EXPLORE **THE BIBLE**®

Adults

Romans

Personal Study Guide (CSB)

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ONE ROAD

"All roads lead to Rome." It's a familiar phrase. We understand it to mean that no matter what problem we're facing, there's probably more than one way to achieve a solution. Of course, thousands of years ago, it meant something much different.

During the days of the Roman Empire, the capital city was the hub of economic and cultural power. That included transportation. Justifiably, the Romans were proud of their roads. What's more, many of those roads originated from a single spot, the *Milliarium Aureum*, the "Golden Milestone." This large column was set up in the Roman Forum and served as the starting point for a vast network of highways that branched across the known world. As a result, all roads quite literally led to Rome.

Midway through the first century, the apostle Paul was hoping to take one of those roads and visit the church in Rome. In preparation, he wrote them a letter, an extensive explanation of humanity's sin and God's salvation. In it, Paul shared the meaning of the gospel and how Christ followers should apply it to their lives each day.

While many roads led to Rome, Paul was adamant that Jesus was the only road to God. He said that Jews and Gentiles alike were helpless to save themselves. Everyone needs Jesus as Savior. Things haven't changed. We all still need Jesus if we're hoping for a new relationship with God. If that's where you find yourself today, here's what you need to do . . .

- **Admit** to God that you are a sinner. Repent, turning from your sin.
- **By faith receive** Jesus as God's Son and accept His gift of forgiveness from sin. He took the penalty for your sin by dying on the cross. Jesus also rose from the dead, making a new, eternal life possible for us.
- **Confess** your faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. You may pray a prayer similar to this as you call on God to save you: "Dear God, I know that You love me. I confess my sin and need of salvation. I turn away from my sin and place my faith in Jesus as my Savior and Lord. In the name of Jesus I pray, amen."

After you have received Jesus Christ into your life, tell a pastor or another Christian about your decision. Show others your faith in Christ by asking for baptism by immersion in your local church as a public expression of your faith.

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*Evangelistic Emphasis

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MEET **THE WRITER**

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FROM **THE TEAM LEADER**

Photos. Wedding invitations. Save the dates. Birth announcements. Our refrigerator doors often showcase important people in our lives and significant events. I put announcements on my refrigerator so I won't forget them and sometimes photos of past events are purposely left up because they bring me so much joy. Exciting milestones and photos of everyday moments are captured in one spot like a special collection to be reminded of and enjoyed over and over.

Good news and big announcements are hard to keep to ourselves. In the book of Romans, Paul wrote to believers meeting in Roman house churches telling them of the best news ever shared—the gospel. Paul expounded on who needs the gospel (we all do) and where we can find salvation (only in Christ!). Jesus, through His life, death, and resurrection, made salvation possible for us. We are "justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 3:24). The gospel truly is the *best* good news.

I hope this quarter of study brings a deeper appreciation of God's gift of grace and the new life we are offered in Christ. May this lead you to tell others this good news!

In Him,

Amber Vaden

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Explore **Discover**

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WORD **WISE**

Terms listed here are identified in the Bible commentary with a dot (•).

Faith—trusting Jesus alone for salvation; personal reliance on His death and resurrection (Rom. 3:22; 4:5)

Firstfruits—the first and best part of a harvest offered to God, showing gratitude and trust in His provision; it also refers to the first evidence of God's saving work (Rom. 8:22-23; 11:16)

Flesh—the sinful human nature—our internal pull toward sin that resists God's desires (Rom. 7:18)

Glorified/Glorification—the future transformation of believers when they are fully made like Christ and share in His glory (Rom. 8:17)

Gospel—the good news of Jesus Christ—His death, resurrection, and the salvation He offers to all who believe (Rom. 1:15)

Grace—God's unearned kindness and favor, freely given to sinners through Christ (Rom. 5:20)

Illyricum [ih LIHR ih kuhm]—Roman province located northwest of Macedonia; the northeastern limits of Paul's missionary work (Rom. 15:19)

Justified/Justification—God's declaration of a believer's right standing with Him, resulting in peace with Him (Rom. 3:24; 5:1)

Reconciled/Reconciliation—to be brought back into a right relationship with God as the result of His justifying sinners—accomplished through Christ's blood, not through human effort (Rom. 5:10-11)

Redemption—God's act of setting people free from sin's penalty and restoring what was broken (Rom. 3:24; 8:23)

Righteous/Righteousness—God's perfect moral character expressed in His always doing what is right and just; to be "made righteous" refers to God's saving act in which He justifies the sinner, giving them a right standing with Him based on their faith (Rom. 3:22)

Sanctified—to be set apart by God and for God; something God does—by the Holy Spirit who changes the believers' hearts—and something believers pursue, growing in godliness (Rom. 6:22; 15:16; 1 Cor. 6:11)

Sin—anything that stands in opposition to God's holy character and commands; sin separates people from God and places humanity under His judgment; it is both a condition and the acts that flow from it (Rom. 3:23; 6:23)

Wrath—God's righteous opposition to sin (Rom. 1:18; 5:9)

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BIBLE READING **PLAN**

SEPTEMBER

- ❑ 1. Romans 1:1-7
- ❑ 2. Romans 1:8-12
- ❑ 3. Romans 1:13-15
- ❑ 4. Romans 1:16-17
- ❑ 5. Romans 1:18-23
- ❑ 6. Romans 1:24-25
- ❑ 7. Romans 1:26-32
- ❑ 8. Romans 2:1-4
- ❑ 9. Romans 2:5-11
- ❑ 10. Romans 2:12-16
- ❑ 11. Romans 2:17-24
- ❑ 12. Romans 2:25-29
- ❑ 13. Romans 3:1-8
- ❑ 14. Romans 3:9-18
- ❑ 15. Romans 3:19-20
- ❑ 16. Romans 3:21-26
- ❑ 17. Romans 3:27-31
- ❑ 18. Romans 4:1-5
- ❑ 19. Romans 4:6-8
- ❑ 20. Romans 4:9-12
- ❑ 21. Romans 4:13-17
- ❑ 22. Romans 4:18-25
- ❑ 23. Romans 5:1-5
- ❑ 24. Romans 5:6-11
- ❑ 25. Romans 5:12-14
- ❑ 26. Romans 5:15-17
- ❑ 27. Romans 5:18-21
- ❑ 28. Romans 6:1-4
- ❑ 29. Romans 6:5-10
- ❑ 30. Romans 6:11-14

OCTOBER

- ❑ 1. Romans 6:15-18
- ❑ 2. Romans 6:19-23
- ❑ 3. Romans 7:1-3
- ❑ 4. Romans 7:4-6
- ❑ 5. Romans 7:7-12
- ❑ 6. Romans 7:13-20
- ❑ 7. Romans 7:21-25
- ❑ 8. Romans 8:1-4
- ❑ 9. Romans 8:5-11
- ❑ 10. Romans 8:12-17
- ❑ 11. Romans 8:18-25
- ❑ 12. Romans 8:26-30
- ❑ 13. Romans 8:31-39
- ❑ 14. Romans 9:1-5
- ❑ 15. Romans 9:6-9
- ❑ 16. Romans 9:10-15
- ❑ 17. Romans 9:16-21
- ❑ 18. Romans 9:22-29
- ❑ 19. Romans 9:30-33
- ❑ 20. Romans 10:1-4
- ❑ 21. Romans 10:5-13
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- ❑ 28. Romans 11:25-32
- ❑ 29. Romans 11:33-36
- ❑ 30. Romans 12:1-2
- ❑ 31. Romans 12:3-8

NOVEMBER

- ❑ 1. Romans 12:9-13
- ❑ 2. Romans 12:14-21
- ❑ 3. Romans 13:1-3
- ❑ 4. Romans 13:4-7
- ❑ 5. Romans 13:8-10
- ❑ 6. Romans 13:11-14
- ❑ 7. Romans 14:1-4
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- ❑ 27. Romans 16:17-19
- ❑ 28. Romans 16:20
- ❑ 29. Romans 16:21-24
- ❑ 30. Romans 16:25-27

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BIBLICAL **BACKGROUND**

At the time he wrote this letter, Paul had not yet visited the church in Rome. He hoped to introduce himself because he was planning to travel there as soon as God allowed. As part of that introduction, he wanted the believers in Rome to understand what he believed about the gospel and how it shapes the lives of those who follow Christ.

It is not clear who established the church in Rome. It's possible that the Jews who had heard Peter's sermon on Pentecost carried the gospel to Rome and started the church. Whatever its beginnings, the Roman church had become a thriving, multi-ethnic congregation.

Paul likely wrote Romans from Corinth around AD 56–57. During that time, he may have learned more about the Roman church through Priscilla and Aquila (Acts 18:1–3). They had been expelled from Rome, along with other Christians, by Emperor Claudius around AD 49 and later became ministry partners with Paul.

In chapters 1–11, Paul presented a defense of the gospel. He highlighted the pervasive nature of sin and its universal effect on humanity, but he also proclaimed that God had offered salvation through Jesus Christ. Chapters 12–16 shift to practical application. Because believers belong to Christ, their relationships—both within the church and with those outside it—should reflect Him. Above all, love should be the defining mark of the Christian life.

MAJOR THEMES IN ROMANS

1. *The Righteousness of God.* Paul was not ashamed of the gospel because it was the power of God for salvation to all who believed. God gave righteousness as a gift to those who believed in Christ (Rom. 1:16-17).

2. *The Universality of Sin.* All people sin, and sin produces death. Sinners cannot save themselves from the consequences of their sin (1:17–3:30).

3. *Justification by Faith.* Believers are declared righteous before God, not by works but by faith (3:28; 5:1).

4. *Life in the Spirit.* Believers are called to engage their flesh in the battle against the temptation to sin (6:1-14). Even this is a work of the Holy Spirit, who lives in all believers (8:1-17).

5. *God's Sovereignty and Israel.* Even though Israel rejected God, He still desired they be saved. Paul prayed for the salvation of Israel as well as the salvation of the Gentiles (chaps. 9–11).

6. *Practical Christian Living.* Believers should offer themselves to God as living sacrifices and have their mind renewed into the image of Christ. This is a daily process of sanctification (chaps. 12–15).

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OUTLINE

ROMANS

I. **Introduction** (Rom. 1:1-15)

II. **The Universal Need of Righteousness** (Rom. 1:16–3:20)

III. **Justification: The Imputation of Righteousness** (Rom. 3:21–5:21)

IV. **The New Life in Christ** (Rom. 6:1–8:39)

V. **The Mystery of Israel** (Rom. 9:1–11:36)

VI. **Exhortations about the Christian Life** (Rom. 12:1–15:13)

VII. **Epilogue: Greetings and Travel Plans** (Rom. 15:14–16:27)

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True Power

THE GOSPEL ALONE HAS THE POWER TO REMOVE THE GUILT OF HUMANITY'S SIN.

ROMANS 1:13-25

All of us have experienced the power of good news. Perhaps it was when you got the report that you passed an exam. Or when you were told that you got the job. Maybe you received the blood test results and learned that nothing's wrong. Good news has a powerful impact on us. It turns an ordinary day into an extraordinary event that we will always remember.

What's a memorable good news moment you've had? How did it affect you?

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UNDERSTAND **THE CONTEXT**

ROMANS 1:1-32

Paul introduced himself to the church in Rome by way of the gospel. When anyone used the word "gospel" in those days, they meant that they had good news. For Paul, the gospel meant the good news of salvation in Jesus Christ.

Paul served Jesus as a missionary to the Gentiles. He devoted himself to sharing the gospel with people who had never had a chance to hear it. For that reason, he told the believers in Rome that he would visit them soon. Paul's passion to share the gospel prompted him to make this visit. He wanted to encourage believers there, and he also wanted them to partner with him in proclaiming the gospel to others who had not heard it. He testified that telling others the good news of Jesus did not embarrass him. On the contrary, he shared the message with eagerness. He had an obligation to proclaim it everywhere. Paul knew that anyone who placed their faith in Christ would have their lives transformed.

A sincere burden for Gentiles compelled Paul to preach the gospel to them. Even though he didn't mention Gentiles specifically, he had them in mind as he wrote about the wrath of God. They lived in a world that God had created. By looking around them, they should have sensed His presence. But instead of turning to Him and worshiping Him, they ignored His presence and rejected His existence.

By turning a deaf ear to the truth about Jesus, they stumbled along in spiritual darkness. Sinful behavior directed their lives. Having rejected the Creator, they worshiped objects that He created. They also gave themselves to immorality and other pagan expressions of sexual degradation. Their sinful way of living had poisoned them spiritually. As a result, they sank deeper into sin and encouraged others to join them in their disgraceful conduct. Therefore, God would have the last word over their lives, and His judgment would affect them eternally. For that reason, they needed to hear the good news of Jesus.

Read Romans 1:1-25 and underline the words and phrases that call attention to Jesus and the gospel.

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EXPLORE **THE TEXT**

GOSPEL POWER (ROM. 1:13-17)

13 Now I don't want you to be unaware, brothers and sisters, that I often planned to come to you (but was prevented until now) in order that I might have a fruitful ministry among you, just as I have had among the rest of the Gentiles. 14 I am obligated both to Greeks and barbarians, both to the wise and the foolish. 15 So I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome. 16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, first to the Jew, and also to the Greek. 17 For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith, just as it is written: The righteous will live by faith.

VERSE 13

Paul was eager to visit the Christians in Rome. But so far, his work ***prevented*** him from going there. He looked forward to being with them because he had many friends in the church (Rom. 16:3-16). But he also had another reason for wanting to be with them. The visit would strengthen their spiritual kinship for the sake of ***fruitful ministry***. The Lord had called Paul to serve as a missionary to the ***Gentiles*** (Acts 9:15). With the help of the church in Rome, he intended to expand his ministry to new areas where Christ was not known (see Rom. 15:23-24).

VERSES 14-15

Paul passionately embraced his call to mission work. He considered himself ***obligated*** to people who had not heard the gospel. They needed to know about Jesus and the gift of salvation that is centered in Him. Some of them spoke the Greek language. Others, like the ***barbarians***, spoke other languages. Likewise, they may have been known as ***wise***, or they could have been categorized as ***foolish***. All of them shared one need in common: to hear the good news about Christ. Jesus had changed Paul's life forever, and the need for others to know Him compelled the apostle to stretch himself as far as possible to take the gospel to them.

Paul did not consider his obligation to be a heavy ball and chain that he would have to drag around for the rest of his life. Quite the opposite, he took hold of it with wholehearted enthusiasm.

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He looked forward to walking through the doors of opportunity God would open for him. At this time in His ministry, walking through the door meant going to Rome and deepening his relationship with the church there.

KEY DOCTRINE: *Evangelism and Missions*

It is the duty and privilege of every follower of Christ and of every church of the Lord Jesus Christ to endeavor to make disciples of all nations. (See Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 1:8.)

VERSES 16-17

Paul's testimony reminds us that we should never be ***ashamed of the •gospel***. The good news about Jesus is the ***power of God*** that changes lives and brings ***salvation*** to everyone who believes. Paul's mention of both ***Jew*** and ***Greek*** reminds us that the gospel has no boundaries—it is good news for all people everywhere.

Receiving the gift of salvation through Christ changes everything. Most importantly, it makes us right with God. Trying to earn ***•righteousness*** by our good deeds leads to nothing more than emptiness and frustration. A right relationship with God does not result from doing charitable deeds, keeping religious rules, or observing empty rituals. It results from placing our ***•faith*** in Christ to save us.

When Jesus makes us right with God, He will then guide us toward maturity. The level of faith we exhibit in spiritual infancy gives way to a more mature level of faith as we follow Him. From one level of faith to another, we grow stronger and deeper in our walk with Him.

Do you see sharing the gospel as a duty, a privilege, or both? How can you cultivate a heart that is eager to share the gospel?

How does remembering that the gospel is "the power of God for salvation" change your confidence in sharing it?

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DIVINE REVELATION (ROM. 1:18-20)

[18] For God's wrath is revealed from heaven against all godlessness and unrighteousness of people who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth, [19] since what can be known about God is evident among them, because God has shown it to them. [20] For his invisible attributes, that is, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen since the creation of the world, being understood through what he has made. As a result, people are without excuse.

VERSES 18-19

Having affirmed the power of the gospel, Paul explained why people need to hear the gospel. He explained that ***God's wrath is*** being ***revealed . . . against all godlessness and unrighteousness***. *God's wrath* does not suggest that God lost His temper because Gentiles did something that made Him mad. Rather, God's wrath is His appropriate response to sin.

Paul noted that God's wrath was directed toward those who ***by their unrighteousness suppress the truth***. Paul was talking about people who closed their eyes and covered their ears so they could not see the obvious signs of God's actual presence in their world. By muffling the truth about Him, they could deceive themselves into believing that He did not exist at all.

Paul's explanation about people's attempt to bury the truth underscores a critical point that cannot be overlooked. Everyone who tries to wipe out the reality of God will fail in their attempt. The reality of God's existence screams at them from everywhere. Consequently, the vast evidence that validates His presence simply cannot be ignored. Anyone who is awake can see it before them. Not only does the evidence exist all around them, but He has also gone to the trouble of making sure that they see it. He has taken the initiative to show it to them. Therefore, they cannot say that they have never ***known about God***.

God does not conceal Himself from us. He doesn't occupy a throne so far away that we'll never be able to encounter Him. Quite the opposite, He makes Himself known to us through the extraordinary as well as the ordinary circumstances we face each day. Theologians have a name for the everyday evidence of God's presence: general revelation. In the Bible, God shows Himself in a way that's called special revelation. There we meet Jesus. God's special revelation about Jesus in Scripture is necessary for salvation.

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VERSE 20

The most obvious evidence of God's presence can be seen in His ***creation***. In ***the world*** He created, He has made Himself known in a vast assortment of ways. Granted, nobody has seen His ***invisible attributes***. We cannot see His ***eternal power***. Neither can we behold His ***divine nature***. However, anyone can ***clearly*** perceive His attributes in the world that He created for us. Furthermore, we can sense His presence when we look at a newborn baby, feel the warmth and safety of a loving hug, or enjoy the food the soil produces. When we examine God's creation, we can agree with Paul. Nobody has an ***excuse*** for denying God's reality and presence in the world.

What does creation teach us about God's attributes?

WORTHLESS THINKING (ROM. 1:21-25)

21 For though they knew God, they did not glorify him as God or show gratitude. Instead, their thinking became worthless, and their senseless hearts were darkened. 22 Claiming to be wise, they became fools 23 and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man, birds, four-footed animals, and reptiles.24 Therefore God delivered them over in the desires of their hearts to sexual impurity, so that their bodies were degraded among themselves. 25 They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served what has been created instead of the Creator, who is praised forever. Amen.

VERSE 21

When people refuse to see God in His creation, they begin to spiral downward spiritually. They find themselves wandering around in a spiritual wasteland. There they begin to foster notions about themselves and their world that turn out to be ***worthless***. Such notions leave no room for God and His presence. In turn, they ignore the truth about Him at every turn. With their minds closed to the certainty of His presence, their ***hearts*** turn cold toward Him. The chilling emptiness in their hearts redirects their passions in a destructive way. As they adore their own ***senseless*** ideas and

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misdirected passions, they consider themselves to be enlightened. In reality, they are stumbling along in spiritual darkness.

How does failing to glorify God lead to a darkened heart?

VERSES 22-23

Paul pointed to the result of their deception. The people who reject the reality of God's presence continue to mislead themselves. They lie to themselves about how their world works and how they work in their world. Instead of telling themselves the truth about God's presence in their world, they choose to deceive themselves into thinking that He does not exist. They consider their self-deception to be wisdom. Actually, it has made ***fools*** of them.

They show their foolishness in the objects they choose to worship. They pay no attention to the ***immortal God***. Glorifying Him alone would reflect true wisdom. God created them to worship Him. Glorifying Him would exhibit their awareness of His awesome presence and eternal reign. Ignoring Him sets them on a path of worshiping what He created. Instead of choosing wisely to worship the Lord who will never die, they made a foolish choice. They decided to indulge in the practice of paying homage to ***images***. They shaped the images into pagan idols that they adored and worshiped. Some of the idols looked like humans, while others took the shape of the ***birds***, ***animals***, and ***reptiles***. The idols of their worship share their mortality.

VERSE 24

In response to their foolish choice, God reflects His eternal wisdom. He has the authority to destroy them completely or to wash His hands of them for good. But instead of choosing either option, He determined to hand them over to their pagan passions. Their hearts crave ***sexual impurity***. He released them so they could follow their hearts in their attempts to find spiritual contentment in unbridled sexual encounters. In turn, they took a nosedive into an empty lifestyle of morally degrading behavior. In so doing, they continue to disgrace themselves as they sink deeper into spiritual darkness.

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VERSE 25

By choosing such a self-destructive path, they make an exchange. They replace ***truth*** with a ***lie***. If they would take hold of truth, they would give themselves to worshiping and serving God. Unmistakable validations of His living presence surround them. But they turn their backs on the truth. Instead, they place their faith in a lie of the worst kind. Consequently, they devote themselves to a lifestyle that renders spiritual emptiness. They reject ***the Creator*** who could fill their lives with spiritual contentment. He alone deserves to be ***praised forever***.

What does it look like to claim wisdom but live foolishly?

How do people exchange truth for lies today—and how might you be tempted to do the same?

BIBLE SKILL: *Use a Bible dictionary to better understand a theological concept.*

Paul emphasized that God reveals Himself through nature ("natural" or "general" revelation) as well as through His Word and through Jesus ("special" revelation). Read a Bible dictionary article on "Revelation" to learn more about these two forms of divine revelation. Record your thoughts about their similarities or differences.

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APPLY THE TEXT

+ Believers seek opportunities to share the gospel's power with those who need it.
+ We can point others toward God through what He has revealed in His creation.
+ Rejecting God ultimately leads to devastating consequences.

Focus on people in your life who do not know Jesus. Agree with your Bible study group to pray together for these people and to ask God for opportunities to share the gospel with them.

Look at your own determination to share the good news of Jesus. How do you exhibit your confidence in the power of the gospel? What will you do this week to demonstrate your eagerness for others to hear it? With whom will you start a gospel conversation?

Memorize Romans 1:16.

Prayer Needs

Explore the Bible Prayer Guide
Scan here for a weekly prayer guide based on this quarter's Bible passages.

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Coming Judgment

God will judge every person according to their response to Him.

ROMANS 2:1-13

Standing before a judge can be a sobering experience, even if it's only for the speeding ticket in your hand. When a police officer pulls you over and gives you a ticket, you set it aside and get back on the road. However, from that moment on, you know that one day you will be accountable to a judge. On that day, the ticket testifies to your accountability.

What does a speeding ticket teach us about accountability?

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UNDERSTAND **THE CONTEXT**

ROMANS 2:1–3:20

In Romans 1:18-25, Paul described the guilt of the Gentile world. The Jews likely would have stood and applauded at Paul's proclamation of the Gentiles' guilt. But in chapter 2, Paul reminded the Jews they were no different from the Gentiles when it came to facing God's judgment. Had they responded to the truth that God had given them in Christ? God's judgment is based on truth and is impartial—both Jews and Gentiles will be judged in the same way. Mere knowledge of the law does not justify; obedience to God's Word is what matters (Rom. 2:1-16).

In 2:17-29, Paul addressed those Jews who relied on the law and boasted in their Jewish heritage yet failed to obey God. External signs like circumcision were meaningless without inward obedience. True circumcision is of the heart, by the Spirit, not merely by the letter of the law.

In 3:1-8, the apostle acknowledged that Jews had an advantage—they had been entrusted with God's Word, the Old Testament. Even though some Jews were unfaithful to God, He remained faithful and true. Human failure cannot nullify God's promises. Paul also emphasized that God is always just in judging sin.

In 3:9-20, Paul concluded that all people—Jews and Gentiles—are guilty of sin. He cited multiple Old Testament passages to show that no one is righteous, no one seeks God, and all have turned away (Pss. 5:9; 10:7; 14:1-3; 36:1; 53:1-3; 140:3). The law cannot justify anyone; it only reveals sin and holds the world accountable to God. The whole world stands guilty before Him. Righteousness must come from God, not human effort.

Read Romans 2:1-13. Identify what these verses teach about God's character. What do they teach about human accountability?

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EXPLORE **THE TEXT**

NO EXCUSES (ROM. 2:1-5)

[1] Therefore, every one of you who judges is without excuse. For when you judge another, you condemn yourself, since you, the judge, do the same things. [2] Now we know that God's judgment on those who do such things is based on the truth. [3] Do you think—anyone of you who judges those who do such things yet do the same—that you will escape God's judgment? [4] Or do you despise the riches of his kindness, restraint, and patience, not recognizing that God's kindness is intended to lead you to repentance? [5] Because of your hardened and unrepentant heart you are storing up wrath for yourself in the day of wrath, when God's righteous judgment is revealed.

VERSES 1-3

Most Jewish people in Paul's day considered themselves to be spiritually superior to non-Jews. They viewed Gentiles as spiritually unclean. Here, Paul asserted that the Jews were ***without excuse*** in judging others. He had previously said this about the Gentiles (Rom. 1:20). He reminded them that all people are without excuse because all people are sinners before God. For that reason, they had no right to ***judge another*** person—they too had sinned. Those who were judging others were themselves under ***God's judgment***, and God's judgment is ***based on the truth***. God's judgment is always just, whereas the judgment of others is often prejudiced by self-righteousness and hypocrisy. Because God's judgment is truth-based, it is impartial and based on His character.

All people are without excuse because all people are sinners before God.

Jesus Himself warned against judging others (Matt. 7:1). Some people find this confusing because we must make judgments about people almost daily. However, evaluation doesn't mean condemnation. When we condemn others, we pass judgment on their sin while we exhibit the same sinful behavior. If we don't think that we will face God's judgment when we condemn others, we have deceived ourselves. We will not ***escape*** God's verdict on our hypocrisy.

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VERSES 4-5

Some presume upon God's ***kindness*** to believe that He would never judge sinners. Others believe God's kindness applies only to themselves. Paul already established the universality of sin and the fact that all people stand guilty before God apart from His grace. Now he explained that the kindness of God was to lead people to ***repentance***. Realizing they are sinners and that God has thus far withheld His wrath against them should lead them to turn from their sin to Him. However, rather than seeing God's kindness as an opportunity to repent, many have a ***hardened and unrepentant heart***. Paul warned that they are ***storing up •wrath*** for themselves in ***the day of wrath***. The day of accounting is coming.

Why do individuals tend to judge others while overlooking their own sin?

According to verse 4, what is the purpose of God's kindness, restraint, and patience? How does verse 5 challenge our view of accountability?

PERFECT STANDARD (ROM. 2:6-11)

[6] He will repay each one according to his works: [7] eternal life to those who by persistence in doing good seek glory, honor, and immortality; [8] but wrath and anger to those who are self-seeking and disobey the truth while obeying unrighteousness. [9] There will be affliction and distress for every human being who does evil, first to the Jew, and also to the Greek; [10] but glory, honor, and peace for everyone who does what is good, first to the Jew, and also to the Greek. [11] For there is no favoritism with God.

VERSES 6-8

Paul supported the truth of His assertions by citing two Old Testament passages (Ps. 62:12; Prov. 24:12). Both of these passages drive home the same truth about God's righteous judgments.

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The day is coming when the Lord will ***repay each one according to his works***.

Paul asserted that all people will belong to one of two categories when they stand before Him in final judgment. One category consists of everyone who receives the gift of ***eternal life***. They devote themselves to ***doing good*** in response to what God has done for them. They live to bring ***glory*** and ***honor*** to Him.

The second category consists of misguided people who have deceived themselves. They can count on facing a different outcome. Instead of being rewarded with eternal life, they will be paid the wages of their sinful lifestyles. Their wages would be counted out to them in the currency of God's ***wrath***. Anyone who rejects Jesus will be faced with the humiliating reality that they embraced a lie of the worst order. They disobeyed ***the truth*** about their need to be made right with God through Christ.

VERSES 9-10

Paul had more to say about the coming day of God's judgment. ***Affliction and distress*** await anyone who demonstrates an eagerness to give their lives to ***evil*** practices. ***The Jew*** first as well as ***the Greek***—or the Gentile—would be held to the same standard.

A completely different outcome awaited others who would come before Him in judgment one day. Instead of being cursed with a miserable existence of unending anguish, they could look forward to a choice blessing. They would be able to keep on glorifying God. The privilege to ***honor*** Him with their lives would be extended into eternity. Furthermore, they would enjoy the abiding sense of ***peace*** with God. Jewish people would be judged ***first***. God's standard would not be different for them. He would judge them first because He had given His Word to them first. However, He would not use a different yardstick when He judged Gentiles. He would judge them by the same standard.

God judges all people in the very same way.

VERSE 11

Paul's description of God's judgment leads to an inevitable conclusion. God judges all people in the very same way. There is ***no favoritism with God***. Such a conclusion may astonish those who consider themselves to be God's favorites. Like the Jews of the first

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century, some individuals today may view themselves as uniquely special to God because of their heritage. They may believe that their connection with spiritual leaders in the past qualifies them for preferred status with God. Or they may think that God favors them because they have made huge donations to a variety of charities. Nothing could be further from the truth. No one can count on favoritism with God to give them a right relationship with Him.

What do these verses teach about God's impartiality?

Based on these verses, what is the key to a healthy relationship with God?

KEY DOCTRINE: *Man*

In the beginning man was innocent of sin and was endowed by his Creator with freedom of choice. By his free choice man sinned against God and brought sin into the human race. (See Genesis 3; Psalm 51:5.)

ONE WAY (ROM. 2:12-13)

12 For all who sin without the law will also perish without the law, and all who sin under the law will be judged by the law.
13 For the hearers of the law are not righteous before God, but the doers of the law will be justified.

VERSE 12

God does not play favorites. He applies the same perfect standard of judgment to each person. His judgment is based on how people respond to Him. Paul noted that Gentiles sinned against God just like Jews. However, they did not understand as much about •***sin***. They did not have the Scriptures. Jewish people had a deeper understanding of sin because God had given them ***the law***. For example, God gave the Ten Commandments to Israel.

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Each commandment identified a specific sin to be avoided. When God delivered the Israelites from Egyptian slavery centuries earlier, He gave the commandments to them at Mount Sinai (Ex. 20:1-17). Since that time, generations of Jewish people learned about avoiding sinful behavior. Gentiles lived ***without the law***. But God still held them accountable to Him.

Even though the Gentiles did not have the law, God made Himself known to them. When they rejected Him, He judged them for not responding to the truth He revealed to them. In turn, they would ***perish***. The Jews could not treat God's law as nothing more than a keepsake. The same truth applies to us: those who have God's Word cannot treat it as nothing more than a keepsake. The Jews possessed and knew the law, and they still transgressed it. Both the Jew and the Gentile were condemned apart from Christ, whether they knew the law or not. Jews were not safe from the wrath of God because they possessed the law, and Gentiles were not safe because they did not possess the law.

Those who have God's Word cannot treat it as nothing more than a keepsake.

VERSE 13

Again, Paul divided his listeners in two categories: the ***hearers of the law*** and the ***doers of the law***. As Paul stated, merely hearing the words of the law would not make Jewish people right with God. For anyone to be •***righteous*** before God, they would need to do more than just hear the words of Scripture. They had to be ***doers***. Being a doer does not suggest that people can work their way into being right with God. In chapter 3, Paul declared that "there is no one righteous, not even one" (v. 10). He also made the point that no one is saved "by works of the law" (3:20). Only one person who has ever lived was a righteous doer of the law—Jesus Christ. The doers of the law are those who put their faith in Him.

In verse 13 Paul used the word •***justified*** for the first time in Romans. The word *justified* is derived from legal terminology. It describes a person who is declared innocent, upright, or righteous. The message of Romans is that it is only by the substitutionary death of Jesus and faith alone in Him that any person can be forgiven and declared right with God. "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God; they are justified freely by his grace

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through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus" (3:23-24). "Since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (5:1). "But God proves his own love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us . . . while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son" (5:8,10). Therefore, what Paul says in verse 13 sets the stage for a fuller explanation of the gospel in the following chapters.

Why can't my good works make me right with God?

In what ways might you be relying on knowledge rather than obedience in your own spiritual life? What practical steps can you take to move from hearing God's truth to actively doing it?

BIBLE SKILL: *Use multiple Scripture passages to understand a major doctrine.*

People have used Romans 2:13 and other passages to claim that salvation is achieved by works that are needed in addition to faith. Read the following passages and determine what the Bible teaches about salvation by faith: John 6:28-29; 11:26; Acts 16:31; Rom. 1:17; 4:6-8; 6:23; Eph. 2:8; Phil. 3:9. How do these verses relate to Paul's words to the Romans about the universality of judgment?

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APPLY THE TEXT

+ We should focus on our own sin rather than judging others.
+ Our eternal destiny is based on our response to God in this life.
+ Unbelievers need to understand that good works will not justify them before God.

Discuss with your Bible study group some of the opinions you have heard about how people are justified before God. How can you use this week's passage to give a biblical answer?

As you apply this Bible study to your own life, think about your personal response to God. How have you responded to the gospel of Jesus Christ? How are you responding to the gospel message today—how is your life being changed?

Memorize Romans 2:11.

Prayer Needs

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Saving Faith

A RIGHT STANDING WITH GOD COMES BY FAITH ALONE.

ROMANS 3:21–4:5

We put our faith to work every day. When we sit in a chair, we trust it to hold us upright so we won't fall on the floor. We entrust our lives to a bridge to safely get us across a river. Throughout our daily routines, we put our faith in people around us. We trust that the sun will rise in the morning and set in the evening. However, we often struggle with trusting the Lord.

In whom or in what have you been placing your trust lately? What factors can make trusting others challenging?

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UNDERSTAND **THE CONTEXT**

ROMANS 3:21–4:25

So far in Paul's instruction, we have learned that all people are guilty of sin, and there is nothing we can do to remove our guilt. However, God has done something about our sin that reflects His grace. He will forgive us freely because Christ paid the price for our sin. By allowing Jesus to die in our place, God has provided the only way for our sins to be forgiven for good.

Nothing we do will ever be enough to earn God's forgiveness. For that reason, we cannot brag about what we have done to be righteous. Our right standing with God comes through Christ alone. He offers the gift of his forgiveness freely to every person in the same way. When we turn to Christ by faith, we will be forgiven.

Paul pointed to two Old Testament heroes who validated the truth about forgiveness. First, he noted David's affirmation of God's forgiveness. Second, he pointed to Abraham, who trusted God in faith. Abraham could not brag about anything he had done to cause God to accept him as righteous. He simply placed his trust in God. In response, God made Abraham right with Him. God demonstrated Abraham's right standing with Him by making a promise that proved to be monumental. He did not make the promise because Abraham kept His law perfectly—this was before God gave the law. On the contrary, the promise resulted solely from Abraham's believing God.

The remarkable account of Abraham serves as a stirring testimony of God's grace to anyone who puts their faith in Him. According to Paul, the testimony of Abraham's faith in God applies to us as well when we believe in Jesus. Jesus died for our sins and rose from the grave so we could be made right with God by faith alone.

Read Romans 4:6-25 in your Bible. Underline the words "faith" and "righteousness" in the passage. Why are these words important in Paul's instruction about God's gift of forgiveness through Christ?

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EXPLORE **THE TEXT**

FALLING SHORT (ROM. 3:21-26)

21 But now, apart from the law, the righteousness of God has been revealed, attested by the Law and the Prophets. 22 The righteousness of God is through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe, since there is no distinction. 23 For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God; 24 they are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. 25 God presented him as the mercy seat by his blood, through faith, to demonstrate his righteousness, because in his restraint God passed over the sins previously committed. 26 God presented him to demonstrate his righteousness at the present time, so that he would be just and justify the one who has faith in Jesus.

VERSES 21-22

Paul emphasized that having the law and trying to obey it was not the way to achieve ***the •righteousness of God***. In other words, good works do not make anyone right with God. The law showed the problem of sin, but it did not provide the way to fix it. ***But now***, God has ***revealed*** His way of being right with Him. ***The Law*** as well as ***the Prophets*** of the Old Testament declared it. His way of being right with Him does not result from earning a good standing with Him. It does not have anything to do with good works. On the contrary, it has everything to do with faith. ***•Faith in Jesus Christ*** makes people right with God.

The law showed the problem of sin, but it did not provide the way to fix it.

VERSES 23-24

All of us share one reality in common. We ***all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.*** Theologian Hadley Moule (1841–1920) illuminated the truth of verse 23 like this: "The harlot, the liar, the murderer, are short of [God's glory]; but so are you. Perhaps they stand at the bottom of a mine, and you on the crest of an Alp; but you are as little able to touch the stars as they."[1] In other words, apart from Christ, we all are equally lost and without hope.

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Again, Paul used the key term •***justified***. When God justifies us, two things happen: first, we are declared no longer guilty of sin. Second, we are declared righteous.

Paul used another key theological word in verse 24: •***redemption***. *Redemption* referred to the purchase of freedom for slaves, prisoners of war, or condemned criminals. All this is ***by his grace***, a gift offered ***freely***. But what is free to us was not free to God; it came with a cost.

KEY DOCTRINE: *Salvation (Justification)*

Justification is God's gracious and full acquittal upon principles of His righteousness of all sinners who repent and believe in Christ. (See 1 Corinthians 1:30; Galatians 2:16.)

VERSES 25-26

Paul declared that God presented Jesus as ***the mercy seat by his blood***. Other translations render the Greek term (*hilasterion*) as "propitiation" or "the sacrifice of atonement." This is language of the Old Testament sacrificial system. After God delivered His people from Egyptian slavery, He directed them to build the tabernacle and the ark of the covenant. He instructed them to place *the mercy seat* on top of the ark (Ex. 25:17-21). Once each year, on the Day of Atonement, He gathered His people for a worship experience that focused attention on their sin and His forgiveness (Lev. 16:1-30). The high priest sprinkled blood from sacrificed animals on the mercy seat. This portrayed the reality that a sacrifice had been made to atone for their sins. Likewise, the ***blood*** of Jesus made Him the mercy seat or the atoning sacrifice for everyone who places their ***faith*** in Him. The focus is on the sacrifice of the blood Jesus shed for our sin.

When it comes to our sin, God is ***just*** in His judgments. He requires that a sacrifice be made to atone for our sin. At the same time, He is the judge who justifies ***the one who has faith in Jesus***.

Why can't good works lead to salvation?

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How do you respond to the truth that you cannot earn righteousness through your own efforts?

FINDING HOPE (ROM. 3:27-31)

27 Where, then, is boasting? It is excluded. By what kind of law? By one of works? No, on the contrary, by a law of faith. 28 For we conclude that a person is justified by faith apart from the works of the law. 29 Or is God the God of Jews only? Is he not the God of Gentiles too? Yes, of Gentiles too, 30 since there is one God who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith. 31 Do we then nullify the law through faith? Absolutely not! On the contrary, we uphold the law.

VERSES 27-28

Paul addressed the question of ***boasting***. God's grace always renders grateful humility. If we could earn our salvation by working for it, then we would have a reason to boast. We could give ourselves a pat on the back for our achievement. But because salvation is by faith alone and not by works, boasting is ***excluded***.

Paul's conclusion that justification is by faith alone deserves our attention. We are wise to reflect on the wonder of God's grace to us. Giving serious attention to it nurtures our gratitude to Him, and it nourishes our humility.

However, this does not suggest that works are unimportant. Works are a result of salvation, not a cause of salvation. In Ephesians, Paul wrote, "For you are saved by grace through faith, and this is not from yourselves; it is God's gift—not from works, so that no one can boast" (Eph. 2:8-9). Then he added, "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works . . . " (v. 10).

VERSES 29-30

The Jews believed they had the unique privilege of an exclusive relationship with God. For that reason, they considered themselves to be superior to ***Gentiles,*** those who did not have a place in the family tree of Abraham. Their sense of superiority fostered their disdain for Gentiles. Paul addressed this by affirming that God favored Gentiles just as much as He favored the Jews.

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Just as God loves all people in the same way, He will ***justify*** everyone in the same way. His gift of forgiveness is offered to anyone who places their faith in Jesus. Jews set themselves apart by being ***circumcised***. Accordingly, they referred to Gentiles as ***uncircumcised***. Such distinctions did not matter to the ***one God*** who has provided one way of salvation for all.

VERSE 31

Paul addressed yet another question that Jews and Gentiles alike would raise. The question focused on the need for ***the law*** since forgiveness came through ***faith***. The Jews viewed the law as a sign of privilege and assurance that God included only them as His people. Consequently, Gentiles saw the law as a reminder that they had been excluded. For both groups, being pardoned through Christ did not ***nullify*** the law. On the contrary, what God did through Christ upheld the law. Jesus said, "Don't think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to abolish but to fulfill" (Matt. 5:17). The penalty of the law still had to be paid—and Jesus paid it on the cross.

Why did Paul say boasting is excluded in the context of justification?

What does it mean to be justified by faith instead of works?

FOLLOWING FAITH (ROM. 4:1-5)

[1] What then will we say that Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh, has found? [2] If Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about—but not before God. [3] For what does the Scripture say? Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him for righteousness. [4] Now to the one who works, pay is not credited as a gift, but as something owed. [5] But to the one who does not work, but believes on him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is credited for righteousness.

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VERSES 1-2

Paul turned to ***Abraham*** —the ***forefather*** of the Jews—to make his argument that salvation is by faith. For Jewish people, Abraham personified their conviction that a person could earn justification by works. Without a doubt, Abraham gained an esteemed reputation with everything he had done in his life. He left his homeland and traveled far away to a new land. There he and Sarah started a family that grew to be the nation called Israel. For Jewish people, his ***works*** had earned God's favor. Paul, however, argued that ***before God***, Abraham had no reason to ***boast*** about his accomplishments.

VERSE 3

Paul's argument came directly from ***Scripture***. According to Genesis 15:6, "Abram believed the LORD, and he credited it to him as righteousness." Abraham was made right with God because of his faith—not his works. Abraham became a righteous person when he ***believed God***.

Paul notes that Abraham's faith was ***credited to him for righteousness***. The word *credited* comes from the world of accounting and meant to deposit or to place in the positive ledger column. It implied a transaction. However, this credit did not happen because of work performed but grace freely given.

God will give the same gift to anyone—even the most ungodly person—who turns to Him in faith.

VERSES 4-5

When people work at a job for an employer, they expect to be ***credited*** for their labor by being paid. They would not consider their pay to be a ***gift*** from their employer. Rather, the employer ***owed*** the money to the employee.

Anyone who read what Paul said about paying a person who worked for an employer would have understood what he meant. Employees deserved to be paid when they worked for an employer. For them, a wage would never be thought of as a gift. From there, Paul affirmed the profound truth about God's way of making a person right with Him. He did not pay Abraham for his work by declaring him to be a righteous person. When Abraham took a simple step of ***faith***, God presented him with the most precious

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gift of all. He made Abraham right with Him. Paul went on to affirm that God will give the same gift to anyone—even the most ***ungodly*** person—who turns to Him in faith.

Why would Paul's Roman readers have considered his comments radical? How does this passage challenge the idea that righteousness can be earned?

In what ways do you sometimes try to "earn" God's favor through your actions?

BIBLE SKILL: *Use Bible study tools to learn about key words in Scripture.*

Read Genesis 12:1-3 and 15:1-20. Use a Bible dictionary and other Bible study tools to learn more about the meaning of a "covenant." Read and reflect on Genesis to identify the various elements of a covenant. Answer these questions: How did this covenant ceremony highlight the faith of Abraham? Why do you think that Abraham needed this covenant ceremony to remind him of the promises of God in Genesis 12:1-3?

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APPLY THE TEXT

+ Everyone falls short of God's standard, so everyone needs Jesus.
+ We can never be "good enough" to make ourselves right with God.
+ God calls all people to accept His offer of salvation through faith in Christ.

Discuss with your Bible study group any troubling issues people have regarding God's gift of forgiveness. What prevents people from accepting His offer of salvation? Do they struggle with faith, or do they doubt the sacrifice of Christ?

As you reflect on God's gift of salvation through Christ, how often have you boasted over your spiritual accomplishments? What place does grateful humility have in your personal relationship with God? In what ways do you demonstrate your concern for others who need Jesus?

Memorize Romans 3:23-24.

Prayer Needs

1. Kenneth Boa and William Kruidenier, *Romans*, vol. 6, Holman New Testament Commentary (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2000), 107.

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Restored Relationship

CHRIST DIED FOR SINNERS, MAKING RECONCILIATION WITH GOD POSSIBLE FOR ALL.

ROMANS 5:1-11,18-21

Reconciliation paints a picture of love at work. Imagine two children in trouble with their mom. When their mother confronted them about their disobedience, their responses were tinged with disrespect. Their bad behavior built a wall between themselves and their mother. She knew that something had to be done to restore the relationship. Because she loved her children, she took the first step toward making things right. So did God when Christ died for us.

When have you seen reconciliation in action lately? With whom have you sought reconciliation?

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UNDERSTAND **THE CONTEXT**

ROMANS 5:1-21

In chapter 4, Paul emphasized justification by faith in Christ. He pointed to Abraham, who lived before God gave the law. Abraham was justified by faith rather than by his works (Rom. 4:3). This occurred also before he was circumcised (4:9-12). Just as Abraham was justified by his faith, God justifies people today through faith—not works. No one can be reconciled to God by good deeds or good intentions. Reconciliation is the result of justification. Because God has justified us, He has also reconciled us to Himself.

In Romans 5, Paul listed three results of reconciliation. First, reconciliation with God brings a new peace with God (5:1-5). Those who are justified by faith in Jesus now live at peace with God. Grace gives them a new standing with the Father and hope for eternity. In addition, Christ followers can rejoice because even their afflictions are used to nurture their spiritual maturity.

The second result of reconciliation is that it witnesses to God's unconditional love (5:6-11). Jesus died as a substitute for the ungodly. His death served as a perfect sacrifice for sin and a perfect demonstration of God's love.

Finally, reconciliation initiates a growing grace in the life of the believer (5:12-21). Jesus reversed the curse of Eden. While Adam's disobedience led humanity into condemnation, Christ's obedient sacrifice leads to justification and reconciliation for all who accept Him in faith. Sin creates a universal problem, but it cannot compare to the overwhelming grace of Jesus. He has brought sin's reign of death to an end, offering reconciliation and eternal life to everyone who believes. Jesus accomplished what the law could not. The law highlighted sin, leading to more guilt; but Jesus redeems individuals from sin's power.

Read Romans 5:1-11,18-21 in your Bible. Identify all the things a believer gains through faith in Christ. How are these benefits of salvation connected?

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EXPLORE **THE TEXT**

A NEW PEACE (ROM. 5:1-5)

[1] Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. [2] We have also obtained access through him by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we boast in the hope of the glory of God. [3] And not only that, but we also boast in our afflictions, because we know that affliction produces endurance, [4] endurance produces proven character, and proven character produces hope. [5] This hope will not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured out in our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.

VERSES 1-2

The word ***therefore*** looks back to everything Paul has said up to this point about the need for justification (chaps. 1–3) and the means of justification (chap. 4). The phrase ***since we have been •justified*** indicates Paul is now turning his attention to those who have placed their ***•faith*** in Christ. Because we have been *justified,* we have ***peace with God***.

Peace with God through Christ gives way to other blessings. One of them involves ***access***. Jesus opens the door to a personal relationship with God. With the door opened, we step into the wonders of His magnificent ***grace*** to us. Because of His grace, we're forgiven. Furthermore, we have new life in Him that will never end. Abiding in His grace, we're anchored to Him. He is our rock-solid foundation, and nothing can separate us from Him. Another blessing of God's peace comes in the form of ***hope***. We can ***boast in the hope of the glory of God.*** Previously, Paul said all people fall short of the glory of God (Rom. 3:23). But those who have been justified by faith reflect His glory and find hope. While we cannot boast in our own efforts to be right with God, we can boast in the peace that He has brought to us through reconciliation.

VERSES 3-4

Another blessing of reconciliation involves unshakable hope even when we face ***afflictions***. Peace with God does not always mean freedom from suffering. In fact, peace with God may result in suffering for the sake of the gospel. Jesus said, "You are blessed when

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they insult you and persecute you and falsely say every kind of evil against you *because of me*" (Matt. 5:10, emphasis added). Believers can rejoice in affliction because they recognize God is at work in those difficult circumstances.

Paul listed benefits that accompany suffering for the sake of the gospel. When we suffer for the gospel, God produces ***endurance*** in us. This endurance involves perseverance in continuing to live for Christ. Endurance produces ***character,*** and character produces ***hope***. This hope is a deep sense of peace that God has a plan for our lives that no circumstance can derail (Rom. 8:28).

VERSE 5

The hope we have is rooted in God's love. For this reason, our hope in Him will ***not disappoint*** us. Paul wrote that God pours out His love on us—it covers us completely. His love is ***poured out in our hearts through the Holy Spirit***. As believers, the Holy Spirit indwells us. The Spirit of God nourishes us with the love of God, so that our hope in Him grows stronger in difficult times.

How does "peace with God" affect your life today and in eternity?

KEY DOCTRINE: *Salvation (Justification)*

Justification brings the believer unto a relationship of peace and favor with God. (See Romans 3:28; Titus 3:5-7.)

A PROVEN LOVE (ROM. 5:6-11)

[6] For while we were still helpless, at the right time, Christ died for the ungodly. [7] For rarely will someone die for a just person—though for a good person perhaps someone might even dare to die. [8] But God proves his own love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. [9] How much more then, since we have now been justified by his blood, will we be saved through him from wrath. [10] For if, while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, then how much more, having been reconciled, will we be saved by

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his life. [11] **And not only that, but we also boast in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received this reconciliation.**

VERSES 6-8

Paul pointed to the fact that before being justified through Jesus, we were in a state of helplessness. Earning our salvation was not possible. We can never be good enough to make ourselves right with God. In the face of our helplessness, ***Christ died*** for us even though we were ***ungodly***.

Note that Christ died ***at the right time***. Paul made a similar statement in Galatians 4:4-5. God orchestrated events so Christ arrived at the exact right moment. The peace of the Roman Empire, a common language (Greek), and a general curiosity about religious ideas contributed to a perfect historical environment for the Saviour's arrival. But it was also the perfect time because humanity was ***helpless***.

Some people think they must "get right" before God will accept them.

Jesus dying for ungodly people does not make any logical sense to us. Nobody would ever think about making such a supreme sacrifice for a person who doesn't deserve it. A person might die in the place of someone who had a reputation for being ***just***. Even so, dying for a good person who deserved the chance to live would happen only ***very rarely***. Parents would die for their children. A husband would be willing to give up his life to save his wife from death. In a moment of crisis, firefighters, police officers, or soldiers would sacrifice their lives to keep innocent people from being killed. But who would voluntarily endure pain to help an enemy? That's exactly what God did. Christ's death for us can be traced to one motivation: God's ***own love for us***. He demonstrated His love for us when Jesus died on the cross.

Some people think they must "get right" before God will accept them. Verse 8 proves the error of that way of thinking. We can never be good enough to deserve what Christ did for us. But God took the first step ***while*** we still wallowed in our sin. If you ever wonder about God's love for us, the cross should be all the proof you need.

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VERSES 9-11

Because we have been justified by God through faith in Christ, we have been saved from His •***wrath***. Believers will never suffer the wrath of God because Jesus suffered as their substitute on the cross.

In verse 10 Paul used the word •***reconciled***, another of his favorite words for salvation. The word *reconciled* indicates there was something broken that needed to be fixed. In this case, it was our relationship with God.

To grasp the importance of the word, Paul began by saying ***we were enemies*** of God. This term included hostility, hatred, and animosity. In Colossians 1:21-22, Paul wrote, "Once you were alienated and hostile in your minds as expressed in your evil actions. But now he has reconciled you by his physical body through his death."

It is worth noting that our reconciliation to God was initiated by God, accomplished by Christ, and is ***received*** by us. Jesus is the reconciler; we are the objects of His reconciliation.

How does Jesus's death prove His love for humanity?

A GROWING GRACE (ROM. 5:18-21)

18 So then, as through one trespass there is condemnation for everyone, so also through one righteous act there is justification leading to life for everyone. 19 For just as through one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so also through the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous. 20 The law came along to multiply the trespass. But where sin multiplied, grace multiplied even more 21 so that, just as sin reigned in death, so also grace will reign through righteousness, resulting in eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

VERSES 18-19

In verses 12-14, Paul explained how sin entered the world through one man—Adam—and how death spread to all people because all people since Adam have sinned. In verses 15-17, Paul explained how by the obedience of one man—Jesus—all people can experience God's grace and be reconciled to Him. In verses 18-21, Paul

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continued the contrast between that which came through Adam and that which comes through Christ.

One trespass refers to Adam's sin. Because sin entered the world through Adam, there is ***condemnation*** for everyone. Adam's sin condemned Adam, and it condemned ***everyone*** else who came after him. Adam's children—and everyone who has lived since Adam—inherited a sin nature, evidenced by Cain killing his brother (Gen. 4:8).

Thankfully, that is not the end of the story. Jesus's ***righteous act*** changes everything. Because of what Jesus did, ***there is justification leading to life for everyone***. By *everyone,* Paul did not imply that Christ's atoning death automatically provided justification for all people. The *everyone* Paul referenced here are believers, not unbelievers. Eternal life is not given to those who do not believe—only to those who put their faith in Christ. "Anyone who believes in him is not condemned, but anyone who does not believe is already condemned" (John 3:18). "The one who believes in the Son has eternal life, but the one who rejects the Son will not see life" (John 3:36).

Adam's act of ***disobedience*** had a ripple effect on everyone everywhere. Also, we are accountable to God because we have chosen to sin against Him ourselves. Just like Adam, we face the certainty of God's judgment. In stark contrast to the darkness of eternal punishment that awaited us, the ***obedience*** of Christ glistened with the brilliant light of eternal hope. Through His obedience, Jesus changed everything for us. By being obedient, He became the appropriate sacrifice for our sinful disobedience. His sacrifice will have an eternal effect on us.

Through His obedience,
Jesus changed everything for us.

VERSES 20-21

Once again Paul discussed the law. The ***law came along to multiply the trespass***. God's *law* clarified more precisely what disobedience and sin looked like. The law ***multiplied*** sin in the sense that it increased awareness and accountability. But while the reality of sin grew more troubling, the presence of •***grace*** became even more amazing.

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In light of Paul's explanation so far, we're wise to take a long look at the breathtaking gift of God's lavish grace to us. We're sinners because we belong to Adam. Furthermore, we have chosen to disobey God ourselves. Therefore, we're accountable for our disobedience to Him, and His law gives us no excuse for being confused about what sin looks like for us. Our sin separates us from God, and it leads to ***death***. When death ***reigned*** over us like a brutal tyrant from whom we could never escape, God's ***grace*** came to our rescue and delivered us. Not only has God in His grace liberated us from death, He also placed us in His kingdom. We live under the ***reign*** of His amazing grace, and we live eternally with Him ***through Jesus Christ our Lord***.

How do I know Jesus's death was meant for me?

BIBLE SKILL: *Study the life of a key character in Scripture.*

Use a Bible dictionary and other Bible study tools to learn more about the life of Esau, focusing on the reconciliation of Esau and Jacob. Identify the events that prompted Esau to hate his twin brother Jacob. Read Genesis 33 and reflect on the brothers' reconciliation. Consider: What anxiety did Jacob feel about reconciliation? What had to happen before the two brothers could be reconciled? How did Jacob try to reconcile with gifts and good works? Why was reconciliation ultimately dependent on Esau's grace?

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APPLY THE TEXT

+ Believers should embrace their new relationship with God.
+ Individuals can be reconciled to God thanks to the loving sacrifice Jesus offered on the cross.
+ Our lives can be transformed by the matchless grace of Jesus.

Identify all the promises given to believers in this week's focal passage. Which of these truths is hardest for you to embrace right now? How can your group encourage one another to live in that promise?

As you reflect on your personal relationship with God, how has the truth about being justified through Christ influenced your attitude about yourself? What difference has knowing that you've been reconciled through Christ made in your daily life? Find a quiet time and place this week to write down your reflections.

Memorize Romans 5:19.

Prayer Needs

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Freedom

BELIEVERS ARE FREED FROM THE POWER OF SIN.

ROMANS 6:1-14

The words "debt free" make a happy sound in our hearts. So do the words "cancer free." Each of these terms brings up different realities. However, they share one word in common: free. For a person drowning in debt, being liberated from it would be a game changer. Anyone who's dealing with cancer would be ecstatic to be told it was gone. Of course, being freed from sin's power brings the greatest joy.

In what ways would the promise of freedom make you happy?

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UNDERSTAND **THE CONTEXT**

ROMANS 6:1-14

Chapter 6 plays a pivotal role in the flow of Romans. Chapters 1–4 highlight humanity's sin and justification by faith. In chapters 5–8, Paul focused on the results of justification, moving from the doctrine of justification to its implications.

Chapter 6 addresses a critical question raised in Romans 5:20. If grace increases where sin abounds, then should believers sin more? Paul was addressing believers who might be tempted to think salvation by grace gave them a license to sin even more. Because sins can be confessed and forgiven, they might conclude that it didn't really matter how they lived. But nothing could be further from the truth.

Paul reminded the Romans that they were not just forgiven of their sins—they were dead to sin. When they accepted Jesus's sacrifice, they died to sin because all their sins were nailed to the cross. Not only that, but as Jesus rose from the dead, they had been raised to walk in newness of life. They were to stop embracing the old ways and embrace their Savior rather than their sin.

Paul used the image of baptism to make his point. Baptism pictures the old life of sin being buried with Christ and being raised with Him to live for Him. Paul also used the image of slavery. Before justification, we were slaves to sin. Now we are slaves to righteousness. Jesus has provided a way for believers who were dead in sin to be made alive and free. Like a slave redeemed from physical slavery, believers are set free from sin's enslavement. This does not mean we no longer battle sin (see Rom. 7) or that we can now live sinless lives. But sin as a power no longer holds us in its enslaving clutches.

Chapter 6, therefore, is key because it connects justification to sanctification. The theme has moved from what God has done for us to what God is now doing in us. The "therefore" in verse 12 introduces the application based on the truths of verses 1-11. We are to demonstrate in the way we live that sin is no longer in charge of us—God is.

Read Romans 6:1-14 in your Bible. How does baptism help you visualize the transformation Paul describes in these verses?

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EXPLORE **THE TEXT**

DEAD TO SIN (ROM. 6:1-7)

[1] What should we say then? Should we continue in sin so that grace may multiply? [2] Absolutely not! How can we who died to sin still live in it? [3] Or are you unaware that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? [4] Therefore we were buried with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too may walk in newness of life. [5] For if we have been united with him in the likeness of his death, we will certainly also be in the likeness of his resurrection. [6] For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body ruled by sin might be rendered powerless so that we may no longer be enslaved to sin, [7] since a person who has died is freed from sin.

VERSES 1-4

At the end of chapter 5, Paul affirmed that God's grace multiplied in response to multiplied sin (Rom. 5:20). Once Paul made the affirmation, he immediately raised a probing question about it. If believers wanted God's grace to be multiplied, should they sin more? Growing disciples would have asked the question innocently and honestly. However, enemies of the gospel would have asked the question in an effort to deceive people who had placed their faith in Christ.

No one who claims the power of the gospel should intentionally go looking for chances to sin.

Paul's terse answer to the question keeps us from pondering it for even one second: ***Absolutely not!*** Paul used the phrase translated *absolutely not* ten times in Romans (3:4,6,31; 6:2,15; 7:7,13; 9:14; 11:1,11). Each time it was to distinguish orthodox teaching from heresy. The reason for such a stern response here drives home the truth about the reign of sin in a believer's life. When we gave our lives to Christ, we ***died*** to a way of life controlled by sin. We renounced the rule of sin over us. This powerful truth answers Paul's question about sin and grace. No one who claims the power of the gospel should intentionally go looking for chances to sin.

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Baptism serves as a reminder of our liberation from sin. For that important reason, we should not lose sight of what being ***baptized*** means. Baptism symbolizes Jesus's ***death***, burial, and resurrection. It also reminds us that giving our lives to Christ involves being ***buried with him***. It also represents the believer's own death and burial to sin and his resurrection to a new life in Christ. Baptism is a picture that we have been changed by Jesus to walk in ***newness of life***. Thus, baptism signifies a change in lifestyle. We now embrace a new way of living.

KEY DOCTRINE: *Baptism*

Baptism is an act of obedience symbolizing the believer's faith in a crucified, buried, and risen Saviour, the believer's death to sin, the burial of the old life, and the resurrection to walk in newness of life in Christ Jesus. (See Matthew 28:19-20; Acts 2:41-42.)

VERSES 5-7

Instead of living under the reign of sin that separates us from Christ, we are now ***united*** with Christ in both His ***death*** and His ***resurrection***.

We didn't just receive forgiveness of our sins. We also received a new power to live differently. Baptism serves as a tangible reminder that the Christian life involves both dying and living. Our ***old self was crucified*** with Christ on the cross and His death freed us to live under a new Master.

Paul emphasized his point about newness of life with the picture of slavery. Slaves to sin live under its control. Sin has a firm grip on their thoughts, words, and actions. Slaves to sin do not have the ability within themselves to be liberated from sin's tyranny over them. Liberty from the reign of sin takes place only when a person turns to Christ by faith. Jesus has ***rendered powerless*** the rule of sin over anyone who puts their trust in Him. He sets them free from the rule of sin.

In what ways might people today misunderstand or misuse the concept of grace?

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Why shouldn't believers continue living in sin if sin multiplies God's grace?

ALIVE IN CHRIST (ROM. 6:8-11)

[8] Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him, [9] because we know that Christ, having been raised from the dead, will not die again. Death no longer rules over him. [10] For the death he died, he died to sin once for all time; but the life he lives, he lives to God. [11] So, you too consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

VERSES 8-10

Paul used repetition to reinforce the truth that following Christ means identifying with His death. Jesus's death was only one part of the story. His crucifixion reflects our death to sin, but His resurrection means life for us. Because ***we died with Christ***, we will also ***live with him***.

Because of Jesus's resurrection, we are free from the power of sin. We are both justified—declared righteous—and sanctified—set apart for God's purposes. We live in the power and presence of Jesus each day.

We live in the power and presence of Jesus each day.

Paul placed our hope in the certainty of Jesus's resurrection. He said ***we know*** that Christ has risen from the dead. Our assurance is not drawn from mere speculation or wishful thinking. Neither is it based on anything that we have done. Instead, we know with certainty that His resurrection is the foundation for our assurance of eternal life.

We also know that His resurrection was unique in the sense that He would not die again. Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead, but Lazarus would die again (John 11:38-44). He raised the widow of Nain's child and the centurion's daughter (Luke 7:11-15; 8:49-55), but they would die again. Jesus would never die again, and those incorporated into His resurrection will not die spiritually again.

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Paul also affirmed that Christ died to sin ***once for all time***. In the first part of verse 10, Paul emphasized the finality of Christ's sacrifice. In the second half of verse 10, he emphasized the ongoing result. Jesus voluntarily experienced death to break sin's dominion. But this one-time event opened a way of life to all who would trust in Him.

DID YOU KNOW?

Paul used the term "in Christ" eighty-six times in his letters, eleven times in Romans, and twice in chapter 6 (vv. 11,23). This term is rich in meaning, expressing how believers share in all Christ has accomplished—His life, resurrection, and victory—by living in union with Him. It also highlights our connection to Christ as the head of His body and to one another as members of His body. To be "in Christ" is to live out a new identity in which Christ dwells within the believer, reshaping their character, priorities, and purpose.

VERSE 11

In verse 11, Paul focused on the responsibility of believers to ***consider*** themselves ***dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus***. The word *consider* came from the world of accounting. It could be translated as "count, credit, or think." It carries the challenge to accept God's words as true. We have died to sin, and we are alive to God in Christ Jesus. We must consider that truth as reality and live in it.

What does it mean to consider yourself dead to sin and alive to God? What does this look like practically in your life?

How does the resurrection of Jesus give you confidence in your daily struggle with sin?

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INSTRUMENTS OF RIGHTEOUSNESS (ROM. 6:12-14)

[12] Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, so that you obey its desires. [13] And do not offer any parts of it to sin as weapons for unrighteousness. But as those who are alive from the dead, offer yourselves to God, and all the parts of yourselves to God as weapons for righteousness. [14] For sin will not rule over you, because you are not under the law but under grace.

VERSES 12-13

The implications of salvation are not only for eternity. Salvation has implications for the here and now. Having given attention to explanation, Paul turned his attention to practical application with one word: ***therefore***.

Paul portrayed sin as a cruel taskmaster. Sin dominates and enslaves those who live under its authority. But everything changes in Christ. The phrase ***do not let sin reign*** is a command in Greek. Throughout this passage, Paul has referred to sin as a monarch, reigning over those who do not believe. Not letting sin reign over us involves an exercise of the will. It is not completely divorced from grace, though, as Paul says in verse 14. However, as believers, we have a responsibility to declare war on sin in our lives. To consider ourselves dead to sin (v. 11), we actively struggle against its temptations and lure in our own lives.

Paul used the language of warfare. Before we came to Christ, our mortal bodies were ***weapons for unrighteousness***. The enemy used us in his battle against God. But now, we ***offer*** ourselves to God as ***weapons for righteousness***. The word *offer* points to the Old Testament sacrificial system and worship. We offer ourselves now as living sacrifices (Rom. 12:1-2). When we yield to God, we become weapons for His righteous purposes.

As believers, we have a responsibility to declare war on sin in our lives.

VERSE 14

Verse 14 contains a promise, which ends this section: ***sin will not rule*** over believers. Here, Paul returned to a theme from earlier in this letter: law versus grace. Because sin no longer rules over us, we no longer need to worry about satisfying the demands of the

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law—or being condemned by it. We live under grace. Under grace, the penalty of death was satisfied in the death of Jesus on the cross. Jesus offered Himself freely on the cross so that we might now freely offer ourselves to God.

How can a person keep from obeying sin and its desires? How can a person avoid allowing sin to become his or her master?

In what ways do you still act as if sin is your master? How can you practically "offer" yourself to God today?

BIBLE SKILL: *Create a compare/contrast chart.*

On one side of a vertical line, identity words and phrases that describe life that is lived with sin as the monarch or ruling authority. On the other side, note words and phrases that describe life that is lived with God as the monarch or ruling authority. Use the first six chapters of Romans that we've covered so far to inform the list you make.

Sin as the Monarch	God as the Monarch

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APPLY THE TEXT

+ Believers need to understand that they live in union with Christ and act accordingly.
+ Believers are to consider themselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ.
+ Believers are to offer themselves to God for the accomplishment of His righteous purposes.

Discuss with your Bible study group the importance of baptism. How does it symbolize your new life in Christ? How does recalling your baptism encourage you to remain focused on devoting yourselves to God?

Take a look at your personal walk with Christ. How do you exhibit your new life in Him with your thoughts, words, attitudes, and actions? Where does God's grace fit into your life as you try to devote yourself to Him each day?

Memorize Romans 6:11.

Prayer Needs

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Struggle

BECAUSE SIN REMAINS A POWERFUL FORCE, BELIEVERS SHOULD NOT BE SURPRISED WHEN DOING RIGHT IS A STRUGGLE.

ROMANS 7:4-6,14-25

Everyone loves a good rescue story. Some rescue stories are dramatic, like the firefighter who pulls an elderly couple out of a bedroom window just before their house collapses in flames. Others are less dramatic but no less inspiring, like the teacher who stays after school to tutor students who are struggling in class. However, nothing compares to the way God rescued us through Jesus.

What is your favorite "rescue" story? Who comes to mind when you are asked to name the first person who ever rescued you?

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UNDERSTAND **THE CONTEXT**

ROMANS 6:15–7:25

Paul returned to the question of whether Christians should continue to sin because they are under grace rather than the law (Rom. 6:15). Did grace give license to sin? Again, Paul strongly objected, "Absolutely not!" (see also 6:1-2).

The apostle used two illustrations to show the power of grace to battle sin rather than submit to it. First, he explained that everyone is a servant—either to sin, which leads to death, or to obedience, which leads to righteousness. Believers, freed from sin through Christ, now serve God, resulting in holiness and eternal life. Paul concluded that "the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus" (6:16-23).

Second, Paul used an illustration from marriage to show that believers are released from the law's authority through Christ's death. Just as death ends a marriage covenant, Christ's death frees us from the law so we can belong to Him and bear fruit for God (7:1-6).

Paul clarified that the law itself is not sinful; rather, it reveals sin. The law exposes human inability to keep it perfectly, and sin uses the law to produce death in us. The law shows our need for grace (7:7-13).

However, just because believers are set free from sin's power and are dead to sin, it doesn't mean that they no longer struggle with sin. In Romans 7:14-25, Paul described the inner struggle of desiring to do good but being pulled by sin. This tension shows human weakness and dependence on Christ. Paul ended with gratitude: deliverance comes through Jesus Christ our Lord. Jesus is our Rescuer.

Read Romans 7:4-6,14-25 in your Bible and look for what Paul said about the believer's struggle with sin. What do these verses reveal about our dependence on Christ?

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EXPLORE **THE TEXT**

FREED (ROM. 7:4-6)

4 Therefore, my brothers and sisters, you also were put to death in relation to the law through the body of Christ so that you may belong to another. You belong to him who was raised from the dead in order that we may bear fruit for God. 5 For when we were in the flesh, the sinful passions aroused through the law were working in us to bear fruit for death. 6 But now we have been released from the law, since we have died to what held us, so that we may serve in the newness of the Spirit and not in the old letter of the law.

VERSE 4

Paul began chapter 7 with an analogy. He wrote about a woman whose husband died. According to the law, she would be liberated from her marriage vow to him. Accordingly, she could get married again (Rom. 7:1-3). Paul used the analogy to make a point about believers being released from the authority of the law.

Starting with ***therefore,*** Paul identified believers as his ***brothers and sisters***. He wanted his spiritual siblings to know that they shared with him a new relationship with God that began when they died ***to the law***. Now they belonged to ***Christ***. Because of Christ's death, we have died to the law with Him. Likewise, because He rose from ***the dead***, so do we when we place our faith in Him.

VERSE 5

Paul looked back to the time when they lived ***in the •flesh***. Instead of living to please God, they lived for the sole purpose of indulging in whatever their bodies craved. The reign of sin had a destructive effect on them. They lived under the control of ***sinful passions***. When they gave in to those passions, they sinned against God. As sin ***aroused*** their passions, they sinned even more. Their passions kept on ***working*** in them like seeds planted in the soil. The seeds became sprouts that kept on growing stronger. Eventually, the sprouts became plants that produced ***fruit for death.*** In other words, the law, meant to show us the righteous commandments of God, instead became an instrument that led to sin. The law provoked our old nature to sin, which led to death.

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VERSE 6

Just as a widow can consider herself to be free to marry again, we live in freedom too. We've been ***released from the law*** and ***have died to what held us***. The law held us captive because we could not meet its demands. The old letter of the law told us what to do but did not create true spirituality. What we needed was to serve in the ***newness of the Spirit***. The law told us how to live, but we were unable to live that way. In Christ, we have both the desire to obey and the power for obedience.

What practical difference should it make that a believer belongs to Christ? In what ways does it change your identity and purpose?

In what ways are you bearing fruit for God in your daily life? Where do you need to rely more on the Spirit than on your own effort?

In Christ, we have both the desire to obey and the power for obedience.

CONFLICTED (ROM. 7:14-23)

14 For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am of the flesh, sold as a slave under sin. 15 For I do not understand what I am doing, because I do not practice what I want to do, but I do what I hate. 16 Now if I do what I do not want to do, I agree with the law that it is good. 17 So now I am no longer the one doing it, but it is sin living in me. 18 For I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my flesh. For the desire to do what is good is with me, but there is no ability to do it. 19 For I do not do the good that I want to do, but I practice the evil that I do not want to do. 20 Now if I do what I do not want, I am no longer the one that does it, but it is the sin that lives in me. 21 So I discover this

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law: When I want to do what is good, evil is present with me.
[22] For in my inner self I delight in God's law, [23] but I see a different law in the parts of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and taking me prisoner to the law of sin in the parts of my body.

VERSES 14-17

In verses 7-13, Paul explained that the law itself is not sinful; rather, it reveals sin. Without the law, we would not recognize sin. For example, we know coveting is sin because the law forbids it. In verses 14-16, Paul explained that the problem was not with the law but with human nature—***the flesh***.

As evidence, he pointed to the ongoing battle with sin in his own life. At times he did what he knew to be wrong and failed to do what he knew to be right. Bible teachers disagree on whether Paul was describing his experience before or after conversion. However, the context of the passage makes the case for this being Paul's post-conversion struggle with sin. Beginning in Romans 6:12, Paul had moved from a discussion of justification of the sinner to sanctification of the believer.

Paul is giving his own testimony regarding the conflict with sin that continued to trouble him. He testified that he found himself not practicing what he wanted to do. Just as difficult, he dealt consistently with the inner struggle that came from doing something sinful even though he hated it.

KEY DOCTRINE: *Sanctification*

Sanctification is the experience, beginning in regeneration, by which the believer is set apart to God's purposes, and is enabled to progress toward moral and spiritual maturity through the presence and power of the Holy Spirit dwelling in him. (See Philippians 2:12-13; 1 Thessalonians 5:23.)

Paul acknowledged that the law is spiritual. His old nature struggled with the demands of the law and the lure of the flesh. He said in Galatians 5:17, "For the flesh desires what is against the Spirit, and the Spirit desires what is against the flesh; these are opposed to each other, so you don't do what you want." Paul did not understand why he continued to be enslaved to sin when he had trusted Christ to die to sin. This was the conflict.

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As he testified about his struggle, he acknowledged the truth about the law. He confessed that when he gave himself to sinful behavior, he did not want to do it at all. The spiritual conviction that tore at his heart because of his sinful behavior validated the purpose of the law. Paul noted that the law cast a bright light on sin. For that reason, he saw the law as altogether good.

Paul knew that the law was good. But he found himself battling between the new nature and old nature. As believers, we still battle the power of sin even though Jesus has set us free from it. This ongoing battle will not be settled until Jesus returns (1 John 3:2).

VERSES 18-23

Paul had ***the desire to do what is good***. This desire comes from the Holy Spirit. However, there was no ***ability*** to do good. He struggled to ***do the good*** he wanted to do, doing instead ***the evil*** he did ***not want to do***. In these verses, Paul was acknowledging that sin is still a formidable enemy, even after salvation.

Death to sin as a power did not remove sin's allurement, hence, the conflict in the believer's life. On the one hand, Paul had a ***delight in God's law***. Such is a characteristic of the godly: "his delight is in the LORD's instruction" (Ps. 1:2). At the same time, however, he had to contend with ***evil*** that kept on presenting itself to him at every turn. As he took a long look at himself, he could see that the desire to obey God remained in his ***inner self***. Sincerely and honestly, he testified that he experienced sheer ***delight*** at the thought of devoting himself to honoring ***God's law*** with his life. But much to his disappointment, he observed that a ***different law*** had an extremely powerful influence over the various parts of his body.

The opposing laws waged ***war*** with each other, and Paul's life became the battlefield. Consistently, the law that dictated his body fought against ***the law*** that guided ***his mind***. The battle seemed to end in the same way. His mind surrendered to his body. That's when his body would make him a ***prisoner***. The law in his body placed him in a prison, and the ***law of sin*** locked him up in his cell.

Do these verses encourage you or discourage you? Explain your answer.

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How does recognizing sin's presence in you change the way you depend on God?

HOPE (ROM. 7:24-25)

[24] What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? [25] Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, with my mind I myself am serving the law of God, but with my flesh, the law of sin.

VERSE 24

Can't you identify with Paul's struggle? Like him, we agonize over our inner conflict. We're conflicted in that we don't do what we want to do, and we do what we don't want to do in our relationship with God. The frustration over the endless battle within ourselves because of the inner conflict compels us to echo his one-word description of himself: ***wretched***. The word suits us well because it underscores the misery we feel in our hearts because we're disgusted with ourselves. But at the same time, we can't seem to do anything about changing our behavior because we simply lack the personal strength to do it.

For that reason, we join Paul in determining that we need help. As we consider his assessment of the help we need, we affirm that we need more than good advice from a person who understands our conflict. Good advice alone will not solve our problem. Like Paul, we need someone to ***rescue*** us from our struggle. Paul's statement about ***this body of death*** hits home with us. We have died to the reign of sin over us. However, we're frustrated with the way sin's corpse keeps hanging on to us. Sin still wants to control our lives and prevent us from experiencing spiritual joy in our walk with God. We long to be rescued.

VERSE 25

Paul concludes this section with gratitude to God. We can express our ***thanks*** to Him because He sent ***Christ Jesus*** to be the sacrifice for our sin. When we turn to Him by faith, we experience God's grace. He pardons us, and He gives us the gift of new life that is eternal. We thank Him wholeheartedly for His grace in setting us free from the tyranny of sin. Now Christ Jesus reigns supremely

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as ***our Lord***. For that reason, we live in hope that centers in Him alone. Because of our hope in Him, we rejoice in the certainty that He hears our cry for help by rescuing us.

Paul's assertion about himself gives us the direction that we need as we face the conflict that goes on inside us. We know from experiences in life that certain conflicts can be resolved sometimes. In those cases, the intense struggle between two opposing forces, ideas, or people can be replaced with peace. However, some conflicts in our lives will never be resolved. Instead, they can be managed, but the struggle involving them will never end. In those cases, life will go on, and the conflict will continue to be a part of it. Like Paul, we trust Christ to help us as we manage the inner conflict with sin. Our minds will continue to serve ***the law of God***. However, our ***flesh*** will keep on nudging us to obey ***the law of sin***.

In light of the difficulty in battling sin, what keeps us from despair and hopelessness?

In what ways can you live more consciously in the freedom Christ provides?

BIBLE SKILL: *Bible Skill: Summarize the argument.*

Read through the entirety of Romans 6:15–7:25 to summarize the argument Paul made regarding the ongoing effects of sin. First, make an outline of the argument. Second, write a one-sentence summary of this argument. Consider how sin effects a believer's life and the significance of dying to sin. Respond to these questions: How does this argument encourage you? Does it discourage you in any way?

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APPLY THE TEXT

- Believers bear fruit for God when they live in the Spirit of God.
- Believers need to recognize that the struggle with sin is real, and they need help.
- Believers can express gratitude to God that they do not have to battle sin in their own power, but that Christ provides the victory.

Discuss with others in the Bible study group a believer's conflict over sin. What approach do they take in dealing with it? How does the conflict make them more productive and grateful believers?

When did you recognize that sin would always present a problem for you? How do you show your gratitude to God for helping you to be victorious through Christ?

Memorize Romans 7:4.

Prayer Needs

Explore the Bible Prayer Guide

Scan here for a weekly prayer guide based on this quarter's Bible passages.

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Indwelt

THOSE WHO TRUST JESUS ARE INDWELT BY THE HOLY SPIRIT WHEN THEY ARE ADOPTED INTO THE FAMILY OF GOD.

ROMANS 8:14-27

A happy family always makes space for everyone. During holiday gatherings, the house might feel packed, but no one worries about being left out at bedtime. Beds fill up fast, and cozy spots on the floor become welcoming places to sleep. Come breakfast, there's plenty for all—because the kitchen never runs out of pancakes.

When you picture a happy family, whose family do you think of? How does being a part of God's family shape your sense of belonging?

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UNDERSTAND **THE CONTEXT**

ROMANS 8:1-39

In chapters 1–4, Paul addressed the universal sinfulness of humanity. In chapters 5–6, he shifted to emphasize Jesus's work in providing salvation for sinners. Through His death and resurrection, Jesus opened the way to a new life. Those who die to sin through Him are raised to walk in a transformed life. Yet, overcoming sin is not as simple as flipping a switch. In chapter 7, Paul lamented his struggle—how easily he did what he should not and failed to do what he should. In anguish, he cried out for deliverance, then answered with a triumphant declaration, "Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!" (Rom. 7:25).

This victory cry leads into Romans 8, where Paul explained how the Holy Spirit enables believers to live a victorious Christian life. He began by contrasting life under the law with life in the Spirit (8:1-11). The law exposes sin in the flesh, but the indwelling Spirit empowers believers to live out their new life in Christ.

In verses 12-17, Paul used the image of adoption to highlight the believer's secure relationship with God. Living by the Spirit rather than the flesh proves that one is truly God's child—a relationship marked by intimacy and guaranteed inheritance. Those who belong to God by faith are "heirs of God and coheirs with Christ" (8:17).

Paul then focused on freedom in the Spirit (8:18-30). Believers receive the Holy Spirit as the firstfruits of their adoption into God's family. Through the Spirit's presence, Christians live with hope, anticipating the full redemption at Christ's return. Positionally, believers already belong to God's redeemed family, even as they battle the flesh in this life. Practically, the Spirit empowers them to resist sin and live according to God's will.

Finally, in 8:31-39, Paul returned to the theme of freedom from condemnation. Because Jesus paid the penalty for sin, believers stand before God without accusation. God's love in Christ guarantees that nothing can separate us from Him. Since Jesus died and was raised for our justification, we can live now with confidence in His love and life.

Read Romans 8:14-27 in your Bible and record some key thoughts about the Holy Spirit's importance in your life.

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EXPLORE **THE TEXT**

RELATIONSHIP (ROM. 8:14-17)

14 For all those led by God's Spirit are God's sons. 15 For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear. Instead, you received the Spirit of adoption, by whom we cry out, "*Abba*, Father!" 16 The Spirit himself testifies together with our spirit that we are God's children, 17 and if children, also heirs—heirs of God and coheirs with Christ—if indeed we suffer with him so that we may also be glorified with him.

VERSE 14

When we receive God's gift of salvation through Christ, we join ***all those*** who enjoy the blessings of salvation. This includes the indwelling of ***God's Spirit***. We have the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit because we have become God's children.

Paul reminded the Romans that believers are ***led by*** God's Spirit. We are not free to live as we please. We follow the Spirit's direction and guidance. Following the Spirit is not simply a matter of obedience. It is also a matter of identification. We know we are ***God's sons*** because we walk with the Spirit.

VERSE 15

Paul contrasted the difference between two spirits. A ***spirit of slavery*** is marked by the ***fear*** of being punished. Those living in slavery are accountable to the judgments of the law. In contrast, ***the Spirit of adoption*** does not deal in fear. The Holy Spirit assures believers that God has adopted them into His family. (See also Eph. 1:3-12; Gal. 4:1,7.) The difference between a slave and a child was significant.

The phrase ***Abba, Father*** is a term of endearment similar to "daddy" in English. It is the language of a child running into the arms of a loving father. We once ran from Him in fear and guilt, now we run to Him with the assurance that we are His children.

Paul wanted the Roman believers to grasp the depth of what it means to be God's children. They were invited to relate to Him as their *Abba, Father*. Just as Jesus approached God with intimate confidence, believers—adopted into His family—have every right to cry out with the same closeness: Abba, Father (Mark 14:36)!

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VERSE 16

Paul taught that the Holy Spirit's indwelling presence works alongside our own spirit to affirm ***that we are God's children***. At times, believers who falter may wrestle with doubts about their salvation. In those moments, the Spirit serves as a decisive witness to their place in God's family. Though the enemy may try to plant seeds of doubt, the Spirit's confirmation settles the matter. Fear is removed, and the truth stands firm: this believer belongs to God.

VERSE 17

Paul noted that we are ***heirs of God*** and ***coheirs with Christ***. As members of God's family, we have access to all of God's riches. Paul was not proclaiming a prosperity gospel here—he was stating that God's resources are enough to meet our every need.

Paul also reminded the Romans that being coheirs with Christ can involve suffering with Him in this life. This statement echoes Jesus's warning to His disciples that they could expect to experience suffering because of the gospel—just as Jesus did (see John 15:18-21). However, if we suffer with Christ on account of our faith, we can be sure that we will ultimately be •***glorified with him***. Any struggles in this life cannot compare to the blessings of eternity.

According to these verses, what are some key differences between a believer and an unbeliever?

How does calling God "Abba, Father" impact your understanding of prayer and intimacy with Him?

HOPE (ROM. 8:18-25)

[18] For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is going to be revealed to us. [19] For the creation eagerly waits with anticipation for God's sons to be revealed. [20] For the creation was subjected to futility—not willingly, but because of him who subjected it—in

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the hope [21] that the creation itself will also be set free from the bondage to decay into the glorious freedom of God's children. [22] For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together with labor pains until now. [23] Not only that, but we ourselves who have the Spirit as the firstfruits—we also groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for adoption, the redemption of our bodies. [24] Now in this hope we were saved, but hope that is seen is not hope, because who hopes for what he sees? [25] Now if we hope for what we do not see, we eagerly wait for it with patience.

VERSES 18-22

When Paul wrote of ***the sufferings of this present time,*** he was drawing from his own experience. He had endured ridicule, beatings, imprisonment, and even a near-death encounter. Followers of Christ in his day were often jailed, driven out of cities, or killed for their faith. Paul faced hardships most of us can hardly imagine, yet he called them "light affliction" (2 Cor. 4:17).

Paul refused to focus on suffering—his eyes were fixed on the ***glory*** that awaited him. Jesus Himself endured the shame and agony of the cross "for the joy that lay before him" (Heb. 12:2). In the same way, Paul bore immense trials for the sake of the gospel, knowing they were nothing compared to the glory that will one day be revealed.

As God's children, we share that same hope. We look forward to the glory to come—and ***creation*** longs for it too. Paul explained that a day is coming when Christ will restore all things in a new heaven and new earth. Using vivid personification, he pictured creation straining with anticipation for that moment. Just as sin corrupted the entire universe, Christ's return will bring complete renewal. God will recreate everything according to His original design, and creation's beauty will reflect His purity and glorify Him.

Biblical hope is confident expectation grounded in God's promises.

Paul emphasized that creation lives in ***hope***—a hope far deeper than wishful thinking. Biblical hope is confident expectation grounded in God's promises. When God subjected creation to ***futility*** because of human sin, He also guaranteed that redemption would extend beyond humanity. As believers are freed from

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corruption through Christ, so creation will be liberated from decay. To illustrate his point, Paul used the image of childbirth. Creation groans under the weight of sin like a woman in labor, longing for delivery. These ***labor pains*** signal that renewal is near. When the time of suffering ends, creation will be reborn—restored to its intended glory.

KEY DOCTRINE: *Last Things*

God, in His own time and in His own way, will bring the world to its appropriate end. (See 2 Corinthians 4:17; Revelation 21:1.)

VERSES 23-25

Until that day when God restores His creation, believers can depend on the Holy Spirit to produce •***firstfruits***. This word picture depicts a bountiful harvest of fruit. It points to the beginning of a relationship with God that will be fulfilled completely one day. That's when believers will experience the complete joy of their ***adoption*** and the ***redemption*** of their ***bodies***.

Our hope in Him will not allow us to be satisfied only with what we can see and experience right now.

This inspiring picture of ***hope*** encourages us. Our hope came alive when He ***saved*** us. Our salvation includes the adventure of growing from spiritual infancy to maturity in our walk with Him. Along the way, our hope matures as well. We can agree with Paul that our hope prompts us to look forward to what awaits us. Our hope in Him will not allow us to be satisfied only with what we can see and experience right now. Granted, we have been given a few glimpses of what will happen one day yet to come, but not the complete picture. We're eager as we wait to see what awaits us then. But we also have ***patience*** because our hope settles us.

How does the hope expressed in these verses help you in times of adversity?

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HELP (ROM. 8:26-27)

[26] In the same way the Spirit also helps us in our weakness, because we do not know what to pray for as we should, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with inexpressible groanings. [27] And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because he intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.

VERSE 26

Paul emphasized that the Holy Spirit works within us in a way that deeply strengthens our hope in Christ. Put simply, the Spirit ***helps us***. As we anticipate the day that is still to come, we hold fast to the glorious truth of our eternal inheritance as God's children. The blessings awaiting us are beyond anything we can imagine. Yet we can be confident of that inheritance because the Holy Spirit lives within us. His presence now is the guarantee—the down payment—of what is to come. By dwelling in us, He keeps our hope in Christ alive.

We can be especially thankful for His help in ***our weakness***. Weakness often shows up as confusion or uncertainty that leads to frustration. In those times, even knowing ***what to pray for*** can feel overwhelming. We simply don't know what to ask. When we face such perplexing situations, we can rejoice in the Spirit's help. He ***intercedes for us*** when words fail. He carries our burdens to God when we cannot express them ourselves.

VERSE 27

God the Father ***searches our hearts***. First Chronicles 28:9 says that "the LORD searches every heart and understands the intention of every thought." David prayed, "LORD, you have searched me and known me" (Ps. 139:1).

The Father also ***knows the mind of the Spirit***. We never need to worry that the Spirit's prayers to the Father will go unheard. Just as God the Father listened to the prayers of His Son, He also hears the prayers of His Spirit.

The Spirit's prayers are heard because he ***intercedes for the saints according to the will of God***. Ultimately, God's will is what matters most. As believers, we can find hope in knowing that God's will is accomplished in our lives—even when we are weak and unsure how to pray. This is the context of the promise in Romans 8:28: "We know that all things work together for the good

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of those who love God, who are called according to his purpose." God may not always answer our prayers in the way we expect, but He answers according to His perfect will, which is always for our good.

When was the last time you didn't know what to pray? What practical difference does it make knowing that the Holy Spirit intercedes for you?

How does knowing that God understands both your heart and the Spirit's intercession give you peace?

BIBLE SKILL: *Use a Bible Dictionary to learn more about the Holy Spirit.*

Use a Bible dictionary to learn more about what the Bible teaches about the Holy Spirit. Reflect on these questions: How did the Holy Spirit's work differ in the Old and New Testaments? What kind of work does the Holy Spirit do in the life of a believer in the New Testament? Note any findings about the Holy Spirit that were new for you.

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APPLY THE TEXT

- Believers can confidently approach God as Father.
- The indwelling of the Spirit and the promise of what is yet to come motivates believers to live in hope.
- Believers can be assured that the Holy Spirit is interceding to the Father for them.

Share with your Bible study group what being in God's family means to you.

What effect does your personal relationship with God as your Father have on the durability of your hope? How much do you depend on the Holy Spirit to help you when you pray?

Memorize Romans 8:15.

Prayer Needs

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Believe

EVERYONE WHO CONFESSES AND BELIEVES IN JESUS WILL BE SAVED.

ROMANS 9:30–10:3,9-17

When people hear about someone making a confession, their thoughts may go to the criminal justice system. Thinking that way wouldn't be a mistake. When a person confesses to a crime, it usually means that the law has been broken and justice will be served. In the legal system, confession confirms guilt and results in punishment. But in the gospel, confession of Jesus acknowledges our need for Him and leads to freedom and salvation.

What's the connection between confessing to a crime and believing that you broke the law?

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UNDERSTAND **THE CONTEXT**

ROMANS 9:1–10:21

Paul exposed his heart for the Jews as he wrote to the church in Rome. He recounted how God had blessed them throughout their history as His people. God had embraced them as His people, given them His law, graced them with His presence, and fulfilled His promise to them regarding Jesus Christ.

In the face of their rejection of Christ, Paul insisted that God had not failed them. God's relationship with them across the centuries underscored His sovereign wisdom. Paul touched on an assortment of ways in which God worked with His people in keeping with His eternal purpose. God's actions reveal that He made decisions about them that would glorify Himself. Accordingly, nobody had the authority to question His wisdom any more than a lump of clay had the right to doubt the potter.

In keeping with His eternal plan, God included Gentiles as well as Jews. Unlike the Jews, Gentiles did not have the Mosaic law to guide them. They lived in spiritual darkness. However, when some of them heard the good news of Christ, they gave their lives to Him by faith. Meanwhile, Jews stumbled over Christ like runners who tripped over a stone on their path.

Paul went on to assert that Jesus alone provides the way to salvation. Anyone who believes in Him and confesses Him as Lord would be saved. Likewise, everyone who receives the gift of salvation through Him will never be ashamed of entrusting their lives to Him.

Paul asserted that Jewish people could not say that God had not given them the opportunity to hear the message of salvation. He cited three Old Testament passages to support it. He referred to Psalm 19:4 as he underscored the truth regarding the proclamation of God's Word. Deuteronomy 32:21 and Isaiah 65:1 confirmed that they had an awareness of God's ways with them. Even so, they refused to obey Him.

Read Romans 9:30–10:3 and 10:9-17 in your Bible. Where do you see the tension between God's sovereignty and human responsibility?

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EXPLORE **THE TEXT**

RIGHTEOUSNESS THROUGH FAITH (ROM. 9:30-33)

30 What should we say then? Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, have obtained righteousness—namely the righteousness that comes from faith. 31 But Israel, pursuing the law of righteousness, has not achieved the righteousness of the law. 32 Why is that? Because they did not pursue it by faith, but as if it were by works. They stumbled over the stumbling stone. 33 As it is written, Look, I am putting a stone in Zion to stumble over and a rock to trip over, and the one who believes on him will not be put to shame.

VERSES 30-32

Paul has explained in Romans that all people—Jews and Gentiles—have sinned against God and need salvation. He has made the point that no one can be saved by works of the law, since all disobey the law (Rom. 3:19-20), and there is one way of salvation for all people—through Christ. Here, Paul noted that Gentiles did not ***pursue righteousness***. On the contrary, they wandered in spiritual darkness. But when they heard the good news about Jesus Christ, many Gentiles believed and placed their ***faith*** in Christ, receiving His gift of salvation. Their trust in Jesus made them right with God.

The people of ***Israel*** chose a path that led them in a different direction. Paul grew up the Jewish world. He knew well the Jewish approach to being right with God. They pursued *righteousness* based on works. Instead of entrusting their lives to Christ, they gave themselves to knowing and keeping ***the law***. Instead of God, the law became the central focus of their attention, and keeping it became their sole ambition. They thought that if they kept the law, they could earn righteousness. However, the path they took kept them from being right with God.

Consequently, they turned their backs on the gospel message that centered in Christ. They rejected Jesus and the way of salvation that He alone could provide. His life, death, burial, and resurrection served as the ***stone*** they ***stumbled*** over as they sought to achieve righteousness by way of the law.

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VERSE 33

Paul pointed to two Old Testament passages to make his point. In Isaiah 8:14, the Lord said that the Messiah would be a sanctuary for some, but for the house of Israel, He would be "a stone to stumble over and a rock to trip over, and a trap and a snare." For those who trusted in Him, the Messiah was a sanctuary. For those who trusted in themselves, He became a stumbling block. In Isaiah 28:16, the prophet noted that the Messiah would be a tested stone, a precious cornerstone, a sure foundation. However, this was only for the one who believes. Paul noted that believers would never be ashamed of placing their faith in Christ.

Why might people stumble over the message of the gospel?

MISGUIDED ZEAL (ROM. 10:1-3)

[1] Brothers and sisters, my heart's desire and prayer to God concerning them is for their salvation. [2] I can testify about them that they have zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. [3] Since they are ignorant of the righteousness of God and attempted to establish their own righteousness, they have not submitted to God's righteousness.

VERSE 1

Paul addressed the believers in Rome with sincere affection. Even though he had not yet visited the church, he affirmed their spiritual kinship as ***brothers and sisters***. At the same time, he revealed his affection for the Jewish people. His heart had been broken for them, and he had a genuine ***desire*** to see them come to faith in Christ. Paul's heavy burden over their lostness caused him to pray for their ***salvation***.

VERSES 2-3

Paul could ***testify*** to the difficulty Jews had in trusting Jesus for salvation. He knew they possessed a ***zeal for God***. They tried to obey the requirements of the law to attain righteousness on their own. However, they lacked the spiritual ***knowledge*** necessary to grasp God's intention regarding the law. It's not that they lacked intelligence. Rather, they suffered from spiritual ignorance.

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They had been ***ignorant*** of the way God intended for them to be made righteous. They continued to work toward earning ***their own*** righteousness by keeping the law. They simply had ***not submitted to*** God's way of being right with Him through faith in Christ.

How can religious zeal get in the way of knowing God?

Whose salvation are you continually praying for?

KEY DOCTRINE: *Salvation*

There is no salvation apart from personal faith in Jesus Christ as Lord. (See John 14:6; Acts 4:12.)

SALVATION AVAILABLE TO ALL (ROM. 10:9-13)

**9 If you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and
believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead,
you will be saved. 10 One believes with the heart, resulting in
righteousness, and one confesses with the mouth, resulting in
salvation. 11 For the Scripture says, Everyone who believes on
him will not be put to shame, 12 since there is no distinction
between Jew and Greek, because the same Lord of all richly
blesses all who call on him. 13 For everyone who calls on the
name of the Lord will be saved.**

VERSES 9-10

Paul made clear God's way of salvation. It involves confessing ***Jesus is Lord***. Confessing Jesus as Lord is the same as acknowledging that He is God. This would have been difficult for the Jew and a primary reason they were rejecting Jesus. But salvation is not possible without confessing, "Jesus is Lord."

Confession is an external sign of one's acceptance of Him, but accepting Jesus goes beyond simple lip service. Faith demands that

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you ***believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead***. Salvation involves both believing and outwardly confessing.

While Paul emphasized that salvation is something that takes place in the ***heart,*** he also stressed the importance of the ***mouth***. Ultimately, confession and belief are two sides of the same coin. When we confess, we express with our words what's going on in our hearts.

God does not want anyone to be excluded from the opportunity to hear the good news of salvation.

VERSES 11-13

Once again, Paul quoted from Isaiah 28:16 (see also Rom. 9:33). Paul underscored the truth that the good news of salvation is for ***everyone***. God did not intend for the gospel to be shared only with certain individuals. He wants every person to hear it. Those who place their faith in Jesus will never be ashamed of entrusting their lives to Him. The word ***shame*** can also mean "disappointed." Everyone, both Jew and Gentile, can have confidence that God saves those who put their trust in Him.

In verse 13, Paul quoted from Joel 2:32. Paul was emphasizing that ***everyone*** is welcome at the cross. Consequently, God does not want anyone to be excluded from the opportunity to hear the good news of salvation and to call on ***the name of the Lord*** Jesus to ***be saved***.

What does it mean to confess Jesus as Lord?

Paul made the connection between salvation and Jesus's resurrection. What practical difference does Jesus's resurrection make in your life right now?

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GO TELL (ROM. 10:14-17)

[14] How, then, can they call on him they have not believed in? And how can they believe without hearing about him? And how can they hear without a preacher? [15] And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written: How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news. [16] But not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, Lord, who has believed our message? [17] So faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes through the message about Christ.

VERSES 14-15

In light of the truth that the gospel is for all people, Paul raised four questions. Each question began with the same word: ***how***. First, he asked how individuals would ***call on*** Christ to save them if they have not ***believed in*** him. Second, he wanted to know how people could believe in Jesus ***without hearing*** about Him. Third, how could they hear about Jesus ***without a preacher***? He considered a *preacher* to be any believer who shares the gospel message.

The fourth question asks how they can preach ***unless they are sent.*** This fourth question points to the Great Commission (Matt. 28:19-20). Paul's poignant question challenges us to support missionaries and other vocational ministers as they share the gospel. They've been called to proclaim the good news of Christ around the world. However, it also challenges all believers. We have been *sent* to share the gospel in our neighborhoods and around the corner. Paul's reference to Isaiah 52:7 in verse 15 inspires us as we take to heart our call to make sure that others hear the gospel.

VERSE 16

Everyone needs an opportunity to hear the gospel. However, ***not all*** people who hear the •***gospel*** will respond by receiving the gift of salvation. Paul said that not all will obey the gospel. He may have been thinking about Jewish people in his day. They rejected Christ and the gospel message that centered in Him. However, they couldn't say that the gospel had not ever been shared with them. Paul echoed Isaiah's assertion that the ***message*** of salvation had been presented to them, but they refused to believe it (Isa. 53:1).

VERSE 17

In this verse, Paul returned to a foundational truth about the gospel message. Receiving the gift of salvation requires people to place

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their ***faith*** in Jesus. When individuals place their faith in Him, they will be saved. They cannot earn their salvation. Neither can they expect to be saved because they happen to have some sort of relationship with believers. Therefore, the challenge confronting believers is to make sure that others have the opportunity to hear the gospel. After people hear ***about Christ***, they will be able to respond to what they have ***heard***. Hearing the good news about Christ prompts them to place their faith in Him.

What hinders people from calling on Jesus for salvation? What role do believers play in removing these hindrances?

Who shared the gospel with you when you invited Christ into your life by faith? Who in your world needs you to share the good news of Christ with them?

BIBLE SKILL: *Use other Scripture to help understand another Bible passage.*

Read Peter's sermon in Acts 2:14-41. List all the main points that you see in his sermon and compare it to what you find in Paul's teaching from Romans 9–10. Peter's message and Paul's writings make up what has been called Christianity's "kerygma," or the preaching of the apostles. Consider how you can share these truths with those around you. Evaluate your effectiveness in sharing the gospel with those in your sphere of influence.

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APPLY THE TEXT

+ All people need to understand that true righteousness comes through faith not by works.
+ Believers can follow Paul's example by praying for the salvation of lost people.
+ Any person who has not yet believed and confessed Jesus can do so and be saved.
+ Believers must tell others the gospel message and send missionaries throughout the entire world.

Spend time with your Bible study group sharing accounts of your most recent conversations about Jesus with lost people. Then have several members share their testimonies about how they gave their lives to Christ.

When did you place your faith in Jesus and receive His gift of salvation? What kind of difference does He make in your life right now?

Memorize Romans 10:9.

Prayer Needs

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Kindness

God's plan for redemption includes all people.

ROMANS 11:11-24

Who should be included on the invitation list? That question often puts event planners in a tough spot. They must determine how many invitations can be sent based on the event's purpose and the budget available. Ultimately, they're forced to wrestle with the difficult decision of who will receive an invitation and who will not. They would never simply declare that everyone is invited. Yet that's exactly what God does. His invitation is open to all.

When was the last time you received an unexpected invitation to something? What has God shown you about His open invitation to everyone?

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UNDERSTAND **THE CONTEXT**

ROMANS 11:1-36

In Romans 11, Paul raised two crucial questions about Gentiles who had been saved. First, he asked if God had rejected the Jews. He answered the question by pointing to himself. He was a Jew who had been loyal to Judaism when he gave his life to Christ. Then Paul mentioned God's encounter with Elijah. Elijah considered himself to be the last standing Israelite. God assured the prophet there were other Israelites who were loyal to Him.

Second, he asked if the Jews had gone too far in their rejection of Christ. The answer to this question sheds light on the truth about God's grace. Paul used the image of a tree with grafted branches to exhibit God's grace to Jews and Gentiles. Jews who rejected Christ would be like branches that had been removed from the tree. When they turned to Christ by faith, they would be restored to Him. In that way, God's grace would be extended to believing Jews as well as believing Gentiles.

Paul stressed that God had not turned His back on Israel. His mercy toward the Jews would never be smothered. Quite the opposite, His abiding love for them would always fuel the fire of His mercy toward them. His love for them reached all the way back to the original Old Testament patriarchs who followed His leadership during the formative years of Israel's history. Consequently, God showed his mercy to Jews and Gentiles alike.

Explanation gave way to adoration as Paul continued to write about God and His relationship with His people. The apostle praised God for His priceless wisdom and awe-inspiring judgments. He also glorified God because His relationship with His people enriched them in ways they would never be able to comprehend completely.

Read Romans 11 in your Bible and underline each reference to God's grace and mercy. What insights into God and His character do you garner from these references?

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EXPLORE **THE TEXT**

REJECTION (ROM. 11:11-16)

[11] I ask, then, have they stumbled so as to fall? Absolutely not! On the contrary, by their transgression, salvation has come to the Gentiles to make Israel jealous. [12] Now if their transgression brings riches for the world, and their failure riches for the Gentiles, how much more will their fullness bring! [13] Now I am speaking to you Gentiles. Insofar as I am an apostle to the Gentiles, I magnify my ministry, [14] if I might somehow make my own people jealous and save some of them. [15] For if their rejection brings reconciliation to the world, what will their acceptance mean but life from the dead? [16] Now if the firstfruits are holy, so is the whole batch. And if the root is holy, so are the branches.

VERSE 11

After answering the question about whether God had rejected the Jews, Paul went on to ask if they had gone too far in their rejection of God's gift of salvation through Christ. He answered the question decisively: ***Absolutely not!*** He acknowledged they had ***stumbled*** over Jesus instead of embracing Him. However, their ***transgression*** when they rejected Christ opened the door for the gospel to be shared with the ***Gentiles***. When the Gentiles heard the message about ***salvation*** through Christ, they received Him. In turn, the Jews became ***jealous*** of them.

VERSE 12

God transformed Israel's ***transgression*** into a blessing for the Gentiles, allowing them to experience the benefits that come with believing in Christ. The Gentiles brought spiritual richness to their lives. In this way, Israel's ***failure*** to turn to Christ opened the door for people across ***the world*** to come to Him by faith. From that point, Paul shifted his focus toward his hope for Israel's future. Although Israel's spiritual emptiness had not prevented others from being saved, he wondered what would happen when the Jewish people themselves embraced Christ and experienced the ***fullness*** of life found in Him.

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VERSES 13-15

Paul was writing this to the ***Gentiles***. When they saw the pronoun ***you*** in his letter, they could rest assured that he was writing to them. God had called Paul to be an ***apostle*** to the Gentiles who would share the gospel with them. He also helped to establish several churches. Therefore, Paul wanted to shine a light on what God had done through his ***ministry***.

Paul's purpose in writing about the effectiveness of his ministry had nothing to do with selfish pride. He knew God alone deserved the credit for the victories in his missionary work. His interest in sharing the glowing reports of salvation among the Gentiles centered in fostering jealousy among Jewish people. In their selfish pride, Jewish people had come to believe that God worked through them exclusively. Now they could see Him at work in the lives of others. Paul hoped their envy would give way to their surrender to Christ.

Instead of pouring cold water on the fire that the gospel had started, Israel's rejection of Christ fueled the blaze even more. Gentiles everywhere experienced the wonder of •***reconciliation*** with God. Paul pondered what would happen when the rejection of the Jewish people turned into their ***acceptance*** of Him. He compared it to something like resurrection. Their spiritual awakening would look like ***life*** that been sparked ***from the dead***.

VERSE 16

The possibility of the Jews receiving Christ prompted Paul to reflect on the stewardship principle of •***firstfruits***. In the Old Testament, God instructed His people to present a loaf of bread as an offering to Him from the first batch of dough after the grain harvest (Num. 15:17-21). By setting the first loaf apart to Him, they acknowledged that the entire batch had been made ***holy*** to Him. Paul elaborated on the principle by bringing a tree into view. If the ***root*** of the tree had been dedicated to God as ***holy***, then the ***branches*** would be set apart for Him too.

What may cause someone to reject the gospel?

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If God's plan of salvation embraces all peoples, what is one next step—prayer, conversation, hospitality, giving, or going—you will take to participate in that plan this week?

KEY DOCTRINE: *God's Purpose of Grace*

Election is the glorious display of God's sovereign goodness, and is infinitely wise, holy, and unchangeable. It excludes boasting and promotes humility. (See Ephesians 1:4-6; 1 Peter 2:9-10.)

GRAFTED (ROM. 11:17-22)

17 Now if some of the branches were broken off, and you, though a wild olive branch, were grafted in among them and have come to share in the rich root of the cultivated olive tree, 18 do not boast that you are better than those branches. But if you do boast—you do not sustain the root, but the root sustains you. 19 Then you will say, "Branches were broken off so that I might be grafted in." 20 True enough; they were broken off because of unbelief, but you stand by faith. Do not be arrogant, but beware, 21 because if God did not spare the natural branches, he will not spare you either. 22 Therefore, consider God's kindness and severity: severity toward those who have fallen but God's kindness toward you—if you remain in his kindness. Otherwise you too will be cut off.

VERSES 17-19

The imagery of a tree continued to provide Paul with a helpful word picture to use as he explained the truth about Gentiles who gave their lives to Christ. Paul compared them to a ***wild olive branch***. God ***grafted*** them in so they could thrive as His people. Also, the ***root*** brought to mind the nourishing presence of God among His people. The grafted branch flourished because it enjoyed the privilege of receiving the same kind of nourishment that had enriched the ***cultivated olive tree***. Of course, Paul intended for the cultivated tree to serve as a reference to Jewish people.

The temptation for Gentiles to ***boast*** over such a privilege compelled Paul to call attention to it. They ran the risk of considering

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themselves to be ***better than*** the Jews. He referred to Jewish people as ***those branches***. Boasting would show that Gentiles had forgotten the central truth about their salvation. It did not center in the branch. Instead, their salvation started in the root. In other words, the applause over salvation belonged to God. He had been like the root that sustained the branch.

Gentiles who boasted about being saved had become blind to the most important aspect of their salvation. They demonstrated that they had damaged their spiritual vision by considering themselves to be God's favorites. Such a declaration would have suggested that God moved the Jewish people out of the way to make room for them. Using the image of the olive tree, they ran the risk of saying that God decided He would prune the Jewish branches so He could graft in the Gentile branches. Consequently, it would have implied that God loved Gentiles more than Jews.

VERSES 20-21

Paul conceded that people who rejected Christ could have been compared to branches that were ***broken off*** the tree. However, God's pruning of them was not because He didn't love them. Instead, their ***unbelief*** led to their removal. By the same token, By His grace, He grafted Gentiles onto the tree according to their ***faith*** in Christ. Gentile Christians needed to ***beware*** of arrogance.

God would ***not spare*** Jewish people who rejected His way of salvation through Christ. He removed them even though they had been rooted in a relationship with Him that began in the early days of the Old Testament. Therefore, Gentiles needed to remember that He would ***not spare*** them ***either***.

He made no distinction between Jews and Gentiles regarding who would be saved.

VERSE 22

God demonstrated His grace with countless expressions of His ***kindness***. He made no distinction between Jews and Gentiles regarding who would be saved. But neither did He exhibit any distinction regarding His ***severity***. He would judge anyone who had ***fallen*** into the trap of spiritual arrogance. For that reason, Gentile and Jewish Christians demonstrated wisdom by responding humbly to God's kindness.

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When might we feel boastful of our spiritual blessings? How can we turn from spiritual pride to genuine care?

RESTORATION (ROM. 11:23-24)

[23] And even they, if they do not remain in unbelief, will be grafted in, because God has the power to graft them in again. [24] For if you were cut off from your native wild olive tree and against nature were grafted into a cultivated olive tree, how much more will these—the natural branches—be grafted into their own olive tree?

VERSE 23

For the Jews, being removed did not mean their relationship with God would never be restored. However, their restoration depended on their willingness to return to Him. ***If*** they came to the point in their lives where they would no longer ***remain*** in their ***unbelief***, He would be gracious to them. Using the word picture of a tree once more, Paul assured believing Jews that they would be ***grafted in*** by God's grace. The branch would be grafted into the root. In other words, the relationship that believing Jews had with Him would be restored.

Their hope for restoration in their relationship with God did not rest with their ability to persuade Him to change His mind about them. They could not have won God's favor by promising to be better or do more as Jewish people. Rather, the only fitting response that they could make to Him was to abandon their unbelief and put their faith in Christ alone. If they made such a response, they could trust God to be gracious and open His arms to them.

God alone had the ***power*** to restore their relationship with Him. Compelled by His grace, He would exert His power to make restoration possible. Paul declared that God would ***graft them in again*** when they turned to Christ by faith.

VERSE 24

Paul turned his attention to believing Gentiles. Once again, the image of a tree enabled him to affirm Gentiles who received Christ. They started as branches of their ***native wild olive tree***.

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When Jesus came into their lives, something remarkable took place. Like branches that were ***grafted into a cultivated olive tree,*** they became members of God's family. By being grafted in, they received enriching nourishment from the root of the cultivated tree. In other words, God enriched believing Gentiles in the same way that He nourished believing Jews.

God saved Gentiles who entrusted their lives to Christ, and He did something that went against what farmers had learned in nature about olive trees. In those days, farmers would take a branch of a cultivated olive tree and graft it into a native olive tree. Grafting a branch in that way would make the native olive tree more productive. God grafted believing Gentiles into the cultivated tree with believing Jews. As a result, the tree that included Gentiles as well as Jews who trusted in Christ became stronger and more productive.

What do you learn about God's heart from His willingness to restore those who previously rejected Him? How might that influence the way you view people who have walked away from faith?

BIBLE SKILL: *Use multiple Scripture passages to understand a major doctrine.*

This session emphasizes a Christian's eternal security once he or she has accepted Christ as Savior. Paul's teaching refutes the idea that true believers are in jeopardy of losing their salvation. Read the following Bible passages and note what each one teaches about the security of the believer: Matthew 10:22; 24:13; John 5:24; 6:37; 10:27-28; Romans 8:38-39; Philippians 1:6; 1 John 2:19; 3:9; Jude 1:24-25.

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APPLY THE TEXT

- We can be assured that the gospel is for all people.
- As members of God's family, believers should embrace humility and resist spiritual pridefulness.
- Believers can take comfort in knowing God has the power to save those who repent.

Share with your Bible study group how you will apply the truth that God intends for everyone to hear the gospel. In what ways would a lack of humility prevent you from sharing the good news of Christ?

As you reflect on God's power to save anyone, who have you considered "unreachable"? Commit to pray for that person's salvation. What barriers do you need to remove so you can share the gospel with that person?

Memorize Romans 11:33.

Prayer Needs

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Sacrifice

THE LIFE OF A BELIEVER IS ONE OF SACRIFICE AND COMMUNITY.

ROMANS 12:1-13

What's in it for me? It's a question we've all heard—and one we've probably asked ourselves. When we give our time, money, or abilities, we feel entitled to know what benefit we'll receive in return. But when we shift from being consumers to being participants, a different question emerges: *What can I do to help?*

Which question—'What's in it for me?' or 'How can I help?'—tends to shape your thinking most, and why?

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UNDERSTAND **THE CONTEXT**

ROMANS 12:1-21

Paul has been guiding his readers through a rich exploration of the theology of sin and salvation. He has shown that every person—no matter their background or ethnicity—stands guilty before God (Rom. 1–4). Yet the story is not without hope. God has made a way for us to be rescued from sin through the death and resurrection of Jesus (chap. 5). Those who choose to follow Christ can no longer live for themselves; they have died and been buried with Him (chap. 6). And by His power, God has raised them to live for His glory through the work of His Spirit (chaps. 7–8).

In chapters 9–11, Paul paused his main argument to address the history and future of the Jewish people. Since the Roman church was likely made up of both Jews and Gentiles, he wanted each group to understand that God had not abandoned His chosen nation. Although many Jews had rejected the Messiah, their rejection was not total. Some—Paul himself included—had embraced Christ, and many more would receive the gift of salvation.

Paul also explained that Israel's rejection opened the way for Gentiles to hear and respond to the gospel. No matter one's nationality or ethnicity, he emphasized that salvation comes through faith in Christ. This message may have been difficult for Jews who were deeply committed to the law, but faith—not works—had always been God's means of drawing people to Himself.

With this theological foundation in place, Paul turned his attention in the final chapters of Romans—including chapter 12—to the practical implications of salvation. Having laid the theological groundwork, he now urged his readers to live out their faith in daily life. In doing so, they would display the gospel to the world around them.

Read Romans 12:1-13 in your Bible and underline each command. How would you summarize Paul's main point in this section of his letter?

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EXPLORE **THE TEXT**

LIVING SACRIFICE (ROM. 12:1-2)

[1] Therefore, brothers and sisters, in view of the mercies of God, I urge you to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God; this is your true worship. [2] Do not be conformed to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may discern what is the good, pleasing, and perfect will of God.

VERSE 1

Paul began with ***therefore***. This connects what he has been teaching to what he was about to teach. He shifted from theological explanation to practical application.

He addressed the Roman believers as ***brothers and sisters***. This emphasized both his affection for them and their connection to one another. They were all part of God's family.

Paul's challenge to his readers was made ***in view of the mercies of God***. In response to the mercy God had shown them in Christ, he admonished them to present their ***bodies as a living sacrifice*** to Him.

Gentiles and Jews alike who lived in Rome would have known about sacrifices. In the temple in Jerusalem as well as the pagan temples in Rome, worshipers sacrificed animals on altars. Unlike the animal sacrifice that had no choice in the matter, believers choose to become living sacrifices. This is our ***true worship***. Worship is not an event that happens only on Sunday morning, nor is it a place to go on Sundays. Worship is the active and willing choice to live in submission to God.

VERSE 2

Choosing to live as living sacrifices is challenging. The world expects us to conform to the ways and values of ***this age***. ***Conform*** means to fit into a particular mold. But instead of trying to fit into the world's way of living, God expects His people to be ***transformed***. The Greek word used here is related to the English word *metamorphosis,* which refers to a transformation from one thing to another. Being transformed starts on the inside. It is a work of the Holy Spirit in us and will affect our attitudes, affections, and actions.

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The transforming work of the Holy Spirit involves the ***renewing*** of our minds. He changes the way we think and how we see the world and our place in it. He gives us wisdom and discernment to recognize and fulfill His will for our lives. As we ***discern*** His ***will*** for us, we'll learn what is ***good*** and ***pleasing*** to Him.

What obstacles might prevent us from offering our lives to God as "living sacrifices"?

IN THE CHURCH (ROM. 12:3-8)

3 For by the grace given to me, I tell everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he should think. Instead, think sensibly, as God has distributed a measure of faith to each one. 4 Now as we have many parts in one body, and all the parts do not have the same function, 5 in the same way we who are many are one body in Christ and individually members of one another. 6 According to the grace given to us, we have different gifts: If prophecy, use it according to the proportion of one's faith; 7 if service, use it in service; if teaching, in teaching; 8 if exhorting, in exhortation; giving, with generosity; leading, with diligence; showing mercy, with cheerfulness.

VERSES 3-5

The •***grace*** God extended to Paul in the first century continues to benefit believers in the twenty-first. Through Paul's instruction, we receive God's wisdom, enabling us to serve Him collectively within the church. Central to his message is the necessity for every believer to cultivate humility as we labor together in service to the Lord. As spiritual brothers and sisters in Christ, we remain susceptible to pride—becoming conceited or arrogant when we perceive ourselves as more gifted than others. Such attitudes can foster the harmful habit of viewing ourselves as more significant than fellow members of the body.

Paul's emphasis on humility protects us from falling into selfish pride. Rather than yielding to arrogance, we exercise wisdom when we think with sober judgment. Such judgment is demonstrated when we put our faith into practice by employing the spiritual gifts God has entrusted to us. Paul illustrated the importance of each

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gift by comparing the church to the human body. Just as a body is composed of many parts, each with its own distinct function, so too the church is made up of many members who contribute in unique ways.

This analogy helps us recognize the Lord's wisdom in granting diverse spiritual gifts to His people. The church comprises individuals who share a common testimony: each has received God's gift of salvation. Though we differ in our abilities and backgrounds, we belong to ***one body in Christ***. Because we are united, we work together in mutual dependence. When we faithfully use our spiritual gifts in cooperative service, the church matures and grows strong.

VERSES 6-8

It is important to remember that we possess spiritual gifts solely because of God's ***grace***. He has given us ***different gifts*** so we may serve Him together. As we devote ourselves to His purposes, we can rely on His guidance to use these gifts in ways that honor Him. Moreover, these gifts are employed toward a shared aim: the strengthening of the church. When used in this manner, they bring spiritual enrichment and fulfillment to the body of Christ.

The Lord has entrusted some members of the church with the gift of ***prophecy***. They exercise this gift faithfully when they put their trust in Him and speak His Word with clarity and conviction for the benefit of His people.

However, not all believers are called to speak prophetically. Some serve the Lord more through ***service*** than through speech. They demonstrate their faith by willingly embracing opportunities to assist and support others. The church also requires those whom God has given the gift of ***teaching***. These individuals employ their faith by instructing others in the truths of Scripture, thereby fostering spiritual growth within the congregation.

The practice of using spiritual gifts extends to other areas of ministry as well. Believers with the gift of ***exhortation*** are eager to encourage and uplift fellow Christians. Others express their faith through generous ***giving***, trusting the Lord's direction as they contribute to the ministries of the church. Still others reveal their faith by ***leading*** with ***diligence***, guiding their spiritual brothers and sisters with care and responsibility. Those who have been graced with the gift of ***mercy*** minister with ***cheerfulness*** rather than reluctance, compassionately attending to those who are suffering.

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Why is it important for each believer to serve within the church? What results can we anticipate if believers fail to use their gifts in the church?

How does your exercise of spiritual gifts contribute to the overall spiritual maturity of the church? What steps can you take this week to intentionally build up another believer through your gifting?

KEY DOCTRINE: *The Church*

A New Testament church of the Lord Jesus Christ is an autonomous local congregation of baptized believers, associated by covenant in the faith and fellowship of the gospel; observing the two ordinances of Christ, governed by His laws, exercising the gifts, rights, and privileges invested in them by His Word, and seeking to extend the gospel to the ends of the earth. (See Acts 2:41-47; 1 Corinthians 12:7.)

IN RELATIONSHIPS (ROM. 12:9-13)

9 Let love be without hypocrisy. Detest evil; cling to what is
good. 10 Love one another deeply as brothers and sisters. Take
the lead in honoring one another. 11 Do not lack diligence in
zeal; be fervent in the Spirit; serve the Lord. 12 Rejoice in hope;
be patient in affliction; be persistent in prayer. 13 Share with the
saints in their needs; pursue hospitality.

VERSE 9

As we exercise our faith through the use of our spiritual gifts, it is important to remember that we do not labor alone. We serve alongside fellow believers within the church. For this reason, Scripture provides us with a series of imperatives that guide our collaboration. These foundational directives, when taken seriously, strengthen our relationships as we serve Him together. The first

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imperative directs our attention to ***love,*** which functions as the overarching principle. Genuine love rejects all forms of ***hypocrisy***. We love sincerely when we cling to what is good and deliberately reject every expression of ***evil***. Hypocrisy, however, allows space for merely pretending to value what is good rather than embracing it wholeheartedly.

VERSE 10

The command to ***love one another*** is directed toward a clearly defined community—our fellow believers within the church. This love reflects true spiritual maturity only when it rises above superficial sentiment. We are called to love one another ***deeply,*** exhibiting the kind of genuine affection characteristic of a healthy family united as ***brothers and sisters*** in Christ. As spiritual siblings, we possess the capacity to cultivate profound and enduring bonds of love. We demonstrate this familial affection by affirming and honoring one another. Rather than seeking recognition for ourselves, we intentionally celebrate the contributions of other believers. We willingly and wholeheartedly step forward to acknowledge and esteem our fellow members in the body of Christ.

VERSE 11

A disposition shaped by genuine love equips believers to fulfill the next imperative as well. Whereas the previous instruction directed our attention toward one another, this command is oriented toward ***the Lord*** Himself. As we mature in our relationship with Him, we cultivate an eagerness to serve Him with diligence. Increasing love for God produces a ***zeal*** aimed at pleasing Him. In this process, we come to understand that authentic zeal is rooted in a deliberate attentiveness to the guidance of the ***Spirit***. Spiritual sensitivity forms and sustains our eagerness to follow His leading. Consequently, we do not approach our discipleship with reluctance or indifference; rather, we remain focused on our highest priority—rendering faithful service to the Lord.

VERSE 12

Our love for the Lord and for one another as spiritual siblings in Him equips us to withstand the difficulties we encounter as we work together. Even in circumstances that appear devoid of ***hope,*** we remain steadfast, refusing to lose sight of the confidence we possess in the Lord. His leadership sustains us, prompting us to rejoice in the assurance of His unfailing guidance through every

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challenge we face. Consequently, we do not surrender to panic when difficulty arises. Instead, our hope in Him steadies our hearts, enabling us to persevere with patience amid ***affliction***. In the trials, we persist in ***prayer***, recognizing the immeasurable value of maintaining deep communion with the Lord.

VERSE 13

Love also compels us to look beyond our own concerns. As we work alongside our brothers and sisters in Christ, we remain attentive to their well-being. When we see that they're struggling, we give assistance in whatever ways we can. Like us, they are ***saints***—set apart for the Lord—and we share a common desire to serve Him faithfully. Accordingly, we care for one another without hesitation, generously providing whatever support is needed so that their ***needs*** might be met. A spirit of genuine ***hospitality*** moves us to open both our homes and our hearts to one another.

How can you be more diligent and intentional in your service to the Lord and His people?

BIBLE SKILL: *Memorize a verse and apply it to a real-life situation.*

Memorize Romans 12:1-2 in your preferred translation. Paraphrase the verse to meditate on the meaning. Evaluate ways that you are offering yourself as a living sacrifice to the Lord. Also evaluate ways the world is trying to conform you to its image. List ways your mind can be renewed to the will of God.

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APPLY THE TEXT

- As believers, our lives are to be shaped by God, not by worldly influences.
- Believers are to serve alongside each other, exercising their God-given gifts.
- As believers practice sacrificial love in their relationships, their lives give evidence of God's grace.

Share with your Bible study group your approach to presenting yourself as a live sacrifice to God. Discuss the difference between worshiping God—which is true worship—and worshiping worship itself.

How would you describe your love for the Lord today? In what ways do you reflect your love for Him in your love for others in the church? What changes do you need to make so you can demonstrate your love for them?

Memorize Romans 12:1-2.

Prayer Needs

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Represent

Believers represent Christ well by honoring civil leaders and loving their neighbors.

ROMANS 13:1-14

Live up to your family name. It's a charge many parents give their sons and daughters early in life, and over time it becomes ingrained in their children. As those children grow into adults, that calling shapes their decisions and guides their relationships. In the same way, believers have been entrusted with the responsibility of honoring the name of Jesus.

How have the expectations you grew up with shaped the choices and relationships in your adult life?

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UNDERSTAND **THE CONTEXT**

ROMANS 13:1-14

In chapter 12 Paul highlighted behavior within the church. In chapter 13 he turned his attention to how believers interact with people outside the church. While we are citizens of heaven, we also live as citizens of earth. Accordingly, we want to represent Christ well in our world so that others will be drawn to Him through our relationships with them.

Paul began this chapter by pointing to the need for believers to submit themselves to the leaders of the Roman government. Christians are to pay taxes to whom they owe taxes, give respect to whom they owe respect, and show honor to whom they owe honor. God instituted government for the good of all people. In His grand scheme, governing authorities are God's servants to dispense justice in the world (Rom. 13:1-7).

In verses 8-10, Paul addressed the need for believers to nurture healthy relationships with their neighbors. He used the Ten Commandments to illustrate the relationship between love and the law. Sins like adultery, murder, theft, and coveting are caused by selfishness, which is the opposite of sacrificial love. As believers, we owe a debt of love to others. What God expects of us can be summed up in a single principle: "Love your neighbor as yourself" (v. 9).

Every day that passes puts us closer to Jesus's return. In view of this reality, Paul admonished the believers to "wake up from sleep" as our salvation is "nearer than when we first believed" (v. 11). We should avoid spiritual lethargy, drunkenness, sexual impurity, quarreling, and jealousy. Instead, we are to display Christlikeness outwardly in our daily lives.

Read Romans 13:1-14 and pay close attention to each directive Paul gives. Which of these instructions describe practical, everyday ways for believers to live out their faith in Christ?

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EXPLORE **THE TEXT**

HONOR AUTHORITIES (ROM. 13:1-7)

[1] Let everyone submit to the governing authorities, since there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are instituted by God. [2] So then, the one who resists the authority is opposing God's command, and those who oppose it will bring judgment on themselves. [3] For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Do you want to be unafraid of the one in authority? Do what is good, and you will have its approval. [4] For it is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, because it does not carry the sword for no reason. For it is God's servant, an avenger that brings wrath on the one who does wrong. [5] Therefore, you must submit, not only because of wrath but also because of your conscience. [6] And for this reason you pay taxes, since the authorities are God's servants, continually attending to these tasks. [7] Pay your obligations to everyone: taxes to those you owe taxes, tolls to those you owe tolls, respect to those you owe respect, and honor to those you owe honor.

VERSES 1-2

Paul addressed believers' responsibilities to ***submit*** to the ***governing authorities***. Such submission reflected their recognition that all authority ultimately resides with God. He, in His sovereign wisdom, ***instituted*** governmental structures for the order and well-being of society.

Our Christian faith does not give us the freedom to flaunt the legal system.

Consequently, anyone who opposed governmental authority was, in effect, resisting the divine order established by God and would therefore be held accountable by Him. By ***opposing*** civil authorities, citizens set themselves up to face ***judgment,*** both from the governing officials empowered to administer punishment and from the Lord, who commanded believers to demonstrate a submissive posture toward civil authority.

Our Christian faith does not give us the freedom to flaunt the legal system. Of course, at some point, we may be forced to choose between the rule of government and the principles of God.

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In those cases, we still are subject to the law and must endure the repercussions of our choices. Paul and the Romans certainly understood this truth, having suffered for faith on numerous occasions.

VERSES 3-4

The Lord did not intend for governing authorities to instill fear in citizens through acts of ***terror***. Rather, He established government to provide an environment in which individuals could engage in ***good conduct*** and refrain from ***bad*** conduct. Within such an environment, citizens would have no reason to fear those in authority; they would need only to devote themselves to what is good to receive the ***approval*** of those who govern.

Government leaders remain accountable to the Lord, who expects them to guide the populace in accordance with His standards of goodness. When individuals engage in behavior deemed ***wrong*** in His sight, they have legitimate cause for concern. Authorities possess the power of the ***sword,*** meaning they are divinely authorized to administer justice and impose appropriate punishment upon wrongdoers. In this respect, government functions as ***God's servant, an avenger*** through which He brings ***wrath*** against those who engage in evil.

KEY DOCTRINE: *Religious Liberty*

Civil government being ordained of God, it is the duty of Christians to render loyal obedience thereto in all things not contrary to the revealed will of God. (See 1 Timothy 2:1-2; 1 Peter 2:13-17.)

VERSES 5-7

Because the Lord established human government, discerning believers recognized their responsibility to ***submit*** to civil authorities. Paul had already identified a significant reason for believers to place themselves under the authority of governing officials: refusal to do so would inevitably result in the government's ***wrath,*** which would rightly accompany such foolish conduct. Paul then introduced an additional basis for submission. Mature believers should seek to let their ***conscience*** guide them. Conscience compelled them to pursue what is right and to avoid what is wrong as they served God. Submitting to governing authorities was inherently proper, for government existed by God's own design.

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Moreover, wise believers demonstrated their integrity as citizens by putting their conscientious convictions into practice in straightforward, practical ways. One clear expression of this was their willingness to pay taxes. Government leaders performed God's work by exercising authority, and by paying their ***taxes,*** Christian citizens supported that divinely sanctioned task.

The directive regarding submission to government focused on the word ***obligations***. If believers want to be good citizens, they will take their obligations seriously. The integrity of their testimony depends on it. For that reason, they are to pay their ***taxes*** and ***tolls*** and show ***respect*** and ***honor*** to government leaders.

How does Paul's teaching that rulers are God's servants for your good challenge or affirm your perspective on government?

HONOR EACH OTHER (ROM. 13:8-10)

[8] Do not owe anyone anything, except to love one another, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. [9] The commandments, Do not commit adultery; do not murder; do not steal; do not covet; and any other commandment, are summed up by this commandment: Love your neighbor as yourself. [10] Love does no wrong to a neighbor. Love, therefore, is the fulfillment of the law.

VERSES 8-10

Beyond taxes owed to government, Paul pointed to a larger debt believers owe—***to love one another***. Unlike financial debts, the debt of love will never be paid in full. We are always under an obligation to love others.

What are some ways you can practically show love to those around you?

Paul illustrated his point with the Ten Commandments. ***Adultery, murder,*** stealing, and coveting are rooted in selfishness.

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Selfishness is the opposite of self-giving love. God's expectation of believers can be summed up in the command: ***Love your neighbor as yourself***. This represents ***the fulfillment of the law.***

Unlike financial debts, the debt of love will never be paid in full.

Love for others is a recurring theme throughout the New Testament. In John's Gospel, Jesus taught that His followers would be identified by their love for one another (John 13:34-35). The early church embodied this principle through practical expressions of care (Acts 4:32-35). Later, Paul reminded the Corinthians that genuine love consistently seeks the good of others (1 Cor. 13:4-7). Likewise, both John (1 John 3:18) and Peter (1 Pet. 4:8) urged believers to demonstrate sincere and steadfast love. In the same way, we must learn to love others well.

Paul said that love does no wrong to a neighbor (v. 10). In what ways—through actions, attitudes, words, or silence—might you unintentionally wrong others? How can you become more aware of how your choices impact the people around you?

HONOR CHRIST (ROM. 13:11-14)

11 Besides this, since you know the time, it is already the hour for you to wake up from sleep, because now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed. 12 The night is nearly over, and the day is near; so let us discard the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light. 13 Let us walk with decency, as in the daytime: not in carousing and drunkenness; not in sexual impurity and promiscuity; not in quarreling and jealousy. 14 But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh to gratify its desires.

VERSE 11

Paul offered an additional reason to honor governing authorities and to love one another: believers live in anticipation of Christ's return. Although Paul did not know when Jesus would come again,

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he understood that the appointed time was coming. Because of this, he urged the Roman believers to ***wake up*** spiritually and conduct themselves in a manner consistent with the nearness of that day.

Though two thousand years have passed, each day brings us closer to His return. As Paul reminded his readers, the fulfillment of ***our salvation is nearer than when we first believed***.

VERSE 12

Paul used the imagery of ***night*** and ***day*** to contrast the moral ***darkness*** of the world with the ***light*** of faith. He reminded his readers that a new day would soon dawn. In the midst of prevailing darkness, Paul challenged believers to shine as lights in their communities. The first step in doing so was to ***discard the deeds of darkness***. Christ had already redeemed them from that former way of life; there was no reason to return to it. Instead, they were to ***put on the armor of light***. Just as armor equips a soldier for battle, God's spiritual armor equips believers to illuminate the darkness as they await the return of Christ (see also Eph. 6:10-18).

The only remedy for the cycle of emptiness is Jesus.

VERSES 13-14

Paul compared the believer's way of living to a ***walk***—an appropriate comparison, since life is a journey that steadily moves us toward eternity. He urged believers to walk ***with decency,*** living in such a way that their conduct could withstand the scrutiny of those around them.

This type of lifestyle stands in stark contrast to the behaviors commonly embraced by the surrounding culture. Paul highlighted examples of how people, lacking a moral compass, attempt to dull their pain through ***carousing and drunkenness***, or seek a counterfeit form of intimacy through ***sexual impurity and promiscuity***. While Christians are called to be known by their love, the world often tears itself apart through ***quarreling and jealousy***.

The only remedy for the cycle of emptiness is Jesus. Those who ***put on the Lord Jesus Christ*** discover healing, genuine community, and lasting hope. Rather than becoming enslaved to the ***desires*** of the ***•flesh,*** believers are freed by Christ to become all that God created them to be.

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Ultimately, the issue returns to submission. When we submit every aspect of our lives to God, we remain in right fellowship with Him and shine as a light to those around us.

What steps can we take to prevent spiritual lethargy?

How aware are you of Christ's return, and how does that awareness—or lack of it—shape your daily choices?

BIBLE SKILL: *Identify the imagery in a verse or passage and discover what it communicates.*

Compare Romans 13:11-14 with Ephesians 4:22-24 and Colossians 3:10-12. What does this imagery communicate to you about the old life before Christ and the new life in Christ? How does this imagery help you in understanding how God would want you to respond when you battle the flesh, the old person you were before you came to know Christ?

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APPLY THE TEXT

+ Believers should honor civil authorities.
+ Believers are to love our neighbors.
+ Believers are to display Christlikeness so that their lives reflect Jesus.

With your Bible study group, discuss why submitting to governing authorities qualifies as a meaningful way to represent Christ. Also share the challenges you face as you try to show His love to the people around you. Pray for one another so that each will represent Him well.

Reflect on your relationships with people around you. What significance do you place on honoring Christ by being a person who strives to live with integrity? Who's holding you accountable for behaving in ways that others can see Christ in you?

Memorize Romans 13:14.

Prayer Needs

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Unity

BELIEVERS PROMOTE UNITY BY ACCEPTING AND EDIFYING ONE ANOTHER.

ROMANS 14:5-20

One day, a teacher invited her students to debate an issue that had surfaced in class. The students immediately began sharing their viewpoints, and the discussion quickly grew intense. As the debate escalated, the teacher noticed that while the students were passionate about their perspectives, their disagreements were becoming disrespectful. At that moment, she challenged them to disagree agreeably. Paul did the same—because of Christ.

When have you found yourself needing to disagree with someone in a respectful way? What made it challenging?

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UNDERSTAND **THE CONTEXT**

ROMANS 14:1–15:13

Believers in Rome found themselves divided over matters such as dietary rules and the observance of special days. Those from Jewish backgrounds often disagreed with their Gentile brothers and sisters about how to handle these issues. Paul reminded them of a crucial truth: they were not to appoint themselves as judges over fellow believers whose convictions differed on these secondary matters. Each believer served the Lord, and He alone held the authority to judge them.

Rather than dwelling on their disagreements, Paul urged them to keep their focus on Jesus. Honoring Him was what mattered most. Because of this, they were wise to bring their personal convictions before Him, seeking His approval. They also honored Christ by respecting the opinions of others within the church. Serving Him together was more important than debating differences over non-essential concerns. This unity would lead them toward spiritual maturity and allow them to experience the joy and peace that flow from a close relationship with Him. Such mutual respect would be possible only when believers allowed love to guide them. Love creates space for differing opinions. Love also motivates believers to build one another up.

Jewish believers had the privilege of receiving God's law and His promise of the Messiah, while Gentile believers had the privilege of hearing the good news of Christ. Both groups were fully welcomed into God's family. To emphasize this, Paul pointed to Old Testament passages that affirmed God's plan to include both Jewish and Gentile believers as spiritual brothers and sisters in Him.

Read Romans 14:5-20. Circle preferences and underline commands. How does confusing preferences with commands create strife?

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EXPLORE **THE TEXT**

DISAGREEMENT (ROM. 14:5-8)

5 One person judges one day to be more important than another day. Someone else judges every day to be the same. Let each one be fully convinced in his own mind. 6 Whoever observes the day, observes it for the honor of the Lord. Whoever eats, eats for the Lord, since he gives thanks to God; and whoever does not eat, it is for the Lord that he does not eat it, and he gives thanks to God. 7 For none of us lives for himself, and no one dies for himself. 8 If we live, we live for the Lord; and if we die, we die for the Lord. Therefore, whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord.

In verses 1-4, Paul addressed tensions in the Roman church—especially between Jewish and Gentile believers—over disputable matters such as food laws. He instructed believers not to judge one another over their differences. Instead, each person should live out their convictions unto the Lord, remembering that God—not other believers—is the true Judge.

VERSES 5-6

In addition to tensions over food laws, Paul addressed divisions in the Roman church over holy days. One person ***judges one day to be more important than another day,*** while someone else ***judges every day to be the same***. Most likely, Jews in the church at Rome were observing the Sabbath and other important feast days. Others in the church, likely Gentile believers, did not feel any obligation to a religious calendar. Paul urged each group to examine their convictions.

While not all believers held the same convictions, every believer had the responsibility to ***honor*** the Lord**.** Those who chose to observe certain days or eat certain foods were to do so in ways that honored God. Likewise, those who chose not to eat those foods or observe those days were to abstain in ways that honored the Lord.

VERSES 7-8

Believers today continue to deal with tensions that stem from conflicting convictions. Unity in Christ does not mean that we must agree on every issue that comes up in the church. Believers may grow frustrated because others don't agree with them.

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We diminish the tension when we remember that we are accountable to ***the Lord***. We ***live for*** Him, and we ***die for*** Him. If we seek to honor Him with our convictions, we're more willing to respect others in the church who also want to honor Him—albeit in different ways. We can enjoy freedom to serve God as He leads us, but we also must allow others the same right. Our rights do not extend so far as to trample the convictions of others.

What kind of spiritual practices might believers disagree over today? How can we implement Paul's instruction when we encounter disagreements like these?

ACCOUNTABILITY (ROM. 14:9-12)

[9] Christ died and returned to life for this: that he might be Lord over both the dead and the living. [10] But you, why do you judge your brother or sister? Or you, why do you despise your brother or sister? For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God. [11] For it is written, As I live, says the Lord, every knee will bow to me, and every tongue will give praise to God. [12] So then, each of us will give an account of himself to God.

VERSES 9-10

All of Paul's readers had one thing in common: they confessed Jesus as ***Lord***. What united them was far greater than any secondary differences that might divide them. Through His death and resurrection, Jesus frees believers from condemnation. For that reason, no Christian has the right to impose bondage on a fellow believer whom Christ has already set free.

To drive the point home, Paul asked two rhetorical questions. First, why would a believer ***judge your brother or sister?*** Second, why would a believer ***despise your brother or sister?*** We are not permitted to sit in judgment over those who hold different convictions, nor are we free to treat them with contempt. Both attitudes are out of place in the body of Christ.

Paul then reminded his readers of a sobering truth: each one of us will one day stand before the judgment seat of God.

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This judgment will not determine salvation but will evaluate our faithfulness to the Lord. In light of this reality, believers should extend grace, not judgment, to one another.

VERSES 11-12

Paul quoted Isaiah 45:23 to remind his readers that ***every knee will bow*** before God and ***every tongue will give praise*** to Him. This was to remind his readers that He is Lord—and Judge—over everyone and everything.

In writing to the Philippians, Paul emphasized how Jesus humbled Himself on a cross, God raised Him up, every knee will bow before Him and every mouth will confess His authority (Phil. 2:5-11). The context of Philippians was similar to our passage in Romans. The Philippian church had also been struggling with a lack of unity and judgmental attitudes (Phil. 2:1-4). Whether it's the church at Rome, Philippi, or the church you attend today—the answer is the same. What unites us is the gospel. Grounded in the gospel, we are to nurture unity—not create division. In verse 12, Paul highlighted our motive: each of us will one day ***give an account*** of ourselves to God.

How should these verses shape our understanding of God and His desire for our lives?

When you disagree with another believer, how does the gospel factor into your response and attitude?

LOVE (ROM. 14:13-18)

13 Therefore, let us no longer judge one another. Instead decide never to put a stumbling block or pitfall in the way of your brother or sister. 14 I know and am persuaded in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean in itself. Still, to someone who considers a thing to be unclean, to that one it is unclean. 15 For if your brother or sister is hurt by what you eat, you are no longer walking according to love. Do not destroy, by what you

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eat, someone for whom Christ died. [16] Therefore, do not let your good be slandered, [17] for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit. [18] Whoever serves Christ in this way is acceptable to God and receives human approval.

VERSES 13-15

The word ***therefore*** connects what Paul has just said with what he is about to say. The practical application of verses 1-12 is that we must not ***judge one another*** nor ***put a stumbling block or pitfall in the way of your brother or sister***. A *stumbling block* is an obstacle that causes one to fall. A *pitfall* refers to a snare or trap that causes people to be offended.

I know and am persuaded, said Paul, that ***nothing is unclean in itself***. Jesus had "declared all foods clean" (Mark 7:19). Paul understood this, but not all believers did. He explained that we must consider the ***brother or sister*** who thinks differently than us. If we selfishly ignore their convictions and press our freedom to eat what they call unclean, we will ***hurt*** those who think differently. Therefore, Paul encouraged that we act in ***love***. Love has regard for others, even those who may have a weaker conscience. In the interest of love, we are to patiently lay aside our rights to await growth in others.

VERSES 16-18

The kingdom of God is not about petty things like ***eating and drinking***. Rather, it's about ***righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit***. The Spirit gives the gift of *righteousness* that results in right living. *Joy* and *peace* are part of the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23). Paul urged the Romans to focus not on secondary matters but on the greater priorities—the spiritual growth the Spirit was bringing about in weaker believers.

When we choose to limit our freedom for the sake of someone else's spiritual growth, we are serving both Christ and our fellow believers. ***Whoever serves Christ in this way is acceptable to God.*** Additionally, by limiting our freedom we will receive ***human approval***. This reminds us that other believers are watching us, and our choices can either harm them or help strengthen their faith.

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Who has been instrumental in helping you grow spiritually? What practical things can we do to spur on others and not be a stumbling block?

KEY DOCTRINE: *The Church*

Each congregation operates under the Lordship of Christ through democratic processes. In such a congregation each member is responsible and accountable to Christ as Lord. (See Ephesians 2:19-22; Colossians 1:18.)

EDIFICATION (ROM. 14:19-20)

19 So then, let us pursue what promotes peace and what builds up one another. 20 Do not tear down God's work because of food. Everything is clean, but it is wrong to make someone fall by what he eats.

VERSES 19-20

Paul urged believers to ***pursue what promotes peace and builds up one another***. This is what should matter most as we serve the Lord together in the church. Peace with God through Christ (Rom 5:1) extends to our relationships with other believers. Earlier in this letter, Paul urged the Romans, "If possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone" (Rom. 12:18). Jesus said, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God" (Matt. 5:9). We promote peace when we do everything possible to build up each other as we work together in God's family.

We are to pursue what builds up other believers. The opposite of building up is to ***tear down***. Overlooking our responsibility to edify one another has a damaging effect on ***God's work***. Instead of focusing our attention on doing His work together, we'll get sidetracked pitting ourselves against one another with our petty disagreements. By referring to ***food,*** Paul's instruction underscores the temptation to give primary concern to secondary issues. The rules about food in Paul's day call to mind a number of secondary issues in our day. Disagreements over secondary issues can distract us from the primary work that centers in the gospel.

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Once again, Paul affirmed that ***everything is clean***. Mature believers understand this. However, followers of Christ who have not grown toward maturity may disagree with it. Growing past the points of disagreement means moving beyond the notion that serving the Lord only consists of keeping rules and honoring rituals. Getting beyond such notions involves handling disagreements in a way that builds up believers as we live for Christ together. Mature believers don't want to do anything that would cause a brother or sister in Christ to fall into confusion regarding what matters most in serving the Lord.

Why is peace so significant in the body of Christ? What might we forfeit if strife or dissension are allowed to grow?

Where in my relationships do I need to intentionally "pursue what promotes peace"?

BIBLE SKILL: *Use another Bible passage to understand the focal passage.*

Read Acts 10:9-16. Summarize the vision Peter had about clean and unclean foods. How did God use the vision to help Peter understand that he should also take the gospel to Cornelius and the other Gentiles in Caesarea (see Acts 10:1-8)? Compare that with Galatians 2, where issues of circumcision and eating with the Jews caused division in the church. How did Paul respond to each of these issues?

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APPLY THE TEXT

- Believers should allow other believers to express their love for God as God directs them.
- Every person will be held accountable for their actions and choices.
- As members of the body of Christ, we're to spur on each other to spiritual growth.
- Believers are to build up one another, pursuing peace in our relationships with other believers.

Discuss with your Bible study group current issues that resemble the dietary laws and special days in Paul's day. To what extent do believers share different convictions about the issues with one another? How can your group handle these differing convictions in a way that promotes unity and builds one another up, rather than creating frustration or division?

Consider what it might look like to prioritize someone else's spiritual growth over your own freedom or comfort. What is one practical step you can take this week to build up another believer in their walk with Christ?

Memorize Romans 14:19.

Prayer Needs

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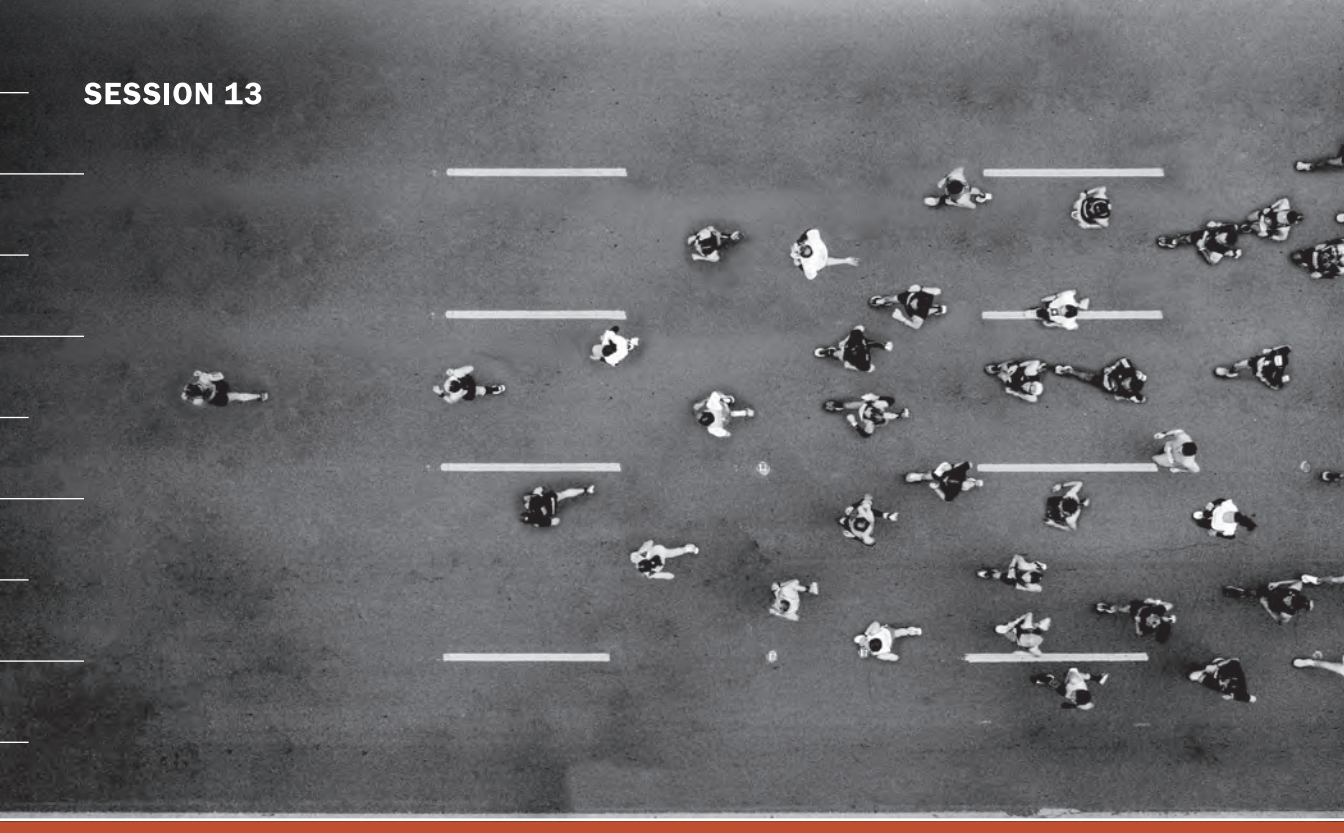

Purpose

BELIEVERS ARE TO BE INTENTIONAL ABOUT MAKING CHRIST KNOWN TO ALL PEOPLE.

ROMANS 15:14-21,30-33

We recognize the importance of being intentional about our health—brushing our teeth, paying attention to what we eat, and staying active. We try to show that same intentionality in our work by getting up when the alarm goes off and arriving on time. Likewise, as believers we are to be intentional about making Christ known to all people.

Which areas of your life come more naturally when it comes to being intentional, and which areas require more effort or discipline?

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UNDERSTAND **THE CONTEXT**

ROMANS 15:14–16:27

In chapters 1–11 of Romans, Paul focused on the core doctrines of justification and reconciliation. Then, in chapters 12–14, he turned to the practical implications of the gospel for everyday living. As he brought his letter to a close, the apostle returned once more to the theme of salvation—but from a different angle. Earlier, he emphasized that all people need a Savior; now he highlighted the responsibility believers have to share the good news of salvation with others.

Paul's purpose was to preach the gospel to the Gentiles. He explained his calling to the Romans so that they might join him in fulfilling it. He could not take any credit for his past ministry. Christ had accomplished it using him, as evidenced by signs and wonders. In the power of the Holy Spirit, Paul had preached the gospel from Jerusalem to Illyricum. Paul's aim now was to take the gospel beyond Rome and into regions untouched by its message (Rom. 15:20-29). Knowing he could not fulfill this mission alone, he appealed to the believers in Rome for support. While financial help may have been included, Paul's primary request was for their prayers. He asked them to pray for deliverance from unbelieving Jews in Judea, that his ministry would be acceptable to the believers there, and that he would complete his journey to Rome one day (15:30-33).

As he concluded his letter, Paul recognized a number of fellow believers who had faithfully partnered with him in ministry (16:1-16). Though he had never visited Rome, he had met some of its church members during his travels, and he wanted them to know how much he valued them. He ended with a final warning (16:17-18) and a closing blessing (16:19-27).

Read Romans 15:14-21,30-33. What role did God give Paul in relation to the Gentiles? What specific requests did Paul make of the believers in Rome?

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EXPLORE **THE TEXT**

JOINT MINISTRY (ROM. 15:14-16)

14 My brothers and sisters, I myself am convinced about you that you also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, and able to instruct one another. 15 Nevertheless, I have written to remind you more boldly on some points because of the grace given me by God 16 to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles, serving as a priest of the gospel of God. God's purpose is that the Gentiles may be an acceptable offering, sanctified by the Holy Spirit.

VERSE 14

Paul called the believers in Rome his ***brothers and sisters***, even though he had never met many of them. He expressed his sincere appreciation for them. He was ***convinced*** they were ***full of goodness*** and ***filled with all knowledge***. Also, they demonstrated their ability to ***instruct one another***. In these ways, they reflected their spiritual growth and the character of Christ.

VERSES 15-16

Nevertheless, Paul knew they still had room for growth. He could not allow himself to overlook his obligation as an apostle to ***remind*** them of the areas to which they still needed to give attention. His goal was to help them become more like Jesus.

God had called Paul to be ***a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles***. He compared his ministry with the Gentiles to the work of a ***priest***. In the Old Testament, priests spoke on behalf of God. Paul saw his responsibility in a similar way. Additionally, priests presented offerings. Paul embraced that metaphor. He wanted to present as many Gentile believers as possible to God as ***an acceptable offering, •sanctified by the Holy Spirit***.

What is our responsibility in becoming spiritually ready to minister to others?

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Identify one believer you could affirm this week for their spiritual growth. What specifically will you say or do?

SPIRIT'S POWER (ROM. 15:17-21)

17 Therefore I have reason to boast in Christ Jesus regarding what pertains to God. 18 For I would not dare say anything except what Christ has accomplished through me by word and deed for the obedience of the Gentiles, 19 by the power of miraculous signs and wonders, and by the power of God's Spirit. As a result, I have fully proclaimed the gospel of Christ from Jerusalem all the way around to Illyricum. 20 My aim is to preach the gospel where Christ has not been named, so that I will not build on someone else's foundation, 21 but, as it is written, Those who were not told about him will see, and those who have not heard will understand.

VERSES 17-18

Paul never bragged about his accomplishments as a minister of the gospel. He understood that anything that had been done was ***accomplished*** by Christ working through him. Therefore, he had ***reason to boast in Christ***. He wanted the Romans to know that if they chose to support him, they would be supporting Christ's work. Paul was not promoting his own personal agenda. Today, we recognize the impact of Paul's ministry. Perhaps the Romans understood it as well, even in the first century. Nevertheless, Paul demonstrated his humility in giving all the credit to Christ.

Paul demonstrated his humility in giving all the credit to Christ.

VERSE 19

Notice the word ***power*** used twice in this verse. Many ***miraculous signs and wonders*** were accomplished through Paul. Some of these are recorded in the book of Acts (Acts 14:8-10; 16:16-18; 20:9-12). Paul knew these were accomplished by ***the power of God's Spirit***. Likewise, his preaching was empowered by the Spirit.

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Writing to the Corinthians, he said, "My speech and my preaching were not with persuasive words of wisdom but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power, so that your faith might not be based on human wisdom but on God's power" (1 Cor. 2:4-5).

Paul was able to say that he had ***fully proclaimed the gospel of Christ from Jerusalem all the way around to •Illyricum***. Of course, he was not claiming that everyone in these vast regions had heard the gospel. Rather, he was saying that he had saturated these regions with the gospel. *Jerusalem* was the place that Christianity began, and *Illyricum* was a Roman province between Greece and Italy in modern-day Albania on the Adriatic Sea.

Paul knew that many would respond to the gospel if they were given the opportunity.

VERSES 20-21

Paul's aim was to ***preach the gospel where Christ has not been named***. Though Paul sometimes revisited cities where he previously had shared the gospel (Acts 15:36), he understood that his main mission was to take the gospel to unreached people. He wanted to preach in Rome, which had heard of Jesus, but his ultimate goal was to preach in Spain (Rom. 15:24,28). His desire to take the gospel to where it had never been heard was the reason he did not want to ***build on someone else's foundation***. This was not his calling (1 Cor. 3:10).

In verse 21, Paul quoted Isaiah 52:15 to emphasize the importance of his plan. This verse in Isaiah says that the kings of many nations "will see what had not been told them, and they will understand what they had not heard." He clearly saw this as a reference to the salvation of the nations. Paul knew that many would respond to the gospel if they were given the opportunity, and he wanted to be God's instrument for giving them that opportunity.

How does the Holy Spirit help believers faithfully share the gospel with others?

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Where do you sense God's Spirit inviting you to attempt something that will fail unless He supplies the power? What is the first step of obedience?

KEY DOCTRINE: *Cooperation*

Members of New Testament churches should cooperate with one another in carrying forward the missionary, educational, and benevolent ministries for the extension of Christ's Kingdom. (See Philippians 1:5; 4:15-16.)

FOCUSED PRAYER (ROM. 15:30-33)

30 Now I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, through our Lord Jesus Christ and through the love of the Spirit, to strive together with me in prayers to God on my behalf. 31 Pray that I may be rescued from the unbelievers in Judea, that my ministry to Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints, 32 and that, by God's will, I may come to you with joy and be refreshed together with you. 33 May the God of peace be with all of you. Amen.

VERSE 30

Paul told the believers in Rome that he planned to carry the gospel as far as Spain, and he hoped they would partner with him in that mission (Rom. 15:22–24). Before traveling to Rome, however, he intended to go to Jerusalem to deliver a financial gift collected by Gentile believers for those in need. After completing that task, he would continue on to Rome. Knowing the challenges that awaited him in Jerusalem, Paul urged his ***brothers and sisters*** in Rome to ***strive*** in prayer for him. The word translated *strive* is the word from which we get our word "agonize." It also has the prefix ***together*** attached to it. Prayer is a way of joining others who are taking the gospel to the unreached people of the world. Paul based his appeal on the name of Jesus and on the deep and abiding love that the Holy Spirit nourished in the hearts of the believers in Rome.

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VERSE 31

Paul understood that traveling to Jerusalem would be dangerous. He knew that ***unbelievers*** there would try to put a stop to his ministry. Years earlier, he had joined Peter, James, John, and other church leaders in Jerusalem as they sought the Lord's direction about bringing the gospel to Gentiles (Acts 15:1-21). The strong opposition he witnessed then now moved him to ask the Roman believers to pray that he would ***be rescued*** from any of their attempts to silence him. He also asked them to pray for the Jewish believers who would receive the financial gift collected by Gentile Christians. Paul referred to these Jewish believers as ***saints***—people set apart to God as holy. They had been set apart when they placed their faith in Christ. Paul hoped they would receive the offering with gratitude, recognizing the sincere care shown to them by Gentile brothers and sisters.

Prayer is a way of joining others who are taking the gospel to the unreached people of the world.

VERSE 32

Paul shared yet another prayer request with the believers in Rome. He asked them to pray that he would be able to travel to Rome and spend time with them—always, of course, in alignment with ***God's will***. God had guided Paul throughout his missionary journeys, and Paul trusted that God would also direct his path to Rome. He invited the Roman believers to place their trust in God in the same way. Paul anticipated that once he arrived, their fellowship would bring him ***joy*** and their time together would be refreshing.

Incidentally, God answered all three parts of Paul's request. In Jerusalem, God protected him from danger (Acts 23:10). Jewish believers received him warmly (21:17-20). And ultimately, Paul set sail for Rome (25:11-12).

VERSE 33

Paul's three prayer requests in verses 31-32 focused on his ministry in Jerusalem and his anticipated visit to the church in Rome. But he didn't stop at asking the Roman believers to pray for him. He also offered a benediction—a prayer for their wellbeing. The believers in Rome lived in a dangerous period of the empire's history. At any

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moment they could be expelled from the city, or worse, arrested simply because they followed Christ. Knowing this, Paul committed them to God's care. Only God could sustain them and enable them to live in ***peace***. Of course, experiencing that peace required them to trust God. They already had peace with Him through their faith in Christ. Now Paul longed for them to be filled with the confidence of God's peace as they faced the uncertainties of their daily lives.

What do believers stand to gain when they unite in prayer for the sharing of the gospel?

How committed are you to praying earnestly for others, especially those serving in difficult places or roles?

BIBLE SKILL: *Create a chart to better understand a Bible passage.*

Read the following verses and determine how prayer influences sharing one's faith: Matthew 9:37-38; Acts 4:29-31; Romans 10:1; Ephesians 6:18-20; Colossians 4:2-4; 2 Thessalonians 3:1. How would you summarize the role of prayer in evangelism? In what ways do these verses motivate you to pray for your sharing of the gospel and those who are taking the gospel to the unreached?

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APPLY THE TEXT

+ Believers are to join with others in ministry.
+ Believers can be assured that the Holy Spirit empowers us to share the gospel.
+ Believers need to pray for the spread of the gospel.

Discuss with your Bible study group why believers need to work together in sharing the gospel with unreached people around the world and around the corner. Consider ways your group or church can be involved in doing this.

As you live out your call to serve Christ intentionally by sharing the gospel with others, who is praying for you? How much will you trust the power of God's Spirit as you talk with others about Jesus?

Memorize Romans 15:30.

Prayer Needs

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The Gospel of Jesus Christ

Steve Booth

In the ancient world, the Greek word for announcing a happy event was *euangelion*—good news. Translated "gospel," this was a secular word long before it entered into Christian vocabulary. From it we get our noun, "evangelism." *Euangelion* occurs in differing contexts, such as the birth of a child, report of a battle victory, or announcing an upcoming wedding. These were joyous events.

People considered being the messenger who brought good news to be an honor. Most were eager to be the first to deliver good news. For example, a courier would race from the battlefield as fast as he could. His outward appearance telegraphed the good news ahead of his words: face shining, waving a palm branch, his spear decked with laurel. Raising his right hand, he loudly shouted, "Greetings . . . we are victorious!" Citizens responded in joyous celebration; they draped temples in garlands, offered sacrifices, and commenced celebratory games.[1]

Euangelion could also refer to the reward a messenger received for delivering a joyous report—a crown, monetary gift, or special honor.

IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

The noun *euangelion* appears in the New Testament seventy-six times; the related cognate verb translated "to announce the good news," fifty-four. Jesus came preaching the gospel of God (Mark 1:14). His message was simply, "The kingdom of God has come near! Repent and believe the good news!" Jesus explained that His ministry fulfilled Isaiah's prophecy, which included preaching good news to the poor (Isa. 61:1-2; Luke 4:18-19).

The apostles continued the evangelistic ministry by proclaiming Jesus as the Messiah (Acts 5:42). This One who had proclaimed the gospel was indeed Himself the good news. As the church spread the message of Christ, *euangelion* became the short-hand descriptor of the content of their preaching (15:7) and later the written record of Jesus's life and ministry (Mark 1:1).

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Paul understood this new technical term for the Christian message. He employed *euangelion* sixty times and the related verb *euangelizo* twenty-one times. From *euangelizo* comes the English verb, "to evangelize." Paul believed God has entrusted him with the message, hence he could call it "my gospel" (2 Tim. 2:8). He did not believe the message was his alone, for he spoke of "our gospel" (2 Cor. 4:3) and the "gospel of God" (Rom. 1:1).

At times Paul used both the verb and noun forms of this root together: "Now I want to make clear for you, brothers and sisters, *the gospel I preached* to you" (1 Cor. 15:1, emphasis added). What is this gospel Paul "gospelized"? Nowhere does Paul give a full-blown description of all aspects of his gospel message—although Romans comes close. This is likely because the recipients of his letter already knew much of that information. The core of the gospel preaching was established early on and was passed along, beginning with the eyewitnesses and then to each subsequent generation of converts.

Paul stated he also had received this teaching, and as a reminder, he summarized it for the Corinthians—Jesus's death, burial, and resurrection (1 Cor. 15:3-4). Paul then enumerated six individuals or groups who were eyewitnesses of the resurrected Lord, including himself (vv. 5-8). These eyewitnesses were crucial as Paul emphasized the importance of the resurrection, both Jesus's and ours. Paul was also careful to emphasize the continuity between the old and new covenants. This gospel message is both ancient and current. Everything transpired just as the Old Testament had foretold. Paul knew there is only one true gospel, even though some would attempt to distort its message. Once twisted, it is no gospel at all (Gal. 1:6-9).

There is only one true gospel.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE GOSPEL

But why is the gospel good news? The good news is so good because the bad news is so bad. Jesus called for repentance because we are sinners. Paul stated that one element of the gospel is that God will judge the secrets of men by Christ Jesus on the final day (Rom. 2:16). Judgment and joy belong together because Jesus is both Savior and Judge.

So what is the gospel?

> The gospel is the good news that the only true God, the just and gracious Creator of the universe, has looked upon hopelessly sinful men and women and has sent

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his Son, God in the flesh, to bear his wrath against sin through his substitutionary death on the cross and to show his power over sin and death through his resurrection from the grave so that everyone who turns from their sin and themselves and trusts in Jesus alone as Savior and Lord will be reconciled to God forever.[2]

The gospel points to God's care and provision for us. He proved His great love for us in that while we were still sinful, Christ died for our sins (Rom. 5:8).

While we were still sinful, Christ died for our sins.

The gospel carries two implications. First, those who have not yet trusted Christ must hear and receive the gospel (Col. 1:5,23; see 2 Cor. 11:4). Second, those who have received the gospel must share it with others.

Consider some New Testament verbs that accompany *euangelion*: preach (1 Cor. 9:14; 1 Thess. 2:9), proclaim (Col. 1:23), speak (1 Thess. 2:2), teach (2 Tim. 1:10-11), make clear/known (1 Cor. 15:1), and present (Gal. 2:2). As mentioned above, Paul also combined the verb and noun, "gospelizing the gospel" (1 Cor. 9:18; 15:1; 2 Cor. 11:7; Gal. 1:11). The gospel of Jesus Christ is something we must make public. Like Paul, we are compelled to declare it!

The inauguration of the new age began with a birth announcement in Bethlehem, not by a Roman procurator but by an angel: "Don't be afraid, for look, I proclaim to you good news [*euangelizomai*] of great joy that will be for all the people. Today . . . a Savior was born" (Luke 2:10-11). Empowered by the Holy Spirit, the church will continue to faithfully proclaim this good news (*euangelion*) of the kingdom to all nations, and then the end will come (Matt. 24:14).

1. Gerhard Friedrich, "ευαγγελιζομαι, ευαγγελιον, προευαγγελιζομαι, ευαγγελιστης" (*euangelion*, good news) in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel, transl. and ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964), 722.

2. Zane Priest, "This is the Gospel," IMB, September 2, 2016, https://www.imb.org/faq/what-is-the-gospel/.

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COMING **NEXT QUARTER**

1 SAMUEL

Session 1:	**Prayer** (1 Samuel 1:9-18,24-28)
Session 2:	**Calling** (1 Samuel 3:1-14)
Session 3:	**Savior** (Luke 2:8-20)
Session 4:	**Supremacy** (1 Samuel 5:1-10; 6:13-15,19-20)
Session 5:	**King Demanded** (1 Samuel 8:1-9,19-22)
Session 6:	**Obedience** (1 Samuel 15:7-23)
Session 7:	**Valued** (Psalm 139:1-10,13-16,23-24)
Session 8:	**Anointed** (1 Samuel 16:1-13)
Session 9:	**Victory** (1 Samuel 17:32-47)
Session 10:	**Friendship** (1 Samuel 18:1-9; 20:35-42)
Session 11:	**Respect** (1 Samuel 24:1-11,16-20)
Session 12:	**Discernment** (1 Samuel 25:14-19,29-35)
Session 13:	**Guidance** (1 Samuel 30:1-8,21-25)

Explore

"You will seek me and find me when you search for me with all your heart." Jeremiah 29:13

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The First-Century Roman Empire

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ROMANS

In some ways, we live in a world defined by sound bites and social media posts. We condense key events of our days down to 280 characters or to quick videos that are here today and gone tomorrow. While brevity can be a good thing, our obsession with what's temporary also runs the risk of trading genuine substance for empty cliches. In his letter to the Christians at Rome, Paul rejected flimsy theology. His systematic and logical explanation of the gospel left no doubt about the world's need for a Savior and our responsibility as Christ followers. By studying his words to the Romans, we can gain a better understanding of who God is, what God does, and the impact it should have on our lives each day.

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