



THRU the **BIBLE**

with *J. Vernon McGee*

ROMANS

BIBLE COMPANION



EPISTLES

READ THIS FIRST

This Bible Companion is a summary of Dr. J. Vernon McGee's teaching of the book of Romans heard on THRU the BIBLE. These summarized lessons get to the heart of Bible passages and are intended to stir your own thinking, prayer, and study.



Begin with prayer. Dr. McGee said, "We are living in the day of the ministry of the Holy Spirit, the day of grace, when the Spirit of God takes the things of Christ and reveals them to us." Before you start each lesson, ask the Lord to use it to grow you up in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ as He is revealed in that section. Dr. McGee said, "This is the secret of life and of Christian living."



As you study, read the Bible passage first. Invite God to open your eyes and deepen your understanding of His Word. That's a request God loves to answer!



If you want to listen to Dr. McGee's complete teaching on any specific passage, go to TTB.org/Romans (or any book of the Bible).

The corresponding audio messages are listed at the top of the summaries. You can also use this Bible Companion to follow along and take notes while you listen to Dr. McGee teach a book of the Bible on the radio or online.



After every lesson, several questions are listed for your personal consideration or, if you're reading this as a group, for your discussion. Ask the Spirit to help you take to heart what He wants to show you.

LET THE WORD OF CHRIST DWELL IN YOU
RICHLY IN ALL WISDOM AND TEACHING....

COLOSSIANS 3:16^A

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LESSON 1

WHAT MAKES SALVATION GREAT



Begin with prayer



Read **Romans 1:1-13**



Listen at TTB.org/Romans to *Romans Introduction, Romans 1:1-4,* and *Romans 1:3-13*

You are about to spend time in one of the most important books of the Bible. For many in every generation, God has used this book of Romans to change thinking, deepen faith, and comfort hearts. It could be God will use this study in your life to teach, comfort, convict, encourage, or stir you towards a deeper faith in Him and greater effectiveness in living the Christian life.

Before you dive in, ask Him to quiet your heart and awaken your mind to the greatest subject of the ages: His great salvation. Invite Him to do whatever work He wants to in your heart as you discover the depth of this amazing gift. Every Christian should make every effort to know Romans, for this book will ground the believer in the faith.

The book of Romans contains the great gospel manifesto for the world, but the world doesn't want to hear or accept it. It likes to hear about the glory of mankind and exalt man instead of God. We must see mankind for who we are: Totally corrupt, ruined creatures without God, helpless, and hopelessly

lost. We must have the righteousness of God since we have none of our own. The only remedy for our sin is the perfect remedy God provided in Jesus Christ for a lost humanity.

This is the great message of Romans: God takes lost sinners—like us—and He brings us into the family of God and makes us His children. He does it not because we deserve it, but because Christ died on the cross. Romans teaches this essential truth.

The apostle Paul opens this letter with a great statement and the key to understanding:

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.”

–Romans 1:16, 17

Paul is confident the gospel has inherent power for a specific thing: *Salvation*. That is the end and the effect of the gospel. When you are saved, it includes everything from justification to glorification; it is both an act and a process. It is equally true that you *have been* saved, you *are being* saved, and you *will be* saved.

You can't work for or buy this righteousness from God; you only can accept it by faith. Justification by faith means not only the subtraction of sin but the addition of righteousness—all so you might stand before God complete in Christ. God saves on no other ground than that you trust Jesus.

ABOUT THIS BOOK

God has used many ways to communicate with us in His Word. He gave history, poetry, and prophecy. He gave the Gospels, and now we come to a new section: The Epistles, the majority written by the apostle Paul. The Lord speaks to us in each one of these very wonderful letters.

Paul identified himself to the Romans in the very beginning as a slave, or *doulos*, of the Lord Jesus Christ. He took this position willingly. Paul said he is also a “called apostle”—God called him. Technically, “apostle” in the New Testament means one chosen by the Lord Jesus to declare the gospel as an eyewitness of the resurrected Christ. Like an apostle, every believer should be a witness, one sent forward with a message.

Paul also said he was separated *to* the gospel of God. He was separated *to* something, not *from* something. Like in a marriage when a spouse separates themselves from all others to stand with their spouse alone, Paul said he was leaving everything else behind to be devoted to Jesus. “Separated” is the Greek word *aphorizo*, the same word as “horizon.” When you are separated unto Christ, He enlarges your horizons.

This gospel Paul is sharing is God’s good news. Man didn’t create it; it was originated by God. It existed way before us. We can take it or leave it. This message of salvation was promised by God’s prophets all the way through the Old Testament. The message is this: God loves mankind and has made a way to save mankind. The gospel is all about Jesus Christ and what He has done.

This gospel is “concerning His Son Jesus Christ our Lord” (v. 3). “Concerning” is the Greek preposition *peri*—used also in “periscope” and “perimeter”—and means “that which encircles.” Draw a wide circle around Jesus and the gospel is what goes inside. Paul identifies Jesus’ full title here: He is the Son of God, and He is Jesus Christ our Lord. That is His wonderful name.

Jesus is also the seed of David, in His humanity. He is virgin-born because He is declared—“horizoned” out to be—the Son of God with power.

He is also declared to be the Son of God “by the resurrection from the dead.” The Resurrection proves everything. The Resurrection didn’t make Him the Son of God, it simply revealed that He was. This is the picture of the perfect humanity of Christ and the perfect deity of Christ. Jesus Christ is not any more man because He is God, and He is not any less God because He is man. He is God-man.

Then we learn another great truth. What is Jesus doing today? We see Jesus Christ, resurrected and presently seated at the right hand of God in the heavens, interceding right now for us, God’s children, giving us power and comfort.

Jesus’ resurrection insures He will someday return to this earth as the Judge and as the King of kings and Lord of lords. He will put down sin, and He will reign on this earth in righteousness. The Resurrection guarantees each one of us is going to face the Lord Jesus Christ. As a child of God, this is nothing to be feared. Remember, the gospel brings us into a love relationship. God loves us and gave Himself for us.

What this future meeting does is prompt our obedience. Obedience to the faith is very important to God. Although He saves us by faith and not by works, after He has saved us, He wants to talk to us about our works, about our obedience to Him.

Paul sums up the gospel: This message is from the risen Christ for everyone in the world. First, come to Him and be saved, and then serve Him with faith and obedience.

Initially, the book of Romans was written to the Christians in Rome. Paul calls them “beloved of God” and “called to be saints” (v. 7)—these names are ours, too, as followers of Jesus. A saint is one who exalts Jesus Christ. A person becomes a saint when Jesus Christ becomes his Savior. There are only two classes of people in the world: The saints and the ain’ts. If you are not an ain’t, then you’re a saint. And if you are a saint, you have trusted Christ. It is not your character that makes you a saint, it’s your faith in Jesus Christ and the fact that you are set apart for Him.

Paul tells the Roman Christians that their faith was talked about all around the whole world, and he is grateful for them and their godly reputation. Word had filtered out throughout the empire that many in Rome were turning to Christ—so much so that it disturbed the emperors. Later on, persecution began.

Paul is praying for a “prosperous journey” (v. 10 ΚJV) to come to them in Rome. When we read about his journey in the book of Acts, it doesn’t look prosperous—he went as a prisoner, they endured weeks in a terrible storm at sea, the ship was lost, they were shipwrecked, and he was bitten by a poisonous snake. Yet it was a prosperous journey because God clearly led him the whole way.

Paul wanted to come to Rome “in the will of God” to teach the Word of God. He had led many of these Christians in Rome to Christ when he met them in different parts of the Roman Empire, and now he wanted to see the fruit of the Spirit in their lives.

If somebody else had founded the church in Rome, Paul would never have gone there, he said. In essence, he’s the one who started the church there, but he did so by remote, not in person. Paul had never been to Rome, no apostle had, yet a church had been born. How did that happen?

As Paul moved throughout the Roman Empire, he shared the gospel with everyone who would listen. Hundreds of thousands of people were coming to faith in Jesus Christ. Rome had a strong drawing power, and many people in Rome met Paul out in the Roman Empire.

On his missionary journeys, Paul visited Roman colonies, such as Philippi and Thessalonica, and there he saw Roman customs, laws, language, styles, and culture on exhibit. He walked on Roman roads. He met Roman soldiers on the highways and in the marketplaces, and he slept in Roman jails. Paul had gone before Roman magistrates. He'd enjoyed the benefits of Roman citizenship. Paul knew all about Rome, although he was yet to visit there. From the vantage point of the world's capital, he was to preach the global gospel to a lost world, that God loved so much that He gave His Son to die that whosoever believed on Jesus Christ might not perish, but have eternal life (see John 3:16).

Rome was a great magnet, drawing men and women from the ends of the then-known world to its center. As Paul and the other apostles crisscrossed the colossal empire, they brought multitudes to the foot of the cross.

And like he did in every letter he wrote, Paul begins by wishing the reader, God's grace and peace (v. 7)—grace (*charis*), the Gentile's greeting, and peace (*shalom*), the Jewish greeting. Paul extends his double blessing on everyone who will read this and then begins to teach.

NEXT: Your two options to know more about God.

5. Why is Jesus' resurrection so important to what we believe?

6. According to Romans, what does it take to become a saint?

7. The Apostle Paul took the gospel around the world. Where are you taking the gospel? Who do you wish knew about Jesus' offer of salvation?

LESSON 2

HOW BAD IS IT?



Begin with prayer



Read **Romans 1:14-32**



Listen at [TTB.org/Romans](https://www.ttb.org/Romans) to ***Romans 1:14-20*** and ***Romans 1:21-32***

Let's get to know this man, Paul.

You can read his backstory in Acts 22, 24-26. Here in his letter to the Romans, he tells them about his three "I ams."

"I am a debtor both to Greeks and to barbarians ..." (v. 14). The world is always dividing up people groups. First-century Greeks defined the world as "us and everyone else." Paul said no matter how it's divided, he owed a debt to every man because of all he has gained in Jesus Christ. He wants to share all he's been given in Christ. He owes it to everyone—especially the lost. As the body of Christ today, not until *every person* has heard the gospel of Jesus Christ have we paid our honest debt.

"I am ready ..." (v. 15). Paul, having said he owed a debt, is now ready to pay it. Sharing the gospel with others isn't a burden or duty for him—instead, he's eager to give the good news to everyone who will listen. He's got a pastor's heart—encouraging and warm to the saints and sinners alike.

"I am not ashamed of the gospel ..." (v. 16-17). Why? Because the gospel is God's *dunamis*, His *dynamite*, to *reach everyone*, regardless of racial or religious barriers. It's a personal invitation, pleading with everyone who

will come. These two verses summarize all of Romans: God offers to save everyone worldwide who believes in the name of Jesus Christ. We can't come to God or have life any other way than by faith in Jesus. (See also Philippians 3:9 and Habakkuk 2:4.) God saves you by faith, you live by faith, you die by faith, and you'll be in heaven by faith. To be "justified by faith" means that a sinner who trusts Christ is not only pardoned because Jesus died for him, but he also stands before God complete in Christ.

This invitation into the life and grace of God is important to get on the table right now, because in the next section of Romans we'll discover how God, in His perfect righteousness, deals with our sin.

If you want to know how glorious salvation really is, you have to know how bad sin is and how honest God's anger is against it. The gospel hasn't changed God's attitude toward sin, it just makes it possible to accept the sinner.

As a sinner, you know either the righteousness or the wrath of God. His wrath is not His punishment of sin, it is His anger against it. Throughout the whole Bible, God is constant and insistent in His anger against evil. He didn't change between the two testaments. God's mercy is just more evident in the New Testament, not because He is lenient with the sinner, but because Christ died for him.

God hates all ungodliness—anything that denies His character and shows man's neglect and rebellion against God. Just imagine how He feels about those who deny He even exists. God also hates man's "unrighteousness" against his fellow man. He hates it when right is held down and truth is cast off like litter. Why? Because He has shown up and shown us who He is, and we have looked the other way.

Our universe tells us two things about God: His person and His power. Since the world was created, these two invisible things can be seen. Just look around—creation is a clear light of revelation, revealing the unchangeable power and existence of God. (See Psalm 8:3, 19:1, and Acts 14:17.)

Even if we don't admit it, we have an instinctual knowledge of God. To deny He exists is literally insane, illogical, and senseless. Behind a façade of wisdom, mankind become fools when they say God doesn't exist. (See Psalm 14:1—the word for "fool" means "insane.") Creation so clearly reveals God that man is without excuse. Those who deny God's existence and power do so not through ignorance, but by willful rebellion in the presence of clear light.

Mankind is not getting any better, contrary to what evolutionists say. The pull is downward, away from God, physically, morally, intellectually, or spiritually. In fact, look at Romans 1:21-23 carefully for the seven steps we've taken downward since the Garden of Eden.

Even though mankind knew God:

- "They did not glorify [God]." They didn't give Him His rightful place and became self-sufficient. We say we don't need God.
- "Nor were thankful." Ingratitude pervades our thinking and relationships.
- "Became futile [vain] in their thoughts." We even concocted a theory of evolution—any way to get around our responsibility before God.
- "Their foolish hearts were darkened." We moved into the darkness of our own hearts as our religion.
- "Professing to be wise, they became fools." The wisdom of man is foolishness with God. Man searches for truth through logical reasoning, but arrives at a philosophy that is foolish in God's sight.
- "And changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man—and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things." They turned God's glory into a cartoon and traded the magnificence of God into cheap figurines you can buy at any roadside stand.

... And we've been spiraling ever since. The only *practical* thing for us to do is to return to the living and true God.

Because mankind has revolted against God, Romans 1:24-32 says three times that God gives them up, literally *God hands them over*—it is a positive, not a passive, attitude. *If that's what you want, then here you go.*

Mankind's downward spiral can be specifically measured by our perversion of sex. Idolatry and gross immorality are the bitter fruits of rejecting what God has said about Himself. Passions of dishonor and disgrace and depravity all speak of godlessness—regardless of what public opinion is today.

No one can be a child of God and live in the thick mire of our contemporary perversion and permissiveness. But if anyone comes to Christ, He will lead them out of this sin.

All this revelation about God does not meet with public support. Mankind has heard from God but flagrantly flaunts God's Word by defying His judgment against such sins. Sound familiar?

Just watch the news and you'll see evidence of Romans 1 everywhere: Rampant evil, grabbing and grasping, vicious political backstabbing, envy, reckless killing, bickering, and cheating. Look at them: Gossips, the mean-spirited, venomous, slanderers, and liars. Bullies, swaggerers, the arrogant, disobedient, and unloving. People keep inventing new ways of wrecking lives. (See Romans 1:24-29.) And it's not as if they don't know better. Mankind knows perfectly well; they're just stiffening their necks against God.

The book of Romans reveals the tragic helplessness of the human race. No other book of the Bible looks so fearlessly at the spiral of human sin. And we're not done yet.

But before you let this debauchery depress you too much, know that the best, most wonderful news you ever heard is coming. But before that redemption can be appreciated in all its fullness, you need to be convinced that we're lost without the Lord.

Stay with us.

NEXT: Would God ever ask me to pay for my own salvation?

LESSON 3

THE ONLY VERDICT



Begin with prayer



Read **Romans 2:1–3:20**



Listen at TTB.org/Romans to ***Romans 2:1-22***, ***Romans 2:21–3:9***,
and ***Romans 3:5-22***

Religious people, self-righteous people, and so-called good people all need a Savior. You may be someone who tries hard to be good, and you're likely very nice. Or maybe you're religious and follow a strict code of behavior and requirements. You can be kind and you can be religious, but without a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, you're lost.

In Romans 1, we see how desperately people need a Savior. They need deliverance from all kinds of perversion and immorality. But in God's sight, the "good" person's sin is just as awful as the depraved acts that offend the culturally refined sinner. When we judge someone else's sin, we immediately establish the principle that whoever is above us can judge us also for not measuring up to their standards. Call the abuser or the pedophile's sin abhorrent, and God in His position as He looks down at you—a so-called respectable person—says, *"You're a sinner, and come short of My glory. You, in My sight, are just as much a sinner as that person is in your sight."*

To reject Jesus as the Son of God immediately puts you under God's judgment, and the only verdict is guilty. (See 1 John 5:12, John 3:36, 5:24, and the marvelous John 3:16-18.)

Wait! What about “God is love”? That’s the God I follow. Yes, you’re right.

God is love, but until you do something with the love He offers you in Jesus Christ, His position toward you is one of wrath toward your sin (see Romans 5:8). God is the same throughout the whole Bible. He is loving and just, and His attitude toward sin has never changed.

If you reject God’s way through Jesus Christ, the only option you have is to pay for your salvation yourself. If you do that, here are six principles God will apply when He judges you:

1. God knows the real you (2:2). God will judge according to the facts. He knows your heart better than you do. He doesn’t grade sin on a curve—with someone getting an A and someone getting an F. We’re all sinners.
2. Our lives will be scrutinized (2:6). At the Great White Throne, God will judge people according to what they’ve done. His books will open, and every sinner’s life will be scrutinized.
3. We’re all judged by the same standard (2:11). You might be well educated and raised in a good home, but you have no advantage over some illiterate person living in dire circumstances. God will judge you both by the same standard. This is not for salvation, but for judgment.
4. Our best will never be good enough (2:13). You like the Sermon on the Mount and the Ten Commandments. *Do you keep them?* The answer is no, no one can. No one measures up to them. Every honest person *knows* he comes short of the glory of God.
5. We all fall short; we miss the mark (2:15). Your conscience either excuses or accuses you. When you say, “Well, I’m doing the best I can; I’m only human,” you’re excusing yourself. We *are* human, and that is the reason we fall short.
6. There will be no secrets at the judgment (2:16). That part of your life you have kept hidden, God will bring out—provided you do not come and accept His salvation now. If you turn down God’s salvation, you *will* face Him on this matter, and these six principles outline the way He will judge so-called good people.

Wouldn’t you rather Jesus stand up for you in court, offer His nail-printed hands, and say, *“These debts have been paid. I died in your place.”*

The saint with the most tender conscience today is more aware of sin than anyone else. If you're not conscious of sin in your life, you are in a dangerous place. You're like a man in an ice storm who thinks he's comfortable but is actually freezing to death. He wants to lie down in the snow and sleep, but if he does, he will die. Many people today live like this—numb, unconscious to the fact they are sinners in God's sight.

Some think they will escape judgment because they are religious. Of course, Jewish people illustrate this for the simple reason they had the only God-given faith (2:17-18). Paul asks them, *You've taught the Law and boasted in the Law—but have you lived up to the Law?* No, no one can. The tragedy of the half-truth that being moral and ethical is enough is that it's not. God finds the religious person the most difficult in the world to reach. Church members are the hardest people to lead to Christ.

For the Jew, circumcision was the badge of the Mosaic system—but that's all it was. It said that man believed the Law. But when they broke God's Law, their badge became worthless. That which should have been sacred became profane.

This thought can be applied to our church ceremonies. Water baptism is rightly a sacred thing, *if* it is the outward expression of a work God has done in your heart. But it's a mockery if the person who is baptized gives no evidence of salvation. Same is true for church membership. The symbol should stand for something.

Any rite or ritual you go through is meaningless for your salvation. God doesn't ask you to join anything or do anything. What God asks the lost sinner to do is believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and they will be saved. Until a person answers that question, God hasn't anything else to say to him. (After he's saved, then God will probably talk to him about church membership and baptism.)

Some may ask, "Well, doesn't my church, my creed, my membership, my baptism help toward my salvation?" The answer is no. But if you are saved, these things help communicate to the world who you are. Unless you are trusting Jesus Christ alone for your salvation, then instead of your church membership or good deeds being a sacred thing, they become disrespectful and worthless, at best.

Yes, Jews have an advantage, Paul said. But with it comes a responsibility.

God gave the nation Israel the opportunity to share the Word of God. This is important: Israel is not the shadow fulfilled and absorbed *in the church*, but the *basis* on which the church rests. God has a future for Israel.

Will Israel's lack of faith cancel out God's faithfulness? The Jew failed; doesn't that mean God failed? No. God's promise to send Israel the Redeemer was not defeated by their willful disobedience and rejection. All His promises for Israel's future will be fulfilled to God's glory in spite of their unbelief. Think about what this means to you. Aren't you glad God's promises to you don't depend on your faithfulness? Thank God for *His* faithfulness!

All God's promises, whether to the Jew or to the world, are found in the same Word of God. God will make good on John 3:16 to us just as He will make good on His covenant with Abraham in Genesis 12. God's faithfulness is true and won't change. How bad is it not to believe God gave His Son to die for you? Well, when you reject His Son, you call God a liar (see 1 John 5:10).

The Bible holds up a mirror to people who thought they knew God. Some realized they were sinners, lost before God, and turned to Him and were rescued. Others turned away from God but still claimed to be religious. All of us, even those who shake their fist at God, believe some people ought to be judged. Now, you may not think *you* ought to be, but you believe *somebody* ought to be judged. God has put within us an innate need for justice.

Few things sound more ominous than a judge striking his gavel, announcing the verdict of "guilty." In this section, mankind stands before the judge of all the earth, and the verdict of "guilty" resounds against every one of us. It makes no difference who we are; if we belong to the human race, we stand guilty before God.

After the courtroom where we have six charges brought against us, we then visit God's clinic where the Great Physician looks at eight other critical issues.

Paul starts the case with the conclusion: We're all under sin (3:9). Under sin says we are sinners by our actions, by our nature, and as a human family.

The first charge God makes about us is: No one is right with Him (3:10). He doesn't force anyone to be right with Him, but He offers a gift you can turn down. God says, "*This is My universe. You're living on My little world, using My sunshine and My water and My air, and I have worked out a plan of salvation that is true to My character and My nature. My plan is the one that's*

going to be carried out. You're a sinner, and I want to save you because I love you. Now here it is. Take it or leave it." That's what God says to a lost world and to each of us individually. To be right with God, then, means to accept His salvation.

The second charge is this: No one seeks after God (3:11).

The third charge: God isn't playing hide-and-seek with us. He has revealed Himself, out in the open telling us our problem and offering a solution (3:11).

The fourth charge: Mankind is detoured; we left the way we knew was right, and we know it (3:12).

The fifth charge is: We've gotten spoiled, overripe, sour (3:12).

The sixth charge is: Mankind is like a group of travelers who have gone in the opposite direction from the right one, and not one can help the others (3:12).

Now Paul transfers us over to God's clinic and into the hands of the Great Physician who says we are spiritually sick (3:13-20). First He tells us to stick out our tongues and say, "Ah," and to that God says we smell like an open grave—rotten. Our tongues are vicious and mean. Our mouths are full of bitterness. Our feet run fast to evil. And we know nothing about peace. And to sum it up, Paul says mankind has no fear of God. We're living as if God does not exist, and yet we shake our fist at Him in defiance.

Had enough of the bad news?

Between Romans 3:20 and Romans 3:21 there is a "Grand Canyon" division. Just when we have all the talk of sin that we can take, God will tell us what it means to be saved by faith.

Stay with us.

NEXT: When will God not save you?

THIS IS
THE GREAT MESSAGE
OF ROMANS:

G O D

TAKES LOST SINNERS

—LIKE US—

AND HE BRINGS US INTO

THE FAMILY OF GOD

AND MAKES US

HIS CHILDREN.



THRU**the**BIBLE

LESSON 4

HOW TO STAND BEFORE GOD



Begin with prayer



Read **Romans 3:21–4:25**



Listen at TTB.org/Romans to *Romans 3:5-22*, *Romans 3:22-31*, and *Romans 4*

In a court of justice, only after every defense has failed and the law itself has been shown to be broken, is an appeal made to the judge for mercy. That's where we stand today: In need of God's grace and mercy. We are spiritually helpless and without hope, paralyzed and unable to save ourselves.

So how can God save us? There's only one way: Through His righteousness, through the work of Jesus Christ on our behalf. God has provided a way to stand before Him in grace, and it's only through Jesus (John 14:6). We can't save ourselves; no religion can save; no church can save. We can't escape a sinful past and hopeless future on our own, but the righteousness God demands, God also provides. He is willing to give us the glorious life He has always wanted for us. He extends it as a gift. He offers us Jesus Christ.

WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE TO BE JUSTIFIED BY FAITH?

Here's what Romans 4:5 says about believing God.

But to him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness.

But to him who believes... “Oh, but I ought to do something.”

But to him who believes... “Well, shouldn’t I join the church and be baptized?”

But to him who believes... “Shouldn’t I promise God I’ll live a better life?”

But to him who believes... “But don’t you think I ought to offer God something?”

But to him who believes... “I’m happy to work for my salvation.”

Look back at that verse—who does God justify? The good people? No. God justifies the “ungodly,” the worst kind. The only people God saves is ungodly people; He’s never yet saved a good person. Not only has God never saved a good person, He never will. Do you know why? Because no one is good. Every one of us is ungodly.

The Lord Jesus says, “I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance” (Luke 5:32). He came to “give His life a ransom for many” (Matthew 20:28). Why did Jesus come? To pay the ransom demands for an ungodly people.

Please take this to heart: Until you come as a sinner to God, He cannot save you. He is in the business of only saving *sinners*. Many people defend their dignity and status rather than let God save them. But when you come to Him, you have to come as the sinner you are. He only saves ungodly people.

This is not a popular concept today because people don’t want to hear they are sinners. But that’s what we are. And that’s good, because God saves sinners. He doesn’t save those who just are weak or make mistakes. No, it’s sin Jesus paid for. When we come on His terms alone—because Jesus paid our debt for us—we receive His grace and mercy. He welcomes sinners like us.

This salvation by faith is a *gift*. You don’t work for a gift; you can’t pay for a gift; you can’t promise God anything. If you are going to receive His gift, you must reach out your hand in faith and receive what He offers.

That gift comes through Jesus’ death on the cross, what He did for us in our place. Why did it have to come to this? Because none of us measure up. We can all jump off the dock, but none of us are going to land on the island in the middle of the lake. Some may jump farther, but everyone comes up short.

What God does for us, He does by His grace; what God does by His grace, He does joyfully. He does it freely, literally, *without a cause*, and without holding back. God doesn’t parcel out grace as if He might run out of

His supply. When He gives you grace, He goes the limit. He is not stingy. Nothing beautiful in us calls out the grace of God, other than our great *need*. It's Jesus' gift that's beautiful. So when you come to the Lord Jesus Christ, you can exchange the guilt of your sins for the riches of His grace.

This gift comes by *faith* in the Lord Jesus Christ. Faith on its own doesn't save you, it's who you're putting that faith in—it's Jesus Christ who saves you by the blood He shed on the cross as He took your place. Without the blood of Christ, we have no other hope. God has always had only one way of saving sinners, and that is through the Cross of Jesus Christ. Everyone God saved in the Old Testament, He saved on credit. He did not save them because they brought a little lamb. The blood of lambs pointed to the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. When Christ died on the cross, He paid to redeem those who lived in the past, too. On this side of the Cross we don't bring a sacrifice, but we are to trust in Christ and His blood.

God has set forth Christ to be a propitiation through faith in His blood. Jesus is “the mercy seat” between us and a holy God. How wonderful to know God looks on Jesus' blood and pardons us. In joy, with satisfaction and delight in Jesus, God holds out mercy to a guilty world.

As an example of this grace and mercy apart from anything else, Paul describes God's work in the lives of Old Testament heroes, Abraham and David. They were in the same boat as all of us. Abraham, the founder of the nation Israel, and David, their greatest king, were desperate sinners, lost without God—but they were saved by faith alone.

ABOUT ABRAHAM

The nation Israel began with Abraham, but he stood on the same ground as the weakest sinner stands. God promised Abraham his family lineage would be numbered like the stars, even when his wife was barren. But Abraham simply believed God, and God credited that confidence for righteousness. When God saves us, He not only subtracts our sins, but He adds the righteousness of Christ that allows us to stand in His presence. (See Romans 4:3 and Genesis 15:6). Abraham believed God told the truth, then he rested completely on Him and worshipped Him. This left God free to fulfill that promise.

ABOUT DAVID

The Old Testament makes it very clear King David deliberately *broke* the Law. He knew what he did. Even so, David confessed his sin to God and God forgave him, accepted him, and saved him by faith.

Sometimes a judge may under certain circumstances remit sins. But David's forgiveness speaks of the tenderness of God by taking the sinner into His loving arms and receiving him with affection. His sins are covered. How? Because Jesus Christ died and shed His blood. Blessed is this person whose sin God doesn't count against him (see Romans 4:8).

Today, when we admit we're sinners, come to God, and trust Jesus as our Savior—regardless of who or how or when we are—God will save us. God holds us accountable today on one basis alone: His question is, *What will you do with My Son who died for you on the cross?*

**NEXT: Heaven waits for those who trust Jesus—
but what do we get here and now?**

LESSON 5

BLESSINGS FROM OUR FATHER



Begin with prayer



Read **Romans 5**



Listen at [TTB.org/Romans](https://www.ttb.org/Romans) to *Romans 5:1-9* and *Romans 5:9-21*

We've traveled a heavy road so far in Romans, but now the sin question has been settled. We will not come before God for judgment because of the redemption Jesus Christ purchased for us at tremendous price on the cross. What He did for us delivers us from the penalty of sin. An eternal home with Jesus waits for all who trust Him.

But what about here and now?

What benefits do we as Christians gain right now in our new life in Christ? Well, there's a long list of them! Actually, even the world pays a lot of money and attention to get these benefits that freely come to us with our salvation. (We don't always *enjoy* all of them—but that's our issue.) God has put these on the table for you, and all you have to do is reach over and take them (see Ephesians 1:3).

Being justified by faith produces wonderful results in our lives. As a believer in Jesus Christ, you now possess these eight things:

1. **Peace with God (v. 1)**—"Peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" comes to your soul when you trust Christ as Savior and when you are certain God no longer has any charge against you. God is for you;

your salvation is permanent and eternal. Your sins are forgiven, and everything is right between you and God. That brings unexplainable peace, beyond our understanding but still real. (See Philippians 4:7.)

2. **Access to God (v. 2a)**—As God’s child, you have access to a heavenly Father who listens to you. It is wonderful having someone to go to and talk with about your problems. He always hears and answers, and sometimes He shows He is a good Father by saying “no.” He answers according to His wisdom, not according to our will. We have access by faith into this grace we now stand in.
3. **Hope (v. 2b)**—As God’s children, we look forward to Jesus coming back to this earth (see 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18). He’s coming soon to take His church out of this world. That’s a glorious hope, and it will take place at His appearing. This hope means we have a future—something to look forward to. The child of God has a blessed hope. And we know all things are going to work together for good (8:28). We know nothing is going to separate us from the love of God (8:39). What a wonderful hope!
4. **Triumph in trouble (vv. 3, 4)**—Paul tells us to rejoice in our hardships, knowing that hardship (distress, pressure, trouble) produces patient endurance; and endurance, proven character (spiritual maturity); and proven character, hope and confident assurance of eternal salvation. It takes trouble to bring out the best in the believer’s life. The only way God can get fruit out of the life of the believer is by pruning the branches. The world does it differently. The world never combines “affliction” and “joy,” but the child of God can be confident God’s discipline is under God’s control for our good and God’s glory.
5. **Love (v. 5)**—What kind of love is this? Love for our fellow man? No—that’s elsewhere. Love for God? No. This love poured in us is the assurance that *God loves us*. These are desperate days, and you need to know God loves you. You can’t keep God from loving you. You can put yourself in a place where you don’t experience His love—like you can’t keep the sun from shining, but you can shut yourself in a dark room. You can put up an umbrella of sin, of indifference, of stepping out of the will of God, which will keep His love from shining on you. But He will never stop loving you. (Read that last sentence again.)

6. **The Holy Spirit (v. 5)**—The Holy Spirit is the One who, among other things, makes the love of God real in the hearts of believers. To get through these days on earth, you need to be very conscious of the fact that God loves you. And if you listen, you'll hear the Holy Spirit telling you how much He does. Go ahead, ask Him.
7. **Deliverance from wrath (v. 9)**—What is this future wrath from which we will be saved? Jesus calls it the Great Tribulation. Believers have been saved from the penalty of sin; He is constantly saving us from the power of sin; and He is going to save us in the future from the presence of sin. This means every believer will leave this earth at the Rapture. We are saved from wrath through Christ; we live by the grace of God; and by the grace of God, ten billion years from today we will still be in heaven.
8. **Joy (v. 11)**—We joy *in God*—what a wonderful truth from Scripture! Right now, whatever your problems are, you can have joy in God. You can have joy in Him that He lives and is all He says He is. You can rejoice because He is willing to save you even though you're a sinner. And someday, He will bring you into His presence. God has worked out a plan to save us because He loves us.

Be happy today in God for these wonderful benefits of salvation. And God wants to do even more for His children ...

WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE TO GROW IN CHRIST?

First God saves the sinner. In God's holy court a sinner is declared righteous but, really, his heart hasn't been changed. We're the same as we were. But God doesn't intend to leave us like this—He wants to make us the people we should be. His method, of course, is through the power of His Holy Spirit. And it unpacks as a process.

Romans 5:12 says that “just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned.” We've seen the dreaded result of what started in the Garden of Eden when Adam disobeyed God. His sin became our sin. Adam's decision is our decision, whether we like it or not.

Adam acted for the human race. Remember, we're sinners because we sin, and because it's our nature, and because we are in a family of sinners. Adam's one act of disobedience plunged his entire offspring into sin. We are all made sinners by Adam's sin.

But this was God's plan so that He might turn it all around when He justifies us by faith. Now He can take us out of the old Adam and put us in the new Adam, the Lord Jesus Christ. That is how God sanctifies us today, always by faith. Just as through one man sin entered and spread to the world, so through one Redeemer we can be declared righteous and made into a new creation, a new race, and a new redeemed person. "For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive" (1 Corinthians 15:21).

One transgression plunged the race into sin; but one act of obedience and the death of Christ upon the cross makes it possible for lost man to be saved.

But not only that, we have much more in Christ than we lost in Adam. Today we look forward to something more wonderful than the Garden of Eden. Jesus provides a breathtaking life ahead for those who receive His gift of life.

Death once ruled us because of one man who committed only one offense, but Jesus has established another kingdom that is far superior to the kingdom of death—it is the kingdom of life. And it's offered to us through the superabundance of grace—we have only to receive it. The King of the kingdom of life is Jesus Christ, and the gift comes through His hand. God is calling out a people for Himself and offers salvation to a lost race.

All the requirements of God's righteousness are fully met in Jesus' death. The kingdom is fully and firmly established on His cross. All other ground is sinking sand. The believing sinner now has eternal life by being united to the last Adam, the raised and glorified Savior. Jesus is head of the saved human family and brings us life and righteousness. He removes our guilt of sin. And on that basis, He can move into the lives of those who trust Him and begin to make them righteous. That is, He can begin to make them *good*.

God's work in our hearts makes it possible for us to grow in the grace of our Lord Jesus, which we'll study next.

**NEXT: Sin's pull on us is so strong ...
what should we do to get victory?**

LESSON 5

 **FOR DISCUSSION AND REFLECTION**

1. What is the difference between *having* the benefits of salvation and actually *enjoying* the benefits of salvation?
2. How do God's promises for the future give us hope in troubles right now?
3. Why is endurance such an important trait for a believer to develop? What does God use to develop endurance in our lives?
4. If we know from Romans that God will never stop loving us, why do we still feel like He will sometimes?

LESSON 6

YOU STAND IN GRACE



Begin with prayer



Read **Romans 6**



Listen at [TTB.org/Romans](https://www.ttb.org/Romans) to ***Romans 6:1-14*** and ***Romans 6:13-23***

Take a deep breath and thank God for His amazing grace. If you have received His gift of salvation, then you have been rescued from sin and death and you stand in grace.

Now God wants you to grow in that grace so it pervades everything about you.

God is both an exterior and interior decorator. He is an exterior decorator in that He enables us to stand before Him, because He has paid the penalty and removed the guilt of sin from us. But He is also an interior decorator who moves into our hearts and lives by the power of the Holy Spirit to make us the kind of Christians we should be. Once He saves us from sin, He doesn't leave us there.

Let's talk about how that happens.

We've just described two big Bible words, justification and sanctification. Justification describes being saved from sin and sanctification describes being changed into the people God envisions us to be because we are His and His alone.

Justification is an *act*; sanctification is a *work*.

Justification took place the moment you trusted Christ—you were declared righteous; the guilt was removed. Then God began a work of sanctification in you that will continue throughout your life.

You were instantaneous saved, but it will take a lifetime to be sanctified.

Justification is how and why this is happening; sanctification is the result.

Justification is *for* us; sanctification is *in* us.

Justification *says* you, the sinner, are righteous; sanctification *makes* you righteous.

Justification removes the *guilt and penalty* of sin; sanctification removes the *pervasive power* of sin.

Both justification and sanctification flow from being in Christ, crucified and risen. By faith, we seize Christ as our own for our salvation and for growing deeper and more personally in His life.

Behind us in our study, we've talked about how a sinner gets saved. Going forward we will see how God makes us, sinners, into His children and how we grow up to look like Him.

In our old nature, we were slaves to sin, but as believers, our new nature wants to obey God. He is now our Lord and Master. He gives us freedom to do what is best.

With all this in mind, imagine what an insult it is to hear Paul ask in Romans 6:1, *So if grace is so great, maybe we should sin more so we'll experience more grace?*

What? Are you crazy? We remember all too well what a life controlled by sin feels like, and now you're suggesting we go back there?

Paul is being a bit argumentative. "What shall we say then?" is a Greek question asked when there is only one logical answer.

After you peek into God's amazing salvation, there's only one answer, and it's not "let's continue in sin." No, the right answer is, of course, *How could we ever go back?* "Certainly not," Paul says—or literally, "May it never be!"

How could we who are saved by grace continue living like we used to? And if you think you can, then maybe you're not saved. Now's the time to make certain. God's Word is clear—your new nature means a new life.

Even though the guilt of your past life has been removed, the power of sin is still strong. We have died to sin in Christ, but we are never dead to it as long as we are breathing. It's like a dead weight we drag around with us. We want to live for God, but we need God's power to live out the reality that we're dead to sin.

We have to see ourselves as *in Christ*. Identified with Him in His death. This concept is pictured in the Greek word, *baptiz*. When something is immersed in water, it is swallowed up by it and comes up new.

So, how does God make a sinner a changed person? First, He gives us a new nature. Then He shows us how we died with Christ, were buried with Him, and then raised with Him. (See how important Jesus' death and resurrection continue to be?) That is truth, and now we need to learn how to count on that truth to change the way we live—now by faith. We have trusted Him for salvation, and now we trust Him in our daily living. This is what it means to live by faith.

Living by faith means we take several truths to heart.

1. **We know something.** (v. 3) Like every gadget that needs assembling, living the Christian life comes with instructions. You have to know that when Jesus Christ died, you were there with Him. You were the one who was guilty—He wasn't. Your sin put Him up there on that cross. Now picture pulling something under water. Just like that, we died with Him. You have to know that the judgment on our sin was fully made, the penalty fully paid. Our debt was swallowed up in His death.
2. **Then we identify with something.** (vv. 4-8) When Christ died, you died. When He was raised from the dead, you were raised from the dead so that now you answer to a new head of the human race, the Lord Jesus Christ. You are no longer a slave to sin.

You were with Christ in His death, and now you are with Him when He rose again. You are joined today to a living Christ. The Resurrection opens up eternity to Christ, and it opens eternity to those who are in Him. Jesus is alive today. He lives to intercede for those who are His—you.

Because of this, He can save you to the utmost, to the ultimate extreme. Your sins have been judged, your death has been accomplished, you are raised with Jesus when He conquered death, and now you are with Him in the heavenlies. Your position is settled.

That's what it means to identify with Christ. You are vitally connected to Him, like a limb grafted into a tree shares the life of the tree. The life of Christ is your life now.

3. **Now count on something.** (v. 11) “Reckon”—that is, count on the fact—that you are dead to sin and alive unto God. The sin factory that once bossed you around has been put out of business. Think on this: There are only two places for your sins. Either you trusted Christ to pay for them when He died for you, or you still carry them today and judgment is ahead for you. You don't share the burden of your sin. If you are in Christ, then He took care of it. You can count on it. You no longer have to live in the grip of your old nature. You don't have to listen to your old self talking.

FINALLY, YIELD YOURSELF TO GOD

We get into trouble when we listen to our old self talking. Instead of giving back the ground Jesus already won for you, you can present yourself to God. A willing servant. *I'll do whatever you want, Lord.*

Just like you once yielded yourself to sin—how easy that was!—now you yield yourself to God as someone who is alive from the dead. You're now alive in Christ. You have a new nature. You've been born again.

Jesus asks you to yield specific things to Him, things that are your “members as instruments of righteousness to God.” Think about that specific something, that sin that nips at your heels. Yield *that* to Him. A bad temper? Take that to Him. A gossiping tongue? Talk to Him about it. Sexual immorality? Present yourself to God—body and soul. You can do it when the Holy Spirit has your permission. Your new nature can choose to obey God; you even want to. You're done with your “I'll do it my way” attitude.

This is all God's method of changing you. You step into this process by faith—faith that God can do it. You *can't* do it (He never said you could). When you finally learn you can't live the Christian life, you have learned a great lesson. Only then will you let Him live it through you.

Don't you know that everyone serves someone or something? This is really so practical. Whoever you listen to—that is your master. If every time your favorite sin pops up you say “yes” to it, then it is your master and you follow it naturally.

But you are also free to live for Jesus Christ and say “yes” to Him. That's your new nature talking. You might be just as weak as you were before and unable to resist sin, but now you can, by faith, live in the power of the Holy Spirit. Only the Spirit of God can produce the Christian life in us, as we're going to see. The inclination to sin is still strong, but in His strength, you can live for God, you can live a holy life.

Some people don't like to think of themselves as slaves to anything, especially sin. But whatever you let control you, you are a servant to. When sin was your master, you did as you pleased. Sounds like real freedom, right? Wrong. Your old life was an evil master. You're ashamed of it now. But now as a slave to God, you are freed from its control that leads to death. You are whole—with more life on the way that will last for eternity.

Sin always demands more. You never can pay enough. But God's gift is real life that you live by faith. You are saved by faith. You are to walk moment by moment by faith. You cannot live for God by yourself any more than you can save yourself. Depend on Him as your next breath. Look to the Lord Jesus Christ by the power of the Spirit. He will help you, if you ask.

**NEXT: Help for the many times you've asked,
“Why do I keep doing that?”**

WHEN YOU COME TO
the Lord Jesus Christ,

YOU CAN EXCHANGE
THE GUILT OF YOUR SINS

*for the riches of
His grace.*



THRU^{the}BIBLE

LESSON 7

WHY DO I KEEP DOING THAT?



Begin with prayer



Read **Romans 7**



Listen at TTB.org/Romans to ***Romans 7:1-6*** and ***Romans 7:7-25***

If you've ever failed at something, especially something you really value, you know that frustrated, sick feeling of not measuring up. Of feeling less than you are.

Romans 7 tells us that we'll fail every time we try to live the Christian life on our own. In Romans 6 we learned to present ourselves to God and trust Him to live the Christian life through us. When we don't do that, we feel its sobering effect.

The apostle Paul said he failed at the Christian life. It didn't wreck his salvation, but he wasn't happy and had no joy or power in his life. In Romans 7, he shares the two systems that failed him and what God taught him about victory.

#1 NO ONE MEASURES UP TO THE LAW

The first system, the Law, had been keeping Israel in line for 1500 years. The Law, says Paul, was a list of standards Jews lived by that revealed the exceeding sinfulness of sin. The Law is an x-ray of your heart. The Law is a mirror; it reveals what we are, sinners. Nobody measures up. If you have a dirty spot on your face, the mirror will show it to you, but it can't remove the spot. It just condemns you.

The person who uses the Law as their guideline for the Christian life just gets shown their own weakness, inability, and sin. If there had been a law which could have given life, God would have given it (see Galatians 3:21). But life and Christian living do not come by the Law. It just keeps giving you a long list of things to do and demands to be kept, without hands to do them.

The Jew had lived under the Law for generations, but if the new Gentile believers had to adopt the Law, there was no hope for them. But Paul gives hope—he says that because Christ died in His body and we are identified with Christ in His death, now we are dead to the Law and the Law is dead to us.

It's like a marriage—a wife is bound to her husband as long as he lives, but when the husband dies, she is completely released from the relationship. In other words, if he is dead, she is no longer married to him. If we are dead to the Law, we no longer have a relationship to it. If Christ has had victory over the Law, then we are released from its rules.

Today we can serve God not because the Law demands it of us and makes us think, "I ought to do it." Now we can serve God because we want to. "I delight to do this, because I want to please Jesus." As a believer, you are set free from the handcuffs of the Law, and in love you can now give yourself to God and do what pleases Him.

If today you follow a set of rules because you think doing so will make God pleased with you, you're setting yourself up for failure. The Law will never lead to life. If a judge sentenced you to die, you shouldn't ask him how you are going to live.

The Law is not given to the new man in Christ—old things have passed away and all things have become new (see 2 Corinthians 5:17). The believer is not under Law but under grace. God says so!

The successful Christian life is Jesus living His life through you today. You can't do it yourself, nor can we do it by following long sets of rules and the Law. All the Law does is show you how much you need God.

#2 THE STRUGGLE OF TWO NATURES

When Jesus Christ saved you, He gave you a new nature. You are a new creature in Christ Jesus (2 Corinthians 5:17). But the old nature has been in control for so long that it often takes over. Your new nature wants to follow

after God, but your old nature drags its feet. It doesn't want to serve God, doesn't want to pray or worship. It wants what it always has gotten—its own way.

Here's a radical thought: You can't depend on your new nature. Just to say you want to live for Christ won't get you anywhere. Your relationship with God is not a Do-It-Yourself kit.

You need Jesus. You need to turn your life over to the Spirit of God, yield to Him, and let Him do for you what you can't do for yourself.

Generations of saints have never understood this and accept defeat as normal Christian living. They are satisfied to continue on the low level of a sad, crushed life. God doesn't want us to arrive in heaven by that route.

Paul becomes very personal in this chapter. He documents his internal struggle as he tried to live for God in the power of his new nature. He found it impossible. In essence, he said, *"I don't understand my own actions. I am baffled and bewildered by them. I don't do what I want to do, but instead do the very thing I hate. I'm yielding to my human nature, my worldliness—my sinful capacity"* (v. 15).

What a perfect picture of the conflict between our old nature and our new nature.

Can you relate? Do you do something, then hate yourself because you've done it? You cry out, "God, oh, I've failed You!" Every child of God has had this experience.

Paul shares his own experience. First he was a proud Pharisee under the Mosaic Law, kidding himself by doing what he thought would make him right with God. But the Law was condemning him all the while.

Then Paul met Jesus Christ on the Damascus Road. This proud young Pharisee turned to Christ as his Savior. But still Paul felt he could live the Christian life on his own. His new nature said, "Now I'm going to live for God!" But he struggled and failed for a time.

Then there was the day when Paul didn't win, but Christ did. Paul learned it was all about yielding to God and letting the Spirit of God live the Christian life through him.

Paul learned two things in this struggle every Christian needs to learn:

First, there's nothing good in my old nature (v. 18). Have you found that out yet? Too many times we feel we can do something in our own strength that will please God. We might get very busy and think God will reward us for our effort. Yet we're doing it all by ourselves and have no vital connection with the Lord. His life is not being lived through us—we're just trying to fly solo.

Second, God won't use anything we do in our own strength. He won't have it; it's *no good*. Have you learned that yet? There's no *good* in the old nature, and there's no *power* in the new nature. The new nature wants to serve God, but your old nature is an enemy to God. We say, "I want to live for God. I want to do better." But there's no power in it. It causes the honest child of God to cry out, as Paul cried: "O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?" (v. 24).

The word "wretched" speaks of the exhaustion we feel in the struggle. *I've tried everything, and nothing helps. I'm at the end of my rope. Can anyone help me?*

The honest Christian who has tried to follow the Law and who has tried to do the Christian life in his own strength is helpless. His shoulders are pinned to the floor—he has been wrestled down. He is calling for help.

And God answers him.

Paul says in effect, *"My new life tells me to do right, but the old nature still inside me loves to sin. Who will help me get free of it? Thank God! Jesus Christ my Lord will help me. He has set me free."*

This chapter is Paul's S.O.S. to God, and God delivers him. More detail of how God does it is in chapter 8, but here's a hint: Both salvation and sanctification come through Jesus Christ; He provides everything we need.

**NEXT: We're going to what many call
"the greatest chapter in the Bible."**

LESSON 8

ALL THAT IS OURS IN CHRIST



Begin with prayer



Read **Romans 8:1-17**



Listen at [TTB.org/Romans](https://www.ttb.org/Romans) to ***Romans 8:1-8*** and ***Romans 8:9-17***

In Romans 7 we felt the frustration we have all experienced in living the Christian life. *We can't do it. What are we going to do?* Now here's the answer.

Romans 8 is the high-water mark in Romans, and many believe it to be the greatest chapter in the Bible. No other chapter more deeply and fully describes the hope and tender mercies we have in God's love. Nor does any other chapter describe the work of the Trinity on our behalf—the Holy Spirit working with our spirit, Jesus' intercession for us, and the unfailing love of God the Father for His children. All these truths link together to form a great security for every Christian and the opportunity to experience the life in God He intends for us. We must come to this study like Moses standing at the burning bush, with our feet unshod and our heads uncovered, not fully realizing or recognizing the glory and wonder of it all.

In Romans 7 we saw that our old nature has no good in it and our new nature has no power. So what's an exhausted, frustrated, defeated Christian to do? *I'm so tired of trying and failing, who will help me live for God? (7:24).*

That's where Romans 8 comes in, explaining where the victory comes from—it's through the work of God's Spirit! A life that pleases God must be lived in His power and not ours. The Holy Spirit's job is to deliver us from frustration and failure.

In spite of the defeat Paul experienced in chapter 7 when he struggled to live a life that pleases God, he didn't lose his salvation. "There is ... no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus ..." (v. 1). However, Paul wasn't enjoying the Christian life. God wanted him to have joy. But how could he get it?

Remember we learned how we were once under the authority of "the law of sin and death"? In our old nature, it controlled us and even as a Christian, it cut off our fellowship with God.

Only a higher authority and power can put us back in fellowship with God—only the Holy Spirit, who is the *life* in our new *life* in God, can connect us to the living Christ Jesus. He is the one who sets us free from the law of sin and from death's power.

The Law could never make us righteous before God. It couldn't produce any good thing in us (it only showed us where we failed). But now, the Holy Spirit does the impossible. He produces a holy life in our weak and sinful flesh so we can walk "according to the Spirit" (v. 4). What the Law couldn't do, the Holy Spirit can do.

We can live the Christian life when the Holy Spirit empowers us. We don't have to lift ourselves up by our own bootstraps. We'll never make it that way, anyway. Think of all the New Year resolutions we make, like "I'm going to do better," but do we ever do better? Didn't we do the same old things this year?

Giving His Spirit to us is God's way of getting to the root of our sin. First Jesus was identified with us on the cross, putting death itself to death. God dealt with sin itself, and now it has been condemned in our bodies—but it's still there. Now the Holy Spirit delivers and redeems us from these bodies (see 1 Corinthians 15:44). Today, He enables you to live the Christian life right where you live in this sinful world. He gives you the strength to win the victory. The Holy Spirit produces a life of joyful obedience, which the Law commanded but could never produce in you. The Holy Spirit furnishes the power, but the decision to let Him rule is still yours.

We are never told to fight against the flesh—did you know that? The Holy Spirit is the one who fights for you. He fights against your old nature for the mastery of sin over the body. You must let the Holy Spirit deal with the flesh; you can't overcome it. You have to turn it over to somebody who can. He wants to do that for you, and He can!

It's humiliating but true that even as a child of God, we retain our old nature. It means defeat and death to live by the flesh. No child of God can be happy in living for the things of the flesh. If you find yourself living habitually in the flesh and constantly let it run you, and you don't sense your new nature rebuking you, you might not have a new nature. If you are a child of God, then His Spirit lives in you. As an act of the will, you can yield yourself to His control and your new nature.

When the Spirit is in control, we love the things of Christ; the fruit of His Spirit become obvious in us (see Colossians 3:1-2, 12 and Galatians 5). We can't do these things just by trying harder. These godly attributes show up in us only as we let the Spirit of God work in us. The Spirit who indwells us brings life and peace. He convicts us when we sin, and we go to God, confess our sin, and let Him wash us clean (see 1 John 1:9). He brings us peace, the experience of tranquility and well-being about the present and future. This ongoing relationship with God is because His Spirit lives in us.

Jesus offers us this life full of satisfaction and the exercising of our total abilities—that's life at its fullest and best! Many people think they are really living today, but it is a cheap substitute for the life God wants to provide.

One thing is for sure: If a child of God is living in the flesh, they are *not* having fellowship with God. God won't feel close to us if we are committing sin and continuing to live like our old selves. That nature is totally depraved, hopeless. God has no plan to redeem it. He has no program to change the flesh. Rather He brings in something new: "That which is born of the Spirit is spirit" (John 3:6). He gives us a new nature. If someone continues living a sinful lifestyle, they may not be a child of God. We have no standing before God in ourselves.

To just "hope to do better" misses the whole point, too. If you are in Christ, you have God's Spirit, and only when He moves through you can you accomplish that lifestyle you hear about in His Word. Stop believing in yourself, and believe instead that the Spirit of God can enable you through your new nature to live for God—today.

If you're discouraged, that means you don't believe God. He has a purpose, a plan, and blessing for you. Trust Him and lay hold of life His way. By the way, nothing you get from God comes from how devoted you are to Him. You don't need to dedicate yourself to Him—you need to *believe* Him. You can't do anything, but God can do it all.

In our own strength, we don't have some secret bent toward God. Our flesh is at war with Him. We're not only dead in trespasses and sins but actively in rebellion against God. Often we'll even become religious in order to stay away from the living and true God and the person of Jesus Christ. Anything the flesh produces is worthless to God. The religious works of church people done in the lukewarmness of the flesh make Christ sick to His stomach (see Revelation 3:15-16).

Yet there is deliverance in the Spirit of God. Are you willing to turn it over to the Holy Spirit and quit trusting your weak, sinful nature? You aren't in the flesh anymore, but God's Spirit really does live in you. The true mark of a genuine Christian is that the Spirit of God is alive in them *and it shows*. We yield ourselves to His Spirit with confidence and tell Him, "I can't do it, Lord, but You can do it through me."

God created us with a body, mind, and spirit. When Adam sinned, his spirit died to God (Genesis 2:17). After Adam ate that fruit, he physically lived on, but spiritually he died immediately. Our whole life was turned upside down. The body—the old nature, the flesh—became dominant, and spiritually we died. Regeneration means we are turned right side up again; it means you are born again spiritually, and you have a nature that wants to serve God.

Someday our bodies will be put in a grave, but the Spirit of God guarantees we will be raised from the dead, because Jesus was raised from the dead (2 Corinthians 5:1-4). At last, the Holy Spirit will deliver us from the "body of death"—this old nature.

If you are a child of God and you have unconfessed sin in your life, do you *want* to go to church? Do you *want* to read your Bible? Do you *want* to pray? Of course you don't. You are separated from God. Whatever your struggle is with sin, confess it to Him today, then turn it over to the Holy Spirit. Deal with it in reality. Only Christ can remove it—that is His business. "*Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden,*" Jesus said, "*and I will rest you*" (see Matthew 11:28). You will know what it feels like to have sins forgiven.

NEW RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD

When you are enjoying your relationship with God as He intended, you relate with Him differently. First, you sense Him lead you. The Lord is our shepherd, but He doesn't drive His sheep; He leads them. Jesus describes how safe the sheep feel when they follow Him. Because they have a new nature, they hear His voice. *And they love the sound of it*, He said (John 10:27).

When you have a new relationship with God, you can also leave your insecurity behind. You don't wonder about your spiritual condition anymore. You don't doubt whether you are really saved. Instead, you've got joy, joy, joy down in your heart because you know He's your heavenly Father. The Spirit of God wells up within you, saying, "*Abba, Father.*"

Abba is an untranslated Aramaic word; its closest meaning is "My Daddy"—a heart cry when you're in trouble. Picture a young child with arms wide, begging for comfort. The Spirit confirms in your spirit that you have that kind of access to God; He makes it real. How sweet it is to trust Him, to turn yourself over to Him.

This sweet Father relationship continues from child, to heir, to joint-heirs with Christ. We're in the family. Whatever it is that's hard for you today, you can be sure that as a joint-heir with Christ He will redeem it someday. When we look at this trial in eternity, it will seem like a light thing compared to the "eternal weight of glory" (2 Corinthians 4:17) we will be enjoying with Him.

All this is ours in Christ when the Spirit of God is in control. And there's even more to come.

**NEXT: We're going to the mountain peak
next time: Romans 8:28.**

LESSON 9

ALL THINGS WORK TOGETHER FOR GOOD



Begin with prayer



Read **Romans 8:18-39**



Listen at TTB.org/Romans to ***Romans 8:18-28*** and ***Romans 8:28-39***

Do you see it yet? Like children waiting on tiptoes for the first glimpse of a parade coming around the corner, we wait eagerly for what God has planned for the future. There will be a great day when God will fully redeem His plan for creation and for us. Nothing will compare to the glory. What's coming will outshine everything.

Because of the Fall, our whole creation is frustration. It never reached the perfection God originally intended for it. Our entire physical universe will be redeemed, from our earth to the furthest star a billion miles beyond Pluto. That is God's purpose and plan. We're trading this old earth for a new one, a new universe, a new solar system where there's no sin. No curse of sin will ever come upon it again. Can you imagine how wonderful that will be?

Creation is like a veiled statue today. But someday we'll have an unveiling party when we'll gather round a work of art like at a museum and all "ooh" and "ahh" when the covering is lifted ... an *apokalupsis* (a revealing).

We all see it today—creation is winding down. It's in a state of decay. King Solomon wrote: *All the rivers flow into the sea, but the sea never fills up. The rivers keep flowing to the same old place, and then start all over and do*

it again (Ecclesiastes 1:7-11). There is a weary round of repetition. Nature waits for the promised unveiling, too.

When Adam disobeyed God, the physical world also came under the curse (see Genesis 3:18-19). Go out in the beautiful forest and you'll stumble on a tree lying dead, corrupt, rotting. That's nature. Even our bodies carry its curse. God is in His heaven, but all is not right with the world. The wind blowing through the pine trees on a mountainside and the breaking of the surf on some lonely shore—all nature sings in a minor key, an audible testimony to what the Bible says.

As God's children, we share in this groaning in sympathy for how the whole creation is feeling. But someday, God will fully redeem both creation and us. And like the first fruits offering, God's gift of the Spirit to us when we are saved is His pledge that He will complete the process of salvation in the future (Ephesians 1:13-14; 4:30; 1 John 3:2).

All of that is ahead, but today we groan in our bodies. We hurt and we moan a little. We even cry. God calls our bodies collapsing tents (2 Corinthians 5:1-5), and we long for the day when we trade it in for the real thing, our true home, our resurrection bodies.

When will that happen? We will receive our eternal bodies at the Rapture (Philippians 3:20-21; 1 Corinthians 15:44). The judgment seat of Christ will follow, when we will receive more of our glorious inheritance (1 Peter 1:3-4). We can believe God for this and hope for the day when we experience what He has promised. Until then, we patiently endure and persevere through our present sufferings that in the end, won't even compare to the glory that lies ahead for us. This redemption will put everything—even the suffering—in perspective.

We live by faith, in hope, and in love. Someday hope will pass away, when God's promises become a reality. In fact, both faith and hope will pass away in the glory which shall be revealed in us. Only love abides.

In these days on earth as creation winds down, we don't know how we ought to pray for God's will. The Spirit of God intercedes for us before the Father with groanings that express deep compassion for us. He groans, too.

Have you gone to God sometimes in prayer when you actually did not know what to pray? All you could do was just go to Him and say, *Father*. You could not ask anything because you didn't know what to ask for. At times like this,

the Spirit helps our weakness. Sometimes we go to the Lord and say, “I don’t know what to ask for. I don’t know what to say. But I’m coming to You as Your child. And I want Your *will* done.” And the Spirit of God then will pray for us according to God’s will. Isn’t that wonderful!?

OUR NEW PURPOSE

If Romans is the greatest book of the Bible, and chapter 8 is the high-water mark, then Romans 8:28 is the mountain’s peak.

With great confidence, we can be sure God orders all of life’s events so they result in blessing for His children, the called-ones. God sovereignly directs the plan and it works for good, according to His perspective and for His purposes.

Many of us have pillowed our heads on Romans 8:28. We rest in our confidence He is in control and works all things together for our eventual good—even the groanings. “We know” this—the Spirit makes it real to our hearts.

“For ... those who love God” is the fraternity pin of the believer. Love is the mark (Galatians 5:6; 1 John 4:10-16). This is the only place in Romans where Paul tells us of the believer’s love for God—other times we read only of God’s love for us.

If you have trouble believing God loves you, then you will have difficulty loving God (1 John 4:19; 1 Peter 1:8). Believe God, and your sincere love for Him will bring joy and brightness into your life.

Romans 8:28 also assures us that it doesn’t make any difference what comes to you—good things, bad things, dark things, bright things, lovely things, mean things, easy or hard, happy or sad, prosperity or poverty, health or sickness, calm or storm, comfort or suffering, life or death—because whatever comes, God will see to it that it works for good in your life. You can be sure of that. Hold on to that truth.

God works all things together *for good*. There are no accidents. As God’s called-ones, we will look back over our lives someday and say, “All of this worked out for good.” (Like Job 13:15 and Genesis 50:20.) This kind of faith in God is confidence He’ll put the pieces together like a puzzle and create a beautiful picture. Every piece has a place.

Not only that, but God says that during all of this, *“I can hold onto you, because when I started out with you, I not only foreknew you, but I*

predestined you; and when I predestined you, I called you; and when I called you, I justified you; and when I justified you, I glorified you" (see Romans 8:29, 30). In other words, God says, "*When I called you, I knew I could carry you through to the end. It won't depend on your performance. It will depend on Me.*" Paul says in Philippians 1:6, "Being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ."

This promise that God makes to work everything together is specific to those "who are the called" ones, and it is "according to God's purpose." The called are those who received God's invitation and *accepted it*. God invited Jews and Gentiles, not because of their religion (Jews) or wisdom (Greeks), but because of His purpose. To these called, the Cross is God's *dynamite* to salvation. "The called" heard God's call, and they answered.

There is no place for human pride in this process. It is God's work, His wisdom, and His purpose being carried out. Some like to talk about predestination like their opinion changes anything. But the will of God comes down out of eternity past like a great steamroller. Don't think you can stop it. In fact, you had better get on and ride.

God doesn't elect anyone to be lost, but He speaks of "the called ones" as predestined. Predestination means that when God saves you, He's going to see you through. Follow this chain of thought: Whom God foreknew, He predestinated, and whom He predestinated, He called, and whom He called, He justified, and whom He justified, He glorified (vv. 29-30). In other words, this amazing section is on the *sanctification process we go through as believers*, yet Paul doesn't even mention being sanctified. Instead, He concludes: "If God is for us, who can be against us?" (v. 31).

How glorious, how wonderful! Why is it true? Well, who can condemn a child of God? Christ died for us, He is risen again, He is even at the right hand of God, and He makes intercession for us. Nothing in life is better than that in this life or in the life to come. He is on your side today. He's given you Jesus and, with Him, He is freely giving you all things—everything necessary for this life and in the life to come.

You can't lose—because of Him, not because of you. He has already declared you bankrupt and a failure and a sinner. But He says, "I will see you through all the way." God's elect are justified sinners. God has placed His throne behind them, so who could ever condemn them? No one. Why? Because Jesus rose from the dead. (See how it always comes back to the Resurrection?)

We stand in security and confidence because Jesus Christ did four things:

1. He died for us—He paid for our offenses.
2. He was raised from the dead for our justification.
3. He sits on the right hand of God—the living Christ.
4. And He prays for us. Did you pray for yourself this morning?

You should have. But if you missed it, Jesus didn't. He prayed for you.

Jesus' work on our behalf is why nobody can lay any charge against God's elect.

You have to wonder, "*Could anything backfire here?*" No, nothing can separate us from Jesus Christ's love. "*What about trouble—can that put us outside God's reach?*" No, Jesus won't let it. "*Distress or anguish?*" You may think God has let you down, but He hasn't. "*Persecution?*" Will someone's campaign against you separate you from God's love? Never. "*Or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?*" From Paul's own experience, he knows these can't stand in the way of Christ's love.

If you can think of anything he didn't name, include those, too. The conclusion makes it worth it all: "*I am persuaded that none of these things can possibly separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord*" (vv. 38, 39). This is God's glorious salvation. "Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us" (v. 37).

To be more than a conqueror means to have help from someone who wins for us. Our victorious life is not our life. It is His life.

Paul's conclusion, his confidence, now reaches a high crescendo. *Nothing can separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus.*

We can know this for sure. Death can't separate us—in fact, it takes us right into God's presence. When many early Christian martyrs were threatened with death, they said, "Thank you, you will transport me right into the presence of my Savior." You can't hurt people like that.

Life can't separate us from God's love, either. Often it is more difficult to face life than to face death. But life's temptations, failures, disappointments, uncertainties, and sufferings will not separate us from God's love.

Can angels? Do our spiritual enemies, fallen angels, harm us? No. (See Ephesians 6:12).

How about our present circumstances or future struggles—will they separate us?

Or any other created thing (anything else you want to mention)? Absolutely nothing can separate us from the love of God which is centered in Jesus Christ.

At its heart, salvation is a love story. We love Him because He first loved us. Nothing can separate us from that. We entered Romans 8 with “no condemnation;” we end it here with “no separation;” and in between, all things work together for good.

**NEXT: Paul wishes his family knew Jesus ...
What’s God doing with the Jews?**

9. Paul's statement that nothing can separate us from God is bold and life changing. What happens in us when we trust this claim is true?

Life's
TEMPTATIONS,
FAILURES,
DISAPPOINTMENTS,
UNCERTAINTIES,
and
SUFFERINGS
WILL NOT SEPARATE US FROM

God's love.




THRU the BIBLE

LESSON 10

WHAT ABOUT GOD'S PEOPLE, THE JEWS?



Begin with prayer



Read **Romans 9:1-24**



Listen at [TTB.org/Romans](https://www.ttb.org/Romans) to ***Romans 9:1-5*** and ***Romans 9:4-24***

Romans 8 closes on the high plane of triumph and joy: *Nothing will ever separate us from God's love in Jesus Christ our Lord.*

Romans 9 opens on the low plane of despair and sorrow. Obviously, something about this change of subject brought Paul heartbreak. The once hardened rabbi who arrested the “followers of the Way” in Damascus in (Acts 9) now revealed his brokenhearted plea for Israel’s salvation.

In confirming that Israel had rejected the gospel, Paul made it clear that God’s Word had not failed nor had His promises. Some Jews had indeed turned to Jesus Christ just as Paul himself had, and that fact along with God’s promises for Israel in the future comforted him.

Even so, Paul used Old Testament Scripture (and specifically Isaiah) to point out that the gospel message was for both Jews and Gentiles.

His own people, the Jews, accused Paul of being an enemy. They wouldn’t even try to understand what prompted his change of message. Since he had discovered who Jesus really is, his heart had a heaviness and continual sorrow for them. He understood how they felt toward Jesus Christ and

toward Christianity, for he once felt the same way. He had once been a zealous, hardened rabbi intent on arresting rebellious Jews. Now he wants nothing more than their salvation in Jesus Christ.

He said he wished they could be blessed by the Messiah the way he had been. They were family—no wonder he felt this way.

At the time of writing, the people of God faced a unique historical position and problem. Their church was now mostly Gentile, and the Jewish background has been all but forgotten. Their assumption was that God was done with the Old Testament and the church is now heir to all its prophecies. But that's not true.

We learn in this section of Romans dedicated to hope for Israel (Romans 9-11) that God's promises to them will still be fulfilled. Not only that, but God promises the church, an elect people both Jew and Gentile, to form them into a body (see Acts 15:13-18).

God is calling out a people to His name. When God's purposes are complete for the church, He will remove us from the earth and turn again to Israel. But even then, God won't be through with Gentiles. All saved Gentiles at that time will enter the kingdom with Israel, and God's kingdom will be set up on this earth.

God does all these things in His own sovereign will. He is in charge and is moving His kingdom forward through mercy in how He works with Israel and all others—even us. We explore God's *past* dealings with Israel in Romans 9, His *present* dealing with Israel in Romans 10, and His *future* dealings with Israel as a nation in Romans 11.

First, we discover who these people are whom Paul loved. Israel has a long history with God. They are God's people, the Jews, and nothing can disturb or destroy that. If we have been saved, we are chosen in Christ, but not because of some natural heritage we have. Jesus Christ came from Judaism. He was an Israelite. God gave a religion to this people. Paul began this epistle by saying the gospel is "to the Jew first" (1:16), which means that chronologically the Jew got it first.

WHO ARE ISRAELITES?

“Israelites” means the chosen people of God, whereas “Jews” simply distinguishes them from Gentiles. Israel is set apart unto God in these eight ways:

1. *In adoption.* God called the nation Israel His “son” (Exodus 4:22, Deuteronomy 7:6, Hosea 11:1). He speaks of the nation—not just an individual—as His own. He never said that of any other people.
2. *In glory.* The children of Israel are the only ones ever to have God’s visible presence with them physically as in the pillar of cloud and fire, in the tabernacle, and later in the temple.
3. *In covenants.* God made covenants with the nation Israel He intends to carry out. He also said He would make them a blessing to all people.
4. *In the Law.* The Mosaic Law was given to the nation Israel—a sign between God and the nation that the Lord sets them apart for Himself. Having this Law from God was a great privilege for Israel and helped them govern their political, social, and religious lives. It guaranteed God’s blessing if they obeyed.
5. *In God’s service.* Israel was a kingdom of priests, a holy nation. In the future millennial kingdom, the nation Israel will once again be God’s priests on the earth. The Jewish sacrificial system allowed Israel to have fellowship with God (now available through Jesus’ indwelling Spirit, our High Priest).
6. *In the promises.* The Old Testament is full of promises made to Israel with a specific one, the land of Israel, given strictly to the Jews. The promises revealed to the patriarchs God’s guaranteed work for them (8:31).
7. *In the fathers.* The patriarchs were “the fathers” to whom God gave the promises before Israel was a nation, specifically Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. In this respect, they correspond to the apostles in the church.
8. Finally, and most important, *in Christ the Messiah.* Jesus came as a Jewish baby to the nation Israel as a seed of Abraham (Hebrews 2:16). Though He was not exclusively theirs (He belonged to the world), He came first to Israel.

In spite of these unique blessings for Israel, the nation rejected Jesus as Messiah and failed to carry out God’s purpose—they “failed” (*ekpeptoken*) means they “went off course,” like a ship. But regardless of their response, God will accomplish His purpose. His promises were unconditional.

Israel saw it differently. Many Jews believed they were God's chosen, the elect, and that salvation was simply a matter of birthright. They thought being a Jew was enough to receive God's kingdom. They didn't understand God's message through His prophets that He wants a contrite heart, not entitlement or performance.

They also didn't understand, even when Paul used Old Testament scripture, that the gospel was for both Jews and Gentiles. They misunderstood the Torah and worked very hard to keep a set of rules. Gentiles would never make it (v. 30). They thought they were right with God and were confused by Paul's message of grace through faith and not by works. God chose a nation as His own, but He only saves individuals who turn to Him (always a remnant; see 1 Peter 2:9-10).

WHAT IS GOD DOING WITH ISRAEL?

We can't begin to understand God's mysterious dealings, but we can trust Him to act in justice. This is His universe. He is in charge and in control. We are but little creatures on earth; He could take away our breath in the next moment. Who has the audacity to question what He does? That would be rebellion of the worst kind.

God told Moses, "*I'm in charge of mercy. I'm in charge of compassion*" (see Romans 9:15). Whatever choice He makes is right.

Moses wanted to see God's glory. But God said in effect, "*I'll show it to you, Moses, but not because you are Moses, but because I am God!*" Do you know why God saved you? Because He is God. Is it because we work hard or want it badly? No. He makes the choice to extend mercy to us. Who are we to question Him?

Even the great Pharaoh of Egypt was used for God's purposes. God gave him multiple opportunities to turn to Him. He could have said, "I won't let Israel go." But God says, "*You may think you won't, but you will because I will it.*" When Exodus 9:12 says God hardened Pharaoh's heart, it means God forced him to do the thing he wanted to do all along. (By the way, there never will be a person in hell who did not choose to be there. We make our own decision.)

We want to reason out God's actions. We try to discern the mystery and majesty of God's sovereignty. But faith leaves it there and accepts it in humble obedience. Unbelief rebels against it and continues under the same wrath and judgment that it questions.

Yield to the fact that God is God, and we are not.

God deals with us in patience and mercy, treating us like little clay pots He made. He deals with us, not as lifeless clay, but as creatures with a free will. He gives us ample opportunity to reveal any desire to obey Him. Although God hates sin, "vessels of wrath" (v. 22) and must judge it in a most final manner, His mercy is constantly going out to the creatures He made.

When Jesus announced the Jewish nation was going to be destroyed, He wept over Jerusalem (Luke 23:34). When the final judgment came in A.D. 70, God saved a remnant. These were "vessels of mercy."

In the future, a remnant of Israel will also be saved in the Great Tribulation Period (only 144,000 Jews will be sealed—a small ratio). Don't ask why—it is God who shows mercy. If He saved only *one*, it would reveal His mercy, because none of us deserve it. Only God's *mercy* keeps any of us from hell.

Gentiles, without willing or working, found righteousness in Christ because *God* worked and *God* willed it. The Old Testament Scriptures had prophesied it. But Israel, pursuing a system that was supposed to deliver righteousness, didn't get there; the Law couldn't produce it. Religious people are the most difficult people to reach with the gospel—because they think they can achieve it on their own.

You will never be able to reconcile the sovereignty of God and the responsibility of man. God invites "*whoever wants to come to Me*" (see Mark 8:34) and "*whoever comes to me I will hang on to them*" (see John 6:37). "*You are welcome; please come,*" He says. Don't stand on the sidelines and say, "I'm not elected." If you *want* to be saved, you are the elect. If you don't, you're not. God is sovereign, and He is going to do this according to His will. And His will is right—there is no unrighteousness in Him. He won't make a mistake.

The Jews stumbled (Isaiah 8:14; 28:16) and the Cross, to the Gentiles, is foolishness. Only the one who believes, either Jew or Gentile, will be saved. The natural man will still try to produce salvation by some natural process.

He will try to reconcile the sovereignty of God and the responsibility of man as if our tiny minds are capable and infallible. The humble mind will come in simple faith.

Believe in God. He is righteous and good, and He does whatever is right.

**NEXT: What's going to happen to Israel?
Is God done with them?**

LESSON 11

WHAT'S GOING TO HAPPEN TO ISRAEL?



Begin with prayer



Read **Romans 9:25–11:36**



Listen at TTB.org/Romans to *Romans 9:25–10:6*, *Romans 10:7–11:10*, *Romans 11:11-25*, and *Romans 11:26–12:1*

We are incredibly, incurably addicted to working for our own salvation. Whatever the reason, we struggle to say to God, “I am not good enough, but I accept your gift.” Instead, we want to be worthy of it. We want to be right with God on our own merit. But that never works.

Paul desperately wanted Israel to be saved. They were his family, his kindred. He wanted them to see they weren’t saved because they were God’s people. Jews are as lost as any Gentile because religion can’t save you. Even with a God-given religion, Jews are as far from God as anyone. Just as Gentiles need to be saved, Jews need to be saved ... and God is saving them today. A small number, perhaps, but more than you think, become convinced of God’s grace towards them. God’s present plan is that they be saved and brought into the body of believers, the church (see Ephesians 2:11-22).

Today, the present state of Israel is unable to have peace because peace comes through Christ who is the end of the law of righteousness.

Now Paul turns from God’s sovereignty to our responsibility.

- **You can be religious and lost.** Israel had religion but not righteousness. They had more from God than any other nation, but they were lost. They *can* be saved, but now they're on the same plane before God today as Gentiles. We should share the gospel with them as much as anyone else without Christ. The ground at the foot of the cross is level. Without Christ, we all are hell-doomed sinners, but God is ready to show mercy today. He doesn't love someone because of who they are, but because of who He is.
- **You might have zeal but not knowledge.** Often our addiction to self-sufficiency and self-righteousness begins with ignorance. Paul said *we have zeal but not knowledge*. We want to do what's right, but we don't understand what God says in His Word. The Jews didn't correctly understand the Torah, God's revealed will in Scripture, and it caused them to reject Jesus as Messiah. Paul repeatedly quoted the Old Testament (and specifically Isaiah) in this letter to the Romans, more often than any other letter. He wanted to paint the bigger picture—for the Jews to see how their own Law and the prophets pointed to a Messiah who would save anyone in the world. He also wanted the Gentile to see that God's plan still included Israel. A promise is a promise.

The Jews believed the Law God gave to Moses. But that Law was meant to *lead us* to Christ, not *save us* (see Galatians 3:24). It shows us we need to be saved. It takes us by the hand and brings us to the cross of Christ. The Law came to an end in Christ. If you could live an excellent life under the Law, it would be by your *own* righteousness, not God's righteousness. Your very best could never measure up to His.

- **Our mouths and our hearts must agree.** What we say and what we believe should be the same. You believe with your heart (your total personality, your entire being). Some just give lip service to God—but their hearts are far from Him. If you confess Jesus Christ without faith, you are either deceiving yourself or you're a hypocrite. If you have faith but don't confess it, you may be a coward. If you are going to work your mouth, be sure you have faith in your heart.

Both Jews and Gentiles have all sinned and come short of the glory of God. If anyone wants to be saved, they must come the same way to Christ. The Lord Jesus said, "No one comes to the Father except through Me" (John 14:6). Not by Old Testament ritual or by the Mosaic Law. Salvation is offered to all people on the same basis of mercy—by faith. Hear and believe the

gospel. “For whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved” (10:13). Jews and Gentiles are to “call on the name of the Lord,” meaning to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. Salvation is always and only by faith.

Tucked away in the Old Testament prophets is this from Joel 2:32, “Whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved. For in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there shall be deliverance, as the LORD has said, among the remnant whom the LORD calls.”

Paul began this letter saying he was a called apostle of Jesus Christ (1:1). There follows a logical sequence. Preachers must be sent in order for people to hear, so that they might believe—or else they wouldn’t know how to call upon God. Paul pinpoints all on *believing*. “So then faith [believing] comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God (10:17).

Faith doesn’t come by preaching philosophy or psychology or some political plan; it comes by preaching the *Word of God*. Until you hear the Word of God, you cannot be saved.

WHAT ABOUT ISRAEL’S FUTURE? WHAT ABOUT GOD’S PROMISES?

Does this mean, then, that God is so fed up with Israel that He’ll have nothing more to do with them? Hardly. Paul reminds them he is an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, out of the tribe of Benjamin. He presents himself as proof that God will save.

God has not cast away Israel as a nation. God always has a remnant in Israel. That remnant today is made up of those Jews who believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. This is why Paul says later that “all Israel is not Israel” (9:6-7).

Grace and works are two opposite systems. Those Jews who come to Jesus believe He is their Messiah and are not saved because of their works. They are saved by grace through faith.

What will happen to those who do not believe Jesus is their Messiah? The remainder of Israel is hardened. They are hardened because they fail; they do not fail because they are hardened. They weren’t blinded. They have been exposed to the gospel as no other people have been exposed to it. Israel has had plenty of opportunities to listen and respond to God. He has

been patient with them. Now they are blinded because they would not accept the light He gave them. They rejected God's offer and became the most difficult to reach with the grace of God.

God gives light in order that people might see, but if they are blind, they will not see. Today, the light reveals the blindness of millions. Many intelligent people can't seem to understand what the Bible is all about. They are blind.

GOD'S FUTURE PURPOSE WITH ISRAEL

But wait a minute. Does Israel's rejection destroy God's plan for the future? No. As soon as God completes His plan for the church—of calling out both Jews and Gentiles to be a people to His name and taking the church out of the earth—He will return again to the nation Israel and begin to deal with them.

Their rejection now has prompted God to open the gates of salvation *wide* to the Gentiles. The Jews are watching the reality of their salvation now given to the Gentiles. What they thought only could come to the Jews, God is now blessing the Gentiles.

God has set the Jews aside. He's not dealing with them as a nation right now. When God does deal with them, the Arab-Israeli conflict will be a thing of the past. Never again will Israel live in fear, because God will make sure they live in peace and tranquility (Micah 4:4). God keeps all His promises. He will resume His relationship with Jews and will bless them. They will be His people and He will be their God. God's gifts and God's call are guaranteed—never canceled, never taken back.

But what will happen now to the Gentiles? Will God forget us when the Jews come back in the picture? Never. God's grace toward the Gentiles will be multiplied (Acts 15:16-17).

What does Paul think about all this? God called him to be an apostle to the Gentiles, and he accepted that. But as he preached to the Gentiles, he hoped it would move his own people to turn to Christ too. Some did turn to Jesus as their Messiah, Savior. Only a few—but some. In all of this Paul fulfilled his ministry, and God was accomplishing His purpose in this age with both Jew and Gentile.

As hard as it was to focus on Gentiles instead of his own people, Paul understood the satisfaction of doing what God called him to do. God has a place for all of His children to serve. He might want you on the front lines or

He may want you to support another who is getting out the Word of God. Whatever it is, you will experience great satisfaction in doing what you are confident God has called you to do.

Today, the church benefits because of the nation Israel. We owe them so much. They were set aside because of their unbelief. We now stand on faith in Jesus Christ alone. This grace brought us into the family of God and has given us privileges and blessing. Let's not trifle with the grace of God.

Since God accepts Gentiles who have no merit on which to be saved, surely God can restore Israel who likewise has no merit. (None of us deserve God's grace.) Israel will turn to God again (see Jeremiah 23:3-8; Zechariah 12:10).

Paul is writing this letter to Gentile believers who mostly made up the church in Rome. By this time, many Gentiles have come to faith in Jesus Christ. Paul says there was a day when Gentiles didn't believe, but now a remnant of Gentiles have obtained mercy (11:31). As a nation, Israel formerly believed, but now doesn't believe. God saves both Jew and Gentile by *mercy*. Just as God showed mercy to the Gentiles, He will show mercy to the nation Israel. Because of this, remember by *grace* we are saved, through faith, and that not of ourselves. It is the gift of God; not of works, lest any of us should boast (see Ephesians 2:8-9).

The child of God has a glorious future ahead. From man's point of view today, the future has gotten dark. The world is in quite a mess. But God is on the throne, and He is going to straighten it out. Our greatest days are ahead.

**NEXT: Present your whole self to God.
Explore God at the center of your relationships.**

LESSON 12

HOW SHOULD I THEN LIVE?



Begin with prayer



Read **Romans 12–13**



Listen at [TTB.org/Romans](https://www.TTB.org/Romans) to ***Romans 12:1-11***, ***Romans 12:12–13:1***,
and ***Romans 13***

If Romans 1-8 describes the faith in which we now stand and Romans 9-11 gives Israel hope for the future, then Romans 12-16 pictures what love looks like in a Christian's life. We study now what a Christian does with the salvation God has given to us.

Romans 12-16 guides us through our practical responsibility. Considering all God has done for us, this is our “reasonable service” (12:1).

A Christian's spiritual responsibility is to present himself to God as a living sacrifice. A child of God can't live to himself. If you have been redeemed by the blood of Christ, God has a claim on your life. If you live selfishly, you'll just be miserable. You can't live the Christian life until you present your total personality to God.

We learned earlier in our study about sanctification (Romans 5-8) related to our Christian *character*—what was going on in the inner man. Now we see that applied to our Christian *conduct*, our outer man. Who we *are* vs. what we *do*. What happened in us and how it gets into our daily activity. God created us to be relational beings, and so we'll explore our connection to God Himself, His Spirit, other Christians, people who don't yet know Him, our neighbors, and government.

YOUR RELATIONSHIP TO GOD

Because you are now rich in God's tender compassion, yield your whole person as a living sacrifice to Him. Your mind, your affections, your will—His Spirit can use your whole self. This isn't asking too much but is your rational, spiritual service and one way God said He would be pleased. (See also 1 Corinthians 6:20; 2 Corinthians 4:10.) When you yield to God, you choose to put yourself at His service.

You can put your service to the test by changing your outward expression to reflect your true heart. Live what you believe. Don't frame your life by those around you, not even by the church, but instead live out God's good and acceptable will for your life.

When God's Spirit is working from within, your life is genuine and true (see 2 Corinthians 3:18; Titus 3:5). The minute you pretend to be something you're not, you give up your discernment of God's will in your life. But when you yield to His Spirit, God's will shapes your life perfectly. You won't have to act like a Christian, but just naturally let God's Spirit move and work through you. Paul begs us to do this. It's the only way to a life of joy and fullness. Oh, to be a normal Christian and enjoy God's blessing!

YOUR RELATIONSHIP TO GOD'S SPIRIT

Be on your guard. Considering the grace God gives you, it's easy to start thinking too much of yourself and overestimate your ability, character, and gifts. Instead, be humble. Think wisely of yourself, even as God has divided a measure of faith to each of us.

The only accurate way to understand yourself is by remembering who God is and what He does for us, not by who we are and what we do for Him. Just do what He wants you to do.

The church is like a body—with many members doing different things well. The Spirit gives you "free gift" giftedness. When He saves us, God gives us the ability to serve His body in a unique way; it's a living organization. When you contribute your gift, you confirm His Spirit is alive in you.

There's a wonderful variety of gifts with which the Spirit equips His body—hospitality to prophecy, generosity to speaking, giving to teaching, administration to showing kindness. All are unique and needed within the body. How do you best serve?

YOUR RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER CHRISTIANS

As a family, we experience all kinds of connections with our brothers and sisters in Christ. Through the Spirit's power, we're able to live distinctly godly lives yet interact and relate with each other. Paul starts us thinking with his list of ways to relate:

- *Love each other the best you know how.* Don't say you love someone but then talk behind their back. Be sincere and be bold in expressing your care.
- *Hate what is evil.* Run away from it or look the other way. Don't put up with something that's against God.
- *Hold on to what is good.* Be known by how you focus on godly things.
- *Be kind and affectionate to each other.* Love each other like you're blood-family. Give each other the seat of honor.
- *Don't be lazy or burn out.* Be eager and enthusiastic to join with each other in doing good and serving the Lord.
- *Rejoice in hope . . .* even when the situation doesn't look hopeful. Don't quit, even on a hard day. Look ahead to a new day.
- *Be a person who prays.*
- *Share the necessities of life with others who need it.*
- *Pursue hospitality*—seek out other believers to whom you can be gracious. Extend fellowship to them.
- *Bless those who persecute you.*
- *Enter into the joys and sorrows of other believers.* Go through life with your Christian brothers and sisters. Be right there with them in the good times and in hard.
- *Together, follow Jesus' model.*
- *Make everyone your friend, no matter their status.*
- *Be humble* about who you are, how close you are to God, and what you contribute to the body.

Through the Spirit's power, we can do all this in our relationships with others in God's family. Next, we learn how to relate to those outside of Christ.

YOUR RELATIONSHIP TO PEOPLE WHO DON'T YET KNOW JESUS CHRIST

We live in a world of unbelievers. How can we related to those who don't yet know Jesus?

- *First, we should never try to retaliate for any harm they cause us.* Don't you know that God saw what happened? He won't permit any injustice to come to you that He will not straighten out someday. Don't get off track in your faith—don't hit back. When we hit back, we are saying to God, "I can't trust You in this particular case. I'm going to have to take it into my own hands."
- *Turn your problem people over to God.* Let Him take over. He does a much better job than any of us in dealing with evil and injustice. We should expect evil at the hands of the world. Don't insist on getting even.
- *Don't be wise in your own opinions.* Don't love the sound of your own voice.
- *Pay your debts.* Be truthful and the person upon whom others can depend.
- When it's possible, *live peaceably with everyone.* Sometimes it's not possible, but when it is, be the center of the storm.
- *Don't let evil get the best of you.* Keep doing good. If you try to fight the satanic system that rules the world, it might whip you. Hate and revenge will eat you up, and you'll lose for sure. Instead, overcome evil with good. Walk in the power of His Spirit.

YOUR RELATIONSHIP TO GOVERNMENT

As a believer, your citizenship is in heaven, but you're also a citizen in this world. God appointed government as our authority. We might be inclined to say, "You wouldn't say that if you lived in our day with this crowd of crooked politicians in office." Oh no? Remember that in Paul's day bloody Nero was on the throne in Rome. Paul even appealed his case before him. Despite these conditions, Paul could say, "Be obedient to government authority, for they are ordained of God"—whether it's bloody Nero or whoever is in office in your town. We're even supposed to pray for those in authority.

The duty of every believer as a citizen of heaven is spiritual. The duty of a believer as a citizen under a government is secular—two separate functions.

Although the kingdoms of this world belong to Satan and injustice and corruption flourish in all governments, God still has control. He raises up kings and presidents, and He puts them down. He has not abdicated His throne; neither is He disturbed about what is happening in politics.

Christianity is not a movement to improve government or to help society clean up the town. We are to preach a gospel that is the power of God to bring salvation to anyone who will believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.

The government is to maintain law and order. When it doesn't do that, it fails. As Christians, we should respect our rulers who enforce the law. We're also to obey the law, not only to avoid judgment, but also to obey our conscience. For example, we should pay our taxes, although we may not agree how it's spent.

A Christian should be the best citizen, although our true citizenship is in heaven.

YOUR RELATIONSHIP TO YOUR NEIGHBORS

Our love for our neighbor is best seen in what we do rather than in what we say.

Did you borrow your neighbor's lawnmower? Take it back. Owe no one anything, except a debt of love. We show them we love them by fulfilling God's law—by not committing adultery, not killing, not stealing, not coveting. Talk about love all you want, but if you commit these acts against your neighbor, you don't love him.

Loving your neighbor is the best way to follow God's Law. You only have a capacity to love like this when the Spirit is in control. Love is the fruit of His Spirit (Galatians 5).

Time is short. You have a small window to share the Lord with your neighbor. Live as children of light, Paul said. This challenge is like an alarm clock to waken us up to why we should yield our whole lives to God. Yield all you are and all you have to Him. This is rational. This is reasonable. This is what we are supposed to be doing—living like God's representatives in a lost generation.

Look for Jesus Christ's return, too. It could be any day. This alone will help you to live a pure life (1 John 3:3). Let's live for God in our generation! Leave not a space for worldly living, but make room for God's presence in your life every day.

**NEXT: What should I do about the grey areas?
Can I? Should I?**

LESSON 13

SHOULD I OR SHOULDN'T I?



Begin with prayer



Read **Romans 14:1–15:3**



Listen at TTB.org/Romans to ***Romans 14:1-5***, ***Romans 14:5-17***,
and ***Romans 14:17–15:3***

Do I belong to Jesus Christ? As a Christian, that question determines everything. “You were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God’s,” 1 Corinthians 6:20 tells us.

Glorifying God takes on new meaning in the details of life. How should I live? How should I live *differently* because Jesus has saved me? Paul said he was “separated to the gospel of God” (1:1).

Earlier in our study we learned that God only sees two classes in the world: The saints, who have trusted Christ as Savior, and the ain’t who haven’t. Saints are set apart for Him. So what does it mean to be “separated”?

Some have made a list of personal commandments to follow—a *Christian doesn’t do this, or that, or the other thing*—and think this is how to be separate from the world. But genuine Christian conduct involves a way of thinking, with the motivation to please the Lord.

As we saw in Romans 13, the Bible is clear about a Christian’s behavior—to God, to others, to the government, etc. But what should be our behavior in questionable matters? How should a Christian live in the grey areas? Paul

gives us three principles—conviction, conscience, and consideration—to guide our conduct.

- Conviction about what we do. Conviction means “that which anticipates.” We really look forward to what we’re going to do. We’re raising our flag in support.
- Our conscience in the present moment evaluates if something is right or wrong to do.
- Lastly, we need to consider others. Others are influenced by what we do.

As we explore these guidelines, we should note two extreme viewpoints about Christian conduct in the grey areas. One extreme position puts up no wall of separation from the world. They indulge in all kinds of worldly amusement, go everywhere the world goes, and they spend their time and energy in activities that have no spiritual profit. They live like they’re not saved (and maybe they’re not yet).

The second group goes to the extreme in the opposite direction. They reduce the Christian life to a series of negatives (see Colossians 2:21). They make their own set of ten commandments—only they double it. They easily become self-centered, critical, and proud.

Receive this group, Paul says. They’re clueless to know what to do about questionable matters, too, and over-compensated as a result. Don’t argue with them, just love them. Believers shouldn’t sit in judgment on each other about questionable matters of Christian conduct. In things not expressly forbidden in Scripture, we can’t decide each other’s personal liberty.

Even Paul and Peter wrestled with their own spiritual liberty in the issue of eating meat. Peter was proud of his commitment to keep a strict Kosher diet that separated him from the world. But then God turned the tables on him and said everything was clean to eat (Acts 10:9-16). The apostle Paul, on the other hand, sat down and ate meat with his new Gentile friends without his conscience bothering him at all.

We must show each other mercy in these issues. We are not accountable to each other in these decisions; our judge is the Lord. Maybe you disapprove of a brother’s conduct in one of these grey areas. Well, he’s not accountable to you; you are not his master. He is responsible to Jesus Christ, his Master, for the decisions he makes.

Now let’s explore these three guiding principles for living a separated, joyful life unto God.

PRINCIPLE #1: CONVICTION

Let each be fully convinced in his own mind. –Romans 14:5

Conviction means you are “fully persuaded in your own mind.” You only do the things which you can give yourself to fully and without reserve. Whatever you do for God, do with enthusiasm!

Questionable amusements are wrong for the believer if they are questionable to you. If you can participate in them and maintain a close relationship to Christ, they’re not wrong for you. Our hearts determine our conduct.

As Christians, we can’t live our lives apart from Christ. Whether you live, you will have to live to Him; whether you die, you will have to die to Him. Our Christian conduct is not gauged by the foods spread out on the table, but by our lives spread out before Him. One day we’ll give an account of our lives—every word, every choice (see 2 Corinthians 5:10).

One reason Christians sometimes struggle with our behavior is because we haven’t anything in our hearts to take the place of these things we are told to give up. Often people go from one type of questionable activity to another. They straddle the fence, trying to go with the world and trying to go with God. When you live with conviction, be convinced this is what God is pleased you do.

This is not just negative. We should also be enthusiastic in our conviction on what is good. If the body of Christ today had *real* conviction about going to church, the place would be packed. Conviction motivates our Christian conduct.

The walk and talk of the believer should please God and meet the approval of our personal conscience. We should also invest our energy and thinking in a way that will help us get along with each other. God is at work in each of our lives, though on His own timetable. Respect what God is doing in other’s lives. Don’t just think about your freedoms in Christ, think about how your choices affect others.

“Pursue the things which make for peace ...” (14:19). The Christian is to make a definite effort to avoid doing anything that offends another Christian. Instead, we are to press toward the mark of spiritual values: Righteousness,

peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit. These things build up fellow believers. You don't know how God is working in another's heart. Don't get in the way just to exercise your freedom.

Anything that is questionable and is a matter of conscience for a weak brother becomes wrong for the strong one.

As we look toward doing something for God, having conviction means we ask ourselves: Will it be right for me to do this? Can I do it with excitement, anticipation, and joy?

PRINCIPLE #2: CONSCIENCE

Again, in the grey areas where God's Word has not spoken, your conscience evaluates if something is right or wrong to do. This guideline looks back at what you've done.

Happy is the Christian who reviews his life without any qualms of conscience. (*"Maybe I shouldn't have done that..."*) Your conscience helps you act in a way that is consistent with what you believe. It influences how you live forward. If the way you live isn't consistent with what you believe, then it's wrong.

If you look back and hate what you've done, then that's your conscience convicting you. It might have been OK for someone else to have done the same thing, but for you, it was wrong. Even if the offense was simply not living by faith—that's sin for the believer. As our conscience listens to the Holy Spirit teach us about the grey areas, we learn what it means to be saved by faith and to walk by faith.

PRINCIPLE #3: CONSIDERATION

Be thoughtful of others—it's that simple. Maybe you have a conviction about this or that and you can do it without losing fellowship with the Lord, and maybe your conscience doesn't condemn you for doing it. But how might it affect someone else?

Take the other person into consideration. We will give account on how we lived in front of those who are spiritually weaker. They watch how we live and sometimes don't understand our conduct. They struggle with the freedoms we have in Christ. They may not know how to put a grey area in the context of the Christian life. Often in their weakness, they over-

compensate and demand black and white, right and wrong categories for Christian conduct. In these cases, we need to use our liberty but not abuse it. We don't have to agree with them to honor their choices. Jesus was willing to die for that weak brother, and we certainly ought to be willing to refrain from doing something that would hurt him in his Christian walk.

As a Christian your goal is to please the Lord, not yourself. It is not a question today of whether it's right or wrong—that is not the standard of the Christian anymore. The real issue is, are you walking in the light. “But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses [keeps on cleansing] us from all sin” (1 John 1:7).

It is not *how* you walk, it is *where* you walk that counts. It is not to see how far you can go in doing questionable things and still maintain a Christian testimony. To live like this is only to know a shabby, shoddy Christian life.

But when you walk in the light, you show others the way to Jesus.

**NEXT: So does the gospel work?
Find out how it makes a difference in our lives today.**

When you **walk in the light**,
you show others the way to

Jesus.



THRU the BIBLE

LESSON 14

THE HOPE OF THE GOSPEL



Begin with prayer



Read **Romans 15**



Listen at TTB.org/Romans to ***Romans 15:4-16*** and ***Romans 15:15-26***

So does it work? We've given our full attention to Paul's letter to the Romans and are understanding the beautiful offer of salvation and how to live the Christian life. Every Christian should make an effort to know Romans, for this book will ground you in the faith.

As he nears the end of his letter, Paul now focuses on the two groups reading it: Jews and Gentiles. *Will you come together in one body to glorify God?*

This is a practical side of Christianity and the church in the first century. Paul gave us wonderful doctrine, now he's putting it into practice.

To the Gentiles he says, *The Word of God we're reading* (the Old Testament to them) *is written for you, too* (15:4). The Old Testament has a definite application to believers today. It was written for "our learning." God wants you to *know* His Word. Ignorance of the Bible is the greatest sin of the hour—in and out of the church. Some of the things in God's Word aren't very nice—but God paints mankind exactly as he is for our *learning*.

How does knowledge of the Bible help you? The Word of God brings patience, comfort, and hope. You won't find any hope in the newspaper or online. You won't find hope in modern literature. Look at any media for hope

and you'll be hard-pressed to find it in this dark and dismal world. The only place you can find real hope is in the Word of God.

God's Word also channels blessing to the body of Christ when we are united in it. The Jews and Gentiles aren't going to see eye to eye—but together in God's Word they demonstrate their unity in love and consideration of one another. How? Because we yield ourselves to *“the God of patience and comfort ...”* (v. 5)

And just as God receives us by our simple acceptance of Jesus Christ, now let both the strong and the weak receive each other in fellowship. Giving God His due glory is the ultimate goal for both the Jews and the Gentiles. They were once one voice on their own, and now they are singing God's praise together. This fulfills four unique promises from the Old Testament that tell us someday Gentiles will praise God (Psalm 18:49, Deuteronomy 32:43, Psalm 117:1, and Isaiah 11:10). Obviously God always intended that Gentiles will come to know Jesus Christ as Savior. What a comfort that must have been to the mostly Gentile audience originally reading this letter.

Paul finishes the teaching section of his letter with this beautiful benediction:

Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. –v. 13

For the first time in the Bible we have a new name for God—He is “the God of hope.” The believing heart finds here the Rock of Ages who is the shelter in the time of storm. “The God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing.” This is what a study of Romans can do for you. It can bring you joy and peace. May it also strengthen your faith and bring hope and power into your life.

As he closes his letter, Paul sends some personal notes to the Christians in Rome. *“I hope I can come see you soon,”* he writes. Paul, who spoke so boldly and bluntly about the important issues of sin and salvation, now spoke warmly to his friends.

What Paul wrote in this letter is meant for their good. He describes himself as a minister of the gospel in the language sounding like Levitical temple worship. They are acceptable, Paul writes, apart from the Law or any religion—because of their relationship to Jesus Christ. Beginning with

Cornelius, the first Gentile believer (Acts 10), the life-giving work of the Holy Spirit begins the *moment* of regeneration when the Spirit of God takes up His home within the believer. Paul may have given them the gospel, but God gave them the Holy Spirit when they believed.

Paul knew these saints in Rome probably didn't need his instructions, but he was grateful for the opportunity to write them about our wonderful salvation. He was just God's servant, doing His will, he said. Paul could only speak about the things Jesus asked of him. He didn't take the credit for God's work others were doing among the Gentiles. He wasn't there on that Day of Pentecost in Jerusalem. And Peter was the one who took the gospel to Cornelius.

Paul only preached the gospel where Jesus Christ's name was not yet known so that "those who have not heard shall understand" (v. 21). Quoting Isaiah 52:15, this could be Paul's life verse as a missionary. He was a pioneer, not in competition with anyone else's ministry, but an evangelist—a true missionary to those who hadn't yet heard about Jesus.

Since Paul said he didn't go where the gospel had been preached before, who founded the church in Rome? He makes it clear, both in his introduction and now, that God used him to found the church in Rome. No one else had traveled there with the gospel.

Paul had traveled from one end of the Roman Empire and now wanted to go to new territory. Rome wasn't his final destination. His eyes were on the frontier of the empire—Spain. And though we don't have any details of his travels west of Rome, when he came to the end of his life, Paul said, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith" (2 Timothy 4:7). So maybe he did get there.

Paul wrote this letter from Corinth and was intent on traveling back to Jerusalem before coming to visit them in Rome. He wanted to deliver with his own hands the love offering collected from Asia Minor churches for the Jerusalem church. Why? Because with his own hands he had "wasted" the church at Jerusalem; he had led in the persecution of believers there. With a compassionate heart, Paul wanted to take them this "certain contribution" (v. 26), translated *koinonia*, meaning "a fellowship." Fellowship is anything believers could share: Christ, the Word, prayer, the Lord's Supper, and financial gifts. Christians express their fellowship in Christ with one another when they give.

The offering Paul collected were gifts from churches who were grateful for the Jerusalem church. The gospel began in Jerusalem, and now these saints were suffering financially because of persecution. This is global missions in reverse! The missionary church now helps the home church.

This trip back to Jerusalem put Paul into the hands of his enemies, the Jewish religious rulers who had him arrested years before. By God's will, Paul will face danger and crisis in his ministry. He had good reason to be frightened about going back. But he asks for prayer "through the Lord Jesus Christ" (v. 30). Everything that was to come to him had to come through Jesus Christ. He asked the believers in Rome to intercede for him before the Lord with the love of the Spirit, which joins all believers together. Today, let's pray for each other like that.

Paul's prayer request is twofold: *Please pray my life will be delivered from my enemies. And pray the church in Jerusalem will accept this love gift from Gentiles.*

Both Paul's requests were answered, but perhaps not as we would have designed. Paul was arrested but immediately placed in Roman custody—outside his enemy's grip. During his imprisonment, Paul will preach the gospel to kings, and eventually to Caesar in Rome—all fulfilling God's will for Paul's life. Paul eventually made it to Rome, after two years in a jail at Caesarea. He suffered through a shipwreck on the way, and arrived in Rome in chains. (See Acts 27-28 for the great story.) In spite of prison and chains and storm and shipwreck, Paul experienced "the God of peace" (v. 33).

May you, too, have that same kind of peace in your life as you walk with Jesus Christ in the power of His Spirit and invite Him to strengthen your faith.

NEXT: We'll give Paul and Romans a proper send-off.

LESSON 15

LOVE, PAUL



Begin with prayer



Read **Romans 16**



Listen at [TTB.org/Romans](https://www.ttb.org/Romans) to *Romans 15:25–16:2* and *Romans 16*

In this final chapter of Romans, the gospel walks in shoe leather down the roads of the first century Roman Empire. In that dark and pagan place, witnesses for Jesus Christ traveled the streets of those cities with the joy of the Lord in their hearts.

Paul has left the mountain peaks of doctrine to come down to the pavements of Rome. Here we see Christianity in action in the Roman Empire under the rule of bloody Nero. The great doctrines Paul proclaimed are not missiles from outer space. They are vehicles which actually drove down Roman roads. The gospel was translated into life and reality.

In Romans 16 we meet a group of people in Rome who knew Paul; he likely introduced them to the Lord when they both were in Ephesus or Corinth or Philippi, or somewhere else along Paul's journeys. Now they lived in Rome and met together in the name of the Lord Jesus whom they all loved, thanks to their beloved pastor, Paul. He founded the church, not by going there in person, but by remote control—you might say by spiritual radar.

Paul closes his masterful letter to that Roman church by mentioning 35 people by name. These people, living in a culture far removed from God,

discovered this gospel to be true, and they lifted high the name of Jesus Christ in their generation.

Many jump over this last chapter, thinking it includes only incidentals. But it is by far the most extensive, intimate, and specific of all of Paul's greetings in any of his letters. He pours his heart out for the saints he loved.

The gospel to the Romans not only worked in this first century, but it worked in the second and the third, and continues to work this year. Christians today, like those in the first century, walk the streets of a pagan world. Those who know Jesus Christ and are walking in the light as He is in the light have found out these things in Romans are true.

The question is, have *you* found out they are true? This isn't just theory or ideas. You can know for sure whether these things are true or not. The Lord Jesus said if you will do His will, you will know His truth, you will know whether it's true or not (see John 7:17). Like the psalmist says, "Oh, taste and see that the LORD is good ..." (Psalm 34:8). God wants you to do the experiment. It all begins at the cross, in a transaction with Him—it all begins when you come to Christ as your Savior.

One of the ways the people of Rome recognized followers of Jesus was by their love for each other. This contradicted Roman philosophy and practice. Now let's meet these people whom Paul names with love and tender affection.

First there was *Phoebe*, who carried the letter to Rome from Corinth. As her name suggests, Phoebe is a Gentile, named after a Greek goddess. Apparently she held a prominent role in the early church, and was a gifted servant of God. The church always needs a woman's insights and sensibilities.

Paul then greets many other brothers and sisters in Christ.

Greet *Priscilla and Aquila*, the Jewish couple Paul knew from Ephesus. They were fellow tentmakers with Paul and had been very helpful to Apollos when the gospel was newly taught. They opened their home to the church. Through the third century, the local church only met in private homes; the church was never intended to mean a building (see Acts 12:12; 1 Corinthians 16:19; Colossians 4:15; Philemon 1:2). Here in the beginning, the church began in the home and in the future, the church will return to meeting in homes.

Please greet *Epaenetus*—meaning "praised"—who was first one to come to Jesus Christ in Achaia.

Mary (or Miriam) has been working hard for the sake of other believers.

Salute *Andronicus*, a Greek identified with a slave, and *Junia*, a Roman. Paul calls these “my countrymen,” which may mean they belonged to the tribe of Benjamin like Paul. He also called them “my fellow prisoners.” Evidently Paul met them in one of the many prisons of the Roman Empire. They were Christians before Paul.

The church in Rome was founded by Paul under unusual circumstances. He had met Aquila and Priscilla in the Corinthian agora, the marketplace, and then he met these two men in jail. These had then gone to Rome and formed the church there.

A common slave’s name, *Amplias*, occurs in the tombs of the early Christians in the catacombs, always in a place of honor. He evidently followed Jesus Christ because of Paul and was dear to Paul’s heart.

Urbanus means “city bred.” Also a common slave name, Urbanus may have been brought up in the city rather than in the country. Paul calls him a real worker among the saints.

Stachys has been found listed in the royal household. He was loved not only by Paul but by the church.

Apelles is “the approved one.” He had stood some outstanding test.

Aristobulus could have been the grandson of Herod the Great or possibly a slave who took the name of his master, same as *Herodion*.

Narcissus is the name of a well-known freed slave Agrippina put to death. The Narcissus was probably a slave who formerly belonged to him and had taken his name.

Tryphena and *Tryphosa* are sweet sounding names that mean “delicate” and “dainty.” These ladies, perhaps sisters, labored in the Lord—they were real workers in the church.

The beloved *Persis* is another woman who worked hard for the Lord. She likely was a freed slave.

Although *Rufus* seems to stand in the shadows in this chapter, we actually know a lot about him, even the color of his hair—red! However, it wasn’t his hair that made him unusual but the phrase, “chosen [or distinguished] in the

Lord.” He was a great saint of God. We can put together Rufus’ backstory from Mark’s Gospel, which was written primarily for the Romans. In giving his account of the crucifixion, Mark describes how a man pulled from the crowd named Simon, a Cyrenian, was forced to carry Jesus’ cross—an act that made him legendary. Mark identifies Simon by adding, “the father of Alexander and Rufus”—all the saints in Rome would know Rufus, because he was one of their church leaders.

Notice that Paul’s greeting also includes Rufus’ mother, “his mother and mine.” We know nothing about Paul’s parents but learn here that a godly woman in Jerusalem, the wife of Simon the Cyrenian, was like a mother to the apostle Paul. When Paul first came to Jerusalem following his conversion, the Christians feared him. They doubted his salvation and suspected trickery. Yet Rufus’ mother took Paul in. Looking back to that time, Paul writes concerning her, *“She is Rufus’ mother, but she is mine also.”* What a lovely tribute to this warmhearted Christian mother.

Paul then greets many more who are just names to us, but Paul knew each of them and their stories. He likely had led them all to Christ.

Paul was concerned for the Romans not to engage with false teachers. Some may have even wedged their way into the church. They were dangerous. Paul was sure the Romans could handle this threat because they had a reputation for being wise. “Be wise in what is good” means they must rely on the instruction of God’s Word. And be “simple concerning evil” means without a mixture of evil (v. 19). Satan is behind it, of course, but soon the God of peace will put down Satan (see Genesis 3:15). Until then, resist the devil and be sober and alert.

As Paul wrote the book of Romans from Corinth, he sends greetings from Christians there with him. Hello from Timothy and Tertius (Paul’s secretary who wrote down the letters Paul dictated). Paul was staying in Gaius’ home, who said hello, too.

Now as Paul closes his letter to the Romans, he gives full attention to the glory of God. In this beautiful benediction, he chose every word carefully. He wanted to direct our focus to God and His Spirit who alone can transform us to look like His Son:

Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery kept secret since the world began but now made

manifest, and by the prophetic Scriptures made known to all nations, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, for obedience to the faith—to God, alone wise, be glory through Jesus Christ forever. Amen. –vv. 25-27

What a privilege, Paul wrote, to proclaim the mystery of the gospel, now unveiled in Jesus Christ. The gospel has always been God’s plan—you can trace it all the way back to Moses. But the partial message entrusted to the Jews now has been fully revealed and made available to everyone—of any race, nation, language, culture, or generation.

We’ve come full circle. In the first chapter when Paul first mentioned the gospel, he said, “the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, ‘The just shall live by faith’” (1:17).

And now we’ve seen through this book what that means. As we close, let’s encourage each other to live in “obedience to this faith” to the glory of the only wise God, through Jesus Christ, amen.

A photograph of two men, one Black and one white, smiling and talking to each other outdoors. They are both gesturing with their hands as if in conversation. The background is slightly blurred, showing other people in a park-like setting.

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A close-up photograph of a person's hands holding a smartphone. The phone screen displays a list of booklets from TTB.org. The background is a blurred outdoor setting with a wooden table.

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