

Grace Community Group Life Study Guide

Romans: Encountering the Gospel's Power

1-14-21 CM

Week 1 (pages 5-12 in the book)

Passage for chapter 1 of the study: Romans 1:1-17 (ESV: English Standard Version)

"Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, ² which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy Scriptures, ³ concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh ⁴ and was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord, ⁵ through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of his name among all the nations, ⁶ including you who are called to belong to Jesus Christ,

⁷ To all those in Rome who are loved by God and called to be saints:
Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

⁸ First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because your faith is proclaimed in all the world. ⁹ For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son, that without ceasing I mention you ¹⁰ always in my prayers, asking that somehow by God's will I may now at last succeed in coming to you. ¹¹ For I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to strengthen you — ¹² that is, that we may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith, both yours and mine. ¹³ I do not want you to be unaware, brothers, that I have often intended to come to you (but thus far have been prevented), in order that I may reap some harvest among you as well as among the rest of the Gentiles. ¹⁴ I am under obligation both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish. ¹⁵ So I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome.

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

Purpose of Community Groups

- The goal is not to get through the material ... the goal is to get to know each other, and for everyone to gain a better understanding of who Jesus is, and what that means for their life.
- To build safe environment where group members feel safe to share honestly. Consider discussing and agreeing to a set of group guidelines.
 - Confidentiality. What is shared in the group stays in the group. You are free to share what you have said in the group, but not what others have said.
 - Listen when others are sharing. Do not interrupt or attempt to fix the other person. Listen.
 - Do not dominate the group discussion. Let others speak. Encourage others to speak. Be willing to adjust your approach to the group if the group leader indicates others need to be heard from.
- Support and care. Community Life Groups are the best way to care for others, and to be cared for by others. Share your needs, and respond to the needs expressed by others.

¹ The book uses, primarily, the NIV (New International Version). At Grace we use, primarily, the ESV (English Standard Version). The ESV is considered a more accurate translation of the original Greek, while the NIV, although a good translation, is appreciated because it is easier to read. A comparison of three Bible versions of this passage is included below (Appendix A) (Curt's notes)

Please use only what you find helpful in this guide.

Get to Know you questions (The first week or two you may spend a majority of your time getting to know each other).

1. Share two things about yourself not many people know.
2. Describe the most extravagant meal you've ever eaten. Where were you? When was this? What was prepared and what did you eat? How did it make you feel?
3. What has been the most helpful book you've ever read regarding faith and spiritual life (This does not have to be a Christian book)? What did it help you understand about God, about spiritual life?
4. Someone you know asks you which book in the Bible they should read to understand Christian faith? What book would you recommend to them? Why?

Introduction and Background of the book of Romans

1. Who wrote the book?

Paul² had never been to Rome when he wrote the letter to the Romans, though he had clearly expressed his desire to travel there in the near future (Acts 19:21; Romans 1:10–12). The apostle greeted twenty-six different people by name, personalizing a letter from a man who would have been a personal stranger to most of the recipients. No doubt they had heard of Paul and would have been honored by the letter, but Paul always took opportunities to personally connect with his audience so that the message of the gospel might be better received.

2. Time and Place of Paul's Letter to the Romans

The apostle Paul wrote to the Romans from the Greek city of Corinth in AD 57, just three years after the 16-year-old Nero had ascended to the throne as Emperor of Rome. The political situation in the capital had not yet deteriorated for the Roman Christians, as Nero wouldn't begin his persecution of them until he made them scapegoats after the great Roman fire in AD 64. Therefore, Paul wrote to a church that was experiencing a time of relative peace, but a church that he felt needed a strong dose of basic gospel teaching.

Writing from Corinth, Paul likely encountered a diverse array of people and practices—from gruff sailors and meticulous tradesmen to wealthy idolaters and enslaved Christians. The prominent Greek city of Corinth was also a hotbed of sexual immorality and idol worship. So when Paul wrote in Romans about the sinfulness of humanity or the power of God's grace to miraculously and completely change lives, he knew that of which he spoke. It was played out before his eyes every day.

3. Why is Romans so important?

The letter to the Romans stands as the clearest and most systematic presentation of Christian doctrine in all the Scriptures. Paul began by discussing that which is most easily observable in the world—the sinfulness of all humanity. All people have been condemned due to our rebellion against God. However, God in His grace offers us justification by faith in His Son, Jesus. When we are justified by God, we receive redemption, or salvation, because Christ's blood covers our sin. But Paul made it clear that the believer's pursuit of God doesn't stop with salvation; it continues as each of us is sanctified—made holy—as we persist in following

² Paul was originally known as Saul. He was fiercely opposed to Christians, persecuting them, arresting them, advocating for their death. His life dramatically and suddenly changed, so did his name. Saul became Paul. His story is found in the book of Acts. For his pre-Christian life and his remarkable transformation by God read Acts 7:54-8:3 and 9:1-25. Also read 1 Corinthians 1:1-31 for Paul's new focus as a Christian. As he further reflects on his life: 1 Corinthians 15:1-11, 1 Timothy 1:12-17, 2 Corinthians 12:7-10. (Curt's notes)

Him. Paul's treatment of these issues offers a logical and complete presentation of how a person can be saved from the penalty and power of his or her sin.

4. What's the big idea?

The primary theme running through Paul's letter to the Romans is the revelation of God's righteousness in His plan for salvation, what the Bible calls the gospel:

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

Paul showed how human beings lack God's righteousness because of sin (1–3), receive God's righteousness when God justifies us by faith (4–5), demonstrate God's righteousness by being transformed from rebels to followers (6–8), confirm His righteousness when God saves the Jews (9–11), and apply His righteousness in practical ways throughout our lives (12–16).

The structure of Romans provides a hint into the importance of the book in our everyday lives. Beginning with eleven chapters of doctrine, the book then transitions into five chapters of practical instruction. This union between doctrine and life illustrates for Christians the absolute importance of both what we believe and how we live out those beliefs. Does your day-to-day life mirror the beliefs you hold, or do you find yourself in a constant battle with hypocrisy? Take heed of the doctrine you find within the pages of Romans, but don't forget to put it into practice as well.³

Questions for this week

- Read the introduction provided in the book (pages 4-8)
 - How important is freedom to you? How would you define freedom? How free are you? Can there be freedom in a society if there are no boundaries or rules? Discuss.
 - Rome was the center of the Mediterranean world. The Roman empire was vast, stretching from Britain to Babylon, from Spain and Italy to Egypt and Israel. Roman armies enforced the Pax Romana (Peace of Rome). Taxes, yes, public unrest, no. What city today resembles the power and position of Rome in the first century? How is Christian faith received in the world's big cities? Discuss.
 - Read through the authors suggestions for your group on pages 7-8.
- Chapter 1 (pages 9-12)
 - Each week we suggest you use the questions included in the Romans: Encountering the Gospel's Power book.
 - Some weeks additional questions will be offered here.

Additional Leader Resources

1. John Piper Sermon Series on Romans: <https://www.desiringgod.org/scripture/romans>
2. Excerpts from Martin Luther's introduction to his commentary on Romans (included below) Appendix B

If you have any questions or comments, if you need help with this study, with members of your group, or with technology, please call (248-7940 x114) or email (curt@yakimagrace.com)

³ From chuck Swindoll's Insight for Living. See <https://www.insight.org/resources/bible/the-pauline-epistles/romans>

ESV: English Standard Version

Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, 2 which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy Scriptures, 3 concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh 4 and was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord, 5 through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of his name among all the nations, 6 including you who are called to belong to Jesus Christ, 7 To all those in Rome who are loved by God and called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. 8 First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because your faith is proclaimed in all the world. 9 For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son, that without ceasing I mention you 10 always in my prayers, asking that somehow by God's will I may now at last succeed in coming to you. 11 For I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to strengthen you— 12 that is, that we may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith, both yours and mine. 13 I do not want you to be unaware, brothers, that I have often intended to come to you (but thus far have been prevented), in order that I may reap some harvest among you as well as among the rest of the Gentiles. 14 I am under obligation both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish. 15 So I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome. 16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. 17 For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, "The righteous shall live by faith."

NIV: New International Version

Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle and set apart for the gospel of God— 2 the gospel he promised beforehand through his prophets in the Holy Scriptures 3 regarding his Son, who as to his earthly life was a descendant of David, 4 and who through the Spirit of holiness was appointed the Son of God in power by his resurrection from the dead: Jesus Christ our Lord. 5 Through him we received grace and apostleship to call all the Gentiles to the obedience that comes from faith for his name's sake. 6 And you also are among those Gentiles who are called to belong to Jesus Christ. 7 To all in Rome who are loved by God and called to be his holy people: Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ. 8 First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because your faith is being reported all over the world. 9 God, whom I serve in my spirit in preaching the gospel of his Son, is my witness how constantly I remember you 10 in my prayers at all times; and I pray that now at last by God's will the way may be opened for me to come to you. 11 I long to see you so that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to make you strong— 12 that is, that you and I may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith. 13 I do not want you to be unaware, brothers and sisters, that I planned many times to come to you (but have been prevented from doing so until now) in order that I might have a harvest among you, just as I have had among the other Gentiles. 14 I am obligated both to Greeks and non-Greeks, both to the wise and the foolish. 15 That is why I am so eager to preach the gospel also to you who are in Rome. 16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile. 17 For in the gospel the righteousness of God is revealed—a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: "The righteous will live by faith."

JB: J.B. Phillips

1-2 This letter comes to you from Paul, servant of Jesus Christ, called as a messenger and appointed for the service of that Gospel of God which was long ago promised by the prophets in the holy scriptures. 3-6 The Gospel is centred in God's Son, a descendant of David by human genealogy and patently marked out as the Son of God by the power of that Spirit of holiness which raised him to life again from the dead. He is our Lord, Jesus Christ, from whom we received grace and our commission in his name to forward obedience to the faith in all nations. And of this great number you at Rome are also called to belong to him. 7 To you all then, loved of God and called to be Christ's men and women, grace and peace from God the Father and from our Lord Jesus Christ. 8-12 I must begin by telling you how I thank God through Jesus Christ for you all, since the news of your faith has become known everywhere. Before God, whom I serve with all my heart in the Gospel of his Son, I assure you that you are always in my prayers. I am longing to see you: I want to bring you some spiritual strength, and that will mean that I shall be strengthened by you, each of us helped by the other's faith. 13-15 Then I should like you to know, my brothers, that I have long intended to come to you (but something has always prevented me), for I should like to see some results among you, as I have among other Gentiles. I feel myself under a sort of universal obligation, I owe something to all men, from cultured Greek to ignorant savage. That is why I want, as far as my ability will carry me, to preach the Gospel to you who live in Rome as well. 16-17 For I am not ashamed of the Gospel. I see it as the very power of God working for the salvation of everyone who believes it, both Jew and Greek. I see in it God's plan for imparting righteousness to men, a process begun and continued by their faith. For, as the scripture says: 'The just shall live by faith'.

Appendix B

Preface to Luther's Commentary on Romans

Martin Luther (1483 – 1546) Germany

This letter is truly the most important piece in the New Testament. It is purest Gospel. It is well worth a Christian's while not only to memorize it word for word but also to occupy himself with it daily, as though it were the daily bread of the soul. It is impossible to read or to meditate on this letter too much or too well. The more one deals with it, the more precious it becomes and the better it tastes. Therefore I want to carry out my service and, with this preface, provide an introduction to the letter, insofar as God gives me the ability, so that every one can gain the fullest possible understanding of it. Up to now it has been darkened by glosses [explanatory notes and comments which accompany a text] and by many a useless comment, but it is in itself a bright light, almost bright enough to illumine the entire Scripture.

To begin with, we have to become familiar with the vocabulary of the letter and know what St. Paul means by the words law, sin, grace, faith, justice, flesh, spirit, etc. Otherwise there is no use in reading it.

You must not understand the word law here in human fashion, i.e., a regulation about what sort of works must be done or must not be done. That's the way it is with human laws: you satisfy the demands of the law with works, whether your heart is in it or not. God judges what is in the depths of the heart. Therefore his law also makes demands on the depths of the heart and doesn't let the heart rest content in works; rather it punishes as hypocrisy and lies all works done apart from the depths of the heart. All human beings are called liars (Psalm 116), since none of them keeps or can keep God's law from the depths of the heart. Everyone finds inside himself an aversion to good and a craving for evil. Where there is no free desire for good, there the heart has not set itself on God's law. There also sin is surely to be found and the deserved wrath of God, whether a lot of good works and an honorable life appear outwardly or not.

It is as if he were saying, "Outwardly you live quite properly in the works of the law and judge those who do not live the same way; you know how to teach everybody. You see the speck in another's eye but do not notice the beam in your own."

Outwardly you keep the law with works out of fear of punishment or love of gain. Likewise you do everything without free desire and love of the law; you act out of aversion and force. You'd rather act otherwise if the law didn't exist. It follows, then, that you, in the depths of your heart, are an enemy of the law. What do you mean, therefore, by teaching another not to steal, when you, in the depths of your heart, are a thief and would be one outwardly too, if you dared. (Of course, outward work doesn't last long with such hypocrites.) So then, you teach others but not yourself; you don't even know what you are teaching. You've never understood the law rightly. Furthermore, the law increases sin, as St. Paul says in chapter 5. That is because a person becomes more and more an enemy of the law the more it demands of him what he can't possibly do.

... to fulfill the law means to do its work eagerly, lovingly and freely, without the constraint of the law; it means to live well and in a manner pleasing to God, as though there were no law or punishment. It is the Holy Spirit, however, who puts such eagerness of unconstrained love into the heart, as Paul says in chapter 5. But the Spirit is given only in, with, and through faith in Jesus Christ, as Paul says in his introduction. So, too, faith comes only through the word of God, the Gospel, that preaches Christ: how he is both Son of God and man, how he died and rose for our sake. Paul says all this in chapters 3, 4 and 10.

That is why faith alone makes someone just and fulfills the law; faith it is that brings the Holy Spirit through the merits of Christ. The Spirit, in turn, renders the heart glad and free, as the law demands. Then good works proceed from faith itself.

... Because our flesh has not been killed, we are still sinners, but because we believe in Christ and have the beginnings of the Spirit, God so shows us his favor and mercy, that he neither notices nor judges such sins. Rather he deals with us according to our belief in Christ until sin is killed.

Faith is not that human illusion and dream that some people think it is. When they hear and talk a lot about faith and yet see that no moral improvement and no good works result from it, they fall into error and say, "Faith is not enough. You must do works if you want to be virtuous and get to heaven." The result is that, when they hear the Gospel, they stumble and make for themselves with their own powers a concept in their hearts which says, "I believe." This concept they hold to be true faith. But since it is a human fabrication and thought and not an experience of the heart, it accomplishes nothing, and there follows no improvement.

Faith is a work of God in us, which changes us and brings us to birth anew from God (cf. John 1). It kills the old Adam, makes us completely different people in heart, mind, senses, and all our powers, and brings the Holy Spirit with it. What a living, creative, active powerful thing is faith! It is impossible that faith ever stop doing good. Faith doesn't ask whether good works are to be done, but, before it is asked, it has done them. It is always active

... Faith is a living, unshakeable confidence in God's grace; it is so certain, that someone would die a thousand times for it. This kind of trust in and knowledge of God's grace makes a person joyful, confident, and happy with regard to God and all creatures. This is what the Holy Spirit does by faith. Through faith, a person will do good to everyone without coercion, willingly and happily; he will serve everyone, suffer everything for the love and praise of God, who has shown him such grace. It is as impossible to separate works from faith as burning and shining from fire

... We find in this letter, then, the richest possible teaching about what a Christian should know: the meaning of law, Gospel, sin, punishment, grace, faith, justice, Christ, God, good works, love, hope and the cross. We learn how we are to act toward everyone, toward the virtuous and sinful, toward the strong and the weak, friend and foe, and toward ourselves. Paul bases everything firmly on Scripture and proves his points with examples from his own experience and from the Prophets, so that nothing more could be desired. Therefore it seems that St. Paul, in writing this letter, wanted to compose a summary of the whole of Christian and evangelical teaching which would also be an introduction to the whole Old Testament. Without doubt, whoever takes this letter to heart possesses the light and power of the Old Testament. Therefore each and every Christian should make this letter the habitual and constant object of his study. God grant us his grace to do so. Amen.

Grace Community Group Life Study Guide

Romans: Encountering the Gospel's Power

1-20-21 CM

Week 2 (pages 13-17 in the book)

Passage for chapter 2 in the study book: Romans 1:16-32 (ESV: English Standard Version)

(First two verses here are from last week) “For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. ¹⁷ For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, “The righteous shall live by faith.”

¹⁸ For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. ¹⁹ For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. ²⁰ For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So, they are without excuse. ²¹ For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. ²² Claiming to be wise, they became fools, ²³ and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things.

²⁴ Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves, ²⁵ because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen.

²⁶ For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature; ²⁷ and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in themselves the due penalty for their error.

²⁸ And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done. ²⁹ They were filled with all manner of unrighteousness, evil, covetousness, malice. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, maliciousness. They are gossips, ³⁰ slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, ³¹ foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless. ³² Though they know God's righteous decree that those who practice such things deserve to die, they not only do them but give approval to those who practice them.”¹

Purpose of Community Groups

- The goal is not to get through the material ... the goal is to get to know each other, and for everyone to gain a better understanding of who Jesus is, and what that means for their life.
- To build safe environment where group members feel safe to share honestly. Consider discussing and agreeing to a set of group guidelines.
 - Confidentiality. What is shared in the group stays in the group. You are free to share what you have said in the group, but not what others have said.
 - Listen when others are sharing. Do not interrupt or attempt to fix the other person. Listen.

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- Do not dominate the group discussion. Let others speak. Encourage others to speak. Be willing to adjust your approach to the group if the group leader indicates others need to be heard from.
- Support and care. Community Life Groups are the best way to care for others, and to be cared for by others. Share your needs, and respond to the needs expressed by others.

Please use only what you find helpful in this guide.

Word of caution about this passage as you prepare to meet

In the book of Romans Paul addressed some of the most controversial topics of his day (in the Roman world), topics that still stir passionate disagreements today. This section of the book of Romans is one of the hardest for some to read, hear, and believe. In this passage Paul speaks clearly about homosexuality as a deviation from how God designed us to live out our sexuality.

This is a difficult message today. Many of our friends, and family members, maybe we ourselves, struggle with how they/we understand sexuality. There is a growing belief that love is the ultimate good, and whatever we love must then be OK. Certainly, the society in which we live disagrees with what Paul claims here.

It is important to approach this passage with understanding and sensitivity. Good Christians, and denominations, disagree with each other on whether this passage still applies today. Are we able to love and respect each other even if we disagree on this issue? Does not the command of God to listen to, and genuinely care for, each other direct how we discuss this topic?

Here at Grace we believe it does. Grace of Christ believes that this passage still represents God's intentions for human sexuality today. We also believe we are called to extend grace to our friends and neighbors who disagree with us.

Homosexuality is not a sin that is meant to be elevated above all others. Sin is sin. We are all sinners and in need of the love, forgiveness, and healing of Jesus. Honesty calls us to find ourselves in the list of sins Paul includes in verses 29-31 and then humbly walk with those who struggle with, or embrace, a sexual identity at odds with what we find in Romans 1 and elsewhere in the Bible. Those who disagree with us remain friends. Our sexuality, or selfishness, or greed, or anger, or addiction, or unwillingness to forgive, or vanity, or consumerism, or faithlessness, or (add your own flavor of sin here), is not our core identity. Our core identity is that we are a beloved child of God. All of the rest stands at a distance from that center. Much within us is still imperfect and in need of healing. God has not given up on us. We are being changed and redeemed by the power of God's mercy and grace.

If you, your group, or a particular member of your group, has a difficult time with this passage, or with Grace's understanding on this topic, please reach out to one of us (pastors). We would appreciate the opportunity to continue the discussion.²

Get to Know you questions (The first week or two you may spend a majority of your time getting to know each other).

1. Where is one place you have traveled to, visited, that you would return to tomorrow if you had the chance? Why is that place such a draw for you?
2. Share a time you have been overwhelmed by the beauty in the world around you (at the ocean, in the mountains, breathing fresh air, the beauty of a bird, fish or beast, the miracle of a child's birth, the expanse of the universe in the night sky ...). How did it make you feel? Did it make you consider the role of God in this world, in creation, in your life? If yes, what did you think about God? If no, what did you think about? How did you explain, to yourself, the beauty and awe you experienced?

² From Curt McFarland, pastor at Grace. Contact information: 509-248-7940 x114, curt@yakimagrace.com

3. Share about your first experience in church (or if you were raised in the church, your first clear memory). Was your experience in church positive or negative? Discuss your answer.

Introduction and Background of the book of Romans

Refer to the Leader's guide for week 1

Questions for this week

- Chapter 2 (pages 13-17)
 - Please refer to the questions included in the Romans: Encountering the Gospel's Power book.
- Additional Questions from your pastors
 - What excuses have others made, or you've made yourself, for dismissing or ignoring God? According to the passage in this chapter are those excuses valid?
 - What happens when a person fully gives in and embraces their temptations? Does it lead to healthy or destructive things?
 - From this passage God does not encourage sin in a person's life, but He does give people over to what they think they want. Is that fair? He does give us regular warnings about the dangers of sin but should God go farther and prevent us from doing what is wrong and is destructive for us? Does that work with parenting?
 - How do you put together the power, the love, and the wrath, of God?

Additional Leader Resources

1. John Piper Sermon Series on Romans: <https://www.desiringgod.org/scripture/romans>
2. See week 1 leader guide for the Preface to Martin Luther's commentary on Romans (from the 1500's)

If you have any questions or comments, if you need help with this study, with members of your group, or with technology, please call (248-7940 x114) or email (curt@yakimagrace.com)

Romans 1:18-32 (3 Versions)

ESV: English Standard Version

18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. 19 For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. 20 For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. 21 For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. 22 Claiming to be wise, they became fools, 23 and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things. 24 Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves, 25 because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen. 26 For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature; 27 and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in themselves the due penalty for their error. 28 And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done. 29 They were filled with all manner of unrighteousness, evil, covetousness, malice. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, maliciousness. They are gossips, 30 slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, 31 foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless. 32 Though they know God's righteous decree that those who practice such things deserve to die, they not only do them but give approval to those who practice them.

NIV: New International Version

18 The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness

and wickedness of people, who suppress the truth by their wickedness, 19 since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. 20 For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse.

21 For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. 22 Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools 23 and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like a mortal human being and birds and animals and reptiles.

24 Therefore God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another. 25 They exchanged the truth about God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator—who is forever praised. Amen. 26 Because of this, God gave them over to shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural sexual relations for unnatural ones. 27 In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed shameful acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their error.

28 Furthermore, just as they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, so God gave them over to a depraved mind, so that they do what ought not to be done. 29 They have become filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed and depravity. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit and malice. They are gossips, 30 slanderers, God-haters, insolent, arrogant and boastful; they invent ways of doing evil; they disobey their parents; 31 they have no understanding, no fidelity, no love, no mercy. 32 Although they know God's righteous decree that those who do such things deserve death, they not only continue to do these very things but also approve of those who practice them.

JBP: J.B. Phillips

Now the holy anger of God is disclosed from Heaven against the godlessness and evil of those men who render truth dumb and inoperative by their wickedness. It is

not that they do not know the truth about God; indeed he has made it quite plain to them. For since the beginning of the world the invisible attributes of God, e.g. his eternal power and divinity, have been plainly discernible through things which he has made and which are commonly seen and known, thus leaving these men without a rag of excuse. They knew all the time that there is a God, yet they refused to acknowledge him as such, or to thank him for what he is or does. Thus they became fatuous in their argumentations, and plunged their silly minds still further into the dark.

22-23 Behind a facade of "wisdom" they became just fools, fools who would exchange the glory of the eternal God for an imitation image of a mortal man, or of creatures that run or fly or crawl.

24 They gave up God: and therefore God gave them up—to be the playthings of their own foul desires in dishonouring their own bodies.

25-27 These men deliberately forfeited the truth of God and accepted a lie, paying homage and giving service to the creature instead of to the Creator, who alone is worthy to be worshipped for ever and ever, amen. God therefore handed them over to disgraceful passions. Their women exchanged the normal practices of sexual intercourse for something which is abnormal and unnatural. Similarly the men, turning from natural intercourse with women, were swept into lustful passions for one another. Men with men performed these shameful horrors, receiving, of course, in their own personalities the consequences of sexual perversity.

28-32 Moreover, since they considered themselves too high and mighty to acknowledge God, he allowed them to become the slaves of their degenerate minds, and to perform unmentionable deeds. They became filled with wickedness, rottenness, greed and malice; their minds became steeped in envy, murder, quarrelsomeness, deceitfulness and spite. They became whisperers-behind-doors, stabbers-in-the-back, God-haters; they overflowed with insolent pride and boastfulness, and their minds teemed with diabolical invention. They scoffed at duty to parents, they mocked at learning, recognised no obligations of honour, lost all natural affection, and had no use for mercy. More than this—being well aware of God's pronouncement that all who do these things deserve to die, they not only continued their own practices, but did not hesitate to give their thorough approval to others who did the same.

Grace Community Group Life Study Guide

Romans: Encountering the Gospel's Power

1-28-21 CM

Week 3 (pages 18-22 in the book)

Reminder: The verse and chapter numbering was not included in the original letters and books of the Bible (they were added much later as an aid for those reading). It is always wise to begin reading a passage a few verses before where you intend to start, and continue a few verses after you intend to stop. There are times when this helps us understand the larger context of what is being said. I'm including here the last few verses of chapter 1. These verses directly connect with what you will read in chapter 2.

²⁸ And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done. ²⁹ They were filled with all manner of unrighteousness, evil, covetousness, malice. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, maliciousness. They are gossips, ³⁰ slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, ³¹ foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless. ³² Though they know God's righteous decree that those who practice such things deserve to die, they not only do them but give approval to those who practice them ..."

Passage for chapter 3 in the study book: Romans 2:1-16 (ESV: English Standard Version) see Appendix below for a three version comparison of this passage.

¹ Therefore (*whenever you come across the word "therefore" ask yourself, "what is it "there for"? In this case it is a clear connection with what precedes it (chapter 1)*) you have no excuse, O man, every one of you who judges. For in passing judgment on another you condemn yourself, because you, the judge, practice the very same things. ² We know that the judgment of God rightly falls on those who practice such things. ³ Do you suppose, O man — you who judge those who practice such things and yet do them yourself — that you will escape the judgment of God? ⁴ Or do you presume on the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance? ⁵ But because of your hard and impenitent heart you are storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath when God's righteous judgment will be revealed.

⁶ He will render to each one according to his works: ⁷ to those who by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, he will give eternal life; ⁸ but for those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, there will be wrath and fury. ⁹ There will be tribulation and distress for every human being who does evil, the Jew first and also the Greek, ¹⁰ but glory and honor and peace for everyone who does good, the Jew first and also the Greek. ¹¹ For God shows no partiality.

¹² For all who have sinned without the law will also perish without the law, and all who have sinned under the law will be judged by the law. ¹³ For it is not the hearers of the law who are righteous before God, but the doers of the law who will be justified. ¹⁴ For when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do what the law requires, they are a law to themselves, even though they do not have the law. ¹⁵ They show that the work of the law is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness, and their

conflicting thoughts accuse or even excuse them ¹⁶ on that day when, according to my gospel, God judges the secrets of men by Christ Jesus”¹

Purpose of Community Groups

- The goal is not to get through the material ... the goal is to get to know each other, and for everyone to gain a better understanding of who Jesus is, and what that means for their life.
- To build safe environment where group members feel safe to share honestly. Consider discussing and agreeing to a set of group guidelines.
 - Confidentiality. What is shared in the group stays in the group. You are free to share what you have said in the group, but not what others have said.
 - Listen when others are sharing. Do not interrupt or attempt to fix the other person. Listen.
 - Do not dominate the group discussion. Let others speak. Encourage others to speak. Be willing to adjust your approach to the group if the group leader indicates others need to be heard from.
- Support and care. Community Life Groups are the best way to care for others, and to be cared for by others. Share your needs, and respond to the needs expressed by others.

Please use only what you find helpful in this guide.

If you, your group, or a particular member of your group, has personal, spiritual, emotional, intellectual, difficulty with last week’s passage, or with any part of this study in Romans, or has questions about Grace’s understanding on what you are studying, please reach out to one of us (pastors). We would appreciate the opportunity to continue the discussion.²

Get to Know you questions

1. What is the highest point (elevation-wise) you’ve ever been (not counting trips in airplanes)? Where were you? When were you there? What did it take for you to get there? What did you see and how did it make you feel?
2. What was your first car? How did you get the car? What are two memories about the car? What happened to the car?
3. Talk about a time you felt you were being judged by others. Why did you think others were judging you? How did it make you feel?

Introduction and Background of the book of Romans

Refer to the Leader’s guide for week 1

Questions for this week

- Are there any lingering questions or comments about Romans chapter 1?
- Refer to Chapter 3 titled “God’s Fairness” (pages 18-22)
 - For this leader’s edition I have included below the questions found in the Romans: Encountering the Gospel’s Power book. Additional questions from Grace of Christ staff are included *in italics* below selected questions from the book.

¹ The book uses, primarily, the NIV (New International Version). At Grace we use, primarily, the ESV (English Standard Version). The ESV is considered a more accurate translation of the original Greek, while the NIV, although a good translation, is appreciated because it is easier to read. A comparison of three Bible versions of this passage is included below (Appendix A) (Curt’s notes)

² From Curt McFarland, pastor at Grace. Contact information: 509-248-7940 x114, curt@yakimagrace.com

- **Q1:** If you could live your life without personal guilt or judgment, would you choose that? Explain.
 - *Is there a positive side to the “guilt” we sometimes feel, or is “guilt” something we need to ignore and eliminate from our life? Discuss*

Read Romans 2:1-11. The underlying theme of this section is the judgment of God upon self-appointed judges. The verses can be divided into two sections: 1-4 and 5-11. What qualities of God’s judgment does each section illustrate?

 - *List here the qualities of God’s judgment found in verses 1-4.*
 - *List here the qualities of God’s judgment found in verses 5-11.*
 - *What are three significant words that stand out related to God’s judgment in verses 1-11?*
- **Q2:** According to verses 1-4, why is it dangerous to judge someone else?
- **Q3:** What is the difference between human judgment and God’s judgment (vv. 1-4)?
 - *What are the ways we judge others, both directly and indirectly?*
- **Q4:** Look more closely at verse 4. How might God’s judgment be a kindness?
 - *How might we “presume on the riches of His kindness and forbearance and patience” in a way that does not lead us to repentance?*
- **Q5:** Focus on verses 5-11. What does this passage reveal about the “day of God’s wrath”?
- **Q6:** Verse 11 says, “God does not show favoritism.” In view of the preceding verses in that paragraph, what does this statement mean?
- **Q7:** What impact does God’s refusal to show favoritism have on you personally? (Consider your current relationship with God as well as your relationships with other people.)
 - *Read the summary paragraph on page 20. The author suggests that it is a “strange human foible to be critical of everyone else except ourselves.” Do you agree with this statement? He ends by saying this allows us to be both “slick and sick.” Your thoughts on this?*
- **Q8:** Read Romans 2:12-16. What, according to these verses, is the relationship between God’s law and His judgment?
- **Q9:** What example do you see of God’s fairness when He judges Gentiles who did not have His law as a part of their history?
 - *“Gentiles” refers to all who are not Jewish.*
 - *According to Christian faith has anyone, anywhere (except Jesus Himself) lived a perfect life, free from sin, exempt from God’s righteous judgment? If no one, how do many who reject Christian faith believe they will be accepted by God?*
 - **Read Romans chapter 3**
 - *Read the short paragraph under question 9 on page 20. Do you agree with the author? Explain. Are there other passages in the Bible that address this? Consider:*
 - **John 14:6** *“Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”*

- **Acts 4:11-12** *“This Jesus is the stone that was rejected by you, the builders, which has become the cornerstone. ¹² And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”*
 - *What happens to a person who does not know about Jesus but is trying to live a good life according to their conscience?*
 - *Consider the prophet Jonah, sent by God to warn the people of Nineveh. They repented and God did not punish them.*
- **Q10:** Verse 15 speaks of the conscience. Why is a conscience important in this setting?
 - *Where does our internal conscience come from? Consider the following:*
 - *In **John 16**, speaking about the coming of the Holy Spirit Jesus said, “Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you. ⁸ And when he comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment: ⁹ concerning sin, because they do not believe in me; ¹⁰ concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father, and you will see me no longer; ¹¹ concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged.”*
 - **Romans 1:19-20** *“For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. 20 For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse”*
 - **Read 1 Timothy 1:5** *“The aim of our charge is love that issues from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith.”*
 - **Read 1 Timothy 4:1-2** *“Now the Spirit expressly says that in later times some will depart from the faith by devoting themselves to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons, ² through the insincerity of liars whose consciences are seared.”*
- **Q11:** What can we do to cultivate a healthy conscience?
 - *Read the author’s summary under question 11.*
- **Apply Q12:** Several times this passage speaks of the “day of God’s wrath.” How would you advise someone to prepare for that day?
 - *Are people generally receptive to conversations about the “day of God’s wrath?” Why or why not?*
 - *What needs to happen before a person is receptive to hearing about the “day of God’s wrath?”*
 - *Consider the following four statements offered by one of your pastors on what needs to happen before there is a receptiveness to a conversation about “God’s wrath.” Do you agree with these four? Would you change, or add to, this list?*
 - **First**, the work of the Holy Spirit speaking to the person directly, stirring their heart, soul, mind, conscience. Without the work of the Holy Spirit preparing the person to receive the message of God’s wrath there will only be resistance and rejection. Pray, “Holy Spirit, are you already speaking to, and preparing, this person? If no, I

should not speak. If yes, give me the courage and compassion to speak.”

- *Second, trust that the person talking about “God’s wrath” genuinely cares about the other person.*
 - *Third, a humble attitude in the person talking about “God’s wrath.” The person speaking is no better than anyone else and was also subject to God’s wrath before meeting Jesus.*
 - *Fourth, sharing, along with the message of “God’s wrath”, the great news of God’s forgiveness and grace offered in Jesus.*
- **Apply Q13:** This passage also speaks of the value of a healthy conscience. What influences have helped shape your conscience?
 - *What are the opposite influences working to corrupt and alter your conscience in ways that are opposed to God’s design and directions?*
 - **Apply Q14:** What can you do now to point your conscience in a healthy direction?
 - **Apply Q15:** God (who is perfect) shows no favoritism in His judgments. What are some ways that you can practice fairness in your own actions?
 - **Pray:** Thank God that He is just and fair – showing no favoritism. Identify yourself in His presence as either Jew or Gentile. Thank Him that through Jesus Christ He invites you into His family – regardless of your origins.

Additional Leader Resources

1. John Piper Sermon Series on Romans: <https://www.desiringgod.org/scripture/romans>
2. See week 1 leader guide for the Preface to Martin Luther’s commentary on Romans (from the 1500’s)

If you have any questions or comments, if you need help with this study, with members of your group, or with technology, please call (248-7940 x114) or email (curt@yakimagrace.com)

Romans 2:1-16 (3 Versions)

ESV: English Standard Version

1 Therefore you have no excuse, O man, every one of you who judges. For in passing judgment on another you condemn yourself, because you, the judge, practice the very same things. 2 We know that the judgment of God rightly falls on those who practice such things. 3 Do you suppose, O man—you who judge those who practice such things and yet do them yourself—that you will escape the judgment of God? 4 Or do you presume on the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance? 5 But because of your hard and impenitent heart you are storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath when God's righteous judgment will be revealed.

6 He will render to each one according to his works: 7 to those who by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, he will give eternal life; 8 but for those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, there will be wrath and fury. 9 There will be tribulation and distress for every human being who does evil, the Jew first and also the Greek, 10 but glory and honor and peace for everyone who does good, the Jew first and also the Greek. 11 For God shows no partiality.

12 For all who have sinned without the law will also perish without the law, and all who have sinned under the law will be judged by the law. 13 For it is not the hearers of the law who are righteous before God, but the doers of the law who will be justified. 14 For when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do what the law requires, they are a law to themselves, even though they do not have the law. 15 They show that the work of the law is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness, and their conflicting thoughts accuse or even excuse them 16 on that day when, according to my gospel, God judges the secrets of men by Christ Jesus.

NIV: New International Version

You, therefore, have no excuse, you who pass judgment on someone else, for at whatever point you judge another, you are condemning yourself, because you who pass judgment do the same things. 2 Now we know that God's judgment against those who do such things is based on truth. 3 So when you, a mere human being, pass judgment on them and yet do the same things, do you think you will escape God's judgment? 4 Or do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, forbearance and patience, not realizing that God's kindness is intended to lead you to repentance?

5 But because of your stubbornness and your unrepentant heart, you are storing up wrath against yourself for the day of God's wrath, when his righteous judgment will be revealed. 6 God "will repay each person according to what they have done." 7 To those who by persistence in doing good seek glory, honor and immortality, he will give eternal life. 8 But for those who are self-seeking and who reject the truth and follow evil, there will be wrath and anger. 9 There will be trouble and distress for every human being who does evil: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile; 10 but glory, honor and peace for everyone who does good: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile. 11 For God does not show favoritism.

12 All who sin apart from the law will also perish apart from the law, and all who sin under the law will be judged by the law. 13 For it is not those who hear the law who are righteous in God's sight, but it is those who obey the law who will be declared righteous. 14 (Indeed, when Gentiles, who do not have the law, do by nature things required by the law, they are a law for themselves, even though they do not have the law. 15 They show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts sometimes accusing them and at other times even defending them.) 16 This will take place on the day when God judges people's secrets through Jesus Christ, as my gospel declares.

MSG: The Message

1-2 Those people are on a dark spiral downward. But if you think that leaves you on the high ground where you can point your finger at others, think again.

Every time you criticize someone, you condemn yourself. It takes one to know one. Judgmental criticism of others is a well-known way of escaping detection in your own crimes and misdemeanors. But God isn't so easily diverted. He sees right through all such smoke screens and holds you to what you've done.

3-4 You didn't think, did you, that just by pointing your finger at others you would distract God from seeing all your misdoings and from coming down on you hard? Or did you think that because he's such a nice God, he'd let you off the hook? Better think this one through from the beginning. God is kind, but he's not soft. In kindness he takes us firmly by the hand and leads us into a radical life-change.

5-8 You're not getting by with anything. Every refusal and avoidance of God adds fuel to the fire. The day is coming when it's going to blaze hot and high, God's fiery and righteous judgment. Make no mistake: In the end you get what's coming to you—Real Life for those who work on God's side, but to those who insist on getting their own way and take the path of least resistance, Fire!

9-11 If you go against the grain, you get splinters, regardless of which neighborhood you're from, what your parents taught you, what schools you attended. But if you embrace the way God does things, there are wonderful payoffs, again without regard to where you are from or how you were brought up. Being a Jew won't give you an automatic stamp of approval. God pays no attention to what others say (or what you think) about you. He makes up his own mind.

12-13 If you sin without knowing what you're doing, God takes that into account. But if you sin knowing full well what you're doing, that's a different story entirely. Merely hearing God's law is a waste of your time if you don't do what he commands. Doing, not hearing, is what makes the difference with God.

14-16 When outsiders who have never heard of God's law follow it more or less by instinct, they confirm its truth by their obedience. They show that God's law is not something alien, imposed on us from without, but woven into the very fabric of our creation. There is something deep within them that echoes God's yes and no, right and wrong. Their response to God's yes and no will become public knowledge on the day God makes his final decision about every man and woman. The Message from God that I proclaim through Jesus Christ takes into account all these differences.

Grace Community Group Life Study Guide

Romans: Encountering the Gospel's Power

Week 4 (pages 23-27 in the book)

Reminder: The verse and chapter numbering was not included in the original letters and books of the Bible (they were added much later as an aid for those reading). It is always wise to begin reading a passage a few verses before where you intend to start, and continue a few verses after you intend to stop. There are times when this helps us understand the larger context of what is being said. I'm including here the last few verses of last week's passage.

"¹⁵ They show that the work of the law is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness, and their conflicting thoughts accuse or even excuse them ¹⁶ on that day when, according to my gospel, God judges the secrets of men by Christ Jesus ..."

Passage for chapter 4 in the study book: Romans 2:17-3:8 (ESV: English Standard Version) see Appendix below for a three version comparison of this passage.

¹⁷ But if you call yourself a Jew and rely on the law and boast in God ¹⁸ and know His will and approve what is excellent, because you are instructed from the law; ¹⁹ and if you are sure that you yourself are a guide to the blind, a light to those who are in darkness, ²⁰ an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of children, having in the law the embodiment of knowledge and truth — ²¹ you then who teach others, do you not teach yourself? While you preach against stealing, do you steal? ²² You who say that one must not commit adultery, do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols, do you rob temples? ²³ You who boast in the law dishonor God by breaking the law. ²⁴ For, as it is written, 'The name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you.'

²⁵ For circumcision indeed is of value if you obey the law, but if you break the law, your circumcision becomes uncircumcision. ²⁶ So, if a man who is uncircumcised keeps the precepts of the law, will not his uncircumcision be regarded as circumcision? ²⁷ Then he who is physically uncircumcised but keeps the law will condemn you who have the written code and circumcision but break the law. ²⁸ For no one is a Jew who is merely one outwardly, nor is circumcision outward and physical. ²⁹ But a Jew is one inwardly, and circumcision is a matter of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter. His praise is not from man but from God.

^{3.1} Then what advantage has the Jew? Or what is the value of circumcision? ² Much in every way. To begin with, the Jews were entrusted with the oracles of God. ³ What if some were unfaithful? Does their faithlessness nullify the faithfulness of God? ⁴ By no means! Let God be true though everyone were a liar, as it is written,

"That you may be justified in your words, and prevail when you are judged."

⁵ But if our unrighteousness serves to show the righteousness of God, what shall we say? That God is unrighteous to inflict wrath on us? (I speak in a human way.) ⁶ By no means! For then how could God judge the world? ⁷ But if through my lie God's truth abounds to his glory, why am I still being condemned as a

sinner? ⁸ And why not do evil that good may come? — as some people slanderously charge us with saying. Their condemnation is just.”¹

Purpose of Community Groups

- The goal is not to get through the material ... the goal is to get to know each other, and for everyone to gain a better understanding of who Jesus is, and what that means for their life.
- To build safe environment where group members feel safe to share honestly. Consider discussing and agreeing to a set of group guidelines.
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Please use only what you find helpful in this guide.

If you, your group, or a particular member of your group, has personal, spiritual, emotional, intellectual, difficulty with any part of this study in Romans, or has questions about Grace’s understanding on what you are studying, please reach out to one of us (pastors). We would appreciate the opportunity to continue the discussion.²

Get to Know you questions

1. Share a time when you trusted someone for information, for directions, for a weather forecast, for help with a problem, and they were wrong? Did it change the way you saw them in the future?
2. What was your favorite cartoon growing up? When did you first watch that cartoon? What was it about that particular cartoon you liked?

Introduction and Background of the book of Romans

Refer to the Leader’s guide for week 1

Questions for this week

- Are there any lingering questions or comments from previous weeks of this study?
- Refer to Chapter 4 titled “Misplaced Confidence” (pages 23-27)
 - For this leader’s edition I am including the questions found in the Romans: Encountering the Gospel’s Power book. Additional questions from Grace of Christ staff are included *in italics* below the questions from the book.
 - **Open:** What are some false assumptions that people make about gaining God’s favor?
 - *Where do those assumptions about God, about Christian faith, come from?*

¹ The book uses, primarily, the NIV (New International Version). At Grace we use, primarily, the ESV (English Standard Version). The ESV is considered a more accurate translation of the original Greek, while the NIV, although a good translation, is appreciated because it is easier to read. A comparison of three Bible versions of this passage is included below (Appendix A) (Curt’s notes)

² From Curt McFarland, pastor at Grace. Contact information: 509-248-7940 x114, curt@yakimagrace.com

Read Romans 2:17-29. The argument of verses 17-24 is the same principle as that of 2:1-3 and is just as applicable to us as to first-century critical moralizers and self-confident Jews. If we judge others, we should be able to judge ourselves (2:1-3). If we teach others, we should be able to teach ourselves (vv. 21-24). If we set ourselves up as either teachers or judges of others, we can have no excuse if we do not teach or judge ourselves. We cannot possibly plead ignorance. On the contrary, we invite God's condemnation of our hypocrisy.

- **Q1:** The people described in verses 17-29 assumed that they had a good relationship with God. What kinds of things did they depend on to give them that relationship?
 - *What do many people today believe will give them a good relationship with God?*
- **Q2:** What is Paul trying to show his readers with the list of questions in verses 21-23?
 - *Are there hypocrites in the Christian church? In the pulpit? In Christian homes?*
 - *What would you say to someone who dismissed Jesus because of Christians they knew who were hypocrites? Are you at times a hypocrite regarding your Christian faith? If yes, How do you find peace with the hypocrisy in our own life? If no, look again.*
- **Q3:** In verse 24 Paul says, "God's name is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you." Why?
 - *Can you provide examples of the name of God being "blasphemed" among those outside the church by those who claim to be inside the church representing God?*
- **Q4:** What is the relationship between circumcision and keeping the law (vv. 25-29)?
 - *Is circumcision still required by God? Read Acts 15 for the great debate among the early Christians on circumcision and their conclusion that it was not circumcision but the grace and work of Jesus that mattered.*
- **Q5:** What does it mean to have a circumcised heart (v. 29)?
- **Q6:** How have you sensed the Holy Spirit at work in your heart?
 - *Have you see any change in your life from the day you first became a Christian until now?*
- **Summary:** *Read the summary on page 25. (Remember that when the author mentions the "Jews" it includes all of us who believe we are insiders with God. The pastors and Bible teachers were the ones who resisted Jesus the most and ultimately demanded His death.) Do you agree with the author as he describes what matters to God? How is "what matters to God" different from what we are often taught (in words and in actions) matters? (Consider 1 Samuel 16:7)*
- **Q7:** Read Romans 3:1-8. In what ways had the Jews "been entrusted with the very words of God"?
 - *In what ways do we have an advantage by being entrusted with the words of God?*
- **Q8:** Notice the list of questions woven through verses 1-8. What objections to faith do these questions raise?

- **Q9:** How would you respond to a person who said, “I’m glad I fell so deeply into wrong. It shows how good God is and how much he will forgive” (vv. 5-8)?
 - *What would you say to someone who told you ... “it doesn’t matter what I do, the choices I make, the sin I am involved in, because God will forgive me. I’m going to do whatever I want. That makes His mercy even greater”?*
- **Q10:** This section of Romans ends with the words, “their condemnation is deserved.” What did Paul mean?
 - *Will there be an accounting for the way we have treated, responded to, the forgiveness and grace of God? Explain.*
- **Summary:** Read the summary on page 26. Do you agree that the reason Paul wrote this section (vv. 3:1-8) was that the character of God was at stake?
- **Apply:** If you are reading this book you have in some way been entrusted with the words of God. How are you using that responsibility?
- The Jews to whom Paul was writing had all sorts of misplaced confidence about their special relationship with God. What or whom have you been tempted to trust besides the grace of Jesus Christ alone?
- **Pray:** In Romans 2:24 Paul issues a strong accusation to Jews who knew God’s law but did not keep it. Spend a few minutes in self-examination to answer this question: “What do people think of God because of me?” Then talk to God about your findings.

Additional Leader Resources

1. John Piper Sermon Series on Romans: <https://www.desiringgod.org/scripture/romans>
2. See week 1 leader guide for the Preface to Martin Luther’s commentary on Romans (from the 1500’s)

If you have any questions or comments, if you need help with this study, with members of your group, or with technology, please call (248-7940 x114) or email (curt@yakimagrace.com)

Romans 2:17-3:8 (3 Versions)

ESV: English Standard Version

¹⁷ But if you call yourself a Jew and rely on the law and boast in God ¹⁸ and know his will and approve what is excellent, because you are instructed from the law; ¹⁹ and if you are sure that you yourself are a guide to the blind, a light to those who are in darkness, ²⁰ an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of children, having in the law the embodiment of knowledge and truth — ²¹ you then who teach others, do you not teach yourself? While you preach against stealing, do you steal? ²² You who say that one must not commit adultery, do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols, do you rob temples? ²³ You who boast in the law dishonor God by breaking the law. ²⁴ For, as it is written, “The name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you.”

²⁵ For circumcision indeed is of value if you obey the law, but if you break the law, your circumcision becomes uncircumcision. ²⁶ So, if a man who is uncircumcised keeps the precepts of the law, will not his uncircumcision be regarded as circumcision? ²⁷ Then he who is physically uncircumcised but keeps the law will condemn you who have the written code and circumcision but break the law. ²⁸ For no one is a Jew who is merely one outwardly, nor is circumcision outward and physical. . But a Jew is one inwardly, and circumcision is a matter of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter. His praise is not from man but from God.

^{3:1} Then what advantage has the Jew? Or what is the value of circumcision? ² Much in every way. To begin with, the Jews were entrusted with the oracles of God. ³ What if some were unfaithful? Does their faithlessness nullify the faithfulness of God? ⁴ By no means! Let God be true though every one were a liar, as it is written, “That you may be justified in your words, and prevail when you are judged.”

⁵ But if our unrighteousness serves to show the righteousness of God, what shall we say? That God is unrighteous to inflict wrath on us? (I speak in a human way.) ⁶ By no means! For then how could God judge the world? ⁷ But if through my lie God’s truth abounds to his glory, why am I still being condemned as a sinner? ⁸ And why not do evil that good may come? — as some people slanderously charge us with saying. Their condemnation is just.

NIV: New International Version

¹⁷ Now you, if you call yourself a Jew; if you rely on the law and boast in God; ¹⁸ if you know his will and approve of what is superior because you are instructed by the law; ¹⁹ if you are convinced that you are a guide for the blind, a light for those who are in the dark, ²⁰ an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of little children, because you have in the law the embodiment of knowledge and truth — ²¹ you, then, who teach others, do you not teach yourself? You who preach against stealing, do you steal? ²² You who say that people should not commit adultery, do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols, do you rob temples? ²³ You who boast in the law, do you dishonor God by breaking the law? ²⁴ As it is written: “God’s name is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you.”

²⁵ Circumcision has value if you observe the law, but if you break the law, you have become as though you had not been circumcised. ²⁶ So then, if those who are not circumcised keep the law’s requirements, will they not be regarded as though they were circumcised? ²⁷ The one who is not circumcised physically and yet obeys the law will condemn you who, even though you have the written code and circumcision, are a lawbreaker.

²⁸ A person is not a Jew who is one only outwardly, nor is circumcision merely outward and physical. ²⁹ No, a person is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is circumcision of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the written code. Such a person’s praise is not from other people, but from God.

^{3:1} What advantage, then, is there in being a Jew, or what value is there in circumcision? ² Much in every way! First of all, the Jews have been entrusted with the very words of God.

³ What if some were unfaithful? Will their unfaithfulness nullify God’s faithfulness? ⁴ Not at all! Let God be true, and every human being a liar. As it is written: “So that you may be proved right when you speak and prevail when you judge.”

⁵ But if our unrighteousness brings out God’s righteousness more clearly, what shall we say? That God is unjust in bringing his wrath on us? (I am using a human argument.) ⁶ Certainly not! If that were so, how could God judge the world? ⁷ Someone might argue, “If my falsehood enhances God’s truthfulness and so increases his glory, why am I still condemned as a sinner?” ⁸ Why not say—as some slanderously claim that we say—“Let us do evil that good may result”? Their condemnation is just!

MSG: The Message

¹⁷⁻²⁴ If you’re brought up Jewish, don’t assume that you can lean back in the arms of your religion and take it easy, feeling smug because you’re an insider to God’s revelation, a connoisseur of the best things of God, informed on the latest doctrines! I have a special word of caution for you who are sure that you have it all together yourselves and, because you know God’s revealed Word inside and out, feel qualified to guide others through their blind alleys and dark nights and confused emotions to God. While you are guiding others, who is going to guide you? I’m quite serious. While preaching “Don’t steal!” are you going to rob people blind? Who would suspect you? The same with adultery. The same with idolatry. You can get by with almost anything if you front it with eloquent talk about God and his law. The line from Scripture, “It’s because of you Jews that the outsiders frown on God,” shows it’s an old problem that isn’t going to go away.

²⁵⁻²⁹ Circumcision, the surgical ritual that marks you as a Jew, is great if you live in accord with God’s law. But if you don’t, it’s worse than not being circumcised. The reverse is also true: The uncircumcised who keep God’s ways are as good as the circumcised—in fact, better. Better to keep God’s law uncircumcised than break it circumcised. Don’t you see: It’s not the cut of a knife that makes a Jew. You become a Jew by who you are. It’s the mark of God on your heart, not of a knife on your skin, that makes a Jew. And recognition comes from God, not legalistic critics.

^{3:1-2} So what difference does it make who’s a Jew and who isn’t, who has been trained in God’s ways and who hasn’t? As it turns out, it makes a lot of difference—but not the difference so many have assumed.

²⁻⁶ First, there’s the matter of being put in charge of writing down and caring for God’s revelation, these Holy Scriptures. So, what if, in the course of doing that, some of those Jews abandoned their post? God didn’t abandon them. Do you think their faithlessness cancels out his faithfulness? Not on your life! Depend on it: God keeps his word even when the whole world is lying through its teeth. Scripture says the same: Your words stand fast and true; Rejection doesn’t faze you. But if our wrongdoing only underlines and confirms God’s rightdoing, shouldn’t we be commended for helping out? Since our lies don’t even make a dent in his truth, isn’t it wrong of God to back us to the wall and hold us to our word? These questions come up.

But if our wrongdoing only underlines and confirms God's rightdoing, shouldn't we be commended for helping out? Since our lies don't even make a dent in his truth, isn't it wrong of God to back us to the wall and hold us to our word? These questions come up.

Grace Community Group Life Study Guide

Romans: Encountering the Gospel's Power

Week 5 (pages 28-32 in the book)

Reminder: The verse and chapter numbering was not included in the original letters and books of the Bible (they were added much later as an aid for those reading). It is always wise to begin reading a passage a few verses before where you intend to start, and continue a few verses after you intend to stop. There are times when this helps us understand the larger context of what is being said. I'm including here the final verses from last week's passage.

⁷ But if through my lie God's truth abounds to his glory, why am I still being condemned as a sinner? ⁸ And why not do evil that good may come? — as some people slanderously charge us with saying. Their condemnation is just."

Passage for chapter 5 in the study book: Romans 3:9-20 (ESV: English Standard Version) see page 5 for a three-version comparison of this passage.

⁹ What then? Are we Jews any better off? No, not at all. For we have already charged that all, both Jews and Greeks, are under sin, ¹⁰ as it is written: "None is righteous, no, not one;

¹¹ no one understands; no one seeks for God.

¹² All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one."

¹³ "Their throat is an open grave; they use their tongues to deceive."

"The venom of asps is under their lips."

¹⁴ "Their mouth is full of curses and bitterness."

¹⁵ "Their feet are swift to shed blood;

¹⁶ in their paths are ruin and misery,

¹⁷ and the way of peace they have not known."

¹⁸ "There is no fear of God before their eyes."

¹⁹ Now we know that whatever the law says it speaks to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be stopped, and the whole world may be held accountable to God. ²⁰ For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin."¹

Purpose of Community Groups

- The goal is not to get through the material ... the goal is to get to know each other, and for everyone to gain a better understanding of who Jesus is, and what that means for their life.
- To build safe environment where group members feel safe to share honestly. Consider discussing and agreeing to a set of group guidelines.
 - Confidentiality. What is shared in the group stays in the group. You are free to share what you have said in the group, but not what others have said.
 - Listen when others are sharing. Do not interrupt or attempt to fix the other person. Listen.

¹ The book uses, primarily, the NIV (New International Version). At Grace we use, primarily, the ESV (English Standard Version). The ESV is considered a more accurate translation of the original Greek, while the NIV, although a good translation, is appreciated because it is easier to read. A comparison of three Bible versions of this passage is included below (Appendix A) (Curt's notes)

- Do not dominate the group discussion. Let others speak. Encourage others to speak. Be willing to adjust your approach to the group if the group leader indicates others need to share.
- Support and care. Community Life Groups are the best way to care for others, and to be cared for by others. Share your needs, and respond to the needs expressed by others.

Please use only what you find helpful in this guide.

If you, your group, or a particular member of your group, has personal, spiritual, emotional, intellectual, difficulty with any part of this study in Romans, or has questions about Grace's understanding on what you are studying, please reach out to one of us (pastors). We would appreciate the opportunity to continue the discussion.²

Get to Know you questions

1. Who was your favorite teacher when you were a student in school? What was it that made them such a memorable teacher? Were you able to express your thanks to them?
2. Share a time when, as a young kid, you knew you did something your parents did not want you to do. What did you do, what resulted from what you did, what lessons did you learn?

Introduction and Background of the book of Romans

Refer to the Leader's guide for week 1

Questions for this week

- Are there any lingering questions or comments about the study so far?
- Refer to Chapter 5 titled "Unholy Togetherness" (pages 28-32)
 - For this leader's edition I have included below the questions found in the Romans: Encountering the Gospel's Power book. Additional questions from Grace of Christ staff are included *in italics* below selected questions from the book.
 - Read the opening paragraph for the chapter
 - **Open:** What kinds of "togetherness" have you chosen? Why?
 - *If you were to look around at a social gathering you were hosting in your home what would you see? What types of people would be there? What kinds of conversations would be taking place?*
 - *Why do you have the friends and acquaintances you have? What were the reasons you chose them and they chose you?*

Study: Read Romans 3:9-18. The apostle is approaching the end of his lengthy argument and asks himself how to wrap it all up, how to rest his case: "What shall we conclude then?" (v. 9). He has exposed in succession the blatant unrighteousness of much of the ancient Gentile world (1:18-32), the hypocritical righteousness of moralizers (2:1-16) and the confident self-righteousness of Jewish people, whose anomaly is that they boast of God's law but break it (2:17-3:8). So now he arraigns and condemns the whole human race.

- **Q1:** Paul opens this section of his letter with the words "What shall we conclude then?" In view of verses 9-12, what is his conclusion about all that he has said thus far?
- **Q2:** Focus on verses 13-18. What images do these words bring to your mind?

² From Curt McFarland, pastor at Grace. Contact information: 509-248-7940 x114, curt@yakimagrace.com

- *Do you see this in the lives of those around you?*
 - *Do you see this in your own life?*
 - *How do these verse make you feel? Sad? Hopeless? Hopeful? Thankful? Discuss.*
- **Q3:** Notice the various parts of the body that Paul describes. What impact does this have on the way you think about sin?
 - *How would you define “sin”?*
 - *Who decides whether something is a sin or not? Who is your guide and compass for what is right and wrong? Allow for disagreement here. Be gracious with each other. If some in your group are not Christians welcome and respect their thoughts on this.*
 - **Q4:** Verse 18 speaks of “fear of God.” What kind of fear of God is appropriate?
 - *Is there a good kind of fear present in our closest relationships? Explain. (consider honor and respect, fear of disappointment, of offending, of hurting, of losing ...)*
 - *Does God intend for us to live in continual fear? What kind of relationship does God desire to have with us? Can you think of Bible passages that speak to this? (consider Genesis 3:1-9, John 3:16, John 15:12-17, Philippians 1:3-11, Galatians 4:1-7, Romans 5:1-11, Hebrews 4:11-13)*
 - **Q5:** How do you feel about seeing yourself described in the words of this passage?
 - **Summary:** One feature of this grim biblical picture stands out. It declares the ungodliness of sin. Sin is the revolt of the self against God, the dethronement of God with a view to the enthronement of oneself. Ultimately, sin is self-deification, the reckless determination to occupy the throne which belongs to God alone.
 - **Q6:** Read Romans 3:19-20. According to these verses, what is an appropriate response to the law?
 - *If no one keeps the law, why did God gave us the law in the first place?*
 - *Consider laws for driving ... why are driving laws given to us? Even when we fail to obey driving laws, what role do they play for us and others?*
 - **Q7:** Suppose someone said, “Since no one will be ‘declared righteous’ by obeying God’s law, why bother to pay any attention to it at all?” How would you respond?
 - *Even though we do not perfectly keep the “law” does it still serve a purpose? If yes, what is, are, the purpose(s)?*
 - The author writes, “I think Luther (1500’s) got it right when he said, “The principal point ... of the law ... is to make men not better but worse; that is to say, it sheweth unto them their sin, that by the knowledge thereof they may be humbled, terrified, bruised and broken, and by this means be driven to seek grace, and so come to that blessed seed [sc. Christ]. Commentary on St. Paul’s epistle to the Galatians [1531; James Clarke, 1953], p. 316.)
 - **Q8:** Paul opened his letter to the Romans with three and a half chapters on the topic of sin. What has this contributed to your view of yourself and your view of God?
 - *How does this focus on our sin connect with the opening verses in Romans chapter 1:1-7?*
 - **Q9:** How might these chapters affect your relationship to other people?

- *Who is the best, most moral, most perfect, person you know? What makes them so good?*
- *Compared to the perfection of God, the demands of the law given by God: 10 commandments and New Testament teachings of Jesus (consider Matthew 5:48 Jesus taught, "You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.") is even the best we know perfect and without sin? Discuss?*
- *What does it mean for you, for us, for the Christian church, when the writer of Romans states, "None is righteous, no not one" (v. 10)?*
- *If every one of us sins and falls short how does that change our approach to, and view of, others with obvious sins?*
- **Summary:** In conclusion, how should we respond to Paul's devastating exposure of universal sin and guilt? We should not try to evade it by changing the subject and talking instead of the need for self-esteem, or by blaming our behavior on our genes, nurturing, education, or society. It is an essential part of our dignity as human beings that however much we may have been affected by negative influences, we are not their helpless victims, but rather responsible for our conduct. Our first response to Paul's indictment, then , should be to make it as certain as we possibly can that we have ourselves accepted this divine diagnosis of our human condition as true, and that we have fled from the just judgment of God on our sins to the only refuge there is, namely Jesus Christ, who died for our sins. For we have no merit to plead, and no excuse to make. We too stand before God speechless and condemned. Only then shall we be ready to hear the great "But now" of verse 21, as Paul begins to explain how God has intervened through Christ and His cross for our salvation.
- **Apply:** Many people today do not like to use words like "right," "wrong and sin." They value personal freedom and believe that they should do whatever seems appropriate in a particular setting. In view of the first three chapters of Romans, how do you respond to this kind of thinking.
- Some people feel constantly guilty, plagued by false guilt. Others seem guilt-free, as if they have an inadequate sense of their own wrongdoing. But many people have a realistic view of personal sin. How would you describe your own sense of guilt and sin?
- What hope would you offer someone who felt a constant nagging sense of guilt?
- **Pray:** Prayerfully reread verses 10-18, acknowledging in the presence of God that this is a true description of yourself apart from the redeeming grace of Jesus Christ. Thank Him for that grace.

Additional Leader Resources

1. John Piper Sermon Series on Romans: <https://www.desiringgod.org/scripture/romans>
2. See week 1 leader guide for the Preface to Martin Luther's commentary on Romans (from the 1500's)

If you have any questions or comments, if you need help with this study, with members of your group, or with technology, please call (248-7940 x114) or email (curt@yakimagrace.com)

Romans 3:7-20 (3 Versions)

ESV: English Standard Version

⁷ But if through my lie God's truth abounds to his glory, why am I still being condemned as a sinner? ⁸ And why not do evil that good may come? — as some people slanderously charge us with saying. Their condemnation is just.

⁹ What then? Are we Jews any better off? No, not at all. For we have already charged that all, both Jews and Greeks, are under sin,

¹⁰ as it is written:

“None is righteous, no, not one;

¹¹ no one understands; no one seeks for God.

¹² All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one.”

¹³ “Their throat is an open grave; they use their tongues to deceive.”

“The venom of asps is under their lips.”

¹⁴ “Their mouth is full of curses and bitterness.”

¹⁵ “Their feet are swift to shed blood;

¹⁶ in their paths are ruin and misery,

¹⁷ and the way of peace they have not known.”

¹⁸ “There is no fear of God before their eyes.”

¹⁹ Now we know that whatever the law says it speaks to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be stopped, and the whole world may be held accountable to God. ²⁰ For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin.

NIV: New International Version

⁷ Someone might argue, “If my falsehood enhances God’s truthfulness and so increases his glory, why am I still condemned as a sinner?” ⁸ Why not say — as some slanderously claim that we say — “Let us do evil that good may result”? Their condemnation is just!

⁹ What shall we conclude then? Do we have any advantage? Not at all! For we have already made the charge that Jews and Gentiles alike are all under the power of sin.

¹⁰ As it is written:

“There is no one righteous, not even one;

¹¹ there is no one who understands; there is no one who seeks God.

¹² All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one.”

¹³ “Their throats are open graves; their tongues practice deceit.”

“The poison of vipers is on their lips.”

¹⁴ “Their mouths are full of cursing and bitterness.”

¹⁵ “Their feet are swift to shed blood;

¹⁶ ruin and misery mark their ways,

¹⁷ and the way of peace they do not know.”

¹⁸ “There is no fear of God before their eyes.”

¹⁹ Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be silenced and the whole world held accountable to God. ²⁰ Therefore no one will be declared righteous in God’s sight by the works of the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of our sin

MSG: The Message

⁷⁻⁸ It’s simply perverse to say, “If my lies serve to show off God’s truth all the more gloriously, why blame me? I’m doing God a favor.” Some people are actually trying to put such words in our mouths, claiming that we go around saying, “The more evil we do, the more good God does, so let’s just do it!” That’s pure slander, as I’m sure you’ll agree.

⁹⁻¹⁸ So where does that put us? Do we Jews get a better break than the others? Not really. Basically, all of us, whether insiders or outsiders, start out in identical conditions, which is to say that we all start out as sinners.

Scripture leaves no doubt about it:

There’s nobody living right, not even one,

nobody who knows the score, nobody alert for God.

They’ve all taken the wrong turn; they’ve all wandered down blind alleys. No one’s living right; I can’t find a single one.

Their throats are gaping graves, their tongues slick as mudslides.

Every word they speak is tinged with poison.

They open their mouths and pollute the air.

They race for the honor of sinner-of-the-year, litter the land with heartbreak and ruin, Don’t know the first thing about living with others.

They never give God the time of day.

¹⁹⁻²⁰ This makes it clear, doesn’t it, that whatever is written in these Scriptures is not what God says about others but to us to whom these Scriptures were addressed in the first place! And it’s clear enough, isn’t it, that we’re sinners, every one of us, in the same sinking boat with everybody else? Our involvement with God’s revelation doesn’t put us right with God. What it does is force us to face our complicity in everyone else’s sin.

Grace Community Group Life Study Guide

Romans: Encountering the Gospel's Power

Week 6: Chapter 6 (pages 33-37 in the book). **Please use only what you find helpful in this guide.**

Passage for chapter 6 in the study book: Romans 3:21 – 4:25 (ESV: English Standard Version) see pages 6-7 for a three-version comparison of this passage.

²⁰ “For by works of the law no human being will be justified in His sight. Since through the law comes knowledge of sin.”

²¹ But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it — ²² the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for **ALL** who believe. For there is no distinction: ²³ for **ALL** have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴ and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, ²⁵ whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. ²⁶ It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

²⁷ Then what becomes of our boasting? It is excluded. By what kind of law? By a law of works? No, but by the law of faith. ²⁸ For we hold that one is justified by faith apart from works of the law. ²⁹ Or is God the God of Jews only? Is he not the God of Gentiles also? Yes, of Gentiles also, ³⁰ since God is one — who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith. ³¹ Do we then overthrow the law by this faith? By no means! On the contrary, we uphold the law.

^{4.1} What then shall we say was gained by Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh? ² For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. ³ For what does the Scripture say? “Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness.” ⁴ Now to the one who works, his wages are not counted as a gift but as his due. ⁵ And to the one who does not work but believes in him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness, ⁶ just as David also speaks of the blessing of the one to whom God counts righteousness apart from works:

⁷ “Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven,
and whose sins are covered;

⁸ blessed is the man against whom the Lord will not count his sin.”

⁹ Is this blessing then only for the circumcised, or also for the uncircumcised? For we say that faith was counted to Abraham as righteousness. ¹⁰ How then was it counted to him? Was it before or after he had been circumcised? It was not after, but before he was circumcised. ¹¹ He received the sign of circumcision as a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised. The purpose was to make him the father of all who believe without being circumcised, so that righteousness would be counted to them as well, ¹² and to make him the father of the circumcised who are not merely circumcised but who also walk in the footsteps of the faith that our father Abraham had before he was circumcised.

¹³ For the promise to Abraham and his offspring that he would be heir of the world did not come through the law but through the righteousness of faith. ¹⁴ For if it is the adherents of the law who are to be the heirs, faith is null and the promise is void. ¹⁵ For the law brings wrath, but where there is no law there is no transgression.

¹⁶ That is why it depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace and be guaranteed to **ALL** his offspring — not only to the adherent of the law but also to the one who shares the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us **ALL**, ¹⁷ as it is written, “I have made you the father of many nations”—in the presence of the God in whom he believed, who gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist. ¹⁸ In hope he believed against hope, that he should become the father of many nations, as he had been told, “So shall your offspring be.” ¹⁹ He did not weaken in faith when he considered his own body, which was as good as

dead (since he was about a hundred years old), or when he considered the barrenness of Sarah's womb.²⁰ No unbelief made him waver concerning the promise of God, but he grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God,²¹ fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised.²² That is why his faith was 'counted to him as righteousness.'²³ But the words 'it was counted to him' were not written for his sake alone,²⁴ but for ours also. It will be counted to us who believe in him who raised from the dead Jesus our Lord,²⁵ who was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification."¹

Get to Know You Questions

1. What was your first job (not working for your immediate family)? How old were you? What were you asked to do? What was your motivation for working? How much were you paid? What did you do with the money you earned?
2. If you could go back in time and visit one event recorded in the Old Testament what would it be, and why would you want to see that particular event?

Are there any lingering questions or comments about the study so far?

Refer to Chapter 6 titled "Forgive Us Our Debts" (pages 33-37). The questions found in the Romans: Encountering the Gospel's Power book are included below. Additional questions from Grace of Christ staff are included *in italics* below questions from the book.

Questions for week 6

- Debts are heavy burdens. Students graduate from college with debts higher than the cost of their parents' homes. Homes put their owners in debt for most of their working lives. Nations owe each other enough money to end poverty on both sides of their borders. But even debts this staggering can be paid off with hard work and cold cash. Resolving our debt to God is harder—maybe even impossible. Paul has spent three and a half chapters proving that we are all morally ruined, that we have no hope, regardless of our efforts, of earning God's favor.²
 - *What is the downside of excessive debt?*
 - *The author states, "Resolving our debt to God is harder—maybe even impossible," and in the next sentence writes, "we are all morally ruined, that we have no hope, regardless of our efforts, of earning God's favor." According to what you know of Christian faith, which of these two: "... maybe even impossible" or "no hope ... of earning God's favor" more accurately describes the Christian understanding of our situation with God?*
- **Open:** Bring to mind the largest financial debt you have ever had. Suppose you got a note from your creditor saying, "Someone else has paid your bill in full. You now owe nothing at all." What would you say and do?
- **Study:** Read Romans 3:21-31. All human beings, of every race and rank, of every creed and culture, Jews and Gentiles, the immoral and the moralizing, the religious and the irreligious, are without any exception sinful, guilty, inexcusable, and speechless before God. That was the terrible human predicament described in Romans 1:18–3:20. There was no ray of light, no flicker of hope, no prospect of rescue.

¹ The book uses, primarily, the NIV (New International Version). At Grace we use, primarily, the ESV (English Standard Version). The ESV is considered a more accurate translation of the original Greek, while the NIV, although a good translation, is appreciated because it is easier to read. A comparison of three Bible versions of this passage is included below (Appendix A) (Curt's notes)

² This and every excerpt quoted is from: Carolyn Nystrom, John R. W. Stott. "Romans." Apple Books.

- **Q1.** Paul opens this new section of Romans with the words “But now.” What shift in emphasis do these words signal?
 - *Why would Paul write in the first chapters of Romans that we are ALL miserable, inexcusable, sinful and guilty? How does that understanding of our condition before God help set us up for what Paul will include later in Romans? See Romans 5:1-10*
 - *Why might it be important for us to hear “bad news” before we hear “good news”?*
- **Q2.** Verses 21-26 are six tightly packed verses, which Leon Morris³ suggests may be ‘possibly the most important single paragraph ever written’ (The Epistle to the Romans, 173). There is a host of theological terms. Give the best definition you can for each of these: righteousness, justified, grace, redemption, atonement, justice, faith. (A Bible dictionary or theological dictionary may help.) (Consider the Bible Dictionary available through Biblehub.com)
 - *In verse 25 the English Standard Translation uses the word “propitiation”⁴, the New International Version translates here “atonement”⁵.*
 - *How do these words help us understand what occurred when Jesus died on the cross? What was the offense Jesus was repairing, reconciling, covering over?*
- **Q3.** Verse 22 says, “There is no difference.” Find as many ways as you can in verses 21-31 that illustrate “no difference” between people.
 - *How does God view the various nations and peoples that populate the world? Does God favor some and ignore others? Refer to John 3:16. Discuss*
 - *How should Christians view, and respond to, other nations and peoples? Why?*
 - *Consider Isaiah 2:2, Matthew 28:19, Luke 13:29, Acts 1:8, Galatians 3:28-29*
- **Q4.** Verse 27 says that we have no reason to boast. Why?
 - *What might spiritual boasting look like?*
 - *What does spiritual boasting tell us about the person doing the boasting, and tell us about their understanding of God?*
 - *For Christians, how is this understanding that “we have no reason to boast” change our relationships with God and others?*
- **Q5.** Verse 24 says that we “are justified freely by his grace.” What day-to-day impact does this have on you?
 - *Grace is a gift ... why do you think some are unwilling to accept God’s free gift of Grace?*
 - *Consider Ephesians 2:4-10 and John 1:11 and 3:19*
 - *What happens when someone accepts the free gift of God’s grace? Does the gift, or the response to the gift, come first? Why does that matter which comes first?*
- **Summary:** Fundamental to the gospel of salvation is the truth that the saving initiative from beginning to end belongs to God the Father. No formulation of the gospel is biblical that removes

³ New Testament Scholar from Australia (1914 – 2006)

⁴ Christ is “the propitiation,” because by his becoming our substitute and assuming our obligations he expiated (covered) our guilt, by the vicarious punishment which he endured. (<https://biblehub.com/topical/p/propitiation.htm#eas>). Expiation: “An act by which satisfaction is made for a crime and the liability to punishment for it is cancelled. It supposes penitence and faith on the sinner's part.” (<https://biblehub.com/topical/e/expiation.htm>).

⁵ Atonement: The meaning of the word is simply at-one-ment, i.e., the state of being at one or being reconciled, so that atonement is reconciliation. Thus it is used to denote the effect which flows from the death of Christ. (<https://biblehub.com/topical/a/atonement.htm>).

the initiative from God and attributes it either to us or even to Christ. It is certain that we did not take the initiative, for we were sinful, guilty and condemned, helpless and hopeless. The first move was God the Father's, and our justification is 'freely by his grace,' his absolutely free and utterly undeserved favor. Grace is God loving, God stooping, God coming to the rescue, God giving himself generously in and through Jesus Christ.

- *How do you respond to this summary by the author?*
- *Why is it important for Christian faith that we are unable to make any move toward God until He makes the first move toward us?*
 - *Consider Ephesians 2:1 "You were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked." And, Romans 4:17 "who gives life to the dead." And, 1 John 4:19, "We love because He first loved us."*
- **Q6.** Read Romans 4. What words and phrases in this chapter seem important to you? Why?
- **Q7.** Was Abraham justified by works or by faith? Explain your answer using information throughout chapter 4
- **Q8.** Romans 4:10 asks when Abraham was credited as righteous: after he was circumcised or before he was circumcised? What is the answer to that question, and what difference does it make (vv. 9-12)?
 - *Read Genesis 15:1-6 and then Genesis 17:1-14. Promise and Blessing before Circumcision*
- **Q9.** In what sense is Abraham "father of us all" (4:16)?
 - *What do you know about Abraham's life and faith?*
 - *What are some of the key events in his life?*
 - *Genesis 11:27-32 (Abram (later renamed Abraham) leaves his homeland)*
 - *Genesis 12 (God provides instruction and makes promise to Abram)*
 - *Genesis 15 (God confirms the promises He made to Abraham. Verse 6, "And he believed the LORD and He counted it to him as righteousness.")*
 - *Genesis 21 (Sarah gives birth to a son, Isaac)*
 - *Genesis 22 (Abraham asked to sacrifice his son Isaac. God prevents Abraham from sacrificing Isaac and instead provides another offering)*
- Jewish people were extremely conscious of their special covenant relationship with God, in which Gentiles did not share. It was to the Jews that God had entrusted his special revelation (3:2). Theirs, too, as Paul will soon write, are 'the adoption to sonship . . . the divine glory, the covenants, the receiving of the law, the temple worship and the promises,' not to mention 'the patriarchs' and 'the human ancestry of Christ' (9:4). What the Jews forgot, however, was that their privileges were not intended for the exclusion of the Gentiles but for their ultimate inclusion when through Abraham's posterity 'all peoples on earth' would be blessed.
 - *Why do some groups that begin for good reasons (serving the poor, raising money for the homeless), at some point, begin to turn inward and see themselves as special or better than others, ultimately using most of the money they raise for themselves not others?*
 - *Do some churches follow that same path? How can Grace of Christ avoid that path?*

- **Q10.** Reread 4:7-8, which comes from Psalm 32:1-2. What is your own sense of blessing as you read those words?
 - *What does it mean to you that God has forgiven you? What did you DO to deserve His forgiveness? Having been forgiven by God how does that change your response to those who have harmed, hurt, offended you? (read Matthew 18:15-35, Matthew 6:14-15)*
- **Q11.** God gives “life to the dead and calls into being things that were not” (4:17). What examples do you see of this in 4:18-25?
 - *Why is it important to you that God has the power to raise the dead?*
 - *Read John 11:1-45, John 20:1-31, 1 Corinthians 15:12-22*
- **Summary:** Many people struggle to cope with the prospect of death. But nothingness and death are no problem to God. On the contrary, it is out of nothing that he created the universe and out of death that he raised Jesus. The creation and the resurrection were and remain the two major manifestations of the power of God.
 - *What are various ways you have heard others describe what happens after a person dies?*
 - *What do you believe happens after a person dies?*
 - *If you believe a person lives on after they die, who or what determines whether they live in heaven or in hell?*
 - *What does Christian faith (the Bible) claim happens to a person after they die? What does it have to say about whether a person lives eternally in heaven or in hell? (See: Matthew 12:36, Hebrews 9:27, John 3:16, John 11:23-27, Luke 18:18-30, John 10:28, Romans 6:22, Titus 3:7, 1 Peter 1:3-5, 1 John 5:11-12)*
- **Apply:** Jesus is alive! (4:23-25). How does this affect who you are or what you want to become?
- Pick a favorite sentence from somewhere in Romans 3 or 4. Meditate on it word by word. Why is the sentence significant to you?
- **Pray:** Create a prayer based on the sentence you chose. Write or speak it as your personal offering to God.

Additional Leader Resources

1. Earl Palmer Sermon on Romans: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IXX0xEBFYqw>
2. See week 1 leader guide for the Preface to Martin Luther’s commentary on Romans (from the 1500’s)

If you have any questions or comments, if you need help with this study, with members of your group, or with technology, please call (248-7940 x114) or email (curt@yakimagrace.com)

2-18-21 CM

Romans 3:21 – 4:25 (3 Versions)

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ESV: English Standard Version

²¹ But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it — ²² the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction: ²³ for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴ and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, ²⁵ whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. ²⁶ It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

²⁷ Then what becomes of our boasting? It is excluded. By what kind of law? By a law of works? No, but by the law of faith. ²⁸ For we hold that one is justified by faith apart from works of the law. ²⁹ Or is God the God of Jews only? Is he not the God of Gentiles also? Yes, of Gentiles also, ³⁰ since God is one — who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith. ³¹ Do we then overthrow the law by this faith? By no means! On the contrary, we uphold the law.

^{4.1} What then shall we say was gained by Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh? ² For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. ³ For what does the Scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness." ⁴ Now to the one who works, his wages are not counted as a gift but as his due. ⁵ And to the one who does not work but believes in him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness, ⁶ just as David also speaks of the blessing of the one to whom God counts righteousness apart from works:

⁷ "Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven,
and whose sins are covered;

⁸ blessed is the man against whom the Lord will not count his sin."

⁹ Is this blessing then only for the circumcised, or also for the uncircumcised? For we say that faith was counted to Abraham as righteousness. ¹⁰ How then was it counted to him? Was it before or after he had been circumcised? It was not after, but before he was circumcised. ¹¹ He received the sign of circumcision as a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while he was still

uncircumcised. The purpose was to make him the father of all who believe without being circumcised, so that righteousness would be counted to them as well, ¹² and to make him the father of the circumcised who are not merely circumcised but who also walk in the footsteps of the faith that our father Abraham had before he was circumcised.

¹³ For the promise to Abraham and his offspring that he would be heir of the world did not come through the law but through the righteousness of faith. ¹⁴ For if it is the adherents of the law who are to be the heirs, faith is null and the promise is void. ¹⁵ For the law brings wrath, but where there is no law there is no transgression.

¹⁶ That is why it depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace and be guaranteed to all his offspring — not only to the adherent of the law but also to the one who shares the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all, ¹⁷ as it is written, "I have made you the father of many nations"—in the presence of the God in whom he believed, who gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist. ¹⁸ In hope he believed against hope, that he should become the father of many nations, as he had been told, "So shall your offspring be." ¹⁹ He did not weaken in faith when he considered his own body, which was as good as dead (since he was about a hundred years old), or when he considered the barrenness of Sarah's womb. ²⁰ No unbelief made him waver concerning the promise of God, but he grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God, ²¹ fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised. ²² That is why his faith was "counted to him as righteousness." ²³ But the words "it was counted to him" were not written for his sake alone, ²⁴ but for ours also. It will be counted to us who believe in him who raised from the dead Jesus our Lord, ²⁵ who was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification.

NIV: New International Version

²¹ But now apart from the law the righteousness of God has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. ²² This righteousness is given through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference between Jew and Gentile, ²³ for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴ and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. ²⁵ God presented Christ as a sacrifice of atonement, through the shedding of his blood — to be received by

faith. He did this to demonstrate his righteousness, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished — ²⁶ he did it to demonstrate his righteousness at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus.

²⁷ Where, then, is boasting? It is excluded. Because of what law? The law that requires works? No, because of the law that requires faith. ²⁸ For we maintain that a person is justified by faith apart from the works of the law. ²⁹ Or is God the God of Jews only? Is he not the God of Gentiles too? Yes, of Gentiles too, ³⁰ since there is only one God, who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through that same faith. ³¹ Do we, then, nullify the law by this faith? Not at all! Rather, we uphold the law.

⁴ What then shall we say that Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh, discovered in this matter? ² If, in fact, Abraham was justified by works, he had something to boast about—but not before God. ³ What does Scripture say?

"Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness."

⁴ Now to the one who works, wages are not credited as a gift but as an obligation.

⁵ However, to the one who does not work but trusts God who justifies the ungodly, their faith is credited as righteousness. ⁶ David says the same thing when he speaks of the blessedness of the one to whom God credits righteousness apart from works:

⁷ "Blessed are those
whose transgressions are forgiven,
whose sins are covered.

⁸ Blessed is the one
whose sin the Lord will never count
against them."

⁹ Is this blessedness only for the circumcised, or also for the uncircumcised? We have been saying that Abraham's faith was credited to him as righteousness. ¹⁰ Under what circumstances was it credited? Was it after he was circumcised, or before? It was not after, but before! ¹¹ And he received circumcision as a sign, a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised. So then, he is the father of all who believe but have not been circumcised, in order that righteousness might be credited to them. ¹² And he is then also the father of the circumcised who not only are circumcised but who also follow in the footsteps of the faith that our father Abraham had before he was circumcised.

¹³ It was not through the law that Abraham and his offspring received the

Romans 3:21 – 4:25 (3 Versions)

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promise that he would be heir of the world, but through the righteousness that comes by faith.¹⁴ For if those who depend on the law are heirs, faith means nothing and the promise is worthless,¹⁵ because the law brings wrath. And where there is no law there is no transgression.

¹⁶ Therefore, the promise comes by faith, so that it may be by grace and may be guaranteed to all Abraham's offspring—not only to those who are of the law but also to those who have the faith of Abraham. He is the father of us all.¹⁷ As it is written: "I have made you a father of many nations." He is our father in the sight of God, in whom he believed—the God who gives life to the dead and calls into being things that were not.

¹⁸ Against all hope, Abraham in hope believed and so became the father of many nations, just as it had been said to him, "So shall your offspring be."¹⁹ Without weakening in his faith, he faced the fact that his body was as good as dead—since he was about a hundred years old—and that Sarah's womb was also dead.²⁰ Yet he did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God,²¹ being fully persuaded that God had power to do what he had promised.²² This is why "it was credited to him as righteousness."²³ The words "it was credited to him" were written not for him alone,²⁴ but also for us, to whom God will credit righteousness—for us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead.²⁵ He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification.

JBP: JB Phillips

²¹⁻²⁶ But now we are seeing the righteousness of God declared quite apart from the Law (though amply testified to by both Law and Prophets)—it is a righteousness imparted to, and operating in, all who have faith in Jesus Christ. (For there is no distinction to be made anywhere: everyone has sinned, everyone falls short of the beauty of God's plan.) Under this divine system a man who has faith is now freely acquitted in the eyes of God by his generous dealing in the redemptive act of Jesus Christ. God has appointed him as the means of propitiation, a propitiation accomplished by the shedding of his blood, to be received and made effective in ourselves by faith. God has done this to demonstrate his righteousness both by the wiping out of the sins of the past (the

time when he withheld his hand), and by showing in the present time that he is a just God and that he justifies every man who has faith in Jesus Christ.

²⁷⁻²⁸ What happens now to human pride of achievement? There is no more room for it. Why, because failure to keep the Law has killed it? Not at all, but because the whole matter is now on a different plane—believing instead of achieving. We see now that a man is justified before God by the fact of his faith in God's appointed Saviour and not by what he has managed to achieve under the Law.

²⁹⁻³⁰ And God is God of both Jews and Gentiles, let us be quite clear about that! The same God is ready to justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised by faith also.

³¹ Are we then undermining the Law by this insistence on faith? Not a bit of it! We put the Law in its proper place.

^{4.1-3} Now how does all this affect the position of our ancestor Abraham? Well, if justification were by achievement he could quite fairly be proud of what he achieved—but not, I am sure, proud before God. For what does scripture say about him? 'Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness'.

⁴⁻⁸ Now if a man works his wages are not counted as a gift but as a fair reward. But if a man, irrespective of his work, has faith as righteousness, then that man's faith is counted as righteousness, and that is the gift of God. This is the happy state of the man whom God accounts righteous, apart from his achievements, as David expresses it: 'Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven, and whose sins are covered; blessed is the man to whom the Lord shall not impute sin'.

^{9a} Now the question, an important one, arises: is this happiness for the circumcised only, or for the uncircumcised as well?

^{9b-12} Note this carefully. We began by saying that Abraham's faith was counted unto him for righteousness. When this happened, was he a circumcised man? He was not, he was still uncircumcised. It was afterwards that the sign of circumcision was given to him, as a seal upon that righteousness which God was accounting to him as yet an uncircumcised man! God's purpose here is twofold. First, that Abraham might be the spiritual father of all who since that time, despite their circumcision, show the faith that is counted as righteousness. Then, secondly, that he might be the circumcised father of all those who are not only circumcised, but are living by the same sort of faith which he himself had before he was circumcised.

¹³⁻¹⁴ The ancient promise made to Abraham and his descendants, that they should eventually possess the world, was given not because of any achievements made through obedience to the Law, but because of the righteousness which had its root in faith. For if, after all, they who pin their faith to keeping the Law were to inherit God's world, it would make nonsense of faith in God himself, and destroy the whole point of the promise.

¹⁵ For we have already noted that the Law can produce no promise, only the threat of wrath to come. And, indeed if there were no Law the question of sin would not arise.

¹⁶⁻¹⁷ The whole thing, then, is a matter of faith on man's part and generosity on God's. He gives the security of his own promise to all men who can be called "children of Abraham", i.e. both those who have lived in faith by the Law, and those who have exhibited a faith like that of Abraham. To whichever group we belong, Abraham is in a real sense our father, as the scripture says: 'I have made you a father of many nations'. This faith is valid because of the existence of God himself, who can make the dead live, and speak his Word to those who are yet unborn.

¹⁸ Abraham, when hope was dead within him, went on hoping in faith, believing that he would become "the father of many nations". He relied on the word of God which definitely referred to 'your descendants'.

¹⁹⁻²² With undaunted faith he looked at the facts—his own impotence (he was practically a hundred years old at the time) and his wife Sarah's apparent barrenness. Yet he refused to allow any distrust of a definite pronouncement of God to make him waver. He drew strength from his faith, and while giving the glory to God, remained absolutely convinced that God was able to implement his own promise. This was the "faith" which 'was accounted to him for righteousness'.

²³⁻²⁵ Now this counting of faith for righteousness was not recorded simply for Abraham's credit, but as a divine principle which should apply to us as well. Faith is to be reckoned as righteousness to us also, who believe in him who raised from the dead our Lord Jesus Christ, who was delivered to death for our sins and raised again to secure our justification.

Grace Community Group Life Study Guide

Romans: Encountering the Gospel's Power

Week 7: Chapter 7 (pages 38-42 in the book). **Please use only what you find helpful in this guide.**

Passage for chapter 7 in the study book: Romans 5:1 – 6:23 (ESV: English Standard Version) see pages 7-9 for a three-version comparison of this passage.

Chapter 4:22-25

“²² That is why his faith was ‘counted to him (Abraham) as righteousness.’ ²³ But the words ‘it was counted to him’ were not written for his sake alone, ²⁴ but for ours also. It will be counted to us who believe in him who raised from the dead Jesus our Lord, ²⁵ who was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification.”

Chapter 5

^{5:1} Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. ² Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. ³ Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, ⁴ and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, ⁵ and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us. ⁶ For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. ⁷ For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die— ⁸ but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. ⁹ Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God. ¹⁰ For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life. ¹¹ More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

¹² Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned— ¹³ for sin indeed was in the world before the law was given, but sin is not counted where there is no law. ¹⁴ Yet death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those whose sinning was not like the transgression of Adam, who was a type of the one who was to come.

¹⁵ But the free gift is not like the trespass. For if many died through one man's trespass, much more have the grace of God and the free gift by the grace of that one man Jesus Christ abounded for many. ¹⁶ And the free gift is not like the result of that one man's sin. For the judgment following one trespass brought condemnation, but the free gift following many trespasses brought justification. ¹⁷ For if, because of one man's trespass, death reigned through that one man, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ.

¹⁸ Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men. ¹⁹ For as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous. ²⁰ Now the law came in to increase the trespass, but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, ²¹ so that, as sin reigned in death, grace also might reign through righteousness leading to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

⁶ What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? ² By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it? ³ Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? ⁴ We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.

⁵ For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. ⁶ We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin. ⁷ For one who has died has been set free from sin. ⁸ Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. ⁹ We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. ¹⁰ For the death he died he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God. ¹¹ So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

¹² Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions. ¹³ Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments for righteousness. ¹⁴ For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace.

¹⁵ What then? Are we to sin because we are not under law but under grace? By no means! ¹⁶ Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness? ¹⁷ But thanks be to God, that you who were once slaves of sin have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed, ¹⁸ and, having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness. ¹⁹ I am speaking in human terms, because of your natural limitations. For just as you once presented your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness leading to more lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness leading to sanctification.

²⁰ For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. ²¹ But what fruit were you getting at that time from the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death. ²² But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the fruit you get leads to sanctification and its end, eternal life. ²³ For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”¹

Get to Know You Questions

1. Describe an experience you’ve had in a very loud and noisy environment? Where were you? Why were you there? How peaceful did you feel at the time? What was it like for you when you got away from the noise?
2. Who is your favorite superhero? What makes them your favorite? What is one act of their superheroism you recall?

Are there any lingering questions or comments about the study so far?

Refer to Chapter 7 titled “Peace with God” (pages 38-42). The questions found in the Romans: Encountering the Gospel’s Power book are included below. Additional questions from Grace of Christ staff are included *in italics* below questions from the book.

Questions for week 7

- “Peace is hard to come by in our fast-paced world. We mostly grab at it in bits and snatches: five minutes of peace just before the children thunder in from school, that last half-hour at work after the phones are shut off and everyone else has left the office, one quiet morning watching the sun rise over the Grand Canyon. After the first four chapters of Romans, with its overwhelming picture

¹ The book uses, primarily, the NIV (New International Version). At Grace we use, primarily, the ESV (English Standard Version). The ESV is considered a more accurate translation of the original Greek, while the NIV, although a good translation, is appreciated because it is easier to read. A comparison of three Bible versions of this passage is included below (Appendix A) (Curt’s notes)

of human sinfulness against the backdrop of God's holiness, the idea that we might have peace with God is powerful indeed. Yet that is precisely what God offers"²

- *What is your best definition of "peace"?*
- *Discuss the difference between an agreed to "cease-fire" and "peace"?*
- *Why is "peace with God" important for us? For you?*
- **Open:** "Describe one of your favorite mental pictures of peace"
- **Study**
 - **Q1.** Read Romans 5:1-11. Pick a phrase or sentence in this section that you particularly appreciate. Why are these words significant to you?
 - *Why do we need "peace with God?" How would you describe a person's relationship with God prior to they become a Christian?*
 - *Where does our "peace with God" come from?*
 - *From this passage is there any indication that we are a source of, or that we contribute to, the peace we now have with God?*
 - We pause after Paul's first three affirmations about the "blessedness" of the justified and reflect. The fruits of justification relate to the past, present, and future. "We have peace with God" (as a result of our past forgiveness). "We are standing in grace" (our present privilege). "We rejoice in the hope of glory" (our future inheritance). Peace, grace, joy, hope, and glory. It sounds idyllic. It is—except for Paul's fourth affirmation: "We also rejoice in our sufferings."
 - *Why do those who have "peace with God" still experience suffering and heartache?*
 - *How does this passage (and others like 2 Thessalonians 1:5, 2 Corinthians 4:16-18, 2 Timothy 4:5, James 1:2-4, Philippians 2:25-30) address those who claim Christians will be completely freed from suffering and difficulty?*
 - *What does it mean to "stand in grace"?*
 - **Q2.** Verse 2 says that we can rejoice even in our suffering. Why?
 - *How does the promise (verse 5) that "God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us" help us in the midst of the suffering we will face?*
 - **Q3.** Verses 3-5 describe a sequence that begins with suffering and ends with hope – with several stages in between. When have you seen that sequence in yourself or in someone else?
 - **Q4.** Describe the work of Christ as seen in verses 6-11
 - *How easy would it be for you to offer up your life for someone you know and care about?*
 - *How east would it be for you to offer up your life for someone who despised you?*
 - *At what point in our relationship with God did God Himself offer up His life for us? Why is this important?*
 - *What would the message of Christian faith be if God waited for us to "get our act together" before He was willing to sacrifice His life for ours?*
 - **Q5.** Paul uses the word reconciliation in verse 11. In view of his letter thus far, what does he mean by this term?

² This and every excerpt quoted is from: Carolyn Nystrom, John R. W. Stott. "Romans." Apple Books.

- *How do you define the word “Reconciliation”. The New Living Translation for this verse, “So now we can rejoice in our wonderful new relationship with God because our Lord Jesus Christ has made us friends of God.”*
- *Have you ever experienced the repair of a relationship that was broken and seemed beyond hope? How did you feel when your relationship was restored? What did it take to “reconcile” with this friend?*
- **Summary:** How can we doubt the love of God? To be sure, we are often profoundly perplexed by the tragedies and calamities of life. Indeed, Paul has been giving his teaching about God’s love within the context of “tribulation,” which can be very painful. But then we remember that God has both proved his love for us in the death of his Son (v. 8) and poured his love into us by the gift of his Spirit (v. 5). This is one of the most wholesome and satisfying features of the gospel. Objectively in history and subjectively in experience, God has given us good grounds for believing in his love.
 - *What does the author mean, in the paragraph above, by “objectively in history and subjectively in experience.”*
- **Q6.** Read Romans 5:12-21. Verses 12-17 speak of Adam and of Jesus Christ. What impact did each have on the human race? (Find all that you can.)
 - *Consider Genesis 2:15, Genesis 3:6-7, Genesis 3:17, Romans 5:12, 1 Corinthians 15:22, 1 Corinthians 15:45, 1 Timothy 1:15, John 11:25, John 10:10, Mark 10:45, Galatians 3:13, Matthew 1:21.*
- **Q7.** Notice the repeated pattern of “just as . . . so also . . .” What comparisons does this phrase highlight?
 - *How is God’s free gift different from the effects of the curse we received from Adam? (verses 15-21)*
- The concept of our having sinned in Adam is certainly foreign to the mindset of Western individualism. We like to identify with Pilate, who washed his hands and declared his innocence. We were not guilty, we say; it had nothing to do with us. The apostles disagree. Not only did Herod and Pilate, Gentiles and Jews “conspire” against Jesus (Acts 4:27), but the sins that led to his death are our sins too. Moreover, if we turn away from God, we “are crucifying the Son of God all over again” (Hebrews 6:6). “Were you there,” the Negro spiritual asks, “when they crucified my Lord?” The only possible answer is that we were there, and not merely as spectators but as guilty participants. Horatius Bonar, the nineteenth-century Scottish hymn writer, expressed it well:

’Twas I that shed the sacred blood;
 I nailed him to the tree:
 I crucified the Christ of God;
 I joined the mockery.”

 - *This is the theological understanding of “original sin”. Beginning with the sin of Adam, sin now infects every generation and every person. We are guilty of sin from birth. In Psalm 51:5 David writes, “Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me.” From our earliest days we demonstrate selfishness. Our individual acts of sin confirm the disease we carry within.*
 - *How do you respond to the claim that because of the sin of Adam we are all infected by sin, and subject to death?*

- *Why is this belief important? How does this belief change our relationship with others, and our relationship with Jesus?*
- **Q8.** Read Romans 6. In what various ways are the words dead and alive used in verses 1-14? In what ways are these both a part of normal Christian experience?
 - *Verse 4, "We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life."*
 - *When a person becomes a Christian what does it mean for them to be buried with Christ and then raised from the dead?*
- **Q9.** Verse 5 says that Christians have been united with Christ in both his death and his resurrection. Why is this important (verses 5-7)?
- **Q10.** Verses 15-23 speak of slavery and freedom. What different forms of slavery and freedom do you see described here
 - *What does slavery to sin look like? Consider addictions, obsessions, selfishness, pettiness, unwillingness to forgive, giving ourselves to things that hurt ourselves and others.*
 - *Christians are no longer slaves to sin (verse 18). Why do we continue to sin?*
 - *If we are no longer slaves to sin then we "volunteer" to sin. What resources has God given us to help us resist "volunteering" to sin?*
- **Summary:** Romans 6 shows two lives that are totally opposed to each other. Jesus portrayed them as the broad road that leads to destruction and the narrow road that leads to life (Matthew 7:13). Paul calls them two slaveries. By birth we are in Adam the slaves of sin; by grace and faith we are in Christ the slaves of God. Bondage to sin yields no return except shame and ongoing moral deterioration, culminating in the death we deserve. Bondage to God, however, yields the precious fruit of progressive holiness, culminating in the free gift of life
 - *What does it mean for a Christian to be a slave (servant) of God rather than a slave to sin?*
 - *How does being a slave of God actually give us freedom?*
 - *What is the end result of rejecting God's free gift and, instead, embracing sin? (verse 23)*
- **Q11.** Focus on verse 23. How would you explain it to a ten-year-old child?
- On May 28, 1972, the Duke of Windsor, the uncrowned King Edward VIII, died in Paris. The same evening a television program rehearsed the main events of his life. Extracts from earlier films were shown in which he answered questions about his upbringing, brief reign, and abdication. Recalling his boyhood as Prince of Wales, he said, "My father [King George V] was a strict disciplinarian. Sometimes when I had done something wrong, he would admonish me, saying, 'My dear boy, you must always remember who you are.'" It is my conviction that our heavenly Father says the same to us every day: "My dear child, you must always remember who you are."
 - *How does the reminder that we belong to God, and that He loves us and has redeemed us at the cost of His own life, help us when we face temptations and sufferings?*
- **Apply:** In Romans 6:13 Paul invites us to use various parts of our bodies as "instruments of righteousness." What specific steps could you take in offering your body or any part of it to God?

- Bring to mind a current area of suffering. How might the words of Romans 6:8-10 influence the way you deal with that suffering?
- **Pray:** Romans 5 opens with the statement that “we have peace with God.” Spend some time in silence before God. No need to say or do anything. Don’t even try to pray during that silence. Just focus on God and the peace that he offers to you through Jesus Christ. Allow his peace to settle into your pores. After that period of silence, pray aloud, expressing your response to God.

Additional Leader Resources

1. Timothy Keller on the book of Romans: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3P8QiUAEHYk>
2. Timothy Keller on Romans 5:1-10: <https://gospelinlife.com/downloads/cross-the-way-to-endurance-6309/>
3. Chuck Swindoll Sermon on Romans: <https://insight.org/general/sundays/individual/since-we-ve-died-let-s-really-live!>
4. See week 1 leader guide for the Preface to Martin Luther’s commentary on Romans (from the 1500’s)

If you have any questions or comments, if you need help with this study, with members of your group, or with technology, please call (248-7940 x114) or email (curt@yakimagrace.com)

2-24-21 CM

Romans 5:1 – 6:23 (3 Versions)

Page 1

ESV: English Standard Version

5:1 Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. 2 Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. 3 Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, 4 and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, 5 and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.

6 For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. 7 For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die— 8 but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. 9 Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God. 10 For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life. 11 More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

12 Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned— 13 for sin indeed was in the world before the law was given, but sin is not counted where there is no law. 14 Yet death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those whose sinning was not like the transgression of Adam, who was a type of the one who was to come.

15 But the free gift is not like the trespass. For if many died through one man's trespass, much more have the grace of God and the free gift by the grace of that one man Jesus Christ abounded for many. 16 And the free gift is not like the result of that one man's sin. For the judgment following one trespass brought condemnation, but the free gift following many trespasses brought justification. 17 For if, because of one man's trespass, death reigned through that one man, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ.

18 Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and

life for all men. 19 For as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous. 20 Now the law came in to increase the trespass, but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, 21 so that, as sin reigned in death, grace also might reign through righteousness leading to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

6 What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? 2 By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it? 3 Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? 4 We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.

5 For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. 6 We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin. 7 For one who has died has been set free from sin. 8 Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. 9 We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. 10 For the death he died he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God. 11 So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

12 Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions. 13 Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments for righteousness. 14 For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace.

15 What then? Are we to sin because we are not under law but under grace? By no means! 16 Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness? 17 But thanks be to God, that you who were once slaves of sin have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed, 18 and, having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness. 19 I am speaking in human terms, because of your natural limitations. For just as you once presented your

members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness leading to more lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness leading to sanctification. 20 For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. 21 But what fruit were you getting at that time from the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death. 22 But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the fruit you get leads to sanctification and its end, eternal life. 23 For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."

NIV: New International Version

1 Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, 2 through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we boast in the hope of the glory of God. 3 Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; 4 perseverance, character; and character, hope. 5 And hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us.

6 You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. 7 Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person someone might possibly dare to die. 8 But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

9 Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him! 10 For if, while we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life! 11 Not only is this so, but we also boast in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

12 Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all people, because all sinned—

13 To be sure, sin was in the world before the law was given, but sin is not charged against anyone's account where there is no law. 14 Nevertheless, death reigned from the time of Adam to the time of Moses, even over those who did not sin

Romans 5:1 – 6:23 (3 Versions)

Page 2

NIV (Continued)

by breaking a command, as did Adam, who is a pattern of the one to come.

15 But the gift is not like the trespass. For if the many died by the trespass of the one man, how much more did God's grace and the gift that came by the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, overflow to the many! 16 Nor can the gift of God be compared with the result of one man's sin: The judgment followed one sin and brought condemnation, but the gift followed many trespasses and brought justification. 17 For if, by the trespass of the one man, death reigned through that one man, how much more will those who receive God's abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ!

18 Consequently, just as one trespass resulted in condemnation for all people, so also one righteous act resulted in justification and life for all people. 19 For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous.

20 The law was brought in so that the trespass might increase. But where sin increased, grace increased all the more, 21 so that, just as sin reigned in death, so also grace might reign through righteousness to bring eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

6 What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? 2 By no means! We are those who have died to sin; how can we live in it any longer? 3 Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? 4 We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.

5 For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly also be united with him in a resurrection like his. 6 For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body ruled by sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin— 7 because anyone who has died has been set free from sin.

8 Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. 9 For we

know that since Christ was raised from the dead, he cannot die again; death no longer has mastery over him. 10 The death he died, he died to sin once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God.

11 In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus. 12 Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires. 13 Do not offer any part of yourself to sin as an instrument of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer every part of yourself to him as an instrument of righteousness. 14 For sin shall no longer be your master, because you are not under the law, but under grace.

15 What then? Shall we sin because we are not under the law but under grace? By no means! 16 Don't you know that when you offer yourselves to someone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one you obey—whether you are slaves to sin, which leads to death, or to obedience, which leads to righteousness? 17 But thanks be to God that, though you used to be slaves to sin, you have come to obey from your heart the pattern of teaching that has now claimed your allegiance. 18 You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness.

19 I am using an example from everyday life because of your human limitations. Just as you used to offer yourselves as slaves to impurity and to ever-increasing wickedness, so now offer yourselves as slaves to righteousness leading to holiness. 20 When you were slaves to sin, you were free from the control of righteousness. 21 What benefit did you reap at that time from the things you are now ashamed of? Those things result in death! 22 But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the benefit you reap leads to holiness, and the result is eternal life. 23 For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

MSG: The Message

1-2 By entering through faith into what God has always wanted to do for us—set us right with him, make us fit for him—we have it all together with God because of our Master Jesus. And that's not all: We throw open our doors to God and discover at the same moment that he has already thrown open his door to us. We find ourselves standing where we always hoped we might stand—out in the wide

open spaces of God's grace and glory, standing tall and shouting our praise.

3-5 There's more to come: We continue to shout our praise even when we're hemmed in with troubles, because we know how troubles can develop passionate patience in us, and how that patience in turn forges the tempered steel of virtue, keeping us alert for whatever God will do next. In alert expectancy such as this, we're never left feeling shortchanged. Quite the contrary—we can't round up enough containers to hold everything God generously pours into our lives through the Holy Spirit!

6-8 Christ arrives right on time to make this happen. He didn't, and doesn't, wait for us to get ready. He presented himself for this sacrificial death when we were far too weak and rebellious to do anything to get ourselves ready. And even if we hadn't been so weak, we wouldn't have known what to do anyway. We can understand someone dying for a person worth dying for, and we can understand how someone good and noble could inspire us to selfless sacrifice. But God put his love on the line for us by offering his Son in sacrificial death while we were of no use whatever to him.

9-11 Now that we are set right with God by means of this sacrificial death, the consummate blood sacrifice, there is no longer a question of being at odds with God in any way. If, when we were at our worst, we were put on friendly terms with God by the sacrificial death of his Son, now that we're at our best, just think of how our lives will expand and deepen by means of his resurrection life! Now that we have actually received this amazing friendship with God, we are no longer content to simply say it in plodding prose. We sing and shout our praises to God through Jesus, the Messiah!

12-14 You know the story of how Adam landed us in the dilemma we're in—first sin, then death, and no one exempt from either sin or death. That sin disturbed relations with God in everything and everyone, but the extent of the disturbance was not clear until God spelled it out in detail to Moses. So death, this huge abyss separating us from God, dominated the landscape from Adam to Moses. Even those who didn't sin precisely as Adam did by disobeying a specific command of God still had to experience this termination of life, this separation from God. But Adam, who got

Romans 5:1 – 6:23 (3 Versions)

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The Message (Continued)

us into this, also points ahead to the One who will get us out of it.

15-17 Yet the rescuing gift is not exactly parallel to the death-dealing sin. If one man's sin put crowds of people at the dead-end abyss of separation from God, just think what God's gift poured through one man, Jesus Christ, will do! There's no comparison between that death-dealing sin and this generous, life-giving gift. The verdict on that one sin was the death sentence; the verdict on the many sins that followed was this wonderful life sentence. If death got the upper hand through one man's wrongdoing, can you imagine the breathtaking recovery life makes, absolute life, in those who grasp with both hands this wildly extravagant life-gift, this grand setting-everything-right, that the one man Jesus Christ provides?

18-19 Here it is in a nutshell: Just as one person did it wrong and got us in all this trouble with sin and death, another person did it right and got us out of it. But more than just getting us out of trouble, he got us into life! One man said no to God and put many people in the wrong; one man said yes to God and put many in the right.

20-21 All that passing laws against sin did was produce more lawbreakers. But sin didn't, and doesn't, have a chance in competition with the aggressive forgiveness we call grace. When it's sin versus grace, grace wins hands down. All sin can do is threaten us with death, and that's the end of it. Grace, because God is putting everything together again through the Messiah, invites us into life—a life that goes on and on and on, world without end.

6 1-3 So what do we do? Keep on sinning so God can keep on forgiving? I should hope not! If we've left the country where sin is sovereign, how can we still live in our old house there? Or didn't you realize we packed up and left there for good? That is what happened in baptism. When we went under the water, we left the old country of sin behind; when we came up out of the water, we entered into the new country of grace—a new life in a new land!

3-5 That's what baptism into the life of Jesus means. When we are lowered into

the water, it is like the burial of Jesus; when we are raised up out of the water, it is like the resurrection of Jesus. Each of us is raised into a light-filled world by our Father so that we can see where we're going in our new grace-sovereign country.

6-11 Could it be any clearer? Our old way of life was nailed to the cross with Christ, a decisive end to that sin-miserable life—no longer captive to sin's demands! What we believe is this: If we get included in Christ's sin-conquering death, we also get included in his life-saving resurrection. We know that when Jesus was raised from the dead it was a signal of the end of death-as-the-end. Never again will death have the last word. When Jesus died, he took sin down with him, but alive he brings God down to us. From now on, think of it this way: Sin speaks a dead language that means nothing to you; God speaks your mother tongue, and you hang on every word. You are dead to sin and alive to God. That's what Jesus did.

12-14 That means you must not give sin a vote in the way you conduct your lives. Don't give it the time of day. Don't even run little errands that are connected with that old way of life. Throw yourselves wholeheartedly and full-time—remember, you've been raised from the dead!—into God's way of doing things. Sin can't tell you how to live. After all, you're not living under that old tyranny any longer. You're living in the freedom of God.

15-18 So, since we're out from under the old tyranny, does that mean we can live any old way we want? Since we're free in the freedom of God, can we do anything that comes to mind? Hardly. You know well enough from your own experience that there are some acts of so-called freedom that destroy freedom. Offer yourselves to sin, for instance, and it's your last free act. But offer yourselves to the ways of God and the freedom never quits. All your lives you've let sin tell you what to do. But thank God you've started listening to a new master, one whose commands set you free to live openly in his freedom!

19 I'm using this freedom language because it's easy to picture. You can readily recall, can't you, how at one time the more you did just what you felt like doing—not caring about others, not caring about God—the worse your life became and the less freedom you had? And how much different is it now as you live in God's freedom, your lives healed and expansive in holiness?

20-21 As long as you did what you felt like doing, ignoring God, you didn't have to bother with right thinking or right living, or right anything for that matter. But do you call that a free life? What did you get out of it? Nothing you're proud of now. Where did it get you? A dead end.

22-23 But now that you've found you don't have to listen to sin tell you what to do, and have discovered the delight of listening to God telling you, what a surprise! A whole, healed, put-together life right now, with more and more of life on the way! Work hard for sin your whole life and your pension is death. But God's gift is real life, eternal life, delivered by Jesus, our Master."

Grace of Christ Yakima

Study Guide: Community Group Life

Romans: Encountering the Gospel's Power

Week 8: Chapter 8 "Battling Sin" (pages 43-47 in the book).

Please use only what you find helpful in this guide.

Passage for chapter 8 in the study book: Romans 6:20 – 7:25 (ESV: English Standard Version) see pages 6-7 for a three-version comparison of this passage.

²⁰ For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. ²¹ But what fruit were you getting at that time from the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death. ²² But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the fruit you get leads to sanctification and its end, eternal life. ²³ For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."

^{7:1} Or do you not know, brothers — for I am speaking to those who know the law — that the law is binding on a person only as long as he lives? ² For a married woman is bound by law to her husband while he lives, but if her husband dies she is released from the law of marriage. ³ Accordingly, she will be called an adulteress if she lives with another man while her husband is alive. But if her husband dies, she is free from that law, and if she marries another man she is not an adulteress.

⁴ Likewise, my brothers, you also have died to the law through the body of Christ, so that you may belong to another, to him who has been raised from the dead, in order that we may bear fruit for God. ⁵ For while we were living in the flesh, our sinful passions, aroused by the law, were at work in our members to bear fruit for death. ⁶ But now we are released from the law, having died to that which held us captive, so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit and not in the old way of the written code.

⁷ What then shall we say? That the law is sin? By no means! Yet if it had not been for the law, I would not have known sin. For I would not have known what it is to covet if the law had not said, "You shall not covet." ⁸ But sin, seizing an opportunity through the commandment, produced in me all kinds of covetousness. For apart from the law, sin lies dead. ⁹ I was once alive apart from the law, but when the commandment came, sin came alive and I died. ¹⁰ The very commandment that promised life proved to be death to me. ¹¹ For sin, seizing an opportunity through the commandment, deceived me and through it killed me. ¹² So the law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good.

¹³ Did that which is good, then, bring death to me? By no means! It was sin, producing death in me through what is good, in order that sin might be shown to be sin, and through the commandment might become sinful beyond measure. ¹⁴ For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am of the flesh, sold under sin. ¹⁵ For I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. ¹⁶ Now if I do what I do not want, I agree with the law, that it is good. ¹⁷ So now it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me. ¹⁸ For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh. For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out. ¹⁹ For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing. ²⁰ Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me.

²¹ So I find it to be a law that when I want to do right, evil lies close at hand. ²² For I delight in the law of God, in my inner being, ²³ but I see in my members another law waging war against the law of my mind and making

me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members.²⁴ Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?²⁵ Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself serve the law of God with my mind, but with my flesh I serve the law of sin.”

8:1 “There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.”¹

Get to Know You Questions

1. What is one of your strongest “food” temptations? (Something you know you shouldn’t eat but you find hard to resist.)
2. What is a memorable commercial from when you were growing up? What were they selling? Why was that particular commercial one you remember? Was the product something you really needed, or were they trying to convince you to buy what you did not need? Were they successful?

Are there any lingering questions or comments about the study so far?

Refer to Chapter 8 titled “Battling Sin” (pages 43-47). The questions found in the Romans: Encountering the Gospel’s Power book are included below. Additional questions from Grace of Christ staff are included *in italics*.

Main themes in Romans 7: 1) What role does “the law of God” play in a Christian’s life and faith and, 2) can a Christian overcome sin or is sin too powerful?

Study and Questions for week 8

- Romans 7 is known by many Christian people because of the debate it has provoked about holiness. Who is the “wretched man” of verse 24 who gives us such a graphic account of inner turmoil, cries out for deliverance, and then immediately appears to thank God for it? Is this person a Christian or not yet a Christian? If a Christian, is he or she normal or abnormal, mature, immature, or fallen away? But it is never wise to bring to a passage of Scripture our own ready-made agenda, insisting that it answer our questions and address our concerns. For that is to dictate to Scripture instead of listening to it. If we come to Romans 7 with a mood of meekness and receptivity, it becomes evident at once that Paul’s preoccupation is more historical than personal.²
 - *When you read through chapter 7 what is your initial thought? Is Paul describing his life before, or after, he became a Christian? What leads you to that conclusion?*
- **Open:** When you hear the term “the law of God,” what are some of your reactions?
 - *How would you define “the law of God”? What is it? Where can you find “the law of God”?*
 - *What is the purpose/role of the “law of God”?*
- **Study**
Read Romans 7:1-6. Paul is struggling with the place of the law in God’s purpose. For the “law” or the “commandment” or the “written code” is mentioned in every one of the chapter’s first fourteen verses and some thirty-five times in the whole passage, which runs from Romans 7:1 to 8:4. What is the place of the law in Christian discipleship now that Christ has come and inaugurated the new era?

¹ The book uses, primarily, the NIV (New International Version). At Grace we use, primarily, the ESV (English Standard Version). The ESV is considered a more accurate translation of the original Greek, while the NIV, although a good translation, is appreciated because it is easier to read. A comparison of three Bible versions of this passage is included below (Appendix A) (Curt’s notes)

² This and every excerpt quoted is from: Carolyn Nystrom, John R. W. Stott. “Romans.” Apple Books.

- **Q1.** What legal changes happen to a woman when her husband dies (vv. 1-3)?
 - *What obligations and responsibilities cease to have any affect once a person dies? (Contracts they've signed, debts they have incurred, tickets and jail sentences ...)*
 - *What challenges remain for a wife (or a husband) when their spouse dies?*
- **Q2.** What similar changes happen when we die to the law (vv. 4-6)?
 - *What aspects of the "law of God" are Christians required to adhere to?*
- **Q3.** Does this mean that Christians do not keep a moral code? (Use this passage as a basis for your answer.)
 - *Are Christians still required to follow (obey) "the law of God"?*
 - *Read 1 Corinthians 9:19-23, Romans 6:14, Galatians 5:18, and Matthew 22:34-40. What do these verses say about a Christian's relationship to "the law of God?"*
- **Summary:** We can summarize three possible attitudes to the law, the first two of which Paul rejects, and the third he commends. We might call them "legalism," "antinomianism," and "law-fulfilling freedom." Legalists fear the law and are in bondage to it. Antinomians hate the law and repudiate it. Law-abiding free people love the law and fulfill it. Directly or indirectly Paul alludes to these three types in Romans 7
 - *How do you see these three positions lived out in our society today? 1) Legalists who demand rigid adherence to every rule, 2) antinomianism: those who reject the law completely, "I determine my own law ... no one will tell me what to do," 3) Those who love and appreciate the law and willingly submit to it.*
- **Q4.** Read Romans 7:7-25. Focus on verses 7-13. What is good about the law? Find all that you can.
 - *What would have happened throughout history, and in our world today, if there were no laws, no universal right and wrong, no conscience? Would people choose to do what was right and good for others (even when it cost them their own money and freedom) if there were no laws, no conscience, and no consequences for their choices and actions?*
- **Q5.** What limitations do you see in these same verses to what the law can accomplish?
- **Q6.** What influence has God's law had on you?
- Take a criminal today. A man is caught red-handed breaking the law. He is arrested, brought to trial, found guilty, and sentenced to prison. He cannot blame the law for his imprisonment. True, it is the law that convicted and sentenced him. But he has no one to blame but himself and his own criminal behavior. In a similar way Paul exonerates the law. It is indwelling sin that, because of its perversity, is aroused and provoked by the law. Those who say that our whole problem is the law are quite wrong. Our real problem is not the law but sin. It is indwelling sin that accounts for the weakness of the law, as the apostle will go on to show in the next paragraph. The law cannot save us because we cannot keep it, and we cannot keep it because of indwelling sin.
 - *What would your response be to someone claiming that the main problem today is the law that limits individual freedom, and all the guilt and shame it produces in our lives. They might argue, "if we weren't oppressed by the law we would feel better about ourselves and as a result we would be kinder, more accepting, and treat others better than we do now."*

- **Q7.** Focus on verses 14-25. What makes this person a “wretched man”?
 - *What are some of the ways people attempt to come to terms with the inner struggle they have between knowing what is the right thing to do but not doing what they know they should do?*
 - *Have you ever felt this inner battle?*
- **Q8.** What examples of this kind of struggle have you seen in your own life?
 - *How have you come to peace with this conflict within?*
- **Q9.** Paul says in verse 18, “I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out.” What does this imply about a person’s relationship with God?
 - *What resources and help do Christians believe they have been given by God to help them when they are tempted with sin? (See Genesis 4:6-7, Matthew 6:13, 1 Corinthians 10:13, Hebrews 4:14-16)*
- **Q10.** In spite of this conflict, why is Paul thankful (vv. 24-25)?
 - *Where does our strength come from when we are battling sin?*
 - *What gives Christians confidence that they can begin again when they have failed and given in to sin?*
- **Summary:** We return to the question whether the law is still binding on Christians and whether we are expected still to obey it. Yes and no! Yes in the sense that Christian freedom is freedom to serve, not freedom to sin. We are still slaves (v. 6), slaves of God and of righteousness (6:18, 22). But also no, because the motives and means of our service have completely changed. Why do we serve? Not because the law is our master and we have to but because Christ is our husband and we want to. Not because obedience leads to salvation but because salvation leads to obedience. And how do we serve? “We serve in the new way of the Spirit” (v. 6). For the indwelling of the Holy Spirit is the distinguishing characteristic of the new age, and so of the new life in Christ
 - *What is your reason for doing the right thing? Fear? Thankfulness? Community/family shame?*
 - *Who do you turn to when you have given in to the same sin again?*
 - *Is there a limit to the kindness, the patience, and the forgiveness of God? Discuss*
 - *What helps you resist temptation?*
- **Apply:** Paul addresses three approaches to God’s law: legalism (you have to obey it), antinomianism (you just ignore it), and law-fulfilling freedom (you don’t count on keeping the law to make you right with God, but you love God’s law and enjoy following it). Which best describes your own current relationship with God’s law? If this is different from some other stage of your life, what caused the change?
 - Verse 24 says, “What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body that is subject to death?” Using your knowledge of Scripture as well as your own experience with God, how would you answer that person?
 - *What hope do you see in this passage for those who struggle with sin?*
 - *Has your initial thoughts about this passage (whether it describes a person’s life before or after they become a Christian) changed? Explain*
- **Pray:** Use Romans 7:4-6 as the focus of your prayer. Praise God for the way he is revealed there, thank him for what he offers, confess your sins as these words reveal them to you, and ask God to continue his work in your life

Additional Leader Resources

1. John Piper on Romans 7 Part 1: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PibUtpAWZqs>
2. Conversation with J.I Packer on Romans 7: <https://www.biola.edu/blogs/good-book-blog/2012/a-key-insight-about-romans-7-from-a-conversation-with-j-i-packer>
3. Preston Sprinkle Responding to John Piper on Romans 7: <https://www.prestonsprinkle.com/blog/2014/10/a-response-to-john-piper-on-romans-7>
4. See week 1 leader guide for the Preface to Martin Luther's commentary on Romans (from the 1500's)

If you have any questions or comments, if you need help with this study, with members of your group, or with technology, please call (248-7940 x114) or email (curt@yakimagrace.com)

3-4-21 CM

Romans 6:20 – 7:25 (3 Versions)

Page 1

ESV: English Standard Version

^{6:20} “For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. ²¹ But what fruit were you getting at that time from the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death. ²² But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the fruit you get leads to sanctification and its end, eternal life. ²³ For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

^{7:1} “Or do you not know, brothers — for I am speaking to those who know the law — that the law is binding on a person only as long as he lives? ² For a married woman is bound by law to her husband while he lives, but if her husband dies she is released from the law of marriage. ³ Accordingly, she will be called an adulteress if she lives with another man while her husband is alive. But if her husband dies, she is free from that law, and if she marries another man she is not an adulteress.

⁴ Likewise, my brothers, you also have died to the law through the body of Christ, so that you may belong to another, to him who has been raised from the dead, in order that we may bear fruit for God. ⁵ For while we were living in the flesh, our sinful passions, aroused by the law, were at work in our members to bear fruit for death. ⁶ But now we are released from the law, having died to that which held us captive, so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit and not in the old way of the written code.

⁷ What then shall we say? That the law is sin? By no means! Yet if it had not been for the law, I would not have known sin. For I would not have known what it is to covet if the law had not said, “You shall not covet.” ⁸ But sin, seizing an opportunity through the commandment, produced in me all kinds of covetousness. For apart from the law, sin lies dead. ⁹ I was once alive apart from the law, but when the commandment came, sin came alive and I died. ¹⁰ The very commandment that promised life proved to be death to me. ¹¹ For sin, seizing an opportunity through the commandment, deceived me and through it killed me. ¹² So the law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good.

¹³ Did that which is good, then, bring death to me? By no means! It was sin, producing death in me through what is good, in order that sin might be shown to

be sin, and through the commandment might become sinful beyond measure. ¹⁴ For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am of the flesh, sold under sin. ¹⁵ For I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. ¹⁶ Now if I do what I do not want, I agree with the law, that it is good. ¹⁷ So now it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me. ¹⁸ For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh. For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out. ¹⁹ For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing. ²⁰ Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me.

²¹ So I find it to be a law that when I want to do right, evil lies close at hand. ²² For I delight in the law of God, in my inner being, ²³ but I see in my members another law waging war against the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members. ²⁴ Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? ²⁵ Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself serve the law of God with my mind, but with my flesh I serve the law of sin.”

NIV: New International Version

^{6:20} “When you were slaves to sin, you were free from the control of righteousness. ²¹ What benefit did you reap at that time from the things you are now ashamed of? Those things result in death! ²² But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the benefit you reap leads to holiness, and the result is eternal life. ²³ For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

^{7:1} “Do you not know, brothers and sisters—for I am speaking to those who know the law — that the law has authority over someone only as long as that person lives? ² For example, by law a married woman is bound to her husband as long as he is alive, but if her husband dies, she is released from the law that binds her to him. ³ So then, if she has sexual relations with another man while her husband is still alive, she is called an adulteress. But if her husband dies, she is released from that law and is not an adulteress if she marries another man.

⁴ So, my brothers and sisters, you also died to the law through the body of Christ, that you might belong to another, to him who was raised from the dead, in order that we might bear fruit for God. ⁵ For when we were in the realm of the flesh,

the sinful passions aroused by the law were at work in us, so that we bore fruit for death. ⁶ But now, by dying to what once bound us, we have been released from the law so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit, and not in the old way of the written code.

⁷ What shall we say, then? Is the law sinful? Certainly not! Nevertheless, I would not have known what sin was had it not been for the law. For I would not have known what coveting really was if the law had not said, “You shall not covet.” ⁸ But sin, seizing the opportunity afforded by the commandment, produced in me every kind of coveting. For apart from the law, sin was dead. ⁹ Once I was alive apart from the law; but when the commandment came, sin sprang to life and I died. ¹⁰ I found that the very commandment that was intended to bring life actually brought death. ¹¹ For sin, seizing the opportunity afforded by the commandment, deceived me, and through the commandment put me to death. ¹² So then, the law is holy, and the commandment is holy, righteous and good.

¹³ Did that which is good, then, become death to me? By no means! Nevertheless, in order that sin might be recognized as sin, it used what is good to bring about my death, so that through the commandment sin might become utterly sinful.

¹⁴ We know that the law is spiritual; but I am unspiritual, sold as a slave to sin. ¹⁵ I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. ¹⁶ And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good. ¹⁷ As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me. ¹⁸ For I know that good itself does not dwell in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. ¹⁹ For I do not do the good I want to do, but the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing. ²⁰ Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it.

²¹ So I find this law at work: Although I want to do good, evil is right there with me. ²² For in my inner being I delight in God’s law; ²³ but I see another law at work in me, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within me. ²⁴ What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body that is subject to death? ²⁵ Thanks be to God, who delivers me through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself in my mind am a slave to God’s law, but in my sinful nature a slave to the law of sin.

Romans 6:20 – 7:25 (3 Versions)

Page 2

JBP: JB Phillips

²⁰⁻²¹ Then, released from the service of sin, you entered the service of righteousness. (I use an everyday illustration because human nature grasps truth more readily that way.) In the past you voluntarily gave your bodies to the service of vice and wickedness — for the purpose of becoming wicked. So, now, give yourselves to the service of righteousness — for the purpose of becoming really good. For when you were employed by sin you owed no duty to righteousness. Yet what sort of harvest did you reap from those things that today you blush to remember? In the long run those things mean one thing only — death.

²² But now that you are employed by God, you owe no duty to sin, and you reap the fruit of being made righteous, while at the end of the road there is life for evermore.

²³ Sin pays its servants: the wage is death. But God gives to those who serve him: his free gift is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

^{7 1-3} You know very well, my brothers (for I am speaking to those well acquainted with the subject), that the Law can only exercise authority over a man so long as he is alive. A married woman, for example, is bound by law to her husband so long as he is alive. But if he dies, then his legal claim over her disappears. This means that, if she should give herself to another man while her husband is alive, she incurs the stigma of adultery. But if, after her husband's death, she does exactly the same thing, no one could call her an adulteress, for the legal hold over her has been dissolved by her husband's death.

⁴ There is, I think, a fair analogy here. The death of Christ on the cross had made you "dead" to the claims of the Law, and you are free to give yourselves in marriage, so to speak, to another, the one who was raised from the dead, that you may be productive for God.

⁵⁻⁶ While we were "in the flesh" the Law stimulated our sinful passions and so worked in our nature that we became productive—for death! But now that we stand clear of the Law, the claims which existed are dissolved by our "death", and we are free to serve God not in the old obedience to the letter of the Law, but in a new way, in the spirit.

⁷ It now begins to look as if sin and the Law were very much the same thing—can this be a fact? Of course it cannot. But it must in fairness be admitted that I should never have had sin brought home to me

but for the Law. For example, I should never have felt guilty of the sin of coveting if I had not heard the Law saying 'You shall not covet'.

⁸⁻¹¹ But the sin in me, finding in the commandment an opportunity to express itself, stimulated all my covetous desires. For sin, in the absence of the Law, has no chance to function technically as "sin". As long, then, as I was without the Law I was, spiritually speaking, alive. But when the commandment arrived, sin sprang to life and I "died". The commandment, which was meant to be a direction to life, I found was a sentence to death. The commandment gave sin an opportunity, and without my realising what was happening, it "killed" me.

¹²⁻¹³ It can scarcely be doubted that in reality the Law itself is holy, and the commandment is holy, fair and good. Can it be that something that is intrinsically good could mean death to me? No, what happened was this. Sin, at the touch of the Law, was forced to express itself as sin, and that meant death for me. The contact of the Law showed the sinful nature of sin.

¹⁴⁻²⁰ After all, the Law itself is really concerned with the spiritual—it is I who am carnal, and have sold my soul to sin. In practice, what happens? My own behaviour baffles me. For I find myself not doing what I really want to do but doing what I really loathe. Yet surely if I do things that I really don't want to do, I am admitting that I really agree with the Law. But it cannot be said that "I" am doing them at all—it must be sin that has made its home in my nature. (And indeed, I know from experience that the carnal side of my being can scarcely be called the home of good!) I often find that I have the will to do good, but not the power. That is, I don't accomplish the good I set out to do, and the evil I don't really want to do I find I am always doing. Yet if I do things that I don't really want to do then it is not, I repeat, "I" who do them, but the sin which has made its home within me.

²¹⁻²⁵ When I come up against the Law I want to do good, but in practice I do evil. My conscious mind whole-heartedly endorses the Law, yet I observe an entirely different principle at work in my nature. This is in continual conflict with my conscious attitude, and makes me an unwilling prisoner to the law of sin and death. In my mind I am God's willing servant, but in my own nature I am bound fast, as I say, to the law of sin and death. It is an agonising situation, and who on earth can set me free from the clutches of my sinful nature? I thank God there is a way out through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Grace of Christ Yakima

Study Guide: Community Group Life

Romans: Encountering the Gospel's Power

Week 9: Chapter 9 "Rescued By God's Spirit" (pages 48-51 in the book).

Please use only what you find helpful in this guide.

Passage for chapter 9 in the study book: Romans 7:24 – 8:17 (ESV: English Standard Version) see pages 5-6 for a three-version comparison of this passage.

²⁴ Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? ²⁵ Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself serve the law of God with my mind, but with my flesh I serve the law of sin.

^{8:1} There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. ² For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death. ³ For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, ⁴ in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. ⁵ For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. ⁶ For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. ⁷ For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot. ⁸ Those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

⁹ You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. ¹⁰ But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. ¹¹ If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you.

¹² So then, brothers, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. ¹³ For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. ¹⁴ For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. ¹⁵ For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, "Abba! Father!" ¹⁶ The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, ¹⁷ and if children, then heirs — heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him. ¹

Get to Know You Questions

1. Share briefly about a coach or mentor who made a lasting positive impact on your life. What qualities did they have that made them a great mentor/coach? Do you have any memories of a coach who was less than helpful? What should they have done differently?
2. How far back are you able to go in your family genealogy? Were there any surprises in your family tree you are willing to talk about? What countries did your ancestors come from before arriving in the United States?

Are there any lingering questions or comments about the study so far?

¹ The book uses, primarily, the NIV (New International Version). At Grace we use, primarily, the ESV (English Standard Version). The ESV is considered a more accurate translation of the original Greek, while the NIV, although a good translation, is appreciated because it is easier to read. A comparison of three Bible versions of this passage is included below (Appendix A) (Curt's notes)

Refer to Chapter 9 titled “Rescued By God’s Spirit” (pages 48-51). The questions found in the Romans: Encountering the Gospel’s Power book are included below. Additional questions from Grace of Christ staff are included *in italics*.

Main themes in Romans 8:1-17: *1) Those who are in Christ Jesus have been set free from sin and are no longer under condemnation, 2) to live according to the flesh leads to death but to live according to the Spirit bring life and peace and, 3) we are no longer slaves to sin but we have been adopted by God as His children.*

Study and Questions for week 9

- It’s been a long, uphill climb through the first seven chapters of Romans. Paul has convinced us of our sin, of God’s holiness, and of our inability to meet the demands of God’s law. He has even shown us a picture of the bitter inner battle when we try to get ourselves into spiritual shape under our own steam. It’s true, as we have climbed this mountain, that Paul has allowed us glimpses of God’s grace. He showed us God’s faithfulness to Abraham (who was far from perfect), he offers peace and joy through Christ (even in the midst of suffering), and he offers us hope, aliveness, because Jesus Christ is alive, raised from the dead. But in the first half of Romans, after these brief breaks of light, Paul keeps us firmly trudging the path of discovering our own helplessness apart from the mercy of God. But in Romans 8 everything changes. It’s as if we have finally reached the summit and an enormous vista full of the wonders of God’s gifts to his people opens before us. We should approach it with appropriate thanksgiving and awe.²
 - *As you reflect on the first 7 chapters of Romans what has been the most significant discovery, or re-discovery, for you?*
- **Open:** When and how have you seen God’s kindness?
 - *Define “kindness”?*
 - *Has God been kind to you? If yes, in what ways? If no, what expressions of kindness do you expect from God?*
- **Study:** Read Romans 8:1-8. Romans 8 is without doubt one of the best-known, best-loved chapters of the Bible. If in Romans 7 Paul has been preoccupied with the place of the law, in Romans 8 his preoccupation is with the work of the Spirit. In chapter 7 the law and its synonyms were mentioned some thirty-one times, but the Holy Spirit only once (v. 6), whereas in the first twenty-seven verses of chapter 8 he is referred to nineteen times by name. The essential contrast that Paul paints is between the weakness of the law and the power of the Spirit. For over against indwelling sin, which is the reason the law is unable to help us in our moral struggle (7:17, 20), Paul now sets the indwelling Spirit.
- **Q1.** According to verses 1-4, what all has God done?
 - *Why is it important that there is now “no condemnation” for those who belong to Jesus?*
 - *How does the Spirit of God “set us free” from the law of sin and death?*
- **Q2.** In what different ways might people respond to these actions by God
 - *Compare the various ways some respond to the actions of God to the different soils mentioned in Jesus’ parable of the Sower: seeds along the path, seeds in the rocks, seed mixed in with thorns, and seeds in good soil. (Matthew 13:1-17)*

² This and every excerpt quoted is from: Carolyn Nystrom, John R. W. Stott. “Romans.” Apple Books.

- **Q3.** How have you responded at various stages of your life?
 - *How are you responding currently? What type of soil (see above) describes where you are now?*
- **Q4.** In spite of having written seven chapters about sin and our inability to keep God's law, Paul now writes, "Therefore, there is now no condemnation." Why?
 - *Read Romans 5:1-8. How is it that we now stand "un-condemned"?*
 - *How does this new freedom given to us by God change how we live our lives?*
- **Q5.** Focus on verses 5-8. How is a mind "set on what the flesh desires" different from a mind "set on what the Spirit desires"?
 - *How do you understand Paul's use of the terms "flesh" and "Spirit"?*
 - *Why can't those who have their minds set on the flesh please God?*
- **Summary:** Here are two categories of people (the unregenerate who are "in the flesh" and the regenerate who are "in the Spirit") who have two perspectives or mindsets ("the mind of the flesh" and "the mind of the Spirit"), which lead to two patterns of conduct (living according to the flesh or the Spirit) and result in two spiritual states (death or life, enmity or peace). Thus our mind, where we set it and how we occupy it, plays a key role in both our present conduct and our final destiny.
- **Q6.** Read Romans 8:9-17. Drawing on the information in verses 9-11, what do you learn about the Holy Spirit?
 - *For more information on the Holy Spirit read John 14:15-27, and John 16:1-24*
 - *What are some of the ways the Holy Spirit assists Christians?*
 - *How are we adopted into God's family? What are the benefits of being part of God's family?*
- **Q7.** What do the same verses (Romans 8:9-17) reveal about the Trinity (the nature of God)?
 - *How would you describe the Christian understanding of God (called the doctrine of the Trinity) to someone who had never been to church and knew nothing about Jesus?*
- The ultimate destiny of our bodies is not death but resurrection. Paul points out this truth in verse 11. Our bodies are not yet redeemed (v. 23), but they will be, and we are eagerly awaiting this event. How can we be so sure about it? Because of the nature of the indwelling Spirit. He is not only "the Spirit who gives life" (v. 2) but also the Spirit of resurrection.
- **Q8.** Focus on verses 12-17. What do you enjoy in these verses? Why?
 - *What rights come with being adopted into a family?*
- **Q9.** What further work of the Holy Spirit do you see in these verses?
 - *Of the following phrases from verses 12-17 which is most impactful for you, and why?*
 - *Debtors, not to the flesh*
 - *Led by the Spirit of God*
 - *Did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear*
 - *Spirit of adoption*
 - *We cry "Abba!, Father!"*
 - *We are Children of God*
 - *If children, then fellow heirs with Christ*

- Provided we suffer with Him
- **Q10.** What affect does it have on you that you can speak to God as “Father”?
 - *How is the Christian understanding of our relationship with God different from how other faiths and philosophies describe a relationship with God?*
 - *How is it possible that we are able to address God as “Our Father”?*
- **Summary:** F. F. Bruce reminds us that we must interpret the implications of our adoption in terms not of our contemporary culture but of the Greco-Roman culture of Paul’s day. He writes: The term “adoption” may have a somewhat artificial sound in our ears; but in the Roman world of the first century A.D. an adopted son was a son deliberately chosen by his adoptive father to perpetuate his name and inherit his estate; he was no whit inferior in status to a son born in the ordinary course of nature, and might well enjoy the father’s affection more fully and reproduce the father’s character more worthily. (The Letter of Paul to the Romans, 2nd edition. [Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press 1985], p. 157)
- **Apply:** What are some ways that you can show your appreciation for being adopted into God’s family?
- The Christian life is essentially life in the Spirit, a life that is animated, sustained, directed, and enriched by the Holy Spirit. Without the Holy Spirit, true Christian discipleship would be inconceivable and indeed impossible. In view of all that this passage reveals about the Holy Spirit, how can you give appropriate attention to his presence in your life?
- **Pray:** Focus on the work of the Holy Spirit in you, praying for a growing awareness of the Holy Spirit’s work.

Additional Leader Resources

1. RC Sproul on the impact of the book of Romans: <https://youtu.be/QXrJ6AVb1ms>
2. Alistair Begg, “Romans 8, God has done what the law could not do”: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5OZwr2Rh6vA>
3. Francis Chan, “Abba!, Father!”: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pn0SkXiTtco>
4. John Piper, Reading Romans Chapter 8: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i867dGtKIFo>
5. See week 1 leader guide for the Preface to Martin Luther’s commentary on Romans (from the 1500’s)

If you have any questions or comments, if you need help with this study, with members of your group, or with technology, please call (248-7940 x114) or email (curt@yakimagrace.com)

3-10-21 CM

Romans 7:24 – 8:17 (3 Versions)

Page 1

ESV: English Standard Version

²⁴ Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? ²⁵ Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself serve the law of God with my mind, but with my flesh I serve the law of sin."

There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. ² For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death.

³ For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, ⁴ in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. ⁵ For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. ⁶ For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace.

⁷ For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot. ⁸ Those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

⁹ You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. ¹⁰ But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. ¹¹ If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you.

¹² So then, brothers, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh.

¹³ For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.

¹⁴ For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. ¹⁵ For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, "Abba! Father!" ¹⁶ The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, ¹⁷ and if children, then heirs — heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him

NIV: New International Version

²⁴ What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body that is subject to death? ²⁵ Thanks be to God, who delivers me through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself in my mind am a slave to God's law, but in my sinful nature a slave to the law of sin.

Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, ² because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death. ³ For what the law was powerless to do because it was weakened by the flesh, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in the flesh, ⁴ in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

⁵ Those who live according to the flesh have their minds set on what the flesh desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. ⁶ The mind governed by the flesh is death, but the mind governed by the Spirit is life and peace. ⁷ The mind governed by the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. ⁸ Those who are in the realm of the flesh cannot please God.

⁹ You, however, are not in the realm of the flesh but are in the realm of the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, they do not belong to Christ. ¹⁰ But if Christ is in you, then even though your body is subject to death because of sin, the Spirit gives life because of righteousness. ¹¹ And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies because of his Spirit who lives in you.

¹² Therefore, brothers and sisters, we have an obligation — but it is not to the flesh, to live according to it. ¹³ For if you live according to the flesh, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live.

¹⁴ For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God. ¹⁵ The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father." ¹⁶ The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. ¹⁷ Now if we are children, then we are heirs — heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.

MSG: The Message

²⁴ I've tried everything and nothing helps. I'm at the end of my rope. Is there no one who can do anything for me? Isn't that the real question?

²⁵ The answer, thank God, is that Jesus Christ can and does. He acted to set things right in this life of contradictions where I want to serve God with all my heart and mind, but am pulled by the influence of sin to do something totally different.

^{8 1-2} With the arrival of Jesus, the Messiah, that fateful dilemma is resolved. Those who enter into Christ's being-here-for-us no longer have to live under a continuous, low-lying black cloud. A new power is in operation. The Spirit of life in Christ, like a strong wind, has magnificently cleared the air, freeing you from a fated lifetime of brutal tyranny at the hands of sin and death.

³⁻⁴ God went for the jugular when he sent his own Son. He didn't deal with the problem as something remote and unimportant. In his Son, Jesus, he personally took on the human condition, entered the disordered mess of struggling humanity in order to set it right once and for all. The law code, weakened as it always was by fractured human nature, could never have done that.

The law always ended up being used as a Band-Aid on sin instead of a deep healing of it. And now what the law code asked for but we couldn't deliver is accomplished as we, instead of redoubling our own efforts, simply embrace what the Spirit is doing in us.

⁵⁻⁸ Those who think they can do it on their own end up obsessed with measuring their own moral muscle but never get around to exercising it in real life. Those who trust God's action in them find that God's Spirit is in them — living and breathing God! Obsession with self in these matters is a dead end; attention to God leads us out into the open, into a spacious, free life. Focusing on the self is the opposite of focusing on God. Anyone completely absorbed in self ignores God, ends up thinking more about self than God. That person ignores who God is and what he is doing. And God isn't pleased at being ignored.

⁹⁻¹¹ But if God himself has taken up residence in your life, you can hardly be thinking more of yourself than of him. Anyone, of course, who has not welcomed this invisible but clearly present God, the Spirit of Christ, won't know what we're talking about. But for you who welcome him, in whom he dwells — even though you still experience all the limitations of

Romans 7:24 – 8:17 (3 Versions)

Page 2

MSG: The Message (continued)

sin — you yourself experience life on God's terms. It stands to reason, doesn't it, that if the alive-and-present God who raised Jesus from the dead moves into your life, he'll do the same thing in you that he did in Jesus, bringing you alive to himself? When God lives and breathes in you (and he does, as surely as he did in Jesus), you are delivered from that dead life. With his Spirit living in you, your body will be as alive as Christ's!

¹²⁻¹⁴ So don't you see that we don't owe this old do-it-yourself life one red cent. There's nothing in it for us, nothing at all. The best thing to do is give it a decent burial and get on with your new life. God's Spirit beckons. There are things to do and places to go!

¹⁵⁻¹⁷ This resurrection life you received from God is not a timid, grave-tending life. It's adventurously expectant, greeting God with a childlike "What's next, Papa?" God's Spirit touches our spirits and confirms who we really are. We know who he is, and we know who we are: Father and children. And we know we are going to get what's coming to us — an unbelievable inheritance! We go through exactly what Christ goes through. If we go through the hard times with him, then we're certainly going to go through the good times with him!

Grace of Christ Yakima

Study Guide: Community Group Life

Romans: Encountering the Gospel's Power

Week 10: Chapter 10 "Present Pain, Future Glory" (pages 52-56 in the book).

***** This is the Final Week in our 10-week Grace of Christ Winter 2021
Community Life Series *****

Our next 10-week supported Community Life series will begin the week of April 18 and continue through the week of June 20

Please use only what you find helpful in this guide.

Passage for chapter 10 in the study book: Romans 8:15 – 8:39 (ESV: English Standard Version) see pages 5-6 for a three-version comparison of this passage.¹

¹⁵ For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, "Abba! Father!" ¹⁶ The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, ¹⁷ and if children, then heirs — heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.

¹⁸ For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us. ¹⁹ For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. ²⁰ For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope ²¹ that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. ²² For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. ²³ And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. ²⁴ For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? ²⁵ But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.

²⁶ Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. ²⁷ And he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God. ²⁸ And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. ²⁹ For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. ³⁰ And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.

³¹ What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? ³² He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? ³³ Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. ³⁴ Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us. ³⁵ Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? ³⁶ As it is written,

"For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered."

¹ Three versions: ESV (English Standard Version), NIV New International Version, MSG (The Message)

³⁷ No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. ³⁸ For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, ³⁹ nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.” ²

Get to Know You Questions

1. What would you prefer to receive: 1) an email from a friend, 2) a Facebook post from a friend, 3) a phone call from a friend, 4) a letter from a friend? Why?
2. When did you first learn to pray? Where were you? How old were you? How were you taught to pray? Has your understanding of prayer changed since your first prayers? Discuss

Are there any lingering questions or comments about the study so far?

Refer to Chapter 10 titled “Present Pain, Future Glory” (pages 52-56). The questions found in the Romans: Encountering the Gospel’s Power book are included below. Additional questions from Grace of Christ staff are included *in italics*.

Main themes in Romans 8:15-39: *1) Future blessings will overshadow our current sufferings, 2) The Holy Spirit aids us (even with our prayers), 3) For those who love God, God can and will work for good even in the worst of experiences, and 4) The love of Christ is unstoppable. Nothing, nothing, nothing can separate us from His love.*

Study and Questions for week 10

Life is hard. Sure, it has its moments of joy: birth, weddings, the seashore. But joy is often shrouded in pain. Birth gets linked with death, weddings with divorce, and the sea with pollution. It is an imperfect world, and we are all imperfect people.

But there is good news. Romans 8 tells us that it won’t always be that way! There is a future glory. God will change his people; he is in the process of changing us right now. Even the earth will be a part of that glory. But for now we wait — and ever so slowly move toward what we will become.”³

- *Share three or four ways you see brokenness in this world? What caused the brokenness? What solutions are there for the brokenness you’ve identified?*
- **Open:** Theologians sometimes say that we live in the “already but not yet.” Christians are already a part of God’s family, but they are not yet living in the perfect world God designed nor are they yet perfect physically, mentally, or spiritually themselves. What do you long for that is a part of your “not yet”?
 - *If there is one thing about your life you could change or fix, what would it be?*
 - *If you believe in heaven, what are you looking forward to most about heaven? If you do not believe in heaven, what do you think happens after this life is over? What do you hope to see happen in your life, or in the world, before you take your final breath?*
- **Study:** Read Romans 8:18-27. Paul now moves on from the present ministry of God’s Spirit to the future glory of God’s children, of which indeed the Holy Spirit is “the firstfruits” (v. 23). What prompted this development was clearly his allusion to our sharing in the sufferings and glory of Christ (v. 17). For

² The book uses, primarily, the NIV (New International Version). At Grace we use, primarily, the ESV (English Standard Version). The ESV is considered a more accurate translation of the original Greek, while the NIV, although a good translation, is appreciated because it is easier to read. A comparison of three Bible versions of this passage is included below (Appendix A) (Curt’s notes)

³ This and every excerpt quoted is from: Carolyn Nystrom, John R. W. Stott. “Romans.” Apple Books.

“suffering and glory” is the theme throughout this section, first the sufferings and glory of God’s creation (vv. 19-22) and then the suffering and glory of God’s children (vv. 23-27)

- **Q1.** What examples of present suffering do you see in verses 18-27?
 - *What are some of the “current” sufferings in our world today?*
 - *What are some examples of current suffering experienced by Christians you know, and Christians in various countries around the world?*
- **Q2.** How is the “future glory” described?
 - *How would you describe heaven?*
 - *Where did you get your ideas about heaven?*
- **Q3.** Verses 24-25 speak of hope. What is the hope that is defined here?
 - In what practical ways can you express this sort of hope?
 - *What are some things people hope for, or hope in, that fail every time (i.e. winning the lottery, living forever, perfect relationship, absolute freedom, worldwide peace, everyone will be kind ...)?*
 - *What are some of the reasons Christians place their hope in Jesus?*
 - *If you have not yet placed your hope in Jesus, what or who are you currently placing your hope in?*
- **Q4.** Notice the three uses of the word *groan* in this passage. This word is like the groaning of childbirth; it anticipates the birth of something new. What does each use of this word suggest about suffering and about hope?
 - *Verse 22: In what way is creation groaning?*
 - *Verse 23: In what ways do we groan inwardly?*
 - *Verse 26: In what ways does the Holy Spirit assist our prayers with groanings too deep for words?*
- **Q5.** Focus on verses 26-27. What do you appreciate about the Holy Spirit’s work as it is described here?
 - *What are the ways, mentioned in these verses, that the Holy Spirit assists a Christian?*
 - *For more information on the Holy Spirit read John 14:15-27, and John 16:1-24*
 - *What does Paul mean when he writes about, “He who searches hearts ...”? How is this a comfort for those who trust in Jesus?*
- **Summary:** Why do we not know what to pray for? Perhaps because we are unsure whether to pray for deliverance from our sufferings or for strength to endure them. Also, since we do not know what we will be, or when or how, we are in no position to make precise requests. So the Spirit intercedes for us and does so with speechless groans. It is truly amazing that having written of the groaning creation and of the groaning church, Paul should now write of the groaning Spirit. God’s creation and God’s children groan because of their present state of imperfection, but there is nothing imperfect about the Holy Spirit. It must be, therefore, that the Holy Spirit identifies with our groans, with the pain of the world and the church, and shares in the longing for the final freedom of both. We and he groan together.
- **Q6.** Read Romans 8:28-39. Focus on verses 28-30. What five actions does God take toward his people? (Define each as accurately as you can.)
- **Q7.** In view of these actions of God, what encouragement do you find in verse 28?

- *We know from what we read across scripture that God does not minimize sorrow, or dismiss the hardships we face. God promises to meet us in the depth of the darkness around us and within us, and He promises to bring a measure of light even in the darkest places. And, one day, the joy we enter into will redefine all of our tears. Do you agree or disagree with this? Discuss*
- *Can you recall a time in your life when something happened and it looked hopeless, but later you began to see some positive things happening as a result of the “hopeless” experience?*
- Paul has already several times used the noun glory. It is essentially the glory of God, the manifestation of his splendor, of which all sinners fall short (3:23) but which we rejoice in hope of recovering (5:2). Paul also promises both that if we share Christ’s sufferings we will share his glory (8:17) and that the creation itself will one day be brought into the freedom and glory of God’s children (8:21). Now he uses the verb: “Those he justified, he also glorified.” Our destiny is to be given new bodies in a new world, both of which will be transfigured with the glory of God.
- **Q8.** Find five questions in verses 31-39. What is the cumulative impact of these questions?
- **Q9.** What do these verses reveal about God?
- **Q10.** How might the love of God, as it is revealed here, help you deal with some of your current pain?
- **Summary:** Here then are five convictions about God’s providence (v. 28), five affirmations about his purpose (vv. 29-30) and five questions about his love (vv. 31-39), which together bring us fifteen assurances about him. We urgently need them today since nothing seems stable in our world any longer. Insecurity is written across all human experience. Christian people are not guaranteed immunity to temptation, tribulation, or tragedy, but we are promised victory over them. God’s pledge is not that suffering will never afflict us but that it will never separate us from his love. Our confidence is not in our love for him, which is frail, fickle, and faltering, but in his love for us, which is steadfast, faithful, and persevering. The doctrine of “the perseverance of the saints” needs to be renamed. It is the doctrine of the perseverance of God with the saints
- **Apply:** What signs of a “groaning” creation are particularly painful to you?
 - What signs do you see of your own incompleteness — compared to our future glory?
 - How is God’s love nudging you toward that future glory?
- **Pray:** Reread verses 26-27. Invite the participation of the Holy Spirit as you approach God in prayer. Ask him to show you how to pray, who to pray for, how to express your praise and thanks, what gifts to ask from God. Then approach Father God in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ. As Romans 8 points out, prayer is a trinitarian exercise.

Additional Leader Resources

1. Timothy Keller on Romans 8:28, 38-39: <https://youtu.be/MDbKcZodtZI>
2. John Piper, “Called According to His Purpose”: <https://youtu.be/XCzr-mHXS88>
3. Adrian Rogers (Billy Graham Evangelistic Association) “Do all things work together for good?”: <https://billygraham.org/story/do-all-things-work-together-for-good/>

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3-18-2021 CM

Romans 8:15 – 8:39 (3 Versions)

Page 1

ESV: English Standard Version

¹⁵ For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, “Abba! Father!” ¹⁶ The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, ¹⁷ and if children, then heirs — heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.

¹⁸ For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.

¹⁹ For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. ²⁰ For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope ²¹ that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. ²² For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. ²³ And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. ²⁴ For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? ²⁵ But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.

²⁶ Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. ²⁷ And he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.

²⁸ And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. ²⁹ For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. ³⁰ And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.

³¹ What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? ³² He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? ³³ Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. ³⁴ Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—

who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us. ³⁵ Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? ³⁶ As it is written,

“For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.”

³⁷ No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. ³⁸ For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, ³⁹ nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

NIV: New International Version

¹⁵ The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, “Abba, Father.” ¹⁶ The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. ¹⁷ Now if we are children, then we are heirs — heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.

¹⁸ I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. ¹⁹ For the creation waits in eager expectation for the children of God to be revealed. ²⁰ For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope ²¹ that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the freedom and glory of the children of God.

²² We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. ²³ Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption to sonship, the redemption of our bodies. ²⁴ For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what they already have? ²⁵ But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently.

²⁶ In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans. ²⁷ And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for God's people in accordance with the will of God.

²⁸ And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. ²⁹ For those God foreknew he

also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters. ³⁰ And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.

³¹ What, then, shall we say in response to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? ³² He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? ³³ Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. ³⁴ Who then is the one who condemns? No one. Christ Jesus who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us.

³⁵ Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? ³⁶ As it is written:

“For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.”

³⁷ No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. ³⁸ For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, ³⁹ neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Romans 8:15 – 8:39 (3 Versions)

Page 2.

MSG: The Message

¹⁵⁻¹⁷ This resurrection life you received from God is not a timid, grave-tending life. It's adventurously expectant, greeting God with a childlike "What's next, Papa?" God's Spirit touches our spirits and confirms who we really are. We know who he is, and we know who we are: Father and children. And we know we are going to get what's coming to us — an unbelievable inheritance! We go through exactly what Christ goes through. If we go through the hard times with him, then we're certainly going to go through the good times with him!

¹⁸⁻²¹ That's why I don't think there's any comparison between the present hard times and the coming good times. The created world itself can hardly wait for what's coming next. Everything in creation is being more or less held back. God reins it in until both creation and all the creatures are ready and can be released at the same moment into the glorious times ahead. Meanwhile, the joyful anticipation deepens.

²²⁻²⁵ All around us we observe a pregnant creation. The difficult times of pain throughout the world are simply birth pangs. But it's not only around us; it's within us. The Spirit of God is arousing us within. We're also feeling the birth pangs. These sterile and barren bodies of ours are yearning for full deliverance. That is why waiting does not diminish us, any more than waiting diminishes a pregnant mother. We are enlarged in the waiting. We, of course, don't see what is enlarging us. But the longer we wait, the larger we become, and the more joyful our expectancy.

²⁶⁻²⁸ Meanwhile, the moment we get tired in the waiting, God's Spirit is right alongside helping us along. If we don't know how or what to pray, it doesn't matter. He does our praying in and for us, making prayer out of our wordless sighs, our aching groans. He knows us far better than we know ourselves, knows our pregnant condition, and keeps us present before God. That's why we can be so sure that every detail in our lives of love for God is worked into something good.

²⁹⁻³⁰ God knew what he was doing from the very beginning. He decided from the outset to shape the lives of those who love him along the same lines as the life of his Son. The Son stands first in the line of humanity he restored. We see the original and intended shape of our lives there in him. After God made that decision of

what his children should be like, he followed it up by calling people by name. After he called them by name, he set them on a solid basis with himself. And then, after getting them established, he stayed with them to the end, gloriously completing what he had begun.

³¹⁻³⁹ So, what do you think? With God on our side like this, how can we lose? If God didn't hesitate to put everything on the line for us, embracing our condition and exposing himself to the worst by sending his own Son, is there anything else he wouldn't gladly and freely do for us? And who would dare tangle with God by messing with one of God's chosen? Who would dare even to point a finger? The One who died for us—who was raised to life for us! — is in the presence of God at this very moment sticking up for us. Do you think anyone is going to be able to drive a wedge between us and Christ's love for us? There is no way! Not trouble, not hard times, not hatred, not hunger, not homelessness, not bullying threats, not backstabbing, not even the worst sins listed in Scripture:

They kill us in cold blood because they hate you. We're sitting ducks; they pick us off one by one.

None of this fazes us because Jesus loves us. I'm absolutely convinced that nothing—nothing living or dead, angelic or demonic, today or tomorrow, high or low, thinkable or unthinkable — absolutely nothing can get between us and God's love because of the way that Jesus our Master has embraced us.

Grace of Christ Yakima

Study Guide: Community Group Life

Romans: Encountering the Gospel's Power

Week 1: Chapter 11 "Understanding God's Purposes" (pages 57-61 in the book).

We are not entering our Spring Community Life Group Series. Beginning the week of April 18 and continuing through the week of June 22.

For leader study guides for chapters 1-10 of "Romans: Encountering the Gospel's Power" please visit yakimagrace.com and look for the Community Life Leader Resource page.

Chapter 9 in Romans presents significant theological concepts that some have used to increase division between Christians. That is not our desire here at Grace as we enter into the study of chapters 9-11 in Romans. Please be gracious with each other, practice humility, and love each other, offering grace even when opinions differ. If you, or others in your group, would like to talk to one of the pastors about what you read in these chapters please contact Bill, Curt, or Alex.

Please use only what you find helpful in this guide.

Passage for chapter 11 in the study book: Romans 9 (ESV: English Standard Version) see pages 11-13 for a three-version comparison of this passage.¹

Last verses from Chapter 8

"³⁸ For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, ³⁹ nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Chapter 9

"¹ I am speaking the truth in Christ — I am not lying; my conscience bears me witness in the Holy Spirit — ² that I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. ³ For I could wish that I myself were accursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, my kinsmen according to the flesh. ⁴ They are Israelites, and to them belong the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises. ⁵ To them belong the patriarchs, and from their race, according to the flesh, is the Christ, who is God over all, blessed forever. Amen.

⁶ But it is not as though the word of God has failed. For not all who are descended from Israel belong to Israel, ⁷ and not all are children of Abraham because they are his offspring, but "Through Isaac shall your offspring be named." ⁸ This means that it is not the children of the flesh who are the children of God, but the children of the promise are counted as offspring. ⁹ For this is what the promise said: "About this time next year I will return, and Sarah shall have a son." ¹⁰ And not only so, but also when Rebekah had conceived children by one man, our forefather Isaac, ¹¹ though they were not yet born and had done nothing either good or bad — in order that God's purpose of election might continue, not because of works but because of him who calls — ¹² she was told, "The older will serve the younger." ¹³ As it is written, "Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated." ¹⁴ What shall we say then? Is there injustice on God's part? By no means! ¹⁵ For he says to Moses, "I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion." ¹⁶ So then it depends not on human will or exertion, but on God, who has mercy. ¹⁷ For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, "For this very

¹ Three versions: ESV (English Standard Version), NIV New International Version, MSG (The Message)

purpose I have raised you up, that I might show my power in you, and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth.”¹⁸ So then he has mercy on whomever he wills, and he hardens whomever he wills.

¹⁹ You will say to me then, “Why does he still find fault? For who can resist his will?”²⁰ But who are you, O man, to answer back to God? Will what is molded say to its molder, “Why have you made me like this?”²¹ Has the potter no right over the clay, to make out of the same lump one vessel for honorable use and another for dishonorable use?²² What if God, desiring to show his wrath and to make known his power, has endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction,²³ in order to make known the riches of his glory for vessels of mercy, which he has prepared beforehand for glory —²⁴ even us whom he has called, not from the Jews only but also from the Gentiles?²⁵ As indeed he says in Hosea, “Those who were not my people I will call ‘my people,’ and her who was not beloved I will call ‘beloved.’”

²⁶ “And in the very place where it was said to them, ‘You are not my people,’ there they will be called ‘sons of the living God.’”

²⁷ And Isaiah cries out concerning Israel: “Though the number of the sons of Israel be as the sand of the sea, only a remnant of them will be saved,²⁸ for the Lord will carry out his sentence upon the earth fully and without delay.”²⁹ And as Isaiah predicted,

“If the Lord of hosts had not left us offspring, we would have been like Sodom and become like Gomorrah.”

³⁰ What shall we say, then? That Gentiles who did not pursue righteousness have attained it, that is, a righteousness that is by faith;³¹ but that Israel who pursued a law that would lead to righteousness did not succeed in reaching that law.³² Why? Because they did not pursue it by faith, but as if it were based on works. They have stumbled over the stumbling stone,³³ as it is written,

“Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense; and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame.”²

Keys to Leading a Community Life Group

- The goal is not to complete all the questions. The goal is to invite and encourage genuine relationships with each other, and with God, that lead to honest reflection and honest conversation.
- To accomplish the above it is essential that your Community Life Group is a safe place. 1) What’s shared remains confidential. 2) Truth is valued over pretense. 3) All questions are welcome. All points of view, and all persons, will be listened to and respected. 4) Our purpose is not to correct each other ... instead it is to humbly come together before God to seek what is true.
- Differences of opinion and belief are expected. Grace is expected too.
- It’s OK for you as the Group leader not to have an answer to a question. “That’s a great question. I don’t know the answer to that. Let me see what I can find out before we meet next time.”

Get to Know You Questions

1. What was your favorite thing to do as a kid (Painting, music, homework, sports, scouts, hiking, reading ...)? When was the last time you did “your favorite kid thing?”
2. What is something you realize is absolutely, completely, beyond question, out of your control? When did you first realize it was beyond your control? How do you feel about not being in control on this, or on many, aspects of your life?

² The book uses, primarily, the NIV (New International Version). At Grace we use, primarily, the ESV (English Standard Version). The ESV is considered a more accurate translation of the original Greek, while the NIV, although a good translation, is appreciated because it is easier to read. A comparison of three Bible versions of this passage is included below (Appendix A) (Curt’s notes)

Refer to Chapter 11 titled “Understanding God’s Purposes” (pages 57-61). The questions found in the Romans: Encountering the Gospel’s Power book are included below. Additional questions from Grace of Christ staff are included *in italics*.

Main themes in Romans 9: 1) *Paul’s passionate concern for his fellow countrymen, the Jews*, 2) *God’s sovereign election*, 3) *Human responsibility*, and 4) *God’s absolute faithfulness and His remnant people*.

Study and Questions for week 1 (Chapter 11: Spring Series)

Certain questions are perennial in college dorms and seminary classrooms. These questions often deal with the purpose of life, the nature of God, and what difference it all makes anyway. One of the more jarring questions for Christians revolves around what happens to those outside the Christian faith. “No one comes to the Father except through me,” said Jesus Christ in the fourteenth chapter of John. Those words are warm and comforting to the Christian believer — until they encounter a dear friend who happens to be a non-Christian. Then an onslaught of similar questions explodes: What about those who have never heard about Jesus? What about good people who happen to believe in some other religion? Are all of these people eternally lost? What about the unbelieving Jews Paul addressed?

Paul treats these questions with respect. Indeed, he had once been one of those Jews devoted to the ancient faith of the Hebrews.³

- *What questions have you heard others voice about why they cannot accept Christian faith?*
- *What questions have you had, do you have, about Christian faith?*

Open: Suppose a friend says to you, “I think your Christianity is much too exclusive. People travel on all kinds of spiritual journeys, and I think that God accepts them all.” How would you respond?

- *What resources (books, movies, friends, pastors, podcasts ...) do you use when someone is asking honest and difficult questions about Christian faith?*
- *Is there any group you know of that accepts everyone without exception? (All behaviors and all beliefs welcome however each person would like to express them)*
- *Does Greenpeace have limits to who they accept into their organization and the leadership of their organization? Does the YMCA or YWCA have any expectations of those who use their services? Is there any religious group you can think of that does not require some agreement of their established beliefs for those who wish to be members or leaders? Is there any sports team you know of that accepts everyone regardless of ability, attitude or agreement with a code of behavior?*

Study: Read Romans 9:1-18. Is it wrong to question God? Paul is not addressing someone who asks sincerely perplexed questions but rather someone who “quarrels” with God, who talks back or answers back. Such a person manifests a spirit of rebellion against God, a refusal to let God be God and acknowledge his or her true status as creature and sinner. Instead of such presumption we need, like Moses, to keep our distance, take off our shoes in recognition of the holy ground on which we stand, and even hide our face from him (Exodus 3:5). Similarly, we need, like Job, to put our hand over our mouth, confess that we tend to speak things we do not understand, despise ourselves, and repent in dust and ashes (Job 40:4; 42:3, 6).

There are numerous questions asked of God by some of the greatest men and women of faith:

- *Job 13:24 “Why do you hide your face and count me as your enemy?”*
- *Psalms 10:1 “Why, O Lord, do you stand far away? Why do you hide yourself in times of trouble?”*

³ This and every excerpt quoted is from: Carolyn Nystrom, John R. W. Stott. “Romans.” Apple Books.

- *Jeremiah 14:19 “Have you utterly rejected Judah? Does your soul loathe Zion? Why have you struck us down so that there is no healing for us?”*
- *Since these questions, and many more, are included in the Bible, God’s word for us, we must conclude that God is OK with our honest questions. It seems it is the attitude we bring with our questions that matters most.*
 - *On that day when you are face to face with God, what questions will you ask Him?*
 - *What counsel would you give to someone addressing God as if they were His equal?*
 - *How do you approach God when you talk to Him?*

Q1. What phrases here show the intensity of Paul’s concern for the Jewish people (vv. 1-3)?

- *Paul’s transformation from “religion” (he was passionate about his Jewish faith. Read Acts 8:1-9:2) to a relationship with God (Read Acts 9:3-22) was dramatic. What was it about his encounter with Jesus that made him desire that all within the Jewish faith put their faith in this same Jesus?*
- *Who would you be willing to give up your eternity with God for? Paul was willing to be cut off from Christ if that would mean his fellow Jews (who constantly attacked him) would be saved ... “for I could wish that I myself were accursed.” (To be cut off from Christ seems eternally definite and final. I’m not sure I could offer that and mean it ... even for those I love most. I have to think more about this. Lord, increase my faith! Curt)*

Q2. What privileges had God already granted the Jews (vv. 4-5)

- *What privileges has God given to Christians?*
- *What privileges has God given you?*

Q3. Four questions outline this chapter. (See verses 6 [a statement], 14, 19, and 30.) How would you phrase each question?

- *How has God kept His promises (promises made to Abraham and others in Genesis ... the promises to God’s people throughout the Old Testament ... and the promises made to us by Jesus)?*
- *What is your response to God when you do not understand what He is doing in a particular circumstance?*
- *What is your response to God when you do not understand a truth about God or life you find in the Bible?*

Q4. When and why have you asked a question similar to one of these?

- *Have you ever felt God was unfair? Discuss. How did you, if you did, resolve this?*
- *How do you feel about God being in complete and absolute control, and that we cannot “resist His will” (verse 19)?*

Q5. Focus on verses 6-13. Does being a descendant of Abraham guarantee a spot in God’s family? Why or why not?

- *What was the benefit, or the liability, of the way you were raised related to Christian faith? Did you have a supportive upbringing, a neutral upbringing, or an upbringing where Christian faith was dismissed and opposed? Discuss.*
- *Does a “good” Christian upbringing guarantee a relationship with God? Why or why not?*
- *I have often said that “going to church every Sunday does not make a person a Christian any more than sleeping in the garage every night makes a person a car. Do you agree or disagree with that statement? Explain your answer.”*

Q6. How do the examples of Moses, Pharaoh, and a potter help answer the question about God's justice?

- *Moses: read Exodus 3*
- *Pharaoh: read Exodus 4:21, and 7:1-13*
- *Potter: Read Jeremiah 18*

Verse 13 says, "Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated." This bald statement sounds shocking in Christian ears and cannot possibly be taken literally. Although there is such an emotion as "holy hatred," it is directed only to evildoers and would be inappropriate here. God put Jacob above Esau—as individuals, not just in the sense that Israelites were God's people, not the Edomites.

We have to remember that Esau forfeited his birthright because of his own worldliness (Genesis 25:29-34) and lost his rightful blessing because of his brother's deceit (Genesis 27), so human responsibility was interwoven with divine sovereignty in their story. We should also recall that the rejected brother was circumcised and therefore in some sense, too, a member of God's covenant and promised lesser blessings. Nevertheless Esau illustrates the key truth of "God's purpose in election might stand." So God's promise did not fail.

Read Romans 9:22-33. Few preachers maintained balance better than Charles Simeon of Cambridge in the first half of the nineteenth century. He ministered at a time when there was much controversy surrounding the doctrine of election. In defense of his commitment to both election and individual freedom, Simeon would sometimes borrow an illustration from the Industrial Revolution: "As wheels in a complicated machine may move in opposite directions and yet subserve a common end, so may truths apparently opposite be perfectly reconcilable with each other, and equally subserve the purposes of God in the accomplishment of man's salvation" (preface to the *Horae Homileticae* in 21 volumes [1832], 5).

- *I've included at the end of this guide a response I gave (in 2012) to a group asking for an explanation of "predestination." It may, or may not, be helpful.*
- *I also recommend for further study the wonderful book by J.I. Packer Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God that addresses this very question.*
- *How do you understand the concept of Predestination and election? (In your discussions be gracious with one another ... there are several different understandings on this within the Christian community. The topic is not meant to incite disagreement and arguments but to call us to humbly seek the truth of God. If the subject is too contentious ... it is not appropriate to continue the discussion but instead to pray, be gracious, and love one another.)*
 - *How do you define "Predestination"? (Read Acts 2:22-24, Acts 4:23-31, Romans 8:28-30, Ephesians 1:3-14)*
 - *How do you define "election", being "chosen"? (Read Matthew 24:24-31, Luke 18:7, 1 Peter 1:1-10, Deuteronomy 7:1-7)*
- *What benefit is there for those who know they have been chosen by God? What benefit is there for those who know God has a future already established for them, a future that cannot be taken from them?*
- *When you know you have been chosen by God, not because of anything you have done but purely by the love and grace of God, how does that change your motivation as you live your life, and how does it change your relationships with others? With this understanding, is there any room for pride or a sense of superiority in your life? Read Ephesians 2:1-14.*
- *Paul stresses in these verses that it is all up to God ... and yet, here and elsewhere, Paul makes it clear we each have responsibility for our response to God. How do those two fit together?*

Q7. What examples do you see of God's wrath and his mercy in verses 22-24?

Q8: How had the prophets Hosea and Isaiah prepared the Jewish people for the possibility that belonging in God's family was not simply a matter of biological heritage (vv. 25-29)

Q9: Focus on verses 30-33. What relationships do you see here between faith, works, Jews, and Gentiles?

- *Where does a faith based on our works and effort lead us?*
- *Where does a faith based on the undeserved grace and mercy of God lead us?*
- *What will our attitude toward God and others be if we believe we have earned God's favor by how good we have been?*
- *What will our attitude toward God and others be if we believe we do not deserve the forgiveness, love, and favor of God that He has given us?*

Q10: What do you learn about Jesus Christ from verse 33?

- *Paul continually affirms that our relationship with Jesus is what matters. Either we accept what God offers us in Jesus (those who do will not be put to shame) or we reject Jesus (and stumble, remaining spiritually dead). Do you agree with this? Is there any way to "get around" Jesus and get to God? Discuss.*

Q11: How have you seen Christ in one of the ways described here?

Summary: Paul began this chapter with the paradox of Israel's privilege and prejudice (vv. 1-4). How can its unbelief be explained?

It is not because God is unfaithful to his promises, for he has kept his word in relation to the Israel within Israel (vv. 6-13).

It is not because God is unjust in his "purpose in election," for neither his having mercy on some nor his hardening of others is incompatible with his justice (vv. 14-18).

It is not because God is unfair to blame Israel or hold human beings accountable, for we should not answer him back, and in any case he has acted according to his own character and according to Old Testament prophecy (vv. 19-29).

It is rather because Israel is proud, pursuing righteousness in the wrong way, by works instead of faith, and so has stumbled over the stumbling block of the cross (vv. 30-33).

Thus this chapter about Israel's unbelief begins with God's purpose of election (vv. 6-29) and concludes by attributing Israel's fall to her own pride (vv. 30-33).

Apply: This chapter speaks several times of God's mercy. When and how have you seen God's mercy at work?

Paul speaks of people who did not come into God's family because instead of trusting in the "rock," they stumbled over it (vv. 32-33). Who among your friends and family seem to have made that same mistake?

Mentally select one of these people who do not yet believe. Try to see Christianity from that person's point of view. How do you think he or she sees the Christian faith?

Pray: Spend time praying for people you know who have not yet trusted Christ. Ask God to extend his mercy to them and draw them into faith. Ask him to show you how you might become a part of that mercy.

Additional Leader Resources

1. Alistair Begg: Chosen in him. https://youtu.be/cVOXmg_1BTE
2. Timothy Keller "The Counter-Intuitive Calvin": <https://timothykeller.com/blog/2012/9/1/the-counter-intuitive-calvin>
3. J.I Packer "Does Each Person Choose Their Own Destiny": https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f_4CvAVh1aw
4. C.S. Lewis quote from his book The Great Divorce: "There are only two kinds of people in the end: those who say to God, "Thy will be done", and those to whom God says, in the end, "Thy will be done." All that are in hell choose it. Without that self-choice there could be no hell. No soul that seriously and constantly desires joy will ever miss it. Those who seek find to those who knock, it is opened."

If you have any questions or comments, if you need help with this study, with members of your group, or with technology, please call (248-7940 x114) or email (curt@yakimagrace.com)

4-16-2021 CM

My response to an email asking me to explain Predestination.

It's nice to see your group is working through the simple questions of faith.

It is appropriate from the start to remember, as you have stated, that this subject has been "frequently debated among Christians." The debates themselves, if that is all they amount to, do not draw us closer to God or deeper in our love for Jesus. If the discussion remains a debate over ideas, words, and Bible verses it is not beneficial (1 Timothy 1.3-7). But if the discussion and exchange drives us back to prayer and to the Bible to wrestle with our understanding of the nature of God, and if those conversations proceed with gentleness, boldness, sensitivity and love there is great benefit.

The Presbyterian Church has a long history of holding high the Sovereign power, position and privilege of God. God is God, there is no other. We are creations, He is Creator. God alone holds all power and wisdom. God alone knows and holds the future. We do not have the ability to bargain with God or to negotiate with Him a more favorable outcome than what He determines in justice and truth. He sets all the rules. He determines the course of history. God alone will win. The conclusion of history is not in doubt. While there are forces at work contrary to God, He will prevail. God is in charge. The war between spiritual forces is not a battle of equals with an uncertain end. The end has already been determined. There is no possible defeat of God's will and plan.

I am comforted by this significant truth. I can trust God for the present and the future. I can trust that even if the world falls in around me, He remains true. If I face hardship He will keep His promises and will walk with me through the dark valley and see me through to eternity. This is where I find rest, comfort, security ... nowhere else. With this understanding I can also trust God in the area of salvation.

One clear truth of the Bible is that there is not a single person deserving of the grace and forgiveness of God. All of us have rebelled against God (see Romans 3). Due to our revolt against God not one single person deserves the gift of God or eternity with God. All of us deserve justice, which is the wrath and punishment of God (see Luke 19.11-27). If even one person were spared from the judgment of God it would be more than was deserved. Because of God's generous love offered in Jesus there is hope and we can give thanks that God is gracious and merciful to so many.

Shifting to the verse you asked about in Ephesians 1 ... the word "Pre-destination" refers to our ultimate destination. God has chosen the destination for those who believe. God has pre-determined that our ultimate destination will be in His presence forever. God has chosen us. We did not choose Him. God works in our life first (1 John 4:19). Interestingly in the Bible the term "free-will" is used (with possibly some translation exceptions) to refer to a type of offering the people of Israel were instructed to give to God in the Old Testament. Do we have "free-will? The answer the church has given from the beginning is that we do not have free-will in relation to the things of God. The Bible actually tells us we are, in relation to the things of God, the exact opposite of free. Apart from the freeing work of God in our life we are identified as slaves to sin (Romans 6.20-23). We cannot figure out God and faith in Jesus through our human intellect (1 Corinthians 2:14). We cannot grasp salvation and receive forgiveness through our good acts of kindness or our sincere thoughtful reflection (Ephesians 2:5, 8-10). We cannot comprehend or honestly desire God through human intellect, effort, or will. God Himself must work in us to stir us to faith and belief (John 1.9-14). The Bible even goes so far as to declare that we are dead apart from the work of God (Ephesians 2.1). This is the direct

consequence of disobeying God. It started at the very beginning ... God originally warned Adam and Eve to not eat the fruit of one particular tree in the garden (out of all the many trees God generously provided) but they broke their relationship with God through direct disobedience (Genesis 2.15-17). We are dead, not mildly ill or even seriously wounded (Ephesians 2.3-5). We do not need a little help to enter into life with God ... we need a completely new life provided by God Himself through the Holy Spirit. Spiritually we are dead to the things of God. It takes a miracle directly from God to bring us back to life. There is nothing we do or can do to remedy this desperate crisis we are in. The solution to death is the gift of life offered in Jesus. Great leaders in the church have clung to this, and celebrated it, through the centuries (Augustine, Luther, Calvin ...).

Exactly how Pre-destination works in our life and in the life of others we do not fully know (Read Romans chapters 9 – 11). One significant truth is that God is not bound by time. God stands outside of time (2 Peter 3.8). Time was created for us. Time provides boundaries and urgency to our life.

It would be a mistake to attempt to identify whom God has pre-destined and whom He has not pre-destined. From Psalm 139 (“... my frame was not hidden from thee, when I was being made in secret, intricately wrought in the depths of the earth, Thy eyes beheld my unformed substance; in Thy book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there was none of them.”) to the thief on the cross in Luke 23 speaking to the other thief (“Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? And we indeed justly; for we are receiving the due reward of our deeds; but this man [Jesus] has done nothing wrong.” And he said, “Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.” And Jesus said to him, “Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in paradise.”)

We do not know how or when or why God works in certain situations and certain individuals, but we do know that He works through us as broken people to share His message of hope and life to others. That is the way He has always worked ... disciples, people of Israel, the church, me. I don’t understand it, but I know that if I love Him and desire to obey Him I will speak when He says to speak. As a result of our obedience others who are dead around us will respond to the gracious invitation of Jesus. When we speak in obedience of the things of God the Holy Spirit provides the power to revive those who are spiritually dead. How does our involvement fit with God’s election from before the foundation of the world? I don’t really know. I just know that He has told us to go and speak and serve and love ... and so that’s what I want to do, or at least at times I am willing to do. I pray that God would make me more willing. Even faith itself is a gift from God. The result of the gift of God is a life lived for others (Ephesians 2.8-10).

One verse that I keep returning to regarding this mystery is Philippians 2.12-13. “... work out your own salvation with fear and trembling (take it seriously. We have responsibility! But wait ...) for God is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure (it is, after all, God who is working in our life in ways we do not often even understand).”

If the Ephesians 1 passage were alone in its strong statements on God’s eternal plan for us we could view it as a mystery but not a central truth to discuss and study. But it does not stand alone. Words like “chosen,” “elect,” and “predestination” occur many times in the Bible. This understanding is wide spread in the Bible (see Romans 8.28-30, Romans chapters 9-11, Acts 2:23-36, Acts 3.18, Acts 9.10-17, John 4.16-26, John 5.21, John 6.35-40, John 9.1-5, John 10.27-30, Genesis 12 (the election or choosing of Abraham (the Jewish nation) out of all the nations), 2 Peter 1.10-11, Matthew 24.22-31, Titus 1.1, 1 King 19.9-18 (God has left 7000 as a remnant who have not bowed to Ba’al), The choosing of David (one of the least likely to be elected king) instead of Saul (most likely to be elected king), Genesis 25.19-28 (the position of the younger Jacob over the older Esau), Genesis 50.15-21 (The election and work of God in the life of Joseph), Isaiah 10.1-19 (The use of foreign non-believing armies to accomplish the work of God).

God is Sovereign and at work in the world. Even when I face the realities of life, the hardship, the grief, the pain, I can trust my future to Him and Him alone. Who else could I turn to (see John 6.67-69)? This is where I must stand. Without the assurance that nothing escapes the control and power of God, nothing at all, I would feel a restlessness and a fear. I could hope He would win in the end, but it would be a frightful and uncertain hope. Thankfully I know He will win because I see evidence of His power and love all around me. I believe He does hold all eternity and all of nature, and my very life and the lives of those around me because we are somehow very precious to Him.

Hoping this adds benefit to your discussions and your desire to love Jesus,

Humbly,

Curt McFarland

ESV: English Standard Version

³⁸ For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, ³⁹ nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord

¹ I am speaking the truth in Christ—I am not lying; my conscience bears me witness in the Holy Spirit—² that I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. ³ For I could wish that I myself were accursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, my kinsmen according to the flesh. ⁴ They are Israelites, and to them belong the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises. ⁵ To them belong the patriarchs, and from their race, according to the flesh, is the Christ, who is God over all, blessed forever. Amen.

⁶ But it is not as though the word of God has failed. For not all who are descended from Israel belong to Israel, ⁷ and not all are children of Abraham because they are his offspring, but “Through Isaac shall your offspring be named.” ⁸ This means that it is not the children of the flesh who are the children of God, but the children of the promise are counted as offspring. ⁹ For this is what the promise said: “About this time next year I will return, and Sarah shall have a son.” ¹⁰ And not only so, but also when Rebekah had conceived children by one man, our forefather Isaac, ¹¹ though they were not yet born and had done nothing either good or bad—in order that God’s purpose of election might continue, not because of works but because of him who calls—¹² she was told, “The older will serve the younger.” ¹³ As it is written, “Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated.”

¹⁴ What shall we say then? Is there injustice on God’s part? By no means! ¹⁵ For he says to Moses, “I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion.” ¹⁶ So then it depends not on human will or

exertion, but on God, who has mercy. ¹⁷ For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, “For this very purpose I have raised you up, that I might show my power in you, and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth.” ¹⁸ So then he has mercy on whomever he wills, and he hardens whomever he wills.

¹⁹ You will say to me then, “Why does he still find fault? For who can resist his will?” ²⁰ But who are you, O man, to answer back to God? Will what is molded say to its molder, “Why have you made me like this?” ²¹ Has the potter no right over the clay, to make out of the same lump one vessel for honorable use and another for dishonorable use? ²² What if God, desiring to show his wrath and to make known his power, has endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, ²³ in order to make known the riches of his glory for vessels of mercy, which he has prepared beforehand for glory—²⁴ even us whom he has called, not from the Jews only but also from the Gentiles? ²⁵ As indeed he says in Hosea, “Those who were not my people I will call ‘my people,’

and her who was not beloved I will call ‘beloved.’”

²⁶ “And in the very place where it was said to them, ‘You are not my people,’ there they will be called ‘sons of the living God.’”

²⁷ And Isaiah cries out concerning Israel: “Though the number of the sons of Israel be as the sand of the sea, only a remnant of them will be saved, ²⁸ for the Lord will carry out his sentence upon the earth fully and without delay.” ²⁹ And as Isaiah predicted, “If the Lord of hosts had not left us offspring, we would have been like Sodom and become like Gomorrah.”

³⁰ What shall we say, then? That Gentiles who did not pursue righteousness have attained it, that is, a righteousness that is by faith; ³¹ but that Israel who pursued a law that would lead to righteousness did not succeed in

reaching that law. ³² Why? Because they did not pursue it by faith, but as if it were based on works. They have stumbled over the stumbling stone, ³³ as it is written, “Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense; and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame.”

NIV New International Version

³⁸ For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, ³⁹ neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

I speak the truth in Christ—I am not lying, my conscience confirms it through the Holy Spirit—² I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. ³ For I could wish that I myself were cursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my people, those of my own race, ⁴ the people of Israel. Theirs is the adoption to sonship; theirs the divine glory, the covenants, the receiving of the law, the temple worship and the promises. ⁵ Theirs are the patriarchs, and from them is traced the human ancestry of the Messiah, who is God over all, forever praised! Amen.

⁶ It is not as though God’s word had failed. For not all who are descended from Israel are Israel. ⁷ Nor because they are his descendants are they all Abraham’s children. On the contrary, “It is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned.” ⁸ In other words, it is not the children by physical descent who are God’s children, but it is the children of the promise who are regarded as Abraham’s offspring. ⁹ For this was how the promise was stated: “At the appointed time I will return, and Sarah will have a son.”

¹⁰ Not only that, but Rebekah’s children were conceived at the same time by our father Isaac. ¹¹ Yet, before the twins were born or had done anything good or bad—in order that God’s purpose in election might stand: ¹² not by works but by him who

calls—she was told, “The older will serve the younger.” ¹³ Just as it is written: “Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated.”

¹⁴ What then shall we say? Is God unjust? Not at all! ¹⁵ For he says to Moses,
“I will have mercy on whom I have mercy,

and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion.”

¹⁶ It does not, therefore, depend on human desire or effort, but on God’s mercy. ¹⁷ For Scripture says to Pharaoh: “I raised you up for this very purpose, that I might display my power in you and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth.” ¹⁸ Therefore God has mercy on whom he wants to have mercy, and he hardens whom he wants to harden.

¹⁹ One of you will say to me: “Then why does God still blame us? For who is able to resist his will?” ²⁰ But who are you, a human being, to talk back to God? “Shall what is formed say to the one who formed it, ‘Why did you make me like this?’” ²¹ Does not the potter have the right to make out of the same lump of clay some pottery for special purposes and some for common use?

²² What if God, although choosing to show his wrath and make his power known, bore with great patience the objects of his wrath—prepared for destruction? ²³ What if he did this to make the riches of his glory known to the objects of his mercy, whom he prepared in advance for glory— ²⁴ even us, whom he also called, not only from the Jews but also from the Gentiles? ²⁵ As he says in Hosea:

“I will call them ‘my people’ who are not my people;

and I will call her ‘my loved one’ who is not my loved one,”

²⁶ and,

“In the very place where it was said to them,

‘You are not my people,’

there they will be called ‘children of the living God.’”

²⁷ Isaiah cries out concerning Israel:

“Though the number of the Israelites be like the sand by the sea,
only the remnant will be saved.

²⁸ For the Lord will carry out his sentence on earth with speed and finality.”

²⁹ It is just as Isaiah said previously: “Unless the Lord Almighty had left us descendants,
we would have become like Sodom,
we would have been like Gomorrah.”

³⁰ What then shall we say? That the Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, have obtained it, a righteousness that is by faith; ³¹ but the people of Israel, who pursued the law as the way of righteousness, have not attained their goal. ³² Why not? Because they pursued it not by faith but as if it were by works. They stumbled over the stumbling stone. ³³ As it is written:

“See, I lay in Zion a stone that causes people to stumble and a rock that makes them fall, and the one who believes in him will never be put to shame.”

JBP: J.B. Phillips

³⁸⁻³⁹ I have become absolutely convinced that neither death nor life, neither messenger of Heaven nor monarch of earth, neither what happens today nor what may happen tomorrow, neither a power from on high nor a power from below, nor anything else in God’s whole world has any power to separate us from the love of God in Jesus Christ our Lord!

¹⁻³ Before Christ and my own conscience I assure you that I am speaking the plain truth when I say that there is something that makes me feel very depressed, like a pain that never leaves me. It is the condition of my brothers and fellow-Israelites, and I have actually reached the pitch of wishing myself cut off from Christ if it meant that they could be won for God.

⁴⁻⁵ Just think what the Israelites have had given to them. The privilege of being adopted as sons of God, the experience of seeing something of the glory of God, the receiving of the agreements made with God, the gift

of the Law, true ways of worship, God’s own promises—all these are theirs, and so too, as far as human descent goes, is Christ himself, Christ who is God over all, blessed for ever. ⁶⁻⁷ Now this does not mean that God’s word to Israel has failed. For you cannot count all “Israelites” as the true Israel of God. Nor can all Abraham’s descendants be considered truly children of Abraham. The promise was that ‘in Isaac your seed shall be called’.

⁸⁻¹² That means that it is not the natural descendants who automatically inherit the promise, but, on the contrary, that the children of the promise (i.e. sons of God) are to be considered truly Abraham’s children. For it was a promise when God said: ‘At this time I will come and Sarah shall have a son’. (Everybody, remember, thought it quite impossible for Sarah to have a child.) And then, again, a word of promise came to Rebecca, at the time when she was pregnant with two children by the one man, Isaac our forefather. It came before the children were born or had done anything good or bad, plainly showing that God’s act of choice has nothing to do with achievements, good or bad, but is entirely a matter of his will. The promise was: ‘The older shall serve the younger’.

¹³ And we get a later endorsement of this divine choice in the words: ‘Jacob I have loved, but Esau I have hated’.

¹⁴⁻¹⁵ Now do we conclude that God is monstrously unfair? Never! God said long ago to Moses: ‘I will have mercy on whomever I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whomever I will have compassion’.

¹⁶⁻¹⁷ It is obviously not a question of human will or human effort, but of divine mercy. The scripture says to Pharaoh: ‘Even for this same purpose I have raised you up, that I might show my power in you, and that my name shall be declared in all the earth’.

¹⁸ It seems plain, then, that God chooses on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will harden in their sin.

¹⁹⁻²⁰ Of course I can almost hear your retort: "If this is so, and God's will is irresistible, why does God blame men for what they do?" But the question really is this: "Who are you, a man, to make any such reply to God?" When a craftsman makes anything he doesn't expect it to turn round and say, 'Why did you make me like this?'

²¹⁻²⁶ The potter, for instance, is always assumed to have complete control over the clay, making with one part of the lump a lovely vase, and with another a pipe for sewage. Can we not assume that God has the same control over human clay? May it not be that God, though he must sooner or later expose his wrath against sin and show his controlling hand, has yet most patiently endured the presence in his world of things that cry out to be destroyed? Can we not see, in this, his purpose in demonstrating the boundless resources of his glory upon those whom he considers fit to receive his mercy, and whom he long ago planned to raise to glorious life? And by these chosen people I mean you and me, whom he has called out from both Jews and Gentiles. He says in Hosea: 'I will call them my people, who were not my people, and her beloved, who was not beloved'. 'And it shall come to pass in the place where it was said to them, You are not my people, there they will be called sons of the living God'.

²⁷⁻²⁸ And Isaiah, speaking about Israel, proclaims: 'though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, the remnant will be saved. For he will finish the work and cut it short in righteousness, because the Lord will make a short work upon the earth'.

²⁹ And previously, Isaiah said: 'Unless the Lord of Sabaoth had left us a seed, we would have become like Sodom and we would have been made like Gomorrah'.

³⁰⁻³³ Now, how far have we got? That the Gentiles who never had the Law's standard of righteousness to guide them, have attained righteousness, righteousness-by-faith. but Israel, following the Law of righteousness, failed to reach the goal of righteousness. And why? Because

their minds were fixed on what they achieved instead of on what they believed. They tripped over that very stone the scripture mentions: 'Behold, I lay in Zion a stumbling stone and rock of offence, and whoever believes on him will not be put to shame'.

Grace of Christ Yakima

Study Guide: Community Group Life

Romans: Encountering the Gospel's Power

Week 2: Chapter 12 "God's Grief" (pages 62-66 in the book).

We are now in week 2 of our Spring Community Life Group Series. This 10-week series began the week of April 18 and continues through the week of June 20.

For leader study guides for chapters 1-10 of "Romans: Encountering the Gospel's Power" please visit yakimagrace.com and look for the Community Life Leader Resource page.

Chapter 9-11 in Romans presents us with some theological truths that have been difficult for some, and divisive for others. Our desire here at Grace as we enter into this study in Romans is to be gracious with each other, practice humility, and love each other, even when opinions differ. If you, or others in your group, would like to talk to one of the pastors about what you read in these chapters please contact Bill, Curt, or Alex.

Please use only what you find helpful in this guide.

Passage for chapter 12 in the study book: Romans 10 (ESV: English Standard Version) see pages 7-9 for a three-version comparison of this passage.¹

Last verses from Chapter 9

³⁰What shall we say, then? That Gentiles who did not pursue righteousness have attained it, that is, a righteousness that is by faith; ³¹but that Israel who pursued a law that would lead to righteousness did not succeed in reaching that law. ³²Why? Because they did not pursue it by faith, but as if it were based on works. They have stumbled over the stumbling stone, ³³as it is written, "Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense; and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame."

Chapter 10

¹Brothers, my heart's desire and prayer to God for them is that they may be saved. ²For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. ³For, being ignorant of the righteousness of God, and seeking to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness. ⁴For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.

⁵For Moses writes about the righteousness that is based on the law, that the person who does the commandments shall live by them. ⁶But the righteousness based on faith says, 'Do not say in your heart, 'Who will ascend into heaven?' (that is, to bring Christ down) ⁷or 'Who will descend into the abyss?' (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead). ⁸But what does it say? 'The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart' (that is, the word of faith that we proclaim); ⁹because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. ¹⁰For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved. ¹¹For the Scripture says, 'Everyone who believes in him will not be put to shame.' ¹²For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, bestowing his riches on all who call on him. ¹³For 'everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.'

¹ Three versions: ESV (English Standard Version), NIV New International Version, MSG (The Message)

¹⁴ How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? ¹⁵ And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, 'How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!' ¹⁶ But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, 'Lord, who has believed what he has heard from us?' ¹⁷ So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.

¹⁸ But I ask, have they not heard? Indeed they have, for 'Their voice has gone out to all the earth, and their words to the ends of the world.'

¹⁹ But I ask, did Israel not understand? First Moses says, 'I will make you jealous of those who are not a nation; with a foolish nation I will make you angry.'

²⁰ Then Isaiah is so bold as to say, 'I have been found by those who did not seek me; I have shown myself to those who did not ask for me.'

²¹ But of Israel he says, 'All day long I have held out my hands to a disobedient and contrary people.'"²

Keys to Leading a Community Life Group

- The goal is not to complete all the questions. The goal is to invite and encourage genuine relationships with each other, and with God, that lead to honest reflection and honest conversation.
- To accomplish the above it is essential that your Community Life Group is a safe place. 1) What's shared remains confidential. 2) Truth is valued over pretense. 3) All questions are welcome. All points of view, and all persons, will be listened to and respected. 4) Our purpose is not to correct each other ... instead it is to humbly come together before God to seek what is true.
- Differences of opinion and belief are expected. Grace is expected too.
- It's OK for you as the Group leader not to have an answer to a question. "That's a great question. I don't know the answer to that. Let me see what I can find out before we meet next time."

Get to Know You Questions

1. To get caught up on the news of the day do you prefer: 1) listening to the radio, 2) reading a newspaper, 3) checking social media, 4) using a news app on your phone, 5) watching the evening news?" or 6) I don't watch because I don't want to know.
2. Share a movie or TV show about space that is one of your favorites. Why do you like that movie or TV show? Does the movie or TV show describe life "out there" as you imagine it is and will be?

Refer to Chapter 12 titled "God's Grief" (pages 62-66). The questions found in the Romans: Encountering the Gospel's Power book are included below. Additional questions from Grace of Christ staff are included *in italics*.

Main themes in Romans 10: *1) Some believe they can get right with God by obeying the law rather than getting right with God as a complete undeserved gift from God, 2) Faith is the result of believing in your heart and confessing with your mouth, and, 3) The importance of preaching and sending ... in the process of a person's faith.*

Study and Questions for week 2 Spring Series (Chapter 12 in the study book)

For two thousand years God had courted his people. Sometimes they walked with him as did Abraham, the first of the Hebrews. Some performed marvelous acts of faith as did Nehemiah, rebuilding the walls of

² The book uses, primarily, the NIV (New International Version). At Grace we use, primarily, the ESV (English Standard Version). The ESV is considered a more accurate translation of the original Greek, while the NIV, although a good translation, is appreciated because it is easier to read. A comparison of three Bible versions of this passage is included below (Appendix A) (Curt's notes)

Jerusalem, as did Jeremiah, wailing over the sins of his people as he called them back to God. Many were flawed, serving God in one event and defying him in another. Jonah, for example, nearly drowned before agreeing to perform his assignment and preach to Nineveh. Even then he complained that God forgave such sinful people as the Ninevites. Samson did more for the cause of God in his suicidal death than in his unruly life. And some among God's people were evil to the core. The evil king Manasseh, who ruled longer than any other king, took delight in killing the prophets. King Ahab stole a poor man's vineyard, and when the prophet Elijah confronted him, Ahab spent the rest of his life trying to destroy him.

Behind the headlines of individual Hebrew heroes and villains, however, were generations of others. Sometimes they served God, often they rebelled, sometimes they repented. But always they were his people. Until now. God the Father had provided one eternal way to belong to him: his Son, Jesus Christ. What if his chosen people rejected his Son? The closing verses of this chapter record poignant words from God, "All day long I have held out my hands to a disobedient and obstinate people."³

- *What examples can you think of from the Bible of those who rejected God, rebelled against God, even opposed God, even though they had the benefit of being part of God's people? (Some examples: Joseph's brothers, Genesis 37:12-28. Those who followed after Gideon, Judges 8:29-35. King Manasseh, 2 Kings 21:1-9.)*
- *Is this still a problem today for those who have been blessed to be a part of God's people, God's Church?*

Open: When have you seen the sadness of a ruptured relationship?

- *Think of the Biblical examples of Jacob and Esau, Joseph and his brothers, Saul and David*

Study: Read Romans 10:1-13. One of the notable features of Romans 10 is that it is saturated with Old Testament allusions and quotations. Paul cites Scripture here in order to confirm or illustrate eight truths: first, the ready accessibility of Christ to faith (vv. 6-8 = Deuteronomy 30:12-14); second, the promise of salvation to all who believe (v. 11 = Isaiah 28:16; v. 13 = Joel 2:32); third, the glorious necessity of evangelism (v. 15 = Isaiah 52:7); fourth, the unresponsiveness of Israel (v. 16 = Isaiah 53:1); fifth, the universality of the gospel (v. 18 = Psalm 19:4); sixth, the Gentiles' provocation of Israel (v. 19 = Deuteronomy 32:21); seventh, the divine initiative of grace (v. 20 = Isaiah 65:1); and eighth, the patient grief of God the evangelist (v. 21 = Isaiah 65:2). Thus Paul's emphasis is not only on the authority of Scripture but also on the fundamental continuity that unites the Old and New Testament revelations.

- *Do you see any common themes that run consistently throughout the Old and New Testaments?*
 - *If yes, what are some of those themes?*
 - *If no, what are the differences you see between the Old and New Testaments of the Bible?*

Q1. Focus on verses 1-4. Describe Paul's attitude toward the Jews.

- *Who in your life do you have a heartfelt desire for them to be saved and follow Jesus?*
- *Pray for that person. If you do not have someone currently who you have a heartfelt desire to see become a Christian ask God to bring someone into your life who you can pray for.*

Q2. What were the strengths and what were the inadequacies of their religion?

- *What were some of the blessings of faith that the Jewish people had?*
- *What were some of the difficulties the Jewish people experienced because of their faith?*

³ This and every excerpt quoted is from: Carolyn Nystrom, John R. W. Stott. "Romans." Apple Books.

Q3. Paul quotes the teachings of Moses about the law—but he applies those teachings to Jesus (vv. 5-8). What is appealing about “the righteousness that is by faith”?

- *Is it possible for a person to perfectly keep all aspects of God’s law? Which are the toughest of the 10 commandments to keep perfectly (read Exodus 20)? How does Jesus’ teaching on the 10 commandments (Matthew 5:17-48) change our understanding of what it means to keep the law of God? Discuss.*
- *What do Christians mean when they claim they are righteous before God, not because they perfectly keep the law, but because of their faith in Jesus?*

Q4. Verses 9-13 contain an ancient creed of the Christian faith. According to these verses, what defines a Christian?

- *As you read these verses, what does Paul say makes a person a Christian?*
- *How easy, from reading these verses, is it for a person to become a Christian?*

Q5. What words and phrases in verses 11-13 express the invitation offered by God?

- *What is significant in the “everyone who believes in Him” (meaning Jesus) and the “everyone who calls on the name of the Lord” statements?*

Q6. How might the message of Romans 10 affect your relationships with other Christians? With those who have not yet come to saving faith?

- *Does the teaching in chapter 10 of Romans increase your thankfulness to God and your sense of humility, or does it elevate your pride and strengthen your sense of self-accomplishment?*

Summary

What then, according to this section, is necessary for salvation? First, the fact of the historic Jesus Christ, incarnate, crucified, risen, reigning as Lord, and accessible. Second, the apostolic gospel, “the word of faith” (v. 8), which makes him known. Third, simple trust on the part of the hearers, calling on the name of the Lord, combining faith in the heart and confession with the mouth. But still something is missing. There is, fourth, the evangelist who proclaims Christ and urges people to put their trust in him. It is of Christian evangelists that Paul writes in the next paragraph.

- *Define the word, “evangelist.”*
- *Have you ever heard a Christian evangelist speak?*
- *If yes, who were they? Who sent them? How did you and others respond to what the evangelist said?*

Q7. Read Romans 10:14-21. Notice the four questions of verses 14-15 and the explanation in verses 16-19. According to these verses, what are the usual steps toward becoming a Christian?

Q8: Paul quotes Isaiah in verse 15. What is the significance of the quotation in this context?

- *“How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news.” (Isaiah 52:7)*
 - *Who brought the good news of Jesus to you?*
 - *Stop for a moment and give thanks for those who shared the good news of Jesus with you.*

The essence of Paul’s argument is seen if we put his six verbs in opposite order: Christ sends heralds, heralds preach, people hear, hearers believe, believers call, and those who call are saved. And the relentless logic of Paul’s case for evangelism is felt most forcibly when the stages are stated negatively and each is seen to be essential to the next.

- 1) Someone is sent to talk about Jesus, 2) That person talks (preaches) about Jesus, 3) Someone hears what that person has to say about Jesus, 4) Hearing, they believe in Jesus, 5) Believing, they call out to Jesus and are saved. (Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.)

Q9: In verses 19-21 Paul again quotes Moses and Isaiah. What do these verses show about God's actions toward people—and their response to him?

- *What is meant by "I have been found by those who did not seek Me"?*
- *What is meant by, "I have shown myself to those who did not ask for Me"?*
- *Who is it Paul is stating did not seek God and did not ask for God but God revealed Himself to them anyway?*
- *Can a person come to faith in Jesus without someone else's help? (without someone speaking to them about Jesus or writing to them about Jesus ...)*

Q10: What do these verses reveal about God's relationship with the Jews?

- *How patient has God been in reaching out to, and taking care of, His chosen people?*
 - *God saved Noah and his family (Genesis 6), God sought out and chose Abraham and Sarah (Genesis 12), God Saved Jacob and his sons and families through Joseph (Genesis 50), God saved the Hebrews through Moses (Exodus and the parting of the Red Sea), God provided to the rebellious Hebrews as they wandered for 40 years in the desert (Leviticus – Deuteronomy), God gave the land He promised Abraham to the descendants of Abraham and Sarah and saved them from various enemies after regular times of disobedience (Joshua – Judges), God provided Israel with King David, King Solomon and remained faithful through times of many evil and disobedient kings (the history books), God sent one prophet after another to warn Israel and to call them back to obedience and faith (the Prophets), God came into this world in Jesus (Immanuel).*
 - *"All day long I have held out my hands to a disobedient and contrary people." Verse 21.*

Summary: God deliberately reverses the roles between himself and the Gentiles. It would normally be for them to ask, seek, and knock (as Jesus was later to put it) and to adopt toward him the respectful attitude of a servant at his master's disposal, saying, "Here I am." Instead, although they did not ask or seek or offer themselves to his service, he allowed himself to be found by them, he revealed himself to them, and he even offered himself to them, saying humbly to them, "Here am I." This is dramatic imagery for grace, God taking the initiative to make himself known: "All day long I have held out my hands to an obstinate people" (Isaiah 65:2).

These Jews did not even give him the neutral response of the Gentiles, who decline both to ask and to seek. No, their response is negative, resistant, dismissive. They are determined to remain "an obstinate people." We feel God's dismay, his grief.

- *We are not better, more faithful, more obedient than those in other times. God's people then were no different than we are today. We are all (everyone of us, Jews and non-Jews) in this together. We must rely on God's grace and kindness in order to be saved, His patient strength and presence to keep us from falling into disobedience, His mercy and favor for forgiveness when we fail.*
- *The dismay we feel when we see how the Jewish people continually disobeyed God is the same dismay we feel when we look in the mirror. We grieve God too. We need forgiveness. God forgives.*

Apply: Verse 9 says that Christians confess, "Jesus is Lord." Make a mental review of what you have said and done in the last week. In what ways have you confessed that Jesus is your Lord?

- *Define the word "Lord"?*

- *What does it mean to you when you say that Jesus is your Lord?*
- *Would it change how you understand your relationship with Jesus if, instead of using the word Lord, you said, "Jesus is my Master and I am His servant/slave"? (The early Christians often identified themselves as the slaves/servants of Jesus. Read the opening verses of many of Paul's letters in the Bible.)*
- *Why is it essential that we combine confessing with our mouths with believing in our hearts? Can one confess Jesus with their mouths and not believe in Jesus with their hearts? Discuss.*

Verses 14-18 speak of the importance of sharing the good news of Jesus with those who do not yet believe. What can you do to take part in that task?

- *How do you share your love of Jesus with others?*
- *Is it possible to share your love of Jesus without speaking about Jesus? Explain?*
 - *If you don't talk about Jesus how will those you help others understand your kind actions are done because of Jesus?*
 - *If you don't live out your love of Jesus in how you treat others how effective will talking about Jesus be?*

Pray: If God can grieve over unbelievers, so can we. Bring to mind an acquaintance who is not a Christian. Intercede for this person in prayer. Ask God to extend His hand so that in time this person will experience the new life Jesus offers. *(from Curt: I've slightly reworded this prayer as I believe it's original language sounds too harsh towards Jewish people)*

Additional Leader Resources

1. Billy Graham: "Choices we Make": <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UdsrIWUkTw0>
2. Chuck Swindoll "Trust God": <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CafpzBJJFbQ>
3. RC Sproul "Modeling God's Love: Loved by God": <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0PmqLqURUDE>
4. Dale Bruner "Jesus' Beatitudes": <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KRcZDgW57S4>

If you have any questions or comments, if you need help with this study, with members of your group, or with technology, please call (248-7940 x114) or email (curt@yakimagrace.com)

4-21-2021 CM

Romans Chapter 10:1-21
Three versions page 1

ESV (English Standard Version)

Brothers, my heart's desire and prayer to God for them is that they may be saved. ² For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. ³ For, being ignorant of the righteousness of God, and seeking to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness. ⁴ For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.

⁵ For Moses writes about the righteousness that is based on the law, that the person who does the commandments shall live by them. ⁶ But the righteousness based on faith says, "Do not say in your heart, 'Who will ascend into heaven?'" (that is, to bring Christ down) ⁷ "or 'Who will descend into the abyss?'" (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead). ⁸ But what does it say? "The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart" (that is, the word of faith that we proclaim); ⁹ because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. ¹⁰ For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved. ¹¹ For the Scripture says, "Everyone who believes in him will not be put to shame." ¹² For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is

Lord of all, bestowing his riches on all who call on him. ¹³ For "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."

¹⁴ How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? ¹⁵ And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!" ¹⁶ But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, "Lord, who has believed what he has heard from us?" ¹⁷ So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.

¹⁸ But I ask, have they not heard? Indeed they have, for "Their voice has gone out to all the earth,

and their words to the ends of the world."

¹⁹ But I ask, did Israel not understand? First Moses says, "I will make you jealous of those who are not a nation; with a foolish nation I will make you angry."

²⁰ Then Isaiah is so bold as to say,

"I have been found by those who did not seek me;

I have shown myself to those who did not ask for me."

²¹ But of Israel he says, "All day long I have held out my hands to a disobedient and contrary people."

NIV: (New International Version)

Brothers and sisters, my heart's desire and prayer to God for the Israelites is that they may be saved. ² For I can testify about them that they are zealous for God, but their zeal is not based on knowledge. ³ Since they did not know the righteousness of God and sought to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness. ⁴ Christ is the culmination of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes.

⁵ Moses writes this about the righteousness that is by the law: "The person who does these things will live by them." ⁶ But the righteousness that is by faith says: "Do not say in your heart, 'Who will ascend into heaven?'" (that is, to bring Christ down) ⁷ "or 'Who will descend into the deep?'" (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead). ⁸ But what does it say? "The word is near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart," that is, the message concerning faith that we proclaim: ⁹ If you declare with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. ¹⁰ For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved. ¹¹ As Scripture says, "Anyone who believes in him will never be put to shame." ¹² For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile—the same Lord is Lord

of all and richly blesses all who call on him, ¹³ for, “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”

¹⁴ How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? ¹⁵ And how can anyone preach unless they are sent? As it is written: “How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!”

¹⁶ But not all the Israelites accepted the good news. For Isaiah says, “Lord, who has believed our message?” ¹⁷ Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word about Christ. ¹⁸ But I ask: Did they not hear? Of course they did: “Their voice has gone out into all the earth,

their words to the ends of the world.”

¹⁹ Again I ask: Did Israel not understand? First, Moses says, “I will make you envious by those who are not a nation;

I will make you angry by a nation that has no understanding.”

²⁰ And Isaiah boldly says, “I was found by those who did not seek me;

I revealed myself to those who did not ask for me.”

²¹ But concerning Israel he says, “All day long I have held out my hands

to a disobedient and obstinate people.

MSG: The Message

¹⁻³ Believe me, friends, all I want for Israel is what’s best for Israel: salvation, nothing less. I want it with all my heart and pray to God for it all the time. I readily admit that the Jews are impressively energetic regarding God — but they are doing everything exactly backward. They don’t seem to realize that this comprehensive setting-things-right that is salvation is *God’s* business, and a most flourishing business it is. Right across the street they set up their own salvation shops and noisily peddle their knockoffs. After all these years of refusing to really deal with God on his terms, insisting instead on making their own deals, they have nothing to show for it.

⁴⁻¹⁰ The earlier revelation was intended simply to get us ready for the Messiah, who then puts everything right for those who trust him to do it. Moses wrote that anyone who insists on using the law code to live right before God soon discovers it’s not so easy—every detail of life regulated by fine print! But trusting God to shape the right living in us is a different story—no precarious climb up to heaven to recruit the Messiah, no dangerous descent into hell to rescue the Messiah. So what exactly was Moses saying? The word that saves is right here,

as near as the tongue in your

mouth, as close as the heart in your chest.

It’s the word of faith that welcomes God to go to work and set things right for us. This is the core of our preaching. Say the welcoming word to God — “Jesus is my Master” — embracing, body and soul, God’s work of doing in us what he did in raising Jesus from the dead. That’s it. You’re not “doing” anything; you’re simply calling out to God, trusting him to do it for you. That’s salvation. With your whole being you embrace God setting things right, and then you say it, right out loud: “God has set everything right between him and me!”

¹¹⁻¹³ Scripture reassures us, “No one who trusts God like this — heart and soul — will ever regret it.” It’s exactly the same no matter what a person’s religious background may be: the same God for all of us, acting the same incredibly generous way to everyone who calls out for help. “Everyone who calls, ‘Help, God!’ gets help.”

¹⁴⁻¹⁷ But how can people call for help if they don’t know who to trust? And how can they know who to trust if they haven’t heard of the One who can be trusted? And how can they hear if nobody tells them? And how is anyone going to tell them, unless someone is sent to do it? That’s why Scripture exclaims,

A sight to take your breath away!

Grand processions of people

Romans Chapter 10:1-21
Page 3

telling all the good things of
God!

But not everybody is ready for
this, ready to see and hear and
act. Isaiah asked what we all
ask at one time or another:

“Does anyone care, God? Is
anyone listening and believing
a word of it?” The point is:
Before you trust, you have to
listen. But unless Christ’s Word
is preached, there’s nothing to
listen to.

¹⁸⁻²¹ But haven’t there been
plenty of opportunities for
Israel to listen and understand
what’s going on? *Plenty*, I’d say.
Preachers’ voices have gone
’round the world,
Their message to earth’s seven
seas.

So the big question is, Why
didn’t Israel understand that
she had no corner on this
message? Moses had it right
when he predicted,
When you see God reach out to
those

you consider your inferiors —
outsiders! — you’ll become
insanely jealous.

When you see God reach out to
people you think are religiously
stupid, you’ll throw temper
tantrums.

Isaiah dared to speak out these
words of God:

People found and welcomed
me who never so much as
looked for me.

And I found and welcomed
people who had never even
asked about me.

Then he capped it with a
damning indictment:

Day after day after day,
I beckoned Israel with open
arms,
And got nothing for my trouble
but cold shoulders and icy
stares.

Grace of Christ Yakima

Leader Study Guide: Community Group Life

The Reason for God: Belief in an Age of Skepticism, Timothy Keller¹

Spring Series 2021: Week 3 (Chapter 13) “The Reality of the Resurrection” (pages 209-221)

This is the Third Week in our new 10-week Grace of Christ Spring 2021 Community Life Series (*beginning April 18 and continuing through the week of June 20*)

Please use only what you find helpful in this guide.

Get to Know You Questions

1. What do you know about your Roots? Your family heritage? Your ancestors?
2. What is your favorite (or least favorite) part of gardening? Why do weeds grow faster than what we plant? What is your favorite vegetable to grow ... and eat?

Overview of the book (The Spring 2021 study of this book will focus on the final 4 chapters and then shift to a 6 week DVD study addressing questions from the book, led by the author)

- | | |
|--|--|
| Introduction | 8. The Clues of God |
| 1. There Can't be Just One Religion | 9. The Knowledge of God |
| 2. How Could a Good God Allow Suffering | 10. The Problem of Sin |
| 3. Christianity is a Straightjacket | 11. Religion and the Gospel |
| 4. The Church is Responsible for so Much Injustice | 12. The (True) Story of the Cross |
| 5. How Can a Loving God Send People to Hell | 13. The Reality of the Resurrection |
| 6. Science Has Disproved Christianity | 14. The Dance of God |
| 7. You Can't Take the Bible Literally | Epilogue: Where do We Go from Here? |

Chapter 13 Opening Quote² ... The Reality of the Resurrection

“My question – that which at the age of fifty brought me to the verge of suicide – was the simplest of questions, lying in the soul of every man ... a question without an answer to which one cannot live. It was: “What will come of what I’m doing today or tomorrow? What will come of my whole life? Why should I live, why wish for anything, or do anything?” It can also be expressed thus: Is there any meaning in my life that the inevitable death awaiting me does not destroy?”

Leo Tolstoy, A Confession

Chapter 13 Questions

1. Why does a rejection of the resurrection of Jesus create problems when trying to explain why so many decided to follow Jesus in those early years after His death by crucifixion?
 - *If the resurrection of Jesus did not happen but instead was a myth created later, why were so many willing to risk everything, even death, in order to follow someone they believed to be a great teacher, but a dead martyr?*

¹ The Reason for God, Edition: 2018, Penguin books

² Quotes included by the author at the beginning of each chapter

- *Would you be willing to suffer and die for someone you believed to be a good and noble teacher? What if you knew the central claim made by, and about, that teacher was a lie ... would that affect your level of devotion?*
 - *What is so important to you that you would be willing to alter your life priorities and choices, give what you've earned to those in need, give up the pursuit of your own pleasures, suffer and even die rather than renounce or reject it/them?*
2. Do you agree or disagree with the author's comment (page 210), "If Jesus rose from the dead, then you have to accept all He said; if He didn't rise from the dead, then why worry about any of what He said?" Discuss.
- *Why does whether Jesus rose from the dead make such a difference for Christians ... for everyone?*
 - *Would it change your understanding of Jesus if it was proved He did not rise from the dead?*
 - *Would you still be a Christian?*
3. Were those living in the time of Jesus more superstitious? Were they more willing than we are to believe that someone could rise from the dead?
- *In the Bible we find disbelief and doubt in the face of miracles ...*
 - *Joseph did not believe the story his betrothed told him about how she became pregnant (by the work of God). It took a visit from an angel for Joseph to believe (Matthew 1)*
 - *People did not return from the dead. People of that day did not expect or believe resurrections would happen. Read John 11: the temporary resurrection of Lazarus and the response of Lazarus' sisters and those who came to mourn. Read the story of the twelve-year old girl raised from the dead by Jesus (Mark 5) and the disbelief of the people when Jesus told them she wasn't dead ...*
 - *It is too simplistic to say those living in Jesus' time were ignorant and superstitious. Belief in miracles, especially resurrection, was difficult for them in Jesus' day. It is still difficult for us today. See N.T. Wright's comments on this (page 215-217).*
4. The author responds to some of the arguments against the Resurrection of Jesus from the dead:
- **Accusation:** *the written accounts of the Resurrection were written long after the event. The story of the resurrection was changed over time to match the hopes and beliefs of the early Christians.*
 - **Response:** *The "eyewitness" accounts of the death and resurrection circulated soon after the death of Jesus. Consider Paul's many claims about the resurrection in his letters (dated 40-60 AD) (see: Philippians 3:10-11, 1 Corinthians 15, 2 Timothy 2). The event of the resurrection was preached and shared widely soon after the time of the event itself. If it were a lie those who had lived during the time of the crucifixion and resurrection would have spoken up and refuted the disciples publicly.*
 - **Accusation:** *the body of Jesus was stolen by the disciples. Then they made up a story about Jesus rising from the dead.*
 - **Response:** *Even if the Romans and religious leaders (highly motivated) could not find the body ... why were each of the original disciples willing to suffer and die for a story they made up?*

- **Accusation:** *The first witnesses of the resurrection were women. Women in that day were not trusted as accurate witnesses. They could not serve as witnesses in court.*
 - **Response:** *This accusation supports the opposite of what it intends. Jesus honored women as the first witnesses. N.T. Wright (p.213), “There must have been enormous pressure on the early proclaimers of the Christian message to remove the women from the accounts.” If it were a made-up story, to help people live more moral lives, the writers would have removed the offense of the women and included more trustworthy first witnesses.*
5. The Christian movement spread quickly, and across a broad geographical area. People from vastly different cultures and backgrounds committed their life, their income, their possessions, their families, and their death, to this resurrected Jesus.
- *How could the message of Jesus take hold so quickly unless people believed the resurrection was a real historical reality?*
 - *In Acts chapter 26 Paul, in chains for his belief in Jesus, was brought before the regional ruler to present his defense. Here’s what he said, “²² To this day I have had the help that comes from God, and so I stand here testifying both to small and great, saying nothing but what the prophets and Moses said would come to pass: ²³ that the Christ must suffer and that, by being the first to rise from the dead, he would proclaim light both to our people and to the Gentiles.’ ²⁴ And as he was saying these things in his defense, Festus said with a loud voice, ‘Paul, you are out of your mind; your great learning is driving you out of your mind.’ ²⁵ But Paul said, ‘I am not out of my mind, most excellent Festus, but I am speaking true and rational words. ²⁶ For the king knows about these things, and to him I speak boldly. For I am persuaded that none of these things has escaped his notice, for this has not been done in a corner. ²⁷ King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? I know that you believe.’ ²⁸ And Agrippa said to Paul, ‘In a short time would you persuade me to be a Christian?’ ²⁹ And Paul said, ‘Whether short or long, I would to God that not only you but also all who hear me this day might become such as I am—except for these chains.’”³*
6. Discuss the author’s statement (page 219) “Every effort to account for the birth of the church apart from Jesus’ resurrection flies in the face of what we know about first century history and culture. If you don’t short circuit the process with the philosophical bias against the possibility of miracle, the resurrection of Jesus has the most evidence for it.”
- *Do you agree or disagree with the author’s quote above? Can you think of a better explanation for the birth and rapid growth of the Christian church ... in the face of tremendous opposition.*
 - *If the author is right ... why do you think people reject the miracle of the resurrection?*
 - *C.S. Lewis said that he resisted Jesus for so long because he knew that acknowledging the resurrection as a miracle and a reality would invite God to interfere with his life. God’s interference was one thing C.S. Lewis said he did not want.*
7. When you read the four accounts of Jesus’ death and resurrection you see immediately that there are slight variations. The fears and disbelief of the disciples (when they first saw Jesus risen from the dead) is included, not scrubbed and redacted. That’s what one would expect of a real historical event. They did not iron out all the differences and difficulties. It has the ring of true things.

³ Acts 26:1-32

8. The author includes a quote from N.T. Wright on page 219-220. “Nobody was expecting this kind of thing; no kind of conversion experience would have invented it, no matter how guilty (or how forgiven) they felt, no matter how many hours they pored over the scriptures. To suggest otherwise is to stop doing history and enter into a fantasy world of our own.
- *How would you respond to N.T. Wright? Does he make sense here? Is there something he’s missing?*
9. Quoting a sermon of N.T. Wright’s (page 220-221) “The message of the resurrection is that the world matters. That the injustices and pains of this present world must now be addressed with the news that healing, justice and love have won. If Easter means Jesus Christ is only raised in a spiritual sense – then it is only about me, and finding a new dimension in my personal spiritual life. But if Jesus Christ is truly risen from the dead, Christianity becomes good news for the whole world – news which warms our hearts precisely because it isn’t just about warming hearts. Easter means that in a world where injustice, violence, and degradation are endemic, God is not prepared to tolerate such things – and that we will work and plan, with all the energy of God, to implement victory of Jesus over them all. Take away Easter and Karl Marx was probably right to accuse Christianity of ignoring problems of the material world. Take it away and Freud was probably right to say Christianity was wish fulfillment. Take it away and Nietzsche probably was right to say it was for wimps.”
- *What would the world, and human history, be like if Jesus had not risen from the dead?*
 - *Does the resurrection of Jesus make a difference for you and how you live, and how you face the reality of pain and death (yours and others)?*

Additional Resources for Leaders

1. Billy Graham: “Life After Death” <https://youtu.be/GGQACnwkWmc>
2. John Ortberg: “Easter 2020 Service” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3hkdZJXurAM>
3. John Piper: “How does Easter Change us?” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LbzDPUD43rw>
4. Lee Strobel: Why do we believe in the resurrection?” <https://youtu.be/dTBuxSNcseU>
5. Alistair Begg: “The Resurrection” <https://youtu.be/W02wzBNQ584>

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Grace of Christ Yakima

Study Guide: Community Group Life

Romans: Encountering the Gospel's Power

Week 4: Chapter 14 "Getting Practical" (pages 72-76 in the book).

We are now in week 4 of our Spring Community Life Group Series. This 10-week series began the week of April 18 and continues through the week of June 20.

For leader study guides for chapters 1-10 of "Romans: Encountering the Gospel's Power" please visit yakimagrace.com and look for the Community Life Leader Resource page.

Chapter 12 marks a turning point in the Book of Romans. With this chapter the writer, Paul, begins offering practical advice on how to live a Christian life. He shifts from presenting a theology focused on Jesus Christ (Chapters 1-11) to an application of that focused theology (chapters 12-16). What does it mean to understand the depth of our sin and immeasurable depth of God's grace? How does it change our day to day life to know we are no longer slaves to sin but instead we are now slaves to Christ? What happens to our relationship with God and with others when we grasp we really are a loved child of God?

This week we are including a one page summary (last page, page 8) ***identifying the questions and insights we believe may be most helpful. As always ... use only what you find helpful in this guide.***

Passage for chapter 14 in the study book: Romans 12:1-8 (ESV: English Standard Version) see pages 6-7 for a three-version comparison of this passage.¹

Last verses from Chapter 11

³² For God has consigned all to disobedience, that he may have mercy on all.

³³ Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways!

³⁴ For who has known the mind of the Lord,
or who has been his counselor?

³⁵ Or who has given a gift to him
that he might be repaid?

³⁶ For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen."

Chapter 12:1-8

^{12:1} I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. ² Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect. ³ For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned. ⁴ For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, ⁵ so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. ⁶ Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith; ⁷ if service, in our serving; the one who teaches, in his teaching; ⁸ the one who

¹ Three versions: ESV (English Standard Version), NIV (New International Version), MSG (The Message).

exhorts, in his exhortation; the one who contributes, in generosity; the one who leads, with zeal; the one who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness.²

Keys to Leading a Community Life Group

- The goal is not to complete all the questions. The goal is to invite and encourage genuine relationships with each other, and with God, that lead to honest reflection and honest conversation.
- To accomplish the above it is essential that your Community Life Group is a safe place. 1) What's shared remains confidential. 2) Truth is valued over pretense. 3) All questions are welcome. All points of view, and all persons, will be listened to and respected. 4) Our purpose is not to correct each other ... instead it is to humbly come together before God to seek what is true.
- Differences of opinion and belief are expected. Grace is expected too.
- It's OK for you as the Group leader not to have an answer to a question. "That's a great question. I don't know the answer to that. Let me see what I can find out before we meet next time."

Get to Know You Questions

1. Talk about a school teacher who inspired you and transformed (for the better) how you thought about school, and about life? What made that teacher so significant for you?
2. Describe your best experience as a member of a team. What made that team special? What role did you play on that team? What lessons have you carried with you to other teams, other aspects of your life?

The questions found in Chapter 14 titled "Getting Practical" (pages 72-76) of the Romans: Encountering the Gospel's Power book are included below. Additional questions from Grace of Christ staff are included *in italics*.

Pray and then Read the passage together as a group: Romans 11:32 - 12:8

Main themes in Romans 12: *1) Christian faith involves offering our everyday life in service to God and others, 2) Christians are to think and live differently than the accepted patterns and priorities of the world they live in, 3) Christians are not independent of each other, but called to be united together, each Christian serving a specific role for the good of the whole, as God has gifted them.*

Study and Questions for week 4 Spring Series (Chapter 14 in the study book)

Paul used the first eight chapters of his letter to the Romans to explain more completely than in any other book of the Bible the whole sweep of the Christian faith. He opens with our sin and therefore our need for a Redeemer. He speaks of faith, righteousness, and judgment. He offers justification through faith and peace with God through Jesus Christ. He outlines the continued struggle with sin, then rises to one of the peak passages of Scripture as he illustrates in Romans 8 a picture of life through God's Spirit and our future glory with him. Paul then takes three chapters to deal with the pressing question of God's relationship with the Jews—in view of Gentile converts to Christianity. Once again we see God's justice, but we also see justice tempered by his mercy and persistent love.

Now in Romans 12 Paul stands on the sturdy theology of the previous eleven chapters and says, "Let's get practical." And practical is the theme of the last five chapters of his letter. Here we learn how to get along

² The book uses, primarily, the NIV (New International Version). At Grace we use, primarily, the ESV (English Standard Version). The ESV is considered a more accurate translation of the original Greek, while the NIV, although a good translation, is appreciated because it is easier to read. A comparison of three Bible versions of this passage is included below (Appendix A) (Curt's notes)

with other Christians, the importance of love, why we should not seek revenge, what to do about a hostile government, how to approach someone whose rules are not to our liking, and ways to wait for Christ's return. In the end we even see Paul's personal notes to friends—reflecting a broad, comfortable range of companionship in faith. But even in this final section of his book, Paul does not abandon theology. He just shows us how to live it out.³

- *What 1 or 2 questions about your relationship with God do you wish you could ask Paul about?*

Open: Do you consider yourself more practical or theoretical in your approach to faith? Explain

- *Are you the type of person who prefers to study and learn about God, or the type of person that would rather roll up your sleeves and get busy helping people? Which type do you believe God prefers? Read Luke 10:38-42. Does this passage change your understanding of these two types?*
- *Did Jesus, in His life, emphasize one of these two types over the other? (Read Mark 1:21-45. Jesus teaches, then He heals many, then He preaches, then He heals ...)*

Study: Read Romans 12:1-2. One of the notable features of Paul's teaching is that he regularly combines doctrine with duty, belief with behavior. In consequence, as in some of his other letters, he now turns in Romans 12 from the gospel to everyday Christian discipleship. Moreover, it is not only individual or personal ethics to which Paul now introduces his readers. He is concerned with depicting the characteristic of the new community that Jesus has brought into being by his death and resurrection.

Q1. Using the content of verses 1-2, describe in your own words an appropriate response to God's mercy?

- *Define the word "mercy"?*
- *Whether you consider yourself a Christian or not, how have you benefited from God's mercy?*

Q2. Notice that these verses speak of both mind and body. Why are both of these important in our relationship with God?

- *Can a person serve God with their mind but not their body? Or serve God with their body but not their mind? Discuss.*

Q3. What are some practical ways that you could offer your body as a living sacrifice to God?

- *Who does a sacrifice offered to God belong to?*
- *What are some of the differences between a "living" or a "dead" sacrifice?*

Q4. What are some steps you have taken (or could take) toward the renewing of your mind?

- *Why does Paul stress, in this passage, the importance of a changed mind?*
- *How would being "conformed to this world" change your relationship with God and how you live your life? (The Message says it this way, "Don't become so well-adjusted to your culture that you fit into it without even thinking. Instead, fix your attention on God."). How can your mind be transformed by God?*

Summary

What is this living sacrifice, this rational, spiritual worship? It is not to be offered in temple courts or in the church building but rather in home life and in the marketplace. It is the presentation of our bodies to God. This blunt reference to our bodies was calculated to shock some of Paul's Greek readers. Brought up on Platonic thought, they would have regarded the body as an embarrassing encumbrance. Their slogan was "the body is a tomb," in which the human spirit was imprisoned and from which it longed for its escape.

³ This and every excerpt quoted is from: Carolyn Nystrom, John R. W. Stott. "Romans." Apple Books.

Still today some Christians feel self-conscious about their bodies. The traditional evangelical invitation is that we give our hearts to God, not our bodies. But no worship is pleasing to God that is purely inward, abstract, and mystical; it must express itself in concrete acts of service performed by our bodies.

- *Do you agree that God created, and values, our physical life? Why is worshiping God with our bodies important?*

Q5: Read Romans 12:3-8. Study verse 3. What information here would help you to accurately evaluate yourself?

- *Do most people generally think too much of themselves, or too little of themselves? Discuss. How does God view us (you)?*

Q6: Twice this verse uses the word think. How can the mind contribute to either a healthy or an unhealthy view of ourselves?

- *How can self-examination, study, and honest evaluation help us in our relationship with God?*

The link between Paul's general appeal (vv. 1-2) and his particular instructions that now follow (vv. 3-8) seems to be the place of the mind in Christian discipleship. Our renewed mind, which is capable of discerning and approving God's will, must also be active in evaluating ourselves, our identity, and our gifts. For we need to know who we are and to have an accurate, balanced, and above all sober self-image. A renewed mind is a humble mind, like Christ's (Philippians 2:5-11).

Q7: In what ways is a group of Christians like a single body? (Compare the word body in verses 1, 4, and 5.)

- *How have you seen people within a church work as one, sharing the specific gifts and abilities they have, for a common purpose? Share an example.*
- *Have you seen people within a church not work well together? What were some of the reasons their efforts were less effective and sometimes even counter-productive?*

Q8: Study the list of gifts in verses 6-8. What can you know about their source, purpose, and variety?

- *Think about the various gifts listed. Think of one person you know for each of these gifts.*
- *Why didn't God simply give all of the gifts to one or two "Super-Christians" in each church? Wouldn't that have been more efficient?*
- *What happens to a church when someone believes God has given them all of the gifts needed for a particular church (or at least the most important ones)?*

Q9: How might each contribute to the well-being of other Christians?

- *What role does each gift play in the community of faith and with those who are not yet Christian?*

Summary: This list of seven spiritual gifts in Romans 12 is much less well-known than either the two overlapping lists in 1 Corinthians 12 (nine in the first list and eight in the second) or the short list of five in Ephesians 4:11. The 1 Corinthians list focuses on the supernatural (tongues, prophecy, healing, and miracles), whereas in Romans 12 all the gifts apart from prophecy are either general and practical (service, teaching, encouragement, and leadership) or even prosaic (giving money and doing acts of mercy). It is evident that we need to broaden our understanding of spiritual gifts.

Apply: God has given each of his people special skills to be used for the good of other Christians. Think of yourself with some of the "sober judgment" described in verse 3. Without falling into either pride or self-deprecation, what are some of the skills or gifts that God has given you?

- *Which of the gifts listed have others you know suggested you might have?*

- *Which of these gifts brings you the most joy (prophesying (preaching), serving others, teaching, exhorting (encouraging others), contributing financially to help those in need, leading others, doing acts of mercy and kindness)*
- *What brings you the most joy is often an indication of your God-given gifting.*

How might knowing that these gifts come from God keep you from either arrogance or belittling yourself?

Q10. Name several specific ways that you can use one or more of your skills to serve other Christians.

Pray: Ask God to show you your gifts. Name the gifts you are aware of, giving thanks even for the most simple and obvious. Take time to use your “renewed mind” to think and consider how God wants you to put these gifts to use. Ask God to show you ways to offer them as a “living sacrifice” for his glory and for the strengthening of his people.

As an expression of your body as a “living sacrifice” (12:1), you might cup your hands as you pray, showing that you have received these gifts from God. Then raise your hands toward heaven to symbolize that you are willingly offering that gift back to him in his service.

Additional Leader Resources

1. Timothy Keller: “Everyone With a Gift”: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qDoJIXaQJd4>
2. Billy Graham "The Battle for the Mind": <https://billygraham.org/audio/the-battle-for-the-mind/>
3. Rick Warren "Transformed: Change your Life by Changing your Mind":
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PMxJH8EyvAY>
4. Spiritual Gifts Survey: PDF file found on the Leader Resource page

If you have any questions or comments, if you need help with this study, with members of your group, or with technology, please call (248-7940 x114) or email (curt@yakimagrace.com)

5-6-2021 CM

Romans Chapter 11:32- 12:8

Three Translations

ESV: English Standard Version

³² For God has consigned all to disobedience, that he may have mercy on all.

³³ Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways!

³⁴ For who has known the mind of the Lord,

or who has been his counselor?

³⁵ Or who has given a gift to him that he might be repaid?

³⁶ For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen."

^{12:1} I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. ² Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

³ For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned. ⁴ For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, ⁵ so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. ⁶ Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith; ⁷ if service, in our serving; the one who teaches, in his teaching; ⁸ the one who exhorts, in his exhortation; the one who contributes, in generosity; the one who

leads, with zeal; the one who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness."

NIV: New International Version

³² For God has bound everyone over to disobedience so that he may have mercy on them all.

³³ Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out!

³⁴ "Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counselor?"

³⁵ "Who has ever given to God, that God should repay them?"

³⁶ For from him and through him and for him are all things.

To him be the glory forever!

Amen.

^{12:1} Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. ² Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

³ For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the faith God has distributed to each of you. ⁴ For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, ⁵ so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. ⁶ We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us. If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your faith; ⁷ if it is serving, then serve; if it is teaching, then teach; ⁸ if it is to

encourage, then give encouragement; if it is giving, then give generously; if it is to lead, do it diligently; if it is to show mercy, do it cheerfully."

MSG: The Message

³² In one way or another, God makes sure that we all experience what it means to be outside so that he can personally open the door and welcome us back in.

³³⁻³⁶ Have you ever come on anything quite like this extravagant generosity of God, this deep, deep wisdom? It's way over our heads. We'll never figure it out.

Is there anyone around who can explain God? Anyone smart enough to tell him what to do? Anyone who has done him such a huge favor that God has to ask his advice?

Everything comes from him; Everything happens through him; Everything ends up in him.

Always glory! Always praise!

Yes. Yes. Yes.

^{12:1-2} So here's what I want you to do, God helping you: Take your everyday, ordinary life—your sleeping, eating, going-to-work, and walking-around life—and place it before God as an offering. Embracing what God does for you is the best thing you can do for him. Don't become so well-adjusted to your culture that you fit into it without even thinking. Instead, fix your attention on God. You'll be changed from the inside out. Readily recognize what he wants from you, and quickly respond to it. Unlike the culture around you, always dragging you down to its level of immaturity, God brings the best out of you, develops well-formed maturity in you.

³ I'm speaking to you out of deep gratitude for all that God has given me, and especially as I have

page 2

responsibilities in relation to you. Living then, as every one of you does, in pure grace, it's important that you not misinterpret yourselves as people who are bringing this goodness to God. No, God brings it all to you. The only accurate way to understand ourselves is by what God is and by what he does for us, not by what we are and what we do for him.

⁴⁻⁶ In this way we are like the various parts of a human body. Each part gets its meaning from the body as a whole, not the other way around. The body we're talking about is Christ's body of chosen people. Each of us finds our meaning and function as a part of his body. But as a chopped-off finger or cut-off toe we wouldn't amount to much, would we? So since we find ourselves fashioned into all these excellently formed and marvelously functioning parts in Christ's body, let's just go ahead and be what we were made to be, without enviously or pridefully comparing ourselves with each other, or trying to be something we aren't.

⁶⁻⁸ If you preach, just preach God's Message, nothing else; if you help, just help, don't take over; if you teach, stick to your teaching; if you give encouraging guidance, be careful that you don't get bossy; if you're put in charge, don't manipulate; if you're called to give aid to people in distress, keep your eyes open and be quick to respond; if you work with the disadvantaged, don't let yourself get irritated with them or depressed by them. Keep a smile on your face.

⁹⁻¹⁰ Love from the center of who you are; don't fake it. Run for dear life from evil; hold on for dear life to good. Be good friends who love

deeply; practice playing second fiddle.

¹¹⁻¹³ Don't burn out; keep yourselves fueled and aflame. Be alert servants of the Master, cheerfully expectant. Don't quit in hard times; pray all the harder. Help needy Christians; be inventive in hospitality.

¹⁴⁻¹⁶ Bless your enemies; no cursing under your breath. Laugh with your happy friends when they're happy; share tears when they're down. Get along with each other; don't be stuck-up. Make friends with nobodies; don't be the great somebody.

¹⁷⁻¹⁹ Don't hit back; discover beauty in everyone. If you've got it in you, get along with everybody. Don't insist on getting even; that's not for you to do. "I'll do the judging," says God. "I'll take care of it."

²⁰⁻²¹ Our Scriptures tell us that if you see your enemy hungry, go buy that person lunch, or if he's thirsty, get him a drink. Your generosity will surprise him with goodness. Don't let evil get the best of you; get the best of evil by doing good.

One Page Summary

Community Life Leaders Chapter 14: Week 4

These are the questions we believe may be most helpful for you and your group

1. *Are you the type of person who prefers to study and learn about God, or the type of person that would rather roll up your sleeves and get busy helping people?*
2. *Did Jesus, in His life, emphasize one of these two types (above) over the other? (Read Mark 1:21-45. Jesus teaches, then He heals many, then He preaches, then He heals ...)*
3. *Verses 1-2. Whether you consider yourself a Christian or not, how have you benefited from God's mercy?*
4. *Can a person serve God with their mind but not their body? Or serve God with their body but not their mind? Discuss.*
5. *What are some practical ways that you could offer your body as a living sacrifice to God?*
6. *How would being "conformed to this world" change your relationship with God and how you live your life? (The Message says it this way, "Don't become so well-adjusted to your culture that you fit into it without even thinking. Instead, fix your attention on God."). How can your mind be transformed by God?*
7. *Do you agree with the author's statement, "no worship is pleasing to God that is purely inward, abstract, and mystical; it must express itself in concrete acts of service performed by our bodies." Discuss*
8. *Verse 3. Do most people generally think too much of themselves, or too little of themselves? Discuss. How does God view us (you)?*
9. *In what ways is a group of Christians like a single body? (Compare the word body in verses 1, 4, and 5.)*
10. *What role does each gift (Romans 12:4-8) play in the community of faith and with those who are not yet Christian?*
11. *Which of these gifts brings you the most joy (prophesying (preaching), serving others, teaching, exhorting (encouraging others), contributing financially to help those in need, leading others, doing acts of mercy and kindness). What brings you the most joy is often an indication of your God-given gifting?*
12. *Ask God to show you your gifts. Name the gifts you are aware of, giving thanks even for the most simple and obvious. Take time to use your "renewed mind" to think and consider how God wants you to put these gifts to use.*

Grace of Christ Yakima

Study Guide: Community Group Life

Romans: Encountering the Gospel's Power

Week 5: Chapter 15 "Showing Love" (pages 77 - 81 in the book).

We are now in week 5 of our Spring Community Life Group Series. This 10-week series began the week of April 18 and continues through the week of June 20.

For leader study guides for chapters 1-10 of "Romans: Encountering the Gospel's Power" please visit yakimagrace.com and look for the Community Life Leader Resource page.

Chapter 12 marks a turning point in the Book of Romans. With this chapter the writer, Paul, begins offering practical advice on how to live a Christian life. He shifts from presenting a theology focused on Jesus Christ (Chapters 1-11) to an application of that focused theology (chapters 12-16). What does it mean to understand the depth of our sin and immeasurable depth of God's grace? How does it change our day to day life to know we are no longer slaves to sin but instead we are now slaves to Christ? What happens to our relationship with God and with others when we grasp we really are a loved child of God?

This week we continue including a one page summary (last page) identifying the questions and insights we believe may be most helpful. As always ... use only what you find helpful in this guide.

Passage for chapter 15 in the study book: Romans 12:9-21 (ESV: English Standard Version) see page 7 for a three-version comparison of this passage.¹

Chapter 12:8-21

⁸the one who exhorts, in his exhortation; the one who contributes, in generosity; the one who leads, with zeal; the one who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness.

⁹ Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good. ¹⁰ Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor. ¹¹ Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord. ¹² Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer. ¹³ Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality.

¹⁴ Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. ¹⁵ Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. ¹⁶ Live in harmony with one another. Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly. Never be wise in your own sight. ¹⁷ Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all. ¹⁸ If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. ¹⁹ Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord." ²⁰ To the contrary, 'if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals on his head.' ²¹ Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good."²

¹ Three versions: ESV (English Standard Version), NIV (New International Version), MSG (The Message).

² The book uses, primarily, the NIV (New International Version). At Grace we use, primarily, the ESV (English Standard Version). The ESV is considered a more accurate translation of the original Greek, while the NIV, although a good translation, is appreciated because it is easier to read. A comparison of three Bible versions of this passage is included below (Appendix A) (Curt's notes)

Keys to Leading a Community Life Group

- The goal is not to complete all the questions. The goal is to invite and encourage genuine relationships with each other, and with God, that lead to honest reflection and honest conversation.
- To accomplish the above it is essential that your Community Life Group is a safe place. 1) What's shared remains confidential. 2) Truth is valued over pretense. 3) All questions are welcome. All points of view, and all persons, will be listened to and respected. 4) Our purpose is not to correct each other ... instead it is to humbly come together before God to seek what is true.
- Differences of opinion and belief are expected. Grace is expected too.
- It's OK for you as the Group leader not to have an answer to a question. "That's a great question. I don't know the answer to that. Let me see what I can find out before we meet next time."

Get to Know You Questions

1. Share one piece of unhelpful advice ... advice you've overheard, advice you've been offered, advice you've given. What would have been a better piece of advice given the situation?
2. Where do you go, who do you turn to, when you need advice and counsel? Why do you seek their/that counsel? What is one good piece of advice that has stuck with you through the years?

The questions found in Chapter 15 titled "Showing Love" (pages 77-81) of the Romans: Encountering the Gospel's Power book are included below. Additional questions from Grace of Christ staff are included *in italics*.

Pray and then Read the passage together as a group: Romans 12:8-21

Main themes in this second half of Romans 12: *1) Practical counsel on living a Christian life, 2) Christian faith has a direct impact on the everyday details of, and relationships in, our life, 3) Treat others with love, 4) Do not seek revenge. Trust God to correct all wrongs and to bring justice where there has been injustice.*

Study and Questions for week 4 Spring Series (Chapter 15 in the study book)

Love is hard. Yet the Christian faith is founded on love — the love of God for his people and the love of his people for each other. Jesus himself said, "By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another" (John 13:35). So it should be no surprise that Paul bases the practical section of his letter on expression of love. We can be grateful that he nowhere says that we must love others by feeling warm toward them. While God graces our lives with a few who bring out warm feelings in us, many people who need love are not exactly lovable. Paul does us the favor of stressing not the feelings of love but the actions.³

- *Do you agree that even though Christians may not "feel" love towards a particularly difficult person they are still commanded to act in love for them and seek from God a genuine love for them?*
Discuss

Open: What would people in your church or fellowship group say about how easy or difficult it is to show you love?

- *Are there people in our church who you find it difficult to love? What steps have you taken to obey God's command (in this Roman's 12 passage and elsewhere) to love them?*

³ This and every excerpt quoted is from: Carolyn Nystrom, John R. W. Stott. "Romans." Apple Books.

Study: Read Romans 12:9-16. Without doubt agape love now dominates the scene. So far in Romans all references to agape have been to the love of God—demonstrated on the cross (5:8), poured into our hearts (5:5), and doggedly refusing to let us go (8:35, 39). But now Paul focuses on agape as the essence of Christian discipleship. Romans 12–15 are a sustained exhortation to let love govern and shape all our relationships.

- *In the English language we use the word "love" for a wide range of meanings: 1) I love you, 2) I love pizza, 3) I'd love to beat the stuffing out of you. Hopefully each of those uses of the word "love" means something quite different. The Greek language allows for more precision in what is meant by "love." The Greek word Agape (αγαπε) is found in verse 9, setting the tone for all that follows.*
- *What do you know about the meaning of the word agape (see footnote for further discussion)?⁴*
- *Can you think of examples where agape love has been evident?*
- *How are you at loving others with agape love?*

Q1. What expressions of love (Agape) do you find in verses 9-16? (Find all that you can.)

- *How do you define the word "love"? What does "love" mean to you?*
- *When most people speak about seeking love, and loving someone else, are they mostly thinking of "eros", "phileo" or "agape" love? (See footnote 4 for a brief description of each type of love)*
- *What type of love is most often talked about, sung about, acted out, in songs, movies, TV shows? Is this kind of love healthy?*
- *What type of love is most common in the world around us?*
- *What type of love are most people longing for?*
- *God's love for us is described as "agape" love. What does that tell us about God? How does that change our relationship with God and with others?*

Q2. Many of the statements of how to express love also include a negative—what not to do. What can you learn from each negative?

- *List the negative examples found in this passage. (Abhor what is evil. Do not be slothful in Zeal. Do not curse. Do not be haughty. Never be wise in your own eyes. Repay no one evil for evil. Never avenge yourselves. Do not be overcome by evil.)*

Q3. When has receiving one of the expressions of love described here made a major impact on you?

Q4. Thoughtfully consider your church or fellowship group. Which of these expressions of love do you regularly see there? (How do they express that love)?

- *In what ways did Jesus demonstrate agape love by what He said and how He lived?*
- *How do you express love, and what type of love do you express, to others in your church and in your community group?*

Q5. Which of these expressions of love need to be more apparent in your church or fellowship group?

- *Read 1 John chapter 4. How does this chapter help Christians (you too) understand the kind of love God intends us to offer to others?*

⁴ Agape is a Greek word for love that was elevated by Jesus, and then His first followers in the early years of the Christian Church. Agape is a selfless, serving, sacrificing, seeking the good of the other more than oneself, other-focused love. There are two other common Greek words for "love." The Greek word "eros" is the root of our word "erotic". Eros indicates an attractive love. Eros offers love when it receives love. It is a good and necessary love. The other common Greek word for love is "Phileo" and indicates a "brotherly type of love. Family love. Loyalty. Commitment. Affection. Phileo is the root of the name "Philadelphia," which is "the city of brotherly love." This is a very good and noble love.

- *Read 1 Corinthians 13. How does this chapter help us understand the kind of love God intends for us?*

Summary

What a comprehensive picture of Christian love Paul gives us! Love is sincere, discerning, affectionate, and respectful. It is both enthusiastic and patient, both generous and hospitable, both benevolent and sympathetic. It is marked by both harmony and humility. Christian churches would be happier communities if we all loved one another like that.

- *Why do you think it is hard for Christians (everyone really) to offer this type of love to others?*
- *What would you need in order to be able to offer this type of love to others easily and generously without any concern or thought about receiving their love in return?*

Q6: Read Romans 12:17-21. Several times in verses 17-21 Paul uses the words “Do not. . . .” What general themes do you see in what we are not to do?

- *Why do you think revenge, or getting "even", is the common approach most of us take when wronged by another?*
- *How easy is it for you forgive someone who has hurt and wronged you? What would make forgiving then easier?*
- *Do you have someone in mind right now that you are finding it difficult to forgive? Without using names, share if you feel comfortable doing so.*
- *Is there anything in this passage that provides a way forward toward forgiveness? Explain*

Q7: Paul follows each use of the phrase “do not” with what we are to do instead. In view of these instructions, how are we to deal with people who might otherwise be our enemies?

What does it mean to “heap burning coals on his head”? Because in the Old Testament it is said that God will “rain fiery coals” on the wicked (Psalm 11:6; 140:10), some take the coals here as a symbol of judgment and even argue that to serve our enemies “will have the effect of increasing the punishment” that they will receive (Robert Haldane, *Exposition of the Epistle to the Romans*, vol. 2 [Sovereign Grace Book Club, 1957], 574). But the whole context cries out against this explanation, especially the very next verse and its reference to overcoming evil with good. Others suggest that the pain inflicted by the burning coals is a symbol of the shame and remorse experienced by an enemy who is rebuked by kindness. A third option is that the coals are a symbol of penitence. Recent commentators draw attention to an ancient Egyptian ritual in which a penitent would carry burning coals on his or her head as evidence of the reality of repentance.

- *Is it possible that our acts of kindness (feeding an enemy who is hungry, giving them something to drink when thirsty) are really and truly acts of kindness? Is it possible that our true acts of kindness, done with Agape love for our enemy, is used by God to increase their awareness of their own misdeeds as they experience true selfless love offered to them? Do you agree with this or disagree? Do you agree with one of the explanations in the paragraph above? Explain your answer.*
- *It has been said that forgiveness and peace is possible when we believe that God will one day hold accountable every act of injustice. Without this belief we are compelled to seek justice and revenge on our own terms. The cycle of hatred, revenge, evil continues. Do you agree with this? Discuss.*

Q8: It is easy, almost natural, to be “overcome by evil” (v. 21). We simply join what is going on around us. How might following the principles in this passage lead us instead to overcome evil?

- *What is an example of a "natural evil response" that others would celebrate? Mob justice?*

- *Can you think of an example when participating in mob justice ended in disaster? Provide examples if you can.*

Q9: Focus on verse 18. How might the note of realism expressed here encourage you about difficult relationships in your life?

- *Who around you do you find it difficult to live with, to forgive, to love?*
- *What is your typical response to a person you know does not like you, and may even be out to harm you?*
- *There are some relationships we cannot repair. What, from this verse, is your Christian responsibility with the broken relationships in your life?*

Q10: In what practical ways might this passage from Romans 12 help you to obey Christ's command to "Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you" (Luke 6:27)

- *What practical advice from this chapter do you want to incorporate into your life? Why? Discuss.*

Summary: In all our thinking and living it is important to keep the negative and positive counterparts together. Both are good. It is good never to retaliate, because if we repay evil for evil, we double it, adding a second evil to the first and so increasing the tally of evil in the world. It is even better to be positive, to bless, to do good, to seek peace, and to serve and convert our enemy, because if we thus repay good for evil, we reduce the tally of evil in the world while at the same time increasing the tally of good. To repay evil for evil is to be overcome by it; to repay good for evil is to overcome evil with good. This is the way of the cross.

- *Discuss how the above Christian response to enemies is different than how we are trained to respond.*
- *Consider the example of the Amish community offering forgiveness to the man who killed their children.⁵ Were they right to forgive? How does their example affect you?*

Apply: Few of us have people we would label as enemies. But most of us have difficult people in our lives, people whose interests and values are so different from our own that we could hardly think of them as friends. Bring to mind one of these people who has particularly made your life difficult. Skim through Romans 12:9-21 with this person in mind. What do you find here that might lead you to "live at peace"?

- *Reflect for a moment on those who might be viewed as your enemies (you might see them this way or they might see you this way). This could be a family member, a neighbor, a co-worker, a former friend, or it might be someone you read about who is at the opposite end of the political spectrum, or those in a foreign nation, or a religious terrorist.*
- *How has God called Christians to respond to "enemies"? See Matthew 5:43-48 "Love your enemies"*
- *How did Jesus respond to His enemies? Think of Jesus on the cross "Father, forgive them."*

What practical step could you take in that direction?

Consider your relationships within your church, fellowship group, or family. In view of verses 9-16, what is one way that you could better express your love to one person?

⁵ 2006 Amish community response to the gunman who broke into one of their schools and killed five children, wounding five more. "One year ago today, a shooter entered a one-room Amish school in Nickel Mines, Pa., dismissed all but 10 girls, and fired at them execution-style, killing five before shooting himself. Within hours, the Amish community forgave the killer and his family. News of the instant forgiveness stunned the outside world – almost as much as the incident itself did. Many pundits lauded the Amish, but others worried that hasty forgiveness was emotionally unhealthy." CS Monitor, Donald B Kraybill, October 2, 2007

Pray: Verse 12 says that we are to be “faithful in prayer.” Ask God to show you how you might show your love for God and your love for other people through your praying.

Additional Leader Resources

1. CBS News "The Mother of Amish School Shooter shares Amazing Story of Forgiveness" <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/mother-of-amish-school-shooter-shares-amazing-story-of-forgiveness/>
2. Allistair Begg "The Law of Love" <https://www.truthforlife.org/resources/sermon/the-law-of-love/>
3. John Piper "Love your Enemies" <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fMRjbQL1eHE>
4. Billy Graham "Forgiveness" <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fxmkczQfq58>
5. Ted TalkX on Rwanda Reconciliation <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5-ONs1J6laE>

If you have any questions or comments, if you need help with this study, with members of your group, or with technology, please call (248-7940 x114) or email (curt@yakimagrace.com)

5-14-2021 CM

Romans Chapter 12:8 - 12:21

Three Translations

ESV: English Standard Version

⁸the one who exhorts, in his exhortation; the one who contributes, in generosity; the one who leads, with zeal; the one who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness.

⁹ Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good. ¹⁰ Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor. ¹¹ Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord. ¹² Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer. ¹³ Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality.

¹⁴ Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. ¹⁵ Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. ¹⁶ Live in harmony with one another. Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly. Never be wise in your own sight. ¹⁷ Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all. ¹⁸ If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. ¹⁹ Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord." ²⁰ To the contrary, 'if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals on his head.' ²¹ Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good."

NIV: New International Version

⁸ if it is to encourage, then give encouragement; if it is giving, then give generously; if it is to lead, do it diligently; if it is to show mercy, do it cheerfully.

⁹ Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. ¹⁰ Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves. ¹¹ Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord. ¹² Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. ¹³ Share with the Lord's people who are in need. Practice hospitality.

¹⁴ Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. ¹⁵ Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn. ¹⁶ Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited.

¹⁷ Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everyone. ¹⁸ If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. ¹⁹ Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord. ²⁰ On the contrary: "If your enemy is hungry, feed him;

if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head."

²¹ Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good."

MSG: The Message

⁸ if you give encouraging guidance, be careful that you don't get bossy; if you're put in charge, don't manipulate; if you're called to give aid to people in distress, keep your eyes open and be quick to respond; if you work with the disadvantaged, don't let yourself get irritated with them or depressed by them. Keep a smile on your face.

⁹⁻¹⁰ Love from the center of who you are; don't fake it. Run for dear life from evil; hold on for dear life to good. Be good friends who love deeply; practice playing second fiddle.

¹¹⁻¹³ Don't burn out; keep yourselves fueled and aflame. Be alert servants of the Master, cheerfully expectant. Don't quit in hard times; pray all the harder. Help needy Christians; be inventive in hospitality.

¹⁴⁻¹⁶ Bless your enemies; no cursing under your breath. Laugh with your happy friends when they're happy; share tears when they're down. Get along with each other; don't be stuck-up. Make friends with nobodies; don't be the great somebody.

¹⁷⁻¹⁹ Don't hit back; discover beauty in everyone. If you've got it in you, get along with everybody. Don't insist on getting even; that's not for you to do. "I'll do the judging," says God. "I'll take care of it."

²⁰⁻²¹ Our Scriptures tell us that if you see your enemy hungry, go buy that person lunch, or if he's thirsty, get him a drink. Your generosity will surprise him with goodness. Don't let evil get the best of you; get the best of evil by doing good

One Page Summary

Community Life Leaders Chapter 15: Week 5

These are the questions we believe may be most helpful for you and your group

1. Do you agree that even though Christians may not "feel" love towards a particularly difficult person they are still commanded to act in love for them and seek from God a genuine love for them? Discuss
2. In the English language we use the word "love" for a wide range of meanings: 1) I love you, 2) I love pizza, 3) I'd love to beat the stuffing out of you. Hopefully each of those uses of the word "love" means something quite different. The Greek language allows for more precision in what is meant by "love." The Greek word Agape (αγαπε) is found in verse 9, setting the tone for all that follows. What do you know about the meaning of the word agape (see footnote for further discussion)?⁶
3. God's love for us is described as "agape" love. What does that tell us about God? How does that change our relationship with God and with others?
4. How do you express love, and what type of love do you express, to others in your church and in your community group?
5. Why do you think revenge, or getting "even", is the common approach most of us take when wronged by another?
6. How easy is it for you forgive someone who has hurt and wronged you? What would make forgiving then easier? Do you have someone in mind right now that you are finding it difficult to forgive? Without using names, share if you feel comfortable doing so.
7. It has been said that forgiveness and peace are possible when we believe that God will one day hold accountable every act of injustice. Without this belief we are compelled to seek justice and revenge on our own terms. The cycle of hatred, revenge, evil continues. Do you agree with this? Discuss.
8. Verse 18. There are some relationships we cannot repair. What, from this verse, is your Christian responsibility with the broken relationships in your life?
9. Consider the example of the Amish community offering forgiveness to the man who killed their children. (see footnote 5 above). Were they right to forgive? How does their example affect you?
10. Reflect for a moment on those who might be viewed as your enemies (you might see them this way or they might see you this way). This could be a family member, a neighbor, a co-worker, a former friend, or it might be someone you read about who is at the opposite end of the political spectrum, or those in a foreign nation, or a religious terrorist. How has God called Christians to respond to "enemies"? See Matthew 5:43-48 "Love your enemies"

⁶ Agape is a Greek word for love that was elevated by Jesus, and then His first followers in the early years of the Christian Church. Agape is a selfless, serving, sacrificing, seeking the good of the other more than oneself, other-focused love. There are two other common Greek words for "love." The Greek word "eros" is the root of our word "erotic". Eros indicates an attractive love. Eros offers love when it receives love. It is a good and necessary love. The other common Greek word for love is "Phileo" and indicates a "brotherly type of love. Family love. Loyalty. Commitment. Affection. Phileo is the root of the name "Philadelphia," which is "the city of brotherly love." This is a very good and noble love.