



**A STUDY GUIDE FOR
INDIVIDUALS AND GROUPS
VOLUME 1: ROMANS 1-5**

MARK DRISCOLL

ROMANS

Theology for Everybody

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FOR INDIVIDUALS AND GROUPS
VOLUME 1: ROMANS 1-5

REALFAITH.COM



Mark Driscoll

Romans: Theology for Everybody
A Study Guide for Individuals and Groups
Volume 1: Romans 1-5
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CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION1

REAL GROUPS..... 2

CHAPTER 1: GET TO KNOW THE APOSTLE PAUL..... 4

Did Paul Write Romans? 5

What is Paul's Conversion Testimony?..... 6

What is Paul's Place in Scripture?..... 7

What is Paul's Place in History? 8

What Personal Cost Did Paul Pay for His Ministry?.....9

CHAPTER 2: GET TO KNOW PAUL'S LETTER TO THE ROMANS. 12

Where did Paul Write Romans From and To?..... 13

What is Paul's Big Idea in Romans? 15

What are Some Major Themes in Romans?..... 16

What is the Unifying Center of Romans?.....17

What is the Outline of Romans?.....19

What are Some Key Words Paul Uses in Romans?.....20

CHAPTER 3: GET TO KNOW PAUL AND ROMANS' IMPACT ON HISTORY24

What Honor Does Romans Hold in Church History?.....24

How did Romans Transform Augustine, Luther, & Wesley?25

What is Romans' Impact on Theology?.....28

How Has Romans Remained Relevant?30

What are Recent Reflections on Romans?31

CHAPTER 4: AN 11-PART STUDY OF ROMANS 1-5 FOR INDIVIDUALS AND GROUPS33

Lost and Found: Finding God's Peace and Power
(2-part series in Romans 1:1-17)..... 35

Set Free: Escaping Rebellion, Rules, and Religion
(3-part series in Romans 1:18-2:19).....45

Crazy Grace: Bad News for Good People, Good News for Bad People (2-part series in Romans 3:1-31)60
Start Here: Faith Comes First
(2-part series in Romans 4:1-25)70
Best News Ever: Find Your Happiness and Hope
(2-part series in Romans 5:1-21)79

NOTES88

ABOUT PASTOR MARK DRISCOLL AND REAL FAITH92

INTRODUCTION

This study guide is intended to help individuals and groups study the New Testament book of Romans (chapters 1-5) verse-by-verse. To help you learn this breathtaking book of the Bible, we also have additional resources including sermon notes, sermon transcripts, daily devotions, and the sermon series in audio and video format all for free at realfaith.com or on the free Real Faith app, where you can also find our weekly fun church online show called Real Faith Live.

We also have a massive free library of Bible teaching such as Real Men, Real Women, Real Marriage, Real Parenting, Real Español, Real Leaders, Real Worship, and Real Classes. There are hundreds of free sermons mainly studying the Bible verse-by-verse, thousands of free daily devotions, and hundreds of real answers for real people under the Have Questions? category.

All of this is made possible by our generous financial partners who support Real Faith as a Bible teaching ministry of Mark Driscoll Ministries, so thank you.

-Pastor Mark Driscoll

REAL GROUPS

WITH REAL FAITH

Faith that does not result in good deeds is not real faith.

James 2:20, TLB

At Real Faith, we believe that the Word of God isn't just for us to read, it's to be obeyed. And living in community with fellow believers is one of the ways God the Father allows us to learn and grow to become more like His Son Jesus through the power of the Holy Spirit. We do this through something called Real Groups. Here are a few tips to start your own.

1. Invite

Invite your friends, neighbors, family, coworkers, and enemies, because they all need Jesus whether they know Him or not! Whether it's a group of men, women, families, students, or singles, explain that you'd like to start a weekly sermon based small group based on Pastor Mark Driscoll's sermons.

2. Listen to the sermon on realfaith.com or on the Real Faith app

You can host a viewing party to watch Real Faith Live and discuss it all at once, or you can watch it separately and gather to discuss it at another time that works for the group.

3. Get into God's Word

In addition to watching the sermon, make sure you and all group members have a study guide from realfaith.com for the current

ROMANS 1 - 5

sermon series. There are questions for personal reflection as well as for groups that can guide your devotional times throughout the week. You can also sign up for Daily Devos at realfaith.com.

4. Gather together

Whether at someone's house, a public place, or through something like Zoom, meet weekly to discuss the sermon and what God taught you through it. The great thing about Real Groups is that you don't all have to be in the same location. You can talk about sermon takeaways, what stood out to you in the study guide, or what God taught you in His Word that week. Focus on personal application as much as possible.

5. Pray

When you gather, feel free to share prayer requests, pray for each other on the spot, and continue praying throughout the week. Prayer is a great unifying force that God gives us to strengthen His family.

6. Share

Send us photos, videos, testimonies, and updates of how your group is doing to hello@realfaith.com. You might even be featured on our Real Faith Live show!

There are plenty more resources to discover at realfaith.com/real-groups, as well. We will be praying for you and your group and look forward to hearing what God does through it.

CHAPTER 1

GET TO KNOW THE APOSTLE PAUL

“Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel.”
– Paul (1 Corinthians 9:16)

As a Catholic young man who was not yet born again because of my own disinterest in spiritual things, at the age of seventeen I met the girl of my dreams, a pastor’s daughter named Grace. As our friendship developed, she gave me a nice leather-bound Bible with my name inscribed on the front as a gift. In college, I became a Christian through reading that Bible. The exact instance of my conversion is a bit blurry, but the moment I remember knowing that my soul had been changed happened as I sat on my bed in the college dormitory in the fall of 1989 and read Romans 1:6, “And you also are among those Gentiles who are called to belong to Jesus Christ.”

In reading that verse, it was like a switch in my soul was flipped from “off” to “on”. It dawned on me that my life was no longer my own, and that everything I had and did needed to be surrendered to Jesus Christ as I now belonged to Him. Soon, some fellow Christian students on campus at our state university invited me to their church and Bible study. Immediately, I was surrounded with godly kind people of all ages and life stages and had an incredibly wonderful college experience by having my faith challenged in almost every class and having Biblical wisdom to meet the challenge in my church. At my first men’s retreat, which included multiple local churches, I went out on a prayer walk along the river to speak to God as our pastors asked us to. In that moment, God spoke to me audibly telling me to 1) marry Grace 2) preach the Bible 3) train men and 4) and plant churches. My pastor confirmed this was the Word of the

ROMANS 1 - 5

Lord to me, and these have been the focus of my life ever since.

My relationship with God was started and has been sustained by the Scriptures. I started studying the Bible diligently and daily as a college freshman. Soon, I began teaching and preaching to fellow students. While in college, Grace and I were married by our pastor, and upon graduation began leading college ministry at a church back in our hometown in 1993. By the end of 1995 we began gathering the core for our first church plant which is when I began preaching and teaching through books of the Bible verse-by-verse.

Today, we have five children and planted The Trinity Church in Scottsdale, Arizona as a family ministry (thetrinitychurch.com). We all love Jesus and people, and have built our marriage, family, life, and ministry on the foundation of the Bible. Along the way, I have preached or taught through dozens of books of the Bible, including 10 written by Paul. The notable exception is Romans. I started preaching that book of the Bible in 1998 and did not make it very far until I quit. The sermons were not great because I was not ready. Preaching Romans is like hiking Mount Everest, and I was a new hiker in flip flops completely unprepared to finish the journey I started. So, I turned around and headed back down the mountain. I have been waiting and preparing since I read Romans 1:6 in the fall of 1989 in my college dormitory to preach the entire book. To begin our journey together, we will start by getting to know the Apostle Paul.

DID PAUL WRITE ROMANS?

Have you ever gotten a text, email, voicemail, or call from someone who failed to identify themselves? When we don't know who is speaking, it is hard to know exactly what they mean. The same thing is true when we begin to study a book of the Bible. For starters, we know that God is the divine Author. If we can also determine the human author, understanding the meaning of their message is easier.

Thankfully, the New Testament book of Romans starts with, "Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God..." Peter also mentions Paul's "letters" which would include Romans that are sacred "Scriptures", "our beloved brother Paul also wrote to you according to the wisdom given him, as he

does in all his letters...There are some things in them that are hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other Scriptures.” (2 Peter 3:15-17)

After surveying the major arguments for and against Paul being considered the human author of Romans, a Bible Dictionary concludes, “Although Paul’s authorship of several letters has been contested, the evidence for his authorship of Romans is so strong that only the most radical have challenged it.”¹

WHAT IS PAUL’S CONVERSION TESTIMONY?

The first thing we learn about Paul in the Scriptures is that his pre-conversion name is Saul as he is named after the Old Testament king. Saul is a religious terrorist. He oversees the murder of the early church leader Stephen in Acts 7. While dying, Stephen echoes Jesus from the cross and prays that his murderers would be forgiven by God. Stephen then saw Heaven open, and Jesus get off His throne to cheer for Stephen as our Lord sees forgiveness as the great Kingdom victory. Acts 8:1-3 says, “And Saul approved of his execution. And there arose on that day a great persecution against the church in Jerusalem, and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles. Devout men buried Stephen and made great lamentation over him. But Saul was ravaging the church, and entering house after house, he dragged off men and women and committed them to prison.”

Acts 9:1 says, “Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord...” continued his religious terrorizing. Then, Jesus came down from Heaven to deal with Saul personally. The religious terrorist was knocked to the ground, blinded, humbled, and confronted by Jesus Christ. Jesus answered Stephen’s prayer, which goes to show that when we forgive someone and pray for them you never know what Jesus Christ might do next in their life.

Saul was converted, and for the rest of his life looked back at his early life with repentant remorse whenever he shared his testimony. In Acts 22:4 Paul confesses, “I persecuted this Way to the death, binding and delivering to prison both men and women...” In Acts 26:10-11 he says, “I not only locked up many of the saints in prison after receiving authority from the chief priests, but when they were

put to death I cast my vote against them. And I punished them often in all the synagogues and tried to make them blaspheme, and in raging fury against them I persecuted them even to foreign cities.” In Galatians 1:13, he says, “you have heard of my former life in Judaism, how I persecuted the church of God violently and tried to destroy it.” In Philippians 3:6 Paul says, “as to zeal, a persecutor of the church”. Lastly, in 1 Corinthians 15:9 he says, “I am the least of the apostles, unworthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.”

In light of his personal experience, it makes sense why Paul is so emphatic on preaching and teaching certain doctrines with passion. As a former self-righteous

lost religious zealot, he knows all too well the danger of legalism and man-made traditions which is why he attacks them as enemies of the gospel of grace. As someone who was in no way seeking or choosing Jesus, the doctrine of election makes perfect sense in light of his own salvation testimony. As

someone who lived a rigid religious life without the Holy Spirit, his constant emphasis on the need for life in the Spirit is the obvious need for everyone to him. Jesus coming down from Heaven on a mission to convert Paul helps explain his passion to be a ministry travelling constantly to preach Jesus to others as a missionary. Lastly, the forgiveness and grace that Paul received from Christ, Stephen, and other Christians explains his devotion to preaching the gospel of forgiveness and grace of God through Jesus Christ.

“No book has had such a powerful impact on my life as the book of Romans.”



-R. C. Sproul

WHAT IS PAUL’S PLACE IN SCRIPTURE?

As we get to know Paul through the letter he wrote to the Romans, it is important to get some perspective on this magnitude

THEOLOGY FOR EVERYBODY

of this man in human history. He wrote 13 or 14 of the 27 books of the New Testament (there is a debate about the unnamed author of Hebrews). Paul wrote over a period of at least 15 years, to at least seven different churches, and also to two individual church leaders.

Paul wrote more New Testament books than any other author, and Luke contributed the largest amount of content for the New Testament with his historical books of Luke and Acts. Paul was Luke's pastor and Luke was Paul's doctor. They travelled and ministered together. Additionally, the history of Acts 13-28 focuses mainly on Paul which, combined with the books he wrote and influence he had on Luke, means that the majority of the entire New Testament is written by Paul, written about Paul, or written by someone working closely with Paul.



Paul's incredible intelligence includes studying under the renowned rabbi Gamaliel (Acts 22:3) as being fluent in the languages of Hebrew, Aramaic, Greek, and possibly Latin. In his letters, Paul used more than one hundred Old Testament quotations in addition to innumerable echoes and summations of biblical themes and terms, perhaps all from memory as he was often travelling by foot, and often in jail during his ministry.

WHAT IS PAUL'S PLACE IN HISTORY?

The Apostle Paul is a towering figure in world history. Martin Luther called him "the wisest man after Christ."² Luther went on to say of Paul, "We should rejoice and take comfort and also thank God, who has called such a glorious apostle, Paul, for us Gentiles and has sent him to us. Paul himself testifies to this mission in his letter to Timothy when he says (2 Tim. 1:11) that he is appointed a preacher and an apostle and a teacher of the Gentiles in the faith and the truth. Therefore the beloved Paul is our apostle, although all the other apostles are also ours; for all have together received one and the same doctrine from Christ and have taught it."³

ROMANS 1 - 5

Bible scholar Paul Barnett calls Paul the “first theologian in the early church, and arguably the greatest in the history of Christianity.”⁴ Early church father John Chrysostom wrote of Paul, “Put the whole world on one side of the scale and you will see that the soul of Paul outweighs it.”⁵

In roughly a decade of ministry Paul walked an average of nearly 20 miles a day, preaching a message hated by most everyone. He was single and didn't have the comfort of a wife, and he was often suffering alone. He was often poor and would spend time working a job to keep himself alive so that He could continue preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ (Acts 18:1-3).

Summarizing the life of Paul as a missionary of Jesus, theologian Paul Barnett says, “This ex-Pharisee brought the message about Jesus the Christ to the eastern provinces of the Roman Empire, and wanted to repeat this achievement in the western province, Spain. Apart from Paul's Herculean efforts, it is difficult to imagine how the gospel of Christ would have taken root so comprehensively in the Greco-Roman world. Paul's intrepid and energetic travels and tireless work, however, do not in themselves explain his achievements. Here we must understand that for Paul his relationship with Christ and his work for him were inseparable. He regarded all that he did as ‘the work of the Lord’ (1 Corinthians 15:58) that the risen Christ was doing ‘through’ his servant, Paul (Romans 15:18)...In short, to understand Paul's achievements we need to appreciate his driving passion, which was that Christ loved him and seized him, and that he could never be separated from his love (Rom 8:35, 39), sinner though he was and persecutor though he had been.”⁶

WHAT PERSONAL COST DID PAUL PAY FOR HIS MINISTRY?

Paul spent the first part of his life in comfort, ease, and luxury. He enjoyed dual citizenship which allowed him incredible freedom to travel, had a world class education, was a member of the prestigious religious group known as the Pharisees, and was widely respected as a powerful leader who literally killed people in the name of God. Living like a wealthy and well-armed religious terrorist, Paul traded it all on to serve Jesus Christ. Paul lost everything from his social status, to friends and family, along with safety and security. He may

THEOLOGY FOR EVERYBODY

have even lost his wife to divorce as membership as a leader in the Pharisee party required marriage and after his conversion there is no mention of Paul being married; in fact he is emphatic that he is single which may indicate that he was either a widower, or that his devout Jewish wife divorced him upon his conversion. As a result, he lived most of his adult life like Jesus – a chaste unmarried and fatherless man fully devoted to ministry and its accompanying misery. Paul's own account of his life shows a supernatural resilience:

2 Corinthians 6:4-10

...as servants of God we commend ourselves in every way: by great endurance, in afflictions, hardships, calamities, beatings, imprisonments, riots, labors, sleepless nights, hunger; by purity, knowledge, patience, kindness, the Holy Spirit, genuine love; by truthful speech, and the power of God; with the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and for the left; through honor and dishonor, through slander and praise. We are treated as impostors, and yet are true; as unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and behold, we live; as punished, and yet not killed; as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, yet possessing everything.

2 Corinthians 11:23-39

Are they ministers of Christ? – I speak as a fool – I am more: in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequently, in deaths often. From the Jews five times I received forty stripes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods; once I was stoned; three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been in the deep; in journeys often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils of my own countrymen, in perils of the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and toil, in sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness—besides the other things, what comes upon me daily: my deep concern for all the churches. Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is made to stumble, and I do not burn with indignation?

Behind much of Paul's suffering was demonic attack. Paul speaks

a great deal about the demonic realm and spiritual warfare. Because of his God-given mission to bring the gospel to the nations and set captives free from Satan and sin, Paul was at the top of the Enemy's hit list. Acts 19:15 reports, "the evil spirit answered them, 'Jesus I know, and Paul I

recognize...'" Random demons knew who Jesus was, and were also well aware that Paul was now His most devoted foot soldier marching from nation to nation advancing the Kingdom of God. Paul accepted this as simply part of his mission to endure hardship as a "good

soldier of Christ Jesus". (2 Timothy 2:3). In the next chapter Paul continues by speaking of "my persecutions and sufferings...which I endured". Paul says, "Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted..." (2 Timothy 3:10-12)

For most people, they want the message of Christianity to be more like ordering a meal at a restaurant where teachers change the ingredients to suit the tastes of those who consume it. The strength of Paul's writing is that he presents the gospel of Jesus Christ like math – it is unchanging, fixed, and true whether we believe it or not. This is because God does not change, the human problem of sin does not change, and the divine solution of Jesus Christ also does not change. This explains why the messenger takes a beating as some people want them to change the message and are empowered by demonic forces in an effort to change the gospel message.

“[Romans] is the true masterpiece of the New Testament, and the very purest Gospel, which is well worthy and deserving that a Christian man should not only learn it by heart, word for word, but also that he should daily deal with it as the daily bread of men's souls. For it can never be too much or too well read or studied; and the more it is handled the more precious it becomes, and the better it tastes.”

-Martin Luther



CHAPTER 2

GET TO KNOW PAUL'S LETTER TO THE ROMANS

“...our beloved brother Paul also wrote to you according to the wisdom given him, as he does in all his letters...There are some things in them that are hard to understand...”

– Peter (2 Peter 3:15-16)

After some 20 years of ministry in one city where God planted a lot of churches and saved so many people that around 10,000 people were baptized, God in His loving grace gave us a season to rest up, get healthy, enjoy some family time, and seek the Father's face for what our next assignment might be for our family.

As God began to give us a burden for the desert valley in Arizona, my wife Grace and I sought the wise counsel of the pastors we look to as spiritual fathers over us. They confirmed that God was stirring in us a possible calling to relocate, and possibly plant a new church. Before making such a big move as a family, we reached out to the godly pastors who served as apostolic leaders in the greater Phoenix area to seek a relationship with them and to ask for their blessing. This led to a few trips to Arizona where we met with various leaders of churches, denominations, networks, ministries, and seminaries. We answered any questions they had, and eventually they welcomed us to the valley, prayed for us, and supported our new church plant.

Since godly people were already doing good ministry work, we wanted to honor them and only come to partner with them in reaching more people for Christ. Our hope was to complete what they were already doing and not compete with great ministries. This is somewhat similar to the reason Paul wrote the letter of Romans, seeking to build relationships and earn trust to partner with them for

ministry in a city he had not yet ministered in.

WHERE DID PAUL WRITE ROMANS FROM AND TO?

The Christian churches meeting throughout the city of Rome were the original recipients of Paul's letter. While many churches had been planted by the apostles, including many planted under Paul's leadership to non-Jewish Gentiles, no one is exactly sure who planted the church in Rome. We are told that there were "visitors from Rome" (Acts 2:10) who were among those saved when Peter preached about Jesus at the Pentecost holiday in Jerusalem and the Holy Spirit fell. The general consensus is that, most likely, some of the people who

"...at the heart of Romans we find a theology of love."

-N.T. Wright



were from the city of Rome and present at the Pentecost holiday (Acts 2:1-41) in Jerusalem became Christians and brought the message of Jesus with them upon their return home.

Perhaps the reason

Paul's letter is so lengthy is for the simple fact that he had never been to the city of Rome and had few close, personal relationships with people in the church at Rome, though he does mention a few at the end of his letter.

In Romans 15:14-33, Paul summarized his ministry to that point and outlined his missional strategy for the future. Paul was called of God to bring the gospel to non-Jews, and had spent roughly 20 years evangelizing Asia Minor, Macedonia, and Greece (Achaia), and he felt that his work there was largely completed. His hope was to travel to Rome to encourage the church there and also raise financial and spiritual support so that he could then set up a new missions outpost in Spain. In Romans 15:23-24, Paul says, "But now, since I no longer have any room for work in these regions, and since I have longed for many years to come to you, I hope to see you in passing as I go to Spain, and to be helped on my journey there by you, once I have enjoyed your company for a while."

It is possible, if not probably, that Paul wrote his letter to the

church in Rome in 57 AD. A guide to the Bible says, “For three months he stayed in the province of Achaia (the ‘Greece’ of Acts 20:3), and probably in the city of Corinth. The clues lie in Paul’s mention of Phoebe, Gaius and Erastus in his greetings (16:1, 23). Phoebe may be taking the letter to Rome with her when she travels there on business. She comes from Cenchræa—the eastern port of Corinth.

We know that Gaius was baptized by Paul in Corinth (1 Corinthians 1:14), and an inscription has been found in Corinth for someone called Erastus.”⁷

The Christians in Rome likely gathered as house churches (Romans 16:4-5). The size of their gatherings would have ranged from small to large, depending upon the size of the home or

other building each group was able to secure as was common for the first Christians.

Having been to some of the archaeological locations that the New Testament was written to in modern day Greece, Israel, and Turkey, the homes we saw ranged in size much like they do today, with larger homes and nice neighborhoods having large rooms for parties of perhaps a few hundred. Therefore, when we think of early house churches the range in size could be quite large from meeting to meeting.

The mention of Jews and Gentiles throughout Romans indicates that both groups worshipped together as Christians. Furthermore, “The leaders are people like Priscilla and Aquila, Aristobulus and Narcissus, whom Paul greets at the end of his letter (16:3–5, 10–11)... Paul mentions twenty-six people by name. Some are men and women converted through his ministry, others are people with whom he has been in prison and others are his friends or relatives.

“Paul is the “first theologian in the early church, and arguably the greatest in the history of Christianity.”



-Paul Barnett

Some are well placed in society, while others have slave names. Nine of them are women and Paul especially values their care and hard work.”⁸

WHAT IS PAUL’S BIG IDEA IN ROMANS?

Paul’s letter to the Romans is widely considered his most towering theological work. This helps explain why it is listed first among Paul’s letters in the Bible, even though it was not written first. In this way, the order of Paul’s writings shows that Romans is of the first order.

Regarding Romans in comparison to the rest of Paul’s writings, one Bible Encyclopedia says, “Some passages in his other writings may reach higher emotional heights or contain momentary flashes of deeper intuitive insight into the wonder of the gospel, or...set forth the cosmic grandeur of the gospel in more profound terms. In its totality, however, Romans stands alone in the massiveness of its thought and the power it has released in history through its testimony to the gospel as “the power of God for salvation to every one who has faith” (1:16).”⁹

After surveying a wide breadth of writings on Romans, one Bible commentary concludes, “Commentators generally accept that Paul states his basic theme or thesis in Rom 1:16–17 and that all the letter’s other ideas and themes revolve around this center.”¹⁰

Romans 1:16-17 says, “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 for faith, as it is written, ‘The righteous shall live by faith.’” Paul’s big idea in Romans is the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ. As we will examine in our study of this majestic masterpiece this includes:

1. God’s work for us: we are justified by grace through faith in Jesus Christ by imputed righteousness.
2. God’s work in us: we are regenerated, or born again, by the power of the Holy Spirit by imparted righteousness.
3. God’s work through us: we live the Christian life as members of

the church doing ministry to serve the mission of God as the fruit of imputed and imparted righteousness.

Commenting on the big idea of Romans, theologian John Murray said, “The epistle to the Romans is God’s Word. Its theme is the gospel of his grace, and the gospel bespeaks the marvels of his condescension and love. If we are not overwhelmed by the glory of that gospel and ushered into the holy of holies of God’s presence, we have missed the grand purpose of this sacred deposit.”¹¹

WHAT ARE SOME MAJOR THEMES IN ROMANS?

The length and theological depth of Romans makes it virtually impossible to find any one singular theme for the entire letter. Since the days of the Protestant Reformation and Martin Luther, many Protestant Bible commentators have emphasized Paul’s theme of justification by faith, which is one of the dominant themes, but likely not the predominant theme.

After surveying the entire spectrum of theological interpretation on Romans, one Bible commentary says, “Four themes in particular stand out among the many that can be identified. First and arguably foremost, the righteousness of God takes center stage...There is, of course, considerable debate about the meaning of the terminology Paul uses...The exact phrase ‘righteousness of God’ occurs only eight times in Romans (see Rom 1:17; 3:5, 21, 22; 10:3 [2x]), but it plays a pivotal role in Paul’s articulation of the gospel in the letter...Second, Paul advocates for the unity of Jews and Gentiles as one family of God, both on theological and practical grounds. Paul still envisions the priority of Israel in salvation—to the Jew first and also to the Greek’...—but the argument in Romans is that God’s salvation is available for every individual who believes and that God has grafted the Gentiles into the one people of God alongside Israel (Rom 1:17; 11:11–24)...Paul urges both Jews and Gentiles in the Roman churches to accept one another as members of God’s one family (see Rom 14:1–15:13). Closely related to this theme is the question of Israel’s place in the plan of God... Third, Paul’s presentation of Christ as the ‘second Adam’—that is, the head of the new humanity—places Christ at the center of God’s salvific activity and at the heart of Paul’s

argument (Rom 5:12–21; compare Rom 3:21–26)...Fourth, the Holy Spirit plays a key role in Paul's theological argument in Rom 1–11 and in his exhortations in Rom 12–15. For Paul, God's Spirit dwelling in believers serves as proof of both the fulfillment of God's promises in the Scriptures (e.g., Ezek 11:19–20; 36:25–27; Joel 2:28–32; Jer 31:31–33) and God's adoption of His children (Rom 5:5; 8:12–17). The Spirit empowers ethical Christian living by liberating the believer from the power of sin (Rom 8:2), helping believers to live in obedience to God (Rom 8:4–16; 14:17; 15:13), and interceding on behalf of believers in their weakness (Rom 8:26–27)."¹²

The home you live in probably has four sides. Each side has its own uniqueness, and together the four sides complement one another to make it a good environment. For the Christian, Romans is to be a bit like a home. In it we are to live our life, learn about God, and love others. Each of the four themes in Romans is a bit like the four sides of a home. By keeping them all connected, we enjoy the best home possible. Just like taking down an exterior wall in your home causes everything to crumble, the same thing is true when we fail to keep each of the four themes of Romans together.

“If we have gained a true understanding of this Epistle [Romans], we have an open door to all the most profound treasures of Scripture.”



-John Calvin

WHAT IS THE UNIFYING CENTER OF ROMANS?

At the risk of stating the obvious, the unifying center of the entire Bible is God. The first line of Scripture says, “In the beginning, God”. To understand anyone or anything, we must begin with God. The unifying center of history, theology, the Bible, and our lives is ultimately God. This same principle is true of Romans, as well as every other book of the Bible.

Bible commentator Leon Morris says, “One point that is often overlooked and should be stressed is that Romans is fundamentally

a book about God. It is obvious to all that Romans is concerned with the gospel, with salvation, and so on. But many students seem not to have noticed Paul's preoccupation with God. The thought of God dominates this epistle. The word 'God' occurs 153 times in Romans, an average of once every 46 words. This is more often than in any other New Testament writing (except the short 1 Peter and 1 John).

“GOD” occurs more frequently in Romans than any other book

Romans	153 times (every 46 words)
Acts	166 times (every 110 words)
Luke	122 times
1 Corinthians	105 times

“GOD” also occurs more in Romans than any other theme

153 times	—	“God”
72 times	—	“Law”
65 times	—	“Christ”
48 times	—	“Sin”
43 times	—	“Lord”
40 times	—	“Faith”

Acts has the word 166 times, but since it is so much longer this works out to once in 110 words. The only other books with more than 100 occurrences are Luke with 122 and 1 Corinthians with 105. And not only does 'God' occur in Romans more frequently than in any other writing, it occurs more often than any other theme in that book. Apart from a few prepositions, pronouns, and the like, no word is used in Romans with anything like the frequency of 'God'. Next is 'law' (72 times), then 'Christ' (65), 'sin' (48), 'Lord' (43), and 'faith' (40). Statistics must always be used with caution, but these figures draw attention to the important fact that in Romans the one great theme is God. Paul writes on a number of topics, but everything is related to God."¹³

WHAT IS THE OUTLINE OF ROMANS?

Because Romans weaves together so many theological themes, it is not surprising that scholars do not agree on one way to divide the various sections of the book into themes. However, the following is one good example of the general outline of Romans from Warren Wiersbe:

Introduction (1:1-17)

- A. Salutation (1:1-7)
- B. Explanation (1:8-17)

I. Sin (1:18-3:20—Righteousness Needed)

- A. The Gentiles under sin (1:18-32)
- B. The Jews under sin (2:1-3:8)
- C. The whole world under sin (3:9-20)

II. Salvation (3:21-5:21—Righteousness Imputed)

- A. Justification explained (3:21-31)
- B. Justification expressed: the example of Abraham (4:1-25)
- C. Justification experienced (5:1-21)

III. Sanctification (6-8—Righteousness Imparted)

- A. Our new position in Christ (6)
- B. Our new problem in the flesh (7)
- C. Our new power in the Spirit (8)

IV. Sovereignty (9-11—Righteousness Rejected)

- A. Israel's past election (9)
- B. Israel's present rejection (10)
- C. Israel's future redemption (11)

V. Service (12:1-15:13—Righteousness Practiced)

- A. Consecration to God (12)
- B. Subjection to authority (13)
- C. Consideration for the weak (14:1-15:13)

VI. Conclusion (15:14-16:27)

- A. Paul's faithfulness in the ministry (15:14-21)
- B. Paul's future in the ministry (15:22-33)
- C. Paul's friends in the ministry (16:1-23)
- D. Final benediction (16:24-27)¹⁴

WHAT ARE SOME KEY WORDS PAUL USES IN ROMANS?

Key words have become all the rage in our age of technology. Certain specific words and phrases are used to guide us through information as we seek to make sense of the flood of data that surrounds us.

In the Bible, God the Holy Spirit has also chosen some key words for us to make note of. These become shorthand ways of explaining and referring to complex theological truth. Understanding what these keywords mean, and don't mean, helps us learn the language of the Bible so that we can understand what the authors of Scripture meant, and also helps us communicate with one another big ideas from the Bible. The following are some of the key words Paul uses in Romans.

HUMAN GOVERNMENT
THE GOSPEL **THE JEWS**
THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD
SIN **F A I T H** **GOD'S CHOICE**
OUR SPIRITUAL STRUGGLE **RIGHTEOUSNESS**
ONE ANOTHER

The Righteousness of God

Surveying the landscape of Bible commentaries, the summary is given that, "The phrase 'the righteousness of God' is one of the central theological ideas for Paul's exposition of the gospel and his mission in Romans. The phrase occurs just eight times in Romans (see Rom 1:17; 3:5, 21, 22, 25, 26; 10:3 [2x]), though Paul frequently uses related terms and phrases throughout the letter. The interpretation of the phrase 'the righteousness of God' is complex and, at times, controversial since it carries significant theological weight for the

doctrine of justification.”¹⁵

The Gospel

Outside of the Bible in the ancient world, the Greek concept of “*euangelion*” simply referred to a good report of some good news. Often, this kind of good report would come from a King who would send a herald out into the kingdom to preach the good news. This is the concept Paul uses in Romans referring to the good news and preachers are heralds sent out from His Kingdom to preach the gospel to the nations.

One Bible commentary says, “The majority of NT uses of *euangelion* occur in Paul’s letters. 60 of the over 75 NT uses of *euangelion* are attributed to Paul, and over 45 of those occur in the undisputed letters. Within the Gospels, *euangelion* occurs only in Matthew (three times) and Mark (eight times). Although the noun *euangelion* occurs only twice in Luke-Acts, the related verb *euangelizō* occurs over 25 times in Luke-Acts. In comparison, Paul uses the verb *euangelizō* approximately 20 times...Paul uses *euangelion* nine times within Romans and approaches the gospel from several different angles...For Paul, the gospel is a fact that God has proven through Jesus; to deny the gospel is to deny reality. However, the gospel’s ultimate point is not an abstract discussion of reality, but salvation. Paul declares, ‘I am not ashamed of the gospel (*euangelion*), for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek’ (Rom 1:16 ESV). This final element allows us to develop the following working definition of *euangelion*: (1) it’s God’s demonstrated work in history culminating in Christ; (2) it has the power to bring about salvation for anyone who believes.”¹⁶

Faith

The concept of faith is a massive theme of Paul’s letter to the Romans. One Bible commentary says, “*pistis* is used to translate several words—most often ‘*aman*, meaning ‘to be trustworthy’ or ‘to trust’—and tends to portray trust in terms of obedience and acceptance of God’s ways. In the NT *pistis* can have several nuances related to belief (or trust) and God. The most prominent senses of *pistis* in the NT involve: (1) the proper disposition toward God; (2)

THEOLOGY FOR EVERYBODY

the vehicle of relationship with God; (3) the content of belief in God; and (4) the expression of that disposition, relationship, and belief through faithful conduct. All of these nuances of *pistis* are present in Romans."¹⁷

In addition to Paul's major keywords in Romans, one Bible reference resource lists the following "gems" from Romans:

SIN

Everyone has sinned, without exception, both Jew and Gentile: All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God (3:23).

RIGHTEOUSNESS

Everyone is put right with God in the same way—not by keeping the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ: Now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known... This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe (3:21–22).

Jews and Gentiles belong together as God's people. All are saved by faith alone, because of God's grace.

THE JEWS

Christians have their roots in the Jewish faith and depend on it for their understanding of God. God has not rejected or discarded his Jewish people. They are still central to his plan of salvation (9:1–11:36): Did God reject his people? By no means (11:1)!

FAITH

Abraham is the prime example of faith. If we live by faith, we are the true children of Abraham: He [Abraham] is our father in the sight of God, in whom he believed—the God who gives life to the dead and calls things that are not as though they were...he did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God, being fully persuaded that God had power to do what he had promised (4:17, 20–21).

ONE ANOTHER

If we belong to Christ, then we accept one another—without racial prejudice or spiritual one-upmanship: Accept one another...just as Christ accepted you (15:7).

HUMAN GOVERNMENT

The state has God's authority to govern, although the claims of God's kingdom are higher: The authorities that exist have been established by God (13:1).

OUR SPIRITUAL STRUGGLE

There is a conflict within every Christian: "I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out" (7:18). But the Holy Spirit comes to our aid: "the Spirit helps us in our weakness" (8:26).

GOD'S CHOICE

God chooses or "elects" to save whole nations, not just individual people. Paul quotes Hosea: "I will call them 'my people' who are not my people" (9:25). Paul adds that this "does not depend on human desire or effort, but on God's mercy" (9:16).¹⁸

“It must be further noticed that this grace, this glorious gift, comes to men through Jesus Christ, and through no other channel.”



-Charles Octavius Boothe,
Former slave commenting
on Romans 5:17-21

CHAPTER 3

GET TO KNOW PAUL AND ROMANS' IMPACT ON HISTORY

“These men...have turned the world upside down...”
– A mob rioting against Paul (Acts 17:6)

For every effect, there is a cause. For a gigantic effect, there is a gigantic cause. One such example happened on July 9, 1958 at 10:15pm. A gigantic earthquake registering a magnitude 7.8 caused a rockslide of roughly 40 million cubic yards in the Gilbert Inlet of Alaska with a gigantic effect. The result was a megatsunami, and the biggest wave ever recorded, measuring an incredibly staggering 1,720 feet!⁹

In spiritual terms, the equivalent of this is Paul's letter to the Romans. In its wake has come a massive wave of theological study and spiritual power rippling throughout church history to this very day.

WHAT HONOR DOES ROMANS HOLD IN CHURCH HISTORY?

The early church father and legendary preacher John Chrysostom had Romans read to him multiple times a week. In his sermons from Romans, Chrysostom says, “As I keep hearing the Epistles of the blessed Paul read, and that twice every week, and often three or four times, whenever we are celebrating the memorials of the holy martyrs, gladly do I enjoy the spiritual trumpet, and get roused and warmed with desire at recognizing the voice so dear to me, and seem to fancy him all but present to my sight, and behold him conversing with me. But I grieve and am pained, that all people do not know this man, as much as they ought to know him;

but some are so far ignorant of him..."²⁰

Summarizing its effect it is said, "No doubt Romans is one of the most important of all the books of the Bible...a famous English poet [Samuel Taylor Coleridge], said Romans was 'the profoundest book in existence'; that Melancthon copied Romans twice by hand just to get more thoroughly acquainted with it. [W.H. Griffith] Thomas himself says that Romans is concerned with 'the deepest problems of Christian thought,' 'great theological principles,' and 'the prime secrets of the spiritual life.'

He adds: 'A Christian life nourished on the Epistle to the Romans will never lack the three great requisites of clear perception, strong conviction, and definite usefulness.'

“This epistle [Romans] is the principal and most excellent part of the New Testament, and most pure...gospel, and also a light and a way in unto the whole scripture...” -William Tyndale



conviction, and definite usefulness."²¹

Not only has Romans impacted the history of the church, it can also impact the history of your life. Warren Wiersbe says in the introduction to his commentary on Romans, "Imagine! You and I can read and study the same inspired letter that brought life and power to Luther and Wesley! And the same Holy Spirit who taught them can teach us! You and I can experience revival in our hearts, homes, and churches if the message of this letter grips us as it has gripped men of faith in centuries past."²²

HOW DID ROMANS TRANSFORM AUGUSTINE, LUTHER, AND WESLEY?

In sports, an all-star team is comprised of the very best players from the various teams. In Christianity, we have our own teams like Calvinists and Arminians. Our version of an all-star team with the best theologians and leaders from various teams and traditions

would include Augustine (the father of what we call Calvinism today), Luther (the father of Lutheranism), and Wesley (the father of Arminianism along with both Charismatics and Pentecostals). What they each have in common is a profound life-changing experience with the Holy Spirit through the book of Romans.²³

The church father Augustine was born in North Africa and talks openly in his book *Confessions* about being torn between Christianity and his love of the common false trinity for young men – loud parties, beautiful women, and stiff drinks. In the summer of AD 386 after hearing a child next door say, “Pick it up, read it”, he picked up a copy of Romans that his friend had and at-random read Romans 13:13-14 which says, “Let us walk properly as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and sensuality, not in quarreling and jealousy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.” Like a sniper shot from Heaven, the Holy Spirit hit Augustine right in the soul. He testifies, “A light flooded my heart and all the darkness of doubt vanished away’ (Augustine, *Confessions*, 8:29).”²⁴ Augustine grew to become one of the most influential theologians in the history of the church and his works to this day are bedrock in Christian theology.

“It was as if Paul was writing his theological last will and testament, as if to the Romans he was distilling the very essence of his faith and belief.” -William Barclay



Commenting on Romans, Augustine says, “Paul...fights zealously and fiercely on behalf of this grace of God, against the proud and arrogant who presume upon their own works...Truly then is he clear and eager above all in the defense of grace...And in the letter to the Romans he is concerned almost solely with this very matter; fighting with such numerous arguments as to weary the reader’s will to follow: yet such weariness is beneficial and salutary, training rather than weakening the various aspects of the inner person. (Spirit. et Lit.12)”²⁵

ROMANS 1-5

Roughly a millennium later, around the fall of 1515, the Holy Spirit once again sent a sniper shot to the soul from Heaven with a verse from Romans. Martin Luther is widely known as one of the leaders of the Protestant Reformation. Among the most important people to walk the earth, he lived from 1483 to 1546 as a contemporary of the printing press, Copernicus, Henry VIII, Leonardo da Vinci, Michelangelo, Christopher Columbus, and John Calvin. A copper miner's son, he was born in Germany some 120 miles outside Berlin.

After a powerful encounter with God in which he was nearly struck by lightning, Luther became a priest and a monk. This included taking vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience for the rest of his life. Trained as a lawyer, Luther lived a tormented life. Constantly judging his life by the demands of God's laws in the Bible with a brutal honesty and brilliant legal mind, he nearly drove himself mad seeking to make himself righteous in God's sight out of a terrifying fear of God. This included endless prayer, severe fasting that gave him significant intestinal problems, sleepless nights, freezing cold, and even beating his own body in an effort to atone for his sin.

But by the grace of God, Luther had an epiphany that changed not only his life but also the lives of countless others. Serving as a professor of theology in Germany at the University of Wittenburg, he was teaching on Paul's letter to the Romans, and had a Holy Spirit epiphany in Scripture that changed the world: "I felt that I was altogether born again and had entered paradise itself through open gates.' This new understanding of this one verse—Rom 1:17—changed everything; it became in a real sense the doorway to the Reformation. 'Thus that place in Paul was for me truly the gate to paradise,' says Luther (Latin Writings, 336–337)."²⁶

Luther learned that righteousness is a gift God gives by grace from and faith in Jesus Christ and not something earned or merited through human religious and moral performance. Theologians call this "justification by faith" for shorthand.

In his commentary on Romans, Luther wrote, "It [Romans] is the true masterpiece of the New Testament, and the very purest Gospel, which is well worthy and deserving that a Christian man should not only learn it by heart, word for word, but also that he should daily deal with it as the daily bread of men's souls. For it can never be too much or too well read or studied; and the more it is handled the

more precious it becomes, and the better it tastes.”²⁷

Over two hundred years later, this time in London, the Holy Spirit would send yet another sniper shot from Romans to the soul of English pastor John Wesley. He attended an evening service at Aldersgate Street in London on May 24, 1738. Part of Martin Luther’s commentary on Romans was read aloud. Wesley remembers,

“He was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ. I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone, for my salvation; and an assurance was given me that he had taken my sins away, even mine; and saved me from the law of sin and death’ (John Wesley, Works (1872), volume 1).”²⁸

“The Epistle to the Romans is the cathedral of the Christian faith.”

-F.L. Godet



Wesley went on to lead a spiritual revival in England based upon the life of the Spirit imparted to him, and Luther, through Paul’s letter to the Romans. Additionally, Swiss Bible commentator F. Godet anticipated that “every great spiritual revival in the church will be connected as effect and cause with a deeper understanding of this book.”²⁹

WHAT IS ROMANS’ IMPACT ON THE HISTORY OF CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY?

In more recent years, the praise of Romans has continued, “Philip Schaff has said, ‘The Epistle to the Romans is the Epistle of the Epistles, as the Gospel of John is the Gospel of the Gospels’” ...“This is in every sense the greatest of the Epistles of Paul, if not the greatest book in the New Testament,” declares Thiessen...Newell...says Romans is “probably the greatest book in the Bible.” “If the apostle Paul had written nothing else, he would still be recognized as one of the outstanding Christian thinkers of all time on the basis of this letter alone,” say Newman and Nida...This familiar praise comes from

ROMANS 1 - 5

Godet...“The pious Sailer used to say, ‘O Christianity, had thy one work been to produce a St. Paul, that alone would have rendered thee dear to the coldest reason.’ May we not be permitted to add: And thou, O St. Paul, had thy one work been to compose an Epistle to the Romans, that alone would have rendered thee dear to every sound reason. Godet adds, ‘The Epistle to the Romans is the cathedral of the Christian faith’”...Batey...says, “Paul’s epistle to the Romans stands among the most important pieces of literature in the intellectual history of Western man.” “It is safe to say that Romans is probably the most powerful human document ever written,” declares Stedman. Some might think this honor should go to the U.S. Constitution or to the Declaration of Independence. “But even they cannot hold a candle to the impact the Epistle to the Romans has had upon human history”...Boice avows: “Christianity has been the most powerful, transforming force in human history—and the book of Romans is the most basic, most comprehensive statement of true Christianity”.³⁰

The impact of Romans on every generation of Christian thought cannot be overstated: “Paul’s letter to the Romans is regarded not only as his most significant writing, but as one of the most important writings in the history of the Christian faith.”³¹ The influence of Romans includes John Bunyan who studied Romans while sitting in the Bedford jail. He was so inspired by what he learned from Paul, that he was inspired to write the now legendary Puritan book *Pilgrim’s Progress*.

A Bible dictionary summarizes Romans’ place in Church history saying, “The Epistle to the Romans has also contributed significantly to the history of Christian doctrine. Almost every influential Christian thinker has dealt with Romans. Origen, Thomas Aquinas, and Philip Melancthon, to mention only a few, wrote noteworthy commentaries on Romans. And numerous theological notions have been derived solely or in part from Romans. Augustine acquired his idea of original sin from Romans 5, Luther gained his understanding of justification by faith alone from Romans 3–4, John Calvin obtained his doctrine of double predestination from Romans 9–11, John Wesley got his distinctive teaching on sanctification from Romans 6 and 8, and Karl Barth learned of the importance of the righteousness of God from Romans 1 and 2. In short, this epistle has exerted a

powerful influence on all branches of the Christian Church, and its impact on the lives and thought of prominent Christian thinkers through the years has been second, perhaps, only to the canonical gospels.”³²

HOW HAS ROMANS REMAINED RELEVANT IN EVERY GENERATION?

Trends and fads dominate culture and history. In everything from music to fashion, what is hot today is cold tomorrow. In comparison, the book of Romans has been a favorite in every generation for nearly two millennia. One Bible commentary says, “Paul’s letter to the Romans is regarded not only as his most significant writing, but as one of the most important writings in the history of the Christian faith. The popularity of Romans is evidenced by the endless number of commentaries, essays, and books devoted to the interpretation of the letter throughout the centuries. [Joseph] Fitzmyer [says]...‘one can almost write the history of Christian theology by surveying the ways in which Romans has been interpreted.’ [John] Stott’s claim that ‘the church in every generation has acknowledged the importance of Romans’ also applies to virtually every major theologian throughout church history—from Ambrosiaster and John Chrysostom in the first centuries of the church, to Aquinas in the medieval period, to Luther and Calvin during the Reformation, to John Wesley in 18th-century Britain, to Barth’s influential commentary *Römerbrief* in the 20th century, to N. T. Wright’s recent *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*.”³³

Romans is so big that its impact is far beyond Christianity, transforming entire cultures. One theologian has said, “Paul’s letter to the Romans is one of the most influential writings in the past fifteen hundred years of Western culture...More than any other book, Romans has been the forge of the Western psyche.”³⁴ Another says, “This letter is arguably the most influential book in Christian history, perhaps in the history of Western civilization.”³⁵

Within the history of Christian theology, Paul’s letter to the Romans has been a battleground between Catholic and Protestant theologians. Catholic Bible commentator Brendan Byrne rightly said, “While widely acknowledged as the single most influential document in Christian history, it has also been the most

controversial...At the time of the Reformation the letter became a battleground within Christianity between Protestant and Catholic understandings of the faith."³⁶ Protestant Bible commentator Leon Morris says, "The Reformation may be regarded as the unleashing of new spiritual life as a result of a renewed understanding of the teaching of Romans."³⁷

For Protestant Christians, Paul's letters to the Romans and Galatians are perhaps the most significant source of theological clarity teaching what the gospel of Jesus Christ is, and is not respectively. Theologian Douglas Moo says, "Paul remains a gigantic figure, whose impact on the history of theology is probably greater than that of any other biblical author."³⁸

One well respected commentator on Romans says, "From the death of Paul to this day there has not been a Sabbath when he was not read, recited or quoted in the public ministrations of God's house; and so it will be to the end of time."³⁹

The early church father Chrysostom said of Paul's writings, "Like a wall of adamant, his writings form a bulwark around all the churches of the world, while himself, as some mighty champion stands even now in the midst, casting down every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ."⁴⁰

Thomas Draxe, a seventeenth-century English Puritan described Romans as, "The quintessence and perfection of saving doctrine."⁴¹ John Calvin said, "if we have gained a true understanding of this Epistle, we have an open door to all the most profound treasures of Scripture."⁴²

“[I wish to have seen] Christ in the flesh and Paul in the pulpit.”



-Saint Augustine

WHAT ARE SOME RECENT REFLECTIONS ON ROMANS FROM BIBLE TEACHERS?

In more recent years, Christian theologians have continued their mining for even more gold in Paul's letter to the Romans. R.C. Sproul

said, “no book has had such a powerful impact on my life as the book of Romans.”⁴³

John Stott said, “Paul’s letter to the Romans is a kind of Christian manifesto.”⁴⁴

Charles Swindoll says in his commentary on Romans, “Paul’s letter to the believers in Rome can be called many things. Clearly, this became his magnum opus. It is the first systematic theology of the Christian faith. This letter may be considered the believer’s constitution—the Christian Magna Carta. We might even call it a manifesto of the new kingdom, for it not only declares our essential beliefs, it establishes our agenda as Christ’s disciples.”⁴⁵

N.T Wright says, “Paul’s letter to the Christians in Rome is his masterpiece. It covers many different topics from many different angles, bringing them all together into a fast-moving and compelling line of thought. Reading it sometimes feels like being swept along in a small boat on a swirling, bubbling river. We need to hold on tight if we’re going to stay on board. But if we do, the energy and excitement of it all is unbeatable.”⁴⁶

In the introduction to his commentary on Romans Grant Osborne said, “Paul’s letter to the Romans is clearly the deepest theological treatise in the New Testament, indeed of Scripture as a whole. It was written by one of the great geniuses of the early church under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Who am I to try to unpack such a work, perhaps the greatest of history?”⁴⁷

In his commentary on Romans, James Boice says, “we cling to man-centered, need-oriented teaching. And our churches show it! They are successful in worldly terms—big buildings, big budgets, big everything—but they suffer from a poverty of soul. All this means, in my judgment at least, that it is time to get back to the basic, life-transforming doctrines of Christianity—which is to say that it is time to rediscover Romans.”⁴⁸

Bible teacher Warren Wiersbe says, “If a Bible student wishes to master any one book of the Bible, let it be Romans! An understanding of this book is a key to unlocking the entire Word of God.”⁴⁹ We will do just that in the next chapter as you begin your journey with the Holy Spirit through the book of Romans!

CHAPTER 4

AN 11-PART STUDY ON ROMANS 1-5 FOR INDIVIDUALS AND GROUPS

“Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth.”

– Paul (2 Timothy 2:15)

The best way to start learning any book of the Bible is to simply pray and read it over and over. As the longest of Paul’s letters in the New Testament, it takes about an hour to read the entire book of Romans. There are 16 chapters, and each chapter takes between 2-5 minutes to read. Here are some practical plans for you to choose from in reading Romans:

1. Read Romans 1 hour each day to read the entire book every day
2. Read Romans 30 minutes each day to read the entire book every other day
3. Read Romans 15 minutes each day to read the entire book every four days
4. Read Romans just under 10 minutes each day to read the entire book once a week

In addition to Bible reading for yourself, the following study guide is intended to help individuals and groups learn

“Romans is the constitution of the church.”

-Dr. Tony Evans



THEOLOGY FOR EVERYBODY

Romans. Please use this guide as tools and not rules. As the Holy Spirit guides your time in Scripture, and as you have discussion with others, the goal is not finishing the guide but rather meeting with God through learning the Bible. Consider this guide more as a compass pointing you in a direction than a map that directs your every step. The format for each section of Romans 1-5 is as follows:

1. Lost and Found: Finding God's Peace (Romans 1:1-7)
2. Lost and Found: Finding God's Power (Romans 1:8-17)
3. Set Free: Escaping Rebellion (Romans 1:18-32)
4. Set Free: Escaping Rules (Romans 2:1-11)
5. Set Free: Escaping Religion (Romans 2:12-29)
6. Crazy Grace: Bad News for Good People (Romans 3:1-20)
7. Crazy Grace: Good News for Bad People (Romans 3:21-31)
8. Start Here: Faith Comes First for Abraham (Romans 4:1-12)
9. Start Here: Faith Comes First for You (Romans 4:13-25)
10. Best News Ever: Find Your Happiness (Romans 5:1-11)
11. Best News Ever: Find Your Hope (Romans 5:12-21)



Lost and Found: Finding God's Peace (Romans 1:1-7)

¹Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, ²which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy Scriptures, ³concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh ⁴and 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, ⁵through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of his name among all the nations, ⁶including you who are called to belong to Jesus Christ, ⁷To 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.

Memory Verse:

Romans 1:7 – Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Summary:

The book of Romans is a letter written in the common format of the ancient world. The introduction is longer than any of Paul's other letters, in large part because he had not yet been to Rome, did not personally know the people, and so he was introducing himself in hopes of coming to finally visit them after previous failed attempts. In this opening he starts with 1. introducing himself in relation to Jesus Christ, 2. commitment to the Old Testament having been fulfilled in relation to Jesus Christ, 3. the saving message of the gospel of Jesus Christ, 4. the obedience that Christians have to Jesus Christ, 5. the mission to get the gospel of Jesus Christ out to the nations, and 6. how the love, grace and peace of God the Father come to us through Jesus Christ. In summary, in his introduction, Paul connected

THEOLOGY FOR EVERYBODY

everything and everyone to Jesus Christ so that people can belong to Him, receive grace and peace through Him, experience transformed lives in obedience to Him, all made possible through faith in Him.

Personal Study Questions:

1. Paul opens by telling us that God is the Trinity of Father, Son, and Spirit. Make note of the appearance of each member of the Trinity in this section.
2. In 1:2-4, Paul tells us that the Old Testament prophesied in advance the person and work of Jesus Christ. To see some of these occurrences look up 2 Sam. 7:12-16; Psalm 89,132; Isa. 11:1-5; Jer. 23:5-6; Ezek. 34:23-24.
3. The word “gospel” in the original Greek language, refers to the joyful proclamation of good news! Examples in the ancient world include royal births, weddings and inauguration of the reigns of an emperor king who was worshipped as deity and this word appears repeatedly starting in Romans 1:1. In your own words, what is the gospel of Jesus Christ?
4. List or make note of everything Paul tells us about Jesus Christ in this opening section of Romans
5. List or make note of everything Paul tells us about our status as Christians in this opening section of Romans.
6. Christians are sinners but Paul says that, in Christ, God has “called us to be saints” who live new lives as people forgiven for the past and made new for the future (1:7). What changes in your life would help you fulfill living out your calling as a saint since the Holy Spirit makes you holy?
7. Jesus is called Lord at least over 700 times in the New Testament (1:4,7). The word Lord or “kurios” was used in the ancient world to refer to the absolute and sovereign rule of the emperor who was considered a god and a man who ruled in ultimate power as a king over a kingdom. What does it mean, very practically, to have all of your life under the Lordship of Jesus Christ? Is there any area of your life where you, or someone else, is acting as the counterfeit Lord over that area of your life?

Group Discussion Questions:

1. Paul starts by telling us a bit of his testimony and how he

ROMANS 1-5

became a Christian. Take a few minutes and have each person share where they are at on their faith walk and where it started.

2. Paul says he is a servant of Christ Jesus. What are some of the practical ways you are serving Christ Jesus in this season (e.g. spouse, parent, employee, ministry, etc.)?

3. Paul starts by focusing our attention on God's love, grace, and peace for us. How have you seen these things in your life, especially God's grace? God's grace is named around over 150 times in the New Testament, about 100 times it is from Paul. The book of the New Testament that mentions God's grace the most is Romans, where it appears around 24 times. Can you give some specific examples of how God's grace has shown up in your life?

4. Peace corresponds with the OT word "Shalom", which means not merely the absence of war, but the presence of blessing. It is a rich and full word looking to final redemption and restoration, healing, wholeness when everyone and everything is brought under the rule of Jesus, the Prince of Shalom. Are there any areas in which you are struggling to live because it is the opposite of shalom that we could pray for and help with?

NOTES



Lost and Found: Finding God's Power (Romans 1:8-17)

⁸First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because your faith is proclaimed in all the world. ⁹For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son, that without ceasing I mention you ¹⁰always in my prayers, asking that somehow by God's will I may now at last succeed in coming to you. ¹¹For I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to strengthen you— ¹²that is, that we may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith, both yours and mine. ¹³I 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. ¹⁴I am under obligation both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish. ¹⁵So I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome. ¹⁶For 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. ¹⁷For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, "The righteous shall live by faith."

Memory Verse:

Romans 1:16 – I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes.

Summary:

Paul begins his letter to a church he had never visited by praying for them as was his regular habit. In particular, he is thankful that the church in Rome is strong, healthy, growing, and that, through it, the gospel of Jesus Christ was going forth from a major city into new areas. As a church planting missionary, Paul is motivated to see their work continue which is why he wants to visit them, so that

ROMANS 1-5

he can partner with them and plant more churches by reaching more people for Christ. Paul concludes his introduction by declaring his unwavering and unashamed commitment to the gospel of Jesus Christ so that they can be sure that he is preaching the same message and serving the same message that they are. This trust would have been crucial for Paul to establish if the church in Rome was to support and send him to pioneer new areas for evangelism and church planting.

Personal Study Questions:

1. Paul has tried repeatedly to visit the Christians in Rome and has been unable (1:8-15). He hopes to visit soon, but in the meantime sent a letter. Is there anyone you wish you could be with but cannot right now for some reason? How could you encourage them (e.g. letter, call, email, etc.)?
2. Are there any teachings in biblical Christianity that you struggle to not be ashamed of (1:16)? Why?
3. How have you experienced the power of the gospel in your own life (1:16)?
4. Paul uses the concept of righteousness often in Romans. This legal term is about being right with God. In every religion but Christianity, works righteousness is taught. You must do something to be righteous before God and right with God. Christianity is about gift righteousness that we receive by grace through faith in Jesus Christ. Make note of the occurrences of Jesus Christ, faith, gift, gospel, salvation, believes, righteousness, and faith which together combine rich truths about “the righteousness of God”.
5. Paul quotes Habakkuk 2:4 in Romans 1:17, along with Galatians 3:11, and Hebrews 10:38. The context in Habakkuk is that it seems like the enemies of God and his people are winning, and that God is not acting to protect or provide for His people. Read Habakkuk 1:1-2:4 and see how faith was worked out in relationship and conversation with God.
6. Habakkuk 2:4 is also quoted in Galatians 3:11 and Hebrews 10:38. To learn more about faith, look up those Scriptures in context.
7. Paul talks about partnering with the church in Rome, which would have included financial support and prayer. How are you

THEOLOGY FOR EVERYBODY

doing with your prayer for and financial support of a local church?

Group Discussion Questions:

1. Paul talks about preaching the gospel to reap a harvest. Who preached the gospel to you to help you become a Christian?
2. Paul intends to visit the Christians in Rome so that they can strengthen and encourage one another. How can group members help do the same for one another?
3. What are the kinds of people Paul is obligated to minister to in 1:13-15? Which people has God placed in your life to minister to? Are there any that you would rather not, but you have to accept the call from God to be committed to ministering to them?
4. Paul starts by praying a prayer of thanksgiving. Spend some time as a group sharing things you are thankful for and then pray for one another.

NOTES



Set Free: Escaping Rebellion (Romans 1:18–32)

¹⁸For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. ¹⁹For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. ²⁰For 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. ²¹For 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. ²²Claiming to be wise, they became fools, ²³and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things. ²⁴Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves, ²⁵because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen. ²⁶For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature; ²⁷and 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. ²⁸And 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. ²⁹They were filled with all manner of unrighteousness, evil, covetousness, malice. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, maliciousness. They are gossips, ³⁰slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, ³¹foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless. ³²Though they know God's righteous decree that those who practice

THEOLOGY FOR EVERYBODY

such things deserve to die, they not only do them but give approval to those who practice them.

Memory Verse:

Romans 1:18 – For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth.

Summary:

The God of the Bible is holy, righteous, good, and not silent. He has spoken to us through the special revelation of the Scriptures, and Jesus Christ. He has also spoken to us through the general revelation of creation around us and a conscience within us. Despite all of this revelation, people choose to suppress the truth because they love sin more than God. This is especially true of sexual sin, which people tend to love the most. This causes people to worship created things (like the human body and pleasures of sex), rather the Creator God. God's response to this rebellion is wrath. The wrath of God is His fully just and right response to sin and evil which is at war against His holiness and goodness. The wrath of God is not something that has ever been popular for people to hear. However, the Scripture is very clear that the wrath of God is dealt with in only one of two ways. One, Jesus Christ paid the price of God's wrath in our place for our sins on the cross. Two, we pay the price of God's wrath in our place for our sins in hell. John 3:36 succinctly says, "Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him."

Personal Study Questions:

1. In Romans 1:18-21, Paul says that in addition to the Scriptures, God has also revealed Himself and His character to us in creation He made around us, and the conscience He made in us. What are some things that you have learned about God through creation externally and conscience internally?
2. In Romans 1:22-23, Paul says that everyone worships, and that the only difference is that some people worship the Creator, while everyone else worships someone or something in creation (e.g. spouse, child, food, alcohol, status, power, comfort,

ROMANS 1-5

reputation, success, etc.). How have you seen this truth in your life, that if you are not passionately following God then your passions veer you off course to pursue someone or something else in His place?

3. Romans 1:24-31 is likely the strongest and most specific denunciation of sexual sin in all of Scripture. Is there anything Paul says that you need to surrender your mind to believing as truth? If you want to learn more about what the Bible says on sexual sin, look up Genesis 19:4-8 cf. Jude 7; Leviticus 18:22; 1 Corinthians 6:9-10, 1 Timothy 1:10.

4. In Romans 1:32, Paul says that people who rebel against God, choosing sin and sex, ultimately act like evangelists seeking to recruit others to join their parade of unrepentant pride. How are you seeing this very thing happen right now in our culture?

5. What lies are you believing about yourself, God, or the world that are making you susceptible to sin?

Group Discussion Questions:

1. Paul talks about well-educated people who are intelligent but not wise. What is the difference between being smart and having intelligence versus being wise and knowing how to live in obedience to God?

2. In what ways throughout your life have you put creation (someone or something) in the place of God your Creator? Why is this something we all often need to be reminded of?

3. What is the difference between someone who struggles against sinful temptation that they know is wrong and want to defeat, versus someone who gives in to it, indulges it, becomes proud of it, and encourages others to do it?

4. Is there someone you love, without gossiping, that we can pray for as they have chosen to self-destruct through feeding sinful desires of the flesh?

NOTES



Set Free: Escaping Rules (Romans 2:1-11)

¹Therefore 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. ²We know that the judgment of God rightly falls on those who practice such things. ³Do 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? ⁴Or 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? ⁵But 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. ⁶He will render to each one according to his works: ⁷to those who by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, he will give eternal life; ⁸but for those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, there will be wrath and fury. ⁹There will be tribulation and distress for every human being who does evil, the Jew first and also the Greek, ¹⁰but glory and honor and peace for everyone who does good, the Jew first and also the Greek. ¹¹ For God shows no partiality.

Memory Verse:

Romans 2:4 – God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance.

Summary:

Although everyone is a sinner by nature and choice, some people who live according to the conscience God gave them do live moral lives in comparison to the average person. This would include religious people who do not have the Holy Spirit but live by moral laws in their religion's teachings. The problem is that moral people

ROMANS 1-5

tend to make themselves the standard for morality, and then judge and look down on others as being morally inferior. The standard of morality is God and, in comparison to God, we are all sinners who need a Savior. Since pride is perhaps the worst sin of all, people who are proud of their morality are perhaps the worst sinners of all, as these were the arrogant religious types who killed Jesus thinking they were holy, and He was unholy. People pursuing righteousness have three options. One, if you accept that you are an unrighteous sinner and do not believe anything can be done to change your status, you embrace your lot as a broken and bad person. Two, if you try to fix your unrighteousness by becoming a disciplined moral person, you fall into the trap of becoming self-righteous, which is just another form of being unrighteous. Three, if you accept that you are unrighteous, see Jesus Christ as the standard of righteousness, and accept His righteousness as a gift to you then you escape the traps of being unrighteous and self-righteous through His gift-righteousness.

Personal Study Questions:

1. In 2:1-3, Paul talks about the universal human problem (especially among religious people) to judge others without judging ourselves. Unlike our hypocrisy, God who is holy judges everyone by the same standards in total justice.
2. In 2:4, we are told that the reason people get away with sin is because God is working on them. How has this principle worked to change your life? Who are you frustrated with that God might be working on that you can give some kindness to?
3. In 2:5-11, Paul compares and contrasts two groups of people – those who will experience the eternal wrath of God versus those who will experience the eternal grace of God. Make a list comparing and contrasting these two eternal realities.
4. If you are a Christian, Jesus endured the wrath of God so that you could enjoy the grace of God. Take a few moments to stop and simply thank Jesus Christ for all the things the Holy Spirit brings to mind that you have been saved from.

Group Discussion Questions:

1. Paul talks about “your hard...heart”. Have you had a time that your heart was simply just hard and unyielding about something

THEOLOGY FOR EVERYBODY

with God?

2. Read 2:4 and share with one another how God's loving patience has brought about some big changes in your life to encourage one another.

3. Who do you know that is living in rebellion and you are needing to extend them God's patience in hope that their life course turns in repentance back to God and grace?

4. Paul compares and contrasts what God saves us from, and what God saves us to. What are some things God has saved you from, and what things has God saved you to that you can share to encourage one another?

NOTES



Set Free: Escaping Religion (Romans 2:12-29)

¹²For 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.

¹³For it is not the hearers of the law who are righteous before God, but the doers of the law who will be justified. ¹⁴For 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.

¹⁵They 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 ¹⁶on that day when, according to my gospel, God judges the secrets of men by Christ Jesus. ¹⁷But if you call yourself a Jew and rely on the law and boast in God ¹⁸and know his will and approve what is excellent, because you are instructed from the law; ¹⁹and if you are sure that you yourself are a guide to the blind, a light to those who are in darkness, ²⁰an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of children, having in the law the embodiment of knowledge and truth—

²¹you then who teach others, do you not teach yourself? While you preach against stealing, do you steal? ²²You who say that one must not commit adultery, do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols, do you rob temples? ²³You who boast in the law dishonor God by breaking the law. ²⁴For, as it is written, “The name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you.” ²⁵For circumcision indeed is of value if you obey the law, but if you break the law, your circumcision becomes uncircumcision. ²⁶So, if a man who is uncircumcised keeps the precepts of the law, will not his uncircumcision be regarded as circumcision? ²⁷Then he who is physically uncircumcised but keeps the law will condemn you who have the written code and circumcision but break the law. ²⁸For no one is a Jew who is merely one outwardly, nor is circumcision outward and physical. ²⁹But a Jew is one inwardly, and circumcision is

THEOLOGY FOR EVERYBODY

a matter of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter. His praise is not from man but from God.

Memory Verse:

Romans 2:29 – ...circumcision is a matter of the heart, by the Spirit...

Summary:

In Romans 1, Paul told us that God has revealed Himself to all people. Everyone has general revelation where God has revealed something of His attributes to all people through creation externally, and conscience internally. In addition, some people have received special revelation with such things as Bible teaching, witnessing Jesus' life and ministry, a visit from an angel or other divine being, or experiencing a miracle or other supernatural event from God. Because God is just, He judges each person based upon the amount of revelation they received and then rejected. Jesus' brother James says something similar in James 3:1, "Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness." As human beings, we can only see the outside of a person. Thankfully, God can also see our hearts. Ultimately, Paul teaches, God who alone is the perfect Judge knows which people have received a new heart from the Holy Spirit on the inside, and which people have the same old heart and are just going through religious rituals on the outside. In Paul's day, the big issue was male circumcision, and some believed that if a person underwent that change to their body, they were saved, even if their soul was unchanged. Today, some people wrongly treat baptism the same way thinking that if a baby is baptized physically, their soul is saved spiritually. Paul's point is that while there is nothing wrong with outward religious symbols, ultimately what really matters is an inward relationship with the Spirit. Since salvation and marriage are both covenants, think of it like a wedding ring. If you are married, it makes sense to wear a wedding ring pointing to the relationship. But, if you are not married, wearing a wedding ring is of no benefit to you since there is no relationship.

Personal Study Questions:

1. In 2:12-16, Paul says that there are two ways people know right

ROMANS 1-5

and wrong as revealed in God's law. What are these two ways? How did you know something about right and wrong even before you believed the Bible?

2. In 2:17-25, Paul says that religious people who know the Bible and grow up with religious teaching sometimes don't really live out what they learn but wrongly think they are right with God. Have you had a season of life like this where you were religious but not redeemed? How was this Paul's exact problem before He met Jesus?

3. In 2:24, Paul says that sometimes people who claim to know God can act so judgmental and unloving that lost people despise their faith. Is there anyone you've done this to that you should contact and apologize to?

4. According to 2:25-29, religion is overly concerned with the outward and not nearly concerned enough with the inward. If honest, what outward things do you care too much about, and what inward things do you care too little about?

5. The big difference between the person who is simply religious versus the person who is spiritually redeemed comes down to their "heart" and the "Spirit" according to 2:9. In your own words, what does this mean to you?

Group Discussion Questions:

1. In your own words, what is the difference between a religious person who tries hard to make themselves better, and a redeemed person whom the Holy Spirit makes new?
2. Have you ever had a real religious season where you judged everyone based upon external things you can see without giving enough attention to the internal things that matter like a changed heart?
3. Before you knew the moral laws of God in the Bible, how did the conscience God gave you keep you out of some real trouble (2:15)?
4. How has your "heart" been changed by the "Spirit" (2:29)?

NOTES



Crazy Grace: Bad News for Good People (Romans 3:1-20)

¹Then what advantage has the Jew? Or what is the value of circumcision? ²Much in every way. To begin with, the Jews were entrusted with the oracles of God. ³What if some were unfaithful? Does their faithlessness nullify the faithfulness of God? ⁴By 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." ⁵But 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.) ⁶By no means! For then how could God judge the world? ⁷But if through my lie God's truth abounds to his glory, why am I still being condemned as a sinner? ⁸And why not do evil that good may come?—as some people slanderously charge us with saying. Their condemnation is just. ⁹What 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, ¹⁰as it is written: "None is righteous, no, not one; ¹¹no one understands; no one seeks for God. ¹²All 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; ¹⁶in their paths are ruin and misery, ¹⁷and the way of peace they have not known." ¹⁸"There is no fear of God before their eyes." ¹⁹Now 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. ²⁰For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin.

ROMANS 1 - 5

Memory Verse:

Romans 3:10-11 – None is righteous, no, not one; no one understands; no one seeks for God.

Summary:

The Jewish nation began with the pagan Gentile Abram being chosen by God for salvation (Genesis 12) and trusting in God by faith so that he was renamed Abraham (Genesis 15:6; Hebrews 11:8-12). God promised that through Abraham would come a son, through that son would come the nation of Israel, and through that nation would come Jesus Christ as the Son of God and Savior of the nations of the world. Paul, who was himself a devout Jew before meeting Jesus, answers the question if there is any benefit to being Jewish now that the mission and message of salvation has gone forth into the Gentile nations making Jewish believers a minority group within Christianity. Paul says that there are many benefits to being Jewish, but they are not of any eternal blessing unless someone believes in Jesus Christ, which was the whole point of the Old Testament and Jewish faith.

Personal Study Questions:

1. In Romans 3:1-7, Paul says that coming from a religious family can be a benefit, but only if you believe in Jesus Christ. Otherwise, it's all a wasted opportunity. What things in your upbringing are a benefit to you if you also believe in Jesus Christ?
2. In Romans 3:8, Paul says that some people want to argue that it's okay to do a bad thing if it is part of a greater good. How do people think the same thing today? Why is this thinking wrong in the sight of God?
3. In Romans 3:9-19, Paul says that God rules the world by unchangeable laws that are like math – true for everyone no matter whether they agree or not. How does this understanding of God's unchanging universal laws apply to individuals who believe they are the exception to God's laws, and entire cultures that disagree with God's laws?
4. In Romans 3:20, Paul says that the more we learn the laws of God in the Word of God, the more we should be aware that we are a sinner and need a Savior. What were some of the first things God convicted you of as a new Christian? In what areas

THEOLOGY FOR EVERYBODY

has God recently been showing you that you need to change?

Group Discussion Questions:

1. Paul talks about how there are many benefits to growing up in a believing home with Bible teaching, but it is of no use unless you also believe in Jesus Christ. How have you seen this fact in your life or with close friends and family?
2. Paul says that sometimes people who are religious, and participate in religious events and traditions, wrongly think that they are right with God even if they don't believe in Jesus Christ. How have you fallen into this same trap in your life?
3. When Paul says that "God will judge the world" it should give us hope that the wrongs will be made right, everyone and everything will be dealt with justly once and forever, and that the world as we know it will come to an end to be replaced by perfection and peace. What are you most looking forward to when God once and for all judges the world?
4. Paul says that the more we understand God's commands in the Scriptures, but more we should be aware of all the ways we have broken God's laws and sinned. How have you seen your awareness of your own sin and need for a Savior increase the more you have learned the Bible?
5. How has God been faithful to you even when you have failed to be faithful to Him?

NOTES



Crazy Grace: Good News for Bad People (Romans 3:21-31)

²¹But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it— ²²the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction: ²³for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, ²⁵whom 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. ²⁶It 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. ²⁷Then 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. ²⁸For we hold that one is justified by faith apart from works of the law. ²⁹Or is God the God of Jews only? Is he not the God of Gentiles also? Yes, of Gentiles also, ³⁰since God is one—who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith. ³¹Do we then overthrow the law by this faith? By no means! On the contrary, we uphold the law.

Memory Verse:

Romans 3:23-24 – ...for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus...

Summary:

After Paul described the content of the Gospel of Jesus (Romans 1:3-4), and completed the introduction of his letter to the church at Rome (1:1-15), he concludes his opening thoughts by introducing the Power of the Gospel to reveal the Righteousness of God and provide

THEOLOGY FOR EVERYBODY

Salvation to everyone who believes in the Gospel by Faith (1:16-17). Paul then transitions his thoughts to the universal unrighteousness of all people and the subsequent wrath of God for all sinners (1:18-3:20). Paul's indictment of all people is strong and thorough. He declares that God is righteous, has given us His law to obey, that we have all broken His good law and become unrighteous, and are therefore separated from the good and perfect God. Paul further declares that there is absolutely nothing that we can do to remedy our lost condition in sin. God has therefore been just, and our damnation is deserved and right. Paul then returns to proclaiming the Good News of the Gospel of Jesus in 3:21-31 by which the sinner is declared righteous before God, and made right with God, by faith in and grace from Jesus Christ.

This section of Romans is one of the most important texts in the entirety of the Protestant Reformation. It has been summarized as:

- Scripture Alone – only the Bible reveals the Gospel completely and perfectly, not the traditions or thoughts of men.
- Grace Alone – we are saved from the penalty of our sin solely by God's Grace, not our own efforts, as Jesus lived the righteous life we have not lived and paid the ultimate price we should have paid.
- Faith Alone – we are saved from the penalty of our sin solely by placing Faith in Jesus' work on our behalf, not on our own works.
- Christ Alone – we are saved from the penalty of our sin by Jesus alone, not by anyone or anything else in addition to or in place of Christ.
- To God be the Glory – we are to give glory, thanks and praise to God alone for our salvation, not to anyone or anything else.

Personal Study Questions:

1. Regarding human sin, how extensive does Paul say that the problem of human unrighteousness extends in 3:23? Do you truly believe that this includes you personally?
2. Paul says that religious people try to either earn their righteousness with good deeds, traditions, and other human efforts in 3:27-28, including the Jewish people and himself as he sought to earn righteousness through dedicated religious devotion. What things have you, and people you know, sought

ROMANS 1-5

to use to earn for yourself right standing before God (e.g. baptism, speaking in tongues, suffering, tithing, serving, paying off karmic debt, etc.)?

3. Gentiles are non-Jewish people, and God loves them as well. Read Genesis 22:15-18 to see the angelic declaration that God's plan was to bless all the Gentile nations through Jesus Christ.

How is the promise of Genesis fulfilled in Romans 3:28-30?

4. List all the ways and times in this section of Scripture that explain how and why all we need for forgiveness of sin and a righteous standing before God is found fully and only in Jesus Christ.

Group Discussion Questions:

1. How have you sought, or seen people you know, seek to be righteous by non-religious works like social or political causes, moral crusades, pointing out everyone else's sin instead of their own, etc.?

2. How have you sought, or seen people you know, seek to be righteous by religious works that make them arrogant and judgmental of others?

3. How is it a humbling relief to trust that, if you have Jesus, you have everything to be right with God? What burdens does this lift for you personally?

4. Paul says that after Jesus saves us, we uphold the law. We do this by agreeing that the law has shown us our sin, and then getting a new nature with new desires from the Holy Spirit by which what God did for us in Jesus, and does in us through the Spirit, flows through us to change how we live. For the Christian, we do not live for our righteousness, but we live from Jesus' righteousness. How has your life changed since Jesus made you righteous?

NOTES



Start Here: Faith Comes First for Abraham (Romans 4:1-12)

¹What then shall we say was gained by Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh? ²For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. ³For what does the Scripture say? “Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness.” ⁴Now to the one who works, his wages are not counted as a gift but as his due. ⁵And to the one who does not work but believes in him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness, ⁶just 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; ⁸blessed is the man against whom the Lord will not count his sin.” ⁹Is this blessing then only for the circumcised, or also for the uncircumcised? For we say that faith was counted to Abraham as righteousness. ¹⁰How then was it counted to him? Was it before or after he had been circumcised? It was not after, but before he was circumcised. ¹¹He 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, ¹²and 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.

Memory Verse:

Romans 4:3 – “Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness.”

Summary:

We all understand the concept of a prototype. When something is

ROMANS 1 - 5

to be done over and over, great effort is made to ensure that the first one is done right so that it can serve as the pattern. When it comes to living by faith, our prototype is Abraham. The way Abraham was saved is the same way we all are, not by being a good person or doing the right things, but by admitting he was a bad person doing the wrong things and trusting in God alone to fix the mess he'd made. Here is a list of examples where God made a promise, and Abraham responded in faith:

1. *God's Promise* – Abraham would be a great nation, blessed, with a great name, a blessing to all nations of the earth, protected by God (Genesis 12:1-3).

Abraham's Faith Response – At 75 years of age without any children He did as God said and moved to a new land God prepared for him (12:4-5).

2. *God's Promise* – Abraham's seed would be given a land by God (12:7).

Abraham's Faith Response – Abraham built an altar to worship God (12:7).

3. *God's Promise* – Abraham would have numerous descendants and a land (13:15-17).

Abraham's Faith Response – Abraham moved and built an altar to worship God (13:18).

4. *God's Promise* – Abraham would have a son and numerous offspring (15:4-5).

Abraham's Faith Response – Abraham believed God (15:6).

5. *God's Promise* – At 99 years of age God again promised Abraham he would be the father of many nations (17:1-8).

Abraham's male descendants were to be circumcised as a sign of the covenant (the shedding of male blood pointed to Jesus) (17:9-14). All of this would happen through Sarah within a year (17:17-22).

Abraham's Faith Response – Abraham was 99 years old, believed God, and circumcised himself and all the men in his household (17:23-27).

THEOLOGY FOR EVERYBODY

Because God is faithful, we should have faith in Him. Abraham was 100 years old when his wife Sarah gave birth miraculously to a son, 25 years after God made His promise (21:1-7) because God is faithful.

Personal Study Questions:

1. Did faith or works justify Abraham (Romans 4:1-5)? Since the law was given 500 years after Abraham, how is it impossible that he was righteous because he obeyed the law? Look up Genesis 15:6 since Paul quotes it.
2. Was David justified by faith or works? (Romans 4:6-8) Since David committed adultery, and murdered the godly husband of the woman he impregnated, how is it impossible that he was saved because he was a godly righteous man? Look up Psalm 32:1-2 which Paul quotes to prove this point.
3. Is justification for Jews only? (Romans 4:9-12) How is a sign of a covenant (e.g. circumcision or baptism) not a guarantee that someone is a saved believer? Abraham was justified before he was circumcised. Circumcision came 17-25 years after God justified Abraham by faith in the promises of God. Therefore, Abraham experienced salvation before he was a Jew, before the law, and before circumcision. Therefore, how is Abraham the father of both Jews and non-Jews, the circumcised and uncircumcised, basically all who have faith in the promises of God?

Group Discussion Questions:

1. Why is it far better to get what Jesus has earned for you rather than what you deserve? How should the way Jesus treats us cause us to treat others with forgiveness and grace when they sin against us?
2. When Paul says we are blessed because God has forgiven us in Christ, and does not keep a record of all we have said and done wrong, is this something you really believe for yourself? How does Satan and demonic accusation sometimes come to rob you of this blessing?
3. We can only have a relationship with Jesus Christ because of the blessing of being forgiven by God. Who do you need to

ROMANS 1-5

forgive that has sinned against you and give that same gift to them from God?

4. Since faith comes before the sign of faith, is there anything you need to do now that you are a Christian to publicly testify to your faith (e.g. get baptized, partake in communion, raise your hands and voice in worship at church, etc.)?

NOTES



Start Here: Faith Comes First for You (Romans 4:13–25)

¹³For 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. ¹⁴For if it is the adherents of the law who are to be the heirs, faith is null and the promise is void. ¹⁵For the law brings wrath, but where there is no law there is no transgression. ¹⁶That 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, ¹⁷as 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. ¹⁸In hope he believed against hope, that he should become the father of many nations, as he had been told, “So shall your offspring be.” ¹⁹He 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. ²⁰No unbelief made him waver concerning the promise of God, but he grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God, ²¹fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised. ²²That is why his faith was “counted to him as righteousness.” ²³But the words “it was counted to him” were not written for his sake alone, ²⁴but for ours also. It will be counted to us who believe in him who raised from the dead Jesus our Lord, ²⁵who was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification.

Memory Verse:

Romans 4:20-21 – ...he [Abraham] grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God, fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised.

THEOLOGY FOR EVERYBODY

Summary:

Continuing with the survey of Abraham's life as our prototype and pattern of faith, the comparison and contrast is made between trusting in the works that we do, versus trusting in the works that Jesus has done. We either have faith in ourselves, or we have faith in Jesus. We either wrongly try and earn right standing with God by our own performance, or we rightly receive right standing with God by faith in Jesus' perfection which He credits to the account of those whose faith is in Him alone. The key to Abraham's faith in God rather than Himself was the unwavering believe that God could do the impossible and would be faithful to any promise He had made. In the same way, when we trust that God raised Jesus from the dead, and will raise us from the dead to be like Him and with Him forever, we are trusting God to do the supernatural and impossible because we trust His Word.

Personal Study Questions:

1. How did Abraham receive the promises of God (Romans 4:13-17)? Obedience to the law did not save Abraham, because he lived 500 years before the law was given. How do we live by faith in God's promises like Abraham?
2. How did Abraham demonstrate faith in God's promises (Romans 4:18-24)? Abraham's faith in God and his faith in God's promises made him able to believe that even his barren and old wife would bear him a son because God had promised. How did Abraham have faith in God's promises because He believed in the Power of God to do the impossible. What does it mean for you to think in the same way for your future?
3. How is Jesus Christ the fulfilment of all of God's promises (4:24b-25)?
4. What do you learn about faith, including Abraham's faith, by reading Hebrews 11, especially 11:1?

Group Discussion Questions:

1. Read Hebrews 11:1 aloud in the group. In your own words, how would each of you describe what it means to live by faith in God?
2. How has God proven faithful in specific ways in your life?
3. What things are you still trusting God for in your future? What

ROMANS 1-5

steps is He asking you to take that we can pray to support?

4. Who or what can we be praying for with you in faith for God to act in a supernatural way?

NOTES



Best News Ever: Find Your Happiness (Romans 5:1-11)

¹Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. ²Through 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. ³Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, ⁴and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, ⁵and 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. ⁶For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. ⁷For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die— ⁸but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. ⁹Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God. ¹⁰For 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. ¹¹More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

Memory Verse:

Romans 5:8 – God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Summary:

It is often said that you need food, water, air, and shelter to remain alive. It is true that our body needs these things to survive. It is also true that our soul needs hope. For the Christian, our hope is in the person and work of Jesus Christ. Because we have been justified (made legally right with God), and now have peace (loving

THEOLOGY FOR EVERYBODY

relationship with God), we can stand rooted in Christ having hope for everything else in our life. God will help us when we are suffering so that we grow in character through trial. All of this is made possible by God's love, poured out into us by the Holy Spirit who empowers our new life of faith to follow in the footsteps of Jesus. Because Jesus shed His blood, enduring the wrath of God in our place for our sins on the cross, we now enjoy new life that never ends with our God who will never betray or abandon us through this life or into the eternal life to come.

Personal Study Questions:

1. Read Romans 5:1-2 and make note of all the benefits God has given you "through our Lord Jesus Christ".
2. When you suffer, how can you invite the Holy Spirit to use that suffering to make you more like Jesus according to Romans 5:3-5?
3. List out what Romans 5:6-9 says about 1) who you were before Jesus saved you, 2) what Jesus suffered to save you, and 3) who you are now that Jesus has saved you.
4. List some reasons in Romans 5:10-11 that you can rejoice in, and stop and spend some time in prayer thanking God for whatever the Holy Spirit brings to mind for you to rejoice in.

Group Discussion Questions:

1. Have you ever had a season where you had no hope? Why is it important for you to have hope in God as you look into your future?
2. What are some very practical ways that this section tells us that Jesus has loved us?
3. What are some very practical additional ways you have seen God's love in your life recently?
4. What does it mean, practically, to live a life in love by the power of the Holy Spirit for you? If the Spirit is the source of love, how can you never run out of love to give to God and others?
5. Paul gives some reasons to rejoice, what are some thankful prayers you can share to give hope to the rest of the group?

NOTES



Best News Ever: Find Your Hope (Romans 5:12-21)

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— ¹³for sin indeed was in the world before the law was given, but sin is not counted where there is no law. ¹⁴Yet 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. ¹⁵But 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. ¹⁶And 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. ¹⁷For 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. ¹⁸Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men. ¹⁹For 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. ²⁰Now the law came in to increase the trespass, but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, ²¹so that, as sin reigned in death, grace also might reign through righteousness leading to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Memory Verse:

Romans 5:19 – ...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.

Summary:

In the Bible, Paul called Jesus the “last Adam” (1 Corinthians 15:45) because he is the remedy for idolatry and the redeemer of humanity, whereas the first Adam was the source of idolatry and the downfall of humanity. The first Adam turned from the Father in a garden; the last Adam turned to the Father in a garden. The first Adam was naked and unashamed; the last Adam was naked and bore our shame. The first Adam’s sin brought us thorns; the last Adam wore a crown of thorns. The first Adam substituted himself for God; the last Adam was God substituting himself for sinners. The first Adam sinned at a tree; the last Adam bore our sin on a tree. The first Adam died as a sinner; the last Adam died for sinners.

We die in Adam but are born again in in Christ: “For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive” (1 Corinthians 15:22). In Adam there is condemnation, but in Christ there is salvation. In Adam we receive a sin nature, but in Christ we receive a new nature. In Adam we’re cursed, but in Christ we’re blessed. In Adam there is wrath and death, but in Christ there is love and life.

The summary of Paul’s argument in Romans 5:12-21 and elsewhere is that there are two teams in life; each of us takes the field with one of them, and the decisions made by the team captains affect the whole team, for better or worse. Not only does the captain win or lose; his whole team wins or loses along with him. One team has Adam as its captain. The other has Jesus as its captain. While there are many ways to categorize people in our society, the Bible has these two categories—those whose identity is in Adam and share in his defeat and those whose identity is in Christ and share in his victory.

Personal Study Questions:

1. According to Romans 5:12-13, how is sin not just actions we choose but a deeper nature we have?
2. Reading Romans 5:12-21, make two lists. On one list, make note of everything that explains people who are born in Adam as sinners. On the other list, make note of everything that explains people who are born again in Christ as saints.
3. How have you seen God pour out more grace in the most sinful areas of your life (Romans 5:20-21)?

ROMANS 1-5

4. How does God's grace not only forgive your sin, but change your nature so that the Holy Spirit changes your behavior giving you victory over sin? To see this point read ahead in Romans 6.

Group Discussion Questions:

1. Why is it vital that Christians understand sin as not just actions we choose, but a nature we have that needs to be changed by Jesus Christ? How does this help us to focus on sharing the gospel with people to become new rather than just pushing them to be a better version of their old nature?
2. How has your view of God changed since meeting Jesus Christ?
3. How has your view of yourself changed since meeting Jesus Christ?
4. How has your desires changed since meeting Jesus Christ?

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MARK DRISCOLL & REAL FAITH

With Pastor Mark, it's all about Jesus! Mark and his wife Grace have been married and doing vocational ministry together since 1993. They also planted The Trinity Church with their five kids in Scottsdale, Arizona as a family ministry (thetrinitychurch.com) and started Real Faith, a ministry alongside their daughter Ashley that contains a mountain of Bible teaching from Pastor Mark as well as content for women, men, parents, pastors, leaders, Spanish-speakers, and more.

Pastor Mark has been named by Preaching Magazine one of the 25 most influential pastors of the past 25 years. He has a bachelor's degree in speech communication from the Edward R. Murrow College of Communication at Washington State University as well as a master's degree in exegetical theology from Western Seminary in Portland, Oregon. For free sermons, answers to questions, Bible teaching, and more, visit RealFaith.com or download the Real Faith app.

Together, Mark and Grace have authored "Win Your War" and "Real Marriage". Pastor Mark has authored numerous other books including "Spirit-Filled Jesus", "Who Do You Think You Are?", "Vintage Jesus", and "Doctrine". Pastor Mark and his daughter Ashley Chase have also written "Pray Like Jesus" as a father-daughter project, a book to be released in January 2021.

If you have any prayer requests for us, questions for future Ask Pastor Mark or Dear Grace videos, or a testimony regarding how God has used this and other resources to help you learn God's Word, we would love to hear from you at hello@realfaith.com.



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