

**A STUDY OF
THE BOOK OF ROMANS**

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INTRODUCTION

This Bible study was developed out of love for those who will come seeking God's truth in the book of Romans. My prayer is that the teaching of this letter will open our minds and hearts to a higher view of God so that we may begin to understand "the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God"! See Romans 11:33.

You should begin this study with prayer, asking the Lord to help you understand the truths of His Word. Next, read the Bible passage and answer the questions developed for those verses. The notes, which follow the questions, were developed to add background and insight to the passage. If you would like further study on any chapter, I suggest you read Dr. James Boice's commentaries on Romans.

I have found it is most helpful to do this study with others. It is very helpful having an open discussion about how each of us answers the questions. However, it can also be used effectively as a personal Bible study. Finally, at the end of each lesson there is a corresponding doctrine and memory verse. (The study uses the N.I.V. translation of the Bible for references.)

This Bible study may be reproduced and used without cost. However, I would gratefully appreciate your prayerful consideration of a donation of any size to the scholarship fund of Scott Theological College in Machakos, Kenya. In Africa there are many potential pastors called to serve Christ in ministry but they lack the necessary funds to continue their education. The African Inland Mission colleges have been very integral in training national pastors. Any financial support that you give would be used to help pay part of the tuition for qualified students. The entire cost to send a student to Scott Theological College for one year (room, board, and tuition) is \$1,400.00. I know this is an investment in "good soil" as Mark 4:20 states, "others, like seed sown on good soil, hear the word, accept it, and produce a crop - thirty, sixty or even a hundred times what was sown."

If you have any questions or need more information about Scott Theological College or African Inland Mission and their effort to train pastors, I would be very pleased to respond to them. Also if you have any comments or suggestions about this study please feel free to contact me at carlfzt@aol.com. I appreciate hearing from those doing the study as I pray both for the study and those who are working on it.

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What do I need for this life and the life to come?

I need God. I need to know that God is real, that He tells me about Himself, and that, although I am a sinner, He loves me and forgives me through the obedience, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Psalm 19:1-2; Psalm 100:3; John 3:16; John 17:3; Romans 3:23; Hebrews 11:6; Romans 3:22-25

Memory Verse

"The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul. The statutes of the Lord are trustworthy, making wise the simple." Psalm 19:7

ROMANS 1:1-17

1. What do you learn about Paul from verse 1? For what do you believe God has you set apart and why?
2. Do you have enough knowledge of the Scripture to present the gospel to others? If so, practice writing the gospel in your own words. If not, will you commit to learning how to share your faith in our study of Romans?
3. From verse 15, what was Paul's attitude toward his obligation? What is your attitude toward your obligation to share with others what God has given you in spiritual understanding?
4. From verses 16-17, find three truths about the gospel that are the basis for Paul not being ashamed of it. Are these truths valid today also? If so, how?
5. List specific questions you have in understanding or accepting the truths of Christianity. See if at the end of our study of Romans those questions are answered.

ROMANS 1:1-17

Paul is writing to the church in Rome as one who had been given a message that should be received by them as the very words of God. This has meaning for us, for it tells us how we are to receive this book and benefit from it. If we are to profit from our study, we must receive Romans as a message from God to both our minds and hearts. Consequently, we must obey it, just as we would obey God if He should speak to us directly.

In verses 1-17, the introduction of Romans, 'gospel' is the most important word. It is repeated six times and is important because it is the theme of the letter. Romans was written to make this 'Good News' from God more widely known. The 'Good News' is Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God. We confess that everything we believe, everything we are and hope to be as Christians centers in the person and work of Jesus Christ.

Too often the gospel is offered as something good to make people happy or more complete as a person, but which they are at perfect liberty to refuse. Sin becomes little more than a bad choice and faith is a good work for which people pat themselves on the back. Missing in this approach is recognition that sin primarily is rebellion against God, and that God commands us to repent and turn towards Him. In order for the gospel to be obeyed, it must be preached as a command. Paul, as God's apostle, and in the name of God, commands people to turn from sin, believe in Jesus Christ as Savior and follow Him as Lord. In our society there is the delusion that without the gospel all is well with our soul when in truth people are without Christ and perishing.

Notice in the first four verses Paul's clear recognition of both the human and divine nature of Jesus. Jesus was, is, and always has been God. In verse four Paul is thinking of the resurrection as the striking revelation of God's power over sin and death.

Verses 7-13 show Paul's commitment to prayer and mutual encouragement of Christians. Prayer for Christians is not optional. It is essential even though it can be a struggle and difficult at times. We will never fully understand the power of prayer, but we can trust that God hears us and is striving to bring us closer to Himself. A.W.Tozer was once asked which is more important to a Christian, Bible study or prayer. He answered, "Which is more important to a bird, his right wing or his left?"

Verses 16-17 contain the heart and purpose of Paul's letter. These verses are the most important in the book for they express the very essence of Christianity. They tell how a man or woman may become right with God. We are not right with God in ourselves. This is what the teaching of original sin is all about. We are in rebellion against God. Therefore we are to be judged by Him. What is to be done? On our side nothing can be done. Yet here Paul says that God has done precisely what was needed. He has provided righteousness for us. And this is received, not by our doing righteous things, but through faith. It is received through believing that what God tells us is true.

Let's look at what Paul says about this gospel. Firstly, it is the *power* by which God accomplishes salvation. The most important thing happening in the world at any given time is the preaching of the gospel. Lives are transformed by God's power when the gospel is told. Paul is *not ashamed* of the gospel because it is *God's* might working. God is not simply telling us about salvation; God Himself is providing salvation through the gospel.

The second important point in these verses is that the gospel is for "*everyone who believes.*" It is first for the Jew, then for the Gentile. In the systematic disclosure of the gospel, the Jewish people chronologically occupied a first and important place. From them is traced the human ancestry of Jesus Christ. (Romans 9:3-5) A full appreciation and understanding of the gospel is gained as you study the Old Testament, the historical preparation for Jesus Christ.

Unbelievers argue, as an excuse, that the gospel may be for other people, but not themselves. Actually the whole world needs the gospel, since all are separated from God because of sin and cannot stand before a holy God holding on to anything except the grace of God in the atoning death

of Jesus Christ. The gospel is for *everyone* who believes. At Pentecost Peter declared, “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.” (Acts 2:21 and Joel 2:32) Indeed, the Bible ends on this note: “Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let him take of the free gift of the water of life.” (Revelation 22:17)

How can one be ashamed of a gospel that offers hope to the vilest, most desperate of men, as well as to the most ‘respectable’ person? How can we be ashamed of anything so gloriously universal? The reason is because *the world* is opposed to God’s gospel and ridicules it. The gospel was despised in Paul’s day and it is rejected in ours. People today reject the simplicity of the gospel; that it is all from God and of God. We cannot add to or work for our salvation. They oppose God’s mercy for others, placing themselves above God’s perfect judgment. In verse 17 Paul speaks of “righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: “The righteous will live by faith.” (Habakkuk 2:4)

What is faith? Is it something to which we can attain? No. Faith is believing God. It is opening a hand to receive the righteousness of Christ which God offers. The great preacher Charles Spurgeon once wrote, “Faith is not a blind thing, for faith begins with knowledge. It is not a speculative thing, for faith believes facts of which it is sure. It is not an impractical, dreamy thing, for faith trusts, and stakes its destiny upon the truth of revelation. Faith...is the eye which looks..., the hand which grasps..., the mouth which feeds upon Christ.”

Our call as Christians is to be not ashamed of the gospel. Why should we not? Because “it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes.” It is no less powerful today than it was in Paul’s day. We need never be ashamed of it, for it is truth and it is life!

How can I know the truth about God and His work?

The only clear and saving knowledge of God comes from the Holy Spirit and is revealed in the truth of the Holy Scriptures. John 14:26; Psalm 119:105, 142; Psalm 19:7; Hebrews 4:12

Memory Verse

“I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, and then for the Gentile. For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: ‘The righteous will live by faith’”. Romans 1:16-17

ROMANS 1:18-32

1. Why do you think God's wrath is so seldom spoken of today?
2. What can you learn about God from nature? What can you not learn about God from nature?
3. From this passage list some of the characteristics of a depraved mind. What are the reasons for this type of thinking?
4. Name several things our culture "approves" of today which the Bible says are wrong. If possible give a verse to support your answer.
5. Verse 32 tells us that they know God's righteous decree, yet they continue in their sinful ways. Why? What in your life are you tempted to put in God's place, and what will you do about it?

ROMANS 1:18-32

Do you ever think about what God is like? Most of the time we talk about God's love and kindness, His grace and mercy. But do you think of God as having wrath? In the Old Testament there are nearly six hundred places where we are told about the wrath of God. The biblical writers viewed God's wrath as one of God's great "perfections" alongside His other attributes. When we talk about God's wrath, we are not describing God as suddenly getting angry or losing His temper. Rather, the Bible is speaking of God's wrath as the firm, fearful hatred that God has for all wickedness. This wrath is building up and one day will result in eternal condemnation for everyone who is not made right in God's sight by a personal belief in the Lord Jesus Christ as his or her Savior.

The reason for God's wrath is seen in verses 18-20. Paul explains that the wrath of God is justified for two reasons: man's rejection of the revelation of God to mankind in nature, and, the suppression of the truth about God by human beings. Because of God's clear revelation, human beings have no excuse for failing to acknowledge God. Verse 18 says that people, by their wickedness, suppress the truth. But you might ask, "How can they know the truth?" First of all, in this study, we will always take the "high view" of God, meaning that we can be sure God is fair, just, righteous, and holy. If He is going to judge someone, He lets them know the right answers before the test. He wants people to know Him. He doesn't try to be sneaky or obscure. God's invisible qualities, His eternal power and divine nature, can be seen and understood from what has been made. Nature tells us that there is a God who has specific attributes. The revelation of God in nature is called "general revelation" because it is available to everyone. General revelation does not tell us everything we need to know about God. It does not tell us how to be saved from our sin, but it is still a true revelation for which all human beings are responsible. Not only has God given us evidence of His existence, He also has given us the capacity to comprehend or receive it, though we may refuse to do so. (There is also "special revelation" which goes beyond "general revelation." Special revelation is understanding the truth of Jesus Christ based on the Bible which can lead to a personal relationship with Him.)

The second reason God is displaying His wrath against mankind is mankind's suppression of the truth God has given. Why do we reject what God has given? It is because we prefer sin to God's way. God is sovereign, but we dislike Him for His sovereignty. We want to be sovereign. God is holy, but we dislike Him for His holiness. We want to be free to practice sin. God is omniscient, and we dislike Him for His omniscience. We think it is intrusive and offensive for God to know everything, and we try to hide from Him. Above all we dislike God for His nature which does not change with the times to fit our human perception. If we are totally honest with ourselves, we not only dislike God for these attributes, we actually hate Him and want nothing to do with Him because of them.

Fallen man tries to rationalize away the obvious fact that this universe and our physical bodies are not here by random chance or accident. We try to make excuses for our lack of faith in God. Our first excuse is that we do not know if God exists. It is the argument that science either has disproved God or else has been unable to give adequate evidence for His existence. Science is supposed to base its finding upon facts. The fact is there is no scientific evidence that nothing can produce something, as the random chance theory of evolution suggests. The sheer lack of probability that nothing could create a complex, thinking, creative, emotional being like yourself is ludicrous. The second way we try to excuse unbelief is by claiming we have too many unanswered questions about Christianity. People who raise that objection seldom investigate their questions seriously. The weakest excuse for lack of faith is the statement, "I just don't think it's important." That reasoning is obviously faulty. If God exists and we are all destined to meet Him to give an account of our actions some day, nothing can be as important as getting the most basic of our relationships right. People who reject the truth about God claim to be wise, but they are easily deceived. They take God's

attributes and assign them to themselves. That is why in the Bible a “fool” is often connected with one who denies of the existence of God. Psalm 14:1 reads, “The fool says in his heart, ‘There is no God.’”

How does God reveal His wrath against people who choose to suppress the truth and who refuse to glorify and thank Him? He lets them continue in the way they have chosen. God gives wicked people over to their wickedness. God lets them make this choice; He lets them pursue the sinful desires of their hearts. These wicked choices result in people’s misuse of their bodies and the bodies of other people. They refuse God’s standard of one man for one woman; they choose and pursue whomever they desire. Consequently, God gives them over to depraved minds which are morally unstable and corrupt. When man does not retain the knowledge of God, he becomes filled with every kind of wickedness. Look at the word ‘approve’ in verse 32. It is not only that people *do* what is sinful. A person can sin, be ashamed of his or her actions, and ask for forgiveness. But here, at the very end of this terrible downhill path of our own sinful desire. The people involved come to a *point of acceptance and even approval* of what is evil.

Our culture is a dramatic example of this insane inversion. We live in a time when society says there are no rights or wrongs, no absolutes. The Bible speaks of a similar period of history in Judges 17:6 and 21:25, “In those days Israel had no king; everyone did as he saw fit.”

What is the solution to this horrible, dark and devastating picture? There is only one solution. Jesus Christ is mankind’s only hope. But God allows us to have a choice. You and I can receive the truth of God by faith, embrace it, take it into our minds and hearts, and order our lives according to God’s revelation through nature, His Word, and His Son Jesus. Or, you can refuse the truth of God. You can push it down and refuse to glorify and thank God, deciding on the downward trail to destruction. The Bible tells us every person, each one, is a sinner, so we, in our sinful nature choose against God. We must ask God, in the faith that comes from Him, to give us a new nature, His nature. When you receive Jesus Christ as your Savior, you receive this new nature. God’s Holy Spirit comes to live in you. He helps you to choose to honor God and to obey Him. Have you made God ruler of your life? If you have, how often do you express your gratitude to Him? Do you submit your thoughts, desires, and actions to His will? Do you give up thoughts, emotions, and actions which are displeasing to God? King David, desiring a pure life before God, prayed, “Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.” (Psalm 139:23-24)

Why is knowing God important?

God made me so that I can know, serve, and love Him. I cannot really know myself, the world, or how I should live without knowing the true God. Genesis 1:26; Jeremiah 9:23-24; Colossians 3:8-10; 2 Corinthians 4:6; Ephesians 5:8

Memory Verse

“For since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities - His eternal power and divine nature - have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse.” Romans 1:2

ROMANS 2:1-29

1. Paul tells us that God's kindness, tolerance and patience are meant to lead us to repentance. From verse 5, give the reasons for God's wrath.
2. List the results of following the path of good and the path of evil described in verses 7-11.
3. List the privileges which had been given to the Jewish people. What specific privileges has God given you?
4. Read verses 25-27, substituting the terms "baptism," "confirmation," or "church member" for "circumcision." How do people today rely on these outward signs for their relationship with God?
5. How does Paul describe a true Jew? What areas of your life will you pray that God would strengthen in you, as you seek to "walk in His ways?"

ROMANS 2:1-29

At first glance the opening of Romans 2 may seem redundant, but Paul is actually dramatizing a point. The point is that people never seem able to admit fully their wrongdoing and never tire of making excuses for their behavior. In chapter 1 Paul showed that the human race has turned from God in order to pursue its own way and that the horrible things we see about us are the result. In chapter 2:1-4 Paul describes people who pass judgment on others. However, they are also under the wrath of God. He also shows the depths to which our rebellion against God has led us. This is such a dreadful denunciation that, at this point, you and I or perhaps everyone, reacts by saying, "He must not be speaking to me." But Paul argues that the one who objects to what is going on in chapter 1 is guilty of the very same things. We "pass judgment on someone else" in declaring others' actions bad, as distinct from our own, which we perceive as being good. Yet this does not mean that we are innocent. How can this be? Let's look at our moral code.

The most widely acknowledged standard of morality in the western world is the Ten Commandments. (Exodus 20:1-17) Much civil law is based on it, and there are many people who consider themselves superior moral beings because they believe they "keep the Ten Commandments." But does anybody? Let's look at the fifth commandment, which requires us to honor our father and mother. Have you never dishonored your parents by speaking in a dishonoring way? Have you always been properly thankful, respectful and obedient to them?

We might appeal to the sixth commandment, which forbids murder, and you feel good about this one because you have never actually murdered anybody. But have you forgotten that God looks on the heart and judges by thoughts and wishes as well as by actions? Jesus says in Matthew 5:21-22 that even speaking a defamatory word against a brother is enough to incur God's wrath for breaking this commandment.

The seventh commandment forbids adultery, but many have done this, and others have desired it or contemplated it. Jesus says we are guilty even if we only lust after another person. (Matthew 5:28)

Have you never stolen? Never shaded the figures on your income tax in order to pay less than you actually owed? Have you never lied? Never misrepresented the truth? What about the tenth commandment which says that we must not covet? To covet means to want something that someone else has just because he or she has it and we do not. There is no one who is innocent of this.

And what of the first four commandments, those that deal with God and our responsibility to worship and honor Him? Who can say that he has never had another god before God? Who has never made an idol of something? Who has not misused God's name? Who has remembered every Sabbath day by "keeping it holy"? If you say, "My standard is the Ten Commandments," you are condemned by that standard.

Some might argue that that was another age and a particularly difficult set of moral codes to live by. Your standard might be the Sermon on the Mount. (Matthew 5-7) If anybody thinks this way, his thinking proves how little he really understands Christ's teaching. The Sermon on the Mount does not weaken the Old Testament standards. It strengthens them, saying that they have to do not only with outward acts but also with attitudes of the heart. Do you seek to justify yourself on the keeping of the Golden Rule: "In everything, do to others what you would have them do to you"? (Matthew 7:12) Have you always treated others exactly as you have wanted them to treat you? Have you never been impatient with them, never gotten angry unjustly? We can see that by whatever standard our holy and sinless God judges our actions we will be proven guilty.

Then, you might ask, "Are we not to judge others, or at least their actions, in any measure?" Some people have taken this teaching to mean that we should not in any way look upon others critically. It is true that none of us is qualified or equipped to pronounce judgment on another person. God is the only one who can judge perfectly; He alone is the righteous judge. Indeed, Jesus told the people in the Sermon on the Mount that they should not judge others or they would be

judged by the same measure. (Matthew 7:1-2) Are we then to accept and approve all behavior? No. We are to distinguish between right and wrong. In our government the courts of law use guidelines to evaluate the behavior of people. The courts are given the responsibility by the people, and by God, to judge the behavior of people and to punish lawbreakers. We should evaluate actions, words, and attitudes of ourselves and others, but we are not to judge a person's heart. We cannot bring final judgment on people. All people, even the worst criminals, are made in the image of God and, therefore, are to be respected for who they are, though they may be condemned for what they have done. (Romans 2:2)

Do not dwell on the 'what if' questions concerning God's judgments. We can trust that His judgment will be holy and just. While we cannot judge another's heart, we are responsible for our own response to Christ's love for us.

Many people find Romans 2:6-16 difficult, because it seems to say that salvation is by good work. That is not what it is saying. No one is saved except through faith in the work of Jesus Christ. (Ephesians 2:8-9) Nevertheless, it is significant that Paul does speak of two paths, and he does not encourage us to suppose that a person can reach the goal of eternal life without actually being on the path of righteousness. (Romans 2:7) The questions the verses raise are: Are you on the path that leads to salvation and eternal life? What do you do if your actions show you are on the wrong path?

The path of a Christian is chosen and pursued by the power of God who sends the Holy Spirit to turn us from sin to faith in Jesus Christ and joins us to Him. What do you do to get on the right path? Firstly, agree with God that you are on the wrong path and cannot save yourself from your sin and its consequences. Secondly, knowing that Jesus Christ died for your sins taking the punishment you deserve, ask God to forgive you your sins. Thank God for the forgiveness He gives to you through Jesus Christ and the new life of the Holy Spirit within. Thirdly, commit your life to learning about and following Jesus. This is the meaning of faith.

Why is knowing God so difficult?

It is hard to know God because I have always been a sinner. Because of my fallen human nature, I do and think bad things, am selfish and rebellious against God and His law. Genesis 8:21; Jeremiah 17:9; Romans 1:18-22, 3:10-12, 23; Ephesians 4:17-18

Memory Verse

"For God does not show favoritism." Romans 2:11

ROMANS 3:1-20

In chapter three Paul wants us to see ourselves in our full sinfulness. Before we can begin to cry out for a Savior, we must clearly see our need for one. As we begin to see how detestable sin is to our holy God, we will understand that Jesus' death shows the extent of God's hatred toward sin.

If we are Christians, we will hate sin, repudiate it, fight against it, and strive for righteousness.

In verses 10-12, the apostle summarizes the condition of every human being apart from the grace of God in Christ. According to Paul all, Jews and Gentiles, are under sin and all are thus subject to the wrath and final judgment of Almighty God. Quoting from Psalm 14:1-3; and Psalm 53:1-3, Paul declares, "There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God."

This doctrine, which some call "total depravity", is hard for many people to accept, for one of the results of being sinful is that we tend to treat sin lightly. Most people today erroneously hold the view that, spiritually speaking, people are basically good and are even getting better. The problem with this thinking is that without an accurate knowledge of our sin, we will never come to know the meaning of God's grace nor will we come to God for the salvation we so desperately need. As long as we suppose we are doing all right, we will never commit ourselves to Christ.

Paul is saying that there is something fundamentally wrong with human beings who, if left unaided by a supernatural work of God, cannot seek Him. It is a statement of what has come to be known in theology as "the bondage of will." Augustine had a phrase for this inherent human inability, *non posse no peccare*. It means *not able not to sin*; that is, unaided by God, a person is not able to stop sinning and choose God. Augustine said that man, having used his free will badly in the fall, lost both himself and his will. He said that the will is free of righteousness, but it is enslaved to sin. It is free to turn from God, but not to come to Him. Augustine saw that apart from grace no one can be saved. Moreover, it is a matter of grace from beginning to end, not grace to which the sinner adds his or her efforts. Otherwise, salvation would not be entirely of God, God's honor would be diminished, and human beings would be able to boast in heaven.

Therefore our only proper role is humbly to acknowledge our sin, confess our helplessness, and admit that we can no more choose God by our enslaved wills than we can please Him by our sullied moral acts. All we can do is call upon God for mercy knowing that even as we seek His mercy it is because God has graciously convicted us of our need and is leading us to embrace the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation.

God's gospel is a gospel of grace from first to last. Jesus said, "No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him," (John 6:44) and "Whoever comes to me I will never drive away." (John 6:37) What is our view of God? Does He desire that anyone who wants to come to Christ may come? Yes! "He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance." (2 Peter 3:9) God is calling us into a relationship with Him through His creation, His Son, His Spirit and His Word!

Why do I need the Scriptures?

Since I am a sinner, I cannot know God by myself. All I can know without error about God is what He tells me in the Bible. Isaiah 55:11; Psalm 1:1-3; 19:7-11; 119:89-94; Proverbs 30:5-6

Memory Verse

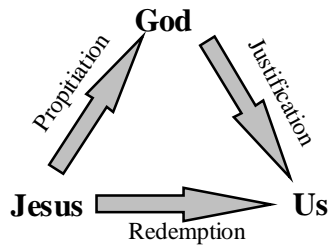
"As it is written: 'There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God.'" Romans 3:10-11

ROMANS 3:21-31

1. According to verse 22, how does one receive the righteousness of God?

2. Verse 24 states that we are “justified freely by His (God’s) grace.” Give examples of God’s grace (unmerited favor) to you in the past week. Did you thank Him for these expressions of His grace?

3. Explain this diagram in your own words.



4. Read Hebrews 11:2-34. Choose two people and tell what faith caused them to do. What has faith caused you to do?

5. How does the fact that “there is only one God”, stated in verse 30, compare with worldly thinking today?

ROMANS 3:21-31

Since Adam and Eve, every person was born a sinner; therefore, everyone sins. What can you do with that sense of guilt, knowing that you have done wrong? The bad news is that you can do nothing. You and I are guilty. The good news, the wonderful news, is found in today's lesson! Even though we can do nothing, God, Himself, has done something! Romans 3:21-31 brings us to the heart of this book and the heart of salvation. In all the world there is nothing more important than the teachings contained herein. There are four main points:

- A. God has provided a righteousness of his own for men and women, a righteousness which we do not possess ourselves.
- B. This divine righteousness is ours because of God's grace.
- C. It is the work of the Lord Jesus Christ in dying for His people, redeeming them from their sin, that has made this grace on God's part possible.
- D. The righteousness which God has provided becomes ours through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

The issues of eternity hang upon these truths, and we must be faithful to them. Christianity is categorically different from every other religion. All religions have their distinguishing points; some emphasize one path to God, some another. But all, except for Christianity, suppose that there is something human beings can do for their salvation. Only Christianity humbles us by insisting there is nothing we can do, salvation is all of God. No man would make up such a religion. It is nothing of man but all of God. (Of course, once we are saved, we have the obligation and privilege of doing much, since Jesus calls us to discipleship. But we are not saved by discipleship.)

We see the principle of God's provision in Genesis 22:6-8. In obedience, "Abraham took the wood for the burnt offering and placed it on his son Isaac, and he himself carried the fire and the knife. As the two of them went on together, Isaac spoke up and said to his father Abraham, "Father?" "Yes, my son?" Abraham replied. "The fire and the wood are here," Isaac said, "But where is the lamb for the burnt offering?" Abraham answered, "God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering, my son." God Himself did provide the lamb for Abraham (Genesis 22:9-13), and God Himself also provided the Lamb for our redemption, Jesus Christ upon a cross at Calvary.

Paul wrote about a "righteousness from God...being made known...through faith,...(imparted to us) freely by His grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus." (Romans 3:21-24) Though the prophets knew about this way of becoming right with God, it was not fully made known or revealed to them as it is to us. God tells us about the Lamb's purpose in 1 Peter 2:24 and 2 Corinthians 5:21. "He Himself bore our sins in His body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by His wounds you have been healed." "God made Him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God." Righteousness, a gift to us, was paid by God through Jesus Christ.

How does one receive this righteousness from God? Through faith in Jesus Christ. This is not faith in anything abstract, or faith in what you or I can do. Saving faith is receiving what God offers. It is not your faith that saves you, but it is Jesus who saves you. Righteousness from God is provided to all who believe in Jesus Christ. When we believe in Jesus as our personal Savior, God declares that we are right with Him. This means that God has justified us.

Paul uses three great words to explain what Christ's death was about: justification, redemption, and propitiation. (Romans 3:24-25) The New International Version translates propitiation as "a sacrifice of atonement." We will examine each word to help us understand the full meaning of these doctrines.

Let's start with *justification* which comes from the court of law. It describes the act by which a judge acquits an accused person. It is a legal term indicating the process of declaring someone made right with the law. Justification is not a synonym for amnesty, which is a forgiveness which overlooks, even forgets wrongdoing and declines to bring it to justice. When God justifies sinners, he is not declaring bad people to be good, or saying that they are not sinners after all. He is

pronouncing them legally made right, free from any liability to the broken law, because He Himself in His Son has borne the penalty of their law-breaking.

Faith is the channel by which justification becomes ours. Faith is not a good work. It is not a work at all. Faith is God's gift, as Paul clearly states, "It is by grace you have been saved, through faith-and this not from yourselves, it is a gift of God-not by works, so that no one can boast." (Ephesians 2:8-9) Faith is nothing more than receiving what God offers.

Redemption means that Jesus paid the price for us so that we might belong to Him. Why did he have to pay a price? Because God demands a price for sin. It is a price we cannot pay. Only a perfectly holy, righteous person could pay the price. We needed someone to pay it, a redeemer. To redeem is to buy back. That is what Jesus did on the Cross. Jesus bought us back from sin and claims us as His own. The person who believes in what Jesus did now belongs to Jesus. Jesus cherishes and cares for you and me, His possessions.

Propitiation presupposes the wrath of God against sin. (It is here that many people rebel. Many only consider the loving nature of God and never come to fully understand God's necessity of dealing with sin. However, it is because of God's holy character that His wrath must punish sin. Since God's wrath is against sin, we are separated from Him while in sin. If the wrath of God cannot be turned aside by someone or in some way, we are lost. God's wrath is not capricious anger. We seem to feel that the wrath of God and the love of God are incompatible, but the Bible teaches that God has wrath and is love at the same time. What is more, His wrath is not just a minor element alongside His significant and overwhelming love. God's wrath is a strong reality. God cannot ignore sin; sin must be punished.)

Propitiation is the turning aside of God's wrath. 'Propitiation' was translated "Mercy Seat" in the Old Testament. As an illustration of propitiation, once a year, on the Day of Atonement, the high priest entered the Most Holy Place to make atonement for the people's sins. He took the blood of a sacrificial animal and sprinkled it upon the Mercy Seat. As God looked down, He saw not the law which had been broken, but the blood of the sacrifice. He saw that punishment had been meted out. Propitiation had been made. His love could reach out to save all who came to Him, not on the basis of their own righteousness or good works, but through faith in the sacrifice. But this sacrifice pointed forward to the only sufficient sacrifice, that of Jesus Christ who by His atoning death became the true and final propitiation. (See Hebrews 9-10 for a fuller explanation.)

Who interprets the Scriptures?

God has not established any person as a perfect interpreter. Rather, the Scriptures interpret themselves, as Christians read and study them together. To know God and His truth I must search the Scriptures. Deuteronomy 32:46-47; Isaiah 55:11; Matthew 5:18; Acts 17:11

Memory verse

"For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from observing the law." Romans 3:28

ROMANS 4:1-25

1. Read Romans 4:16. We are saved by trusting in what God *has done*. Abraham trusted in what God *would do*. Why doesn't God want us to be able to work for our salvation?

2. Why does a person sometimes still feel guilty even when he know his sins have been forgiven? How can verses 7-8 help a person who feels guilty even after being forgiven?

3- Who are Abraham's offspring? (See verses 16-17)

4. Though we cannot work for our salvation, when we are saved our faith is made complete by what we do. (James 2:22) How did Abraham prove His faith? How will you prove your faith this week?

5. List several phrases from this chapter which describe attributes of God.

ROMANS 4:1-25

In chapter three, Paul establishes that justification by faith excludes boasting, for boasting is an expression of pride and pride will not be accepted in the kingdom of God. Pride was the very first sin. It was the sin of Satan who said, "I will ascend to heaven; I will raise my throne above the stars of God; I will make myself like the Most High." (Isaiah 14:13-14) Pride made Satan want to be like God and usurp the place of God, but it actually brought him down "to the grave, to the depths of the pit." (Isaiah 14:15) Salvation by grace through faith is the one doctrine that undercuts all boasting, for not even the 'best' of us can win God's approval. Scripture does not say that we are justified *because of* our faith nor *on account of* our faith. The Bible says that we are justified *by* faith and *through* faith. Faith is the *instrument* or the *channel* by which the righteousness of God in Christ becomes ours. In order for God's righteousness to become ours, we must believe that He, and only He, has provided it for us. The faith with which we believe in Jesus Christ is not from ourselves, it is the gift of God (Ephesians 2:8). Faith does not come to you and me because we think we live up to God's law, please Him and therefore deserve it. All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. (Romans 3:23) Faith is ours apart from the law. It is a gift from God.

How can we understand faith? The best way is recognizing that biblical faith has three elements; knowledge, belief, and trust.

A. The beginning of faith is *knowledge* of the truth. Faith must have content. The object of Christian faith is Christ; and our faith rests on knowledge of Him. We learn to know Him through the study of the Scriptures. That knowledge leads us to love Him and consequently to follow and obey Him. Our faith must be in Christ, His life and work.

B. The second element of faith is *personal belief*. The idea here is that, important as the content of faith is, it is nevertheless possible to know this content and still be lost. (An example is the devil, who undoubtedly knows the Bible, yet does not believe it in a personal sense. The demons "believe" but "shudder", says James 2:19). You and I must believe that Jesus Christ died on the cross for our own sins. If you or I had been the only ones in the world, Jesus Christ would still have died for our sins to redeem us. When the truth received by the mind takes root in the heart, the believer is able to internalize the gospel message.

C. The third element of faith, *trust* or *commitment*, is yielding of oneself to Christ, which goes beyond knowledge, and even being personally moved by the gospel. It is the point at which we pass over the line from belonging to ourselves and instead make Jesus Christ our Lord and Master. We are ready to follow Him whatever the cost. It is what was seen in Thomas falling at the feet of Jesus, exclaiming, "My Lord and my God!" (John 20:26-28)

In chapter four, Paul is going to show that belief in Jesus is the only way anyone, whether born before Him or after, has been saved. With the call of Abram (or Abraham), God inaugurates a new departure in His dealing with humanity. God begins to prepare one special people, the Hebrews (or Israel) to become His means of salvation for all peoples. To this end they need to be separated from idolatry and moral corruption of surrounding kingdoms and be uniquely related to God Himself. (Exodus 19:4-6) Abram's father, Terah, was originally an idolater "who served other gods" and worshiped the sun and moon. (Joshua 24:2-3,14-15) They lived in Ur, a corrupt and immoral city at that time. God called Abram to leave Ur and go to a land He would show him. Abram responded in faith and obedience. The nation of Israel and our Christian heritage were formed from this man. The name Abraham is one of the great names in history. His name will continue to be great through all eternity.

While the call to Abraham marks a transition from a universal calling to a particular people, the reminder is given at the very beginning of Israel's history that the scope of God's concern and promises was universal. "...all peoples on earth will be blessed through you." (Genesis 12:3) The Jewish nation was formed from the multitude and from the Jewish nation would come the Savior of the whole world.

The place at which Paul begins with Abraham is the same place we must begin ourselves, if we would be saved. It is the acknowledgement that there was nothing in Abraham that could have commended him to God. How was Abraham saved? The answer, as Paul shows, is that he was not saved by his own works. “Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.” (Romans 4:3 and Genesis 15:6) He believed the words of God, what God promised to him. The context of this Genesis 15:6 is the incident in which God took Abraham out under the night sky and promised him offspring as numerous as the stars of heaven, even though at this time Abraham was eighty-five years old and had no children. Abraham’s belief and God’s accrediting him righteousness is the doctrine of justification by faith. It is the first verse in the Bible to speak of: 1) “faith” 2) “righteousness” and 3) “justification.” We know that people were saved before Abraham, but this is the first time any individual is specifically said to have been justified, credited with righteousness by God. How was this accomplished? When God saved Abraham, He did not pretend that something was true when it was not. As Paul views it, that righteousness was nothing other than the righteousness of Jesus Christ. Abraham believed in a promise. (The word “promise” appears four times in verses 13, 14, 16, 20 and as a verb in verse 21.) God made a multifaceted promise to Abraham, involving personal blessing, a land to be given to him and his posterity, blessing on his descendants, and a Redeemer to come. (See Genesis 12:2-3, 7; 15:5; 22:17-18) The first and most important thing about Abraham’s faith is that it was faith in these promises of God. Abraham did not merely believe God in absence of all external supports; he believed God when the external evidences were actually and sharply to the contrary. This does not mean that faith is irrational; nothing is more rational than to believe God. But it does mean that true faith stands with God and His Word, even when doing so appears foolish from a human perspective. Abraham believed God wholeheartedly. We also must believe the Word of God and the promises He makes through His Son, Jesus Christ. (John 1:1) Then we will be credited with righteousness.

The doctrine of justification by grace through faith lays the foundation for a religion which may be preached to everyone under heaven. This doctrine suits the character of God and His relation to all people on earth. God is a universal, not a national, God. Who may come to Jesus Christ? All who trust in His atoning work, for all are lost in sin, yet all alike are the desire of Jesus’ saving love.

What do the Scriptures teach you about how you as a sinner can live for God?

I can live for God only if I am united to Jesus Christ and obey His Word. John 3:3, 5-6, 16, 15:5; 1 John 2:17, 3:23-24, 4:9

Memory Verse

Yet he did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God, being fully persuaded that God had power to do what he had promised.” Romans 4:20-21

ROMANS 5:1-11

1. What did Paul want the readers of Romans to understand after being told that justification does not come through works, ritual, or law? (See verse 5:1)
2. What does it mean to have peace with God? Personally, when did you receive this gift from God?
3. How can Christians continue to rejoice even in the face of great hardship and suffering?
4. Why is it so important to understand that God saved us when we were still sinners? Using Ephesians 2:1-9, explain why a person is powerless to save himself.
5. Many Christians become complacent with their salvation. List some ways that you rejoice in the Lord.

ROMANS 5:1-11

Our hope is not in the circumstances that surround us. Our joy and assurance is in our eternal destiny. Paul wrote the fifth chapter of Romans to teach that those who have been justified by God through faith in Jesus Christ are secure in their salvation. We saw in chapter four that Abraham was a saved man. How was Abraham saved? It wasn't by his heritage, ability, godliness, or any good works unique to him. He was saved by grace through faith in the words, promises and character of God. He had a different time perspective on the promises than we do today. He believed what God *would* do; we believe what God *has done*. Abraham looked forward and believed in Christ who would bring salvation through his seed. (Genesis 3:15; 12:2-3; 15:4-6; 17:6-7, 19) We look back in history and believe in Christ who has completed the work of salvation. (Matthew 1:1)

Perhaps you wonder if your relationship with God is temporary. How can you be sure that you are a Christian? How can you, who continue to sin, not be counted once more as God's enemy? The answer is in Christ. When you understand that you do not deserve God's love, you can begin to be secure in it. Because you cannot earn God's love, you cannot lose God's love. When you received Jesus Christ as your Savior, you were justified by God, and were born spiritually. That cannot be undone anymore than you can be unborn physically.

In this lesson Paul tells us some of the blessings that the justified have. First you have peace *with* God. You are no longer an enemy of God because your sins are no longer on record with Him. We are at peace with the One who created us and paid the debt for our sin. You may not always feel peaceful, but God has given you a peace treaty signed with the blood of Jesus Christ which will never be broken.

Another blessing of the justified is rejoicing in the hope of the glory of God. Christians expect to stand in the presence of God's full glory one day! (Jude 24) In our day "hope" is a weak word. We speak of "hoping or wishing for the best", but this is not what hope means in the Bible. In the Bible hope is a certainty and the only reason it is called hope is that we do not yet possess the thing that will one day be ours. (Acts 2:26-27; 1 Corinthians 13:13; Titus 1:2; 2:13; Hebrews 6:19-20; 1 Peter 1:3) Our hope is in Jesus Christ and has been promised to us by God.

We can understand rejoicing in the hope of God's glory, but Paul says that believers should respond to their *suffering* with rejoicing. Why should we rejoice in our trials? Because suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. Suffering matures our faith when we learn to rely not upon our strength but upon God's. We hold on to God because He holds on to us. The gift Christians have is that God is with us and has poured out His love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit. Let's look at what suffering produces; firstly, perseverance. When suffering comes to each one of us, it is in our response that perseverance is developed. The immature Christian tries to avoid difficulties and get out from under them. The maturing Christian is steady under fire, knowing God will prove Himself faithful. Secondly, suffering produces character. We become "fit" for God's use as a result of spiritual self discipline. A godly response to suffering produces a testimony that can be used for God's glory and to comfort and encourage other Christians. (2 Corinthians 1:4-5) Paul knew there would be suffering but he also knew that this suffering will not compare with the glory that will be revealed in us. (Romans 8:18) Thirdly, suffering produces hope in the character of God as the Christian experiences God's faithfulness to take us through the trial.

In verses 3-5, the most important word is "know". God allows us to know with certainty part of the reasons for sufferings and what to expect from suffering. We do not know everything there is to know about suffering, however the Bible gives at least five reasons why people suffer.

1. Some suffering is merely common to mankind. (Job 5:7)
2. Some suffering is corrective. (Psalm 119:67)
3. Some suffering is designed to glorify Christ. (John 9:3)
4. Some suffering is cosmic to demonstrate the rightness of God's ways before the fallen angels.

(Job 1-2)

5. Some suffering is constructive. (Romans 5:3-4)

Jesus Himself knew suffering. We remember He wept at the death of His friend Lazarus. (John 11:35) Jesus wept again when He looked upon Jerusalem, the city He loved and knew would be destroyed in 70 A.D. (Luke 19:41) Jesus endured the cross, scorning its shame for the joy set before Him of sitting down at the right hand of the throne of God. (Hebrews 12:2) Rejoicing is not a jumping up and down happy feeling. It is the understanding that God Himself is for you and, if He is for you, who can be against you? (Romans 8:38-30)

While we were still sinners Christ died for us. (Romans 5:8) God's love for us is totally undeserved. Nothing could be more positive than that statement of fact. If we think that God loves us because we are somehow lovely or desirable, then our appreciation of the love of God will be reduced. If we think we deserve God's love, we can never be secure in it. It is only those who know God loves them in spite of their sin who can trust Him to continue to show them grace. God loves us because He loves us.

"We rejoice..." writes Paul in verses 2, 3, and 11. Do we? Honesty compels us to admit that often we do not. Why do Christians so often fail to rejoice? One reason may be because we don't fully trust that God will do what He has promised. Abraham left his home; Noah built the ark; Joshua took the land. When I think of how God has worked in my life, why am I so unwilling to step out in faith with joy and love? Each of us must take hold of what God has done and live our life with the joy of our salvation in our hearts.

To summarize, we have peace with God even when we don't feel it. In our daily sins we can lose God's peace, but we can never lose our peace with God. We have reason to rejoice in circumstances today and for the future because we have a faithful God.

How will you rejoice in the hope of the glory of God? Will you ask God to help you grasp the truth of "justification by faith alone"? How will you prepare to rejoice in suffering? Will you think about these truths, meditate on them and learn how great the love and grace of God is? Perhaps then, you, along with the hymn writer of old, will be able to: "Turn your eyes upon Jesus, look full in His wonderful face and the things of earth will grow strangely dim in the light of His glory and grace."

What has Jesus done to reconcile you to God?

Jesus lived, died, and was raised for me. Romans 4:25; 6:5; 1 Peter 1:18-21.

Memory Verse

Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Romans 5:1

ROMANS 5:12-21

1. Do *most people in the world* believe that man is born good but does bad things, or that man is born bad but does good things? What do you believe and why?
2. Give examples of how sin brings physical and spiritual death to people today.
3. In verses 15,16, and 17, what is the gift and how did God provide it?
4. Verse 18 has been used to support the false doctrine of universal salvation. Using Romans 3:21-31; 4:1-24; and 5:1-11 (the last three lessons) explain the doctrine of salvation through faith by grace.
5. From this lesson list the gifts given to you by “the one man, Jesus Christ”. Explain in your own words how we receive eternal life.

ROMANS 5:12-21

The first part of chapter five talks about our reconciliation with God in Christ. Through Christ we have gained access to God (see also Ephesians 3:12, Hebrews 4:16); we rejoice both in our future hope and present circumstances, appreciating more and more the love and grace God showed us in the death of Christ. The second part of chapter five is teaching that all people are sinners and without Christ we die.

The two over-riding perspectives of people today are: 1.) I am bad and it is not possible for God to love me, or 2.) I am good, (at least good enough), and not in need of a Savior. The truth that all people are sinners and die because they are united to Adam in his sin is a very foreign concept to our culture. People grumble that it doesn't seem fair sin entered the world through one person. But, is it fair that sinless God came to earth to die for me, taking upon Himself the sins of the world? Salvation has no fairness in it at all as no one deserves it! Salvation comes from God's grace offered lovingly and righteously to an undeserving people. It is easy to grumble about Adam and the injustice of his sin, but if Adam hadn't sinned who among us can say we wouldn't have?

The good news of chapter five is even though you cannot help being in Adam, you do not have to continue to live in Adam. Everyone is born a sinner. No one can, by him or herself, keep from rebelling, doing bad things and thinking evil thoughts. But we do not have to stay that way. Because Jesus lived and died and rose again, you and I can be different.

Adam is the representative of all people. That means his sin and sin nature are now a part of all people. Ever since the time of Adam's sin every person has been born a sinner. Does that mean babies are sinners? Yes. Does that mean the babies who die are going to hell? No. God will have mercy on whom He will have mercy. (Romans 9:14-15) 'What-if' questions are often an excuse not to trust in the sovereign, merciful, all knowing, holy character of God. Perhaps a more appropriate question is, do I trust in God to do what is right even if I do not completely understand all the truths of God? In questioning God's judgment, we often set ourselves up as being more merciful than God in many situations. God's character is infinite and beyond our grasp. When we place our limited sense of justice, mercy and understanding next to God's and somehow think that we are capable of higher moral judgments, we stand on extremely shaky ground!

God's grace is greater than our sin. Does that mean that everyone is saved? No, it does not. God's word clearly states that only those who come to Jesus for forgiveness and receive Him as Lord will have eternal life. Adam's one disobedience brought judgment on the whole world. Christ's one act of obedience covered all the sins of all people. But salvation occurs individually, one person at a time receiving God's grace.

In chapter five Paul develops the idea of two kingdoms; the kingdom of sin and the kingdom of grace. Everyone is born into the kingdom of sin through Adam and is sentenced to death. The people who live in the kingdom of grace are those who have received the grace of God through the gift of the Lord Jesus Christ. The kingdom of sin carries with it the lie that sin is fun, that real happiness and freedom can be found apart from God. It also questions the word of God. In the garden of Eden Satan asked, "Did God really say..." (Genesis 3:1) The kingdom of sin also presents the lie that self must be first. The desire for more possessions, freedoms, and personal rights leads us in a downward spiral of first complacency and then destruction. Sin is a mocker that brings death to those who desire to cling to the illusions it presents.

In the kingdom of grace, we receive God's forgiveness, mercy, and love. God's righteousness enters us and we have union with Christ. This union with Christ is what Jesus prayed for in John 17:23. The fact that *Christ lives in us* through the power of the Holy Spirit is difficult for nonbelievers to understand. But it is only *in His power and righteousness* that Christians can claim the full measure of joy within them. (John 17:13) For it is only *through Christ in us* that we can and will resist sin. In John 17:17 Jesus asks his Father to "Sanctify them by the truth; your Word is truth." The truth of scripture is understood and made real in our hearts by the Spirit of God working

and living *in us*.

The union of the believer with Christ is one of the three great unions taught in Scripture. The first is the three persons of the Godhead, the Trinity. On the basis of the revelation of God in Scripture, we believe that our one God exists in three persons as the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. This perfect union enabled Holy Father to send Himself in the form of His Son to earth to die for the sins of sinful man. It also enabled the Son to leave the gift of the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, “who will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment.” (John 16:8) It is this union that provides perfectly for our salvation.

The next union is that of the two natures of Christ. The Lord Jesus Christ is one person, yet both man and God, possessing two natures. This fact is important since the benefits of Jesus’ death depended on His being both man (so He could die) and God (so that His death would have infinite atoning value).

Both Christians and non-Christians can agree upon the truth of verse 12. This verse tells of the universality of sin (though non-Christians will not call it sin) and the universality of death. Even the most thoroughly secular person will not claim to be perfect, and everyone knows he or she must die. As far as sin is concerned, the secular view assumes that it is only an imperfection which with time will be overcome. This view of sin fits the evolutionary framework of our day. As to death, the secularist explains this as being merely natural. All living things die, they are meant to do so. The problem is that none of us really believes that or wants that. We sense that we were meant to be immortal, that we should not die. In Christianity death is not natural. It is the punishment of God for sin. Adam’s sin was imputed to us just as Christ’s righteousness is imputed to those whom God saves.

Justification through faith is said to be the doctrine by which the church stands or falls. However, this is an incomplete statement. Our justification through faith comes by God’s grace to us. It was His sovereign will to provide His Son, our Savior and Lord, as the atonement for our sins. Therefore the right relationship with God is through faith alone, by grace alone, in Christ’s work alone.

Flashing like a beacon of light on a dangerous night is Romans 5:20-21. “But where sin increased, *grace* increased all the more, so that, just as sin reigned in death, so also *grace* might reign through righteousness to bring eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.” Grace is God’s unmerited favor to those who are undeserving. Grace is shown when God reaches out to save those who would perish otherwise. God sees us staggering and by grace comes alongside to bear us up. God sees us dying and by grace imparts eternal life. God sees us destitute and by grace pours the inexhaustible riches of Christ into our laps.

Who is Jesus Christ?

Jesus is true God and true Man. He is the second Person of the Trinity, who became a human being. He was descended from David, born of the Virgin Mary and came in fulfillment of the prophecies and laws of the Old Testament. John 1:1,14,18; Romans 1:2-4; Galatians 4:4; Matthew 1:1-23

Memory Verse

“Consequently, just as the result of one trespass was condemnation for all men, so also the result of one act of righteousness was justification that brings life for all men.” Romans 5:18

ROMANS 6:1-11

1a. In verses 6:1-2, who is considered “we?” Who would not be considered “we?”

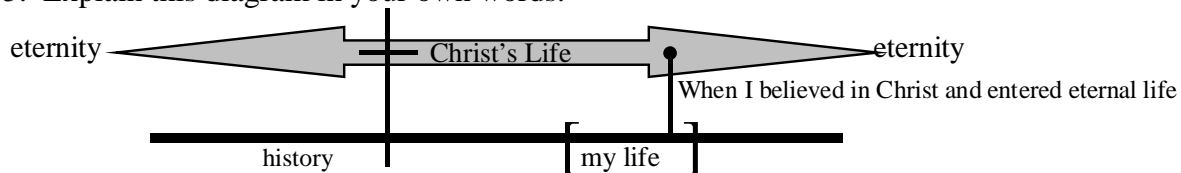
1b. In verses 8, 9, and 11, we have the verbs *believe*, *know*, and *count* (yourself). Explain your thinking on infant or believer’s baptism.

2. Christians will sin, but they will not love or cling to sin. Tell how this statement has been true in your own life.

3. In what particular area of your life are you not counting yourself alive to God and what will you trust God to do for you regarding it?

4. Our relationship to Christ should make us a joyful people. How will you thank Christ for what he has done in your life?

5. Explain this diagram in your own words.



ROMANS 6:1-11

For many people Christianity is perceived negatively. The world lives under the false understanding that Christianity is mostly a series of “don’ts”. They are blind to the fact that genuine Christianity is just the opposite. It is sin that is negative. To be freed from sin is to be freed to a brand new life, one that enables us to pursue true fulfillment in our personality and our relationship with God and man.

Chapter six develops the idea of having a living union with Christ. When you claimed Jesus as your Savior, did you think sin would just go away? Have you been surprised that you still sin? You may be wondering what to do now. In this chapter we learn a mind stretching truth - sin is not removed from me, but I am removed from sin!

You see, Jesus died for all your sins, past, present and future. When you are united with Jesus in His death, you can be certain that you will be united with Him in His resurrection. Heaven is your destination, sin cannot and will not take that from you. Does that mean you and I can go on sinning? By no means! When you understand the price Jesus paid for your sin, you will no longer desire sinful behavior. Rather you will strive for righteousness, because He is righteous.

There are reasons why you cannot continue to live in sin as you did before becoming a Christian. First of all, we are united to Christ and He died to sin once for all. Secondly, sin is no longer our master, God is. For us to hold onto and wallow in our sin is inconceivable, because it overlooks God’s whole purpose in the plan of salvation which was to save us from sin. If we tolerate the practice of sin now, we are contradicting the very purpose of God in our salvation.

There are some common misunderstandings of verse 2. Since this verse is so critical in understanding how to live a holy life, we will look at three misconceptions.

1. “A true Christian is no longer responsive to sin.” This interpretation says that Christians have literally died to sin’s appeal. Unfortunately, this is not true. Moreover it makes no sense with respect to the exhortation in verses 11-13. It says there, “Count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ...Do not let sin reign in you mortal body...Do not offer the parts of your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness.” Christian’s daily fight the battle of sin’s temptations and appeal.
2. “Christians should die to sin day by day.” Here the starting point is wrong as it begins with man rather than God. It is Christ who died to sin once and for all. Also the verb is wrong. God is not telling us that we *should* die, but rather we *have died*. He is speaking of something that is already true for you as a Christian. This view says that the one who is united to Christ will grow in holiness, which is true, but it is not by increasingly dying to sin’s call. We will have to be as much on guard against temptations at the end of our lives as now.
3. “We cannot continue in sin because we have renounced it.” Renouncing sin is not something we do but rather something that has been done for us. It is *God’s work through Christ* that makes our continuing in sin unthinkable.

In order to understand how we died to sin, we will look at how Jesus died to it. Verse 10 says that Jesus died to sin, the exact thing that is said of us in verse 2. Paul’s statement says that Christ “died to sin once for all.” This means that as far as sin is concerned, Jesus’ relationship to it is finished forever. While He lived upon earth, He had a relationship to it. He had come to die for us taking sin’s punishment, and to put an end to its claims upon us. Now, having died, and been resurrected, that phase of His life is over. Verse 9 makes that point exactly: “We know that since Christ was raised from the dead, He cannot die again; death no longer has mastery over Him.” As a result of our union with Christ in His death and resurrection, the old life of sin is past for us also. We can never go back to it. We have been brought from that old life, the end of which was death, into a new life, the end of which is righteousness. We must embrace that fact and live for righteousness.

Paul also reminds believers of the meaning of baptism in verses 3-4. Baptism is an outward sign that points to an inner spiritual reality, namely, of being joined to or identified with Jesus Christ.

Verse 4 tells us that we were buried with Him in baptism. We have been taken out of one state and put into another. You have not only died to sin, you have been buried to it. To go back to sin once you have been joined to Christ is like digging up a dead body. Though sin will still tempt us we will never have the same relationship with it again. The reality of Christ's death and resurrection has forever broken the tyranny of sin in a believer's life.

Verse 8 says "we will also live with Him." These words not only refer to our future resurrection but also to an experience of resurrection life here and now. We passed from the reign of sin and death to the reign of grace and life at the moment of conversion.

In verse 11, Paul urges us to count ourselves "dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus." This process of growing more and more alive and responsive to God in Christ Jesus is called sanctification. It begins with the knowledge that Jesus died for our sins. His righteousness has been transferred to our accounts, so that God reckons us righteous. In these truths we have the framework to live a victorious life in Christ. (more about sanctification in future lessons)

A question that may be asked is: "What if a Christian goes back to living a sinful life?" It will not work. Take the illustration of an adult trying to be a child again. Can he do it? He can act childlike, though it is dishonoring to him and an embarrassment to everyone else, however, an adult can never physically return to being a child. What do we say to an adult who is acting childlike? We say, "Why don't you just grow up?" As you take hold of who God is and the reality of His presence within you, you will not return to sin's domain. You cannot enjoy sin as you did before, and you will not be able to sin prolongedly before God calls you back to Himself. God will not stop you from sinning, but He will stop you from continuing in it. Either He will make your life so miserable that you will repent and beg Him to redirect your ways, or God will put an end to your life. Paul told the Corinthians that because some had dishonored the Lord's Supper, God had taken them home to heaven. (1 Corinthians 11:30) If you are a true Christian, you cannot return to your former way of life, continuing rebellion against God. (1 John 3:9)

If you have been saved by Jesus, you have been saved forever. There is nowhere for you to go but forward, forward into righteousness! See John 17:14-19. Each of us can and should joyfully and without reservation commit ourselves to the life set before us.

What does it mean that Jesus was raised for you?

Jesus rose from the dead so that I can have a new life. Now Jesus lives in me, and is praying for me, for protection from all my enemies: the world, the flesh, and the devil. Romans 4:25, 6:4, 8:34; Hebrews 4:16, 7:25

Memory Verse

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

ROMANS 6:12-23

1. From verses 12-13, what should we not do? What should we do? Give specific examples of how sins of the body are to be refused and specific examples of how one offers one's body to God.
2. How can someone know they are no longer slaves to sin? (See verses 17-18)
3. Slavery to sin leads to death. List as many advantages as you can for becoming a slave to righteousness.
4. From what would you like to be free? What could you do to obtain that freedom?
5. What would you thank God for this week? How do you think God would like you to thank Him?

ROMANS 6:12-23

In the first part of chapter six, we learned we are no longer related to sin, but united with Christ in a resurrected life. Here are three things we can say to ourselves each morning that will help us live this new life: “I am dead to sin and alive to God in Christ. I no longer am a slave to sin. I am a slave to God. (I no longer have to give in to the temptation of sin. God will provide a way out. 1 Corinthians 10:13) Because I believe this, through God, I can choose to change my behavior.”

In the second part of chapter six, we learn that true freedom is slavery to God. Did you ever wonder why everyone doesn't want to become a Christian? God gives us eternal life, purpose here on earth, an understanding of truth far beyond anything we could have imagined, and love. Yet, many people reject His gift because they cling to the sinful desires of their hearts. They do not want to know the truth of God because, if God does exist, then God would be above them. The temptation to place ourselves in the role of God comes as early as Genesis 3:5. Sinful man does not desire God because he believes God would restrict his freedom. He cannot understand that true freedom is being who God wants you to be and doing what God wants you to do. He has created us. He loves us and desires us to have true fulfillment through the greatest gift He could ever give. He gave us this gift in the form of His Son Jesus Christ. However, God will not make us receive the gift.

In chapter six Paul is developing the concept of two kingdoms begun in chapter 2. He now adds to that idea by introducing two masters. The idea of slave and master is a very foreign concept to today's autonomy and freedom, but that doesn't make it less a reality. In this life you will serve someone. You will be a slave to sin, which leads to death, or to God which leads to righteousness, holiness and life.

What you do with your mind will determine a great deal of what you will become as a Christian. If you fill your mind with products of our secular culture, you will remain secular and sinful. If you feed your mind on the Bible and Christian books, train it with godly conversations and discipline it to critique what you see and hear, you will grow in godliness and become increasingly useful to God. Your mind will become an instrument of righteousness.

A proper use of our minds is necessary for growth in all areas of our Christian experience. We must take hold of the fact that God speaks to us through His words given in the Bible. God will renew our mind through Christ. The use of the mind is important in sanctification; if Christians fail to yield their minds to God, is it any wonder that many Christians are almost indistinguishable from non-Christians around them?

In verse 15 Paul again asks, “Shall we sin because we are not under the law but under grace?” The answer we know is; “By no means!” Paul then gives reasons why we cannot continue to sin:

1. From verse 16-18 we understand we are either a slave to sin or to righteousness. Before salvation our relationship to sin is a relationship of slavery. It would be folly to be delivered from slavery to sin only to return to it again. The world never presents our relationship to sin in that way. Sin is presented as the very essence of freedom. The truth is that sin is bondage. It enslaves us so that we are unable to escape its grasp, even if we want to. The obvious ravages of sin's destruction in drugs, greed, crime, and, immorality are apparent on the front page of every newspaper. But the subtleness of sin as seen in selfishness, emptiness, lust, and despair cuts very deep into our modern day society.
2. Sin leads to death. (Romans 6:16,21,23) Again, this is not what the world or the devil tells us. In Genesis 3:4, the devil countered God's word (Gen.2:17) by telling Adam and Eve, “You will not surely die...” However, they did die. They died in their spirits instantly, for the fellowship they had enjoyed with God up to this point was broken, (which is shown by them hiding from God when He came to them later in the garden). Their personalities began to die, for they started to lie and shift blame to one another. And at last their bodies also died. As God said, “Dust you are and to dust you will return.” (Genesis 3:19) God graciously gave them the promise of a redeemer who would save them from sin. (Genesis 3:15) The world suggests sin is harmless. Believe God, who tells you that sin leads to death. In fact, being a sinner, you are dying now. Your mortal life is decaying. One day

you will experience the second death, which is to be separated from God in hell forever, unless you are saved first. The only sensible reaction to sin is to turn from it and receive salvation in the Lord Jesus Christ.

3. Christians have been freed from sin's slavery. (Romans 6:17-18) Deliverance from sin's slavery is the meaning of *redemption*, as we saw when we were studying Romans 3:24. Redemption means to be bought out of slavery. How, then, can those who have been redeemed from sin return to sin's lordship? To do so would be to repudiate Christ and His work on the cross. It would indicate a lack of faith in the completed work of Christ.

4. Christians have become slaves to God which is true freedom. (Romans 6:22) Someone might ask, "What advantage is it to be freed from one master if all it means is that we become slaves of another?" Well, it would be a significant gain if we were slaves in a physical sense and were set free from a cruel master to become a slave to one who was kind and had our best interests at heart. God is as good, gracious, and loving a master as sin is cruel and harmful. However, there is more to this new slavery than that. The Bible teaches this new relationship includes becoming a son of God. Read Romans 8:14-18. Slavery to God actually brings freedom. This is because true freedom is also true fulfillment and is found in belonging to the right master. It is not being able to do anything at all. A child that is allowed to grow up without any restrictions is not a fulfilled child. The freedom you or I desire to know is the freedom that comes from a relationship with Jesus Christ. In Him is found fulfillment of life, personality and work. This includes living a righteous life.

5. This chapter shows us that genuine Christianity will never lead to moral license. Either we must serve sin, which is bondage and leads to death, or we must serve God which is freedom and leads to righteousness. (verse 22) There is no neutral ground.

We live in a day when many people shirk hard work, looking for some easy solution or quick fix for nearly everything. In Christianity there is no easy formula for success. After realizing what God has done for us, we must discipline the parts of our bodies, minds, eyes, ears, tongues, hands, and feet, to respond according to His will. God has done everything necessary for our salvation and given us everything we need to live a faithful, maturing Christian life. This process of sanctification, becoming like the Lord Jesus, will not come as we struggle toward it by our own effort, but rather as we turn moment by moment to our union with Christ. We should not measure sanctification by comparing ourselves to others. We must keep our eyes on Jesus. Maturity is a growing awareness of how sinful and helpless we are alone, and how dependent we are on our Lord Jesus Christ for His power to live according to His will.

Before we were saved, we served sin; that was consistent and reasonable. Now that we are converted, it is equally reasonable we should serve God. If you claim to be a Christian and are living a sinful life, your conduct is inconsistent with that profession. You must call upon God to straighten your life out, or you dare not assume you are united with Christ.

Jesus prayed for His disciple's sanctification, saying, "Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth." (John 17:17) Lord, renew our minds to grasp the ramifications of belonging to You.

Is Jesus the only Savior?

Yes. No one can find peace with God and salvation from sin except through the person and work of Jesus Christ. Acts 4:12; John 10:9, 14:6, 1 Peter 2:24

Memory Verse

For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." Romans 6:23

ROMANS 7

1. What good purpose does the law serve?
2. According to verse 4-6, what is the purpose of belonging to Christ?
3. Why does the idea that we must die to sin and be reborn frighten many non-Christians? How do Christians respond to this wonderful and miraculous gift?
4. What are you doing at this time in your life that you do not want to do, and what are you not doing that you really want to?
5. Can you think of a time when distress over sin led you to call out to God in desperation? (see verses 24-25)

ROMANS 7

In chapter six, we learned we are united with Christ in His death and resurrection. Our union with Him is by the grace of God which nullifies human pride in our own spiritual accomplishments. We also learned that our sins, past, present, and future, are forgiven in order that we may “count ourselves dead to sin, but alive to Christ Jesus.” (Romans 6:11) Paul uses the illustration of marriage in chapter 7 to show Christians have a new husband, Christ Jesus. (Romans 7:4)

Paul also discusses why the Christian needs to consider the law in chapter 7. In verses 8-11, Paul gives several reasons or functions of the law for the Christian.

First, the law reveals sin as sin. Left to themselves people never think they are sinners. God reveals sin to us by showing us we fall short of His standards as expressed in the law. Verse 7-8 illustrate how the law reveals sin, “Indeed I would not have known what sin was except through the law. For I would not have known what coveting really was if the law had not said, ‘Do not covet.’ But sin, seizing the opportunity afforded by the commandment, produced in me every kind of covetous desire.” When Paul learned he was not to covet, he became aware of how much he did covet. The covetousness had been there all along. When the law came, Paul could name his sin before God. Adam and Eve were aroused to rebel against God by the command, “You must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.” (Genesis 2:17) Sin, brought into the world through Satan, seized the opportunity, which resulted in Adam and Eve’s disobedience to God’s specific command. It is the same with you and me. The more we study God and His ways, the more we recognize the evil desires of our heart and can name them as sin. Be thankful as God leads you into this awareness of sin. It is the Holy Spirit working in your and my life, convicting us and pointing us to the source of strength and victory, Jesus Christ.

Secondly, in verses 9-11, we see that the law brings us to the end of ourselves. As long as we believe we are “fine” in our relationships to God, self, and the world around us, we never come to the point of seeing ourselves in need of a savior. But the law, in exposing sin, brings every Christian to a place of devastation and helplessness over his sin. It brings us to an end of our resources and ‘goodness’. It does what God sent it to do, showing us to be dead in our sins. The more you know what sin is, the more you can repent, turning from sin to God and His mercy.

But you might say, “I know that sin is awful. I know that sin earns death. I know that God abhors sin. I know that the law is holy, righteous, and good. I want to obey God’s commands because I love God. He has done so much for me. But I cannot consistently keep God’s commands. No matter how hard I try, I sin. I do the things I do not want to do, and I do not do the things I want to do.” There is comfort for you in the Bible. What I have just said is the experience of every person who is a Christian; it was Paul’s experience, too. Paul experienced frustration produced by the conflict within his sinful nature. He describes and explains his experience for us in Romans 7:14-25.

There are several different views of the man described in those verses. This study upholds the belief, that the man of Romans 7 is a mature Christian describing his continuing conflict with sin. Paul is teaching that there is no victory in our struggle against sin apart from the Holy Spirit. Paul is saying that though I am alive in Christ and desire to do His will, when I look at what I do, I find that I fall very short of what I had hoped. (verse 23) From this he perceives that the anti-God urge called sin, though dethroned in his heart, still dwells in his own flawed nature. Paul saw that his spiritual reach persistently exceeded his grasp and that his desire for perfection was frustrated by the distracting energies of indwelling sin. Stating this fact about himself renews Paul’s regular distress over it, found in the cry of verse 24. He voices his grief at not being able to glorify God more. However, that grief is answered in verse 25. His present involuntary imperfection will one day be made a thing of the past through the redemption of the body. For that future redemption we longingly await, maintaining the homeward traveling, future-glory perspective that pervades the whole New Testament. (Philippians 3:20)

Each of us has a bias to sin inherited from Adam. In addition, there is the pull of long-indulged

habits of sin. Your worst enemy is not the devil, but your own sinful nature. How do we become more like Jesus Christ? We become more like Him as we acknowledge sin and turn to Him. The Christian life is a struggle and a battle daily against sin, but we have won through the victory of Jesus Christ. Your life will not be easy. All your life you will struggle with your old sin nature. Cry out to God daily for help to surrender to His way within you. He will help you put off the old self and put on the new.

Here are four principles that may be drawn from Paul's teaching in Romans 7:14-25:

1. When God called us to be Christians, He called us to a lifetime of struggles against sin.
2. Although we are called to lifetime struggles against sin, we will never be able to achieve victory by ourselves.
3. When we triumph over sin by the power of the Holy Spirit, which should be often, it is by the power and grace of God and not by ourselves.
4. We are to go on fighting and struggling against sin, taking full advantage of the weapons God has made available to us; chiefly, prayer, Bible study, Christian fellowship, service to others, baptism, and communion.

We are never to quit in this great battle against sin. We are to fight it with every ounce of energy in our bodies and throughout our entire lives until our final breaths. The Christian life is not easy. No responsible person ever said it was. It is a battle all the way, but it is a battle that will be won. And when it is won, we who have triumphed will cast our crowns at the feet of the Lord Jesus Christ who worked in us to accomplish the victory, and we will praise Him forever.

What does it mean that Jesus died for me?

Jesus died on the cross for me, fully bearing the wrath and curse of God against me for my sins and fully meriting the forgiveness of my sin. Matthew 26:29; 2 Corinthians 5:19, 21; Romans 3:25-26, 5:9

Memory Verse

“What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? Thanks be to God, through Jesus Christ our Lord!” Romans 7:24-25

ROMANS 8:1-17

1. Romans 8:1 tells Christians there is now “no condemnation.” Why is it essential for Christians to take hold of the complete forgiveness we have in Christ Jesus?
2. Compare the sinful mind to the mind that is lead by the Spirit? (List several attributes of each)
3. According to verses 9-11, and 16, how can a person know for sure whether or not he/she is a Christian?
4. What encouragement do you receive from verse 11 regarding today and your future? How could you encourage someone else with the truth of this passage?
5. We cannot “tip”(add anything to) God for giving us salvation, but we can gratefully praise and thank Him. How will you give God the glory for what he has done in your life?

ROMANS 8:1-17

The words of Romans 8 should ring in the ears of every Christian as the freedom bells of salvation! It is the truth of these verses that enables us to take hold of our great inheritance. Paul begins chapter 8 with the words, “Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.” ‘Therefore’ points us in two directions. It takes us back to what Paul has been saying in the first seven chapters of Romans: namely, that God declares righteous those who believe in Jesus as their Savior. When we, through faith, receive the good news of Jesus’ death for us, we move from being guilty before God and sentenced to death to being justified, declared right with Him. The result of justification has both an immediate and future effect, so ‘therefore’ also signifies that for now and the future there *is* no condemnation for the believer!

‘No condemnation’ is the power of the gospel. God the Father sent God the Son to redeem people from their sinful nature who are then enabled to live righteous lives by the power of God the Holy Spirit. Why do Christians seem to be so slow in taking hold of this truth? Is it because they do not trust God enough to believe the words of Romans 8:1? We sometimes cling to judging ourselves and do not fully accept the complete forgiveness we have in Christ. If God has forgiven us, it is wrong to place our own judgment above God’s. We have been set free from the law of sin and death in order to live the life that God desires for us to have now and into eternity with Him.

We can rightly say that one purpose of Jesus’ incarnation and death was that all who are in Him might live holy lives. (see Romans 8:4) The Christian life is a path along which we walk, following Jesus Christ who goes before us. The path has a direction and it has boundaries. The direction of the path leads us towards the character of God, changing us into His image. The boundaries are the requirements of God’s Word as revealed in the Bible. Will Christians make mistakes, fall and sin? Yes, but there is all the difference in the world between stumbling on the path, getting up and going on, and not being on the path of discipleship at all. A Christian’s heart is set not on living according to the sinful nature but according to the Spirit.

To be “in Christ” is to be delivered from the state of sin and death, given eternal life, and to be growing in holiness. In Chapter 8 Paul teaches that only by the presence and power of the Holy Spirit can anyone be holy. In verses 5-11 Paul contrasts life according to the sinful nature with life according to the Spirit. To live according to the sinful nature is to have the focus of life upon self. To live according to the Spirit is to have the focus of life upon God.

To live according to the sinful nature is to have one’s mind set on what that nature desires. The unsaved person may or may not indulge in “fleshly sins.” He may be quite successful and ‘moral’ in the eyes of the world, imagining that he deserves God’s favor. He may do ‘good things’, but if he continues in his rejection of his Creator, his heart will grow hard to the prodding of the Holy Spirit and eventually all that he accumulates or accomplishes will come to nothing, for he will die without a Savior.

Non-Christians often develop a religious system “a la cart”, choosing items from a potpourri of ideas, combining them to make their own beliefs. They feel comfortable with such a “religion” because it enables them to keep their heart focused on their one true god, self. The person controlled by the sinful mind is hostile to God, unable to please Him. He is veiled from the truth of Jesus Christ and the cross. (see 1 Corinthians 1:18, 2:14; 2 Corinthians 3:15-16) Condemnation follows the rejection of Jesus, for the only sin that cannot be forgiven is the continual rejection of the prodding of the Holy Spirit who points us to the truth of the gospel. (see Matthew 12:31-32)

To the believer, God is no longer unreal or intangible. On the contrary, He is more real to us than life itself. God has not only come alive to us as a result of the Holy Spirit’s work, the Word of God, the Bible, also comes alive to us. Our desire is to become more like Christ in our lives. The Holy Spirit joins us to Christ. Being Christ’s, is to begin to take hold of who we belong to. 1 Corinthians 6:19-20 says “You are not your own; you were bought with a price. Therefore honor God with your body.” The past is now dead for us and we must live as what we truly are, children of

the King!

In Romans 8:9-17, we read about our deliverance from our sin nature. These verses tell us that we are sons of God. Verse 9 explains that those who belong to Christ have the Holy Spirit, also referred to as the Spirit of God and the Spirit of Christ, living in you. Our mortal bodies have life today to live for righteousness. Paul's strength in service to Christ came from the reality of the Spirit of God living in Him. His life's desire is seen in Philippians 3:10, "I want to know Christ and the power of His resurrection." The power of the Holy Spirit is nothing less than the ability to bring death to life. Those who cling to their sin will die, but those who are led by the Spirit have life!

Christians "have an obligation" to live according to the Holy Spirit rather than according to the sinful nature because of what Christ has done for us. We have received sonship from the Father, being heirs of God, co-heirs with Christ. In being a co-heir with Christ we will share in His suffering so that we may also share in His glory. Suffering can be for many reasons, but, as we suffer for Christ's sake, we keep our eyes on Christ and remember His promise of glory in the future. (see verse 18) To be able to suffer for Christ is supernatural because it is accomplished by the power of God alone.

In summary, we know we are in God's family as the Spirit of God leads us forward in our daily lives. God breaks the power of sin in the believer's life, giving him the power to put to death the misdeeds of the body. He enables us to live to please Him! This entire chapter teaches that if we are truly in Christ, nothing in creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God.

Our obligation is to make a conscious effort every day to yield to the Lord. This must be done even in the small, secret things, continuing to understand that all we are and have is because of God's love and grace. Let each of us thank and praise Him for the relationship He has given us through Jesus Christ, sealed with the Holy Spirit.

How can you be united to Jesus and His work?

I can be united to Jesus and His work only by God's grace. Ephesians 2:4-5, 8-10; Revelation 3:20

Memory Verse

"Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." Romans 8:1

ROMANS 8:18-39

1. When Christians come to an understanding that the earth is not our home, they will hold the things of this world less securely. What do you cling to from this world? What do you hope for most earnestly in the life to come?

2. List three entities that “groan” in verses 18-27, and suggest the reason each would groan?

3. From verse 28, people can misunderstand the “good” God does for those who love Him. How is God conforming you to the image of Jesus Christ at this time?

4. List the five questions in verses 31-35 and give an answer to each one.

5. Go back through this section of chapter 8 and choose two statements that you most want to remember and write why .

ROMANS 8:18-39

Suffering and glory are the major themes of this section of Romans. At first glance they do not seem to go together; the first to be avoided at all cost and the second to be sought. Paul introduces the idea of suffering because honesty did not allow him to talk about our glorious future inheritance without acknowledging that the path to glory is a cross. The early church experienced persecution, death, great need, illness, and pain. When we become followers of Christ it does not mean we will be excluded from the hardships of this world. Christians will suffer for many reasons and our suffering causes real pain. Sometimes it leaves scars that are not erased in this life. But we must remember, suffering will not last forever and Christians do not suffer alone. We have the Holy Spirit who lives in us to help, encourage, guide and direct us. The groaning of the Holy Spirit is a work analogy. As we carry our burden, he comes alongside and groans with us in lifting the burdens of our daily life. Paul understood the reality of suffering. But he also understood that knowing God makes all the difference in how we respond to that suffering. We have hope centered upon the promised return of the Lord Jesus Christ. We have God in heaven who hears our prayers, Jesus Christ who is praying for us, and the assurance that this present suffering is not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. (Romans 8:18, 34)

In verse 23, Paul discusses adoption as something in the future. Yet, in verse 15 adoption was treated as something that has already taken place. Some might ask how adoption can be both past and future at the same time. The answer is that the word is used in two different ways. In one sense we have already received our adoption since we have been brought into God's family. Nothing is ever going to change that relationship. Yet, in a second sense we still wait for our adoption because we do not yet enjoy all its privileges. We are waiting for our future resurrection and the glorification of our bodies.

Verse 23 says, "We wait eagerly," verse 25, "We wait patiently." It is important to take the two adverbs together, because biblical patience is not passivity. It is an expectant, though patient, waiting. It expresses itself in vigorous service while we wait for Christ's return. In John 21:15-19 Jesus called Peter into service for his church. Jesus understood the love that Peter had for Him, but He wanted Peter to understand how he could show his love in service. Jesus also showed him the way he would be able to accomplish the task saying, "Follow me!"

Romans 8:26-27 teaches us about prayer. First, prayer is not easy, but regardless of the problems we may have with prayer, we must pray. In fact we are commanded to "pray continually" in 1 Thessalonians 5:17. Prayer is a spiritual discipline. In prayer we come to God who hears us and desires to work for the good of those who love Him. (Romans 2:27) We read that the Spirit is praying for us in accordance with God's will. What a comfort it is to know that even when we don't know God's will the Spirit does, and is praying that it will be done in our lives!

In verses 29-30, we are confronted with five verbs in past tense that help us begin to understand the process of salvation. : He fore knew, predestined, called, justified and glorified. These five truths about God and His relationship with us are often misunderstood. The reason for the misunderstanding is that we are not God. Our judgments and comprehension are finite, but God is infinite. Humans speak of "fore" knowledge and "pre" destination, but these prefixes have meaning only for us. Strictly speaking there is no time frame, past, present and future, in God. God is outside of time, existing eternally, knowing all things at all times. Yet, He created time for His purposes and for His glory. He has worked through history, and continues to create new life, both spiritual and physical, today. God is concerned and involved with the details of our world. Foreknowledge means that salvation had its origin in the eternal plan of God. It focuses our attention on the distinguishing love of God according to which some are chosen to be conformed to the character of Jesus Christ. Some people have taken foreknowledge to mean that, since God knows all things, God knows beforehand who will believe in Him and who will not. As a result He has predestined those whom He foresees will believe in Him for salvation. In other words, He

foreknows and predestines our faith. But verses 28-29 are not talking about human actions or responses at all. They are speaking entirely of God, who He is, and what He does. Each of these five terms is like that. Predestination, like foreknowledge, tells us that having fixed His distinguishing love upon us, God appointed us to be conformed to the likeness of His Son. He does this by calling, justifying, and glorifying those chosen.

Does this mean, then, that people who do not believe in and trust God can blame God for their lack of faith, since it seems they have no responsibility in the process? No, God places responsibility on each of us for belief or unbelief. Our God is a God of multiple truths. Read John 3:16-18. Do you hear God's call to believe in Jesus Christ? It is the Holy Spirit who tugs at our hearts, leading us to Jesus, as the truth of God's word is heard. God's call is trustworthy and good. "Whoever believes in Him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son."

Though we will not fully understand God's call to some people and not to others, we must trust and yield to His judgments. If God is truly righteous, and He is, salvation must be all from God or we would have room to boast. The Bible never says that we are saved *because* of our faith. That would make faith something good in us, that we somehow contributed to the process. But it does say that we are saved *by* or *through* faith, meaning that God gives it to us so that we can be justified. Our role, in the process of salvation is to receive the faith He offers us and yield to God's mercy, thanking, praising, and worshiping our holy, gracious, and powerful God. Is it wrong to have questions? No, Christianity is truth! God will bring a sense of peace to the questions asked from a sincere, seeking heart.

Verses 31-39 direct us to the glorious truth that nothing can rob believers of their eternal glory because God is responsible for it. If salvation was based on our love, not on God's, we would never have full assurance of our salvation, for our hearts and emotions are susceptible to sin and change. There would be days when our assurance would seem justifiable and days when it would not. Heaven would be a reward for the strong and not an open gift of love for sinners saved by grace. Thankfully, we have assurance in this chapter that our salvation is all from Him. God knows who His children are for He knows all things from eternity to eternity. God's desire for us is that we know Him and love Him more, so that we may be transformed into His image. We are Christ's possession. If God is for us, who can be against us? This question separates believers from non-believers. Within all who know Christ, there is the growing conviction that God's love is the very foundation of our salvation. Because God's love is a divine love, it will never be shaken, as is clearly stated in verses 38-39. For now, we wait, eagerly and patiently, for future glory, expressing our love for God in service to others.

What is the grace of God?

The grace of God is the undeserved favor, mercy, and action of God in rescuing sinners. Eph.2:4-5, 8-10

Memory Verse

And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. Romans 8:28

ROMANS 9:1-5

1. In verse 1, Paul uses two witnesses to the fact that he is telling the truth. What are they? Why is it necessary for Christians today to use both of these two internal witness when testifying to something?
2. Give reasons why Paul would feel so deeply for the Jewish people.
3. List some of the advantages God had given the people of Israel.
4. Name some physical or material advantages you have been given, and tell how you have used these gifts from God.
5. What does verse 5 tell you about Christ? With knowledge comes responsibility. How is God calling you to respond to this truth?

ROMANS 9:1-5

Chapters 9,10 and 11 deal with God's continuing relationship with His chosen people, the Jewish race. Has God broken His covenant with the Jews? Has He broken His promises to send them the Messiah? No, God has not and will never break His covenants with Israel.

For background, let's begin the study of Romans 9 with Haggai 2:7-9. Haggai, a Jewish prophet, was told to speak to Zerubbabel, the governor of Judah, to encourage him and the others to complete the construction of the temple. The people were discouraged because they did not have the resources to match the splendor of the previous temple and to some it seemed like nothing in comparison. But God, through Haggai, tells them that the "desired of all nations, will come and I will fill this house with glory."

The Jewish people understood that God would come again and dwell with His people in the temple. The Lord says something very startling in Haggai 2:9. "The glory of this present house will be greater than the glory of the former house," says the Lord Almighty. "And in this place I will grant peace." The significance of this Old Testament temple is that it will be connected in the future with the Messiah, the "Desired of all nations." Jesus Christ spoke in this temple and, though it had been greatly embellished by Herod the Great, it never did match in material splendor the grandeur of Solomon's temple. However, the temple from Haggai's day was greater than Solomon's, for it was here that on the eighth day after His birth, the baby Jesus was presented. It was here that Simeon took the baby in His arms saying, "Sovereign Lord, as you have promised, you now dismiss your servant in peace. For my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in sight of all people, a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel." (Luke 2:28-32) It was here the prophetess, Anna, gave thanks to God and spoke about the child to all who were looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem. (Luke 2:38) At the age of twelve Jesus sat in the temple courts among the teachers, listening and discussing spiritual matters. (Luke 2:46-47)

One might ask, what happened? If Jesus was the Messiah, why have the Jews, for the most part, rejected Him? It is that question with which Paul deals in the next three chapters.

The change in mood from Romans 8:37-39 to Romans 9:1 is like falling off of a mountain top. Paul is now thinking of his own people, grieving because most had rejected the gospel of God's grace. In verses 1-3, Paul establishes himself as a credible witness for the truth of Christ. He reveals his love for his Jewish brothers. We know Paul's Jewish background from Philippians 3:5. We know what he was willing to suffer as a Christian from 2 Corinthians 11:22-33.

Paul had become an enemy of the Jewish leaders for the sake of Christ. They believed that not only was Paul dreadfully wrong, but that he was a traitor who was trying to destroy Judaism. Paul was not doing that, of course. He was proclaiming Jesus as Israel's long-awaited Messiah, but he was aware of Jewish hatred, which was why he was anxious to declare his love for his people. (See Romans 9:2-3, 10:1) Paul had a great love for his Jewish enemies. Paul's heart was like the heart of Christ, who wept over Jerusalem and her future destruction in 70 AD. (Luke 19:41-42)

Verse 9:3 seems like an odd statement to make, for as a Christian Paul knew he could not ever be separated from Christ. This truth is what the previous chapter has proclaimed so fully. Though Paul knew this could never happen, his words are indicative of his deeply felt love for his Jewish brothers. He is saying that he would do anything to achieve the salvation of his people.

The love that was in Paul should be in each of us, if we would be a soul winner. No one can die for another person's salvation. Paul could not, nor could Moses, though he made a similar offer in Exodus 32:32. Jesus is the only one who could and did. But we can love as Paul loved, and point others to the cross.

Do you sorrow for those who do not know Jesus Christ and who are, therefore, perishing without Him? Most of us do not. Why? Is it because we do not believe they are perishing? Is it because we do not trust in the power of the gospel for the salvation of everyone who believes? Are we so self-centered and absorbed in our own lives that God's truth and calling for those around us

somehow gets pushed to the back of our minds? Paul's example for us is to love our enemies. In fact we are to love most those who treat us the worst, remembering God's love for us while we were His enemies. (Romans 5:10; Matthew 5:43-48). This type of love is not easy, but Jesus Christ leads the way for us by His words and life.

The Jewish people are the chosen people of God. They had great advantages in being Jewish. First of all, they had been entrusted with the very words of God. Having God's word was an extraordinary advantage possessed by no other nation until the Christian era. They had the covenant that one day God would send a Savior from their nation who would reign forever on the throne of David. Temple worship taught how sinful human beings could approach a holy God. God must be approached with a blood sacrifice, which testifies to the gravity of sin. This showed that an innocent substitute could die in the sinner's place. The patriarchs provided godly examples to follow. Though these wise and influential men struggled at times, they persevered in faith. Jewish people everywhere are justly proud of the heritage of these great men.

Yet, the greatest spiritual advantage that could possibly be imagined did not guarantee salvation, which is the reason for the sorrow Paul has so intensely and poignantly expressed. This should be a warning to Christians as well. As Paul learned on the road to Damascus, we will only be saved through Jesus Christ. (Acts 9:1-19)

Paul ends the list of Jewish privileges with an extraordinary statement, "...Christ, who is God over all, forever praised! Amen." Paul is telling us in stark language that Christ, the Jewish Messiah, is in fact God. It is a tragedy beyond description that they should have rejected Jesus as their divine Messiah, who God had promised to them. They couldn't understand that they were actually rejecting God.

Yet, however tragic Jewish rejection of Jesus was in Paul's day, the rejection of Him today by both Jews and Gentiles is equally tragic. People seem to have lost hope of finding answers to life's deepest questions, answers that matter for one's eternal destiny. Christians must keep in mind that we have been privileged with the answers, for God has revealed Himself through Jesus Christ and His Word. His Word teaches us that eternal God began history, taking charge of it. The cross of Jesus Christ is at the center of history, giving history meaning and hope. Christ will return at the end of history, bringing it to a triumphant conclusion. Life's true meaning for today and eternity can only be found in Jesus Christ, "who is God over all, forever praised! Amen."

Why have you received the grace of God?

I have received the grace of God because of His eternal plan of election in Christ. Romans 8:29-30, 9:15; Ephesians 1:4-5

Memory Verse

"Theirs are the patriarchs, and from them is traced the human ancestry of Christ, who is God over all, forever praised! Amen." Romans 9:5

ROMANS 9:6-29

1. From verse 9:12, how does Paul explain election? How can you know if you have been elected by God?
2. Mercy has been defined as God not giving us what we deserve. List some ways in which God has shown you mercy. Why should verses 14-16 lead us to hope, thanksgiving, and praise?
3. Why is God so patient with those who reject and scorn His love? See 2 Peter 3:8-9.
4. If God would save people on the basis of something in them, how would this be unjust?
5. From the beginning, God's plan was for both Jews and Gentiles (Genesis 12:3). After reading the study notes, express in your own words what the doctrine of election means to you.

ROMANS 9:6-29

As we know, the original Christians were Jewish. They naturally began to obey Jesus' great commission (Matthew 28:18-20) by witnessing to their Jewish families and neighbors. Since the promises of the Messiah was to Israel and since Jesus of Nazareth was that Messiah, Israel should have embraced Him. But the Jewish people as a whole did not. Those who were becoming Christians seemed to be overwhelmingly Gentile. This was a severe disappointment to the early evangelists. More than this, it was a theological dilemma. The promises of God were to Israel; but if Israel as a whole was unresponsive, did this mean that God's promises to Israel had failed? Did it mean that God was impotent in the face of unbelief? No. God is all powerful and can do all things. God loves all people and sheds His many blessings on the faithful and the unfaithful. But God will not force us to love Him. God has opened His arms to us by the blood-stained hands of Jesus Christ on the cross. He has revealed the truth of His word to us in the Bible. He has left His Spirit to touch hearts that are being prepared to yield to His will. The fact that individuals reject Jesus Christ does not change the fact that Jesus Christ is truth. God will be God in all circumstances, He is unchanging. His eternal attributes stand before us as light in the darkness. Man's limited understanding and judgments of truth will not effect what God has done and will continue to do in the hearts and minds of those He is calling to come and love Him forever.

The believer's from Old Testament days, "true Israel", looked *forward* to the Messiah's coming and believed in Him who *was to come*. The believers from New Testament time and after, "true Israel", look *back in time*, to Jesus Christ, believing in Him who came now some 2000 years ago.

This part of Romans teaches us about the doctrine of election. The Jewish nation began with God's election of Abraham. Abraham did not know God nor did he seek God. Rather, God sought Abraham. (Genesis 12:1-5) In Abraham's children we see the continuation of God's election. Ishmael was born of Abraham's natural powers, (Genesis 16:1-4), but Isaac's conception was a case of God's supernatural intervention. Isaac was the first of "the children of the promise". (Genesis 17:15-16; 18:10; 21:1-2, and Romans 9:6-9) The principle of election is also shown in Jacob and Esau. "Before the twins were born or had done anything good or bad - in order that God's purpose in election might stand: not by works but by Him who calls, - Rebecca was told, 'the older will serve the younger.'" (Romans 9:11-12, Genesis 25:22-23)

In the same way, today, spiritual birth, results from God's election, is supernatural. We cannot begin spiritual life in ourselves since, according to Ephesians 2:1, we are spiritually dead. In order for us to become spiritually alive, God must intervene. Our sovereign, holy, merciful Lord elects those who will come to Him. Sinful man can respond to this teaching in different ways. He can embrace this doctrine and thank God for His grace and mercy, or he can charge God with being unrighteous for showing partiality. However, as we have learned, no one deserves to be chosen by God.

In Romans 9:14, Paul strongly declares that it is impossible that any injustice or unrighteousness should be attributed to God. The whole idea is abhorrent. To prove this point Paul quotes God's words to Moses, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion." (Exodus 33:19) The circumstances preceding this statement are that while Moses had been on the mountain talking with God, Israel had gone headlong into worship of the golden calf. All were guilty, even the High Priest. (Exodus 32) Had strict justice been served, all would have perished on the spot. But God showed mercy to those who did not deserve it. Therefore, if the mercy of God that is sovereignly given out, is now going to be declared unfair, then the objector is going to have to say God was unfair in sparing any of the Israelites in the incident of the golden calf! God chose to have mercy on a portion of Israel (even though three thousand died in one day) and God continues to be sovereignly merciful in our day in the process of bringing individuals to faith in His son.

If you are a Christian, do not think it is by your will, or any good within you, that has caused God to elect you. If that were so, it would lead to boasting and arrogance. Our spiritual birth is an act of God. What have we done that God should choose us? Nothing. We have done everything that would cause God not to choose us. The correct perspective on election is to see God sovereign over all things, and accept His mercy with humble praise and thanksgiving. God's purposes are not clear to us, for we are not God. (see Isaiah 55:8-9) We will not know the 'whys' of all situations, nor can we in our finite thinking understand them.

Paul now uses Pharaoh as an example. In the first five plagues, Scripture notes that Pharaoh hardened his heart. (Exodus 8:32) Finally, during the last five plagues, after enduring with much patience the hardness of this man's heart, God gave him over to that hardness, and Scripture states, "God hardened Pharaoh's heart." (Exodus 9:12) There will come a time when God will no longer strive with the hardened hearts of sinful man. (Romans 1:24)

In this section of Romans, God is pictured as a potter working with "clay". The clay here depicts people as sinners. God does not make people sin. He takes the clay as He finds it. The mercy of God is that He patiently endures with individuals who are responsible for their own sins. But some might say, "If God does not approve of my conduct and actions, then why did He make me this way or give me this background? On those grounds I am no longer responsible." Paul rebukes such a question with, "But who are you, O man, to talk back to God?" All too often we question God because we want to be god over ourselves. We must come before God with a sincere and contrite heart, not with arrogance or indifference. Each of us has questions and some might earnestly ask why doesn't God show mercy to everyone? Sincere questions will be answered. Paul addresses this question in verse 15, saying that God is sovereign. God has reasons that may forever remain unknown. We must accept His authority and trust Him. God's ultimate objective is to make His glory known. What this means is that God considers the display of His attributes to be worth the whole historical drama of the creation, the fall, election, and redemption. From God's point of view the revelation of Himself, "I Am that I Am," is the great and unshakable priority.

Whenever we think of election, we tend to focus on the negative, wondering why some are passed over. But the Bible focuses on the positive, saying that this is the day of God's grace. The demonstration of God's justice in judging sinners is an important part of what God is doing in human history. But God is also making known the riches of His glory in saving some. Why shouldn't you be among those people?

If all God wanted to do was send people to hell, He would not have promised us His love and grace. There would be no need for a Bible, for preachers, for a Savior. But God has given us all these things, and much more in order to know Him and receive Him. The message is: Repent and believe in Jesus Christ. Turn from your sin now. Today God is setting the way of salvation before you. God's election is not exclusive, it is inclusive. God does save people. His election is extended to all people through the preaching and teaching of the Scriptures by the power of His Holy Spirit. The question is, what will you do with this knowledge?

Why has God loved you in Christ from eternity?

God has loved me not for anything in me, but only because of His good-pleasure, which humbles me and fills me with amazement. Eph. 1:3-6; Romans 5:5-8; 1 Peter 1:19-20

Memory Verse

"It does not, therefore depend on man's desire or effort, but on God's mercy." Romans 9:16

ROMANS 9:30-10:13

Some have believed that the doctrine of election and the words of Romans 10:9 and 13 are at odds with each other. Of course they are not, since God cannot contradict Himself. There are two common misunderstandings about the doctrine of election. One position is for people to justify their sinful desires, blaming God for their condition of being cut off from Him. This is false thinking, for God does not condemn innocent people. The responsibility of sin rests on each individual who chooses that response. Another misunderstanding is that the doctrine of election can lead to inactivity by Christians in witnessing to others. People may think that since election is all by God's choice, there is no responsibility to teach their neighbor the truth of Christ.

In this passage, Paul shows us that everyone who believes in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord will be saved. Everyone is welcome, the only requirement is belief. How does that fit with the truth that God chooses those to whom He will give salvation? One analogy is a clock that has two gears which turn counter to each other to produce the working mechanism of that clock. Another would be a coin having two sides, both necessary to make up the coin. Similarly, there are two sides to the truth of salvation. God chose you before the foundation of the world, but you must choose God in your lifetime. God is good. He has given us the opportunity and desire to know Him. Salvation is open to anyone who wants to receive it. God's choice of man and man's free will are both part of the truth of salvation.

God can fully balance many truths that our finite minds can only yield to. Romans 9:18 teaches that God in His righteousness does pass over some. On the other hand is the universal gospel invitation, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." Paul makes it clear that the offer of salvation is open to everyone. (Romans 10: 12-13). If it were not for this invitation, we might think election excludes us or that the gospel is for people other than ourselves. But in Romans 10:13 we are told it is for anyone who calls upon Jesus, trusting in what He has accomplished on the cross. If you are a Christian, what a wonderful message we have to bring to our family, friends, and neighbors! God in His grace is seeking us. We do not earn the gift of salvation and we cannot work for it. The Jewish people failed to attain salvation because they pursued it not by faith but by work. (Romans 9:32) They sought salvation in the wrong way, and so do we all, until God turns our minds and hearts to Jesus. Jesus Christ became a stumbling stone for them. Isaiah 28:16 states, "See I lay a stone in Zion a tested stone, a precious cornerstone for a sure foundation; the one who trusts will never be dismayed." (See also Isaiah 8:14)

In Romans 9:33, Paul uses both Isaiah 26:16 and Isaiah 8:14 to help clarify who the stumbling stone is. In Isaiah 8:14 the prophet says that Jehovah is the stone that causes people to stumble. But Isaiah 28:16 makes clear that the stumbling stone is another individual whom God is going to "lay in Zion." This means the latter passage explains the earlier one, showing that the stumbling stone is actually the Lord Jesus Christ whom the Father sent into this world. The passages of Isaiah not only identify Jesus as the stone, they also identify Him as God.

The Jewish people of this time and many people today think that what the righteousness God requires of us is human righteousness, that is, a development of character or an accumulation of good works of which we ourselves are capable. What they do not understand is that God requires divine righteousness. Since it is divine, the only way it can be obtained is from God Himself as a free gift. Personally I did not receive this gift until I was forty four years old. All my life I believed in God. I believed God to be the creator, and I followed a religious system that I had set up for myself. I knew I would be judged for my actions and I felt I could justify them before God. I was a fairly moral person and I cared about others. However, I did not know what to do with Jesus. I actually resented others who said Jesus was the only way we could know God. I came to omit Jesus or at best ignore Him as not being an integral part of my religious system. I had stumbled over the stumbling stone. In my self-reliant thinking I could not accept my need for a Savior. I believed that whatever needed to be done for my relationship with God could and should be accomplished by me. I, like many

others, both Jew and Gentile alike, depended on my own righteousness through avoiding evil, and performing good deeds. I could not see that my works could never add up to what true righteousness is, divine righteousness.

For the Jewish leaders of the first century, the fact that divine righteousness was unattainable by man was an intolerable concept. They considered themselves to be quite good and clearly better than others. They didn't realize that God gave the law to show that we are sinners in need of a savior. The reality of this fact is just as difficult for people today. We must turn to the mercy of God to save us from our sins, rather than plead our own morality as ground for God's approval. Paul clearly states our new relationship to the law in Romans 10:4, "Christ is the end of the law so that there may be a righteousness for everyone who believes."

Paul presents the simplicity and inclusiveness of the gospel in Romans 10:9-13. Some have asked, "What about people who just mouth the words 'Jesus is Lord', but then do not live the life?" The answer is God's responsibility. If one understands what these words mean, one's life will be different. For no one can meaningfully say, "Jesus is Lord" and remain unchanged. (see 1 Corinthians 12:3) It is impossible to overestimate the significance of those three words. They were the starting point of the church and early Christian preaching. Believers throughout history have been willing to give their lives for that statement of truth.

When we say "Jesus is Lord" we testify to three things: 1) the deity of Christ, 2) the saving work of Christ, 3) the on-going, all-embracing rule of Christ over His people, the church, and the whole world. The first of these truths is due to the fact that in the Greek version of the Old Testament, the Septuagint, the word Kyrios, "Lord," is used to translate the great Hebrew name for God, Yahweh, over 6,000 times. This is why most of our English Bibles do not use God's name Yahweh, but have the word, Lord, instead. The disciples of Christ knew that this word was repeatedly used to translate the name for God. Yet, knowing this, they did not hesitate to transfer the title to Jesus. The second implication of the title, Lord, is that Jesus is Savior. This is linked to His lordship because "Lord" is a symbol of Christ's victory on the cross, and therefore our deliverance from sin and death. The third implication of the words, "Jesus is Lord", is that Jesus rules over the church and the world from heaven. (Colossians 1:15-18 and 1 Peter 3:22) Christians are to confess Him openly before others. (Romans 10:10) Let us be rid of all "secret discipleship." Now is the time of God's grace! We will not need to witness to others about Christ in heaven. We must testify now of His amazing grace sufficient for salvation. Each of us can proclaim, like the blind man in John 9:25, "I once was blind but now I see."

How does God give his grace to you?

God gives His grace to me by the power of the Holy Spirit through His Word, baptism, the Lord's Supper, and in the fellowship of the church. Acts 2:38; Romans 8:9-16, 10:14; Luke 24:32; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26

Memory Verse

"That if you confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved." Romans 10:9-10

ROMANS 10:14-21

1. Romans 10:14-15 makes a passionate plea for missions. How is your church involved in world missions? How could you help and encourage your church's efforts?

2. According to verse 17, where does faith come? List ways in which people hear the Gospel today. Which way do you think is most effective?

3. To whom were Moses and Isaiah referring in verses 19-20? How could they have known this so long before Paul's time?

4. In what ways are you disobedient and obstinate? How will you show your gratitude for the way God has held out His hand to you?

5. For whom will you continue to hold out your hands in love and truth in hopes that they will believe the gospel? Will you patiently and with perseverance uphold them in prayer as you come before the Lord daily?

ROMANS 10:14-21

Our last lesson showed us that everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. That statement is the universal invitation to the gospel, which calls everyone to faith. Now Paul develops the idea of where saving faith comes from. Yes, anyone who calls on Jesus Christ will be saved, but how can people do that unless they know about Him? Our answer comes in verse 17, “faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ.” Christ speaks when the gospel is presented. “How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them?” (Romans 10:14) The answer is that they cannot!

In verses 14-15, Paul makes a stirring plea for missions. No one can hear the gospel and believe in Christ unless someone takes the gospel to that person. Saving faith is from God. It is a gift of grace to sinful man. Faith has been defined as having three parts: 1) content or knowledge, 2) personal agreement with the knowledge, and 3) trust or commitment to that knowledge. It might be stated, “Lord Jesus Christ, I admit and agree that I am a sinner. I cannot save myself, and I believe only you can save me from my sin. I trust you to cover my sin, and I make you Lord of my life.”

The missionary plea of verses 14-15 states the need for Christian preaching and for expanding world-wide missionary efforts. It is essential that the world hears the gospel; that God has given us the ability to repent of sin and be forgiven by the substitutionary blood of Jesus Christ, that He is alive, and that one day He will return again. On that day every knee shall bow and every tongue confess Jesus Christ is Lord. The call to missions is from God. Jesus gave the ‘great commission’ in Matthew 28:18-20 saying, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always to the very end of the age.” Let us pay close attention to these words today since in many places commitment to missions is on the wane. We must never forget it was a band of Jewish missionaries like Paul, Barnabas and many others that endured hardship but reaped the benefit of being faithful to God’s call to them. Do you believe that God has the power to do what He says He will do in His word? If you believe, then you will desire to spread this glorious message of hope and salvation to a world that is dying. Hudson Taylor once related the words of a recent Chinese convert, “How long have you had the Glad Tidings in your country?” “Some hundreds of years”, Hudson Taylor reluctantly response. “What! Hundreds of years?” “My father sought the Truth,” the convert continued sadly, “and died without finding it. Oh, why did you not come sooner?” Hudson Taylor would never forget that moment, which deepened his already earnest desire to bring Christ to those who might still be reached. Let us remember the words of Romans 10:15 “How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!” When we think of how God has used men and women like George Whitefield in America, David Livingstone in Africa, Hudson Taylor in China, Amy Carmichael in India, and countless others throughout history, we can only marvel at the power of God working through yielded lives given in service to Him.

We, too, can have beautiful feet as we bring this word of salvation where God has called each of us. It is not enough for a person to sit under the preaching of the Word of God. It is not enough for one to be only a student of the Bible. God calls us to be fishers of men wherever He places us, in our neighborhoods, communities and the world.

In this section of chapter 10, Paul establishes the fact that the unbelief of Israel is not God’s fault. God sent His prophets to Israel, and they spoke of the coming Messiah. We have their words recorded in the Old Testament. After Jesus, Paul and others preached the gospel clearly. If many of the Jewish people did not believe, it was not because they were not told, since they had both heard and understood the message. (see John 11:47-48) The problem was that they refused to accept Jesus as their Messiah. They knew the message being received by the Gentiles was a message of salvation by the grace of God apart from keeping the law. This message was being taught not as a

contradiction of Judaism but as a fulfillment of it. That is what made it so offensive to them. Instead of detached indifference and smug superiority, there was jealousy and anger on the part of the Jewish leaders. This proved that they understood very well what was happening. They knew that the message being received by the Gentiles was a message of salvation by the grace of God. They chose to reject the miraculous signs they saw. They rejected their Messiah and clung to a religious system based upon what they might merit rather than upon God's grace.

People today reject the gospel for exactly the same reason. They reject grace. Many have heard the gospel and even understand it. But they want to hold on to what they can see and know. There is a fear that if they accept Christ, somehow they will be changed and will regret the difference. What they do not see is that Jesus is the completion of self and salvation from death. In Christ we have life and hope. Our responsibility as followers of Jesus is not to make people believe this message, for only God can do that. Our responsibility is to tell His truth in love.

Romans 9 is about God's election. Romans 10 is about personal responsibility. To most people these seem to be irreconcilable truths. We suppose that if God elects to salvation, then we cannot be responsible for rejection of the gospel, or, if we are responsible, then salvation must be by works and not by God's grace. But they are not irreconcilable teachings. Predestination and personal responsibility are two mutually supportive truths which always need to be understood together.

Our minds will not fully understand God. "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts." (Isaiah 55:8-9) But we can learn to trust Him for today and throughout eternity. When we put our faith in God, we see Him for who He truly is, Lord, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness. (Psalm 86:15; 103:8, Exodus 34:6) He is also holy and we cannot come before Holy God clinging to our sin and false pride. Now is the time of God's grace! He is holding out His hands to all who will come.

Who is the Holy Spirit?

He is the third person of the Trinity. John 15:26; Matthew 28:19; Romans 8:9 Matthew 3:16-17; John 14:16, 16:7

Memory Verse

"Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message and the message is heard through the word of Christ." Romans 10:17

ROMANS 11:1-24

1. What difference did it make in Paul's argument that he himself was a Jew? How would you encourage a person who is the only Christian in his/her family?

2. In verse 7, what did Israel seek? Why do you think Israel did not obtain what they sought so earnestly?

3. For what should we as Christians thank the Jewish people in their long history as the chosen people of God?

4. How will Israel's envy bring them to salvation? (See verses 11 and 14.) What responsibility do we as Christians have in living our life for Christ?

5. What caused the branch of Israel to be broken off? What should this lead Christians to understand and do?

ROMANS 11:1-24

Chapter 11 teaches us that God has a plan for the Jewish and Gentile nations that will be accomplished. Paul is revealing more of God's character concluding with the doxology in verses 33-36. All of us have ideas about how we want God to be, but the Bible tells us how God really is. There are places in the Bible that we sometimes wish were not included because they make us uncomfortable. Some people find the teaching about hardening of hearts difficult to believe about God. But we must have a full picture of God. The Bible assures us that God is loving and never does things without reason. We do not need to defend God. He is sovereign and has a right to do whatever He chooses. His decisions and His ways are perfect. God has shed His grace upon this earth and given us undeserved favor. We are a sinful people but He has given us Jesus Christ for salvation. He has also given an open invitation to the gospel in which all are invited to turn from sin and turn towards God. He has given us election to take away our pride, and much more that we will only fully understand in heaven. If you are having difficulty accepting who God is, will you pray to God and humbly accept what He is teaching you now? Perhaps He is allowing some difficulty to help you know Him better. Trust God and He will show Himself faithful.

One of the underlying questions in Romans 9-11 is, "How can we believe in the eternal security of Christians if, as we can clearly see, Jewish people as a whole are not responding to the teaching of the gospel?" Romans 11:1 asks, "Did God reject His people?" Paul answers, "By no means. I am an Israelite myself, a descendent of Abraham, from the tribe of Benjamin." Using the example of Elijah from 1 Kings 19:18, Paul points out that there always has been and always will be a remnant of true believers. God had saved 7,000 in Elijah's day. Although the number of Jewish believers since the church began has always been proportionally small, there are, nevertheless, many who have believed. We remember the 3,000 who became believers in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost and from that time on, "The Lord added to their numbers daily those who were being saved." (Acts 2:47) God is doing the same today.

Christianity was begun by Jewish believers who knew that Jesus Christ was their Messiah. It was moved forward by a remnant of God's people who preached the gospel in power and strength. It continues today to move forward by those who refuse to bow their knee to false gods but instead stand with Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit. Baal was a god of the Canaanites. The worship of Baal consisted of child sacrifice, sexual acts of worship, and materialism. There is much of the same corruption in society today: worship of self to the extent of child abuse and neglect, idolatry of sex and pornography, and the chasing after things. As we look at our own culture, Christians might be tempted to grow weary as Elijah did. Some may say, "I might as well give up, nothing is going to change." But this is not the time to grow faint. We are to put on the armor of God and pray constantly. (Ephesians 6:10-18) The battle is the Lord's and has already been won! We have our victory in the Lord Jesus Christ who said from the cross, "It is finished!" and who rose from the dead three days later. We know that "the one who is in (us) is greater than the one who is in the world." (1 John 4:4)

Did God harden the hearts of the Israelites in Paul's day? No, He allowed them to go the way of their own desire. Jesus' public ministry in Jerusalem and the surrounding area left no doubt about the power of his ministry and the validity of His claims. As He reported back to John the Baptist, "The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is preached to the poor." (Matthew 11:4-5) Jesus was fulfilling the Old Testament prophecies about His ministry. (Isaiah 35:4-6, 61:1) The people of Paul's day knew the power and truth of Jesus' ministry but chose to follow their religious leaders instead. Jesus sternly denounced the hypocrisy of those professing to serve God and yet rejected His Son. He said about them, "they loved the praise from men more than praise from God." (John 12:43)

In verse 11, Paul refers to the Jews, "Did they stumble so far as to fall beyond recovery?" The answer is, "Not at all!" Paul knew the power of grace. He held on to the words of Romans 10:13

and Acts 2:21, “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.” The Jewish nation has not stumbled beyond recovery, but because of their rejection of the Messiah, salvation has come to the Gentiles. God is using the Jewish rejection *so that* salvation might come to the Gentiles. God is now working *through* Gentile salvation so that the Jewish people might look to Jesus as the Savior and Messiah. Verse 11 tells us, “...salvation has come to the Gentiles to make Israel envious.” The Biblical use of envy includes, ‘wanting what someone else has’. Christians are to live so that others, including Jews, would want Jesus Christ as Lord. The emotion of envy used improperly will lead to covetousness, bitterness, and death. But understanding envy in a biblical context will help us uphold our relationship with Jesus Christ for the sake of others. Unfortunately, for the most part, Gentile Christians do not live in a way that would provoke the Jews to envy what we possess.

The problem is not entirely on one side, of course. Christians who have talked with Jewish people about Jesus might be surprised and amazed at the blindness that has settled over many of them. Even if they know the Old Testament well, they go to incredible lengths to deny clear teaching about Christ. But the Christian’s responsibility is greater. We know the gospel. We have the power of the Holy Spirit to live like Jesus Christ and show His love to all. But instead of showing love to the Jewish people, many Gentiles have shown indifference, prejudice, and even hatred.

Verses 17-24 is a troubling passage for many Christians because it can mistakenly be taken to imply a loss of salvation. That is not what these verses are teaching. That would contradict teaching elsewhere in the Bible. Paul uses the illustration of grafting branches to speak of the Jewish and Gentile peoples as a whole. The Jewish nation is the root from which salvation comes. When the majority of Jews rejected Jesus Christ as Messiah they were cut off from the root. Gentile believers have now been grafted in because of their faith in Jesus. The warning comes to the Gentile nations that if the Jews were cut off because of unbelief, God will certainly reject Gentiles for the same reason. We know that God works in individual lives grafting us in one by one. This illustration reminds us of both the kindness and sternness of God. He has opened the way for Gentiles now. We are not to take that gift for granted. We are to teach our children and those we know the truth of God’s grace. Remember, there is only one people of God, based on true faith in His salvation. Unbelief does exclude us from the tree of life. We must take our responsibility as Christians seriously and gratefully.

What does the Holy Spirit do for you?

He works powerfully and effectively to give me faith. He brings me to Christ, gives me a new nature, makes me holy, and preserves my salvation. John 3:5, Titus 3:5; Romans 8:9,15; John 14:26

Memory Verse

“So too, at the present time there is a remnant chosen by grace. And if by grace, then it is no longer by works; if it were, grace would no longer be grace” Romans 11:5-6

ROMANS 11:25-36

1. Salvation is by grace through faith. How will the Jews be saved? See Zechariah 13:9. In one sentence describe God's plan for saving all people.

2. Paul breaks forth in praise of God in verses 33-36. What reason or reasons expressed in verses 25-32 would cause him to do this?

3. Verses 30-32 tell of God's mercy. Why is it important that we personally understand God's mercy, before speaking to others about God's mercy to them?

4. Why is it necessary that mankind not be able to repay God?

5. In verses 33-36, what are some of the things that cause Paul to overflow with praise to God? What has God done for you recently that would cause you to break forth in praise to Him?

ROMANS 11:25-36

About one hundred years ago, Frederick the Great, King of Prussia, was having a discussion with his chaplain about the truth of the Bible. Frederick asked, "If your Bible is really from God, you should be able to demonstrate the fact simply." The chaplain replied, "Your Majesty, it is possible for me to answer your request in one word." Frederick was amazed at this response. "What is the magic word that carries such weight of proof?" he asked. "Israel," said the chaplain. The survival of Israel as a distinct people throughout the four thousand years of her history was the evidence he used for the Bible being the inerrant Word of God. God has preserved these people through their many dispersions and persecutions because He cares for them, and because He has a plan for them that will unfold in blessing in the last days.

Paul begins this lesson by explaining an important biblical mystery. A biblical mystery is something that was hidden but God has now revealed or made known. The mystery is that God has not failed in His promise to Israel. God's covenant with Abraham in Genesis 12:3 was for the whole human race. The Savior would come through him, and God would bless all the people of the world through this Savior. (see Galatians 3:8, 16) In Romans 11:25 Paul explains, "Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of the Gentiles has come in." Paul goes on to describe a time when Israel will be saved, and further develops the concept from Isaiah that, "He will take away their sin." God's love for His chosen people, Israel, has never changed, for God's gifts and His call are irrevocable. (Romans 11:29)

The Jewish people always knew that God would provide a Savior. That was clear in Old Testament scripture. The "mystery" of salvation was the way in which the Savior would be provided. The Old Testament gives us an illustration of substitutionary sacrifice, in the blood sacrifice of animals for the cleansing of sin. In Genesis 22:13, we also see how God Himself provided the sacrifice for Abraham on Mount Mariah. In the New Testament we have God Himself providing the sacrifice at the incarnation. We see God humbling Himself to be born as a baby. He came for one ultimate purpose, to die in our place. Unfortunately many Jewish people of Christ's day and nonbelievers of today still cannot fathom the depth of God's love.

The prophet Isaiah and many of the minor prophets portray a time when Israel will see Jesus as their Messiah. Isaiah's prophecy of the servant of the Lord in Isaiah 42:1-9, 52:13, and chapter 53 are vivid pictures of the Jewish Messiah who was to come. The prophet Joel (3:17) tells of a time when, "You will know that I, the Lord your God dwells in Zion, my holy hill. Jerusalem will be holy, never again will foreigners invade her." These verses point to a time of future blessing for Israel. A time when God will "turn godlessness away from Jacob." A time when He will take away their sins. As Zechariah 12:10 states "I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and supplication. They will look on me, the one they have pierced, and they will mourn for him as one mourns for an only child, and grieve bitterly for him as one grieves for a first born son." Zechariah 13:1 says, "On that day a fountain will be opened to the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, to cleanse them from impurity. Zechariah 13:9 continues with this prophecy, "they are my people, and they will say the Lord is our God."

In Romans 11:26, Paul states that all Israel will be saved. Paul was not only prophesying this event, he was also helping to clarify the character of God. God is unchanging. Therefore, His plans for Israel are also unchanging, and His call, which put His plan into action, is irrevocable. God chose Israel to be His special people, and nothing that has happened since, or will happen in the future, can change that choice or relationship. God will continue to work with them as a covenant people. He will bring them an understanding of the new covenant, "the new covenant in my (Jesus') blood, which is poured out for you." (Luke 22:20) God has promised, in Romans 11:27, to "take away their sins." The taking away of sin is done only by the blood of Jesus Christ. This is what the book of Hebrews emphasizes. In that book the author is writing to the Jewish people. He shows that God has replaced the old covenant, which required faith and obedience, but not the power to obey,

with a new covenant that is mediated by Jesus and accomplished by His death. This fact warns us never to think of Jewish people as somehow having a separate salvation track, as if they are saved merely because they are Jewish. As Paul writes to Timothy, “There is one God and one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus.” (1 Timothy 2:5) One day God’s promises to the Jewish people will be complete. They will come to know Jesus as their sacrificial Savior.

The misinterpretation of Romans 11:32 has led to the false concept of universal salvation. That is not what Paul is teaching, for, if he did, it would be a contradiction of Romans 9. Paul is addressing Jews and Gentiles as groups of people, not individuals. He is emphasizing God’s mercy. Although neither Gentiles nor Jews deserve God’s mercy, God is merciful to both. God’s very character is “merciful” and He will save all who come to Him for it. God has never turned a deaf ear to anyone who has turned from sin to Christ. Do we as Christians believe that? What should our response be? We should tell others that God is exactly who the Bible declares Him to be, the God who saves all who come through Christ.

As Paul’s understanding of God’s love and mercy begins to flow through his mind, he breaks into a great doxology of praise. Paul understood that God is not like us. In fact, God is not like anything we can actually experience or know. God’s ways can never be known to us apart from His revelation to us. Where does this leave us? We are to trust God. As Proverbs 3:5-6 teaches, “Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your path straight.”

Paul has been teaching that we have nothing to add to who God is or what He does. God is utterly sufficient in and of Himself in all things, in all places, and at all times. We must abandon any thought of bringing God down to our level in which He becomes answerable to our ideas of what is wise or just. We must also give up any thoughts of earning something from Him by what we would ‘give’ Him. Then we are ready to live the Christian life as He has planned. We will begin to understand what it means to live by grace. At our best we are unworthy servants as Jesus described in Luke 17:10, “So you also, when you have done everything you were told to do, should say, ‘We are unworthy servants; we have only done our duty.’” But we must also remember that Jesus said, “I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master’s business. Instead, I have called you friends.” (John 15:15)

Before all time, God, the great “I am that I am,” existed and was as perfect, glorious and blessed in His eternal existence as He is now. We will never fully understand God, for He alone is God. But he has revealed to us what we need to know to live for Him now and throughout eternity. All things are *from* Him. Both creation and salvation are, for there is none other from whom they could have come. (John 1:3-4) The way of salvation is *through* God and *for* His glory. Paul praises God, knowing that He alone deserves the glory. Glory to God alone! To those who do not know Him, that is perhaps the most foolish of all statements. But to those who are saved, it is a wise, true, inescapable and highly desirable confession of faith. “For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things, to Him be the glory forever! Amen!”

What is the Law?

The law is the revelation of God’s holy will and character summarized in the Ten Commandments. The law calls me to live a perfect life and threatens punishment if I do not, driving me to Christ, His gospel and His righteousness. Exodus 20:1-17; Matthew 22:37-40; Deuteronomy 30:15-18; Romans 3:21-22, 8:1-3

Memory Verse:

“For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever! Amen”
Romans 11:3

ROMANS 12:1-8

1. List the Christians who have had the most influence on your life. What makes them different from the world around them?
2. What must a person do to renew his/her mind? How has your thinking been changed since studying Romans?
3. What does it mean to think of one's self with sober judgment? Is your evaluation of yourself too high or too low? Give reasons.
4. Why is it important for Christians to look upon each other as equals? Why is this essential in the body of Christ?
5. What is your spiritual gift that was given to you by God? How are you using that gift in your church? What attitude should we have as we use that gift in serving the church?

ROMANS 12:1-8

Chapter 12 begins the application section of Paul's letter with the word "therefore." "Therefore" signals a reconsideration of all that Romans has stated thus far. We remember that God has always revealed Himself to man. (Romans 1:19-20) Secondly, because of man's sinful nature, he is rebellious and unable to help himself. (Romans 3:10-12) Yet, God offers redemption and righteousness through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. (Romans 3:22-25) Because of our union with Christ and new relationship with the Father, we have peace with God and victory over sin by the indwelling Holy Spirit. (Romans 5-8) Romans 9-11 explains God's plan of salvation in relation to the Jewish and Gentile nations and His irrevocable call to the Jews. Up to chapter 12, Paul has explained and illustrated God's mercy shown to sinful man.

Romans 12:1 presents a natural and proper response to God's mercy. We are to offer ourselves fully and continuously to Him. Paul says this offering is an act of worship. We worship God when we surrender our entire beings to Him. When we bow our will to His, love what He loves, and fill our minds with His thoughts, we are worshiping God. As God sets us apart for His purposes, we become holy and pleasing to Him. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 6:19-20, "You are not your own; you were bought with a price. Therefore honor God with your body." God's love for us causes us to respond by loving Him and sharing our love with others. To live for Christ will impact every value and relationship you have. A new perspective will emerge in which the good in life will no longer be self-fulfillment, but rather, honoring God.

Sometimes we hold back from God because we have been conformed to the pattern of this world. In what ways do you hold on to worldliness? Is it materialism? Self or sexual gratification? Power over others? Acceptance by others? How do we as Christians break that cycle of worldliness? By being transformed in the renewal of your mind! Take hold of the fact that when you were united with Christ you were changed! The Holy Spirit is living inside of you! In John 15:15 Jesus tells His disciples, "everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you." Your mind is to be actively engaged in learning God's Word. The Holy Spirit speaks as you read the Bible, study it, and apply it in your life. He will change your attitudes and thoughts, as you cooperate and receive His truth. One of the Holy Spirit's jobs is to teach us all things and remind us of everything Jesus has spoken to us. (John 14:26) As our minds are being renewed, then we will be able to test and approve God's will. Romans 12:2 tells us we must be transformed as it takes a new way of thinking to put God's way first. It is the resurrective power of the Holy Spirit working in our hearts and minds that enables us to know God's will. God's good, pleasing and perfect ways will always be in agreement with His Word. Discerning God's will includes a yielding and accepting heart, an honest seeking of His desires, confirmation by other Christians, and peace by His Spirit.

In verse 3, God calls us to think of ourselves with sober judgment in accordance with the measure of faith He has given each of us. Sober judgment involves having God's perspective of ourselves. God has given us faith to become His children through Jesus Christ. Ephesians 1:3-8 describes God's loving, omniscient purpose and provision for His children. 1 Corinthians 3:16 reveals that God made us in His image to be the temple of the Holy Spirit. "We are His workmanship created to do the good works which God has prepared in advance for us to do." (Ephesians 2:10) Pride, false humility and fear are three sins of improper judgment. Those sins shift the starting point from God to self and will bring inevitable failure. Daily prayer, Bible study and repeating the gospel to yourself will help you remember the grace and victory God has given you. It will also help you maintain sober judgment of who you are, a sinner saved by grace!

The true church is made up of those who have acknowledged Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. Each believer has come to faith by the power of the same Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is also performing a work of sanctification in each of us so that we are all working for Christ and are beginning to produce the fruit of the Holy Spirit. (Gal. 5:22-23) Each of us is a member of the body of Christ belonging to all the other members. Part of our shared doctrine as Christians is our

common goal of glorifying God and the hope we have in the future. We look forward to the return of Jesus Christ and to our eternal state in the new heaven and new earth.

Our time here upon Earth has reason and purpose. We are to do the good works which God prepared for us to do. Ultimately our lives are not about what we do, but that we belong to God, and trust in His ability not ours. Christian work can only be accomplished by the Holy Spirit in unity with other Christians. God, in His grace, has not left us alone. He has given us the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, who “will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness.” (John 16:8) Believers in Christ have also been given special gifts from God to be used in and for the body of Christ. Listed in Romans are the gifts of prophesying, serving, teaching, encouraging, giving, leadership and mercy. Prophesying is the ability given by the Holy Spirit to communicate the mind of God to people, particularly for the purpose of giving doctrine, reminding people of duty, or giving a warning. The prophet’s words must agree with the Bible. The gift of service points us to the example of Jesus Christ who took the towel and washed the feet of His disciples. (John 13) It is in the gift of service that we show God’s love in action. The Christian who has been given the gift of teaching should teach. If you know how the gospel of Jesus Christ has changed your life, you should be sharing your life with others. Like the blind man in John 9 said, “One thing I do know. I was blind and now I see!” To encourage means to motivate people to do good deeds and help them in places where they are having difficulty. Contributing to the needs of others is a gift from God. In giving you will desire to do so generously because you are fulfilling God’s plan for another person in need. Leadership is to take responsibility to guide and shepherd others in the path of truth and righteousness. Finally, there is the gift of mercy, being ready to give compassion and practical help to others, because of the mercy Christ has given you. These gifts were given to unite us in the common purpose of giving glory to God!

What is the gospel?

The gospel is the promise of eternal life through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ who bore our sins and conquered death. John 3:16-18, 36; 1 Cor. 15:1-4

Memory

“Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God- this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is - His good, pleasing and perfect will.” Romans 12:1-2

ROMANS 12:9-21

1. How can we hate what is evil, yet not give in to hating others? (Compare verse 9 with verse 21 for your answer)

2. In this section, Paul describes sincere love in action. Which attribute or attributes will you pray that God would increase in your life?

3. When Christians repay an evildoer with evil, what happens a.) to the evil doer?

b.) to the Christian?

c.) to the Church?

4. What specific act(s) can you take today to overcome evil with good?

5. How can a person live the kind of life Paul is commanding in Romans 12:9-21?

ROMANS 12:9-21

The end of Chapter 12 reveals the essence of the gospel story, love overcoming evil. Let's begin this lesson with a reminder of who we are in Christ. First, I am made in the image of God, with an ability to respond and relate to God. Secondly, I am filled with the Spirit of God. God is at work in me through the problems and pressures I am going through this day. Thirdly, I am part of the plan of God. God is working out all things to a great and final purpose in my life and on the Earth, therefore, what I do today has significance and meaning.

Do you want practical Christianity? It is hard to think of anything more practical than to love, honor and serve one another, pray for one another, and meet one another's needs. This lesson teaches us that sincere love is the virtue that defines genuine Christian service. Paul spends much of the remainder of this letter explaining what God-like love is and how it is worked out in life circumstances. The key concept that separates godly love from human love is that God-given love must be sincere. Christian love is not just words. It is the kind of love God has, pure and sacrificial. You sacrifice yourself, your energy, time and resources. It is not selfish or possessive. No one can love like this by himself. You need the Holy Spirit in your heart to love like Christ. This lesson is designed to help take the focus off of ourselves and put it on God and His provisions.

A principle given in verse 9 is, hate what is evil; cling to what is good. It is not always a sin to hate. If we do not hate what God hates, we are not godly. We must hate murder, lying, theft, sexual immorality, child abuse, divorce, misusing the Lord's name and other sins the Bible teaches us about. This does not mean we are to hate the person caught in the sin! Christians are to ask God for help to stand against the sin and also do everything he can to show the sinner God's love. Romans 12:9 couples two antonyms, love and hate, to teach us about righteousness. In our post modern world where personal autonomy has become god, we are taught by society to not judge wrong, and even to accept it as right. However, the Bible teaches us that there are wrongs and evils. If we are to love as God loves, there will be things for us to hate. (see Proverbs 6:16-19). Many churches, in their desire to be relevant, have become lukewarm in their condemnation of what the Bible clearly teaches as sin. In striving to show God's love, they have forsaken the fact that God is also holy. The church has also taken on many of the characteristics of the world. It is unacceptable that the divorce rate in our American churches is almost as high as that of the world. Have we forgotten the words of Malachi 2:16, "I hate divorce," says the Lord." The ordination of individuals actively involved in a homosexual relationship is in direct opposition to Romans 1:24-27. Our complacency towards adulterous relationships shown in movies and on television has affected our ability to call it what it is, sin. Christians must understand, thanks to God's love for us and His work in us, we have victory over sin. We can choose to cling to what is righteous both personally and in our churches. As Micah 6:8 tells us, "He has shown you, O man, what is good. And what does God require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God."

Sincere love, as revealed in verses 10-13, is centered on Christ. In Christian work there is always a threat of "burn out." Paul spoke of this in Galatians 6:9, "Let us not become weary of doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up." If you have been a Christian for any length of time, you know how easy it is to get discouraged. Our zeal, fervor, joy and hope must always be centered on who we are serving, Christ. (Romans 12:10-12) We will only bring His love, healing and victory to others by depending upon His Spirit in us. Paul encourages us to continue in prayer, for it is in prayer that our eyes are taken off the task and we reach the source of our strength. He understood that we can get tired and neglect prayer precisely when we need it most. Jesus was aware of this, too, which is why He taught about prayer so often. It is prayer that enables Christians to be zealous, hopeful, patient, generous and fervent, not holding back, but moving forward with determination, commitment and conviction. Jesus set the example when He took the very nature of a servant, and became obedient to death! (Philippians 2:7-8)

Practical Christianity comes down to very basic principles of living. Are we willing to place

Jesus Christ as Lord over our lives, and are we willing to share our lives with the needs, hurts, and joys of others? The world will always set up caste systems to make one person more important than another. The Jewish people wanted to make Jesus their king, but Jesus came to be their servant. Verse 16 reminds Christians that we should live in harmony with one another. There can be no room for pride or conceit in the family of God. The elitism and division of our day is based less on religion and race, and more on wealth, power, and education. Paul is reminding us to think of ourselves with sober judgment, not to be proud or conceited. We are to see others with God's eyes. We need to stop thinking of other people as being above or beneath us. The proper perspective is to regard everyone as a person made in God's image, with potential for everlasting fellowship with Him.

Now we come to the most difficult matter of all. Paul moves to how we should treat those who persecute us because of our relationship with Christ. We are taught that instead of hating them back, we are to love them, even as Christ loved us and prayed for us when we persecuted Him. We will never be able to do what verses 14, 17-21 outline unless we understand two things. 1) It is 'natural' to want to strike back at people who are hurting us. 2) The only way to overcome this evil tendency is to do good to others. Ultimately there is only one real "good", for people to come to know and love the Lord Jesus Christ. Do you desire to show Christ's love to those who persecute you?

Paul was eternally thankful for the mercy given to him when he met Jesus on the road to Damascus. (Acts 9:5, 17-18) Even though Paul had been persecuting Christians, God transformed Paul, gave him new life and used him to bring the gospel to the Gentiles. (Acts 9:15) Practical Christianity is following the example of our Teacher. As we think of God's patience and mercy towards us, we can begin, through His Spirit, to show mercy and forgiveness to others.

As Christians we know that evil exists in this world. Sometimes evil must be resisted even to the point of armed conflict. Christians can rightly contribute to their country's defense in time of war and can also rightly defend themselves if attacked. What Christians cannot do is take revenge. We must never be overcome by evil, letting it control our motives and actions. It is God's job to avenge. It is our job to be obedient and trust God. Verse 20 is often misinterpreted to mean that we are to use good as a weapon. However, this verse is best understood in the context of John 13:34-35, "A new command I give you: Love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another." Perhaps those 'burning coals' of love in action will be kindled to become 'tongues of fire' (Acts 2:3) as the Spirit brings them to repentance and life.

The biblical method of subduing an enemy is by overcoming evil with good. We cannot do this in our own strength. Philippians 4:13 says, "I can do everything through Him who gives me strength." Christians know strength and victory is found in only one place. Our victory is in the resurrected Lord Jesus Christ and our relationship with Him.

How do you receive the grace of God?

I receive the grace of God by faith alone. Romans 3:22; 4:16; Ephesians 2:8-9

Memory Verse

"Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good." Romans 12:21

ROMANS 13

1. List the benefits you have received from the government of the country to which you belong. Will you give thanks and pray for your country and for those in power, that they will come to know and follow God's will?

2. List reasons why Christians especially must submit to authorities. When may a Christian not submit to civil authority? (See Exodus 1:15-17, Acts 4:18-20, Acts 5:29)

3. Christians have an outstanding debt that can never be repaid. What is our debt and why can it never be repaid?

4. What does it mean to love your neighbor as yourself? How could you specifically show that kind of love to your family, neighbors, and church?

5. List ways you see Christians slumbering at the present time. What could you do personally to "wake up" your family, neighbors, and church?

ROMANS 13

From where does morality come, then? From God, through the power of His Spirit revealing the truth of Jesus. Morality must work its way into national life through citizens who know, love, and sincerely desire to please God. When that happens, a nation becomes morally strong, and justice becomes a reality. Nations will not become strong by laws but by the character of her citizens.

Verse 11 of this chapter propels us into paying our debt of love “understanding the present time.” The time is coming when there shall be no more time here on Earth to live out our faith as we know it now. Jonathan Edwards urged us never to lose one moment of time but to improve on each precious moment. We are accountable to God for our time. How can we improve on our time? The answer is summed up in verses 8-10 and the commandment Jesus gave, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind”; and ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’” (Luke 10:27) Do we as Christians truly take hold of that command? Do we pray and ask God for the strength to make that love a reality in our lives? What would the church look like if it woke up and responded to an unbelieving world with that kind of love? Are we awake to this unique moment to live for God and witness to others about His grace? Will you and I wake up, put on the ‘armor of light’, and begin to live and share the gospel? That is the greatest demonstration of love. People are dying eternally who do not know the forgiving blood of the Savior. Paul reminds us we have fewer days now to love others and serve Christ because Jesus Christ’s return is closer today than yesterday.

The revival that took place in the American colonies under the preaching of godly men was called the “Great Awakening.” After hearing these men preach, people who thought of themselves as Christians woke up to the fact that they did not have a living, ongoing personal relationship with God. Once awakened, they heard the gospel and believed it. After believing, they gave evidence in their lives that they were spiritually regenerated or born again. We are in need of another “Great Awakening” in many parts of the world today.

Let each of us commit our lives to fulfill the purpose that God has planned for us. Now is the time to touch the world by His love. Now is the time to take off the ‘grave cloths’ and truly count ourselves dead to sin and be clothed with the risen Lord Jesus Christ! One day when our time is finished here on Earth, we will stand before God, covered by the precious blood of Jesus. Let us live our lives now gratefully praising Him as we will into eternity!

What is faith?

Faith is knowing God as revealed in His Word and trusting firmly in the promises of Jesus Christ to save His people. Hebrews 11:1, 6; Job 19:25; Psalm 46:10; Luke 1:4; John 17:3, 20:31, 21:24; 2 Timothy 1:12; 1 John 5:13

Memory Verse

“Let no debt remain outstanding except the continuing debt to love one another, for he who loves his fellow man has fulfilled the law.” Romans 13:8

ROMANS 14

1. List some different practices among Christians that you think are disputable. Personally, are you judging others in any of these practices?

2. Verses 11-12 tells us that “each of us will give an account of himself to God.” Why does this take away our need to judge others?

3. From verses 17-18, tell what “the kingdom of God” is about. How can we live for Christ in this way?

4. How can you apply verses 19-21 in your life today?

5. State the principle of verses 22-23 in your own words.

ROMANS 14

The theme of Romans 14 is responsibility. As we approach the end of this great letter to the Romans, Paul has one more major point he wants to impart to those who will listen. It is the way Christians accept or fail to accept other Christians. Paul considers this subject to be very important, for he devotes one and a half chapters to it. The command to love and accept other Christians should be foremost in our hearts and minds as we work in unity with Christ and His children. Christians are the family of God, and just as in a family there will be members who can handle more responsibility there will also be members who are learning how to walk. We do not judge the young children of a family because they cannot do certain tasks. We know that there is a maturing process and our role as parents is to guide and instruct them to become mature adults. Christians should not pass judgment on or condemn weaker believers.

Paul is trying to help us understand the divisive nature of disputable matters. What are disputable matters? Those truths and principles which are not essential for salvation and about which the Bible does not give definite instruction. Christians can disagree on certain issues without being disagreeable, arrogant, or contemptuous. Our one master is Christ. It is He whom we serve. Our relationship with other believers is to love and support them as Christ loved us. A church that teaches the complete gospel should not be divided by nonessential personal choices. In Paul's day Christians were judgmental about eating habits and days of worship. In our day we sometimes superficially judge other Christians about styles of worship, music, or the clothes they wear. We should not let divisions form in the church over such issues. Christians have a responsibility to bring the gospel of Jesus Christ to an unbelieving world. Unfortunately we can sometimes spend far too much time grumbling against each other instead of focusing on the incredible task that God desires for us to accomplish.

We have the ability to serve others as Jesus would, with a humble and meek heart. That ability does not come from us as Paul says in 1 Corinthians 1:30. "It is because of Him (God) that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God- that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption." The concept of humble service to others was so important to Jesus that He spent much of the final evening with His disciples, showing them the extent of His love. In John 13, after Jesus washed the feet of His disciples, He told them that He was setting an example of servant leadership. The world will take notice of Christians as we follow Jesus' example and demonstrate our love in service and acceptance of others.

Although in Christ we have freedom from rituals and rules, we must use our freedom in a way that is supportive and encouraging of others. We should not use our freedom in a way that might cause others to regard it as an excuse to do whatever we please. Each one of us should be convinced in our own mind that what we do is done with a clear conscience before God. Life is short; we know earthly pleasures are not only passing, but in many cases deceiving and destructive. In any case, they will be vastly overshadowed by the far greater joys of heaven. Let us take hold of our freedom in Christ and seek in His strength to do all we can to build each other.

Romans 14:10-11 tells us that each person will stand before God's judgment seat, and on that day "every knee will bow and every tongue confess to God." We can all trust that God's judgment will be just, for that is part of who God is and what He does. This fact should help us stop passing judgment on one another since it is not our place to judge anyone else's servant. "To his own master he stands or falls. And he will stand, for the Lord is able to make him stand." (Romans 14:4)

Certainly, there is a deep and unavoidable chasm between those who know Jesus Christ as Savior and those who do not, a division between life and death, heaven and hell. But this division should not exist between believers. In John 17:22 Jesus prays, "I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one."

Christians must examine their hearts and lifestyle to see if they are putting stumbling blocks between themselves and other Christians. Do our thoughts or actions reflect a pious, self-righteous,

judgmental attitude toward our weaker brothers and sisters? Or is our desire to come alongside them, striving together to encourage and uphold in prayer those who are growing in Christ? Practical Christianity will only be lived out as we place our needs at the foot of the cross and help and encourage others to do the same.

In Romans 14:17, Paul writes, “For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.” This verse explains what our lives can look like as lived out by the power of the Holy Spirit. Rather than putting stumbling blocks in our brother’s and sister’s way, we will consider their needs before ours. As Christians prayerfully seek God, His righteousness, peace, and joy will be reflected in our lives. God offers us the righteousness of Jesus Christ Himself. The offer is given through faith, which is the channel by which sinners receive Christ’s righteousness from God. Our peace with God is a gift that comes with salvation. Peace in our circumstances is a process that develops as the believer learns to praise, thank and petition God. (see Philippians 4:6-7) The joy of our salvation lies in the grace of God. Nehemiah proclaimed this great truth, “Do not grieve, for the joy of the Lord is your strength.” (Nehemiah 8:10)

Christians are to serve God with a clear conscience. Our conscience becomes clear as we trust that our sins are forgiven. Sin will always affect your ministry to others. We should continually examine ourselves in prayer as King David did in Psalm 139:23-24, “Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me and lead me in the way everlasting.” Our relationship with other Christians should be helping and building the church of Jesus Christ. We must strive to make every effort that leads to peace and mutual edification of each believer.

God is actively building His temple, the church, on earth. We do not know what is going on inside hearts as the Holy Spirit creates new life and adds individuals to the temple. We may not even fully realize the part we are playing as we seek to build and encourage others. But we must be willing to lay aside petty differences, prejudices, and fear as we labor in love for others. We are God’s workmen, laboring together with Jesus Christ. We have the privilege to do our part in building His temple. In Matthew 16:15, Jesus asked his disciples, “Who do you say I am?” Peter answers, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” This truth is our firm foundation. We must do our part of the building well, with the righteousness, peace, and joy that comes from being in the Holy Spirit. Christ has called us to be servants, living in faith, loving and caring for each other. Pray that all Christians would live by faith and act in love as we draw our strength from Christ.

What is justification?

Justification is God’s declaring that all my sins are forgiven and that I am accepted as righteous in God’s sight, all for the sake of Jesus Christ. Galatians 2:16; Romans 5:18, 3:24

Memory Verse

“For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit, because anyone who serves Christ in this way is pleasing to God and approved by men.” Romans 14:17-18

ROMANS 15:1-13

1. How does pleasing one's neighbor for his good differ from "people pleasing." Who do you focus on pleasing - yourself, others, or Christ?

2. Compare verse 4 with 2 Timothy 3:16 and 1 Corinthians 10:11. Why is it essential for Christians to study the Bible?

3. List some examples of prejudice you observe around you. Explain how verse 7 helps keep Christians from prejudice.

4. God's promise to Abram (Genesis 12:3) was "all people on earth will be blessed through you." The patriarchs rejoiced in knowing all nations would come to faith. How are you reaching out to your family, neighbors, and friends to help them come to love and trust Jesus as Savior?

5. What makes it possible for Christians to have hope? (See Romans 15:13) How would you be different if you were able to overflow with joy and peace?

ROMANS 15:1-13

Can we know God's will? Yes, He desires that we do. God's will for us stated in Romans 15:1-3 is that Christians would bear with the failings of the weak and live not to please ourselves, but for our neighbor's good, building him up. Jesus Christ set the example in His willingness to bear the insults of His children. What is God's will for those who have come to Him by faith in Jesus Christ? First, to love Him with all our heart, soul, mind and strength and, secondly, to love our neighbor as ourselves. (Mark 12:30-31; Romans 13:8-10) This is accomplished by Christ's Spirit working in and through us. Christ's power comes when we repent, acknowledge our powerlessness and trust Him. The book of Romans has been teaching us that Christ changes hearts and minds through the power of His gospel, His indwelling Holy Spirit and His Word. The challenge is, do we live our lives trusting in the power that God has provided?

Paul marks our direction to hope in Romans 15:4 saying, "everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope." The pathway leads through the teaching and encouragement the Bible provides. God caused all the writers of the Bible to write as they did because He wanted His people through the ages to be edified and encouraged. (see 2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:19-21; 1 Corinthians 10:11) It is for our benefit that we learn what was written in the past. For example, James 5:10-11 reminds us of the perseverance of Job and the Lord's compassion. The Scriptures are the record of God's faithfulness to His people. A Christian who says in words or actions that he does not have time to read the Bible is a Christian who must come back to this gift God has given for our edification. Christians cannot live spiritually healthy lives without the Scriptures.

What is the opposite of hope? Discouragement. Sometimes discouragement comes as a result of sin. We give in to our old nature and hold on to the guilt which accompanies sin. Instead, we should surrender to our new nature, open the Bible and read. 1 John 2:1 tells us, "My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have One who speaks to the Father in our defense - Jesus Christ the Righteous One." We know from 1 John 1:9 that God is faithful to forgive us and cleanse our repentant hearts. Is your discouragement rooted in sin? God wants to replace discouragement with hope.

Paul's prayer in verse 5 is that God who gives endurance and encouragement will also give a spirit of unity among the followers of Christ Jesus, so that we would glorify Him with one heart and mouth. As we understand and apply God's Word in our lives, the result is hope and unity within the Church. Do you in your church long to show glory to God through Christ to your generation and the generations to come? According to verse 7, we can bring praise to God by accepting one another just as Christ accepted each of us. Christians need to pray and build each other up in sincere love to uphold the truths that we learn from Scriptures.

In verses 7-12 Paul presents proof to Jewish believers and nonbelievers that God's plan for His people always included the Gentiles. He makes his point through the promises made to the patriarchs and prophets. He shows that throughout Old Testament scripture it was God's intention for Jews and Gentiles to one day sing praises together to the one true God. He is appealing for the church through Christ to be of one heart and mouth to glorify God in words and actions.

Jesus is the Savior of the world sent for all nations. Many Jewish people of Christ's day expected the Messiah to be a king who would rule on the throne of David and drive the Romans out of Palestine. But Jesus was not that kind of Messiah. As He told His disciples, "the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve and to give His life as a ransom for many." (Matthew 20:28) Paul wanted His fellow Jews to understand that the Messiah came to take away the sins of the world so that all people may call upon His name and be saved. Paul reminds the Jewish believers of how King David looked forward to a time when Gentiles would know God and praise Him in spirit and truth. (Romans 15:9 quotes Psalm 18:49; Romans 15:11 quotes Psalm 117:1)

Romans 15:13 is a prayer for all those who trust in Christ. "May the God of hope fill you with

all joy and peace as you trust in Him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.” The joy Paul speaks of in this verse is knowing that Christ is the author of our salvation and we are sealed in Him forever. Peace is not just the absence of conflict or problems. Christians have peace *with* God (Romans 5:1) and the peace *of* God (Philippians 4:5-6). Joy and peace are gifts of God which come from trusting Him. Christians, just like other people, have problems. We can and will become fearful and discouraged. But God, who desires for us to come and speak to Him of our needs, says us in Hebrews 13:5, “Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.” Christians can overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. The phrase “by the power of the Holy Spirit” is used in this verse, reminding us that nothing of any spiritual value is possible in or of ourselves. It can only be by the power of the Holy Spirit. In reaching out and overflowing to others, we see Christ working through our hearts and minds. He gives us the ability to stop focusing on ourselves and begin looking for opportunities to serve others as He did.

The book of Romans is said to bring revival to the hearts and minds of people who seek after Christ. Romans 15:13 is certainly a verse upon which we can base spiritual revival. Hope is the key idea of this verse, as it has been since verse 4. Paul links hope to God, speaking of Him as “the God of hope.” When we have hope in Him, our hope is secure. Reality becomes living for Him now, with our eyes on our eternal home. If we rely on the strength and promises of the world, we are indeed “without hope” (Ephesians 2:12); but as soon as God enters the picture, the situation changes. Faith is the necessary channel for His hope to come. It is a gift from God, and it becomes ours as we trust in Him.

How are you justified by faith?

Justifying faith is not based on what I do. Rather, I look away from myself to what Christ alone has done. Romans 3:22-26, 4:20-25

Memory Verse

“May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.” Romans 15:13

ROMANS 15:14-33

1. Paul was convinced that those of the church of Rome were competent to instruct one another. What do you think gave Paul that confidence? Why should you feel confident, through the grace of God, in your ability to instruct and share God's truth with others?

2. In what way did Paul fulfill the role of a priest? What priestly duties could you perform today for your family, relatives, or church?

3. Paul's desire was to go to Spain to continue spreading the gospel. Personally, how could you assist in the missionary efforts of your church to reach the world with the truth of His Word?

4. What did Paul urge the church to pray for him personally? Who have you asked to pray for you as you follow God's will for your life?

5. In verse 15:33 Paul makes a request, "The God of peace be with you all." In what area of your life will you ask the God of peace to minister to you today?

ROMANS 15:14-33

In this great letter to the Christians in Rome, Paul has unfolded the doctrine of justification by faith in its many ramifications. Paul's heartfelt desire is to assure Christians of their permanent and sure salvation. He understood that as people come to know and trust in what God has already done for them, they will be able to tell others, not in a legalistic way but out of an overflow of love. Paul has taught us practical applications of theology in such areas as yielding our minds to Jesus, holding a right opinion of ourselves and others, the relationship of Christians to the state, how believers are to live in light of the imminent return of Christ, and the need for Christians to accept and value one another.

In verse 16 of this chapter Paul explains the purpose of his ministry and ours to "proclaim the gospel of God." God had directed Paul in his priestly duty to be a minister to the Gentiles. Paul is now encouraging the Romans and all those who will read this letter to bring the "Good News" to the world. It seems strange to hear Paul refer to his "priestly duties." The early church's preachers, pastors, or ministers are never called priests in the New Testament. That is because we have only one priest, Jesus Christ, as explained in Hebrews 5:14-16 and 10:11-14. He alone has made atonement for our sins by His death on the cross, and He, along with the Holy Spirit, intercede for us to the Father. (Romans 8:27, 34) The priestly duty to which Paul refers is gospel teaching. The task of a minister, and each believer, is to proclaim the gospel.

The Gospel teaches that God has provided a way for us to be saved from sin through the work of Jesus Christ. Unfortunately, many people today do not recognize themselves as sinners in need of a Savior. Their lives conform to the culture around them and they imagine themselves to be "good enough" for God. In the book of Romans Paul has shown us the nature and extent of sin. He did this to help us understand the incredible gift of God's saving grace. We also see in Romans that while the gospel is simple it is not simplistic. Faith comes first, then full understanding and appreciation take time.

Paul's desire for the Gentiles was that God would sanctify them by the Holy Spirit. The process of sanctification begins when we become Christians. The reign of sin and self is broken and Christ becomes Lord. Sanctification continues as Christians offer their bodies, moment by moment, to God "as living sacrifices." (see Romans 12:1-2) Paul is urging us to be an effective, hard working, God-glorifying, dedicated church. This will happen by God's grace and the teaching of the truths found in Scripture.

Throughout the New Testament we come to understand we have direct access to the Father through Christ. But with that access there comes responsibility. That responsibility is addressed in the conversation of Jesus and Peter in John 21:17, "Do you love me?" "Yes, Lord, you know I love you." "Feed my sheep." If we truly love Him we will seek with every fiber of our being to know Him, in prayer and in the study of His Word. We will also follow Him and obey His commands. Paul's passion was to proclaim the Gospel, "so that the Gentiles might become an offering acceptable to God, sanctified by the Holy Spirit." In verse 14 we see Paul was convinced that the Christians in Rome were capable of proclaiming the Gospel of faith and grace. The problem today is many Christians do not believe they are "complete in knowledge and competent to instruct one another." Often for that reason they remain silent when clarification of God's truth is needed. The disturbing part of our silence is that those who oppose the cause of Christ in our society are not silent. Those who teach a false or incomplete gospel are quite vocal! Remember, if you have a personal relationship with Christ, you have the Holy Spirit living in you, and a testimony about what Jesus has done for you. John tells us in Revelation 12:10 how we overcome. "They overcame him (the accuser) by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony." We have the responsibility and privilege given in the words of Isaiah 66:19, "They will proclaim my glory among the nations."

Paul had a deep love for the service he did for Jesus Christ. God blessed his work greatly, but

Paul also experienced hardships, threats, beatings, dangers, and rejections. (2 Corinthians 11:23-29) In these verses he “boasts” about what God had accomplished through the hardships, “in leading the Gentiles to obey God.” There is such a thing as a proper kind of pride, not in what we have done, but what God is doing through us. In 2 Corinthians 11:30 we see why Paul can boast about the hardship he faced. He understood that he was too weak to withstand the hardship he faced. It was only in the strength of Christ that Paul was able not only to endure but give God the glory and praise for what Christ was doing through him. We serve a living God who desires to reach His world through us. He also desires to strengthen, lead, and guide us as we trust in Him. 2 Chronicles 16:9 states, “for the eyes of the Lord range throughout the earth to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to Him.” Christ’s love had changed Paul from a proud, stubborn, self-righteous murderer of God’s people into the greatest pioneer missionary the world has ever seen.

Paul’s desire was to go to Spain to preach the gospel, “where Christ was not known.” Whether or not he got there is an open question depending on whether he was imprisoned in Rome one or two times. But the principle of verse 24 is very important. Here he seems to be trying to recruit members of the church in Rome to become what we would call a home support team. Paul understood his need for prayer, and in verse 30 he asks the Christians in Rome to pray for him. We know that no one can do God’s work alone. Paul knew he would face difficulties in Jerusalem. He urges the Christians in Rome to pray specifically that he would be rescued from the unbelievers in Judea. He also asked them to pray that his service would be acceptable to the saints there, and that he could come to Rome. (Romans 15:31) Their prayers were effective, as we see Paul being rescued from the unbelievers in Judea. (Acts 21:31-33) His service was “acceptable to the saints there” and helped bridge the gap between Jewish and Gentile Christians. He also did get to Rome, perhaps not as he may have planned, but as a prisoner of the Roman emperor. Paul understood that prayer is not only effective, it is the necessary starting point of work for Christians.

There are often two common errors in our understanding of prayer. The first brings a superficiality to prayer, thinking that God is sovereign and that His will is always done no matter whether we pray or not. That belief, though true, can err in deducing that prayer is unimportant, except in regard to how it changes us. The opposite side of the coin makes God somehow weakly dependent upon us, as if God is impotent apart from our prayers. The right understanding of prayer is that God not only appoints the end to be obtained, He appoints the means to attain that end, and God’s appointed means to spiritual blessing and work is prayer. Paul shows us prayer is the source for our strength and success! We must pray specifically and pro-actively for ourselves and others.

What is sanctification?

Sanctification is the gracious work of God in making me holy. As I grow in faith and cooperate with the Holy Spirit, He helps me become more like Jesus Christ and live in holiness. Romans 6:8-14, 8:29; 2 Corinthians 3:18, 5:17; Galatians 2:20

Memory

“Therefore I glory in Christ Jesus in my service to God.” Romans 15:17

ROMANS 16

1. How many of the people mentioned in verses 3 - 15 are women? Why do you think the early church had such unity of gender, race, and economic status? What could you do to help bring this unity to your church today?

2. In verses 17-19 Paul gives us a warning. Why do you think Paul put in this warning at the close of his letter?

3. How would you relate verse 20 to Genesis 3:15? What is the assurance and hope we are given in verse 20?

4. What was the mystery to which Paul referred in verse 25? How is a person established in the gospel?

5. Write a brief introduction of yourself to a church in another country. How will you give glory to God for what He has done in your life?

ROMANS 16

In Chapter 16 we see the culmination of Paul's ministry. His love for God and his intense interest in people come together here. There is no better picture in all the Bible, possibly in all literature, of genuine Christian fellowship, than this snapshot of believers in Corinth, as they send greetings to the Christians in Rome. This chapter contains the names of many people to whom Paul was writing. When we look over this chapter, we get a sense of how close these people were to Paul, even though they were hundreds of miles away. He calls them "beloved" and praises them for their faithful service to him and one another. It is amazing to think that Paul, an incredibly busy and productive missionary, always kept his focus on personal relationships. He knew of the church that met in the home of Priscilla and Aquila. He remembered his first convert in Asia. He recognized the work of the many men and women who served the Lord. One can sense the fatherly love that Paul had for these individuals. Paul's ministry was not driven by task, but by mutual love and respect for each of his brothers and sisters in Christ. Do we love other Christians like that? Especially Christians who are not quite like ourselves? Are we willing to forget our unessential differences and take hold of who we are in Christ? This is a fascinating picture of the New Testament church. In this church there was no difference between "Jew or Greek, slave or free, male or female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus." (Galatians 3:28) That concept is a radical change for the self-centered ethnic thinking of our day, let alone in the first century.

The first of the many people Paul mentions is Phoebe. It seems most likely that Phoebe was the bearer of the letter to the church in Rome. We are probably right to suppose that she is a single, and no doubt prominent, woman. Phoebe had been of great help to many people, even Paul. Now she was called to be an even greater servant to the church, for she was trusted to carry the words that have been a blessing to countless thousands throughout the ages.

In the first centuries none of the Christians worried about brotherhood. They simply ignored the differences dividing the rough Roman world and came together as followers of Jesus Christ. It was an actual oneness, above all human distinctions. The recorder of Paul's words was Tertius. Tertius is the name of a slave. The name itself means "three", indicating that Tertius was the number three slave probably in the household of Gaius. In verse 23 we have another slave, Quartus, number four, sending greetings along with Erastus, the prominent city director of public works. They were sending greetings to people they had probably never met but to whom they felt an attachment because of their common identity as believers in Christ. This group of believers had a common link which made them equal before their Creator. Each one understood that they were important enough for our Lord and Savior to give his life in exchange for them.

Before Paul closes his letter to the Romans, he gives them one last warning about "those who cause divisions and put obstacles in your way that are contrary to the teaching you have learned." Divisiveness in the family of God, except over the truth of scripture, must be avoided. Instead we should listen to the words of 1 Peter 2:1-3, "therefore, rid yourselves of all malice and all deceit, hypocrisy, envy and slander, of every kind. Like newborn babies crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation, now that you have tasted that the Lord is good." Deception and divisiveness are not of the Lord. Paul tells us that these people will teach things contrary to the truth found in Scripture. In verse 19 we are instructed to be wise about what is good, and innocent about what is evil. Paul links those who cause divisions with Satan, the father of lies and destroyer of relationships. (John 8:44) Satan, through our sinful desires, encourages pride, self-centeredness and greed. Never strive to understand evil. It is impossible to remain innocent of evil if you experiment with it or explore it. Many Christians have fallen into the mistake of trying to "understand the enemy." However, in their understanding they find themselves caught in the trap of sin. Scripture instructs us in James 4:2, "Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." Our responsibility is not to understand our enemy but to cling to our Savior. It is God who will crush Satan under our feet as we submit to His leadership in our life.

In the garden of Eden the plan for God's victory is seen. Genesis 3:15 says, "and I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring (seed) and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel." Every person since the creation of Adam and Eve was born by the seed of man, except Jesus. "But when the time had fully come, God sent His Son, born of a woman." (Galatians 4:4) The conception of Jesus was not by the seed of man. It was between God and Mary, as told in Matthew 1:20-21, "What is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son, and you will give Him the name Jesus, because He will save his people from their sin." The words of Genesis 3:15 tell us what God will do to Satan, "crush his head." In Romans 16:20 we see that it is the God of peace, Jesus, the Prince of Peace (Isaiah 9:6), who crushes Satan under our feet. This was accomplished upon the cross, with the prophetic words, "It is finished!" It continues to be accomplished in every generation as people are redeemed from sin and darkness by the Lord Jesus Christ. Christians need never to live in fear of Satan for we have the promise of Romans 16:20.

Do you ever marvel, as Paul did, at the grace of God, who reaches down from heaven to save sinners such as you and I? No one is worthy to receive this amazing gift of life, but God gives it freely to all who believe. He establishes us by His gospel. He desires that we, with grateful hearts, proclaim Jesus to all nations so that others would come to love, follow and obey. Why does God desire our obedience? Because He knows it is the highest "good" for us, becoming one with Him through the Lord Jesus Christ.

Throughout the book of Romans we see Paul's desire to teach sound Christian theology. He knew that doctrine would only be effective as it is lived out in the minds, hearts, and actions of those who believe. God's grace is the theme of the book of Romans. It is the most important doctrine you can ever study. Paul understood that grace plus anything else is not the true gospel. Do you believe and trust Jesus as your Lord and Savior? Then live your life in abandonment to the truth of His Word and His promises for you. Do you desire to work for God? Don't be afraid. Give your heart in prayer to Him and He will direct you. God's will for Paul was to spread God's Word to the unbelieving world around Him. The entire epistle of Romans has been an unfolding of truths to meet that will.

The gospel is neither human in its origin nor its power. The gospel is the truth of God's love for all mankind. It is communicated to us through the power of His Word, revealed by His Spirit. It's origins are in God. It is accomplished by God, and has God's own glory as its goal. It is, as Paul says, a "mystery hidden for long ages past, but now revealed and made known through the prophetic writings by the command of the eternal God, so that all nations might believe and obey Him." God, through Paul, has revealed and explained this mystery throughout Romans. As the angel proclaimed in Bethlehem, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; He is Christ the Lord." Nothing in all the world is greater than the gospel. In conclusion we join with Paul saying, "to the only wise God be glory, forever through Jesus Christ. Amen!"