BIBLE STUDY NOTES

# Romans

## Large Print Edition

**Hollis McGehee**

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# Romans — A Complete Review

From Guilt to Glory — the gospel of God’s righteousness, received by faith, lived out by the Spirit, and shared with the nations · Bible study by Hollis McGehee · verse by verse

Every Scripture reference in blue is a link: tap or click it to read the passage in the ESV on our website.

## Just want to read Romans?

Skip the study notes and go straight to the Scripture. Tap or click a chapter to read it in the ESV on our website.

| | |
|---|---|
| Romans 1:1–32 | Romans 2:1–29 |
| Romans 3:1–31 | Romans 4:1–25 |
| Romans 5:1–21 | Romans 6:1–23 |
| Romans 7:1–25 | Romans 8:1–39 |
| Romans 9:1–33 | Romans 10:1–21 |
| Romans 11:1–36 | Romans 12:1–21 |
| Romans 13:1–14 | Romans 14:1–23 |
| Romans 15:1–33 | Romans 16:1–27 |

## Study Romans verse by verse

Romans is a long letter, so the verse-by-verse study is in four parts.

**Part 1: Romans 1–4 — The Gospel and Our Need**The gospel is the power of God for salvation, and the whole world, Jew and Gentile alike, stands guilty before Him. God's answer is a righteousness that comes as a gift through faith in Jesus Christ, just as Abraham believed God and it was counted to him as righteousness.**Part 2: Romans 5–8 — New Life in Christ**Justified by faith, we have peace with God, we are dead to sin and alive to God, and we live by the Spirit. The section climbs from "no condemnation" (Romans 8:1) to "no separation" (Romans 8:39).**Part 3: Romans 9–11 — God's Faithfulness to Israel and the Nations**Has God's Word failed because so many in Israel rejected Christ? Paul answers no: God's mercy, His remnant and His promises still stand, the Gentiles are grafted in, and it all ends in worship.**Part 4: Romans 12–16 — Living the Gospel Together**By the mercies of God we offer ourselves as living sacrifices, love one another genuinely, welcome one another as Christ welcomed us, and join Paul in carrying the gospel to the nations, all to the glory of God.

## Who wrote it

The apostle Paul wrote Romans. He names himself in the first verse (Romans 1:1). He dictated the letter to a helper named Tertius, who adds his own greeting near the end: "I Tertius, who wrote this letter, greet you in the Lord" (Romans 16:22).

Paul introduces himself first as “a servant of Christ Jesus” (Romans 1:1). The Greek word means a bondservant, one who belongs wholly to his master. Before he says anything about the Romans, he points to Jesus: truly human, “descended from David,” and declared to be the Son of God in power by His resurrection from the dead (Romans 1:3–4).

Paul was once Saul of Tarsus, a Pharisee who persecuted the followers of Jesus, until the risen Lord met him on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:1–22). Jesus called him as an apostle to the Gentiles, and that calling runs all through this letter: Paul has received “grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith … among all the nations” (Romans 1:5), and he longs to preach the gospel in Rome and then go on to Spain (Romans 1:15; 15:23–24).

## Where is Rome

Rome was the capital and the epicenter of the powerful Roman Empire, ruling over many of the great ancient centers of the world. The believers there probably met in several house churches (see 16:5), yet Paul writes to them as one church.

Paul did not start the church in Rome, and when he wrote he had never been there (Romans 1:10–13). So how did the church get there? On the day of Pentecost there were “visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes” in Jerusalem (Acts 2:10). I believe the most likely beginning is that some of them were

converted, returned home as believers, and started a church in their home city. Others may have come later, when persecution scattered the believers from Jerusalem (Acts 8:1–4). Either way, the church most likely began as a Jewish church.

From there it probably went through stages: all Jewish, then Jews and Gentiles together, then mainly Gentile when Emperor Claudius “commanded all the Jews to leave Rome” (Acts 18:2), and then Jews and Gentiles again when the Jews returned under Nero. Priscilla and Aquila, forced out under Claudius, were back in Rome when Paul wrote (Romans 16:3–5). A church learning to live together across that Jew–Gentile line needed exactly this letter.




Modern locator map. Rome is marked by a star. Paul most likely wrote from Corinth, planned to carry a gift to Jerusalem, and hoped to visit Rome on his way to Spain (Romans 15:24–28).

## Romans among the New Testament books

Matthew · Mark · Luke · John · Acts · **Romans** · 1 Corinthians · 2 Corinthians · Galatians · Ephesians · Philippians · Colossians · 1 Thessalonians · 2 Thessalonians · 1 Timothy · 2 Timothy · Titus · Philemon · Hebrews · James · 1 Peter · 2 Peter · 1 John · 2 John · 3 John · Jude · Revelation

Romans is the sixth of the 27 books in the New Testament. It comes after Acts and before 1 Corinthians.

## When and where it was written

Paul most likely wrote Romans from Corinth, in Greece, about AD 56–57, near the end of his third missionary journey (compare Acts 20:2–3). He was staying with Gaius (Romans 16:23), and he was about to go to Jerusalem "bringing aid to the saints," carrying a gift from the believers in Macedonia and Achaia for the poor among the saints there (Romans 15:25–26). After that he hoped to visit Rome and, with the church's help, go on to Spain (Romans 15:23–24). The letter was carried by Phoebe, "a servant of the church at Cenchreae" (Romans 16:1–2), the port of Corinth. Romans is the longest of Paul's letters, about 7,100 words in Greek, and Paul trusted it to her on the long journey across the sea to Rome. Imagine if she had lost it!

That places Romans in the middle of Paul's letter writing. By then he had already written Galatians, 1 and 2 Thessalonians,

and 1 and 2 Corinthians. Paul did reach Rome a few years later, but as a prisoner (Acts 28:14–16), and from there came the "Prison Letters": Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians and Philemon. His letters to Timothy and Titus came later, near the end of his life. Though it was not the first of his letters, Romans stands first among them in our New Testament.

## Meet the letter

I have called Paul's letter to the Romans "the most important words ever written." It gives us one of the clearest and fullest explanations of the gospel in the Bible. Paul wrote more of the New Testament than anyone else, yet Romans somewhat eclipses everything else he wrote. It is not more important, but it is more foundational. One of my favorite mentors, Tom Dake of Meadville Presbyterian Church in Meadville, Mississippi, once told me: "If a Christian can obtain a firm grip on and understanding of the books of Genesis and Romans that person is well on their way to understanding God, His ways, and the path of life God has for us." I have never forgotten it.

Paul states the theme of the whole letter in 1:16–17: the gospel is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, and in it the righteousness of God is revealed, "from faith for faith." Everything that follows unpacks those two verses. The letter moves from the gospel announced, to the problem of sin

(Romans 1:18–3:20), to God's answer in justification by faith (Romans 3:21–5:21), to the new life of the believer (chapters 6–8), to God's faithfulness to Israel (chapters 9–11), to the gospel lived out (Romans 12:1–15:13), and finally to the gospel going out to the nations (Romans 15:14–16:27). Three great "therefore" turns mark the way: 5:1 changes our standing, 8:1 changes our security, and 12:1 changes our life.

God has used this one letter to turn lives and the life of the church. Augustine was converted reading Romans 13:13–14. Martin Luther's new understanding of "the righteousness of God" in 1:17 became the doorway to the Reformation: "Thus that place in Paul was for me truly the gate to paradise." John Wesley heard Luther's preface to Romans read in Aldersgate Street in 1738 and "felt my heart strangely warmed." The Swiss commentator Frédéric Godet saw the pattern: "every great spiritual revival in the church will be connected as effect and cause with a deeper understanding of this book." That is a revival worth praying for.

**THE CENTRAL MESSAGE:** All humanity is guilty before a righteous God, but God graciously saves sinners through faith in Jesus Christ, gives them new life through His Spirit, and transforms them into a people who live for His glory.

**A passage to carry through the study** Romans 1:16–17

## Find your way

Study Romans verse by verse (four parts)

Main teachings

Praying through Romans

A brief outline

Related teaching and source notes

Verses to memorize

# Main teachings

## Not ashamed of the gospel

**Romans 1:1–17** Paul, a servant set apart for the gospel, thanks God for the believers in Rome and longs to visit them. Then he states the theme of the letter: the gospel is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, and in it the righteousness of God is revealed, for “the righteous shall live by faith.”

## The whole world guilty before God

**Romans 1:18–3:20** God has made Himself plain in creation, so no one has an excuse. When people refuse to honor Him and give Him thanks, their thinking grows dark and they slide downward. Moral and religious people are accountable too,

and Paul's verdict covers us all: "None is righteous, no, not one."

## Righteousness through faith in Jesus

**Romans 3:21–31** All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and all who believe are justified by His grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. His death displays both God's justice and His mercy, and it leaves no room for boasting.

## Abraham, the father of faith

**Romans 4:1–25** Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness, before circumcision and apart from the law. David, too, celebrates the blessing of forgiveness. God's promise comes through faith, so it rests on grace and is sure to all Abraham's children of faith.

## Peace with God; Adam and Christ

**Romans 5:1–21** Justified by faith, we have peace with God, access to His grace and hope that does not put us to shame, because God shows His love in that Christ died for us while we were still sinners. Adam's sin brought condemnation and death; Christ's gift brings righteousness and life, and where sin increased, grace abounded all the more.

## Dead to sin, alive to God

**Romans 6:1–23** Grace is no license to keep on sinning. Believers are united with Christ in His death and resurrection, called to walk in newness of life and to consider themselves dead to sin and alive to God. The wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

## The war within

**Romans 7:1–25** The law is holy and reveals sin, but it cannot save. Paul describes the struggle every believer knows, doing what he hates and failing to do the good he wants, until it ends in a cry for deliverance and its answer: thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

## No condemnation, no separation

**Romans 8:1–39** There is no condemnation for those in Christ Jesus. The Spirit gives life, leads God's children, and helps us in our weakness, even praying for us. God works all things together for good to conform us to the image of His Son, and nothing in all creation can separate us from His love.

## God's Word has not failed

**Romans 9:1–29** Paul grieves for his own people, Israel. Yet God's Word has not failed: not all descended from Israel belong to Israel, and the children of promise are counted.

Salvation depends not on human will or exertion, but on God, who has mercy.

## The word is near you

**Romans 9:30–10:21** Israel had zeal for God without knowledge, seeking to establish their own righteousness. But Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes. Confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord, believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, and you will be saved, for faith comes from hearing the word of Christ.

## God has not rejected His people

**Romans 11:1–36** There is a remnant chosen by grace. Gentiles are grafted into the olive tree and warned against pride, and Israel's partial hardening will last until the fullness of the Gentiles comes in. The chapter ends in worship: from Him and through Him and to Him are all things.

## A living sacrifice; love overcoming evil

**Romans 12:1–21** By the mercies of God, present your bodies as a living sacrifice and be transformed by the renewal of your mind. Use your gifts humbly, let love be genuine, rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer, and overcome evil with good.

## Authorities, love and waking up

**Romans 13:1–14** Be subject to the governing authorities, which are instituted by God. Owe no one anything except to love each other, for love fulfills the law. The night is far gone, so cast off the works of darkness and put on the Lord Jesus Christ.

## Welcome one another

**Romans 14:1–15:13** Believers who differ on secondary matters must not judge or despise one another, since each of us will give an account to God. The strong bear with the weak, liberty is governed by love, and Jew and Gentile welcome one another as Christ welcomed them, filled with joy and peace by the God of hope.

## The gospel to the nations

**Romans 15:14–16:27** Paul describes his priestly ministry to the Gentiles, his plans for Jerusalem, Rome and Spain, and asks the church to strive with him in prayer. He greets a real family of servants and co-workers, warns against those who cause divisions, and ends with glory to the only wise God.

# Praying through Romans

Romans is a letter full of prayer. Paul opens with thanks to God for the believers in Rome and tells them that he mentions

them in his prayers “without ceasing” (Romans 1:8–10). He tells us that the Holy Spirit helps us in our weakness and prays for us when we do not know what to pray (Romans 8:26–27). His heart’s desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they may be saved (Romans 10:1). He prays for harmony among believers (Romans 15:5–6) and that the God of hope would fill them with joy and peace (Romans 15:13). He asks the church to strive together with him in prayer (Romans 15:30–33), and he closes with glory to the only wise God (Romans 16:25–27). Along the way he tells us to “be constant in prayer” (Romans 12:12). As Matthew Henry wrote, “One of the greatest kindnesses we can do our friends, and sometimes the only kindness that is in the power of our hands, is, by prayer to recommend them to the loving-kindness of God.”

One of the best ways to study Romans is to pray it. In my notes on Romans 1, I take each section and ask what foundational truth it teaches, then turn that truth into a short first-person statement to meditate on and pray over, so the truth moves from the page into the heart. The first prayer below is built from those lines. The second is my prayer from Romans 12 for those who suffer and for the persecuted church. Pray them slowly, pause to name the people God puts on your heart, then pray them again in your own words.

## The prayers in this letter

**Romans 1:8–10 — Thanks for their faith.** Paul thanks God through Jesus Christ for all the believers in Rome, because their faith is proclaimed in all the world. God is his witness that he mentions them always in his prayers, asking that by God's will he may at last come to them.

**Romans 8:26–27 — The Spirit helps us pray.** When we do not know what to pray for as we ought, the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. The Father who searches hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, who always prays according to the will of God. No believer ever prays alone.

**Romans 10:1 — A heart's desire for the lost.** Paul's heart's desire and prayer to God for his own people, Israel, is that they may be saved. Though they opposed his preaching, he kept praying for them.

**Romans 15:5–6 — A prayer for harmony.** Paul asks the God of endurance and encouragement to grant believers to live in harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus, so that together, with one voice, they may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

**Romans 15:13 — The God of hope.** Paul prays that the God of hope will fill believers with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit they may abound in hope.

**Romans 15:30–33 — Strive together with me in prayer.** By our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, Paul asks the church to strive together with him in prayer: that he be delivered from unbelievers in Judea, that his service for Jerusalem be acceptable to the saints, and that by God's will he may come to them with joy and be refreshed. He closes, "May the God of peace be with you all."

**Romans 16:25–27 — To the only wise God.** Paul ends the letter with praise to Him who is able to strengthen believers according to the gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, the mystery now made known to all nations to bring about the obedience of faith. To the only wise God be glory forevermore through Jesus Christ.

## Foundational truths and prayers from Romans 1

Pray it with Romans 1:1–32

> *Lord, I am called to be fully devoted to You, living as Your servant with wholehearted commitment. Jesus' resurrection declares Him the Son of God. Because He died and rose for me, I now live fully for Him. As one born again, I belong to Jesus Christ, and by His grace I am empowered to live in faithful obedience to His call.*
>
> *I am not ashamed of the gospel. Through faith in Jesus, who died for my sins, I am born again and declared righteous before You. By Your power I live by faith; let my*

*life bear witness to His righteousness in me. If I know the truth but remain silent, I am guilty of withholding life. Help me speak the truth of the gospel and declare life in Jesus.*

*You have clearly revealed Yourself in creation; its order, beauty and design reflect Your nature. You are eternal, without beginning or end, and Your creation displays Your divine power, leaving no excuse for denying You. Because You reveal Yourself, I will honor You as God and give You thanks. Keep me from the futile thinking and darkened heart that come when I fail to honor and thank You, and from exchanging the glory of the one true God for created things.*

*Every moment in life presents a choice between serving You, O Lord, or turning away. Help me to choose You — to choose to follow Jesus, my Savior and my example in all things. May I always, by Your grace, choose to walk in the light as Jesus is in the light. You alone, O Lord, are the right path, the right choice, the only true choice. May You be blessed forever. In Jesus' name, amen.*

## A prayer from Romans 12

Pray it with Romans 12:10–12

> *Lord, we praise You that even in trials You give us hope to rejoice, strength to endure, and the invitation to remain in prayer. Help us grow by loving deeply, serving wholeheartedly, and staying fervent in spirit, not letting weariness steal our devotion to Christ.*
>
> *Heavenly Father, we lift up those who are burdened with suffering and hardship. Strengthen their hearts with hope, give them patience in tribulation, and let them feel Your nearness as they endure. Remind them that You are the God who redeems pain and brings joy in the morning.*
>
> *Lord Jesus, we especially remember our brothers and sisters facing persecution for Your name. Surround them with courage, shield them with Your presence, and let their witness shine brightly in dark places. May they know they are not forgotten but upheld by the prayers of Your people around the world. Fill them with the Spirit so they may rejoice in hope and remain constant in prayer, even under pressure. Amen.*

## A brief outline

### Part 1: Romans 1–4 — The Gospel and Our Need

1:1–1:7 Greeting

1:8–1:15 Longing to Go to Rome

1:16–1:17 The Righteous Shall Live by Faith

1:18–1:32 God’s Wrath on Unrighteousness

2:1–2:16 God’s Righteous Judgment

2:17–2:29 God’s Judgment and the Law

3:1–3:8 God’s Righteousness Upheld

3:9–3:20 No One Is Righteous

3:21–3:31 The Righteousness of God Through Faith

4:1–4:12 Abraham Justified by Faith

4:13–4:25 The Promise Realized Through Faith

## Part 2: Romans 5–8 — New Life in Christ

5:1–5:11 Peace with God Through Faith

5:12–5:21 Death in Adam, Life in Christ

6:1–6:14 Dead to Sin, Alive to Christ

6:15–6:23 Slaves to Righteousness

7:1–7:6 Released from the Law

7:7–7:25 The Law and Sin

8:1–8:11 Life in the Spirit

8:12–8:17 Heirs with Christ

8:18–8:30 Future Glory

8:31–8:39 God's Everlasting Love

## Part 3: Romans 9–11 — God's Faithfulness to Israel and the Nations

9:1–9:5 Paul's Anguish over Israel

9:6–9:29 God's Sovereign Choice

9:30–9:33 Israel's Unbelief

10:1–10:4 Israel's Unbelief

10:5–10:21 The Message of Salvation to All

11:1–11:10 The Remnant of Israel

11:11–11:24 Gentiles Grafted In

11:25–11:36 The Mystery of Israel's Salvation

## Part 4: Romans 12–16 — Living the Gospel Together

12:1–12:2 A Living Sacrifice

12:3–12:8 Gifts of Grace

12:9–12:21 Marks of the True Christian

13:1–13:7 Submission to the Authorities

13:8–13:10 Fulfilling the Law Through Love

13:11–13:14 The Day Is at Hand

14:1–14:12 Do Not Pass Judgment on One Another

14:13–14:23 Do Not Cause Another to Stumble

15:1–15:7 The Example of Christ

15:8–15:13 Christ the Hope of Jews and Gentiles

15:14–15:21 Paul the Minister to the Gentiles

15:22–15:33 Paul's Plan to Visit Rome

16:1–16:16 Personal Greetings

16:17–16:24 Final Instructions and Greetings

16:25–16:27 Doxology

## Related teaching and source notes

These are the Romans studies, class notes, sermons and prayers this study was drawn from.

**The Book of Romans — Overview, Outline and Quick Reference: From Guilt to Glory** — Front door to the collection: Romans in one sentence, a chapter-by-chapter map, several outlines, five key words, the three "therefore" turns, the Great Gospel Road and key verses.

**Introducing Romans — Why This Letter Matters** — Who wrote it, how the church in Rome began, why Paul wrote, how Romans changed Augustine, Luther and Wesley, and a study guide on Romans 1:8–17.

**Romans 1 — Foundational Truths and Prayers** — Each section of Romans 1 written out as a foundational truth, then turned into first-person lines for meditation and prayer.

**Romans 1:5–7 — Called to Belong to Jesus Christ** — Verse-by-verse study of Paul's greeting: grace, the obedience of faith, and belonging to Jesus Christ.

**Romans 1:18–21 — No Excuse** — Devotional study on God revealed in creation and the danger of not honoring Him or giving Him thanks.

**Romans 3 — Key Truths** — Section-by-section outline of Romans 3: God is faithful, all have sinned, and we are made right through faith in Jesus.

**Romans 5:1–11 — Peace Through the Resurrection (Easter Sermon by Pastor Chris Berg)** — Notes I compiled from Pastor Chris Berg's Easter sermon (April 5, 2026): what we have, what we will have, and why we rejoice. The thoughts are his, summarized, not word for word.

**Romans 6:1–14 — Dead to Sin, Alive to God: A Greek Word Study** — The key Greek phrases of Romans 6:1–14 and what Paul means by "continue in sin."

**Romans 7:14–25 — The War Within: Why I Do What I Don't Want to Do** — Teaching notes on flesh, Spirit and the believer's struggle with sin, drawing on an article by Bob Deffinbaugh (Bible.org).

**Romans 8:24–30 — Saved in Hope; the Spirit Helps Us** — Verse-by-verse notes from our Tuesday night group on hope, the Spirit's help in prayer, and God's unbreakable chain from calling to glory.

**Romans 8:28–29 — All Things Work Together for Good** — A close study of the promise of Romans 8:28 and God's purpose to conform us to the image of His Son.

**Romans 8:29–39 — More Than Conquerors** — The high point of Romans 1–8: if God is for us, who can be against us? Nothing can separate us from the love of God.

**Romans 9:1–29 — God's Sovereign Mercy** — Study guide for Tuesday Night Bible Study on Paul's anguish for Israel, the children of promise, and the remnant.

**Romans 10:1–21 — The Word Is Near You** — Study guide for the Tuesday Night Men's Group, taught over two sessions: zeal without knowledge, Christ the end of the law, and faith that comes by hearing.

**Romans 11:1–27 — Has God Rejected His People?** — Study guide for the Tuesday Night Men's Group on the remnant, the olive tree, and the mystery of Israel's future.

**Romans 11:28–36 — Mercy That Has the Last Word** — Verse-by-verse study of God's irrevocable gifts and calling, and the doxology that closes chapters 1–11.

**Romans 11:32–12:2 — From the Depths of God's Wisdom to a Living Sacrifice** — The great turn of the letter from doctrine to daily life: from worship of God's wisdom to presenting ourselves as living sacrifices.

**Romans 12:9–21 — Love Overcoming Evil** — Verse-by-verse study of what genuine love looks like among believers and toward enemies.

**Romans 13:8–14 — Love Fulfills the Law; Put On the Lord Jesus** — Study of owing nothing but love, waking from sleep, and putting on the Lord Jesus Christ.

**Romans 14:1–23 — Welcoming the Weak: Liberty Governed by Love** — Verse-by-verse study of the strong, the weak, and the lordship of Christ over disputable matters.

**Romans 15:1–7 — Welcome One Another as Christ Welcomed You** — Study of bearing with the weak, Christ our pattern, and the encouragement of the Scriptures.

**Romans 15:8–33 — Paul's Mission and Plans: The Gospel to the Nations** — Christ the servant, the God of hope, Paul's priestly ministry to the Gentiles, and his request for prayer.

**Romans 16:1–27 — Greetings, Warnings and the Final Doxology** — Paul's friends and fellow workers, a final warning against division, and glory to the only wise God.

**Romans 12:9–21 — 29 Commands for Us to Be Like Jesus** — The commands of Romans 12:9–21, listed and numbered one by one.

**Romans 12:10–12 — A Prayer from Romans 12** — My written prayer for those who suffer and for the persecuted church: rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer.

**A Walk Down the Roman Road — Basic Christianity, Lesson 1** — A discovery study I wrote in 2021 for Basic Christianity groups in Kenya, walking through Romans 3:23, 6:23 and 10:9–10.

**Romans 8:28 — The Svea Flood Story** — A true missionary story I keep as an illustration of Romans 8:28. It is not my own writing; it comes from the account of Aggie Hurst.

**Romans 13:14 — A Real Put On: Putting On Jesus** — Sermon outline on putting on the Lord Jesus Christ like our favorite clothes and like a suit of armor.

**Romans 1 — Verse-by-Verse Study** — My earlier website study of Romans 1, verse by verse, with verses to memorize.

**Romans 2 — Verse-by-Verse Study** — My earlier website study of Romans 2, verse by verse, with memory verses.

**Romans 3 — Verse-by-Verse Study** — My earlier website study of Romans 3, verse by verse, with memory verses.

**Introduction to Romans** — My written introduction: the theme, the truths we will meet, purpose, key themes, an outline and the setting of the letter.

**Paul's Letter to the Romans — Introduction (Teaching Notes)** — My original teaching notes introducing Romans as "the most important words ever written," with the questions on Romans 1:8–17.

**Romans 1 — Full Text Broken Down** — The ESV text of Romans 1 laid out phrase by phrase for slow reading.

**Romans 13:1–7 — Authority From God** — A study on Romans 13:1–7, still being prepared.

## Source acknowledgments

Prepared for Aiming For Jesus from Hollis McGehee's Romans studies, class notes, sermons and prayers. Teaching explanations have been edited for clarity. Scripture is distinguished from commentary.

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Modern map outlines — Natural Earth public-domain geography

## Verses to memorize

Begin with one selection. Read its surrounding passage, say the words aloud, and return to them during the day. For a longer selection, learn one verse at a time and then join the verses together.

### The power of God for salvation

Romans 1:16–17

### All have sinned

Romans 3:23

### Justified by His grace as a gift

Romans 3:24

### Peace with God

Romans 5:1

### While we were still sinners

Romans 5:8

### The free gift of God

Romans 6:23

### No condemnation

Romans 8:1

### All things work together for good

Romans 8:28

### Nothing can separate us

Romans 8:38–39

### Confess and believe

Romans 10:9–10

### Faith comes from hearing

Romans 10:17

### To Him be glory forever

Romans 11:36

### A living sacrifice, a renewed mind

Romans 12:1–2

### The God of hope

Romans 15:13

# Romans 1–4 — The Gospel and Our Need

Part 1 of 4 · Romans — A Complete Review · Bible study by Hollis McGehee · verse by verse

Every Scripture reference in blue is a link: tap or click it to read the passage in the ESV on our website.

## Just want to read Romans 1–4?

Skip the study notes and go straight to the Scripture. Tap or click a chapter to read it in the ESV on our website.

Romans 1:1–32 | Romans 2:1–29

Romans 3:1–31 | Romans 4:1–25

## Study every verse

The gospel is the power of God for salvation, and the whole world, Jew and Gentile alike, stands guilty before Him. God's answer is a righteousness that comes as a gift through faith in Jesus Christ, just as Abraham believed God and it was counted to him as righteousness.

Begin with the Scripture, then read the study notes and the passages to read alongside. After each section, pause over the question. The aim is to understand Paul's meaning and put it into practice in dependence on Christ.

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

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# Chapter 1

## Greeting

### Romans 1:1

Read the verse: Romans 1:1

**Study Notes**

Paul introduces himself first as “a servant” of Christ Jesus. The Greek word, doulos, means a bondservant or slave, one who belongs wholly to his master. Before Paul ever mentions his title as an apostle, he tells us whose he is. He was called by God and “set apart” for one purpose: the gospel of God.

Every believer is called to that same wholehearted devotion. We may not be apostles, but we belong to the same Master, and we are called to live as His servants with our whole heart.

**Read alongside** Acts 9:15 ; Galatians 1:15–16 ; Philippians 1:1

## Romans 1:2

Read the verse: Romans 1:2

**Study Notes**

The gospel Paul preached was not a new idea. God “promised beforehand” through His prophets in the holy Scriptures that He would send a Savior. The Old Testament points forward to Jesus, and Jesus Himself showed His disciples how everything written about Him in the Law, the Prophets and the Psalms had to be fulfilled.

As John Wesley wrote on this verse, “And the promise and accomplishment confirm each other.” What God promises, He keeps, and we can rest our whole lives on His Word.

**Read alongside** Luke 24:44–47 ; Galatians 3:8 ; Acts 13:32–33

## Romans 1:3

Read the verse: Romans 1:3

**Study Notes**

The gospel is “concerning his Son.” Paul points straight to Jesus. He is truly human, “descended from David according to the flesh,” the promised Son of David whose throne God said would last forever. The Greek word sperma means seed or offspring: Jesus came from David’s line, just as God had promised.

**Read alongside** 2 Samuel 7:12–16 ; 2 Timothy 2:8 ; Matthew 1:1

## Romans 1:4

Read the verse: Romans 1:4

**Study Notes**

Jesus was “declared to be the Son of God in power … by his resurrection from the dead.” The Greek word horizō means to mark out or appoint. The resurrection is God’s public declaration of who Jesus is. He was always the Son of God; the empty tomb announced it to the world with power.

Because Jesus died and rose for us, we are called to live fully for Him. The risen Lord deserves all of us. We can pray: Jesus’ resurrection declares Him the Son of God. Because He died and rose for me, I now live fully for Him.

**Read alongside** Acts 13:32–33 ; John 17:5 ; 1 Corinthians 15:3–4

## Romans 1:5

Read the verse: Romans 1:5

### Study Notes

Everything Paul had came “through” Jesus. His grace and his calling were gifts, not something he earned. God’s grace saves us, and it also equips us for the work He gives us to do.

The goal of Paul’s mission is striking: not just belief, but “the obedience of faith.” Faith that is real does not stay in the head; it bends the knee and changes the life. As Matthew Henry put it, “It does not consist in a notional knowledge or a naked assent, much less does it consist in perverse disputings, but in obedience.” And the reach of the mission is “all the nations,” all for the honor of His name.

**Read alongside** Romans 16:25–26 ; Matthew 28:18–20 ; Acts 1:8 ; James 2:17

## Romans 1:6

Read the verse: Romans 1:6

### Study Notes

Paul includes the Roman believers, and us, in God’s call. The word “called” (klētos) tells us that God took the first step. We

did not find our way to Him on our own; He called us. And the purpose of the call is belonging: we are “called to belong to Jesus Christ.” As Charles Spurgeon said, “Those who are called by Christ, are called to be his.”

That is a great comfort, because we are His and He will not let us go. It is also a responsibility, because we are not our own. As one born again, I belong to Jesus Christ, and by His grace I am empowered to live in faithful obedience to His call.

**Read alongside** 1 Corinthians 1:9 ; 1 Corinthians 6:19–20 ; Ephesians 4:1

## Romans 1:7

Read the verse: Romans 1:7

### Study Notes

Look at how Paul describes ordinary believers in a pagan city: “loved by God and called to be saints.” In the Bible a saint (hagios, set apart) is not a person who has reached a special level of goodness. It is anyone God has set apart for Himself through Christ. Our holiness begins with His choice and His love, and then we grow to live like who we already are.

Paul’s greeting joins the Greek greeting, grace, with the Hebrew greeting, peace (shalom). Grace is God’s undeserved favor; peace is wholeness and being made right with Him. As

Matthew Henry wrote, “All gospel blessings are included in these two: grace and peace.”

**Read alongside** 1 Corinthians 1:2–3 ; 1 Peter 2:9 ; Romans 5:1 ; Romans 8:15

**Put it into practice** You are “called to belong to Jesus Christ.” Pray this each morning this week: “As one born again, I belong to Jesus Christ. By His grace I am empowered to live in faithful obedience to His call.” Then name one area of your life where you want to live more set apart for Him.

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## Longing to Go to Rome

### Romans 1:8

Read the verse: Romans 1:8

**Study Notes**

Paul opens with thanks to God. What is he thankful for? The report of their faith: “your faith is proclaimed in all the world.” These Romans had never seen Jesus, and Paul had never visited them, yet they were seeking to follow Christ, and word of it had spread across the empire.

Notice that Paul thanks God “through Jesus Christ.” Even our thanksgiving comes to the Father through the Son. It is a good

habit to begin as Paul did, by thanking God for the faith we see in other believers.

**Read alongside** 1 Thessalonians 1:8 ; Philippians 1:3–5 ; Colossians 1:3–4

## Romans 1:9

Read the verse: Romans 1:9

**Study Notes**

How does Paul serve God? “With my spirit,” in the gospel of His Son. The Greek word latreuō means to serve or to worship. Paul’s preaching was not just a job; it was worship offered from the heart. And part of that service was prayer: “without ceasing I mention you.”

Matthew Henry wrote, “One of the greatest kindnesses we can do our friends, and sometimes the only kindness that is in the power of our hands, is, by prayer to recommend them to the loving-kindness of God.” We may not be able to visit everyone we love, but we can always pray for them.

**Read alongside** 2 Timothy 1:3 ; Ephesians 6:18 ; 1 Thessalonians 5:17

## Romans 1:10

Read the verse: Romans 1:10

**Study Notes**

What does Paul pray for? For the chance at last to come and visit the church at Rome. Yet he places that desire “by God’s will.” Paul made plans, but he held them with an open hand, trusting God to open or close the door.

That is a good pattern for us. We bring our hopes to God honestly, and we leave the timing and the outcome with Him. As James reminds us, we ought to say, “If the Lord wills, we will live and do this or that.”

**Read alongside** James 4:13–15 ; Romans 15:30–32 ; Acts 19:21

## Romans 1:11

Read the verse: Romans 1:11

### Study Notes

Paul “longs” to see them. Why? First, to impart some spiritual gift to strengthen them. The Greek word stērizō means to strengthen or establish, to make firm. Paul wanted to help these believers stand steady in the faith.

God gives His gifts to each of us not for our own sake, but to build up others. Every believer has something to share that can strengthen a brother or sister in Christ.

**Read alongside** 1 Corinthians 12:7 ; 1 Peter 4:10 ; Romans 16:25

## Romans 1:12

Read the verse: Romans 1:12

**Study Notes**

Second, Paul longs to see them “that we may be mutually encouraged by each other’s faith, both yours and mine.” The great apostle did not see himself as above them. He expected to be encouraged by them as much as they would be by him.

This is a verse worth memorizing. We need each other. No believer is so mature that he does not need the encouragement of other believers, and no believer is so young in the faith that he has nothing to give.

**Read alongside** Hebrews 10:24–25 ; 1 Thessalonians 5:11 ; Philippians 1:25

## Romans 1:13

Read the verse: Romans 1:13

**Study Notes**

Third, Paul wanted to “reap some harvest” among them, as he had among the other Gentiles. He had often planned to come but had been prevented. Later in the letter he explains that his work in other places had kept him from Rome (Romans 15:22).

The Greek word karpos means fruit or harvest. Paul’s heart was set on fruit that lasts: people coming to faith and growing in

Christ. Delays did not change his purpose; they only waited on God's timing.

**Read alongside** Romans 15:22–24 ; John 15:16 ; Colossians 1:6

## Romans 1:14

Read the verse: Romans 1:14

**Study Notes**

How did Paul feel about the people he served? He was "under obligation" to all of them: Greeks and barbarians, wise and foolish. The Greek word opheiletēs means a debtor. Paul felt he owed the gospel to everyone, whatever their background or education. As John Wesley put it, "I am bound by my divine mission to preach the gospel to them."

We are debtors too. The good news we have received was given to us so it could be passed on. No one is outside the reach of the gospel, and no one is beneath our concern.

**Read alongside** 1 Corinthians 9:16–17 ; Colossians 3:11 ; Romans 13:8

## Romans 1:15

Read the verse: Romans 1:15

**Study Notes**

“So I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome.” Because Paul felt he owed the gospel to everyone, he was eager to give it. The Greek word prothymos means ready and willing. Obligation and eagerness belonged together in his heart.

Paul wanted to preach the gospel even to people who were already believers. The gospel is not only how we begin the Christian life; it is what we keep living on.

**Read alongside** 1 Corinthians 15:1–4 ; 2 Timothy 4:2 ; Romans 15:20

**Put it into practice** Paul prayed for the Romans “without ceasing.” Write down the names of three believers you know, and pray for them by name every day this week. Then send one of them a short note telling them how their faith has encouraged you.

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## The Righteous Shall Live by Faith

### Romans 1:16

Read the verse: Romans 1:16

**Study Notes**

These two verses are the theme of the whole letter; everything that follows in Romans develops and explains them. Paul says,

“I am not ashamed of the gospel,” and we must never be ashamed of this great news either. Others may regard the message as foolishness, but we are called to share the good news of Jesus.

The gospel is not merely good advice; it is “the power of God for salvation.” The Greek word dynamis means power or ability. And it is for “everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.” The church in Rome was made up of Jewish and Gentile believers, and Paul wanted both to know that they are saved the same way, by faith in Jesus.

**Read alongside** 1 Corinthians 1:18 ; Acts 13:46–48 ; 2 Timothy 1:8 ; Romans 10:12–13

## Romans 1:17

Read the verse: Romans 1:17

### Study Notes

In the gospel “the righteousness of God is revealed.” This is not only God’s own perfect goodness; it is the right standing with God that He gives as a gift to everyone who believes. As Matthew Henry wrote, “While God is a just and holy God, and we are guilty sinners, it is necessary we should have a righteousness wherein to appear before him; and, blessed be God, there is such a righteousness brought in by Messiah the prince.” “From faith for faith” means faith from first to last, and

Paul's proof, "The righteous shall live by faith," comes from Habakkuk 2:4.

This one verse changed Martin Luther's life and became the doorway to the Reformation. When he finally understood it, he wrote, "Here I felt that I was altogether born again and had entered paradise itself through open gates." Righteousness from God is the only kind we will ever have. Salvation is by grace alone, through faith alone, in Jesus alone.

**Read alongside** Habakkuk 2:4 ; Philippians 3:9 ; Romans 3:21–22 ; Galatians 3:11

**Put it into practice** Pray these words slowly, out loud: "I am not ashamed of the gospel. Through faith in Jesus, who died for my sins, I am born again and declared righteous before God. By His power I live by faith." Then ask God to show you one person with whom you can share that good news this week.

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## God's Wrath on Unrighteousness

### Romans 1:18

Read the verse: Romans 1:18

**Study Notes**

After announcing the good news, Paul begins to show why everyone needs it. God's wrath (orgē) is not a temper tantrum. It is His holy, settled opposition to evil, and it is as real as His love. People "suppress the truth" (katechō, to hold down), like a hand pressing a lid shut. As Matthew Henry said, "They held the truth as a captive or prisoner, that it should not influence them."

That can be a person who has never been saved, but it can also be you and me. We suppress the truth whenever we live, speak or think in any way other than what God has called us to, and when we know the truth but stay silent. If there were a fire and I knew the safe way out, but I stood silent while people perished, I would be guilty. When I speak the truth of the gospel, I declare life in Jesus.

**Read alongside** John 3:36 ; John 3:19–20 ; Galatians 2:20 ; Romans 2:5

## Romans 1:19

Read the verse: Romans 1:19

**Study Notes**

What can be known about God is "plain" to people, because God Himself has shown it to them. Pay just the most basic attention to His creation: the sun rises and sets, spring gives way to summer, fall and winter, the tide goes out and comes

back in, day after day, century after century. It is evident there is a design by an intelligent, superior Being.

God also shows Himself inside us. When we know something is wrong, how do we know it? If we came from nothing, why would it even matter? We know because God exists and has given us a conscience that seeks to do right. As Matthew Henry wrote, “Those common natural notions which they had of God were imprinted upon their hearts by the God of nature himself.”

**Read alongside** Acts 14:15–17 ; Romans 2:15 ; Acts 17:24–28

## Romans 1:20

Read the verse: Romans 1:20

### Study Notes

Can you look at what is around us and think it just happened? How many times have you been out in nature and a deer suddenly just came to be? That is not the way things work. The storms, the seasons, the existence of everything scream out: God, our Creator. His “eternal power” and “divine nature” (theiotēs, what makes God God) are clearly seen in what He has made. God is eternal, with no beginning and no end.

So people are “without excuse” (anapologētos, without a defense). No one will stand before God and argue that the evidence was hidden. This answers the question of those who

“never heard”: God is righteous and fair in every way, and He has shown Himself to all. Salvation has always been by faith in the One who created everything.

**Read alongside** Psalm 19:1–4 ; Hebrews 11:3 ; Acts 17:29–31

## Romans 1:21

Read the verse: Romans 1:21

**Study Notes**

The problem was not that people did not know God. They knew Him, but they would not honor Him as God or give Him thanks. The slide downward in Romans 1 does not begin with some shocking sin. It begins with two quiet failures: not honoring God and not thanking Him. Their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened.

The cure starts in the same place. Gratitude is one of the first marks of a heart turned back to God, and a thankful heart is one of the best guards a believer has. As Charles Spurgeon said, “you cannot put God in the second place.”

**Read alongside** Ephesians 4:17–18 ; Psalm 14:1 ; Jeremiah 2:5 ; Deuteronomy 8:11–14

## Romans 1:22

Read the verse: Romans 1:22

**Study Notes**

“Claiming to be wise, they became fools.” When the heart turns from God, it does not become wiser; it becomes foolish while thinking itself clever. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, so true wisdom always starts with honoring Him.

**Read alongside** Proverbs 1:7 ; 1 Corinthians 3:18–20 ; 1 Corinthians 1:20–21

## Romans 1:23

Read the verse: Romans 1:23

**Study Notes**

A foolish heart exchanges the glory of the one true God for things that were created by God. When the heart will not worship the Creator, it does not stop worshiping; it simply trades Him for something smaller. The Greek word allassō means to exchange. People traded the glory of the immortal God for images of mortal men, birds, animals and creeping things.

We may not carve idols today, but we can still make the same trade whenever money, comfort, approval or pleasure takes the place that belongs to God alone.

**Read alongside** Deuteronomy 4:15–19 ; Psalm 106:19–20 ; Exodus 20:4–6

## Romans 1:24

Read the verse: Romans 1:24

**Study Notes**

Three times in this chapter Paul says “God gave them up” (verses 24, 26 and 28). It is a sobering kind of judgment: God stops holding people back and lets them have what they have chosen. The Greek word paradidōmi means to hand over. As Matthew Henry wrote, “God gave them up, in a way of righteous judgment, as the just punishment of their idolatry—taking off the bridle of restraining grace—leaving them to themselves—let them alone; for his grace is his own, he is debtor to no man, he may give or withhold his grace at pleasure.”

**Read alongside** Psalm 81:11–12 ; Ephesians 4:18–19 ; Romans 1:26

## Romans 1:25

Read the verse: Romans 1:25

**Study Notes**

We either serve the Creator or that which was created. If we set God aside to worship what He has made rather than the One who made it, God gives us up to our own poor choices. People “exchanged the truth about God for a lie.”

Yet even here Paul breaks into praise: the Creator “is blessed forever! Amen.” No matter what choice anyone makes, God will be blessed forever. Human rebellion cannot lessen His glory.

**Read alongside** Jeremiah 10:10–12 ; 1 Thessalonians 1:9 ; 1 John 5:21

## Romans 1:26

Read the verse: Romans 1:26

**Study Notes**

“For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions.” If I choose to worship what God has created rather than the Creator Himself, God will allow me to proceed with my own choices. I have chosen my path, and God is not going to block me from it. Paul says women “exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature” (physis, the natural order God created).

God’s design from the beginning was male and female, made in His image, joined as one in marriage. Turning from the Creator leads to turning from His good design.

**Read alongside** Genesis 1:27–28 ; Matthew 19:4–6 ; Romans 1:24

## Romans 1:27

Read the verse: Romans 1:27

**Study Notes**

Men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, “receiving in themselves the due penalty for their error.” By choosing a path apart from God, people consign themselves to exchanging godly plans for very ungodly plans, and to the consequences that follow.

Paul’s purpose here is not to single out one group but to show how deep the damage of turning from God runs. The good news is that no sin is beyond the reach of the gospel. Paul wrote to the Corinthians of people caught in many sins and then said, “And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.”

**Read alongside** Genesis 2:24 ; 1 Corinthians 6:9–11 ; Galatians 6:7–8

## Romans 1:28

Read the verse: Romans 1:28

**Study Notes**

“Since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind.” If I choose not to honor God, not to acknowledge Him as God, then my mind is affected and I

make wrong choices. Those wrong choices lead progressively downward into evil.

The Greek word adokimos means not approved, failing the test. People tested God and judged Him unworthy of their attention, and they were left with a mind that itself fails the test. Refusing God never leaves the mind neutral.

**Read alongside** Jeremiah 9:6 ; Ephesians 4:17–19 ; Romans 12:2

## Romans 1:29

Read the verse: Romans 1:29

### Study Notes

Read slowly, one line at a time, the list in verses 29–31 shows how wide the damage runs: “filled with all manner of unrighteousness, evil, covetousness, malice … full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, maliciousness … gossips.” Notice how ordinary many of these sins are. Envy, strife and gossip stand right beside murder.

The word for covetousness, pleonexia, means greed, the constant desire for more. Sin does not begin in the hands; it begins in the heart, just as Jesus taught.

**Read alongside** Mark 7:21–23 ; James 3:14–16 ; Galatians 5:19–21

## Romans 1:30

Read the verse: Romans 1:30

**Study Notes**

The list goes on: “slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents.” Disobedience to parents sits right beside hatred of God. No one reading this list can say, “That is only about other people.”

Pride appears three ways here: insolent, haughty and boastful. The word hyperēphanos means one who shows himself above others. Pride is at the root of turning from God, because it will not bow to Him.

**Read alongside** 2 Timothy 3:1–5 ; Ephesians 6:1–3 ; James 4:6

## Romans 1:31

Read the verse: Romans 1:31

**Study Notes**

The list ends: “foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless.” A life turned from God eventually loses its understanding, its faithfulness, its natural affection and its mercy. The word aneleēmōn means without mercy.

How different is the life God calls us to. Those who have received mercy are to put on compassion, kindness, humility,

meekness and patience, forgiving one another as the Lord has forgiven us.

**Read alongside** James 2:13 ; Colossians 3:12–13 ; Titus 3:3–5

## Romans 1:32

Read the verse: Romans 1:32

**Study Notes**

Sin grows downward until people not only practice evil but also approve of others who do the same. They know God's righteous decree, yet they cheer on what He condemns. That is the bottom of the slide that began with not honoring God and not giving Him thanks.

That is exactly where Paul is heading in chapters 2 and 3: "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). Romans 1 shows why we need the gospel so badly, and verse 16 shows that God has provided it. The same gospel that reveals God's wrath against sin is "the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes."

**Read alongside** Ephesians 5:11 ; Romans 2:1–4 ; Romans 3:23 ; Romans 6:23

**Put it into practice** The downward slide in Romans 1 begins with failing to honor God and give Him thanks. Before you go to bed tonight, write down three things you can thank God for,

and ask Him to show you anything created (money, comfort, approval, pleasure) that you have been serving in His place.

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# Chapter 2

## God's Righteous Judgment

### Romans 2:1

Read the verse: Romans 2:1

**Study Notes**

Paul has just described a world that turned its back on God (Romans 1:18–32). Notice how ordinary many of those sins are: envy, strife, gossip, boasting. Now Paul turns to the reader who has been nodding along and thinking, "That is only about other people." His answer is blunt: "you have no excuse." The word for judge is krinō, to pass a verdict, and when we condemn in others the very things we do ourselves, we pass a verdict on ourselves.

John Wesley put it simply: "Seeing knowledge without practice only increases guilt." Knowing right from wrong does not shelter us from judgment; it makes us more accountable.

**Read alongside** Matthew 7:1–5 ; James 4:11–12 ; Romans 1:32 ; Romans 3:23

## Romans 2:2

Read the verse: Romans 2:2

**Study Notes**

God's judgment "rightly falls"; literally, it is according to truth (alētheia). Human judges can be fooled, but God sees every case exactly as it is. People are unfaithful, but God is never unfaithful, and so His judgments are always proper and just. That is a warning to the hypocrite and a comfort to everyone who has ever been judged unfairly.

**Read alongside** Psalm 9:8 ; John 7:24 ; Romans 3:4 ; Genesis 18:25

## Romans 2:3

Read the verse: Romans 2:3

**Study Notes**

Paul asks a pointed question: do you really think you will escape (ekpheugō) God's judgment while condemning others for the same things? Being quick to spot sin in someone else is not the same as being free of it.

When I remember that I must give account to God myself, I lose the appetite to sit as judge over my brother. Matthew

Henry said it well: “A believing regard to the judgment of the great day would silence all these rash judgings.”

**Read alongside** Hebrews 4:13 ; Romans 14:10–12 ; Matthew 7:1–2

## Romans 2:4

Read the verse: Romans 2:4

**Study Notes**

This is a verse worth memorizing. God is rich in kindness, forbearance and patience. To “presume” on those riches is to treat His patience as permission, as if a delay in judgment meant there will be none. But God’s kindness has a purpose: to lead us to repentance (metanoia). Repentance is a change of direction toward God, not just a feeling of regret, and it is always met by grace.

God’s goodness does not make sin look smaller; it makes it look darker. As Charles Spurgeon said, “The dearer Christ is to us, the blacker is sin in our sight.” The longer we enjoy God’s kindness, the more it should draw us home, like the prodigal son coming to himself.

**Read alongside** 2 Peter 3:9 ; Luke 15:17–24 ; Romans 11:22

## Romans 2:5

Read the verse: Romans 2:5

**Study Notes**

The opposite of a heart that repents is a hard heart. The word sklērotēs means hardness, a heart that has grown stiff and unwilling to bend before God. Paul says such a person is “storing up” wrath, piling it up like treasure, only it is a treasure no one would want on the day God’s righteous judgment is revealed. Every day of refusing God’s kindness adds to that store.

**Read alongside** Hebrews 3:12–15 ; Zephaniah 1:14–18 ; Romans 1:18

## Romans 2:6

Read the verse: Romans 2:6

**Study Notes**

God “will render” (apodidōmi, give back or repay) to each person according to what he has done. This does not teach that we are saved by our works; Paul will soon show that no one is righteous on his own (Romans 3:10, 20). It does teach that our works are real evidence of what is in our hearts, and that God takes them seriously.

**Read alongside** Psalm 62:12 ; 2 Corinthians 5:10 ; Revelation 22:12

## Romans 2:7

Read the verse: Romans 2:7

**Study Notes**

Here is one direction a life can take: patient perseverance in doing good, seeking the glory, honor and immortality that only God can give. The word for patience is hypomonē, steadfast endurance. Paul describes the steady direction of a life turned toward God, not a few good deeds stacked up to earn heaven. God's answer to that kind of life is eternal life.

**Read alongside** Galatians 6:8–9 ; John 5:28–29 ; Romans 6:22–23

## Romans 2:8

Read the verse: Romans 2:8

**Study Notes**

Here is the other direction. The word for self-seeking (eritheia) means selfish ambition, living for my own advancement. Such people refuse to obey the truth and instead obey unrighteousness. Everyone obeys something; the question is what. For those who choose self over God, Paul says there will be wrath and fury.

**Read alongside** James 3:14–16 ; 2 Thessalonians 1:8–9 ; Philippians 2:3–4

## Romans 2:9

Read the verse: Romans 2:9

**Study Notes**

“The Jew first and also the Greek” echoes the theme of the letter (Romans 1:16). The gospel came to the Jew first, and so does accountability; greater privilege brings greater responsibility. In chapters 1–3 Paul shows that both groups stand guilty before God, and in chapters 3–4 that both are saved the same way, by faith.

**Read alongside** Amos 3:2 ; Luke 12:47–48 ; Romans 1:16

## Romans 2:10

Read the verse: Romans 2:10

**Study Notes**

Paul repeats the promise of verse 7 and adds a word: peace (eirēnē). Glory, honor and peace belong to everyone who does good, whatever his background. Peace with God is the very thing Paul will later say we have through our Lord Jesus Christ (Romans 5:1).

**Read alongside** Isaiah 32:17 ; Acts 10:34–35 ; Romans 5:1

## Romans 2:11

Read the verse: Romans 2:11

**Study Notes**

Another verse to memorize: “God shows no partiality.” The word pictures someone who judges by a person’s face, his rank

or his background. God does not. This truth went straight to the heart of the church in Rome, where Jewish and Gentile believers were at odds over “their church.” Neither group had an inside track with God. There is one Judge, one standard, and one Savior for all.

**Read alongside** Deuteronomy 10:17 ; James 2:1–9 ; Acts 10:34–35 ; Romans 3:22–23

## Romans 2:12

Read the verse: Romans 2:12

**Study Notes**

Paul now takes up the law (nomos). Gentiles who sinned without having the law of Moses will still perish, because they sinned against the light they had. Jews who sinned under the law will be judged by that law. No one is judged by a standard he never had, but no one can plead that he had no standard at all.

**Read alongside** Romans 1:19–20 ; Luke 12:47–48 ; Romans 3:19

## Romans 2:13

Read the verse: Romans 2:13

**Study Notes**

Hearing God's law read every Sabbath did not make anyone righteous; doing it is what counts (poiētēs, doer). Paul is pulling away the false comfort of simply owning the law.

This is not a back door to salvation by works. By works of the law no one will be justified, and the law only serves to show us what sin is (Romans 3:20). Paul is closing every exit so that we will run to the only door left: righteousness as God's gift, through faith in Jesus.

**Read alongside** James 1:22–25 ; Romans 3:20–24 ; Matthew 7:21

## Romans 2:14

Read the verse: Romans 2:14

**Study Notes**

Even Gentiles who never received the law of Moses sometimes do by nature (physis) what the law requires. When we know that something is wrong, how is it that we know it is wrong? If we came from nothing, why would it even matter? We know because God exists and has placed in us a desire to do right. We have a sinful nature, but God has given us a conscience.

**Read alongside** Acts 28:1–2 ; Romans 1:19–20 ; Acts 14:17

## Romans 2:15

Read the verse: Romans 2:15

### Study Notes

The “work of the law” is written on the human heart. Conscience (syneidēsis) means literally “joint-knowledge,” an inner witness that judges our actions and motives. It speaks up inside us, sometimes accusing and sometimes excusing. God has not hidden Himself; He shows Himself outside us in creation and inside us in a conscience that knows right from wrong.

Conscience can warn us, but it cannot change us. The one who is justified by faith receives the Holy Spirit, who writes God’s law on the heart and produces the obedience the law could only command (Romans 8:3–4). The believer’s conscience is meant to be sensitized and guided by the Holy Spirit.

**Read alongside** Proverbs 20:27 ; 1 Corinthians 4:4–5 ; Jeremiah 31:33 ; Romans 9:1

## Romans 2:16

Read the verse: Romans 2:16

### Study Notes

Judgment will reach all the way to the secrets (kryptos, hidden things) of our hearts. Nothing will be overlooked. Paul says this is “according to my gospel,” and the Judge will be Christ Jesus. That is sobering, but it is also good news: the One who

will judge the secrets of every heart is the very One who died to take away our sins.

**Read alongside** Ecclesiastes 12:14 ; Acts 17:30–31 ; John 5:22–24

**Put it into practice** Think of one person you have judged harshly this week. Before you say another word about him or her, ask God to show you where the same fault lives in you. Then thank Him that His kindness is meant to lead you, too, to repentance.

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## God's Judgment and the Law

### Romans 2:17

Read the verse: Romans 2:17

**Study Notes**

Paul now speaks directly to the Jewish reader. He or she had real privileges: the name of Jew, the law of God, and a relationship with the one true God. But Paul says this person "relies on" the law (epanapauomai, to rest upon). Remember the setting: some Jewish believers in Rome wanted to add the requirements of the Torah to faith in Christ. Paul shows that the law was never meant to be something to rest on for salvation.

**Read alongside** Romans 9:4–5 ; Jeremiah 9:23–24 ; Philippians 3:4–9

## Romans 2:18

Read the verse: Romans 2:18

**Study Notes**

These privileges were real. Taught from the law, the Jew knew God's will and could "approve what is excellent" (dokimazō, to test and approve). Paul is not mocking these gifts. His point is that knowing God's will and doing it are two different things.

**Read alongside** Psalm 119:105 ; Philippians 1:9–10 ; Romans 12:2

## Romans 2:19

Read the verse: Romans 2:19

**Study Notes**

Israel was called to be a light to the nations, a guide (hodēgos) for those in darkness. That was a God-given calling. But a guide who does not walk the road himself cannot lead anyone else down it. Jesus warned of blind guides who lead the blind into a pit.

**Read alongside** Isaiah 42:6–7 ; Matthew 15:14 ; Matthew 5:14–16

## Romans 2:20

Read the verse: Romans 2:20

**Study Notes**

The Jewish teacher had in the law “the embodiment of knowledge and truth.” That is high praise for God’s Word, and it is true. But those who teach (didaskalos, teacher) will be judged with greater strictness. Having the truth in hand is a responsibility before it is a privilege.

**Read alongside** 2 Timothy 3:16–17 ; James 3:1

## Romans 2:21

Read the verse: Romans 2:21

**Study Notes**

Now come the hard questions. You teach others; do you teach yourself? You preach against stealing; do you steal? It is easier to preach than to practice. Ezra set the right order: he studied the law, then did it, and only then taught it.

**Read alongside** Matthew 23:2–4 ; Ezra 7:10

## Romans 2:22

Read the verse: Romans 2:22

**Study Notes**

The questions press closer: adultery, and robbing temples (hierosyleō, to commit sacrilege). Someone could hate idols and still profit from them. Jesus showed that the commandments reach the heart as well as the hand; lust is adultery of the heart. None of us can stand on our record.

**Read alongside** Exodus 20:14–15 ; Matthew 5:27–28

## Romans 2:23

Read the verse: Romans 2:23

**Study Notes**

Here is the sad irony. The one who boasts in the law dishonors (atimazō) God by breaking it. Our lips can say all the right things while our lives say something else, and people believe our lives.

**Read alongside** Malachi 1:6 ; Titus 1:16 ; 1 John 2:4–6

## Romans 2:24

Read the verse: Romans 2:24

**Study Notes**

Paul quotes Isaiah 52:5. When God's people live in disobedience, the watching world speaks evil of God (blasphēmeō). The same is true for us today. Our conduct either draws people toward God or gives them a reason to

mock Him. We can ask God to let our lives make His name beautiful to those around us.

**Read alongside** Isaiah 52:5 ; Ezekiel 36:20–23 ; Matthew 5:16

## Romans 2:25

Read the verse: Romans 2:25

### Study Notes

Circumcision (peritomē) was the God-given sign of His covenant with Abraham. Paul says it has real value, but only if the law is kept. A sign without the reality it points to is empty. In 3:1–2 Paul will answer the question this raises: the Jews were given much, above all the very words of God.

**Read alongside** Genesis 17:9–14 ; Jeremiah 9:25–26 ; Romans 3:1–2

## Romans 2:26

Read the verse: Romans 2:26

### Study Notes

If an uncircumcised Gentile keeps what God requires, will he not be “regarded” (logizomai, counted or reckoned) as circumcised? It is the same word Paul will use of Abraham, whose faith was counted to him as righteousness (Romans 4:3). God looks at the heart, not the outward mark.

**Read alongside** Galatians 5:6 ; 1 Corinthians 7:19 ; Romans 4:3

## Romans 2:27

Read the verse: Romans 2:27

### Study Notes

Paul turns the tables. The Gentile who obeys will stand as a witness against the one who had the written code (gramma, the letter) and circumcision but broke the law. Jesus said something similar: the men of Nineveh will rise up in judgment against those who heard a greater message and did not repent.

**Read alongside** Matthew 12:41–42 ; Luke 11:28

## Romans 2:28

Read the verse: Romans 2:28

### Study Notes

Being a true child of God is not a matter of what is outward and visible (phaneros). Ancestry, rituals and religious labels cannot make anyone right with God. Jesus warned against cleaning the outside of the cup while the inside stays full of greed. Man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart.

**Read alongside** Deuteronomy 10:16 ; Matthew 23:25–28 ; 1 Samuel 16:7

## Romans 2:29

Read the verse: Romans 2:29

**Study Notes**

This is the third memory verse of the chapter, and its peak. True circumcision is of the heart (kardia), by the Spirit, not by the letter. God promised long ago to circumcise His people's hearts so they would love Him. By the power of the Holy Spirit, those who belong to Christ live a new life, a life the written code could describe but never produce.

"His praise is not from man but from God." The outward religious person looks for the approval of people. The one changed on the inside lives for an audience of One. In Christ we are the true circumcision: we worship by the Spirit of God, glory in Christ Jesus, and put no confidence in the flesh.

**Read alongside** Deuteronomy 30:6 ; Philippians 3:3 ; Colossians 2:11 ; Ezekiel 36:26–27

**Put it into practice** If salvation is entirely God's gift, where are you still tempted to "boast," even quietly, in your own goodness, your church attendance, or your knowledge of the Bible? Name it before God today, and ask the Holy Spirit to make your heart, not just your record, His.

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# Chapter 3

## God’s Righteousness Upheld

### Romans 3:1

Read the verse: Romans 3:1

**Study Notes**

Paul has just said that a true Jew is one inwardly, and that real circumcision is a matter of the heart, by the Spirit (Romans 2:28–29). So he anticipates the obvious objection: if that is true, is there any advantage at all in being a Jew or in being circumcised? Paul does not brush the question aside. He answers it honestly, and in doing so he turns our eyes from what people have to what God has done.

**Read alongside** Romans 2:28–29 ; Romans 9:4–5 ; Deuteronomy 4:7–8

### Romans 3:2

Read the verse: Romans 3:2

**Study Notes**

“Much in every way.” The first and greatest advantage was that the Jews were entrusted with the oracles of God. The Greek

word logion means a divine utterance: God's own words, spoken and written down. John Wesley described these oracles as "The scriptures, in which are so great and precious promises."

We who hold the whole Bible in our hands share in that privilege, and in its responsibility. To be entrusted with God's Word is not a badge to wear; it is a trust to keep, to read, to believe and to obey.

**Read alongside** Deuteronomy 4:8 ; Psalm 147:19–20 ; 2 Timothy 3:16–17

## Romans 3:3

Read the verse: Romans 3:3

**Study Notes**

People are unfaithful. God is never unfaithful. Many in Israel did not believe the very promises they had been given, but their unbelief could not cancel God's faithfulness. The Greek word pistis can mean both "faith" and "faithfulness," and here Paul sets our faithlessness beside His faithfulness. God keeps His word even when we do not keep ours.

**Read alongside** 2 Timothy 2:13 ; Numbers 23:19 ; Romans 11:29

## Romans 3:4

Read the verse: Romans 3:4

### Study Notes

“By no means!” Though everyone else may lie, God speaks the truth: “Let God be true though every one were a liar.” Therefore God’s judgments are always proper and just. Paul quotes Psalm 51:4, where David, confessing his own sin, agreed that God was right in His words and blameless when He judged.

Notice that Romans 3 begins with God’s faithfulness before it speaks of our sin. That order matters. Before we face the hard truth about ourselves, we are given solid ground to stand on: God is true, and He does not change.

**Read alongside** Psalm 51:4 ; Psalm 116:11 ; Titus 1:2 ; Numbers 23:19

## Romans 3:5

Read the verse: Romans 3:5

### Study Notes

Some people in Paul’s day twisted the gospel this way: “If my sin makes God’s goodness shine brighter, why should He judge me?” Paul says he is speaking “in a human way”; he is voicing the kind of argument the human heart likes to make when it wants to escape judgment. The word for righteousness here, dikaiosynē, is the same word that runs all through Romans: God is right in all He does.

**Read alongside** Genesis 18:25 ; Romans 9:14 ; Romans 1:18

## Romans 3:6

Read the verse: Romans 3:6

**Study Notes**

“By no means!” If God could not justly punish sin simply because His goodness shows up against it, then He could never judge the world at all. But Scripture is plain that He will judge the world in righteousness. The Judge of all the earth will always do what is right.

**Read alongside** Psalm 9:8 ; Acts 17:31 ; Genesis 18:25

## Romans 3:7

Read the verse: Romans 3:7

**Study Notes**

Here the twisted argument comes again: if my lie makes God’s truth stand out and brings Him glory, why am I still condemned? But no matter how anyone tries to pervert or confuse the truth, a lie is still a lie. God is faithful. God is true. And God calls us to be true.

**Read alongside** Romans 3:4 ; Romans 6:1–2 ; Ephesians 4:25

## Romans 3:8

Read the verse: Romans 3:8

**Study Notes**

Some even slandered Paul by saying he taught, “Let us do evil that good may come.” Paul will not argue with it at length. He calls the charge slander and says the condemnation of those who teach it is just. The word krima means judgment or condemnation. God’s grace is never a reason to sin, a truth Paul takes up again in Romans 6:1–2.

**Read alongside** Romans 6:1–2 ; Romans 6:15 ; 2 Corinthians 4:2

**Put it into practice** God is faithful, God is true, and God calls us to be true. Ask yourself: Is there any place in my life where I have been shading the truth or excusing a sin because “God will forgive anyway”? Bring it honestly to Him today, and make it right where you can.

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## No One Is Righteous

### Romans 3:9

Read the verse: Romans 3:9

**Study Notes**

“Are we Jews any better off? No, not at all.” Jews and non-Jews are all alike under sin. To be “under sin” (hamartia) is to be under its guilt and its power, as a people live under a ruler.

Paul has already shown the guilt of the Gentile world (Romans 1) and of the religious person (Romans 2); now he gathers everyone together under one verdict.

**Read alongside** Galatians 3:22 ; Romans 11:32 ; Romans 1:18

## Romans 3:10

Read the verse: Romans 3:10

### Study Notes

No one is righteous, apart from God in Christ Jesus. Paul now strings together lines from the Psalms and Isaiah to show that the Bible itself has already reached this verdict on the whole human race. Matthew Henry put it this way: “There is none righteous, no, not one; implying that, if there had been but one, God would have found him out.”

**Read alongside** Psalm 14:1–3 ; Psalm 53:1–3 ; Ecclesiastes 7:20

## Romans 3:11

Read the verse: Romans 3:11

### Study Notes

The picture Paul paints covers the whole person, starting with the mind and the will. “No one understands”: the mind is darkened. “No one seeks for God”: the will turns away from

Him. Left to ourselves we do not go looking for God; it is God who comes seeking us.

**Read alongside** Psalm 14:2 ; Ephesians 4:18 ; Luke 19:10

## Romans 3:12

Read the verse: Romans 3:12

**Study Notes**

All people have turned aside. The Greek word ekklinō means to turn off the road, to bend away from the right path. In our sinfulness we are worthless to God, like fruit gone bad. “No one does good, not even one”: not good in the way God measures good, from a pure heart for His glory.

**Read alongside** Psalm 14:3 ; Isaiah 53:6 ; Romans 3:23

## Romans 3:13

Read the verse: Romans 3:13

**Study Notes**

Now Paul turns to the mouth. The unregenerate tongue deceives. “Their throat is an open grave”: what comes out of it carries the smell of death. “The venom of asps is under their lips”: words that poison and wound. What we say shows what is in the heart.

**Read alongside** Psalm 5:9 ; Psalm 140:3 ; Matthew 12:34

## Romans 3:14

Read the verse: Romans 3:14

**Study Notes**

The mouth of the unregenerate is full of curses and bitterness. The word pikria means bitterness, a sharp and sour spirit that spills out in what we say. James reminds us how wrong it is for blessing and cursing to come out of the same mouth.

**Read alongside** Psalm 10:7 ; James 3:9–10 ; Ephesians 4:31

## Romans 3:15

Read the verse: Romans 3:15

**Study Notes**

From the mouth Paul moves to the feet. “Their feet are swift to shed blood,” quoted from Isaiah 59:7. Sin does not stay in the heart or on the tongue; it runs eagerly into harmful action. From Cain onward, human history has proven the truth of this verse.

**Read alongside** Isaiah 59:7 ; Proverbs 1:16 ; Genesis 4:8

## Romans 3:16

Read the verse: Romans 3:16

**Study Notes**

“In their paths are ruin and misery.” Only ruin and misery lie ahead of us while we are unregenerate, not yet born again. A road may seem right to a person, but without God it ends in destruction.

**Read alongside** Isaiah 59:7 ; Proverbs 16:25 ; Matthew 7:13–14

## Romans 3:17

Read the verse: Romans 3:17

**Study Notes**

“The way of peace they have not known.” The word eirēnē means peace, the wholeness and rest that come from being right with God. Apart from Him people search for peace but never find the road to it. Jesus came “to guide our feet into the way of peace,” and Paul will soon say that, justified by faith, “we have peace with God” (Romans 5:1).

**Read alongside** Isaiah 59:8 ; Luke 1:79 ; Romans 5:1

## Romans 3:18

Read the verse: Romans 3:18

**Study Notes**

Finally Paul reaches the root: the heart. “There is no fear of God before their eyes.” Apart from the new birth we have no fear of God, and so no wisdom, and so no righteousness. This

is why the new birth matters so much. Only a new heart from God changes what we are at the root (John 3:3).

Bob Deffinbaugh points out that Romans 3:10–18 is similar to Romans 7:14–25. In Romans 3 Paul quotes the Old Testament to show that no one is righteous; in Romans 7 he uses his own experience to show that even a Christian cannot live righteously in his own strength.

**Read alongside** Psalm 36:1 ; Proverbs 1:7 ; John 3:3

## Romans 3:19

Read the verse: Romans 3:19

**Study Notes**

The law speaks to those who are under the law, and when we are under law we are under condemnation, because we fail. Its purpose is “that every mouth may be stopped.” The word hypodikos means answerable, liable to judgment. Like a defendant with no defense left, the whole world stands silent and accountable before God.

**Read alongside** Job 40:4–5 ; Romans 2:12 ; Galatians 3:10

## Romans 3:20

Read the verse: Romans 3:20

**Study Notes**

By works of the law no one will be justified. The law only serves to show us what sin is; the word epignōsis means a clear knowledge or recognition. The law is like a mirror: it shows the dirt but cannot wash it away. As Matthew Henry wrote, “That law which convicts and condemns us can never justify us.”

**Read alongside** Psalm 143:2 ; Galatians 2:16 ; Romans 7:7

**Put it into practice** Read Romans 3:10–18 slowly. Which line is hardest for you to accept about yourself, and why? Write it down, confess it honestly to God, and then read on to Romans 3:21–24 and thank Him that this verdict is not His last word.

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## The Righteousness of God Through Faith

### Romans 3:21

Read the verse: Romans 3:21

**Study Notes**

“But now.” After two and a half chapters of bad news, these two words turn everything. God’s righteousness is revealed apart from the law; it is not something we build by keeping rules. Yet it is not new or foreign to Scripture: the Law and the Prophets bear witness to what the righteousness of God is. The word phaneroō means to make visible, to bring out into the open.

**Read alongside** Romans 1:17 ; Acts 10:43 ; Genesis 15:6

## Romans 3:22

Read the verse: Romans 3:22

**Study Notes**

This is the righteousness of God given to a person. We are right before God only through faith in Jesus: by believing in Him, who He is and what He has accomplished. It is for all who believe, “for there is no distinction.”

There are only two kinds of righteousness on offer: the kind we try to build ourselves, and the kind God gives. Righteousness from God is the only kind we will ever have. Paul longed to be “found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ” (Philippians 3:9).

**Read alongside** Philippians 3:9 ; Galatians 2:16 ; Romans 10:12

## Romans 3:23

Read the verse: Romans 3:23

**Study Notes**

This is step one on the Roman Road: everyone has sinned. No one is left out. The “glory of God” is His perfect goodness, and

all of us fall short of it. The word hystereō means to fall short, to lack, like an arrow that drops before it reaches the mark.

We must see the bad news before the good news can mean much to us. But the bad news is never the end of the sentence. The very next verse gives the answer: we “are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus” (Romans 3:24).

**Read alongside** Romans 6:23 ; Ecclesiastes 7:20 ; 1 Kings 8:46 ; Romans 5:8

## Romans 3:24

Read the verse: Romans 3:24

**Study Notes**

We are made just, or right, in God’s presence only as a gift from God, by His grace. John Wesley summed it up in four words: “Without any merit of their own.” This gift comes through the redemption that is ours in Christ Jesus, and it is received by faith alone.

The word apolytrōsis means redemption, a release by the payment of a ransom. We were slaves under sin; Jesus paid the price to set us free. The gift is free to us because it was paid for in full by Him.

**Read alongside** Ephesians 1:7 ; Titus 3:7 ; Ephesians 2:8–9

## Romans 3:25

Read the verse: Romans 3:25

**Study Notes**

God Himself put Jesus forward as a propitiation, a payment, by His blood. “Propitiation” means a sacrifice that turns away God’s just anger against sin. The Greek word hilastērion is also used for the mercy seat, the lid of the ark where the blood was sprinkled on the Day of Atonement. Jesus is the true mercy seat, where God meets sinners in mercy.

The payment God provided for our sins is received only by faith. In His divine forbearance He had passed over former sins, not ignoring them but waiting for the cross where they would be fully paid. As Matthew Henry wrote, “Christ is the propitiation; there is the healing plaster provided.”

**Read alongside** Leviticus 16:15–16 ; 1 John 2:2 ; 1 John 4:10

## Romans 3:26

Read the verse: Romans 3:26

**Study Notes**

The cross shows God’s righteousness at the present time. At the cross God did not simply overlook sin; He dealt with it fully in Jesus. That is how God can be completely just (sin is punished) and at the same time the justifier (the one who

declares sinners righteous) of everyone who has faith in Jesus. The word dikaioō means to justify, to declare righteous.

**Read alongside** Isaiah 45:21 ; 2 Corinthians 5:21 ; 1 Peter 3:18

## Romans 3:27

Read the verse: Romans 3:27

**Study Notes**

“Then what becomes of our boasting? It is excluded.” The door is shut and locked. We cannot boast, because salvation, our righteousness and our redemption are all by faith, and faith simply receives what God gives. The word kauchēsis means boasting, glorying in ourselves.

If salvation is entirely God’s gift, where are we still tempted to boast, even quietly, in our own goodness? The only boast left to us is in the Lord.

**Read alongside** Ephesians 2:8–9 ; 1 Corinthians 1:29–31 ; Galatians 6:14

## Romans 3:28

Read the verse: Romans 3:28

**Study Notes**

Our faith is in Jesus and His finished work, not in our works of the law. The word chōris means apart from, without. We are saved by grace through faith alone, and that faith then

produces a life full of good works. Good works are the fruit of salvation, never the root of it.

**Read alongside** Galatians 2:16 ; Romans 4:5 ; Ephesians 2:10

## Romans 3:29

Read the verse: Romans 3:29

### Study Notes

God is the God of the Jews and the Gentiles. If salvation came by keeping the law of Moses, God would belong to one nation only. But because it comes by faith, the door is open to every people on earth. He is Lord of all, rich toward all who call on Him.

**Read alongside** Romans 10:12 ; Acts 10:34–35 ; Galatians 3:28

## Romans 3:30

Read the verse: Romans 3:30

### Study Notes

“God is one,” Paul says, echoing Israel’s great confession in Deuteronomy 6:4. Because there is only one God, there is only one way to be made right with Him. God is the one who justifies, and it is by faith and through faith, for the circumcised and the uncircumcised alike.

**Read alongside** Deuteronomy 6:4 ; Galatians 3:8 ; Ephesians 2:14

## Romans 3:31

Read the verse: Romans 3:31

**Study Notes**

The law is not overthrown by faith; it is upheld by faith. Faith agrees with everything the law says: God is holy, sin is real, and it must be paid for. Faith then looks to Jesus, who kept the law perfectly and bore its penalty. And the one who is justified by faith receives the Holy Spirit, who writes God's law on the heart and produces the obedience the law could only command (Romans 8:3–4).

The word histēmi means to establish, to make stand. As Matthew Henry wrote, "The law is still of use to convince us of what is past, and to direct us for the future."

**Read alongside** Matthew 5:17 ; Romans 8:3–4 ; Jeremiah 31:33

**Put it into practice** Memorize Romans 3:23–24 this week. Then ask yourself honestly: Where am I still tempted to "boast," even quietly, in my own goodness? Each time you notice it, stop and thank God out loud that your righteousness is His gift through faith in Jesus.

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# Chapter 4

## Abraham Justified by Faith

### Romans 4:1

Read the verse: Romans 4:1

**Study Notes**

Paul has just said that we are justified by faith apart from works of the law and that boasting is excluded (Romans 3:27–28). Now he turns to Abraham, the father of the Jewish people, the man every Jewish reader would hold up as the best example of a righteous life. If anyone could have earned God's approval, surely it was Abraham. So Paul asks the honest question: how was Abraham made right with God?

**Read alongside** Romans 3:27–28 ; Genesis 12:1–3 ; Galatians 3:6–9

### Romans 4:2

Read the verse: Romans 4:2

**Study Notes**

If Abraham had been justified by his works, he would have something to boast about. But boasting is excluded, because

salvation, our righteousness and our redemption are by faith (Romans 3:27). We may have something to show before other people, Paul says, but not before God.

Augustine said Paul in this letter “contends with much courage and earnestness against the proud and arrogant, and such as plume themselves on their own works, in order that he may commend the grace of God.” Abraham is Paul’s first witness in that defense of grace.

**Read alongside** Romans 3:27 ; Ephesians 2:8–9 ; 1 Corinthians 1:29–31

## Romans 4:3

Read the verse: Romans 4:3

### Study Notes

This is one of the great verses of Romans: “Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness” (Genesis 15:6). The word “counted” (logizomai) is a judicial or accounting term; it means to put something to a person’s account. Abraham did not earn righteousness. He believed God’s promise, and God credited righteousness to him.

Notice what Scripture says came first. Abraham believed, and God counted. It has always worked this way, in the Old Testament and the New. Faith is not the work that earns the gift; it is the empty hand that receives it.

**Read alongside** Genesis 15:6 ; Galatians 3:6 ; James 2:23 ; Hebrews 11:8

## Romans 4:4

Read the verse: Romans 4:4

### Study Notes

A paycheck is not a gift. When we work, our wages are owed to us; no employer thinks he is being generous when he pays what he agreed to pay. If salvation could be earned, God would owe it to us. But Paul has already shown that the only wage sin earns is death (Romans 6:23).

**Read alongside** Romans 6:23 ; Romans 11:6 ; Titus 3:5

## Romans 4:5

Read the verse: Romans 4:5

### Study Notes

Here is the wonder of the gospel. God justifies “the ungodly,” not the people who have cleaned themselves up first. The one who stops working to earn God’s favor and simply trusts Him has his faith counted as righteousness. Righteousness is a gift God gives by grace, through faith in Jesus Christ; it is not something earned or merited through religious and moral performance.

Ask yourself honestly where you are still trying to earn God's approval. The person God justifies is the one who trusts Him, not the one who pays Him.

**Read alongside** Romans 3:26 ; Romans 3:28 ; Ephesians 2:8–9 ; Philippians 3:9

## Romans 4:6

Read the verse: Romans 4:6

### Study Notes

Paul brings a second witness, David, the great king of Israel. Abraham lived before the law; David lived under it. Both tell the same story. David speaks of the blessing that belongs to the person to whom God counts righteousness "apart from works."

**Read alongside** Psalm 32:1–2 ; Romans 3:21 ; Acts 13:38–39

## Romans 4:7

Read the verse: Romans 4:7

### Study Notes

Paul quotes Psalm 32, which David most likely wrote after his sin with Bathsheba. "Forgiven" means sent away; "covered" means hidden from God's sight. David had nothing to offer God but his confession, and God forgave him. That is real happiness, the blessedness of a guilty person who has been forgiven.

**Read alongside** Psalm 32:1–2 ; Psalm 51:1–2 ; 1 John 1:9

## Romans 4:8

Read the verse: Romans 4:8

### Study Notes

This is the other side of “counting.” God counts righteousness to the believer, and He refuses to count sin against him. The sin is real, but the charge has been settled by another. For the believer, the record has been cleared, and God will not bring it back.

**Read alongside** Psalm 32:2 ; 2 Corinthians 5:19 ; 2 Corinthians 5:21 ; Psalm 103:12

## Romans 4:9

Read the verse: Romans 4:9

### Study Notes

Now Paul asks a question his Jewish readers would care about. Is this blessing only for the circumcised, the Jews, or also for Gentiles? Go back to Abraham, he says. Faith was counted to him as righteousness, so the next question is when.

**Read alongside** Romans 3:29–30 ; Galatians 3:8 ; Acts 10:34–35

## Romans 4:10

Read the verse: Romans 4:10

**Study Notes**

The answer is simple and powerful. Abraham was counted righteous in Genesis 15; he was circumcised in Genesis 17, more than a dozen years later. God declared him righteous while he was still uncircumcised. The ritual did not make him right with God; it came afterward.

**Read alongside** Genesis 15:6 ; Genesis 17:10–11 ; Galatians 5:6

## Romans 4:11

Read the verse: Romans 4:11

**Study Notes**

Circumcision was a “sign” and a “seal.” A sign points to something; a seal confirms it. Circumcision did not create Abraham’s righteousness; it marked and confirmed the righteousness he already had by faith. That makes Abraham the father of every believer, including Gentiles who were never circumcised.

True circumcision has always been of the heart, by the Spirit (Romans 2:29). Outward signs matter, but they never take the place of faith.

**Read alongside** Genesis 17:11 ; Romans 2:28–29 ; Galatians 3:7 ; Colossians 2:11–12

### Romans 4:12

Read the verse: Romans 4:12

**Study Notes**

Abraham is also the father of Jewish believers, but not simply because they are circumcised. He is their father if they “walk in the footsteps” of the faith Abraham had before he was circumcised. Physical descent is not enough. God’s family is a family of faith.

**Read alongside** Galatians 3:28–29 ; John 8:39 ; Romans 9:6–8

**Put it into practice** Write out Romans 4:5 and put it where you will see it this week. Each time you catch yourself trying to earn God’s favor or measuring yourself by your performance, read it aloud and thank God that He justifies the ungodly who trust Him.

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## The Promise Realized Through Faith

### Romans 4:13

Read the verse: Romans 4:13

**Study Notes**

God promised Abraham and his offspring that they would be heirs of the world, a promise that reaches all the way to Christ

and to the new creation. That promise did not come through the law; the law was given at Sinai about 430 years later (Galatians 3:17). God's promise to Abraham came through faith, through the righteousness that faith receives.

**Read alongside** Genesis 12:2–3 ; Genesis 22:17–18 ; Galatians 3:16–18

## Romans 4:14

Read the verse: Romans 4:14

**Study Notes**

If the inheritance depended on keeping the law, faith would be pointless and the promise would be worthless, because no one keeps the law perfectly. A promise that depends on our performance is no promise at all. God's promises stand because they rest on Him.

**Read alongside** Galatians 3:18 ; Galatians 2:21 ; Romans 3:20

## Romans 4:15

Read the verse: Romans 4:15

**Study Notes**

The law is good and holy, but it cannot make anyone right with God. It shows us what sin is (Romans 3:20), and when we break it, it brings wrath. Where there is no law, there is no

transgression, no line to step across. The law exposes our need; only Christ can meet it.

**Read alongside** Romans 3:20 ; Romans 5:13 ; Romans 7:7 ; Galatians 3:10

## Romans 4:16

Read the verse: Romans 4:16

### Study Notes

That is why the promise rests on faith: so that it rests on grace and is guaranteed. If it depended on us, it would always be uncertain. Because it depends on God's grace, it is sure for every one of Abraham's children, Jew and Gentile alike. Salvation is by grace alone, through faith alone, in Jesus alone.

**Read alongside** Ephesians 2:8–9 ; Galatians 3:29 ; Romans 3:24 ; Romans 11:6

## Romans 4:17

Read the verse: Romans 4:17

### Study Notes

Paul quotes Genesis 17:5: "I have made you the father of many nations." Notice who Abraham believed in: the God "who gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist." Isaac was born because God promised him and then did the impossible for an old man and a barren woman. That is

how every child of God is born, not by human descent or effort, but by God's promise and power.

**Read alongside** Genesis 17:5 ; Genesis 18:10 ; John 1:12–13 ; Hebrews 11:3

## Romans 4:18

Read the verse: Romans 4:18

### Study Notes

"In hope he believed against hope." Every natural reason for hope was gone, yet Abraham held on to God's word. Biblical hope is not wishful thinking; it is confident expectation grounded in God's promise. Abraham's hope rested on what God had said: "So shall your offspring be."

**Read alongside** Genesis 15:5 ; Hebrews 11:11–12 ; Hebrews 6:19

## Romans 4:19

Read the verse: Romans 4:19

### Study Notes

Abraham did not pretend. He looked honestly at his own body, "as good as dead" at about a hundred years old, and at Sarah's barrenness. Faith does not deny the facts. It looks past them to the God who is greater than the facts.

**Read alongside** Genesis 17:17 ; Genesis 18:11–14 ; Hebrews 11:11–12

## Romans 4:20

Read the verse: Romans 4:20

**Study Notes**

Abraham did not waver in unbelief. Scripture shows that he had his moments of weakness, but he did not let go of the promise. His faith grew stronger as he gave glory to God. Faith gives God glory because it takes Him at His word.

**Read alongside** Genesis 21:1–2 ; James 1:6–8 ; Hebrews 10:23

## Romans 4:21

Read the verse: Romans 4:21

**Study Notes**

Abraham was “fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised.” This is the heart of faith: confidence in God’s ability and in His faithfulness. Paul uses the same language when he says God is able to graft Israel back in (Romans 11:23). What God promises, He is able to do.

**Read alongside** Romans 11:23 ; Hebrews 11:19 ; Ephesians 3:20 ; Numbers 23:19

## Romans 4:22

Read the verse: Romans 4:22

**Study Notes**

“That is why” his faith was counted to him as righteousness. God did not count Abraham righteous because his faith was large, but because it rested on a faithful God. The value of faith is found in its object. You have faith that this bridge will hold you, but it is the bridge that does the holding!

**Read alongside** Genesis 15:6 ; Romans 4:3 ; Hebrews 11:6

## Romans 4:23

Read the verse: Romans 4:23

**Study Notes**

Paul now applies the story to us. The words “it was counted to him” were not written for Abraham’s sake alone. The Scriptures are not only history; God gave them to teach us today (Romans 15:4).

**Read alongside** Romans 15:4 ; 1 Corinthians 10:11 ; 2 Timothy 3:16–17

## Romans 4:24

Read the verse: Romans 4:24

**Study Notes**

Righteousness will be counted to us who believe in God, “who raised from the dead Jesus our Lord.” Abraham believed in the God who gives life to the dead; we believe in the God who

raised Jesus. It is the same faith in the same God, and it receives the same gift.

**Read alongside** Romans 10:9 ; 1 Peter 1:21 ; Colossians 2:12

## Romans 4:25

Read the verse: Romans 4:25

**Study Notes**

Jesus was “delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification.” His atoning death is central to God’s plan of salvation. As Pastor Chris Berg preached on Easter Sunday, we are not saved without the resurrection: because Christ lives, God can credit His righteousness to everyone who responds by faith (a thought Pastor Chris credited to John Witmer).

Jesus died for our sins. Jesus rose from the grave. Our hope is in Him.

**Read alongside** Isaiah 53:5–6 ; 1 Corinthians 15:3–4 ; 1 Corinthians 15:17 ; Romans 8:34

**Put it into practice** Abraham was “fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised.” Name one promise of God you are struggling to believe right now. Write it down, find the verse, and each day this week give glory to God by thanking Him in advance for keeping it.

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Romans front pagePart 2: Romans 5–8 →

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# Romans 5–8 — New Life in Christ

Part 2 of 4 · Romans — A Complete Review · Bible study by Hollis McGehee · verse by verse

Every Scripture reference in blue is a link: tap or click it to read the passage in the ESV on our website.

## Just want to read Romans 5–8?

Skip the study notes and go straight to the Scripture. Tap or click a chapter to read it in the ESV on our website.

**Romans 5:1–21** **Romans 6:1–23**

**Romans 7:1–25** **Romans 8:1–39**

## Study every verse

Justified by faith, we have peace with God, we are dead to sin and alive to God, and we live by the Spirit. The section climbs from “no condemnation” (Romans 8:1) to “no separation” (Romans 8:39).

Begin with the Scripture, then read the study notes and the passages to read alongside. After each section, pause over the question. The aim is to understand Paul’s meaning and put it into practice in dependence on Christ.

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# Chapter 5

## Peace with God Through Faith

### Romans 5:1

Read the verse: Romans 5:1

**Study Notes**

“Therefore” is the first of three great turns in Romans (Romans 5:1; 8:1; 12:1). Here the gospel changes our standing: from guilty to justified, from hostility to peace with God. Justification is God’s once-for-all verdict; peace with God is the new relationship that verdict creates.

As Pastor Chris Berg preached, in our courts a person may be found “not guilty,” but justification is far better than that. God does not merely declare the believing sinner not guilty; He declares that person righteous, with the righteousness of Christ credited to him. And because God is just, He does not declare someone righteous and then remain hostile toward him.

**Read alongside** Romans 3:24 ; Romans 8:1 ; Ephesians 2:14 ; Colossians 1:20

## Romans 5:2

Read the verse: Romans 5:2

**Study Notes**

Through Christ we have access by faith into the grace in which we stand. Access is the open door we now walk through daily. None of it rests on how we feel on a given day; it rests on what God has declared about those who trust His Son.

Only the high priest could once enter the Most Holy Place, and then only once a year. When Christ died the curtain was torn, and now all who trust Him have direct access to the Father. And we “rejoice in hope of the glory of God,” not with fingers crossed, but with confident expectation.

**Read alongside** Ephesians 2:18 ; Hebrews 10:19–22 ; Colossians 1:27 ; Romans 12:12

## Romans 5:3

Read the verse: Romans 5:3

**Study Notes**

“Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings.” Most of us make decisions to avoid suffering, yet Paul says we rejoice in it because of what it produces. The first thing suffering produces is endurance (hypomonē), patient staying power, the strength to remain steady under a load without quitting.

**Read alongside** James 1:2–4 ; 1 Peter 1:6–7 ; Romans 12:12 ; 2 Corinthians 4:17

## Romans 5:4

Read the verse: Romans 5:4

**Study Notes**

Endurance produces character, and character produces hope. As Pastor Chris Berg put it, hard times either build character or reveal the lack of it; suffering does not destroy a believer’s walk with Christ but refines it, so that he holds on even tighter to the glory to come.

Hope fuels perseverance, and perseverance proves that hope is real.

**Read alongside** James 1:12 ; Romans 8:24–25 ; 1 Peter 5:10

## Romans 5:5

Read the verse: Romans 5:5

**Study Notes**

Hope does not put us to shame; it will not end in disappointment. Biblical hope is confident expectation grounded in God, not wishful thinking. And we know our hope is not empty, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.

As Pastor Chris Berg said, someone without the Spirit may think it foolish to wait for the glory of God, but we do not wait with empty hearts. Our hearts are full in Christ Jesus.

**Read alongside** Psalm 25:3 ; Galatians 4:6 ; Romans 8:16 ; Titus 3:5–6

## Romans 5:6

Read the verse: Romans 5:6

**Study Notes**

When did Christ die for us? "While we were still weak," helpless to save ourselves, and "at the right time," the time God appointed. He died for "the ungodly." Our goodness was never the reason He died for us.

**Read alongside** Galatians 4:4–5 ; Romans 4:5 ; 1 Peter 3:18

## Romans 5:7

Read the verse: Romans 5:7

**Study Notes**

Paul points to how rare it is for one person to die for another. Someone might scarcely die for a righteous person, and perhaps someone would dare to die for a good person. Even the best human love has its limits. God's love goes far beyond; it reaches even to a sinner such as I.

**Read alongside** John 15:13 ; 1 John 3:16 ; Philippians 2:5–8

## Romans 5:8

Read the verse: Romans 5:8

**Study Notes**

This verse is a stop on the Roman Road, the path from the problem to the promise. All have sinned (Romans 3:23), and the wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23), but "God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us." He did not wait for us to improve. He loved us at our worst.

Christ died for us before we were declared righteous, while we were still sinners, weak, and His enemies. Through faith we receive the righteousness of the living Christ, and a dead Christ would have no righteousness to give.

**Read alongside** Romans 3:23 ; Romans 6:23 ; John 3:16 ; 1 John 4:9–10

## Romans 5:9

Read the verse: Romans 5:9

### Study Notes

Since we have now been justified by Christ's blood, "much more" shall we be saved by Him from the wrath of God. Paul's "much more" argument moves from the harder thing to the easier one. If God did the hardest thing, giving His Son for enemies, He will certainly finish the work for those now reconciled to Him.

This does not mean God never corrects His children. Correction comes from God's love; condemnation comes from His justice, and for the believer that issue has already been settled.

**Read alongside** 1 Thessalonians 1:10 ; John 5:24 ; Romans 8:1 ; Hebrews 12:6

## Romans 5:10

Read the verse: Romans 5:10

### Study Notes

We were enemies, and God reconciled us to Himself by the death of His Son. Now, much more, we shall be saved by His

life. The cross settles our guilt; the living, interceding Christ secures our future. That is why Easter is not an extra to the gospel but part of its heart. Matthew Henry put it this way: “We are reconciled by Christ humbled, we are saved by Christ exalted.”

Pastor Chris Berg used the picture of a will. Jesus wrote us into His will and signed it with His blood; a will comes into force at death, so He died. Then He rose to carry out the will Himself, and He lives forever to intercede for us.

**Read alongside** Hebrews 7:25 ; 2 Corinthians 5:18–19 ; Colossians 1:21–22 ; Luke 22:20

## Romans 5:11

Read the verse: Romans 5:11

### Study Notes

“More than that, we also rejoice in God.” We rejoice not only in His gifts but in God Himself. After sin entered in the Garden, mankind turned against God, but God did not answer with war. He sent a peacemaker, His Son, to bring us back into fellowship with Himself.

The One who made peace between us and Himself through Christ is “the God of peace” (Romans 15:33). Reconciliation is not something we wait for; we “have now received” it.

**Read alongside** 2 Corinthians 5:18–20 ; Philippians 3:1 ; Romans 15:33

**Put it into practice** Pastor Chris Berg asked whether we have "cashed the check." Is any part of you still trying to add to what Jesus paid? Name it before the Lord, confess that Jesus paid it all, and spend a few minutes simply thanking God for the peace with Him that is already yours.

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## Death in Adam, Life in Christ

### Romans 5:12

Read the verse: Romans 5:12

**Study Notes**

Paul now steps back to the beginning. Sin came into the world through one man, Adam, and death came through sin. Because all sinned, death spread to all. All people are sinners and need to be saved from their sin; no one is left out, Jew or Gentile. The wages of sin is death, separation from God (Romans 6:23).

**Read alongside** Genesis 2:17 ; Genesis 3:6 ; Romans 3:23 ; Romans 6:23

### Romans 5:13

Read the verse: Romans 5:13

**Study Notes**

Sin was in the world before the law of Moses was given. Without a written law, sin was not charged in the same way, as the breaking of a known command. But sin was still there, and its effects were plain.

**Read alongside** Romans 4:15 ; Romans 7:7–8 ; Galatians 3:19

### Romans 5:14

Read the verse: Romans 5:14

**Study Notes**

The proof is that death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over people who had not broken a specific command as Adam did. Death was everywhere. And Paul calls Adam “a type of the one who was to come,” a pattern pointing ahead to Christ. As one man’s act affected all who belonged to him, so would another Man’s act.

**Read alongside** Genesis 5:5 ; 1 Corinthians 15:22 ; 1 Corinthians 15:45

### Romans 5:15

Read the verse: Romans 5:15

**Study Notes**

But Christ is not simply Adam in reverse; He is far greater. The free gift is not like the trespass. If many died through one man’s trespass, “much more” have the grace of God and the

free gift abounded for many through Jesus Christ. Grace is always bigger than sin.

**Read alongside** Romans 6:23 ; Ephesians 2:4–7 ; 2 Corinthians 9:15

## Romans 5:16

Read the verse: Romans 5:16

**Study Notes**

Look at the difference in scale. One sin brought judgment and condemnation; but the free gift came after many trespasses and brought justification. God's grace did not answer one sin; it answered all of them.

**Read alongside** Romans 8:1 ; Isaiah 1:18 ; Colossians 2:13–14

## Romans 5:17

Read the verse: Romans 5:17

**Study Notes**

Through Adam, death reigned like a king. Through Christ, those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness will reign in life. Notice the word "receive." This is a gift, received by faith, and it changes who is on the throne.

**Read alongside** John 10:10 ; 2 Timothy 2:12 ; Revelation 22:5

## Romans 5:18

Read the verse: Romans 5:18

**Study Notes**

Here is the summary. Adam's sin brought condemnation and death; Christ's one act of righteousness, His obedient life and sacrificial death, brings justification and life for all who are in Him.

**Read alongside** 1 Corinthians 15:21–22 ; 2 Corinthians 5:21 ; Romans 3:24

## Romans 5:19

Read the verse: Romans 5:19

**Study Notes**

By one man's disobedience many were made sinners; by one Man's obedience many will be made righteous. Jesus was obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. We are made right with God by His obedience, not by ours. The question for each of us is whose family we belong to: Adam's or Christ's.

**Read alongside** Philippians 2:8 ; Isaiah 53:11 ; Hebrews 5:8–9

## Romans 5:20

Read the verse: Romans 5:20

**Study Notes**

The law came in “to increase the trespass.” The law is good and holy, but only Christ can remove sin and overcome its power. The law only serves to show us what sin is; it makes sin visible. And then comes one of the most wonderful truths in all of Romans: where sin increased, grace abounded all the more.

Paul knows some will twist that into an excuse: “If grace covers everything, why not keep on sinning?” His answer in 6:1–2 is the strongest “no” the Greek language allows: “By no means!” Grace is never an excuse to remain under sin’s rule.

**Read alongside** Romans 3:20 ; Romans 6:1–2 ; Galatians 3:24 ; 1 Timothy 1:14–15

## Romans 5:21

Read the verse: Romans 5:21

**Study Notes**

Two kings, two kingdoms. Sin reigned in death; now grace reigns through righteousness, leading to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. Sin is like a king that has lost his throne but still tries to give orders (Romans 6:12). The believer no longer has to obey him. Eternal life is not a wage; it is God’s free gift, found only in Christ Jesus our Lord.

**Read alongside** Romans 6:12–14 ; Romans 6:23 ; John 10:28

**Put it into practice** Where sin increased, grace abounded all the more. Think of the sin you are most ashamed of, and read

Romans 5:20–21 over it. Then ask yourself: in what one area this week am I still letting a dethroned king give the orders? Choose one concrete step of obedience under grace's reign.

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# Chapter 6

## Dead to Sin, Alive to Christ

### Romans 6:1

Read the verse: Romans 6:1

**Study Notes**

Romans 5 ended with a wonderful truth: where sin increased, grace increased all the more. Paul knows some will twist that into an excuse: "If grace covers everything, why not keep on sinning?" The words "continue in sin" translate the Greek epimenōmen tē hamartia, which means to persist, remain or keep on in the realm of sin. The picture is not of a single slip but of staying put, making sin the place where we live.

Paul uses this same verb, epimenō, for good persistence as well as bad: we can continue in God's kindness (Romans 11:22) and continue in the faith (Colossians 1:23), or continue in unbelief (Romans 11:23). So the question for each of us is not only "Do I ever sin?" but "Where am I choosing to remain?"

**Read alongside** Romans 5:20–21 ; Romans 3:8 ; Romans 11:22 ; Colossians 1:23

## Romans 6:2

Read the verse: Romans 6:2

### Study Notes

Paul asks the question only to reject it. His answer, mē genoito, is the strongest “no” in the Greek language: “By no means!” or, as older translations put it, “God forbid!” Then he gives the reason: we “died to sin.” A Christian has died with Christ to sin’s rule, so how can we still make our home in it? Grace is never a reason to stay under sin’s control; it is the power that sets us free from it.

**Read alongside** Romans 6:11 ; Galatians 2:20 ; 1 Peter 2:24 ; Romans 3:31

## Romans 6:3

Read the verse: Romans 6:3

### Study Notes

“Baptized into Christ Jesus” (ebaptisthēmen eis Christon Iēsoun) means we have been joined to Him, and so we were baptized “into His death.” Through faith, pictured in baptism, His death became our death to sin’s rule. This is why a Christian cannot be comfortable living in sin: we belong to the One who died to put sin away.

**Read alongside** Galatians 3:27 ; Colossians 2:12 ; 1 Corinthians 12:13

## Romans 6:4

Read the verse: Romans 6:4

### Study Notes

“We were buried together with Him” (synetaphēmen oun autō). Burial is the proof that a death is real and final. Baptism pictures the old life laid in the grave with Christ, and rising from the water pictures the new life that follows. Just as the Father raised Jesus in glory, we are raised to “walk in newness of life” (en kainotēti zōēs peripatēsōmen).

To “walk” is everyday language. Newness of life is not only a moment at the baptistry; it is the way we live on Monday morning. Christ’s resurrection is both the pattern and the power for that new walk.

**Read alongside** Colossians 2:12 ; 2 Corinthians 5:17 ; Ephesians 4:22–24 ; Galatians 2:20

## Romans 6:5

Read the verse: Romans 6:5

### Study Notes

Paul’s word for “united” is symphytoi, literally “grown together.” It pictures two plants grafted so closely that they grow as one.

We do not merely admire Christ from a distance; we share His life. If we share His death, we will certainly share His resurrection too, and so we share His break with sin.

**Read alongside** John 15:4–5 ; Philippians 3:10–11 ; 2 Timothy 2:11

## Romans 6:6

Read the verse: Romans 6:6

### Study Notes

The “old self” (ho palaios hēmōn anthrōpos, “our old man”) is who we were in Adam, before Christ: a person ruled by sin. Paul says that person “was crucified with Him” (synestaurōthē). The body of sin is “brought to nothing” (katargeō). That does not mean sin no longer exists in us, but that its power to command us has been broken. A slave whose master has died no longer has to obey him.

**Read alongside** Galatians 2:20 ; Galatians 5:24 ; Ephesians 4:22–24 ; Colossians 3:9–10

## Romans 6:7

Read the verse: Romans 6:7

### Study Notes

Paul uses a legal word here. “Set free” is literally “justified” (dedikaiōtai) from sin. Death settles every claim. Sin’s claim on

the believer has been settled at the cross, and it no longer has any right to rule over us.

**Read alongside** Romans 6:18 ; Romans 8:1–2 ; 1 Peter 4:1–2

## Romans 6:8

Read the verse: Romans 6:8

**Study Notes**

“If we died with Christ, we believe we will also live with Him” (pisteuomen hoti kai syzēsomen autō). Dying with Christ is never the end of the story. The same union that joined us to His death guarantees our share in His life, now in daily obedience and one day in glory.

**Read alongside** 2 Timothy 2:11 ; Colossians 3:3–4 ; John 14:19

## Romans 6:9

Read the verse: Romans 6:9

**Study Notes**

Christ, raised from the dead (Christos egertheis ek nekrōn), “no longer dies.” Death has lost its grip on Him forever. Because our new life is His life, it rests on a victory that can never be reversed.

**Read alongside** Revelation 1:18 ; Acts 2:24 ; Hebrews 7:24–25

## Romans 6:10

Read the verse: Romans 6:10

**Study Notes**

“He died to sin once for all” (ephapax). Jesus dealt with sin completely; His sacrifice never needs repeating. Now “He lives to God” (zē tō theō). His whole life is turned toward the Father. That is the pattern for ours: one decisive break with sin, and then a life lived to God.

**Read alongside** Hebrews 9:26–28 ; Hebrews 10:10 ; 1 Peter 3:18

## Romans 6:11

Read the verse: Romans 6:11

**Study Notes**

This is the first command in Romans 6. Everything before it tells us what God has done; now Paul tells us what to do with it. “Consider” (logizesthe) is an accountant’s word: to count something as true and act on it. We do not make ourselves dead to sin by feeling dead. We believe what God says happened in Christ and then live as if it is true, because it is.

Faith treats God’s facts as more real than our feelings. Dead to sin (nekrous men tē hamartia), but alive to God (zōntas de tō theō) in Christ Jesus: that is who we are. What would change this week if we counted that as true before we felt it?

**Read alongside** Galatians 2:20 ; Colossians 3:1–3 ; 2 Corinthians 5:14–15 ; 1 Peter 2:24

## Romans 6:12

Read the verse: Romans 6:12

### Study Notes

“Let not sin reign” (mē oun basileuetō hē hamartia) pictures sin as a king. It has lost its throne, but it still tries to give orders. Our bodies are still mortal and still feel sin’s pull, but we do not have to obey its passions. Truth now becomes a daily choice about who sits on the throne of our lives.

**Read alongside** Galatians 5:16 ; Romans 13:14 ; 1 Peter 2:11

## Romans 6:13

Read the verse: Romans 6:13

### Study Notes

Our members, the parts of our bodies, are hopla: tools or even weapons. Our eyes, hands, tongue and feet will serve someone. Every day we choose whose side they fight on. Paul says do not keep offering them to sin; instead, “present yourselves to God” (parastēsate heautous tō theō) as people brought from death to life.

Name one: your tongue, your eyes, your hands. What is one specific way you can present it to God today?

**Read alongside** Romans 12:1 ; 1 Corinthians 6:19–20 ; Ephesians 6:13 ; Romans 13:12

## Romans 6:14

Read the verse: Romans 6:14

**Study Notes**

Verse 14 is not a command but a promise: “sin shall not be lord over you” (hamartia gar hymōn ou kyrieusei). Why? Because we are not under law but under grace. The law told us what to do; grace gives us a new Master and the power to do it.

Matthew Henry: “Sin may struggle in a believer, and may create him a great deal of trouble, but it shall not have dominion; it may vex him, but shall not rule over him.” (Commentary on the Whole Bible, Romans 6:14) Grace does not give us permission to stay where we were. It gives us a new place to live.

**Read alongside** Romans 7:4–6 ; Romans 8:2 ; Titus 2:11–12 ; Galatians 5:18

**Put it into practice** Romans 6:1–14 moves in three steps: know, reckon, present. Ask yourself honestly: is there any sin I have quietly settled into, telling myself grace will cover it? Name it before God today, count yourself dead to it and alive

to Him, and choose one part of your body to present to God as an instrument for righteousness.

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## Slaves to Righteousness

### Romans 6:15

Read the verse: Romans 6:15

**Study Notes**

Paul raises the same false idea a second time, now from a different angle: if we are not under law, are we free to sin? Again he answers, “By no means!” He has met this slander before (Romans 3:8). Freedom from the law is not freedom to do as we please; it is freedom to belong to God.

**Read alongside** Romans 3:8 ; Romans 6:1–2 ; Galatians 5:13 ; 1 Peter 2:16

### Romans 6:16

Read the verse: Romans 6:16

**Study Notes**

Paul states a plain truth of life: whatever we keep obeying becomes our master. There is no neutral ground. Either we serve sin, which leads to death, or we serve obedience, which leads to righteousness. Every choice is a step toward one master or the other.

**Read alongside** John 8:34–36 ; Matthew 6:24 ; 2 Peter 2:19

## Romans 6:17

Read the verse: Romans 6:17

**Study Notes**

Paul breaks into thanksgiving. We were once slaves of sin, but God changed our hearts so that we became obedient from the heart to the teaching we received. The credit goes to God, not to us. True obedience is not grudging outward rule-keeping; it comes from a heart He has made new.

**Read alongside** Ezekiel 36:26–27 ; Ephesians 2:1–5 ; 2 Timothy 1:13

## Romans 6:18

Read the verse: Romans 6:18

**Study Notes**

We are no longer slaves of sin but slaves of righteousness. In Christ we have a new Master. Being set free from sin did not leave us without a master; it placed us under the One whose service is perfect freedom.

**Read alongside** John 8:36 ; Galatians 5:1 ; Romans 6:7

## Romans 6:19

Read the verse: Romans 6:19

**Study Notes**

Paul says he is speaking “in human terms” because slavery was something everyone in Rome understood. Once we offered our members to impurity and lawlessness, and it only led to more lawlessness. Now we are to offer those same members to righteousness, and that leads to sanctification, growing holiness. The same energy we once gave to sin can and must now be given to God.

**Read alongside** Romans 6:13 ; Romans 12:1 ; 1 Thessalonians 4:3–4 ; Titus 3:3

## Romans 6:20

Read the verse: Romans 6:20

**Study Notes**

When we were slaves of sin, we were “free” in regard to righteousness. That kind of freedom sounds attractive, but it was really bondage. We had no part in what is right and good before God, and we did not even know what we were missing.

**Read alongside** Ephesians 2:1–3 ; John 8:34 ; Titus 3:3

## Romans 6:21

Read the verse: Romans 6:21

**Study Notes**

Paul asks an honest question: what fruit did that old life produce? The things we once enjoyed now make us ashamed, and their end is death. Sin never pays what it promises. Looking back with clear eyes helps us refuse to go back.

**Read alongside** Galatians 6:7–8 ; James 1:14–15 ; Ephesians 5:11–12

## Romans 6:22

Read the verse: Romans 6:22

### Study Notes

“But now” marks the great change. Set free from sin and made slaves of God, we bear a new kind of fruit. It leads to sanctification, a life made more and more holy, and its end is eternal life. This is the freedom Paul celebrates: not freedom from God, but freedom to belong to Him.

**Read alongside** Romans 7:4 ; Galatians 5:22–23 ; John 15:8 ; 1 Peter 1:15–16

## Romans 6:23

Read the verse: Romans 6:23

### Study Notes

This verse is one of the steps on the Roman Road. Sin earns a wage, and the wage is death: separation from God. But eternal life is not a wage. It is a free gift, and it is found only “in Christ

Jesus our Lord.” Put it beside Romans 3:23, “all have sinned,” and Romans 10:9–10, believe and confess, and you can walk someone from the problem to the promise.

Sin requires death, and Christ paid that price at the cross. As Pastor Chris Berg preached, a gift must still be received: he told of a birthday check from his father that sat uncashed for months. Nothing was wrong with the check; it simply had not been cashed. Christ paid for the sins of the world, but many have not “cashed the check.”

**Read alongside** Romans 3:23–24 ; Romans 5:8 ; Romans 10:9–10 ; John 3:16 ; Ephesians 2:8–9

**Put it into practice** Every life serves a master. Look honestly at the fruit of your days this week: is it leading toward holiness or back toward shame? Then think of one person who needs to hear Romans 6:23, and ask God for the courage to walk them down the Roman Road this week.

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# Chapter 7

## Released from the Law

### Romans 7:1

Read the verse: Romans 7:1

**Study Notes**

Paul now turns to those who know the law. Everyone understood one simple principle: the law has authority over a person only as long as that person lives. Death ends its claim. This chapter will show how believers are freed from the law through Christ.

**Read alongside** Romans 6:14 ; Romans 6:7 ; Galatians 2:19

## Romans 7:2

Read the verse: Romans 7:2

**Study Notes**

Paul gives an everyday example. A married woman is bound to her husband by law as long as he lives. If he dies, she is released from that law. The bond was real and binding, but death brought it to an end.

**Read alongside** 1 Corinthians 7:39 ; Romans 7:1

## Romans 7:3

Read the verse: Romans 7:3

**Study Notes**

The same woman who would be called an adulteress for marrying another while her husband lives is free to marry after his death. Nothing about her changed; death changed her

legal standing. Paul is preparing us to see what Christ's death has done for our relationship to the law.

**Read alongside** Matthew 5:32 ; Romans 7:2

## Romans 7:4

Read the verse: Romans 7:4

### Study Notes

Now Paul applies the picture. Through the body of Christ, through our union with Him in His death, we died to the law. We are free to belong to Another: the One who was raised from the dead. And the purpose of this new union is fruit for God. We were not set free to live for ourselves but to be joined to Jesus.

**Read alongside** Galatians 2:19–20 ; Romans 6:22 ; John 15:5 ; 2 Corinthians 11:2

## Romans 7:5

Read the verse: Romans 7:5

### Study Notes

When we lived "in the flesh," the law did not make us better. It actually stirred up our sinful passions, which worked in our bodies and bore fruit for death. The law reveals sin, but it cannot save. Its rules could show us the wrong but could not give us the power to do right.

**Read alongside** Romans 6:21 ; Galatians 5:19–21 ; 1 Corinthians 15:56

### Romans 7:6

Read the verse: Romans 7:6

**Study Notes**

“But now” again marks the change. We have been released from the law, dead to what held us captive, so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit and not the old way of the written code. Our obedience is no longer outward rule-keeping driven by fear. It is a new life, empowered by the Holy Spirit, coming from a changed heart.

**Read alongside** 2 Corinthians 3:6 ; Romans 8:2–4 ; Galatians 5:18 ; Jeremiah 31:33

**Put it into practice** Ask yourself: am I trying to please God by keeping rules in my own strength, or am I living in the new way of the Spirit? This week, before each day begins, thank God that you belong to the risen Christ, and ask His Spirit to bear fruit through you rather than trying to produce it yourself.

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## The Law and Sin

### Romans 7:7

Read the verse: Romans 7:7

**Study Notes**

If the law stirs up sin, is the law itself sinful? “By no means!” The law is not the problem; it is the mirror that shows the problem. Paul says he would not have known what coveting was if the law had not said, “You shall not covet.” The law defines and reveals sin and shows us we need a righteousness not our own.

**Read alongside** Exodus 20:17 ; Romans 3:20 ; Galatians 3:24 ; James 1:23–24

## Romans 7:8

Read the verse: Romans 7:8

**Study Notes**

Sin is so twisted that it takes a good commandment and uses it as an opportunity. Tell a child not to touch something, and the desire to touch it grows. In the same way, the law’s “do not” awakened every kind of covetous desire in Paul. Apart from the law, sin lay dead, unnoticed and unexposed.

**Read alongside** James 1:14–15 ; 1 Corinthians 15:56 ; Romans 5:20

## Romans 7:9

Read the verse: Romans 7:9

**Study Notes**

Paul was once “alive apart from the law,” comfortable and confident in himself. But when the commandment came home to his heart, sin came alive, and he died. He saw himself as God saw him: guilty and lost. Some read this verse as describing Adam; either way, the commandment exposes sin and strips away false confidence.

**Read alongside** Philippians 3:4–6 ; Romans 3:19–20 ; Genesis 2:16–17

### Romans 7:10

Read the verse: Romans 7:10

**Study Notes**

The commandment promised life to those who kept it, but for Paul it proved to bring death. The fault was not in the commandment but in the sinner who could not keep it. The law showed the way of life but could not give the power to walk in it.

**Read alongside** Leviticus 18:5 ; Galatians 3:21 ; Romans 8:3

### Romans 7:11

Read the verse: Romans 7:11

**Study Notes**

Sin is a deceiver. It seized the opportunity the commandment gave, deceived Paul, and through it killed him. This is how sin

has worked since the garden: it twists what God has said and promises what it can never deliver.

**Read alongside** Genesis 3:13 ; Hebrews 3:13 ; 2 Corinthians 11:3

## Romans 7:12

Read the verse: Romans 7:12

**Study Notes**

Paul's verdict is clear: the law is holy, and the commandment is "holy and righteous and good." God gave it; He is its Author. It shows His character, sets out sin and its penalties, and points ahead to the righteousness revealed in Jesus. It is Scripture, profitable for teaching, reproof, correction and training in righteousness.

**Read alongside** Psalm 19:7–9 ; 1 Timothy 1:8 ; 2 Timothy 3:16 ; Psalm 119:97

## Romans 7:13

Read the verse: Romans 7:13

**Study Notes**

Did something good become death to Paul? No. It was sin, using what is good, that brought death. And in doing so, sin was exposed for what it really is. Through the commandment,

sin is shown to be “sinful beyond measure.” The law does not make us sinners; it shows us how deep our sin really goes.

**Read alongside** Romans 5:20 ; Galatians 3:19 ; Romans 3:19–20

## Romans 7:14

Read the verse: Romans 7:14

**Study Notes**

Paul has already said the law is holy; now he adds, “the law is spiritual.” It speaks to the heart, not just to outward actions, and it cannot be understood without the Spirit’s help. But “I am of the flesh, sold under sin.” The key to this whole passage is understanding two words: flesh and Spirit. The flesh will never do the things of God. The Spirit will never do the things of the world.

Notice that Paul switches to the present tense. He had been a Christian for more than twenty years when he wrote Romans, yet he still felt this tension. Before salvation Paul had no struggle with sin; he was free to sin. His struggle then was with God. After salvation we have no struggle with God; we have a struggle with our flesh.

**Read alongside** Galatians 5:16–17 ; 1 Corinthians 2:14 ; Romans 8:7 ; 2 Timothy 3:16

## Romans 7:15

Read the verse: Romans 7:15

### Study Notes

Every believer asks these questions sooner or later: Why do I do what I don't want to do? Why do I not do the things I want to do? Catch a little boy doing the wrong thing and ask, "Young man, why did you do that?" He will invariably and truthfully say, "I don't know." Paul says much the same: "I do not understand my own actions."

We think of Paul as the man with all the answers, but here he offers no quick, easy explanation, because sin makes no sense. We try to give our sin good reasons, but there is no good reason for sin.

**Read alongside** Galatians 5:17 ; Romans 3:10–12 ; Jeremiah 17:9

## Romans 7:16

Read the verse: Romans 7:16

### Study Notes

Even in his failure, Paul's heart sides with God. If he does what he does not want, he agrees that the law is good. That agreement shows his heart has been changed. A believer hates sin and grieves over it, while an unbeliever may simply enjoy it.

**Read alongside** Psalm 119:128 ; Psalm 51:3–4 ; Romans 7:12

## Romans 7:17

Read the verse: Romans 7:17

**Study Notes**

“It is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me” is not Paul dodging blame. He is showing where the problem lives. The real “I,” the new person in Christ, agrees with God and delights in His law. Sin still lives in the flesh and wages war. This is no excuse for sin; God has given us the way out, and we must take hold of that truth and let Him win the battles.

Matthew Henry: “The remainders of indwelling sin are a very grievous burden to a gracious soul.” (Commentary on the Whole Bible, Romans 7:14–25)

**Read alongside** Galatians 2:20 ; 1 John 1:8–9 ; 1 Corinthians 10:13

## Romans 7:18

Read the verse: Romans 7:18

**Study Notes**

“Nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh.” Paul’s flesh, his fallen nature and all he was apart from Christ, is still opposed to God and quick to respond to sin. He has the desire

to do what is right but not the ability to carry it out. We are spiritual beings living inside flesh bodies until we go home, pilgrims passing through.

**Read alongside** Romans 3:10–12 ; Galatians 5:17 ; Philippians 2:13 ; 1 Peter 2:11

### Romans 7:19

Read the verse: Romans 7:19

**Study Notes**

Bob Deffinbaugh tells of Joni Eareckson Tada, paralyzed at seventeen. In the hospital her sheet slipped, and she could do nothing to cover herself. What a frustration. But Paul's frustration is deeper: it is one thing for our body not to do what we tell it to do; it is quite another to find our body very obedient to something else, quick to respond to the pull of sin. The very things we despise, we find ourselves doing.

**Read alongside** Galatians 5:16–17 ; Matthew 26:41 ; James 3:2

### Romans 7:20

Read the verse: Romans 7:20

**Study Notes**

Paul repeats his point from verse 17 to make sure we see it. When he does what he does not want, the root is sin dwelling within. The struggle itself is evidence of new life. But the

struggle is not the victory; verse 25 and Romans 8 show where victory comes from.

**Read alongside** Romans 7:17 ; Romans 8:1–2 ; Romans 8:13

## Romans 7:21

Read the verse: Romans 7:21

### Study Notes

Paul finds a principle at work: whenever he wants to do right, evil lies close at hand. Temptation is near at the very moment we set our hearts on doing good. Knowing this keeps us watchful and dependent on God, who with every temptation provides a way of escape.

**Read alongside** 1 Corinthians 10:13 ; Genesis 4:7 ; 1 Peter 5:8

## Romans 7:22

Read the verse: Romans 7:22

### Study Notes

“I delight in the law of God, in my inner being.” This is one of the clearest signs that Paul is describing his life as a believer. Romans 8:7 says the unbelieving mind cannot submit to God’s law, yet Paul delights in it. An unbeliever does not describe himself with this kind of inner conflict; this is a Christian speaking humbly about his unworthiness.

**Read alongside** Psalm 1:2 ; Psalm 119:97 ; 2 Corinthians 4:16 ; Romans 8:7

## Romans 7:23

Read the verse: Romans 7:23

### Study Notes

Paul sees another law in his members waging war against the law of his mind, making him captive to the law of sin. He is like a hostage held by sin inside his own body. Living between Christ's first and second comings, the believer has an old nature that is passing away and a new nature being renewed day by day, and the two are at war.

**Read alongside** Galatians 5:17 ; James 4:1 ; 1 Peter 2:11 ; Ephesians 4:22–24

## Romans 7:24

Read the verse: Romans 7:24

### Study Notes

"Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?" Every Christian who reads this passage should identify with that cry. Notice that Paul asks "Who," not "What." The answer is not a better plan or more willpower; it is a Person. Admitting how weak our flesh really is, is not defeat; it is where holiness begins.

John Stott wrote: “Indeed, an honest and humble acknowledgment of the hopeless evil of our flesh, even after the new birth, is the first step to holiness. To speak quite plainly, some of us are not leading holy lives for the simple reason that we have too high an opinion of ourselves.” (John R. W. Stott, Men Made New, Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1966, p. 74, as quoted by Bob Deffinbaugh, Bible.org)

**Read alongside** Romans 8:1–2 ; 2 Corinthians 12:9 ; Philippians 3:20–21 ; Isaiah 6:5

## Romans 7:25

Read the verse: Romans 7:25

### Study Notes

“Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!” If there were no answer to Paul’s cry, we would hardly dare to press on. But there is an answer, and His name is Jesus. Paul still admits the tension: with his mind he serves the law of God, but with his flesh the law of sin. Do not stop at Romans 7; always read on into Romans 8:1–2.

Romans 7 tells the truth about us; Romans 8 tells the truth about Christ. If we skip Romans 7, we become proud and shallow. If we stop at Romans 7, we live defeated. As Bob Deffinbaugh wrote, “The darkest hour of Romans 5-7 comes just before the dawn of Romans 8.” We walk by the Spirit, and He gives us the victory.

**Read alongside** Romans 8:1–2 ; 1 Corinthians 15:57 ; Galatians 5:16 ; Romans 8:13

**Put it into practice** Where do you most feel the war within: something you keep doing that you hate, or something good you keep failing to do? Name it honestly before God. Then, instead of simply trying harder in your own strength, thank Him through Jesus Christ our Lord and ask what it would look like this week to walk by the Spirit in that very battle.

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# Chapter 8

## Life in the Spirit

### Romans 8:1

Read the verse: Romans 8:1

**Study Notes**

“There is therefore now no condemnation.” This is one of the three great “therefore” turns in Romans (Romans 5:1; 8:1; 12:1). Romans 5:1 changed our standing before God; Romans 8:1 changes our security. The believer is no longer under condemnation and now lives in the power of the Spirit.

Never stop reading at the end of Romans 7. Paul's cry, "Who will deliver me from this body of death?" is answered with a Person, not a plan: "Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!" Romans 7 tells the truth about us; Romans 8 tells the truth about Christ. As Bob Deffinbaugh put it, "The darkest hour of Romans 5-7 comes just before the dawn of Romans 8."

**Read alongside** Romans 7:24–25 ; Romans 5:1 ; John 5:24 ; Romans 8:34

## Romans 8:2

Read the verse: Romans 8:2

**Study Notes**

The war within is real, but it is not the end of the story. Paul was held captive by "the law of sin" in his members (Romans 7:23), and here he says "the law of the Spirit of life" has set us free from "the law of sin and death." The answer is not more willpower. God has given us the way out; we have to take hold of that truth and let Him win the battles.

**Read alongside** Romans 7:23 ; Romans 6:22 ; Galatians 5:16–17 ; 1 Corinthians 10:13

## Romans 8:3

Read the verse: Romans 8:3

**Study Notes**

The law is holy, righteous and good (Romans 7:12). It reveals sin and shows us we need a righteousness not our own, but it cannot save, because it has to work through weak flesh. So God did what the law could not do. He sent His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and at the cross He condemned sin in Him. Our sin was judged there, and that is why there is no condemnation left for us.

**Read alongside** Romans 7:12 ; 2 Corinthians 5:21 ; Galatians 4:4–5

## Romans 8:4

Read the verse: Romans 8:4

**Study Notes**

Faith does not throw the law away; it upholds it (Romans 3:31). Faith agrees with everything the law says: God is holy, sin is real, and it must be paid for. Then the one who is justified by faith receives the Holy Spirit, who writes God's law on the heart and produces the obedience the law could only command. That is how "the righteous requirement of the law" is fulfilled in those who walk by the Spirit.

**Read alongside** Romans 3:31 ; Jeremiah 31:33 ; Ezekiel 36:26–27 ; Galatians 5:16

## Romans 8:5

Read the verse: Romans 8:5

**Study Notes**

Two words unlock this chapter: flesh and Spirit. The flesh will never do the things of God, and the Spirit will never do the things of the world. What we set our minds on shows which one is leading us. We are spiritual beings living inside flesh bodies until we go home, pilgrims passing through, so we set our minds on the things of the Spirit.

**Read alongside** Galatians 5:16–17 ; Colossians 3:1–2 ; Philippians 3:19–20

## Romans 8:6

Read the verse: Romans 8:6

**Study Notes**

Paul sets two roads side by side. A mind set on the flesh leads to death; a mind set on the Spirit brings life and peace. This is the same peace with God that Romans 5:1 promised to those justified by faith, now lived out day by day. What fills our thoughts will shape where our lives go.

**Read alongside** Romans 5:1 ; Isaiah 26:3 ; Galatians 6:8

## Romans 8:7

Read the verse: Romans 8:7

**Study Notes**

Before salvation our struggle was not with sin; we were free to sin. Our struggle was with God, because the mind set on the flesh is hostile to Him and does not submit to His law. That is why it matters that Paul could say in Romans 7:22, “I delight in the law of God, in my inner being.” The unbelieving mind cannot do that. If we now grieve over sin and love God’s ways, it is evidence of a changed heart.

**Read alongside** Romans 7:22 ; Romans 5:10 ; James 4:4

## Romans 8:8

Read the verse: Romans 8:8

### Study Notes

“Those who are in the flesh” are people who do not belong to Christ. However religious or hardworking they may be, they cannot please God, because nothing done in our own strength can make us right with Him. Pleasing God begins with faith in His Son and the new life His Spirit gives.

**Read alongside** Hebrews 11:6 ; Isaiah 64:6 ; Romans 3:20

## Romans 8:9

Read the verse: Romans 8:9

### Study Notes

Paul turns from warning to assurance: if the Spirit of God dwells in you, you are not “in the flesh” but “in the Spirit.”

Every believer has the Holy Spirit; there are no second-class Christians in God's family. And the reverse is just as plain: anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to Him.

**Read alongside** 1 Corinthians 6:19–20 ; Ephesians 1:13–14 ; 1 Corinthians 12:13

## Romans 8:10

Read the verse: Romans 8:10

**Study Notes**

Even with Christ in us, our bodies still grow old and will die, because sin brought death into the world. But our spirit is alive, because God has counted us righteous in Christ. We live in the "now but not yet": truly alive today, still waiting for the day our bodies share in that life.

**Read alongside** 2 Corinthians 4:16 ; Galatians 2:20 ; Colossians 1:27

## Romans 8:11

Read the verse: Romans 8:11

**Study Notes**

The same Spirit who raised Jesus from the dead lives in every believer. That is a promise for our bodies, not only our souls. The God who raised His Son will one day raise us and give life

to these mortal bodies. Death does not have the last word for anyone who belongs to Christ.

**Read alongside** 1 Corinthians 15:20–22 ; 2 Corinthians 4:14 ; Philippians 3:20–21

**Put it into practice** Name the one place where you most feel the “war within” right now. What would it look like this week to walk by the Spirit in that battle instead of simply trying harder in your own strength?

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## Heirs with Christ

### Romans 8:12

Read the verse: Romans 8:12

**Study Notes**

Paul draws a conclusion: we are debtors, but not to the flesh. The flesh has done nothing for us but lead us toward death. We owe our lives to the God who saved us and to the Spirit who gives us life, so we no longer live to please the old self.

**Read alongside** Romans 6:12–14 ; 1 Corinthians 6:19–20 ; Galatians 5:13

### Romans 8:13

Read the verse: Romans 8:13

**Study Notes**

Here is how the Christian life is lived. If we skip Romans 7, we become proud and shallow, pretending the battle is not real. If we stop at Romans 7, we live defeated, as if the battle cannot be won. We live in Romans 8: “by the Spirit” putting to death the deeds of the body, resting in “no condemnation,” and thanking God through Jesus Christ our Lord every time the flesh is overcome.

**Read alongside** Galatians 5:16–17 ; Colossians 3:5 ; Romans 13:14

## Romans 8:14

Read the verse: Romans 8:14

**Study Notes**

Being led by the Spirit is the mark of God’s children. The Spirit does not drag us; He leads us, through His Word, through conviction, and through a growing desire to please the Father. If we are following the Holy Spirit away from sin and toward Christ, that is a sign we belong to God’s family.

**Read alongside** Galatians 5:18 ; Galatians 5:25 ; John 1:12–13

## Romans 8:15

Read the verse: Romans 8:15

**Study Notes**

We were once slaves living in fear. Now God has given us “the Spirit of adoption,” and we cry, “Abba! Father!” His love was not earned; it is His own choice to bring us into His family. A child does not have to wonder whether he is welcome at his Father’s table.

**Read alongside** Galatians 4:6–7 ; 1 John 4:18 ; 2 Timothy 1:7

## Romans 8:16

Read the verse: Romans 8:16

**Study Notes**

God does not leave us guessing about whether we belong to Him. His Spirit bears witness with our spirit that we are His children. That inner assurance rests on the promises of His Word, not on our changing feelings.

**Read alongside** 1 John 3:1 ; 1 John 4:13 ; Ephesians 1:13–14

## Romans 8:17

Read the verse: Romans 8:17

**Study Notes**

Children are heirs, and we are “fellow heirs with Christ,” sharing in all He has. As Pastor Chris Berg preached, Jesus wrote us into His will and signed it with His blood, then rose to carry out that will Himself. The road to that inheritance runs

through suffering with Him, but it ends in being glorified with Him.

**Read alongside** Galatians 4:7 ; 1 Peter 1:3–4 ; Philippians 3:10 ; 1 Peter 4:13

**Put it into practice** This week, begin your prayers by calling God “Father,” and thank Him by name for one thing that belongs to you as His child and heir.

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## Future Glory

### Romans 8:18

Read the verse: Romans 8:18

**Study Notes**

Paul does not pretend suffering is small; he had known more of it than most. But he weighed it against the glory to come and found there is no comparison. Our present troubles are real, but they are temporary, and the glory that will be revealed in us is forever.

**Read alongside** 2 Corinthians 4:17–18 ; 1 Peter 5:10 ; Romans 5:2–3

### Romans 8:19

Read the verse: Romans 8:19

**Study Notes**

Paul pictures all creation standing on tiptoe, eagerly waiting for the day God's children are revealed. When Christ appears, His people will appear with Him in glory. The whole world is waiting for what God has promised us.

**Read alongside** Colossians 3:4 ; 1 John 3:2

## Romans 8:20

Read the verse: Romans 8:20

**Study Notes**

When sin entered the world, the curse fell not only on mankind but on the ground itself. Creation was "subjected to futility," unable to be what God first made it to be. Yet even that judgment came "in hope." God was already planning the restoration.

**Read alongside** Genesis 3:17–19 ; Ecclesiastes 1:2

## Romans 8:21

Read the verse: Romans 8:21

**Study Notes**

The day is coming when creation itself will be set free from decay and share in the freedom of God's children. Sickness, death and ruin will not last forever. God will make all things new.

**Read alongside** Revelation 21:1–5 ; 2 Peter 3:13 ; Isaiah 65:17

## Romans 8:22

Read the verse: Romans 8:22

**Study Notes**

Creation groans like a woman in labor. Earthquakes, disease and death are the cries of a world that is not yet what it will be. But labor pains are not pointless; they come before new life.

**Read alongside** John 16:21–22 ; Romans 8:26

## Romans 8:23

Read the verse: Romans 8:23

**Study Notes**

We groan too. We have “the firstfruits of the Spirit,” the first part of the harvest that guarantees the rest, yet we still wait for the day God finishes His work in us. Much of our salvation is still ahead: the new body, the end of sin and sorrow, and seeing Jesus face to face.

**Read alongside** 2 Corinthians 5:2–5 ; Philippians 3:20–21 ; 1 Corinthians 15:42–44 ; Ephesians 1:13–14

## Romans 8:24

Read the verse: Romans 8:24

**Study Notes**

We were saved “in this hope.” Salvation is real now, but much of it is still ahead, and if we already held it all in our hands we would not need to hope for it. Biblical hope (elpis) is not “I hope so.” It is a sure expectation resting on God’s promise, like an anchor holding a ship steady in a storm (Hebrews 6:19). Matthew Henry said, “Our happiness is not in present possession: We are saved by hope.”

**Read alongside** Hebrews 6:19 ; 2 Corinthians 4:18 ; 1 Peter 1:3

## Romans 8:25

Read the verse: Romans 8:25

**Study Notes**

Hope changes how we wait. Paul’s word for waiting means eager, forward-leaning expectation, and he pairs it with patience (hypomonē), staying under a load without giving up. We do not wait like someone stuck in a line, bored and restless; we wait like a family expecting a loved one home. Biblical patience is not passivity; it is strength under strain, and it proves our hope is real.

**Read alongside** Isaiah 40:31 ; Hebrews 11:1 ; James 5:7–8

## Romans 8:26

Read the verse: Romans 8:26

**Study Notes**

“Likewise”: just as hope holds us up, the Holy Spirit holds us up too. The word for “helps” pictures someone taking hold of the other end of a heavy load and lifting it with us. We often do not know what to pray for, and that is not a failure to be ashamed of; it is part of being weak creatures. In those moments the Spirit Himself prays for us with groanings too deep for words. No believer ever prays alone.

**Read alongside** 2 Corinthians 12:9 ; Ephesians 6:18

## Romans 8:27

Read the verse: Romans 8:27

**Study Notes**

The One who “searches hearts” is God the Father, and He knows perfectly what the Spirit is asking, because the Spirit always prays “according to the will of God.” Our prayers may be clumsy, confused, or cut short by tears, but the Spirit’s prayers for us are never mistaken. We need not fear “praying wrong”; our weak prayers are held safely in God’s hands. As Matthew Henry wrote, “The Spirit in the heart never contradicts the Spirit in the word.”

**Read alongside** Psalm 139:1 ; 1 John 5:14

## Romans 8:28

Read the verse: Romans 8:28

**Study Notes**

Paul says “we know.” This is not a guess or a hopeful feeling; it is settled confidence. He does not say all things are good, or that they will feel good, but that God works all things together (synergeō, our word “synergy”) for good, even suffering and other people’s sin. Joseph’s brothers meant evil, but God meant it for good. The promise has an address: “those who love God,” who are “called according to his purpose.” And the “good” is spelled out in the very next verse.

A true missionary story shows this promise at work. In 1923 Svea Flood died in the Congo at twenty-seven, having led just one village boy to Christ, and her husband David went home bitter, saying God had ruined his life. Forty years later their daughter learned that the boy had grown up to lead his village to Christ, and she was able to tell her dying father, “You didn’t go to Africa in vain.” Like David Flood, we are tempted to judge God by one painful moment. Romans 8:28 invites us to trust Him with the part of the story we cannot yet see; in Spurgeon’s words, the believer “trusts him where he cannot trace him.”

**Read alongside** Genesis 50:20 ; Ephesians 1:11 ; 2 Timothy 1:9 ; John 12:24

## Romans 8:29

Read the verse: Romans 8:29

**Study Notes**

Verse 29 answers the question verse 28 raises: what is the "good"? It is that God's people be "conformed to the image of his Son." "Foreknew" is not mere foresight of facts; in Scripture "to know" often means to set love upon, as God "knew" Israel and Abraham (Amos 3:2; Genesis 18:19). God marked out where He was taking His people and is shaping them into the likeness of Jesus now, a little at a time. Jesus is the "firstborn," first in honor, and we are brought into His family as His brothers and sisters.

God's goal for your life is not primarily comfort or success but Christlikeness, and everything, including delay, loss and weakness, is being used toward that end. John Newton, once a blaspheming slave trader, looked back late in life and saw that God had not wasted even his darkest years. He could say he was not what he ought to be, nor what he wished or hoped to be, and yet, "I am not what I once was." As Matthew Henry put it, "Holiness consists in our conformity to the image of Christ."

**Read alongside** 2 Corinthians 3:18 ; 1 John 3:2 ; Amos 3:2

## Romans 8:30

Read the verse: Romans 8:30

### Study Notes

This is the golden chain of salvation, with no missing links. Everyone God predestined, He called; everyone He called, He justified; everyone He justified, He glorified. Paul even writes

“glorified” in the past tense, because in God’s plan it is that certain. Our hope does not rest on how strongly we hold on to God but on how firmly He holds on to us. What God begins, He finishes.

**Read alongside** Philippians 1:6 ; 2 Timothy 1:9 ; Ephesians 1:11

**Put it into practice** Verse 29 says the “good” God is working toward is making you like Jesus. Name one hard thing in your life right now, and ask God this week how He may be using it to shape you into the image of His Son.

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## God’s Everlasting Love

### Romans 8:31

Read the verse: Romans 8:31

**Study Notes**

“These things” are everything Paul has said in chapter 8: no condemnation, the Spirit within, adoption as God’s children, and God’s unbreakable purpose. Paul does not say we will have no enemies; believers will face opposition. But if God Himself is on our side, no opponent can finally win. John Calvin called this truth “the chief and the only support which can sustain us in every temptation.”

**Read alongside** Psalm 118:6 ; Hebrews 13:6

## Romans 8:32

Read the verse: Romans 8:32

**Study Notes**

Paul argues from the greater to the lesser. Abraham was spared from giving up Isaac, but the Father did not spare His own Son; Paul even uses the same word found in the Greek of Genesis 22. If God has already given the most costly gift He had, He will not hold back anything we truly need. “All things” does not mean everything we want, but everything that is good for us in His purpose. Why do we trust God for our eternal soul and then struggle to trust Him for our daily needs? The cross is proof He can be trusted with both.

**Read alongside** Genesis 22:12 ; John 3:16 ; Philippians 4:19

## Romans 8:33

Read the verse: Romans 8:33

**Study Notes**

Paul, like a lawyer, walks us into a courtroom. Who can bring a charge against God’s people? Accusers may come: our own conscience, other people, even Satan. But the Judge Himself has already declared us righteous, so the charges cannot stand.

**Read alongside** Isaiah 50:8 ; Romans 5:1 ; Revelation 12:10

## Romans 8:34

Read the verse: Romans 8:34

### Study Notes

Who can condemn? Only Christ could, and He is the very One who died for us, rose again, sits at God's right hand, and is praying for us now. The One who could condemn us is the One who defends us. Calvin wrote, "He then who seeks hereafter to condemn us, must bring back Christ himself to death again." When your past is thrown in your face, point to your Advocate.

**Read alongside** Hebrews 7:25 ; 1 John 2:1 ; Romans 4:25

## Romans 8:35

Read the verse: Romans 8:35

### Study Notes

Paul does not promise an easy life. He names seven hard things, and he had faced most of them himself. A few years after this letter, Nero blamed the Christians for the fire of Rome, and many of its first readers were torn by dogs or burned as torches; these words were not theory to them. Trouble may take away comfort, health, possessions, or even life, but it cannot tear us out of Christ's love. Matthew Henry said, "All these troubles are very consistent with the strong and constant love of the Lord Jesus."

**Read alongside** 2 Corinthians 4:8–9 ; John 16:33 ; 2 Corinthians 11:23–27

## Romans 8:36

Read the verse: Romans 8:36

### Study Notes

Paul quotes Psalm 44, where God's people suffered even though they had been faithful. Suffering is not strange for Christians, and it is not a sign that Christ has stopped loving us. Paul reminds us that we are like "sheep to be slaughtered" right before he speaks of victory. The question is not whether trials will come, but whether they can separate us from Christ. They cannot.

**Read alongside** Psalm 44:22 ; 2 Corinthians 4:10–11 ; 1 Peter 4:12–13

## Romans 8:37

Read the verse: Romans 8:37

### Study Notes

Notice where the victory happens: "in all these things," not after them or apart from them. Paul's word means "we super-conquer." We do not just survive; the very things meant to destroy us end up serving God's purpose of making us like His Son. And the victory is "through him who loved us," Christ's

strength, not ours. In Matthew Henry's words, "we are not only conquerors, but more than conquerors, that is, triumphers."

**Read alongside** 1 John 5:4 ; 2 Corinthians 2:14

## Romans 8:38

Read the verse: Romans 8:38

**Study Notes**

"I am sure" is a settled word in Greek: Paul was persuaded once and for all, and he stays persuaded. Then he sweeps through everything that might threaten us, in pairs: death and life, angels and rulers, things present and things to come, and powers. He covers every realm and every moment of time. Which one do you find hardest to believe cannot separate you from God?

**Read alongside** John 10:28–29 ; 2 Timothy 1:12

## Romans 8:39

Read the verse: Romans 8:39

**Study Notes**

Paul adds "height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation," so nothing is left out. Everything on the list is created; only God is not, and He is the One who loves us. Romans 8 began with "no condemnation" and ends with "no separation." This love is found "in Christ Jesus our Lord," and those who belong

to Him are held by a love nothing can break. As Matthew Henry wrote, “Time shall not separate us, eternity shall not.”

**Read alongside** 1 Peter 1:5 ; Ephesians 3:17–19 ; Jude 1:24–25

**Put it into practice** Look again at Paul’s list in verses 35–39. Which item do you most fear could come between you and God? Write it down, and beside it write verse 39 as God’s answer to that fear.

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# Romans 9–11 — God's Faithfulness to Israel and the Nations

Part 3 of 4 · Romans — A Complete Review · Bible study by Hollis McGehee · verse by verse

Every Scripture reference in blue is a link: tap or click it to read the passage in the ESV on our website.

## Just want to read Romans 9–11?

Skip the study notes and go straight to the Scripture. Tap or click a chapter to read it in the ESV on our website.

**Romans 9:1–33** **Romans 10:1–21**

**Romans 11:1–36**

## Study every verse

Has God's Word failed because so many in Israel rejected Christ? Paul answers no: God's mercy, His remnant and His promises still stand, the Gentiles are grafted in, and it all ends in worship.

Begin with the Scripture, then read the study notes and the passages to read alongside. After each section, pause over the question. The aim is to understand Paul's meaning and put it into practice in dependence on Christ.

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# Chapter 9

## Paul's Anguish over Israel

### Romans 9:1

Read the verse: Romans 9:1

**Study Notes**

Romans 8 ended in triumph: nothing can separate God's people from His love in Christ. That raises a hard question,

and Paul faces it head-on in chapters 9–11. If God's promises are so sure, what about Israel, the people who received them yet mostly rejected their Messiah? Before Paul answers, he opens his heart with a threefold oath: he speaks the truth in Christ, he is not lying, and his conscience bears witness in the Holy Spirit.

The Greek word for conscience, syneidēsis, literally means "joint-knowledge," an inner witness that judges our actions and motives. The believer's conscience is meant to be made tender and kept honest by the Holy Spirit. As John Calvin wrote on this verse, "By these words he calls his own conscience before the tribunal of God, for he brings in the Spirit as a witness to his feeling." Ask yourself: is my conscience clear before the Holy Spirit when I speak of my concern for others?

**Read alongside** Romans 8:38–39 ; 2 Corinthians 1:12 ; Acts 24:16 ; Romans 2:15

## Romans 9:2

Read the verse: Romans 9:2

### Study Notes

Paul has just finished the joy of Romans 8, yet he turns at once to grief. Knowing God's love did not make him cold toward others; it made him hurt for those who did not yet know it. The word for anguish, odynē, means a consuming pain, and Paul

calls it “unceasing,” not a passing feeling. Jesus wept over Jerusalem, and Paul carried the same heart for his people.

A hallmark of spiritual maturity is a broken heart for those who are lost. Assurance of our own salvation should deepen our burden for the lost, not quiet it. When was the last time you felt “unceasing anguish” for someone’s salvation?

**Read alongside** Luke 19:41–42 ; Romans 10:1 ; Matthew 23:37 ; 1 Timothy 2:1–4

## Romans 9:3

Read the verse: Romans 9:3

### Study Notes

Paul says he could wish himself “accursed” (anathema, something devoted to destruction) and cut off from Christ, if it would bring his kinsmen to salvation. He does not say this could actually happen; he has just said nothing can separate us from God’s love (Romans 8:38–39). “I could wish” shows how far his love would go if it were possible. Moses prayed something much like this for Israel (Exodus 32:32).

This is intercessory love that looks like Christ’s, who truly did bear the curse for others (Galatians 3:13). John Calvin wrote, “He could not have expressed a greater ardour of love than by what he testifies here; for that is surely perfect love which refuses not to die for the salvation of a friend.” Do we love our

neighbors enough to suffer loss so that they might gain Christ?

**Read alongside** Exodus 32:31–32 ; Galatians 3:13 ; Romans 8:38–39 ; Romans 10:1

## Romans 9:4

Read the verse: Romans 9:4

**Study Notes**

Paul lists the privileges God gave Israel. God adopted them as His people, lived among them in glory, made covenants with them, and gave them His law, His worship and His promises. The word for glory, doxa, points to the manifest presence of God that filled the Tabernacle and the Temple. No nation had ever been given so much.

Yet spiritual privilege does not automatically mean salvation. Israel had every advantage, and still many did not believe. Growing up close to the things of God is a gift, but it is not the same as knowing God.

**Read alongside** Exodus 4:22 ; Exodus 40:34–35 ; Deuteronomy 7:6 ; Romans 3:1–2

## Romans 9:5

Read the verse: Romans 9:5

**Study Notes**

The list reaches its high point: the patriarchs belong to Israel, and from their race, according to the flesh, came the Christ. Then Paul calls Christ “God over all, blessed forever.” This is one of the clearest statements in Scripture that Jesus is God. As Matthew Henry put it, “He is not only over all, as Mediator, but he is God blessed for ever.”

All these privileges could not save anyone who refused the Christ they pointed to. Ask yourself honestly: am I relying on my religious heritage, or on the Person of Christ?

**Read alongside** John 1:1–3 ; Colossians 2:9 ; Titus 2:13 ; Matthew 1:1

**Put it into practice** Paul’s joy in Romans 8 turned straight into grief for the lost in Romans 9. Write down the names of the people you carry on your heart, and pray for each of them by name every day this week.

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## God’s Sovereign Choice

### Romans 9:6

Read the verse: Romans 9:6

**Study Notes**

This verse is the key to the whole chapter. Has God’s word “failed” (ekpiptō, literally “to fall out,” to lose its force)? Paul’s

answer is no. God never promised to save every physical descendant of Jacob. Within Israel there has always been an Israel of faith, a people God called, and the promise has been kept to them.

God's word stands, even when many who carry the family name do not believe. Matthew Henry wrote, "Grace does not run in the blood; nor are saving benefits inseparably annexed to external church privileges." Our true identity is defined by God's call, not by our family line, so we must never assume we are "in" because of our background.

**Read alongside** Isaiah 40:8 ; Numbers 23:19 ; Romans 2:28–29 ; Galatians 3:7

## Romans 9:7

Read the verse: Romans 9:7

### Study Notes

Abraham had two sons, Ishmael and Isaac, but God's promise ran through Isaac alone: "Through Isaac shall your offspring be named" (Genesis 21:12). Being Abraham's physical offspring did not by itself make someone a child of the promise. Physical descent from a believer does not grant spiritual standing.

**Read alongside** Genesis 21:12 ; Galatians 4:22–23 ; John 8:39

## Romans 9:8

Read the verse: Romans 9:8

### Study Notes

Paul draws the lesson: it is not the children of the flesh who are God's children, but the children of the promise who are "counted" as offspring. The word logizomai is an accounting term, meaning to put something to one's account. God reckons as His own those born of His promise and power. That is how every child of God is born, not of human descent or effort, but of God (John 1:12–13).

Ask yourself: am I a "child of the flesh," trying to reach God by my own means, or a "child of promise," resting on what God has said and done?

**Read alongside** John 1:12–13 ; Galatians 4:28 ; Galatians 3:29

## Romans 9:9

Read the verse: Romans 9:9

### Study Notes

Paul quotes the promise itself: "About this time next year I will return, and Sarah shall have a son" (Genesis 18:10). Isaac was born because God promised him and then did the impossible for an old man and a barren woman. God's children are born of His promise and His power, never of human ability.

**Read alongside** Genesis 18:10–14 ; Genesis 21:1–2 ; Hebrews 11:11

## Romans 9:10

Read the verse: Romans 9:10

### Study Notes

“And not only so.” Someone might say that Ishmael and Isaac had different mothers, and that explains the difference. So Paul goes further. Jacob and Esau were twins: same father, same mother, conceived together by Rebekah. Nothing in their family background set one apart from the other.

**Read alongside** Genesis 25:21–23 ; Romans 9:7–8

## Romans 9:11

Read the verse: Romans 9:11

### Study Notes

God’s word about the twins came before either was born or had done anything good or bad. Paul says this was so “that God’s purpose of election might continue, not because of works but because of him who calls.” The word for election, eklogē, means a choosing or selection. God’s purpose rests on His call, not on our performance. Matthew Henry wrote, “The difference was made between them by the divine counsel before they were born, or had done any good or evil.”

Grace and earning cannot be mixed. The moment we add even a little of our own work as the reason God accepts us, it stops being a gift and becomes wages (Romans 11:6). That is why no one who belongs to God has any room to boast.

**Read alongside** Romans 11:5–6 ; Ephesians 2:8–9 ; 2 Timothy 1:9 ; Titus 3:5

## Romans 9:12

Read the verse: Romans 9:12

### Study Notes

Rebekah was told, “The older will serve the younger” (Genesis 25:23). This promise came while the boys were still in the womb, before either had any record to point to. Human merit plays no part in God’s sovereign plan. He keeps His purpose by His own call.

**Read alongside** Genesis 25:23 ; Genesis 27:29 ; 1 Corinthians 1:27–29

## Romans 9:13

Read the verse: Romans 9:13

### Study Notes

“Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated” quotes Malachi 1:2–3 and speaks of God’s choice of Jacob and his descendants for covenant blessing. The wonder is not that God passed by Esau,

but that He set His love on Jacob at all. As C. H. Spurgeon preached, “...there was, there could have been nothing in Jacob, that made God love him; and the only reason why God loved him, must have been because of his own grace...”

Does the idea of God’s sovereign choice lead you to worship or to worry? Paul means it to humble us and to draw us to worship, because everyone who belongs to God is there by mercy.

**Read alongside** Malachi 1:2–3 ; Deuteronomy 7:7–8 ; Ephesians 1:4–6

## Romans 9:14

Read the verse: Romans 9:14

### Study Notes

Paul anticipates the objection: “Is there injustice on God’s part?” His answer is a firm “By no means!” Since no one deserves mercy, God is not unjust when He gives it to whom He chooses. No one is treated unjustly by God; some receive mercy they did not earn. Paul asked the same kind of question back in Romans 3:5–6, and gave the same answer: the Judge of all the earth will do what is right.

**Read alongside** Genesis 18:25 ; Romans 3:5–6 ; Deuteronomy 32:4

## Romans 9:15

Read the verse: Romans 9:15

### Study Notes

Paul quotes what God told Moses: “I will have mercy on whom I have mercy” (Exodus 33:19). The word eleeō means to show kindness or help to the afflicted or undeserving. Mercy belongs to God to give. If mercy were owed, it would not be mercy. Matthew Henry wrote, “All God’s reasons of mercy are taken from within himself.”

**Read alongside** Exodus 33:19 ; Exodus 34:6–7 ; Lamentations 3:22–23

## Romans 9:16

Read the verse: Romans 9:16

### Study Notes

Here is the heart of the chapter: salvation “depends not on human will or exertion, but on God, who has mercy.” It does not depend on how much we want it or how hard we try. As Paul wrote to Titus, God “saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy” (Titus 3:5). Mercy is a gift, not a right.

This truth humbles us, and it gives us hope. If salvation rested on human effort, some people would seem too far gone. Because it rests on God’s mercy, no one is beyond His reach.

Do you feel you “deserve” God’s mercy, or are you stunned by it?

**Read alongside** Titus 3:5 ; Ephesians 2:4–5 ; John 1:13

## Romans 9:17

Read the verse: Romans 9:17

### Study Notes

Paul turns to Pharaoh, quoting Exodus 9:16: God raised him up to show His power in him, “that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth.” God used even Pharaoh’s rebellion to display His power and make His name known. God is sovereign over the hearts of rulers, and His name will be proclaimed.

**Read alongside** Exodus 9:16 ; Exodus 15:11 ; Joshua 2:9–11 ; Proverbs 21:1

## Romans 9:18

Read the verse: Romans 9:18

### Study Notes

“He has mercy on whomever he wills, and he hardens whomever he wills.” The word sklērynō means to make stubborn. Exodus says both that Pharaoh hardened his own heart (Exodus 8:15) and that God hardened it (Exodus 9:12). Pharaoh was not an innocent man forced into sin; he was a proud ruler who defied God again and again, and God gave

him over to what he chose. Origen, speaking of Pharaoh's heart, observed that "the sun, by one and the same power of its heat, melts wax indeed, but dries up and hardens mud."

The warning for us is plain: every time we hear God's word and refuse it, the heart grows harder. "Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts" (Hebrews 3:15). Is your heart soft toward God's word, or are you becoming resistant?

**Read alongside** Exodus 8:15 ; Exodus 9:12 ; Hebrews 3:15 ; Romans 1:24

## Romans 9:19

Read the verse: Romans 9:19

**Study Notes**

Paul raises the next objection himself: if God has mercy on whom He wills and hardens whom He wills, "Why does he still find fault? For who can resist his will?" Paul does not answer every question we might ask. He answers the attitude behind the question. Some things about God's ways are higher than our ways, and Scripture asks us to trust Him there.

**Read alongside** Isaiah 55:8–9 ; Deuteronomy 29:29 ; Job 40:2

## Romans 9:20

Read the verse: Romans 9:20

**Study Notes**

“Who are you, O man, to answer back to God?” The word antapokrinomai means to reply against, to argue in a hostile way. A creature has no standing to put the Creator on trial; God is the Creator, we are the created, and the distance between us is infinite. Paul is echoing Isaiah: “Shall the clay say to him that fashioneth it, What makest thou?” (Isaiah 45:9, King James Version).

Are there areas of your life where you are “answering back” to God about how He made you or about your circumstances? Bring those questions to Him humbly, as a child to a Father, not as an accuser to a defendant.

**Read alongside** Isaiah 45:9 ; Isaiah 29:16 ; Job 40:2 ; Job 42:2–3

## Romans 9:21

Read the verse: Romans 9:21

**Study Notes**

Paul draws on the picture of the potter from Jeremiah 18:6: the potter has the right to shape the clay for his purposes. Matthew Henry wrote, “The rude and unformed mass of matter hath no right to this or that form, but is shaped at the pleasure of him that formeth it.” This is humbling, but it is also a

comfort. We are in the hands of a wise and good Maker, not left to chance.

**Read alongside** Jeremiah 18:1–6 ; Isaiah 64:8 ; 2 Timothy 2:20–21

## Romans 9:22

Read the verse: Romans 9:22

### Study Notes

Notice what Paul stresses: God “has endured with much patience” those who deserve His wrath. He did not rush to judgment. There are “vessels of wrath prepared for destruction,” and that is a sober warning, but even toward them God shows long patience. Matthew Henry drew a careful line here: “Sinners fit themselves for hell, but it is God that prepares saints for heaven.”

**Read alongside** Romans 2:4 ; 2 Peter 3:9 ; Exodus 34:6

## Romans 9:23

Read the verse: Romans 9:23

### Study Notes

The goal of God’s whole plan is “to make known the riches of his glory for vessels of mercy, which he has prepared beforehand for glory.” The word proetoimazō means to make ready ahead of time. God’s patience toward the wicked is

meant to magnify His glory toward the redeemed. How does knowing you are a “vessel of mercy” change how you see your own identity?

**Read alongside** Ephesians 2:4–7 ; Ephesians 2:10 ; Romans 8:29–30

## Romans 9:24

Read the verse: Romans 9:24

### Study Notes

Then Paul names the vessels of mercy: “even us whom he has called, not from the Jews only but also from the Gentiles.” The chapter that began with Paul’s grief over Israel opens out to a people from every nation. God’s promise has not failed; it is reaching farther than anyone expected.

**Read alongside** Romans 10:12 ; Ephesians 2:14 ; Galatians 3:28 ; Revelation 7:9

## Romans 9:25

Read the verse: Romans 9:25

### Study Notes

Paul shows from the prophets that God always intended to call a people from outside Israel. Hosea spoke of Israel, rejected for unfaithfulness, being restored as God’s people: “Those who were not my people I will call ‘my people’” (Hosea 2:23). Paul

sees in that the same mercy reaching Gentiles who were never God's people at all.

**Read alongside** Hosea 2:23 ; 1 Peter 2:10 ; Ephesians 2:12–13

## Romans 9:26

Read the verse: Romans 9:26

### Study Notes

Paul adds Hosea 1:10: in the very place where it was said, "You are not my people," they will be called "sons of the living God." This is a promise. Those who were outsiders, far from God, can become His own children. No one is too far away for God's call to reach.

**Read alongside** Hosea 1:10 ; Galatians 3:26 ; 1 John 3:1

## Romans 9:27

Read the verse: Romans 9:27

### Study Notes

Isaiah adds the other side: though the sons of Israel be as many as the sand of the sea, "only a remnant of them will be saved" (Isaiah 10:22). The word hypoleimma means what is left over, a small surviving group. God has always kept a remnant by His grace, as He kept seven thousand in Elijah's day (1 Kings 19:18), and Paul will return to this in Romans 11:5.

**Read alongside** Isaiah 10:22–23 ; 1 Kings 19:18 ; Romans 11:5

## Romans 9:28

Read the verse: Romans 9:28

### Study Notes

“The Lord will carry out his sentence upon the earth fully and without delay.” God’s judgment is certain, and His word will be carried out completely. That gives our witness urgency. If God’s judgment is “full and without delay,” how urgent is our mission to share the Gospel?

**Read alongside** Isaiah 10:23 ; 2 Corinthians 6:2 ; 2 Peter 3:9–10

## Romans 9:29

Read the verse: Romans 9:29

### Study Notes

Paul closes with Isaiah 1:9: if the Lord had not left offspring, Israel would have been wiped out like Sodom and Gomorrah. Without God’s mercy, even the remnant would not exist. Matthew Henry wrote, “It is so far from being an impeachment of the justice and righteousness of God that so many perish and are destroyed, that it is a wonder of divine power and mercy that all are not destroyed.”

Whether Paul is speaking of Gentiles called in or a remnant of Israel kept, the lesson is the same: anyone who belongs to God is there by mercy, not by right. That truth should lead us

to worship, to humility, and to a deeper burden for those who do not yet know Christ.

**Read alongside** Isaiah 1:9 ; Genesis 19:24–25 ; Lamentations 3:22

**Put it into practice** Paul says salvation “depends not on human will or exertion, but on God, who has mercy” (verse 16). Think of one person you have considered too far gone, and begin praying today for God’s mercy to reach them.

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## Israel’s Unbelief

### Romans 9:30

Read the verse: Romans 9:30

**Study Notes**

Paul now sums up the surprising result. Gentiles, who were not pursuing righteousness at all, have obtained it, and it is “a righteousness that is by faith.” They did not climb up to God; God reached down to them in Christ, and they received His gift by believing. Paul will say the same in Romans 10:20, quoting Isaiah: “I have been found by those who did not seek me.”

**Read alongside** Romans 10:20 ; Isaiah 65:1 ; Romans 3:21–22 ; Philippians 3:9

## Romans 9:31

Read the verse: Romans 9:31

### Study Notes

Israel, by contrast, pursued a law that would lead to righteousness and did not succeed in reaching it. Their problem was not a lack of effort or sincerity. They were running hard in the wrong direction. Romans 11:7 says it plainly: “Israel failed to obtain what it was seeking.” Seeking without obtaining is a warning to every one of us against relying on religious effort.

**Read alongside** Romans 10:2–3 ; Romans 11:7 ; Galatians 1:14

## Romans 9:32

Read the verse: Romans 9:32

### Study Notes

Why did Israel miss it? “Because they did not pursue it by faith, but as if it were based on works.” There are only two kinds of righteousness on offer: the kind we try to build ourselves, and the kind God gives. Paul later described his own change of heart this way: he wanted to “be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ” (Philippians 3:9).

Paul says they “stumbled over the stumbling stone.” The very One who came to save them became the thing they tripped over, because receiving Him meant giving up the record they were trying to build. Self-righteousness is still the main barrier that keeps people from God’s righteousness.

**Read alongside** Romans 10:3 ; Philippians 3:9 ; Galatians 2:16 ; Isaiah 64:6

## Romans 9:33

Read the verse: Romans 9:33

**Study Notes**

Paul joins two sayings of Isaiah (Isaiah 8:14 and 28:16). God laid a stone in Zion, and that stone is Christ. To those who try to reach God by their own works, He is a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense. To those who trust Him, He is a sure foundation.

Then comes the promise: “whoever believes in him will not be put to shame.” The word kataischynō means to be disappointed or disgraced. God will never fail or embarrass the one who trusts in Him. We can, and we must, count on God in all things, for all time and for eternity.

**Read alongside** Isaiah 28:16 ; Isaiah 8:14 ; 1 Peter 2:6–8 ; Romans 10:11

**Put it into practice** Where are you still tempted to lean on your own record instead of on Christ? Name one way you have been trying to earn God's favor, and in prayer today hand it over and thank Him that whoever believes in Christ will not be put to shame.

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# Chapter 10

## Israel's Unbelief

### Romans 10:1

Read the verse: Romans 10:1

**Study Notes**

Paul opens this chapter with his heart, not his argument. The word for "desire" (eudokia) speaks of a real longing for the good of others, and "prayer" (deēsis) is a specific, heartfelt plea to God. Sincere prayer for the lost is a mark of a heart that beats in step with God's, and salvation is the greatest need of every person, whatever their religious heritage.

These were the very people who opposed Paul and his message. As Matthew Henry put it, "Though Paul preached against them, yet he prayed for them." Ask yourself: do I pray

for the salvation of those who disagree with my faith, or only argue with them?

**Read alongside** Romans 9:1–3 ; 1 Timothy 2:1–4

## Romans 10:2

Read the verse: Romans 10:2

### Study Notes

Paul gives Israel credit: they were zealous for God. He knew that kind of zeal from the inside. Before he met Christ he was “zealous for God” (Acts 22:3) and even persecuted the church. Israel’s problem was not a lack of effort or sincerity, but a lack of the right knowledge (epignōsis, a precise and personal knowing). They were running hard in the wrong direction.

Sincerity and passion are no substitute for truth. It is possible to be very busy in religion and still be lost. Zeal is good when it is aimed at the truth; without the truth, even the most devoted religion cannot save.

**Read alongside** Acts 22:3 ; Galatians 1:14 ; Philippians 3:4–6

## Romans 10:3

Read the verse: Romans 10:3

### Study Notes

There are only two kinds of righteousness on offer: the kind we try to build ourselves, and the kind God gives. Israel did not

know God's righteousness, so they set out to establish their own. Self-righteousness is the great barrier to receiving God's righteousness, because it keeps us pleading our own record.

The word "submit" (hypotassō) means to rank oneself under. Paul later described his own surrender this way: he wanted to "be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ" (Philippians 3:9). To submit to God's righteousness is to stop offering Him our efforts and to receive His gift.

**Read alongside** Philippians 3:9 ; Isaiah 64:6 ; Romans 3:21–22

## Romans 10:4

Read the verse: Romans 10:4

### Study Notes

The Greek word telos can mean both "goal" and "end," and both are true here. The law pointed to Christ as its goal, and in Christ the law's demand as a way of earning righteousness comes to an end, because He kept it perfectly and bore its penalty for us. Matthew Henry said it simply: "When the substance comes, the shadow is gone."

This does not make God's moral commands worthless; they still show us His holy character. But no one is made right with God by keeping them. Righteousness comes "to everyone who

believes," without exception, and that is real peace for anyone who feels they never measure up.

**Read alongside** Matthew 5:17 ; Galatians 3:24 ; Romans 3:20

**Put it into practice** Paul prayed for the very people who opposed him. Name one person you will pray for by name this week, asking God to save them, and ask yourself where you are still leaning on your own record instead of on Christ.

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## The Message of Salvation to All

### Romans 10:5

Read the verse: Romans 10:5

**Study Notes**

Paul now sets two ways side by side. Moses wrote that "the person who does the commandments shall live by them" (Leviticus 18:5). If we choose the law as our path to life, the standard is perfect, continuous performance. We must do (poieō) everything it says, all the time.

No one but Christ has ever walked that road to the end. The law shows us our need; it cannot meet it. That is why this verse points us so clearly to our need for a Savior.

**Read alongside** Leviticus 18:5 ; Galatians 3:10–12 ; James 2:10

## Romans 10:6

Read the verse: Romans 10:6

**Study Notes**

In verses 6–8 Paul borrows the words of Moses from Deuteronomy 30:11–14, where Moses told Israel that God's word was not far off, up in heaven or beyond the sea. Paul applies this to Christ. We do not have to climb up to heaven to bring Christ down; He has already come to us in the flesh.

Faith does not ask us to perform impossible feats to reach God. Christ has already made the move toward us. Matthew Henry wrote, "The way of justification and salvation has in it no such depths or knots as may discourage us."

**Read alongside** Deuteronomy 30:11–12 ; John 3:13 ; John 1:14

## Romans 10:7

Read the verse: Romans 10:7

**Study Notes**

Neither do we have to go down into the abyss, the realm of the dead, to bring Christ up. God has already raised Him. We do not need to conquer death ourselves; Christ has done it, and the work of the resurrection is complete and sufficient.

Ask yourself whether your life ever suggests you are trying to redo what Christ already finished. The work is done. What

remains is to believe it.

**Read alongside** Deuteronomy 30:13 ; 1 Corinthians 15:3–4 ; Ephesians 4:9–10

## Romans 10:8

Read the verse: Romans 10:8

### Study Notes

“The word is near you.” The Gospel is not a distant mystery for experts; it is simple and close at hand (engys, near, immediate). The “word” here is rhēma, the spoken word, the specific message of faith that Paul and the apostles proclaimed.

This word is meant to travel from the ear to the heart and out through the mouth. What God has spoken does not return to Him empty; it does its work in those who receive it.

**Read alongside** Deuteronomy 30:14 ; Isaiah 55:11 ; Psalm 119:11

## Romans 10:9

Read the verse: Romans 10:9

### Study Notes

This is one of the clearest statements of the Gospel in the Bible, and a key step on the Roman Road. Two things go together: believing in the heart and confessing with the mouth.

To “confess” (homologeō) is to say the same thing as God says. In Paul’s day, to confess “Jesus is Lord” (kyrios, Master, supreme authority) was costly, because Caesar claimed that title. It meant yielding to Jesus as Master.

To believe “God raised him from the dead” is to trust that His sacrifice was accepted and His victory is real. Where both are present, God promises: “you will be saved.” Matthew Henry warned, “The profession of faith with the mouth, if there be not the power of it in the heart, is but a mockery.”

**Read alongside** Matthew 10:32 ; Acts 16:31 ; 1 Corinthians 12:3 ; Philippians 2:9–11

## Romans 10:10

Read the verse: Romans 10:10

### Study Notes

Paul now turns the order around: heart first, then mouth. Faith is inward trust; confession is saying so openly. With the heart we believe and are justified, given a right legal standing (dikaiosynē) before God. With the mouth we confess and are saved (sōtēria), which means deliverance, preservation and healing.

Inner faith and outward testimony are two sides of the same coin. Justification is the root; salvation is the fruit. Real faith

does not stay silent. Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.

**Read alongside** 2 Corinthians 4:13 ; Luke 6:45 ; Romans 1:16

## Romans 10:11

Read the verse: Romans 10:11

### Study Notes

Paul quotes Isaiah 28:16, where God promises a tested, precious cornerstone laid in Zion. Peter applies the same verse to Jesus (1 Peter 2:6). The word for “put to shame” (kataischynō) means to be disappointed, disgraced or confounded.

God will never fail or embarrass the one who trusts in Him. We can, and we must, count on Him in all things, for all time and for eternity. And notice the word “everyone” (pas): every single one who believes is included.

**Read alongside** Isaiah 28:16 ; 1 Peter 2:6 ; Psalm 25:3 ; 2 Timothy 1:12

## Romans 10:12

Read the verse: Romans 10:12

### Study Notes

“There is no distinction” (diastolē) between Jew and Greek. God does not show favoritism. The same Lord is Lord of all,

and He pours out His riches on all who call on Him. The spiritual wealth of Christ is open to anyone who asks.

Matthew Henry wrote, “God doth not save any nor reject any because they are Jews, nor because they are Greeks, but doth equally accept both upon gospel terms.” This should change how we look at people who are, look or act different from us. In Christ we are all one, and He has broken down the dividing wall.

**Read alongside** Galatians 3:28 ; Ephesians 2:14 ; Acts 10:34–35 ; Romans 3:22–23

## Romans 10:13

Read the verse: Romans 10:13

### Study Notes

Paul quotes the prophet Joel, and in Joel “the LORD” is the covenant name of God. Paul applies it directly to Jesus, the same Lord of verse 9. That tells us who Jesus is. It also tells us how wide the door is: “everyone.” The Amplified Bible puts it, “calls upon the name of the Lord [invoking Him as Lord].”

To call on (epikaleomai) His name is more than saying a word. It is crying out to Him for help, trusting His person, character and authority (onoma) to save. No one who sincerely cries out to Him that way is turned away. Salvation is an open invitation to the whole human race, and the “whosoever” includes you.

**Read alongside** Joel 2:32 ; Acts 2:21 ; Acts 4:12

## Romans 10:14

Read the verse: Romans 10:14

**Study Notes**

Verses 14–15 are a chain, followed backward: calling on the Lord requires believing; believing requires hearing; hearing requires someone to tell (kēryssō, to herald as an official messenger); telling requires someone sent. God could have written the Gospel across the sky. Instead He chose to send people.

The Ethiopian official in Acts 8 had the Scriptures in his hands but still needed Philip to explain them. This is why we share: the Roman Road is simple enough for any believer to walk someone else down it. Every believer is part of this chain.

**Read alongside** Acts 8:30–31 ; Matthew 28:19–20 ; Matthew 9:37–38

## Romans 10:15

Read the verse: Romans 10:15

**Study Notes**

Preachers must be sent (apostellō, dispatched with a specific commission). Matthew Henry reminds us, “It is God’s prerogative to send ministers; he is the Lord of the harvest.”

And every believer is sent by God into his or her own sphere of influence: home, workplace, neighborhood.

Paul quotes Isaiah 52:7: “How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!” The word hōraios means timely, blooming, lovely. God sees the carrying of the Gospel as a thing of great beauty. As John Calvin wrote, “the gospel does not fall like rain from the clouds, but is brought by the hands of men wherever it is sent from above.”

**Read alongside** Isaiah 52:7 ; Nahum 1:15 ; John 20:21

## Romans 10:16

Read the verse: Romans 10:16

### Study Notes

Hearing the Gospel does not guarantee a positive response. Not all “obeyed” (hypakouō, literally to listen under) the good news. The Gospel is not only to be admired but obeyed, and God sees the rejection of it as disobedience. Isaiah saw it long ago: “Lord, who has believed what he has heard from us?” (Isaiah 53:1).

The same message softens some hearts and hardens others. Origen pictured it this way: “the sun, by one and the same power of its heat, melts wax indeed, but dries up and hardens mud.” When people reject the message we share, we need not

lose heart; it was so for Isaiah, and for Jesus Himself (John 12:37–38).

**Read alongside** Isaiah 53:1 ; John 12:37–38 ; 2 Corinthians 2:15–16

## Romans 10:17

Read the verse: Romans 10:17

**Study Notes**

This verse sums up the chain of verses 14–16. Faith (pistis, persuasion, conviction, reliance) does not grow out of our own feelings or willpower. It is God's gift, and He gives it through His Word, especially "the word of Christ," the message about Jesus. Calvin called this "a remarkable passage with regard to the efficacy of preaching; for he testifies, that by it faith is produced."

That is why reading, hearing and studying Scripture matter so much. If we want stronger faith, the answer is not to try harder to feel sure, but to put ourselves under the Word and increase our intake of it.

**Read alongside** John 5:24 ; Hebrews 4:12 ; John 20:31

## Romans 10:18

Read the verse: Romans 10:18

**Study Notes**

Now Paul answers an objection: perhaps Israel never really heard? Indeed they have. He quotes Psalm 19:4, which speaks of the heavens declaring God's glory, and applies it to the Gospel that had gone out across the inhabited world (oikoumenē). God has made His truth known through creation and through proclamation.

Because God has spoken clearly, no one is without excuse. In a world full of noise, the question is not whether God has spoken, but whether we are listening.

**Read alongside** Psalm 19:1–4 ; Romans 1:20 ; Colossians 1:23

## Romans 10:19

Read the verse: Romans 10:19

### Study Notes

Did Israel not understand? Paul answers from Moses (Deuteronomy 32:21). God said long ago that He would make Israel jealous (parazēloō, to provoke to rivalry) by blessing those who were "not a nation," the Gentiles who had been outsiders.

God sometimes uses the blessing of others to wake up His own people. His grace reaches those once counted foolish, and this humbles the wise, for "God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise" (1 Corinthians 1:27). Paul will develop this hope in Romans 11.

**Read alongside** Deuteronomy 32:21 ; Romans 11:11 ; 1 Corinthians 1:27

## Romans 10:20

Read the verse: Romans 10:20

### Study Notes

Isaiah was “so bold” as to say that God would be found by those who were not even looking for Him (Isaiah 65:1). God is a seeking God. He often finds us before we know we are lost, and His grace is unmerited and often unexpected.

Look back on your own life and remember how God showed Himself to you when you were not looking. That same God gives us hope for those who seem completely uninterested in Him today.

**Read alongside** Isaiah 65:1 ; Luke 19:10 ; Ephesians 2:12–13

## Romans 10:21

Read the verse: Romans 10:21

### Study Notes

Romans 10 ends not with a door slammed shut but with open arms. Israel had heard and had been warned, yet God describes Himself as standing all day long with His hands held out to a “disobedient” (apeitheō, refusing to be persuaded) and “contrary” (antilegō, speaking against) people. Matthew

Henry wrote, “God’s patience towards provoking sinners is admirable.”

Jesus showed the same heart when He wept over Jerusalem: “How often would I have gathered your children together… and you were not willing!” (Matthew 23:37). The chapter leaves Israel responsible for its unbelief and leaves God still inviting. Israel heard; Israel rejected; but Romans 11 will show that God is not finished.

**Read alongside** Isaiah 65:2 ; Matthew 23:37 ; 2 Peter 3:9 ; Romans 11:1–2

**Put it into practice** Who first told you the Gospel, and who might God be sending you to tell? Choose one person you could walk down the Roman Road with this week (Romans 3:23; 6:23; 10:9–10), and make an “I will” statement to do it.

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# Chapter 11

## The Remnant of Israel

### Romans 11:1

Read the verse: Romans 11:1

**Study Notes**

“Has God rejected his people?” Paul answers his own question with the strongest “No!” the Greek language allows: mē genoito, “By no means!” His proof is himself. He is an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin, and yet Christ saved him. He was once a persecutor of the church, and still God’s grace reached him. If God had thrown away His people, Paul himself would be lost.

Matthew Henry put Paul’s thought this way: “Should I say that all the Jews are rejected, I should cut off my own claims, and see myself abandoned.” Your own life can be a case study of the same faithfulness. Look back at the times you felt God had cast you away, and see how He refused to give up on you. We can trust His promises, whatever outward appearances say.

**Read alongside** 1 Samuel 12:22 ; Psalm 94:14 ; Philippians 3:4–6 ; 1 Timothy 1:13

## Romans 11:2

Read the verse: Romans 11:2

### Study Notes

God has not rejected the people “whom he foreknew.” The word (proegnō) means more than knowing facts ahead of time; it means God set His love on them beforehand (Romans 8:29). What God began in love, He does not throw away. Then Paul turns to Elijah, who “appeals to God against Israel.” The word means to plead or intercede. Ask yourself: does my praying

more often plead for people, or against them when they fail? I need God's view of the spiritual state of the world, not just my own limited observation.

**Read alongside** Romans 8:29 ; Amos 3:2 ; 1 Kings 19:9–10

## Romans 11:3

Read the verse: Romans 11:3

**Study Notes**

Paul quotes Elijah's complaint from 1 Kings 19. The prophets had been killed, the altars torn down (the word means dug under, demolished), and Elijah felt utterly alone: "I alone am left." Have you ever felt like the only one left who was faithful? A sense of spiritual isolation can twist our view of what God is actually doing. We must guard against both the pride and the despair of thinking we are the only ones still carrying God's truth.

**Read alongside** 1 Kings 19:10 ; 1 Kings 19:14 ; 1 Kings 18:22

## Romans 11:4

Read the verse: Romans 11:4

**Study Notes**

Elijah had just seen fire fall on Mount Carmel, yet days later he was hiding in a cave, sure he was the last faithful man in Israel. God's answer corrected him gently: seven thousand

others had not bowed the knee to Baal. Discouragement shrinks our view of what God is doing. God always knows His own, even when we cannot see them. As Matthew Henry wrote, “Things are often much better with the church of God than wise and good men think they are.”

Who are the “seven thousand” in your life, the quiet believers who strengthen your faith? John Calvin draws a wise lesson here: “let us not lightly give over to the devil all those whose piety does not openly appear to us” (Commentary on Romans, on 11:4). We can rest in the fact that God is always working behind the scenes, even when we cannot see it.

**Read alongside** 1 Kings 19:18 ; 1 Kings 18:36–39 ; Romans 9:27

## Romans 11:5

Read the verse: Romans 11:5

### Study Notes

“So too at the present time”: what was true in Elijah’s day was true in Paul’s day, and it is true in ours. There is a remnant (leimma, what is left), chosen (eklogē) by grace (charis, unmerited favor). The remnant is not a club of better people. It exists only because God chose to be gracious, and that leaves no room for spiritual elitism in the church. My place in God’s family is a gift of grace, not the result of my own effort.

**Read alongside** Romans 9:27 ; Romans 9:11 ; Joel 2:32

## Romans 11:6

Read the verse: Romans 11:6

**Study Notes**

Paul makes a simple point that is easy to forget: grace and earning cannot be mixed. The moment we add even a little of our own work as the reason God accepts us, it stops being a gift and becomes wages. That is why salvation is “not a result of works, so that no one may boast” (Ephesians 2:8–9). As Matthew Henry said, “It is not grace, properly so called, if it be not perfectly free.”

Why is it so hard for the human heart to accept this? Ask yourself where you are still trying to earn God’s favor rather than resting in what Christ has finished. The answer is to lay down all self-righteousness and rest entirely in His finished work.

**Read alongside** Ephesians 2:8–9 ; Galatians 2:21 ; Romans 4:4–5 ; Titus 3:5

## Romans 11:7

Read the verse: Romans 11:7

**Study Notes**

Israel was seeking righteousness but failed to obtain it, failed to “hit the mark” (epetychen), because they sought it by their own effort (Romans 9:31–32). The elect obtained it; the rest were hardened. That word (epōrōthēsan) means covered with a thick skin, made callous. Origen long ago pictured how “the sun, by one and the same power of its heat, melts wax indeed, but dries up and hardens mud” (De Principiis, III.1.11). The same light that softens one heart hardens another, so we pray for a soft heart that stays responsive to the Holy Spirit.

**Read alongside** Romans 9:31–32 ; 2 Corinthians 3:14 ; Hebrews 3:15

## Romans 11:8

Read the verse: Romans 11:8

### Study Notes

Paul quotes Moses and Isaiah (Deuteronomy 29:4; Isaiah 29:10) to show that Israel’s hardening was no surprise to God; Scripture had spoken of it. A “spirit of stupor” (katanyxis) is a numbness, a spiritual slumber. When people keep refusing the light, God may give them over to the darkness they have chosen (compare Romans 1:24). That is more dangerous than any outward punishment, because the one under it does not even feel it. We can ask God to awaken our senses and give us eyes to see the truth of His Word clearly.

**Read alongside** Deuteronomy 29:4 ; Isaiah 29:10 ; Isaiah 6:9–10 ; Romans 1:24

## Romans 11:9

Read the verse: Romans 11:9

### Study Notes

Now Paul adds David's words from Psalm 69:22. The "table" (trapeza) stands for the blessings God gave His people. The very gifts God gives can become a snare and a stumbling block (skandalon, the trigger-stick of a trap) when we value them above the Giver. So we hold all earthly blessings loosely, and make sure they never take the place of God Himself.

**Read alongside** Psalm 69:22 ; Deuteronomy 8:10–14 ; 1 Timothy 6:17

## Romans 11:10

Read the verse: Romans 11:10

### Study Notes

David's prayer continues: "let their eyes be darkened… and bend their backs forever" (Psalm 69:23). It is a sobering picture of people who refuse the light and stay bent under their burden. Yet Paul will show in the next verses that this hardening is partial and temporary, and that God is using it for good. If your eyes have been opened, rejoice in the light of Christ, who has lifted the burden of sin from your back.

**Read alongside** Psalm 69:23 ; 2 Corinthians 4:4–6 ; Matthew 11:28–30

**Put it into practice** Think of one person you have quietly written off as beyond God's reach. Remember the seven thousand Elijah could not see, and pray for that person by name every day this week.

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## Gentiles Grafted In

### Romans 11:11

Read the verse: Romans 11:11

**Study Notes**

Did Israel stumble so as to fall for good? Again, "By no means!" Their trespass (paraptōma, a false step) was real, but God did not let the stumble be the end of the story. Their rejection of the Messiah became the open door through which the gospel went out to the nations (Acts 13:46). And God intends the blessing of the Gentiles to "make Israel jealous" (Deuteronomy 32:21) and draw them back.

Does your life make others "jealous" for the peace and grace you have? My prayer is that we live lives so filled with the joy of Christ that they create a spiritual hunger in those who do not yet know Him.

**Read alongside** Acts 13:46 ; Deuteronomy 32:21 ; Romans 10:19

## Romans 11:12

Read the verse: Romans 11:12

### Study Notes

Paul reasons from the lesser to the greater. If Israel's failure brought riches to the world, how much more will their "full inclusion" (plērōma, fullness, completion) mean! God brought great good out of their stumbling; the blessing of their return will be greater still. This changes how we view setbacks: God uses even human failure to expand His kingdom. So we pray expectantly for Israel's spiritual restoration and the final fulfillment of God's kingdom.

**Read alongside** Romans 11:25–26 ; Zechariah 8:23 ; Genesis 50:20

## Romans 11:13

Read the verse: Romans 11:13

### Study Notes

Paul now speaks directly to Gentile believers. As the apostle to the Gentiles (Acts 9:15; Galatians 2:8), he "magnifies" his ministry. The word (doxazō) means to glorify or honor. Paul loved his calling and gave it his very best. We should fulfill our

own calling with the same excellence, knowing it serves a larger purpose of God than we can see.

**Read alongside** Acts 9:15 ; Galatians 2:8 ; Romans 15:15–16

## Romans 11:14

Read the verse: Romans 11:14

### Study Notes

Even while serving the nations, Paul hoped that as Gentiles came to Christ, some of his own people would take notice and be saved. This is the same heart we saw in Romans 9:3 and 10:1, and in his resolve to become “all things to all people, that by all means I might save some” (1 Corinthians 9:22). Let us keep a deep burden for the salvation of our own family and community, even while serving others.

**Read alongside** Romans 9:1–3 ; Romans 10:1 ; 1 Corinthians 9:22

## Romans 11:15

Read the verse: Romans 11:15

### Study Notes

Israel’s rejection (apobolē, casting away) meant the reconciliation (katallagē) of the world, as the gospel went out to every nation (2 Corinthians 5:19). Their acceptance, Paul says, will be nothing less than “life from the dead.” That phrase

describes every true conversion as well: the change from unbelief to faith is a resurrection. We should see every conversion as a life-from-the-dead moment and praise God for His power to reconcile.

**Read alongside** 2 Corinthians 5:18–19 ; Ephesians 2:4–5 ; Luke 15:24

## Romans 11:16

Read the verse: Romans 11:16

**Study Notes**

Paul uses two pictures. When the first part of the dough (aparchē, firstfruits) was offered to God, the whole batch was counted holy (Numbers 15:19–21). In the same way, the patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, are the holy “root” (rhiza), and God has not forgotten the branches that come from them. If the root and the covenants are holy, that should shape our attitude toward the Jewish people today.

**Read alongside** Numbers 15:19–21 ; Jeremiah 11:16 ; Romans 11:28

## Romans 11:17

Read the verse: Romans 11:17

**Study Notes**

Olive trees were everywhere in Israel, and farmers grafted branches to make trees fruitful. Paul's picture is deliberate: God's people are one olive tree, rooted in His promises to Abraham. Unbelieving Israelites were broken off; believing Gentiles, a "wild olive shoot," were grafted in (enekentristhēs, inserted) and now share (synkoinōnos, a partaker) in the nourishing root. What "wild" parts of your life has God graciously grafted into His holy family?

**Read alongside** Jeremiah 11:16 ; Ephesians 2:12–13 ; Ephesians 2:19

## Romans 11:18

Read the verse: Romans 11:18

### Study Notes

"Do not be arrogant toward the branches." The word (katakauchō) means to boast against. We did not bring life to the tree; the root carries (bastazeis) us. My spiritual life depends entirely on the life-giving root of God's covenant. I am a receiver of grace, not a source of it. Andrew Murray wrote, "Humility is the only soil in which the graces root; the lack of humility is the sufficient explanation of every defect and failure" (Humility, chapter 1).

**Read alongside** Romans 12:3 ; 1 Corinthians 4:7 ; John 4:22

## Romans 11:19

Read the verse: Romans 11:19

### Study Notes

Paul anticipates the proud reply: “Branches were broken off so that I might be grafted in.” It is tempting for believers to feel superior to those who are, for now, outside the faith. But there is real danger in treating someone else’s spiritual failure as a benefit to yourself. My inclusion is not a sign of my worth but a sign of God’s sovereign mercy.

**Read alongside** Luke 18:9–14 ; Romans 12:16 ; 1 Corinthians 10:12

## Romans 11:20

Read the verse: Romans 11:20

### Study Notes

“That is true,” Paul says, but look at the reason. They were broken off because of unbelief (apistia); you stand fast only through faith. Faith leaves no room for pride, because faith is simply receiving. So “do not become proud, but fear.” As Matthew Henry wrote, “A holy fear is an excellent preservative against high-mindedness.”

This fear (phobou) is reverent awe, not anxious dread. How do we keep a holy fear without losing the assurance of grace? By

never taking our standing with God for granted, and walking in constant dependence on Him.

**Read alongside** 1 Corinthians 10:12 ; Hebrews 3:12 ; Philippians 2:12–13

## Romans 11:21

Read the verse: Romans 11:21

### Study Notes

If God did not spare the natural branches, the people with the covenants and the promises, He will not spare proud Gentile branches either. No one stands with God by heritage or privilege, only by faith. This is not meant to make us doubt God's grace, but to keep us humble and dependent, never taking our place on the tree for granted.

**Read alongside** Hebrews 3:12–14 ; 1 Corinthians 10:11–12 ; Romans 2:28–29

## Romans 11:22

Read the verse: Romans 11:22

### Study Notes

"Note then" means stop and look carefully. God is not only kind and not only severe; He is both. His severity (apotomia, sharpness, decisiveness) is seen in the branches broken off for unbelief; His kindness (chrēstotēs, goodness) in the wild

branches grafted in. As Matthew Henry observed, “God is most severe towards those that have been in profession nearest to him, if they rebel against him.”

“Provided you continue in his kindness” does not mean we keep ourselves saved; it means true faith keeps on trusting (Hebrews 3:14). The verb, epimenō, is the same one Paul uses in Romans 6:1, “continue in sin.” We can continue in something good, like God’s kindness, or in something harmful, like sin or unbelief. So the question for each of us is, “Where am I choosing to remain?”

**Read alongside** Hebrews 3:14 ; John 15:2 ; Colossians 1:23 ; Romans 6:1–2

## Romans 11:23

Read the verse: Romans 11:23

**Study Notes**

Here is hope. Even the branches broken off, “if they do not continue in their unbelief,” will be grafted in again, “for God has the power” to do it. When anyone turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away (2 Corinthians 3:16). So we never stop praying for those who have walked away, believing that God’s power to restore is greater than their power to resist.

**Read alongside** 2 Corinthians 3:16 ; Romans 4:21 ; Luke 15:20

### Romans 11:24

Read the verse: Romans 11:24

**Study Notes**

Gentile believers were cut from a wild olive and grafted, “contrary to nature” (para physin), into a cultivated olive tree (kallielaios). If God has already done the “harder” thing, grafting in wild branches, why should we doubt He will do the “natural” thing and graft Israel back into their own tree? The contrary-to-nature grafting shows the greatness of His power. We can marvel at the unnatural grace that included us, and expect God’s restoration of His original people.

**Read alongside** Romans 11:17 ; Jeremiah 11:16 ; Ephesians 3:6

**Put it into practice** Ask God to show you any place where you have looked down on someone still outside the faith. Then thank Him today for the root that carries you, and pray by name for one person, Jewish or Gentile, who has not yet believed.

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## The Mystery of Israel’s Salvation

### Romans 11:25

Read the verse: Romans 11:25

**Study Notes**

Paul writes “lest you be wise in your own sight.” A “mystery” (mystērion) in the Bible is not a puzzle but a truth once hidden and now made known by God. Israel’s hardening (pōrōsis, callousness) is partial, since a remnant believes, and temporary, lasting only “until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in.”

The “fullness of the Gentiles” shows God’s careful timing and His heart for all nations. It also calls for humility. We should approach God’s prophetic timeline without the “conceit” of thinking we have it all figured out.

**Read alongside** Luke 21:24 ; Romans 12:16 ; Ephesians 3:4–6 ; Romans 16:25–26

## Romans 11:26

Read the verse: Romans 11:26

### Study Notes

“And in this way all Israel will be saved.” Bible-believing Christians understand this phrase in more than one way; many take it to mean a great turning of the Jewish people to Christ before He returns. Either way, salvation comes the same way for all: the Deliverer (rhyomenos, the Rescuer) comes from Zion and banishes ungodliness (asebeia) from Jacob (Isaiah 59:20). We can rest in the certainty of God’s Word that His plan for Israel will reach a glorious conclusion.

**Read alongside** Isaiah 59:20–21 ; Psalm 14:7 ; Romans 10:12–13

## Romans 11:27

Read the verse: Romans 11:27

### Study Notes

“And this will be my covenant (diathēkē) with them when I take away their sins.” This is the new covenant promised in Jeremiah 31:31–34 and fulfilled in Christ (Hebrews 8:8–12). God’s commitment to His covenant with Jacob reassures us about His promises to us, because this same covenant is the foundation of our own salvation. Celebrate the new covenant in Christ’s blood, which takes away sin once and for all.

**Read alongside** Jeremiah 31:31–34 ; Hebrews 8:8–12 ; Luke 22:20

## Romans 11:28

Read the verse: Romans 11:28

### Study Notes

Paul holds two truths side by side. As regards the gospel, most of Israel had set themselves against it, “enemies” (echthros) for your sake, and God used even that to send the good news to the Gentiles. As regards election (eklogē), they are still “beloved” (agapētos), because God made promises to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and He keeps His word. Matthew

Henry wrote, “In this love to the fathers the first foundation of their church-state was laid.”

A person can be opposed to the gospel today and still be the object of God’s patient love. That should shape how we pray for, and speak to, those who now oppose the message we believe.

**Read alongside** Deuteronomy 7:7–8 ; Romans 9:4–5 ; Matthew 5:44

## Romans 11:29

Read the verse: Romans 11:29

**Study Notes**

The gifts (charisma, free, undeserved favors) and the calling (klēsis) of God are “irrevocable” (ametamelētos), literally “not to be regretted.” God does not take back what He has given, and He does not cancel whom He has called. This is the ground of Paul’s hope for Israel, and it is the ground of our security too. Our standing with God does not rest on how steady we are but on how steady He is. As Matthew Henry said, “whom he so loves, he loves to the end.”

People change their minds; God does not (Numbers 23:19). For the believer who fears being set aside because of failure, this verse is a firm place to stand. Do you find comfort in it today?

**Read alongside** Numbers 23:19 ; 1 Samuel 15:29 ; Malachi 3:6 ; Philippians 1:6

## Romans 11:30

Read the verse: Romans 11:30

### Study Notes

Paul reminds the Gentile believers where they came from. They too had been disobedient (apeitheō, to refuse to be persuaded). They did not earn mercy (eleos); they received it, and in God's wise plan the door opened to them through Israel's stumbling. No one in the church stands on higher ground than anyone else; we were all rebels who were shown mercy. Remembering that keeps us humble and thankful, and keeps us from looking down on anyone still far from God.

**Read alongside** Ephesians 2:1–2 ; Titus 3:3 ; Colossians 3:7

## Romans 11:31

Read the verse: Romans 11:31

### Study Notes

Now the pattern turns around. Israel's disobedience became the Gentiles' doorway to mercy, and the mercy shown to the Gentiles is meant to bring Israel back to mercy. The verb is passive: mercy is something God does, not something we achieve. Matthew Henry put it beautifully: "If the putting out of their candle was the lighting of yours, by that power of God

which brings good out of evil, much more shall the continued light of your candle, when God's time shall come, be a means of lighting theirs again."

God wastes nothing. The mercy He has shown us is not only for us; it is meant to be seen. Our lives are to be a window through which others see the kindness of God. Are others seeing God's mercy alive in you?

**Read alongside** 1 Timothy 1:13–16 ; Matthew 5:16 ; Romans 11:11

## Romans 11:32

Read the verse: Romans 11:32

**Study Notes**

This verse sums up Romans 1–11. God has "consigned" (synekleisen, shut up, imprisoned) everyone under disobedience, like prisoners locked in the same cell. "All" here means Jew and Gentile alike, all without distinction. No one gets out by his own effort, religion or family line. But the purpose of the prison is not to destroy; it is to show mercy.

When every mouth is closed and every excuse is gone, grace can be seen for what it is. Augustine wrote, "It is only of unmerited mercy that any is redeemed, and only in well-merited judgment that any is condemned" (Enchiridion, ch.

94). This verse is the hinge between Paul's teaching and his praise: seeing such mercy, he cannot help but worship.

**Read alongside** Galatians 3:22 ; Romans 3:9 ; Romans 3:23

## Romans 11:33

Read the verse: Romans 11:33

**Study Notes**

Imagine Paul reaching the crest of a great hill and looking back over the trail of chapters 9–11. Chapter 9: God is sovereign, and we are not. Chapter 10: we must take responsibility for our choices; Israel heard, and Israel rejected. Chapter 11: God slides the curtain back to let us see His plan. But just when we think we have it all tied up in a neat little bow, KABLOOM, verse 33 blows that out of the water: "Oh, the depth!"

God's resources are bottomless (bathos, depth), His thinking is flawless, His understanding is total, His decisions are beyond auditing, and His ways are "inscrutable" (anexichniastos), literally "without footprints." There is no confusion with God; He is simply far too vast for our minds. You don't "figure God out." You bow. A God small enough to be fully understood would be too small to trust.

**Read alongside** Job 5:9 ; Isaiah 55:8–9 ; Psalm 139:6 ; Psalm 36:6

## Romans 11:34

Read the verse: Romans 11:34

### Study Notes

Paul quotes Isaiah 40:13. “Who has known the mind of the Lord?” Surely not me. We have all said, “Well, I think God is saying thus and such…” When I catch myself doing that, I have to say, “Hush your mouth, Hollis. Lord, have mercy on me for thinking that.” And who has been His counselor? Can we imagine pulling up a chair close to the Lord and saying, “Let me help You with this”? Yet we have all done it.

God does not take counsel; He gives it. If verse 33 humbles our thoughts, verse 34 makes us speak of God in hushed tones. The cure is not to stop praying but to pray humbly, trusting what He has clearly revealed in His Word and leaving His hidden purposes with Him. As Matthew Henry said, to counsel God “would be like lighting a candle to the sun.”

**Read alongside** Isaiah 40:13 ; 1 Corinthians 2:16 ; Jeremiah 23:18 ; Deuteronomy 29:29

## Romans 11:35

Read the verse: Romans 11:35

### Study Notes

“Who has given a gift to him that he might be repaid?” Who, sir? Me, sir? No, sir! Not I, sir! Paul echoes Job 41:11. One of

the greatest misconceptions about God is that He owes us something, as if we could say, “Let’s see, God, I have been totaling up Your bill, and it comes to…” Everything we could offer Him already came from Him (1 Corinthians 4:7). As Augustine wrote, “It is His own gifts that God crowns, not your merits” (On Grace and Free Will, ch. 15).

God owes us nothing, yet He has given us everything in Christ. The right response to grace is not to send God an invoice but to give Him thanks and give Him ourselves. Charles Hodge, the early Princeton teacher, spoke of being saved as a young boy, and said the whole rest of his life of teaching, preaching and writing was simply a prolonged postscript of gratitude to God for that early grace.

**Read alongside** Job 41:11 ; 1 Chronicles 29:14 ; 1 Corinthians 4:7

## Romans 11:36

Read the verse: Romans 11:36

### Study Notes

Paul closes his great argument with three small words. From Him (ex autou): God is the source of everything, creation, salvation and all of history. Through Him (di’ autou): He is the sustainer and director of all of time and eternity. And the hardest one for us to swallow: to Him (eis auton). God is the goal; everything is moving toward Him. It is not our story. It is

His story. God begins it, God carries it, God ends it, and God gets the glory.

This is the summit of Romans 1–11, and everything else in the letter flows from it, beginning with the “therefore” of Romans 12:1. Nothing ultimately exists for us; all things exist for Him. As Matthew Henry wrote, “If all be of him and through him, there is all the reason in the world that all should be to him and for him.” So Paul ends with the only fitting word: “To him be glory forever. Amen.” Does your life say “Amen” too?

**Read alongside** 1 Corinthians 8:6 ; Colossians 1:16–17 ; Revelation 4:11 ; Romans 12:1

**Put it into practice** Choose one area of your daily routine, your work, your time or your money, and consciously hand it over to God’s glory this week. Where you have been trying to advise God or send Him a bill, stop arguing and start bowing.

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# Romans 12–16 — Living the Gospel Together

Part 4 of 4 · Romans — A Complete Review · Bible study by Hollis McGehee · verse by verse

Every Scripture reference in blue is a link: tap or click it to read the passage in the ESV on our website.

## Just want to read Romans 12–16?

Skip the study notes and go straight to the Scripture. Tap or click a chapter to read it in the ESV on our website.

Romans 12:1–21 | Romans 13:1–14

Romans 14:1–23 | Romans 15:1–33

Romans 16:1–27

## Study every verse

By the mercies of God we offer ourselves as living sacrifices, love one another genuinely, welcome one another as Christ welcomed us, and join Paul in carrying the gospel to the nations, all to the glory of God.

Begin with the Scripture, then read the study notes and the passages to read alongside. After each section, pause over the question. The aim is to understand Paul's meaning and put it into practice in dependence on Christ.

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# Chapter 12

## A Living Sacrifice

### Romans 12:1

Read the verse: Romans 12:1

**Study Notes**

This is the turning point of Romans. The “therefore” is a bridge: because of everything God has done in chapters 1–11, the only logical response is to give Him our whole selves. Notice that Paul does not bark orders; he appeals “by the mercies of God.” The word for mercies speaks of God’s deep, heartfelt compassion, and Paul uses the plural to take in all of His saving work. Christian obedience is not driven by fear. It is driven by gratitude.

“Present your bodies” means your whole self: your actions, your habits, your time, your energy, your daily obedience. Old Testament sacrifices were killed; we are to be living sacrifices. The phrase “spiritual worship” can also be rendered “reasonable service”: worship is not a mindless ritual but the only sensible answer to God’s grace. It is not mainly singing on Sunday; it is a whole life laid on the altar, day after day. As Matthew Henry wrote, “It is Christ living in the soul by faith that makes the body a living sacrifice.”

**Read alongside** Romans 11:36 ; 1 Peter 2:5 ; Hebrews 13:15–16 ; Romans 6:13

## Romans 12:2

Read the verse: Romans 12:2

### Study Notes

Paul now shows how the surrendered life works. Two forces are pulling at us: the world trying to shape us and God working to transform us. “Be conformed” means to be pressed into a pattern from the outside, and it takes no effort at all. “Be transformed” comes from the word that gives us “metamorphosis,” the same word used of Jesus’ transfiguration. It is change from the inside out, the way a caterpillar becomes a butterfly.

That change comes through a renewed mind: not emotion alone or experience alone, but God’s truth, by His Word and Spirit, reshaping how we think. The Christian life is a continual renovation of our thinking, not mere behavior modification. A renewed mind learns to test things and recognize what pleases God, and it comes to see His will not as a burden but as good, acceptable and perfect. The warning is plain: if your mind is not being renewed, you will be shaped by the world. Matthew Henry put it this way: “Conversion and sanctification are the renewing of the mind, a change not of the substance, but of the qualities of the soul.”

**Read alongside** 2 Corinthians 3:18 ; Ephesians 4:23–24 ; Colossians 3:2 ; 1 John 2:15–17

**Put it into practice** Ask yourself: what part of my life — my time, my energy, my habits — is hardest to leave on the altar today? Offer that very thing to God in prayer. Then choose one habit this week that will renew your mind in His Word, and one pattern of the world you will stop copying.

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## Gifts of Grace

### Romans 12:3

Read the verse: Romans 12:3

**Study Notes**

Paul now turns to how a living sacrifice lives within the church. He speaks “by the grace given to me,” as one who has received, not earned. The first danger he names is pride: thinking of ourselves more highly than we ought. Yet he does not tell us to think nothing of ourselves. He asks for “sober judgment,” seeing ourselves honestly, measured by the faith God has given rather than by our own opinion. Andrew Murray wrote, “Humility is the only soil in which the graces root; the lack of humility is the sufficient explanation of every defect and failure.”

**Read alongside** Romans 11:20 ; Philippians 2:3 ; 1 Corinthians 4:7 ; Proverbs 3:7

## Romans 12:4

Read the verse: Romans 12:4

### Study Notes

Paul reaches for a picture everyone understands: the human body. One body has many members, and they do not all do the same job. The eye does not try to be the hand, and the hand does not envy the eye. Difference in the church is not a problem to be fixed; it is how God designed the body to work.

**Read alongside** 1 Corinthians 12:12 ; 1 Corinthians 12:18 ; Ephesians 4:16

## Romans 12:5

Read the verse: Romans 12:5

### Study Notes

“In Christ” we who are many are one body, and “individually members one of another.” We do not just belong to Christ; we belong to each other. No believer is meant to live the Christian life alone, and no believer is unneeded. When one member is missing, the whole body is weaker.

**Read alongside** 1 Corinthians 12:27 ; Ephesians 4:4–6 ; Galatians 3:28

## Romans 12:6

Read the verse: Romans 12:6

**Study Notes**

Our gifts “differ according to the grace given to us.” Every gift is grace, a free present from God, so there is no room to boast about having one or to complain about not having another. The point is to use what we have been given. Paul begins with prophecy: speaking God’s word to His people, and doing it in keeping with the faith, never going beyond what God has revealed.

**Read alongside** 1 Peter 4:10–11 ; 1 Corinthians 12:4–7 ; Ephesians 4:7

## Romans 12:7

Read the verse: Romans 12:7

**Study Notes**

Some are gifted to serve, meeting practical needs, and some to teach, opening God’s Word so others can understand and live it. Paul’s instruction is simple: if that is your gift, give yourself to it. Neither gift is more spiritual than the other. The one who sets up the tables and the one who teaches the lesson are both serving Christ.

**Read alongside** Acts 6:2–4 ; 2 Timothy 2:2 ; Colossians 3:23

### Romans 12:8

Read the verse: Romans 12:8

**Study Notes**

Paul finishes his list with gifts that show up in everyday church life: encouraging, giving, leading and showing mercy. Each comes with a note about the heart behind it. Give generously, not grudgingly. Lead with zeal, not half-heartedly. Show mercy with cheerfulness, not with a sigh. How we use our gift matters to God as much as which gift we have.

**Read alongside** Acts 4:36–37 ; 2 Corinthians 9:7 ; Hebrews 10:24–25

**Put it into practice** Ask God to show you the gift He has given you for the good of His body. Then use it on purpose this week for one person in your church family, and do it with the heart Paul describes: generously, eagerly and cheerfully.

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## Marks of the True Christian

### Romans 12:9

Read the verse: Romans 12:9

**Study Notes**

Verses 9–21 show what a living sacrifice looks like with people. Count the commands in these twelve verses and you will find

29 of them. They are not rules to earn God's favor. Taken together, they are a portrait of Jesus, who lived every one of them perfectly. And they all flow from one source: love that is real. The word "genuine" means "without hypocrisy," the opposite of the Greek stage actor who spoke from behind a mask. Love is not theater. Sincere Christians wear no masks.

It may seem strange that a command to love is followed at once by a command to hate. But love is not blind feeling. It cares so much for the one it loves that it hates every evil that would harm them, and it clings to what is good the way two boards are glued together. You cannot truly love someone while you stay indifferent to what destroys them. Matthew Henry said, "The right love is love unfeigned; not as the kisses of an enemy, which are deceitful."

**Read alongside** 1 John 3:18 ; Proverbs 8:13 ; 1 Peter 1:22

## Romans 12:10

Read the verse: Romans 12:10

### Study Notes

God's people are not a club or an audience; they are a family. Paul uses two family words here: one for the tender love of parents for their children, and one for the loyal love of brothers and sisters. Then he turns honor into a friendly contest: try to outdo one another in showing respect. Instead of waiting to be

noticed, look for ways to notice and lift up someone else. Pride keeps score; love gives the credit away.

**Read alongside** 1 Thessalonians 4:9 ; Philippians 2:3 ; John 13:34

## Romans 12:11

Read the verse: Romans 12:11

**Study Notes**

Love has energy. Paul warns against letting our zeal cool into a lukewarm routine. “Fervent” pictures water at a boil, and that heat does not come from willpower but from the Holy Spirit at work in us. It also has a direction: “serve the Lord.” Whether our work is in a church, a hospital room or a kitchen, we do it for Him, and that makes the ordinary holy. As Matthew Henry said, “Those that would approve themselves Christians indeed must make religion their business.”

**Read alongside** Colossians 3:23 ; Ecclesiastes 9:10 ; Revelation 3:15–16

## Romans 12:12

Read the verse: Romans 12:12

**Study Notes**

Here are three short commands that belong together. Hope looks ahead to what God has promised, so we can rejoice even

before we see it. Tribulation is real, so we need patience, the kind that stays under the load without quitting. And the way we keep hoping and keep enduring is by praying, not once in a while but steadily. Joy, patience and prayer are the three legs of a stool that holds a believer up in hard days. Matthew Henry wrote, “Prayer is a friend to hope and patience, and we do in it serve the Lord.”

This verse makes a fine prayer for those who are hurting. We can praise God that even in trials He gives us hope to rejoice, strength to endure and the invitation to remain in prayer. And we can ask Him to fill the suffering, and our brothers and sisters persecuted for the name of Jesus, with His Spirit, so that they too may rejoice in hope and remain constant in prayer, even under pressure.

**Read alongside** Romans 5:2–3 ; 1 Thessalonians 5:16–18 ; Philippians 4:4–7 ; Psalm 30:5

## Romans 12:13

Read the verse: Romans 12:13

### Study Notes

Love opens both the hand and the door. The first command is to share with fellow believers in need; the word is related to “fellowship,” so giving is part of belonging. The second is to “seek” hospitality, literally to pursue it, and the word itself means “love of the stranger.” In Paul’s day traveling and

persecuted believers often had nowhere safe to stay. Generosity and hospitality are not extras for the spiritually advanced; they are love moving from feeling to action.

**Read alongside** Acts 2:44–45 ; Galatians 6:10 ; Hebrews 13:2 ; 1 Peter 4:9

## Romans 12:14

Read the verse: Romans 12:14

### Study Notes

Paul almost repeats the words of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount. Remember who first read this letter: Christians in Rome under Nero, with pressure against them growing. When someone mistreats us, our instinct is to protect ourselves or strike back. Jesus teaches us to answer with a blessing: to speak well of them and to ask God to do them good. Blessing is an act of the will, not a feeling. It does not pretend the harm never happened; it chooses, by God's grace, to want God's best for someone who wants our worst, just as Jesus prayed, "Father, forgive them."

**Read alongside** Matthew 5:44 ; Luke 6:28 ; Luke 23:34 ; 1 Peter 3:9

## Romans 12:15

Read the verse: Romans 12:15

### Study Notes

Love feels with people. Sometimes it is harder to rejoice with someone than to weep with them, because envy creeps in when another person is blessed. At other times we would rather send a card than sit with someone in their grief. Paul asks for both. Being present, sharing a smile or sharing tears, often says more than any words we could offer. As Matthew Henry said, “True love will interest us in the sorrows and joys of one another, and teach us to make them our own.”

**Read alongside** 1 Corinthians 12:26 ; John 11:35 ; Job 6:14

## Romans 12:16

Read the verse: Romans 12:16

**Study Notes**

Harmony in a church does not mean everyone thinks exactly alike. It means we share one mind about what matters most and treat each other with humility. Paul names two enemies of harmony: looking down on people of lower standing, and thinking we have all the answers. These words spoke straight into the Jewish–Gentile tensions in Rome. Jesus spent His time with ordinary and overlooked people; when we do the same and stay teachable, unity grows. Matthew Henry said it well: “True love values grace in rags as well as in scarlet.”

**Read alongside** Philippians 2:2–3 ; 1 Peter 5:5 ; Proverbs 3:7

## Romans 12:17

Read the verse: Romans 12:17

**Study Notes**

Paul now turns from love inside the church to love toward those who wrong us. “No one” means no exceptions. The law of the playground is “you hit me, I hit you back,” but God’s way is different. Instead of planning revenge, we are to plan what is good and right, conduct that even outsiders can see is honorable. Refusing to retaliate is not weakness but strength, the strength to break the cycle. How we respond when wronged is one of the clearest witnesses we give.

**Read alongside** 1 Thessalonians 5:15 ; 1 Peter 3:9 ; Proverbs 20:22

## Romans 12:18

Read the verse: Romans 12:18

**Study Notes**

This is one of the most realistic verses in the Bible. “If possible” and “so far as it depends on you” admit that peace takes two, and some people will not make peace no matter what we do. So Paul tells us to do our part fully: apologize when we are wrong, forgive, reach out, speak gently. We are not responsible for the other person’s response, and that

spares us false guilt. But we are responsible for making sure the barrier is not on our side.

**Read alongside** Hebrews 12:14 ; Matthew 5:9 ; Mark 9:50

## Romans 12:19

Read the verse: Romans 12:19

### Study Notes

Paul calls his readers “Beloved” because he knows how hard this is. Not taking revenge does not mean pretending evil does not matter. It means handing the case to the right Judge. Vengeance belongs to God, and when we take it ourselves we take over His role. God sees every wrong, and He will repay with perfect justice, even when earthly courts fail. Letting go of revenge is not weakness; it is faith that God is just. As Matthew Henry warned, “We step into the throne of God if we do and take his work out of his hand.”

**Read alongside** Deuteronomy 32:35 ; Hebrews 10:30 ; 1 Peter 2:23

## Romans 12:20

Read the verse: Romans 12:20

### Study Notes

Paul quotes Proverbs 25. Instead of harming an enemy, meet his most basic needs: food and water. The word “feed” first

meant feeding morsels to a baby. The “burning coals” are not a hidden way to get even; they picture the burning shame and awakened conscience that undeserved kindness can stir in a hard heart, and that may lead to repentance. Unearned kindness disarms hostility better than any argument. Our kindness may be the very thing God uses to turn an enemy into a brother.

**Read alongside** Proverbs 25:21–22 ; Luke 6:35 ; Matthew 5:44

## Romans 12:21

Read the verse: Romans 12:21

**Study Notes**

Paul ends where he began. His first word was “Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good,” and his last is “overcome evil with good.” The Greek moves from passive to active: stop being conquered by evil, and keep on conquering evil with good. A. T. Robertson summed it up: “Drown the evil in the good.” Evil wins whenever it makes us like itself, bitter, spiteful and hard. Good wins when we refuse to let evil set the terms.

This is how Jesus won at the cross: He answered hatred with love and death with life. Every time we return good for evil, we share a little in His victory. Matthew Henry urged, “Let not the evil of any provocation that is given you have such a power over you, or make such an impression upon you, as to dispossess you of yourselves, to disturb your peace, to destroy

your love, to ruffle and discompose your spirits, to transport you to any indecencies, or to bring you to study or attempt any revenge."

**Read alongside** Proverbs 16:32 ; 1 John 2:13–14 ; Ephesians 6:10–12

**Put it into practice** Think of someone who has wronged you. Pick one of the commands in verses 14–21 and practice it on purpose toward that person this week: bless them, pray for them, or do them one practical kindness. Ask God for the help to do it.

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# Chapter 13

## Submission to the Authorities

### Romans 13:1

Read the verse: Romans 13:1

**Study Notes**

Paul now turns from the church to society. "Every person" means no one is exempt, believers included. The reason is not that rulers are always good, but that God is over them: there is no authority except from God. Scripture teaches that God sets

up kings and removes them, and that even a ruler's heart is in His hand.

Remember when Paul wrote this. Nero was on the throne, the emperor who would later turn on the Christians, and within about a decade Paul himself would die under Rome's sword. Paul's call to submit is not approval of every ruler. It is trust in the God who sits above every throne.

**Read alongside** Daniel 2:21 ; Proverbs 21:1 ; John 19:11 ; 1 Peter 2:13–14

## Romans 13:2

Read the verse: Romans 13:2

**Study Notes**

To resist the authorities as a way of life is to resist what God has put in place, and it brings judgment. Yet Scripture also shows a limit. When rulers command what God forbids, or forbid what God commands, the apostles answered, "We must obey God rather than men." Submission is the believer's settled attitude, but it is never permission to sin.

**Read alongside** Acts 5:29 ; Daniel 3:16–18 ; Titus 3:1

## Romans 13:3

Read the verse: Romans 13:3

**Study Notes**

Paul describes what government is for. Rulers are meant to restrain evil and to commend those who do good. In the ordinary course of life, the law-abiding citizen has nothing to fear from a just authority. So the simplest way to live at peace with those over us is to do what is good.

**Read alongside** 1 Peter 2:14–15 ; 1 Timothy 2:1–2 ; Proverbs 16:12

## Romans 13:4

Read the verse: Romans 13:4

**Study Notes**

Twice Paul calls the ruler “God’s servant.” The authority to punish wrongdoing, pictured by the sword, comes from God for the good of the people. Notice how this fits with Romans 12:19. Believers are told never to avenge themselves but to leave room for the wrath of God. One of the ways God restrains and punishes evil in this life is through just government. What we may not do for ourselves, God has entrusted to those He appoints.

**Read alongside** Romans 12:19 ; Genesis 9:6 ; 1 Peter 2:14

## Romans 13:5

Read the verse: Romans 13:5

**Study Notes**

Paul gives two reasons to submit: to avoid punishment, and for the sake of conscience. The first is the reason anyone might obey. The second belongs to the believer. We keep the law not only when someone is watching, but because we live before God, who always sees. A Christian's honesty with the government should come from a clear conscience, not from fear of being caught.

**Read alongside** Acts 24:16 ; 1 Peter 2:13 ; Colossians 3:22–23

## Romans 13:6

Read the verse: Romans 13:6

### Study Notes

This is why we pay taxes. Those who govern are serving God as they give their time to this work, and taxes support it. Jesus Himself paid the temple tax and taught, "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's." Paying what we owe is part of a believer's faithfulness.

**Read alongside** Matthew 22:17–21 ; Matthew 17:24–27

## Romans 13:7

Read the verse: Romans 13:7

### Study Notes

Paul sums it up: pay to all what is owed. Taxes and revenue to those who collect them; respect and honor to those to whom

they are due. We honor the office even when the person holding it disappoints us. And this verse leads straight into the next, where Paul names the one debt we can never finish paying: love.

**Read alongside** 1 Peter 2:17 ; Matthew 22:21 ; Romans 13:8

**Put it into practice** This week, pray by name for those in authority over you, in your town, your state and your nation, as 1 Timothy 2:1–2 urges. Then ask yourself honestly whether you are paying what you owe, in taxes, respect and honor, with a clear conscience before God.

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## Fulfilling the Law Through Love

### Romans 13:8

Read the verse: Romans 13:8

**Study Notes**

Paul has just told believers to pay what they owe: taxes, respect and honor (Romans 13:7). Now he says, leave no debt unpaid, except one. Love is a debt we can never pay off. We pay it today, and tomorrow we owe it again. This is not a burden but a privilege, because it flows from the love God has poured into our hearts. When we love others this way, we are doing what God's law was aiming at all along. John Wesley called it "An eternal debt, which can never be sufficiently

discharged; but yet if this be rightly performed, it discharges all the rest."

**Read alongside** Galatians 5:14 ; Matthew 22:39–40 ; Romans 5:5

## Romans 13:9

Read the verse: Romans 13:9

**Study Notes**

Paul lists commandments that deal with how we treat other people: no adultery, no murder, no stealing, no coveting. Then he says every commandment like them is "summed up," gathered under one head, in a single sentence from Leviticus 19:18: love your neighbor as yourself. Your "neighbor" is literally "the one near," anyone God puts in your path. Love does not cancel the commandments; it is the heart that keeps them. A person who truly loves his neighbor will not steal his goods, his spouse or his life.

**Read alongside** Leviticus 19:18 ; Matthew 19:18–19 ; Luke 10:29–37

## Romans 13:10

Read the verse: Romans 13:10

**Study Notes**

Most of the commandments Paul listed are “you shall not” commands. Love keeps all of them, because love never sets out to harm a neighbor. But love goes further than avoiding harm; it looks for ways to do good. As John Wesley wrote, “the same love which restrains from all evil, incites us to all good.” That is why love is the fulfilling of the law. Jesus said the same: if we love Him, we will keep His commandments.

**Read alongside** John 14:15 ; 1 Corinthians 13:4–7 ; Galatians 5:13–14

**Put it into practice** Love is a debt you never finish paying. Who is one person to whom you owe a “payment” of love this week? Decide what it will look like, and pay it before the week is out.

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## The Day Is at Hand

### Romans 13:11

Read the verse: Romans 13:11

**Study Notes**

Paul gives another reason to take love seriously: time is short. The word for “time” here is not clock time but the critical moment. Christians know what hour it is on God’s clock. Every day brings us closer to the day Jesus returns and our salvation is made complete. That is not a reason for fear but for

alertness. A person who knows the sunrise is near does not roll over and go back to sleep. He gets up and gets ready. Spiritual drowsiness is a real danger for believers.

**Read alongside** 1 Thessalonians 5:6 ; Ephesians 5:14 ; Hebrews 9:28

## Romans 13:12

Read the verse: Romans 13:12

**Study Notes**

The night of this present evil age is nearly over, and the day of Christ is about to dawn. So Paul uses the picture of changing clothes: take off the works of darkness like dirty night clothes, and put on the armor of light. Christians are not only to stop doing wrong; they are to dress for daylight and for battle. The armor of light is the life of faith, love and hope, shining in a dark world. John Wesley loved the picture: “This life, a night; the resurrection, the day; the gospel shining on the heart, the dawn of this day.”

**Read alongside** Ephesians 6:11 ; 1 Thessalonians 5:8 ; 1 John 2:8

## Romans 13:13

Read the verse: Romans 13:13

**Study Notes**

Paul names three pairs of night-time sins: wild parties and drunkenness, sexual immorality and sensuality, quarreling and jealousy. The first two pairs are what people usually hide in the dark. The last pair is often found among church members in broad daylight. Paul puts them all on the same list. Believers belong to the day, so we should live as if everything we do is seen, because it is.

**Read alongside** Galatians 5:19–21 ; 1 Peter 4:3 ; Ephesians 5:8

## Romans 13:14

Read the verse: Romans 13:14

**Study Notes**

This is the verse God used to bring Augustine to faith. Sitting in a garden in Milan, he opened Paul's letter and read these words, and he later wrote, "No further would I read; nor needed I: for instantly at the end of this sentence, by a light as it were of serenity infused into my heart, all the darkness of doubt vanished away." To put on the Lord Jesus Christ is to be so joined to Him that His life becomes our clothing, so that He is what others see when they look at us.

There are two kinds of "putting on." One is putting on airs, dressing self up to look important. The other is putting self aside and putting on Jesus. We put Him on once when we come to faith, and we keep putting Him on every day, like our

favorite outfit and like a suit of armor. Matthew Henry said, “Jesus Christ is the best clothing for Christians to adorn themselves with, to arm themselves with; it is decent, distinguishing, dignifying, and defending.”

The second half of the verse is very practical: make no provision for the flesh. Do not plan for sin, leave the door open, or stock the shelf for the temptation you know you struggle with. I learned how real this is on my own path to sobriety, which I tell in A River To Cross. Putting on Christ and making room for the flesh cannot go together.

**Read alongside** Galatians 3:27 ; Colossians 3:12–14 ; Galatians 5:16 ; Philippians 3:9

**Put it into practice** Don’t wait: put on the Lord Jesus Christ right where you are sitting. Then name one practical step you will take this week to close a door you have been leaving open to temptation, and take it.

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# Chapter 14

## Do Not Pass Judgment on One Another

### Romans 14:1

Read the verse: Romans 14:1

**Study Notes**

Paul now turns from how Christians relate to the world (Romans 13) to how they relate to each other. The “weak in faith” is not a poor Christian in every sense. He is a believer whose conscience is still bound by things Christ has set free, such as food laws and special days. Paul’s first word is “welcome him.” The door of fellowship opens first, and we receive him not to win an argument but because he belongs to Christ.

The word for “welcome” (proslambanō) means to take someone into your company and fellowship. It is the same word Paul uses in Romans 15:7: “Welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you.” As John Wesley put it, we are to receive him “with all love and courtesy into Christian fellowship.”

**Read alongside** Romans 15:1 ; Romans 15:7 ; 1 Corinthians 8:9–11 ; Colossians 3:12–14

## Romans 14:2

Read the verse: Romans 14:2

**Study Notes**

In Rome some believers, many from a Jewish background, would not eat meat that might be unclean or might have been offered to idols, so they ate only vegetables. Others knew that

in Christ all foods are clean. Paul calls the first group “weak,” not because they were bad Christians, but because they had not yet grasped the full freedom they had in Christ. Both groups loved the Lord, and both sat at the same table.

**Read alongside** Romans 14:14 ; 1 Corinthians 8:7 ; Mark 7:18–19

## Romans 14:3

Read the verse: Romans 14:3

### Study Notes

Each side has its own temptation. The one who feels free is tempted to look down on the careful brother as narrow. The careful one is tempted to judge the free brother as worldly. Paul shuts both doors with one reason: “God has welcomed him.” If God has received a person in Christ, we have no right to push him away over a matter God has left open.

Looking down on a brother is a way of “putting on airs.” Putting on Christ is the opposite: setting self aside and putting on humility, meekness and patience, “bearing with one another” (Colossians 3:12–13).

**Read alongside** Colossians 2:16 ; Acts 10:15 ; Colossians 3:12–13

## Romans 14:4

Read the verse: Romans 14:4

### Study Notes

Every believer is Christ's servant, not ours, and a servant answers to his own master. When we sit in judgment on a brother over secondary things, we step into a place that belongs to the Lord. As Matthew Henry said, "God sees not as man sees; and he is their master, and not we."

Then Paul adds a word of great comfort: "he will be upheld, for the Lord is able to make him stand." Our standing rests on Christ's power, not on the approval of others. That is true of my brother, and it is true of me.

**Read alongside** James 4:12 ; 1 Corinthians 4:4–5 ; Jude 1:24–25

## Romans 14:5

Read the verse: Romans 14:5

### Study Notes

Paul gives a second example: special days. Some believers kept certain days as holy; others treated every day alike. Paul does not say truth does not matter. He says that where God has not given a clear command, each believer should think it through before the Lord and be settled in his own mind. Honest conviction before God, not pressure from others, should guide these choices.

**Read alongside** Colossians 2:16–17 ; Galatians 4:10 ; Romans 14:23

## Romans 14:6

Read the verse: Romans 14:6

### Study Notes

Here is the test for every gray area: is it done “in honor of the Lord,” with thanks to God? The one who eats gives thanks; the one who abstains also gives thanks. Both can please God, because both are aiming at Him. That is why we should be slow to judge: the brother who does differently may be serving the same Lord just as sincerely.

**Read alongside** 1 Corinthians 10:31 ; 1 Timothy 4:3–4 ; Colossians 3:17

## Romans 14:7

Read the verse: Romans 14:7

### Study Notes

No Christian is his own master. We do not live for ourselves, and we do not even die for ourselves; our whole life belongs to Another. This is not a loss but the heart of the gospel: Christ died so that we might live for Him. And if my brother’s life belongs to the Lord just as mine does, I have no business treating him as if he answered to me.

Matthew Henry put it plainly: “Not one that hath given up his name to Christ is allowedly a self-seeker; it is contrary to the foundation of true Christianity.”

**Read alongside** 2 Corinthians 5:15 ; Galatians 2:20

## Romans 14:8

Read the verse: Romans 14:8

**Study Notes**

“Whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord’s.” This is one of the most comforting sentences in Romans. In health or sickness, in life or at the moment of death, the believer belongs to Christ. He claims us and keeps us as His own.

And if my brother belongs to the Lord in the same way, then his life is in good hands, and his Master will care for him.

**Read alongside** Philippians 1:20–21 ; 1 Thessalonians 5:10 ; 1 Corinthians 6:19–20

## Romans 14:9

Read the verse: Romans 14:9

**Study Notes**

Why is Jesus Lord of every believer? Because He died and rose again for this very purpose. The cross and the empty tomb are the ground of His rule. Death does not take a Christian out from under His care; it brings him into His

presence. The same Lord who rules over the living and the dead is the Lord of the brother I am tempted to judge.

**Read alongside** Revelation 1:18 ; Acts 10:42 ; Philippians 2:9–11

## Romans 14:10

Read the verse: Romans 14:10

**Study Notes**

Paul asks both groups a pointed question. To the careful: why do you judge? To the free: why do you despise? Then he lifts our eyes to the day when “we will all stand before the judgment seat of God.” When I remember that I must give account to God myself, I lose the appetite to sit as judge over my brother.

This is both a warning and a relief: God Himself is the judge, not you. As Matthew Henry said, “A believing regard to the judgment of the great day would silence all these rash judgings.”

**Read alongside** 2 Corinthians 5:10 ; Matthew 7:1–2 ; Romans 2:1

## Romans 14:11

Read the verse: Romans 14:11

**Study Notes**

Paul quotes Isaiah 45:23 to show that this judgment is certain. God has sworn by Himself: every knee will bow and every tongue confess. Philippians 2:10–11 applies the same promise to Jesus, so the One before whom we will bow is the Lord Jesus Himself. Keeping that day in view humbles us; we will be too busy answering for ourselves to answer for anyone else.

**Read alongside** Isaiah 45:23 ; Philippians 2:10–11

## Romans 14:12

Read the verse: Romans 14:12

### Study Notes

“So then” draws the conclusion of verses 10–11. Each believer is personally accountable to God, not to human opinion, and is not free to judge others in His place. You, too, will give an account. That truth should make us careful with our own lives and gentle with the lives of others.

**Read alongside** Matthew 12:36 ; 1 Peter 4:5 ; Galatians 6:4–5

**Put it into practice** Think of a believer who sees a secondary matter differently than you do. Ask yourself: Do these verses require a course correction in how I treat him? This week, welcome him warmly, leave his judging to his Master, and remember that you, too, will give an account to God.

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# Do Not Cause Another to Stumble

## Romans 14:13

Read the verse: Romans 14:13

### Study Notes

From here on Paul speaks mainly to the “strong.” Their freedom is real, but it must be governed by love. Paul plays on the word “judge”: stop judging your brother, and instead make this judgment about yourself, that you will never put an obstacle in his path.

A stumbling block is anything that trips another believer and leads him to sin against his own conscience. Love asks not only “Is this allowed for me?” but also “What will this do to him?”

**Read alongside** Matthew 7:1 ; 1 Corinthians 8:13 ; 1 Corinthians 10:32–33

## Romans 14:14

Read the verse: Romans 14:14

### Study Notes

Paul sides with the strong on the facts: in Christ, no food is unclean in itself (see Mark 7:19 and Acts 10:15). But he adds that if a brother believes something is wrong, then for him it is wrong. His conscience is not yet free, and to act against it

would be sin for him. Knowing the truth does not give us the right to run over another person's conscience.

**Read alongside** Mark 7:18–19 ; Acts 10:15 ; 1 Corinthians 8:7

## Romans 14:15

Read the verse: Romans 14:15

### Study Notes

Here is the heart of the chapter. Christ thought this brother worth dying for. Shall I refuse to give up a meal for him? When my freedom grieves and harms a weaker believer, I am no longer walking in love, however right I may be about the food. The cross puts our small rights in their proper place.

As Matthew Henry said, "Charity to the souls of our brethren is the best charity."

**Read alongside** Ephesians 5:2 ; 1 Corinthians 8:11 ; Romans 13:10

## Romans 14:16

Read the verse: Romans 14:16

### Study Notes

Our freedom in Christ is a good thing, but it can be used in a way that wounds others, and then what is good gets a bad name. Paul calls us to use our liberty in a way that cannot fairly

be criticized as harmful to a brother. We give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all.

**Read alongside** Romans 12:17 ; 1 Corinthians 10:29–30 ; 1 Peter 2:16

## Romans 14:17

Read the verse: Romans 14:17

**Study Notes**

Paul puts food and drink in their place. God's kingdom is not about what is on the plate. It is about the righteousness, peace and joy that the Holy Spirit produces in us. When Christians quarrel over secondary things and lose their peace and joy, they have traded the main thing for a small thing.

Matthew Henry wrote, "Righteousness, peace, and joy, are very comprehensive words; and each of them includes much, both of the foundation and the superstructure of religion." These are the things that last, and they are the fruit the Spirit grows in every believer who walks with Him.

**Read alongside** 1 Corinthians 8:8 ; Galatians 5:22–23 ; Romans 15:13

## Romans 14:18

Read the verse: Romans 14:18

**Study Notes**

“Thus” points back to verse 17. The believer who serves Christ through righteousness, peace and joy in the Spirit, rather than by fighting over food, is acceptable to God and approved by men. We aim at what is honorable not only in the Lord’s sight but also in the sight of others. Our first audience is always the Lord Christ, whom we serve.

**Read alongside** 2 Corinthians 8:21 ; Colossians 3:23–24

## Romans 14:19

Read the verse: Romans 14:19

**Study Notes**

“Pursue” is an active word. Peace in the church does not happen by accident; we chase after it. And we aim at “mutual upbuilding,” helping one another grow. As John Wesley noted, “Peace and edification are closely joined.”

Before we speak or act in a disputed matter, we can ask two questions: Will this make for peace? Will this build my brother up?

**Read alongside** Psalm 34:14 ; 1 Corinthians 14:12 ; Hebrews 12:14 ; Romans 12:18

## Romans 14:20

Read the verse: Romans 14:20

**Study Notes**

Every believer is “the work of God,” something He is building. Paul warns us not to tear down what God is building in a fellow believer’s life for the sake of food or any other secondary matter. Yes, everything is clean, but it is wrong to use that freedom in a way that makes another stumble. Being right about the food is never worth wrecking a brother.

**Read alongside** Romans 14:15 ; Titus 1:15 ; Philippians 1:6

## Romans 14:21

Read the verse: Romans 14:21

**Study Notes**

Paul does not tell the weak to become strong overnight. He tells the strong to be willing to give up meat, wine or anything else that would cause a brother to stumble. This is not a new law for everyone. It is love choosing to lay down a right for the good of someone else, just as Christ did for us (Romans 15:3).

Matthew Henry said, “We must deny ourselves in our appetites, inclinations, and in the use of Christian liberty, rather than obstruct and prejudice our own or others’ grace and peace.”

**Read alongside** 1 Corinthians 8:13 ; Romans 15:1–3 ; 1 Corinthians 9:19

## Romans 14:22

Read the verse: Romans 14:22

**Study Notes**

If you are free in a matter, enjoy that freedom quietly before God. You do not need to parade it before weaker believers. There is a real blessing in a clear conscience, in doing what you approve without secretly condemning yourself for it. Freedom held humbly before God, and used with love toward others, is freedom used well.

**Read alongside** 1 John 3:21 ; 1 Corinthians 10:29 ; Acts 24:16

## Romans 14:23

Read the verse: Romans 14:23

**Study Notes**

Paul closes with a searching principle. If a believer has doubts and goes ahead anyway, he sins, not because the food is evil, but because he acted against what he believed God wanted. “Whatever does not proceed from faith is sin.”

That is why the strong must never pressure the weak to do what their conscience forbids. Conscience can be taught by the Word, but it must not be trampled. As John Wesley wrote, “Whatever a man does without a full persuasion of its lawfulness, it is sin to him.”

**Read alongside** Romans 14:5 ; James 4:17 ; Hebrews 11:6

**Put it into practice** Before you use a freedom this week, run it through a quick test: Can I do it in faith with a clear conscience before God? Can I give thanks while doing it? Could my liberty become a stumbling block to another believer? Does it pursue peace and build others up? If the answer to any of these troubles you, be willing to give up that freedom for a brother's sake.

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# Chapter 15

## The Example of Christ

### Romans 15:1

Read the verse: Romans 15:1

**Study Notes**

These verses close Paul's long teaching on "the strong" and "the weak" that began in Romans 14. Paul now counts himself among the strong, the believers who understood their freedom in Christ about food and days. But strength is not a license; it is an obligation. The word Paul uses (opheilō) means a debt we owe, and "bear with" (bastazō) is the same word as "Bear one another's burdens" in Galatians 6:2. Real spiritual strength

shows itself in patience and self-denial, not in insisting on our rights.

Ask yourself who “the weak” are in your own circle, and what their failings ask of you. Dietrich Bonhoeffer put it well: “Every Christian community must realize that not only do the weak need the strong, but also that the strong cannot exist without the weak. The elimination of the weak is the death of the fellowship.” (Life Together)

**Read alongside** Galatians 6:2 ; Galatians 6:1 ; 1 Thessalonians 5:14 ; Romans 14:1

## Romans 15:2

Read the verse: Romans 15:2

### Study Notes

The opposite of pleasing ourselves is not pleasing everyone for the sake of peace. Paul says to please our neighbor “for his good, to build him up.” That rules out mere flattery or going along with whatever someone wants. The word for building up (oikodomē) pictures building a house. The question is always: what will help this person grow in Christ? Sometimes that means giving up a freedom; sometimes it means a word of encouragement. Every believer is either building others up or tearing them down.

**Read alongside** 1 Corinthians 10:24 ; Ephesians 4:29 ; Romans 14:19 ; Philippians 2:4

## Romans 15:3

Read the verse: Romans 15:3

**Study Notes**

Here is the reason behind the command: Christ Himself did not please Himself. Paul quotes Psalm 69:9, a psalm of the suffering righteous one, and puts the words in Jesus' mouth. The insults people threw at God landed on Jesus, and He took them willingly, all the way to the cross. As Spurgeon said, "He took the most trying place in the whole field of battle; he stood where the fray was hottest."

If the Son of God set aside His own comfort for us, we can surely set aside our preferences for a brother or sister. A self-protective Christianity is not shaped like Christ. Matthew Henry wrote, "The self-denial of our Lord Jesus is the best argument against the selfishness of Christians."

**Read alongside** Psalm 69:9 ; Philippians 2:5–8 ; John 6:38

## Romans 15:4

Read the verse: Romans 15:4

**Study Notes**

Having just quoted a psalm, Paul stops to say why the Old Testament still matters. It was “written for our instruction.” The Scriptures are not only history; God gave them to teach us today. Through them He gives endurance (hypomonē, patient staying power under trial) and encouragement (paraklēsis) when we are weary, and the result is hope. When bearing with others feels hard, the Word of God is where we find the strength to keep loving.

**Read alongside** 2 Timothy 3:16–17 ; 1 Corinthians 10:11 ; Psalm 119:50 ; Romans 4:23–24

## Romans 15:5

Read the verse: Romans 15:5

### Study Notes

Paul turns his teaching into a prayer. He calls God “the God of endurance and encouragement,” the same two gifts he just said come through the Scriptures. Harmony in the church is not something we manufacture; it is something God grants. And the harmony Paul prays for is “in accord with Christ Jesus.” It does not mean everyone agrees on every opinion. It means everyone is tuned to the same Lord.

A. W. Tozer gave a fine picture of this: “Has it ever occurred to you that one hundred pianos all tuned to the same fork are automatically tuned to each other?” (The Pursuit of God).

When each of us looks to Christ, we find ourselves nearer to one another.

**Read alongside** Romans 12:16 ; Philippians 2:2 ; Colossians 3:14–15 ; 1 Peter 3:8

## Romans 15:6

Read the verse: Romans 15:6

### Study Notes

Here is the goal of the unity Paul prays for: not unity for its own sake, but worship. Jewish and Gentile believers, strong and weak, are to glorify God “with one voice.” A church divided over secondary matters cannot sing well together. But when believers welcome and bear with one another, their many voices become one song of praise to “the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

**Read alongside** Ephesians 4:4–6 ; Psalm 34:3 ; John 17:21 ; Hebrews 13:15

## Romans 15:7

Read the verse: Romans 15:7

### Study Notes

Paul sums up everything since Romans 14:1 in one sentence: welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you. The word “welcome” (proslambanō) means to take someone into your

company and fellowship, the same word that opened chapter 14. How did Christ welcome us? While we were weak, sinful and far from God, at the cost of His own life.

If He received us like that, we have no grounds to hold a fellow believer at arm's length over food, days or opinions. And when we welcome one another this way, God is glorified. As Matthew Henry asked, "Has Christ been so kind to us, and shall we be so unkind to those that are his?"

**Read alongside** Romans 14:1 ; Ephesians 4:32 ; John 13:34

**Put it into practice** Think of one believer whose convictions or habits differ from yours. This week, set aside a preference for their sake and do one thing that builds them up, welcoming them as Christ has welcomed you.

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## Christ the Hope of Jews and Gentiles

### Romans 15:8

Read the verse: Romans 15:8

**Study Notes**

Paul has just told the strong and the weak to welcome one another as Christ welcomed them (Romans 15:7). Now he shows how wide Christ's welcome is. Jesus came first as a servant to the Jewish people, keeping every promise God

made to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. That proves God is truthful. The same faithfulness that kept His word to Israel is the reason the Gentiles, and we, can trust Him too.

**Read alongside** Matthew 15:24 ; Luke 1:54–55 ; 2 Corinthians 1:20

## Romans 15:9

Read the verse: Romans 15:9

### Study Notes

Christ also came “in order that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy.” God had no covenant with the nations, so what they received was pure mercy. Paul begins a chain of Old Testament quotations with the words of David (Psalm 18:49), who promised to praise God among the nations. God’s mercy to the Gentiles is the fulfillment of ancient Scripture; His plan for the nations was never an improvisation.

**Read alongside** Psalm 18:49 ; 2 Samuel 22:50 ; Ephesians 2:12–13

## Romans 15:10

Read the verse: Romans 15:10

### Study Notes

The second quotation comes from the Song of Moses (Deuteronomy 32:43). Notice the words “with his people.” The

Gentiles are not called to rejoice in a separate place, but alongside Israel. This is the very unity Paul has been urging on the mixed church in Rome. Jew and Gentile were always meant to praise God together.

**Read alongside** Deuteronomy 32:43 ; Psalm 117:1 ; Ephesians 2:14

## Romans 15:11

Read the verse: Romans 15:11

### Study Notes

The third quotation is Psalm 117:1, the shortest psalm in the Bible, calling “all you Gentiles” and “all the peoples” to praise the Lord. In verses 9–12 Paul draws from the Law, the Prophets and the Psalms to show that God always meant for the nations to praise Him. Every people on earth is invited into that song, and that includes us.

**Read alongside** Psalm 117:1 ; Psalm 148:11–13 ; Revelation 7:9–10

## Romans 15:12

Read the verse: Romans 15:12

### Study Notes

The last quotation is from Isaiah. Jesse was King David’s father. From that family line, which looked like a cut-down

stump, God raised up the Messiah, the King who rules the nations and in whom people of every nation now hope. Gentile believers are not an afterthought; they are the fulfillment of God's plan. In Christ, the Root of Jesse, we find our true and lasting hope.

**Read alongside** Isaiah 11:1 ; Isaiah 11:10 ; Matthew 12:21 ; Revelation 22:16

## Romans 15:13

Read the verse: Romans 15:13

### Study Notes

This prayer gathers up the whole letter. God is called "the God of hope" because hope begins with Him. He fills us with joy and peace "in believing," that is, as we keep trusting Him. The result is not a thin hope we have to work up, but hope that overflows by the power of the Holy Spirit. Our part is to trust; His part is to fill.

Matthew Henry said it beautifully: "God is the foundation on which our hope is built, and he is the builder that doth himself raise it." My prayer for you is the same as Paul's, that you would abound in hope.

**Read alongside** Romans 5:1–2 ; Romans 14:17 ; Romans 5:5 ; Galatians 5:22–23

**Put it into practice** Pray Romans 15:13 by name each day this week for yourself and for one person who is discouraged, asking the God of hope to fill them with joy and peace as they trust Him.

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## Paul the Minister to the Gentiles

### Romans 15:14

Read the verse: Romans 15:14

**Study Notes**

From here on Paul speaks personally. After fourteen chapters of strong teaching and correction, he assures the Romans that he thinks well of them. He is convinced they are “full of goodness,” filled with knowledge and able to instruct one another. That is a good pattern for us: correction goes down best with genuine encouragement, and every church should have members who can teach and counsel each other.

**Read alongside** 2 Peter 1:12 ; 1 Corinthians 1:5 ; Colossians 3:16

### Romans 15:15

Read the verse: Romans 15:15

**Study Notes**

Paul admits he has written “very boldly” on some points, but he calls it a reminder, not new teaching. Even mature believers need to hear the gospel again. His boldness did not come from his own authority but “because of the grace given me by God,” the grace that made him an apostle (Romans 1:5). When we speak the truth, we do it as people who have received grace, not as people who have earned the right.

**Read alongside** Romans 1:5 ; 1 Corinthians 3:10 ; 2 Peter 1:12–13

## Romans 15:16

Read the verse: Romans 15:16

**Study Notes**

Paul uses the language of the temple. He sees himself as a priest, and the Gentiles who believe the gospel are his offering to God. Under the old covenant, Gentiles were kept at a distance from the temple. Now, through the gospel, they are brought to God and made acceptable, set apart by the Holy Spirit. Every person who comes to Christ is a gift offered to God.

**Read alongside** Isaiah 66:20 ; Philippians 2:17 ; Romans 12:1

## Romans 15:17

Read the verse: Romans 15:17

**Study Notes**

Paul says he has reason to be proud of his work, but notice where that pride is placed: “in Christ Jesus.” He is not boasting in his own talent or effort. He is glad about what God has done through his service. That is the right kind of satisfaction in ministry, the kind that can say with Paul, “Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord.”

**Read alongside** Philippians 3:3 ; 1 Corinthians 1:31 ; Galatians 6:14

## Romans 15:18

Read the verse: Romans 15:18

**Study Notes**

Paul will not boast about himself, only about “what Christ has accomplished through me.” The goal of his ministry was to bring the Gentiles “to obedience,” the same obedience of faith he named at the start of the letter (Romans 1:5). And the gospel went out “by word and deed,” in preaching and in a changed life. Our words and our lives need to tell the same story.

**Read alongside** Galatians 2:8 ; Acts 15:12 ; Romans 1:5

## Romans 15:19

Read the verse: Romans 15:19

**Study Notes**

The gospel Paul preached was backed by signs and wonders done in the power of the Spirit of God. Illyricum was a Roman province along the eastern coast of the Adriatic Sea, northwest of Greece. From Jerusalem all the way around to there, Paul had planted the gospel in the main cities. That is what he means by “fulfilled the ministry of the gospel”: he had fully preached Christ through that whole region.

**Read alongside** 2 Corinthians 12:12 ; Acts 19:11 ; 1 Thessalonians 1:5

## Romans 15:20

Read the verse: Romans 15:20

### Study Notes

Paul’s ambition was to take the gospel to places that had never heard it. He did not look down on those who built on others’ work (1 Corinthians 3:10), but his own calling was to lay foundations. Matthew Henry observed, “Paul broke the ice, and therefore must needs meet with the more difficulties and discouragements in his work.” The call to reach those who have not heard still stands.

**Read alongside** 2 Corinthians 10:15–16 ; 1 Corinthians 3:10 ; Romans 10:14–15

## Romans 15:21

Read the verse: Romans 15:21

**Study Notes**

Paul found his calling in Isaiah 52:15, a verse about the Servant of the Lord: people who had never been told of Him would see and understand. He applied it to his own mission and trusted God to make Christ known among peoples who had not heard. The verse does not promise that every hearer will believe, but it does promise that God will make His Son known among the nations.

**Read alongside** Isaiah 52:15 ; Acts 13:46–47 ; Romans 10:14–15

**Put it into practice** Name one group or place near you, or far away, where Christ is not yet known. Decide on one concrete way to take part in reaching them this month: praying by name, giving, or going.

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## Paul's Plan to Visit Rome

### Romans 15:22

Read the verse: Romans 15:22

**Study Notes**

Paul had long wanted to see the believers in Rome (Romans 1:10–13). He explains that the reason he had "so often been hindered" was his work of preaching where Christ had not

been named. His delay was not a lack of love for them; it was faithfulness to his calling. Sometimes the good things we want must wait while we finish the work God has given us now.

**Read alongside** Romans 1:13 ; 1 Thessalonians 2:18 ; Acts 16:6–7

## Romans 15:23

Read the verse: Romans 15:23

### Study Notes

Now Paul's work in the eastern regions was done; there was "no longer any room for work in these regions." After "many years" of longing, the way to Rome seemed open. Paul had said in Acts 19:21, "After I have been there, I must also see Rome." God's timing is not ours, but His purposes do move forward.

**Read alongside** Acts 19:21 ; Romans 1:10–11

## Romans 15:24

Read the verse: Romans 15:24

### Study Notes

Paul planned to visit Rome on his way to Spain, at the western edge of the known world, and he hoped the Roman church would help send him on. Scripture does not tell us whether he

ever reached Spain. Acts ends with Paul in Rome as a prisoner, still preaching the kingdom of God (Acts 28:30–31).

Notice that Paul expected the church to help him on his journey. Sending and supporting those who carry the gospel is part of the work, just as Titus was told to see that Zenas and Apollos “lack nothing.”

**Read alongside** Acts 15:3 ; Titus 3:13 ; Acts 28:30–31

## Romans 15:25

Read the verse: Romans 15:25

### Study Notes

Before Rome, Paul had one more task: “At present, however, I am going to Jerusalem bringing aid to the saints.” This gift for the poor believers in Jerusalem was one of the reasons he wrote this letter. Paul, the great missionary, took time to carry an offering in person. Serving the needs of God’s people is gospel work too.

**Read alongside** Acts 24:17 ; 1 Corinthians 16:3 ; Acts 20:22

## Romans 15:26

Read the verse: Romans 15:26

### Study Notes

The Gentile churches in Macedonia and Achaia (northern and southern Greece) gave for the poor among the Jewish

believers in Jerusalem. Paul says they were “pleased” to do it. In 2 Corinthians 8 he tells us the Macedonians gave out of their own poverty, even begging for the privilege of taking part. Generous giving flows from grace, not pressure.

**Read alongside** 2 Corinthians 8:1–4 ; Acts 11:29–30 ; Galatians 2:10

## Romans 15:27

Read the verse: Romans 15:27

**Study Notes**

Paul says the Gentile believers were glad to give, and also that they owed it. The gospel came to the Gentiles from Israel; sharing material help was a fitting way to say thank you. The gift was also a picture of what Paul has taught in chapters 14–15: Jew and Gentile are one family in Christ.

Ask yourself: who first shared the spiritual riches of Christ with me, and how can I serve them, or others like them, in return?

**Read alongside** 1 Corinthians 9:11 ; Galatians 6:6 ; Galatians 6:10

## Romans 15:28

Read the verse: Romans 15:28

**Study Notes**

Paul wanted to finish the Jerusalem task properly, delivering what had been collected, before turning west. The phrase translated “delivered” carries the idea of a sealed and safely handed over gift; Paul was careful and trustworthy with what others had given. Only then would he set out for Spain by way of Rome. Faithfulness in finishing one task comes before starting the next.

**Read alongside** Romans 15:24 ; 2 Corinthians 8:20–21 ; Acts 20:22

## Romans 15:29

Read the verse: Romans 15:29

**Study Notes**

Paul was confident that when he came, he would come “in the fullness of the blessing of Christ.” He did not know what lay ahead in Jerusalem, but he knew he would not arrive empty-handed. It is a reminder that God’s servants travel with divine resources. Paul hoped his visit would bless the Romans and that they would bless him, so that they would be “mutually encouraged by each other’s faith” (Romans 1:12).

**Read alongside** Romans 1:11–12 ; Ephesians 3:8

## Romans 15:30

Read the verse: Romans 15:30

**Study Notes**

Paul does not ask the Romans merely to remember him. He asks them to “strive together” with him in prayer, a word that carries the idea of a struggle or contest. He grounds the request in the Lord Jesus Christ and in the love the Holy Spirit gives. Prayer is not a small extra in the work of the gospel; it is how believers far apart share in the same battle.

Matthew Henry wrote, “Those who are put far asunder by the disposal of God’s providence may yet meet together at the throne of his grace.” We can do that for one another today.

**Read alongside** Colossians 4:12 ; 2 Corinthians 1:11 ; Ephesians 6:18–19

## Romans 15:31

Read the verse: Romans 15:31

### Study Notes

Paul asks for two specific things: to be delivered from the unbelievers in Judea, who opposed him fiercely, and that his gift would be accepted by the Jewish believers in Jerusalem. He knew the danger he faced and that the offering might be misunderstood. His example teaches us to pray specifically, naming the real dangers and the real needs.

**Read alongside** 2 Thessalonians 3:1–2 ; Acts 21:10–13 ; 2 Corinthians 8:4

## Romans 15:32

Read the verse: Romans 15:32

**Study Notes**

Paul's third request was a joyful arrival in Rome "by God's will," to be refreshed in their company. God answered in His own way. In Jerusalem Paul was arrested but kept alive (Acts 21–23), and he reached Rome, though in chains (Acts 28). God's answers do not always follow our plans, but His will is always good.

**Read alongside** Acts 28:14–16 ; 1 Corinthians 16:18 ; Philemon 1:7 ; James 4:15

## Romans 15:33

Read the verse: Romans 15:33

**Study Notes**

Paul closes this part of the letter with a short blessing. The One who made peace between us and Himself through Christ (Romans 5:1), and who makes Jew and Gentile one, is "the God of peace." He is the best gift Paul can wish for any church, and His presence goes with everyone who serves Him.

**Read alongside** Romans 16:20 ; Philippians 4:9 ; Romans 5:1

**Put it into practice** Choose one missionary, pastor or ministry worker and "strive together" with them in prayer this

week: ask what they need, then pray specifically for their safety, their work and their joy.

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# Chapter 16

## Personal Greetings

### Romans 16:1

Read the verse: Romans 16:1

**Study Notes**

Phoebe served the church at Cenchreae, the port town just east of Corinth, where Paul wrote this letter. She was traveling to Rome, and many believe she carried the letter. Paul calls her “our sister” and a “servant” of the church; the Greek word can also mean “deaconess.” In God’s family she is a sister, and in God’s work she is a servant.

Think of her as the first “mail lady.” Official mail in the Roman Empire went by runner, but Paul sent Romans, the longest of his letters, by Phoebe. She would have carried the papyrus sheets, wrapped to keep them dry, across the sea and on to Rome. Imagine if she had lost it! We can’t help but wonder: did she have any notion of how important her package was?

**Read alongside** Acts 18:18 ; Philippians 2:29 ; 1 Timothy 3:11

## Romans 16:2

Read the verse: Romans 16:2

### Study Notes

Paul asks the Romans to welcome Phoebe “in a way worthy of the saints” and to help her with whatever she needs, because she had been a patron, a generous helper who used her means to support others, Paul included. Faithful service in the church deserves honor and help. When God sends a faithful servant our way, we are to welcome, honor and assist them.

**Read alongside** Philippians 2:29 ; 3 John 1:8 ; Galatians 6:10

## Romans 16:3

Read the verse: Romans 16:3

### Study Notes

Paul first met Aquila and his wife Priscilla (Prisca) in Corinth. They had been forced out of Rome when Emperor Claudius expelled the Jews (Acts 18:2), and they worked with Paul as tentmakers. Now they were back in Rome when Paul wrote. He calls them “my fellow workers in Christ Jesus”: a husband and wife who served the Lord side by side.

**Read alongside** Acts 18:1–3 ; Acts 18:26 ; 1 Corinthians 16:19

## Romans 16:4

Read the verse: Romans 16:4

**Study Notes**

At some point Prisca and Aquila put their own lives at risk to save Paul. We are not told when, but Paul says every Gentile church owes them thanks. Some of the most important work in God's kingdom is done by ordinary believers who open their homes and stand by His servants.

**Read alongside** Acts 19:30–31 ; Philippians 2:30 ; John 15:13

## Romans 16:5

Read the verse: Romans 16:5

**Study Notes**

The early church had no church buildings. Believers met in homes, and in a large city like Rome there were several such house churches. As Matthew Henry observed, "It seems then, a church in a house is no such absurd thing as some make it to be." (Commentary on the Whole Bible, on Romans 16:5)

Epaenetus was the first person in the province of Asia (western Turkey today) to believe in Christ. Paul still remembers him with affection. Every believer is someone's "firstfruits," and Paul never forgets the people God used him to reach.

**Read alongside** 1 Corinthians 16:19 ; Colossians 4:15 ; Philemon 1:2

## Romans 16:6

Read the verse: Romans 16:6

### Study Notes

Mary is one of several women in this chapter whom Paul honors for their labor. All we are told is that she "worked hard for you," and that was enough for Paul to remember her by name. Hidden, faithful work for the church is never forgotten by God, and it should not be forgotten by us. Scripture asks us to respect those who labor among us.

**Read alongside** 1 Thessalonians 5:12 ; Galatians 4:11 ; Hebrews 6:10

## Romans 16:7

Read the verse: Romans 16:7

### Study Notes

Andronicus and Junia were Jewish believers ("my kinsmen") who had been in prison with Paul and who came to Christ before he did. The ESV says they were "well known to the apostles"; other translations read "outstanding among the apostles." Either way, they were respected, long-serving believers. Paul, the great apostle, gladly honors people who were in Christ before him.

**Read alongside** Colossians 4:10 ; Philemon 1:23 ; Romans 9:3

## Romans 16:8

Read the verse: Romans 16:8

### Study Notes

Of Ampliatus we know only what Paul tells us: he was “my beloved in the Lord.” What bound Paul to so many people in Rome was not shared background but shared love in Christ. That love is the mark Jesus said would show the world we are His disciples.

It is believed that most of those whom Paul requested greetings for were people Paul had met in his travels but who now lived in Rome.

**Read alongside** John 13:35 ; 1 John 3:1 ; 1 John 4:11

## Romans 16:9

Read the verse: Romans 16:9

### Study Notes

Urbanus is a “fellow worker,” and Stachys is “my beloved.” Paul names some for their work and some for their place in his heart, and both matter in the body of Christ. We are all God’s fellow workers, laboring in His field, and our names are written in the book of life.

**Read alongside** 1 Corinthians 3:9 ; Philippians 4:3

## Romans 16:10

Read the verse: Romans 16:10

**Study Notes**

Apelles is “approved in Christ,” a believer whose faith had been tested and proven genuine. That is the approval worth seeking: not the praise of people, but God’s approval after we have stood the test. Paul also greets the believers in the household of Aristobulus, which may have included servants or slaves who had come to Christ.

**Read alongside** 2 Timothy 2:15 ; James 1:12 ; 1 Peter 1:6–7

## Romans 16:11

Read the verse: Romans 16:11

**Study Notes**

Herodion was another Jewish believer, one of Paul’s “kinsmen.” Paul also greets “those in the Lord” in the household of Narcissus, which suggests that not everyone in that house believed, but Paul remembers those who did. The gospel had reached into homes of every kind in Rome.

**Read alongside** Romans 9:3 ; Acts 13:1 ; Philippians 4:22

## Romans 16:12

Read the verse: Romans 16:12

**Study Notes**

Tryphaena and Tryphosa, probably sisters, are “workers in the Lord,” and Persis “has worked hard in the Lord.” Again Paul honors women who labored for the gospel. Their names are a reminder that labor done “in the Lord” is never in vain, however small or unseen it may seem.

**Read alongside** 1 Corinthians 15:58 ; Philippians 4:3 ; Colossians 3:23–24

## Romans 16:13

Read the verse: Romans 16:13

**Study Notes**

Mark 15:21 tells us that Simon of Cyrene, who carried Jesus’ cross, was “the father of Alexander and Rufus.” Mark wrote his Gospel for readers who knew those names, and many believe this Rufus in Rome is the same man, though we cannot be certain. Paul calls Rufus “chosen in the Lord” and says Rufus’s mother had been like a mother to him. In God’s family, believers become mothers, brothers and sisters to one another.

**Read alongside** Mark 15:21 ; 1 Timothy 5:2 ; Mark 10:29–30

## Romans 16:14

Read the verse: Romans 16:14

**Study Notes**

These five men and “the brothers who are with them” were probably a house church of their own. Paul does not rank them or describe their gifts; he simply greets them. Every small gathering of believers matters to God, and we are called to do good especially to the household of faith and not to neglect meeting together.

**Read alongside** Galatians 6:10 ; Hebrews 10:24–25

## Romans 16:15

Read the verse: Romans 16:15

**Study Notes**

Here is another group, likely a second house church, with men and women, a brother and his sister, and “all the saints who are with them.” Paul closes his list as he began it, remembering whole families of believers. No one in Christ is a nameless face in the crowd.

**Read alongside** Philippians 4:21–22 ; Hebrews 13:24

## Romans 16:16

Read the verse: Romans 16:16

**Study Notes**

Romans 16 has more names than any other chapter in Paul’s letters: men and women, Jews and Gentiles, slaves and free, all loved and remembered. The “holy kiss” was a common

greeting in that culture, made holy because it was shared among God's people. The point for us is the same: greet one another with real, pure affection, because in Christ we are one family.

**Read alongside** 1 Corinthians 16:20 ; 1 Peter 5:14 ; John 13:34–35

**Put it into practice** Paul remembered the people who served, worked hard and opened their homes. This week, name one person in your church who serves quietly, and thank them personally with a note, a call or a word of encouragement.

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## Final Instructions and Greetings

### Romans 16:17

Read the verse: Romans 16:17

**Study Notes**

In the middle of his warm greetings, Paul gives a sharp warning. Some people cause divisions and put obstacles in the way of believers by teaching things contrary to the doctrine the church had received. Paul says to "watch out" for them and "avoid them." Such false teachers are a clear and present danger to the church, and they must be identified and avoided.

This is not about honest questions or disputable matters like those in Romans 14. It is about people who pull believers away from the truth of the gospel.

**Read alongside** 1 Timothy 1:3 ; 2 John 1:10 ; Titus 3:10

## Romans 16:18

Read the verse: Romans 16:18

**Study Notes**

Paul tells how to recognize such people. They do not serve Christ but their own appetites, their own desires and interests. Their tool is “smooth talk and flattery,” and their target is the naive, those not yet well grounded in the truth. As Matthew Henry wrote, “Thus by good words and fair speeches the serpent beguiled Eve.” (Commentary on the Whole Bible, on Romans 16:18)

The best protection is to know the Word well, so that pleasant words cannot lead us away from it.

**Read alongside** Philippians 3:19 ; Colossians 2:4 ; 2 Corinthians 11:3

## Romans 16:19

Read the verse: Romans 16:19

**Study Notes**

The Roman believers were known everywhere for their obedience (see 1:8), and Paul rejoiced over them. But he wanted them to be wise about what is good and innocent about what is evil. Like Jesus' words, "wise as serpents and innocent as doves" (Matthew 10:16), this means studying and practicing what is good, while refusing to become experienced in evil.

**Read alongside** Romans 1:8 ; Matthew 10:16 ; 1 Corinthians 14:20

## Romans 16:20

Read the verse: Romans 16:20

### Study Notes

This promise looks back to Genesis 3:15, where God told the serpent that the woman's offspring would crush his head. Christ won that victory at the cross, and Paul says the God of peace will "soon" crush Satan under the feet of His people. Division and false teaching are among Satan's tools, but they will not win. Victory over the enemy is not in doubt, only the timing. Paul adds a blessing: the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

Matthew Henry encourages us to keep going: "Hold out therefore, faith and patience, yet a little while; when we have once got through the Red Sea, we shall see our spiritual enemies dead on the shore, and triumphantly sing the song of

Moses and the song of the Lamb." (Commentary on the Whole Bible, on Romans 16:20)

**Read alongside** Genesis 3:15 ; Luke 10:18–19 ; Romans 15:33 ; 1 John 3:8

## Romans 16:21

Read the verse: Romans 16:21

### Study Notes

Now the greetings come from Paul's companions in Corinth. Timothy, Paul's "fellow worker" and son in the faith, heads the list. Jason may be the man whose house was attacked in Thessalonica because he had welcomed Paul (Acts 17:5). Paul did not serve alone; the gospel always moves forward through a team of faithful people.

**Read alongside** Acts 16:1–3 ; Acts 17:5 ; Philippians 2:19–22

## Romans 16:22

Read the verse: Romans 16:22

### Study Notes

Tertius was the scribe who wrote this letter down as Paul spoke it. Paul often used a helper to write and then added a greeting in his own hand (see 1 Corinthians 16:21; Galatians 6:11). Here the scribe adds his own greeting "in the Lord." God

used Paul's words and Tertius' pen to give the church this great letter.

**Read alongside** 1 Corinthians 16:21 ; Galatians 6:11 ; 2 Thessalonians 3:17

## Romans 16:23

Read the verse: Romans 16:23

**Study Notes**

Paul was staying with Gaius, most likely in Corinth, when he wrote this letter. Gaius opened his home not only to Paul but to "the whole church." Erastus held a public office as city treasurer, and Quartus is simply "our brother." A host, an official and a brother stand side by side as equals in Christ.

**Read alongside** 1 Corinthians 1:14 ; Acts 19:29 ; Acts 20:2–3

## Romans 16:24

**Study Notes**

The ESV places this verse in a footnote because it is missing from the earliest manuscripts; later manuscripts add it, repeating the blessing of verse 20.

**Put it into practice** Ask yourself: is there any teaching I have been listening to because it sounds pleasant rather than because it agrees with the Word? Test it against Scripture this

week, and ask God to make you wise as to what is good and innocent as to what is evil.

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## Doxology

### Romans 16:25

Read the verse: Romans 16:25

**Study Notes**

Paul's last words turn to praise of the God "who is able to strengthen you." The power to stand firm is not something we produce ourselves; God supplies it through the gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ. That gospel reveals "the mystery," God's plan kept secret for long ages.

**Read alongside** Ephesians 3:20 ; 1 Corinthians 2:1 ; Jude 1:24–25

### Romans 16:26

Read the verse: Romans 16:26

**Study Notes**

The mystery is now hidden no longer. Through Christ and the prophetic Scriptures, God has made it known to all nations by His eternal command, so that people of every nation may come to "the obedience of faith," the same words Paul used at

the start (Romans 1:5). Real faith in Christ shows itself in obedience, not as rule-keeping but as the fruit of trust.

**Read alongside** Romans 1:5 ; Colossians 1:26 ; Matthew 28:18–20

## Romans 16:27

Read the verse: Romans 16:27

**Study Notes**

Romans ends the way it has been heading all along: with glory to God. All of it, from our sin and God's grace to the life of the Spirit and the gospel going to the nations, leads to one end: glory to the only wise God through Jesus Christ, forever.

Paul's great letter ends with people and with praise. He remembers by name the men and women who served, risked, worked hard and opened their homes. He warns the church to guard the truth and stay together. And he gives all the glory to God. The names change, but the family, the warning and the praise are still ours.

**Read alongside** Romans 11:36 ; 1 Timothy 1:17 ; Jude 1:24–25

**Put it into practice** Romans ends where it began, with the obedience of faith and the glory of God. Choose one specific way you will obey Christ this week out of trust in Him, and close each day by giving Him the glory through Jesus Christ.

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