

■ GRACE IN THE WORD ■

THE BOOK OF ROMANS





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CHURCH**

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WHAT IS YOUR HOPE FOR THIS STUDY IN GOD'S WORD?

WELCOME TO ■ GRACE IN THE WORD ■

ABOUT THIS READING PLAN

This reading plan walks you through the book of Romans.

Each day's reading includes: a passage from the Book of Romans, a commentary, devotional, or reflection thought to process the biblical reading more intentionally, and space for you to write thoughts or questions from that day's corresponding scripture or reflection.

Check out graceclarksville.com/graceintheword for additional resources, and join our Facebook community at facebook.com/groups/graceintheword

The study material in this guide was adapted from *Romans 1-7 For You & Romans 8-16 For You* by Timothy Keller, *The Message of Romans: God's Good News for the World* by John Stott, *Romans: Verse by Verse* by Grant Osborne, *Paul for Everyone: Romans, Part 2: Chapters 9-16* by N.T Wright, *Romans New Covenant Commentary* by Craig Keener, *In View of God's Mercies* by Courtney Doctor, *Enduring Word Commentary* by David Guzik and *Romans: The Gospel-Centered Life* by Jeremy and Kristin Schmucker.

WATCH ROMANS OVERVIEW PART 1

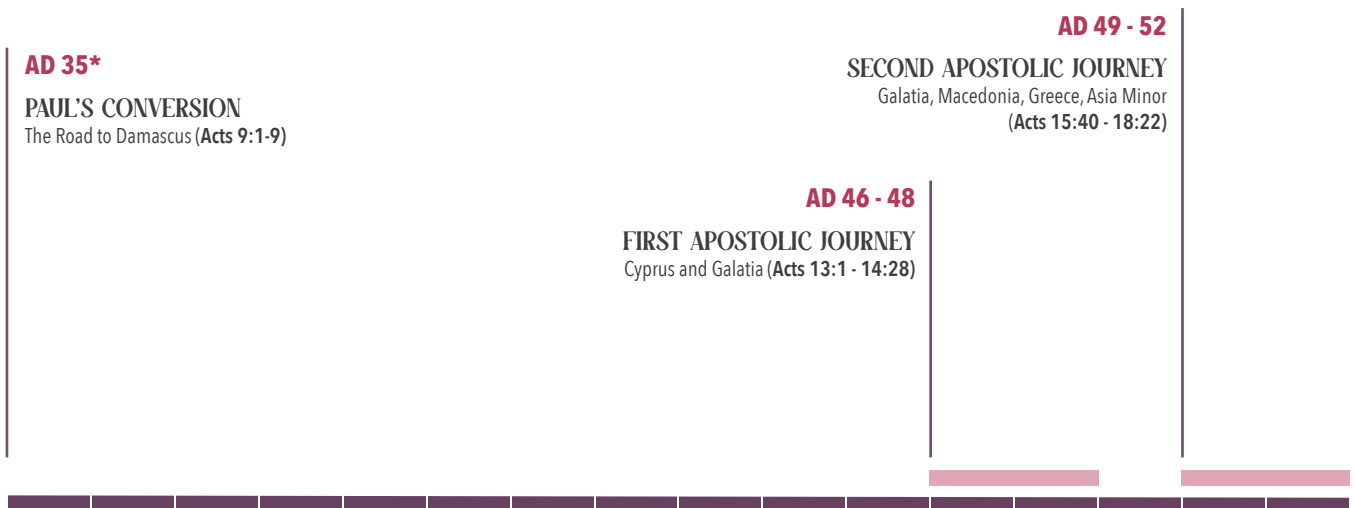


WATCH ROMANS OVERVIEW PART 2



IMPORTANCE OF THE BOOK OF ROMANS

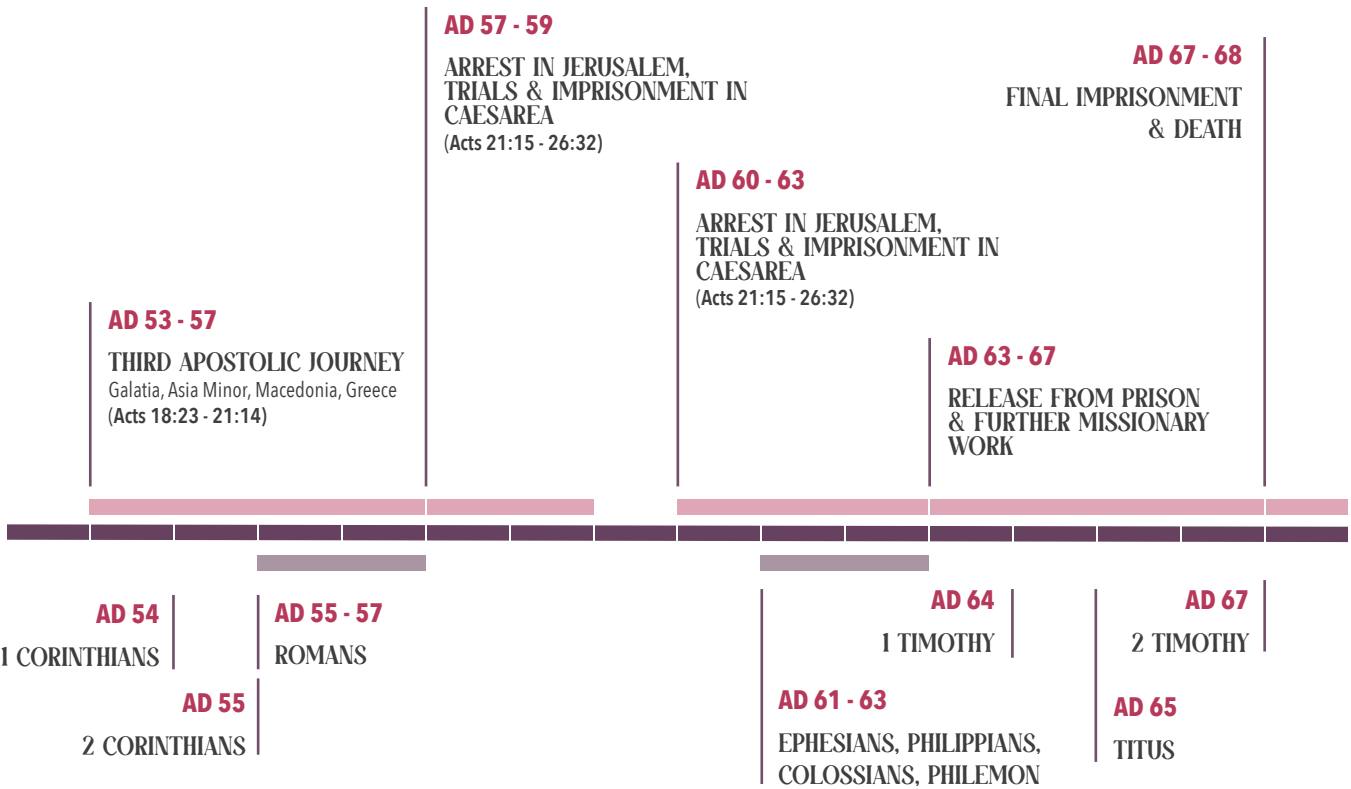
Paul's letter to the Romans gives us a rich and comprehensive picture of several foundational aspects of the Christian faith. Paul's hope for this letter is to provide Christians who have already believed and trusted in Jesus an important reminder to keep their eyes on the message of the gospel. It is easy to accept the gospel when you say yes to Jesus and then forget how the gospel should shape our everyday lives. In this six-week study, we will focus on the truth of the gospel and how this message should inform every aspect of our lives.



Paul wrote many epistles (letter) during his missionary journeys. These letters form a large part of the New Testament and offer pastoral care and theological guidance to the early church and for us today.

AD 49
GALATIANS

AD 51
1 & 2 THESSALONIANS



A ROMANS ■ GLOSSARY OF TERMS ■

The following are terms or ideas prevalent throughout Paul's letter to the church in Rome that are important to understand to fully grasp the message Paul is conveying.

General Revelation- "The knowledge of God's existence, character, and moral law that comes through creation to all humanity." -Wayne Grudem *Systematic Theology*

Circumcision- The physical and spiritual marking of a male follower of God. This practice began through God's covenant with Abraham (Genesis 17) to mark Abraham and his descendants as God's chosen people. The act of circumcision was a physical sign to show that these people were the people of God. The act of circumcision was, and remains, a common practice of the Jewish people to show faith in God. Paul, also a Jewish man, later referred to circumcision as not a physical act but a spiritual act (Romans 2:28-29) that all believers of Jesus go through within their hearts.

Jew - "Jew" primarily refers to a person of Jewish ethnicity belonging to the people of Israel, descendants of the ancient Hebrews. A Jew was identified by their adherence to the Mosaic Law (Torah), including practices like circumcision, observing the Sabbath, and following dietary laws. Religiously, a Jew worshiped the God of Israel and was part of the covenant community of people chosen by God. In the book of Romans, Paul redefines "Jew" to include those faithful to God not just by external observance but by an inner transformation of the heart, emphasizing faith and the work of the Holy Spirit. This theological perspective was crucial to Paul's mission, as he preached to both Jews and Gentiles about the inclusion of all people in God's covenant through faith in Jesus Christ. (Romans 2)

Gentile - "Gentile" refers to anyone not of Jewish descent. It describes all the peoples and nations outside of the Jewish community, regardless of their ethnic or cultural background. At the time, Gentiles were those who did not follow the Mosaic Law, were not circumcised, and did not worship the God of Israel. They were often associated with pagan practices and polytheistic religions. Paul's teaching in Romans broke down the traditional barriers between Jews and Gentiles, stating that salvation was available to all people.

The Law of God - God's commandments, statutes, and instructions to His people, the Jews. The Law of God can be found in the Torah (also referred to as the Pentateuch), which consists of the first five books of the Old Testament. These laws consist of moral laws, ceremonial laws, and civil laws. "The Law" is seen as a vital part of God's revelation but one that ultimately points beyond itself to the need for faith in Christ, who fulfills the Law and brings about the possibility of true righteousness and life through the Spirit.

Justification by Faith - The legal standing of a Christian—that through faith in Christ, we have been justified and declared righteous by God, once and for all. Christ's righteousness covers us and is what God sees when He looks at us. (Is. 61:10). This is not based on anything we have done but is a gift from God, made possible through the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross, where He atoned for our sins. Justification is a one-time work of God on our behalf that happens when we admit our sin and need for a Savior and put our faith in the saving work of Jesus. This puts us back in right relationship with God. (Romans 5)

Sanctification - Sanctification is an ongoing process that requires daily surrender to obey and submit to the Holy Spirit's conviction in our hearts. As believers die daily to their flesh and walk in step with the Spirit, their lives will begin to bear the fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, gentleness, faithfulness, and self-control. (Romans 6:6)

INTRODUCTION AND ■ PURPOSE OF ROMANS ■

WHEN:

The Apostle Paul wrote the Book of Romans as a letter to the Christian community in Rome that he hoped to visit soon. This book is one of Paul's most robust and significant theological works. Romans was most likely written around A.D. 55 - 57 while he was in Corinth, preparing to visit Rome on his way to Spain during his third missionary journey.

WHO:

This letter addresses the Christian church in Rome, which included both Jewish and Gentile (non-Jewish) believers. This diverse audience is significant, as it influences Paul's themes regarding the law and grace. Romans is also the first of Paul's recorded letters to a church, which he did not personally start. He hoped the church at Rome would be a launching point for his mission to the west like the church in Antioch was for his three missionary journeys to the east.

WHY:

Paul writes to introduce himself to the Roman Christians and Jewish people to establish a relationship with them for his future visit. Romans is considered a foundational theological text for understanding Christian doctrine, particularly regarding salvation, grace, and faith. Its influence has been profound throughout Christian history, shaping theological thought and prompting significant movements.

Here are the primary purposes behind Paul's writing of Romans:

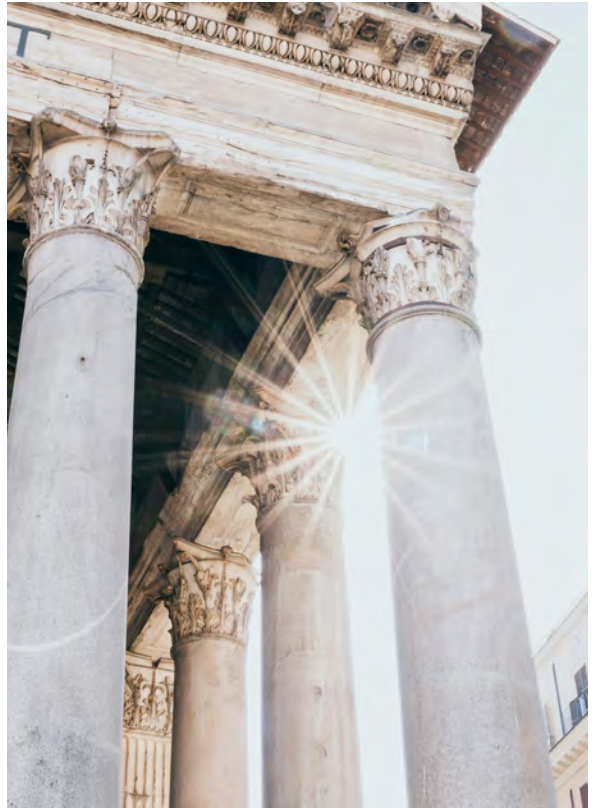
- 1. Clarification of the Gospel:** Romans tackles key doctrines such as justification by faith, the role of the law, and the nature of sin and salvation. Paul wanted the Roman believers to understand these foundational truths clearly.
- 2. Unity among Believers based on Justification by Faith:** The Roman church was composed of both Jew and Gentile Christians who were fighting over the place of the law in the Christian life. Gentiles believed that Christ had fulfilled the place of the law and that they were, therefore, free from its demands. Jewish Christians thought the food and ceremonial traditions mandated by the law were still binding. Paul wants them to seek unity under the banner of Jesus' work on the cross, where they are saved by grace through faith alone, not by their adherence to the law.
- 3. Walking in the Spirit:** Paul stresses living in the Spirit rather than living by the flesh. He provides practical advice and encouragement for living out the Christian faith. He also addresses ethical issues, the importance of love and humility, and the responsibilities of Christians in society.
- 4. Hope for Continued Spread of the Gospel:** Paul expressed his desire to visit Rome and use it as a base for further missionary work in Spain. He sought the support and prayers of the Roman Christians for his mission, hoping to involve them in the broader work of spreading the gospel.

By writing Romans, Paul sought to strengthen the faith of the Roman believers, unify the church, and prepare for his future missionary endeavors. The letter reflects his deep commitment to spreading the gospel and fostering strong, vibrant Christian communities.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT & CURRENT APPLICATION

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

With this book, Paul is, in essence, announcing a transition in his ministry from spreading the gospel to churches in Greek-speaking areas to the western, more Latin-speaking half of the empire. At this time, however, he is targeting Rome as a strategic location to continue the spread of the gospel to all the world. Paul is writing this book hoping to visit Rome soon but does not know that he will be arrested in Jerusalem and arrive in Rome in chains. On his way to Rome, he suffers a shipwreck in the Mediterranean and ends up under house arrest for another two years. (see Acts 27-28) An important historical event in the history of the Roman church that set the stage for the Book of Romans is the expulsion of Jews from Rome under the emperor Claudius in A.D. 49 (Acts 18:2). Five years later, after Claudius' death, Jews would have begun to return to Rome to churches that would have been almost exclusively Gentile. When they did, they found a church that had become non-Jewish in its customs and practices. This cultural clash created a lot of tension, and by Paul's day, the Roman church was divided. They disagreed about how to follow Jesus and debated if non-Jewish Christians should observe the laws set out in the Old Testament. Since the Jewish believers had come to faith earlier than the Gentiles, the Jews returned and possibly wanted to take back leadership of the churches. Paul writes to clarify that there is one people of God—all who are justified by faith in Christ (both Jews and Gentiles, since all have sinned) and who walk by the Spirit. Paul appeals to them to open their arms and welcome one another so that they can worship God together as one. Paul's letter tried to resolve some of these differences and unite these churches, emphasizing the unity in faith that binds them together.



APPLICATION FOR TODAY

Romans is a treatise—a study on the doctrine of salvation and an in-depth presentation of the gospel. The Jew-Gentile troubles in Rome reflected such differences throughout the Christian world, and Paul wanted this letter read everywhere, not just in Rome. He wished churches everywhere to know he was not opposed to the law and believed it was valid for Jewish Christians to live as they did as an expression of the level of their faith. God honored their conscience so long as their trust for salvation was anchored in the cross, not the law. Observance of food laws, holy days, and so on was viable so long as their true faith was in Christ, and such observances were an expression of their worship of him. Romans provides an important model for Christians today, who may differ in their theological underpinnings and worship style but not in their adherence to the cardinal doctrines of the faith. Unity and understanding are needed as much in the church today as in Paul's day. - Grant Osborne, *Romans: Verse by Verse*

A GUIDE TO DAILY ■ PRAYERS AND REFLECTIONS ■

BEFORE YOU READ GOD'S WORD TODAY, SEEK HIS HELP WITH THESE 5 PRAYERS

1. God, give me wisdom, knowledge, and understanding.
2. God, let any knowledge I gain help me love You and others more and not puff me up.
3. God, help me see something new about You I've never seen before.
4. God, correct any lies I believe about You or anything I misunderstand.
5. God, direct my steps according to Your Word.

** Prayers from *The Bible Recap Reading Plan* by Tara-Leigh Cobble **

TIPS FOR APPROACHING SCRIPTURE

- Pray before you read (use the prayers above)
- Read the words in proper context, taking into consideration when it was written, to whom it was written, and what was happening when it was written (a good study bible is helpful; we recommend the *ESV Study Bible*)
- Look for God's character and faithfulness to His people
- Look for themes that point to Jesus
- Look for anything repetitive, unusual, confusing, hopeful, comforting, challenging
- Once you are finished reading, take a few minutes to meditate on what you have read:
 - | Narrow down what you've read to just one or two main thoughts.
 - | What did I learn about God in these passages?
 - | How can I praise God for what this says about him?
 - | What did I learn about the human heart in these passages?
 - | What behavior/emotions come when I forget these things about God?
 - | What is God revealing to me today that I need to listen to?
 - | What sins do I need to confess in light of what God revealed today?
 - | What next step can I take in light of what I have read today?

■ WEEKLY CHECKLIST ■

WEEK ONE | Romans 1-3

- DAY 1 *Romans 1:1-17*
- DAY 2 *Romans 1:18-32*
- DAY 3 *Romans 2:1-16*
- DAY 4 *Romans 2:17-29*
- DAY 5 *Romans 3:1-20*
- DAY 6 *Romans 3:21-31*
- DAY 7 *Rest & Reflection Day*

WEEK FOUR | Romans 10-12

- DAY 1 *Romans 10:1-15*
- DAY 2 *Romans 10:16-21, 11:1-10*
- DAY 3 *Romans 11:11-36*
- DAY 4 *Romans 12:1-2*
- DAY 5 *Romans 12:3-8*
- DAY 6 *Romans 12:9-21*
- DAY 7 *Rest & Reflection Day*

WEEK TWO | Romans 4-6

- DAY 1 *Romans 4:1-12*
- DAY 2 *Romans 4:13-25*
- DAY 3 *Romans 5:1-11*
- DAY 4 *Romans 5:12-21*
- DAY 5 *Romans 6:1-14*
- DAY 6 *Romans 6:15-23*
- DAY 7 *Rest & Reflection Day*

WEEK FIVE | Romans 13-14

- DAY 1 *Romans 13:1-5*
- DAY 2 *Romans 13:6-7*
- DAY 3 *Romans 13:8-10*
- DAY 4 *Romans 13:11-14*
- DAY 5 *Romans 14:1-9*
- DAY 6 *Romans 14:5-23*
- DAY 7 *Rest & Reflection Day*

WEEK THREE | Romans 7-9

- DAY 1 *Romans 7:1-6*
- DAY 2 *Romans 7:7-25*
- DAY 3 *Romans 8:1-17*
- DAY 4 *Romans 8:18-30*
- DAY 5 *Romans 8:31-39*
- DAY 6 *Romans 9*
- DAY 7 *Rest & Reflection Day*

WEEK SIX | Romans 15-16

- DAY 1 *Romans 15:1-6*
- DAY 2 *Romans 15:7-13*
- DAY 3 *Romans 15:14-21*
- DAY 4 *Romans 15:22-33*
- DAY 5 *Romans 16*
- DAY 6 *Romans 3:21-31*
- DAY 7 *Rest & Reflection Day*

FOLLOW ALONG ON OUR APP!





ROMANS 1-3

■ WEEK 1 ■

"Only when we have faith do we truly fulfill the law."
- Romans 3:31

The Gospel and Justification through Faith - Salvation is available to everyone, including Jews and Gentiles, through faith in Jesus Christ. All have sinned and fall short of God's glory but are justified freely by His grace through faith in Jesus Christ. This justification is not based on works of the law but on faith.

WEEK 1, DAY 1
■ **MONDAY** ■
ROMANS 1:1-17

THE POWER OF THE GOSPEL

The gospel is an announcement—a declaration. The gospel is not advice to be followed; it is news, good news about what has been done. The apostle Paul is the herald of this announcement. It is a good reminder that the gospel is not Paul's; it did not originate with him and he did not claim the authority to craft it. Rather, it is "of God".

He (Paul) is not ashamed of the gospel because "it is the power of God" (v 16). Paul is often fond of contrasting "mere" words with power (see, for instance, 1 Corinthians 4:20). Paul is saying that the gospel is not merely a concept or a philosophy. In the gospel, words and power come together. The message of the gospel is what God has done and will do for us. Paul says that the gospel is therefore a power. He doesn't say it brings power or has power, but that it actually is power. The gospel message is actually the power of God in verbal, cognitive form. It lifts people up; it transforms and changes things. When it is outlined and explained, or reflected upon, its power is released.

Timothy Keller - *Romans 1-7 For You*



REFLECTION

Have you ever thought of the gospel as announcing the good news of God's power? Take a moment to think about the good news you have heard in your life. How does good news transform how you think about yourself and your life? How does good news transform the way you see the world around you? Ask yourself: has the gospel announcement transformed your life? How are you different today than before you heard the announcement of Jesus' saving grace?

As you wrap up your time of study and reflection today, ask the Lord to help you to see your life differently. Ask Him to help you throughout the next six weeks to hear the announcement of the good news of His Son and what His grace and sacrifice should mean for you today and every day. Ask Him to be filled with an unashamed awe of His power and goodness.

WEEK 1, DAY 2
■ **TUESDAY** ■
ROMANS 1:18-32

THE UNDENIABLE EVIDENCE OF GOD

Paul continues his thought on the power of God and the gospel by highlighting how man has always been invited to experience the power of God and, in return, glorify Him for it. He addresses the undeniable attributes of God that reign through in His creation. Biblical commentator David Guzik describes the evidence of God in creation this way:

His invisible attributes are clearly seen: God shows us something of His eternal power and divine nature through creation, by the things that are made. He has given a general revelation that is obvious both in creation and within the mind and heart of man...The problem is not that man did not know God, but that he did know Him - yet refused to glorify Him as God. Therefore, mankind is without excuse. Instead of glorifying God, we transformed our idea of Him into forms and images more comfortable to our corrupt and darkened hearts.

David Guzik - *Enduring Word Bible Commentary*

The point Paul is making in this part of his letter to the Romans is that we, people, are without excuse. We know God, even in the most basic sense, through creation. General revelation is the revelation of God that can be understood in the most basic and "general" sense through creation and the world around us. The evidence of God's character (His divinity, loving, good, powerful attributes) is found in creation. Paul points to the fact that people have not missed God but have abandoned God. He then lists all of the sins that run rampant in the history of mankind as a result of ignoring the power and authority of God. We are without excuse. There is a God who has made Himself known.

Refer to the Glossary of Terms on page 4 for more on general revelation.



REFLECTION

The problem is not our lack of knowledge of God but our inability to worship God because we have given our hearts towards worshipping something else. This is the point Paul is making in today's passage. Paul is making the point that our very world is meant to be a constant reminder of God's power, presence, goodness, wrath, love, foreknowledge, etc. The problem is that we miss it because we are walking blind. Today, take a moment, no matter the weather, go outside. Take a walk amongst God's creation. Draw near to the beauty that is His presence through His earthly creation. Use this time to reflect on God's goodness, power, strength, beauty, and love. Ask Him in this time to work on, in, and through your heart that it may become centered on worshipping Him above all else.

WEEK 1, DAY 3
■ WEDNESDAY ■
ROMANS 2:1-16

GOD THE JUDGE

Yesterday, we looked at Paul's address of the sin that has run rampant throughout history due to our abandonment of God and His power in our world and lives. Today, Paul continues this discussion by steering us from the temptation of judging the people of this world for their sinfulness. Why? Because we are all guilty of the sin of abandonment. "...you are just as bad." (Romans 2:1)

Paul is writing this for two reasons. One: to disarm us from our self-righteousness. We need more reminders like this, don't we? Paul is the equivalent of our GPS warning us of an accident ahead and to begin to slow down. He is telling us that before we give in to the desire to judge those around us for their sins and unrighteous lifestyle, look at ourselves and realize we have the root problem of sin in us, too. We ALL are guilty of abandoning God and His power for our own selfish, perverse, unhealthy desires. We are the idol-makers too. (Romans 2:23).

The second reason Paul reminds us that we are guilty of abandonment is to help us get back on track with God. The road towards God is not found through the highway of the self-righteous judgment of others but instead through humble awareness of our brokenness, our tendency toward abandonment of God, and through the conscious and hearty work of obedience. Paul reminds us that we are abandoners, not judges, but we can return through hearts set on the Savior, which demonstrates itself through obedience. Obedience to God flows out in our lives when judgment does not reign in our hearts.



REFLECTION

"the day is coming when God, through Christ Jesus, will judge everyone's secret life." -Romans 2:16

Today, as you reflect upon Paul's words, assess your secret life. Besides God, no one knows you better than you do. Assess the life (the thoughts, feelings, actions) you commit in secret. Ask yourself these questions: why is this part of my life secret? How does this secret part of my life point towards abandonment of God? How does this secret area of my life lack obedience to Him?

This is not an easy or fun task, but it is vital. It involves pruning the sinful work that corrupts our hearts. Don't stray from some serious, quiet time of reflection before God.

The final question in this reflection is the most important. How can I begin to let go of my secret life and walk in the light of my relationship with God? We pray for you today as you seek to unpack your heart and bring the secret life you keep away from Him to the purifying light of Jesus.

WEEK 1, DAY 4
■ THURSDAY ■
ROMANS 2:17-29

OBEDIENCE TO HIS LAW

Continuing off of yesterday's reading, Paul finishes his thoughts on the law. He explains that the Jewish people's birthright as God's children does not entitle them to blatantly break God's law. He highlights that Gentiles (a non-Jewish person) who follow the law are more like God's children than the Jewish people who know the law but don't follow it. At the very end of this thought, though, he writes something very interesting:

*"...a true Jew is one whose heart is right with God...
it is a change of heart produced by the spirit." - Romans 2:29*

In other words, Paul is saying that a true child of God has a heart that is changed because of the work of the Holy Spirit. A child of God has given their lives to the Lord. The freedom in this means that when we fall short of God's law, the Lord judges but does not separate His spirit from us. When we work for the praise of our God, it is because our hearts desire the Lord, not our way. This is the working of the Lord within us. This is how obedience to God's law works itself through our lives, not for the sake of religious pride but for the sake of heart-changed obedience to God.

Refer to the Glossary of Terms on page 4 for more context on the law, Jews, and Gentiles.



REFLECTION

Whose praise matters to you? Is it a spouse? Your children? A friend? A boss? A sibling? A parent? Who are you working to make proud? Far too often, the answer is ourselves. We live for ourselves and miss the One who rules over us. Take time today to focus your every action on praising God. Whatever you do today, try to do it to make God proud. At the end of the day, assess the difference in how you felt versus a day of living/working for yourself.

WEEK 1, DAY 5
■ **FRIDAY** ■
ROMANS 3:1-20

HOW SINFUL WE ARE

The principal point ...of the law... is to make men not better but worse; that is to say, it sheweth unto them their sin, that by the knowledge thereof they may be humbled, terrified, bruised and broken, and by this means may be driven to seek grace, and so come to that blessed Seed (Christ).

Martin Luther Commentary on St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians

In conclusion, how should we respond to Paul's devastating exposure of universal sin and guilt, as we read it now? We should not try to evade it by changing the subject and talking instead of the need for self-esteem, or by blaming our behaviour on our genes, nurturing, education or society. It is an essential part of our dignity as human beings that, however much we may have been affected by negative influences, we are not their helpless victims, but rather responsible for our conduct. Our first response to Paul's charge, then, should be to make it as certain as we possibly can that we have ourselves accepted this divine diagnosis of our human condition as true, and that we have fled from the just judgment of God on our sins to the only refuge there is, namely Jesus Christ who died for our sins. For we have no merit to plead and no excuse to make. We too stand before God speechless and condemned. Only then shall we be ready to hear the great 'But now' of verse 21, as Paul begins to explain how God has intervened through Christ and his cross for our salvation.

John Stott - *The Message of Romans*



REFLECTION

"The law simply shows us how sinful we are." - Romans 3:20

How do you think our faith grows when the law exposes our sinfulness? Today, spend time with God, acknowledging where you fall short of the law. In doing this, try to steer yourself from clothing yourself in shame and instead filter this confession through the work of faith. Let each confession be a reminder that yes, you are sinful, but also, yes, you are chosen by God as His son or daughter. Let this practice of confession be an exercise of growing faith.

WEEK 1, DAY 6
■ SATURDAY ■
ROMANS 3:21-31

FULFILL THE LAW

This means that Paul can triumphantly conclude his argument: are we now singing a different hymn altogether? Are we abolishing the law? No, of course not! We are setting it to a far better tune, a tune that in fact God himself has written for it. It was never meant to be fulfilled 'by works' in the way that the Pharisees and others had attempted. It was always designed to be sung to the tune called 'faith'. Paul is often imagined to have had a negative view of the law, but one of the reasons he writes Romans is to make it clear that that is wrong. The law always was God's law, and it is not abolished. Instead, it is fulfilled in a way nobody ever imagined before: through faith. This is the tune that makes the best sense of the words.

N.T. Wright - *Paul for Everyone: Romans, Part 1*



REFLECTION

Reflect today on what you have read about the law of God and the role it plays in our faith. Look over the passages and see what you have highlighted. What have you learned that you hope to apply to your walk with God? Ask Him, in prayer, to help you to do this. Thank Him for His faithfulness, and ask Him to help you grow in your faithfulness to Him.

WEEK 1, DAY 7
■ SUNDAY ■

REST & REFLECTION DAY

Join us for worship today and prepare your heart to engage with next week's study of God and His word. Use your time today to rest, pray, and reflect on this week's readings.

Take notes on this week's sermon on page 57.



REFLECTION NOTES & QUESTIONS

This week, we looked at Romans 1-3 and specifically how God meets us, His people. God meets us through His word, work, creation, law, and grace. As we wrap up this week's study, read Romans 3:27-31. Let this be a reminder for your mind, your heart, and your soul that God fulfills the law in us through our faithfulness to Him.

Reflect on how these words shape our lives. Reflect/journal your thoughts on this or these following prompts:

- Write down what you learned about who God is this week.
- What is something you looked at this week that you want to receive from God in greater measure? Why?
- How can you begin to apply this truth about God to your walk with Him?



ROMANS 4-6

■ WEEK 2 ■

For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord.

- Romans 6:23

The Gospel Reveals God's Righteousness - Christ has become the living revelation of God's righteousness so that everyone who believes—Jews and Gentiles—can be made right and brought into God's family.

WEEK 2, DAY 1
■ **MONDAY** ■
ROMANS 4:1-12

JUSTIFIED BY FAITH ALONE

In these verses, we see that God counted or credited Abraham with righteousness.

To credit something is to confer a status that was not there before. Faith counted as righteousness. It means that God treated Abraham as though he was living a righteous life. His faith was not righteousness; but God counted it as if it were. As Paul explains in verse 4, our righteousness is an either-or: either merited by our works, or credited without regard for them. A Christian is one who stops working to be saved, not one who stops working! It is the removing of one's hopes and trust from other things to place them on God as Savior. Verse 5 concludes by saying that if we stop trusting in ourselves as justifiers and start trusting God as justifier, the result is credited righteousness. It is believing God when he promises a way of salvation by grace. You can have lots and lots of strong faith that God exists, that he is loving, that he is holy. You can believe that the Bible is God's holy word. You can show great reverence for God. Yet all the while, you can be seeking to be your own savior and justifier by trusting in your own performance in religion, in moral character, in vocation, in parenting, etc.

Timothy Keller, *Romans 1-7 for You*

Our salvation is a gift from the Lord, a testament to His boundless grace. We can trust that in His great mercy, God credits our account with what we could never earn and definitely don't deserve. We are to admit we are sinners in need of a Savior and put our trust in the God who forgives sinners. Abraham and David were both faithful followers of the Lord, but both men failed to obey the Lord many times. Paul is aiming to prove by mentioning these two men that God credits righteousness to those who have faith in Him, not because of anything they have accomplished on their own. Abraham was counted righteous before his circumcision. Abraham's obedience flowed out of a heart responding to the free gift of grace and mercy received from God. Our obedience should be the same.

Refer to the Glossary of Terms on page 4 for more on circumcision.



REFLECTION

If someone asked you, "Why should you be admitted into heaven?" What would you say? What does your answer reveal about what you are trusting to save you? Are you relying on your good works, or are you relying on the Lord to be your Savior? This is the good news of the gospel: you can't save yourself, and God knew this; it's why He sent Jesus.

WEEK 2, DAY 2
■ TUESDAY ■
ROMANS 4:13-25

PROMISE THROUGH FAITH

Building on what we read yesterday, this fourth chapter of Romans tells us how to live out our relationship to obeying the law and trusting fully in the finished work of Jesus on the cross for our salvation. Paul says that this example of Abraham being counted as righteous is also for our benefit. We are assured that God will also count us as righteous if we believe in Him, the one who raised Jesus, our Lord, from the dead. He was handed over to die because of our sins, and he was raised to life to make us right with God. (vs. 24-25). Abraham's example of faith can impact us even today; here's what we see about his faith in these passages:

- He believed in "the God who brings the dead back to life and who creates new things out of nothing" (vs. 17)
- He never gave up hope that God would fulfill His promises. (vs. 18)
- He aimed to obey the law, but when He came up short, his faith in the Lord never wavered. It, in fact, grew stronger, which brought glory to God. (vs. 20)
- He was convinced the Lord was faithful, even when he couldn't see the evidence. (vs. 21)



REFLECTION

What stood out to you in Paul's words regarding Abraham's faith in today's reading?

Reflect today on this verse, Romans 4:21, "He was fully convinced that God is able to do whatever he promises." Spend time processing various things in your life (finances, children, job, relationships, current events). Ask yourself if you are fully convinced that God will do what He promises in each area. Spend some time in prayer asking the Lord to remind you of His promises so that you can grow in faith daily.

WEEK 2, DAY 3
■ WEDNESDAY ■
ROMANS 5:1-11

JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH BRINGS PEACE

How does our **justification** through faith impact our daily lives? Romans Chapter 5 does a great job of explaining that for us. Let's start with vs. 2 that says because of our faith in Jesus, we now stand in a place of undeserved privilege and confidently and joyfully look forward to sharing in God's glory. The CSB translation says it this way: "that we now have access through Him by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we boast in the hope of the glory of God." Those are powerful words. Through faith, we are given access to things that we don't deserve; take a minute to let that sink in.

This should help us wrestle with the next few verses, which are harder to swallow. We are also to "boast" or, in some translations, "rejoice" in our sufferings, afflictions, problems, and trials due to what God desires to produce in us through them: things like endurance, character, and hope. But don't miss what is offered amidst all this: PEACE WITH GOD.

Peace with God is astounding. We're all born as God's enemy--haters, rebels, and traitors. But God being rich in mercy, ended the war, made peace, reconciled us, brought us close, and poured His love into our hearts. We didn't earn these things, deserve them, or accomplish them. If God has made peace with you through the blood of Jesus, then you're eternally safe in the arms of your Father. We can rest assured that our future salvation is guaranteed. As we wait for that glorious day, let's rejoice in the peace He's made, the access He's given, the endurance He cultivates, the hope He anchors, and the love He pours out.

Courtney Doctor - *In View of God's Mercies*

Refer to the Glossary of Terms on page 4 for more on justification by faith.



REFLECTION

Reflect today on what it means to you that you have peace with God through faith. How does that help you to face and endure hard times and trials in your life?

WEEK 2, DAY 4
■ THURSDAY ■
ROMANS 5:12-21

LIFE IN ADAM VS. LIFE IN CHRIST

In today's passages, Paul takes us back to where sin entered the world in Genesis and where our redemption from sin entered through Jesus. The contrast is stark and profound. The curse of death came as sin entered the story in Genesis. In a way, Adam serves as a representation of all of humanity under the curse of sin. Then Jesus comes as a "second Adam" in human form, a beacon of hope, with the purpose of living a perfectly righteous life to redeem those sins and break the curse of death that sin has over our lives. Adam's story is one of sin and death, while Jesus' story is one of righteous living and eternal life. But because of Jesus, Adam's story is redeemed and restored back to a right relationship with God and a path to eternal life. There is a distinction in this passage that's important for us to understand. Paul makes it very clear in these passages that we should realize this is a "free gift" offered to us.

While Adam was told he would enjoy blessing if he obeyed God, and yet chose to disobey, the second Adam knew he would face agony and death if he obeyed—and yet he resolutely walked in obedience to his Father. When we read of Jesus' continual loving obedience in the Gospels, it is a matter of life and death to us; because that obedience is our obedience, if we are in Christ instead of Adam.

Timothy Keller - *Romans 1-7 For You*

So, are we living in Christ? We must acknowledge that we can fall very quickly into a trap of living in the extremes rather than living in the reality of the gospel of Jesus. Living in Christ means:

- faithful obedience wrapped in His grace
- to do justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with our God, setting out to be His hands and feet to the world
- enjoying the gifts He has given while continuing to pursue wisdom and righteousness
- to speak and live out the Truth in word and deed as we love others like Jesus

This is how we live in light of the free gift of His righteousness: We receive the gift, and then we live in it!



REFLECTION

Reflect today on how you allow righteousness and grace to co-exist in your heart. Ask God to help you see what sin you might need to confess and repent to live more fully in Christ and what He has for you.

WEEK 2, DAY 5
■ **FRIDAY** ■
ROMANS 6:1-14

DEAD TO SIN, ALIVE IN CHRIST

As discussed yesterday, we are to live in Christ, which requires us to be crucified with Him. What does this mean? It means that our body is no longer to be ruled by sin; we have died to sin and are raised to new life in Christ. We are **NO LONGER** a slave to sin. This does not mean that we will no longer be tempted by sin or have the desire to sin or that we will never give in to the power of sin. Being dead to our sin means that sin no longer has to be our master or rule over us; we now have the power of Christ reigning in us to fight back against the desires of our flesh and be victorious over it.

In fact, these verses encourage us to offer our whole self as a weapon or instrument for righteousness. This implies that we are actively fighting our sinful desires in order to follow Jesus, and yet we often forget this is something we should fight daily. We sometimes lull ourselves into believing that because God's grace covers our sins through Jesus that we don't need to take our sins seriously. But Paul's words here convey something different. Grace doesn't mean that we are free to sin; grace means we are free from being a slave to sin. If we are in Christ, we can now walk in freedom and newness of life; our lives can look different. Before Christ, we had no power to defeat sin in our lives. After Christ, we have the power to fight back against it every single day, but in Christ, we also now have grace for the days that we fall back into slavery to sin. The freedom given through Christ now allows us to walk fully alive in Christ instead of being dead in our sins.

So, the question is: Do you want to be a slave to sin or a slave to righteousness? We'll delve into this further tomorrow...



REFLECTION

Do you believe you have power over your sin in Christ? If you're feeling powerless over your sin today, I encourage you to ask God to help you believe the truths in this passage of scripture. Spend some time meditating on the idea of being crucified with Christ and what that means to you.

WEEK 2, DAY 6
■ SATURDAY ■
ROMANS 6:15-23

SLAVES TO RIGHTEOUSNESS

When a non-Christian sins, they are acting in accord with their identity, with who they are. Why wouldn't they sin? But when someone is united to Christ, everything changes, because who they are changes. There is a new "me." Offering ourselves "to righteousness [leads] to holiness" (v 19). As we act according to the truth, our character and will are shaped into habits of holiness and righteousness. After all, sin is a master who always pays, on time and in full. The wages he pays "is death" (v 23). Sin pays out what we deserve for our work for him. On the other hand, slavery to God leads to "eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." Paul's meaning here is not that, just as sinful works bring death, righteous works merit life. No, sin gives what we deserve, but eternal life is only and always "the gift of God." Serving him does not win us salvation—however good our service, we can only ever say: "We are unworthy servants; we have only done our duty" (Luke 17:10). But those who know they have received the wonderful "gift of God ... eternal life" have a new Master, a Master who offers the fulfillment of working for him.

Timothy Keller, *Romans 1-7 For You*



REFLECTION

We are all slaves to something. How will remembering this help you next time sin tempts you? How would you use this passage to answer someone who says to you: I don't like Christianity because it restricts my freedom? How would you use this passage to answer someone asking why you would bother to obey God if he already accepts you?

WEEK 2, DAY 7
■ SUNDAY ■

REST & REFLECTION DAY

Join us for worship today and prepare your heart to engage with next week's study of God and His word. Use your time today to rest, pray, and reflect on this week's readings.

Take notes on this week's sermon on page 58.



REFLECTION NOTES & QUESTIONS

This week, we looked at Romans 4-6. As we wrap up this week's study, go back and read Romans 6. Reflect on how these words shape our lives. Reflect/journal your thoughts on this or these following prompts:

- Write down what you learned about who God is this week.
- What is something you looked at this week that you want to receive from God in greater measure? Why?
- How can you begin to posture your life to receive more from Him?



ROMANS 7-9
■ WEEK 3 ■

So letting your sinful nature control your mind leads to death. But letting the Spirit control your mind leads to life and peace.

- Romans 8:6

The Power of Life in the Spirit - God's righteousness and the gift of the Holy Spirit give us hope in our battle against sin. Living according to the Spirit, not the flesh, highlights the transformative power of the Holy Spirit in the believer's life.

WEEK 3, DAY 1
■ **MONDAY** ■
ROMANS 7:1-6

A HARVEST OF GOOD DEEDS

So does the Christian ignore the moral law of God? Not at all. We now look at it as an expression of God's desires. He loves honesty, purity, generosity, truth, integrity, kindness, and so on. We now use the law to please the One who saved us. So we are not "under the law." We are not married to it. We are married to Christ; we are seeking to please him, and so the law's precepts are ways to honor the One we love. They are now not a burden—we have a new motivation (love for our Husband) and obey in a new framework (acceptance on the basis of Christ, not us, fulfilling the law)...

We obey who we offer our service to. We live to please who we are married to. We were once slaves to sin—we obeyed it. We were once married to the law; controlled by our sinful natures—whether pursuing self-righteous religion or self-centered license we lived to please it. But our death in "the body of Christ" (v 4) has changed everything, totally and eternally. We are slaves to God—how could we, and why would we, sin?! We belong to Christ as his bride, knowing he died for us—how could we, and why would we, not live to please him, out of loving gratitude toward him? It is the Christian's identity—the Christian's relationship to God..It is knowing who you are in Christ that causes you to say, deep in your heart: Will I live in this moment as though I'm a slave to sin, married to the law? By no means!

Timothy Keller - Romans 1-7 For You



REFLECTION

In marriage, we live to please our spouse. We do this not to receive more but to express our love to the other. Paul uses the marriage metaphor as an example of our relationship with the Lord because of our salvation. The law is how we strive to please the Lord in our marriage. Ask yourself today: who am I normally living to please? Really take time to process that question and your honest answer. Begin to seek today and this week the work of pleasing the Lord.

WEEK 3, DAY 2
■ TUESDAY ■
ROMANS 7:7-25

INTERNAL CONFLICT

Oh, what a miserable person I am! Who will free me from this life that is dominated by sin and death? Thank God! The answer is in Jesus Christ our Lord. So you see how it is: In my mind I really want to obey God's law, but because of my sinful nature I am a slave to sin.

- Romans 7:24-25

Paul continues his explanation about the power of God's law by pointing toward the most significant power of the law, the exposure of our sin. As strange as it sounds, Paul points toward his love of the law (Romans 7:22) because it shows him who he is: sinful. (Romans 7:14) It is good to know who we are. We grasp a better understanding of our thoughts, actions, and motives. Knowing ourselves more clearly, though, brings about a clearer picture of our brokenness and depravity, too. Paul is actively unpacking this internal conflict in Romans 7:14-25. Paul narrows in on the conflict that takes place in his and every Christian's spirit as a result of the law.

The law exposes how utterly hopeless we are to do what is right. The law sheds light on our inevitable submission to sin. The law clarifies how impossible it is for us to live a righteous life. Paul uses this internal conflict to point toward the beautiful salvation found in Jesus. *"Who will free me from this life that is dominated by sin and death? Thank God! The answer is in Jesus Christ our Lord."* What resolves the sin conflict within us? What can make us whole when sin tears us apart? What brings us hope when we are so hopeless to do what God requires of us? The answer is in Jesus Christ our Lord. The internal sin conflict we all face is resolved through the answer of Jesus Christ. The law brings to light our need and salvation in Jesus.



REFLECTION

Have you ever thought of God's law as a tool to help you begin to understand yourself better? Paul suggests here that the law exposes our sinful nature, which answers the questions about our inner workings that have been a mystery to us for our entire lives. What do you feel the law has revealed to you about yourself? How can this humble you today and allow you to love those around you more personally? Reflect on these questions today and seek to apply the answers to your walk with Christ and His people.

WEEK 3, DAY 3
■ **WEDNESDAY** ■
ROMANS 8:1-17

A NEW NATURE

The Christian life is essentially life in the Spirit, a life which is animated, sustained, directed, and enriched by the Holy Spirit. Without the Holy Spirit, true Christian discipleship would be inconceivable, indeed impossible.

John Stott - *The Message of Romans: God's Good News for the World*

At the moment of our salvation, a profound exchange of spirit and nature occurs. This exchange, often termed conversion, is akin to converting our American currency for the foreign currency of a country we visit. Our very nature is transformed when we acknowledge Jesus as our Savior. Our faith in Jesus leads us to transition from our sinful nature to a holy nature, with the Holy Spirit serving as the evidence and catalyst of this spiritual conversion.

Paul clarifies that we are made new from our sinful nature, not because of anything we do, but because of what the Holy Spirit does through us. We have to begin to get out of the way in order to let the Spirit move and work our new nature out around us. We start this work by more readily and openly listening to the Spirit speak. How do we do this? Quiet down the other noises. We have to quiet the noise of sin, the noise of busyness, the noise of anxiety, the noise of control that we bring about in our lives.



REFLECTION

Today, take an extended time with God and work to quiet the noise and hear His spirit. That could mean taking a walk outside. It may mean sitting in silence. Maybe it means driving with nothing but the road sounds to accompany you. Whatever it is, be quiet and listen to the Spirit. At the end of the day, write what you heard the Spirit say. If you didn't hear anything, do it again tomorrow and each day until you hear Him speak.

WEEK 3, DAY 4
■ THURSDAY ■
ROMANS 8:18-30

FOR GOOD

We have come to one of the most comforting verses of Scripture for the people of God. Many have called it the pillow upon which we can rest our weary heads. And with this verse, the crescendo of chapter 8 continues to grow. There is hope for our every moment in our sovereign God.

After Paul has just comforted us despite the thing that we did not know in verse 26, here he shifts his focus to the thing that we do know. And it is in this truth that all of our anxieties vanish. We know with utmost confidence and full assurance that for the people of God, all things work together for good. And it is God who providentially does the working. He is active and not passive. He is not sitting by and scrambling to fix the mess that we are in, but He is sovereignly reigning over every moment and working every aspect of our every day for good.

Every moment a mercy...Someday we will be able to look back on our lives and see that He used every moment for good. It doesn't mean that every moment was good. It doesn't in any way negate the pain that we face. But it reminds us of the One that we trust in...

All things. The words are definite and sure. They suppress any "but what if," or "but what about," questions that we are tempted to raise. Whether things that have been done to us or things we have done, He will work all things for the good of His people...All the sorrow. All the joy. All the suffering. All the unmet expectations. All the waiting. All the mess. He will use it all. Every part of our stories will be used to conform us to the image of Christ. Not one ounce of sorrow will be wasted.

Jeremy and Kristin Schmucker - Romans: The Gospel-Centered Life Volume Two



REFLECTION

Romans 8:28 is a comfort in our times of trouble, and honestly, we often find ourselves in times of trouble in this life. Whatever you're going through today, take a moment and write down verse 28. After writing this passage down, set an alarm for your phone to go off three times today. Stop whatever you're doing when the alarm goes off, and read verse 28. See what comfort this brings to your weary and troubled heart today.

WEEK 3, DAY 5
■ **FRIDAY** ■
ROMANS 8:31-39

NOTHING CAN SEPARATE

Can anything ever separate us from Christ's love? Does it mean he no longer loves us if we have trouble or calamity, or are persecuted, or hungry, or destitute, or in danger, or threatened with death? (As the Scriptures say, "For your sake we are killed every day; we are being slaughtered like sheep.") No, despite all these things, overwhelming victory is ours through Christ, who loved us.

And I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from God's love. Neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither our fears for today nor our worries about tomorrow—not even the powers of hell can separate us from God's love. No power in the sky above or in the earth below—indeed, nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Romans 8:35-39 NLT



REFLECTION

There is no addition necessary to better understand Paul's words of hope, joy, and goodness found in the final verses of Romans 8. Romans 8 is not short in encouraging God's love, connection, and comfort for our weary, troubled lives. Romans 8 is a passage of courage for us. Today, reread Romans 8:35-39. Read it a few times. Read it until you truly take in not only the words and meaning but the courage found in the truth of these words.

WEEK 3, DAY 6
■ SATURDAY ■
ROMANS 9

EVERLASTING FAITHFULNESS

Romans 9 begins a shift. Romans 1-8 was Paul's explanation of man's deficiency and God's immensity to meet and save and remake us in His glorious image. Romans 9-11 shifts to the question of what it means for Israel, the Jewish people, that Jesus is the Messiah. Romans 9 is the beginning of Paul's encouragement to the Jewish people to be born again by changing how they see God and His son, Jesus. Paul's words are a sign to us that there is no favoritism. (Romans 2:11) The salvation of the Lord is not prejudiced, biased, or reserved only for those of a particular heritage, skin color, country, or lifestyle. The gift of new life in the Lord Jesus Christ is for all and must be received by all who wish to live the eternal life promised to the believer.

Paul endeavors to weave the enduring work of God into the Jewish tradition of scripture and their daily lives. For us today, Paul's words in Romans 9 serve as a powerful reminder of God's unwavering faithfulness to us. He never abandons us. We all need Him, and we are all invited to receive Him. His faithfulness is constant and unchanging, a rock we can always rely on.



REFLECTION

There is a hymn that has always brought me comfort because it always brings me back to the truth of what my future looks like with Christ. Today, after reading about the faithfulness of God to His people in Romans 9 and Paul's encouragement that we may all receive Him, take a moment to reflect on that faithfulness and what it means for your life. Look up the song *No Turning Back* by Steffany Grettzinger and Leeland. Listen to it during a silent time of reflection at home, at work, in the car, or while on a walk outside. During this time of worship and reflection, Thank God for His faithfulness.

WEEK 3, DAY 7
■ SUNDAY ■

REST & REFLECTION DAY

Join us for worship today and prepare your heart to engage with next week's study of God and His word. Use your time today to rest, pray, and reflect on this week's readings.

Take notes on this week's sermon on page 59.



REFLECTION NOTES & QUESTIONS

This week, we looked at Romans 7-9 and specifically how God has made us in His likeness and is shaping us daily to look more and more like Him. Every harvest of good deeds we make, every time we shed light and turn away from the work of sin, when we draw near to our new nature, remember nothing separates us from God, and when we reflect upon His everlasting faithfulness towards us we shed more of our old selves and put on more of our Holy set apart selves. As we wrap up this week's study, read Romans 8:38-39. Let this be a reminder for your mind, your heart, and your soul that God's love is greater than anything we will ever know.

Reflect on how these words shape our lives. Reflect/journal your thoughts on this or these following prompts:

- Write down what you learned about who God is this week.
- What is something you looked at this week that you want to receive from God in greater measure? Why?
- How can you begin to apply this truth about God to your walk with Him?



ROMANS 10-12

■ WEEK 4 ■

For Christ has already accomplished the purpose for which the law was given. As a result, all who believe in him are made right with God.

- Romans 10:4

The Gospel Fulfills God's Promise to Israel and All People – Israel plays a vital role in God's redemptive plan, affirming God's faithfulness to His promises to the Jewish people while paving the way for Gentiles and all others to follow Jesus in the future.

WEEK 4, DAY 1
■ **MONDAY** ■
ROMANS 10:1-15

SALVATION COMES THROUGH JESUS

Paul's message here is for the Jews who, at this time, were continuing to struggle with the fact that salvation is as simple as just "believing in your heart and confessing with your mouth that Jesus is Lord." They are still holding fast "with zeal" to having to keep God's law perfectly and missing the importance of Jesus' death and resurrection entirely. The Jews also struggled with the fact that the Gentiles were trusting in Jesus for salvation rather than a strict adherence to the law. In this passage, Paul points them back to Moses' words in Deuteronomy 30:11-14, which we can express with our mouths outwardly, a trust that has happened inwardly in our hearts.

You don't have to go up to heaven—because the Messiah has already come down to you. You don't have to go down into the depths—because the Messiah has already been raised from the dead. The strange, cryptic promises which spoke of the final undoing of the curse of exile have come true—in Jesus! He is God's fresh gift of grace, like the original law but in a completely new mode. This is Paul's own variation on the theme of Deuteronomy 30. But why is Paul going to these lengths to say all this in what seems to us such a roundabout way? And how then does faith, 'calling on the name of the Lord', and salvation itself, fit into all this? We must not forget, in reading this passage, that Paul is still addressing the question he raised at the start of the chapter. The desire of his heart is that his fellow Jews would be saved. But most of them have remained ignorant of God's covenant plan, fulfilled in Jesus the Messiah, the covenant plan through which the great promise of salvation in Deuteronomy 30 would come true.

N.T. Wright, *Paul for Everyone: Romans, Part 2: Chapters 9-16*

So, our obedience to the law should come from a zeal that knows the depth of what Christ has done for us, which is what the Jews were missing here. It isn't good news if we have to work our way into heaven because we know we will never be able to adhere to the law perfectly. When we grasp this gospel truth deep in our hearts, then we can share with our mouths that good news with others. Paul says, "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news."



REFLECTION

The good news of the Gospel is that God, in His love and grace, has made a way for us to be reconciled to Him through Jesus Christ. God sent His Son, Jesus, to come to earth, live a sinless life, die on the cross as a sacrifice for our sins, and rise from the dead, defeating death and offering eternal life. Our efforts do not earn this gift of salvation but are freely given to all who put their faith in Jesus. Reflect on your own heart. Do you believe this good news, or are you still striving to earn your salvation?

WEEK 4, DAY 2
■ TUESDAY ■
ROMANS 10:16-21, 11:1-10

FAITHFUL REMNANT

In this section, Paul points out that there has always been a “faithful remnant” of God’s people, that God had not forsaken His people, and that some of His people have turned their backs on Him. So what does Paul mean when he says, “God has put them into a deep sleep. To this day he has shut their eyes so they do not see, and closed their ears so they do not hear.” It’s important for us to know that Paul is pulling from both Moses’ warning to the Israelites (Deut. 29:4) and Isaiah’s warning (Is. 29:10) that they would have been familiar with to warn them against God giving them over to their selfish ways. If they continue to harden their hearts or disregard the truth of Jesus as the Messiah, there will be consequences.

Israel’s problem, Paul now argues, is not ignorance, but disobedience. Salvific (Saving) faith is available through hearing the “report” about Christ, but Scripture warned that Israel would reject this very report about Christ. Far from Jewish unbelief posing a credibility problem for Paul’s Jewish message, it simply fulfilled what the prophets had predicted. If Israel has rebelled against their own salvation, has God therefore rejected them? Paul is adamant that God has not; his own faith as a Jewish believer is itself a testimony that God has left a remnant. God foreknew both the present disobedience and the future when he chose Israel. In 11:8, Paul covers both law and prophets by conflating texts with similar warnings: in Isa 29:10 God gave them the “spirit of stupor,” closing their eyes (blinding them to the prophetic message); in Deut 29:4, God had not given them eyes to see nor ears to hear, “to this day.” Isaiah’s context involves judgment, God handing people over to the blindness they have chosen (Isa 29:9-14).

Craig Keener, *Romans New Covenant Commentary*



REFLECTION

Our job is to be willing and ready to share the gospel, the good news of what Jesus has done for you; it’s as easy as just telling your story. There are no perfect words needed to share the gospel; it is just your personal experience. Even knowing that everyone will not be open and receptive to what we have to share, we are to share anyway. We aren’t responsible for how others respond; we only share, which should be done boldly and with humility. As you reflect on these passages, ask God to reveal people in your life who are open to hearing what Jesus has done for you. Pray for their hearts to be soft and their eyes to be open to what you have to share.

WEEK 4, DAY 3
■ WEDNESDAY ■
ROMANS 11:11-36

GRAFTED INTO THE FAMILY

As “apostle to the Gentiles”, Paul in this section wants to place all he has said so far in chapters 9-11 in terms of Jew-Gentile relationships. In Paul’s day, Israel was divided into a repentant minority and a hardened majority, but that is not God’s plan for the future. In the future, “all Israel will be saved” and God’s plan will be complete. In verses 17-24, Paul presents this anew through a metaphor: God has removed many Jewish branches from an olive tree and grafted Gentile branches into that tree. This should produce humility among the Gentiles, not pride, for the Gentiles are just as responsible as the Jews and can be removed in turn. Paul is afraid his readers will surmise from what he has said that the choice of the remnant and the hardening of the “others” is permanent, so there is no longer any hope for Israel, so his response in verses 11-16 takes four stages:

- Israel has been rejected, but this state is not permanent (v. 11a).
- The immediate purpose of this rejection is to bring salvation to the Gentiles (vv. 11b-12).
- The more distant purpose is to make Israel jealous through the Gentiles (vv. 11c, 14).
- This eventually will bring Israel back to God (vv. 14-16).

God’s incredible mercy and the conversion of people from every segment of humanity are more than Paul can handle, and so in the depths of religious ecstasy he composes a hymn to the grace and mercy of God. This final paragraph in Romans 11 is the most astounding promise yet, a truly apocalyptic revelation of the true future for Israel. It is the final piece of the puzzle, telling us not only that God will keep his covenant promises to his chosen people but also that there is a national future, a God-sent revival that will ensure an eternal reward for the faithful.

Grant Osborne, *Romans: Verse by Verse*



REFLECTION

Why does it matter that God is both kind and severe? In her study, *In View of God’s Mercies*, Courtney Doctor says: “If God is only kind, then the evil, sin, and wickedness in our world would go unpunished. But if God were only severe, we would all perish. I am eternally grateful that God will both destroy the wickedness in me and around me and, at the same time, that our Almighty God is so abundantly kind.” Reflect on this quote and meditate on Romans 11:33-36. What do these verses show us about the sovereignty of God and the vastness of His purposes for His people?

WEEK 4, DAY 4
■ THURSDAY ■
ROMANS 12:1-2

A LIVING SACRIFICE

Chapter 12 marks a turning point in the book of Romans. Paul has been setting up the heart of the gospel so that the church in Rome could understand salvation through Jesus, but now he is shifting his focus to how to live out their salvation. He moves from explanation to encouragement.

He (Paul) is about to give an outline of Christian living that should issue from a knowledge of and trust in the gospel he has been explaining. Thus, verses 1-2 are a summary of the whole of the Christian life! "Therefore," indicates that we give ourselves to God because of all Paul has been explaining in chapters 1 - 11; namely, that we are justified by grace alone through faith alone because of Christ alone. To be a "living sacrifice" is to be fully at God's disposal. It means, actively, to be willing to obey God in anything he says in any area of life; and, passively, to be willing to thank God for anything he sends in any area of life. Once you have a good view of God's mercy, anything less than a total, complete sacrifice of yourself to God is completely irrational! If you give yourself partially or half-heartedly, you are simply not thinking; you are not looking at what Jesus did. If what he did does not move you or break the ice over your soul, you must ask yourself if you have ever understood the gospel. We come to grips with the One who surrendered himself utterly for us only to the extent that we surrender ourselves utterly to him. It is the only sensible thing to do! Paul is laying out a radical way of living. It will require a transformed mind to pursue it. So he tells us: "Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed". What does this mean? Two patterns are held up: the pattern of the world and the pattern of God's will. Paul tells us to recognize and reject the pattern of thinking, feeling, and behaving that characterizes the world, and to embrace God's will for all character and life. This requires us to make time regularly to meditate on who Jesus is and what he has done, and to reflect on what his will for us is in the circumstances he sends our way—how he would have us behave, and how he may be changing us.

Timothy Keller, *Romans 8-16 For You*



REFLECTION

Ask God to reveal an area that you still need to surrender in order to be a "living sacrifice" for Him. Spend time with the Lord today, evaluate what is consuming your mind, and make a list. Then, surrender those things to the Lord so that He can transform those thoughts to align with His will for your life and shape you into who He wants you to be.

WEEK 4, DAY 5
■ **FRIDAY** ■
ROMANS 12:3-8

MANY PARTS, ONE BODY

In today's passage, Paul shifts from our personal walk with Jesus to the part we individually play in the larger body of the church. Paul here is emphasizing that the church is one unified body made up of many individual parts that are intended to use their gifts in order to serve one another and help the church serve the world.

With a transformed and renewed mind under the control of the Spirit, it is impossible to be arrogant and self-centered. In humility and a spirit of giving we will use our gifts and strengths to minister to each other. In verses 4-5 Paul presents a theology of spiritual gifts similar to that in 1 Corinthians 12:12-26. The central metaphor is one of the most important pictures of the church, the body of Christ. The body is a single mechanism that depends on all the members functioning together to work, yet at the same time each member performs a different task. All of us members are meant to "form one body," the church, and to work together in unity to function as the church. As the members come together as one body, "each member belongs to all the others," so that there is both unity and diversity in the church. In this passage Paul is telling us four things:

1. *We have gifts and abilities.*
2. *The gifts vary among us.*
3. *God and the Spirit distribute them to us.*
4. *The gifts are not intended to benefit the individuals who possess them but to benefit the body of Christ.*

We are the many who live as one, for we take all our individual gifts and place them at the service of those around us.

Grant Osborne - Romans: Verse by Verse



REFLECTION

Do you see yourself as an important part of the body of Christ that has useful gifts to serve others? Spend some time today with this list in Romans 12, and also Paul's list in 1 Corinthians 12:7-11. What gifts do you sense that God might want you to share with others in your church or in your community? This self-reflection will help you understand your role in the church and community, and how you can use your gifts to serve. Stop by the Info Table on Sunday or check out graceclarksville.com/volunteer or graceclarksville.com/local-outreach to see some areas where you can begin to use your gifts to serve the Lord.

WEEK 4, DAY 6
■ SATURDAY ■
ROMANS 12:9-21

LOVE ONE ANOTHER

In this short passage, Paul lists a substantial list of ethical behaviors for believers, and all of them draw on the specific teachings of Jesus. At the beginning of chapter 12, Paul focuses on our relationship with God. He moves to our relationship within the context of church and now moves to how we should be in our relationship with others. "If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all." - Romans 12:18

John Stott, in his book, *The Message of Romans: God's Good News for the World* summarizes these verses with this:

What a comprehensive picture of Christian love Paul gives us! Love is sincere, discerning, affectionate and respectful. It is both enthusiastic and patient, both generous and hospitable, both benevolent and sympathetic. It is marked by both harmony and humility. Christian churches would be happier communities if we all loved one another like that. It is even better to be positive, to bless, to do good, to seek peace, and to serve and convert our enemy, because if we thus repay good for evil, we reduce the tally of evil in the world, while at the same time increasing the tally of good. To repay evil for evil is to be overcome by it; to repay good for evil is to overcome evil with good. This is the way of the cross. 'Such is the masterpiece of love.'



REFLECTION

What stood out to you in today's verses? Is there one of these directives that pricked your heart? Ask God to reveal if there is a relationship where you need to practice something you read in these verses.

WEEK 4, DAY 7
■ SUNDAY ■

REST & REFLECTION DAY

Join us for worship today and prepare your heart to engage with next week's study of God and His word. Use your time today to rest, pray, and reflect on this week's readings.

Take notes on this week's sermon on page 60.



REFLECTION NOTES & QUESTIONS

This week, we looked at Romans 10-12. Paul is laying out the basics of the good news that Jesus is the way to salvation and then he moves into how the gospel should impact our relationships and our everyday life. Reflect back on the week and on how the truths we studied this week shape our lives.

Reflect/journal your thoughts on this or these following prompts:

- Write down what you learned about who God is this week.
- What is something you looked at this week that you want to receive from God in greater measure? Why?
- How can you begin to apply this truth about God to your walk with Him?



ROMANS 13-14
■ WEEK 5 ■

For the Kingdom of God is not a matter of what we eat or drink, but of living a life of goodness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

- Romans 14:17

Righteousness in Relationships - Paul is concerned that disagreements over secondary issues will keep those in the church from putting their faith into practice, mainly when living together as a diverse yet unified Church. He calls them to love, service, humility, and unity around the work of Jesus.

WEEK 5, DAY 1
■ **MONDAY** ■
ROMANS 13:1-5

RESPONSIBILITY TO AUTHORITY

The topic of government is an interesting one in Christian culture. It is a topic that immediately brings many opinions from political affiliations to how Christians should respond to the prevailing culture in the world. And yet, these words of Paul's are timeless commands that are rooted not in political parties, but in the Sovereign God.

There seem to be two extremes that believers easily fall into when it comes to the government. Many place an overemphasis on government. They think that electing leaders that align with their ideologies will bring hope to their nation. But this always falls short, because true hope is found only in the gospel of Jesus Christ. The other extreme is that of a rebellion against all forms of government. This also directly contradicts the commands of Paul in this chapter: We are to respect and honor our government, but a human government has no power to bring salvation – only Jesus can do that.

But the main theme of this passage is not in telling us which political party we should choose, it is to show us the sovereignty of our God. Paul was writing in a time when the government hated Christians and he was not immune from this severe treatment and persecution. Yet despite the injustices that he faced, he rested in the sovereignty of God. Romans 13 commands submission to our governing authorities, but it doesn't tell us to blindly submit. Instead it tells us that we can submit with full and complete confidence that all authority is put into place by God. Romans 8:28 reminded us of the truth that God works all things for the good of His people, and we are reminded of that truth again. We can be assured that even when we do not understand the governmental authority (or any authority we are called to submit to), we can rest in the truth that God is using all things to bring about His purposes.

Jeremy and Kristin Schmucker - Romans: The Gospel-Centered Life Volume Two



REFLECTION

We are not short of feelings and opinions about the authorities of our world. We feel strongly about our bosses, our businesses, and our local and national government. God works all things for His good. We have learned that, but this is one of those areas where we need the faith to believe and live it. Take time today to pray for the authorities you struggle to understand and support. Ask God to help you develop your faith and trust in Him and His plan.

WEEK 5, DAY 2
■ **TUESDAY** ■
ROMANS 13:6-7

RESPONSIBILITY TO PAYING DEBTS

Romans 13 begins with some really tough topics of discussion. Government, now taxes. These are subjects that bring about headaches, division, anger, and anxiety. Why are we looking at this? Simply put, we need to invite God into the things we most desire to ignore or run from. The areas where we don't invite God into our lives are the areas where we need Him to be Lord more than anything. Taxes are, of course, one of those areas through which we need our devotion to the Lord to reign. Have you ever thought about your faithfulness to the Lord while paying a sales tax? Have you considered the goodness of God while paying your taxes in April? Paul is encouraging the church of Rome to continue to pay what is due to the authorities above them. He is encouraging them to stand out by the way they do what is right and required, even when it is difficult or unpopular. We need to take the words of Paul as a reminder to embrace the spiritual practice of being mindful of God in the areas we dread.



REFLECTION

Where do you feel you need to be more mindful of God? This week, when you are confronted with high living costs, frustration with interest rates, or anxiety over debt, consider the Lord. Ask Him to help you. Seek His peace and be mindful of Him in these areas you wish to ignore and avoid.

WEEK 5, DAY 3
■ WEDNESDAY ■
ROMANS 13:8-10

LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR

On a personal level, the only "debt" we are to carry is the "debt" to love one another - this is a perpetual obligation we carry both before God and each other...Paul echoes Jesus' words as recorded in Matthew 22:36-40. This is one of the two commands upon which hang all the Law and the Prophets.. Love your neighbor means to love the people you actually meet with and deal with every day. It is easy for us to love in the theoretical and the abstract, but God demands that we love real people.

"No man can compass the ends of life by drawing a little line around himself upon the ground. No man can fulfill his calling as a Christian by seeking the welfare of his wife and family only, for these are only a sort of greater self." (Spurgeon)

Love is the fulfillment of the law: It is easy to do all the right religious "things" but to neglect love. Our love is the true measure of our obedience to God.

David Guzik - Enduring Word Bible Commentary



REFLECTION

Have you ever thought about loving others as a debt you owe to them? Surely not. No one wants to be in debt to anyone, but Paul here leans into that. Paul highlights to be a Christ-follower is to be in an obligation of debt. The debt is an obligation to pay towards your neighbor; the currency of that debt is love. Today, process who you feel you may owe a debt of love to. Lean into that question. You may find it being someone you struggle to love, someone you haven't thought of in a long time, or someone you see almost every day but haven't shared the currency of love with lately. During this time of reflection, don't grasp toward the easiest people to love, but the ones you truly believe you have neglected/owe a debt to. Begin to pay your debt today and every day.

WEEK 5, DAY 4
■ THURSDAY ■
ROMANS 13:11-14

BE READY FOR THE LORD

We must live with an eternal perspective. We must live with our heart firmly fixed on the return of our Savior. In this passage, we are exhorted to live not only in light of the cross and resurrection of Jesus, but also in light of His coming. In this creation, fall, redemption, and consummation story that Scripture declares, we cling to the salvation that is found in the redemptive aspect of the story and we set our hope on the day when the consummation of all things takes place. We look to the day when this world will be restored, but even better. And these are not just far off stories, this is our steadfast confidence. This is the comfort that we rest in. Things will not always be as they are. This world will be made new just as we have been made new in Christ. Sin and death will be forever banished and we will dwell in the presence of our God forever. And that hope should pump through our veins and change the way that we live our daily lives.

It is time to wake up. It is time to arise and live like the people of God. The hour has come for our faith to be demonstrated in action. We are told that our salvation is nearer than it was when we first placed faith in this gospel message. Every moment brings us closer to the awaited day when we see our Savior face to face...

We must cast off the works of the flesh. We must shun the supposed self-righteousness we think that we possess. We must abandon our sinful desires and replace them with better desires...we must intentionally fix our hearts on Jesus and fix our gaze on the day we see Him face to face.

Jeremy and Kristin Schmucker - Romans: The Gospel-Centered Life Volume Two



REFLECTION

"...clothe yourself with the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ." (Romans 13:14)

Clothes are a status symbol. Clothes are a comfort. Clothes are a means of protection. Clothes are a means of confidence. Paul's encouragement to clothe ourselves, not simply with Christ but with His presence, is so powerful. Paul's ending words for chapter thirteen encourage us to organize our lives around the greatest thing we can look forward to the return and eternal presence of the King. Reflect today on this: how am I clothing myself in the presence of the Lord today? How am I organizing my life around the return of the King? What do I need to begin to reorganize?

WEEK 5, DAY 5
■ **FRIDAY** ■
ROMANS 14:1-9

LIVE AND DIE TO HONOR THE LORD

If we live, it's to honor the Lord. And if we die, it's to honor the Lord. So whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord. - Romans 14:8

Paul seems to be getting in the weeds of the Jewish law at the beginning of chapter fourteen. He is talking about not arguing with people about issues that don't determine one's salvation, like what you eat or what day you mark as holy or not. Paul is encouraging the Roman people to care about what we, or others do, to honor the Lord. He is shifting the focus onto honoring God being the primary motivation of our encouragements or criticisms, not our religious preferences. His words remind us that in all we do, we need to filter it through the lens of: is this honoring the Lord? Imagine how different our lives would look if this was a question we asked ourselves before each thought or action. Is what I'm thinking about this person honoring the Lord? Is what I'm saying honoring? Is what I'm spending my money on honoring?

When we live and die to honor the Lord, we not only draw nearer to Him, but we honor ourselves and His people more. We see ourselves as His creations, and in turn, we see those around us as His creations worthy of honor, too. Honor the Lord in all you do so you may, too, find a greater measure of honor for your life and those around you.



REFLECTION

What do you think it practically means for you to begin to honor the Lord? It starts with seeing what areas of your life seem to be dishonoring God. These are typically the areas we hide. These are the areas where we are selfish, vengeful, lustful, or greedy. Spend time today looking at these areas and seek out how you might be able to honor the Lord in these areas of neglect in your life.

WEEK 5, DAY 6
■ SATURDAY ■
ROMANS 14:5-23

DON'T CAUSE ANOTHER TO STUMBLE

Paul's supreme concern in this passage is the danger of so clearing your own path that you end up making it impossible for your neighbours to walk down theirs. It is all too easy, in sorting out our own lives and finding our own way forward as Christians, to make things harder, not easier, for those around us. Since one of the basic Jewish and Christian images for what we call 'behaviour' is that of walking, a natural way of describing these difficulties is the one Paul highlights in verse 13: the danger of putting obstacles' or stumbling blocks' - things that will trip people up - in each other's way.

So, he says with deliberate humour, don't pass judgment on each other - but do use your judgment in not tripping each other up! Just as it is vital for every Christian to make up his or her mind about things which are, as we saw in the previous passage, 'indifferent' - things about which Christians can legitimately differ - so it is vital that, when we have done so, our main concern is then not for ourselves but for those around us. Other people may well be at a different point in the Christian life, and may still be struggling with their conscience over things which we believe to be perfectly good in themselves...

The way forward is to recognize that things can and do become unclean, or even evil, not because of what they are in themselves but because of how people regard them. This is rather like saying that beauty is in the eye of the beholder, and it's obviously not a principle which can be applied to all ethical questions and situations. Paul is talking specifically about what people eat and drink, in a context where that was very contentious. We have to use wise judgment ourselves...What (Paul) says in verse 14 is that food can and does become unclean - at the point at which someone considers it so; and, in verse 20, that it can and does become evil (a stage beyond 'unclean') if when you eat it you cause someone else to trip up.

This whole passage is, in fact, looking one way in the argument. It is an appeal to people who are happy to eat and drink anything at all. It is asking them to recognize that there are occasions when they need to hold back from this freedom for the sake of those whose Christian faith would be irreparably damaged by such behaviour.

N.T. Wright - *Paul for Everyone: Romans, Part 2*



REFLECTION

This is just another area where Paul continues the call that Jesus gives us to honor Him by loving our neighbor. If our freedoms in Christ hinder or confuse someone else's Christian walk, we must weigh whether that is loving or selfish. Essentially, Paul reminds us to be mindful of our Christian brothers and sisters and how to encourage, not discourage, their walk with Christ. Reflect on this idea today.

WEEK 5, DAY 7
■ SUNDAY ■

REST & REFLECTION DAY

Join us for worship today and prepare your heart to engage with next week's study of God and His word. Use your time today to rest, pray, and reflect on this week's readings.

Take notes on this week's sermon on page 61.



REFLECTION NOTES & QUESTIONS

This week, we looked at Romans 13-14 and specifically how God has given us responsibilities to meet that point toward our honoring and loving of one another and God. All that we do is meant to be out of love and honor for God. As we wrap up this week's study, read Romans 14:7-9. Let this be a reminder for your mind, your heart, and your soul that we are made to honor the Lord in all that we do.

Reflect on how these words shape our lives. Reflect/journal your thoughts on this or these following prompts:

- Write down what you learned about who God is this week.
- What is something you looked at this week that you want to receive from God in greater measure? Why?
- How can you begin to apply this truth about God to your walk with Him?



ROMANS 15-16

■ WEEK 6 ■

May God, who gives this patience and encouragement, help you live in complete harmony with each other, as is fitting for followers of Christ Jesus. Then all of you can join together with one voice, giving praise and glory to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

- Romans 15:5-6

Proclaiming the Gospel as a Unified Church - For Paul, Christians ought to center their entire lives—in terms of both belief and action—on Christ. The good news of Jesus' saving act is meant to be transformative, and this good news should be unapologetically proclaimed so that others can come to Christ.

WEEK 6, DAY 1
■ **MONDAY** ■
ROMANS 15:1-6

ESSENTIALS VS. NON-ESSENTIALS

Paul is essentially saying to believers “keep the main thing, the main thing.” It is acceptable for believers to have strong convictions and opinions on secondary, non-salvation issues, but we don’t need to elevate those things to essential issues. Paul reminds the Romans of what really matters to God, and it is not divisive issues like the food laws. The goal is not full agreement on all non-salvation issues, our heart in the church should be unity on the essentials of faith and salvation. This continues to be a matter of discernment for mature believers in the church today.

Paul’s point is that our concern should be for the spiritual needs of our opponents, not just for ourselves. If both groups are seeking to serve those on the other side, the conflict will take care of itself. When we seek spiritual edification rather than victory in the debate, God is pleased with us. With pressure from outside (persecution) and inside (dissension), they need the hope of the gospel more than ever. Hope is endangered when the church is fractured by conflict. The strong are obligated before God to go beyond their differences with the weak in order to establish harmony in the church. In the conflict Paul is addressing here, both sides were acting like pagans. When we have the mindset of holding all things in common we place our differences and disagreements in perspective and discover respect and love for each other in the Spirit, whichever group we belong to. We find a larger unity behind our different theological persuasions since we worship the same Lord and focus on the same essential doctrines.

Grant Osborne, *Romans: Verse by Verse*



REFLECTION

This unity is not only beneficial for the community but also serves to glorify God. When believers live in unity, they collectively testify to God’s love and grace, bringing glory to Him. Reflect on how you can become more unified around core doctrine rather than divided on non-essential issues in the church.

WEEK 6, DAY 2
■ **TUESDAY** ■
ROMANS 15:7-13

CHRIST THE HOPE FOR BOTH JEWS AND GENTILES

Paul in these passages takes us back to the Old Testament to show that God's plan has always been for a diverse unified church of people from all nations, tribes and tongues, including Jews and Gentiles unified under Christ.

Christ came so that God would accept both Jew and Gentile, and so the gospel is able to break down the "dividing wall of hostility" (Ephesians 2:14); Jew and Gentile, strong and weak, rich and poor must reflect this in their relationships in the church. In fact, God's purpose was always to have a people made up of all nations, Jew and Gentile. Paul shows this in his four Old Testament quotations in Romans 15:9-12. There is a progression through them. First, God's name is to be praised among the Gentiles by his people; the Gentiles are to be invited in to praise "with his people", so that "all you peoples" (Jew and Gentile) will praise the Lord; and all this will be accomplished by "the Root of Jesse"—the great Ruler to come from the line of David, Jesse's son—as the nations come under his rule and find "hope in him". God's plan has always been for his people to proclaim to the nations that God is to be praised, and to draw the nations into his people under the rule and hope of his chosen King.

Timothy Keller - Romans 8-16 For You



REFLECTION

Reflect today on Paul's words in Romans 15:13. "May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope." Ask God to reveal an area where you need to abound in hope and pray for the Spirit to fill you with hope. As you pray, think of someone in your life who also needs hope right now; pray they might feel the power of the Spirit fill them with hope today.

WEEK 6, DAY 3
■ WEDNESDAY ■
ROMANS 15:14-21

PROCLAIM THE GOSPEL

Paul is coming to the close of this letter presenting the gospel to the Roman church and addressing the problem areas they were having, including the meaning of salvation in the new covenant and the place of the law in the Christian life. In these verses, we see his passion for proclaiming the gospel.

We may not have Paul's calling or all his gifts, but we are called to "make disciples of all nations" and to "be prepared to give an answer ... for the hope that [we] have" so that we can "make the most of every opportunity" (Matthew 28:19; 1 Peter 3:15; Colossians 4:5). Evangelism may not be everything in our lives and ministries, as it was to Paul; but perhaps it should be far more than it is. He says he has won people to Christ "by what I have said and done". Literally, he says he has won people by "word and deed." This means he did not only get the message of the gospel across by speaking, but by his life and actions. We are not only to tell people the gospel, but to embody it in our attitudes and relationships. We are to invite (in a sense, "dare") people to look into us deeply and see what a human life rearranged by the gospel looks like. John Stott comments further: "This combination of words and works, the verbal and the visual, is a recognition that human beings often learn more through their eyes than through their ears. Words explain works, but works dramatize words.

Timothy Keller - Romans 8-16 For You



REFLECTION

Do you lean more towards proclaiming the gospel in word or deed? Reflect on those who have proclaimed the gospel to you by sharing Jesus in word and deed. God has put you in specific places in order for you to bring Him glory. Ask God to show you how and where you can begin to more boldly share with others what Jesus has done for you.

WEEK 6, DAY 4
■ THURSDAY ■
ROMANS 15:22-33

PARTNERING IN PRAYER

When Paul wrote this book to the Romans, he was in the city of Corinth on his third missionary journey. He still hadn't been to Rome but was anxiously awaiting his visit. Paul was planning to take offerings from Gentile churches in Macedonia and Achaia to Jerusalem, but he didn't know what awaited him in Jerusalem. It didn't go quite as planned. He would arrive in Rome much later than he planned, in chains awaiting trial before Caesar (read Acts 27 for context).

Paul expects opposition—from two quarters. First, there will be Jewish non-Christians, who will bitterly resent his coming to Jerusalem. They will see him as a traitor, a blasphemer, someone who has led Jewish people astray and destroyed the grip of the law of Moses on their lives. Second, there will be many of the Jewish Christians themselves, who for the reasons mentioned a moment ago may well find it difficult to accept money raised from non-Jewish sources. For that reason Paul urges the Roman Christians to pray for him. He has a clear sense of vocation to come to Rome, but there are major battles up ahead before he can get there. Indeed, he is setting off in the other direction altogether, going east to Jerusalem before he goes west again to Rome. As we know from Acts, the trip would indeed be a near-disaster, involving riots, beatings and trials, two years of imprisonment, a complex sea voyage and a shipwreck. We are invited, looking on, to join both in gratitude to God for all that Paul accomplished and in urgent prayer for the those who preach the gospel in our own day, especially where it crosses important cultural boundaries. Not only money, but power and the deepest sense of human identity, are challenged by the message which declares that there is one God and that the crucified and risen Jesus is his son, the world's true Lord.

N.T. Wright - *Paul for Everyone: Romans, Part 2: Chapters 9-16*



REFLECTION

Spend time in prayer today for those who are risking persecution and harm each day as they spread the gospel to those in other parts of the world. Pray for their safety and pray for their mission of reaching others with the hope of Jesus.

WEEK 6, DAY 5
■ **FRIDAY** ■
ROMANS 16

SERVE FOR HIS GLORY

Paul is making sure that the Romans care for those who have been faithful servants to him, including Phoebe, who was a woman who used her resources to support the church and was likely the one delivering and reading this letter to the church in Rome. He also includes a widely diverse group of men and women from different races and class in his greetings here and expresses deep gratitude for these friends and fellow servants. This shows the importance that Paul places on serving together in the body of believers, knowing this work can't be done alone. It's a group effort by these people to fund, host, teach, and give practical care and support to those in their church. This is the same way the church is intended to operate today. We all have an important part to play in the life of the church: giving, serving, meeting physical needs, pointing one another toward truth, and encouraging one another in our spiritual journeys. He closes with a few last warnings against divisiveness and false teaching, reminding them that unity in Christ and preaching the true gospel is of utmost importance.



REFLECTION

As we close our study of the book of Romans, here are some questions to ponder about your place in your local body of believers: How are you connected to others in your church? How can you be more invested in your church? What gifts, skills, and resources can you use to further the kingdom through your church?

WEEK 6, DAY 6
■ SATURDAY ■
ROMANS 3:21-31

THE HEART OF ROMANS

Read Romans 3:21-31 one last time as we close out our study. Many biblical scholars call this section of scripture one of the most important paragraphs ever written.

This epistle of Paul provides the most systematic answer anywhere in Scripture to the question of how to become right with God, which is the fundamental question of human existence on the assumption that God exists at all. More comprehensively, incorporating both the theological and ethical material of the epistle, Romans sums up the Christian answer to the question of how to know God's will for one's life. This letter is the fullest and most organized presentation of the heart of the gospel. All human beings have sinned and thus have become alienated from God. Restoring a desirable relationship with their Maker required the atonement wrought by Jesus Christ. Actualizing this relationship—what Christianity calls salvation—necessitates faith in Christ, which combines belief in his deity and bodily resurrection with submission to his lordship (making him ultimate Master of one's life). No form of works-righteousness can ever bring about this salvation. Still, those who have truly been justified will by definition have living within them the Spirit, who guarantees their transformation into increasingly godly people, though undoubtedly in as many different ways as there are individual believers and not without plenty of lapses and fresh starts. This growth in Christian living culminates in the ultimate glorification of the believer when Christ returns, which combines a resurrected body, free from the decay that leads to death, with a morally perfected spirit that never again sins. Because moral change begins already in this age, believers are commanded to yield themselves increasingly to the Spirit, who will empower them to obey the commands of the gospel. At the most general level, these commands involve physical and mental purity in the dedication of one's entire self to the Lord. They then proceed to the level of discovering one's individual spiritual gifts and exercising them faithfully and in love.

Craig Blomberg, Darlene Seal, and Alicia Duprée - *From Pentecost to Patmos: Acts To Revelation*



REFLECTION

Spend some time today summarizing in your own words the heart of Paul's message to the church in Rome and what you took away from our time in Romans.

WEEK 6, DAY 7
■ SUNDAY ■

REST & REFLECTION DAY

Join us for worship today and prepare your heart to engage with next week's study of God and His word. Use your time today to rest, pray, and reflect on this week's readings.

Take notes on this week's sermon on page 62.



REFLECTION NOTES & QUESTIONS

This week, we looked at Romans 15-16 and specifically Paul's vision for unity and discernment within the church. Paul lays out in these chapters the heart behind believers unifying under the message of Jesus and what a healthy vibrant community of believers should look like.

As you reflect back on what we have read this week, journal your thoughts on this or these following prompts:

- Write down what you learned about God this week.
- What is something you looked at this week that you want to receive from God in greater measure? Why?
- How can you begin to apply this truth about God to your walk with Him?

WEEK 1
■ SERMON NOTES ■

WEEK 4

■ SERMON NOTES ■

■ WHAT NOW? ■

As we come to the end of our journey through the book of Romans, we hope it's been a time of learning, after growth and deepening your understanding of God's love and grace.

Paul's letter to the Romans has the power to transform our hearts and minds. We've explored several deep theological truths, such as justification by faith, the power of the Holy Spirit, and the deep love of God that nothing can separate us from. Each chapter has offered us a new lens through which to see our lives, our struggles, and our hope in Christ.

Let's carry the message of Romans in our hearts, remembering that the gospel is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes and that its message is to bring unity among believers through Christ. May we live out our faith boldly, loving others as Christ has loved us, and shining His light in the world.



GRACE
COMMUNITY
CHURCH