

STUDY
GUIDE
CHAPTERS 1-8

The Book of ROMANS



by Rob Rash



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Overview of the Book of **ROMANS**

Most scholars agree that the book of Romans is the Apostle Paul's most important work. Essentially, it is Paul's reasoning for why we need the gospel of Jesus Christ. And in this letter to all disciples, Paul gives us the basis for major parts of the theological foundation of the Christian faith. Romans is really the blueprint for the doctrine of the gospel – the good news about Jesus. To be clear, doctrine means instruction, especially as it applies to the application in our lives of any given teaching. Another way to think of doctrine is that it is the worldview by which we govern our lives. So, Paul is helping establish the bible as the sole source of doctrine for spiritual matters because only it is God-inspired and the basis for all truth.

The book of Romans placement in the bible immediately after the four gospels and Acts is important. Because Paul is revealing the significance of who Jesus is and why his ministry was absolutely necessary. In other words, the gospel has been proclaimed in Matthew, Mark, Luke, John and Acts. Now, Paul goes to great lengths to explain why we need the good news of Jesus.

Personally, I'm passionate about understanding the "why" of my faith, as I know you are also. As I took on this task of creating a study guide, I was reminded that understanding Romans is essentially a requirement for every disciple. The letter to the Romans tells me that the depth of grace I have received from my Lord is priceless. It promises me that my salvation is sure and cannot be lost. I now know that my life has a purpose which surpasses anything I can imagine. And it reminds me that I'm spiritually bound with my Lord forever and my life is guided by his holy love for me.

Paul, the Apostle and Author of Romans

The Lord said he appointed Paul as an Apostle and set him apart for his purposes. Paul was uniquely gifted to fulfill the purposes Jesus had planned for him (as are all his disciples). He was born a Roman citizen, providing him many privileges that would eventually further his life's purpose. He was Jewish, highly educated, deeply religious and zealous in his pursuit of God. He was part of the religious ruling class called the Pharisees, which governed Jewish religious life with great authority. Paul was in a position of power and authority as a Pharisee.

The New Christians in Jerusalem

After Jesus ascended into heaven, the church in Jerusalem began to explode in growth. We're told in Acts that the first sermon preached in Jerusalem resulted in three thousand men coming to faith in Christ. The sheer numbers tell us that God had huge plans for his church from day one. The promised Holy Spirit was at work establishing the kingdom of God in the hearts of men and women.

The ruling Pharisees saw these massive numbers of new Christians as a very direct threat to their authority and livelihood. In addition, Christians were witnessing to the arrival of the promised Messiah, which the Pharisees detested. In fact, Jesus spoke very harshly about the empty ways of the Pharisees and personally challenged them to follow him. Unfortunately, most of the Pharisees rejected the Lordship of Jesus. This is extremely ironic, as they were the religious teachers who should have known and believed the coming Messiah.

Paul Personally Meets Jesus

Paul speaks in Philippians of his persecution of these new Christians. He vigorously defended the law of Moses, while ignoring the proof of the arrival of the Messiah. Paul had Christians

imprisoned and put to death for what the Pharisees believed was blasphemy. He even travelled to neighboring cities to pursue Christians.

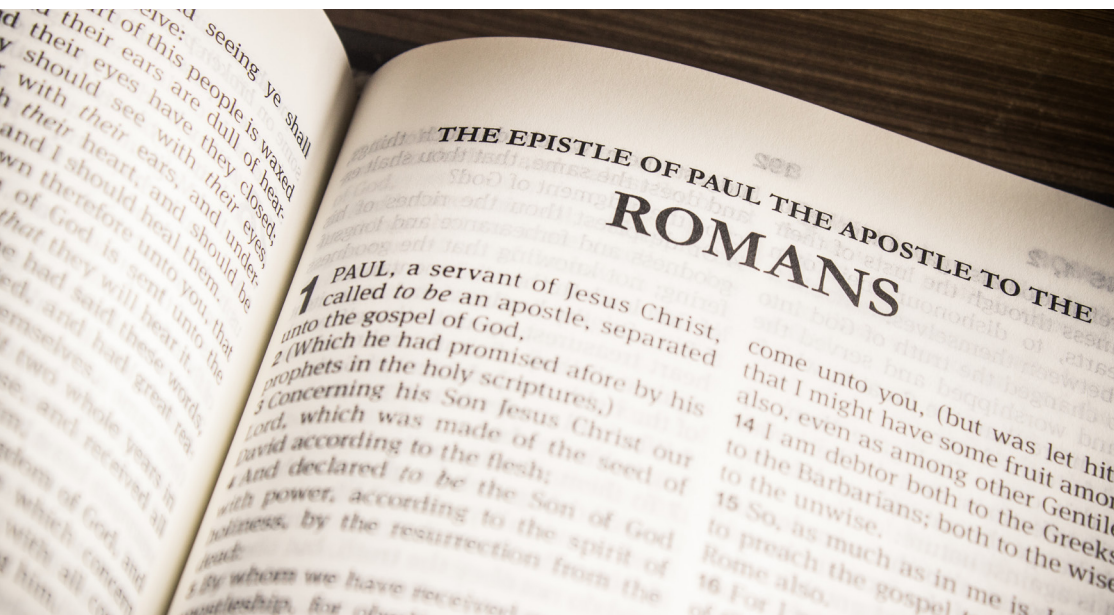
On just such a trip to Damascus, Syria, Paul was directly confronted by the risen Lord Jesus for his persecution of Christians. You can read about this remarkable encounter in Acts chapter 9. From this point, the man born Saul, would become Paul, the servant of the risen Lord. In Philippians, Paul would later confess to the futility of his life's pursuits before meeting Jesus. He literally called his previous ambitions and efforts "garbage" now that he personally knew Jesus as his Lord. He was dramatically transformed from a self-directed life to a Spirit-directed life when he trusted Jesus as his Lord.

Paul, A Model of Discipleship

What makes Paul such an effective witness today is that he is totally transparent with us throughout his letters about his transformation. This smart, respected, ambitious man was born-again in the Holy Spirit. His personal encounter with the Lord reminds us that we too should reevaluate our lives based on our own personal spiritual transformation. Then we should pursue our relationship with our Lord as our primary love in life.

Paul teaches us from a position of humble confession and profound experience that we too can live the life Jesus purposed for us to live. I pray the teaching of the transformed Paul in Romans will bring new confidence and life to your daily walk and illuminate your life's purpose in Christ Jesus.

As you work through this study, challenge yourself with this question: will I seek to live a life transformed and led by the Holy Spirit working through me, like Paul did?



The Gospel of **PAUL** LESSON 1

Romans 1:1-7

Paul's Commitment to Jesus

In his introduction in verse 1, Paul is telling his audience about himself, but he's also giving every disciple a model to follow regarding their personal surrender to the gospel. For example, Paul calls himself a servant, which is better interpreted as "slave" of Christ Jesus. This means he's directly under his authority. He's also called to be an apostle, which in this context means he was an eyewitness of Jesus and was personally sent by Jesus to share the gospel. Paul also says he is set apart for the gospel, which is language similar to being in a marriage. In other words, he is now permanently obligated to the Lord as an apostle for the good news of Jesus.

How does Paul's life provide a model for our own behavior as committed disciples? Paul in 1 Corinthians 2:2 says that he wants to know nothing but Christ crucified. What is he saying about his, and our, human abilities compared to the abilities of Christ in us? Do you sense the full surrender of Paul to the risen Lord in Romans 1:1? Shouldn't we model this total surrender, as believers in the gospel message?

*For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you **except Jesus Christ** and him crucified.*

1 Corinthians 2:2

Prophecy Fulfilled, Power Displayed

Next in verse 2, Paul affirms that the gospel of Jesus fulfills the many prophecies regarding the coming of the promised Messiah. We were promised in the Old Testament that God

himself would visit Earth as a man to provide the path for the forgiveness of all sins and establish an everlasting kingdom. The Messiah had been anticipated for centuries. Now, he has arrived, and the news is glorious.

In verse 4, we're told Jesus' resurrection, by the power of the Holy Spirit, proves his authority as Lord over all creation. In Romans 8:11, Paul tells those who have the Holy Spirit that they will also experience the same resurrection.

How do fulfilled biblical prophecies strength your faith in the scriptures? Read Romans 8:11. What assurance for your soul do you find in this promise?

*And if the Spirit of him
who raised Jesus from
the dead is living in you,
he who raised Christ
from the dead will also
give life to your
mortal bodies because of
his Spirit who lives in you.*

Romans 8:11

Obedience Due to Faith

Beginning in verse 5, all are called to faith in Christ because he desires for none to be lost. And all his disciples are called to go and make new disciples so that we share in the joy of new spiritual birth. Paul says that only through the unmerited favor of God on us (grace) are we able to even participate in this holy work.

While we are saved only through faith, and not by works, we also know that once we are saved, obedience must immediately follow. But that obedience is based on the outcome of being in a loving relationship, not in our efforts to do good works and earn salvation, or God's favor. If we are obedient to works, but do not have faith, those works do not save us. Jesus said many will do great things in his name, but their hearts will be far from him. He rejects all who try to earn salvation, or his favor, in this way.

Then, notice in verse 7 that all of his disciples are called holy people. This is not a just a friendly greeting, it is a statement of our legal standing before King Jesus. It is who we are in Christ. We are no longer sinners in Jesus' eyes, but we are his holy ones.

Discuss the tendency to think that works alone or simply trying to be good, will save you. Why is this a grave error? Do you see serving God in the effort to make disciples as grace given to you, or something difficult or fearful? What does it really mean to be called holy by the Lord Jesus? Is there any higher position we could obtain in the universe? How do we receive this position?

Romans 1:8-15

Paul's Eagerness to Share His Gifts

In verses 9 and 15, we see a man of service to the gospel, eager to build up the church in Rome through sharing his faith. In verse 11, he shares his desire to use his spiritual gifts to help make them strong in the faith. In verse 14, he tells us that everyone, regardless of their position in life, needs to hear the gospel.

Paul is also eager to help this church mature in their discipleship. While Paul was an expert evangelist, he was also a teacher and spent years building up the churches he had planted. While Paul didn't plant the Roman church, he was obligated to share his gifts with them. Notice the anticipation in his language to be with his brothers and sisters in Christ to help them grow in their faith. Paul knew he had life-changing news to share.

Do you have confirmation of your spiritual gifts? Are you as eager and devoted as Paul in the sharing of your gifts so that the body of Christ grows both numerically and in spiritual maturity?

Romans 1:16-17

The Gospel is Everything

The gospel message makes it clear that the fundamental problem of humankind (the worst news ever) is not found here on earth but is found in heaven. We are strangers to God and are born outside of his kingdom. And we can do nothing to earn his favor and gain entrance to that kingdom. But the good news is that the power of God is revealed in us when we accept God's saving grace through faith alone. The gospel is not just advice to be followed, it is a heavenly announcement that must be respected and believed.

When we accept the reality of our sinfulness and seek his forgiveness, then the power of God declares our salvation and we are now in a right relationship with him. Paul does not say the gospel brings power or has power, but it is power. The gospel literally transforms us from sinner to saint. It is the only power that saves us, reconciles us with God into an eternal relationship and guarantees us a place in His kingdom.

Jesus describes our new relationship as a spiritual marriage, which is the only way we are made right with God. The gospel message is about the transformation of our lives

through the righteousness of God revealed in us. We are literally new spiritual creatures as his Holy Spirit has taken up residence in us. Our salvation is not a transaction, it the total transformation of our spirit into something brand new.

Have you ever thought of salvation as something less than what it really is: Christ in you? Does this change your perspective on the value of your salvation?

This is why Paul is “not ashamed” of the gospel. This double-negative means Paul is essentially saying “I’m really excited about the gospel and have risked my reputation and my life on the validity of its power.” Paul will endure any shame that men may heap on him for living and proclaiming the gospel. This is because the truth and power of the gospel is God ordained as the only means to be right with God. Absolutely nothing men can say or do will keep him from his purpose. In actuality, those that reject the gospel will suffer eternal shame before a holy God.

In verse 17 Paul quotes Habakkuk from the Old Testament when he teaches this truth: “the righteous will live by faith.” In contrast to this verse, the unrighteous and unbelievers who reject the gospel will not live eternally. Our salvation and transformation into righteous people before God is THE good news for which the world has been waiting for centuries. Through Jesus alone, the way to God is now open to everyone who professes faith in him and calls him Lord.

Knowing that God has saved you and transformed you through the power of the gospel into a new creation, how should you utilize the responsibilities that come with this role? Should the opinion of other people affect your commitment to the gospel message? What may be holding you back from total surrender to him, if anything?

Foundational Truths from Lesson One

1. Prophecies regarding the Messiah are fulfilled in Jesus Christ
2. We have received spiritual gifts that must be shared
3. The gospel message is the power of God



The **BAD NEWS** LESSON 2

Romans 1:18–32

All Are Without Excuse

In verse 18, Paul immediately tells us the gospel needs to be revealed because all of humanity is hopelessly separated from God and subject to his eternal punishment. And to be clear, God is not angry, but he is just. Being holy and righteous, he must judge sin.

In verses 19 and 20, we are told that everyone is without excuse because God's divine nature is clearly seen in his creation. Paul repeats twice that the knowledge of God has been made plain to everyone. So, everyone is defenseless before our Holy God.

From verses 21 through verse 25 Paul says that many will chose to worship their own god, instead of the God. They have exchanged truth for a lie, worshipping created things instead of the Creator. In verses 24, 26 and 28, Paul makes a frightening statement three times: due to their unrepentant evil nature God has "given them over" to their sinful desires. Twice Paul mentions that sexual impurity of all kinds is a clear indication of the Lord giving them over to a life of sin.

Paul concludes in verse 32 that all humans can know God's truth, but those that reject him deserve death. The death Paul speaks of as punishment is spiritual death which is eternal separation from God in Hell. And even though these sinners know the horrible penalty of their sin, they even promote evil practices to others.

If you're unfamiliar with the righteous judgment of God, this section may sound like a harsh section of scripture. So, the question must be answered: who defines the truth? If God is the author and judge of truth, what strength do we have to oppose his truth? Discuss the beauty of Jesus' loving sacrifice to cover all sins in light of his just judgment of all sins?

*For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—**have been clearly seen**, being understood from what has been made, so that people are **without excuse**.*

Romans 1:20

Romans 2:1–11

No One Can Condemn Others, For All Have Sinned

You'll notice in verse 1 that Paul now directly confronts his audience regarding judging and condemning others for their sin. To judge and condemn another in this sense is putting oneself in the place of God. Verse 2 clearly states that only God knows the truth and has the right to pass judgment. We humans are incapable of knowing the heart and mind of another person, so we are completely unqualified to condemn others. And the word "condemn" used here is a very serious word meaning someone has been found guilty in a court of law and is worthy of punishment.

The specific audience Paul is speaking to are the Jews of his day who saw Gentiles (any non-Jew) as inferior and pagan and were hated by the Jews. Jews would not associate with Gentiles in any way or even enter their homes. This was a huge cultural problem in the first century world that could impede the growth of the new church. But Paul is reminding everyone, Jew and Gentile, that all are equal in sin before God and are not worthy to condemn others.

In verse 4 he states that God's patience with sinners greatly exceeds what we can imagine. His greatest desire is that everyone would know him as Lord, so as not to be condemned. We should be eternally thankful for his tolerance and patience toward us that we have experienced. In verse 5, Paul states that this sin of unqualified judgment will itself be judged harshly.

As a disciple of Jesus, do you find it easy to become frustrated or angry with non-believers? What should be our attitude toward them, as ambassadors of Christ?

In verses 7 through 10, Paul first speaks of those consistently doing good whose reward will be eternal life. And those doing evil will be subject to eternal punishment. This brings up the question, do good works save us? The New Testament universally teaches that we are saved by faith alone, not by good works. Paul is not addressing the topic of salvation in these verses, but the topic of judgment. By continuing to do evil and rejecting the truth, a person demonstrates their heart is evil and they will be subject to God's condemnation. Those that continue to do good show that they have been saved by faith, and they will escape condemnation. Because, of course, those good works only come from a repentant heart.

Who do you know that desperately needs Jesus' salvation and how can you begin to share the truth with them?

Romans 2:12–16

Obedience to the Gospel

In this section, Paul reminds us that those under the law (Jews) will perish if they sin under its authority. Those without the law (Gentiles) will also perish if they sin without the written law. But as verse 13 clearly states, being declared righteous is a matter of obedience to the law, not knowledge of it. Because, as verse 16 says, there will be a final day of reckoning for the obedience of all persons. But notice how that obedience will be judged. Judgment will come through Jesus Christ and obedience to his gospel.

And what does the gospel of Jesus Christ assure us on that day? That those that placed their full faith and trust in his atoning sacrifice and have made him Lord of their hearts will be considered obedient of all the law, because he fulfilled the law on our behalf. Paul is continuing to make his case that whether we have the law, or not, we all have sinned and are in desperate need of the gospel to escape the coming judgment of Jesus himself.

Paul will teach us throughout Romans that our ability to obey Jesus will come only after we are in a relationship with him. In this love-based relationship, we will have the power of the Holy Spirit working in us to overcome sin. Have you prioritized your relationship with Jesus above every earthly desire and submitted yourself fully to him in obedience so he will lead you in your daily walk with him?

Romans 2:17–29

The Transformed Heart

In this section, Paul asks the Jews a series of “if” questions about the privileges of being Jewish. This type of dialogue was a way to argue his point with them. The answer to all those questions was yes, they were certainly chosen by God as guides to the spiritually blind. But Paul’s challenge to them was regarding their own personal obedience to the law. They were caretakers of the law, but did they truly follow it? Paul’s negative conclusion in verse 24 was that God’s name was blasphemed, due to their own disobedience to the law.

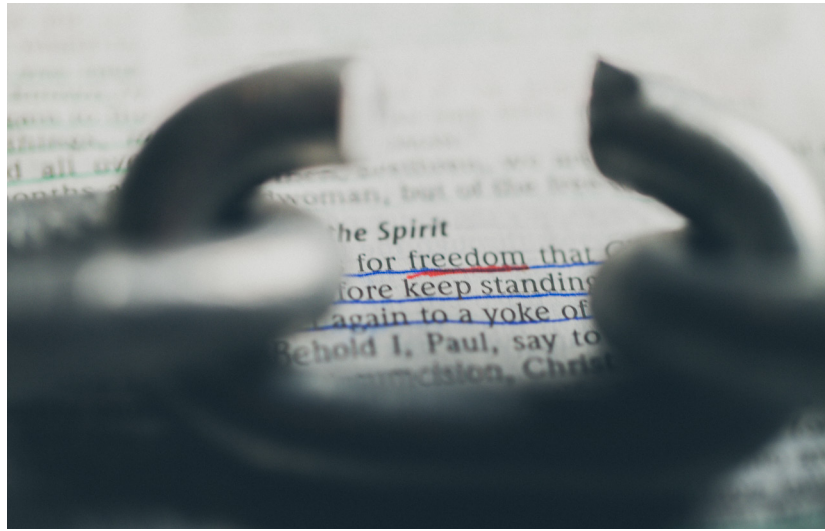
In addition to being given the law of God, Jews also carried the mark of circumcision. These two elements, the law and circumcision, were the two most important signs of being a Jew. In verses 25 through 27, Paul is attempting to erode their confidence in relying only on their heritage as Jews to make them right with God. Just giving the Jewish people the law and requiring circumcision was never God’s way to create holiness in them. In verse 28, Paul make his point that the outward symbols do not make them faithful. Only when their hearts are truly devoted to God are they obedient to their calling.

Paul's conclusion in verse 29 is that true spirituality is never about external things, but a truly transformed heart. And now, in light of the revelation of the gospel of Jesus, "circumcision of the heart" comes only through the filling of the Holy Spirit. That is, we must rid ourselves of our old sin nature which only happens when we are filled with the Holy Spirit of Jesus which he awards every believer upon declaration of our faith in him (read Acts 2:38-39).

Have you ever fallen into the trap of just "going through the motions" of religion, thinking those actions would make you right with God? How does Paul's message here change your perspective about what it means to be right with Jesus? Does your lifestyle as a disciple set a positive example to those around you for the sake of the gospel?

Foundational Truths from Lesson Two

1. A life given over to rebellion and sin will be punished by a just God
2. Only God is qualified to condemn (give final judgment) anyone for their sins
3. Saving faith is based on a transformed heart, not empty religious ritual



The Good News that **SAVES** LESSON 3

Romans 3:1 – 8

Never Presume Upon Jesus' Grace

In this section, Paul is addressing a serious error regarding the Jews interpretation of God's covenant faithfulness to them. Since only the Jewish people had a covenant with God, they felt this made them immune from God's judgment. They felt that even being disobedient to the law would result in God being glorified, as he would display his forgiveness, no matter their behavior. Clearly, they had taken things too far regarding God's intent.

God had promised the Jewish people blessings for obedience and curses for disobedience. So, Paul is reminding them that God is being faithful for punishing their sin. His holy character demands that he responds with wrath to all sin.

Christians today are under the protection of the New Covenant. That covenant guarantees that God will forgive us of our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. But even under the New Covenant, there is punishment in this life for being willfully sinful. Sin always causes a penalty. Paul will teach us a great deal more about our attitude toward sin in Romans, but we disciples can never use our position of privilege to presume on our eternal security in Christ. I would suggest that continuing to do so may reveal a heart not truly surrendered to Jesus as Lord.

If you're married, how would you feel if your spouse was flirting with someone of the opposite sex? Wouldn't you question their commitment to the relationship? In our spiritual marriage to Jesus, don't we do the same thing to him when we sin against him?

Romans 3:9 – 20

Observing the Law Does Not Save

Paul is now concluding his argument regarding the pervasiveness of sin that started in

Romans 1:18. As he plainly states in verse 9, all are under sin. Then in verses 10 through 18, he supports his conclusion with a series of quotes from the Old Testament. He is hammering home his point with indisputable evidence. Verse 19 is powerful, telling us that everyone will be held accountable for their sin by God.

Verse 20 is the grand finale of his argument. Observing the law does not save, because the law's purpose is to make us aware of our sin. We are incapable of meeting its requirements since we are all born "under sin". This language reminds us we are slaves to sin with no escape possible through our efforts. Our addiction is so harsh, it's as if we are imprisoned by sin and its penalty. And because of our imprisonment, we will never be able to be righteous before God. We don't need a teacher or a politician to free us from sin, we need a rescuer!

A reality many people can't face is their standing before God. They think that having a generally good life and doing good works will save them. Paul is masterfully building his case here in Romans that destroys that misconception. Sin is the one unsolvable problem we all face, and its consequences are devastating. Have you personally come to grips with the truth taught here that you have sinned and are outside God's grace?

Romans 3:21–31

All Are Freely Justified by His Grace

Now we come to what many theologians call the high point of the Book of Romans. In this section, Paul is continuing his declaration of the supremacy of the gospel message that he introduced in chapter 1:16-17. Now that he has thoroughly proven why all mankind needs rescue from our sin nature, he announces God's plan.

Notice in verse 21, he says "the" righteousness of God is now known. There is no other belief or faith or religion that will bring us into a right relationship with God. That righteousness is found in Christ alone. And he adds something interesting: the law would not bring righteousness, but it does testify to the new work of righteousness found only in Jesus. The revelation of God in the person of Jesus Christ was not God's "plan B." The law and prophets gave hundreds of prophecies that God would come in human form to save his people. Now, that revelation has been fulfilled.

Verse 22 gives hope to all mankind. Anyone and everyone who places their total faith and trust in the Lordship of Jesus as their rescue from sin will receive that rescue. The path to God is exclusive: it is offered through faith alone in the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus as the Messiah. But the gospel is also inclusive, as Jesus' salvation is open to absolutely everyone.

When we make an important commitment in life, such as getting married, we are putting great faith in another person that they will fulfill their vows to the relationship. What commitment has Jesus already shown us to prove his love? Have you responded to Jesus' invitation to join him in an eternal relationship?

Who Will Experience His Glory?

Paul now reminds us in verse 23 that all of mankind is under the curse of sin therefore everyone needs the grace of Jesus. But why does he reference the glory of God? Because in our sinful state, we cannot be part of God's family and enjoy his presence. And his presence is unlike anything we can imagine. Read about the transfiguration of Jesus on the mountain before Peter, James and John in Matthew 17. The true glory of our Lord is beyond understanding or human description.

And Paul is alluding to the fact that Jesus' disciples will in fact, experience his glory. Read Romans 8:18, Philippians 3:21 and 2 Thessalonians 2:14. Our sin nature will prevent us from experiencing this eternal glory. Our faith in Jesus will guarantee we experience it eternally.

Verse 24 is our victory over sin. To be justified before God is revolutionary as it literally means we are declared not guilty and our pardon is for a lifetime. Emphasizing his grace is critical, because his justification is a pure gift. We can do nothing to earn it. Then Paul says we are redeemed, which is the equivalent of liberating a slave by purchasing their freedom. This is perfect imagery since we are under the slavery of sin with no escape except through the gospel.

Do you personally agree with verse 23? Have you come to the realization that no one can stand before the glory of God without a personal relationship with Jesus as their Lord? Based on the doctrine of justification, which Paul is describing for us, can a true disciple of Jesus ever lose their salvation?

The Urgency of The Gospel Message

In verse 25, Paul states the core of the gospel message. Under the Old Covenant, God had established that regular blood sacrifices were required to pay the penalty for sin. God's message is clear: our sin causes death. But the scriptures are clear that the worst death is not our physical death, but the "second death", or eternal separation of our souls from God. See Revelation 20:14 and 21:8.

The gospel, or "the" good news, is that God entered humanity in the person of Jesus, the Messiah, to satisfy his own law that required a blood sacrifice for sin. Verse 25 says that only Jesus is the propitiation (or atonement) for the sins of mankind. Propitiation means that Jesus's sacrifice is the only satisfaction God's accepts to pay for our sin nature.

Then Paul makes it clear that only when we believe that Jesus loved each of us enough to be our sacrifice for sin do we enter into a right relationship with him. But faith is not just a simple acknowledgement of the fact that Jesus sacrificed himself. Faith is the realization that Jesus sacrificed himself to demonstrate his unconditional love for us and to open the door for us to enter into a spiritual marriage with him for all eternity.

Christianity is not about rules, morality or behavior. Christianity is only about a personal relationship with the Messiah. And our surrender to him as Lord and Savior is out of overwhelming gratitude for rescuing us from the sure second death. And when we surrender to him, we receive the overwhelming benefits of his love: a lifetime pardon from our sin, guaranteed entry into heaven, a spiritual purpose for our life and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit as our Counselor, to name a few.

Discuss with your group the overwhelming importance of the gospel message in our lives. If we know people not in a relationship with Jesus, then what should be the urgency of the gospel message?

Foundational Truths from Lesson Three

1. Sin is the one unsolvable problem we all face, and we are literally slaves to it with no way to save ourselves
2. A right relationship with God is found only in Christ Jesus and only the benefits of that relationship overcomes our sin nature
3. The value and benefits of our spiritual relationship with the Lord Jesus overwhelm all other things, both negative or positive



Abraham, the Father of **FAITH** LESSON 4

Romans 4:1–8

Abraham Defines Faith

Paul now goes deeper to prove his case that God has always justified people based on faith and not works. In this chapter, he references the revered Abraham, whom the Jews considered their spiritual father. In verse 3, he quotes Genesis 15:6, which states that Abraham's righteousness before God came through his faith, not through works. In verses 4 and 5, Paul argues that our own righteousness comes from faith, not from actions taken to earn our righteousness (such as obeying the law).

Then in verses 7 and 8, he quotes David from Psalm 32:1-2. Paul is making the strong point that the people who are blessed have not earned something from God, but that they have received a gift from him. He blesses us with a status not earned, nor deserved in his love for the faithful. In his overwhelming grace, he will forgive and forget all our sins. Only by faith in this gift of a new relationship do we receive the ultimate blessing: a right relationship with God.

*Do you consider it a relief that we don't have to perform for God to earn his favor or his love?
Does any earthly blessing compare to the blessing of being one with Jesus?*

Romans 4:13–25

Our Faith Is Based on Evidence

In this final part of Chapter 4, Paul is summarizing the power of faith in a loving God to save us, as opposed to our good works or trying to obey God's law. We humans are achievement oriented, so we equate reaching a goal with earning a reward. But this human logic does not apply in the world of spirituality. Paul tells of Abraham having favor with God

because he simply relied on the character and word of God. He knew God would fulfill his promise of a family, but he didn't know when it would occur.

Paul's point is that God blesses us as his children not for what we do, but because we have humbled ourselves before him and acknowledged him as the Holy One. Abraham was waiting on God to fulfill his promise of offspring long after it was physically possible for he and his wife Sarah to have children. But Abraham recognized that God brings dead things to life (verse 17).

*For we walk
by faith,
not by sight.
1 Corinthians 5:7 KJV*

Paul tells us in 2 Corinthians 5:7 that God's children walk by faith, not by sight. This is a fundamental premise of our spirituality on this side of heaven. Our faith is not based on something we can see, or touch. But our faith is not without an absolute sure foundation. God has given us his creation and his Word as evidence of his existence and his power. In addition, Paul also tells us in 1 Corinthians 2:12 that we have the Holy Spirit, "so that we may understand what God has freely given us." Our faith is not a "leap in the dark," is actually based on irrefutable evidence.

In verses 23 through 25, Paul implores us to have the same faith as Abraham in our belief of the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. This is because our righteousness with God will only come through this same belief that God is the God over life and death. Our faith in the resurrection of the Messiah is also our guarantee of our own resurrection from death to eternal life.

The word "faith" is often misunderstood. Do you agree that when someone searches for the truth of the gospel message, they will find overwhelming evidence that God exists and he speaks to our hearts to convict us of our sinful nature? Have you objectively examined all the evidence of God to see that placing your faith in him is actually based on truth and not weak hope?

Foundational Truths from Lesson Four

1. Our faith is based on absolute trust in God's loving character
2. Our faith can be objectively perceived and proven
3. Faith means living in such a way that WE become convincing proof of God's existence, and our witness is heavenly evidence



We Have **PEACE WITH GOD** LESSON 5

R o m a n s 5 : 1 – 4

The Beauty of Our Faith

In the first four chapters of Romans, Paul has established the truth of justification by faith. Now, for those living by faith, he will joyfully elaborate on the results of this new life in Christ.

The first benefit of our faith is that we have peace with God. The peace which Paul refers to in verse 1 is the Jewish concept of shalom, or a state of harmony and well-being with God. He's saying only believers in Jesus have this state of total harmony with the Lord Jesus. Then in verse 2, Paul refers to grace in a new way. At our initial salvation, we were saved by God's grace, or undeserved favor. But in this context, he says we have "access by faith into this grace in which we now stand." Now we continue to experience it every day by living in a state of continual grace under his care.

In verse 2 he tells us we can "boast" in the hope of entering God's glory fully in heaven. It literally means we can live with our heads lifted high due to the confidence of our position before our Creator. Nothing will separate us from Jesus' glorious presence – ever! But then in verse 3, Paul quickly adds that he is not promising us a trouble free life while we are here on earth. And, most importantly, our trials and tribulations in life do not contradict our position of glory before our God. In fact, we will become better people because of our trials.

Since we have access to the throne of God, we have his protection and his strength to endure every trial. This endurance, or perseverance, will produce our Godly character. Our trials will drive us to our knees and reveal that we need Him for our existence, which is exactly the purpose of our trials. God will reveal his love for us as we patiently rely on him through each difficult situation we face. As we build our lives on our intimate relationship with our Creator, we develop a character that lives on the sure hope that comes from total surrender to him.

Read James 1:2-4 and notice how he also speaks of our growth through trials into mature Christians. Just as fire is used to refine raw materials into pure, useful objects, we too will be put through many fiery tests. In your group, have a time of sharing about the trials you all have experienced and how God used them to change you into a more hopeful, loving person focused on Him.

²Consider it *pure joy*, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, ³because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. ⁴Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be **mature and complete**, not lacking anything.

James 1:2-4

Romans 5:5–11

Our Only Confidence for Living

From our faith we gain peace with God, we experience his grace continually, and he works throughout our lives to make us more Christlike as disciples tested and proven. All of this leads us to experience the hope of God in our hearts today. Why do we have such hope? Verse 5 is clear: God continually pours out his love for us through the Holy Spirit. We don't just randomly experience his love in small amounts. His love overflows in us through the powerful work of the Holy Spirit at all times without ceasing.

And how does God prove his great love for us? Paul argues that one person dying for another, as an act of kindness, is extremely rare. But Jesus left heaven and did just that. This is the motivation behind the gospel message: God's actions were based on pure, holy love for his created daughters and sons. In this greatest act of love, sin and death were defeated and by faith in that love, we become complete in Him.

In verse 9, we are reminded that by faith we are found not guilty (justified) and the relationship is now permanently repaired with God (reconciled). And now that we live with Him, we will enjoy all the benefits of being a family member, giving us the confidence we need to live joyful lives. Our reconciliation with God is so sure that it should be the only thing in which we place our confidence for living. Nothing material, or of this earth, will give us this level of confidence.

What do we sometimes put our faith in as a substitute for Jesus? Why do we allow this to happen? Interestingly, who is the real source of absolutely everything?

Romans 5:12–21

We Reign in Life

In verses 12 – 14, Paul is pointing out the truth about the effect of sin since the very first man, Adam. He and Eve disobeyed the direct command of God and He gave the

punishment that He promised: death. (See Genesis 2:17) But is Paul focusing on physical death or spiritual death? Theologians hotly debate this point, but most agree that Paul is concerned about spiritual death because sin brings about our eternal condemnation. Spiritual death is defined as eternal separation from God in Hell. Paul is showing us that since the beginning of the human race, every person is deserving of God's condemnation – because sin is universal in every person.

In verse 16 Paul states that the clear result of sin is judgment (the supreme Judge has ruled we are guilty) and we are deserving of condemnation. But now, the good news! We learn in verse 17 that those entering into a permanent relationship with Jesus (a spiritual marriage), "receive God's abundant provision of grace and the gift of righteousness." His sacrifice cleanses us so that we are now seen as holy before the Holy One. This is the overflowing grace of our Lord who now calls us his children and he empowers us with the Holy Spirit. Thus, it also says we will "reign in life". We are literally transformed from sinner to saint, and we are authorized to represent the Holy One. Our lives now give witness that he reigns in us as a testimony to his grace.

Our status before the Lord is now one of being justified or given a lifetime pardon for our sin nature (verse 18). And the life Paul refers to in verse 18 is the Greek word "zoe," which refers to eternal life. Verse 19 sums up Jesus' victory over sin: since the very first man, all have been declared as sinners. But through the total obedience of Jesus to the will of the Father, many (his disciples) will be made righteous by him and will "reign in life" through His gift of grace.

I frequently hear Christians say that are "just sinners saved by grace." But that's only partially true. Yes, we absolutely were dominated by sin prior to our complete transformation to holiness in the sight of our Lord. But Jesus now does not call us "sinners." We are now his holy children, since he has saved us by his grace. I mention this because sometimes we Christians do not realize who we are in Christ. We might be remembering our old lives under sin and condemning ourselves over and over. But the reality in Jesus' eyes is that we are new creatures today, completely made new in spirit and given spiritual power we cannot imagine.

Discuss this idea with your group. Are you limiting yourself based on the old you? Or are you enjoying the blessedness of the new, Spirit-led life?

Foundational Truths from Lesson Five

1. Our confidence comes only through our position as God's chosen ones
2. Jesus will mature us through trials to grow our love and faith in him
3. Since we are now re-created as his holy ones, we reign with Christ and are witnesses to his goodness and grace



Dead to Sin, **ALIVE IN CHRIST** LESSON 6

Romans 6:1–14

We Are Free from Sin's Power

In chapter 6, Paul now addresses a logical human question: if grace is so freely given, why worry about sin? Of course, Paul obliterates this line of thinking in verse 2: disciples of Jesus must put sin to death. God does not condone sin through his grace, he defeats it. Our old relationship with sin as our controlling entity has been radically transformed so that we are now free to follow the Holy Spirit in a new relationship. Paul uses the very decisive language of death for a reason: we cannot go on living the way we used to, because our spiritual nature has permanently changed.

In verses 3 through 7 Paul uses the imagery of baptism to show that Jesus' disciples share in the death of Christ. That is, as Jesus died for all sins, our old sinful self died with him. And, just as Jesus rose to new life, we too will also rise to a new eternal life. Baptism visually demonstrates this picture of death and resurrection. Amazingly, we are forgiven of the penalty of sin and we are freed from the power of sin.

Verses 8 and 9 reassure us that just as Jesus lives eternally, we will live with him also. But until we reach heaven, we must live for him here and now. In his conclusion, Paul commands us to “count yourselves dead to sin.” For example, prior to marriage, we were free to date, spend our money as we like, and control our time as we saw fit. When we marry everything changes. We are now one with our spouse and even flirting with the opposite sex is not allowed. Our decisions on how we live are now radically changed forever through this relationship.

This is Paul's point: since we are now eternally joined in spirit as one with our Lord (Jesus calls it a marriage – see Ephesians 5:32), sin is never an option. We are now joined in a beautiful new relationship that determines everything about us: our identity as holy ones, our purpose as set apart for Him and our eternal future as our true hope. Who would want to go back to the “old self” of sin given this beautiful new life?

The language of Jesus in scripture is clear: we must run from sinful thoughts and behavior. This is not just because we need to live morally good lives, but because of the damage sin does to our marriage with Jesus. Think about your earthly marriage and what happens when the relationship is hurt. It's awful isn't it?! Life is not right when we don't have harmony in our marriage.

Sin is the ultimate relationship breaker with our Lord. Is there anything from which you need to repent? Will you radically change your thinking or behavior in order to have harmony with your Lord?

Romans 6:15–23

Slaves to Righteousness

In the previous section, Paul taught us we are free from the power of sin. Now he continues the same message, but he uses the idea of slavery to contrast our old and new spiritual lives. In verses 16 and 17 he reminds us we used to be slaves to sin, which leads to death. Thankfully, as verse 18 states, we have been completely set free from sin and are a different type of slave: a slave to righteousness. What completely possessed us before, has been eradicated by the Holy Spirit living in us.

In verse 19, Paul implores us to fully give ourselves over to our new master, as this leads to holiness. In this sense, our being set apart for God's use (our sanctification) is a process that leads us toward holiness. He repeats this thought about the pursuit of holiness in verse 22, but the result of our slavery to righteousness is nothing less than eternal life.

The truth Paul is conveying is starkly clear: slavery to sin leads to eternal death (verse 23), but slavery to righteousness leads to eternal life. Everyone is free to choose whom they will serve, but we must be informed about the result of our choice.

I think sometimes disciples are confused about their being called "holy." In 1 Peter 1:16, he quotes from the Old Testament admonishing the Israelites to "be holy, because I am holy." By repeating this in the New Testament, Peter is reminding Christians that we have the status before God as "holy." Then in 1 Peter 2:9, he reminds us we are a "holy nation" as the disciples of Jesus because we are filled with his Holy Spirit. In 2 Peter 1:4 Peter tells us that we "participate in the divine nature." In other words, we are holy in Jesus' sight.

Think of your holy status as similar to receiving your driver's license for the first time. You were probably young and inexperienced, but you were legally a licensed driver when you first got your license. You had the "status" of a licensed driver. Were you a good driver? No, definitely not. Becoming a good driver was a process learned through experience.

As Christians, we have the same process of learning by experience to "become what we are," which is holy. Jesus is working on us so that we will become conformed to his image. This is the process of holiness, which lasts our entire lifetime. The grace and power that

saved and justified us will continue to be in us to set us apart for his use. The great news is that through our spiritual marriage to Jesus, he will not leave us as we are, but will continually mold us to resemble him.

Paul is setting forth the ultimate choice in life: whom will you serve? This is the classic good vs. evil contrast, but Jesus makes it very personal. Either we serve Him, or we serve Satan. Do you think we have lost the stark contrast between good and evil in our lives? Do we sometimes allow evil to creep into our lives when we should run from it? How can we prevent this temptation?

Foundational Truths from Lesson Six

1. Jesus has set us free from the penalty of sin AND the power of sin
2. Just as our sinful selves died with Christ at his death, we will also be raised to new life in a resurrection like his
3. We are joyful slaves to Jesus resulting in holiness and eternal life



SERVING

in the Spirit

LESSON 7

Romans 7:1–6

Bound to Christ Alone

Paul is continuing to make clear that we cannot be bound to the Mosaic law and Christ at the same time. This is because the law could never save us from our sins. But since our sinful nature died with Christ (verse 4), we are now free from the old covenant and its laws. We are made new in Spirit and are free to belong to Him only.

The Mosaic law, or old covenant, could be divided into several parts: civil law, ceremonial law and moral law. Some think we are still obligated to at least the moral law of the old covenant, such as the ten commandments for example. But Jews did not divide or segment the law into these parts. The law was a whole to be completely followed. So, many theologians believe that Paul is teaching that we are free from the entire authority of the Mosaic law. What this means is that we should look exclusively at the teaching of the New Covenant and Jesus' commands for us. His word alone is now our exclusive authority.

While Paul is clear that we are free from the Mosaic law (the old covenant), we are now bound to Christ and his law. What is Christ's law? The sermon on the mount in Matthew chapters 5 – 7 is a good example of Jesus' commands to his disciples. And in 1 Corinthians 9:21, Paul reminds us we are "under Christ's law." All of Jesus' teachings and commands are to be our only guide to faithful living.

Jesus actually used the old covenant laws many times to explain his intent for our holiness. In Matthew 5:21-22, he explains that murder (the sixth commandment) was not just the act of killing someone. He expands murder to mean anyone that truly hates his brother or sister or calls them a fool and condemns them, so they "murder" them in their heart. Jesus is stating that sin starts in the heart, and we must repent from any evil intent toward others.

As a group, browse through Matthew chapters 5 through 7 (or read the section headers). Can you see the similarities to the old covenant teaching? Did you notice how Jesus has revealed more of his loving intent for us to live holy lives under the new covenant as opposed to the old?

Living Under the Holy Spirit's Authority

Paul's teaching here in Romans is revolutionary in history. Because even today we tend to think that more or better laws and their enforcement will improve our lives. Paul is saying that even the law of God (prior to Christ) was only good in that it identified we are hopeless sinners. Following rules, laws and moral behaviors was never going to save us from our sinful nature.

But the death and resurrection of Jesus inaugurated the Kingdom of God. In that Kingdom, we disciples live under the authority of the Holy Spirit of Jesus, not the Mosaic law. (Verse 6) We have the obligation and joy of a spiritual marriage relationship with our Lord to keep us in love with Him and under his authority. We also have the indwelling of the Holy Spirit to give us the power to follow Him. This is the new way of the Spirit. Sin has been defeated as our old master and the risen Lord Jesus is now our loving master.

But we must never forget the price of this freedom to follow Jesus and to receive spiritual union with him. He lived a sinless life and fulfilled the entire Mosaic law for us, and he died to pay our sin debt under that law that we could never pay. Now, a new way of life, a true spiritual Kingdom, exists for us to enjoy. In verse 5, prior to our faith in Jesus, we did fruitless things "so that we bore fruit for death." But please do not miss the purpose of our new life in Christ in verse 6. It's not to just be satisfied with the joy of our salvation, which is certainly great. We are to "serve in the new way of the Spirit." We are to give our whole selves in service to his Kingdom.

We are now the agents of Jesus himself on Earth until he returns. We are a holy nation and have been assigned "the ministry of reconciliation." We are his holy ambassadors to a lost world. (Please read 2 Corinthians 5:17-21). We are his witnesses to the entire world. (Acts 1:8) These commands are not optional for Jesus' disciples. They are a huge part of Christ's law! Jesus said He would build his church – and we are the method He uses so that His church will grow.

Have you ever thought that Christianity was about moral behavior more than a relationship? How does this section of Romans challenge your thinking that our faith is about good behavior primarily?

*But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and **you will be my witnesses** in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.*

Acts 1:8

Have you found God's purpose for your life through your spiritual gifts? Have you found a ministry that stretches your faith in which you can serve His Kingdom? How much joy would you experience if you gave your ministry the same commitment as your vocation?

Romans 7:7–12

The Law is Holy

Paul told us in verse 5 of Chapter 7 that “sinful passions aroused by the law” were at work in us prior to our salvation. Now he’s asking if that makes the law sinful in verse 7. Of course, the answer is a resolute no. The purpose of the law was to clearly show us the definition of holiness and our inability to keep it. The Mosaic law very clearly shows us the extent and seriousness of our sin.

In verse 8, he explores the human nature to do exactly what we are told not to do by using coveting as his example. Sinful people will be moved to a rebellious reaction when told what not to do. It’s in our very nature and the law proves this is true.

In verses 9 and 10, Paul now is making a startling observation about our condition under the law of God. That condition is that we are all dead in our sins without exception. Verse 11 clearly states the problem: sin deceives us and the result is always spiritual death. Because of our sin nature, obedience is impossible. The law itself is holy and good, as it reflects God’s own character. But we are completely helpless to live up to its standards. So, all humanity is in need of rescue from its deadly effects.

Rebellion against God is core to our humanity, prior to knowing Jesus. Discuss with your group the type of life you led prior to knowing the rescue of Jesus from your sin. Isn’t it clear with without the power of Jesus’ spirit in us, we would be without hope?

Romans 7:13–25

Rescue is Our Only Option

This section of Romans is one of the most controversial in Paul’s letter, according to many theologians. The difficulty starts in verse 14 where Paul states he is “unspiritual, sold as a slave to sin.” Then for the next 10 verses, he details his life and death struggle with the forces of evil and his sinful nature. He says he desires to do what is good, but he just can’t do it. He sees God’s law is good, but in his heart, his inner being, sin is controlling him. Sin is “waging war” against him, and he is a prisoner to it. He realizes he is completely captive to its hold, and he can’t escape. In verse 24, he realizes that he has no solution, and he never will. He needs to be rescued! He sees the promises and riches of holy living, but he can never get there on his own. Never.

Why is this passage controversial? Because experts wonder this: is Paul speaking as a saved believer in Christ in these verses, or is he speaking as a sinner prior to his salvation and filling with the Holy Spirit?

Now, let's contrast this section of scripture with what we know about a born-again believer that has been filled with the Holiness of God through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. In chapter 8, Paul will define this new life in Christ. He will tell us that God has "justified" us. We are "not guilty" in God's supreme court regarding our sinful nature. This verdict is given on our behalf once we place Jesus on the throne of our life. The verdict is nothing less than a complete and final pardon for all our sins. We are now citizens of heaven and can never lose our reward.

If that's not enough, all believers receive the promised Holy Spirit. (Acts 1:8, Acts 2:38, John 14:16-20) The divine nature now dwells in us and sin has no hold on us. Paul will elaborate in chapter 8 that we are now slaves to righteousness, since we live under the power of the Spirit.

So, most experts believe Paul is describing his own life as a "good Jew" in Romans 7:13-25, prior to making Jesus his Lord. He knew the law was good, but he was powerless to keep it, due to his sin nature. He would only experience his rescue from sin when he finally met Jesus and accepted his loving gift of forgiveness.

Probably the most common question new believers have is this: why do I struggle so much with sin? I thought being a disciple would get rid of all this temptation and bad habits. While we are justified by Jesus, we bring many old ways into the new relationship. It is our responsibility to repent and seek forgiveness. And we must establish new habits in line with our new relationship.

For example, if you're married, did you stop flirting with and dating others when you got married? Of course you did! Paul is saying the same thing in Romans. We must completely walk away from the old life and adopt the behavior of a person married to Christ. Only in the confines of the love relationship with Jesus will we be compelled to change our habits and find joy in our new union with Jesus.

Discuss with your group how you broke old sinful habits and what joy and forgiveness you experienced when you prioritized your life with Jesus.

Foundational Truths from Lesson Seven

1. Jesus' disciples live only under the authority of the Messiah himself
2. Prior to a relationship with Jesus, our lives were lived in total rebellion against Him
3. Mankind's only hope is found in the rescue of Jesus



Your Spirit **IS ALIVE** LESSON 8

Romans 8:1 – 13

The Spirit Is the Mark of the Believer

The distinguishing mark of the born-again believer is that we are indwelt by the Holy Spirit. The New Testament is full of references to this fact. Paul refers to the Holy Spirit almost twenty times in Romans chapter 8. The Spirit is the reason we can say along with Paul, that it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me (Galatians 2:20). The Spirit is the cause of our new spiritual birth and brings our cleansing from sin. The Spirit of Jesus is required to live a holy life, because without it we will live a life of futility against sin as described in Romans 7:13 – 25.

Because the Spirit possesses us, we are no longer under the promise of eternal condemnation, as we joyfully read in verse 1. This statement echoes what Paul says about our justification. We are not guilty of sin, we have been washed clean, the Spirit is in possession of us, and we are now children of God. Our purpose is to enjoy his holy presence for all eternity.

But what does Paul mean in verse 2 when he says “the law of the Spirit” sets us free from the law of sin and death? He is saying that the Holy Spirit has the authority and power to liberate us from eternal death. Through the sinless life of Jesus and his death, he fulfilled every part of the law on our behalf, including the death penalty of sin (verse 3). So, our only hope of a right relationship with God is through the Messiah and his gift of the Holy Spirit (verse 4).

Romans 8:1-2 is the ultimate declaration of freedom for the believer. We are free from sin and its death penalty, which is our biggest enemy. Now that we possess the power to deny sin, it is our obligation to live within the boundaries of our union with Christ, just as any marriage creates new boundaries and behaviors in our earthly lives. Have you evaluated every area of your life so that it will show surrender and loving obedience to your Lord?

In verses 5 through 8, Paul shows us four times the deadly contrast between the life lived in the flesh (our sinful nature) vs. the life lived by the Spirit. But notice something interesting, Paul frequently refers to our mind in these verses. The Greek word for mind can be translated “mind-set”, or the direction of one’s will. The orientation of our will reflects our values. Either we have our will set on obeying Jesus, or we satisfy our sinful desires. And the outcome of our sinful desires is ominous, as it always results in spiritual death.

Now in verse 9, Paul addresses us personally. He begins “You, however, are not in the realm of the flesh...” We must remember one of the key purposes of God giving us this letter to the Romans. He is declaring heavenly truth to all humanity. We must read Paul’s declaration of our freedom from the flesh with that high purpose. In verses 9 and 10 he categorically states that if we belong to Christ, we have the Holy Spirit. There is no such person who is a true disciple of Jesus who does not possess the Spirit.

And even though our physical bodies will die (verse 10), our Spirit is now alive forever. And because we have the Spirit, even our frail, mortal bodies will one day be resurrected into an imperishable new body. Jesus is our perfect example of the future resurrection. As verse 12 states, in our life directed by the Spirit, we still have an obligation to put to death the old mind-set to sin while we still live in the flesh.

Paul is saying that our obligation to put sin to death is not optional, but a requirement of the new relationship. Fortunately, by the power of the Spirit, the love of Jesus overwhelms any desires to follow the old sinful ways. Our lifelong goal is to be conformed to the image of Christ and run as fast as we can from the danger of the old, sinful self.

In this section of scripture, Paul is establishing groundbreaking spiritual truth. The Holy Spirit alone gives life because He dwells in us, the disciple of Jesus. We do not have eternal life just because “we made a decision to follow Christ.” The decision to follow him was the first act of our surrender. That act was followed by the indwelling of the Spirit of Jesus to cause us to be born again spiritually. Have you thought about your salvation in that way? What does the indwelling of the divine nature say about our value and purpose in this life? Is there anything more valuable?

Romans 8:14–17

The Spirit of Adoption

When Paul says we are “led by the Spirit” in verse 14, he is saying that the very basis, or orientation of one’s life is determined by the Spirit. He is summarizing the overall purpose of the Spirit dwelling in us. Since the Spirit has taken possession of us, we know we have life eternal, because we are now “sons of God.” In verse 15, Paul reminds us that there are just two ways to be related to God: as a “slave to fear” or the “Spirit of sonship.” The word sonship can also be translated as “adoption.” God’s Spirit confers on every believer, male and female, the rights and privileges of God’s own children.

Jesus called the Father, “Abba” in his painful prayer in the garden, which can also be translated “daddy.” (Mark 14:36) The word in its essence means intimacy, closeness and access. Since we have the Holy Spirit, we experience the same intimacy Jesus had with the Father. And the Spirit then amazingly testifies within us that we are God’s dearly loved children to strengthen us. (Verse 16)

Verse 17 brings home the benefits of our adoption as His children. Paul says that adopted children in God’s kingdom have the same rights as natural children. We are heirs of his entire glorious estate. For the disciples of Jesus, we receive the kingdom of God in all its glory as our inheritance. And notice we are “co-heirs” with Christ. We will also receive resurrection and glorification, just as Jesus the Son did. But, we must live the life he also lived here on Earth. We must be willing to undergo trials and suffering as part of our journey of faith.

We humans are funny about status, aren't we? We love brands that convey status. We idolize personalities through which we live vicariously, and they give us implied status. But we need the full truth of the word of God to live by: our highest status is one of humility as children of the Most High God. We have full access to his throne and his love. Our security and comfort are grounded in these facts alone. In what ways can we reorient our lives to live out our new position in gratitude and humility? Do others see the joy of our new position reflected in our lives?

Romans 8:18–30

The Believer’s Future Glory

In God’s plan for his people and his creation, his ultimate goal is our glorification in his kingdom. Until that day, he gives us everything we need to wait eagerly and patiently for it. He helps us pray through the Spirit, he promises to oversee everything for our good, and we are cared for as his children both now and into eternity. And in verse 18, Paul says that the glory that awaits us cannot be compared with our short-term sufferings while on this planet.

And Paul says that “the creation” waits for the future glory of God to be revealed. This refers to the created world we can see. It is subject to decay now, but in the future, it will be freed from its current state. We also, as created ones with the “first fruits of the Spirit” wait with great anticipation of our future home and our new resurrected bodies (verse 23). First fruits means we have a partial revealing of the holiness of God in ourselves, but the full revelation of our glory is something so spectacular and certain, that we can wait eagerly for it regardless of our circumstances. The thought is that since we can never lose our future glorification, we can endure any trials and period of waiting required because the end result cannot be comprehended.

Talk about your life’s trials and how they have molded you for the better. Would you have experienced God in any other way as effectively?

During our wait for glorification, even when we are not sure how to pray, the Spirit will be our advocate before the Father on our behalf. God is our true shepherd until we meet him in glory. He knows our needs and will work out his perfect will in our lives on our behalf. In verse 28 Paul makes it clear that all believers receive the loving oversight of God throughout their lives. “For those who love God” is another way of saying the disciples of Jesus. And, God working for our good does not mean all things in our lives will be good, but they will all work out for our good according to His holy purposes.

So what is his holy purpose? Verse 29 tells us clearly that all of his children will conform to his likeness. We carry his Spirit now, so we can be like him on Earth, and we will fully know him in his kingdom when he is completely revealed to us in all his glory. All of our life’s pursuits and purposes should align with this purpose of becoming like Him.

In verse 30, calling is not just a general invitation but refers to a summoning of each of us into a relationship. When we enter into this relationship, he declares us innocent before Him, which is justification. Finally, he glorifies us to be fully like him when we enter his kingdom. But notice that Paul uses the past tense for these actions: called, justified, and glorified. What does that mean, as glorification hasn’t happened yet for those of us still alive? The answer is simple: God has already made the decision to glorify those he has justified, as we are his beloved children.

This would be a good time to share how those in your group have experienced Jesus working out all things for your good. These stories are truly encouraging and uplifting and should be celebrated to acknowledge the hand of God always on our lives.

Discuss in your group that calling of God to be conformed to the image of Christ. How does that heavenly purpose align with our own goals, dreams and ambitions? If His purpose and our own purpose are in conflict, what will be the long-term result?

R o m a n s 8 : 3 1 – 3 9

Celebrating Our Eternal Security

This magnificent chapter 8 of Romans is well known to most Christians. In verses 1 through 30, we learned we are eternally freed from any condemnation for our sin. We learned that the Spirit lives in us, freeing our minds to focus on life lived in the Spirit. We learned that we will be raised like our Lord Jesus to a new imperishable body. We learned we have intimacy with our true Father in heaven as his children and we will inherit his kingdom. We learned that the Spirit intercedes for us in our prayers, because God cares for his people when we don’t even know how to pray. We learned that God works all things for our good, since we love Him. And we also learned that God has predestined, called, justified and glorified us. Paul has written an incredible summary of our life in Christ. These things are the true riches of life for which everyone is searching.

Compare the eternal value of all “these things” to the focus of our lives for temporary pleasure and happiness. Where should our joy come from? What should our mind set be, given the heavenly nature of these gifts to us?

Now, in verse 31, Paul begins a series of rhetorical questions to drive home the incredible spiritual riches we possess as disciples of Jesus. The use of these questions is a brilliant technique to help us internalize the absolute truth and joy of our life with Jesus. He wants to move us to a new level of confidence in God’s gifts to us, his children. Because his gifts are unshakable and irrevocable, we must celebrate.

His first question is asking us to summarize our response to “these things” in verse 31. Since God has done all this for us, do we have any opposition whatsoever? The answer is clear and plain in Paul’s eyes, no human or spiritual power can oppose God’s ordained people. Especially since he has already proven the ultimate act of love by leaving heaven to sacrifice himself on the cross on our behalf. Given that supreme act of love, won’t God be “for us” in everything else? Yes, he will “graciously give us all things.” (Verse 32)

Verse 33 refers to our ultimate enemy, Satan, who will lie to us and others in order to accuse us. But a verdict of “not guilty” was delivered by the Supreme Judge and we are free forever from the lies of the enemy. Regret, guilt and remorse have no place in the life of Jesus’ redeemed children. He has chosen you and made you new in Himself and He does not accuse you. Verse 34 drives this fact home. Jesus himself intercedes for us before the Father in heaven. In other words, God is always working for us behind the scenes.

As a disciple of Jesus, are you carrying any guilt or regret in your heart for past sins? Have you sought forgiveness and made restitution with the people involved, if necessary? Have you sought forgiveness and repented before the Lord? In 1 John 1:9, Jesus makes an absolute promise to forgive us when we earnestly confess our sins and seek his forgiveness. That’s why Paul can say there is “no condemnation” for those in Christ Jesus. Are you possibly still condemning yourself for things Jesus has absolutely forgiven?

Now in verse 35, Paul shifts the topic to the great love of Jesus for his children. I think the beauty of God comes from that fact that he alone possesses pure motives. He has no agenda or purpose other than to love his own. He doesn’t need fame, fortune or recognition. Our confidence in all “these things” is totally founded on the pure motives of Jesus. Paul now asks, who can separate us from Christ’s pure love?

He uses several comparisons such as life and death, angels and demons and the present and the future to ask his question. What Paul is saying is that whether we are alive or dead (our body), we are never separated from him, because our spirit is alive always. Angels and demons refer to spiritual powers that also can never separate us from him. The present and future refer to all circumstances and events we may experience.

He is dramatically saying that absolutely nothing known can cause us not to be loved by our Lord. Nothing in the known world, the spiritual world or even life or death can cause Him not to love us. He began this chapter saying that there is “no condemnation” or eternal judgment for those in Christ. He concludes by telling us that even more than that, we shall never be separated from Him and His love for us. His sacrificial death and resurrection are proof enough of his eternal love for you and me. Amen!

To be accepted and loved just for who we are is a tremendous desire in each of us. Are you seeking approval and acceptance from some other source? Are you seeking recognition for your performance or behavior to validate you and give you identity and value? Discuss how the love and acceptance of the Creator is so superior to any earthly things, that they don't even compare.

Read Philippians 3:3-11. Paul sought confidence (identity, approval, love) in his heritage, education, profession, good behavior, dedication and performance. But, once he experienced the love of Jesus, he considered these earthly pursuits “garbage.” Have you started to reorient your life to the truth of the love of Jesus?

Foundational Truths from Lesson Eight

1. All true disciples of Jesus are indwelt by the Holy Spirit
2. Our highest joy and purpose is to be glorified in His presence
3. We are loved by our Creator beyond our wildest imagination



About the **AUTHOR**

Rob Rash

Rob and his wife Janet reside in Frisco, Texas and have been married for over 40 years. They have two awesome children, Matt and Allison, both of whom are married. They also have three wonderful granddaughters. Rob had a wonderful career in the business world until founding Outreach Community Church.

Rob's passion is for saving the lost with the hope of the Gospel, training disciples to reach maturity, and raising up leaders who plant new churches. He holds a master's degree from Dallas Baptist University in Missions & Evangelism.

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