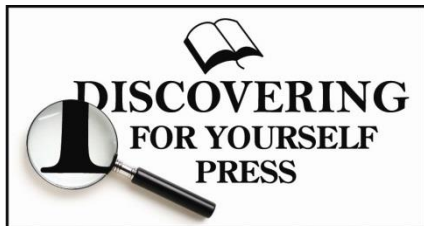


Romans

The Gospel of Grace
through Faith



Moline, IL
www.d4yp.com

Notes and Comments by John Sullivan

This journal belongs to:

Romans

The Gospel of Grace
through Faith

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*For I am not ashamed of the gospel,
because it is the power of God that brings salvation
to everyone who believes:
first to the Jew, then to the Gentile.*

Romans 1:16

Romans

The Gospel of Grace through Faith

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*Therefore, since we have been justified through faith,
we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,
through whom we have gained access by faith
into this grace in which we now stand.
And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God.*

Romans 5:1 – 2

Romans

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Introduction

Notes

Welcome to this 5-week study in **Romans**. We often sing of *Amazing Grace*, but we probably realize that the grace of God is so amazing that it is almost beyond our understanding. Paul, the author of this letter to the church in Rome, understood what it meant to him. Inspired by the Holy Spirit, he poured out his heart on this subject. As we put our heart into studying it today, we will also find ourselves faithful and inspired – not worshipping grace, but worshipping the God of all grace.

Here are some goals that would be worthy of our attention and intention as we go through this together:

- Become as excited as Paul was about the gospel of grace through faith.
- Personally see how much we need God's grace and need to persevere in our faith.
- Feel completely assured of standing in the arena of grace, where there is absolutely no condemnation.
- Be more committed than ever before to obey Christ with all of our hearts – not out of legalism, but as a response to God's grace and mercy.
- Be devoted to the relationships that we have in Christ, giving others the grace and mercy God has shown us.

These might be lofty goals in the hands of a lesser god. But we are in God's hands, and we are applying ourselves to his word. Nothing is impossible for him!

This journal is set up in five weeks, although the pace that you follow is totally up to you. The suggested readings and the questions of this 5-week devotional guide are all designed with the goal in mind of helping you experience the theme of knowing the Scriptures better and knowing God better. He is the author of the Gospel – which, of course, means good news. The good news is all about his grace and the blessings we have when we come to him in faith. It is indeed the gospel (good news) of grace through faith.

Additional Resources

Below is a short list of recommended resources that have proven to be valuable in the study of the topics addressed in *Romans*. **NOTE:** as is always true with anything written by anyone other than God, you may not agree with everything found in these resources, but they all make you think and will help you know God and his word better.

Books

Barclay, William *The Letter to the Romans*, The Westminster Press, 1955.

Ferguson, Gordon *Romans (The Heart Set Free)*, Discipleship Publications International, 2000.

Halley, Henry *Halley's Bible Handbook*, Zondervan, 2000.

Hamilton, Mark (editor) *The Transforming Word*, Abilene Christian University Press, 2009.

Lefler, James *The Complete Guide to Grace*, Silverday Press, 2008.

Moser, K.C. *The Gist of Romans*, Gospel Light Publishing Company, 1957.

Websites and Apps

Introduction to Romans:

<http://www.blueletterbible.org/study/intros/romans.cfm>

Introduction to Romans:

<http://www.biblica.com/resources/scholar-notes/niv-study-bible/intro-to-romans>

www.biblegateway.com A free online, searchable tool with the Bible in multitudes of translations and languages, along with many other Bible-study aids.

www.gotquestions.org A searchable tool designed to try to give reasonable answers to Bible questions. Just type in the question and see what you think about their answer.

YouVersion Bible App A free download of the Bible in many versions to make the Word of God available on your phone or other devices. The audio reading of the Bible is especially helpful.

Hopefully the comments and questions in this journal will help you to discover the Bible for yourself, but this journal is the side dish at best. The main ingredient, of course, is the Word of God itself. So be sure to read the Scriptures each time and spend more time listening to and meditating on theme than you do on this journal.

Also, the focus of this journal is primarily on you as the individual discovering the messages from God in his Word, but this study, like most Bible studies, can be enhanced if you can do it with a group. If you are able to do it with a group, the **Thought Questions** can be used as part of your discussion with the group. Hopefully you will benefit greatly from the practical application of God's Word to you personally, and you will also enjoy helping each other discover God's Word by sharing what you have gained.

God bless you as you study, believe, and apply his word. As always, strive to know the Bible better and know God better!

John Sullivan
April 2018

Week 1

Romans 1 – 3
Romans 1 – 3

The Universal Need for Grace

NOTE: Each week of this 5-week journal will have 5 subsections, with the idea in mind that you could spend one day on each subsection. But, as was stated in the introduction, obviously go at whatever pace fits you.

This letter from Paul to the church in Rome was written around 57 or 58 AD. It seems to be sent as an introduction to Paul's planned visit to the Christians at Rome.

NOTE: Throughout this study of **Romans**, read other resources such as the ones listed on p. 17.

1. The Overture to Romans (Roman 1:1 – 13)

- a. Paul introduced himself with three credentials: a servant (slave) of Jesus Christ; someone with a calling; and someone is set apart for the gospel.

Meditate about how these qualities apply to you:

- Do you see yourself as a servant of Jesus?
 - Do you have a sense of being called? (See verse 6: "those who are called to belong to Jesus.")
 - How has God set you apart from this world for his gospel? (See also verse 7. "Saints" means those who have been set apart.)
- b. Paul also introduces his theme of the *Gospel of Grace through Faith*, in his overture. For each of the following statements from Paul, think about whether or not they represent your conviction also.
- Paul makes it clear in the very first verse that this is the gospel (good news) of God – in other words, it is not just Paul's thoughts, but it came from God.
 - He also makes it clear that it is the good news regarding Jesus (verses 2 – 4). It is not just the promise of forgiveness in this life and the hope of heaven in the next life. Those ideas are certainly very good news. But the basis of it all is the greatness of the Lord himself.
 - And the third focus of this gospel is the impact on our lives that comes from belonging to Jesus Christ (verse 6). As stated above, forgiveness and hope are definitely good news.

As we will read in the next section, it is no wonder that Paul is so excited about the gospel. Meditate and pray about how all of this inspires you as well.

Romans

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Conclusion

Thank you for devoting yourself to this 5-week study of **Romans**.

Hopefully the five goals mentioned in the introduction to this journal and reviewed on page 15, as well as many others, have been realized or at least enhanced by your study. Most Christians seem to agree that they want to study *Romans* again (and again) throughout their life-time journey with God. I know that is certainly my conviction.

If you have also found that you still have some questions about some of the principles discussed in this letter, don't be surprised. You're certainly not the only one. As K.C. Moser said in the preface to his book *The Gist of Romans* "Romans is confessedly profound." So, don't be discouraged or feel guilty about any difficulties you may have with it. Remember that there is no condemnation in Christ. Among other things, that means that there is no condemnation about still having unanswered questions. Keep asking and keep believing that God is answering.

As the subtitle of this journal implies: this is the gospel (i.e. the good news) of the grace of God acting through our faith. The more we understand that, the more likely we would offer to add a simple little adjective – it is the really good news. We all have that universal need for grace – that wretched feeling of incompleteness so eloquently expressed by Paul in chapter 7 of his letter. And the only solution is found in all that God has done through Jesus Christ to make it possible for us to stand in the "No Condemnation" zone that is only found in Christ.

*Therefore, since we have been justified through faith,
we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,
through whom we have gained access by faith
into this grace in which we now stand.
And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God.*

Romans 5:1 – 2

Let's live the rest of our lives *standing in the grace of God!*

Thank you again for studying this part of Scripture and for devoting yourself to the Good News. May God continue to inspire and equip you to know his Word better and to know him better.

John Sullivan

- e. Are you more thankful for and devoted to your relationships, giving others the grace God has given you?
- f. How else have you grown from your study of *Romans*?

We can probably spend a lifetime studying these themes and growing in our ability to apply them. For now, meditate and pray about how you want all of this to be present in your life.

Thought Questions

Use the review questions listed above.

2. Intense Pride in God's Gospel (Romans 1:14 – 17)

- a. Paul expressed his sense of *obligation* (verse 14).
 - Obligation is a bad word in some circles. Why?
 - What do you think prompted Paul's sense of obligation?
 - Does that describe your conviction also?
- b. He also expressed his sense of *eagerness* (verse 15).
 - What do you think was the root of Paul's eagerness to preach the gospel?
 - Does that also describe your conviction?
- c. The rest of this passage focuses on Paul's intense pride of God's gospel, or as he humbly put it "*I'm not ashamed of the gospel.*" He gave two reasons for his enthusiasm. Write your thoughts about each one.
 - It is the power of God for the salvation of all humanity.
 - It unveils the way that God graciously imparts his righteousness on us who have faith.

Are you as excited as Paul was about the gospel and as eager to share it as he was?

Meditate about your enthusiasm about the gospel. If necessary, repent and pray for forgiveness if there is any lacking of pride in your heart about God's gospel. Then ask God to give you, through this study of *Romans*, the same intensity of pride in the gospel that Paul had.

3. The Need for Grace (Romans 1:18 – 32)

This passage, together with the next two chapters of *Romans*, paints a very clear, but dark, picture of why the gospel of grace through faith is so desperately needed. As we often hear, you can't fully appreciate the good news (gospel), until you fully understand the bad news (sin).

This section primarily describes the godlessness and wickedness of those without religion (in particular, the Gentiles). Of course, Gentiles did have their own religion, but it was centered around idol worship. Chapter 2 focuses on the similar condition of many who claim to be in God's religion (specifically, the Jews of that day). And Chapter 3 summarizes the universal need for the gospel – religious and nonreligious alike.

- a. Think about the seriousness of some of the descriptive phrases found in these verses:
 - Suppressing the truth (verse 18). Are we ever tempted with that?
 - Not glorifying or thanking God (verse 21). Do we ever overlook the seriousness of our lack of gratitude?
 - Blatant immorality (verses 24 – 27). Are we ever tempted to think that impurity is really not that bad?
- b. How do you feel about the sad statements (verses 24 and 26) that God gave them over to their sins?

NOTE: Giving them over is not the same thing as giving up on them. This seems more like part of his plan to let people alone (like the way the father did in the story of the lost son in Luke 15) with the hopes that they will come to their senses. Nevertheless, it's a difficult time in a person's life, and, unfortunately, many people do not respond to it well.

Meditate and pray about your convictions about the serious need for the gospel in your life today.

4. The Need for Grace Among the Religious (Romans 2)

In the last reading, we saw the problem of sin graphically presented. Those verses primarily applied to the nonreligious people of the world. In this chapter, Paul boldly points out that the same issues can exist even among those who are religious. In Paul's day, he was referring to the religious Jews who were missing the point of true faith, but today that could refer to so much of "churchianity" in our society. The point is: going to a church does not make you saved, any more than being in a garage makes you a car!

- a. The potential problems of being religious, but not spiritual:
 - Judging others (verses 1 – 3). We never do that, right?
 - Hypocrisy (verse 3). How dangerous is that?
 - Mistaking God's kindness for an excuse to sin (verse 4). What do you think about the point made here about the goal of God's kindness?
 - Bragging (verse 17). What is the difference between the type of bragging that is condemned here and the genuine bragging about God and his gospel?
 - Focusing on externals rather than internals (verses 25 – 29). Is it possible that we might do that with something like baptism?

- Priscilla and Aquila (verse 3 – 5) are mentioned often in the New Testament. (See Acts 18:2 and 1 Cor. 16:19, for instance.)
 - Rufus was the son of Simon the Cyrene (Mark 15:21).
 - Who else stands out to you from this list?
- b. You can see Paul's passion in verses 17 – 20 as he makes a strong point about people who cause divisions. What does he say about that and why do you think he was so passionate about it?
 - c. Verses 21 – 24 focus on greetings to the church in Rome from some brothers and sisters who were with Paul at the time of his writing. What stands out to you about those greetings?

As you get the sense of Paul's heart for his relationships, spend some time praying and meditating about your own relationships and how you want the grace that you have received from God to be evident in the way you view people in your life.

5. Review

Use today (and as many days as you can) to review what you have read in *Romans*. The following questions come from the goals mentioned in the introduction.

- a. Like Paul, do you feel proud of the Gospel and eager to share it?
- b. Do you see personally how much you need grace and need to persevere in your faith?
- c. Do you feel more at peace from knowing that you are loved by a God who did not spare even his own Son to make you his child, totally free from condemnation today?
- d. Do you feel more committed than ever before to obey Christ with all your heart – not out of legalism, but as a response to his grace and mercy?

3. Accepting One Another (Romans 15)

Chapter 15 continues with this practical discussion of how we as Christians who have been saved by grace through faith can live gracefully among others.

- a. Verse 7 says to accept one another as Christ accepts you.
 - How did Christ accept you?
 - How can you apply that to the way you accept others?
- b. Paul often spoke in his letters of being confident about some amazing things about his brothers and sisters, even when he was giving them some corrections. Verse 14 is an example of that. Remember that he is inspired by God. So, it's not unreasonable to think that this is God's view of us also.
 - How do you think it is possible that God sees you as competent and full of goodness? What does he see that we don't?
 - Is this the way you see yourself?
 - How would it affect you if you believed that God sees you this way?
 - Is this the way you see your brothers and sisters?
 - How would it affect your relationships if you talked like this to them?

Are you devoted to the relationships that you have in Christ? Continue to meditate and pray about how you want to continually give others the grace and mercy that God has given you.

4. Examples of Great Relationships (Romans 16)

The “greetings” in this chapter are some of the warmest, most encouraging parts of the Bible. They show us the kind of great relationships they had then and give us an example for our relationships today. This is not just a list of names. It shows God's attention to actual people, not just as names and numbers. Your name may not be written in the Bible, but God has the same attentive mindset about you.

- a. Verses 1 – 16 list a number of faithful brothers and sisters. Write your notes here of what stands out to you about Paul's relationships with them and what you can apply to your relationships today.
 - Phoebe (verses 1 – 2) was a sister whose work for the Lord was greatly appreciated.

- b. Not all religious people do what Paul condemns here, but it is a very clear and present danger. We could easily trust in our religiousness instead of the grace of God.

What can you do to avoid that?

Think about how you want to resist the temptations that can actually be prevalent among church goers, such as the temptations to be self-righteous and hypocritical.

5. The Universal Need for Grace (Romans 3)

- a. Just in case someone might be thinking that Paul was saying that there is absolutely NO advantage in being religious, since both religious and nonreligious people can be sinners, what does he say are the benefits of being religious (verses 1 – 2)? (In his day, that was the benefits of being a Jew; in our day, that might be the benefits of being in church.)
- b. After saying that, though, he makes it clear that there really is no difference between being religious and not being religious in one sense. And that is: we all sin and need the grace of God. Sin is missing the mark. And the mark is Jesus – not just religious activity.

Do you agree with what Paul said about all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God?

Do you agree that this applies to YOU personally?

Is it totally clear to you how much YOU need grace and how much you need to persevere in your faith?

- c. In this Scripture God does not just point out the universal problem, it points out the universal solution. The same word “all” in verse 23 pointing out the universal problem of sin also applies in verse 24 pointing out the universal solution – grace. Take some time to meditate on and research the three key ideas presented in verses 24 – 26:

- **Justification** – describing God the judge declaring us to be innocent.
- **Atonement** – describing the goal of Jesus' sacrifice making us one with God.
- **Redemption** – describing the deliverance from our slavery in sin.

To say the least, this is good news. Meditate and pray about how much you personally need grace, how grateful you are for this gospel, and how much you want to pass it on to others.

As mentioned in the introduction, if you are doing this study with a group, the **Thought Questions** in each section could be used as some of the discussion questions in your group.

Thought Questions

1. How does Paul's example of excitement about the gospel (1:16) and eagerness to share it (1:15) apply to you personally and practically?
2. Why do you need grace?
3. How can you avoid the potential problems (discussed in section 4 above) of being religious, but not spiritual?

Notes

- d. The chapter closes with two important concepts – one positive (what to do) and one negative (what to not do). Consider each one carefully and write your thoughts about them.
 - Clothe yourself with Christ.
 - Do not give any emphasis on gratifying the sinful nature.

Meditate and pray about the love and respect that comes from clothing yourself with Christ, and pray that God will help you to never gratify the sinful desires that would be the opposite of love and respect.

2. Appreciating Diversity (Romans 14)

Chapters 14 and 15 give as much detail as is found anywhere in Scripture about how God wants us to treat one another, especially when there are obvious differences among us. We have already seen how the differences between Jew and Gentile was such a big topic in Paul's day. While that is not the specific area of diversity prevalent today, the principles in this section are vitally important to our generation and every one before and after us.

- a. These verses deal with two specific sources of conflict in their day – dietary laws and observance of special days. Some Christians, especially those from a Jewish background, considered them as still very important. Others, especially those from a Gentile background, thought that they were of no importance at all, because of the emphasis in the New Testament on grace and faith. That resulted in:
 - Those who had a more strict view on those issues would tend to judge those who didn't.
 - Those who placed a greater emphasis on grace and faith would tend to look down on the others and view them as legalists.

Instead of declaring who was right and who was wrong on those issues, this letter had some strong things to say to both sides.

- What does this chapter say about judging others?
- What does it say about looking down on others?

How do both of those principles apply to our diversity issues today?

- b. Verse 19 refers to making every effort to do what leads to peace and mutual edification. Recall what was said about that in verse 18 of chapter 12. That's a major thought, don't you think? Think about that one for a while. How can you apply that to your life this very day?

Pray to God about how you want to live by and promote these principles.

Week 5

Romans 13 – 16
Romans 13 – 16

Faithful and Graceful Relationships

Let's review a little. In chapters 1 – 8 we saw the need for God's grace, whether you're religious or not, and the condemnation that comes with that need. We also read about the uselessness of trying to get rid of that condemnation by our own works. God's grace can only be entered into by our faith, but the amazing result of standing in that grace is being in the NO CONDEMNATION Zone. In chapters 9 – 11 we read about how that applied to a hot topic of their day – the Jews and the Gentiles. We are all encouraged in those chapters to make sure we focus on both the kindness and the sternness of God. In chapters 12 – 16, we see the relationships that result from living a life of faith, standing in the grace of God.

1. Love and Respect (Romans 13)

- a. Verses 1 – 7 of chapter 13 tell us to be respectful citizens. Imagine how hard that was in Paul's day, living under the oppressive Roman government. Other Scriptures clearly teach that anytime government laws contradict God's laws we obey God rather than man. (See Acts 4:19, for example.) But there is also this clear call to be respectful. How do you think this applies to us today?
- b. Paying all debts – except one (13:8 – 10).
 - Why do you think he would need to remind Christians to pay their debts? How does that apply to our finances today?
 - What is the one debt that should never be considered “Paid in Full”?
 - Repeating the emphasis that Jesus gave to the command from *Leviticus 19:18*, Paul says that love for others fulfills all the Law. Is that your consistent emphasis as well?
- c. Verse 11 says that our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed. We usually think of salvation in the past tense: “I’ve been saved.” But the Bible actually uses the word in the past, present, and future tenses. For instance, *1 Peter 1:5, 9* refers to salvation (in heaven) as the future goal of our faith. That seems to be what is referred to here in *Romans 13:11*, where we are told to make sure we wake up to that fact. What do you get from that wake-up call to apply to your life today?

Week 2

Romans 4 – 6
Romans 4 – 6

God's Grace and Our Faith

1. Abraham's Example of Grace through Faith (Romans 4)

- a. Verse 3 quotes *Genesis 15:6*. “Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.” (You might want to read *Genesis 15:1 – 6* for this story about Abraham.)
 - Abraham believed God. What did he believe, and how did he show it?
 - His faith was credited to him as righteousness. “Credited” is an accounting analogy. Abraham's spiritual ledger, like all of us, was lacking in the “righteousness column.” But God saw his faith and favored him (i.e. gave him grace) by putting righteousness into Abraham's account. That was God's grace acting through Abraham's faith.
- b. Verses 13 – 17 contrasts the Old Testament law with faith and concludes that Abraham is the father of all who believe (that's us!), not just of those who came through the Jewish law.
- c. Verses 18 – 22 refer to some amazing characteristics of faith seen in Abraham and Sarah. Write some of your thoughts about each one.
 - True faith trusts God when things seem hopeless (verse 18).
 - True faith faces the facts that are against us, yet does not let that stop us (verse 19).
 - We know from reading the whole story in *Genesis* that Abraham and Sarah had their moments of weaknesses and failures. They were not perfectly sinless. (That's why it is stated that faith was credited as righteousness, rather than saying that righteousness was earned or deserved. It was by grace through faith.) But true faith does not waver during times of unbelief to the point of making us quit (verse 20).
- d. The chapter closes (verses 23 – 25) by making the application to us who believe today. Our faith is also credited to us as righteousness. How does that inspire you?

Meditate and pray about how all of this inspires you as well.

2. Standing in Grace, Justified through Faith (Romans 5:1 – 11)

The word *justified* is a verb with the same root as the word *righteousness*. To be justified is to be declared righteous (by God).

- a. Verse 1 points out that we have been justified (declared righteous) through faith. Here, the word faith could refer to either our trust in God or to God's own faithfulness to do what he promises (or both). This verse highlights the peace that we now have with God because of the fact that he has justified us. In other words, he sees you as if you have never sinned! How does that bring you peace?
- b. At the same time, verse 2 talks about gaining access through faith into the grace (favor) in which we now stand. In other words, we are not only justified (past tense) by God's grace, we presently continually stand in his grace.
 - Have you ever thought about “*standing in grace*”? What does that mean to you?
 - This verse also highlights the rejoicing in the hope of God's glory as we stand in his grace. Are you completely assured that you are standing in God's grace? How does that bring you joy?
- c. In verses 3 – 5, Paul gives a reminder of the reality of the real-life struggles that come to us. Satan is trying to get us to quit because of the hardships. But, as these verses point out, God is giving us perseverance, character, and hope through them. You can imagine the hardships that the Christians of Paul's day faced. How have hardships produced perseverance, character, and hope in your life?
- d. Verses 6 – 11 are some of the most amazing and inspirational thoughts ever written.
 - God demonstrates his love. He has graphically shown and continues to demonstrate his love for you. How can we ever doubt his love?
 - We have now received reconciliation. Reconciled – to be made friends again. Not just tolerated and forgiven. But by the grace of God acting through our faith, we are now considered FRIENDS OF GOD. How do you feel about that?

Meditate about the amazing grace of God in which you now stand. Pray for his help to stay full of faith.

- How important is it to leave vengeance to God?
- **NOTE:** if it is possible, live at peace with others. God realizes that you can't make others live at peace with you, but you can be loving towards them. Then, let God take care of the rest.

We could obviously spend a long time studying and applying these themes, and you probably want to often come back to them. For now, meditate and pray about how you want to grow in all of them.

Thought Questions

1. Do you have the same desire for others to be saved that Paul did (9:1 – 5 and 10:1)?
2. Why do you think it is important to meditate on both the kindness and the sternness of God (11:22)?
3. What does it mean to you personally and practically to be a living sacrifice (12:1 – 2)?

Notes

- d. After we view God and his mercy, we are told to have a proper view of ourselves (verses 3 – 8).
- On the one hand, don't overestimate your (or anyone else's) worth (verse 3).
 - On the other hand, don't underestimate your (or anyone else's) gifts (verses 4 – 8).

We are all valued, loved, and needed. Not thinking of yourself too highly (as verse 3 points out) is not the same as thinking of yourself as worthless. You are God's creation, made in his image, and standing in the grace of God. (Recall *Psalm 139:14*.) How do you need to grow in either or both of these directions – not thinking of yourself too highly, but not thinking of yourself too lowly either?

Are you more committed than ever to obey Christ with all of your heart, not out of legalism, but as a response to God's grace and mercy? Meditate and pray about being that kind of a living sacrifice.

5. Practical Applications of Faith (Romans 12:9 – 21)

This chapter closes with a great list of practical topics. These topics are frequently discussed in other Scriptures, so very little detail is given about them here. Let's dig into them with our eyes wide open about grace and faith.

- The starting point, as Jesus emphasized in the greatest commandments, is love. What do *sincerity* and *devotion*, as mentioned in verses 9 and 10, mean to you in your life of love?
- How can you keep your zeal for God (verse 11)?
- The trio of being joyful in hope, patience in affliction, and faithful in prayer is easy to state (verse 12). Spend some time thinking about the huge blessing that comes from living that way. Is that what you want?
- How are you doing with the topics of sharing and hospitality (verse 13)? What do you learn from the relatively simple use of the word "*practice*" found here (NIV)?
- Verses 14 – 16 require a lot of humility. To bless those that curse you and to be considerate towards others definitely involve dying to our conceit. How does all of that impact you?
- Verses 17 – 21 deal with the way we view and treat our enemies. Jesus frequently emphasized and perfectly exemplified these concepts.

3. The Reign of Sin vs. the Reign of Grace (Romans 5:12 – 21)

Verse 21 contrasts the reign of sin with the reign of grace. In other words, both have a kingdom, where they rule. This reminds us again of the universal need for grace.

a. The reign of sin.

Sin and its consequence – death, entered the world through one man's (Adam's) actions. That doesn't mean that we are born guilty of sin. Read *Ezekiel 18:20*, for example. What does that passage say about how the guilt of sin is not inherited?

The guilt of sin only comes to an individual as he or she sins. But the consequences of sin are handed down to us from one generation to another.

b. The reign of grace.

In sharp contrast to that, the life of one man, Jesus Christ, brings grace to the world. What is said in these verses, and what does your own experience tell you about the following?

- Adam's one act of disobedience brought death into the world.
- Jesus' one act of righteousness (verse 18) brought life into the world.

Meditate and pray about your continued convictions about the absolute need for grace to reign (rule) in your life through your faith. Thank God that he has rescued you from the kingdom of sin! (See *Colossians 1:13 – 14*.)

4. Death, Burial, Resurrection (Romans 6:1 – 14)

- Paul knew full well that grace can be abused. We know that today also. We fully understand that emphasizing grace through faith as much as *Romans* does could lead to a lack of conviction about sin and repentance. Some might even think that sin is good because it brings on grace. What does Paul say to that (verses 1 – 2)?
- Verses 3 – 10 give us some of the deepest and clearest teachings in the Bible about what really happens when we experience God's grace through our faithful act of baptism. It's good to remind ourselves of these principles.
 - It is a death, burial, and resurrection. How does that impact you about your baptism?

- It is also coming “into” Christ. We are in him! How does that change your view of your life?
 - It is also “with” Christ. You died, were buried, and were raised with him. He lets us experience what he experienced. How does it feel to actually be united with Christ?
- c. Verse 11 says to “count” ourselves dead to sin. That’s the same word he used a few times in chapter 4, when he talked about God counting (or reckoning) us as righteous. When we died with Christ, we died to sin. But we need to frequently remind ourselves of that. When we were raised with Christ, we received his life in which death no longer has mastery over us (verse 9). But we need to frequently remind ourselves of that.

What can you do to count yourself as dead to sin and alive in Christ?

- d. Finally, this section closes in verses 12 – 14 with the amazing challenge of choosing whether to be an instrument for sin or an instrument for God. Meditate about what both of those mean and what your daily choice is.

Think about how you want to frequently dwell on the reality of your death, burial, and resurrection. Pray to God about your heart’s desire to be an instrument for him, and not for sin.

5. Death or Life? (Romans 6:15 – 23)

- a. Again, Paul asks the question of whether or not we should sin because now we are under grace, instead of being bound by legalism. What is his response?
- b. Slavery – to sin or to righteousness. This is similar to the concept of the reign (kingdom) of sin versus the reign (kingdom) of grace referred to at the end of chapter 5, as well as the choice we have of whether or not we want to be instruments of sin (6:12 – 14). Surprisingly, Paul says that we choose our slavery. We decide whether to be slaves to sin or to righteousness. We might argue that we don’t want either one! But Paul seems to think that it is either one or the other.
- What are the results of slavery to sin?
 - What are the results of slavery to righteousness?

- a. There has always been a remnant (verses 1 – 6). They are always chosen by grace (verse 6). But, as you can see, their choice of faith is what put them in the position to accept his grace. Again, how does that apply to you? Do you see yourself as being in that remnant?
- b. There is a strong warning about boasting in verses 13 – 24. God never wanted the Jews to boast about being his chosen people. Now he specifically warns the Gentiles about it. So he said to consider both: the kindness of God and the sternness of God (verse 22). **Romans 11:22** is a thought that comes to mind (at least to me (J.S.)) many times when reading the stories in the Bible. God’s direction here is to “consider” literally, “to behold” both his kindness and his sternness. So do that for a few moments. Then write your thoughts here about it.
- c. This section closes with a beautiful *Doxology* (a word of praise to God) in verses 33 – 36. What stands out to you from that hymn?

Meditate and pray about your conviction to live a life fully aware of both the kindness and the sternness of God.

4. Living Sacrifices (Romans 12:1 – 8)

In the last section of *Romans*, chapters 12 – 16, we see the practical results of living a life of faith, standing in the grace of God. We will study chapter 12 now and the rest of that great section later.

- a. All of the great, practical teachings found in this chapter begin with the motivation of why we want to live a life for God: it is “in view of God’s mercy.” It is not just a fear of punishment for not obeying him nor just a desire for the rewards that come from following him. The deeper motivation is the love for him that is inspired by viewing the depths of his grace and mercy for us. (**NOTE:** while mercy and grace are not the same, they both focus on God’s loving actions towards us. God’s grace is his favor towards us, and his mercy is his compassion for us.) From what you have read in *Romans* so far, and from your own experience, what really is your view of God’s mercy and grace, and how do they motivate you?
- b. Having your life be a *living sacrifice* is the way God wants you to worship him. Worship is not just singing a few songs on Sunday morning, as important as that is. Worship is also daily giving your life to him. How is your life a living sacrifice to God?
- c. Spiritual transformation is highlighted in verse 2. What is the practical difference in your life between being conformed to this world and being transformed in your mind?

2. Jesus is Lord! (Romans 10)

This chapter continues the thought of how the gospel of salvation by grace through faith is illustrated by the Jew and Gentile question that was such a hot topic of their day. As we read it, we also discover how important the general principles found here are to us today. Times have changed and our hot topics are not theirs, but the thing that still matters is that Jesus is Lord!

- a. As we saw in chapter 9, we again see Paul's intense desire for the salvation of his fellow Jews (verses 1 – 4). While his statement in chapter 9 about being willing to lose his own salvation for their sake may stretch our faith quite a bit, his statement here about desire and prayer should seem more attainable. Is it your heart's desire and prayer that people get saved? Who?
- b. Verses 5 – 13 contrast, as *Romans* has done all along, the Law of Moses with the Gospel of Christ.
 - The Law said that if you obeyed you would live (verse 5). In other words, it was a salvation by works. What, of course, was the problem with that?
 - The Gospel says that it is by the grace of God acting through our faith. Note and comment about the meaning of the all-important ingredients of our faith mentioned here:
 - Confessing Jesus as Lord (verse 9)
 - Believing in your heart (verse 9)
 - Calling on the name of the Lord (verse 13)
- c. Verse 15 quotes the prophet Isaiah. People who bring the gospel are described as having beautiful feet. When's the last time someone told you that you have beautiful feet? What do you think this means?
- d. Verse 17 states the important connection between faith and hearing God. What does that mean to you on a personal and practical level?

Meditate and pray about how the number one goal of your faith today is still to let Jesus be Lord.

3. The Kindness and Sternness of God (Romans 11)

Chapter 11 finishes the discussion started in chapter 9 by bringing home the point that we (whether Jew or Gentile) have nothing to boast about when it comes to our salvation. It is all about the grace of God. The faithful things we do put us in the position to receive his gift. They do not earn it!

- c. This Scripture closes with the well-known statement about the wages of sin versus the gift of God.
 - Why do you think death is referred to as wages?
 - Why do you think life is referred to as a gift?
 - Which do you choose?

Obviously, we want to remind ourselves of our choice. We made that choice when we confessed Jesus as Lord, but we often want to recommit ourselves to that choice. Meditate and pray about that.

Thought Questions

1. What does it mean to you personally and practically to "stand in the grace of God" (5:1 – 2)?
2. How was your baptism a death, burial, and resurrection (6:1 – 10)? Or, if you haven't been baptized yet, how does that motivate you and inspire you to get to that point?
3. What can you do to make sure you choose to be instruments of righteousness instead of instruments of sin (6:12 – 14)?

Notes

Week 3

Romans 7 – 8
Romans 7 – 8

No Condemnation in Christ

1. Conclusion about the Need for Grace (Romans 7)

This chapter starts off with the general discussion about how law can bring condemnation and ends with a very personal and honest disclosure of how our personal struggles can also bring condemnation. Both sections show how prevalent condemnation is in life and reiterate the need for grace.

- a. How the law of God itself points us to a need for grace (verses 1 – 13).
 - Paul's example of marriage illustrates that we are no longer married to the law, but we are married to Christ. What do you think it means to "serve in the new way of the Spirit" as mentioned in verse 6?
 - Verse 11 reminds us that sin can deceive us. How do you think that happens in your life? (Does this personification of sin remind you of Genesis 3:7?)
 - While Paul maintains that the law itself is holy, righteous, and just (verse 12), he also points out that sometimes it actually works as a temptation. But verse 13 concludes by emphasizing that one goal of the law is to show us how utterly sinful sin really is. In other words, it points us to how much we need grace. Do you see sin as utterly contemptible, or does it still sometimes seem attractive to you?
- b. How our internal sin struggle also points a need for grace (verses 14 – 25).
 - Can you identify with the struggle of wanting to do good and then doing just the opposite?
 - On the other hand, can you also identify with the determination to avoid doing evil and then turning around and doing the very thing you want to not do?
 - Paul refers to that as being wretched (verse 24). Of course, even as he is writing that, he already knows, as we do, the solution. There is a way to be rescued from the law of sin at work within us. But that is not through a legalistic system of performance; it is through Jesus Christ our Lord!

This will lead us into the inspiring verses of chapter 8. But for now, meditate and pray about how much you need God's grace as found in Jesus Christ to overcome condemnation.

Week 4

Romans 9 – 12
Romans 9 – 12

Living Sacrifices as a Response to Grace

Many who read *Romans* today skip chapters 9 – 11, because they seem like a long timeout from the main points. But to the Jews and Gentiles of Paul's day, it dealt with a very important question: if salvation is by grace through faith, and not by the Law, then where do the Jews fit into the new covenant? Are the people that were once God's chosen people now rejected by him?

1. God's Grace as the Potter with the Clay (Romans 9)

- a. Paul's desire for his fellow Jews' salvation is dramatically stated in verses 1 – 5. He will repeat it in chapter 10 also. It's not hard to imagine that this is clearly God's desire also. Paul's statement is very extreme, isn't it? Is there anyone you love so much that you would actually give up your salvation for them?
- b. Paul then describes God's freedom to show mercy as he desires by referring to him as the potter and us as the clay (verses 6 – 24). Like the brief statement in chapter 8 about predestination, this chapter is not saying that we have no choice. Humans' free will and God's freedom to design somehow co-exist. We may not fully understand how that is possible, but God's Word teaches both. What do you get out of his exhortation to not argue with the supreme Potter about the way he has made you?
- c. The remnant of Israel and the calling of the Gentiles (verses 25 – 33).
 - The Old Testament prophets quoted in verses 25 and 26 spoke of the calling of the Gentiles. See also *1 Peter 2:9 – 10*. How do these verses also directly apply to you?
 - The concept of remnant (verse 27) will be brought up again in chapter 11. What do you think is meant by a remnant when applied to people being saved?
 - Of course, not all Gentiles are saved and not all of Israel rejected Christ. The reason some are saved and some are lost is given in verses 30 – 33. It is not because of God's choosing some to be saved and some to be lost. It is rather completely because of our choice. In particular, as it especially dealt with the Jew/Gentile question that Paul is addressing in these three chapters, some choose to be saved by grace through faith, and some still try to attain salvation by works. Do you see how that still applies today?

- He justifies us and glorifies us. We shouldn't seek glory for ourselves, but do you see how God is frequently giving you glory, more than you have earned?

Meditate about the hope and the help that God's grace is constantly giving you. Pray that your faith will always trust that, even when Satan is condemning you.

5. More Than Conquerors (Romans 8:31 – 39)

- Paul, in his question-and-answer style of teaching, asks a series of 5 questions. We see how Paul would answer them. Don't just let these be rhetorical questions. Think about how you would answer them.
 - If God is for us, who can be against us (verse 31)?
 - If God did not spare his own Son, how will he not graciously give us all things (verse 32)?
 - Who can bring charges against God's chosen (verse 33)?
 - Who is he that condemns (verse 34)?
 - Who shall separate us from the Christ's love: trouble, hardship, persecution, famine, nakedness, danger, sword (verse 35)?
- We see Paul's convictions by the way he answered those questions in verses 37 – 39. How do you feel about what he said there?

Meditate and pray about these inspiring thoughts.

Thought Questions

1. How have you personally experienced Paul's description of wretchedness outside of Christ (7:14 – 25), and how does it remind you of how much you need grace?
2. How does it impact you personally and practically to have no condemnation in Christ (8:1 – 2)?
3. What does it mean to you to be more than conquerors (8:31 – 39)?

Notes

2. No Condemnation: The Result of Grace (Romans 8:1 – 4)

This is one of the most often referred to chapters in the Bible. In many ways, it is the climax of what God has been telling us in the first 7 chapters. We need grace so much! And no legalistic effort on our part earns it or accomplishes it. It is only by faith that we can enter into the arena referred to earlier as “standing in grace.”

- First of all, think about the phrase “in Christ.” The passage does not say that there is no condemnation anywhere. In fact, the first 7 chapters vividly pointed out how much condemnation there is in our world. But the sharp contrast for those who are in Christ is that there is no condemnation for them. Recall the statement in chapter 6 about being baptized into Christ. (See also *Galatians 3:26 – 27*.) What does it mean to you to be in Christ and how does it affect you when you see yourself as being in him?
- Secondly, meditate on the amazing fact presented here that there is absolutely no condemnation for you if you are in Christ. This is the **NO CONDEMNATION** zone! How does that make you feel?
 - Does it make you want to abuse that privilege and just keep on sinning?
 - Does it make you want to keep on trying to earn your salvation by your own merit?
 - Does it make you want to doubt it because it is just too good to be true?
 - Does it make you want to boast to others about how great you now are?
 - Does it make you want to figure out how to do just the bare minimum to keep this status?

If you reject all of the above with “By no means!”, then what is your response to “no condemnation”?

- The rest of this small section points out that Jesus did for us what we could not do. The righteous requirements of the Law are fully met in him. And since we are in him, then God views us as having met the requirements of the Law also. Amazing!

Meditate about how amazing it is to be in Christ, standing in the grace of God where there is no condemnation.

3. Reality Check: Flesh versus Spirit (Romans 8:5 – 17)

It is amazing to know that there is now no condemnation for us because we are in Christ. That, of course, doesn't mean that we are done with the struggle with sin that was so vividly pointed out in chapter 7. We no longer need to doubt our forgiveness, but we do need to continually choose between good and evil. And that is a battle! This section contrasts the life controlled by the sinful nature with the life controlled by the Spirit.

- a. What stands out to you from these verses and from your own experience of the life controlled by the sinful nature (the “*flesh*”)?
- b. What stands out to you from these verses and from your own experience of the life controlled by the Spirit?
- c. Verse 15 uses the phrase “*Abba, Father.*” Jesus and the people in Israel of his day spoke Aramaic, but they also knew Greek and Hebrew. Most of the New Testament is written in Greek. But some words in the New Testament, such as *Abba*, are also in Aramaic. *Abba* is the Aramaic word for father. It is the word Jesus would have literally spoken when he prayed. See *Mark 14:36* and also *Galatians 4:6*. The point made here in *Romans 8* is that God wants us to clearly see ourselves as his children in the same way that Jesus did. We have the “*Spirit of sonship*,” and the Holy Spirit reminds us of that frequently. Of course, guess who is also frequently trying to make you doubt that! What is your choice: to listen to the flesh or to listen to the Spirit?

Meditate and pray to *Abba* about your continued convictions to live a life controlled by the Spirit, not the flesh.

4. Hope and Help (Romans 8:18 – 30)

Another sharp contrast between being in Christ, standing in the grace of God, versus being outside of Christ is found in this section. The first 7 chapters of Romans frequently pointed out, not only the lostness of being outside of Christ, but also the hopelessness and the feeling that there was no one to help. These verses point out the great hope that is found in Christ and the way that God is always helping us live by the Spirit.

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- a. Our hope (verses 18 – 25) is contrasted with the “*groanings*.”
 - Nature is groaning. Just look at the way humans have mistreated nature. Did you ever think about how nature will also be liberated (verse 21) in the “*new heaven and new earth*”?
 - We are groaning. Some of the frustrations we face are meant to distress us, because we realize that we are not in heaven yet. The Bible clearly teaches, however, to not be groaning about trivial things. Are you groaning about the right things?
 - The Spirit is groaning. He is interceding for us with thoughts that our words can't express. Do you believe that?
- b. Meanwhile God has always been working for our good, even during times that aren't so good. (Look at Jesus' convictions about that in **John 5:17**.)
 - God “*predestined*” that we become like Christ. The Bible does not teach that God determined ahead of time who will be saved and who will not. He always gives us free will. But he did set the plan out ahead of time about how that would happen.

He also called us. We noticed that back in chapter 1. Do you sense that calling in your life?