

KNOWING GOD THROUGH ROMANS

Freedom from the law! For 2,000 years, Paul's letter to the Romans has proclaimed the news that every guilty person should long for. We don't have to run from the law of God for the rest of our lives—hounded by the barking dogs of past sins. God offers freedom. He offers immunity. He offers pardon. And if He is for us, who can be against us?

Looking at more than the tight theology, precise logic, and down-to-earth practicality of this letter, David Egner and Herb Vander Lugt take us through Romans in a way that brings us to a deeper knowledge of the God of the good news.

Martin R. De Haan II

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Managing Editor: David Sper

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ROME: WHERE ALL ROADS LED

New York, Moscow, London, Paris. Today each has its own international power and influence. But in the days of the first Christians, Rome had that kind of prestige all to herself. The very mention of her name spelled fear. Her disciplined soldiers had brought vast territories under her domination. Her Caesars controlled the fate of millions. Few were beyond her reach and no one escaped her taxes. Her name was on every lip.

The ambitious, the power-hungry, the charlatans, the bloodthirsty, the opportunistic were drawn to Rome as bugs to the light. Sometime during his life, every young adventurer, every hard-driving businessman, and every soldier of fortune would find himself in Rome.

It was said in ancient days that all roads led to Rome. It was the hub of a sprawling military and political network that reached to the remote corners of Europe, spread out across Africa, dominated the Middle East, and pushed into the Orient.

Founded in 753 BC, the City of Seven Hills soon flourished. By New Testament days it boasted a million inhabitants, more than any city of its time. Magnificent buildings, huge arenas, marble palaces, and splendid gardens gave witness to its wealth.

The gospel too had come to Rome. No one is certain how it first arrived. Some believe that Peter established the church at Rome, but history has proved that a church was already there when he arrived. Others say that it was founded in a joint effort by Peter and Paul, but the evidence does not bear that out. Most

likely the church at Rome was started by wandering Jewish Christians—perhaps even by some who had been in Jerusalem at Pentecost and who had carried the message of the risen Christ home with them. Or it may have been started by believers who had a vision of Rome’s importance or a deep concern for those who lived in the shadow of Caesar’s palace.

The apostle Paul, residing in Corinth about AD 56, was bringing his third missionary journey to a close. He wanted to travel to Rome, but he would soon be leaving for Palestine, carrying gifts from the churches to the impoverished brethren in Jerusalem.

**“The book of Romans is the cathedral
of the Christian faith.”**

—Godet

Though his steps were headed east, Paul’s heart was centered in the west. He wanted to start down one of the roads that led to Rome. But he was stopped. So he did the next best thing. He took up his pen and began to write.

PAUL: MAN WITH A BURNING HEART

When Paul sat down to write his letter to Christians in Rome, his heart was burning. He was consumed by his love for God and his call to carry his message of freedom to Jew and Gentile alike. He wanted men and women everywhere to be filled with the praise and knowledge of God that he had experienced. With such a world mission in view, he knew well the strategic importance of the church in the empire's capital city.

So he wrote to Rome. And when he did, the Spirit of God inspired a masterpiece! The book of Romans is a letter both theological and practical, both philosophic and intensely personal, both God-centered and man-directed. It's a book of great value, a book that has earned the respect and admiration of the world.

“Paul’s purpose in Romans was not academic but spiritual, not professional but personal. He wrote to bring the believers in Rome to a deepening knowledge of God.”

But who was this man to write such a book? As a Jew, a Pharisee, and the apostle to the Gentiles, he was uniquely qualified to write to a church that was potentially the most influential in all the world. But even more, he was a man whose heart burned within him to write what this church needed so desperately to hear.

A Jew. Who could exceed Paul's Jewishness? If anyone was ever a Jew, both in heritage and experience, Paul was. He described himself as “an Israelite,

of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin” (Rom. 11:1). Paul knew that his Jewishness gave him an advantage, but he also realized that it counted nothing toward his salvation. As a Jew he had been “ignorant of God’s righteousness” (10:3). He was one with Israel, whom God had given the “spirit of stupor” (11:8). Paul was certainly qualified to speak with authority to the Jews in the church at Rome.

A Pharisee. In his younger years, Paul had been a Pharisee. He had given himself wholeheartedly to the legalistic, rule-centered life of this sect. Of all the Pharisees, he himself testified, he stood at the top of the list of those who were looking for God’s acceptance through good works, the meticulous keeping of the law, and religious zeal (Phil. 3:4-6).

The Apostle To The Gentiles. But now, as Paul sat down to write, he saw himself as the apostle to the Gentiles. He had acknowledged Christ as his Messiah and Savior and had been singled out by Him to break the racial barrier and carry the gospel to the Gentiles (Acts 13:47; 22:21; 26:20; Gal. 2:2,8; Eph. 3:8; 1 Tim. 2:7). He had already taken the gospel into Europe.

When we read Paul’s letter to the Romans, we are reading more than a theology of salvation, more than a tightly reasoned explanation of the place of Jews and Gentiles in the plan of God, more than a carefully chosen set of practical instructions for a life that pleases God, more than an impassioned plea that the missionary effort which had brought the gospel to the world’s capital not be allowed to die there. We are reading the words of a man whose heart burned for God—a man who was driven by love and conviction to bring the message of God to the church in the one city in the world where all roads led.

BOOK CHART OF ROMANS

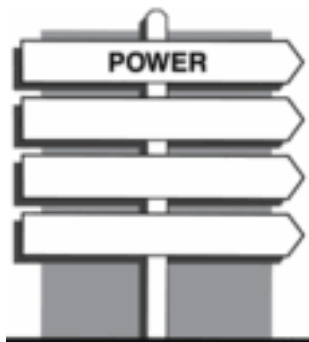
THE GOSPEL: THE REVELATION OF GOD'S POWER	THE GOSPEL: THE REVELATION OF GOD'S RIGHTEOUSNESS		THE GOSPEL: THE REVELATION OF GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY	THE GOSPEL: THE REVELATION OF GOD'S EXPECTATIONS
1:1 3:20	3:21	6:1 8:39	9 11	12 16
Sin	Salvation	Sanctification	Sovereignty	Service
Righteousness Displayed in the Law	Righteousness Imputed Through Christ	Righteousness Imparted by the Holy Spirit	Righteousness Enacted in Israel and the Church	Righteousness Reproduced in the Believer
Need of Salvation	Way of Salvation	Life of Salvation	Scope of Salvation	Service of Salvation
Slave to Satan and to Sin	Slave to God and His Righteousness			Slave to Christ and His Service
Doctrinal				Practical
How the Gospel Saves the Sinner			How the Gospel Relates to Israel	How the Gospel Changes Conduct
Basis of the Gospel				Behavior of the Gospel

“For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ,
for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes . . .”
(Romans 1:16).

KNOWING GOD THROUGH ROMANS

In Paul's day, all roads led to Rome. Just so, every chapter in Paul's letter to the Romans leads to God. As the apostle develops his letter, he shows us how "the gospel of Christ" reveals God's awesome power, His perfect righteousness, His absolute sovereignty, and His high expectations for those He calls to Himself.

It would be a mistake, however, to see only carefully reasoned arguments, clear doctrine, and practical principles. Paul is in every sense leading his readers to the inexpressible privilege of knowing God through the good news of His own crucified and resurrected Son.



THE GOSPEL: REVELATION OF GOD'S POWER (1:1–3:20)

It didn't take Paul long to get around to the subject of the gospel as the revelation of God's power. In His greeting he spoke of himself as "an apostle, separated to the gospel of God" (v.1)—good news that was solidly rooted in the Old Testament

Scriptures (v.2) and sharply focused in the person of Jesus Christ, who was "declared to be the Son of God with *power* . . . by the resurrection from the dead . . ." (v.4). He went on to express his deep love for the Roman Christians and his desire to see them, declaring that because of God's goodness to him, he was under obligation to proclaim that goodness to all mankind

(1:8-15). Thus he set the stage for the tremendous statement that forms the theme for the entire epistle:

For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "The just shall live by faith" (Rom. 1:16-17).

Here, then, is Paul's grand theme for Romans: the gospel is the *power* of God to save all who come to Him by faith. No sin is too heavy. No crime is too evil.

**"The gospel is the power of God
to save all who come to Him by faith."**

Paul knew the value of his message. He knew that when the gospel is proclaimed through the Holy Spirit, God's power is at work. The word Paul used for power (Gk. *dunamis*) puts the stress on its source. The gospel is the power of God because it is the message of His Word, which is "living and powerful" (Heb. 4:12). Paul portrayed it as so powerful that it can bring deliverance from "the wrath of God," which hangs heavily over lawless rebels (1:18-32), over the self-righteous moralists (2:1-16), over the law-keeping and favored Jews (2:17-3:9), and over all mankind (3:10-18).

God's anger is an awesome reality. It is His hatred of sin that leads Him to punish evildoers, not only in the final judgment of hell but also in the present decadence of those who scorn His laws. Nothing we can do has the power to bring deliverance from the guilt and depravity that triggers God's wrath. Only God's power through the gospel of Jesus Christ is able to do that.

Power To Save The Lawless Rebel (1:18-32). The love of God demonstrated in the gospel reaches out to those who are deliberately sinning, and His power is able to save even the most antisocial, godless, and depraved person. It is able to save those who have had a history of systematically repressing the knowledge of God.

Such is the record of mankind. Paul declared that from the beginning, the invisible God made His “eternal power and Godhead” visible and understandable (v.20). But people, past and present, “suppress the truth in unrighteousness” (v.18), are not “thankful” (v.21), and become “futile in their thoughts” (v.21). The result is that their misguided minds are plunged into darkness (v.21).

Those who reject God and His truth place themselves on a toboggan slide—degenerating into narcissistic self-worship, foolish idolatry, coarse sensuality, gross perversion, every conceivable form of antisocial behavior, and an irrational delight in destructive practices (1:22-32).

Paul gave us this dark portrait to show us why God’s righteous anger has been aroused. But he also gave it to show us that God’s power through the gospel can save such lawless rebels, no matter how far they have fallen.

Power To Save The Self-Righteous Moralist (2:1-16). Turning from his description of the lawless rebel, Paul then dealt with the self-righteous moralist—both Jew and Gentile. Up to this point in Paul’s letter such people must have felt quite self-righteous. They could well agree that the grossly immoral and terribly antisocial deserve God’s wrath, but not them. Paul attacked their self-righteousness with a passion. He

declared that while they were quick to judge others with great severity, they practiced “the same things” (v.1). He then asked a series of rhetorical questions, which showed them to be just as guilty as the people they despised (vv.3-4). Because of their stubbornness and their unrepentant hearts, they too were storing up God’s wrath (v.5). They would find out on the day of judgment that God treats all people with absolute impartiality, and that since no one has lived up to the light received, no one has a right to claim salvation by works (vv.11-16).

**“There is none righteous,
no, not one . . . There is none who does
good, no, not one.”**

—Romans 3:10,12

The self-righteous moralist, just as much as the person who abandons himself to gross lawlessness, needs the power of the gospel for salvation.

Power To Save The Law-Keeping Jews (2:17–3:8). Paul anticipated that the Jewish readers would call on the law to defend themselves (v.17). But even though they had this advantage, they were guilty of the very sins they accused the Gentiles of committing (v.23). Even worse, by their disobedience they had caused the Gentiles to blaspheme God’s name (v.24). Not even circumcision could help them—for they were not circumcised (made clean) in their hearts (vv.28-29). The Jews had thrown away their advantage (3:1-8). Therefore they needed the power of the gospel to be saved from their sins. They needed a supernatural salvation with God as its source. Nothing less would do.

Power To Save All Mankind (3:9-20). Paul conclud-

ed this section by presenting a brief resume of human depravity and guilt—both Jew and Gentile. He did so by quoting a series of Old Testament passages depicting mankind's sin as God sees it. He went on to remind his readers that the law (whether the general law of the Gentile world or the Mosaic law of Israel) can only condemn, and that therefore no works-system can bring salvation. Happily, that's not a hopeless conclusion. God's power through the gospel of Christ is available through faith, and it brings complete salvation.

SEEING GOD

- Prompted by His love, God designed the plan of salvation long before Jesus came (1:1-4).
- The power of God guarantees complete salvation to all who believe on Jesus Christ (1:16).
- God is so loving that He desired the salvation of sinners and so wise that He could provide a salvation that would reveal, not violate, His righteousness (1:17).
- God often punishes sinners in this life by letting their sin take its natural course (1:24-32).
- Even though God's wrath burns against sin (1:18), He shows kindness, toleration, and patience toward sinners because He desires their repentance (2:4).
- God is absolutely impartial in His judgment (2:5-11), so He will judge in strict accordance with the light and opportunities each person receives (2:12-16).

SEEING OURSELVES

- We are members of a race that has deliberately rejected God's light and suppressed His truth (1:18-20).
- We are prone to self-righteousness and therefore must be on guard against it (2:1-11).
- We tend to be quick to judge others and slow to see our own sins and failures (2:17-24).

- We are inclined to judge external appearances rather than spiritual realities (2:25-29).
- Because of our sin nature, we are utterly unable to save ourselves by keeping God's law (3:19-20).



THE GOSPEL:

REVELATION OF GOD'S RIGHTEOUSNESS

(3:21–8:39)

Twice Paul stated that in the gospel “the righteousness of God . . . is revealed” (1:17; 3:21). This seems strange at first sight. One would expect Paul to say that God’s grace is revealed in the gospel, and

that His righteousness is revealed in His anger against sin. Instead, he drew a contrast between the righteousness of God and the wrath of God (see 1:16-18). To understand what Paul was saying, we must carefully define the phrase “righteousness of God” as it is used in these verses. It does indeed refer to His character; He is righteous. But it also refers to His activity in salvation; He bestows or provides righteousness for people who need it. This righteousness brings salvation, which includes the forgiveness of sin, freedom from bondage to sin, and ultimately the restoration of everything sin has marred or destroyed. This salvation in all its fullness is received through believing—nothing more, nothing less. This is the truth Paul expounded in Romans 3:21 through 8:39.

God’s Righteousness In Justification (3:21–5:21). The first element in salvation has to do with deliverance from God’s wrath. All have sinned. All stand

before God guilty and condemned. But the good news of the gospel is that God the Judge declares not guilty all who put their trust in Jesus Christ, and that He accepts them as His sons and daughters, heirs of heaven. The word that Paul used to describe this act of God is *justification*. It was a courtroom word pronounced by a judge when a man on trial was found not guilty or had fully paid the penalty for his crime. Paul carefully described God's justification of sinners (3:21-26) and then went on to apply the truth to the minds and hearts of his readers.

Justification Described (3:21-26).

- The righteousness in justification comes from God (v.21).
- The righteousness in justification is received through faith (v.22).
- The righteousness in justification is needed by all—the self-righteous moralist, the law-keeping Jew, and the dissolute sinner—for “all have sinned” (v.23).
- The righteousness in justification is a gift freely given by God to the undeserving (v.24).
- The righteousness in justification is based on the ransom price paid by Jesus Christ on the cross (vv.25-26).
- The righteousness in justification is a legal declaration by God that we who believe are released from wrath and accepted into His family because Christ's righteousness (His perfect obedience and sacrificial death) has been credited to us.

Justification Applied (3:27-5:21).

- Justification leaves no room for boasting because it is all a matter of grace for both Jew and Gentile (3:27-31).

- Justification was a matter of pure grace even for Abraham and David (4:1-8).
- Justification was always by faith alone; Abraham was declared righteous before he was circumcised and before God gave the Mosaic law (4:9-17).
- Justification is a matter of God crediting to us the righteousness Christ earned for us through His atoning sacrifice (4:18-25).
- Justification provides peace with God (5:1).
- Justification gives access into grace (5:2).
- Justification enables us to rejoice in hope, to glory in tribulation, and to know God's love (5:2-5).
- Christ's death as a sacrifice for our justification is the ultimate proof of God's love (5:6-8).
- God's justification of us while we were enemies is a guarantee against future wrath (5:9-11).
- As justified people through our faith union with Christ, the last Adam, we are members of a new, redeemed humanity (5:12-21).

God's Righteousness In Sanctification (chs.6-8).

A prominent minister from a family with a wonderful reputation in the community was performing a wedding for his nephew. He addressed the bride as follows: "Dorothy, you are taking unto yourself an honorable name. Live up to that heritage and to the name you will bear." That's basically the message of Romans 6 through 8. Addressing believers who have been declared not guilty, credited with Christ's righteousness, accepted into God's family, and made members of a new redeemed humanity, Paul told them, "Live up to what you are." The righteous God who credits us with Christ's righteousness wants us to know the joy, honor, peace, and satisfaction of living rightly.

Now, that's a big order. In fact, it is beyond our reach. That's why we need the supernatural help of God's Holy Spirit if we are to become increasingly set apart from sin unto God. The biblical term describing this process is *sanctification*. It can be defined as the ongoing process of achieving a practical holiness that matches our position in Christ.

“God wants us to know the joy, honor, peace, and satisfaction of living rightly.”

Live Up To The Fact That You Are Dead To Sin (6:1-23). We who have placed our faith in the Lord Jesus have been brought into a union with Him. When He died for us after having lived sinlessly, He removed our guilt and defeated sin's power. Therefore sin has no claim on us, neither to condemn us nor to control us. God views us as “in Christ”—as dead to everything we were when we were “in Adam.” When we trusted Jesus, we died to sin and to everything we were when we lived under God's wrath.

- Because God reckons us dead to sin, we cannot live a life dominated by it (vv.1-2).
- Because we know God sees us as united with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection, we are called to live a new kind of life (vv.3-4).
- Because the “old man” (what we were as members of Adam's race under God's wrath) is reckoned dead by God, we should no longer be slaves of sin as before (vv.5-10).
- Because of our new status by virtue of how God sees us, we must consider ourselves dead to sin and offer ourselves to God as our new Master (vv.11-14).

- Because of our union with Christ, we are to become slaves of righteousness, rejecting our old life of enslavement to sin (vv.15-23).

Live Up To The Fact That You Are Dead To The Law (7:1-25). In Romans 7, Paul developed the wonderful and liberating theme that through the death of Christ believers are free from and dead to the law. He probably did this to show his readers that they should not misunderstand his demand that they “reckon” themselves “dead to sin.” They might try to do this in their own strength. In essence, they could easily fall back into the law-keeping mindset. They needed to see that the law, whether the system of regulations given by Moses or the rules for conduct generally accepted by Gentiles, can only condemn. The law is good, but no one can live up to its high and holy standards. It was important that Paul’s readers clearly understand that they had been released from law-keeping as the means of salvation, spiritual growth, or reward. Paul carefully developed this truth to set the stage for his teaching about the Holy Spirit’s role in chapter 8. He did this by showing that:

Christ’s Death Has Freed Us From Law (7:1-6). Just as the death of the husband frees a woman to marry another, so the death of Jesus has freed believers from the law and united them with Him as their new husband. Through this union with Christ and the Holy Spirit, believers have a means of godliness that law-keeping couldn’t provide.

The Law Cannot Save (7:7-13). To show the inability of the law to save the sinner and to magnify righteousness from God as the source of salvation, Paul appealed to his own experience. As a Jew trying to keep the law, he found that the better he knew what

the law required, the more he became aware of his sinfulness. This frustrated him. It even drove him to sin all the more. Law, in this case the system that came from Moses, is good. But the sin principle within every unsaved person leads him to do the very things that are forbidden. Law can't provide the righteousness it demands—the righteousness that brings deliverance from the penalty of sin. Only God can do that.

“The God who reckons us righteous must also make us righteous.”

The Law Cannot Sanctify (7:14-25). Law, which cannot save from the guilt of sin, is also unable to save from the power of sin. It cannot sanctify. It cannot make a bad man or woman into a good one. Paul depicted the struggle of a person who believes God and wants to do His will but finds out in his experience that an inner sin principle keeps him from doing what he earnestly desires to do. The struggle becomes so intense that the apostle cries out, “O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?” (v.24).

This does not refer to an unsaved person. He would not have a deep desire to do God's will. Neither should it be viewed as the normal pattern of life for a believer. Nor can it be explained as the experience of a Christian who simply doesn't understand the distinction between law and grace. It is a conflict every sensitive believer undergoes from time to time. Whenever such a person falls into thinking he can live the Christian life in his own strength, he falls into the Romans 7 struggle. We need a righteousness from God that will make us better people just as we needed His right-

eousness to be saved from the guilt of our sin. The God who reckons us righteous for salvation must also make us righteous in sanctification. And Romans 8 tells us how He does this.

Live In The Spirit (8:1-39). Romans 8 is great news about sanctification. We can live more and more triumphantly over sin. We can increasingly become in our practice what we are in our standing before God through our union with Christ. Through the Holy Spirit, we can obey the theme of Romans 6—that we are to “reckon” ourselves dead to sin, that we are to put away sin, and that we are to place ourselves under the control of a new Master. Through the power of the Spirit, we can overcome the “law of sin” of which Paul spoke so movingly in Romans 7. God, who credited Christ’s righteousness to our account to deliver us from His wrath and make us members of His family (justification), also imparts righteousness to us through the Holy Spirit (sanctification). And the key to our practical growth in goodness is a recognition of and a dependence on the Spirit.

Paul sandwiched Romans 7 between chapters 6 and 8 to set forth in bold relief the truth that we cannot be sanctified by law-keeping any more than we can be justified by it. In Romans 8:1-27 the word *Spirit* occurs 20 times. He is the ultimate answer to the problem of Christian living. He is the source and dynamic of sanctification for all believers who yield to Him.

- The Holy Spirit freed us from both the condemnation and the bondage of law by applying to us the benefits of Christ’s sacrifice and by enabling us to fulfill the righteousness it demands (8:1-5).
- The Holy Spirit renews our mind, causing us to want to do God’s will (8:6-8).

- The Holy Spirit, as our present indweller, is God's guarantee of resurrection and eternal glory, bringing certainty to our hearts (8:9-11).
- The Holy Spirit gives us a wonderful awareness of our rich position as full heirs in God's family, making our service free and joyful (8:12-17).
- The Holy Spirit fills us with an eager expectation of the day when we will receive our resurrection bodies and see the redemption of our groaning world (8:18-25).
- The Holy Spirit intercedes for us when we don't know how to pray (8:26-27).
- The Holy Spirit gives us the confidence that God will work all things together for our eternal good (8:28-30).
- The Holy Spirit assures us that God is "for us," makes us "more than conquerors," and gives us the glorious realization that nothing can separate us from God's love (8:31-39).

How much these truths become a reality in our experience is directly related to our submission to Him.

SEEING GOD

- God's love and wisdom are revealed in the full provision He has made for our salvation from sin's power (8:1-4).
- God is so merciful that His Spirit even takes over our praying when we need special help (8:26-27).
- God is so completely in charge of the universe that He can work out all things for the good of His children and guarantee the future glorification of all whom He has called to salvation (8:28-30).
- God's love as demonstrated in Christ guarantees us that He is for us, and His power guarantees us that nothing can separate us from Him (8:31-39).

SEEING OURSELVES

- When we trusted Christ for our salvation, we died to all that we were and became spiritually alive to live a new kind of life (6:1-10).
- When we became Christians, we ceased to be the slaves of Satan and sin and became the slaves of God and righteousness (6:11-23).
- Even after we believe, we find that our determination to keep God's laws arouses a sin principle within us that keeps us from doing what is right (7:14-25).
- As Christians, we possess the indwelling Holy Spirit, through whom we can live victoriously over sin, doubt, and despair (8:1-30).



THE GOSPEL:

REVELATION OF GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY (9-11)

As you approach Romans 9, put yourself in the sandals of a first-century Jewish Christian. He was thankful for his salvation through faith. He rejoiced in the fact that Jesus Christ had offered the one final complete sacrifice for all sin on the cross. He was even glad that the door of salvation was wide open to Samaritans and Jews. But he was puzzled about the status of Israel. It appeared that God had set aside His chosen people. In the church, they had the same standing as the Gentiles. Why had God rejected the nation to which He had given such a rich history and so many promises and privileges? What about God's promises of a golden age with Israel

on center stage? Had God forgotten them? Did He have the right to do so? Wasn't He, as a righteous God, obliged to keep His promises? These are the questions Paul set out to answer. Up to this point he had been dealing with the justification and sanctification of sinners through the imputed and imparted righteousness of God. Now he is about to vindicate or justify God.

Israel's Rejection: God's Sovereign Right (9:1-29). The first point Paul made to the Jewish believer's objection to God's ways was: God as God has a right to do whatever He chooses to do. The apostle developed this theme with great skill. He began by referring to sovereign choices God had made in connection with Israel—choices his Jewish readers would approve. He gradually proceeded to defend God's right to do what his readers had viewed as wrong.

He first expressed his sorrow over Israel's present condition. Then he listed the nation's special privileges and referred to God's choice of Isaac over Ishmael and Jacob over Esau to show that these privileges came to Israel through God's election (9:1-13).

Next, he denied the charge that God was unrighteous in choosing one person over another. It's not an issue of God's being unfair. Because no one deserves mercy, it is God's sovereign right to show mercy or compassion to whomever He chooses. God is under no obligation to show kindness to any member of a race of people that has hardened its heart toward Him (9:14-18).

After declaring that God is not answerable to man any more than a potter is to the vessel he makes, Paul applied what he had said to Israel, showing that the same God who had bestowed His free grace on undeserving Israel in the past, now had the right to limit His

mercy to Jews who believe on Jesus and to extend it to Gentiles (9:19-29).

Israel's Rejection: Human Responsibility (9:30–10:21). Having considered Israel's rejection from the standpoint of God's election, Paul went on to consider it from the standpoint of human responsibility.

- God has rejected Israel because Israel, wanting to obtain righteousness by works, had rejected the Messiah (9:30-33).
- God has offered Israel righteousness through faith in Christ as a gift of His grace; but in her zeal for righteousness by the law, the nation has turned her back on God (10:1-13).
- God has graciously called Israel to salvation, but the nation has stubbornly refused to accept her own guilt (10:14-21).

Israel's Rejection: Universal Blessing And Divine Vindication (ch.11). Having declared God's right to choose, and having shown that Israel deserved rejection because of unbelief, Paul was ready to handle the question about God's faithfulness to His promises. In chapter 11, Paul pointed out that God will fulfill His promises, showed how He will do it, and then burst out in a doxology of praise for God's wisdom and grace.

- God is fulfilling His promises to Israel in the church age by saving the remnant who believe in Christ (11:1-10).
- In using Israel's present unbelief to open the door to Gentiles, God foreshadowed the greater worldwide impact that will be made when the nation is converted (11:11-24).
- In God's time "all Israel will be saved" (11:25-32).
- God is a wonderful God—infinite in wisdom, grace, and power (11:33-36).

SEEING GOD

- Because God is God, He has the right to choose those to whom He will show special mercy or display His righteous anger (9:14-29).
- Because God is perfect in righteousness and justice, He never acts capriciously or arbitrarily (10:1-21).
- Because God is true to His Word, He will never fail to fulfill His promises (11:1-32).

SEEING OURSELVES

- As creatures, we have no right to demand that our Creator explain His ways (9:20).
- As vessels in the hand of the divine Potter, we have no right to complain if He chooses to show more mercy to others than He does to us (9:21-24).
- Because God has proven His love to us, we can trust Him to plan what is best for our eternal welfare (9:25-29; 11:22-36).



THE GOSPEL:

REVELATION OF GOD'S EXPECTATIONS (12-16)

To conclude his letter to the believers at Rome, Paul turned to the practical theme of how the Christian is to live—the expectations of God for mankind in practical, everyday living. In so doing, Paul picked up the theme he dealt with in chapters 6, 7, and 8: sanctification. But now he is talking in concrete, practical terms about the kind of life that gives witness to the reality of God. The way a Christian lives stems from his salvation. His ethic is founded in his redemption. It springs forth from his union with Christ.

In chapters 12 through 16, Paul was answering the question, “So, what does all this mean in everyday life?” God has declared us righteous in Christ, but He also expects us to live righteous, godly lives. Although many specific expectations are given in these chapters, they can be grouped into five broad categories.

Our Personal Transformation (12:1-2). God expects the person who is saved by faith to present himself once for all as “a living sacrifice” (v.1), then to maintain that commitment by continually resisting the pattern of this sinful world-system and by letting his mind be renewed by God’s Word. The result is transformation.

Our Service In The Church (12:3-8). God expects each of us in humility to serve the church, the body of Christ, with the various spiritual gifts that He has given to make the body function properly.

Our Daily Conduct (12:9-21). The daily conduct of a Christian is to be very different from the behavior of those who are spiritually dead. For example, God expects His children to:

- love sincerely, abhor evil, cling to good (v.9).
- be affectionate and honor one another (v.10).
- be diligent and fervent in serving God (v.11).
- be joyful, patient, and prayerful (v.12).
- be hospitable (v.13).
- bless persecutors (v.14).
- empathize in joy and sorrow (v.15).
- humbly seek unity (v.16).
- refuse to seek revenge (vv.17,19-20).
- be at peace with everyone (v.18).
- overcome evil with good (v.21).

Our Relationship To Government (13:1-14). God is our Ruler and King. And when man’s laws contradict God’s laws, “we ought to obey God rather than

men” (Acts 5:29). But God still expects us to “be subject to the governing authorities” because “the authorities that exist are appointed by God” (v.1). God expects us to give the government their proper taxes, revenues, respect, and honor (vv.7-8). He also expects us to show love to our fellow citizens (vv.8-10) and to live Christlike lives (vv.12-14), especially in light of Christ’s imminent return (vv.11-12).

Our Responsibility To Weaker Believers (14:1–15:13). In Paul’s day, as today, there were people in the church who were overly scrupulous about the eating of certain foods and the observance of special days. They measured their own spirituality and that of others by certain external standards. For instance, they would “eat only vegetables” (14:2), and “esteem one day above another” (14:5). And they were offended by those who didn’t do as they did. In response, Paul pointed out that under grace, “there is nothing unclean of itself” (14:14). But he went on to say that those who don’t have such standards should be considerate toward the weaker brothers and sisters in Christ. God wants us to limit our liberty under grace to protect their consciences. He expects us to do this in the following ways:

- accept them (14:1).
- don’t despise them (14:3).
- refrain from judging them (14:10,13).
- don’t put a stumblingblock in their way (14:13).
- make peace with them (14:19).
- seek to build them up (14:19; 15:2).
- bear with their weaknesses (15:1).
- desire to please them (15:2).
- pursue likemindedness with them (15:5).

The letter to the believers at Rome concludes with two final matters. In the first (15:14-33), Paul reaf-

firmed that he had been sent to the Gentiles (v.16) and told the Roman believers once more of his desire to visit them (v.24).

In the second (ch.16), he sent greetings to a number of the Christian men and women in the church at Rome. He closed the letter with a benediction that expressed his driving goal for all believers: “to God, alone wise, be glory through Jesus Christ forever. Amen” (16:27). And even today, from the 20th century, we add our amen.

SEEING GOD

- God, who made us and redeemed us at great cost, owns us and rightly expects us to place ourselves before Him as “living sacrifices” (12:1-2).
- God, the supreme Governor of His created world, carries out His rule through human leaders of His choosing (13:1-7).
- God, who in mercy looks sympathetically on us in our misery, has special concern for the weaker among us (14:13-23).

SEEING OURSELVES

- When we dedicate our bodies to God, we take an important step in our sanctification (12:1).
- A transformation occurs in us as we allow God to renew our minds through His Word (12:2).
- We are so prone to selfishness, retaliation, and pride that we need continual reminders about our responsibility to be sincere in our love to other Christians, to be forgiving and kind to our enemies, and to be considerate toward the weak (12:9-21; 14:1-23).

DESCRIPTIONS OF JESUS CHRIST IN ROMANS

Romans is a Christ-centered book. To look at Christ is to see God, because Christ is God. A good exercise for every Christian would be to read the epistle for the single purpose of observing what it says about the Lord Jesus. Here are the primary descriptions of Christ in Romans, each one vital to the development of its major themes.

GOD. Paul taught that Jesus Christ is God. Speaking of the Jews, he said that from their ancestry is traced the genealogy of Christ, “who is over all, the eternally blessed God” (9:5). This is a straightforward declaration of His deity.

SON OF GOD. The opening verses of Romans identify Jesus Christ as the Son of God, affirming that the Father declared Him to be His Son through the resurrection (vv.3-4). The gospel is the gospel of God’s Son (1:9), and its ultimate goal is our conformity to His likeness (8:29).

MESSIAH. Jesus Christ is the Messiah of Israel, a stumblingblock to those who insisted on salvation by law-keeping but the Savior of those who believed (9:32-33).

LAST ADAM. As sin came into the world through one man, Adam, so the grace of God and its gift (salvation) has come through the last Adam, Jesus Christ (5:12; see 1 Cor. 15:45).

ATONING SACRIFICE. Jesus Christ is the sacrifice, in His death on the cross, that satisfied God and turned His wrath from us (3:25; see 1 Jn. 2:2). Without this, we would suffer the wrath of God for our sin forever.

LORD. Jesus Christ is our Lord. This name denotes Christ's ownership of the universe and His authority over us (1:3; 10:9).

REDEEMER. Jesus Christ as our Redeemer bought us out of the slave market of sin by paying the price for our redemption through His death (3:24).

RECONCILER. By His sacrifice on the cross, Jesus Christ put an end to the hostility between rebellious sinners and a holy God (5:8-11).

RESURRECTED ONE. Jesus Christ, the resurrected One, is our living Savior and Lord (1:4; 4:24-25; 6:10-11; 8:11).

KEY TERMS FOR UNDERSTANDING ROMANS

Knowing the meaning of the following words will help you understand the book of Romans as you read and study it.

- **Adoption:** the act of God by which He placed us into His family as sons and joint-heirs with Christ.
- **Conversion:** the act by which a person, through the power of the Holy Spirit, turns in faith to Jesus Christ.
- **Death:** separation from God (spiritual); separation of body and soul (physical); separation from God in hell (eternal).
- **Faith:** believing and trusting in what God has revealed about Himself regarding sin and salvation.
- **Glorification:** the end or goal of our salvation; the act of God by which we are transformed into His likeness.
- **Gospel:** the joyous proclamation of God's redemptive activity in Jesus Christ on our behalf; literally "good news."
- **Grace:** the unmerited favor of God to guilty and depraved sinners.
- **Impartation:** the act of God by which He gives us a new nature through the Holy Spirit.
- **Imputation:** the act of God by which the righteousness Jesus earned for us by His sinless life and atoning death is legally given to us.

- **Justification:** the act of God by which He judicially declares a believing sinner to be righteous and acceptable before Him.
- **Mercy:** the undeserved kindness of God to mankind in its misery and bondage to sin.
- **Reconciliation:** the removal of the hostility between us and God by means of Christ's saving work on the cross.
- **Redemption:** the act of God in Christ by which we are "bought out" of the marketplace of sin and given spiritual freedom.
- **Regeneration:** the act of the Holy Spirit by which the person who believes in Christ is given new life or is born again.
- **Righteousness:** a quality in God's character that comes from His intrinsic holiness; a quality that He both imputes and imparts to those who believe on Jesus Christ.
- **Salvation:** the act of God's grace by which He rescues us from the eternal consequences of our sin.
- **Sanctification:** the "setting apart" of the believer by God for a life of holiness and service (positional) and a gradual growth in godliness (practical).
- **Sin:** the violation of the moral law of God. It often carries the idea of missing the mark, lawlessness, unrighteousness, transgression.
- **Wrath of God:** God's righteous anger against sin and its outpouring in punishment.

THE HOLY SPIRIT IN ROMANS 8

The theme of Romans 8 is “more than conquerors” (v.37). Paul had vented his frustration in the struggle with sin (7:7-25); in chapter 8 he expressed his confidence of victory because of the Holy Spirit. Named only once in Romans before this, the Spirit is mentioned 16 times in this important chapter.

1. He gives us life (vv.1-4). Through the new life He imparts to us, we experience deliverance from the slavery and condemnation of the works-system and are enabled to fulfill the righteous demands of our holy God.

2. He helps us fight sin (vv.5-8). Because we are on the Spirit’s side, we have both life and peace.

3. He resurrects the dead (vv.9-11). The same Holy Spirit who raised Christ from the dead will give our bodies life in the resurrection.

4. He gives us power over sin (vv.12-13). The Spirit gives us strength to put to death the disgraceful deeds of the body (see Col. 3:5-11).

5. He leads us (v.14). The Spirit convicts us of sin and leads us into righteousness.

6. He adopts us as full heirs (vv.15-16). We are transformed from slaves to children of God by the Holy Spirit. He testifies to our family status.

7. He gives us hope of resurrection (vv.22-25). What He has done for us now is only the beginning—the firstfruits. A far more wonderful life awaits us.

8. He helps us to pray (vv.26-27). Although the Spirit helps us in every weakness, He especially helps us when we pray.

WHAT DOES ROMANS MEAN TO YOU?

We can summarize our walk down the roads of Romans with the following observations:

1. God has extended to all men impartially an offer of salvation from their sin. His wrath against sin is justified, and we all stand before Him condemned. But God has made a way for us to be justified by faith.

2. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, came to earth to live the sinless life we could not live and to become the atoning sacrifice for our sins. He died for us, paying the penalty for all our iniquity. Because He did, we can be saved—not by law, but by faith. We trust in Him and Him alone for our salvation. It comes through a person, the God-man, not through works.

3. The Holy Spirit dwells within the believer to bring victory over sin. The result is a practical holiness that reflects the truth of Christianity and gives glory to God.

So where do these roads lead you? If you have never been saved, they lead you to the Lord Jesus Christ. You are still dead in your sins. You are God's enemy. You need to be reconciled to God. You need to trust Jesus Christ as your Savior. And we would plead with you to trust Him today.

If you are a Christian, these roads lead you to spiritual growth. You need to see yourself as the living sacrifice Paul described in Romans 12:1-2. If you are still dominated by sin, you need to rely on the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit. You need to accept for yourself the practical guidelines for personal holiness that appear in the concluding four chapters of Romans. God will lead you to growth and victory.



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