

I A M
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A S H A M E D

Living **boldly**
through the
Gospel of Jesus Christ



**I AM
NOT
ASHAMED**

*Living Boldly
through the Gospel
of Jesus Christ*

Sermon Series Guide and Small Group Study
Spring/Fall 2021

I Am Not Ashamed: Living Boldly through the Gospel of Jesus Christ

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*For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith, as it is written,
“The righteous shall live by faith.”*

—Romans 1:16-17



INTRODUCTION

The letter of the Apostle Paul to the Romans is a masterpiece of rich, systematic doctrinal teaching unlike any other book of the Bible. As one of the most formal, forceful, logical, and eloquent works ever penned, it has encouraged, empowered and challenged God's people for centuries. In fact, in referencing Paul's magnum opus, one written through the Spirit's inspired authorship, the sixteenth-century reformer, Martin Luther, once said:

This letter is truly the most important piece in the New Testament. It is the purest Gospel. It is well worth a Christian's while not only to memorize it word for word but also to occupy himself with it daily, as though it were the daily bread of the soul. It is impossible to read or to meditate on this letter too much or too well. The more one deals with it, the more precious it becomes and the better it tastes.*

Background

The author of this letter is Paul the Apostle. We know from the Book of Acts and the letter to the Galatians that, before encountering Christ, Paul purposefully sought to arrest and murder the disciples of Jesus (Acts 9:1-2, Galatians 1:14). Yet God says of him: "He is a chosen instrument

* Bruce Wilkerson and Kenneth Boa, *Talk Thru the Bible* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1990) 377.

of mine to carry my name before the Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel.” Christ confronts him along the Damascus road and offers him grace through the Son (Galatians 1:15). In response, Paul devotes his life to experiencing the blessing of this gospel and proclaiming it to all who would hear.

Paul is writing from Corinth toward the end of his third missionary trip (AD 56 according to most biblical scholars). At this point, his reputation for teaching about Jesus and instructing the churches is known far-and-wide. The message of the gospel had arrived some two decades prior by way of those “visitors from Rome” who were present in Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:10) Further, many Roman believers (including Aquila and Priscilla of Acts 18:2) had been expelled from Rome in AD 49 and landed in various New Testament cities before returning in AD 54. Paul himself, however, has not yet traveled to Rome nor met any of the church leaders.

Nonetheless, both Paul and the church long to meet together, not only “to be mutually encouraged” by one another’s faith, but also to “preach the gospel.” In preparation for his long-awaited visit to the churches of Rome (Romans 1:8-15), Paul writes this letter with the direct purpose of expounding on the power of the gospel to deliver salvation to all people. Unlike other letters, Paul does not write to address specific issues. There are few words of commendation or encouragement. Rather, Paul dedicates the entirety of the letter to building on what is apparently a strong foundation—“the gospel of God”—with deeper insight and practical instruction.

Interestingly, Romans is the first of the Pauline letters listed in our English Bible canon. It is not only the lengthiest letter, but it can also be considered the theological foundation on which all the remaining epistles are built. Once a follower of Jesus comprehends and affirms the fundamental principles of grace, righteousness, and salvation—as outlined in Romans—that person will begin to notice how these doctrinal principles are worked out in all of Scripture. Yet, as steeped in theology and doctrine as this letter is, it is not primarily an academic treatise, but a doorway into Christian freedom, joy, and purpose. Paul’s desire was for the Romans to “first understand the gospel, and then to experience it.”* In essence, to fully grasp doctrine as not just for the head, but essential to a holistic faith—head, heart, and hands.

One way to think of Romans, in regard to the grace, righteousness, and salvation, is with a high-level categorization of chapters as such:

Chapters 1-8, Doctrine: God’s sovereign plan of salvation (*the gospel*) as applied and worked out within a fallen world (*sin*), through justification

* * Timothy Keller, *Romans 1-7 for You* (Surrey, England: The Good Book Co., 2014) 9.

(*faith*), into sanctification (*maturity*), and onto glorification (*eternal hope*).

Chapters 9-11, Doctrine: God’s sovereign choice of his people, Israel. In their disobedience and unbelief, they have misunderstood law for righteousness. Now, salvation by faith is available to both Jews and Gentiles, the latter having been grafted into the family of God.

Chapters 12-16, Application: God’s sovereign grace, when genuinely accepted and received by faith, will be demonstrated by a life of righteousness and unity best described by Christ-like characteristics.

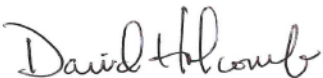
On the following pages you will discover a section titled, “The Romans Road.” It is intended to explain the prayerful purpose of *I Am Not Ashamed*: sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ. “The Romans Road” is a wonderful expression of the aim of our discipleship growth during this season—outreach and evangelism.

Within each unit is a short tip for going deeper in your Bible study, as well as a brief introduction and several questions relevant to the specific passage. We encourage you to utilize the tip as a way of engaging God’s Word in new and exciting ways.

Finally, the guide has been created with significant white space for you to record sermon notes, thoughts, questions, and study answers. Pages specifically set aside for journaling prayers can be found at the end of the book. As we grow in our loving, learning, and living out of God’s Word through the study of this letter to the believers in Rome, may we firmly grasp the basics of an assured eternal salvation. May we know without any doubt that

“All have sinned” (3:23), and the “wages of sin is death” (6:23), but the “gift of eternal life is through Christ Jesus” (6:23). Because, “while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (5:8), and through “confessing Jesus as Lord and believing in our heart that God raised him from the dead, we will be saved” (10:9). Amen. And amen.

Because He lives,



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The Romans Road

Learning, loving, and living out the letter of Romans is a significant focus of this study guide and sermon series. It is not, however, the most important focus.

Living Boldly through the Gospel of Jesus Christ is a call to action, a call to boldly proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ. As we move through our time in this beautifully written letter, we will discover the fundamentals of the gospel that followers of Jesus should know by heart and always be prepared to share “*as the reason for the hope that you have*” (1 Peter 3:15).

At River Oaks, it is our expressed mission and prayerful intention to “**build** up followers of Jesus who are **sent** to **reach** others.” How else will our friends, family members, and co-workers know the gospel? You and I are the bearers of this good news, and—while our actions can *model* the gospel—it is only by our words that there can be *understanding* of the gospel.

This vision is the heart and soul of who we are and to what we have been called. Consider these words from Pastor David Beaty:

We who follow Jesus Christ are “**sent**” people. Jesus urged disciples to pray that God would “**send** out laborers into his harvest.” (Matt. 9:38) Praying to the Father, he said, “As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world.” (John 17:18) And the apostle Paul reminds us that the world is waiting to hear the gospel from “sent” people: “And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? And how are they to preach unless they are sent?” (Romans 10:14-15)

As we dig into the theologically rich Book of Romans, let’s study with a view toward more than our own increased knowledge. Let’s ask the Lord of the harvest to prepare us to be “**sent**” into our hurting world with his love and truth.

Perhaps you are wondering, as many do: “I’m willing to share the gospel and I’m willing to have my eyes and ears open to those curious about the gospel, but what exactly should I *say*?” While a brief personal testimony is always helpful to know and have at the ready, the biblical outline for *how* one receives Christ and *why* one needs Christ is critical.

One of the many life-changing discoveries in Romans is the simplicity with which Paul lays out God’s plan of redemption. In fact, there is an age-old systematic way of explaining the gospel through specific verses found in this letter. It is often referred to as the “Romans Road to Salvation.”

The Romans Road to Salvation

- I. We are separated from God as a result of the original, garden sin.
 - *None is righteous, no, not one.* —Romans 3:10
 - *For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.*
—Romans 3:23
- II. The price, or consequence, of sin is eternal separation from God; death.
 - *For the wages of sin is death.* —Romans 6:23a
- III. Good news. The price, or consequence, was paid by Jesus on the cross.
 - *But God showed his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.* —Romans 5:8
- IV. The result of Christ dying for us is an eternally restored garden relationship with God, no longer separated.
 - *But the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.*
—Romans 6:23b
 - *Since we have been justified (saved) by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.* —Romans 5:1
- V. How does one receive this free gift of God's grace and eternal life?
 - *If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes and is justified and with the mouth one confesses and is saved.* —Romans 10:9-10
 - *For "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."* —Romans 10:13

May the Lord awaken our desire for sharing the gospel. May he give us great boldness to live life on-mission. May God's Word be an ever-present comfort in its promises, hope, and revelation of who Jesus Christ is and what he has done. And may we wake each morning declaring: *"I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes!"* (Romans 1:16a) Amen.

PART
ONE

ROMANS 1:1-17

For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith, as it is written, “The righteous shall live by faith.”—Romans 1:16-17

Here’s a Tip: Multiple Reading

One of the easiest tips is simply to reread the text a couple of times before diving into your study. Most Bible teachers recommend reading the text anywhere from three to seven times before doing anything else with it. Consider reading it aloud at least once. The repetition and verbalization will help you identify important words, possible shifts of thought, and the author’s main idea.



PART 1.UNIT 1

I Am Not Ashamed of the Gospel

Introduction

Imagine Paul dictating this message to his scribe, Tertius. He wants the Romans to be assured of his purpose and care in writing to them. He greets them with focus on the gospel message and his role in stewarding it. After greeting the Romans, telling them his intentions to see them, he makes profound statements about his mission and message. Pay attention to these first 17 verses, as they introduce key themes to the entire letter.

Study Questions

1. Like any letter, Paul begins with an introduction. What do you notice about how he refers to himself?

2. Everything in Romans hinges on “the gospel.” Use verses 2-5 and 16 to create a baseline definition. These questions may help guide your thought process:
 - What or who is the gospel about?

 - Where does the gospel come from?

 - What is the purpose of the gospel?

3. In verse 2, Paul says that the gospel of God was promised beforehand through God’s prophets in the Holy Scriptures and was declared as true through Christ’s resurrection from the dead. How do the following passages impact your understanding of this verse?
 - 2 Samuel 7:12-16

 - Jeremiah 23:5-6

 - Luke 1:32-33

4. Why have we received grace and apostleship through Christ? How does this go against a consumerist mentality in Christianity?

5. Describe Paul's relationship with the Romans, even though he has never met them. What does he think or feel about them? How does he interact with them? Have you ever reached out to others you didn't personally know and expressed similar feelings and thoughts?

6. Paul wants to go to Rome to "reap some harvest." Use these passages to help you understand what Paul means.
 - Matthew 9:37-38

 - Mark 4:14-20, 26-29

7. Paul considers himself *under obligation* to others.
 - What does "obligation" mean in this context?

 - In his book, *Radical*, David Platt says that "Every saved person on this side of heaven owes the gospel to every lost person on this side of hell."* What do you think about this?

 - Who is someone in your life that does not know Christ. What is your general attitude toward those who do not know Christ (e.g., apathy, sadness, hostility)?

* David Platt, *Radical: Taking Back Your Faith from the American Dream* (Colorado Springs, CO: Multnomah Publishing, 2010).

8. We may often be *ashamed* of the gospel because our obedience to it and proclamation of it may lead to suffering and humiliation. Reread Romans 1:16 and look also at 2 Timothy 1:8-13. Paul gives a clear reason to not be ashamed. Put it into your own words.

9. When Paul says everyone, he really means *everyone*. Throughout his missionary journeys, Paul proclaims the gospel to Jews and Gentiles, slaves and prisoners, scholars and politicians, men and women. How would your life and ministry look different if you lived out the belief that God has the power to save everyone who believes?

10. In what ways do you believe God has set you apart to share the gospel?

11. In what arenas of life do you currently have opportunities to share the gospel (work, school, neighborhood, community organization, hobbies, the home, or other)? List any and all, being specific.

Next Step

Identify one person in your relational network—coworker, classmate, family member, neighbor, or gym friend—that you will commit to pray for and share the gospel with this year. After all, “God’s people don’t merely need another method for evangelism. What they need is a white-hot passion to see people who are far from God experience the new life He offers through Jesus Christ.”** United as a church family, we wish to love others well by being intentional, respectful, and bold messengers.

Who’s your “one”? _____

When will you pray for them (day/time): _____

Closing Prayer

God, we are amazed at the power and love that you show in the gospel. You took us out of our sin and foolishness; we are loved by you, called by you, and sent to reach others. As we reflect on our own experience of salvation, would you fill us with conviction and compassion for the lost. May we be eager and unashamed of your gospel. Amen.

** J. D Greear, “Who’s Your One Overview,” (Raleigh, NC, March 2019) par. 2.

ROMANS 1:18-32

For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened.—Romans 1:21

Here's a Tip: Sensory Engagement

Imagine yourself in the setting of the passage. Slow down. Close your eyes and “walk in the sandals” of those in the passage. What do you see, hear, feel? What are the circumstances, emotions, and/or physical condition of the author, the primary figures of the passage, or those who are receiving or reading the book/letter? Try to relate to the original audience.



PART 1.UNIT 2

The Consequences of Ignoring God

Introduction

Paul has just declared that the gospel is the power of God to save anyone who has faith in Christ. The question then, is: What do we need to be saved from? In this next section, Paul explains a concept that may make us uncomfortable: God's wrath against man's sin. Read this passage with a spirit of humility and openness.

Study Questions

1. What is God's wrath revealed against?

2. Define *ungodliness*, *unrighteousness*, and *suppress*. How do these definitions help you understand verse 18?

3. What does Paul mean when he says “the truth?”

4. Theologians often refer to verse 19 as general revelation. Everyone has some knowledge of God, even if they are not a follower of Jesus. What does Paul say can be known about God through creation? Where in creation has God revealed himself to you?

5. What should knowledge of Truth lead to? What did suppression of Truth lead to?

6. How are sinners impacted by their suppression? What is the end result of our ignorance?

7. There are multiple ways that man has “exchanged” God for other, lesser things. List them. What do you imagine this looks like in someone’s daily life?

8. God’s response to man’s unrighteousness is often to “give them up” to their sinful ways. How does the text say that he does this? How does this question relate to Question 7?

9. How does this text change the way you think about sin? Use this space to confess to God how you have turned from him.

10. How does this text confront the cultural understanding that human beings are mostly good on their own?

11. Can you recall a personal life consequence you experienced when you rejected God’s truth?

Next Step

The Bible is clear that confession of sin is a necessary and freeing part of a healthy spiritual life. James 5 says “Confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed.” As you read through this passage and evaluate your own heart, write down sin you need to confess before God. Confess also to someone in your small group, a trusted Christian friend, or a family member. Ask them to pray with you.

Closing Prayer

Our Father in heaven, your name is holy. Your anger burns hot against all idolatry, injustice, ungodliness, ingratitude, and impurity, for these destroy the good life you have created. We confess our foolishness in exchanging your glory and truth for lies and false gods. The end of these things is death. But thanks be to God, who has given us Christ. Though we were full of unrighteousness, he was full of grace and truth (John 1:14). We thank you, Jesus, for your perfect life traded for ours. Let your mercy be sweet to us today. Amen.

ROMANS 2:12-29

For no one is a Jew who is merely one outwardly, nor is circumcision outward and physical. But a Jew is one inwardly, and circumcision is a matter of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter. His praise is not from man but from God.

—Romans 2:28-29

Here's a Tip: Alternative Translations

Translation work has proven especially difficult over the centuries, yet with the many attempts, God has preserved the integrity and faithfulness of his original inspiration. Today there are many good translations with varying word choices due to the objective of the translation (literal to paraphrase), the age of the translation against modern language, and the varying nuances of the original languages that allow for multiple definitions. Make it a habit to read and study passages in varying translations.



PART 1.UNIT 3

A Matter of the Heart

Introduction

Whereas Romans 1:13-32 focuses primarily on the irreligious, in this chapter, Paul turns his attention towards the religious Jews. For generations, Jews have had the law of God to guide their understanding of who God is and how to be rightly related with him (sacrifices, holy days, restrictions). He reveals a shocking similarity between people who have the law and people who do not, showing that—even though the Jews had the law—they too have fallen short of God’s standard for holiness.

Study Questions

1. What words do you see repeated throughout the text? Define them before you continue.

2. Paul separates those with the law from those without the law. Using the entire text, fill in the following chart with what he says about them:

WITHOUT THE LAW (GENTILE)	WITH THE LAW (JEW)

3. If one does have the law, how are they supposed to relate to it? How were the Jews using it? Use these other passages to guide you:

- Deuteronomy 6:3-9
- Micah 3:11
- Jeremiah 7:8-10

4. What do you think it means to have the work of the law “written on our hearts?”

5. How does our study of Romans 1:18-32 help us understand v. 15?

6. According to Genesis 17:11, what is the purpose of circumcision? Is it of value to the Jews in Paul's day?

7. Look up Paul's reference to Isaiah 52:5. What does he mean that God's name is "blasphemed among the Gentiles?" The context for Isaiah 52:5 is the Babylonian exile, where Israel (Jews) are given over to their enemies because of their persistent rebellion. How does this "blaspheme" God's name among non-Jews?

8. Does your knowledge of God and his Scriptures lead you toward humility and obedience or toward excuses and boundary-pushing? Do you harbor religious hypocrisy in your own heart?

9. What impact does religious hypocrisy have on those around us? On believers? On non-believers? What are examples of religious hypocrisy today?

Next Step

Who is your “one”? Have you been consistent in prayer for them? If not, use this time to cry out to God for the Spirit’s work in their life. Ask that God would show them their need for a Savior and that you would be able to proclaim Christ to them.

Closing Prayer

You are a God who sees all that we have done, whether good or bad. Like Adam and Eve, we are naked and exposed before you; yet you offer a covering. Humble us and purify us as we seek to be sent ones. We want your name to be honored among all people. Amen.

ROMANS 3:19-31

*It was to show his righteousness at the present time,
so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.*

—Romans 3:26

Here's a Tip: Repeated Words & Phrases

After reading the passage for the first time, skim over it and look for words that are repeated. Make note of them by highlighting, circling, underlining, or writing them down. If a word is used multiple times, it is probably important to the author's point. Attempt to determine why those words or phrases are emphasized by God through the author.



PART 1.UNIT 4

The Gospel Revealed

Introduction

Though Jews were given the law, the promises, and the covenant of God, they too have failed to fear the Lord and walk in his ways. Paul continues to show how both Jew and Gentile are under sin. He quotes several Old Testament Scriptures about the state of man's heart. Though they may have fooled themselves and perhaps others into thinking they're pious and good, God's Word makes it clear that "none is righteous, no, not one." In this text, Paul reinforces that righteousness is not something we achieve; it is something we receive from God himself. The righteousness of God in the law condemns us, but the righteousness of God given to us in Christ justifies us.

Study Questions

1. The Greek word for law ("nomos") has four definitions, listed below. Which do you think Paul is using in this passage?
 - *of any law whatsoever*
 - *of the Mosaic law*
 - *the moral instruction given by Christ*
 - *the name of the more important part (i. e., the Pentateuch), is put for the entire collection of the sacred books of the Old Testament*

2. What do vv. 19-20 teach us about the purpose of the law?

3. Where does righteousness come from? How do we become righteous? What is God's role in this? What is our role in this?

4. How is righteousness by faith good news for the irreligious Gentiles *and* religious Jews?

5. Define *manifested*:
 - How does the law “display or show by one's acts or appearance; demonstrate” God's righteousness?

 - How does Christ's free gift of justification “display or show by one's acts or appearance; demonstrate” God's righteousness?

6. Use verses 24-25 to fill in this sentence: We are justified (or declared righteous) and therefore acceptable before God, by his _____ through _____ in _____, whom put forward as a _____ by his blood, to be _____ by _____.

7. How does the “law of faith” relinquish our boasting?

8. Read Ephesians 2:11-18. How do Christ and the gospel impact the way Jews and Gentiles are to relate to one another? How might that influence our attitudes toward racial reconciliation in our own day?

9. Instead of disregarding the law, we are still called to uphold it. What does the apostle John say about this?

- John 14:15, 23

- 1 John 2:4-6

10. How does this quote from John Murray on the atonement help you understand verse 26: “The doctrine of the propitiation is precisely this that God loved the objects of His wrath so much that He gave His own Son to the end that He by His blood should make provision for the removal of this wrath.”*
11. How would you explain “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (3:23) to someone who believes being a good person will get them into heaven?

* John Murray, *The Atonement* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House) 1962.

Next Step

Write out how you could use Romans 3:19-31 to share the gospel with your “one”. Make sure you include sin, grace, Jesus, and faith. Pray for an opportunity and for the boldness to share with your “one.”

Closing Prayer

Oh God, if it were not for your grace, we would be utterly lost. If it were not for your seeking us first, we would still be in our sin, and still be under your wrath. No religious deed or good will can excuse our sin. May we be silenced under your holiness, recognizing that we need you. May we confess daily our need for your grace. Thank you for making forgiveness and fellowship with you available through Jesus Christ. We pray that more people would hear and believe in Christ. Amen.

ROMANS 4:13-25

That is why it depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace and be guaranteed to all his offspring—not only to the adherent of the law but also to the one who shares the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all.

—Romans 4:16

Here's a Tip: Key Words

After reviewing the text to find the words that are repeated or emphasized, use a simple dictionary to have a complete definition of the word. Even if you think you already know the vocabulary, this can help bring depth to your understanding of the text.



PART 1.UNIT 5

A Faith Like Abraham's

Introduction

Paul explains the doctrine of faith and salvation now through the lens of a foundational person in Judaism: Abraham. In chapter 4, Paul explains how God's covenant with Abraham began *before* Abraham had obeyed God's law. God gave Abraham a promise by grace and through faith; the same is true now for his descendants. We are made righteous not through work but belief in the One who gives righteousness by faith alone.

Study Questions

1. Central to this passage is "the promise to Abraham." Look at Genesis 12:1-3, 15:1-21.
 - What did God promise?

- How did Abraham respond to God's promises?
2. Verse 14 uses multiple legal terms to explain the relationship between faith, law, and God's promises. Define them:
 - adherent:

 - heir:

 - null:

 - void:
 3. God fulfills his promises by grace and through faith. Why is this important to understand?

 4. Abraham took God at his Word, believing that he would fulfill what he promised. What words of God do you need to believe and hold fast to today? This week?

5. Abraham “believed against hope” and “did not weaken in faith” even though, humanly speaking, it did not seem like God could or would fulfill his word. Instead of considering his own body and Sarah’s barrenness, he considered God’s glory. Be honest about your pain and imitate Abraham, who, “did not waver in unbelief but grew strong in faith, giving glory to God,” as you complete the following:

WHERE OR HOW MY LIFE SEEMS FRUITLESS OR BARREN	GOD’S CHARACTER AND PROMISES

6. Did God fulfill his promise to Abraham? How? How does this give you confidence in your waiting?

7. The word *counted* in Greek is “logizomai.” The definitions are below. Which is being used in this passage? How do you know?

- to reckon, count, compute, calculate, count over
- to take into account, to make an account of
 - ~ metaphorically to pass to one’s account, to impute
 - ~ a thing is reckoned as or to be something, i.e., as availing for or equivalent to something, as having the like force and weight

8. Use verses 24-25 to summarize how the death and resurrection of Jesus give sinners righteousness. How would you explain this to a nonbeliever?
9. Use these passages to relate our spiritual story to Abraham's. How did God "who gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist" do that in our own lives? Make this specific to you.
- Ephesians 2:1-3
 - 1 Peter 2:10
 - Hosea 1:10
10. How does this passage alter the way you view your works? How can you help others trust God instead of working for righteousness?
11. Describe a time when someone else demonstrated "Abraham-like faith" and it made a difference in your life. Describe how it impacts how you live today.

Next Step

Share the gospel with someone. This is a free gift that anyone can receive. Plan a time to meet with someone who does not know Jesus and proclaim this good news to them!

Closing Prayer

Thank you, God, that your promise rests on grace and not on our works. When we could not achieve or create righteousness for ourselves, you stepped in and gave it to us. You are generous and merciful. You remained faithful to us even when we turned from you. Give us the courage and wisdom to obey you this week. Please give life and order where there is currently death and nothingness. Nothing is too hard for you! Amen.

ROMANS 5:1-11

*Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace
in which we stand and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God.*

—Romans 5:2

Here's a Tip: Greek/Hebrew Language

In addition to an English dictionary, you can also look at the meaning of particular words in their original language, whether Hebrew (OT) or Greek (NT). The tool is called a lexicon. You can use one online at biblehub.com/lexicon. This isn't necessary for every single word, but it can be helpful for words that seem lofty or antiquated, or have multiple meanings. Lexicons can also provide insight into where this word is used elsewhere in Scripture.



PART 1.UNIT 6

Through Jesus, We Have...

Introduction

Justification by faith is not a cold doctrine, but a truth that transforms the entire way God relates to us and us to God. In the cross, sin is eradicated, God's anger is appeased, and those who have faith in Christ are reconciled to God and welcomed into his family. Paul lists several implications of Christ's atonement: peace with God, constant access to grace, and an ability to rejoice in sufferings. Because we are brought near to God by the blood of Christ, we forever have assurance that God is for us. Even as we face difficult circumstances, we know that he is good and loving toward us.

Study Questions

1. What has preceded Paul's "therefore" at the beginning of chapter 5? What is he tying together?

2. Count how many times Paul uses a plural pronoun, such as “we” or “us.” Why is this significant?

3. What does Paul say that we have now because of justification by faith?
Hint: Most of his claims begin with “we have” “we are” or “we were.”

4. Pay close attention to the conjunctions (words that link other words, phrases, or clauses together) in this passage. Write phrases/sentences that include:
 - through:

 - by:

 - in:

5. How is our view of suffering changed through the gospel? How is it possible for Christians to rejoice in our sufferings without minimizing the pain we feel?

6. Think of a time in the past when you have gone through suffering. How did God use that to produce endurance, character, and hope in you? How did you know his love more?

7. What was the “right time” for Christ to die? What does the timing show about God’s commitment to us?

8. List some of the verbs that are in the past tense. List some verbs that are in the present tense. How does the work of Christ in the past impact our present reality? Our future hope?

9. Whose wrath was against us? Whose blood justified us? How does that give us confidence that the wrath is completely gone and we are completely justified?

10. How are you feeling weak in your battle against sin or your endurance in suffering? How does this passage encourage you?
11. “While we were sinners, Christ died for us” (5:8). What does that act of sacrificial love mean to you? How does this truth affect how we react to others; to fallen believers, to unbelievers, to our enemies? Who do you most need to sacrifice your comfort in order to love?

Next Step

Share (with a Christian friend or someone in your small group) about a time when God has used suffering to produce good in your life. Be honest with each other about current trials. Pray together that God would give you faith, hope, patience, and endurance.

Closing Prayer

Though we grow weary because of sin and suffering, you strengthen us with your presence and your promises. Thank you, Father, for giving Your Son, even when we were still stuck in the trap of sin. We can see in the cross that you save us because you love us. May you receive the praise, because it is your sacrifice and your grace that has made sinners into saints. If we doubt your love for us today, may we look no further than the cross. May this hope fill us with peace as we face fear, shame, or trials. Amen.

ROMANS 5:12-21

*Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men,
so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men.*

—Romans 5:18

Here's a Tip: Synonyms

Another helpful study technique is to consider synonyms of important words within the passage. For example, if a passage speaks to God's majesty, you might want to write down appropriate synonyms to further clarify "majesty,"—glory, splendor, magnificence. This can help to relate texts to others that use different, yet similar, words or phrasing.



PART 1.UNIT 7

The Free Gift of Grace

Introduction

Paul will take us all the way back to Genesis 3 for this teaching. He contrasts the exponential impact of one man’s disobedience with the eternal impact of one man’s obedience. Though Adam was “a type of the one to come,” the life and flourishing that Jesus gives is far beyond what Adam contributed.

Study Questions

1. Read Genesis 3:1-7 in addition to this passage.
 - What does Paul mean—that sin came into the world through *one* man?

- What does Paul mean—that sin came into the world through one *man*?
2. How are sin and death related to one another?

 3. Adam’s sin was against God, but impacted others. Based on this passage, how would you respond to the thought that something is “just one sin”?

 4. Circle the correct timing below for when sin began. If people were already sinning, then why did God give the law?
 - *Before* the law was given
 - *After* the law was given

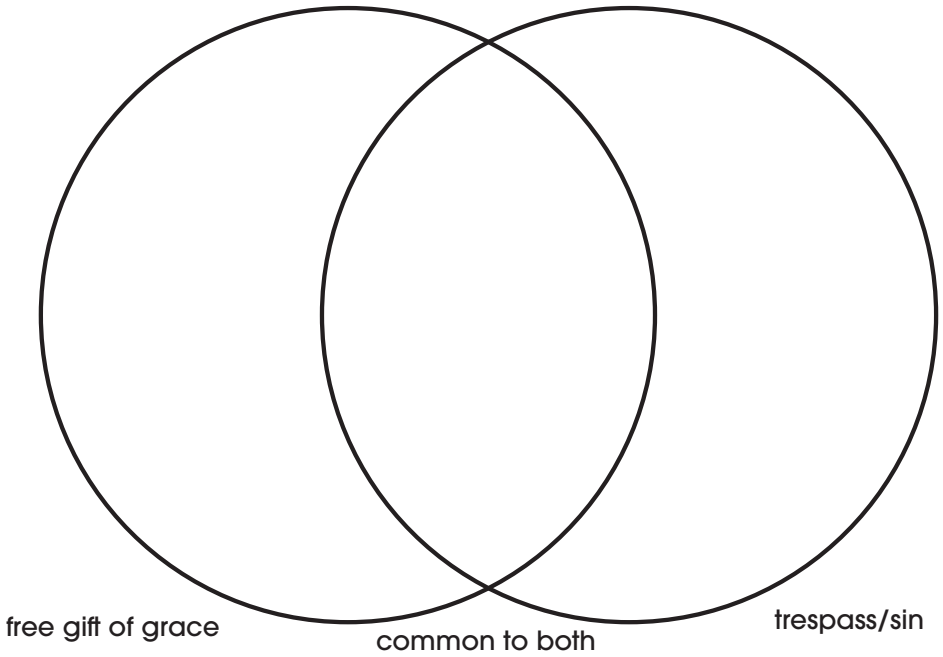
 5. How is Adam a “type” of “the one to come.” Who is Paul referring to when he says this?

6. According to Romans 5:18-21, what are the results the following?

- sin/death:

- free gift/grace:

7. How is the free gift of grace like the trespass? How is it not like the trespass? Use the Venn diagram below to help your thought process:



8. Paul said: “sin increased, but grace abounded all the more.” Although the law increasingly shows us our depravity, the cross increasingly shows us God’s grace. How does the hope of grace overcoming sin allow you to walk in freedom and rest?

9. Read Isaiah 53:5-6, 11. What kind of motives and attitude did God have in his salvation plan?

10. Is there an area of your life where it feels like sin is increasing? Bring that to the Lord and thank him that, through the sacrificial blood of Christ, his grace abounds all the more.

11. Original sin led to death in all aspects of life, creation, and relationship with God. How have you experienced the result of this original sin? How does that frustrate you? How does that comfort you?

Next Step

In order to remember the grace of God that is greater than your sin, write down some struggles or sin that you are currently facing. Be honest about the ways that you have turned against God and been unloving toward your neighbor. Once you are finished, grab a red marker, and in all caps, write “crucified with Christ.” This is your great hope! You are not a slave to your sin; you are a child of God. You have been set free from sin and you can now live for God. Hallelujah!

Closing Prayer

It’s hard to believe that you have truly covered every ounce of our sin—past, present, and future. We have freedom! We do not have to return to the ways of our past sinfulness, but we can walk in the new life that Christ’s blood purchased for us. Keep us from seeing your grace as cheap and as a means to return to sin, and keep us from seeing it as unattainable, falling back into fear and shame. We want to live righteous lives that are for your glory and helpful to others. Please lead us and empower us by your wonderful grace! Amen.

ROMANS 6:1-23

So you must also consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus. —Romans 6:11

Here's a Tip: Subjects & Verbs

Look in the passage for the verbs, then take note of who is performing those actions. This seems nit-picky, but it can have significant implications. For example, it can help us to understand differences between the sovereignty of God and man's responsibility. Verbs in the original languages can also have nuanced and varied meanings, so it's critical to understand exactly how it is used in the passage.



PART 1.UNIT 8

Walking in Newness of Life

Introduction

At this point in the letter, Paul gives logical objections that may arise when thinking about grace-based righteousness: Is God's grace an excuse for sin? He emphatically answers, "By no means!" He then goes on to explain why. For the believer, union with Christ means that we have a new life and a new master. In the same way that Christ was resurrected, we too can walk in godly power, freedom, and confidence. Likewise, instead of giving ourselves to sin, we can give ourselves to God. Through union with Christ, we have the grace we need to live for God.

Study Questions

1. Find four repeated or emphasized words in this passage. Define them in the space provided based on what you have learned so far in Romans:



•

•

•

2. Which verbs are in the past tense? Which verbs are in the present or future tense? Why does this matter?

3. According to this passage, what is the significance of baptism? Is this how you think of baptism? Have you been baptized yet as a profession of your death to sin and new life in Christ? If not yet, what is preventing you?

4. Notice phrases such as “in order that,” “so that,” or “leading to.” What do these link together? What does this show you about the relationship between the past work and the present hope?

5. According to this passage, why does God give us grace? Explain your answer.

6. What are the two opposing options that Paul gives in verse 13? What is the difference in what is being presented?

7. We have a new identity and life through the gospel. How does this impact how we address sin in our lives (whether actions, behaviors, or desires)?

8. What does Paul say is the end result of sin? What is the end result of the free gift?

9. How does this passage speak to our culture's view of freedom and autonomy?

10. Sin is a brutal and insatiable master that makes promises it cannot keep. Jesus is a gentle and trustworthy king who invites you to draw near to him. Through Christ's life, death, and resurrection, you can walk in freedom and holiness. Use this space to confess any sin that you feel enslaved to (bitterness, pornography, compulsive eating). Reread Romans 6 afterwards.

11. Now list ways you can begin each new day focusing on Jesus' victory over sin and his power to free you from those sins for which you are enslaved.

Next Step

If you have not yet been baptized as a way of being “united with Christ,” plan a time for that to happen. If you have been baptized, reflect on that day and what it means that you are buried and resurrected with Christ. Praise God for his freeing grace!

Closing Prayer

What a gift you offer, God! Our salvation is not just a riddance of what is bad, but it is an ability to walk in what is good. You are not a harsh or evil master, but one who is tender and will guide us into truth and purity. Help me today to fight feelings of shame or defeat from sin, and to be empowered by the grace sealed by the resurrection. I am no longer dead in my sin, but I am alive with God. Show me how to practically give my whole self to you today, to give my body and mind and heart and energy to you for loving and serving others. Amen.

ROMANS 7:1-25

For I delight in the law of God, in my inner being, but I see in my members another law waging war against the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members. —Romans 7:22-23

Here's a Tip: Verb Tense

As you begin to become aware of the verbs within a passage, take note of the timing of these actions. You can keep it simple by primarily noting if it is in the past, present, or future tense. This will add clarity to what God has already said or done, is currently saying or doing, and still remains ahead for him to say or do. This is especially important within scriptural narrative.



PART 1.UNIT 9

Why Don't I Do the Good I Want to Do?

Introduction

Paul has made it clear that the law cannot bring salvation. It is true that there is life and flourishing when we obey God's word, but the law is not sufficient to motivate us toward that obedience. Instead, its purpose is to define your sin for what it is, to expose you as guilty, and to lead you to a longing for righteousness outside of yourself. If you try to live under the law, it will lead to condemnation. Yet if you live under Christ, you will find life and freedom, though you will still struggle with sin. This chapter offers realistic hope for the Christian life.

Study Questions

1. What analogy does Paul use at the beginning of this text? How does this analogy relate to God's law and believers?

2. In verses 4-6, Paul uses the conjunctive phrases “so that” and “in order that” to list reasons *why* we are released from the law. How does this impact the way you think about Christ’s death and resurrection?

... *so that* you may _____ to another (v. 4)

... *in order that* we may _____ _____ for God (v. 4)

... *so that* we _____ in the new way of the Spirit (v. 6)

3. What is Paul talking about in the following passages when he refers to a life “in the flesh”?
- Colossians 3:5-9
 - Ephesians 4:17-5:4
4. What are the two main questions that Paul lays out in the text? How does he answer those questions?

5. What did the tenth commandment, “You shall not covet,” show Paul about his slavery to sin? How does sin use the law against us?

6. How, and why, is it helpful to be reminded that the commandments are about internal attitudes before they are about external behaviors? Use verses 8-13.

7. Where in your life can you relate to Paul’s inner struggle between delighting in God’s commands and failing to uphold them? (v.18b-23) How have your own efforts in changing yourself come up short?

8. What is the answer to the question Paul cries out in verse 24? How does the sufficiency of God’s provision in Christ encourage you in your struggle against sin?

9. How would you use this passage to encourage and guide other believers in pursuing obedience?

10. How is God calling you to serve and obey him—by the power of the Holy Spirit—this week?

11. Why is it important to be transparent about our struggles with sin? Do you have someone(s) with whom you can share your struggles regarding what you hate and not doing what you want to do?

Next Step

Use Psalm 139:23-24 to examine your heart and confess sin to God. Ask God to point out any thoughts, desires, speech, or behavior that is offensive to him. Write down what he brings to your attention. Ask him that he would lead you in the way everlasting, that is, in the path of obedience. Tell a friend or someone in your small group, so that they can hold you accountable to confessing and turning from this sin.

Closing Prayer

We praise you God that you have made holiness and fellowship with you attainable through the cleansing blood of your Son. The law tells us what is good, right, true, and beautiful; yet we turn from it, and from you, to do what we want. Our rebellion and independence only leads to slavery and brokenness. But you did not leave us there! When it seemed like there was only judgment, you sent Jesus to save us. Thank you for loving me. Amen.

ROMANS 8:1-17

There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.
—Romans 8:1

Here's a Tip: Conjunctions

Conjunctions are words used to connect clauses or sentences or to coordinate words in the same clause. Some examples include *for*, *and*, *nor*, *but*, *or*, *yet*, and *so*. Writing or highlighting these helps to follow the author's line of thinking. Especially with the writing of Paul, it is easy to get lost in the middle of his long sentences, so this helps you break down the flow of thought into a sequence. It also helps you to understand how the different points relate to each other.



PART 1. UNIT 10

Life in the Spirit

Introduction

Chapter eight is undoubtedly one of the most assuring and comforting chapters in the Bible. It summarizes much of Paul's previous declarations about justification, the law, and Christ, but with more emphasis on a restored relationship with God. Not only is the believer legally cleared from his sin, but he is invited into intimate fellowship with God as Father. As we have already learned in chapters 5-7, the gift of righteousness is not an excuse to go back to sinning, but it is the freedom of a new choice. God-centered living will always lead to flourishing; self/man-centered living will always lead to dysfunction. Like an earthly child with his father, we obey not because we fear retribution for wrong, but because it brings us joy to honor our wise Father's good rules.

Study Questions

1. Though only two letters, the word "in" has great significance in this passage. What phrase is most apparent: "in _____." Is this how you normally think of the relationship described? Why is it an important understanding?

2. What did God do that the law could not do?

3. Write everything that Paul associates with life in the flesh versus life in the spirit:

FLESH	SPIRIT

4. What does the word “mind” mean? How does that add to your understanding of Paul’s point in vv. 6-7?

5. What word is repeatedly paired with the Spirit? Look at vv. 2, 6, 10-11.

6. In John 14-16, Jesus describes the Holy Spirit as the Helper and the Spirit of Truth. His role is to teach and remind believers of Christ's words, produce spiritual fruit in believers, bear witness about Christ, convict the world concerning sin, righteousness, and judgment, and to comfort. How does this passage add to that list?

7. What are the different identities that God has given us through the gospel that Paul has used throughout the book of Romans? (i.e. children, servants, etc.)

8. In his book *Knowing God*, J.I. Packer describes how "to be right with God the Judge is a great thing, but to be loved and cared for by God the Father is greater."* Why is an understanding of God as both Judge and Father necessary in our walk? Do you tend to emphasize one over the other?

9. What does Paul say is a likely, even necessary, component of being an heir with Christ? How does this impact your view of suffering?
 - John 15:20

 - 2 Corinthians 1:5

* J.I. Packer, *Knowing God* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1973).

10. How would seeing yourself as an adopted child and not a slave impact the way you relate to and walk with God?

11. Do you, or someone you know, feel abandoned by God? Does this passage help? What would you tell someone who feels this way?

Next Step

Write down any commands or biblical principles that you find especially difficult to obey because you are unsure if they are good, right, or beautiful (i.e. biblical sexuality, giving money to the poor, evangelism). Ask God for the ability to see that His design comes from his wisdom and love. Talk to a trusted spiritual leader about these things.

Closing Prayer

You have freed us from the condemnation that we deserve for our sin. Hallelujah for the obedience of Jesus that fills every place where we are found lacking. We are acquitted from our sins, but more than that, we are invited to enjoy a feast that our Father has prepared for us. You clothe us with the finest robes and rings, and declare: “This my son was lost, but now he is found!” All glory be to you, Abba! May we love your righteousness and desire to be holy as you are holy. Amen.

ROMANS 8:18-30

*And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good,
for those who are called according to his purpose. —Romans 8:28*

Here's a Tip: Questions

Be inquisitive! A great place to start is with broad questions: Who? What? When? Where? and Why? Feel free to also ask questions about seemingly contradictory statements, confusing phrasing, or questionable decisions. Ask child-like questions rather than critical questions. Write them down and share with others.



PART 1. UNIT 11

Knowing God's Plan for Your Life

Introduction

Paul makes it clear that a life of suffering should be assumed by any follower of Christ. Although uncomfortable to us now, suffering necessarily precedes glory. However, God does not leave us to wallow in despair and darkness, but provides a blissful and radiant hope. Though our sorrow will fatigue us, our hunger for redemption will be satisfied. Though our bereavement leaves us speechless, God's Spirit searches us, knows us, and prays to God on our behalf. Such is the hope of the children of God: we are known, loved, provided for, and protected. God's people always dwell in a land of goodness. Though we do not yet see the fullness of our redemption, we wait for it with confident expectation. The One who has promised all these things is the One who has the power to fulfill all these things. Praise be to the Everlasting God!

Study Questions

1. What are some of the "sufferings of the present time" that either Jesus or the people of God have faced?
 - Physically? (Matthew 20:19, Hebrews 11:35-38)

- Emotionally? (Mark 14:34, 2 Corinthians 1:8-9)

 - Socially? (Isaiah 53:3, 2 Corinthians 6:4-10)
2. How is creation impacted by sin? Use Genesis 3:17-19 to help you answer this question.

 3. John 16:21 says: “When a woman is giving birth, she has sorrow because her hour has come, but when she has delivered the baby, she no longer remembers the anguish, for joy that a human being has been born into the world.” How is childbirth a helpful metaphor for what Paul is teaching about suffering and glory?

 4. Define *hope*. What is the basis for the hope that Paul is talking about in this passage?

 5. How is waiting a necessary part of hope?

6. How is faith a necessary part of hope?

7. The word “intercede,” used twice in this chapter, means “to intervene on behalf of another.” How does the Holy Spirit do this?

- ...with (v.26)

- ...according to (v.27)

8. The believer can have great confidence that all things can work together for good. This does not mean that all things will be good, comfortable, easy, or understandable, but that—as God’s beloved children—all that we endure in this life is leading us to deeper intimacy and stronger confidence in Him. How has this been true in your own life?

9. Fill in the actions of God from v 29-30. These show a glorious chain of God’s work in us from before we were born and into eternity.

_____ → _____ →

_____ → _____

10. What is a sorrow or struggle in your life that seems hopeless? How does this passage fill you with hope and confidence?
11. There are times when we just don't know what to pray for (v. 26). Have you felt that way? Is there a situation in your life today you don't know what to pray for? How might you begin?

Next Step

Ask God for someone to share the hope and comfort of these verses with this week. Schedule a time to call or meet up with them so that you can hear their pain and pray for them.

Closing Prayer

We come to you as people who have been afflicted, crushed, beaten, and fatigued by a fallen world. Even so, we realize that we are part of the problem—that it is our sin that put you on the cross, that it was our rebellion that warranted a curse on the land and on our souls. Yet in Christ, we have the hope of glory! As we wait, give our aching souls and bodies patience and perseverance. Help us to be faithful to love and serve you as you work together all things for your glory and our good. Amen.

ROMANS 8:31-39

*What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us,
who can be against us?—Romans 8:31*

Here's a Tip: Cross References

Most English Bibles provide superscript identifiers within the passage that point to cross-references within the Bible. Take time to read these cross-referenced passages. They are intended for Bible study application as they often allow Scripture to interpret Scripture. Study Bibles can also be beneficial to Scripture cross-references.



PART 1.UNIT 12

If God Is For Us

Introduction

To conclude his chapter on God's redeeming power and life-giving Spirit, Paul presents a series of rhetorical questions. These will express the expansive, abundant nature of God's love, protection, and purposes for his beloved children. Although they may suffer now, they can have assurance that God will forever be their God, and they will forever be his people.

Study Questions

1. List the possible oppositions to God's love or care stated in these verses.

2. Count the number of times Paul uses we/our. Count the number of times Paul uses I/me/mine/yours. God's promises are intended for his united family to enjoy and walk in. Are you connected with your fellow sisters and brothers in Christ, or are you more of an acquaintance?

3. What does verse 32 teach about God's generosity? Where in your life do you need God's provision (physical, financial, spiritual)?

4. Since our sin is against God, he alone has the right and power to choose how he responds—whether to charge, condemn or acquit and pardon. Based on Psalm 130:3-4, what has God chosen to do? How does this reassure you of your salvation?

5. Satan, who is called “the father of lies” (in 8:44) and “the accuser” (Rev 12:10) will likely tell us that we are still guilty, unforgiven, and unwelcome by God. How can we use the truth from Romans to refute this charge of condemnation?

6. In verse 34, which verbs are in the past tense? Which are in the present tense? How does this give you strength and courage in your fight against sin and Satan?
- past tense:

 - present tense:
7. The tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, danger, and sword are sufferings faced by Paul as he proclaims the gospel around the world. But as he said in the beginning, he is unashamed of the gospel. What give Paul this kind of confidence?
8. Have you ever faced suffering (ridicule, ostracism, persecution) explicitly because of the gospel? How did you or would you respond?
9. Paul's declaration of God's all-encompassing, protective love is meant to motivate us toward audacious, self-sacrificing obedience to bring the gospel to our families, communities, and around the world. What do you think about this quote from David Platt's book, *Radical*? Is this how you typically think of following Jesus?

To everyone wanting a safe, untroubled, comfortable life free from danger, stay away from Jesus. The danger in our lives will always increase in proportion to the depth of our relationship with Christ.*

* Platt, *Radical*.

10. How could you use Romans 8:31-39 to share the gospel with an unbelieving friend, coworker, stranger?

11. Do you believe that you are “more than a conqueror” (v. 37)? Why or why not? How does this reality change how we interact in this world? How can your life be evidence that you are more than a conqueror? How can we abuse this verse or take it out of context?

Next Step

Pray for the persecuted church around the world. Pray that the assurance that nothing can separate them from the love of God would fill them with the courage and endurance. Pray that they would share their faith with all boldness and without hindrance. Pray that believers may be able to experience the blessing of gathering together for worship, as well as for fellowship and equipping. Pray for Bibles and resources to be made available. Pray that God would supply for the physical needs of believers. Pray that God would put an end to persecution. Use opendoorsusa.org to teach you about persecuted believers and how you can serve and pray for them.

Closing Prayer

God, we praise you for the great promises that are guaranteed for us who belong to Christ. There is eternal rest and holy confidence in your love. We want to give our lives away for the sake of others and the gospel. Give us confidence that you are saving and working, even if it is we who face danger or difficulty. You are worth it! Amen.

ROMANS 9:1-33

So then it depends not on human will or exertion, but on God, who has mercy.
—Romans 9:16

Here's a Tip: Summary

After reading a passage of Scripture, try to summarize the meaning by giving a short statement about the main points. This can often be thought of as an “elevator explanation.” If you had just a minute in an elevator to explain the most important meaning to this passage, what would you say?



PART 1.UNIT 13

It All Depends on God's Mercy

Introduction

After emphasizing the everlasting, life-giving love of God, Paul addresses the doctrine of God's sovereignty over salvation. Since many Jews—who were called God's people—have not believed the gospel, it could seem like God has failed to uphold his promise to bless and multiply them. Paul argues that it was not God who has failed, but the hard-hearted Jews. This chapter teaches that although God is merciful, not all will be saved. We are confronted with the reality of sin's deception and destruction, as well as the necessity of God's intervention. Read this chapter with humility and patience, expecting it to challenge and disturb you. Wrestling with this passage can be expected.

Study Questions

1. Using vv. 2-3, describe Paul's tone in this chapter. Why is this important?

2. How did God make himself known to the Jews? What all “belonged” to them that could have been used to lead them to belief?

3. What does Israel’s failure to believe teach you about the deceptive and destructive nature of our idolatry and sin?

4. Paul brings up three generations of an important Old Testament family: Abraham > Ishmael and Isaac > Esau and Jacob. Who embraces the promise? Who rejects it? What point is Paul making by referring to these men?

5. Based on v.11 and v.16, what is the basis of God’s faithfulness to his Word? How does God choose to save some?

6. Define *mercy*. What is it important to recognize about mercy? Have you ever received/extended mercy?

7. What does God reveal about himself by saving sinners? What does God reveal about himself by condemning sinners?

8. How is God patient and merciful toward sinners? What responsibility do we have in our salvation?
 - Romans 2:4-5

 - 2 Peter 3:9-10

9. Who was called? How were they called? How did they respond to God's call?

10. How does this passage give you assurance that your own salvation is secure? How does this passage give you boldness and confidence as you proclaim the gospel to anyone?

11. Paul was saddened that his own people had not embraced the message of Christ. How do you imagine that felt for Paul? Who are some of “your people” who have not embraced the message of Christ? Do you feel anguish over their condition? Pray for them now.

*Note: God’s sovereignty, grace, and mercy, as outlined in this passage, can be a difficult truths to understand and/or accept. They are, however, central to reformed theology and the belief that we, in our depravity, are incapable of saving ourselves. While we can’t know all the ways of God, if you have questions ask, seek out discussions, and continue to allow Scripture to interpret Scripture according to God’s character and the biblical context.

Next Step

Boldly share the gospel with someone. God can save the people whom we may deem unlikely or unwilling candidates. Because it is dependent on his mercy, we can proclaim the gospel unashamedly, knowing that it has the power to save those who believe.

Closing Prayer

Lord, we recognize that you alone are the most wise and merciful. Thank you for your kindness and patience with us, even when we were dead in our sins and rebellion against you. We pray for boldness and urgency in proclaiming Christ to nonbelievers we know and love. May we see your power and your compassion on display. Amen.

PART
TWO

ROMANS 10:1-13

...Because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved.

—Romans 10:9-10

Here's a Tip: Paraphrase

Similar to summarizing is paraphrasing. Paraphrasing is restating the text in your own words as a way to express meaning. The meaning of the text should not change, but the words and phrasing will. This is just a way of gaining clarity by putting the phrase in modern terms. Ask yourself how you would translate the text into a modern translation that remains true to the original meaning, yet conveys through contemporary language.



PART 2.UNIT 1

Confess. Believe. Saved. Period

Introduction

So far, Paul has addressed the doctrine of God’s sovereignty and justice. He is Creator and Ruler, extending mercy and grace according to his desire. If we stopped at the end of chapter 9, we might be tempted to forego the responsibility of sharing the gospel message with others and leave it all up to God. Thankfully, Paul doesn’t stop with the lessons on “vertical theology,” or that which occurs between God and his creation. Rather, this next section of the letter will teach a more “horizontal theology” or that which occurs among and between God’s people; including the ongoing plan for Israel, the revelation of his plan for Gentiles, and the good news of sharing and receiving salvation.

Study Questions

1. Who first told you about the gospel of Jesus Christ? What was your initial response?

2. What does Paul say is his desire for fellow Jews? What does Paul believe could be one of the most significant obstacles in seeing his desire for them come to fruition? (10:1-2).

3. Write down the first name of someone who comes to mind for whom you have the same deep desire to receive salvation as Paul did for the Jews: _____. What are the current obstacles that are preventing that individual from receiving salvation? Right where you are, pray for them.

4. According to Paul, the Jews had “zeal for God” (10:2). Isn’t that a good thing? Why or why not? What are examples in our day of misguided zeal for God? Did you know the Zealots were an actual Jewish political party in the late first century (Google it).

5. How does Ephesians 2:8-9 speak to the condition of Israel regarding salvation? (10:3-4).

6. How does a person obtain righteousness (to be made right in the eyes of God) under the law of Moses? What is right/wrong with trying to obtain righteousness according to the law? See James 2:10 and Galatians 3:10.

7. How do we guard against trying to earn God's approval and acceptance? Even after receiving salvation, how do we rely on God's grace more and our works less?

8. Romans 10:9-11, *below*, is a foundational passage to "how" one becomes saved. Underline the requirements of salvation. Circle those words/phrases that provide assurance and certainty. Draw a box around words used at least three times.

...Because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved. For the Scripture says, "Everyone who believes in him will not be put to shame." —Romans 10:9-11

9. This is the way. What aspects of God's way of salvation, found in Romans 10:9-11, encourage you? What aspects of this way of salvation concern you? What aspects of this way of salvation require a biblical understanding so as to genuinely be saved?

10. Did you notice that God's plan requires a two-part response; internal belief and external behavior. What does this tell us about the purpose of each? How does that move us forward in our faith? Consider James 2:14, Romans 10:14-17.

11. Write down Romans 10:13. Memorize it this week. Say it at every red traffic light you stop at this week. It is the simplest, bottom-line statement of gospel truth we can share.

Next Step

When you reflect back on question #3, continue to pray over this name(s) and ask the Lord to provide you a divinely orchestrated opportunity to engage in a relational conversation with this person for whom you most desire to be saved. Pray that the Lord would allow you discernment in words and actions, and most of all that he would speak into this person's life, soften their heart, and allow his words to penetrate with eternal impact. As you do, continue to recite Romans 10:13 throughout your day.

Closing Prayer

Our gracious, heavenly Father, we are eternally grateful for the way to salvation you have planned for those who call on your Name. We are grateful that we cannot earn our way to you, but by the free gift of grace through faith, you welcome us into a restored relationship with you. Lord, we pray for those who have not yet confessed and believed. May you stir their hearts, awaken their curiosities, and open their eyes to the good news of your life, death, and resurrection. Use us to share and show this message. Amen.

ROMANS 10:14-21

How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, “How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!”—Romans 10:14-15

Here’s a Tip: Memorization/Focused Verse

When studying a passage across several days, make it a point to identify a verse or two that can be memorized during the week. Which verses most resonate with you? Which verses are most encouraging or convicting? Recite the verse in your daily prayers, write it down on your calendar, and allow God to bring the verse to mind throughout the day. Share your memory verse(s) with others.



PART 2.UNIT 2

Sent!

Introduction

The main point in this series of rhetorical questions and scriptural references is that a clear and accurate presentation of the gospel message must precede true saving faith. That message is grounded in the content of God's revealed Word. Salvation comes to those who hear and believe the good news, meaning that it is absolutely necessary that followers of Jesus speak the good news. Paul concludes by recognizing that many Jewish people in that day, as many of all people today, will reject the spoken and revealed Word. This is not to be a deterrent to evangelism.

Study Questions

1. Having just presented the formula of believing unto salvation, Paul now presents a "next step" for followers of Jesus. By the rhetorical questions of 10:14-15, can you summarize the point Paul is making?

2. Which of the following do you believe God has intended for you?
(Check each one that applies.)
- Call upon his name _____
 - Believe in him _____
 - Hear his Word _____
 - Preach his Word _____
 - Send others _____
3. Which of the following do you embrace and live out? (check each one that applies)
- Call upon his name _____
 - Believe in him _____
 - Hear his Word _____
 - Preach his Word _____
 - Send others _____
4. “Preach the Gospel at all times and if necessary, use words” (Attributed to Francis of Assisi). What is the proper spirit in which to interpret this popular saying on evangelism? What is the danger of using it as a spiritual life motto? (Consider Psalm 105:1, Mark 16:15, and 1 Peter 3:15).

5. Paul quotes from Isaiah 52:6-8 to emphasize the call of going into the world with the good news. Read this passage and reflect on the scene. What are the words and the overall tone of language Isaiah uses to describe what occurs when the good news of God is proclaimed?

6. In Romans 10:17 Paul stresses once more the way unto salvation. In one word, salvation comes through _____. Faith is the result of _____. And the source of what is heard is _____. If the message is not received, as was the case in 10:16, where does the problem lie?

7. Again, to the Scripture, Paul quotes from Psalm 19:4, Deuteronomy 32:21, and Isaiah 65:1-2, in order to make what point? (10:18-21). Who is the “foolish nation?”

8. Do you find encouragement in Romans 10:20 as it relates to those who aren’t yet followers of Jesus? Do you have a personal testimony relative to this verse?

9. Read the parable found in Luke 14:15-24. What is the primary meaning to this parable? Do you see the connection to Romans 10:18-21?

10. It's been said that in reality there are no "secret Christians." That if you are truly saved, you will never be totally quiet about it. Your faith will interrupt your life. What do you think about this statement? Do you tend to become defensive about it? Do you embrace it? Do you agree and simply want to become more consistent about sharing?

11. Have you ever been "sent?" To international or local missions? What was your experience? Do you have a desire to be sent? What is the prompting on your heart? Write it down and share with others?

Next Step

Readiness to share is the first step toward being sent. Continually equipping yourself through God's Word is instrumental to readiness. Additionally, sometimes we aren't sent because we are not praying for the sending instructions. If you don't already do so, begin praying for daily opportunities to share your faith. Relying on God's power be intentional in your readiness with a radar up for those who are curious or seeking. Commit yourself to the learning of the Romans Road plan of salvation, with preparedness of sharing in a way that is personal.

Closing Prayer

Lord, send us. Across the street or across the world, send us. May our feet be beautiful for your sake with the willingness to share the good news of your great plan. May we not be discouraged by those who reject you, but may we be moved to urgency and humility for the opportunity to be utilized in the advancement of your kingdom in this world. Amen.

ROMANS 11:1-24

But if some of the branches were broken off, and you, although a wild olive shoot, were grafted in among the others and now share in the nourishing root of the olive tree, do not be arrogant toward the branches. If you are, remember it is not you who support the root, but the root that supports you.

—Romans 11:17-18

Here's a Tip: Textual Context

Look at the context of the passage, taking note of what has happened before or after the teaching or event. You wouldn't start any other book in the middle of the story, so why do that with the Bible? A good rule of thumb is to understand the events of the passage before and after your primary passage. (These are referred to as *pericopes*, and in most Bibles are introduced by a subheading within the text).



PART 2.UNIT 3

Broken Branches, Grafted Branches

Introduction

As bleak a picture as Paul paints of Israel's response (the rejection of their Messiah), we are reminded in this passage that God has not forgotten his people. He has an unfailing and unconditional love for them. However, in their failure to receive Jesus, God has granted Gentiles access to the "root of the olive tree." This encouragement is to both Jews and Gentiles to see that ultimately God's offer of salvation includes all.

Study Questions

1. The natural conclusion from what we have read and seen so far is that God had chosen his people Israel and yet they had eventually rejected him. It must be over for them. But what does Paul write that seems to counter this conclusion? Further, why did Paul need to write this in a letter to the Gentile Romans? (11:1-2)

2. The prophet Elijah had cried out to God in 1 Kings 19:10-18 regarding all who had rejected God, but he was wrong. What did God reveal to him? How does this example support what Paul is saying about the Jewish people of his day?

3. Works and grace are common themes throughout much of Paul's writing. Does 11:5-6 help clarify the reason that salvation is by grace and not works (why it can't even be grace *plus* works, but must be by grace alone)?

4. Paul equates the spiritual blindness and deafness of the Israelites in Deuteronomy 29:4 and Isaiah 29:10 with that of the Jewish people of his day (11:7-10). It's also spoken of in Hebrews 3:7-10 and Ephesians 4:18. Is that a real possibility for people of our day? How does one arrive at the place of spiritual blindness or hard-heartedness?

5. Paul is known as the "Apostle to the Gentiles," but what is he making clear in 11:13-16? How would you describe Paul's feelings for his fellow Jews?

6. Imagine a large number of people of your ethnicity, nationality, career field, university, high school ... who reject Jesus Christ. You are one of them by way of your connection, but you are a follower of Jesus. If you were to model Paul's heart for "his people", what would that look like for you? How would you go about living a Paul-like life of ministry?

7. The Gentiles have been grafted into the tree of life (11:17-18). What does this passage say? How do you express? Sketch out your artistic interpretation of this passage below.

8. Just in case Gentiles (most of us) were tempted to become prideful in this realization of God grafting us into his family, what is the warning Paul gives in 11:19-22. Ouch! Use your own words to translate this passage.

9. Do you think the same warning to Gentiles applies today? Are there any examples of believers who seem to think they are a more chosen people than other believers? How can that happen? What are the warning signs and how do we avoid the "severity of God?"

10. For what things are you most grateful when you read this passage?

11. Is there anything in this passage that surprised you about the way in which God has worked out his plan of redemption? Any thoughts or questions regarding God's plan for his people Israel?

Next Step

When we study these passages of God's grace, calling, election, and hardening of hearts, we are tempted to wonder and worry and ask: "Am I called by God?" or even, "Why does God call certain people to himself and not others?" Rather, I would suggest the real question is: "Have I answered God's call in my life?" Knowing God does not want us in the dark, but through our faith the blinders are removed. Also: "Why did God choose me?" Reflection on that alone should make us a fall-to-our-knees worshiper for all eternity! If you have confessed and believed (Romans 10:9), then worship this week in the recognition of God's grace and mercy.

Closing Prayer

Father God, thank you for calling us to yourself. Thank you for softening our hearts and opening our eyes to your saving grace. Thank you for allowing us to be grafted into your family tree. Thank you that you keep your covenant promises and you are not yet done with your people Israel. Keep us humble before a lost and dying world. Let us walk in faith, not boast in works. May many receive the invitation of your call. Amen.

ROMANS 11:25-36

*Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God!
How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways!
“For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counselor?”
“Or who has given a gift to him that he might be repaid?” For from him and
through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen.*
—Romans 11:33-36

Here’s a Tip: Biblical Context

Much like textual context, biblical context is the activity of determining how the passage fits into the overall narrative of Scripture. Within the One Story of Genesis to Revelation, how does this passage move the story forward? What is its importance, or fit, within the specific book? Within the New or Old Testament? Within the Bible?



PART 2.UNIT 4

The Unsearchable Ways of God

Introduction

The mysteries of God are rich and deep, often unsearchable and incomprehensible. One such mystery is referenced in this passage as Paul points to New Testament truth previously not revealed in the Scriptures. In effect, Israel has experienced a partial spiritual hardening that has brought forth God's offer of salvation to the Gentiles. In all of this, God specifically chose Israel, knowing that Gentiles would eventually be included. Gentiles should not only recognize this, but not gloat over Israel's current spiritual state.

Study Questions

1. What do you immediately think of when you hear the word "mystery"? What about when it is in a biblical context? Are there any mysteries concerning God that you often wonder about? What is one of them?

2. What is the mystery that is revealed by Paul in Romans 11:25-27? The quote is from Isaiah 59:20-21. How is Paul using it to reveal the mystery? What is the point of sharing this insight?

3. Define *paradox*:

4. Describe the paradox of Romans 11:28-32 concerning the Jews and Gentiles.

5. “For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable” (11:29). Why is this such a great promise? The phrase “perseverance of the saints” is founded, at least in part, on Romans 11:29. What does that mean?

6. Is Romans 11:32 saying that God is the “author of sin?” Why or why not? Do Psalm 5:4, Ephesians 2:2, and James 1:13 give further insight?

7. How does Paul conclude this narrative on the mysteries of God (11:33-35)? Does it echo of Isaiah 55:8-9?

8. In Romans 11:33, the ESV uses the term “inscrutable.” What does that mean? How does this verse make you feel? Are you one who likes to have all things explained, or are you okay with the fact that most of God’s ways are unknowable? Should the temptation to Eve in Genesis 3:4-5 be a warning to us?

9. In thinking about the “unsearchable judgments,” have you ever experienced a life event and cried out “Why, Lord?” Does this concept of God’s wisdom and knowledge speak to those times? How do we reconcile the hurt we experience against the promised comfort of God, when we can’t know why?

10. Are there any biblical examples of individuals accepting the unknown, mysterious ways of God? What characteristic was necessary for that to happen? (think Old Testament ... Wisdom literature ... Three letters ... Starts with ‘J’ ends with ‘B’ ...)

11. Paul closes this passage with a mini doxology in 11:36. Read it aloud.

Based on this verse, complete the following:

- God is:

- God is:

- God is:

Next Step

Use this unit to practice the call to gratitude, humility, and trust. When you think of your salvation, and all that has occurred in God's history with his people, write out a statement of gratitude concerning God's irrevocable calling. Include a statement of humility regarding the mercy God extended to disobedient Gentiles, that he might also extend the same to his chosen people Israel. Conclude your written statement by turning over one of your "Why's?" Stand on the wisdom and faithfulness of God to know what is best for us, through an eternal perspective, and most brings him glory and honor.

Closing Prayer

Our most merciful God, we don't deserve your salvation, and yet you offer us a way. We are fallen with many flaws, and yet you extend us much grace and forgiveness. We are confident in your promises and trusting in your ways, yet your knowledge and wisdom are far beyond anything we can comprehend. Lord, we pray for your continued mercy as we travel this earth, and we pray for your mercy over those who have yet to receive your invitation, particularly those of Jacob for whom you will one day restore. For from you and through you and to you are all things. To you, God, be glory forever. Amen.

ROMANS 12:1-8

I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect. —Romans 12:1-2

Here's a Tip: Historical Context

God's Word was not inspired or written in a vacuum; it was written within the history that God created and progressed. Because of this, historical context is critical. Governments, nations, wars, famines, etc., form the backdrop of passages in Scripture. Understanding the historical condition of any given time can provide richness and clarity to the words of encouragement, caution, obedience, and teaching that the Bible provides.

Maps are beneficial to historical context as well.



PART 2.UNIT 5

Renewed Minds

Introduction

In most of Paul's letters, he begins them with foundational teaching, doctrinal insight, and the revelation of God's character, then switches to a closing section on application. Romans is no exception, and chapter 12 is that transition. In essence, Paul says, "Now that you know the truth, here's how you make it work in your life." In moving forward, we will notice an emphasis on present tense imperatives, or in other words, commands to obey now! These are not suggestions or Paul "thinking out loud." Are they challenging? Yes. Unpopular? Yes. Necessary for a life lived in recognition of the grace and mercy God has extended to us? Absolutely.

Study Questions

1. "I appeal to you therefore ...," (12:1) or, "because of everything I have just outlined of what God has done, I plead with you to offer yourself as a living sacrifice." What does it mean to present ourselves as living sacrifices?

2. Dwight Moody observed, “The problem with a living sacrifice is that it keeps crawling off the altar.”* What did he mean by that?

3. Paul appears to lay out two scenarios of how we might respond to God’s saving grace—conformed to the world or transformed by the renewal of the mind (12:2). Have you ever conformed to the world? What experience can you share? Have you been transformed through discerning God’s will? What experience can you share?

4. Why is it critical that followers of Jesus pursue the transformation of the mind? What does 1 Corinthians 3:18 tell us about transformation? What does Philippians 4:8 say about renewing of the mind?

5. How does Paul say church members are to relate to one another? Why is difficult? Have you been guilty of violating Paul’s charge in 12:3 or forgetting the teaching of 12:4?

* Tarrants, Thomas A., What God Wants from You, C.S. Lewis Institute, November 11, 2013, https://www.cslewisinstitute.org/What_God_Wants_from_You_FullArticle.

6. Are there other areas of life where many relate as unique parts to one body? What are those situations? How does that work itself out in the church? What are the similarities and differences between other organizations and that of the church?

7. Romans 12:5 is not simply practical advice addressing the age-old frustration of, “Can’t we all just get along,” but a theological statement as well. What is Paul relaying to the reader regarding theology? Notice the prepositions.

8. Before describing a few of the various ways God gifts us through the power of the Holy Spirit, what does Paul say we should do with whatever one(s) we have been gifted? Do you know your spiritual gifts? What are they? If not, you can use the assessment on our website to help you discover potential areas of giftedness for kingdom service and ministry.**

9. What are a few of the human tendencies and frustrations regarding spiritual gifts in the church?

** (<http://rivoakchurch.org/resources/spiritual-growth/>)

10. How do you reconcile the teaching of a “one-body church” with the imperative of “use your individual gifts?” What does this look like in practice? In your past experience? Have you ever thought of intentionally seeking opportunities for your gift to complement, or come alongside, another’s distinctly different gift?
11. According to this passage, is it possible for followers of Jesus to “do church” alone? Why or why not? How would you describe your desire for a transformed life, engaging the gifts God had granted, using them according to Paul’s imperatives, in the one-another of a local “body?”

Next Step

“Having gifts that differ, sovereignly selected and granted by God, let us use them!” (Romans 12:6) Are you using your gifts? If not, begin praying for the moment where your gift and kingdom opportunity intersect. Seek ways to use your gift in the church, in the community, in the world. If you’ve never thought about serving through your gifts, take time to consider the assessment, or even ask wise and discerning counsel if your gifts are known to others. The use of our gifts is not presented as voluntary, “when we feel like it” options. Begin using your gifts and God will work through you.

Closing Prayer

Holy God, we come before you desiring daily transformation through the renewal of our mind and the purification of our heart and soul. May we think, speak, and act in ways that honor you and bring you glory. We thank you for the gift of your Church and the privilege to serve you and others as a member of that body. Make our gifts known to us and allow us to live in them for you. Protect us from comparison to others. Help us build up the body with encouragement and love. Protect us from frustration and impatience as you make your opportunities available. Let us serve with zeal and cheerfulness and endurance. Amen.

ROMANS 12:9-21

Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. Live in harmony with one another. Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly. Never be wise in your own sight. Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all. —Romans 12:14-17

Here's a Tip: Cultural Context

Similar, yet distinct, to historical context, understanding aspects of culture within your passage is important. Are there descriptions of tools, foods, or currencies that are used in the text? Are there references to occupations, physical objects, or customs? Does the passage utilize idioms or analogies that don't make sense to the modern reader, but were in daily use at the time of the writing? Note any of these and do necessary research. This can bring clarity to difficult passages and allow for a greater appreciation of the fullness and beauty of God's Word.



PART 2.UNIT 6

Transformed Lives

Introduction

The marks of a Christian. In this text, Paul provides a number of ways followers of Jesus are to be identified. Most of them are counter-cultural and only make sense in God's economy. Many of them will have come from the oral tradition of Jesus' teaching, and ultimately will be recorded in the Gospels, most within the Sermon on the Mount. As we study this short passage, let's keep in mind that the list is not a buffet selection, we don't pick and choose. We are called to demonstrate all of them, with the utmost desire and to the best of our Holy Spirit-enabled ability.

Study Questions

1. Through 12:9-13 we can point to many of these attributes and commands as instrumental to not only a believer's individual walk, but to the collective effectiveness of the church. Which ones are most critical to the unity and witness of the church?

2. Paul comments not only on how believers respond to other believers, but also to a non-believing world. Which one of these commands (12:14-21) would be most challenging to live out in the world? Do you have examples of real-life situations where you are finding it difficult? Where you are enduring in obedience? What questions or advice do you have?

3. Rejoicing with others is often easy. Weeping, grieving, empathizing with others is often not easy. Yet, Paul says both are necessary to achieve a “same mind” (12:14-15). Do you find it easy to weep with others? How do you approach this and what advice would you give? Do you find that you overlook opportunities to be compassionate toward others, especially those not like you or distanced from you? Thoughts?

4. “Living at peace with others and not repaying evil with evil” (12:17-18) are instructions rarely lived out in the world, and often not lived out in the church, or even the homes of believers. Why is it critical to strive to do these things when it comes to the mission of believers?

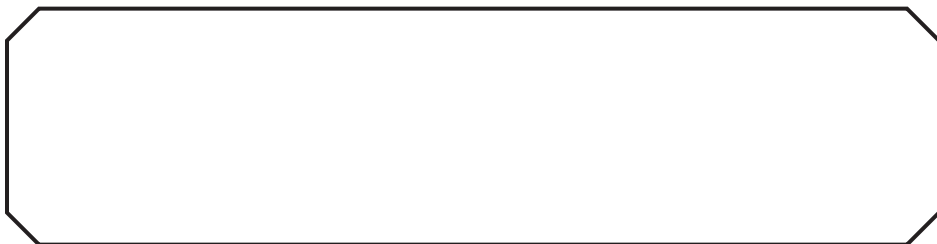
5. Would you say you are a vengeful person? Have you ever sought revenge? What does Paul say about this in 12:19-20? What is the promise from God regarding justice? (See Hebrews 10:30)

6. When you read the entire passage, is there one attribute of Christ that you and I need most in order to live in this way? Which one would you pray to receive a double portion of?

7. Romans 12:14 gives instruction for dealing with those who persecute you. What does Paul say to do? Realizing that most of us will not face the sort of persecution that the Roman church did, what do we do with this command?

8. Why is it difficult to live at peace with everyone? What aspect of original sin most affects this charge?

9. If you were asked to take the words of Paul in 12:11 and create a biblically accurate bumper sticker, what would your bumper sticker say? (For help, see Ecclesiastes 9:10 and 2 Thessalonians 3:13.)



10. Paul quotes Proverbs 25:21-22 to speak to the treatment of our enemies. The reference to “coals of fire on this head” is an Egyptian custom of public contrition and shame. Can you envision the custom and the proverb? Have you ever experienced the shame of having been treated well when you didn’t deserve it? What happened?
11. “Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good” (Romans 12:21). Some call this the *principle of replacement*, meaning it’s not a passive wait and see, but an active response. What is the ultimate gain when this is accomplished? Overcoming evil might be costly, why?

Next Step

Ask the Lord to show you opportunities from this passage. If you have been harboring a grudge or bitterness toward someone, Who is it? Release that grudge and desire for vengeance over to the Lord. If you have been called to rejoice with someone, Who is it? Reach out and share that joy with them. If you have been called to weep with someone, Who is it? Reach out and show compassion, grieve with them. If you have been called to overcome evil with good, Who is it? Seek the Lord's guidance and wisdom to speak life into the life of your enemy.

Closing Prayer

Holy Spirit, we pray for your direction, your prompting, your counsel, and a fill of all your fruit, so that we might live out our faith in a way that demonstrates our submission to Jesus, our Lord. Grant us love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, and faithfulness that we might bless those who curse us; that we might love our enemies; that we might live peaceably with all; that we might be humble, steadfast in prayer, and given to hospitality. And in all of this, that we might glorify God. Amen.

ROMANS 13:1-14

Owe no one anything, except to love each other, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. For the commandments, “You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You shall not steal, You shall not covet,” and any other commandment, are summed up in this word: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law. —Romans 13:8-10

Here’s a Tip: Application: What Does This Passage Teach?

Scripture is intended to teach us about the character of God and our response to him. In each passage, consider what is revealed about God and what your response to him reveals about yourself. What do these lessons prompt you to do—in words, actions, or thoughts?
How will you respond?



PART 2.UNIT 7

Love Fulfills the Law

Introduction

The relationship between Roman believers and the Empire, whose capital was in Rome, had grown hostile. Christians were expelled (Acts 18:2) and then allowed to return, yet always under a watchful and often oppressive rule. In this section of the letter, Paul begins with a teaching on how believers are to relate to the society, specific to the government, for which they lived. Following these comments on obeying authority, Paul begins a longer teaching on how believers are to behave in the church and with one another.

Study Questions

1. What does Paul say about governing authorities in 13:1-3? What are the primary reasons believers are to submit to these authorities?

2. Even as Roman governors were sometimes ruthless and corrupt, and certainly not democratically elected, Paul instructs believers (13:4-8) to obey and extend them certain courtesies; including what?

3. Is civil disobedience ever an option for Christians? Support your response with Scripture. Consider 1 Peter 2:13-17, Daniel 6:8-10, Exodus 1:15-17, and Matthew 22:18-21.

4. If you answered *yes* to #3, what is the determining factor or condition to warrant disobeying human authorities (in one sentence)? If you answered *no* to #3, how do you respond to those who make an argument for civil disobedience? For either answer, what is the appropriate posture and attitude that Paul would have us display in our obedience/disobedience?

5. In regard to our relationships with others, what is the one “debt” we are to owe others? In what sense is this a debt?

6. In your own words, how would you describe the truest of loves based on 13:8-10? (Consider James 2:8.)

7. How is God's view of love different from what the world refers to as love?

8. Many people are "unlovable." How do we respond to unlovable people? (Have you ever been unlovable?)

9. How would our relationships, churches, neighborhoods, schools, and workplaces be different if the biblical definition of love was followed? Pick one and describe the change.

10. In 13:11-14, Paul builds on the fulfillment of the law by love with a call to sanctification in the final days (a biblical reference often to a period of time, age, or era, not literal days). First, what is *sanctification*? Next, what are the specific responses believers are to follow from this passage?

11. Has this chapter of Romans provided any particular insight, encouragement, or conviction relative to how you have lived out the call to:
- obey authorities (including slander, disregard, lack of praying over)?
 - love others?
 - walk in sanctification (readiness, proper walk, “putting on Jesus”)?

Next Step

Think about the many interactions in your life. Is there someone who comes to your mind/heart immediately as being in need of love? Who is that person(s)? _____ Now consider what motivates you to love? What prevents you from loving others? Make a step to reach out and share the love of Christ with that person(s) you just identified.

Closing Prayer

Our heavenly Father, you are sovereign over all creation. You install authorities and remove them. Help us to live peacefully under those who govern us, obeying them and giving them honor, in order that we might demonstrate a difference for which you receive glory. Help us know the difference between what inconveniences us and what dishonors you, and help us to respond accordingly. Lord, allow us to love as you have loved, motivated by the cross, without reservation. Amen.

ROMANS 14:1-23

Therefore let us not pass judgment on one another any longer, but rather decide never to put a stumbling block or hindrance in the way of a brother.

—Romans 14:13

So then let us pursue what makes for peace and for mutual upbuilding.

—Romans 14:19

Here's a Tip: Application: Prayer

Much of Scripture can, and should, be utilized in our prayer life. Pray the words of the passage, directly as appropriate, and by inserting your name or others into the passage for a more personal prayer. Allow the passage to move you to confession of sin, exclamation of gratitude, and acknowledgement of God's glory and honor.



PART 2.UNIT 8

In Non-Essentials, Liberty

Introduction

Evidently, there were differing non-essential doctrinal and practical preferences within the church in Rome that were causing believers to judge and grieve one another. Paul uses the situation as an opportunity to emphasize that freedom in Christ is not a license to do anything we want, even if it is allowed, but to use that freedom to always consider what is best for others.

Study Questions

1. Read Romans 14 and list all of the issues that were causing division among the believers in Rome.

2. Regarding the issues in 14:1-4, how does Paul counsel the Roman believers to handle such manners?

3. Paraphrase the exhortation of Paul in 14:5-12 by completing the sentence, “The bottom line when it comes to non-essential preferences among believers is:

4. While the issue of eating food offered to idols may not seem relevant to our everyday conversation, it was a highly debated topic in the first century Roman church. And while Paul had come to the conclusion that “nothing is unclean in itself” (14:14), note the caution he adds to this determination. What would we expect him to do with a believer who believes meat served to idols was unclean?

5. What are some stumbling blocks that believers put up in the church today? Issues that hinder a believer’s growth? List three or four, then list at least one stumbling block you think you have been guilty of putting up before other believers.

6. What would be your response if a brother or sister in Christ told you that something you did (or didn't do) had become a stumbling block to them?

7. Freedom is an integral concept at the heart of this passage. Why might it be especially difficult for believers in a "free country" to comprehend the difference between personal freedom and biblical freedom? Reflect and write down your thoughts, then consider 1 Corinthians 6:19-20 and 10:23. Do these words of Paul change your thoughts?

8. Romans 14:14-23 is often described as the "law of love" within Paul's letter. What are the basic tenants of this law? Can you think of any areas where you have chosen personal freedom over loving others?

9. "*Unity is more important than your personal rights.*" In short, this is what Paul, inspired by the Holy Spirit, is telling us. It is about the most counter-cultural message one can profess. Yet, within the church it is a critical expression of love. What was your first response when you read this? Are you finding yourself defensive or in agreement? If defensive, can you support your position scripturally?

10. Are there certain beliefs and practices that we should not be willing to compromise or ignore in the name of unity? If yes, can you list at least five of these and feel confident in defending your reasoning with Scripture?

MY RIGHTS FIRST
DIVISIVE SPIRIT

OTHERS FIRST
UNIFIED SPIRIT

11. The church is composed of fallen people and therefore will always have some potential for selfishness and divisiveness. If you were asked to handle the next controversial issue in the church, how would you handle it in a way that builds up the church rather than harm her?

Next Step

Make an assessment of where you currently sit on the following spectrum of Christian freedom, place an 'X' on the approximate location. Consider what steps you can take in order to move toward the right, regardless of where you are today, just a little bit each day.

Closing Prayer

Lord, protect your church. Guard her from our inclination to put ourselves and our personal rights above her unity and the welfare of others. Transform us to be a people of selflessness, aware of the stumbling blocks we are tempted to construct, free from the need to always be right in non-essential matters. Give us the desire to love one another more than we love ourselves, and as we do, may your light shine through us as those who are different in this world. Amen.

ROMANS 15:1-13

We who are strong have an obligation to bear with the failings of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Let each of us please his neighbor for his good, to build him up. For Christ did not please himself, but as it is written, “The reproaches of those who reproached you fell on me.”—Romans 15:1-3

Here’s a Tip: Application: Journal

God has revealed his Word to you and set it upon your heart. Journal your reflections and learnings so that you are able to draw on them and share them along the journey ahead. Take notes in your study guides, keep a digital journal on your phone, write out Scripture outlines in a designated notebook—whichever way you most prefer—to preserve the insight you have gained through a passage of study.



PART 2.UNIT 9

Following the Example of Christ

Introduction

Continuing the message of unity and peace among believers which he has emphasized in the previous chapter, Paul now becomes more specific to the ongoing work of bearing burdens and edifying one another as was the work of Christ. There is a core realization that Paul has concerning church unity: If the community is to survive and thrive for the glory of God, there must be selflessness and Christ-like humility.

Study Questions

1. What does Paul mean by his use of the terminology “strong” and “weak” in 15:1? What can be implied as a universal truth to most all local body congregations?

2. Relative to those “who are strong,” what is the responsibility they have within the church? What is the mission or goal relative to relationships with other followers of Jesus?

3. Some translations use the word “edification” in 15:2. Use a dictionary and define this word. This is the charge for believers.

4. What issues/opinions/behaviors of “the weak” can arise in the church today that the strong are not to simply tolerate, but to demonstrate acceptance, genuine love, and practical consideration while shouldering the burdens to guide and build up in truth and grace?

5. Paul holds up the example of Christ in 15:3 as one that followers should wholeheartedly imitate. In what way can we imitate Christ based Paul’s statement?

6. What is the “Scripture” Paul is referring to in 15:4? What are the benefits that Scripture brings to the life of a believer? To the church? Read 2 Timothy 3:15-17 and note the parallels to this passage.

7. Is there a particular Bible verse or passage that brings you “encouragement unto hope” (15:4)?
8. Believers are to accept one another in love just as Christ has accepted them. Paul is speaking about God’s acceptance of _____. Read Psalm 18:9, Deuteronomy 32:43, Psalm 117:1, and Isaiah 11:10 as evidence of that acceptance. How does this relate to the idea of unity among believers?
9. Paul points to three attributes of a believer’s life that God can “fill” (15:13). What are these three and what would it look like for your life to be filled with each of them?
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10. What do you discover in Ephesians 1:13-14 relating to both Romans 15:4 (Scripture) and 15:13 (Holy Spirit)? 2 Peter 1:21 might help to connect these for you?

11. In reviewing this entire passage, what do you think Paul would say to those followers of Jesus who live by the mottos: “Only the strong survive” and “It’s a dog-eat-dog world”?

Next Step

If you are someone who is mature in your faith, have been actively growing in Christ for several years, what is one thing you can do to help someone who is less mature than you? Who do you have in mind?

If you are someone who is less mature in your faith, having only been growing in Christ for a short time, what is one thing you can do to receive the guidance and instruction from someone more mature than you? Who do you have in mind to ask for help?

Closing Prayer

Father God, fill us with your joy, peace, and hope. Empower us by the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit. Move us to accept one another where we are, edify one another so that we might not stay where we are, and join with one another that we might lift up one voice to glorify your name. May you encourage us, grant us endurance, and enable us to live in harmony as a unified, worship-filled, witness to the world. Amen.

ROMANS 16:17-27

Now to him who is able to strengthen you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery that was kept secret for long ages but has now been disclosed and through the prophetic writings has been made known to all nations, according to the command of the eternal God, to bring about the obedience of faith—to the only wise God be glory forevermore through Jesus Christ! Amen. —Romans 16:25-27

Here's a Tip: Application: Share

After spending time in study, share the passage with others. Share what God has revealed through his Word and how you have responded. Use the passage to teach and encourage others. Pray that God would keep the passage in front of you, allowing you to meditate on it day and night, keeping it readily available for divine interaction.



PART 2.UNIT 10

Be Strengthened by the Gospel

Introduction

At the close of this magnificent letter of doctrine and application, Paul makes one final appeal—a warning against false teachers and those who would seek to cause division. Genuine followers of Jesus will be ready to forgive repentant sin, but they should not condone or ignore it. A discerning spirit is necessary when faced with those who would seek their own glory and distort the gospel truth. With this caution stated, Paul writes his final greetings and closes with a doxology of praise.

Study Questions

1. Romans 16:1-16 begins the close of the letter with personal greetings. This continues in verses 21-23. What do you notice about verses 17-20? How is it different from the passages on either side of this text?

2. Why do you think Paul felt compelled to insert this warning into the middle of these greetings of love and well wishes? Can you hear traces of Acts 20:27-32 in this warning?

3. What is Paul's specific warning, or—as having received this letter—what would the church members in Rome “watch out for?” How does Paul describe the types of individuals who stir up division?

4. How does Paul describe the types of individuals who stir up division? Can you build one-word (or short-phrase) descriptions of these individuals through the following verses?
 - Philippians 3:18-19

 - 2 Timothy 3:7-8

 - 2 Peter 2:1-3

 - Jude 10-13

5. How do you and I recognize false teachers and divisive individuals within the church body today? What is the biblical course of action when this occurs?

6. Paul was not a “Lone Ranger” apostle. The kingdom accomplishments were the work of many, and for that Paul offered much gratitude. Read 16:21, and then go back and read 16:1-16 aloud. What do you most notice about these final greetings? Words, actions, impact?

7. Now write a few lines, mentioning names and specifics, of those you would like to offer greetings of gratitude for coming alongside you in service, discipleship, growth, gospel living.

8. The final words of Paul’s letter to the church in Rome is a doxology, or short prayer of praise and glory for God (16:25-27). As you read it, or pray it, what do you notice about the source of Paul’s confidence as it relates to the believers in Rome?

9. Interestingly, Paul writes, “according to my gospel” (16:25). First, what does “gospel” mean? Then, how is it Paul’s gospel? Can/Should you and I make this same claim?

10. The beginning and the end ... go back and read Romans 1:1-6 followed by the doxology of 16:25-27. Paul’s first and last words express much of the doctrinal teaching that he covers in between. Read it aloud, perhaps as a prayer. Note the presentation of the gospel throughout and record your thoughts or what Paul is saying in your own style of speaking and writing.

11. Complete the following statement as if explaining to a friend who has never read Romans: *Paul’s letter to the church in Rome is:* _____

Next Step

Humbly reflect upon your own words and actions. Have they been divisive or hurtful to the body of Christ? Have you embraced grace and gentleness in your conversations, or in your flesh have you engaged in prideful, smooth-talking deception, gossip, or self-centeredness? Confess those words and attitudes, then move forward in his strength to speak words of life and truth.

Closing Prayer

Lord Jesus, we pray for divine wisdom and spiritual awareness when it comes to protecting the unity, purity, and doctrine of your church and your Word. Let our eyes and hearts see clearly in order that willful deception and harmful behavior be graciously, yet immediately, removed from your body. Give us co-laborers and allow us to come alongside to serve others in the advancement of the gospel proclamation, to the glory of Jesus forever. Amen.

Prayer Journal

My heart's desire and prayer to God for them is that they may be saved.
—Romans 10:1

Prayer Journal

*Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness.
For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself
intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. —Romans 8:26*

Prayer Journal

*For from him and through him and to him are all things.
To him be glory forever. Amen. —Romans 11:36*

Prayer Journal

*Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer.
—Romans 12:12*

Prayer Journal

*I appeal to you by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit,
to strive together with me in your prayers to God on my behalf.
—Romans 15:30*

Prayer Journal

*...to the only wise God be glory forevermore through Jesus Christ! Amen.
—Romans 16:27*

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