. Circumcision

- A. Jewish priority was often desecrated in terms of circumcision for two reasons:
  - 1. It was an outward expression of an inward reality – a way of demonstrating right belief.
  - 2. It was a stark contrast to the Gentiles who did not practice it – a way of demonstrating difference.
- B. Paul did not choose to dwell on circumcision. It was made necessary to discuss this because his opponents (the Judaizers in Acts 15 and Galatians) made this one issue into a type of litmus test for right standing with God.
- C. Paul understood, however, that a focus on circumcision was pointless if the heart of the person was right with God. In Paul’s argument, he sought to address the issue in terms of the above reasons for promoting it:
  - 1. It did not necessarily demonstrate right belief because a person could be circumcised in his flesh (outwardly obedient) but sinful in his heart (inwardly corrupt).

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<sup>11</sup> Mounce, 94.

<sup>12</sup> Mounce, 88.

2. It did not necessarily demonstrate difference between Jews and Gentiles because even though they may have outward contrasts, inwardly they both stood as recipients of God's wrath.

## **VII. Don't Judge Me**

- A. Although this scripture (Romans 2:1-4) discourages us against passing judgement on others, we should be mindful of the context. Paul is discussing unbelievers here. Within the church, however, we are instructed to evaluate ourselves and others for the sake of accountability.
- B. Robert Mounce writes, "The king of judging Jesus and Paul referred (negatively) to was not a sane appraisal of character based on conduct but a hypocritical and self-righteous condemnation of the other person. . . Evaluation is not the same of condemnation."<sup>13</sup>

## **VIII. Crisis**

- A. Even though Paul's letter to the Romans begins with a few pleasant remarks, the first three chapters of Romans is predominantly a discussion of the crisis faced by both Jews and Gentiles.
- B. Paul recognized that a description of the Gospel may not have as much impact outside the context of this crisis. It is often the crisis in our life that brings us to repentance and renews our faithfulness to God. Unfortunately, even our spiritual vibrancy can diminish as the crisis becomes more of a memory than a priority. This was true in Israel where spiritual/covenantal renewal was often found in the midst of crisis. Paul knew that would be most likely true for his readers and warned them of the ancient but urgent crisis they faced in terms of sin and salvation.
- C. The crisis discussion continues into the next chapter. Paul, however, will also reintroduce the good news (the Gospel) after a few concluding remarks about the bad news.

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<sup>13</sup> Mounce, 88-89.

## **Romans Bible Study**

### **Romans 3:1-20**

*"Believers should not so presume on their 'security' that they fail to make every effort to bring their lives into obedience to Christ. It is precisely for this reason that many . . . prefer the slogan 'perseverance of the saints' to 'eternal security.' For the former contains the reminder that the saints need to persevere if they expect to attain glory." – Douglas J. Moo<sup>14</sup>*

#### **I. The Benefits of Being Ethnic Jews**

- A. In Chapter 2, Paul shocked his readers by explaining that Jews would also receive the wrath of God just like Gentiles because both had failed to live up to the standards God provided:
1. The Gentiles had failed to live according to the law of God (or even acknowledge his presence) as revealed through general revelation:
    - i. Nature (Romans 1:18-23)
    - ii. Inner Conscious (Romans 2:14-15)
  2. The Jews had failed to live according to the law of God as revealed through special revelation:
    - i. The covenant between God and Abraham
    - ii. The law given through Moses
    - iii. The word of the Prophets
- B. The Jews had developed an idea that since they had been entrusted and blessed with God's special revelation, he would likewise exempt them from his wrath even if some Jews failed to live according to his standards.
- C. Paul asserts that this is not the case. Outward Jewish ethnicity and practices do not mean (automatic) right standing (righteousness) before God. If outward acts are the result of inward realities, they are valuable. However, if the outside is clean but the inside is corrupt, the outward expressions of godliness have no value.
- D. Thus, Paul anticipates his audience's next question which he uses to carry the conversation forward in Romans 3.
1. Jew's Question to Paul: If what you say is true (that we will receive the wrath of God just as Gentiles will because we do not live perfectly according to God's law) what value is there in being a Jew at all?
  2. The Origin of the Question: It is doubtful that these Jews have begun to despise their ethnicity. Most likely, they are skeptical of Paul's remarks so Paul inserts this question in order to address the real concern which centered around the idea that the Jewish people are God's chosen people. Jews are his holy nation, his royal priesthood, his prized possession (Exodus 19:4-5). How does Paul's theology deal with this? Is Paul trying to change the special status of the Jewish people?
  3. Paul's Response to the Question: Paul makes it clear that he is not trying to diminish the status of Jews. He is one himself and understands the importance of their community.
    - i. First, Paul says, they were given the law and that makes them special. The whole world only has access to general revelation but the Jewish people have been favored with God's special revelation. They have the covenant, the law, and the prophets.
    - ii. Second, they have the faithfulness of God. God will be true to his covenant and his promises. Jewish unfaithfulness does not diminish God's faithfulness.
    - iii. Nevertheless, even in Exodus 19 when God designated the Jews as his treasured possession and reaffirmed the covenant with them, God clearly stated that this relationship would be contingent upon the Jews keeping the law. This keeping the law did not mean merely preservation or passing it down wholly to the next generation. It meant obedience. Even though God

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<sup>14</sup> Moo, 109.



has been gracious to the Jews in their disobedience in the past, it did not mean that God was overlooking their disobedience.

4. Paul's Question to the Jews: If God could not judge the Jews (who had the Law) by the Law how could he judge the world (who did not fully have the Law) by those standards? In fact, the righteousness and just nature of God requires him to hold everyone to account by the same standard.

E. Robert Mounce writes, "The Jewish nation was to be the guardian of all that God has revealed through his spokesmen. Of all the nations on earth God has chosen the Jews to be the custodians of his redemptive plan for the human race."<sup>15</sup>

## II. Antinomianism

A. Antinomianism is the idea that laws do not apply to certain people. There are two aspects of antinomianism being addressed here. There is the unofficial antinomianism that many Jews espouse and the gross antinomianism that Paul is being accused of by the Judaizers. Both are wrong.

### B. Jewish Antinomianism

1. While the Jews would always affirm that need to follow the law, over the generations there arose an idea that their status exempted them from the consequences of not following the law. It was even said that our unfaithfulness has allowed God to show the world the great extent of his unfaithfulness.
2. Paul, as both a strict Pharisee and a believer, would have been greatly opposed to this idea. Even if God is faithful when we are not, that is not reason to be unfaithful. We should always respond to his faithfulness with faithfulness and obedience.

### C. Paul's Antinomianism

1. It seems as if Paul's dispute with the Judaizers (Acts 15, Galatians) never really ended. They accused Paul of being an antinomian (see Acts 21:17-31). Paul alludes to their accusations in Romans 3:8.
2. It is possible that either the Judaizers themselves has come to Rome and made the allegations against Paul or that the Roman Christians were familiar with their dispute with Paul.
3. Paul, however, is not anti-law. However, as we will see later, he see the purpose of the law differently from the Judaizers and most Jews. Where the Jews would see the Law as showing the way to salvation, Paul sees the law as showing the need for salvation (Romans 3:20).

## III. A Hard Word

A. Paul is able to conclude in Romans 3:9 that even though Jews are certainly more blessed and special than the Gentiles in history past, they are essentially in the same condition as they enter eternity. Both have sinned and both will justly receive the wrath of God.

B. Paul supports that claim with several Old Testament scriptures:

1. Psalm 53:1-3
2. Ecclesiastes 7:20
3. Psalm 5:9 (which says sinners have really, really bad breath)
4. Psalm 140:3
5. Psalm 10:7
6. Isaiah 59:7-8
7. Psalm 36:1

C. This would have been the ultimate test for the Jews: does scripture support what Paul is saying. Indeed, even the Old Covenant is in agreement with Paul.

## IV. A Concluding Statement

A. Romans 3:19-20 serve as a conclusion to Romans 1:18 – 3:18.

1. The Law is God's standard for living for all people, both Jews and Gentiles.

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<sup>15</sup> Mounce, 104.

2. God will judge all people according to that Law in the same way, both Jews and Gentiles.
  3. No human being has been able to live according to God's standard and thus be declared righteous in his sight, neither Jew nor Gentiles.
  4. Everyone is a sinner in need of salvation, both Jew and Gentiles.
- B. For Paul, salvation is about coming into right standing with God since sin has taken us out of right standing before God.
  - C. The purpose of the Law: Here Paul explains why the Law was given. It makes clear our need for salvation (to come into right standing before God, righteousness) and our inability to save ourselves.
- V. What About Today?
- A. It seems that the majority of Romans 2 and 3 is for the Jews in Paul's day. How are we to apply this text for us, Gentiles living far from Rome 2,000 years later?
  - B. There arises within many communities (and individuals) who have been associated with God generationally a temptation to think that God has a special grace for us. Although we might never explicitly articulate it, we can develop an attitude that somehow God will judge us differently or that he looks at us with special concern over and above others. This creates a self-righteousness or false superiority that causes us to see others as less of a priority. When we think too highly of ourselves, we forget that we are, as Paul told the Jews, just like those you so readily condemn – desperately needing the grace of God.
  - C. Jesus used a parable to describe this condition in Matthew 20:1-16.
- VI. Good News at Last
- A. Paul has brought his readers to a crisis and the brink of despair. Paul's conclusion in 3:19-20 was a hard blow to the Jews.
  - B. Yet in 3:21, Paul will begin to share this good news (Gospel) which he alluded to in Romans 1:16-17. But now. . .

## **Romans Bible Study**

### **Romans 3:21-31**

*"Paul's hope, before he became a Christian, was that by dint of perseverance in observing the law of God, he might at length be pronounced righteous by God when he stood before His judgement-seat. But in this way of righteousness apart from the law, the procedure is reversed: God pronounces a man righteous at the beginning of his course, not at the end of it." – F. F. Bruce<sup>16</sup>*

#### **I. Moving on to Good News**

- A. Paul has spent a considerable amount of time and space in this letter discussing bad news:
  - 1. The depraved condition of Gentiles
  - 2. The unrighteousness status of the Jews
  - 3. The wrath of God that is ready to be poured out on both
  - 4. The inability of either Jew or Gentile to reconcile with God, generate righteousness, and escape wrath.
- B. The point of this was not to discourage the reader but to provide the reader with the proper context to both accept and appreciate the next section which brings Paul's discussion of what was introduced in Romans 1:16-17. Paul has now prepared his audience for the good news by explaining and convincing them of their spiritual condition outside of God's grace.
- C. Thus, anyone who fully grasps the crisis situation presented and described by Paul in the previous section will welcome with joy and relief this next statement: "But now . . ."
  - 1. "But now" means since the coming of Jesus and his death on the cross. In the aftermath of his incarnate work. . .
  - 2. Even though this even happened at a particular point in time, God viewed event from eternity past, even alluding to it is Genesis 3:15. Thus, the work may have taken place at one point on a timeline but its implications reach far beyond time and space as Paul will indicate in Romans 3:25-26 and elsewhere.

#### **II. Method for Righteousness**

- A. What is Righteousness
  - 1. In the original Greek word that Paul uses, the word means "the standard that a judge must uphold and the measure by which he must judge." If a person meets the standard, they are deemed to be righteous.
  - 2. In the Old Testament, the word deals with right standing with God.
- B. Paul is saying that since the death of Jesus on the cross has been completed, the method by which humanity obtains righteousness has been redefined.
- C. Old Testament:
  - 1. The path of righteousness in the Old Covenant is summarized in Deuteronomy 6:20-25.
  - 2. Righteousness is found/generated/obtained by doing all the commands and works of the law perfectly and completely.
- D. New Testament:
  - 1. In the New Covenant, humanity is declared righteous by grace through faith in Jesus.
  - 2. Ultimately, this was God's plan from the beginning – Genesis 15:6
    - i. The testimony of the law
      - a. See Romans 3:20, Paul's understanding of the purpose of the law.
      - b. Deuteronomy 18:14-19
    - ii. The testimony of the prophets
      - a. Jeremiah 31:31-34
      - b. Isaiah 46:8-14

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<sup>16</sup> Bruce, 102.

### **III. There is no difference**

- A. This method of obtaining righteousness is the same for all people. Since all have sinned and all stand condemned, we all need to be redeemed in this way. Anyone who hopes to have right relationship with God must obtain it via the same means as set forth by God.
- B. Paul does not intend to diminish the status of the Jewish people but rather point out that their historical status does not (and never did) remedy their spiritual condition (in terms of their need for redemption). Despite their special calling, they are just as much in need of salvation as the Gentiles.
- C. There are obvious and real differences between Jews and Gentiles which Paul has acknowledged and will continue to address in the letter. However, he wants to make it clear that the ultimate spiritual condition of all people resembles that of Adam and Eve regardless of nationality.

### **IV. Salvific Terminology**

- A. This passage introduces quite a few prominent words in soteriology (the study of salvation).
- B. Justification
  - 1. Justification is originally a legal term meaning to be made or declared innocent.
  - 2. Justification is necessary because of what Paul wrote in Romans 1:18-3:20 and summarized in Romans 3:23: All have sinned.
    - i. Justification is necessary because of the fall of our ancestor Adam through is sin (also called original sin).
    - ii. Justification is also necessary because of our own sin (personal sin).
    - iii. Even though the original sin of Adam put in all of us the corruption and inclination to commit sin, we also bear personal responsibility for the sin we commit.
- C. Redemption
  - 1. The literal meaning is to release at a price.
  - 2. It was an economic or marketplace term in the Greek language.
  - 3. The word was sometimes used in conjunction with human trafficking or slavery, A slave was bound with no legal way of escape unless the price was paid.
  - 4. God highly values humanity. Having been created in his image, we have a value above that of all other creation. The price for humanity's redemption was so high that only perfection could suffice. Thus, it was only by the giving of Jesus' life that we could be redeemed, released from the consequences of sin at a price, the blood of Jesus.

### **V. Falling Short of Glory**

- A. Paul here makes a reference to the very creation of humankind in Genesis 1-2.
- B. God made man in his own image and likeness. We were created to reflect the character and glory (image) of God. As a result of this special creation, we have unique relationship with God and a unique place in creation. Our very existence brought praise to God and we were made to worship God.
- C. The original intent for our creation, however, was marred after our original sin. In the same way, no human being has been able to live up to the original standard or purpose for which humanity was created.

### **VI. The Theology of Good Friday**

- A. The event described in the Gospels is explained theologically in Romans starting with this passage. In Romans, we find the answer to the following questions:
  - 1. What actually happened on the cross?
  - 2. Why was it effective?
- B. These questions will be answered more fully as we go through the letter but Paul begins here with the first mention of the blood of Jesus in Romans 3:25. For now, we will only answer these questions only to the extent that this text provides.
- C. What actually happened on the cross?

1. The cross as an alter. The Old Testament sacrificial system (and even the first covering of Adam and Even in Genesis 3:21) demonstrate a principle summarized in Hebrews 9:22: without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins.” The continuous nature of Old Testament sacrifices indicated their limited effectiveness. For universal effectiveness (which is what Paul claims the gospel has) there must be a sufficient and eternal sacrifice.
  2. It is unclear if the Jews ever considered that such a sacrifice could (or would) exist. They did know that the sacrifice system was a concession by God for them in the midst of their sinfulness and weakness. They knew that God ultimately intended for the sacrificial system to end. However, their plan for this was to generate their own human perfection. If they could stop sinning, they could stop sacrificing. The extremes were found in the Pharisees and the Essenes. It did not work.
  3. Man’s solution was impossible. God’s solution was improbable. Paul describes that solution in Romans 5:15-17. What Jesus did on the cross ultimately atones for what Adam did in the Garden. Thus, just as the one man’s sin brought condemnation for all, the one man’s obedience brought salvation for all.
- D. Why was this effective?
1. Even though Paul does not address the directly in Romans 3, he knows it is a question that the reader has. Thus, he will tackle this point later in the book.
  2. For now, we look back to Romans 1:2-6. There we see the beginning of Paul’s argument for why Jesus’ sacrifice was effective; because he was both fully God and fully man.
    - i. In order for Jesus to be the “second Adam” he had to be a man in every way Adam was a man. Also, in order to be a sacrifice, he has to die (not just bleed). Since God can’t die, Jesus has to add to himself the complete nature of humanity so that he could live as Adam lived and die as sacrifices should die.
    - ii. Nevertheless, if Jesus is only human, his sacrifice (and the accomplishments it generated) would have been for that day only. Because he is God, he lives even today and is able to apply to work of his sacrifice to all people, at all times, everywhere (since he is omnipotent, omniscient, and eternal).

## VI. Sacrifice of Atonement (3:25)

- A. The Greek word is ἱλαστήριον which is literally translated as a “gift for the gods (or a god) for the appeasing of wrath.”
- B. The problem with the Greek language is that it predates Christianity. Thus, much of the vocabulary that Paul had to work with to describe the truth God and true religion was also used to describe false gods and false religion. This is an example. Based on the original meaning, some translations use the English word propitiation here which means to appease.
- C. However, this seems a little odd based on the context. Paul did not see God as sending Jesus to the cross simply to appease his own demands. He also sent Jesus for the purpose of redeeming humanity. Yes, there was a price that had to be paid but the cross was more than that.
- D. A clue into what Paul meant here is found in the Septuagint, the early, authorized Greek translation of the Hebrew scripture. In that translation (known as the LXX) the Greek word ἱλαστήριον was used in connection with the Day of Atonement sacrifice as described in Leviticus 16. This sacrifice was not only about appeasing the requirements of God with a sacrifice but also about making the people holy in the sight of God (Leviticus 16:17, 22). Thus, even though the original Greek word was not translated as “sacrifice of atonement” many translators see this as the actual message Paul was trying to convey.
- E. The ceremonial and symbolic sacrifice of the Day of Atonement was fulfilled in Jesus who did for real and forever what the sacrifice then only did temporarily.
- F. The death of Jesus is a sacrifice for sin like on the Day of Atonement. This is also supported by the setting of Jesus death: the season of Passover when a lamb was killed and its blood applied so that Israel might be saved from Egypt and God’s wrath might pass them by.

## **VII. The Character of the God**

- A. God is described as both the one who is just and the one who justifies.
  - 1. As the one who is just, we see that God's plan for salvation (by grace) in no way diminishes his standing as a Holy God. He did not reduce his standard so that we could be saved. If he did, it would be a diminishment of his deity. In fact, Paul has made clear in Romans 1:18 – 3:30 that God has held firm to his standard even among those he calls his people (Jews).
  - 2. As the one who justifies, we see that even as God holds to his standard, it is he who initiates (reaches out) to sinful humanity for salvation. We cannot live up to God's standard under our own power and working. But God has made a way through his own initiative.
- B. Douglas Moos writes that God "accepts as righteous before him sinful people who have faith, and he accepts sinners as righteous without violating his own character because Christ has fully satisfied God's demand that all who commit sin must die."<sup>17</sup>
- C. This quality of God is seen throughout Scripture:
  - 1. Genesis 3
  - 2. Genesis 11-12
  - 3. Numbers 21:4-9
  - 4. Matthew 27:46 and Luke 23:46

## **VIII. No Boasting**

- A. This seems to be a destination to which the passage is taking us. Paul has embarked on this conversation not only to explain the theological significance of Christ's work on the cross but also (and perhaps primarily for the original audience) to help his Jewish brethren understand both their need for salvation (which is as great as the Gentiles) and their path to salvation (which is the same as the Gentiles).
- B. It is possible that the primacy that the Jews felt produced an arrogance or pride that ultimately hindered them from participating or properly proclaiming the New Covenant plan of salvation. Jews seem to be diverting down two wrong paths.
  - 1. The gospel is not for us because we have law: The view that Jews would not need to seek God's grace through Jesus since they had been recipients of God's grace from the time of Abraham and Moses. The establishment of the covenant and the giving of the law was their grace. Thus, they felt they did not need to seek for salvation as the Gentiles did. The Gospel was an alternative to the Law but not that to which the law pointed.
  - 2. The gospel is only for us because we have the law: This was the view of the Judaizers in Acts 15 and Galatians. They felt that the good news of the gospel was only for those who first knew and practiced the law. Thus, Gentiles should (and must) first commit to the Old Covenant before jumping into the New Covenant.
- C. Since righteousness is achieved only by the work of God and never by the work of man, no one can hold a superior view towards others. This, however, also makes the Gospel difficult to accept since "no one would have come up with a plan that excluded their own contribution toward a future salvation."<sup>18</sup>

## **IX. The Law in the New Covenant**

- A. It is vital to remember that even though God's righteousness comes to us apart from the Law, it never comes to us divorced from the Law.
- B. Paul has already identified the purpose of the Law in anticipation of the New Covenant: to make us aware of our sinfulness and need for salvation. The Law prepares us for salvation by bringing us to the realization and crisis point that we cannot generate righteousness on our own.

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<sup>17</sup> Moo, 130.

<sup>18</sup> Mounce, 114.

- C. Now Paul is explaining the place of the Law going forward into the New Covenant: it will be viewed and the standard and the mission of the saved. It is not our requirement of salvation but it becomes our desire and our fruit in salvation.

## **Romans Bible Study**

### **Romans 4**

*"Faith has power not in itself but because of the one in whom we place our faith." – Douglas Moo<sup>19</sup>*

#### **I. A Good Example**

- A. Having made some startling and bold claims in Romans 1-3 regarding the New Covenant, humanity, and salvation, Paul now chooses to rely on an Old Covenant example to help prove his case.
1. Abraham was one of the most revered forefathers in Judaism. A supporting example from his life would be very helpful, if convincing.
  2. Paul has chosen to rely on Abraham as an example of his justification by faith doctrine ever since his letter to the Galatians which was one of Paul's first letters and a letter where Paul had to develop this doctrine well in order to combat the teaching of the Judaizers who claimed that faith and works of the Law are necessary for
- B. According to Paul, Abraham is not only an example to the world of how God called Israel out to be his special people with special promises. He is also an example to the world of how anyone (even uncircumcised Gentiles like Abraham) can be made righteous in the sight of God by believing in God even when works for God fail.
1. Abraham was not just a good news message for the Jews (the good news being that God has called us out from the rest of the world to be his special people with a promise).
  2. Abraham was also a good news message to the world (the good news being that even if you are as good as dead your faith [apart from and before works] can save you).
  3. See comparison chart
- C. Some Key Descriptions of Abraham:
1. Abraham was called by God, given grace by God, and described as righteous before he was circumcised (Romans 4:10-12).
    - i. This demonstrates the priority of faith. Work came after faith and as a result of faith.
    - ii. Work did not make Abraham righteous but work confirmed the righteous status that Abraham received through faith.
  2. Abraham was called by God, given grace by God, and described as righteous before the law was given (Romans 4:13-15).
    - i. Once again, this demonstrates the priority of faith in the plan of God. Even before God gave his Law, he looked for and promoted faith among humanity.
    - ii. Indeed, the Law has a purpose to make us aware of our sins but it is not to be seen as the method by which humanity is made righteous.
    - iii. Romans 4:2 (but not before God) demonstrates that even if one keeps the law, that is only the minimum of what is required. Thus:
      - a. Even if one keeps the law that is not a reason to boast before God.
      - b. We (humanity) can't even do the minimum in terms of generating our justification.
  3. Abraham was called by God, given grace by God, and described as righteous even when he was powerless (dead) to do what God had said (Romans 4:18-22).
    - i. Abraham was not chosen to be God's special man and establish God's special people because Abraham was able to do it himself. God extended grace to Abraham and made a promise to Abraham when Abraham could do nothing to help fulfill that promise.

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<sup>19</sup> Moo, 163.

- ii. Salvation by works limits salvation to only those who are powerful enough to do everything that God commanded.
  - iii. Salvation by faith is for everyone for all have sinned and all are powerless to do what God has required.
  - iv. The description of Abraham of “as good as dead” is our description as well. Death came into the world through Adam and Eve’s sin and although they did not die physically immediately, they died spiritually as soon as they sinned and eventually died physically.
    - a. For the sinner born spiritually dead, unless he/she becomes alive spiritually before he/she dies physically, he/she will be dead for eternity (eternal banishment).
    - b. However, if a sinner born spiritually dead becomes alive spiritually (born again in John 3) before he/she dies physically, he/she will live for eternity (eternal life).
- D. Quoting Old Covenant Scripture to Prove a New Covenant Truth
1. Paul relied heavily on Genesis 15:6 to make his claim. Paul quotes this verse (or part of it) three times in Romans 4 (vs. 3, 9, 22-23) and once in Galatians 3:6.
  2. Paul also quotes David by using Psalms 32:1-2 to describe how David also looked to the grace of God rather than the work of men to be made righteous.
- E. I. Howard Marshall writes, “Abraham can be seen as the father of all believers, both the Jews, who were physically descended from him, and the Gentiles, insofar as they all follow his example of faith. This accords with the Scripture that speaks of Abraham as the father of many nations (Genesis 17:5).”<sup>20</sup>

## II. God Uses Dead Men

- A. Paul describes two dead men in chapter 4:
1. Abraham (as good as dead in Romans 4:19)
  2. Jesus (raised from the dead in Romans 4:24)
- B. This emphasis on death serves three purposes:
1. It demonstrates that God’s plan for the salvation of humanity is completely done by God’s own initiative. Our work (or attempt to work) has not:
    - i. Obligated God to save us (he gives salvation)
    - ii. Forced God to save us (he chose salvation)
    - iii. Convinced God to save us (he loves us unconditionally)
  2. It demonstrates the extreme to which God would go for our salvation, even to the point of sending Jesus to die on the cross.
  3. It demonstrates the power of God (omnipotence)
    - i. God uses powerless people to do powerful things (as in Abraham) so that the world sees God at work and not the man (or woman).
    - ii. God is forever more powerful than death (as seen in Jesus) and thus the promise of eternal life can be believed and trusted. God is able to do (and will do) what he says he will do.

## III. The Danger of Unbelief

- A. As we will see later in the Romans, Paul see great salvation in faith but also great danger in unbelief. Faith is not just an option or alternative method for salvation, it is the only way. Thus, to not believe would be detrimental.
- B. Romans 4:20-21 describe Abraham who had a case for unbelief. Nevertheless, he believed even when he could not see the immediate results of his trust in God’s word. His faith (in the absence of sight or evidence) saved him.

## IV. What about James

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<sup>20</sup> Marshall, 312-313.



- A. Some see a contradiction between what Paul writes about Justification by Faith and what James writes in James 2, especially v. 14.
- B. James writes about two types of faith:
  - 1. True, living faith
  - 2. False, dead faith
- C. The Nature of False, Dead Faith:
  - 1. Faith that is only spoken and intellectual (James 2:19).
  - 2. Faith that is not demonstrated in acts of love (James 2:17).
  - 3. Faith that does not demonstrate deep trust in God (James 2:26).
  - 4. Faith that does not save (James 2:19)
- D. The Nature of True, Living Faith:
  - 1. Faith that results from total trust and commitment for Jesus and his teaching.
  - 2. Faith that brings about maturity
  - 3. Faith that results in acts of love
- E. The Relationship Between Faith and Works:
  - 1. James does not see good works as something required for salvation. However, genuine salvation will produce good works as a fruit.
    - i. Good deeds are a necessary part of living, true faith.
    - ii. Faith and works cannot be separated.
    - iii. True, living faith naturally results in and is demonstrated by good works.
    - iv. True, living faith causes a change in character that naturally produces action (in the form of good deeds and acts of trust in God).
  - 2. Other Scriptures (even Paul) support this:
    - i. Isaiah 55:10-11
    - ii. Matthew 13:23
    - iii. John 13:35
    - iv. Pauline Support:
      - a. Galatians 5:6
      - b. Ephesians 2:10
- F. The Context of Paul
  - 1. Remember that Paul is writing in response to Jews who are either:
    - i. Promoting the adherence to Jewish law as a prerequisite for salvation or
    - ii. Seeing the law as an alternative to salvation by faith
  - 2. Thus, when Paul writes about righteousness apart from the law, he is not saying that works are no longer necessary. They are the fruit of the saved but not the method of salvation
- G. The Context of James:
  - 1. James, however, was most likely writing to believers who were beginning to abandon the Law of God as a practice subsequent to salvation.
  - 2. These two very different situations required a different approach to the subject of the Law in the New Covenant.
- H. Do James and Paul Disagree?
  - 1. James does not intend to set faith and deeds in opposition or deny the doctrine of justification by faith alone. He simply wants to remind the readers that true faith is not merely confessing a set of doctrines but actually living out what you confess to be true. Thus, he is not contradicting Paul but supplementing Paul.
  - 2. Faith is the only means of salvation but real, true, living faith will produce righteous action and good works of love and service.
  - 3. Faith that is dead (false) is not really faith at all, but merely a set of beliefs or statements a person claims to believe.
  - 4. Faith that is alive (true) will naturally produce action and good works.

- I. Verlyn Verbrugge writes, “A bare and lifeless faith is like a corpse; still, the deeds that animate faith are not the self-righteous acts that supposedly accrue merit with God but the responses of the faithful to God’s living word.”<sup>21</sup>

**V. A Prosperity Gospel? (Reading Romans 4:17 in its proper context)**

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<sup>21</sup> Verlyn D. Verbrugge, *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 147.

# Justification by Faith in the OT and NT

## (As Seen in Romans 4)

<b>Abraham</b>	<b>New Covenant</b>	<b>Notes:</b>
Abraham lived in a fallen world of fallen humanity and needed salvation (Genesis 3; 11)	Both Jews and Gentiles are living in a fallen state and need salvation (Genesis 3; Romans 1:18-3:23)	
Humanity is unable to save itself collectively or individually (Genesis 11:1-9)	Humanity is unable to save itself collectively or individually (Romans 3:19-20)	
Abraham and Sarah are examples the inability of humans to produce themselves what God has promised (Genesis 18:10-14)	Abraham and Sarah are examples the inability of humans to produce themselves what God has promised (Romans 4:18-19)	
Human effort always fails and falls short of God's standard (Genesis 17:15-22)	Human effort always fails and falls short of God's standard (Romans 3:1-23 and Galatians 3:21-31)	In the Galatians passage, Paul uses Abraham's children as a direct example of how human effort fails.
God extended grace to Abraham before Abraham demonstrated works (Genesis 12:1-4)	God extended grace to humanity (through Jesus) before we demonstrated works (Romans 3:21-25; 4:4-10; 5:8)	
Abraham's faith in God qualified him to receive the promise of God (Genesis 15:6)	This method of justification (through faith) has always been the way by which God intended humanity to be saved. It is the same for today (Romans 4:13; 23-25; see also 1:17).	"God granted a righteous status to Abraham in response to his trustful acceptance of what God said." - I Howard Marshall
Abraham's works confirmed his faith - Leaving home in Genesis 12: 4-6, circumcision in Genesis 17:23-27, and sacrifice in Genesis 22:1-18 (see also Hebrews 11:11-19)	Our good works (according to the Law) also confirm our faith (Romans 3:31; 4:11-12)	See also James 2:14-24

## **Romans Bible Study**

### **Romans 5:1-11**

*"It is not we who possess righteousness but righteousness that possess us." – Verlyn Verbrugge<sup>22</sup>*

#### **I. Since We Have Been Justified Through Faith**

##### **A. Justification**

1. Justified here is translated from the Greek word δικαιοω which meant (in the Greek context) to declare righteous, to regard as being right or innocent.
2. In Theological terms, Justification means “the divine act whereby God makes humans, who are sinful and therefore worthy of condemnation, acceptable before a God who is holy and righteous.”<sup>23</sup> This summarizes what Paul has argued in the first four chapters of Romans.

##### **B. Paul believes that his presentation and case for “justification by/through faith” has now been adequately explained.**

1. In Romans 1:16-17 he introduces the idea.
2. In Romans 1:18 – 3:20 he explains the inefficiency of justification by works:
  - i. Gentiles do not and cannot live up to God’s standard even though God has revealed it to them in nature (general revelation). – Romans 1:18-32 (and 2:14-15)
  - ii. Jews do not and cannot live up to God’s standard even though God has revealed it to them with greater clarity through the Covenants, Law, and Prophets (special revelation). – Romans 2:1 – 3:8
  - iii. No one among all of humanity can living according to God’s standard. The best we can do is not good enough. This is the crisis of all humanity since the fall in Genesis 3 (as Paul will explain more in the last half of chapter 5). – Romans 3:9-20a
  - iv. The Law was given not as a means of salvation but as a signpost to salvation by showing us sin, inability (depravity), and need for salvation. – Romans 3:20b
3. In Romans 3:21-4:25 he explains the heart of justification by faith:
  - i. God now wants (and has always wanted) humanity to come to him in faith (believing and trusting him). By his grace (not our works) God has now opened the way for justification through faith as a result of the sacrificial death and resurrection of Jesus at and after the cross. Romans 3:21-30
  - ii. We are enabled to do the work God prepared for us after salvation but work is not a prerequisite for salvation. We are only called to believe. – Romans 3:31; 4:10-12
  - iii. Even Abraham serves as an example of God’s plan for all humanity: to choose humans by his grace to receive his salvation by faith. – Romans 4:1-25

##### **C. Now he is moving on to discussing the implications of this Gospel (good news) message. Those implications are threefold as seen in Romans 5:1-11**

1. Peace with God (reconciliation)
2. Hope
  - i. Hope for present and future salvation (see chart on past, present, future)
  - ii. Hope for future glory (Romans 5:2) but also hope in present suffering (Romans 5:3)
3. The Holy Spirit

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<sup>22</sup> Verlyn D. Verbrugge, *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 146.

<sup>23</sup> Stanley J. Grenz, David Guretzki, & Cherith Fee Nordling, *Pocket Dictionary of Theological Terms* (Downers Grove: IVP, 1990), 69.

- D. Paul also discusses the foundation of our justification. Justification is achieved:
1. Through faith (Romans 5:1-2) – More about this will be discussed next week.
  2. By grace
    - i. The term is actually used in Romans 5:2
    - ii. The concept is explained in Romans 5:5b-11
  3. As a result of the achievement of Our Lord Jesus Christ
    - i. A sacrificial work
      - a. Blood was shed on account of our sins
      - b. Life was given over to death on our behalf
    - ii. Access gained
      - a. Access to God is available to all humanity through Christ.
        - i. Because of sin (as we see in the Old Covenant Law) access to God was extremely limited before the work of Jesus. The closer you came to the “Most Holy Place” where the presence of God dwelled, the number or type of people eligible to proceed reduced.
        - ii. A curtain was always hanging there to separate the people from the presence of God (Exodus 26:33).
        - iii. Immediately following the death of Jesus on the cross, that curtain was ripped from top to bottom in the Jerusalem Temple (Matthew 27:51; Mark 15:38; Luke 23:45)
          - 1) The ripping of the curtain signified the end of separation between God and mankind. The death of Jesus on the cross atoned for the sin that necessitated this separation.
          - 2) The curtain was ripped from top to bottom to demonstrate that this was done by God and not by man.
      - b. This is also discussed in Ephesians 2:17-18; 3:12 and Hebrews 4:16.
      - c. This does not mean full access. Rather, this means that we can access God (and his grace) in a way that was unavailable to us before Christ and in our sin.

## II. Reconciliation

- A. Paul sees as a primary concern here the value (and necessity) of being reconciled with God, or having peace with God. (see chart).
- B. Sin has created this division and need for reconciliation. As previously described, our sin, whether committed under the law (Jews) or apart from the law (Gentiles) has alienated us from God.
  1. The access to God is withdrawn.
  2. The wrath of God is awaiting.
  3. The eternal separation from God is assured.
- C. Yet God has always been at work to reconcile us to himself.
  1. In the garden of Eden, God made the promise of reconciliation.
  2. In the covenants, God made the preparations for reconciliation.
  3. In the Law, God set the standard or requirements for reconciliation.
  4. In Jesus, God established this reconciliation.
- D. This emphasis on reconciliation demonstrates to us that salvation (and this initiative that God has undertaken) has more to do with a relationship than a legal declaration.
  1. Paul chose to use a word (δικαίωσις) from the Greek legal system to communicate justification but he does so within the context of restored and lasting relationships.
  2. Salvation is not about fulfilling certain requirements so a rubber stamp with “innocent” can be pounded once on your soul. It’s about being in a loving relationship like a lost or estranged child reunited with his father (this is how Jesus described it in Luke 15:11-32).

### III. Hope

- A. Justification involves hope. As Paul describes in Romans 1:18-3:21, there does seem to be much hope among humanity. Our sin has doomed us all.
- B. Yet hope shines forth in the coming of Jesus (as past event), hope is alive for us who believe (a present event), and hope is there for our glorious eternity (a future event).
- C. It is appropriate that hope accompanies justification because it does involve a past work which we did not witness, a present work which is still being hammered out, and a future work that is awaiting fulfillment. (See chart)
  1. Justification, like God, is not bound to time. It is above and beyond time. That is why Paul often speaks of salvation as being simultaneously already and not yet.
  2. This does not diminish God's omnipotence (since some may say, "why can't God do it all right now"). Rather, this aspect of justification is necessitated by our finite nature. We are limited to space and time. We are still becoming what God has called us to be (as sees even now).
  3. Douglas Moo writes that Paul often uses the word saved "to depict the believer's final deliverance from death and the wrath of God in the last day. . . Salvation is not completed until we have put sin and death behind us and been vindicated in the judgement. Being justified and reconciled to God is the critical step on the way to salvation, if these are in place, eventual salvation is certain."<sup>24</sup>
  4. Verlyn D. Verbrugge writes that "the connecting link between present and future righteousness is the fact that, while we have already become a people for God's own possession, he is still at enmity with the world as a whole."<sup>25</sup>
- D. Hope is thus part of our story because we are still awaiting glory (even though we are no longer awaiting wrath).
  1. Paul makes sure to mention that suffering still part of our life even after our justification. Suffering will be destroyed in glory but remains real for the world today, both believer and unbelievers.
  2. There is hope, however, especially in the midst of suffering because we believe that God is able to redeem even the suffering that comes into our life to strengthen us and achieve his purposes.
    - i. Paul says that suffering produces perseverance.
      - a. All of the benefits of salvation do not immediately manifest themselves. There is some faithful waiting involved. Suffering in the midst of our waiting produces a perseverance or steadfastness that will carry us through the difficult times.
      - b. Even though all suffering is not sent by God it can be used by God when we maintain our faith and trust in Him. Just as painful resistance is used to strengthen muscles physically, painful challenges in our life can also strengthen us spiritually.
      - c. Those who attempt to confront the challenges and suffering of life without faith, or those who abandon faith in the midst of difficulties, forfeit the blessing that God can bring from suffering.
      - d. We do not seek after or desire suffering but we are confident in God when it comes and look to God to turn it around for good.
    - ii. Then, Paul says, perseverance produces character.
      - a. Character is the way we live our life both in public and private.
      - b. Paul says in Philippians 2:5 that we should seek after a Christ-like character. Enduring our suffering with faithful perseverance develops this character in us.
    - iii. Finally, Paul says, character produces hope.
      - a. Having a Christ-like character comes from overcoming times of suffering and difficulty with faithful perseverance. Having seen

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<sup>24</sup> Moo, 173.

<sup>25</sup> Verbrugge, 146.

God's hand in the midst of these hardships (both by persevering his people and using the suffering for good) creates a hope in us that God can and will do this whenever problems arise.

- b. Thus, enduring suffering as we wait for glory increases our hope for that glory because we know that God is indeed able and going to do what he promised.

#### IV. The Holy Spirit

- A. Romans 5:5 is the first mentioning of the Holy Spirit in Romans. He will be discussed more in Romans 8.
- B. However, it is interesting to note the use of the word "pour" here. That is the same description of the coming of the Holy Spirit in Acts 2 on the day of Pentecost.

#### V. The Grace of God

- A. As mentioned earlier, the possibility of Justification by faith is only possible as a result of God's grace. It is God who took the initiative and achieved this for humanity through Jesus. Thus, as Moo points out, it's only by God's work for us and God's love towards us that we can be saved.<sup>26</sup>
- B. Paul uses several descriptions of both Jesus and humanity to describe this grace. These are the pictures of grace that Paul is painting to help us understand this concept:
  - 1. Descriptions of Jesus:
    - i. Dying for the ungodly (Romans 5:6) - Rarely will anyone die even for a good man but Jesus died for the worst of mankind.
    - ii. Bleeding for the unworthy (Romans 5:9) – We deserved God's wrath but were given God's son as a sacrificial offering of atonement.
  - 2. Description of Humanity:
    - i. Powerless (Romans 5:6) – We were completely unable to change our condition but God extended his powerful hand to the powerless.
    - ii. Sinners (Romans 5:8) – We were indeed guilty of the most terrible wrongdoings but God still sent his Son to rescue us.
- C. By grace, our sin sickness (and all of its consequences) has been cured. Verlyn D. Verbrugge writes that God's "divine righteousness is revealed by the fact that God's purposes are not foiled by human sin; rather, God remains almighty as both Lord and Savior in spite of human rebellion. Since sin has been so radically dealt with, the demarcation between Israel and the Gentiles can be swept away so that the new people of God may come into being."<sup>27</sup>

#### VI. At Just the Right Time

- A. Paul makes a similar statement in Galatians 4:4.
- B. Many have struggled with this statement. Why was that time the right time?
- C. While we cannot be sure of Paul's exact thinking here, we can be sure of several things concerning this statement:
  - 1. The coming of Jesus was significant and well planned by God. His coming did not happen at just any time but at the select time of God.
  - 2. Sufficient time had passed since the giving of the Law to establish without doubt that humanity could not save itself by living perfectly and completely according to God's holy and righteous standards. Not even one could do it in thousands of years.

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<sup>26</sup> Moo, 171.

<sup>27</sup> Verbrugge, 145.

**The Blessing of Reconciliation  
(as seen in Romans 5:1-11)**

<b>Description of Humanity before Reconciliation</b>	<b>Description of Humanity after Reconciliation</b>
Ungodly (Romans 5:6)	At peace with God (Romans 5:1)
Powerless (Romans 5:6)	Having access (Romans 5:2)
Sinners (Romans 5:8)	Having God's love poured into our hearts (Romans 5:5)
Under and awaiting God's wrath (Romans 1:18 - 3:23)	Saved from God's wrath (Romans 5:9)
God's enemies (Romans 5:10)	Reconciled to God (Romans 5:10)

**Romans 5:1-11  
Salvation in the Past, Present, and Future**



## **Romans Bible Study**

### **Romans 5:12-21**

*"No matter how devastating the sin of the first, the redemptive work of the second reverses the consequences of that sin and restores people to the favor of God. Only by grasping the seriousness of the first is one able to appreciate the remarkable magnanimity of the second."* – Robert H. Mounce<sup>28</sup>

#### **I. The One Man**

##### **A. Therefore?**

1. Verse 12 begins with a “therefore” but it is a bit unclear how Paul is using it in the context.
2. Most likely, Paul is recognizing that Jesus (whom he mentioned in verse 11 as the cause of our recondition with God) does indeed qualify to execute God’s plan of redemption.
  - i. For some, this may be hard to accept? How can one man do for all people what no one could even do for himself in all of human history?
  - ii. In order to explain this, Paul reminds his reader of Adam. The one man through whom the many (humanity) became sinners as a result of:
    - a. The original sin of Adam which brought corruption, condemnation, and death of humanity
    - b. The personal sin of each person having the inclination to sin inherited from the ancestor Adam.

##### **B. The One Man**

1. Jewish theology was clear that the sinful human condition was connected to Adam.
  - i. In the Jewish writing called 4 Ezra (not found in the Old Testament but part of the accepted Jewish religious books) there is this statement: “O Adam, what have you done? For though it was you who sinned, the fall was not yours alone, but ours also who are your descendants.”
  - ii. Leon Morris writes summarizing both the Jewish and Christian view Adam’s role in universal sin: “All commit their own sins, to be sure, but in some way all are also caught up in the sin of Adam . . . Paul does not see sin as part of human nature as God created it. God is not responsible for a flawed creation. It is this that made Adam’s sin so serious. It meant the bringing of sin into a creation that originally was unflawed.”<sup>29</sup>
2. Building on the well-known account of Adam (one man bringing corruption, condemnation, and death to all humanity) Paul seeks to demonstrate how we can also trust in the one man Jesus (who is, by the way, both completely human and wholly divine) to bring justification and redemption to all humanity.
3. See Chart on last part of the study.

#### **II. Original Sin**

- A. This passage has generated both a major theological term and a major theological debate:
  1. The term is “Original Sin”
  2. The debate is over the nature of that Original Sin
- B. Defining “Original Sin”
  1. The most basic definition of original sin is “the state of alienation from God into which all humans are born.

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<sup>28</sup> Mounce, 140.

<sup>29</sup> Leon Morris, “Sin and Guilt,” in *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, ed. Gerald Hawthorne, Ralph P. Martin, Daniel G. Reid (Downers Grove: IVP, 1993), 878.

2. Robert Mounce writes, “The primary cause of our sinful nature would be the sin of Adam; the result the result of that sin would be the history of sinning on the part of all who enter the human race and in fact sin of their own accord.”<sup>30</sup>
3. The way in which various Christian denominations interpret this is varied.

#### C. The Catholic View:

1. Origen was a very early Church theologian and much of Catholic theology is based in his preliminary works. Although Origen never used the term, in regards to “original sin” he wrote in the second century: “Everyone who enters the world may be said to be affected by a kind of contamination. By the very fact that humanity is placed in its mother’s womb, and that it takes the material of its body from the source of the father’s seed, it may be said to be contaminated in respect of both mother and father. Thus everyone is polluted.”<sup>31</sup>
2. Augustine, building on Origen over 200 years later, used the phrase “original sin” when he wrote, “Human nature was certainly originally created blameless and without any fault; but the human nature by which each one of us is now born of Adam requires a physician, because it is not healthy. All the good things, which it has by its conception, life, senses, mind, it has from God, its creator and maker. But the weakness which darkens and disables these good natural qualities . . . did not come from the blameless maker but from original sin, which was committed by free will. For this reason our guilty nature is liable to a just penalty.”<sup>32</sup>
3. In Augustine’s view, both infants and adults would face eternal condemnation if they died outside of God’s grace. Thus, the practice of infant baptism found its root in this theology.
4. Both these ancient views understood humanity to exist more as a collectively than individually.
5. The early catholic church also battled against the heresy of Pelagius (a contemporary of Augustine):
  - i. Pelagius taught that “we are not born in our full development, but with a capacity for both good and evil; we are begotten without virtue as much as without fault, and before the activity of the individual will there is nothing in humans other than what God has placed in them.”<sup>33</sup>
  - ii. This is sometimes call the “blank slate” view. McGrath summarizes Pelagianism as the belief that “God endows humanity with certain capacities and abilities. It is then up to individual human beings to use these abilities appropriately. They may use them for good or evil.”<sup>34</sup>
  - iii. Adam’s original sin serves as a bad example for humanity but not a corrupting factor in and of itself. If we copy Adam, we will have the same corruption but we could also (potentially) go another way.
  - iv. With our modern emphasis on individualism, this view has been resurrected in the last 500 years.

#### D. Protestant Views

##### 1. Arminian view of Original Sin

- i. Although modern expressions of Arminianism differs somewhat in regards to original sin, the general view is as summarized by Millard Erickson: “Arminianism holds that we receive from Adam a corrupted nature. We begin life without righteousness. Thus, all humans are unable, without special divine help, to fulfill God’s spiritual commands. This inability is

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<sup>30</sup> Mounce, 142.

<sup>31</sup> Alister E. McGrath, ed., *The Christian Theology Reader* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2001), 390.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid*, 398.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid*, 404.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid*, 405.

physical and intellectual, but not volitional.”<sup>35</sup> Thus, humanity may still desire to know and serve God but finds itself unable.

- ii. More emphasis in Arminian theology is placed on the actual, individual sin of people rather than the inherited sin of Adam. Indeed, the condition into which humanity is born is corrupted and inclined to sin. However, as J. Rodman Williams writes, “mankind at large repeats in varying ways the fall of primal man.”<sup>36</sup>

## 2. Calvinists have also varied ways of looking at Original Sin

### i. The Federal Headship View:

- a. Erickson summarizes this view as follows: “Humans receive their physical nature by inheritance from their parents but the souls is specially created by God for each individual and united with the body. . . Thus, we are not present psychologically or spiritually in any of our ancestors, including Adam. Adam, however, was our representative. . . Bound by covenant between God and Adam, we are treated as if we have actually and personally done what he as our representative did.”<sup>37</sup>

- b. Thus, our condition is more a product of covenant than transmission.

### ii. Natural Headship View:

- a. Again, Erickson summarizes this view as follows: “We receive our souls by transmission from our parents, just as we do our physical natures. So we were present in germinal or seminal form in our ancestors, in a very real sense, we are there in Adam. His actions was not merely that of one isolated individual, but of the entire human race.”

- b. This is the majority view of Calvinists.

- iii. In Calvinism, original sin is often emphasized more as actual, personal sin. The total depravity of humanity is based on our connection to Adam and his failure. Personal sin is the natural product of our condition and not primarily a choice we make (through we do have personal responsibility).

## 3. One could say that for Arminians, personal sin is aided by original sin but birthed by personal choice while for Calvinists personal sin is birthed as a result of original sin and consummated by personal choice.

## E. What About Babies?

1. With each of the above interpretations comes different implications for the eternal state of babies of children who pass away.

2. Millard Erickson gives us a balanced view with his personal understanding: “We all were involved in Adam’s sin, and thus receive both the corrupted nature that was his after the fall, and the guilty and condemnation that attach to his sin. With this matter of guilt, however, just as with the imputation of Christ’s righteousness, there must be some conscious and voluntary decision on our part. Until this is the case, there is only a conditional imputation of guilt. Thus, there is no condemnation until one reaches the age of responsibility. If a child dies before becoming capable of making genuine morel decisions, the contingent imputation of Adamic sin does not become actual.”<sup>38</sup>

## III. The Consequences of Sin

- A. While the physical effects of sin can be seen in Romans 1, sin’s devastating spiritual effects on humanity are seen clearly in this passage.

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<sup>35</sup> Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 650.

<sup>36</sup> J. Rodman Williams, *Renewal Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan: 1996), 272.

<sup>37</sup> Erickson, 651-651.

<sup>38</sup> Erickson, 656.

1. In the garden, man first moved away from God necessitating God's move away from man. This is described as death or "eternal separation from God, who alone possesses life immortal . . . [this death] is a self-inflicted penalty."<sup>39</sup>
  2. We can also read this passage in conjunction with Ephesians 4:18 and Colossians 1:21.
- B. Consequently, the full impact of the work of Christ is seen here and can be read in conjunction with 2 Corinthians 5:21. Jesus is able to undo everything sin did.

IV. The Giving of the Law

- A. Paul mentions that God gave the Law as a way of showing humanity their sin. The law describes exactly what sin is and how we commit it.
- B. Even though we did not know the exact nature of sin before the law, we were still guilty of our acts of unrighteousness. The law, however, made clear the extent of our sin and the consequences of our action.
- C. Nevertheless, even as God held up his standard of righteousness, he extended to us the hand of grace. Douglas Moo writes, "If we are confident that sin has bought death and untold devastation into the world, we can be even more confident that the grace of God that justifies us will also save us from his wrath in the judgment."<sup>40</sup>

## The One Man (Romans 5:12-21)

<b>The One Man: Adam</b>	<b>The One Man: Jesus</b>
Sin entered the world through Adam's disobedience (Romans 5:12; Genesis 3:11)	Righteousness comes to (reigns in) humanity by the gracious work of Jesus (Romans 5:17)
Death entered the world through Adam's sin (Romans 5:12; Genesis 2:17)	The righteous act of Jesus achieved justification and provided life for all (believing) humanity (Romans 5:18)
Many died by the trespass of Adam (Romans 5:15)	Many will find eternal life through the righteousness of Jesus (Romans 5:21)
Humanity became sinners (Romans 5:19)	Many received God's grace/gift through Jesus (Romans 5:15)
Judgement and condemnation followed Adam's sin (Romans 5:16) for all humanity (Romans 5:18)	Grace and justification followed the work of Jesus (Romans 5:16)
Death reigned (overcame) humanity through Adam's sin (Romans 5:17)	Life comes to humanity through the work of Jesus (Romans 5:17) and righteousness reigns (Romans 5:21).

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<sup>39</sup> Mounce, 146.

<sup>40</sup> Moo, 185.

## Romans Bible Study

### Romans 6

*"The Law demanded obedience, but grace supplies the power to obey." – F. F. Bruce<sup>41</sup>*

*He breaks the power of cancelled sin  
He sets the prisoner free  
His blood can make the foulest clean  
His blood availed to me  
– Charles Wesley*

#### I. Sin and Grace

- A. Chapter 6 begins with a question: "Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase?" Paul presents a similar question in verse 15: "Shall we sin because we are not under the law but under grace?" Paul assumes the reader may be asking this question in regards to his previous statements (in chapter 5:12-21) regarding sin. Three key claims that would lead to this question are:
1. The sin of Adam was so egregious that it both severed humanity's relationship with God and condemned all of humanity (Romans 5:12-19).
  2. The Law was given not necessarily as a means of remedying our sin problem but for the purpose of making humanity clearly aware of sin and its consequences (Romans 5:20, and 3:20).
  3. Nevertheless, God has graciously provided a means of redemption even as he sustains his holy standard. Even as humanity progressed further down the path of sin (Romans 1:18-3:21) God extended even further his offer of salvation through faith in Jesus (Romans 5:21, and 3:21-26; 5:1-11).
- B. Why ask this question?
1. Paul's theology seems counterintuitive. Paul has established a great case for humanity's condemnation and destruction. Yet he describes a God who is willing to extend grace in spite of humanity's sin against him.
  2. Paul's theology seems flawed. How could bad behavior lead to grace? Does God reward bad behavior?
  3. What about sin? How do we address sin in the midst of grace?
  4. Even some, perhaps, saw Paul's theology as being too optimistic. Maybe they would ask this question sarcastically in an attempt to confront this view.
- C. Now that Paul had acknowledged these concerns, he will seek to address them.
1. This is not counterintuitive. Paul explains that God's grace is not in competition with his wrath but both are part of God's greater plan of redemption as both a holy and loving God.
  2. This is not flawed. Grace is not a reward for bad behavior but a remedy for it.
  3. Sin has not produced grace. Grace promotes the subtraction of sin rather than sin promoting the multiplication of grace. That grace increased where sin abounded was not a result of our sin but a result of God's love.
- D. Just a Question?
1. It is unclear if Paul is addressing potential hypothetical questions or questions resulting from real action. Were some in the Roman church continuing to sin boldly and claiming that their sin only increases the grace that God would extend to them?
  2. While we are sure about the actual attitude and action of these Roman readers, we know from Paul's letters to the Corinthians that this was part of the problem in that church.

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<sup>41</sup> Bruce, 140.

3. As mentioned in previous lessons, Paul's writings have often been used to justify antinomianism (the belief that Christians are not bound to any law) in both Paul's day and almost every generation since.
  - i. Philip Melancthon – The close associate to Martin Luther who took Luther's doctrine of *sola fide* (salvation by faith alone) to an inappropriate extreme by teaching that grace has absolved us from any law's condemnation. Thus, we do not need to keep any law subsequent to salvation.
  - ii. Rasputin – The Russian monk whose teaching in the early 1900s is summarized by F. F. Bruce as such: Rasputin taught and exemplified the doctrine of salvation through repeated experiences of sin and repentance; he held that, as those who sin most require the most forgiveness, a sinner who continues to sin with abandon enjoys, each time he repents, more of God's forgiving grace than any ordinary sinner."<sup>42</sup>

#### E. Emphasis on Grace

1. Actually, Paul argues, grace is more efficient than law in dealing with our sin problem.
2. F. F. Bruce writes, "Paul's own experience had taught him that all the law-keeping in the world could not bring the assurance of pardon and peace with God, whereas faith in Christ did so at once. He could never consider legalism as the remedy for libertinism. He knew a more excellent way. When a man yielded his life to the risen Christ and the power of His Spirit, his inward being was radically transformed." This transformation was not available through the Law.

## II. Dead to Sin

- A. In chapter 5 Paul described how we were dead because of sin before redemption. Now that we have received the grace of God, we are alive for him and dead to sin (not dead from sin).
- B. In order to illustrate how grace deals with the problem of sin, Paul uses the imagery of Baptism. This assumes that each of his readers who are believers have been baptized and the memory of that event is still in their mind. They can look to that experience as a way to understanding the power of grace over sin.
- C. In this description, we see that grace is powerful when seen through the lens of Jesus' gracious work on the cross.
- D. See comparison chart.
- E. This section of the text also teaches us two important truths concerning water baptism:
  1. It should closely follow the initial expression of faith on the part of a new believer. Baptism should not be seen as optional or delayable. The experience of it is vital in understanding the nature of our faith and salvation in Christ. Douglas Moos writes that Baptism "sets the seal on one's conversion" for in it we can see "the entire conversion experience."<sup>43</sup>
  2. It should be accompanied with substantive teaching. The experience of baptism is not just a hollow ritual. It is valuable for the believer to have this experience for instruction and future memory. Paul uses these two analogies that we can use as we teach the meaning of baptism:
    - i. Baptism is the setting for a funeral – the burying of your old, condemned life of sin.
    - ii. Baptism is a setting for a birth – the beginning of your new, eternal life with God.
- F. Paul is also careful to mention that Jesus died "once for all" (Romans 6:10). This is important for several reasons:
  1. This demonstrates that Jesus is superior to all other sacrifice. The sacrifices of the Old Covenant were limited in scope and temporary in power. Jesus, however, was

<sup>42</sup> Ibid, 134.

<sup>43</sup> Moo, 204.

- able to do forever what those millions of sacrifices before him could only do for a short time.
2. This demonstrates that Jesus work in final. There is no more need for animal sacrifices nor will Jesus ever have to die again. What he did then is powerful now and into eternity.
  3. This demonstrates that Jesus will live forever (eternal). He will not die and thus we can trust his work and his word.
  4. This demonstrates that he is all-powerful (omnipotent). His one work is always sufficient and able to accomplish its purposes. He does not have to keep doing it again and again.

### III. Spiritual Slavery

- A. Paul also uses the imagery of slavery to describe the condition of a person living in sin:
  1. Sinners are slaves to sin and bound to its mastery apart from Christ (Romans 6:9, 16-17).
  2. Jesus has provided emancipation (freedom) from this slavery to sin through his death and by his grace (Romans 6:10; 17-18).
  3. This freedom, however, is also brought about through our death to sin. Our sinful self dies and can no longer obey the old master (Romans 6:11-12). As F. F. Bruce writes, “A slave is bound to obey his master. But there is a point beyond which his master has no authority over him – and that point is death. When the slave is dead, his master can go on giving order to the corpse until he is blue in the face, but the corpse will pay no attention.”<sup>44</sup>
  4. The freedom that Christ offers is not partial. It is not that your soul is set free but your body remains enslaved. The whole person is made new in this freedom (a new creation as Paul says in 2 Corinthians 5:17). Therefore, we must not let sin even have parts of our body. It all is set apart for Christ. (Romans 6:12-14)
  5. Sin’s slavery makes you instruments of wickedness but God’s grace and salvation make you instruments of righteousness (Romans 6:13, 18-19).
  6. The one who persists in this slavery to sin will die (Romans 6:21-23).
- B. Paul also uses the imagery of slavery to describe the condition of a person living for God:
  1. People who respond to Christ in faith becomes slaves to righteousness (Romans 6:18).
  2. This slavery, however, leads to eternal life, not destructive death (Romans 6:22-23).
  3. This slavery does not destroy the slave with “ever increasing wickedness. Rather, it results in sanctification with ever-increasing holiness. (Romans 6:19)
- C. For Paul, salvation is the movement from one slave master who would drive you to eternal death to another slave master who would enable you for eternal life.
  1. It is not our work that moves us from the evil slave master to the good slave master. Even if we work our whole life trying to get to the good one, we will still be enslaved to the old one and receive his final wage of death.
  2. Rather, it is by grace that we escape the evil one and come into the kingdom of the good one.
  3. Thus, by grace, we are finally able to do away with the sin that would kills us.
  4. Seeing the situation from this perspective, we would never use grace as an excuse to sin more or continuously. Rather, it is by this grace that we become motivated and able to work as instruments of righteousness.
    - i. We would never to back to the slave master who would kill us when we have finally entered into the service of the one who would bless us.
    - ii. Grace, then, is not an overly optimistic or flawed way of viewing God’s activity in the world. It is actually the superior (and only) method by which we do away with sin.
- D. Does Paul condone slavery?

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<sup>44</sup> Mounce, 140.

1. This passage should be viewed as analogous rather than prescriptive. Paul is not prescribing or condoning slavery as an acceptable means of business or employment. He is simply using a familiar human concept (Romans 6:19) to describe a difficult or new spiritual reality (this spiritual reality may have been new to the reader but not to God).
2. That this situation is familiar to the audience is not pleasing to Paul but it is available to him as a tool for illustrating his teaching. The rest of Scripture would reveal to us that Paul sought for better treatment of slaves and indeed the emancipation of slaves from bondage. (Philemon, Ephesians 6:9). Nevertheless, Paul does not clearly support the abolition of slavery overtly in his writing. This does not, however, exclude Christians from doing so. In fact, we should be involved in social justice even as Jesus came to “set the captive free” (Luke 4:18).
3. A. A. Rupperecht writes, “Paul uses the imagery of slavery with some frequency in his letters. He identifies himself as a slave of Christ in salutations of Romans and Philippians. . . For Paul the one who is truly free is the person who is a slave of Christ. That person is as fee as mortal and dependent human beings can become, for not only does this new slave-master relationship result in freedom from sin, that destructive tyrant that leads its captives to destruction, but it also results in obedience to Christ, who leads his ‘slaves’ into holiness, goodness and eternal life. The paradox is very strong. The one who is enslaved to Christ is ultimately free.”<sup>45</sup>
4. In recent years, William Webb has proposed a different way at looking at these types of passages (where the author seems to be tolerant of something we see as intolerable in Christianity). He calls this method of Biblical Interpretation the “Redemptive Movement Hermeneutic.” Webb writes, “The Christian seeking to apply Scripture today should examine the movement between the biblical text and its surrounding social context. Once that movement has been discovered, there needs to be an assessment of whether the movement is preliminary or absolute. If it is preliminary and further movement in the direction by the text would produce a more fully realized ethic, then that is the course of action once must pursue. The interpreter extrapolates the biblical movement toward a more just, more equitable and more loving form. If a better ethic than the one expressed in the isolated words of the text is possible, and the biblical and canonical spirit is headed that direction, then that is where one ultimately wants to end up.”<sup>46</sup>

#### IV. The Gift of God

- A. Romans 6:23 is perhaps one of the most famous verses in the Bible. It frames our understanding of sin and grace and serve as a fitting summary of this passage.
- B. Robert Mounce writes, “By yielding to the impulses of righteousness, believers do not earn anything. They do, however, receive a gift – the gift of eternal life, which comes b faith though Jesus Christ.”<sup>47</sup>

#### V. The Two Extremes

- A. Today we live with the reality that Christianity is divided somewhat in regards to law and grace. We have some who promote the law to the extent that their critics call their practice “legalism.” Then we have other who promote grace to the extent that their critics call their practice “hyper grace.
- B. The best method for keeping away from these extremes is not found in deciding which to promote (law or grace) but in determining that we will neglect neither.

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<sup>45</sup> A. A. Rupperecht, “Slave, Slavery,” in *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, ed. Gerald Hawthorne, Ralph P. Martin, Daniel G. Reid (Downers Grove: IVP, 1993), 882.

<sup>46</sup> William J. Webb, *Slaves, Women, & Homosexuals: Exploring the Hermeneutics of Cultural Analysis* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2001), 36.

<sup>47</sup> Mounce, 159.



1. While the law must now be viewed through the lens of the New Covenant, we are never instructed to abandon it. It not only makes us aware of our sins, but it also establishes God standards and our moral compass. Thus, in grace, we do not run from the law but we develop a love for the law. It becomes a blessing, not a burden.
  2. Likewise, our holiness subsequent to salvation does not diminish our need for grace nor should it reduce our desire to proclaim grace to dirty, rotten sinners. The truth is that every sinner can be saved by grace and given the same reward as us who have been serving in God's kingdom for decades.
- C. Thus, the key is to keep both in balance. A healthy view of the law guides our personal behavior and keeps us humble. A healthy view of grace guides our approach towards others and keeps us from becoming conceited.
- D. Being under grace and not under law does not mean that sin is ignored. Rather, as Robert Mounce writes, it means that "the power to overcome sin is readily attainable. For those in Adam law brings condemnation, not freedom. For those in Christ grace frees from the condemnation brought by failure to keep the law. Believers no longer live under the condemnation of the law but with the realization that God by his grace has placed them in a totally new relationship to himself. . . The freedom brought by grace does not provide carte blanche to continue to sin. On the contrary, grace places the believer under obligation to holiness and growth in righteousness" enabled by the Holy Spirit<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid, 154-155, 157.

# The Nature of Christian Baptism Described as a Comparison to Christ's Death and Resurrection

## (Romans 6:1-11)

Christ's Death and Resurrection	Christian Baptism
Christ died as a sacrifice for our sins. We can live because he died. (Romans 6:3; see also 3:21-26 and 5:6-11)	We were born spiritual dead because of sin yet when we accept Christ and are baptized, we symbolically bury the old, dead self (all dead bodies should be buried) and arise spiritually alive (born again, regenerated) with and because of Christ.
Christ was physically buried in a tomb. (Luke 23:50-55)	We are symbolically buried in water. Our bodies are placed in the water (whether by sprinkling or full submersion) to represent a dead body being laid in the grave (baptised into death). (Rom 6:4)
Jesus arose from the tomb (raised to life) as a demonstration of his promise and his power. (Luke 24:1-12)	We emerge from the water as a symbolic raising from the grave with new life as a result of Christ's promise and power. (Romans 6:34)
Christ died for sinners. (Romans 5:6-8)	When sinners repent and are baptized they unite themselves with Christ. First they demonstrate a union with Christ in death (they die to their old life) then they demonstrate a union with him in life (when they emerge from the water). If we are united with Christ in faith (as demonstrate in that symbolic moment of baptism) surely we can anticipate being united with him for eternity in glory (eternal life). Romans 6:5
Christ literally rose from the grave. He is not alive forevermore and death is defeated both for him and all who believe. (Romans 6:9-10)	Likewise, our resurrection is not only symbolic at baptism but will one day be literal. For even though we are saved from sin we will still die in our body. That death, however, will not be forever. Christ will come again to raise and redeem our bodies. This is an example of the "already/not yet" nature of our salvation. (Romans 6:5)
Jesus was crucified for our sins. His death brings freedom from sin. (Romans 6:6-7)	At salvation, we join Christ in that crucifixion. Yet it is not our bodies that is crucified (as his was). It is our sins that are nailed to the cross. Just as the cross brought death to Jesus, so shall it bring death to our sins because Jesus also died. Baptism, then, can be seen as the funeral for our sin. (Romans 6:6)
Jesus died once for sins but will live forever in glory. (Romans 6:10)	In the same way, at Baptism we proclaim death to sin. Dead people cannot sin. Thus, sin is no longer at work in those who have died with Christ and are now living with him in new life. (Romans 6:11)

## Romans Bible Study

### Romans 7

*"We as believers are not any longer dominated by sin. Nor are we, in all honesty, dominated by righteousness. We are rather dominated by conflict." – John MacArthur<sup>49</sup>*

#### I. Law and Sin

- A. At the end of chapter 6, Paul was discussing the deadly results of sin. Now, in chapter 7, Paul will explain that sin is able to bring death because of the Law.
1. The Law prescribes death to those who cannot live according to its standards. Thus, by the very Law against which it stands, sin uses the law to bring about death.
  2. This, however, does not make the law evil. On the contrary, it is holy and from God (Romans 7:12). Yet the holy law requires death for those who live contrary to its standards. It is this aspect of the law that makes sin powerful in the lives of humanity.
- B. Slavery and Marriage
1. Paul used the social institution of slavery to describe humanity's relationship with sin in chapter 7. Now he will use the social institution of marriage to describe the relationship of humanity to the law.
  2. In marriage, the husband and wife are bound to one another as long as the other is living. To take another partner while the other is still alive would be considered adultery (Romans 7:3; Leviticus 20:1-12).
  3. Just as in a marriage, humanity was united with the Law through the Old Covenant. Yet through the death of Jesus, we have also died both to sin (Romans 6:11, 22) and the law (Romans 7:4). Having died in that old union, we are no longer bound to that old union. We not belong to Christ.
  4. This does not mean that Christ and the law are in competition or conflict (as some believed even during the life of Jesus as seen in Matthew 5:17-20; Mark 7:1-8; Luke 6:1-11). Just as the Old Covenant is not in conflict with the New Covenant but prepared us for the New Covenant, so the law is not in conflict with Jesus but prepared us to accept his gracious offer of salvation. That salvation bring about a death to the old order and new life with a new union with Christ.
- C. Paul and Marriage
1. While Paul is not directly discussing the issue of Christian marriage here, his understanding of Christian marriage definitely informs this analogy.
  2. Nevertheless, we must be careful not to approach this passage primarily as a teaching on marriage but as a teaching on the relationship between the believer and the law. There are plenty of other passage from which we can study Paul's understanding of marriage.
  3. However, we can find three key truths about marriage at work in Paul's theology here:
    - i. Marriage is a lifelong bond which should be protected.
    - ii. Marriage is monogamous.
    - iii. Adultery is wrong and sinful.
- D. Bearing Fruit
1. Sin produces death (Romans 6:23)
  2. Law also brings about death (Romans 7:5) – bears the fruit of death
  3. Through salvation, however, we can bear fruit (a life pleasing to God) (Rom. 7:4, 6)
  4. Although Paul's greatest explanation of this fruit is found in Galatians 5, here we see several aspects of the fruit produces by believers:
    - i. It is a contrast to the "sinful passions" aroused by the Law and manifesting in sin.

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<sup>49</sup> From the sermon "Understanding the Believer's Battle with Sin" from January 2006.

- ii. It involves service to God
- iii. It is enabled by the Spirit rather than mandated by written code. The law mandates but the Spirit enables.

## II. The Nature of the Law

- A. Paul has already described to some extent his understanding of the purpose of the law in Romans 3:20. The law makes us aware of our sin and prepares us for salvation by grace through faith in Jesus Christ.
- B. Here is Romans 7:7-13, Paul explains more about the nature of the purpose of the law.
- C. Paul begins this with a question about law. Since the law is the basis on which sin produces death in humanity, is the law bad?
  - 1. Paul answers “Certainly not!”
  - 2. The law was not established as a tool for God to us to destroy us but to save us.
  - 3. Nevertheless, sin took advantage of the law. When the enemy entered the garden to tempt mankind it was for the purpose of destruction. The enemy used God’s law to lead God’s people into rebellion and condemnation.
- D. Ultimately, the law is good:
  - 1. It makes us aware of sin (Romans 7:7)
    - i. Generally – “what is sin?”
    - ii. Personally – “what is my sin?”
  - 2. It show us the best way of life (Romans 7:9)
  - 3. It brings to light the vileness and magnitude of sin (Romans 7:13)
  - 4. It seeks to remove sin – through death and destruction (Romans 7:11, 13)
  - 5. Robert Mounce writes that “the law is ‘good’ because it intends the very best for people. In his entire discussion Paul was not depreciating law as such. His point has been that law has been used by sin as an unwilling accomplice to bring about death. . Law was simply the instrument used by sin to accomplish its purpose.”<sup>50</sup>
- E. Law and Rebellion
  - 1. Humanity is rebellious towards God. Thus, sin uses the good, holy law as the basis for our rebellion. How would we be able to rebel if there was no standard against which to live?
  - 2. Thus, as rebels by inherited nature (original sin) and our own choice (personal sin), we see the law as a boundary to break out of rather than a blessing to live by. Salvation reverses this view of the law.
- F. “Once I was alive apart from the law.”
  - 1. What did Paul mean by this interesting statement? There are three major theories:
    - i. Paul is speaking about his life before he reached the age of accountability. When Paul was unaware of the nature of sin (as revealed in the law) it has little to no immediate effect on him. However, when he reached the age of knowing and understood the law, the desire to sin activated and compelled him.
    - ii. Paul is speaking about his life before conversion. Although he knew the law he did not fully understand its intent or purpose until he met Christ.
    - iii. Paul is speaking about humanity in general before the introduction of sin and the law. Thus, Paul is saying that the giving of the law to humanity (which was a good thing) was accompanied by the natural opportunity to rebel against the law through sin. Thus, the law did not give birth to sin but sin derives its existence from the law.
  - 2. Either way, Paul is describing the universally known and experienced weakness of humanity to live according the law and apart from sin.
    - i. When the law was revealed to humanity (individually or generally) sin sprang to life and death came for us (Romans 7:9-10).

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<sup>50</sup> Mounce, 165.

- ii. We are so weak that when we see the law we are more aroused to break it than we are compelled to live by it (even among those who love the law – the Jews).

### III. Struggling with Sin

- A. Romans 7:14-25 is the most debated and controversial passage in Romans.
- B. Four theories have emerged regarding this passage:
  1. Theory 1: This was Paul's present, personal, post-conversion experience (as a mature believer)
  2. Theory 2: This was Paul's past, personal, post-conversion experience (as an immature believer)
  3. Theory 3: This was Paul's past, personal, pre-conversion experience (as a Jewish Pharisee)
  4. Theory 4: This was Paul quoting another believer concerning that believer's personal experience. (This is a minority view that requires much speculation.)
  5. There is also a theory that says this passage was not part of the original Romans letter but was added later and is thus a corruption that would be disregarded. This view is in the vast minority or fringe of Christian scholarship.
  6. Since the fourth and fifth theories are far less viable than the first three, we will only give the first three further consideration. This does not mean that theories four and five should be easily dismissed but discussing them is beyond the scope of this present study.
- C. Three basic precautions to consider when seeking to interpret controversial or difficult passages:
  1. Context is key
    - i. The immediate textual context is most important:
      - a. What is Paul saying before and after this passage?
      - b. Where does this passage fit into Paul's flow of thought?
      - c. What language does Paul use in the passage that is similar or repeated in the context?
      - d. What is Paul's main idea, theme, or greater point here?
    - ii. The greater context is also important:
      - a. Does our interpretation of this passage agree with the rest of the letter?
      - b. Does our interpretation of this passage agree with Paul in general (other letters)?
      - c. How do Paul's other writings influence our understanding of this passage?
    - iii. The context of the writer and the recipients is also important:
      - a. Who are they?
      - b. Where are they?
      - c. What is going on around them?
      - d. What is their history?
  2. Set aside assumptions or pre-conceived ideas
    - i. Not all assumptions and previously held understandings are bad. Many are probably good. However, we must not allow our past understanding to limit our present study.
    - ii. We should always approach scripture as if it is our first time reading it and then apply or consider previously held ideas.
  3. Collaborate
    - i. Work together with others to find the intended meaning. This letter only has one author who determines the meaning yet it was intended to be read to a community. We must not neglect the community setting as we read this letter personally.

- ii. Also consider what other authors and theologians have written about the passage.
- D. See Theories Chart
- E. Looking at the Big Picture
1. Big Picture 1: Based on the context of chapter 7, Paul is still speaking about the place of the law in the life of the believer:
    - i. The law first arouses sin in the unbeliever.
    - ii. Yet the law can also prepare the unbeliever for salvation by both identifying the magnitude of our sin and our inability to do anything to resolve the problem.
    - iii. Now, for the believer, it is the law that brings about hatred and disdain of sin in our own lives (Romans 7:15-16).
  2. Big Picture 2: We must not allow an attitude of complacency to develop within us in regards to sin.
    - i. We should be grieved by it regardless of where we are (pre-conversion, immature believer, or mature believer).
    - ii. Douglas Moo warns us to not misuse the text by “using it to justify sin or stagnation in the Christian life.”<sup>51</sup>
    - iii. Regardless of where we find sin along the way in our Christian life, it is not supposed to be there and we should be seeking for its removal. Salvation helps us accomplish this task.
  3. Big Picture 3: As Robert Mounce writes, “Romans 7 does not describe the totality of Paul’s spiritual experience. In fact, it is preparatory to what follows. It sets the stage for the triumph of Chapter 8.

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<sup>51</sup> Moo, 246.

## Interpreting Romans 7:14-25

Theory 1: Paul's experience as a mature believer	Theory 2: Paul's experience as a new (immature) believer	Theory 3: Paul's experience as a Jewish Pharisee before accepting Christ.
<p>Paul speaks in the present tense indicating that even as a mature believer he is still battling intensely against the temptation and desire to sin. Sometimes he still falls into temptation.</p>	<p>In Romans 6:12-14, Paul seems to indicated that even after salvation, sin can be an ongoing issue that requires mastery in the Spirit. Thus, the experience in this passage is Paul's early Christian struggle.</p>	<p>Paul sees salvation as the end of sin in the life of a believer (see Romans 6:2; 6-7, 11). Thus, this passage could not be Paul's experience after his salvation.</p>
<p>Paul speaks in "already/not yet" terms. We are already righteous in the eyes of God but we are not yet righteous in our actually human experience. The struggle against sin will remain an issue for the believer. Chapter 6 is filled with past tense victories of Christ but future tense victories of the believer. We presently live in the tension between what Christ did on the cross and our experience of the fullness of that in our lives upon physical death.</p>	<p>The transition from slavery to sin and slavery to righteousness (Romans 6:17-23) begins at salvation but is consummated over time through a process called sanctification. This means that as we persist in our salvation and life in righteousness, we will gradually win the internal battle against sin.</p>	<p>Since slavery to sin ends at salvation (Rom 6:17-18) we are now slaves to righteousness and have power to overcome. Even if we fall for a moment, our commitment to righteousness will keep us from consistently falling (Rom 6:19-22). Thus, what Paul describes in this passage does not resemble the life of one set free from slavery to sin and living as slaves to righteousness. Though Paul speaks presently of being a slave to sin (Rom 7:14) he does not mean this is his present experience but it was exactly what he experienced formally. Paul makes it clear that slavery to sin ends at salvation.</p>
<p>Paul understands the nature of sin and he hates it (Romans 7:15). This hatred of sin is only experienced in the lives of believers. Unbelievers so not experience this struggle.</p>	<p>Paul understands that the nature of sin and he hates it (Romans 7:15). This hatred of sin is only experienced in the lives of believers. Unbelievers so not experience this struggle. However, as we begin to identify and defeat sin in our life, we fight it until we mature in our sanctification.</p>	<p>Paul had a hatred for sin even as an unbeliever because of his Jewish background. He had a love for the law as a Pharisee and a hatred for the sin it exposed even in his own life. However, his struggle against sin (and the losing battle he faced) was a result of his inability to earn salvation. He found victory, not continuous struggle, at salvation. Thus, while this passage may not apply to unbelieving gentiles, it would certainly apply to unbelieving Jews which was a focus of the church in Rome.</p>

<p>In Romans 7:17-18, "sin living in me" is not a reference to the mastery of sin over the believer but the presence of ongoing sin even after salvation. Until we reach our ultimate redemption, we will struggle against the forces of sin in this world and in us.</p>	<p>In Romans 7:17-18, the "sin living in me" is an example of the real but diminishing sin that exists even in the life of the believers. Yet as the believer matures and the war is waged, sin becomes less and less until it is ultimately destroyed forever in the final redemption of humanity at resurrection.</p>	<p>In Romans 7:17, the "sin living in me" is a clear reference to the unconverted Paul who lived in awareness of sin as a Jew but in the inability to control it as an unregenerate human. Paul clarifies this in verse 18 by referring to "my sinful nature" rather than his present, redeemed nature.</p>
<p>Paul's desire to do good in Romans 7:18-20 is an example of the fruit of salvation mentioned in Romans 7:4. Even as Paul is at work bearing the fruit of his salvation, the fruit of his old, sinful nature is also there.</p>	<p>Paul's desire to do good in Romans 7:18-20 is just the beginning of a life that will produce more and more fruit of salvation mentioned in Romans 7:4. As the fruit of salvation increases, the fruit of sin diminishes.</p>	<p>Paul's desire to do good in Romans 7:18-20 stems from his Jewish heritage. This desire can only be fulfilled, however, as a believer. Apart from Christ, he can never do good no matter how much he desire to do so.</p>
<p>In Romans 7:21-23 Paul is able to distinguish between good and evil and even delights in the law of God. Such ability is only enjoyed by the believer. Unbelievers cannot experience such ability or delight.</p>	<p>In Romans 7:21-23 Paul's ability to distinguish between good and evil and even delights in the law of God is the beginning of his eventual victory over sin and evil in his life</p>	<p>In Romans 7:21-23 Paul's ability to distinguish between good and evil and even delight in the law of God is directly related to his Jewish heritage and not his salvation. This ability to distinguish good and evil or delight in God's law makes him aware his of sinful condition but cannot be lived out practically until he accepts salvation by grace through faith in Jesus.</p>
<p>Even though Paul is saved he is still "a prisoner of the law of sin" (Romans 7:23) in that sin is still at work in the world all around him and has a strong voice within in. Through salvation he has already been emancipated spiritually and is awaiting full emancipation physically.</p>	<p>Even though Paul is saved he is still "a prisoner of the law of sin" (Romans 7:23) in that sin is still at work in the world all around him and has a strong voice within in. Through salvation he has already been emancipated spiritually he is also being emancipated more and more physically as we continues in sanctification.</p>	<p>Once again, this terminology indicates that Paul is not speaking of himself as a believer for his old way of life as "a prisoner of the law of sin" (Romans 7:23).</p>
<p>Although Paul has experienced salvation, he understands his condition is still that of a wretched man needing rescue (Romans 7:24). The difference is now he has hope for that ultimate rescue in Christ Jesus (Romans 7:25).</p>	<p>Although Paul has experienced salvation, he understands his condition is still that of a wretched man needing rescue (Romans 7:24). His rescue is being experienced daily as he grows in sanctification and understanding of Christ Jesus (Romans 7:25).</p>	<p>Paul here is describing his final condition before accept Christ Jesus as his savior (Romans 7:24-25)</p>



<p>Romans 7:25 summarizes the ongoing conflict that the believer faces: I know I am saved but I also know I am being saved from this dreadful condition.</p>	<p>Romans 7:25 summarizes the ongoing conflict that the believer faces: I know I am saved but I also know I am being saved from this dreadful condition and gaining more and more victory over sin.</p>	<p>Romans 7:25 describes a Jewish person who has come to the end of what he can do for himself through the Old Covenant and is now ready to receive Jesus. Though he has committed himself to God's law intellectually, he is unable to do it practically until he accepts the gracious work of Jesus.</p>
<p>Romans 8:1-4 describes our spiritual condition in spite of our physical weakness in the midst of salvation.</p>	<p>Romans 8:1-4 describes our spiritual condition in spite of our physical weakness as we increase in sanctification after salvation.</p>	<p>Romans 8:1-4 describes our spiritual condition after salvation.</p>
<p>Romans 8 will now offer some helpful advice and hope to the believer: The Holy Spirit is there to help us in this tension and conflict.</p>	<p>Romans 8 will now offer some helpful advice and hope to the believer: The Holy Spirit is there to help us progress in our sanctification.</p>	<p>Romans 8 discusses how even the Holy Spirit is at work helping us to find Jesus and victory over sin.</p>

## **Romans Bible Study**

### **Romans 8:1-17**

*"Our freedom from the law is not freedom to disobey it. On the contrary the law-obedience of the people of God is so important to God that he sent his Son to die for us and his Spirit to live in us, in order to secure it. Holiness is the fruit of Trinitarian grace, of the Father sending his Son into the world and his Spirit into our hearts" – John Stott<sup>52</sup>*

#### **I. The Benefits of Salvation**

- A. Having explained once again the crisis that sin brings into our life in Chapter 7, Paul returns to the good news of the Gospel in Chapter 8 by describing some of the benefits or blessings of salvation. Those benefits include:
  - 1. Being free from the condemnation that sin brings (Romans 8:1).
  - 2. Walking continuously with the Holy Spirit in us and helping us (Romans 8:9-13).
  - 3. Future resurrection and eternal life in glory (Romans 8:10-11, 17)
  - 4. Adoption into God's family as a child (Romans 8:14-17).
- B. Paul explains the benefits of salvation by contrasting them with the consequences of sin (see chart on Spirit and Life in Romans 8).
- C. These are not the only benefits but Paul has already described other benefits in Romans 5.

#### **II. A Lot of Law**

- A. Paul mentions three types of law in Romans 7 and 8. Most likely, there are not three separate laws or legal systems. Although Paul does talk about the law of God (the Old Covenant law) his other uses of the word "law" should probably be seen as references to authority or power.
- B. Three Laws in Romans 8:
  - 1. The Law of the Spirit of Life – most likely not a reference to a legal system used by the Holy Spirit but rather the power of authority that the Holy Spirit has in the life of a believer.
  - 2. The Law of Sin and Death – As Paul mentioned early in the letter, the nature of definition of sin is defined by the Old Covenant Law. Sin and death do not have a separate legal system but Paul is refereeing to the power and authority of sin and death in the life of those who reject Christ.
  - 3. God's Law or the Law – When we see this in Romans 8, we can assume that Paul is writing about the actual Old Covenant legal system.
- C. Thus, being set free from the law of sin and death means that we are delivered from its power and now submit to the authority (law) of the Spirit of life. Though we still live with the flesh, it does not influence our behavior as before. The enemy will still tempt us but we have the power and ability to overcome it.

#### **III. How Are These Benefits Accomplished:**

- A. No Condemnation
  - 1. As Paul declares in Romans 1-3, humanity deserves condemnation on account of its sin both original (in the garden) and personal (in our individual lives).
  - 2. The Old Covenant Law shows us how to avoid this condemnation but we are unable to fully and completely do what it demands.
  - 3. Our inability was not a surprise to God who understood that the Law would make us aware of our sins and our need for salvation but never be able to save us on its own. The problem was not with the law but with our inability to keep it. (Romans 3:20; 8:3).
  - 4. Thus, even after the giving of the Old Testament Law, mankind remained under the condemnation of God until that law might be fulfilled.

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<sup>52</sup> John Stott, *The Message of Romans* (Downers Grove: IVP, 1994), 222.

5. The Law required a perfect sacrifice for sin (Romans 8:3). The animals used until the sacrifice of Jesus were of temporary value for a limited number of people. The sacrifice of Jesus would be eternally valuable for all who would believe. Douglas Moo writes, "Christ has fulfilled the entirety of the law's demand on our behalf."<sup>53</sup>
6. Jesus then came in the flesh (not in fallen flesh but in the flesh as it would have been experience in Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden) to live under the law, fulfilled the law (Romans 8:4), and die on the cross.
  - i. The flesh was necessary in order for Jesus to fulfill the law (it was mandated for humanity).
  - ii. The flesh was necessary in order for Jesus to be a sacrifice (God cannot die but flesh can).
7. Now, Jesus provides to humanity a righteousness that is not acquired from obeying the law but from believing in Jesus (Romans 3:21-22).
8. This righteousness frees us from the condemnation that should be ours.

#### B. The Holy Spirit

1. Because of sin, humanity was not able to enjoy the constant dwelling of the Holy Spirit among them or have full access to the presence of God.
2. In the Old Testament, interaction with God's presence and Spirit was limited:
  - i. The Spirit would come upon people for a certain season or task but not remain with them continuously.
  - ii. The presence of God was contained behind a curtain because the people were defiled and nothing unholy can stand in God's presence.
3. When Jesus died on the cross two major events happened:
  - i. Immediately, the curtain in the temple was torn from top to bottom indicating that God's presence would no longer remain behind the curtain.
  - ii. 50 days later, the Holy Spirit came down on the day of Pentecost to dwell with believers continuously.
4. Those events happened subsequent to the death of Jesus on the cross because His sacrifice was necessary to:
  - i. Make the people holy and able to remain in God's presence anywhere and anytime.
  - ii. Make the people holy to be a temple wherein the Spirit of God could dwell.

#### C. Resurrection

1. Even though Christians will still die physically, their bodies will be raised as Christ's was raised.
2. Death is a product of sin. Resurrection demonstrates that we are free from that curse.
3. This is a benefit of our salvation that is already ours but not yet fulfilled. We are alive in our spirit and will live for eternity. However, we are still awaiting the day that even our mortal bodies are redeemed and raised for glory.

#### D. Adoption

1. Sin immediately resulted in alienation from God (see Genesis 3).
2. As a result of sin, Paul describes humanity as powerless, deserving of wrath, and enemies of God in Romans 5.
3. Yet Christ has died for sinners (Romans 5:8) so that they can now be sons (Romans 8:14).

### IV. The Holy Spirit

- A. It is appropriate to see this passage as describing the work of the Holy Spirit in the lives of every believer. While Pentecostals believe that this is an initial work of the Spirit that can be enhanced or maximized following an experience of Spirit Baptism, no one can deny that the Spirit is at work in all who believe. Douglas Moo writes, "Possessing the Spirit is the mark of being a new covenant believer."<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Moo, 250.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid, 248.

- B. How does the Spirit work in us:
  1. Influencing and changing our desires and mindsets (this will be mentioned again in Romans 12:1-2).
  2. Applying the work of Christ to our lives (Romans 8:9).
  3. Resurrecting believers at the end times (Romans 8:11).
  4. Enabling believers to live in a way pleasing to God – putting to death the misdeeds of the body (Romans 8:13).
  5. Leading us in the way we should go – helping us make decisions (Romans 8:14).
- C. There are also many titles or names used for the Holy Spirit here (Spirit of God, Spirit of Life). We should not see each of these titles representing different Spirits but rather all referring to the one Holy Spirit who, like each member of the Trinity, is ascribed different names or titles in Scripture to describe their identity or their work.
- D. In terms of the name “Spirit of Christ” however, we see this as a reference to the presence of Christ and not the Holy Spirit for even though Christ is no longer with us in the flesh he did promise to be in our midst in a real but spiritual sense. We see that the Holy Spirit and Christ “both are involved so intimately in the work of God in our lives that [Paul] can shift virtually unconsciously from one to the other.”<sup>55</sup>

## V. The Triune Work of Salvation

- A. Although Paul (nor any New Testament writer) give us a well-developed theology or explanation of the Trinity, we can see that Paul wrote from a Trinitarian framework. He sees God as One but each member of the Trinity at work in various ways in regards to our salvation.
- B. God the Father’s work in salvation was to send the Son (Romans 8:3).
- C. God’s the Sons work in salvation was to be an overcomer of sin in the flesh and a sacrifice for sin (Romans 8:3).
- D. The Holy Spirit’s work in salvation is to apply the work of Jesus for all humanity to individual people.

## VI. Adoption

- A. Although the word “adoption” does not appear in some English translations until Romans 8:23, Paul alludes to adoption strongly in Romans 8:14-17, especially in verse 15 where “spirit of sonship” could also be translated from the Greek as “spirit of adoption.”
- B. God the Father only has one natural, unique son (John 3:16), all who believe in Jesus become sons and daughters of God by adoption. Although we will never be like Jesus in his divine nature, we are like him in terms of receiving the rights of children in a family.
  1. Relationship with the Father (Salvation)
  2. A Place in the Home (Heaven)
  3. Inheritance (Glory)
- C. The interesting thing here is that Paul includes suffering as part of our sonship. If we are truly like Jesus, the Son of God, we will not only seek to participate in his glory but also be willing to share in his sufferings. Thus, suffering is not unusual in God’s family. It is not a sign that you are on the fringes but rather a sign you belong in the family. Suffering will accompany genuine, spiritual adoption into God’s family.
- D. Craig Keener writes that in the Roman understanding of adoption, it “could take place at any time – canceled all previous debts and relationships, defining the new son wholly in terms of his new relationship to his father, whose heir he thus became.”<sup>56</sup>
- E. Abba
  1. We see this used by Jesus in his prayer to God the Father in Mark in Mark 14:36 and again by Paul in Galatians 4:6.
  2. This is the name Paul uses to refer to God the Father in the context of our adoption and child-father relationship with him.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid, 256.

<sup>56</sup> Craig S. Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary* (Downers Grove: IVP, 1993), 430.

3. This is actually the Aramaic word for father or as Craig Keener writes, it can be translated as “‘Papa,’ a term of great intimacy and affectionate respect. It was normally the first word a child would utter. . . Perhaps because it implied such intimacy, Jewish people never used it for God.”<sup>57</sup>
4. Paul wanted to convey the difference that now exists in our relationship to God because of our salvation. Once we were anticipating God’s wrath as his enemy (alienation), now we are anticipating his inheritance our as Abba (intimacy).
  - i. Intimacy was the original plan for God’s relationship with humanity and interpersonal relationship among humans. We see this demonstrated in the Garden of Eden when God walked with humanity in closeness.
  - ii. Sin, however, drove a wedge between both God and humanity and humans with one another (see Genesis 3). The alienation we experience before salvation is part of the curse and a consequence of sin. We were not originally created to be alienated from God. Adoption as children of God restores this aspect of God’s original intent for humanity.
  - iii. It may also be said that genuine, intimate relationship between humans (as God originally intended it) can only be experienced within the context of Christianity as a product of the ministry of reconciliation that takes place not only between God and mankind but also between individuals in humanity. As we become the children of God, we also become the brothers and sisters of one another. These bonds are not based on temporary fulfilment or selfish motive but eternal, pure, and genuine love for one another.

## **VII. The Sin Problem**

- A. Although there is power to overcome sin by the Spirit in the life of the believer, we understand that sinless perfection may not be possible on this side of heaven even though that remains our life-long goal,
- B. Douglas Moo writes that even though it is our responsibility to respond and react to the work of the Spirit in our struggle against sin, “Paul never suggests that the inheritance of future life requires that we stop sinning altogether. What he demands . . . is clear, long-term, progress in becoming less like the world (i.e., “the flesh”) and more like Christ . . . Cultivating a Spirit-led, Spirit-filled disposition of the heart and mind is necessary if we are to live in a way that pleases God.”<sup>58</sup>

## **VIII. Then Tension Between Romans 8:1 and Romans 8:13**

- A. Here we see the debate spring up again between Calvinism and Arminianism
  1. Romans 8:1 seems to emphasize God’s will and election in salvation while Romans 8:13 seems to emphasize man’s free will and responsibility in salvation.
  2. As we saw in Chapter 5, there is no clear path to strict Calvinism or strict Arminianism in Paul’s writing. As soon as he writes something which seems to prove one side, he will write another statement that seems to support the other side.
    - i. Using Romans 8:1, the Calvinists would say that our freedom from condemnation is completely the word of God as it is seen by Paul as a declaration rather than a condition. The influence of the Spirit is so strong that one who is freed from condemnation will never enter into it again.
    - ii. Using Romans 8:13, the Arminians would say that our salvation is initiated by God but also sustained by the choices of the individual. If the saved person chooses to follow the leading of the Spirit, he/she will progress in their salvation and maturity but if he/she chooses not to follow the Spirit, he/she could fall away from their salvation and back into condemnation.
- B. The reality is that Paul’s words were written before these debates arose and often do not fall perfectly in line with one side or the other. Indeed, Romans 8:1 declares that it is by the

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid, 176.

<sup>58</sup> Moo, 248, 257.

grace of God that we escape condemnation yet Romans 8:13 indicates that we as believers have a responsibility to respond and react to the leading and work of the Spirit in our lives. Douglas Moo writes, “Security without responsibility breeds passivity, but responsibility without security leads to anxiety.”<sup>59</sup>

- C. In regards to this discussion, John Murray writes, “The believer’s once-for-all death to the law of sin does not free him from the necessity of mortifying sin in his members; it makes it necessary and possible for him to do so.”<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid, 258.

<sup>60</sup> John Murray, *The Epistles to the Romans* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965), 294.

## Spirit and Flesh in Romans 8:1-17

Life in the Spirit	Life in the Flesh
<p>The righteous requirements of the law are fulfilled for us by the work of Jesus (Romans 8:4). This allows the Holy Spirit to reside in us (Romans 8:9) and with us continuously (which was not possible before the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross - that is why the Spirit of God was remained behind a curtain in the Temple until Jesus finished his atoning work on the cross).</p>	<p>Unable to keep the law and thereby find salvation through the law (Romans 8:3).</p>
<p>Mind is focused on the righteous desires of the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:5b).</p>	<p>Mind is focused on the sinful desires of our fallen nature (Romans 8:5a).</p>
<p>Results in Life (Romans 8:6, 13). Even though believers are also born into a spiritual death and will experience a physical death, when they become alive in their Spirit (salvation - born again) before they die in the flesh, they will avoid eternal death, experience a resurrection like Christ, and enter into eternal life forever in the presence of God (Romans 8:10-11).</p>	<p>Leads to death (Romans 8:6, 13). This begins with a spiritual death at the time of birth (born into a fallen state, is followed by a physical death, and concludes with an eternal death forever outside the presence of God.</p>
<p>Has peace (reconciliation) with God (Romans 8:6).</p>	<p>Is hostile to God and unable to submit (be reconciled) on his/her own (Romans 8:7).</p>
<p>Controlled by the Spirit as He lives in us and with us after accepting Christ (Romans 8:9). This enables us to please God.</p>	<p>Controlled by the sinful nature and thus unable to please God (Romans 8:8).</p>
<p>Adopted as children of God and heirs to the kingdom along with Jesus, the only natural Son of God (natural in terms of not being adopted but forever having the title of Son). Receiving that inheritance involves both participating in his sufferings and his glory (Romans 8:14-17).</p>	<p>Has no share in the inheritance of Christ.</p>
<p>Set free from fear (Romans 8:15). Since God is all powerful and fears nothing we can trust that his sons need not fear anything as well.</p>	<p>Enslaved to fear (Romans 8:15).</p>
<p>Requires ongoing practice as we walk with (live in, live according to) the Spirit. We receive the Spirit at salvation to both enjoy and obey (Romans 8:12-13). This is aided by discipleship.</p>	<p>Able to be overcome (salvation) by the work of Christ on the cross and the work of the Spirit in the believer (Romans 8:12-13).</p>

## **Romans Bible Study**

### **Romans 8:18-28**

*"Christians are not grim stoics who manage to muddle through somehow. They are victors who have found from experience that God is ever present in their trials and that the love of Christ will empower them to overcome all the obstacles of life" – Robert Mounce<sup>61</sup>*

#### **I. Glory and Suffering**

- A. Having just mentioned in 8:17 that belonging to the family of God (by adoption) will bring about an inheritance of both suffering and glory, Paul clarifies the nature of both these two realities:
  - 1. The suffering we experience is present (temporary) but the glory is future (eternal).
  - 2. The suffering we experience is so small when viewed in conjunction with the glory we shall experience that it is "not even worth comparing." While this may not seem true to the person enduring the present suffering (which can be harsh) it is a blessing and comfort to have this anticipation in the midst of suffering.
- B. Not only is God's family experiencing suffering as we await our final and eternal redemption (glory), but also God's creation is experiencing suffering.
  - 1. We understand from Romans 1:18-32 that we live in a fallen world. Although God created it perfect and good (Genesis 1-2), humankind brought suffering into creation when Adam and Eve sinned.
  - 2. Now creation is suffering alongside humanity eagerly awaiting our redemption because creation's redemption will follow. Although Paul does not elaborate on this issue very much, we understand this to be a New Testament concept from 2 Peter 3:10-13 and Revelation 21:1-4.
- C. Robert Mounce sees this section of Romans describing three encouragements for the believer enduring suffering:<sup>62</sup>
  - 1. We have hope for future glory
  - 2. We have help for present difficulty (through the Holy Spirit)
  - 3. We have the promise that God will work all together for good.

#### **II. Creation**

- A. Creation was originally intended to proclaim glory to God (Psalms 19:1-3) and provide a comfortable environment for humanity (Genesis 2:8-17). Mankind was easily sustained within it.
- B. Because of our sin, however, creation was cursed (Genesis 3:14-19 and Romans 8:20) and made into an uncomfortable environment for humanity. It could still provide sustenance but not without toil, pain, and hardship. (Beauty and the Beast illustration)
- C. God cursed the creation not in anger but in accordance with his plan for redemption. Just as the creation conveys a messages of praise to God (Isaiah 55:12) and a message of God's existence to humanity (Romans 1:18-20), it also demonstrates to humanity its own need to be saved. That creation is not comfortable for sinners is yet another push for us to come to God for salvation since we cannot find it in this world.
- D. Paul understands creation to be aware of this; both the spiritual condition of mankind and the fallen, cursed condition of itself. This may be explained in two ways:
  - 1. Paul may view creation as having awareness of God, its creator. The Old Testament is clear that creation can praise God but Paul may see creation as also conscious of its own need for a future reality of redemption.
  - 2. Paul could be using a literary device called personification where an inanimate object is given human characteristics. If this is the case, Paul is not intending to say that creation as conscious awareness but rather it is too awaiting redemption.

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<sup>61</sup> Mounce, 191.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid, 183.



- E. Regardless of what Paul was intending to say about the awareness of nature, it is certain that Paul view creation as fallen. This fallen nature produces:
  - 1. Decay (as seen in both normal life cycles and natural disasters)
  - 2. Pain and Suffering
  - 3. Groaning to God
- F. Christian environmentalists draw inspiration from this text. Even though God will ultimately and completely redeem the earth, humanity has also been given a role to participate. As we are adopted into the family of God we come to understand that nature is both God's creation and given to humanity for our sustenance but also as something under our care. The theology of "creation care" or Christ-centered environmentalism has arisen in recent decades promote conservation and responsible interaction between humanity and nature.

### III. Groaning

- A. Paul introduced the concept of groaning in regards to creation but it is not only creation that groans. Humanity also groans. We groan:
  - 1. In eager anticipation of final adoption and eternal redemption (Romans 8:23) as a child might groan as he or she waits in a long line to receive a treat or gift.
  - 2. In frustration or weakness when we do not know how or what to pray (Romans 8:26). As we groan in confusion the Spirit groans with us in understanding and expresses what we cannot express to God.
- B. Paul illustrates the groans of both creation and humanity by drawing upon the image of a woman giving birth (which is also connected to the curse brought about by sin).
  - 1. Many have seen the agonizing groans of a woman in the midst of delivery. She groans sometime in pain, frustration, fear, confusion, helpless, anger, and anxiety. Words are not able to adequately express the range of emotions and feelings so noise if produced which do not resemble language but definitely conveys a message.
  - 2. Though the delivery is often fraught with suffering, Childbirth usually produces a new life and joyous celebration. This aspect of childbirth can also be included in Paul's analogy. The suffering, difficulty, and weakness that we experience before redemption is eventually going to give way to a new, eternal life and a joyful existence. This is also part of the promise in Romans 8:28.
- C. Groaning does not diminish with salvation. Indeed, the closer we get to the new and joyful life of eternity (just as a mother get closer to full delivery), the more intense the groaning will become. Douglas Moo makes the point that we do not groan despite having the Spirit but rather we groan "because we have the Spirit."<sup>63</sup>

### IV. The Holy Spirit

- A. The focus on the Spirit is seen more in this section than any other part of Romans. Paul's discussion of the Spirit began previous in chapter 8 but continues here. In summary, Paul see the Spirit:
  - 1. Abiding with believers (we have the Spirit as a "firstfruit") – Romans 8:23.
  - 2. Helping believers in times of weakness – Romans 8:26 (Paul elaborates on this in 2 Corinthians 12:7-10).
  - 3. Interceding for believers – Romans 8:27
    - i. Jesus is also seen interceding for believers in Romans 8:34.
    - ii. While the Spirit intercedes at the side of humanity, Jesus intercedes at the side of the Father (see also Hebrews 7:25).
    - iii. This should not be seen as the Spirit and the Son pleading with the father to change his mind or convince him of something but rather as a source of encouragement. We can be assured that our prayers, regardless of how weak they may seem, are being heard. For the Spirit, who knows perfectly the will of God helps us pray for that will in our lives (Romans 8:26-27). The Son,

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<sup>63</sup> Moo, 267.

who is at the Father's right hand, also ensures that our prayers reach the Father.

## B. Praying in the Spirit

1. Interpreting Romans 8:26 has been problematic. How literal does Paul intend to present this groaning of the Spirit?
  - i. The Greek word for groan in στεναγμος (stenagmos) which, according to Verlyn Verbrugge, literally means an audible sign or groan with "deep emotive elements."<sup>64</sup>
  - ii. Some have translated this as an inaudible, spiritual event comparing the groaning of humanity with the previously mentioned groaning of creation (which is inaudible). This is vivid imagery used to describe the work of the Spirit in our hearts but not necessarily with our tongues.
  - iii. Some Pentecostals see this as a reference to speaking in tongues as an exercise in prayer. Thus, spoken tongues are the audible expression of the Spirit's intercession.
  - iv. Some Non-Pentecostals do not accept this as tongues but recognize that this is "the Christian's own audible but wordless groanings as he or she struggles before the Lord in prayer."<sup>65</sup>
2. Whatever our interpretation of the groaning, the truth is clear: our experience in prayer will be enhanced by the Holy Spirit. As we rely on the Spirit's power and prayers more than our own, we will find ourselves praying in conjunction with someone who knows exactly for what we should pray.
  - i. When we pray for the will of God, as known and revealed by the Spirit, we will find fulfillment rather than frustration in prayer.
  - ii. Douglas Moo writes, "Our inability to pray as precisely as we would like is no hindrance to the working out of God's perfect will in our lives. We may not know what to ask for in a given situation, but the Spirit does. His requests are in perfect harmony with the will of the Lord for us."<sup>66</sup>
  - iii. The focus of prayer, then, should not be finding the right words but seeking after the Holy Spirit.
    - a. Spirit, help me to know (the will of God)
    - b. Spirit, help me to pray (the will of God)
    - c. Spirit, help me to obey (the will of God)
  - iv. Douglas Moo writes, "Once the Spirit, with his demand for holiness, enters our lives, we sense as never before just what God wants us to be. As a result, the Spirit increases our frustration at not meeting God's standard and our yearning to be what he wants us to be."<sup>67</sup>
  - v. Robert Mounce writes, "The Spirit comes to the aid of believers baffled by the perplexity of prayer and takes their concerns to God with an intensity far greater than we could ever imagine. Our groans become his as he intercedes on our behalf."<sup>68</sup>

## V. Hope

- A. Hope is also a theme of Romans 8. Paul see as salvation as both already but not yet. We are already saved, glorified, redeemed in the eyes of God. Yet in our present experience we are still in need, suffering, and groaning. How do we reconcile and endure our present experience in light of our future, eternal reality? We have hope.

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<sup>64</sup> Verbrugge, 540.

<sup>65</sup> Moo, 268.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid, 267.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> Mounce, 187.

- B. Hope is not about having what you want but knowing that it will be given. Thus, when suffering and weakness arise, we can walk through it with confidence knowing that as we patiently wait God will faithfully deliver.
- C. Our hope is exhibited as we maintain our faith in the midst of difficulty for we know that God does indeed work all things together for the good of those who love him. God can take what the enemy intended for evil or what the curse of creation brought into our lives and not only deliver us from it but use it to bring about some good for us and glory for God.
- D. God can take the bad things that happen and redeem them for our:
  - 1. Maturity
  - 2. Testimony
  - 3. Blessing (perhaps more spiritual than physical)
- E. Such results may not be immediately seem but as we “wait patiently” we will be able to recognize (perhaps in hindsight) how God turned the experience around for good.
- F. This does to mean that God brings suffering into our life. Suffering comes as a result of both the attack of the enemy and as a byproduct of a fallen world. Yet the suffering does not diminish the power of God nor the hope that we have in him.
- G. Ultimately, our understanding of “good” in Romans 8:28 must not be defined narrowly in terms of materialistic or financial gain. Rather, we should try see “good” as God defines it. The “good” waiting on the other side of suffering may not be material blessing but spiritual blessing.

## **Romans Bible Study**

### **Romans 8:29-39**

*"Our confidence is not in our love for him, which is frail, fickle and faltering, but in his love for us, which is steadfast, faithful and preserving." – John Stott<sup>69</sup>*

*Let me no more my comfort draw  
From my frail hold on thee;  
In this alone rejoice with awe –  
Thy mighty grasp of me.  
– John C. Shairp<sup>70</sup>*

#### **I. A Concluding Statement**

- A. Paul has been seeking to describe the Gospel since Romans 3:22 (especially since Romans 5) and Paul is not nearing the end of this teaching.
- B. Paul now is at work concluding this section with a series powerful and persuasive remarks meant to totally convince the reader of the importance and truthfulness of the Gospel.

#### **II. Foreknown and Predestined (Romans 8:29-30)**

##### A. Context

1. The immediate context of this passage is Romans 8:28 in which Paul has given a concluding remark about suffering in the life of the believer. Even our suffering can be used by God to bring about his good. God turns suffering into blessing to those who love God and are “called according to his purpose.”
2. That purpose is later described in Romans 8:28: “being conformed to the likeness of his Son.” This is a reference again to the adoption theme that Paul had already mentioned twice in Romans 8 (verses 15 and 23). Again that theme arise when Paul mentions here that being conformed to the likeness of Jesus makes us a brother (or sister) to the firstborn of God.
  - i. The image of Jesus as firstborn should not cause of think that Paul is referring to the creation of Jesus. God the Son was never created, he is an eternal being. The firstborn designation of Jesus here refers to his uniqueness and authority as the only eternal Son of God.
  - ii. We are not sons of God as Jesus is the Son of God. He is firstborn (in regards to priority and authority) while we are adopted.

##### B. The Words

1. Foreknow comes from the Greek verb προγινωσκω (proginosko).
  - i. This word is only used five times in the New Testament
    - a. Acts 26:5
    - b. Romans 8:29 and 11:2
    - c. 1 Peter 1:20
    - d. 2 Peter 3:17
    - e. The noun form is used in Acts 2:23 and 1 Peter 1:2
  - ii. Its basic definition (apart from context) is “to know or to see in advance, to see the future.”<sup>71</sup>
2. Predestined comes from the Greek verb προοριζο (prorizo).
  - i. This word is quite unique to the New Testament as it is not seem much in Greek literature. Even in the New Testament it is only used six times:
    - a. Acts 4:28
    - b. Romans 8:29 and 30

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<sup>69</sup> Stott, 259.

<sup>70</sup> From his hymn “Twixt Gleams of Joy and Clouds of Doubt” composed and published in 1888.

<sup>71</sup> Verbrugge, 490.

- c. 1 Corinthians 2:7
  - d. Ephesians 1:5 and 11 (also key verses in the debate seen below)
  - ii. Its basic definition (apart from context) is “preordain.”<sup>72</sup>
- C. Theological Concerns
1. This passage is one at the center of a great 400 year old debate concerning the nature of salvation (soteriology). At the center of the debate are two streams of theology names after the leading proponents: Calvinism and Arminianism.
    - i. John Calvin was born in France in 1509 and was catholic from a family with financial means. After completing a Master of Arts degree he enrolled in law school but later changed to classical studies and started studying the work of the Protestant Reformation since that was a popular topic at the time. Around 1532 (just 15 years before Luther’s death) John Calvin turned in a new direction. “He gave up his career as a classical scholar and identified with the Protestant cause in France.”<sup>73</sup> Persecution in France drove him out of the county towards Italy but along the way he stopped in Geneva and was asked by the Reformed congregation there (connected to Zwingli) to lead them. He spent most of his life after this event in Geneva and wrote the Institutes which contains in literary excellence of John Calvin’s reformation theology with its heavy focus on God’s sovereignty. The central theme was that “In his own wisdom, from the remotest eternity, [God] decreed what he would do, and by his own power he executes what he has decreed”<sup>74</sup> not only in general but also in individuals in particular.
    - ii. Jacob Arminius was born in 1560 in Holland. He was a leader in the Dutch Reformation but caused a split among the reformers in Holland when he tried to revise the teaching of John Calvin. Arminius did not accept the doctrine of predestination as Calvin taught. He saw God’s foreknowledge as arising from God knowing in advance what choice individuals would make rather than God making that determination for individuals.
    - iii. The debate concerning this division of thought came to a head in 1618-169 at the Dort Synod. The majority of the Synod sided with traditional Calvinism and “the clerical followers of Arminius were deprived of their positions. Not until 1625 did persecution of Arminians cease.”<sup>75</sup>
    - iv. See handout on major beliefs in each theological stream.
  2. God’s Foreknowledge and Human Free Will
    - i. Calvinism emphasizes the sovereignty of God in Salvation. It does not deny human free will but declares that man’s free will has, since the fall, been totally subjected to God’s will. Thus, God knows who will be saved because God has chosen (or elected) those people for salvation from eternity past. A person accepts salvation because he was chosen to do so.
    - ii. Arminianism emphasizes the free will of mankind in Salvation. Arminianism agrees that God is sovereign but insists that God has allowed humanity to choose for himself or herself. God knows all, even who will be saved. However, God’s knowledge of man’s salvation is based on God’s omniscience. He knows who will choose to be saved and he has elected those who will make that decision.
    - iii. The word foreknow indicates that “God’s plan for us began in a decision to enter into relationship with us.”<sup>76</sup> Both understand God to be the one who initiates salvation but they do not agree on how he initiates salvation.

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<sup>72</sup> Verbrugge, 492.

<sup>73</sup> Bruce L Shelley, *Church History in Plain Language* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2008), 269.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid, 271.

<sup>75</sup> Earls E. Cairns, *Christianity Through the Centuries* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 318.

<sup>76</sup> Moo, 270.

3. The Calvinist Interpretation of Romans 8:29-30: These verses describe the process by which the elect are saved. First, he/she is predestined by God in his foreknowledge of all humanity. Second, since he/she is called by God in light of God's choice to elect that him/her. He/She that is called cannot resist God's calling since he is omnipotent and sovereign. Thus, they will respond to God and be saved (justified, declared innocent). All who are saved will persevere through life by God's hand and be glorified in eternity.
4. The Arminian Interpretation of Romans 8:29-30: These verses should not be seen as sequential but as a list of what does occur in the life of a person who chooses to respond to the calling and grace of God. God knew he/she would choose salvation and God predestined that person based on that choice. Thus, their justification and glorification will naturally follow as God fulfills his promises.

#### D. The Bigger Picture

1. Ultimately, Paul was not concerned with giving us a clear theological explanation of God's saving activity here. Paul is more concerned with encouraging the believers who are saved with a discussion of the promise of God in the midst of their suffering and patient waiting for final adoption.
2. While they wait and suffer, they can be sure that God will fulfill his promises. Our place in God's family is not ultimately contingent on our strength but God's love. This knowledge gives us encouragement to be faithful.

### III. Further Encouragement

A. Paul now ends with what John Stott describes as Paul "assurances"<sup>77</sup> about God.

B. Five Assurances of God's Plan (the Gospel):

1. If he is for us, nothing can succeed against us (Romans 8:31, 37)
2. He loved us enough to send his son as a sacrifice for sin (Romans 8:32)
3. He justifies (declares innocent) completely and forever the saved (Romans 8:33)
4. Jesus was raised to life and intercedes on our behalf at God's right hand (Romans 8:34).
5. Nothing can separate us from God's love demonstrated in Christ Jesus (Romans 8:35, 29).

C. Five Assurances of God's Love:

1. Physical difficulties are not indications of a diminishment of God's love (Romans 8:35-36).
2. There is no separation from God love in life or death (Romans 8:38).
3. No spiritual power can separate us from God's love (Romans 8:38).
4. Physical time does not separate us from God's love (Romans 8:38) – he knew us before we were born, know him, or were saved.
5. Physical distance does not separate us from God's love (Romans 8:39).

D. Concerning this passage, John Stott writes, "Insecurity is written across all human experience. Christian people are not guaranteed immunity to temptation, tribulation, or tragedy, but we are promised victory over them. God's pledge is not that suffering will never afflict us, but that it will never separate us from his love. This is the love of God which has been supremely displayed in the cross (Romans 5:8; 8:32, 37), which has been poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit (Romans 5:5), which has drawn out from us our responsive love (Romans 8:28), and which in its essential steadfastness will never let us go, since it is committed to bringing us safe home to glory in the end."<sup>78</sup>

E. Robert Mounce writes, "It is the love of Christ that supports and enables the believer to face adversity and to conquer it."<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> Stott, 259.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

<sup>79</sup> Mounce, 191.

## **Romans Bible Study**

### **Romans 9:1-18**

*"I am confident that God can enable us to hear him speak in the midst of all our personal and cultural prejudices. But we must actively seek to let him do so – by humility, by a willingness to listen, and, most of all, by seeking the Spirit's help and guidance." – Douglas J. Moo<sup>80</sup>*

#### **I. Paul's Desire for Jewish Salvation**

- A. Having explained the truth of the Gospel in Romans 3-8, Paul is now shifting his discussion to the implications of the Gospel, first for the Jewish people.
- B. Paul never abandoned his Jewish identity. He spoke of it with honor:
  1. Romans 11:1
  2. Acts 22:3
  3. Galatians 1:14
  4. Philippians 3:5-4
- C. Thus, Paul had a special concern for his own people as we see in Romans 9:1-3. Though some had accepted the Gospel, many had rejected it as well as Jesus. This caused Paul to grieve and even say that he willing to be "cursed and cut off from Christ" for the sake of Jewish people and their eternal salvation.
  1. The word Paul used for cut off is a very serious word in the Greek: anathema (ἀνάθεμα). In the Greek language, this word originally meant something that was devoted or dedicated to an idol (a Greek deity). Thus, for a polytheistic Greek, this word had a positive connotation. However, for the Jewish, monotheistic person, anything dedicated to an idol was cursed or condemned. Thus, it carried a very negative connotation when used in the Jewish context developing the meaning of accursed or banned by God.
  2. Paul uses this same word with great severity to condemn false teachers in Gal. 1:8.
  3. Concerning Paul's use of this word in Romans 9:3, Verlyn Vebrugge writes, "Paul's Jewish kinship is not abolished by his membership in the church of Jesus Christ. He is even willing to come under the curse (anathema) that is, to be annihilated by God and delivers to eschatological judgement, in order to save Israel."<sup>81</sup>
  4. Most likely Paul is using a literary device often found in Scripture called "overstatement" which is defined as "overstating a truth in such a way that the resulting exaggeration forcefully brought home the point he was attempting to make."<sup>82</sup> Paul has just expressed at the end of Chapter 8 how nothing can separate us from the love of God. Paul's desire was for God and to be with him eternally was his goal (Romans 6:22). For Paul to literally be willing to separate himself eternally from God for the sake of the Jewish people would demonstrate that Paul held their salvation to even a higher place in his life than his own salvation and God. This does not seem to be the case in light of all that Paul has written. We should see this passage, however, as an overstatement of an actual truth: that Paul would be willing to do almost anything to help bring more Jewish people (even all Jews) to salvation.

#### **II. The Work of God Among the Jewish People**

- A. In Romans 9:4-5, Paul describes the outreach of God to the Jewish people over the course of human history. They were seen as a priority for God.
- B. The Jewish People were first in God's plan of salvation in many ways:
  1. First chosen for adoption into God's family
    - i. This is first seen in Genesis 12:1-3 and affirmed in Exodus 19:3-6.

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<sup>80</sup> Moo, 297.

<sup>81</sup> Verbrugge, 44.

<sup>82</sup> Robert H. Stein, *The Method and Message of Jesus' Teaching* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1994), 8.

- ii. God calls the people of Israel collectively his “firstborn son” in Exodus 4:22. Though Jesus is called the first born by Paul in Romans 8:29, Israel could be considered the first among the adopted children.
- 2. First Recipients of Divine Glory
  - i. The presence of God often met with and led the people of Israel (Exodus 13:21 and 16:7-10 for example).
  - ii. The presence of God dwelled in their midst through the Tabernacle and Temple (1 Kings 8:6-16).
- 3. First to be in Covenant Relationship with God
  - i. Abrahamic Covenant (Genesis 15:18)
  - ii. The Mosaic Covenant (Exodus 19:3-6)
- 4. First to receive the Law of God (Exodus-Deuteronomy)
- 5. First to be instructed in proper worship and temple activities (Leviticus)
- C. God’s affirmation of his plan of salvation can also be seen in Israel’s history:
  - 1. The giving of many promises by God regarding eternal blessings and salvation, especially during the time of exile through the prophets.
  - 2. The personal interaction of God with the Patriarchs of Israel.
  - 3. Ultimately, the promise and fulfillment of Jesus, the Messiah who would come both from and for the Jewish people.
- D. This description of Jewish priority in salvation should not be viewed as God’s ethnocentrism but as part of God’s larger plan to raise up Israel for the purpose of bringing all nations to God. Thus, Gentiles should not view Israel with jealousy or contempt but rather appreciation since “their spiritual blessings are all the result of what God has done through his people Israel.”<sup>83</sup>

### III. The Unbelief of the Jewish People

- A. Even though the Jewish people were a priority in God’s plan for salvation before Jesus (as seen above) and after Jesus (as seen in Romans 1:16 and Acts 15), many Jews refused to participate in the Gospel. John Stott writes, “One would think that Israel, favoured with these eight blessings, prepared and educated for centuries for the arrival of her Messiah, would recognize and welcome him when he came.”<sup>84</sup> It broke Paul’s heart to consider that many did not and would not welcome Christ.
- B. Paul attributes this failure to humanity (individual Jews) and not God. God’s word cannot be viewed as having failed since Jews did not ultimately accept the Gospel and receive salvation. In fact, says Paul, even the Old Testament indicates that not all of Abraham’s descendants will be in relationship with God. Participation in God’s Covenant with Israel was not reserved for only those in a particular race but rather those with a particular faith.
  - 1. Faith in God, and not necessarily birth into a Jewish family, was the only way to participate in God’s covenant. In the Old Testament, birth into a Jewish family did indeed prepare a person for faith in a way that no other racial group could but simply being born in that family.
  - 2. Thus, Jewish ancestry was an advantage but not a guarantee for salvation.
- C. Paul illustrated this by using two examples from early Jewish history:
  - 1. The example of Ishmael
    - i. Though his name is never mentioned by Paul, it is clear this is who Paul was referring to in Romans 9:7-8.
    - ii. God’s covenant was extended to the child of faith and not the child of natural or human effort. Indeed, both Ishmael and Isaac were Abraham’s natural children but only one was a child of faith. It was to the child of faith that God’s covenant was extended.
    - iii. Ishmael was even circumcised as Abraham was (Genesis 17:26) which was a physical sign of the covenant. Yet, as Paul explains Galatians, mere physical

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<sup>83</sup> Moo, 291.

<sup>84</sup> Stott, 266.



circumcision is of no value if not accompanied by spiritual circumcision. As Robert Mounce writes, “Spiritual kinship, no ethnic origin, determined who was a true Israelite.”<sup>85</sup>

2. The example of Esau

- i. Jacob and Esau were not only sons of Isaac and Rebekah and grandchildren of Abraham, they were twins (unlike Isaac and Ishmael). Their birth and early life was described in Genesis 25:19-34.
- ii. Here, you would expect that the covenant of God to be entrusted to the firstborn son. However, an unexpected thing happens when God chooses Jacob over Esau. Thus, in God’s plan of salvation, we will sometimes see people we least expect entering into that covenant (like Gentiles) while others we might expect not entering in (like Jews). Again, Mounce writes, “Mere membership in the Jewish nation was insufficient to warrant God’s praise.”<sup>86</sup>

D. Paul is adamant that true children of Abraham (people of the covenant) are not determined by birth but by faith.

1. Paul has previously stated this in Romans 4:13-16
2. Paul also teaches this in Galatians 3:7-14
3. This idea is also seen in the Gospels: Matthew 3:9 and John 8:39

#### IV. Calvinism and Arminianism

A. This debate continues into chapter 9, especially in regards to the story of Esau and Jacob mentioned in Romans 9:10-13.

1. Calvinists use this text to teach their doctrine of election with regards to the predestination of God. Before the twins were born, God had already determined that one would be saved. Thus, Isaac’s covenant participation after his birth was the result of God’s divine choice (election) before his birth.
2. Arminians say that God did not determine that one would serve God and another would not. Rather, God foresaw this and alerted Rebekah of this beforehand. Thus, God’s election of Isaac before his birth was based on God’s foreknowledge of Isaac’s life after his birth.

B. The debate continues in Romans 9:14-18.

1. Calvinists see this passage as a clear indication that God’s sovereign choice determines a person’s path in life and eternity after death. It was by God’s choice that Pharaoh’s heart was hardened and he did not believe. Paul’s use of Pharaoh as an example indicated that Paul understood what happened to Pharaoh to be common in humanity, not unique to Pharaoh. Verses 16-18, then, becomes a chief passage of the Calvinist view of election.
2. Arminians would say that God’s choice to harden Pharaoh’s heart happened in human time only after Pharaoh showed signs of a personal decision to harden his own heart (Exodus 8:15 comes before Exodus 9:12). That Moses was sent to Pharaoh again and again shows that even with a hard heart, Pharaoh could have responded to God. They see Romans 9:16 as a reference to the possibility of salvation in general rather than the ability of individuals to be saved.

C. Although this chapter in general seems to support the Calvinist view, the opening verses seem to indicate that Paul is hopeful that many (if not all) Jews could be saved. Why would he be willing to cut himself off from the Lord for the sake of people who are (in the Calvinist’s view) already eternally cut off from salvation?

1. Calvinists say this expresses Paul feelings towards a people who he desires to be saved even though it is possible some were not called to salvation.
2. Arminians say this expresses Paul desire to bring those people into salvation knowing that anyone who believes can be saved.

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<sup>85</sup> Mounce, 198.

<sup>86</sup> Mounce, 194.

## V. God is Just

- A. Beginning in Romans 9:14, Paul begins to grapple with a question that is still very relevant today: If some (even Jews) refuse God's salvation and stand condemned for eternity, does this negate God's love and call into question his justice. If God can save, why doesn't he do it even for those who do not believe?
- B. Paul's quote of Exodus 33:19 answers this question. God is not obligated to save anyone. That God saved even one person is an example of his mercy and his compassion. Salvation is not mandatory but by grace.
  1. Paul has already made this clear in Romans 3:19-20, 23.
  2. Man's desire or effort will never warrant God's salvation. Rather, we are saved by God's grace alone.
  3. Thus, the real question is not "why does God not save everyone" but rather "why does God save anyone?"
- C. Paul realizes that some people have hardened their hearts towards God, even Jews. Though they may seem devoted to God's word, by refusing to accept the New Covenant and hardening their hearts towards Jesus, they have also rejected God. Thus, they will not be saved (and this breaks Paul's heart). This is not an indication that God lacks love and justice. Nor is this an indication that God is not powerful enough to bring them to salvation (God can even use the hardened heart to fulfil his purpose as seen by Pharaoh). Rather, this indicates a primary message of Paul's gospel: Salvation is a work of faith. No one deserves salvation but anyone who responds to God in faith can receive it.

## VI. The Place of Jews in the New Covenant

- A. This section of Romans is part of a larger section (Romans 9-11) that deals with the practical implication of the Gospel for the Jews but also issue of the place of Jews in the New Covenant. We cannot determine Paul's conclusion without first examining the whole section but we must keep this in mind as we read and study further.
- B. This issue seems to be very relevant today. Several streams of thought have emerged in the church and the question is still being asked. Below is a summary of several views regarding Israel in the New Covenant.
  1. View 1: Jews are condemned for their rejection of Jesus and most will not receive salvation as a result. The church has replaced Israel as the people of God in the New Covenant.
  2. View 2: Jews are no different in their need for salvation than Gentiles. They must accept Christ by faith in order to be saved. The New Covenant is an extension and fulfillment of the Old Covenant. Although Israel remains God's chosen people in prophecy and history, the New Covenant sees the fulfillment of Israel's purpose as the Gentiles are reached and the church becomes an extension of God's chosen people.
  3. View 3: Humanity operates under a bi-covenantal system. Jews are bound by the First (Old) Covenant and Gentiles are bound to the Second (New) Covenant. God used to Jews to bring about the New Covenant but never set aside or abolished the Old Covenant. Thus each ethnic group must respond to the appropriate covenant.
  4. View 4: Although God works primarily through the New Covenant in these last days, it is built on the foundation of the Old Covenant and the people of that Covenant, the Jews. As God's chosen people, they will be saved at the end of time. The church has not replaced Israel nor become Israel. Rather, the church is called to protect Israel as we await Jesus' second coming.

## **Romans Bible Study**

### **Romans 9:19-33**

*"Paul labors with massive scriptural argumentation to demonstrate that the inclusion of the Gentiles, far from being a denial of the Scriptures or an abandonment by God of his promise to Israel, is rather a fulfillment of both. It is precisely through the ingathering of the nations that God is keeping his promise to Israel." – Christopher J. H. Wright<sup>87</sup>*

#### **I. The Heart of Calvinist and Arminian Debate**

- A. The prominence of Romans 9 in these two streams of Christian theology requires that any discussion of this chapter address both sides.
- B. Thus, for most of the major discussion items, we will look through the lens of both Calvinists and Arminians.
- C. Nevertheless, the debate is ongoing. As Robert Mounce writes, "Human logic cannot harmonize divine sovereignty and human freedom, but both are clearly taught in Scripture."<sup>88</sup>

#### **II. Questioning God's Ways (Romans 9:19-20)**

##### **A. Calvinists**

1. This question naturally arises when we discuss divine election as described in Romans 9:18. If, by God's will, some are hardened towards God while others are shown grace by God, and if God's will cannot be resisted, how can individuals be held responsible for what they do?
2. Paul's response in Romans 9:20-24 is not meant to discourage questions. Paul is willing to address the questions of authentic seekers but Paul sees this question as arising from an arrogance that does not wish to understand God but rather to attack God.
3. Eventually, Paul does respond to the question by using the analogy of the potter and the clay. Before the potter even begins to create the pot, he first determines whether the pot will be used for noble purposes or for common use. In human terms, God elects some for salvation while holding all accountable for their sinful actions. This is often referred to as the doctrine of predestination.
  - i. Concerning this, John Calvin wrote, "In the experience of conversion, God does not give a man a choice whether to obey or disobey. A renewed will is given by God's choice, not because man chooses to ask for it."<sup>89</sup>
  - ii. Douglas Moo writes, "Individuals become Christians only because God, by a free act of his will, chooses them and predestines them to faith and glory."<sup>90</sup>
4. As most Calvinists understand predestination, it's not that God maliciously blinds some in regards to faith but rather graciously opens the eyes of some to faith. Thus, we are all held accountable for our sins whether we are elected or not. Some, however, are declared justified by God's grace.

##### **B. Arminians**

1. This question must be viewed in context. This is not the question of just any person but the question of the Jews. It is the Jew asking, "if God now saves by grace through faith, even for the Gentiles, and if his will is accomplished regardless of our works, why is he still blaming us for not keeping the Old Testament law?"
2. Indeed, some of God's creation are bound for noble purposes and some for destruction but God's predestination is not for particular individuals but humanity in

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<sup>87</sup> Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2006), 528.

<sup>88</sup> Mounce, 202.

<sup>89</sup> John Calvin, trans. B. R. Wood, *Biblical Christianity* (London: Grace Publications, 1982), 64.

<sup>90</sup> Moo, 316.

general. All sinners are, before their salvation, destined for destruction. Even Paul called himself an object of wrath in Ephesians 2:3. Yet God has also predestined a people to be saved who are formed not on the basis of birth and race but faith and grace.

3. The potter analogy is, like all analogies, has weaknesses when you expand it beyond the author's intent. The author, Paul, did not intend to use the analogy to speak of individuals in particular but humanity in general. Humanity as a whole is created by God and lives under his authority and sovereignty. Some will be saved while others are not. Individual humans, however, are not mere lumps of clay but special creatures among all of God's creation, created in God's image with a free will.

### III. The Potter and the Clay (Romans 9:21)

- A. This is a common analogy in Scripture to describe the relationship between God and humanity. You see it used in:
  1. Isaiah 29, 41, 45, 64
  2. Jeremiah 18-19
  3. 2 Corinthians 4
  4. 2 Timothy 2
- B. Paul's use of this analogy in 2 Timothy 2 also includes pots of noble purpose and pots of ignoble purposes.

### IV. Objects of Wrath and Mercy (Romans 9:22-23)

- A. Calvinists
  1. These two categories reveal a definite and eternal division among humanity based on God's election.
  2. God's delay in revealing his predestined mercy and its alternative (wrath) is not because God is waiting for people to choose him but rather in order to demonstrate his power even among his enemies and his grace among the faithful.
  3. Ultimately, those who walk in blindness on account of sin will stumble over Jesus into destruction but those whose eyes have been opened by the divine and gracious election of God will see him and respond to his salvation.
- B. Arminians
  1. These categories are options for humanity. Everyone is, at the time of birth, objects of God's wrath as a result of the fall (original sin) and eventually personal sin. Even Paul described himself this way in Ephesians 2:3. God has graciously extended mercy to humanity so that when they respond to him in faith, they can join the category of those who are objects of his mercy.
  2. Paul has already described that God's delay in bringing eternal judgement is for the purpose of extending mercy to those guilty of sin (Romans 3:25-26) so that they might accept Christ and be saved. Paul's comments in Romans 9:30-33 show that Paul understands the responsibility of humanity in making a decision for Christ. Jesus can either be stumbling block or a foundation depending on the decision we make when we encounter him along life's way. I. Howard Marshall writes that Paul sees Gentile salvation as not solely "traced to divine choice at this point but to the fact that Gentiles has responded to Christ with faith, whereas the Jews on the whole has tried to get right with God by the words of the law"<sup>91</sup> Thus, Marshall continues, "Paul speaks of human action of response or failure to respond to God's initiative without giving any indication that these were predetermined by God."<sup>92</sup>

### V. Keeping the Larger Picture in Mind

- A. Remember, Paul did not write this chapter to defend or debunk Calvinism or Arminianism. He is focusing on the Jews and the issue of Gentile salvation. Gentiles are beginning to

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<sup>91</sup> Marshall, 325.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid, 334.

outnumber the Jews and some are wondering if the Gospel can be truly God's will if so many Jews are rejecting it.

B. Paul spends the last portion of this chapter firmly addressing that question from the Old Testament.

1. In the previous verses, he has described how God has always intended his people to respond to him in faith rather than by works. In fact, his people are not necessarily made up from a race or family but by exhibiting faith in him.
2. Paul has also demonstrated how God often chooses those we would not suspect to participate in his covenant.
  - i. God chose Isaac (the second born) rather than Ishmael (the first born) because Isaac was the product of faith and Ismael was the product of works even though they came from the same family.
  - ii. God chose Jacob (the second born) rather the Esau (the first born).
  - iii. God is not choosing the Gentiles (seen as far from the family of God) to participate in his covenant.
  - iv. God's sovereignty means he is free to choose whomever he will for salvation, even Gentiles.

C. Now, Paul is reinforcing that argument with further proof from the Old Testament:

1. From Hosea, God reminds the Jews about the prophet who married an adulterous women. She has children by other men and Hosea named them "not my people" and "no affection from me." Yet God was willing to redeem them and call them the opposite of what they were named.
  - i. Thus, even Gentiles, who are historically not God's people, can be redeemed and made to be God's people.
  - ii. F. F Bruce writes that Paul will "take this promise, which referred to a situation within the frontiers of the chosen people, and extract from it a principle of divine action which in his day was reproducing itself on a world-wide scale. In large measure, Gentiles, who has never been 'the people of God' and had no claim on His covenant mercy, were coming to be enrolled among His people and to be the recipients of His mercy. The scale of the divine action was far wider than in Hosea's day, but the same pattern and principle were recognizable."<sup>93</sup>
2. From Isaiah 10, Paul reminds the Jews that their history is not one of total national or racial faithfulness but often of only a portion or remnant being faithful. Thus, even now as only a few accept the Gospel, it is not unusual or disqualifying but in line with Jewish history and their response to God.
  - i. F. F. Bruce writes that this scripture from Isaiah teaches that in both the original setting and in the New Covenant, "numerous as Israel may be, only a remnant, a small minority, will survive the impending judgement."<sup>94</sup>
  - ii. I. Howard Marshall writes, "The unbelief of so many Israelites is consistent with God's promises to the descendants of Abraham since these promises were never intended to include everybody, and God has acted in mercy to save a people composed of Israelites and Gentiles. . . Paul wants to say that god has acted in judgment against Israel, but this does not mean that he has finally rejected them."<sup>95</sup>
3. Again, from Isaiah 8:14 and 28:16, Paul reminds the Jews that this situation with Jesus and the Gospel being denied by the Jews was foretold in Scripture. Jesus would be a stumbling block to many but a firm foundation so some.
  - i. Douglas Moos writes, "The people of Israel, therefore, focused narrowly on the works the law demanded and missed the larger demand of God to submit

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<sup>93</sup> Bruce, 196.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid, 197.

<sup>95</sup> Marshall, 324-325.

- to him in faith. . . [Paul] draws the picture of a walker so intent on pursuing a certain goal that she stumbles and falls over a rock lying right in her path.”<sup>96</sup>
- ii. Peter also uses this reference in 1 Peter 2:4-8. In the same passage, Peter applies the language used to describe Israel in Exodus 19 to all who believe in Jesus, including Gentiles.
- D. Ultimately, Paul says, the Jews are still pursuing righteousness down a path they cannot faithfully walk. They are trying to be reconciled to God through the law. Paul has already explained how the law was given to make us aware of sins but could not be used as a path for righteousness (Romans 3:20).
1. The way to righteousness and salvation is not found in works but in faith. Thus, the Gentiles (who did not even know the law) were justified by faith while the Jews (who were experts in the law) were condemned. F. F. Bruce writes, “In spite of all the privileges which were theirs as Israelites, the divine righteousness could be attained by them only in the same way as it was open to those complete outsiders of Gentiles who had been for ages past shut out from the knowledge of God and His ways.”<sup>97</sup>
  2. To the Jews, Paul is saying that their response should not be to despise the Gentiles but join them in their faith.
  3. F. F. Bruce writes, “God himself will prove a sanctuary to all who put their trust in Him, a rock on which they will stand secure. But those who do not entrust themselves to Him but put their confidence in other powers or other resources will be swept away by the flood against this rock and come to grief upon it; to them far from being a place of refuge, it will prove a dangerous obstacle – ‘a stone of stumbling’ and ‘a rock of offence.’”<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>96</sup> Moo, 328.

<sup>97</sup> Bruce, 198.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid, 199.

## Romans Bible Study

### Romans 10

*"All effective preaching is accomplished by God himself. The messenger is at best merely the instrument used by the Holy Spirit as a necessary part of the process. It is God's own voice that confronts the sinner and offers reconciliation. This existential reality is what constitutes the gospel, "the power of God for salvation." – Robert Mounce<sup>99</sup>*

#### I. Paul's Desire for Jews to be Saved

- A. Even though Paul ended chapter 9 by describing Jesus and the Gospel as a stumbling block to many Jews (even as it is a foundation stone for Gentiles), Paul is not ready to dismiss or reject unbelieving Jews.
  1. Paul was himself once an unbelieving Jew. F. F. Bruce writes that Paul "has kicked against the stone of stumbling until the scales fell from his eyes and his life was reorientated; now his consuming ambition was that Christ might be magnified in all his life and work."<sup>100</sup>
  2. Paul also understands that Jews are in a unique position among all the peoples of the world. They received the law of God and were offered relationship with God before any other race or nation. They are not the only people of concern to God but they are a priority in God's Kingdom. Thus, they should be the first to accept the message. Many, however, are rejecting it. That law that was meant to prepare them for salvation by faith in Christ is now being viewed as an alternative to that method of salvation.
- B. Jewish Zeal
  1. Paul recognizes that many Jews are still zealous for God.
    - i. Their zeal is even seen (among some) in their fierce opposition and persecution of the Gospel and Christians.
    - ii. Paul himself shared in this form of misplaced zeal as he describes himself in:
      - a. Galatians 1:13-14
      - b. Philippians 3:4-6
      - c. Acts 22:2-5
  2. Yet Paul know, even from firsthand knowledge, that the zeal of many Jews was not based on true knowledge of God. Thus, zealous ignorance is dangerous and unfruitful.
    - i. Paul's own zeal before he met Christ was real but empty (as described in 1 Corinthians 9:26). Although he was very knowledgeable, he was blind to the greater knowledge of God as seen in Christ and the Gospel.
    - ii. Once Paul accepted Christ, he did not lose his zeal but it remained part of his character. It was a sanctified zeal that produced fruit for the Kingdom of God. He was zealous for the Gospel having found this Godly knowledge. His knowledge of God redirected his zeal towards things that matter in God's Kingdom.

#### II. Two Kinds of Righteousness

- A. See chart
- B. The Jews were seeking after a righteousness they could generate using the directions of God in the Old Testament law.
- C. Yet Paul has found (and is now preaching) that the direction shown the Jews by God through the Law was not actually pointing to a righteousness that could be realized through works but to a savior (Jesus) who could deliver them into a righteousness by faith. The Law was designed to first show them they cannot be saved by their own power and then drive them

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<sup>99</sup> Mounce, 212.

<sup>100</sup> Bruce, 200-201.

the only one who could. Thus, while trying to follow the directions the Jews lost their way and lost sight of the ultimate goal which was relationship with God rather than self-made righteousness.

- D. Romans 10:6-7 is a quote (with parenthetical commentary from Paul) from Deuteronomy 30:12-14. This is the farewell address of Moses and it describes the nearness (or immanence) of God and his righteousness.
1. By this point in Moses' life and ministry, God's decrees had been made clear to the Israelites. They did not have to venture far away into heaven for hell to find the will of God. It has been revealed to them where they were and was not in their hearts and on their lips.
  2. Even though this was in reference to the Old Testament law, Paul uses this text as a description of the New Covenant.
    - i. The Pharisees has the idea that if one of them could live completely righteous according to the Old Testament law for just one full day, it perhaps would bring about the coming of the Messiah. Paul is saying that we do not have to force him to come either by works on the earth or going up into heaven to drag him down. He has already come freely in spite of our sin in the incarnate Christ.
    - ii. His resurrection is proof of his power and promises. Again, we do not have to raise him to life by our good works or resurrect ourselves by our own righteousness. His resurrection will result in ours not by works but by faith.

### III. Christ: the End of the Law

- A. This phrase from Romans 10:4 has caused much debate. What does it mean that Christ is the "end" of the law?
- B. The Greek word translated as "end" is *τελος* (*telos*) and it can mean either:
  1. Goal
  2. Termination
- C. Those who see Christ as the "end-goal" of the law see him as being at the end of that crisis experience we face when we realize that we cannot fulfill the law and find salvation through the works of the law. When we comes to that point, we call out to Jesus for help. Thus, the law has a goal of getting us to Jesus. This is supported by Romans 3:19-20; 5:20; 7:7 as well as Jesus on words in Matthew 5:17-20.
- D. Those who see Christ as a termination of the law see him as taking the place of the Law in terms of God's salvation plan. This is often interpreted in three ways:
  1. The Old Testament law is now fulfilled in Christ and only what is affirmed (or added) in the New Testament is binding on the believer.
  2. The Old Testament law is fulfilled in Christ but not abandoned by believers. Although the civil and ceremonial laws are no longer necessary, the moral law of God as seen in the Old Testament remains unchanged and is binding on all believers.
  3. The Old Testament law is abolished in Christ and we are not bound to any law for the purpose of salvation. Although the New Testament does set for some ethical standards, these are not given for salvation. This view is known as the antinomian view.
- E. Whatever way we go here, we must keep in mind that however we view the Old Covenant in relation to the New Covenant, we cannot deny the following:
  1. The Old Covenant is the Word of God
  2. The Old Covenant reveals the heart of God.
- F. Thus, the Old Covenant should be read through the lens of the New Covenant and seen as a source from which to draw our ethics and knowledge about God. To what extent we use the Old Testament for these purposes is debatable but in no way is Paul's statement in Romans 10:4 to be understood as a rejection of the Old Testament. That Paul quotes



the Old Testament extensively to explain the New Covenant serves as our example for studying and revering the Old Testament.

#### IV. The Process of Salvation

##### A. The Confirmation of Personal Salvation (Romans 10:9-13)

1. Paul describes a twofold expression of personal salvation:
  - i. Belief your heart (personal faith)
  - ii. Confession with your mouth (public faith)
2. Paul sees a public, outward confession as arising from a genuine, personal, inward belief (faith) in God. This belief is not merely the verbalizing of a doctrine but the communication of a heart sincerely given to God. John Stott writes, "This is not salvation by slogan but by faith."<sup>101</sup>
3. The words and beliefs expressed are also centered around two truths:
  - i. That Christ is Lord (the Old Testament term for Yahweh, God)
  - ii. That Christ rose from the dead (resurrection was seen as a key element to the Gospel - 1 Corinthians 15).
  - iii. Both of these confessions required faith to believe.
    - a. Though Jesus was fully man, he was also fully God
    - b. Though Jesus was crucified on the cross, died, and was buried, he lives forever and is powerful.
    - c. His Lordship and Resurrection confirm that he is who he says he is and can do what he promised to do.
4. This method of salvation by faith was available to all who believe.
  - i. It is not limited to one ethnic group, gender, or class.
  - ii. It is just not one alternative.

##### B. The Possibility of Personal Salvation (Romans 10:14-15)

1. Paul sees the plan of God in regards to salvation unfolding as follows:
  - i. Preachers are sent
  - ii. Sent preachers proclaim
  - iii. The proclamation is heard
  - iv. The hearers are motivated to believe
2. John Stott writes, "Christ sends heralds; heralds preach; people hear; hearers believe; believers call; and those who call are saved."<sup>102</sup>
3. The proclamation is the Gospel.
4. The preachers began with Israel themselves.
  - i. God always intended his calling of Israel to be a step towards global salvation.
  - ii. Jesus came as the ultimate preacher of Gospel yet many Jews rejected.
  - iii. Jesus sent out apostles from the Jewish community (including Paul) to carry on the ministry and still Jews rejected.
  - iv. Even now, people are being called and sent by God into the world to proclaim.
  - v. These preachers have beautiful feet.
    - a. Beautiful can also be translated here as timely.
    - b. Thus the feet are either beautiful to those who are reached because they bring good news to those who are lost or timely to those who are reached because they are altering the hearer of certain, future damnation to those who do not know Christ.

#### V. Jewish Rejection

- A. Although God has made the way of salvation attainable and understandable, many Jews have still rejected it.

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<sup>101</sup> Stott, 283.

<sup>102</sup> Stott, 286.

- B. Paul spends the last portion of this chapter explaining how even though this is sad to Paul it was even predicted in the Old Testament scriptures.
1. Isaiah 53:1 is quoted in Romans 10:16 to demonstrate how Israel has had a history of failing to heed God’s messages.
  2. Psalms 19:4 is quoted in Romans 10:18 to demonstrate how God is making his special revelation through Jesus known as clearly as general revelation is known through creation (see Romans 1 as well).
  3. Deuteronomy 32:21 is quoted in Romans 10:19 to show how Gentile inclusion was predicted (and expected by God) from the beginning of Jews receiving the law of God. Jewish jealousy over Gentile salvation was also predicted but not avoided by the Jews even though they were warned.
  4. Isaiah 65:1-2 is quoted in Romans 10:20-21 to show the current situation (Gentiles accepting the Gospel more than the Jews) was both foreseen by the prophet and expected by. Although he is holding his hands out for his children who are close, they are rejecting while strangers from far away are responding. This is somewhat related to the parable of the prodigal son in Luke 15.
- C. Douglas Moo summarizes this section by stating that “God continues to extend his grace to Israel (he ‘holds out his hands’ to them), and Israel continues to rebel (they are disobedient and obstinate).”<sup>103</sup>

## Two Kinds of Righteousness (Romans 10)

<b>By Law</b>	<b>By Faith</b>	<b>Notes:</b>
Comes from self (by works, accomplishments). (see Romans 10:3; and chapter 3)	Comes from God (by grace). (see Romans 10:3 and 3:22; and chapter 4)	
Primarily for the Jews (Romans 10:19).	For everyone who believes - Jew and Gentiles (Romans 10:4, 10-11).	
Found only by total obedience (Romans 10:5 which is a quote from Leviticus 18:5).	Found only by total faith (Romans 10:6-10).	Paul also quotes from Deuteronomy 30:12-14 to describe righteousness by faith. See the notes for explanation.

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<sup>103</sup> Moo, 345.

## **Romans Bible Study**

### **Romans 11:1-10**

*"It is by faith that membership in the true people of God is acquired and maintained; it is by unbelief that it is forfeited." – F. F. Bruce<sup>104</sup>*

#### **I. Israel is not Rejected**

- A. Paul begins this chapter by asking a question that may be in the minds of both his Gentile and Jewish readers: Did God reject his people, Israel, that he chose out of all the world to be his chosen nation (Genesis 12; Exodus 19)?
- B. This question may be asked because Paul has made some drastic and critical statements about the status of Israel since this discussion began in chapter 9:
  1. Romans 9:31: But Israel, who pursued a law of righteousness, has not attained it.
  2. Romans 9:31: They stumbled over the "stumbling stone."
  3. Romans 10:3: Since they did not know the righteousness that comes from God and sought to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness.
  4. Romans 10:16a: But not all the Israelites accepted the good news.
  5. Romans 10:21: But concerning Israel he says, "All day long I have held out my hands to a disobedient and obstinate people."
- C. Yet Paul has those statements within the context of loving concern and pleading for salvation. These statements were not made out of anger, arrogance, or prejudice.
  1. Romans 9:3-5: For I could wish that I myself were cursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, those of my own race, the people of Israel. Theirs is the adoption as sons; theirs the divine glory, the covenants, the receiving of the law, the temple worship and the promises. Theirs are the patriarchs, and from them is traced the human ancestry of Christ, who is God over all, forever praised! Amen.
  2. Romans 10:1: Brothers, my heart's desire and prayer to God for the Israelites is that they may be saved.
- D. Paul was able to speak this harsh word to and about the Jews because he lived a life of love and devotion to the Jewish people both before and after his encounter with Jesus.
  1. Some Christians like to speak with harsh authority without first or primarily developing and exhibiting an attitude of authentic love and concern for those about whom they speak.
  2. God does not operate like this. His harsh judgement is seen in scripture only in conjunction with his unconditional love. Thus, we cannot emphasize one and neglect the other. Both are essential to understanding and communicating God.
  3. Until we can learn to love our neighbor, we just refrain from condemning our neighbor. Confrontation that leads to salvation only arises out of an attitude of love, not disdain.
- E. Paul describes himself as an example that God's historic and covenant people have not been rejected. He is among them and he is also among the saved. Even his life is an example of how God intended to use the Jewish people to reach the nations.
- F. "Whom he foreknew" – Douglas Moo writes that this phrase "does not identify the people Paul is talking about; rather, it explains why God remains faithful to that people."<sup>105</sup>
- G. Paul also sees an example of this current situation in the Old Testament account of the prophet Elijah.
  1. Elijah was one of the most famous Jewish prophets. He served God in the Northern Kingdom of Israel under the reign of King Ahab and his pagan wife, Jezebel. Together, Ahab and Jezebel made idol worship a prominent practice in Israel. Elijah opposed them and was threatened with death in 1 Kings 19. While running for his life, he prayed the prayer that Paul quoted in Romans 11:3 (from 1 Kings 19:14).

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<sup>104</sup> Bruce, 219.

<sup>105</sup> Moo, 355.

2. God responds with instructions for Elijah to continue his ministry and assures Elijah that God has 7,000 faithful remaining in the Northern Kingdom (1 Kings 15-18).
  3. When Elijah thought Israel had completely rejected God and God had completely rejected Israel he fell into despair (perhaps even depression – 1 Kings 19:3-4). Yet even then there was a remnant in Israel (a spiritual Israel within a physical, national Israel) that both knew God and was known by God.
  4. Paul sees that happening in his lifetime. Though the majority of Israel has rejected God and is even hostile to those who remain faithful, all hope for Israel is not gone and more may be saved yet.
- H. Remnant has been a common description of faith Israel in the Old Testament:
1. 2 Kings 19:30-31
  2. Ezra 9:13
  3. Isaiah 10:20-22 (already quoted by Paul in Romans 9:27)
  4. Jeremiah 23
  5. Amos 9:11-12 (quoted by James concerning Jews in the New Covenant in Acts 15)
- I. Thus, the current situation of Israel is not new or unique but part of a larger pattern in regards to their relationship and commitment level with God. The faithful and committed are often found in the form of remnants rather than majorities through Israel's history.
- J. Paul reminds the reader that even the remnant are saved not because of their works but because of God's grace.
1. God is not obligated the saved the remnant because they are faithful. Rather, all deserve punishment (Romans 1:18 – 3:32).
  2. Nevertheless, God has graciously chosen the remnant for salvation by grace. The process of how this selection takes place depends on whether you hold to a Calvinist or Arminian viewpoint.
    - i. The Calvinist says that God predestined the “elect” to be saved. Thus, the remnant is not by chance but by choice. They remained faithful because they were chosen (divinely elected) to do so. This view emphasizes the sovereignty of God.
    - ii. The Arminian says that God has allowed for free will among his creation, even among his chosen people. Though they are chosen they have to make a choice for God. Thus, God chooses (elects) all who choose him which is usually only a remnant of the whole. This view emphasizes the free will of mankind.
- K. The answer, then, is NO, God has not rejected his people. Unfortunately, many of his people have rejected him and chosen to turn away from faith and look instead to their own works for salvation.
1. Robert Mounce writes, “The longing for righteousness based on personal merit is deeply embedded in human nature. It is not that people wish to live exemplary lives because that is the right things to do but that such conduct is thought to provide the basis for commendation when compared with the achievements of others.”<sup>106</sup>
  2. Israel went this way. “Because they refused the way of faith, they had become insensitive to God's self-revelation and the promptings of his Spirit. . . Obedience draws the believer into an increasingly intimate relationship with the Lord, but disobedience separates and hardens.”<sup>107</sup>
  3. Righteousness by works is appealing to humanity because we love to compare ourselves to others. When we think we have succeeded, we like to measure ourselves against those who have done less or worse saying, “Wow, look at what I have done.” When we fail we like to measure ourselves against those who have done less or worse saying, “Well, look at what they have done.”

## II. The Elect

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<sup>106</sup> Mounce, 216.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid.

- A. This term is often debated. What does it mean to be the elect?
1. The word is translated from the Greek ἐκλεγω (eklego).
    - i. The noun form is used more often in Scripture and it means the chosen or selected.
    - ii. In the verb form (as we see it in Romans 11) it means the act of choosing or selecting.
  2. Paul uses this word several times in Romans including:
    - i. Romans 9:11
    - ii. Romans 11:5, 7, 28
- B. I. Howard Marshall defines the term as simply as “those who are saved.”<sup>108</sup> However, he goes on to explain that the idea of election or the elect “indicates that there was a prior act of choice by God, but the context shows that the call of God was met with a positive response of faith.”<sup>109</sup>
1. Paul seems to be indicating this in the context of Romans 11. The original question in Romans 11:1 is related to disqualification of some of Israel. If some (or even most) of Israel (who was chosen by God) is disqualified then is the whole race rejected. Paul says no. Rather, the chosen are recognized by their faith, not by simply having the title Israel as part of their genealogy.
  2. Thus, election is intertwined with faith. This explains how even Gentiles are now being recognized as part of the elect. When given the opportunity to respond to the God of Israel in faith, they do it. Many Israelites, unfortunately, do not.
- C. Election should be seen as both the initiative of God to save people *but also* the possibility of people to be saved.
1. This was the mistake of the Jews. They saw their position as chosen people to be a safety net whereby they could both excuse themselves of sin while neglect the world around them. It created a “spirit of stupor” Paul says. God chose us and that this that. If we see election only as God’s choice of people to be saved it can create a spiritual laziness where we also neglect our responsibility to respond to God and forget that God would use us to reach those outside our community.
  2. When we understand that election makes salvation possible, we will not merely rejoice in our election but respond with faith and announce the good news to others. I’m not elected because of who I am but by God’s grace. If I can be elected, surely others could/would be as well.
  3. Paul claims in Romans 11:7-8 that Israel responded to election in such a way that they were disqualified from it. Their emphasis on works and merit rather than faith and grace hardened their hearts to God’s true salvation. Their status as the people of God should have tuned their eyes and their ears in such a way that they would have seen and heard the Word of God with the most clarity. Instead, they allowed their eyes to grow weary and their ears to grow deaf so that they missed the clear message when it was clearly demonstrated (Paul is drawing upon the imagery employed by the Old Testament in Deuteronomy 29:4 and Isaiah 29:10). It was seen and heard by Gentiles but missed by Jews who has fallen asleep spiritually.
- D. To properly understand election, we must approach it with balance s as described by Marshall: “On the one hand, the making of a relationship between God and human beings rests entirely on the initiative of God and his creation of the possibility. On the other hand, it does not depend on the display of any particular qualities by people that might be thought to entitle them to God’s favor or make him prefer one person against another. Rather, it rests on his mercy to the undeserving.”<sup>110</sup> Thus, the only indicator of election is faith.
- E. The Nature of Election
1. Calvinists see election as particular and unconditional

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<sup>108</sup> Marshall, 442.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid, 442-443.

- i. It is particular in that God elects particular people to be saved as an act of divine sovereignty from eternity past.
  - ii. It is unconditional in that those God elects cannot resist or lose their elected status.
2. Arminians see election as general and conditional
- i. It is general in that God has not elected individuals but a people in general to be his people from among sinful humanity. Election, then, is not God calling individuals but creating the possibility for all to be saved. Those who respond in faith make up the elect.
  - ii. It is conditional in that (as seen above) it is realized by an act of faith on the part of the believer. If an individual should choose to reject his faith, he is no longer counted among the elect.
3. Marshall acknowledges that there is debate about whether God’s election “should be seen corporately or individually; that is to say, whether God’s choice was that he would have a people . . . or whether his choice was that he would have specific individuals.”<sup>111</sup> While there are some scriptures that seem to indicate both, Marshall cautions everyone to remember that the Bible does not indicate “that God’s calling is independent of the human response or makes it inevitable, or that his calling implies the passing over of other people whom God has decided not to save. In any case, the process by which people become God’s people takes place as God makes his calling known to them, and they confess that God has graciously called them.”<sup>112</sup>

### III. An Imprecatory Prayer

- A. Paul ends this section by recalling a prayer of David against his enemies as recorded in Psalm 69. Prayers for vengeance or destruction upon others are called imprecatory prayers. He most famous were prayed by David and Jeremiah.
- B. The early church often saw this as a Psalm of Jesus. Thus, that which was spoken by David about his situation and enemies could also be applies to Christ’s earthly situation and enemies.
- C. Paul’s quotation of this prayer is unexpected and harsh, especially in light of Romans 11:26 that is to come. Yet Paul, even though he loves the Jews, does not want to make less severe the spiritual danger in which unbelieving Jews find themselves. For those who reject the salvific invitation of God, there is no escape from his judgement. They will be treated as his enemies (even if they come from Israel):
  - 1. Their table will become a snare/trap/stumbling block/retribution – comfortable places will be turned into dangerous and deadly pitfalls
  - 2. Their eyes will be darkened to the extent of blindness – Paul himself experienced this on the road to Damascus. He through he could see well the will of God but Jesus showed him in a dramatic, physically blinding event that he was actually spiritually blind. Unseeing eyes are both a condition of and a judgement upon sinners.
  - 3. Their backs bent forever – possibly two meanings considering the context:
    - i. As people who seek to obtain righteousness by works, they will labour forever but never find rest or completion.
    - ii. Though they were born as sons they will forever be slaves to their sin as a result of their unbelief and disobedience.
- D. Paul is emphasizing that Jews are not rejected but they must realize their election in the same way as Gentiles are finding it or they will face the judgement of Gentiles who also oppose God.

### IV. Not the Last Word

- A. Paul will not leave the discussion of Israel here. He will end more optimistically.

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<sup>111</sup> Ibid, 443.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid.

- B. Douglas Moo sees Paul progression here from Israel in the past to Israel in the present to Israel in the future:<sup>113</sup>
1. Discussion of Israel's Past: Romans 9:6-29
  2. Discussion of Israel's Present: Romans 11:1-10
  3. Discussion of Israel's Future: Romans 11:11-32

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<sup>113</sup> Moo, 354.

## **Romans Bible Study**

### **Romans 11:11-24**

*"We are all guilty of the blood of Christ's death, and all of us equally are offered the opportunity to have our sins cleansed by it." – Douglas J. Moo<sup>114</sup>*

#### **I. Israel Has Stumbled**

- A. Paul has already established that Israel has stumbled, meaning that they failed to respond to Jesus and the Gospel in an appropriate way.
  - 1. In Romans 9:32-33, Paul used the terminology stumble in regards to how Israel (in general) embraced Jesus. Rather than accepting him as a foundation stone for their faith they stumbled over him thinking he was of no value to them.
  - 2. In Romans 10, although Paul does not use the term "stumble" he implies that there is trouble in how the majority of Israel responds to Jesus in verses 20 and 21.
  - 3. In Romans 11:9, he returned to this terminology of stumbling to describe their rejection of and opposition to Jesus. What would have been a source of blessing has become a source of danger.
  - 4. In each situation, Paul illustrates the stumbling of Israel via Old Testament Scripture, usually prophetic Scripture, as a way of indicating that Israel's failure in regards to the Gospel was both predicted and expected even if it is grievous and improper.
- B. Paul begins this section in Romans 11:11a by asking a question that is most likely in the minds of the readers: Has Israel stumbled (fallen) beyond recovery?
  - 1. Paul is emphatic: "Not at all!"
  - 2. Although Paul has been harsh in his description of Israel, he does not see this as playing Israel beyond the grace of God or outside the covenant God made with their ancestors.
  - 3. There is still hope for Israel.

#### **II. Israel's Transgression Means Salvation for the Gentiles**

- A. Paul's statement in Romans 11:11b (Rather, because of their transgression, salvation has come to the Gentiles to make Israel envious.) need to be qualified by some context.
  - 1. God did not choose to provide salvation to the Gentiles only after Israel's transgression.
    - i. Paul has proclaimed in Romans 1:5 that Gentile ministry and salvation was happening through the initiative of God for His name's sake. This wasn't the alternative plan of God but part of the greater plan of God.
    - ii. Later in Romans 15, Paul clarifies again that Jesus came to the Jews first for the purpose of also reaching the Gentiles not as an alternative to the people of God but as an extension of God's people by grace.
    - iii. The Old Testament is also clear that God designated the people of Israel as his people for the purpose of eventually reaching the whole world. Israel would be a tool God would use to save Gentiles. The Gentiles are not merely extended salvation because the Jews rejected it:
      - a. Genesis 12:3
      - b. Joshua 4:24
      - c. 1 Chronicles 16:24 (also Psalm 96:3)
      - d. Isaiah 42:6; 49:6
  - 2. Most likely Paul is speaking from personal experience when he makes this statement. Based on his ministry experiences before writing Romans, we do see this as a pattern:

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<sup>114</sup> Moo, 373.



- i. Acts 7-8:3 – The stoning of Stephen (an event in which Paul assisted) propelled the church outside of Jerusalem and eventually towards Gentiles such as those in Antioch where a church would be planted among Gentiles from those scattered after the persecution of Stephan in Jerusalem (Acts 11:19-20).
  - ii. Acts 13:6-12 – Paul’s harsh rebuke of the Jewish sorcerer Elymas Bar-Jesus brought about the salvation of the Roman Proconsul (a Gentile) in Paphos in Cyprus.
  - iii. Acts 13:44-48 – Paul’s preaching in the synagogue brought about a rejection by many Jews who drove Paul into the Gentile community which responded positively to the Gospel.
  - iv. Acts 18:6-8 – Again, the rejection of Paul’s ministry in the synagogue forced him into the Gentile community which responded positively to the Gospel.
  - v. Acts 19:8-10 – Once more, Paul’s ministry in Ephesus brought about opposition from Jews so he went to the Gentiles who responded in great numbers to the Gospel.
  - vi. In each of these passages, the transgressions of the Jews were a catalyst for Gentile evangelism.
3. The purpose of Gentile salvation is not only (or primarily) to “make Israel envois.”
- i. All saved people are saved first and primarily because of God’s love.
    - a. Paul has made this clear in Romans 5:8.
    - b. Paul has also expressed in multiple passages that Gentiles are of the same worth and value to God as Jews (Romans 3:22; 10:12).
  - ii. God has not saved Gentiles just to stir up jealousy among the Jews. However, if God can use Gentile salvation to bring Jews to Christ, we should see that as a blessing. God called the Jews to eventually help bring salvation to Gentiles. Now God can use Gentiles to bring salvation to Jews.
  - iii. Douglas Moo writes, “Instead of Gentiles coming to worship Yahweh in Jerusalem as a result of Israel’s restoration, Israel is saved in response to the extension of salvation to the Gentiles.”<sup>115</sup>
- B. Paul continues his comments about Israel’s transgressions in verse 12 where he seems to make the case that even if the Jews refuse Christ, he will still use them to bring Gentiles into salvation. Thus, if God could use them in their rebellion (their transgression, their loss), imagine what they could do for God in obedience (their fullness).

### III. A Message to the Gentiles

- A. Paul makes it clear in Romans 11:13 that this message is not only directed to Jews but also to Gentiles who may be feeling some spiritual superiority because of their salvation. Neither God nor Paul has totally rejected the Jews but both desire their salvation. If the Gentiles can be used to save them, they should be willing and grateful for the opportunity
- B. Paul, the Apostle to the Gentiles
  - 1. Paul refers to himself as an Apostle quite often. Even in Romans 1:1 this is how he introduced himself.
    - i. The word “apostle” comes from the Greek word *αποστολος* which simply means “messenger” or “sent one.”
    - ii. Paul described the nature of his apostolic calling in 1 Corinthians 15:7-10. For more information on Paul’s apostolic ministry, refer to the notes from chapter 1 (page 5).
  - 2. However, in Romans 11:13, Paul clarifies that the focus of his apostolic ministry is Gentiles.
    - i. Paul uses the title “Apostle to the Gentiles” again in Galatians 2:8.
    - ii. Paul describes his emphasis on Gentiles in his ministry in Romans 15, Galatians 2:7-9, and 1 Timothy 2:7.

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<sup>115</sup> Moo, 369.

- iii. This aspect of Paul's ministry was perhaps unexpected in the beginning but predicted by Jesus at Saul's Damascus Road experience as seen in Acts 22:21 and 26:17-18.
3. Nevertheless, Paul has not and will not forsake ministry towards his own people and would even hope that his work among the Gentiles might spur on his brethren to salvation (Romans 11:14). Again, in verse 15, Paul explains that if the rejection of Christ Jesus by the Jews has even helped to bring a blessing to the world (Gentile salvation) surely their acceptance of Christ Jesus would bring about an eternal blessing to them, namely eternal life. Thus, Gentiles should join Paul in his concern for Jewish salvation.

#### **IV. The Metaphor of the Dough (Romans 11:16a)**

- A. Paul explains why Gentiles should be concerned for the Jews and how he still has hope for Israel by using two metaphors: a short one about dough and a long one about an olive tree.
- B. In the metaphor of the dough, Paul is drawing upon the imagery of Numbers 15:17-21.
  1. In this passage, Israel is commanded to present their first fruits as an offering to Yahweh. The first fruits of their field, including the grain used for bread dough, should be dedicated to God and given to the priests.
  2. Ezekiel 44:30 explains that when the first portion of the harvest was given to God, it made holy the whole amount.
- C. Paul, here, is in agreement with Jeremiah 2:3, where the prophet declares that Israel is itself a first fruit offering to the Lord and is holy as a result.
- D. This does not mean that all of Israel has been perfect (Paul has already explained this in Romans 9).
  1. Douglas Moo writes, "By this Paul does not mean that all their descendants will be saved. Rather, 'holy' as in the Old Testament and 1 Corinthians 7:14, means that the people continue to be 'set apart' by God for special attention."<sup>116</sup>
  2. This gives Paul hope that if the history of Israel has been one of dedication and devotion to God, sure there is reason for optimism about Israel's future. Thus, Paul will continue to help his brothers find salvation and lead Gentiles into active ministry towards Jews. They have not stumbled beyond recovery.

#### **V. The Metaphor of the Olive Tree (Romans 11:16b-24)**

- A. The dough analogy was taken from Old Testament scripture but the olive tree analogy is taken from outside scripture. This analogy is based on a common horticultural practice in the Roman world called grafting. Also, as Douglas Moo reports, "the olive tree was the most widely cultivated fruit tree in the Mediterranean area" as olives were wanted for both fruit and oil.<sup>117</sup>
- B. Grafting was a practice devised to help fruit bearing trees produce the greatest yields. Usually, a non-native but heavily producing variety of tree would be grafted to a local or native variety. The native root system (which is known to thrive in the area) would then supply nourishment to the non-native branches which were known to produce more or better fruit than the local variety).
  1. If the non-native, producing variety was planted as a whole tree in new territory, the environment or local diseases may prove unsuitable for the tree to grow or live
  2. If the native, producing tree is left alone, it may not keep up the pace of production needed to make a profit or keep up with competition.
  3. A grafted tree, however, could merge the resilience of a native tree's root system and the productivity of an exotic tree's branches to create a super tree.
  4. Grafting involved removing some of the host's original branches, boring holes into the host trunk at an angle, inserting non-native branches, and applying cloth to bind the branches to the trunk until the trunk accepts and seals the branches. If this

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<sup>116</sup> Moo, 367.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid, 370.

happens, the branches will continue to live on the new trunk which provides them with nourishment from the trunk's roots.

C. Paul's description of grafting in the analogy seems to contradict the normal exercise of this practice.

1. Usually, the wild roots and trunk would be used as a host for cultivated branches. Normally, you would not graft wild branches onto a cultivated, non-native trunk.
  - i. This may indicate that Paul was confused about this practice. After all, he was a tentmaker and not a farmer.
  - ii. However, it most likely indicates that Paul did know the practice but was intentionally describing the process as he did to indicate that Gentiles represent a wild, uncultivated people (people outside the covenant) who have been attached to a cultivated (covenant based) people. This is most likely what Paul means when he calls this process "contrary to nature" in Romans 11:24.
2. Normally, a farmer would seek to graft branches onto a tree because he would need what those branches provided. Perhaps his original trees were not producing well or maybe he wanted to strengthen his grove. A farmer would not invest the time and energy into the process if he did not need the benefits of the graft. God, however, does not graft branches onto his tree because he needs what those new branches can offer. The farmer in the analogy Paul uses does the opposite of what farmers normally did. In the same way, God does what many did not expect by taking wild branches and grafting them onto a tree he had established and cultivated for years. He does not need the new branches but seeks to graft them in purely as an act of mercy and grace.

D. The Holy Roots

1. The tree Paul describes has holy roots. Although the vine metaphor used by Jesus in John 15 indicated that Jesus is the root and trunk which give nourishment to the branches, Paul seems to indicate that the roots of this tree are the patriarchs of Israel. God is seen not as the roots but as the grafter or farmer both planting the original tree and adding to it by grafting wild branches (even by removing natural branches).
2. Douglas Moo writes, "The roots of the tree are planted in Old Testament soil. They are the patriarchs, through whom God acted to call out a people for his own name."<sup>118</sup>
3. As in the dough analogy of the first being holy, here we see the roots are holy. The first from the dough and the roots from the tree seem to be describing the original Israelites. If they were holy, there is hope for those who come after them.
4. These roots, the patriarchs and God's covenant with them, support the tree Israel; both that which grows naturally from the roots and that which is later attached to the trunk by God.

E. Broken Branches

1. The branches broken off the tree would be those who are Israel by birth but not by faith (see Romans 9:6). Their rejection of Christ and unbelief has resulted in their removal (pruning) from the tree.
2. In grafting as well as in normal pruning, branches broken off from the tree would be discarded or even burned (John 15:6). However, Paul indicates that in his plan for salvation, even those broken off because of unbelief can be restored (grafted back in) if they repent and believe. Thus, there is still hope for Israel even when it seems as if they are beyond recovery.

F. Grafted Branches

1. Gentiles are the branches grafted into the original tree that God planted and cultivated. Gentiles are not extensions of the tree by nature but by grace according to the will of the farmer (God).

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<sup>118</sup> Moo, 371.

2. If and when a Gentile puts his/her faith in God, he/she is able to participate in the covenant God extended to Israel. (That is why Peter uses Old Testament covenant language designated for Israel to describe believing Gentiles in 1 Peter 2:9).
3. Gentiles should not mock or feel superior to the one who were broken off before they were grafted in. We must not be arrogant concerning our position for fearful in regards to our behavior. As Paul explains:
  - i. Gentiles are grafted in by grace, not by merit.
  - ii. Those broken off could return if they repent from their unbelief
  - iii. Those grafted in could be broken off if they persist in behavior contrary to their salvation. If God was willing to prune unproductive natural branches, he will certainly not overlook unproductive grafted branches.
  - iv. The branches do not benefit the trunk. Rather, Grafted branches are nourished from the roots of their new host trunk. Thus Gentiles must remember that they trace their blessings back to the covenant God made with Israel. Thus, they do not boast in their position but remain grateful for the grace to be saved.
4. Craig Keener writes that Gentiles should “accept not only Israel’s spiritual history as their own but also Jews as in some sense their siblings, even if those who do not follow Jesus are fallen siblings. Earlier in Romans Paul has opposed Jewish arrogance against Gentiles; here he opposes Gentile arrogance against Jewish people.”<sup>119</sup>
5. F. F. Bruce writes, “If a spirit of pride leads the new graft – the Gentile church – to forget its reliance on divine grace and exchange faith in God for self-confidence, it will suffer the same fate as the old branches; it too will be cut off.”<sup>120</sup>
6. Douglas Moo writes, “The Gentiles have not ‘replaced’ the Jews in God’s plan. Indeed, only through the Jews do Gentiles have any hope for experiencing the blessings of belonging to God’s people.”<sup>121</sup>

G. Lessons to be Learned from the Olive Tree:

1. Salvation and acceptance into God’s Kingdom is only by grace through faith.
  - i. It is not only by birth. Birth into God’s covenant people Israel was an advantage for but not a guarantee of salvation.
  - ii. It is not by works. The metaphor illustrates that branches contribute nothing to them being grafted in. It is based solely on the kindness (grace) of the farmer (God).
  - iii. It produces good works. The metaphor in Romans 11 says that among the branches (both grafted and natural) those that remain:
    - a. Stand by faith (v. 20)
    - b. Continue in his kindness (v. 22)
    - c. Standing and continuing are both the products of what James calls living faith (James 2:17-26). These are the indicators that someone is actually part of the body of Christ. Standing and continuing may be demonstrated in various ways and in various actions but in general we can say that such branches are producing fruit. Branches connected to the tree should produce fruit.
    - d. F. F. Bruce writes, “Throughout the New Testament continuance is the test of reality.”<sup>122</sup>
  - iv. Grafting branches onto a tree is a tedious and delicate job. It takes expert precision, great care, and patience on the part of the farmer to be successful. God has demonstrated through Jesus that he is willing to do everything that needs to be done for our salvation. However, there does seem to be a scenario

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<sup>119</sup> Keener, 436-437.

<sup>120</sup> Bruce, 218-219.

<sup>121</sup> Moo, 367.

<sup>122</sup> Bruce, 219.

in which the farmer would be willing to cut off that which took so much work to graft in. The actions that would lead to this are listed by Paul as:

- a. Boasting (v. 18)
- b. Unbelief (v. 20), and
- c. Arrogance (v. 20)
- d. Each of these represent a lack of faith in God:
  - i. Boasting reflects the attitude of one who has more confidence in himself or his works than in God.
  - ii. Unbelief is the ongoing absence of faith.
  - iii. Arrogance results when one values himself more than others and even his own relationship with God. A strong relationship with God should produce humility, the opposite of arrogance.

## VI. Sternness and Kindness

- A. Paul writes that his olive tree metaphor reminds us that God is simultaneously stern and kind. He maintains his holiness and his mercy at the same time. He can extend grace without diminishing his standard of righteousness.
- B. Paul has already instructed us about this in Romans 3:25-26. As we see Jesus on the cross we see both the ultimate picture of God's love and mercy and the ultimate picture of God's righteousness and holiness. Jesus died for us (love) but he also died on account of sins (righteousness). Thus, we see that God has both an ending love (Romans 8:35-39) and an unbending righteousness (Romans 3:9-20).
- C. We should not fall into the trap of emphasizing some aspect of God while neglecting or minimizing another. Some may want to dwell on his sternness while forgetting his kindness. Other may cling to his kindness while forgetting his sternness. We must recognize both in balance as priorities.
  1. Kindness is seen in God's willingness to establish of the tree and his willingness to graft foreign branches onto it.
  2. Sternness is seen in God's willingness to sever from the free both natural and grafted branches that exhibit persistent unbelief and faithlessness.
  3. Such understanding creates an attitude of gratefulness, humility, and confidence (knowing that one of God's attributes will not be sacrificed for another).

## **Romans Bible Study**

### **Romans 11:25-36**

*"The Bible renders and reveals to us the God whose creative and redemptive work is permeated from beginning to end with God's own great mission, his purposeful, sovereign intentionality. All mission or missions which we initiate, or into which we invest our own vocation, gifts and energies, flow from the prior and larger reality of the mission of God. God is on a mission and we, in that wonderful phrase of Paul, are 'co-workers with God' (1 Cor. 3:9)." – Christopher J. H. Wright<sup>123</sup>*

#### **I. All Israel will be Saved**

- A. This may be the most controversial passage in Romans.
- B. Paul begins this discussion by referring to this as a mystery.
  1. Although Paul has not used that term "mystery" (μυστηριον – mysterion in the Greek) in Romans, it is a common theme of Paul's teaching elsewhere:
    - i. 1 Corinthians 15:51 referring to the promise of resurrection.
    - ii. Ephesians 1:9; 3:3-9; 6:19 referring to salvation by grace in the New Covenant, especially among the Gentiles.
    - iii. Ephesians 5:32 referring to the union between man and women in marriage and God and mankind in the church.
    - iv. Colossians 1:26-26; 2:2; 4:3 referring specifically to the mission of God among the Gentiles through the Gospel of Christ.
    - v. 1 Timothy 3:9-16 referring to the incarnation of Jesus.
  2. For Paul, there are several "mysteries" to be grappled with in the New Covenant, including this issue to Gentiles coming to salvation in larger numbers than the Jews while many Jews are hardened to the Gospel.
  3. Verlyn Vebrugge writes that "In most cases, wherever mysterion occurs in the NT, it is found with verbs denoting revelation or proclamation, i.e., the mysterion is something that is revealed. In a sense, it is no longer secret, for it is now being revealed; it may have been hidden in the past, but today it is something dynamic and compelling."<sup>124</sup> Thus, when Paul speaks of mystery, he is not introducing a new mystery but solving an existing mystery, one that comes about most often as a result of the New Covenant.
  4. John Stott writes, "By a 'mystery' he means not a secret which is known only by the initiated, but a secret which has not been openly revealed and has therefore become public truth."<sup>125</sup>
  5. For Paul, the issue of Jewish rejection of the Gospel is just as mysterious as the incarnation or the resurrection. These things do not immediately make sense to the human mind. Nevertheless, as difficult as these concepts are to understand, Paul is not totally confused for the mystery is being revealed or solved.
- C. Why is Paul discussing this?
  1. We should also pay attention to why Paul is writing this. Based on the previous discussion and verse. 25, Paul's primary concern here is about Gentile arrogance in regards to their salvation. Some have become conceited about their status as grafted branches while natural branches have been cut off.
  2. Paul's point in this passage is less about Jewish salvation and more about Gentile humility.
- D. Before we talk about what this could mean, let us discuss what it does not mean based on our study of Romans 9-11 thus far:
  1. All Israel most likely should not be taken literally to the extent that we interpret this to mean that every Jew who ever lived will be saved.

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<sup>123</sup> Christopher Wright, 531-532.

<sup>124</sup> Vebrugge, 379.

<sup>125</sup> Stott, 302.

- i. Based on what Paul has previously written, we should not assume that every ethnic Jew will be saved:
      - a. Romans 9:6 (see also Romans 2:28-29)
      - b. Romans 9:27 (a quote from Isaiah 10:22)
      - c. Even Jews by birth must become Israel by faith.
    - ii. Craig Keener writes, “Jewish teachers commonly said that ‘all Israel will be saved,’ but then went on to list which Israelites would not be saved: the phrase thus means ‘Israel as a whole (but not necessarily including every individual) will be saved.’”<sup>126</sup>
  2. This passage should also not be interpreted in a way that suggests the Jews have a different path to salvation than the Gentiles. Paul does not teach that the New Covenant is a parallel Covenant to the Old Covenant, rather it is an extension or fulfillment of the Old Covenant. Thus, Jews and Gentiles are saved via the same means.
    - i. Romans 10:12 (see also Romans 3:21-23)
    - ii. Romans 11:22-24
  3. Also, Israel here does not mean the church in the New Covenant. Based on the immediate context, Israel is referring here to the ethnicity of people and not to the spiritual church. Israel is discussed as the nation (not the church) in Romans 11:2, 7, 11, 25 so we must continue in that context to v. 26.
- E. Having eliminated the impossibilities, we can look at the possibilities:
  1. Possibility one: All Israel refers to Eschatological Israel. Paul is saying that at the end of time as we know it, when the “full number of the Gentiles” have been saved all the Jews who are alive at that time to witness the final works of God on earth will respond to the Gospel and be saved.
    - i. F. F. Bruce writes, “When the full tale of believing Gentiles was achieved . . . then all Israel, not a faithful remnant but the nation as a whole, would see the salvation of God. If their temporary stumbling was prophetically foretold, so as their ultimate and permanent restoration.”<sup>127</sup>
    - ii. Douglas Moo writes, “Paul here predicts the salvation of a significant number of Jews at the time of Christ’s return in glory. The present remnant of Israel will be expanded to include a much larger number of Jews who will enter the eternal kingdom along with converted Gentiles.”<sup>128</sup>
  2. Possibility two: This is not referring to any particular number of Jews to be saved but rather Paul is describing God’s method of bringing Jews to salvation in the New Covenant. Even though Gentiles constitute the majority of the people being saved, the Gospel is at work simultaneously among both people groups. It’s not that Jewish salvation is over but as the “full number of the Gentiles” come to salvation, God is also at work to bring the full number of all Jews who believe into salvation as well (perhaps though a combination of jealousy on the part of the Jews, outreach on the part of Christians, and historical relationship on the part of God).
    - i. Christopher Wright writes that this is “not so much indicating a time frame as pointing out the method that God has chosen to reach that ultimate goal.”<sup>129</sup>
    - ii. W. S. Campbell writes, “Paul’s mission cannot be viewed in isolation from Israel’s restoration. The apostle views his Gentile mission both as a catalyst to the present salvation of a remnant from within Israel and as an essential precursor to the eventual salvation of all Israel.”<sup>130</sup>

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<sup>126</sup> Keener, 437.

<sup>127</sup> Bruce, 220.

<sup>128</sup> Moo, 379.

<sup>129</sup> Christopher Wright, 528.

<sup>130</sup> W. S. Campbell, “Israel,” in *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, ed. Gerald Hawthorne, Ralph P. Martin, Daniel G. Reid (Downers Grove: IVP, 1993), 445.

3. Possibility three: All Israel refers to the total number of Jews who will be saved past, present, and future. Paul is saying that even as the “full number of the Gentiles” comes in to the Kingdom of God, God is still at work saving Jews (although it may not be as noticeable or dramatic) and as the end approaches, we will find a community of both Jews from the Old Covenant (with some Gentiles included), Gentiles from the New Covenant (with some Jews included), and Jews and Gentiles from the future success of the Gospel. Howard Marshall writes, “by ‘all Israel’ he apparently refers to all those Israelites who are going to be saved.”<sup>131</sup>

F. What we know with certainty:

1. Although we may not be able to determine with certainty what exactly Paul means here, we can definitely be sure of the following:
  - i. No one has a right to boast or be arrogant about salvation or status (v. 25a):
    - a. All are saved by grace and not by works.
    - b. Jews cannot boast of being Jewish by birth because salvation is by grace, not by race.
    - c. Gentiles cannot boast about their majority status in the church because God’s salvific work on earth was started through the Jews and will conclude with Jews still being saved.
  - ii. Jewish hardening or rejection has opened the door for the acceleration of Gentile salvation (v. 25b)
    - a. As seen in Acts, when the Jews opposed Paul it drove him to the Gentiles).
    - b. Thus, Gentiles should not celebrate Jews being cut off but seek to see them restored (saved).
  - iii. The commencement of the New Covenant has not erased Old Covenant promises but has both confirmed and fulfilled them.
    - a. Some, however, are still awaiting fulfillment or are being fulfilled currently.
    - b. In verses 26 and 27 Paul includes a snippet of larger prophecies from Isaiah 59, then Isaiah 27, and finally Jeremiah 31 to illustrate that Old Covenant promises will see fulfillment in the New Covenant.
  - iv. There is still only one path to salvation that is faith in Jesus.
    - a. George E. Ladd writes, “Paul does not explain how the salvation of Israel is accomplished. One thing, however, is clear: it must take place in fundamentally the same terms as the salvation of the Gentiles, namely, though saving faith in Jesus as the crucified Messiah.”<sup>132</sup>
    - b. Christopher Wright writes, “There is ultimately only one people of god, and the only way to belong to it now, for Jews as much as for Gentiles, it through faith in the Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth. The regrafting of Israel that Paul envisions cannot be on some other criterion, for he explicitly says, ‘if they do not persist in unbelief, they will be grafted in’ (Rom. 11:23). Paul does not hold out any other way to Jews to be part of eschatological Israel other than the same way that Gentile are not joining that community.”<sup>133</sup>
2. Thus, Paul sees the situation with Israel to be serious but hopeful.
  - i. The rejection of the Gospel is terrible.
  - ii. Yet God has brought something good out of it (more Gentile salvation)
  - iii. Nevertheless, Jews need to accept the Gospel
  - iv. Many will eventually do just that.

G. Drawing Conclusions:

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<sup>131</sup> Marshall, 339.

<sup>132</sup> George E. Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 608.

<sup>133</sup> Christopher Wright, 528.



1. In regards to the believer's attitude toward Israel, Craig Keener observes that many Christians "subscribe to one of two systems: Israel and the church are separate and irreconcilable entities, and Israel will be restored; or Christians become the true Israel and ethnic Israel has no more purpose in God's plan. Paul would have rejected both extremes, believing that ethnic Israel as a whole would return to the covenant in the end time, joining the Gentiles and Jewish remnant that already participate in it."
2. Like in the Old Testament, Israel is continuing in its historic pattern:
  - i. God initiates salvation
  - ii. Israel responds and remains faithful for a time
  - iii. Israel becomes unfaithful and rejects God
  - iv. God hands Israel over to destruction and a remnant remain to repent
  - v. God delivers salvation
3. Also, Paul's comments do not include anything about a political kingdom of Israel. F. F. Bruce writes, "In all that Paul says about the restoration of Israel to God, he says nothing about the restoration of an earthly Davidic Kingdom, nothing about national reinstatement in the land of Israel. What he envisaged for his people was something infinitely better."<sup>134</sup>
4. Douglas Moo writes, "God has graciously given us in his Word a revelation of himself and his plan that everyone can understand. The essence of what that Word says is clear and undebatable. But the details are not always as clear as our theological traditions or denominational loyalties suggest. People holding views with more tenacity than Scripture justifies have done untold damage to the church and to the cause of Christ in the world. So even as we praise God for his amazing and gracious plan of redemption, we must also bow our knees in humility before him and keep a good perspective of our own limitation in understanding the specifics of that plan."<sup>135</sup>
5. Evangelism is necessary among every people group. Though we may feel called to focus on some, we are never allowed to neglect or reject even one.

## II. Beloved Enemies

- A. Paul's dual characterization of Jews in Romans 11:28 is Paul's attempt to reconcile the promises of God concerning Israel with the present reality of Jewish rejection.
  1. In terms of the Gospel (New Covenant), many Jews are the enemies of Christians:
    - i. They have persecuted Paul personally (see Acts 14 and 21-22 for examples)
    - ii. They have persecuted the church generally (see Acts 6-8 for examples – Paul was once part of this Jewish persecution towards the church.)
  2. Yet even as Gentiles consider their Jewish persecutors, they must keep in mind that in terms of the overall salvation history (Old and New Covenant) the Jews are:
    - i. Elected – chosen by God as his people to accomplish his mission
    - ii. Loved – based on their historic relationship with God through the Patriarch and the covenant God made with them
  3. The election and love of God (his "gifts" as Paul describes them in v. 29) are irrevocable.
    - i. They are irrevocable not because God is unable to revoke them but because God is able to keep his promises even if we should fail him.
    - ii. Jews still have a responsibility to respond to God's grace in faith (just as Gentiles do) but God's choice of and love for Israel is not revoked when they reject his grace. This will be seen in the course of human history as Paul predicts with certainty that more Jews will be saved.
- B. These verses recognize why anti-Semitism may arise in the church but also respond quickly to such an attitude deeming them entirely inappropriate.

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<sup>134</sup> Bruce, 221.

<sup>135</sup> Moo, 392.

1. We are all enemies of God at some point (Romans 5:10) yet that did not disqualify us from grace.
2. Now, even if we see Jews as acting out the part of God's enemies, it should merely confirm to us (and them) that they both qualify for and desperately need grace to be saved (verses 30-32).

### III. A Concluding Doxology

- A. As Paul concludes this discussion and prepares for the next he chooses to transition with a doxology that many believe Paul composed himself with some help from the Old Testament:
  1. Verse 34 comes from Isaiah 40:13
  2. Verse 35 comes from Job 41:11
- B. Paul has expressed vividly chapter 9, 10, and 11 his own anguish and bewilderment concerning Jewish rejection of the Gospel. He has grappled with this through these chapters first explaining how it is possible and predictable for the Jews to miss this, the scolding the Gentiles for their arrogance, and finally expressing some hope for the future. Now, he has to accept that God is in control even when it may seem as if He is not. Even though Paul was an Apostle to the Gentiles, he probably thought he could easily convince his own people and led them to salvation but that was just not happening to the extent he wanted as seen in Romans 9:2-3. Now, Paul expresses assurance in God in the midst of his own perplexity.
- C. This response to perplexity is presented at the end of Paul's lengthy discussion about a topic even he is still struggling with. Thus, such a response to genuine tension or anguish is not intended to come at the beginning of the conversation (as an easy answer) but as the end of the conversation (as a point of release). Once we have done our best to grapple with a situation internally, with Scripture, and with one another, we can rest assured on this idea that "God knows and it will be well." To use this argument at the onset of a discussion may stifle understanding and reinforce doubt. The appropriate response to perplexity in matter of faith and theology is to wrestle with the issue first but always step away from the struggle with Romans 11:33-36 in view.

## **Romans Bible Study**

### **Romans 12:1-2**

*"We still live in a world strongly influenced by sin and ungodly ways of thinking and behaving. We are not magically set apart from that world when we believe. Indeed, God wants us to stay in that world . . . as 'salt and light.' " – Douglas J Moo<sup>136</sup>*

#### **I. Living Sacrifice**

A. "Therefore, I urge you, Brothers, in view of God's mercy. . . "

1. This section begins with "Therefore." This word refers us to:

- i. The immediate context of Paul's discussion of both the place and attitude of Jews and Gentiles in the New Covenant.
- ii. The overall context of everything Paul has written concerning the Gospel.
  - a. Robert Mounce writes, "It marks the transition from the theology of God's redemptive act in Christ Jesus to the ethical expectations that flow logically from that theological base."<sup>137</sup>
  - b. Douglas Moos writes that this section is "the essence of the believer's response to God's grace in the gospel of Jesus Christ."<sup>138</sup>

2. "in view of God's mercy also give us the reason or occasion for the following instruction: do this as a response to God's mercy. It is worth noting that in the Greek text, mercy is actual plural so the literal reading is "in view of God's mercies." Even though the sacrifice of Jesus is the ultimate expression of God's mercy, the whole of God's mercy is not presented in just one event or in one moment but is a continuous and numerous presence in our life.

B. "To offer your bodies as living sacrifices. . ."

1. Sacrifice was a familiar image to both Jews and Gentiles

- i. Jewish Old Covenant practice involved repetitive animal sacrifice to Yahweh however it never instructed Jews to provide a human sacrifice.
- ii. Pagan, Roman religion involved the sacrifice of animals to various Gods for various reasons. It was unusual but not necessarily uncommon to even give a human sacrifice.

2. Paul is saying that in New Covenant relationship with God there is still a sacrifice to be made on the part of the worshipper, however:

- i. It is not an animal sacrifice, it is a sacrifice of self. F. F. Bruce writes that "the sacrifices of the new order do not consist in taking the lives of animals, like the ancient animal sacrifices, but in giving one's own."<sup>139</sup>
- ii. It is not a sacrifice unto death but a sacrifice where the sacrificed continues to live. Douglas Moo writes, "We offer ourselves as people who have been brought from death to life."<sup>140</sup>

3. Paul has recognized that ultimate sacrifice of Christ on the cross in Romans 3:25 as well as an illustration to this in Romans 5:6.

- i. Christ's death was all-sufficient for salvation.
- ii. The sacrifice that Paul describes here is not something that we do in order to obtain salvation or favor with God. It is a response to a God who has already provided our salvation.
  - a. Pagan worshippers practice literal sacrifice in hopes that their god might save them.

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<sup>136</sup> Moo, 396.

<sup>137</sup> Mounce, 230.

<sup>138</sup> Moo, 394.

<sup>139</sup> Bruce, 213.

<sup>140</sup> Moo, 394.

- b. Christians practice spiritual sacrifice because we are already saved by God.
- 4. Paul has also spoken of this form of Christian sacrifice previously:
  - i. Romans 6:13
  - ii. Romans 6:16
  - iii. Romans 6:19
- C. “Holy and pleasing to God – this is your spiritual act of worship.”
  - 1. Appropriate worship is now found in this personal, self-sacrifice.
  - 2. Many forms of worshipped can be mimicked and undertaken with outward zeal but without inward sincerity.
    - i. Anyone can sing a song, give an offering, or even serve their brother/sister without having a genuine relationship with God (see 1 Corinthians 13:1-3)
    - ii. However, only those who are truly participants in New Covenant salvation can fulfill the task that Paul is describing here.
- D. How is this done?
  - 1. Although Paul does not describe in precise detail how a believer should do this (in contrast to the Old Testament where the rules and law for sacrifices are extensive) the rest of the chapter is a framework for how this could be undertaken and demonstrated in the life of the faithful.
  - 2. Even though Paul does go on to list many outward signs of living sacrifices, he begins by discussing the priority in this activity: inward change.

## II. Transformed, not Conformed

- A. Paul’s discussion of not being conformed to the world must first be discussed in terms of the immediate context of sacrifice:
  - 1. Pagan sacrifice was often done with selfish motivations to a God with whom the worshipper had no relationship.
  - 2. Christian sacrifice is done with selfless motivation (it is the very self that is being sacrificed and not some animal) to a God with whom the worshipper has a trusting and loving relationship.
- B. However, based on the instructions that follow this passage, it is clear that Paul intended to reader to apply this principle to any area of our culture that is not in harmony with the values and attitudes of the Kingdom of God. At the point in which our society or any external mindset contradicts with Word of God, the believer must be willing to resist the pressure to conform to his surroundings and offer himself afresh on the altar as a living sacrifice. As Paul writes in Colossians 2:20, we must die “to the basic principles of this world.”
- C. Transformation
  - 1. Why: Transformation is necessary in order to become like Christ (Philippians 2:5). In our fallen state, we are unlike Christ. Our behavior, attitudes, mindsets, and beliefs are influenced more by sin and the enemy than God. Transformation remedies this condition.
  - 2. How: It is a process that works from the inside out. Before Paul even discusses changing behavior he first addresses changing the mind. Behavioral change is often what we focus on both for ourselves and in regards to others. However, merely changing behavior does not even touch the greater problem, the problem of the mind. God does not want a church filled with people who are simply trained to behave in a certain way. He wants people who are so influenced by God in their mind that behavioral change becomes a natural byproduct of their salvation rather than a forced demand. The law was seen as dealing with behavior but grace transforms the mind. The unfortunate truth is that behavioral change is often temporary, especially in the absence of an immediate reward. Real, lasting change happens from the inside out. Douglas Moo writes, “A new orientation in our thinking leads to a new orientation in behavior.”<sup>141</sup>

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<sup>141</sup> Moo, 295.

3. The Result: Knowing the will of God. The will of fallen mankind is often the exact opposite of the will of God. We may do good sometimes apart from God but even that is often flawed or done with selfish motivations. With a transformed mind, we can begin to discern the will of God for ourselves and for our world. This will is described as:
- i. Good – without malice, evil, or selfishness
  - ii. Pleasing – acceptable to God
  - iii. Perfect – perhaps here the word should be understood to be “complete” rather than “without error.” Even saved people can make mistakes in their attempt to carry out the will of God but when we have a transformed mind, we can begin to see more clearly and fully the will of God.

### III. Sanctification

- A. Many evangelicals see this as a description of Sanctification. While different Christian faith traditions understand Sanctification in slightly different ways, the general view is that after salvation there is a process that takes place in the life of a believer where they become more and more like Christ.
- B. Paul is instructing “Brothers” to do this. Thus, our interaction with God does not pause in between salvation (on earth) and glorification (in heaven). Rather, there is an ongoing, constant activity at work within us initiated by God but carried on by believers in various ways:
  1. Discipleship
  2. Church Attendance
  3. Maturity in Faith
  4. Prayer
  5. Service

### IV. The Problem with Living Sacrifices

- A. It has often been said that the major problem with living sacrifices is that they will often crawl off the altar when the knife gets too close, the fire gets too hot, or the position becomes too uncomfortable. Remaining a living sacrifice becomes the essence of faithfulness. Yet we can look to Jesus as a source of strength. He could not come down from the cross (as the scoffers said) with great ease yet he remained there until the end for our benefit.
- B. Another problem is that changing behavior is often seen as the goal of preaching and ministry with in actuality, the goal should be renewing minds. Douglas Moo writes that that the most effective preaching “goes beyond teaching people what is right and wrong”<sup>142</sup> and includes turning a person towards adopting the mind of Christ even when it conflicts with the culture of worldview of the surrounding world.

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<sup>142</sup> Moo, 399.

## **Romans Bible Study**

### **Romans 12:3-21**

*"To love God is to regard evil with horror. Unfortunately, familiarity with a culture that is shaped by the forces of Satan has lulled too many believers into a state of general tolerance for whatever deviant behavior is in vogue at present. We are to abhor evil because it is the enemy of all that leads to Christlikeness." – Robert H. Mounce<sup>143</sup>*

#### **I. Paul's Commandments**

##### **A. Context**

1. We must be careful to read these commands and instructions within the proper context. Paul began this section by first explaining the nature of people who have chosen to participate in New Covenant salvation by grace through faith in Christ alone. Such people are:
  - i. Romans 12:1 - Living sacrifices (not sacrificing something on account of their sins but being a sacrifice – wholly given to God- as a result of Christ's ultimate sacrifice for sins and making possible sin forgiveness – reconciliation with God).
  - ii. Romans 12:2 – Transformed, renewed minds (the inward process of change has already started even if the outward change has not yet been made manifest. This change or sanctification begins not with one's behavior but with one's mind as God works to redeem the sinful, human mind towards one that can accurately and consistently know the will of God.
  - iii. Romans 12:2 – Unlike the world (no longer conforming to the patterns of the sinful, fallen world that is unable to know and do the will of God.)
2. Thus, doing what Paul commands is ultimately contingent upon first being a living sacrifice and allowing God to transform and renew the mind. This process begins not with us but with the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:5-11). Good behavior can be mimicked but genuine change comes from the inside out.
3. Striving to do these outward works without first allowing the Spirit to do his inward work will result in frustration and failure. (We discussed in the previous lesson about how this inward work is initiated in salvation but carried on in a process aided by both the community (discipleship, church attendance) and personal devotion (Bible study, prayer, faithfulness). As we progress toward maturity, these commands of Paul will be produced as naturally as fruit from a tree rather than begrudgingly and inconsistently from one is forced by compulsion rather than love.

##### **B. Purpose**

1. Paul has already discussed the problem with law-based salvation and righteousness in:
  - i. 3:19-21
  - ii. 4:13-15
  - iii. 5:20
  - iv. 8:3
2. Thus, some would ask why Paul is now returning to legal codes and rules here in connection to salvation.
3. Ultimately, Paul's purpose here is not to lay down the law but offer a glimpse into what the life looks like for "living sacrifices," "renewed minds," and "transformed people." These are not laws that must be kept in order to obtain salvation but lifestyle habits of those already saved.

##### **C. Emphasis**

1. The overwhelming emphasis of these commands is life in community. Paul foresees believers as joining a community of the faithful while still remaining a resident in the

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<sup>143</sup> Mounce, 237.

community of the pagan Gentiles or unbelieving Jews. Douglas Moo comments that broadly speaking Paul is present here “the call for a humble and peaceable attitude towards others, both fellow Christians and non-Christians.”<sup>144</sup> Thus, Paul addresses both aspect of New Covenant community life.

2. In regard to the living in the community of the faithful:

- i. This community is characterized primarily by sincere, brotherly love:
  - a. Paul is emphatic about this in verse 9 when he uses the Greek term *αγαπη* which Verbrugge describes as being used “always in the sense of the love of God.<sup>145</sup>” Our love must be like God’s love. Sincere love here is seen as in opposition to fake love which may disguise selfish motivations. Genuine love, as God loves, is that love which exists even when the one receiving the love is unable to reciprocate.
  - b. Brotherly love (*φιλεω* or *φιλαδελφια*) was used in verse 10 to describe the love within the Christian community. It did not look like erotic love (as would be found in some pagan temple) or contractual love (as would be found among certain fraternities in the pagan world). Rather, it was a natural, caring love like that found between siblings, family members, and genuine friends.
  - c. John Calvin once remarked that almost all people are busy “counterfeiting a love which they do not really possess.”<sup>146</sup>
  - d. There are also many parallels to Romans 12 and 1 Corinthians 13 (known by some as the love chapter).
- ii. This community should be seen as unified body of many different parts (like a human body) rather than a collection of spare parts thrown into a box.
  - a. The analogy of the body used in Romans 12:4-5 has also been used in 1 Corinthians 12 and Ephesians 3-4. Interestingly, each of these passage also contain or are followed up with a discussion of spiritual gifts. We also see this analogy briefly in Colossians 1. F. F. Bruce writes that for Paul “the body ceases to be used as a mere simile and becomes rather the most effective term which the apostle can find to express the vital bond between the life of believers with the risen life of Christ.”<sup>147</sup>
  - b. In the community of faith, we need each other. Just as the body can only function properly when it diverse parts work together, so it is with the body of Christ, the church.
  - c. F. F. Bruce also observes that “Diversity, not uniformity, is the mark of God’s handiwork.”<sup>148</sup>
- iii. This community is developing into what it should be.
  - a. Paul anticipates problems even within the Christian community. Despite their relationship with God, they may find their relationship with one another may be strained. Several of Paul’s commands here address real or potential divisions and disputes among believers in community.
  - b. As the people in the community mature in the Spirit, so shall the community as a whole develop towards God’s design and plan.

3. In regard to the living in the community of the unbelieving world:

- i. Paul expected hostility towards believers and the church from outsiders.

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<sup>144</sup> Moo, 409.

<sup>145</sup> Verbrugge, 6.

<sup>146</sup> As quoted by Mounce, 236.

<sup>147</sup> Bruce, 228.

<sup>148</sup> Ibid, 227.

- a. Paul has seen this first-hand in his ministry both among Jews and Gentiles all over the world and is anticipating it (or recognizing what is already there) as a reality for the Christian community in Rome.
    - b. Paul's comments about evil (v. 21), affliction (v. 12), persecution (v. 14), and enemies (v. 20) indicate that Paul understands these issues will be faced by believers.
    - c. Paul's discussion of revenge (verses 19-20) also reveals the reality of the conflict we may experience with the outside world and how we respond to that conflict.
  - ii. Paul did not expect the church to withdraw from the outside community.
    - a. Paul's remedy to the hostility of the outside world is not to withdraw but to engage (feed your enemy, overcome evil with good).
    - b. Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 5:9-10: "I have written you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people-- not at all meaning the people of this world who are immoral, or the greedy and swindlers, or idolaters. In that case you would have to leave this world." In Paul's mind, the church was not focused on leaving the world behind but engaging the world in order to bring it also into relationship with God.
- D. See the attached chart for a breakdown of the commands listed by Paul in Romans 12.

## II. Spiritual Gifts

- A. In Romans 12:6-8, we find a discussion of some of what has come to be called the "Spiritual Gifts."
  - 1. Other "Spiritual Gifts" passages are found in 1 Corinthians 12 and Ephesians 4.
  - 2. In no one passage does Paul give his complete list of "Spiritual Gifts" nor does he give detailed explanations.
- B. Concerning "Spiritual Gifts," there does seem to be two themes that Paul always emphasizes:
  - 1. Spiritual Gifts are used to benefit the body, not the individual.
  - 2. Spiritual Gifts are to be practiced in love.
  - 3. Spiritual Gifts are spread throughout the members of the community, no one person has all the gifts.
- C. The Gifts of Romans 12:
  - 1. The Gift of Prophecy – v. 6 (Biblical prophecy is predominantly about proclaiming what God says about the present, not the future. Yet the emphasis of many "prophets" is future events.)
  - 2. The Gift of Serving – v. 7
  - 3. The Gift of Teaching – v. 7
  - 4. The Gift of Encouraging – v. 8
  - 5. The Gift of Benevolence – v. 8
  - 6. The Gift of Leadership – v. 8
  - 7. The Gift of Mercy – v. 8
- D. The job description for these gift holders is very brief in Romans 12 yet Paul indicates that one should be able to find such gifts at work in healthy Christianity communities (churches). Just as you would expect a healthy body to have certain parts operating in certain ways, so healthy churches should expect to see the Spirit at work through people with these gifts.
- E. While certain "Spiritual Gifts" should only be practiced by those gifted and qualified to do so, we should not see this as true for every task listed above. Indeed, as seen in Paul's own commands, he expects every believer to be, for example, hospitable (Romans 12:13). Hospitality is not reserved for the few gifted in that area. Those with the gift of hospitality may exhibit that quality in more dramatic ways but each believer should see this as part of his or her lifestyle. Not possessing a gift is no excuse for refusing to live the lifestyle of one wholly given to God.



### III. Heaping Burning Coals

- A. Paul's quote from Proverbs 25:22 may seem problematic at first reading.
  1. Paul has discussed the need to be loving towards our enemies to the extent that we do not seek revenge or cursing on our enemy but rather seek to serve and even bless them.
  2. Yet by quoting this proverb Paul is saying when you are nice to them you are actually hurting them. Thus, feeding them may be a form of taking revenge which Paul has just instructed us not to do.
- B. We must remember, however, that Proverbs often describe patterns or outcomes of our world that exist apart from human intention.
  1. For example: Proverbs 13:24 says that "He who spares the rod hates his son." It may not be the intention of the parent to hate his child but when the parent consistently refuses to discipline that is the message that is communicated.
  2. Thus, heaping coals on our enemy's head may not be our intention when we feed them (or help them in some way) but our action may very well result in that outcome simply as a result of the enemy's perception.
- C. How do we interpret this?
  1. Based on the context, we should not seek revenge or allow hatred to develop within us concerning our enemies. After all, the only enemies we have are those who refuse to be our friends because we always seek peace and reconciliation.
  2. Their animosity or hatred towards us should not influence our behavior towards them. We should always act towards them in a way that is pleasing to God.
  3. If as a result of our good and Godly actions they do experience pain or conviction that very well may be God's way to taking revenge on them. Nevertheless, revenge is not our motivation. Whether revenge is immediate or future should have no influence on our actions.
  4. Taking revenge into your own hands indicates the following:
    - i. We are more controlled by your hatred of others than your love for God.
    - ii. We do not trust God as we should.
  5. Loving our enemies becomes one of the most dramatic changes in the life of people wholly given to God. It is so contrary to the ways of the world. In fact, John Stott writes that such action is likely possible only "when we are moved by the mercies of God, and when our minds have been renewed to grasp his will."<sup>149</sup>
  6. Ultimately, enemies are targets for salvations rather than condemnation.
    - i. That is how God saw us (Romans 5:10)
    - ii. That is how we should approach our enemies.
    - iii. Indeed, their condemnation may come but not before they are bombarded with pleas for salvation.
    - iv. Douglas Moo writes, "Paul urges us to show kindness to our enemies with the hope that they will become ashamed of their actions and seek the underlying reason why we can respond with such love."<sup>150</sup>

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<sup>149</sup> Stott, 334.

<sup>150</sup> Moo, 413

## **Romans Bible Study**

### **Romans 13**

*"Let your only debt that is unpaid be that of love – a debt which you should always be attempting to discharge in full, but will never succeed in discharging." – Origen (184-253 A.D.)*

#### **I. Christians and Government (Romans 13:1-7)**

##### **A. Context**

##### **1. Biblical Context**

##### **i. In Romans**

- a. Remember that these practical commandments that Paul is giving must be read with the understanding that Paul is not describing what one must do to obtain salvation but rather he is describing the character of people who are already saved. These are the actions of those “living sacrifices” who are “transformed by the renewing of your mind” (Romans 12:1-2).
- b. At the end of chapter 12, Paul was discussing the behavior of Christians in both the community of believers (the church) and the community outside the church. Paul anticipated hostility from the outside community (see Romans 12:12, 14, 20, 21). This hostility from the secular world was not to be reciprocated as indicated in Paul’s discussion in revenge and also here in Romans 13. Our attitude of Godly love should be demonstrated not only towards individuals outside the church but also the government.
- c. Paul’s warning about not conforming “to the pattern of this world” does not give Christians an excuse to shun the authority of the worldly government under which they live.

##### **ii. In the New Testament**

- a. Jesus made statements that seem to be in harmony with Paul’s message here. See Matthew 22:21 and John 19:10-11.
- b. Nevertheless, there are occasions in the New Testament when the early Christian leaders had to confront and even disobey their governing authorities. See Acts 4:19 and 5:29 and Matthew 14:3-4.

##### **2. Cultural Context**

- i. Paul is writing to the church in Rome. Rome was the capital of the Roman Empire and the center of Roman government and religion which were intertwined.
- ii. The government in the city itself had proven to be hostile to both Jews and Christians in the past (see Acts 18:1-3). The government’s representatives outside the city had also demonstrated hostility towards Christians, most notably the Roman governor of Judea, Pilate, ordering the crucifixion of Jesus.
- iii. The Roman government was not a democracy. Leaders fought and killed for their positions (or achieved rank through wealth and influence) rather than elections. In many cases, Roman leaders acted as dictators.

##### **3. Jewish Context**

- i. The Old Testament often describes God as working out his plan through secular governments, even evil ones. See Isaiah 40:23-24 and Daniel 4:17 for examples.
- ii. However, Douglas Moo also points out that “alongside the belief that God stands behind secular rulers, there is also the realization that secular rulers

must sometimes be resisted in the name of God.”<sup>151</sup> We can see examples of this also in Daniel 3:13-18 and 6:13-16.

#### 4. Paul’s Context

- i. Paul was a Roman citizen but also a committed Christian. This caused Paul to encounter both positive and negative experiences with the Roman government.
- ii. Paul’s Positive Experiences with the Roman Government (up to the writing of Romans):
  - a. The salvation of the Roman Proconsul in Cyprus in Acts 13.
  - b. The dismissal of a case against Paul by the Roman Proconsul in Corinth in Acts 18.
  - c. The governing authorities calming of a riotous crowd protesting Paul in Ephesus in Acts 19.
- iii. Paul’s Negative Experiences with the Roman Government:
  - a. Paul was beaten and briefly jailed by Roman authorities in Philippi in Acts 16 (although he did get some type of apology the next day when they realized Paul was a Roman citizen).
  - b. Although it was unknown to Paul at the time of his writing of Romans, eventually the Roman government would order and preside over his own execution by beheading just outside the city of Rome.
- iv. Some have claimed that Paul’s citizenship (which was a privilege many did not have) and his positive experiences with the Roman government skewed his perception of how believers should respond to secular governments. This, however, is a minority view. Most understand Paul here to be well aware of the hostility Christians faced from the government and that he was not promoting Roman patriotism but simply right Christian behavior. Nevertheless, we must not base our whole understanding of Paul’s teaching on this subject by merely looking at this one passage. We should also consider the whole of Paul’s writings which include many statements against idolatry, even state sponsored idolatry as was common in Rome.

#### B. Interpreting Paul’s Comments

1. The interpretation of Romans 13:1-7 has been debated since the days of the early church. The early Christians (and many today) asked how they should live out Paul’s instructions here in light of a hostile, pagan government. Many modern Christians live in democracies where governments are chosen by the people and are no longer persecutors of Christians. Yet there is still tension felt when we read these verses.
2. A variety of interpretation have arisen:
  - i. Option 1: Paul is speaking here about governments that are pleasing to God (ideal situations). The key verses for this interpretation are 3-4: Paul is talking about a government that holds “no terror for those who do right” and is led by “God’s servant to do you good.” Thus, when a government does not meet this expectation it is no longer pleasing to God and we as Christians not obligated to submit. We are always obligated to the moral standards that God has given us so we obey the laws of any government as long as they are in harmony with our ethics but when they government deviated from a path pleasing to God we are not bound to it any longer.
  - ii. Option 2: Paul is saying that every leader, good or bad, is established by God and it therefore worthy of our loyalty. Although secular rulers may not be believers, God is using them to achieve his purposes. Good citizenship is as much about being loyal to God as it is about being loyal to worldly leaders. Christians are obligated to obey Scripture when Biblical commands conflict with secular commands but this does not mean that Christians should rebel against the governing authorities appointed by God himself. The key verse

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<sup>151</sup> Moo, 425.

here is verse 2: “He who rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted.”

- iii. Option 3: Paul is not speaking about individual rulers but rather God has ordained and led in the establishment of governments and authority structures in general. The idea of worldly governments does not exist in opposition to God but as a result of God’s guiding hand. Individual rulers or systems may very well take the opportunity God gave and use it for evil but that is no excuse to abandon the whole idea of secular government among Christians. We should help establish governments that please God and achieve the goal for which God created them. Thus, our loyalty is not necessarily for a person but for a structure that facilitates God’s plan and purpose for worldly government.
- iv. Option 4: Christians will be found in a variety of governments and political situations, some conducive for Christian life and ministry and other hostile towards God and his people. Whatever the scenario, Christians must be good citizens and recognize that God is in control. We abide by every law as far as possible in regard to our Christian faith. We respect every authority and seek to convey the love and character of God through our own actions in the midst of secular rulers.

### 3. Key Issues

- i. Paul’s theme here is submission, not necessarily obedience. When we submit to our authorities, we do so with honor and respect and, very often, obedience. However, Paul is not calling us to blind obedience to secular rulers. When they command us to do things that are not in harmony with God’s moral standards (such as idolatry) we must not obey. Yet even when we disobey on account of God we remain respectfully submission also on account of God. As Peter said in 1 Peter 2:12, “Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us.” The Book of Daniel also give us a good balance of respectful submission to leaders and unwavering obedience to God.
- ii. Our obligation to the government is not nullified by our salvation. We still must pay taxes, obey laws, and give respect to our government. Christianity does not free us from this responsibility even to hostile governments. However, within the context of good citizenship there may be a variety of application for this passage. The key thing to remember is that the application of this text is not based on our opinions but God’s Word (in totality). Unfortunately, our approach to this text is often influenced by who is in power on earth rather than who is on the throne in heaven. Whether our political favorite is chosen or rejected should have no influence on our application of this passage. This primary concern should be this: is my action in regards to our government pleasing to God. Political motivations should have no influence in our devotion to Scripture. Robert Mounce reminds us that “the believer’s ultimate allegiance is to God.”<sup>152</sup>
- iii. Although punishment by the secular authorities is a possible consequence of rebelling against the government, another, perhaps more severe, consequence has to do with the conscious. Douglas Moo writes that this term “refers to our consciousness of God and of his will for us.”<sup>153</sup> Paul has already written in Romans 12:2 that a result of a renewed mind is knowing “what God’s will is.” To know God’s will with this amount of clarity and then to disobey it is a serious offense. We must be careful not to do this even in regards to secular governments.

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<sup>152</sup> Mounce, 244.

<sup>153</sup> Moo, 423.

- iv. It is possible that Paul is addressing this situation because many in the Roman church are actively resisting their government or neglecting their responsibilities as residents in the city and empire. Although our citizenship is in heaven (Philippians 3:20 which Paul wrote from Roman incarceration) we are still obligated to be people above reproach as residents of earthly lands. Thus, perhaps Paul is writing intentionally one-sided (over emphasizing submission) to make a point. Nevertheless, there is still truth in the passage that must be followed regardless of our situation.

#### C. Capital Punishment

1. Christians who support the state sanctioned death penalty for crimes often use this text as New Testament support. Indeed there is much in the Old Testament to support capital punishment, most notably Genesis 9:5-6.
2. The death penalty was a reality in Paul's day but it was reserved as a means of punishment that could only be carried out by the government.
3. This is still a debate among many Christian denominations (and believers within the same denomination).

### II. Christians and Debt (Romans 13:8)

- A. Some have interpreted this passage to mean that Christians should never be in debt (except for the debt of love). This is a good rule as debt will create burdens and hindrances in the life of believers.
- B. However, by making this statement Paul recognizes the reality of debt among believers. The issue here is probably more about the following:
  1. Be responsible in economic matters.
  2. Do not cheat anyone out of what you owe them. If you are on a payment plan, be faithful.

### III. The Greatest Commandment: Love

- A. The verb uses for love in the passage is agape (αγαπη) in the Greek. See our discussion of this word from last week's lesson on Romans 12:9.
- B. Paul here is reminding his readers of a teaching presented often by Jesus himself:
  1. Matthew 22:34-40
  2. Mark 12:28-34
  3. Luke 10:25-37
- C. Paul here sees love as the primary characteristic of those who are truly given to Christ as "living sacrifices" and transformed people. They do not need to be bound to the Old Testament law because they will only act out of love for God and others and thus obey everything that God has commanded.

### IV. The End is Near

- A. Paul believed that Christ was coming soon, even in his lifetime perhaps. Romans 13:11-12 seem to indicate this.
- B. That Christ has not come is not a reason to doubt this belief. God's timing is not ours.
- C. However, in light of his return, we must take action regardless of the day or hour. That action includes:
  1. Waking – be active for the Kingdom of God, not a passive bystander.
  2. Working – doing that which is pleasing to God and an example to the world around us.
- D. Light and Darkness
  1. This is a popular theme in Scripture to describe good and evil (John and Jesus both use this as well).
  2. The night time is for sleeping, but Christians are awake and at work.
  3. The night time is when bad things are often done but we operate as if it is the day.

- E. Paul's list of vices are often uncomfortable to read. Although we can be confident we are not doing most of those things, we can usually find at least one that convicts us. Here Paul lists as deeds of darkness:
1. Orgies (popular among some Romans)
  2. Drunkenness
  3. Sexual Immorality (more broad than orgies)
  4. Debauchery (a product of drunkenness)
  5. Dissension
  6. Jealousy
- F. While we may not see jealousy as equal with orgies, Paul lists them in the same category with seemingly no description of one as less severe than the other. Sin is sin and must be put aside for clothing of Christ, Christlikeness. This is the goal of being a "living sacrifice" and having a renewed mind. We want to be like Christ.

## Romans Bible Study

### Romans 14

*"The glory of God and the spiritual welfare of others should be a Christian's chief consideration in eating and drinking, or in anything else." –F. F. Bruce<sup>154</sup>*

#### I. Weak and Strong

- A. Having ended the previous section with instructions to "clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature" (Romans 13:14), Paul will now explain how that should be demonstrated in a diverse community.
  1. The instructions in the previous section seemed to general (for the whole body).
  2. The instructions in this section will be more particular (specific instructions for different types of people)
- B. Many will find Paul's description of weak and strong believers interesting and somewhat unusual.
  1. He classifies as weak those who:
    - i. Abstain from eating meat (Romans 14:2, 6)
    - ii. Honor certain sacred days (Romans 14:5, 6)
    - iii. Abstain from drinking wine (Roman 14:21)
  2. He classifies as strong those who:
    - i. Eats everything (Romans 14:2-3)
    - ii. Considers all days alike (Romans 14:5)
    - iii. Drinks wine (Romans 14:21)
  3. Many would consider abstention a quality of strength, not weakness. Thus, we would also consider "eating everything" a quality of weakness, not strength.
  4. Paul, however, is most likely discussing those who see abstaining from certain food and honoring certain days as compulsory. Fulfilling such discipline is an act of strength but the belief behind the discipline may reflect a level of faith that is somewhat less developed, especially in the area of understanding grace and the place of the law in the New Covenant.
  5. In the same way, simply eating and drinking everything and dismissing holy days is not in and of itself a sign of strength. It may very well be an indication of weakness in both discipline and faith. However, Paul is discussing those who have developed a New Covenant understanding that their relationship with God is not determined by their works but by their faith. Indeed, if faith is genuine, it will produce good works. However, if works are of primary concern in regards to relationship with God, it can never accomplish what is gained by faith.
- C. Paul calls the issues being discusses here (food laws and holy days) "disputable matters." While there are definite indicators of true, genuine, saving faith in a person's life, these issues do not seem to be among them. Thus, this chapter should be seen as guidance over the non-essential issues of Christianity. A discussion of the interpretation of "disputable matters" is found below.
- D. Who are these people?
  1. While it is unclear exactly what Paul is speaking of here, it seems as if there was a division in the Roman church between Gentile Christians and Jewish Christians who felt strongly about keeping the segments of Old Covenant Law that were close associated with the Jewish cultural identity (see discussion below on food laws for further discussion).
  2. The Gentile Christians did not grow up in a society that taught and promoted food laws and it was not seen as necessary in the church. The church had decided at the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15) that Gentiles did not need to become Jewish in order to become Christians. Of course Gentiles were expected to keep the moral laws of God,

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<sup>154</sup> Bruce, 250.

they are binding on all people at all time everywhere. At the Jerusalem Council, Gentiles were also asked to keep certain food laws for the sake of maintaining good fellowship in the community but not as prerequisites for salvation. It seems that the very problems that the Jerusalem Council anticipated in regards to fellowship and food laws did arise in the Roman church.

3. Paul's solution to the problem was to remind both groups about the stress they were causing on the greater community. Paul is not seeking to side with one group or another but the body in general (see chart on Paul's Instructions in Romans 14).

## II. Disputable Matters

- A. This phrase is both difficult to understand in the Greek and harder to interpret into English.
- B. The Greek phrase is διακρισεις διαλογισμων.
  1. διακρισεις (diakrisis) has a nuanced meaning along the lines of "the thoughts of a man deliberating within himself." It is sometimes translated as thoughts but also doubts.
    - i. It is only used one other time by Paul in this letter. In Romans 1:21 it is translated as "imagination."
    - ii. The word is often used in the New Testament to discuss thoughts that originate from carnal man rather than from God. For example, see Mark 7:21; Luke 5:22; and 1 Corinthians 2:20)
  2. διαλογισμων (dialogismon) means discerning or distinguishing. This word is only used thrice in the New Testament (besides here see 1 Corinthians 12:10 and Hebrews 5:14).
- C. Determining how to present this phrase in the Greek has been tedious. Several translations have been generated:
  1. The NIV uses "disputable matters."
  2. The NKJV uses "doubtful things."
  3. The KJV uses "doubtful disputations."
  4. The ESV, NASB, and MEV have all agreed on "opinions."
- D. It seems as if Paul is saying that we should not be assessing one other's place in God's Kingdom using issues about which there is uncertainty as a measure or test. There are plenty of objective matters (essential things) which do serve as a standard for assessing (judging) one another (and ourselves) but we should not elevate matters of opinion to the level of universal truth.

## III. Passing Judgement

- A. The phrase "don't judge me" has become a popular across the cultural spectrum. Some even supplement this phrase with Scripture as if to say it would be against the Word of God to judge one another.
  1. An initial reading of Romans 14 would provide such proof-texts:
    - i. Romans 14:1 – "without passing judgement"
    - ii. Romans 14:3 – don't "look down on him" and do "not condemn the man"
    - iii. Romans 14:4 – "Who are you to judge someone else's servants"
    - iv. Romans 14:10 – "You, then, why do you judge your brother? Or why do you look down on your brother? For we will all stand before God's judgment seat."
    - v. Romans 14:13 – "Therefore let us stop passing judgement on one another"
  2. Other scriptures also seem to support this ban on judging one another:
    - i. Matthew 7:1 - "Do not judge, or you too will be judged."
    - ii. Luke 6:37 - "Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven."
    - iii. Colossians 2:16 – "Therefore do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration or a Sabbath day."



3. The post-modern celebration (and readily acceptance) of cultural relativism has made judging into an appalling and unacceptable activity. Individuals are unable to rightly judge anyone since what is right for me is not necessarily right for you. It is this what Scripture really teaches and supports?

#### B. The Whole of Scripture on Judging

1. The Bible does make several things clear about judgement and judging:
  - i. God is the ultimate judge of all creation (Psalms 50:6; 82:8; 2 Timothy 4:1).
  - ii. The ultimate judgement of all creation will come at the end of time (Isaiah 41:1; 66:15-16; Acts 17:31; Romans 3:19; Revelation 20:11-15)
  - iii. Everyone (each individual) will face divine judgement (Ezekiel 18:30; Matthew 12:36; Romans 14:12).
2. The Bible also indicates that we are to hold one another accountable in love:
  - i. Luke 17:3
  - ii. 1 Corinthians 5:9-11
  - iii. Ephesians 4:14-15
  - iv. 2 Timothy 4:2
3. The Bible also gives us criteria with which to judge one another:
  - i. Matthew 7:15-20
  - ii. 1 John 4:1-3
  - iii. Galatians 5:16-25
4. Two extended teachings in Scripture express the importance of properly judging one another:
  - i. Matthew 18:15-17 – Here Jesus teaches about confronting those who sin in the community of believers.
  - ii. 1 Corinthians 5:1-5 – Here Paul describes an extreme case of church discipline and actually acknowledges that he has “passed judgement on the one who did this.”
5. Thus, Romans 14 is a caution about passing judgement and not a general command against judging one another. We should not make judgements regarding the character and salvation of another based solely on non-essential issues and matters of opinion.
6. Paul offers another caution against judging in 1 Corinthians 5. Even as we hold those in the church accountable we have to be mindful that those outside the church are not yet living according to our standards. We can and should call out the sin of the world but treat those of the world in a way that would draw them to Jesus. The caution here is not to compromise on our morals outside the church but to reserve discipline for those in the church.

#### C. Drawing Conclusions

1. The Bible does not judging one another as mean or reprehensible. Rather, we are tasked with holding one another accountable based on the essential, universal truths of Scripture. This involves making judgement calls based on certain observable criteria as set by the Word of God.
2. The purpose of such judgement is for building up and maturing one another. We must do this with an attitude and motivation of love. If we love our brother or sister, we will work in their best interests, even if that involves discipline.
3. Vengeful or hateful judgement done in arrogance or over non-essential things is inappropriate.
4. When we discern a critical issue in the life of a fellow believer, the proper way to react to that judgment is generally:
  - i. Attempt to resolve privately and maintain privacy as far as possible.
  - ii. If private resolution is unachievable, involve a small group of trusted colleagues or mutual friends (not gossips, drama kings/queens, immature/new believers, etc.).
  - iii. If resolution is still not achieved, inform and involve the church leaders.
  - iv. Serious judgements and discipline should be carried out and overseen by leadership.

#### IV. Jewish Laws

- A. Several Jewish laws and concepts found in the Old Covenant play a significant behind-the-scenes role in this discussion. These include:
1. The Food Laws (found largely in Leviticus 11)
  2. The Idolatry Laws
    - i. Exodus 20:3-5
    - ii. Leviticus 26:1
  3. The Sabbath Laws
    - i. Exodus 20:8-11
    - ii. Leviticus 23:3
- B. The Jewish laws were not only a matter of worship but also intertwined with Jewish identity. Thus, when the implications of Jesus' fulfillment of the law and initiation of the New Covenant were considered, many Jews still desired to hold on to certain culturally distinctive Jewish laws.
1. Some, like the Judaizers in Acts 15 and Galatians held some laws up as necessary for salvation to the extent that even Gentiles had to demonstrate obedience before they could qualify for salvation. They promoted the law of circumcision as a key, outward indicator of law obedience.
  2. Others, like these in Rome, did not see the laws a necessary for salvation but certainly part of true, Godly living subsequent to salvation.
- C. Jewish history was full of examples of faithful Jewish people remaining true to their laws in the midst of overwhelming pagan influence.
1. Daniel 1 describes four Jewish men who refused to eat unclean food while in pagan captivity.
  2. During the later years of the Greek reign of Israel, Jews refused to eat unclean food mandated by the Greeks even at the threat of death.
  3. In Rome, Jews were ridiculed for their peculiar eating habits.
- D. Jewish concern about idolatry and ritual uncleanness was also a factor for Jews living outside of Israel.
1. Most meat markets in Roman and Greek cities were connected to pagan temples. The temples sold the meat of sacrificial animals to generate income for the temple. Thus, Jews saw this meat (even if kosher) as polluted by idolatry and thus unclean (1 Corinthians 8).
  2. Even if they found a butchery that was not connected to a temple, it was difficult to ascertain if the meat had been drained of blood as prescribed in the Old Testament or if the butcher dedicated the meat to an idol.
  3. If the meat was properly prepared and undedicated, it was still handled by Gentile hands. Contact with Gentiles was avoided in order to prevent ritual uncleanness (see Leviticus 5:2-3, Mark 7:1-5, and Acts 10:27-28).
  4. As a result, most Jewish communities outside of Israel were closed off to the outside community and many Jews avoided contact with their fellow citizens even to the extent of not eating meat or drinking wine if it had to be bought from Gentiles.
- E. Jewish Sabbaths and Festivals
1. The Jewish attempt to keep the Sabbath outside of Israel was also difficult as the surrounding society was not prepared or willing to accommodate to the various Sabbath laws.
  2. While many Jews in the diaspora did try to keep the religious festivals of the Old Covenant, doing so was difficult. Many Jews preferred to return to Jerusalem for these celebration.
  3. These festival included:
    - i. Passover – Exodus 12:14
    - ii. Pentecost – Exodus 23:16
    - iii. Ingathering – Exodus 23:16
    - iv. Others established outside the Pentateuch

- F. Douglas Moo observes that that Jewish people in the diaspora “were a minority religious group trying to survive and preserve their identity in the midst of a pluralistic and often hostile environment. Like many other Jews in the centuries after the exile, they put great emphasis on some of the religious traditions that helped to preserve their identity and to keep them separate from the world around them. Faced with both persecution and dispersion, Jews magnified Old Testament-based traditions such as circumcision, the avoidance of unclean food, and the observance of ritual days, especially the Sabbath. We should not, therefore, be surprised that it was just these issues that repeatedly surfaced as points of tension between Jewish Christians and Gentile Christians.”<sup>155</sup>
- G. New Testament Impact on Old Testament Laws
1. The New Testament affirms universal obedience to what has been called the moral law of God found in the Old Testament.
  2. However, while the divine origins and principles are honored, literal obedience to Jewish religious and civil laws are seen to be no longer required in light of the New Covenant.
  3. In several places in the New Covenant, the food laws are specifically addressed:
    - i. Mark 7:14-23
    - ii. Acts 10:9-16
    - iii. Romans 14
    - iv. 1 Corinthians 8
  4. Also, the New Testament seems to indicate that the Sabbath day has been redefined in light of the resurrection of Jesus on the first day of the week. Consider:
    - i. Acts 20:7
    - ii. 1 Corinthians 16:2
- H. Reconstruction the situation in the Roman church:
1. The church in Rome was a diverse body made up of both Jewish believers and Gentile converts.
  2. The Jewish believers were hesitant to let go of the Scriptural based traditions of their ancestors. These were markers of both their ethnic identity and their historical status as the people of God. They could not understand why the Gentiles were unwilling to join them in their participation in such activities. Perhaps they even through badly of the Gentiles for their lifestyle of consuming unclean food and drink and not keeping all the Sabbath laws.
  3. The Gentiles has accepted the God of Jews and the God of the universe and their savior. They realized that they were saved by grace. They did not grow up Jewish or feel any obligation to keep the Jewish traditions. Perhaps they saw the Jews as living in bondage and did not realize that their freedom was causing harm to the unity and maturity of the body.
  4. Paul’s response was not to take a side but to reconcile the sides by affirming their inwards opinions while also challenging their outward behavior.

## V. The Key Issues Addressed

### A. Spiritual Arrogance

1. We often call these people legalistic. They have placed so much priority in obeying the law of God but failed to demonstrate the qualities of God (love, grace, forgiveness). They look down on others to do not fulfill certain laws as well as they do (or as well as they expect).
2. This is a wrong attitude. It is condemning people that God has not condemned (Romans 8:1). Their outward achievements may produce inward deficiencies (pride, arrogance, disdain) and actually hinder the advancement of the kingdom they claim to love and honor.
3. We must not elevate traditions to the level of truth. These traditions may not be bad but they may also not be universal. Opinions about non-essential issues should not be

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<sup>155</sup> Moo, 463.

elevated to the status of essential truth. Our love for the law must not cause us to dishonor the God of the law.

4. We may say they have missed the forest for the trees.

#### B. Unnecessary Temptation

1. These people may be able to participate in activities that have no impact on their Christian life or walk with God but in flaunting their freedom they may be harming the greater community and creating unnecessary temptations for new or less mature believers.

2. The exercise of personal freedoms must always be considered in light of the greater community. If doing something is harmful to others we must abstain even if it does not harm you since we are loving members of a larger community. Robert Mounce writes, "While freedom is a right, it is not a guide for conduct. Love serves that purpose. Rights are laid aside in the interest of love."<sup>156</sup>

3. Even though sin is not defined by culture and we have freedom in areas not classified as sin by Scripture, we must be willing to sacrifice our freedom within cultures that do not share our freedom lest our freedom cause division and harm to the body of Christ. The exercise of our freedom should never cause us to dishonor the God who gave us that freedom.

4. We may say they have missed the trees for the forest.

#### C. The Value and Importance of Community

1. The Church is the body of Christ and our place to belong as we anticipate eternity in heaven. This community based on love. It is the primary venue for experiencing the love of God and his people. Thus, the church should not be just a group of people who tolerate each other. It should be a community characterized by love (Romans 12:10; John 13:35)

2. Our part in participating in the community of believers is not simply to receive the love of the church but to foster it. Thus the church is not a place to exercise freedom but to sacrifice it for the sake of serving others. In the same way the church is not a place to boast of good works but humbly serve others.

3. In Christianity, the community does not exist to uphold the rights and opinions of the individuals. Rather, the individuals come together in unity, sacrificing what may be required, to uphold the community.

### VI. Focus on Christ (Romans 14:6-12)

A. Here Paul is leading us to focus on Christ rather than self.

B. Jesus is the ultimate picture of one who surrendered his freedoms for the benefit of the greater community. He is also the ultimate example of the one who kept the law perfectly but saves (rather than looks down on) those who cannot keep the law as well as he did.

C. Christ died for both the weak ones and the strong one. Thus, each have the same level of value in the eyes of Christ.

D. Christ is the ruler over the living and the dead, the weak and the strong, the believers and the unbelievers. Ultimately, he is the one to whom we must give account. He will participate in our ultimate judgement. His authority is not limited by our life or our death.

E. We must learn to imitate Christ in personal behavior.

F. We must learn to trust him in regards to others.

### VII. The Nature of the Kingdom of God (Romans 14:17-18)

A. Paul also reminds us that the Kingdom of God is a matter of eternal qualities, not temporary opinions.

1. Eating and drinking have little value in the Kingdom of God. Therefore, do not allow your refusal or your freedom to participate to move you away from the Kingdom.

2. The true qualities of the Kingdom of God are

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<sup>156</sup> Mounce, 258-259.

- i. Righteousness (by faith and not by works – Romans 3)
  - ii. Peace (reconciliation with God and one another – Romans 3)
  - iii. Joy in the Holy Spirit
- B. Let us not be so concerned about the things that do not matter that we fail to become concerned about the things that have eternal significance.
- C. Also remember, the issues that Paul addresses here are about the non-essential aspects of Christianity. The Kingdom of God has numerous essential beliefs and behaviors about which there can be no compromise based on personal opinions or perceived freedoms.
  - 1. If those “weak” believers were holding to a view of works that conflicted with the nature of the Gospel, Paul would have condemned that mindset.
  - 2. If those “strong” believers were participating in activities that were not in harmony with the Gospel, Paul would have condemned that activity.

#### **VIII. Everything That Does Not Come From Faith is Sin**

- A. A theme of Paul in Romans has been the necessity of faith for right relationship with God. This faith in God is not limited to theological or eschatological implications, it has implications for the here and now, practical living.
- B. The shared flaw among the strong and the weak seems to be misplaced trust (or perhaps even trust in something above God):
  - 1. The weak placed an unhealthy amount of trust in their works.
  - 2. The strong placed an unhealthy amount of trust in their freedoms.
- C. The key to right living, whether we are weak or strong, is to live a life where our faith informs and influences every decision. A decision to set faith aside or neglect our faith is a decision to move towards sin.

## Pauls Instructions in Romans 14 (concerning non-essential issues)

Instructions to the "weak"	Instructions to the "strong"	Instructions to all	Note
	Do not look down on those who do not share in the freedom you have (v. 3)		
Do not condemn those who have freedom in areas you feel convicted about (v. 3)			
		Do not judge/look down on others based on non-essential matters (v. 4, 10, 13)	
		Seek after a full understanding of why do what you do (v. 5)	
		In all you do, do it in a way that honors and give thanks to God (v. 6)	
		Do not hinder (put a stumbling block) another from serving God and living in holiness (v. 13)	See also the statements of Jesus in Matthew 18:6; Mark 9:42; and Luke 17:2 as well as Paul in 1 Cor. 8:9-13)
Do not participate in anything that will hinder your relationship with God or the development of your faith (v. 14, 23)			
	Acts in love more than freedom. Be willing to sacrifice your freedom in order to express love when necessary (v. 15)		
	Act in the best interests of the body and your fellow believers (v. 15)		
		Be willing to explain your behavior (v. 16)	
		Make every effort to promote peace among the body and maturity & encouragement among individuals (v. 19)	

Instructions to the "weak"	Instructions to the "strong"	Instructions to all	Note
		Do not allow non-essential matters to distract from doing the important work of the Kingdom of God. Keep the kingdom (not opinions) as priority (v. 20)	
	Do not allow the exercise of your freedom to hurt a fellow believer's walk with God (v. 20-21)		Galatians 5:13
		Live by faith in all things (v. 23)	

## **Romans Bible Study**

### **Romans 15**

*"[God] mediates his comfort and encouragement by speaking through his Word to the hearts of receptive believers. To separate oneself from Scripture is to turn a deaf ear to the voice of a Heavenly Father anxious to console." –Robert Mounce<sup>157</sup>*

#### **I. A Concluding Word on the Weak and Strong**

- A. Paul at last identifies where he sees himself among these groups. It was somewhat apparent based on his previous writing but in 15:1 he explicitly places himself among the strong.
- B. He identifies himself among the strong not to brag but to make his following command also an expression of his own personal practice. That command is to consider our neighbors before ourselves. Our primary concern should not be to enjoy freedom but to build up one another even if that means sacrificing individual freedoms. Robert Mounce writes, "Their faith in Christ allowed them to partake with a clear conscience of food that earlier they had held to be ceremonially unclean. They were free from ceremonial obligations, but they remained under the obligation of love."<sup>158</sup>
- C. Paul draws our attention to Christ as the ultimate example of this principle. Jesus voluntarily gave up divine rights, privileges, and freedom to put on flesh and die for our sins.
  1. Paul illustrates this by pointing to Psalms 69:9
  2. Psalm 69 is one of the most popular Old Testament passages used in the New Testament to describe Jesus. It is also quoted or alluded to in:
    - i. Matthew 27:34, 48
    - ii. Mark 15:36
    - iii. Luke 23:36
    - iv. John 2:17; 15:25; 19:28-29
    - v. Acts 1:20
    - vi. Romans 11:9-10
  3. The use of this particular portion of the Psalm is quoted to remind us that Jesus willingly suffered on our behalf. Thus, we should not allow the potential for suffering deter us from serving one another in the best ways possible.
  4. Paul uses the term servant for Christ in 15:8. Although Paul has discussed serving one another, this is the first time (and only time in Romans) that he refers to the servant status of Jesus.
    - i. This is mentioned by Paul so that the reader may understand that following the example of Jesus is not primarily about enjoying freedoms but serving others even at the expense of freedoms.
    - ii. Paul called Christ a "servant of the Jews" in recognition of Christ's priority during his incarnate ministry. The reality is that he ministered primarily among and to the people of Israel. However, as Paul transitions to the next thought, he is emphatic that this service to the Jews also resulted in benefits for the Gentiles. The service of Christ on behalf of Jews was not done in neglect to the Gentiles but for the eventual blessing of Gentiles.
    - iii. Jesus himself takes the title servant vividly in Mark 10:45.
    - iv. Robert Mounce writes, "If Christ, the very Son of God, did not order his life so as to please himself, how much more should we forego all personal advantage and follow the path of the Suffering Servant."<sup>159</sup>
  5. Paul's command to accept one another as Christ accepted you is not an instruction to overlook sin in the life of believers but to have grace in those non-essential issues that have potential to unnecessarily divide the body of Christ.

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<sup>157</sup> Mounce, 260.

<sup>158</sup> Ibid, 259.

<sup>159</sup> Ibid.



- D. Finally, Paul concludes this larger section with a prayer for the whole body: weak and strong. Paul prays that they:
1. Would have endurance and encouragement in spite of both internal and external factors (although the emphasis has been on internal stresses).
  2. Would have a spirit of unity in the midst of their diversity. Paul does not pray for the absence of diversity but rather for the miraculous presence of unity. F. F. Bruce writes, “he is praying that they may possess a unity of purpose that transcends these differences.”<sup>160</sup>
  3. Would glorify God with both heart and mouth.
    - i. Both are essential. If our praise is only words, it will not be reflected in our community or our actions towards one another. Our praise must also come from the heart if it is genuine.
    - ii. The connection between heart and mouth (genuine belief) has been used by Paul before in Romans 10:8-10. It is also a consistent theme in Scripture:
      - a. Deuteronomy 30:14
      - b. 1 Samuel 2:1
      - c. Psalm 19:14
      - d. Proverbs 16:23
      - e. Matthew 12:34
      - f. Luke 6:45
    - iii. Salvation is not simply or primarily about training the mouth what to say or repeating what another has said. It is about fostering faith in the heart (center) of our being so that the right words flow naturally from a pure heart.
  4. Later, Paul also prays that each one would have the hope, joy, and peace that comes from God as a result of trust in him. Paul prays for an “overflow” of hope that only comes from the power of the Holy Spirit rather than surrounding outside circumstances.

## II. The Place of the Old Testament

- A. As Paul quotes the Old Testament in this section quite a bit, he reminds the reader that he is not opposed to the Old Testament. Although Paul sees the New Covenant as the only way to relationship with God, he has not promoted an abandonment of the Old Covenant. The Old Covenant is the foundation of the New Covenant. Thus, Paul reminds us in 15:4 that we should study what was written in the past so that we can have help and understanding in the present and future.
- B. The Old Covenant is still the word of God and valuable to the believer. However, as we see Paul working with the Old Testament here, we should read the Old Testament through the lens of the New Covenant.
- C. F. F. Bruce writes, “The Old Testament . . . continues to play a central role in helping believers understand salvation history and their responsibilities as the new covenant people of God.”<sup>161</sup> Again, Bruce writes, “God wants his church to be a place that transcends any cultural, racial, or ethnic division in a unity based on the gospel.”<sup>162</sup>

## III. A Final Reminder About Gentiles

- A. Paul does not easily let go of his emphasis on the Gentiles. He sees them as a priority and even calls himself “an Apostles to the Gentiles.” He reminds his readers once again that he work of both he and Jesus anticipates Gentile salvation. Gentile salvation is not just a minimal byproduct of the Gospel, they are a mighty “offering acceptable to God, sanctified by the Holy Spirit.”
- B. To illustrate this, Paul quickly mentioned four Old Testament passages that predict and prophecy Gentile salvation as a result of Jewish faithfulness and obedience to God:

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<sup>160</sup> Bruce, 472.

<sup>161</sup> Ibid, 471.

<sup>162</sup> Ibid, 483.

1. 2 Samuel 22:50 (also quoted in Psalm 18:49)
2. Deuteronomy 32:43
3. Psalm 117:1
4. Isaiah 11:10

#### IV. Paul's Confidence about the Roman Church

- A. Although Paul recognizes that he has been bold in some of his writing, he explains his confidence about the present state and future of the church in 15:15-22.
- B. Paul describes the church as:
  1. Full of goodness – Although he has rebuked them on some points, he is pleased with the general direction of their behavior and lifestyle. They are progressing well towards Christlikeness.
  2. Complete in knowledge – This does not mean that their learning is over or that they have obtained on knowledge. It is a bit of an overstatement meant to convey Paul's confidence that they are not deficient in their understanding of the Gospel.
  3. Competent to instruct – Paul is confident about the future of the church because they are able to pass on the gospel message even without his presence.
- C. Paul's overall confidence in the Roman church has kept him from visiting in the past since other cities or churches needed his presence, ministry, and teaching more. Paul, however, is glad that the churches in Greece are improving to the extent that he can finally visit Rome while on the way to the next frontier of ministry, Spain.

#### V. The Full Measure of the Blessing of Christ

- A. Paul wrote with the anticipation of reaching them one day and he looked forward to arriving in the "full measure of the blessing of Christ."
- B. While Paul was writing his letter to the Romans it seems that he was not fully aware of the trouble that would find him in Jerusalem. Although he recognizes the potential for trouble there (Romans 15:31) he writes as if he is planning to leave Jerusalem free and in good shape for a fourth missionary journey to Rome and Spain. When Paul actually arrived in Rome, he was lucky to be alive. He had survived public beating (Acts 21:30-31), an assassination attempt by more than forty hungry men (Acts 23:12-15), a two-week long storm at sea (Acts 27:30-38), near starvation (Acts 27:33), a shipwreck (Acts 27:39-44), and a poisonous snake bite (Acts 28:1-6). Was that "the full measure of the blessing of Christ?"
- C. Paul does make it to Rome as he predicted in the letter to the Romans. The circumstances of his travel, however, turned out to be very different from what Paul had planned. He anticipated arriving as a traveling missionary. He actually arrived as a captive prisoner. We may not call that arriving "in the full measure of the blessing of Christ" but when Paul arrived he was able "thank God" (Acts 28:15) and to preach "boldly and without hindrance" (Acts 28:21). For Paul, I think he would still say that he came "in the full measure of the blessing of Christ" despite his physical condition because suffering is not a sign of diminished blessings (2 Corinthians 12:10). The full measure of Christ's blessing can be experienced even in the midst of and despite physical problems. Rome would eventually take Paul's head and end his life but not before Paul enjoyed fruitful ministry in that city "in the full measure of the blessing of Christ." Likewise, our physical sufferings need not prevent us from enjoying of the "full measure of the blessing of Christ" in our life.
- D. Enjoying the "full measure of the blessing of Christ" may not seem possible in many situations. When we contemplate our life, the bad may seem to outweigh the good. Like Paul, perhaps we made it but just barely. We have the wounds and scars to prove it. This blessing, however, is one that may be possessed by the ones who possess the least and suffer the most. Blessing should not be measured by the accumulation of many things or the achievement of many goals. We can experiencing blessings in the midst of struggle, loss, discouragement, and pain.
- E. Sometimes, we miss the blessings of God because we focus on the external and the physical rather than the spiritual. Recognizing our blessings begins with the ongoing awareness of God's activity in our life. The enemy of God would attempt to blind us to this activity. He

has fostered lies and misunderstandings about God's blessings. Some of those wrong ideas include:

1. God's blessings are primarily found in the physical and material.
  2. God's blessings are only for a future experience in heaven.
  3. Problems in our life are evidence of our failure and the lack or withholding of God's blessings.
  4. God is unwilling to bless me since I'm not that important or worthy.
- F. As believers we should consider the great blessings that God has already given us as seen in Romans:
1. Reconciliation with God through the sacrificial work of Jesus (Romans 5:11).
  2. Access to God at any moment as a benefit of your reconciliation (Romans 5:2).
  3. The Son of God interceding for you in heaven (Romans 8:34) and the Spirit of God interceding for you on earth (Romans 8:26).
  4. Hope, even in times of suffering (Romans 5:3-5).
- G. Paul wrote of all these blessings to the Romans before he visited them. I believe the reality of these blessings in Paul's life propelled him until he reached this city and the church so that even with the snake bites and ship wrecks, he arrived in the "full measure of the blessing of Christ."

## **Romans Bible Study**

### **Romans 16**

*"[God] mediates his comfort and encouragement by speaking through his Word to the hearts of receptive believers. To separate oneself from Scripture is to turn a deaf ear to the voice of a Heavenly Father anxious to console." –Robert Mounce<sup>163</sup>*

#### **I. A Long List of Greetings**

- A. This is by far the longest list of greetings in any of Paul's letter or any other New Testament letter.
  - 1. Paul mentions 27 individuals in total.
  - 2. Among those are 17 men and 10 women.
- B. Some have claimed that this long list of greetings proves that either Paul is not the writer of Romans or that this letter was not sent to Rome.
  - 1. Some say that Paul could not be the author of this letter since whoever the author is exhibits such great personal knowledge of the people of the church. Paul, having never visited the church, could not have been this familiar with the congregation.
  - 2. Others say that this is a letter of Paul but the list of greetings indicates that it was not sent to Rome since Paul did not know the congregation that well. These people are familiar to Paul but that are simply known in Rome.
- C. However, the majority of Evangelical scholars see this list of greetings as evidence supporting Pauline authorship. Paul states in the letter that he has never visited Rome but he is able to write this letter with authority because he knows personally members of the church, having met them in the midst of his other journeys, and Paul is also known to members of the church, perhaps through mutual friends. The list of greetings establishes Paul's credibility in the community he never visited.

#### **II. Phoebe (Romans 16:1-2)**

- A. Phoebe is not only the first named to be mentioned, she is probably also the most discussed name on the list.
- B. What we know about Phoebe with certainty:
  - 1. She is a believer from Cenchrea.
    - i. Cenchrea was a port city connected to Corinth on the east side of the city.
    - ii. Cenchrea was most likely evangelized by Paul during his ministry in Corinth on the second missionary journey (Acts 18).
    - iii. Cenchrea is only mentioned once outside of Romans in Acts 18:18.
      - a. It was the port from which Paul launched out to Ephesus for his initial visit.
      - b. It was also the city wherein Paul had his hair shaved off in order to demonstrate that he has fulfilled a vow, perhaps a vow to take the Gospel into Europe after his vision in Troas in Acts 16:9.
  - 2. She was traveling to Rome and Paul wanted the church to receive her and help her.
    - i. Letters of commendation were common and necessary for those traveling great distances during the time of Paul. Without technology to verify the identity of unknown people, letters of commendation were carried as a way of ensuring help or service could be found in a foreign city.
    - ii. Paul seems to be left Corinth shortly before writing this letter (or may be writing from Corinth itself) and perhaps was asked by Phoebe for this commendation.
  - 3. She has been a great help to many other believers, including Paul.
  - 4. Phoebe is never mentioned elsewhere in the New Testament.
- C. What we may assume about Phoebe based on the text:

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<sup>163</sup> Mounce, 260.

1. She was a lady of wealth. The terminology used to describe her is similar to the way “benefactors” were described in Greek and Roman literature.
  2. Residing in a port city, perhaps she was a business lady like Lydia in Acts 16.
  3. She may have been the letter carrier for this letter. Paul relied on personal letter carriers (see 1 Thessalonians 3:2) to deliver his letters to the churches. Robert Mounce is sure of this when he writes, “Phoebe is undoubtedly the person carrying Paul’s letter to the church in Rome.”<sup>164</sup>
  4. She was a leader in the church (see discussion below).
- D. Phoebe, a *διακονος* of the church in Cenchrea.
1. Phoebe is described as a *diakonos* in the Greek. This is a significant term for understanding her identity.
  2. *diakonos* is used 29 times in the New Testament, mostly by Paul (8 usages in the Gospels and the 21 by Paul).
    - i. In Romans the word is used four times:
      - a. Romans 13:4 (used twice)
      - b. Romans 15:8
      - c. Romans 16:1
    - ii. Other uses by Paul
      - a. 1 Corinthians 3:5
      - b. 2 Corinthians 3:6; 6:4; 11:15 (twice); 11:23
      - c. Galatians 2:17
      - d. Ephesians 3:7; 6:21
      - e. Philippians 1:1
      - f. Colossians 1:7, 23, 25; 4:7
      - g. 1 Thessalonians 3:2
      - h. 1 Timothy 3:8, 12; 4:6
  3. *diakonos* was a word that saw a transformation in meaning through the Greek language.
    - i. As Verlyn Verbrugge writes, the word “first meant to wait at tables; this was expanded to mean to care for household needs, then to serve generally. The first meaning involved personal subjection, which was considered unworthy and dishonoring for a free man. But when used in the third sense it could denote service for a cause, e.g., for the good of the community or for a god. As such, it was an honorable task, a fitting occupation for a free man.”<sup>165</sup>
    - ii. Based on this understanding and the usage we see in the New Testament, this word was used to denote someone of both service in the church but also in leadership. This is seen especially in 1 Corinthians 3:5; 1 Thessalonians 3:2; and 1 Timothy 3.
    - iii. C. G. Kruse writes, “In several places in the Pauline letters the word *diakonos* is used of individuals who exercise a special function within the church. Phoebe is described as a deacon . . . However, the Pauline letters give no indication concerning the exact nature of the service to be rendered by these appointees.”<sup>166</sup>
  4. This description of Phoebe should have implication for our understanding of the role of women in public ministry. We will discuss this further below. A good summary is compiled by Craig Keener when he writes that Phoebe is “apparently a person with administrative responsibility in the early church, but which in Paul’s letters usually refers to a minister of God’s word, such as himself. He also calls her a ‘helper’ of many, a term which is normally referred in antiquity to patrons, some of whom were

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<sup>164</sup> Mounce, 272.

<sup>165</sup> Verbrugge, 136.

<sup>166</sup> C. G. Kruse, “Servant, Service,” in *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, ed. Gerald Hawthorne, Ralph P. Martin, Daniel G. Reid (Downers Grove: IVP, 1993), 870.

women. As a patron, she would own the home in which the church met and hold a position of honor.”<sup>167</sup>

### III. Priscila and Aquila

- A. This couple is the second to be mentioned. This makes sense considering their long-term and close relationship with Paul.
- B. A History of Relationship
  - 1. Aquila and Priscilla residents of Rome before meeting Paul but were driven out of Rome by Claudius. This occurred in 49 A.D. because of quarrels that broke out within the Jewish community in Rome between Jews who believed in Jesus and those who did not. They fled to Corinth.
  - 2. In Acts 18:2, we first see this couple mentioned in Scripture. Immediately after arriving in Corinth, Paul finds this Jewish couple whom he recognizes to be of great potential. It is possible that this couple were already believers before Paul met them.
  - 3. Paul worked alongside Aquila and Priscilla in the field of tentmaking. Paul was trained in this skill and used it to earn a living for himself in Corinth (1 Corinthians 9:15-18). He made tents through the week and taught on the Sabbath in the synagogue or in the marketplace.
  - 4. When Paul left Corinth after about 18 months of ministry, he took Aquila and Priscilla with him to Ephesus where he left them to start the ministry while he traveled on to Jerusalem and Antioch before returning on the third missionary journey.
  - 5. While in Ephesus, they met a minister named Apollos who was familiar with John’s Baptism and preached the gospel. Aquila and Priscilla instructed him more in the way of Jesus and eventually sent him to Corinth to help in the church there.
  - 6. At some point after Paul left Ephesus, the couple seems to have returned to Rome and were involved in the church in their former home.
- C. Priscilla First?
  - 1. It is notable that Paul mentioned the wife’s name first. This is also the pattern in the book of acts. When Luke introduces the couple in Acts 16, he uses the husband’s name first but in every other instance in the Scripture the wife’s name is mentioned first.
  - 2. Name order was important for Luke. At the beginning of the first missionary journey in Acts 13, Luke places Barnabas’ name before Paul in several instances to indicate the Barnabas is the leader of that team (see also Acts 14:12). However, as the story progresses and Paul gradually becomes the leader, the name order shifts to Paul’s name ahead of Barnabas.
  - 3. This name order could indicate that in terms of active ministry, Priscilla was the more involved member of the family. However, F. F. Bruce explains this simply as a matter of “she was the more impressive personality of the two.”<sup>168</sup>
- D. They Risked Their Lives?
  - 1. We do not see a specific instance in Scripture where this occurred.
  - 2. Perhaps Paul is speaking generally. They were willing to leave their home and business and go with Paul to new places for the ministry.
  - 3. Perhaps Paul is referring to the near disaster they all faced when a riot broke out in Ephesus against Christians in Acts 19.

### IV. Other People Greeted

- A. Mary, a common name in the Bible. This Mary is probably not referring to any of the famous women named Mary in the Gospels. Whoever she is, she worked very hard for the church in Rome.

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<sup>167</sup> Craig S. Keener, “Men and Women,” in *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, ed. Gerald Hawthorne, Ralph P. Martin, Daniel G. Reid (Downers Grove: IVP, 1993), 589.

<sup>168</sup> F. F. Bruce, *Paul: Apostle of the Heart Set Free* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977), 251.

## B. Andronicus and Junias

1. Although a minority of scholars have tried to claim that this is two men working together on a ministry team (like Paul and Barnabas) the majority see this as it is literally found in the Greek, a married man and woman like Aquila and Priscilla. Their names are mentioned nowhere else in Scripture.
2. They were somehow related to Paul and they believed in Jesus before Paul. The old Paul (before Christ) may have hated them for their faith but the Christian Paul counted them as “outstanding.”
3. They had been in prison with Paul. We are not sure where this took place. Paul imprisonments were brief up to this point (remember, this is at the end of the third missionary journey and before the imprisonment of Paul in Jerusalem, Caesarea, and Rome).
4. They are named as “outstanding among the Apostles.” This is why many have tried to explain away the feminine name Junias as masculine since no other women in the New Testament is listed among the apostles.
  - i. It is clear from Ephesians 4 that Paul saw a place in the church for apostles outside the foundational apostolic group of the 12 plus Paul.
  - ii. Even though Paul recognized others as apostles, he did understand that there was a differing in the level of authority between foundation apostles and others that followed (see 1 Corinthians 15:5-8).
  - iii. The term apostle (αποστολος) simply means “sent one” so Andronicus and Junias may be seen as a missionary couple who went to help start new or fledgling works.
  - iv. The identification of a women in this position is significant.
    - a. Even Douglas Moo, who does not see Scriptural support for women teaching men or having authority over men, admits that “Romans 16:7 does, indeed, prove that women were ‘apostles’ in the early church.”<sup>169</sup>
    - b. Keener writes, “‘Junia’ itself is clearly a feminine name, but writers inclined to doubt that Paul could have referred to a female apostle have proposed that this is a contraction for the masculine name ‘Junianus.’ But this contraction does not occur in our inscriptions from Rome and is by any count quite rare compared to the common feminine name; the proposal rests on the assumption that a women could not be an apostle, rather than on any evidence inherent in the text itself.”<sup>170</sup>

C. Ampliatus, a male friend of Paul (name only mentioned here in Scripture).

D. Urbanus, a male fellow minister (name only mentioned here in Scripture).

E. Stachys, a male friend of Paul (name only mentioned here in Scripture).

F. Apelles, a notable Christian man from Rome (name only mentioned here in Scripture).

G. Those in the household of Aristobulus

1. While there is some uncertainty here, the most notable Aristobulus during Paul’s time was Herod’s the Great’s son by Mariamne and thus the last Jewish monarch born into the Hasmonian dynasty. He was sent to Rome to study as an adolescent and returned to Jerusalem as a favorite of his father. His half-brother, however, turned his father against Aristobulus. Herod the Great eventually had Aristobulus executed by strangulation out of fear that he would usurp the throne. The children and grandchildren of Aristobulus lived in both Jerusalem and Rome. Eventually the son and grandson of Aristobulus (Agrippa I and II) would become kings of Judea as the third and fourth rulers in the Herodian dynasty.
2. It’s possible that some of the Jewish servants serving in the Roman family home of Aristobulus had believed in Christ and joined the church.

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<sup>169</sup> Moo, 509.

<sup>170</sup> Keener, 589.

- H. Herodion, a male relative of Paul.
- I. Those in the household of Narcissus
  - 1. There are several famous men named Narcissus from 1<sup>st</sup> Century AD Rome so we cannot be sure who this is based on the context.
  - 2. He had a household in Rome which included several believers.
- J. Tryphena a hardworking female in the church (named only mentioned here in Scripture).
- K. Tryphosa, a hardworking female in the church (named only mentioned here in Scripture).
- L. Persis, a hardworking female in the church (named only mentioned here in Scripture).
- M. Rufus and his mother.
  - 1. This Rufus has traditionally been seen as the son of Simon from Cyrene who helped Jesus carry the cross in Jerusalem and mentioned by name in Mark 15:21. His mother would then be the wife of Simon.
  - 2. Rufus was a common name, however, so we cannot be certain of this Gospel connection.
- N. A group including Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermes, Patrobas, Hermas and the brothers with them. Their names are only mentioned here in Scripture and we do not know any further details. They possible a house church.
- O. A group including Philologus, Julia, Nereus and his sister, and Olympas and all the saints with them. Their names are only mentioned here in Scripture and we do not know any further details. They possibly from a house church.

## V. Women in Ministry

- A. Although these verses may not seem like important passages in our understanding of ecclesiology (the theology of the church) they do shine more light on the overall teaching of Scripture concerning the role and place of women in public ministry. Concerning the list of greetings, Keener writes that Paul “lists about twice as many men as women, but commends more than twice as many women as men.”<sup>171</sup>
- B. Douglas Moo writes that there are three things about which we all should agree concerning women in the New Testament:<sup>172</sup>
  - 1. “Women made up a significant part of the early Christian church.”
  - 2. “Women were given the same access to God that men enjoyed (Galatians 3:28; 1 Peter 3:7).”
  - 3. “Women engaged in significant ministry.”
- C. Millard Erickson writes, “Although in a minority, at all times of biblical history there have been women who occupy positions of leadership and influence.”<sup>173</sup>
- D. Even as these verses in Romans seem to be very positive and unrestrictive, we must read this in conjunction with the other passages that Paul has written regarding women in the ministry:
  - 1. 1 Corinthians 14:33-35
  - 2. 1 Timothy 2:11-15
    - i. Extreme interpretations of these texts:
      - a. John Chrysostom (347 – 407, Bishop in Turkey) – “The women [Eve] taught once, and ruined all. On this account therefore he saith, let her not teach. But what is it to other women, that she suffered this? It certainly concerns them; for the sex is weak and fickle, and he is speaking of the sex collectively.”<sup>174</sup>
      - b. Erasmus (1466 – 1536, Catholic Church Reformer) – “Eve was deceived first when, believing the serpent and beguiled by the enticement of the fruit, she disregarded God’s command. The man could not have been taken in either by the serpent’s promises or by

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<sup>171</sup> Keener, 589.

<sup>172</sup> Moo, 505.

<sup>173</sup> Erickson, 564

<sup>174</sup> William J. Webb, *Slaves, Women & Homosexuals* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2001, 263.



the allure of that fruit; only love for his wife drew him into a ruinous compliance.”<sup>175</sup>

- c. P. C. Spicq (modern theologian) – “A women will always be more easy to deceive than a man, that is why the Apostle does not permit women . . . to teach in the church.”<sup>176</sup>
  - ii. A moderate interpretation of this passage affirms that women are equal with men in value, dignity, and intellectual ability. However, based on God’s created order, men and women serve in different ways. Men are assigned the role of leading in both the home the church. Women can and should be active in the church serving in roles that benefit the church but do not involve publically teaching men in religious studies or exerting authority over men in the church.<sup>177</sup>
  - iii. A liberal interpretation (here liberal refers to freedom) – Craig Keener – “Paul . . . provides a short-range solution and a long-range solution. The short-range solution is [women] should not take ruling positions as teachers in the church. The long-range solution is: Let them learn. Again, Paul affirms their ability to learn, and he proposes educating them as a long-range solution to the current problem. That they are to learn “quietly and submissively” may again reflect their witness within society (these were characteristics normally expected of women), but it should be pointed out that this was the way all novices were supposed to learn.”<sup>178</sup> Thus, Paul’s restrictions only refer to uneducated women and thus would not apply to many modern women who have had the same (and sometimes more) education as men.
3. We must not allow our understanding of theological issues to be formed based on one scripture alone. We should seek to find all that the author and the Bible has written about the topic in order to have balance in our views. Erickson writes that in Romans 16 “Paul’s conception of the usefulness of women in ministering” should “qualify those passages where he seems to restrict their activities.”<sup>179</sup>

#### E. Three Views on the Role of Women in the Ministry

1. Highly Restrictive – The role of women in the work of the church should be limited to that which reflects her role in the home: assisting in supportive roles and child care. The women that Paul commends in Romans 16 were excelling in these roles. Paul may have been generous in his appreciation but remained restrictive in his view of women in the church.
2. Moderately Restrictive. A woman may be allowed to serve in various positions of leadership as long as she is not primarily teaching or leading men in the church. As seen in Romans 16, it’s appropriate for women serve in leadership or teaching positions alongside of their husbands or in administrative bodies (such as a member of a board or committee).
3. Unrestrictive – Although the church recognized the lack of education and abilities of women in the early days, Paul instructed women to learn. This was for the purpose of liberating women from this limitation. Romans 16 shows us that God calls women just as he calls men. Both are made in God’s image and have the same Holy Spirit. God’s leaders are determined by calling, not gender. Women should be obedient to the calling given them by God.

#### F. Questions to Ask:

1. If you lean towards a more restrictive view of women in the ministry you must ask why do you accept this restriction in light of Romans 16? It is based on a view of

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<sup>175</sup> Ibid, 265.

<sup>176</sup> Ibid, 267.

<sup>177</sup> See George W. Knight III, *The New International Greek Testament Commentary: The Pastoral Epistles* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), 140 – 141.

<sup>178</sup> Keener, 591.

<sup>179</sup> Erickson, 566.

- women that is not supported by Scripture? We cannot use Scripture to sustain a mindset that is opposed to the word of God.
2. If you lean towards a more unrestrictive view of women in the ministry you must ask why do you accept this freedom in light of 1 Corinthians 14 and 1 Timothy 2? Is your acceptance based on a conviction that is formed more by the current culture than the Word of God? We cannot pick and choose what we read based on how it harmonizes with our culture.
  3. These questions are not designed to attack your viewpoint but rather to challenge your thinking.

## VI. The Holy Kiss

- A. Kissing on the cheek was a common Gentile and Jewish greeting but Jews would most likely not greet Gentiles in this way.
- B. Keener also notes that “due to abuses, in subsequent centuries the church limited the practice of the liturgical kiss of fellowship to men kissing men and women kissing women, although this was not the initial practice.”<sup>180</sup>
- C. Paul is encouraging everyone to greet each other equally in the church. Kissing is not culturally practiced today but we are likewise encouraged to greet in our own appropriate cultural expressions.

## VII. Final Warnings

- A. Paul makes a few last parting warnings to the church including:
  1. A warning about divisions inside the church
  2. A warning about false teachers who would hurt the church
- B. Both of these situation have been seen in Paul’s previously planted church (especially Galatia and Corinth) thus Paul anticipates such problems in Rome.

## VIII. Final Encouragements

- A. Paul ends on a high note with words of commendation and encouragement for church.
- B. Paul commends their behavior and their understanding.
- C. Paul encourages them about the eventual defeat of Satan.
- D. Although verse 24 is omitted since it is seen as not appearing in the older manuscripts it was a final word of blessing or peace over the congregation.

## IX. Those with Paul

- A. Those people with Paul at or near the time of writing are also mentioned here as giving greetings to the church in Rome.
- B. Timothy, a young minister who joined Paul near the beginning of Paul’s second missionary journey in Acts 16.
- C. Tertius, the scribe or secretary who assisted Paul in the writing.
- D. Gaius
  1. Mentioned in Acts 19:29 as a believer in Ephesus
  2. He traveled briefly with Paul as seen in Acts 20:4
  3. He may have been connected to Paul’s Corinthian ministry as seen in 1 Corinthians 1:14
  4. He was the recipient of 3 John which we believed was sent to Ephesus.
  5. He was known as a man of hospitality and a great blessing to Paul and the church.
- E. Erastus
  1. He was seen working with Paul in Ephesus and Timothy in Macedonia in Acts 19:22.
  2. He is mentioned as working in Corinth in 2 Timothy 4:20.
  3. He was an employee of the government.
- F. Quartus is a male helper of Paul only mentioned here in Scripture.

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<sup>180</sup> Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary*, 48.

## **X. Conclusion**

- A. Paul's concluding doxology emphasizes some of Paul's overall points:
  1. The Gospel is the true path to right relationship with God.
  2. The Gospel has been anticipated and prophesied about in the Old Testament.
  3. The Gospel is for all nations.
  4. The Gospel is centered around Jesus.
- B. Paul ends by giving glory to God.