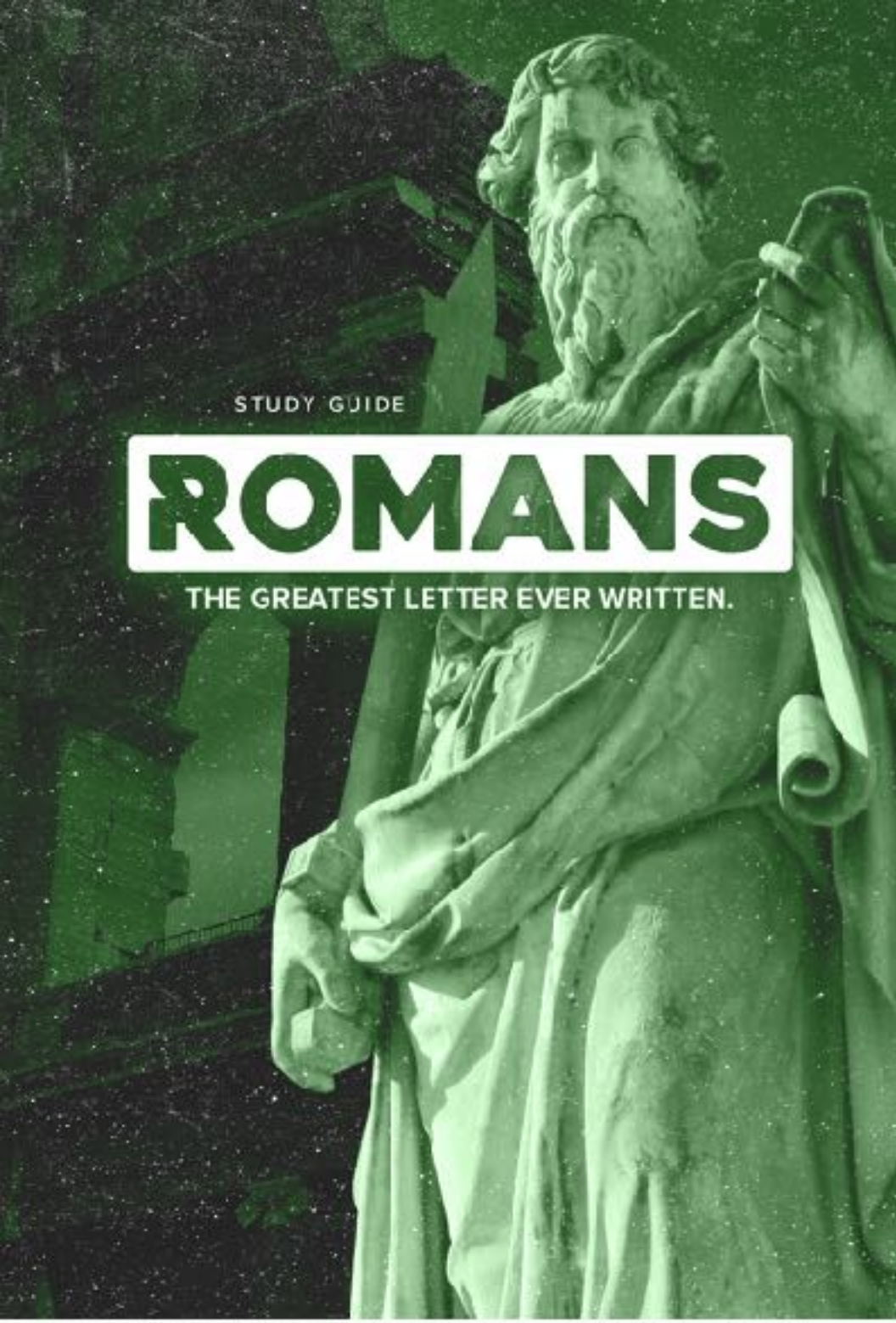


STUDY GUIDE

ROMANS

THE GREATEST LETTER EVER WRITTEN.

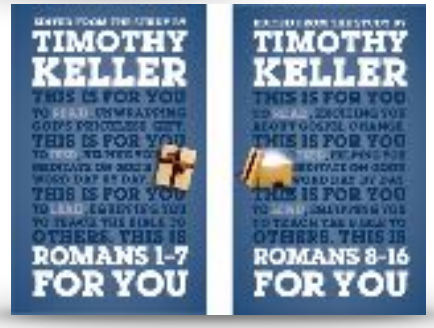
PART 2 - WHAT IS THE GOSPEL? - ROMANS 3:21–7:25

RECOMMENDED HELP FOR STUDYING
ROMANS: THE GREATEST LETTER EVER WRITTEN

From technical to very accessible

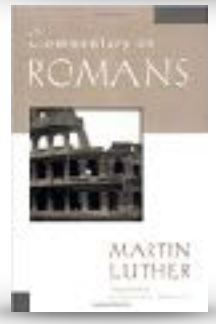
Technical

The Epistle to the Romans
by Douglas Moo



Accessible

Romans For You
by Timothy Keller



Accessible

Commentary on Romans
by Martin Luther

Very Accessible

Romans: The Revelation of God's Righteousness
by Paul Barnett

CONTENT

The study questions were written, and the excerpts were compiled, by Brett Baggett. This Study Guide was edited by Brandon Allen and James Hoover. The excerpts contained are from sermons, books, and articles by various pastors, authors, and theologians, both current and from church history.

HOW TO USE IT

This Study Guide is designed to help you work through *Romans 3:21–7:25* in 10 weeks (one week of introduction and 9 weeks of Bible study). I pray this will be a great tool for personal study, small groups, and leadership training of various kinds.

PURPOSE

My hope for this study guide is to equip the people of Jesus Christ to understand, love, and obey the written Word of God. I believe when that happens they will more joyfully understand, love, and obey the Incarnate Word of God—Jesus Christ the Righteous.

For God's glory and the joy of all people,

ROMANS

the greatest letter ever written

STUDY GUIDE PART 2

WHAT IS THE GOSPEL? ROMANS 3:21–7:25

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Study 0

INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

THE GREATEST LETTER EVER WRITTEN
BY BRETT BAGGETT

Martin Luther said the book of Romans is “the greatest letter ever written." Why would he say that? The Apostle Paul writes to the 1st century church at Rome, as well as to us today, about the depths of God’s holiness, man’s sinfulness, Jesus’ sufficient work to save, and God’s salvation given to sinners, free of charge. The book of Romans is the high point of all of Scripture, teaching most clearly who God is in sovereignty, what God requires in his holiness, and what God provides in his grace toward His people. This letter answers with great detail questions like *why do we need the gospel*? *what is the gospel*? *how deep is the gospel*? and then beautifully finishes with *how then should we live*? Come and study the greatest letter ever written.

WHO WROTE IT? BY THE ESV STUDY BIBLE

As the opening words of the letter indicate, the apostle Paul wrote the book of Romans. Only a few scholars in history have doubted his authorship, and their doubts have been shown to be groundless. The title of the book indicates that the letter was written to the Christian churches in Rome.[1]

WHEN WAS IT WRITTEN? BY THE ESV STUDY BIBLE

Paul probably wrote Romans from Corinth, on his third missionary journey, in A.D. 57 (Acts 20:2–3). Having completed his work in the eastern part of the Roman Empire, he hoped to travel to Rome and then on to Spain; but first he needed to go to Jerusalem to deliver the money he had collected for the church there (Rom. 15:19–32; see Acts 19:21). Paul commends Phoebe (Rom. 16:1–2), and she was likely the person who brought the letter to Rome. She resided in Cenchreae, which was near Corinth and was one of its port cities. Furthermore, Gaius was Paul’s host (16:23), and this is likely the same Gaius who lived in Corinth (1 Cor. 1:14). Finally, two fairly early manuscripts of Romans have subscriptions (brief notes that a copyist added to the end of a document) which say that the letter was written from Corinth.[2]

1. What stood out to you in these sections and why?

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WHAT WAS THE ANCIENT CITY OF ROME LIKE?

BY THE ESV STUDY BIBLE

The city of Rome was founded upon seven hills on the eastern shore of the Tiber River. Rome grew from a small city to an empire through its conquests of Italy (3rd century B.C.), Carthage in north Africa (3rd century B.C.), Greece and Macedonia (2nd century B.C.), western and northern Europe (2nd century B.C.–2nd century A.D.), and Egypt and much of the Near East (1st century B.C.). By Paul's day, the senatorial rule of the Roman republic had succumbed to a centralized empire under the leadership of Augustus (27 B.C.–A.D. 14), Tiberius (A.D. 14–37), Gaius (37–41), Claudius (41–54), and Nero (54–68).

Archaeological evidence in Rome confirms monumental structures that stood during the time of Paul, such as the Circus Maximus, Tabularium (state archives), theaters (including those of Pompey and of Marcellus), and multiple forums. Later, in the third century A.D., the Umbilicus Romae stood in the center of the city, and this cylindrical monument marked the theoretical "center" of the Roman world (likely this way of thinking about Rome's place in the world stemmed from well before the NT period). The prestige of the early emperors was memorialized during Paul's day in their basilicas, arches, and forums (e.g., the Forums of Caesar and of Augustus), in the Altar of Peace, in the Mausoleum of Augustus, in porticoes and images honoring their extended imperial family, and in imperial cult temples (such as the temple of Julius Caesar from 29 B.C. and the temple of Claudius). Innumerable pagan gods received worship in Rome. Especially impressive temples were dedicated to such ancient gods/goddesses as Mars, Saturn, Castor and Pollux, Vesta, Venus and Roma, Apollo, and Jupiter. Indeed, devotion to all the great Roman gods was offered in the monumental domed Pantheon, which stands in Rome to this day. (An earlier Pantheon—depicted in the illustration—was built in 27 B.C. and destroyed by fire in A.D. 80. The present-day structure was built c. A.D. 120.)

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A significant portion of the city was destroyed by fire during Nero's rule in A.D. 64. Nero, who was suspected of having started the blaze, blamed and persecuted Christians for the conflagration. The fire allowed Nero to design and construct his own monumental buildings, including his 200-acre imperial dwelling, the Domus Aurea ("Golden House").

Among the structures that are contemporary with the last books in the NT canon, one should especially note the Arch of Titus and the Colosseum. The Arch of Titus, built in A.D. 81 by the emperor Domitian (reigned 81–96), commemorates the capture and destruction of Jerusalem and its temple in A.D. 70. The two generals who reconquered Palestine received such fame from this war that they both attained imperial rule, which went first to Vespasian (A.D. 69–79) and then to his son Titus (79–81). The Arch of Titus still manifests a relief portraying the captured temple menorah and other Jewish sacred objects being carried through Rome in processional tribute to Titus. Vespasian and Titus built the Flavian Amphitheater, better known as the Colosseum due to its proximity to a gigantic statue (Gk. kolossos) of Nero. The Colosseum is estimated to have seated more than 45,000 for gladiatorial spectacles.

Daily life in Rome could be luxurious for the wealthy but onerous for others. Multiple aqueducts and a huge sewer system provided for the immense water requirements of Rome, including the many bathhouses, fountains, and latrines. Food had to be imported to satisfy the needs of this thriving metropolis, and the emperor often directly oversaw the vital grain supply. Luxury villas in Rome were the privileged possessions of the wealthiest

families (often of senatorial or equestrian rank) and especially of the emperors, but most of the housing in ancient Rome consisted of insulae (multistory apartment buildings often constructed above first-floor shops). Contemporary authors spoke of a severely overcrowded, loud, and smelly city—a place that provided every virtue and vice known to mankind. The residents of Rome were mostly pagan, although a sizable Jewish population also existed (as evidenced both by 1st-century literature and by later remains of inscriptions). The expulsion of the Jews under the emperor Claudius (A.D. 49) was a limited measure.

Today, churches in Rome built during the fourth- to fifth-century Byzantine period mark the traditional burial places of Paul and of Peter, reflecting the post-NT church tradition which claims that Paul and Peter died as martyrs in Rome during the reign of Nero (c. A.D. 64–65, perhaps after an incarceration in the Mamertine Prison). The Roman catacombs house early Christian burials (from the 2nd century A.D. and after), and these catacombs contain some inscriptions and graffiti testifying to Christian martyrdom prior to the legitimization of Christianity by Licinius and Constantine (by the Edict of Milan in A.D. 313).[3]

2. What stood out to you in this section and why?

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WHY DID PAUL WRITE THIS LETTER? BY THE ESV STUDY BIBLE

Romans provides the fullest expression of Paul's theology, though it is doubtful that he intended it to be a complete summary statement. For example, Romans lacks any detailed treatments of Paul's doctrine of Christ (see Phil. 2:6–11; Col. 1:15–20), of the church (see Ephesians), or of last things (see 1 Thess. 4:13–5:11; 2 Thess. 2:1–12).

It is more likely that Paul wrote the letter to address particular issues of concern to the Roman church. Specifically, he addressed matters of interest for a church that included both Jewish and Gentile Christians: (1) Can one be right with God through obeying the law (Rom. 1:1–3:20)? (2) What can be learned from Abraham, and is he the father of both Jewish and Gentile Christians (4:1–25)? (3) What role does the law play with reference to sin (5:20; 7:1–25)? (4) What does the salvation of Gentiles indicate about the future of Israel as God's people (9:1–11:36)? (5) Should Christians observe OT food laws, and how should they relate to fellow believers on such matters (14:1–15:13)?

The focus on Jew-Gentile issues suggests that tensions existed between Jews and Gentiles in the church in Rome. The Roman church probably began as a Jewish church, though it is not known exactly when it was established. Perhaps Jews from Rome returned from Jerusalem after Pentecost (Acts 2:10) and founded the church, or perhaps the church was established later. Some have suggested that Peter founded the church in Rome, but no significant evidence supports this premise.

As time passed, of course, Gentiles in Rome also became Christians. The Roman historian Suetonius records that the Roman emperor Claudius (reigned A.D. 41–54) expelled Jews from Rome in A.D. 49 because of strife over "Chrestos." Suetonius likely misunderstood the name, so that the dispute probably was about "Christos" (Latin for Christ). The expulsion of Jews from Rome is confirmed by Acts 18:2. Because of the expulsion, the Gentile churches would have developed for a number of years apart from the Jews. Over the years the Jewish Christians slowly filtered back into Roman churches. It is not difficult to imagine that tensions would develop between law-observing Jewish Christians and Gentile Christians who lived free of the restrictions in the Mosaic law. It seems, however, that the church was made up mainly of Gentile Christians (see Rom. 1:5–6, 13; 11:13; 15:15–16).

Paul's selection of themes (gospel and law; the significance of Abraham; the future of Israel) suggests significant tensions between the Jews and Gentiles in Rome. Paul wrote Romans so that they would be united in the gospel he preached, and so that they would comprehend how the gospel spoke to the issues that divided them.

A closer look at Romans reveals another purpose as well. Paul wanted the Christians in Rome to rally around his gospel so that Rome would become the

base of operations by which he could proclaim the gospel in Spain (15:22–24). If Roman Christians did not agree with Paul's gospel message, especially on the issues being debated among Jews and Gentiles, then they would not support his proposed mission to Spain. Paul needed to explain the gospel in some detail so that the Christians in Rome would become the base from which he could proclaim the gospel in new regions.

Of course, the ultimate aim and purpose for the preaching of the gospel is the glory of God. Paul longs for the Gentiles to come to the obedience of faith for the sake of Christ's name (1:5). God has planned all of salvation history to bring glory and praise to his name (11:33–36).[4]

3. What stood out to you in this section and why?

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(1) Taken from the ESV® Study Bible (The Holy Bible, English Standard Version®), copyright ©2008 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved. (2) IBID. (3) IBID. (4) IBID.

Study 8

THE JUSTIFICATION

Romans 3:21-30

FALLING SHORT OF THE GLORY OF GOD BY JOHN PIPER

Romans 3:23 says, "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." First of all, notice the word "all." There are no exceptions here (see Romans 3:9–12, 19; Ephesians 2:3). All of us are included. Preachers and prostitutes. Billy Graham and Genghis Khan. President Bush and Ted Bundy. Corrie Ten Boom and Al Capone. The best person and the worst person you can think of are included here. ALL have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

The second thing to notice is the connection between sin and falling short of God's glory. Sin is a falling short of God's glory. This is very important in sharing the gospel.

The Depth and Essence of Our Depravity

If you tell the average law-abiding, hard-working, civic-minded, humane, unbelieving American that he needs Jesus because he's a bad person, he will have a dozen arguments ready at hand to show that he is not bad. He will point to his honesty, his civic duties, his clothed and educated children, his charitable contributions, etc.

What's the problem here? The problem is that God is missing from the equation. The most important issue in the universe is left out of account, namely, the glory of GOD. The most important Person is being ignored. The reason we need Jesus is not because we have fallen short of man's goodness, but because we have fallen short of God's glory. The issue is how we have treated God not man.

That's why Truth #1 and #2 are so crucial. They set the stage for showing how terribly sinful we are. God made us for his glory. It is our duty, therefore, as his creatures, to live for his glory by loving and trusting and thanking and obeying him. But what have we done?

- Instead of glorifying God by loving him, we have dishonored him through neglect or disdain, and by loving other things more.
- Instead of glorifying God by trusting him, we have dishonored him by trying to find security and hope in ourselves and our money and our technology and our weapons, but not in God.
- Instead of glorifying God by being thankful to him for life and breath and everything, we have dishonored him by ignoring his generosity and by treating life as a right and happiness as something we deserve.
- Instead of glorifying God by obeying him, we have dishonored him by disregarding or rejecting his counsel for our sexuality, and our finances, and our job, and our attitudes, and our politics, and almost everything else in our life.

The issue between us and God is not whether we have pleased men, but whether we have utterly disdained the infinite worth of the glory of our Maker. And we have. All of us have.

– John Piper, in an article titled *Joy Exchanged and Joy Forfeited https://www.desiringgod.org/messages/joy-exchanged-and-joy-forfeited*

JUSTIFICATION ACCORDING TO THE EARLY CHURCH

BY CLEMENT (AD. 100)

And so we, having been called through his will in Christ Jesus, are not justified of ourselves or through our own wisdom or understanding or piety, or works that we have done in holiness of heart, but through faith, by which the Almighty God has justified all who have existed from the beginning; to whom be glory for ever and ever, Amen.

– Clement, in 1 Clement 32:4, *(The Apostolic Fathers. Greek Texts and English Translations, 3rd ed., trans. Michael W. Holmes (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007)*

JUSTIFICATION ACCORDING TO THE REFORMED BAPTISTS

SECOND LONDON BAPTIST CONFESSION OF FAITH (revised language) (AD. 1689)

1. Those God effectually calls he also freely justifies.[1] He does this, not by infusing righteousness into them but by pardoning their sins and accounting and accepting them as righteous.[2] He does this for Christ's sake alone and not for anything produced in them or done by them.[3] He does not impute faith itself, the act of believing, or any other gospel obedience to them as their righteousness. Instead, he imputes Christ's active obedience to the whole law and passive obedience in his death as their whole and only righteousness by faith.[4] This faith is not self-generated; it is the gift of God.[5]

[1]Romans 3:24; 8:30. [2]Romans 4:5–8; Ephesians 1:7. [3]1 Corinthians 1:30, 31; Romans 5:17–19. [4]Philippians 3:8, 9; Ephesians 2:8–10. [5]John 1:12; Romans 5:17.

2. Faith that receives and rests on Christ and his righteousness is the only instrument of justification.[6] Yet it does not occur by itself in the person justified, but it is always accompanied by every other saving grace. It is not a dead faith but works through love.[7]

[6]Romans 3:28. [7]Galatians 5:6; James 2:17, 22, 26.

3. By his obedience and death, Christ fully paid the debt of all those who are justified. He endured in their place the penalty they deserved. By this sacrifice of himself in his bloodshed on the cross, he legitimately, really, and fully satisfied God's justice on their behalf.[8] Yet their justification is based entirely on free grace, because he was given by the Father for them, and his obedience and satisfaction were accepted in their place. These things were done freely, not because of anything in them,[9] so that both the exact justice and the rich grace of God would be glorified in the justification of sinners.[10]

[8]Hebrews 10:14; 1 Peter 1:18, 19; Isaiah 53:5, 6. [9]Romans 8:32; 2 Corinthians 5:21. [10]Romans 3:26; Ephesians 1:6,7; 2:7.

4. From all eternity God decreed to justify all the elect,[11] and in the fullness of time Christ died for their sins and rose again for their justification.[12] Nevertheless, they are not justified personally until the Holy Spirit actually applies Christ to them at the proper time.[13]

[11]Galatians 3:8; 1 Peter 1:2; 1 Timothy 2:6. [12]Romans 4:25. [13]Colossians 1:21, 22; Titus 3:4–7.

5. God continues to forgive the sins of those who are justified.[14] Even though they can never fall from a state of justification,[15] they may fall under God's fatherly displeasure because of their sins.[16] In that condition they will not usually have the light of his face restored to them until they humble themselves, confess their sins, plead for pardon, and renew their faith and repentance.[17]

[14]Matthew 6:12; 1 John 1:7, 9. [15]John 10:28. [16]Psalms 89:31–33. [17]Psalms 32:5; Psalms 51; Matthew 26:75.

6. In all these ways, the justification of believers under the Old Testament was exactly the same as the justification of believers under the New Testament.[18]

[18]Galatians 3:9; Romans 4:22–24.

– Chapter 11 in *The Second London Baptist Confession of Faith* with revised language, https://founders.org/library/1689-confession/chapter-11-justification/

NOTES:

1. What does “But now” in **verse 21** indicate as we think about Paul’s flow of this letter so far? What do you think is meant by “the righteousness of God is manifested part from the Law”? What is the “it” at the end of **verse 21** and what bears witness to it?

2. How does **verse 22** help us understand what Paul is getting at in **verse 21**? How does he get more specific? What do the words “faith” and “believes” mean? *faith *and* believes *are the same word in the Greek** What is the object of saving faith, according to **verse 22**? What does Paul mean by “For there is no distinction”? How does **Romans 3:9** help clarify?

3. What does Paul say all *have done*, according to the first part of **verse 23**? What do all *continue to do*, according to the second half of **verse 23**? What does it mean to "fall short of the glory of God"?

4. What happens to those who receive "[God's]" "[gracious]" "gift" of "the redemption" "that is in Christ Jesus" according to the beginning of **verse 24**? What does it mean to be "justified"?

5. According to **verse 25**, what did "God put (Jesus) forward as"? What does "propitiation" mean? What does "by his blood" mean? How is Jesus' propitiatory work to be received and credited to our account?

6. What *did* Jesus' propitiatory work show, according to **verse 25**? What does "God's righteousness" mean? How did it show God's righteousness? What are some other words for "forbearance"?

7. What *does* Jesus' propitiatory work show "at the present time" according to **verse 26**? What does it mean that God is both "just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus"? **he* is *something and he* does *something*

8. Read **verses 27-28**. What is Pauls conclusion in connection with *boasting* according to **verse 27**? The word "law" here is not speaking of the Mosaic Law of God. What's another word for "law" that may help us understand what Paul is getting at? What does Paul juxtapose* in these verses?
**juxtapose = "place close together for contrasting effect"*

9. Who is included among those that God will save and make his own, according to **verse 29-30**? How will he save Jews? How will he save Gentiles?

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PROPITIATION **BY J.I. PACKER**

Has the word propitiation any place in your Christianity?

In the faith of the New Testament it is central.

The love of God [1 John 4:8-10], the taking of human form by the Son [Heb. 2:17], the meaning of the cross [Rom. 3:21-26], Christ's heavenly intercession [1 John 2:1-2], the way of salvation—all are to be explained in terms of it, as the passages quoted show, and any explanation from which the thought of propitiation is missing will be incomplete, and indeed actually misleading, by New Testament standards.

In saying this, we swim against the stream of much modern teaching and condemn at a stroke the views of a great number of distinguished church leaders today, but we cannot help that. Paul wrote, "Even if we or an angel from heaven"—let alone a minister, a bishop, college lecturer, university professor, or noted author—"should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let him be eternally condemned!" ("accursed" KJV and RSV; "outcast" NEB; "damned" Phillips—Gal. 1:8). And a gospel without propitiation at is heart is another gospel than that which Paul preached.

– J.I. Packer, from "The Heart of the Gospel" in *Knowing God* (also in *In My Place Condemned He Stood*, p. 32)

REDEMPTION BY JOHN CALVIN

"Through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." This is the material, — Christ by his obedience satisfied the Father's justice, (*judicium* — judgment,) and by undertaking our cause he liberated us from the tyranny of death, by which we were held captive; as on account of the sacrifice which he offered is our guilt removed. Here again is fully confuted the gloss of those who make righteousness a quality; for if we are counted righteous before God, because we are redeemed by a price, we certainly derive from another what is not in us. And Paul immediately explains more clearly what this redemption is, and what is its object, which is to reconcile us to God; for he calls Christ a propitiation, (or, if we prefer an allusion to an ancient type,) a propitiatory. But what he means is, that we are not otherwise just than through Christ propitiating the Father for us.

– John Calvin, in his commentary on Romans 3:25-26, http://www.sacred-texts.com/chr/calvin/cc38/cc38006.htm

Study 9

THE BLESSING

Romans 3:31–4:12

ABRAHAM, JUSTIFIED BY WARREN GAGE

How can a man be justified before God? There could never be a more important question to fallen and sinful man than this. What do the Scriptures teach about this most urgent of all topics? Generally speaking, two answers to this question have been asserted in the history of Christian theology. Some claim that we can make ourselves righteous by our works. Others assert that we are declared righteous by our faith. Justification is thus understood actively or passively. How are we to decide this question upon which so much depends?

Moses offers a full answer to this vital question in his account of the life of Abraham, who is justly called the father of our faith. In Genesis 15:6 we are told that Abraham "believed the Lord, and he counted it to him as righteousness." The apostle James cites this verse and claims that because of his faith Abraham became the "friend of God" (James 2:23). The apostle Paul likewise appeals to this verse to establish the fact that Abraham's pattern of justifying faith is normative for all that are righteous before God (Rom. 4:22–25), that it is not by works of the Law, rather by "hearing with faith" that we are justified (Gal. 3:5–6).

Paul perceptively observes that Moses pronounces Abraham righteous in Genesis 15:6, prior to Abraham's circumcision, which is recounted in Genesis 17:24. By the same logic it may be helpful to notice how many good works Abraham had already accomplished prior to the same pronouncement. For Moses had many good works upon which to establish Abraham's justification, yet he understood God's decision to pronounce Abraham righteous based on faith alone. What were these good works that Moses passed over with respect to Abraham's justification?

Abraham had obeyed God's call and left his country and his father's house by faith to seek the heavenly city of God (Heb. 11:8). He had deferred his own prior claim to the land of promise to give preference to his nephew Lot in the inheritance (Gen. 13:8–9). He had summoned the courage to wage war against four mighty kings of the east (Gen. 14:1–16), he had renounced the booty offered him by the king of Sodom (Gen. 14:21–24), and he had paid tithes to Melchizedek, receiving from him the bread and the wine and the blessing (Gen. 14:18–20). But Moses tells us that Abraham believed God respecting the promise He had made regarding the seed (Gen. 15:2–5) and that this faith was reckoned righteousness by God (Gen. 15:6). Lest there be any confusion, Moses strategically places the pronouncement of Abraham's righteousness prior to his circumcision and subsequent to many of his good works. Moses thus bases Abraham's justification on his faith in the seed, and in that faith alone.

Many years later God Himself would announce the same doctrine to His prophet Habakkuk. This late seventh-century prophet could not understand how God would use the wicked Chaldeans to punish His own errant people, for God had announced a great judgment on Judah. In the prophet's perplexity, God summoned Habakkuk to a higher realm of belief, saying, "The righteous shall live by his faith" (Hab. 2:4). The language of this affirmation uses the same words as the original declaration by Moses about Abraham. Righteousness comes by a faith in God that defies outer circumstances, whether they be Sarah's barrenness, as in Abraham's case, or the judgments of God against His own errant people, as was the case with Habakkuk.

Habakkuk's doctrine that the just shall live by faith became the centerpiece of Pauline teaching on justification. Paul's understanding of saving faith is thus based on the Law (Gen. 15:6) and the prophets (Hab. 2:4). It is deeply grounded in the Old Testament and central to the New Testament as well. Paul cites Habakkuk's doctrine of justification by faith in Romans 1:17 and Galatians 3:11, and the author of Hebrews likewise appeals to the same passage (Heb. 10:38) to introduce his great teaching on the heroes of the faith that "pleases God" (Heb. 11:6).

Justification is by faith, and that by faith alone. Righteousness is thus reckoned by God to the one who believes. The Reformation of Luther may have blossomed in ad 1517, but its seed was found already in Genesis 15:6, Habakkuk 2:4, Romans 1:17, Galatians 3:11, James 2:23, and Hebrews 10:38. What then is the faith that justifies? What is the faith that pleases God?

Habakkuk the prophet reveals through his prayer what justifying faith, faith like Abraham's, looks like. It is a faith that defies all contradictions in outward circumstances, but looks entirely to God alone and to His promises alone. Listen to the word of the prophet in Habakkuk 3:17–19. The prophet's tribute to justifying faith is unsurpassed in biblical poetry, for he assures us that through his faith alone he found an end to all his perplexity: "Though the fig tree should not blossom, nor fruit be on the vines, the produce of the olive fail and the fields yield no food, the flock be cut off from the fold and there be no herd in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the Lord; I will take joy in the God of my salvation. God, the Lord, is my strength; he makes my feet like the deer's; he makes me tread on my high places."

– Warren Gage, in a devotional titled *The Justifying Faith of Abraham*, https://www.ligonier.org/learn/devotionals/justifying-faith-of-abraham/

NOTES:

1. Read **verse 31**. What are some other words for "overthrow"? What are some other words for "uphold"? How can this help us see what Paul is getting at in **verse 31**?

2. Read **verse 1** of chapter 4. What are some other words for "gained" and how does that help you understand what Paul is getting at in this verse?

3. Read **verse 2**. How does **Romans 3:27** help shed light on what Paul is getting at in **Romans 4:2**? How does **1 Corinthians 1:29-31** help clarify?

4. Paul now uses Abraham, the father of the Jewish faith, to explicitly teach justification through faith alone, apart from works. What passage does he quote in **verse 3**? According to **verse 3**, what does *justification* mean? What is the difference between being *counted* righteous and being *functionally* righteous?

5. Read **verses 4-5**. What is Paul getting at? How does **Romans 11:4-6** help clarify?

6. Read **verses 6-8**. Who does Paul now turn to, in order to help us understand that God has always justified people through faith apart from works? What passage does he quote?

7. What is Paul really getting at in **verse 9**? How could you restate his question?

8. Read **verses 10-12**. What all do we learn about *circumcision* from these verses? What is the significance of Abraham being circumcised *after* he was counted righteous through faith?

DAVID, JUSTIFIED BY LIGONIER MINISTRIES

Sola fide—faith alone—is sometimes called the "material cause" of the Reformation because the substance or material of the debate between the Protestant Reformers and the Roman church concerned the instrumental means of justification. The Reformers and their opponents both understood that we must be declared righteous to endure God's judgment and enter into eternal life. But they disagreed on the instrumental means of justification and the basis upon which the declaration is made. The Roman Catholics held that the basis of God's declaration is the righteousness of Christ and the righteous works that we produce in cooperation with grace. They also said that the instrumental means of justification are the sacraments of baptism, which initiates people into the state of justification, and penance, which restores people to the state of justification after mortal sin. The Protestants argued that the basis for the declaration of justification is only the righteousness of Christ and that faith alone is the instrument by which this righteousness is imputed to us, or put on our record.

Romans 4:1–5; 5:12–21; 1 Corinthians 1:30; and several other passages, we have seen, together teach us that justification is based on the imputation of Christ's righteousness through faith alone. That imputation is one side of the double exchange that happens in justification. Positively, the perfect obedience of Christ is credited to us. Negatively, sin is taken away from us. In justification, God credits us with a righteousness that is not our own but is Christ's, and He takes our sin and puts it on Christ, who bore the divine judgment against it on the cross. "For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God" (2 Cor. 5:21).

Romans 4:6–8 proclaims this removal of sin and guilt, sometimes called the non-imputation of sin because sin and guilt are not imputed to us but to Christ. Paul tells us that Psalm 32:1–2 includes David's teaching about justification that God does not count sin against the person whom He declares righteous. It is not that justification means we are not sinners; rather, it means that the Lord no longer holds our sin against us. And this is good news indeed. Dr. R.C. Sproul writes in his book Faith Alone: "In our redemptive forgiveness God does not charge us with what we owe. He does not count our sins against us. If he did, no one (except Jesus) would ever escape his just wrath. No one but Christ would be able to stand before God's judgment."

Nothing can change the fact that we have sinned. But what can change is our status before God's judgment seat. In justification, our sin and guilt are removed and we are covered by Christ's obedience, enabling God to declare us righteous in His sight. If we are in Christ, our sins will never be held against us on the day of judgment. In Christ, we are truly free of condemnation. That is a cause for great rejoicing.

– Ligonier Ministries, in a devotional titled *Justification and Sin*, https://www.ligonier.org/learn/devotionals/justification-and-sin/

Study 10

THE PROMISE

Romans 4:13-25

THE OBJECT OF SAVING FAITH BY CHARLES HADDON SPURGEON

"He that believeth on him is not condemned" —John 3:18

I am told in the Word of God to believe—What am I to believe? I am bidden to look—to what am I to look? What is to be the object of my hope, belief, and confidence? The reply is simple. The object of Faith to a sinner is Christ Jesus. How many make a mistake about this and think that they are to believe on God the Father! Now belief in God is an after-result of faith in Jesus. We come to believe in the eternal love of the Father as the result of trusting the precious blood of the Son.

Many men say, "I would believe in Christ if I knew that I were elect." This is coming to the Father, and no man can come to the Father except by Christ. It is the Father's work to elect; you cannot come directly to him, therefore you cannot know your election until first you have believed on Christ the Redeemer, and then through redemption you can approach to the Father and know your election.

Some, too, make the mistake of looking to the work of God the Holy Spirit. They look within to see if they have certain feelings, and if they find them their faith is strong, but if their feelings have departed from them, then their faith is weak, so that they look to the work of the Spirit which is not the object of a sinner's faith. Both the Father and the Spirit must be trusted in order to complete redemption, but for the particular mercy of justification and pardon the blood of the Mediator is the only plea. Christians have to trust the Spirit after conversion, but the sinner's business, if he would be saved, is not with trusting the Spirit nor with looking to the Spirit, but looking to Christ Jesus, and to him alone.

I know your salvation depends on the whole Trinity, but yet the first and immediate object of a sinner's justifying faith is neither God the Father nor God the Holy Ghost, but God the Son, incarnate in human flesh, and offering atonement for sinners.

– Charles Haddon Spurgeon, in a sermon titled *The Object of Faith; or, to What Faith Looks,* https://sovereignjesus.net/choice-selections-from-christian-authors/the-object-of-faith-or-to-what-faith-looks/
Delivered on Sunday Morning, February 17th, 1861 by the Rev. C. H. SPURGEON, At Exeter Hall, Strand

NOTES:

1. According to **verse 13**, what *did* the promise come through to Abraham and his offspring? What did it *not* come through? What is this "promise"? What does "heir of the world" mean?

2. Read **verses 14-15**. How would faith become null and the promise void? How does **verse 15** further explain what Paul is getting at?

3. Read **verses 16-17**. What does the promise rest on, according to **verse 16**? What is the opposite of it "[resting] on grace"? Why is that important to understand? What does Paul mean by "[Abraham is] the father of us all"? What passage does he quote to prove his point?

4. What does Paul mean is **verse 18** when he writes, "[Abraham] hoped against hope?" What did he hope in specifically? What passage does Paul quote to further clarify his teaching?

5. Read **verses 19-21**. What is the object of Abraham's faith?

6. Read **verse 22**. Now look back and explain the "that is why" part of Paul's statement in **verse 22**.

7. What do **verses 23-24** teach us about the Old Testament of our Bible in general? What does it teach us about Abraham specifically? What do they teach us about how to be counted righteous before God?

8. What does **verse 25** teach us concerning what the object of our faith should be, if we are to be counted righteous before God and forgiven of our trespasses?

RAISED FOR OUR JUSTIFICATION BY ADRIAN WARNOCK

Is Jesus's Resurrection and Our Justification Linked?

Romans 4:25 reads "[Jesus] was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification". The Greek behind our English word *for* could mean either "because of" or "in order to produce." We know that Jesus's death did not produce sin in us, and certainly Jesus's resurrection was not as a result of our justification. The link between Jesus's resurrection and our justification seems to have many facets.

Raised to Give Us a Future Resurrection

Because of Jesus' resurrection, one day our physical bodies will also return to life.

Raised to Prompt Faith in Us

It is the good news of Jesus' resurrection, following his sin-defeating death, that will inspire us to believe in, trust, obey, and worship this man who lived two thousand years ago in a small country in the Middle East. Justification is "by grace . . . through faith" (Ephesians 2:8), and our faith itself requires the resurrection of Jesus. Unless Jesus had defeated death, we could never have the faith in him that is necessary for our justification. Jesus' resurrection is in this sense the source of the faith that is the grounds of our justification: "If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved" (Romans 10:9).

Raised for His Own Justification

It may sound strange to talk about Jesus' need for justification. But justification is a declaration, a vindication. The resurrection of Jesus has evidencing power. Jesus is declared to still be righteous by his resurrection, just as he was declared to have become sin by his death. God's wrath has been satisfied.

Justified So We Can Be Justified

Despite our usual understanding that the cross alone is responsible for our forgiveness, Paul is elsewhere very clear. "If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins" (1 Corinthians 15:17). We share in the justification of Jesus. Because of his right standing with God, his people are made righteous too.

Raised So He Can Apply Justification to Us

Faith is putting our trust in the person Jesus and in the fact that he died and rose again for us. How does Jesus apply salvation to us? Jesus himself saves us in the present. Edwards comments on Romans 4:25, "That is, delivered for our offenses, and raised again that he might see to the application of his sufferings to our justification, and that he might plead them for our justifying." Jesus is before the throne of God pleading for us, no doubt on the grounds of his death and resurrection. "Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us" (Romans 8:34).

– Adrian Warnock, in an article titled *What Does "Raised for Our Justification" Mean?,* https://www.crossway.org/articles/what-does-raised-for-our-justification-mean/

Study 11

THE PEACE

Romans 5:1-11

GOD DEMONSTRATES HIS LOVE BY JOHN PIPER

Notice that "demonstrates" is present tense and "died" is past tense. "God *demonstrates* his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ *died* for us."

The present tense implies that this demonstrating is an ongoing act that keeps happening today. And will keep happening tomorrow.

The past tense "died" implies that the death of Christ happened once for all and will not be repeated. "Christ also *suffered once* for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God" (1 Peter 3:18).

Why did Paul use the present tense ("God demonstrates")? I would have expected Paul to say, "God *demonstrated* (past tense) his own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ *died* for us." Was not the death of Christ, when it happened, the demonstration of God's love? And did not that demonstration happen in the past?

I think the clue is given a few verses earlier. Paul has just said that "suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces *hope*, and *hope* does not put us to shame" (Romans 5:3–5).

In other words, the goal of everything God takes us through is hope. He wants us to feel unwaveringly hopeful through all tribulations.

But how can we?

Paul answers in the next line: "Because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us" (Romans 5:5). God's love *has been poured* into our hearts. The tense of this verb means that God's love was poured out in our hearts in the past (at our conversion) and is *still present and active*.

God did demonstrate his love for us in giving his own Son to die once for all in the past for our sins (Romans 5:8). But he also knows that this past love must be experienced as a *present reality* (today and tomorrow) if we are to have patience and character and hope.

Therefore, he not only demonstrated it on Calvary; he goes on demonstrating it now *by the Spirit* in our hearts. He does this by opening the eyes of our hearts to taste and see the glory of the cross and the guarantee it gives that nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus (Romans 8:38–39).

– John Piper, in a devotion titled God Demonstrates His Love, https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/god-demonstrates-his-love

NOTES:

1. Why does Paul write "Therefore" at the beginning of **verse 1**? Does Paul say a Christian's justification and peace with God is something we hope to attain in the future or something that has already happened and we possess? What is our justification and peace with God "through"?

2. What have we "obtained access" into, according to **verse 2**? By what instrument do we obtain the access into the grace in which we stand? What does Paul mean by "we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God"?

3. What else do we rejoice in, according to **verse 3**? Why on earth would someone rejoice in sufferings? What does suffering produce? What does the word "endurance" mean?

4. According to **verse 4**, what does endurance produce? What does the word "character" mean? What does character produce? What does the word "hope" mean?

5. What does hope *not* do, according to **verse 5**? Why does hope not put us to shame? Is Paul talking about our love for God or God's love for us?

6. How does Paul define us, sinners who have been saved, according to **verse 6**? What did Christ do for the weak and the ungodly? Do you know that without Jesus all you posses that you could offer to God is weakness and ungodliness?

7. Read **verses 7-8**. How does this clearly show us the good news? What is God showing us at the cross?

8. Read **verse 9**. Note, again, Paul says justification is something that has *already happened* to Christians. What does he mean by "justified by his blood"? What does Jesus save the "justified" from from according to the end of **verse 9**?

9. What does Paul mean by "death" and "life" in **verse 10**? What did Jesus' death accomplish for us? What does Jesus' life (resurrection) accomplish for us?

10. What is the final thing Paul says "we rejoice" in according to **verse 11**? Why do we rejoice in God?

GLORY IS THE GOAL BY JOHN PIPER

Seeing the glory of God is our ultimate hope. "We rejoice in hope of *the glory of God*" (Romans 5:2). God will "present you blameless before the presence of his *glory* with great joy" (Jude 24).

He will "make known the riches of his glory for vessels of mercy, which he has prepared beforehand for *glory*" (Romans 9:23). He "calls you into his own kingdom and *glory*" (1 Thessalonians 2:12). "Our blessed hope [is] the appearing of the *glory* of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ" (Titus 2:13).

Jesus, in all his person and work, is the incarnation and ultimate revelation of the glory of God. "He is the radiance of the *glory* of God and the exact imprint of his nature" (Hebrews 1:3). "Father, I desire that they . . . may be with me where I am, to see my *glory*" Jesus prays in John 17:24.

"So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the *glory* that is going to be revealed" (1 Peter 5:1). "The creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the *glory* of the children of God" (Romans 8:21).

"We impart a secret and hidden wisdom of God, which God decreed before the ages for our *glory*" (1 Corinthians 2:7). "This light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of *glory* beyond all comparison" (2 Corinthians 4:17). "Those whom he justified he also *glorified*" (Romans 8:30). Seeing and sharing in God's glory is our ultimate hope through the gospel of Christ.

Such a hope, that is really known and treasured, has a huge and decisive effect on our present values and choices and actions.

Get to know the glory of God. Study the glory of God and the glory of Christ. Study the glory of the world that reveals the glory of God, and the glory of the gospel that reveals the glory of Christ.

Treasure the glory of God in all things and above all things.

Study your soul. Know the glory you are seduced by, and know why you treasure glories that are not God's glory.

Study your own soul to know how to make the glories of the world collapse like the pagan idol Dagon in 1 Samuel 5:4. Let all glories that distract you from the glory of God shatter in pitiful pieces on the floor of the world's temples. Treasure the glory of God above all this world.

– John Piper, in a devotional titled *Glory is the Goal*, https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/glory-is-the-goal

Study 12

THE GRACE

Romans 5:12-21

JESUS THE LAST ADAM BY LIGONIER MINISTRIES

> *"It is written, 'The first man Adam became a living being'; the last Adam became a life-giving spirit.* ***- 1 Corinthians 15:45***

When we describe human beings, we can separate people into different categories. We can categorize people according to sex: male or female. We can separate them by country of origin: Russian, Chinese, Indian, Kenyan, British, American, Colombian, and so on. We can divide them by age: children, teenagers, adults. There are seemingly countless ways that we have devised to group individuals.

Yet with respect to our standing before God, the Apostle Paul knows of only two groupings: people who are in Adam and people who are in Christ. These groups are represented by different federal heads: Adam and Christ, respectively. To put it simply, that means that whatever the federal head does, the people who are in him share the consequences.

Those who are in Adam are reckoned guilty of his sin. Moreover, they also receive a corrupted moral and spiritual nature that inclines them to hide from God and His ways, as Adam did after his fall (Rom. 5:12–21; see Gen. 3). Those who are in Adam also receive a corrupted physical nature; their bodies decay and eventually die. "In Adam all die," Paul explains (1 Cor. 15:45).

All who are ordinary descendants of Adam are in Adam until by regeneration, faith, and repentance they move from being in Adam to being in Christ (Rom. 5:12–21; 1 Cor. 1:28–30). If we are in Christ by faith alone, we receive forgiveness of sin and our Lord's perfect righteousness, by which we are accepted by God (Rom. 3:21–26). We also receive a new heart—our moral nature is being renewed such that we more and more die to sin and live to righteousness (Rom. 6:11). But in Christ we will even receive a renewed physical nature. At the resurrection our bodies will be raised imperishable (1 Cor. 15:52).

In sum, those who are in Christ will get back what they lost in Adam, but more accurately, what we will get back will be better than what we lost. As John Calvin comments, "[Adam] by his fall ruined himself and those that were his, because he drew them all, along with himself, into the same ruin: Christ came to restore our nature from ruin, and raise it up to a better condition than ever." Christ can do this because He is the last Adam, the federal head whom God appointed in His mercy to stand in for us so that we will become the glorified saints God intends us to be (1 Cor. 15:45).

Coram Deo

Christ came not merely to restore us to what we were before Adam's fall but to give us something better. As the last Adam, Christ restores what was lost and guarantees that we will never lose it again. He gives us His perfect righteousness and is now conforming us into His image. If we are in Christ, we should be thankful daily for all that Christ has brought back to us as the last Adam.

– Ligonier Ministries, in a devotional titled *Jesus The Last Adam*, https://www.ligonier.org/learn/devotionals/jesus-last-adam/

NOTES:

1. What is the first word Paul writes in **verse 12**? Therefore, we need to know and remember what the previous section details. According to **verse 11**, what is the theme of the section previous to the one we are looking at now?

2. In **verse 12**, What does Paul mean by "sin came into the world through one man"? According to **verse 12**, how did death enter the world? Why did "death spread to all men"?

3. What does Paul mean by "sin is not counted where there is no law" in **verse 13**? How does **Romans 2:14-16** help us understand at least what Paul is *not* meaning here in **verse 13**?

4. What "reigned from Adam to Moses" even before the Law was explicitly declared to human beings, according to **verse 14**? Does Paul mean to say that *God* was not "[reigning]" during that time, or does he mean something else? Read **Genesis chapter 5**. What do all those listed have in common, with the exception of Enoch?

5. What does Paul mean by "Adam, who was a type of the one to come" at the end of **verse 14**? How does **verse 15** make clear who the "one to come" is? What did this "one to come" bring, according to **verse 15**? How does **Isaiah 53:11** help clarify?

6. According to **verse 16**, what did Adam's sin bring and what did the "free gift" bring?

7. What does **verse 17** urge us all to do in order to escape the condemnation and judgement we deserve for our sin? What is the *result* of "those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness" according to **verse 17**?

8. Read **verses 18-19**. Is Paul here promoting *Universalist* doctrine, that all people without exception in the end will be saved? How does **verse 17** help clarify? What is Paul getting at in **verses 18-19**? How does **1 Corinthians 15:20-23** help clarify?

9. Read **verses 20-21**. In what way did the Law "increase the trespass"? What overcame sin, according to **verse 20**? According to **verse 21**, what dethrones the reign of sin and death and reigns in their place? *What* and *who* is this "[reigning] grace" through according to the second half of **verse 21**?

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JESUS' SPECTACULAR OBEDIENCE BY JOHN PIPER

This is the great glory of Christ—he vastly outshines the first man Adam. The spectacular sin of Adam is not as great as the spectacular grace and obedience of Christ and the gift of eternal life. Indeed, God's plan from the beginning, in his perfect righteousness, was that Adam, as the representative head of humankind, would be a type of Christ as the representative head of a new humankind. His plan was that by this comparison and contrast, the glory of Christ would shine all the more brightly.

Verse 17 puts the matter to you very personally and very urgently. Where do you stand? "For if, because of one man's trespass, death reigned through that one man, much more will *those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness* reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ." Notice the words very carefully and personally: "those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness."

Precious Words for Sinners

These are precious words for sinners: The grace is free, the gift is free, the righteousness of Christ is free. Will you receive it as the hope and treasure of your life? If you do, you will "reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ." Receive it now. Bear witness to it in baptism. And become a living part of the people of Christ.

– John Piper, in a sermon titled *The Fatal Disobedience of Adam and the Triumphant Obedience of Christ*, https://www.desiringgod.org/messages/the-fatal-disobedience-of-adam-and-the-triumphant-obedience-of-christ

Study 13

THE GLORY

Romans 6:1-14

THE ONE GENUINE CURE FOR LEGALISM AND ANTINOMIANISM

BY SINCLAIR FERGUSON

If antinomianism appears to us to be a way of deliverance from our natural legalistic spirit, we need to refresh our understanding of Romans 7. In contrast to Paul, both legalists and antinomians see *the law* as the problem. But Paul is at pains to point out that *sin*, *not the law* is the root issue. On the contrary, the law is "good" and "righteous" and "spiritual" and "holy." The real enemy is indwelling sin. And the remedy for sin is neither the law nor its overthrow. It is grace, as Paul had so wonderfully exhibited in Romans 5:12–21, and that grace set in the context of his exposition of union with Christ in Romans 6:1–14. To abolish the law, then, would be to execute the innocent.

For this reason it is important to notice the dynamic of Paul's argument in Romans 7:1–6. We have been married to the law. A woman is free to marry again when her husband dies. But Paul is careful to say not that the law has died so that we can marry Christ. Rather, it is the believer who was married to the law who has died in Christ. But being raised with Christ, she is now (legally!) free to marry Christ as the husband with whom fruit for God will be brought to the birth. The entail of this second marriage is, in Paul's language, that "the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit."

This is the sense in which the Christian's relationship to the law is that of being an "in-law"! We are not related to the law directly as it were, or the law in isolation as bare commandments. The relationship is dependent on and the new fruit of our prior relationship to Christ. In simple terms, just as Adam received the law from the Father, from whose hand it should never have been abstracted (as it was by the Serpent and then by Eve), so the new-covenant believer never looks at the law without understanding that his relationship to it is the fruit of his union with Christ.

Bunyan saw the meaning of Romans 7. An "inclination to Adam the First" remains in all of us. The believer has died to the law, but the law does not die. The law still exists to the believer. But united to Christ the believer is now able to fulfill the law of marriage and bear fruit!

Thus grace, not law, produces what the law requires; yet at the same time it is what the law requires that grace produces. Ralph Erskine sought to put this in verse form:

> *Thus gospel-grace and law-commands*
> *Both bind and loose each other's hands;*
> *They can't agree on any terms,*
> *Yet hug each other in their arms.*

Those that divide them cannot be
The friends of truth and verity;
Yet those that dare confound the two
Destroy them both, and gender woe.
This paradox none can decipher,
That plow not with the gospel heifer.
So, he adds,
To run, to work, the law commands,
The gospel gives me feet and hands.
The one requires that I obey,
The other does the power convey.

Head and Heart

This is a fundamental pastoral lesson. It is not merely a matter of the head. It is a matter of the heart. Antinomianism may be couched in doctrinal and theological terms, but it both betrays and masks the heart's distaste for absolute divine obligation, or duty. That is why the doctrinal explanation is only part of the battle. We are grappling with something much more elusive, the spirit of an individual, an instinct, a sinful temperamental bent, a subtle divorce of duty and delight. This requires diligent and loving pastoral care and especially faithful, union-with-Christ, full unfolding of the Word of God so that the gospel dissolves the stubborn legality in our spirits.

Olney Hymns, the hymnbook composed by John Newton and William Cowper, contains the latter's hymn "Love Constraining to Obedience," which states the situation well:

No strength of nature can suffice
To serve [the] Lord aright;
And what she has, she misapplies,
For want of clearer light.
How long beneath the law I lay
In bondage and distress!
I toil'd the precept to obey,
But toil'd without success.
Then to abstain from outward sin
Was more than I could do;
Now, if I feel its pow'r within,
I feel I hate it too.
Then all my servile works were done
A righteousness to raise;
Now, freely chosen in the Son,
I freely choose his ways.
What shall I do was then the word,
That I may worthier grow?
What shall I render to the Lord
Is my enquiry now.
To see the Law by Christ fulfil'd,
And hear his pard'ning voice;

Changes a slave into a child,
And duty into choice.

We are dealing here with a disposition whose roots go right down into the soil of the garden of Eden. Antinomianism then, like legalism, is not only a matter of having a wrong view of the law. It is a matter, ultimately, of a wrong view of grace, revealed in both law and gospel—and behind that, a wrong view of God Himself.

– Sinclair Ferguson, in his book titled *The Whole Christ*, © 2016, pp. 155–162. Used by permission of Crossway.

NOTES:

1. Paul now transitions from writing about about Justification and Reconciliation, to dealing more specifically with Sanctification. Read **verses 1-2**. How does **Romans 5:20-21** help us understand why Paul would write "What shall we say then? Are we continue in sin that grace may abound"?

2. What is Paul's answer in **verse 2** to his question in **verse 1**? What is his reasoning behind his answer? In what sense does Paul mean "we have died to sin"? How does **1 Peter 2:24** help clarify?

3. Read **verse 3**. In what sense does Paul mean Christians have been "baptized into his death"? How does **Colossians 3:3** help clarify?

4. What is the real-life evidence that a person has been "buried…and raised" with Christ according to the end of **verse 4**? What is the grounds or means by which a person is enabled to "walk in newness of life"?

5. Read **verses 5-7**. According to **verse 5**, "If we have been united to him in a death like his" what will the result be? Is Paul speaking of Christians' future bodily-resurrection or is he talking about their present spiritual resurrection? How do **verses 4** and **6-7** help us understand which he is talking about?

6. Read **verses 8-10**. Is Paul now writing about physical or spiritual resurrection—our future resurrection or what's already happened to the Christian? How does **verse 11** help clarify? What does he say we should do, according to **verse 11**? Is this a suggestion or a command (and how can you tell)?

7. Practically speaking, what would it look like to "consider [ourselves] dead to sin and alive to God"? How do **verses 12-13** help clarify?

8. What is Paul's conclusion in closing out this section (**verse 14**)? Does the word *pardon* or the word *power* best describe how Paul uses the word "grace" in this verse?

WHAT BAPTISM PORTRAYS BY JOHN PIPER

Baptism portrays what happened to us when we became Christians.

This is what happened to us: we were united to Christ. His death became our death. We died with him. And in the same instant, his life became our life. We are now living out the life of Christ in us. And all this is experienced through faith.

This is what it means to be a Christian - to live in the reality of what our baptism portrays: day by day we look away from ourselves to God and say, "Because of Christ, your Son, I come to you. In him I belong to you. I am at home with you. He is my only hope of acceptance with you. I receive that acceptance anew every day. My hope is based on his death for me and my death in him. My life in him is a life of faith in you, Father. Because of him I trust your working in me and for me. The same power and glory that you used to raise him from the dead you will use to help me. In that promise of future grace I believe, and in that I hope. That is what makes my life new. O Christ, how I glory in what my baptism portrays! Thank you for dying my death for me and giving new life to me. Amen."

– John Piper, in a sermon titled *What Baptism Portrays*, https://www.desiringgod.org/messages/what-baptism-portrays

Study 14

THE FREE GIFT

Romans 6:15-23

FREED FROM SIN AND FORGED UNTO RIGHTEOUSNESS

BY JOHN MACARTHUR

We will always feel that wretchedness. I tell young people this because they ask me all the time – they ask me, "Will I ever get victory over sin?" Young people can be tempted pretty intensely, and they want to know if it's going to be like that their whole life.

And I've said so many times to them, "Yes, you will progress as a true believer from righteousness to righteousness to righteousness as you yield your members, and the spirit does the sanctifying work, and you'll go from one level of glory to the next, to the next, to the next. But I have to remind you that when Paul said that he was a wretched man, he was a very mature believer."

And the point is this, you sin less, but you feel worse. Why? Because you have grown to a deeper and deeper love for righteousness and a greater and greater animosity toward sin; so, even though you sin less, you feel worse. If you are without Christ, you go from bad to worse, and you become more wretched and more wretched. If you are in Christ, you become cleaner and cleaner and purer and purer and holier and holier and more and more conformed to the image of Christ as the power of that new life and the Holy Spirit and the work of the Word operating within you move you down the path of sanctification.

So, he contrasts the position – a slave to sin, a slave to righteousness. Contrasts the progression – lawlessness to more lawlessness, righteousness to more righteousness and sanctification.

And then in verses 20 to 23, he contrasts the end; listen to what he says. Verse 20, "When you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. Therefore what benefit were you then deriving from the things of which you are now ashamed? For the outcome of those things is death. Now having been freed from sin and enslaved to God, you derive your benefit, resulting in sanctification, and the outcome is eternal life. For the wages of sin is always death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." And he looks to the ultimate promise. You go from the position to the practice or progression and then to the ultimate promise. And he answers the question, where do these slaveries end up?

Sin, which is noted in verse 20 as being free in regard to righteousness – that is sin being void of any righteousness - sin, verse 21, being void of any benefit, produces only the outcome of death. That's all. "You look back on your sinful life," he says, "now and you're ashamed." The fruit of sin just fills people with shame. Lawlessness to lawlessness to lawlessness, a life of shame that ends in death.

John Calvin, commenting on this verse, said, "As soon as the godly begin to be enlightened by the Spirit of Christ and the preaching of the gospel, they freely acknowledge that the whole of their past life, which they live without Christ, is worthy of condemnation. So far from trying to excuse themselves, they are in fact ashamed of themselves. Indeed, they go farther and continually bear their disgrace in mind so that the shame of it may make them more truly and willingly humble before God."

And all there ever was in that life was shame, and all it ever produced is death. Not just physical death, but the death that is eternal, the death of the soul in a hopeless and everlasting hell.

But on the other hand, "Now" – verse 22 – "being freed from sin and enslaved to God, you derive a completely different benefit; you derive sanctification and its outcome: eternal life." Eternal life. Literally he says you have your fruit unto holiness, and the end of it eternal life.

Look, can we sin? Willingly, happily, gladly because where sin abounds grace more abounds? No. We won't; we have a new life. Can we sin because we're not under the tyranny of the law? Its penalty having been paid, it can lay no claim on us; we're not under condemnation. No, because we have, in this new life, been shaped into a brand new mold which is consistent with the teaching to which we have given ourselves, and we have now come out with a new Master.

– John MacArthur, in a sermon titled *Freed from Sin and Forged unto Righteousness*, https://www.gty.org/library/sermons-library/90-302/freed-from-sin-and-forged-unto-righteousness

NOTES:

1. Read **verse 15**. How does this help us understand what it *does* and *does not* mean to live "under grace"? In **verse 16**, how does Paul explain why he answers "By no means!" in **verse 15**? What does "sin" lead to? What does "obedience" lead to?

2. Read **verses 17-18**. What is the function of someone who has "been set free from sin" and has therefore become "a slave of righteousness"? Who is deserving of the "thanks" or praise or ascribed glory when it comes to someone being set free from sin?

3. Read **verse 19**. What does Paul mean by, "I'm speaking in human terms, because of your natural limitations"? In this verse, what does Paul say sinners *do* and what does it *lead* to? What does Paul say Christians *do* and what does it *lead* to? What does "sanctification" mean?

4. Read **verses 20-21**. In **verse 20**, what does Paul mean by "you were free in regard to righteousness"? According to **verse 21**, what fruit were they getting from being slaves to sin? According to this verse, how should we, as Christians, now feel about the things we did when we were slaves to sin?

5. According to **verse 22**, what are Christians now slaves to? What is the "end" of "sanctification"? What does "eternal life" mean in all it's facets?

6. Read **verse 23**. What does the word "wages" mean in general? What does Paul mean by "the wages of sin"? What does he say "the wages of sin is"? What is the opposite of receiving something as a *wage*? Who is the one who gives this "free gift"? What is the "free gift of God"? Who is this free gift "in" according to the last part of **verse 23**? What does Paul mean by "in Christ Jesus our Lord"?

When God brings to bear on a life eternal death, hell forever, it's because the person earned that.

It is just, it is fair, it is proper compensation for their sin because there is an inexorable law in the universe that says the pay for sin is death. It's like any other law. The law of gravity. The law of gravity says you jump off something, you go down. That's a law. That's the way the universe is made. And if God made laws in a physical dimension, there can be laws as well in the spiritual. And here's one of them. The wages of sin is death. The payoff for sin is death, eternal death, spiritual death. It's what you earned.

In fact, let me say it another way. Justice is obligated to pay it or it would be defrauding the worker of his wages. When God gives eternal death to a soul, He is giving him what he's worked for, what he's earned, what he deserves, what is the defined compensation for his life. Let me put it another way. If God didn't give him eternal hell, it would be unjust. And God can't be unjust. You earn death by your sin, you'll get it. And those who hope for pardon and those who hope for deliverance without Christ are hoping that God would be unjust. And God would not be unjust.

There's another side to the absolute, bless God. It says this, "But the gift of God is eternal life." Eternal life is not a wage. Did you notice the change? It is a what? A gift. Can you earn eternal life? No, it's a gift. In fact, literally, it's a free gift. You could write that there. It says, "The free gift of God." Just so that nobody gets confused, it is a free gift.

You can't earn it by your works. You can't earn it by your religiosity. You can't earn it, period. And that's right back to Ephesians 2:8 and 9. "For by grace are you saved through faith, that not of yourselves, it is a" – what? – "gift of God, not of works lest any man should boast." No merit, no earning, no worthiness. It's a gift. So if you want what you deserve, God will give it to you. But if you want what you don't deserve, God will give that to you as well.

You say, "How do I get that? Boy, what a chapter. I don't want to be a slave to sin. I don't want to be free from ever being able to do what's right. I don't want to go from sin, to sin, to sin, from being vile to being viler and viler, ultimately ending in eternal death. I don't want to do that. I want the gift of eternal life. How do I get it? Well, how does the chapter end? What does it say? "Through Jesus Christ our Lord." It's the great climax to the chapter. I mean, the chapter is so powerful, you know that at the end you just need a reminder of how you get this. "Through Jesus Christ our Lord."

Any other place? No other place. "Neither is there salvation in any other, for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved," Acts 4:12. No other name. No other name. Jesus said, "I am the door, the only way to enter is through Me." Jesus said, "No man comes unto the Father but by Me." The most narrow-minded statement ever made. It also happens to be true. You can be narrow minded if you're right. Jesus said, "I am the way. I'm the only way." Through Jesus Christ our Lord.

– John MacArthur, in a sermon titled *Free from Sin, Part 2*, https://www.gty.org/library/sermons-library/45-49/free-from-sin-part-2

Study 15

THE NEW LIFE

Romans 7:1-6

DYING TO THE LAW THROUGH CHRIST BY LIGONIER MINISTRIES

Paul's teachings on the law of God may be his most difficult instruction to understand. Some of the difficulty is due to the Apostle's use of the term *law* in different ways. Often, he means the Mosaic law given to Israel (Gal. 3:19). At times, he means the universal moral law of God found on the consciences of all people (Rom. 2:14). Paul also uses the word *law* when he has both the Mosaic law and God's universal moral law in view (3:19–20).

For our purposes, we need to remember that the universal moral law and the Mosaic law are not identical. The Mosaic law contains regulations that are part of the universal moral law (for example, the Ten Commandments), but not every statute in the law of Moses is found in God's universal, eternal moral law. Some rules, such as the food laws and the sacrifices, were only temporary and given to point Israel to Christ (Heb. 10:1–18). Such laws do not reflect the Lord's unchanging character, and would have been unnecessary apart from the fall. The universal moral law, however, was present even before Adam's sin.

With all that in mind, and knowing that Paul originally wrote his epistle to an audience containing Jewish and Gentile believers, his notion of bondage to the law and sin in Romans 7:1–6 focuses on the Mosaic law but not to the exclusion of the law on the conscience. After all, though the Gentiles did not have the Mosaic law, the Apostle says they are bound to the law (vv. 1–3). Sin perverts God's law, whether we receive it from Moses or have it written on the conscience, and it uses the law to increase sin. But since the law is God's law, its demands must be met. In the complex relationship between the law and sin, sin uses the law to arouse transgression and make us more guilty of rejecting the law's authority (5:20; 7:7–12). Thus, we are rightfully cursed and brought under the law's condemnation (Gal. 3:10).

The only way to be set free from the law's authoritative pronouncement of guilt and sin's use of the law to increase transgression is for the sentence of the law to be executed. This occurs in Christ. United to Christ, upon whom the sentence of God's righteous wrath for our sin was executed, we can no longer be condemned by the Lord. There is no double jeopardy in God's legal system—the same crime cannot be tried and punished twice. Jesus bore the punishment for our crime—our sin—so the law can condemn us no longer (Rom. 7:4; see 3:21–26). Since we have been declared righteous in Christ, the law can no longer rightly condemn or crush us, and the power of sin is broken in our lives.

Coram Deo

Sin's use of the law to increase transgression and the crushing sentence of the law go hand in hand, though Paul does not fully delineate how. If the sentence of the law has been satisfied, however, we are free from sin's power and are no

longer in captivity to transgression (Rom. 7:6). Therefore, we can look to the law as our guide without having to suffer from the increase of sin via the law. In Christ, the law is satisfied and the Spirit enables us to resist sin.

– Ligonier Ministries, in a devotional titled *Dying to the Lae through Christ*, https://www.ligonier.org/learn/devotionals/dying-law-through-christ/

NOTES:

1. Read **verse 1**. What is another word for *binding*? Where in the world is Paul going with this line of argument? How do **verses 2-3** help clarify the point Paul is making here?

2. What is the first word in **verse 4** and what does that tell us? *What* have Christians died to according to this verse and *how*? What is the reason that Christians have "died to the law through the body of Christ" according to the middle part of **verse 4**? What is the reason Christians "belong to…him who has been raised from the dead" according to the last part of **verse 4**?

3. According to **verse 5**, what was "at work in our members" "while we were living in the flesh"? What does Paul by saying "our sinful passions" were "aroused by the Law"?

4. Read **verse 6**. In what sense does Paul mean we are "released from the Law"? How does **Galatians 2:19-20** help clarify? How does **Galatians 5:16-18** help clarify what Paul means in the last part of **Romans 7:6**?

IS THE LAW IMPORTANT? BY JOHN MACARTHUR

So somebody asks the question. If we're free from the law as Christians, is the law binding on us? The answer is no and yes. It is not binding in the sense that our acceptance with God depends on it. It is binding in the sense that our new life seeks to serve it. You see, the law couldn't save you because you couldn't keep it. Now that God saved you, the law can't condemn you, and for the first time in your life by the power of the Holy Spirit, you can keep it. So we're not under the law condemnation but we serve God's law out of the depths of a committed heart.

Is the law important? Oh yes. Can we say with the psalmist, "O how I love Thy law?" Oh yes. Even though it can't save us? Yes. Even though it would condemn us? Yes. Because Jesus Christ has born that condemnation and by planting within us the divine nature has enabled us to keep that very law. And we don't serve it externally, but out of newness of spirit.

So, we're dead to the law in the sense that it could save us or condemn us. But listen, people, we are more alive to the law now in terms of serving it to the glory of God than we've ever been.

– John MacArthur, in a sermon titled *Dead to the Law*, https://www.gty.org/library/sermons-library/45-50/dead-to-the-law

Study 16

THE LAW

Romans 7:7-25

THE THREEFOLD USE OF THE LAW BY NATHAN BINGHAM

Scripture shows that God intends His law to function in three ways, which Calvin crystalized in classic form for the church's benefit as the law's threefold use.

Its first function is to be a mirror reflecting to us both the perfect righteousness of God and our own sinfulness and shortcomings. As Augustine wrote, "the law bids us, as we try to fulfill its requirements, and become wearied in our weakness under it, to know how to ask the help of grace." The law is meant to give knowledge of sin (Rom. 3:20; 4:15; 5:13; 7:7-11), and by showing us our need of pardon and our danger of damnation to lead us in repentance and faith to Christ (Gal. 3:19-24).

A second function, the "civil use," is to restrain evil. Though the law cannot change the heart, it can to some extent inhibit lawlessness by its threats of judgement, especially when backed by a civil code that administers punishment for proven offenses (Deut. 13:6-11; 19:16-21; Rom. 13:3, 4). Thus it secures civil order, and serves to protect the righteous from the unjust.

Its third function is to guide the regenerate into the good works that God has planned for them (Eph. 2:10). The law tells God's children what will please their heavenly Father. It could be called their family code. Christ was speaking of this third use of the law when He said that those who become His disciples must be taught to do all that He had commanded (Matt. 28:20), and that obedience to His commands will prove the reality of one's love for Him (John 14:15). The Christian is free from the law as a system of salvation (Rom. 6:14; 7:4, 6; 1 Cor. 9:20; Gal. 2:15-19, 3:25), but is "under the law of Christ" as a rule of life (1 Cor. 9:21; Gal. 6:2)."

– Nathan W. Bingham, in an article titled *The Threefold Use of the Law*, https://www.ligonier.org/blog/threefold-use-law/

NOTES:

1. Paul has just previous said, "sinful passions" are "aroused by the law" (**Romans 7:5**). Now in **verse 7** he's guarding against anyone thinking, therefore, that "the law is sin." What we do learn in verse 7 about one of the primary functions of the law of God? What example does Paul give?

2. Read **verse 8**. Does Paul seem to think of the law simply as an *act* or is it something more? What did sin *seize*? Through what did seize an opportunity *through*? And what did sin *produce*? What do you think Paul means by, "For apart from the law, sin lies dead"? How does the ESV Study Bible note on **Romans 7:8** help clarify?

3. Read **verses 9-12**. How does **verse 12** help us see what Paul is *not* saying in these verses (i.e. what does Paul positively affirm in **verse 12**)? How does **verse 11** help us see what Paul means in **verses 9-10**?

4. In the following verses, Paul argues that the imperfection lies with sin, not with the law, because "the law is holy…and righteous and good" (**verse 12**). Read **verses 13-14**. What *did not* bring death to Paul? What *did*? What does the law "[show]"? What does Paul mean by, "I am of the flesh" in **verse 14**? What does he mean by "the law is spiritual"?

5. Read **verses 15-20**. What is Paul getting at? Can relate at all to Paul's explanation of his experience as a Christian? According to **verses 17** and **20**, what is it really that is leading Paul to sin? How does **verse 18** help us to stay humble as we continually seek to out our sin to death and follow Jesus?

6. Read **verses 21-23**. What lies "close at hand" when we want to do right? How should this way of thinking arm us to fight sin and obey Jesus? What does Paul "delight in" "in [hid] inner being," according to **verse 22**? Do you delight in the Law in your inner being? According to verse 23, what is happening inside of Pail, an, by implication, inside of every Christian?

7. Read **verse 24**. What are some other ways you could say "Wretched man that I am"? Do you feel this way as a Christian especially when convicted of sin? What question does Paul ask and what is the answer in **verse 25?** What does Paul mean in **verse 25** by "I myself serve the law of God with my mind, but with my flesh I serve the law of sin"?

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WARFARE MADE POSSIBLE BY JOHN PIPER

Paul is at pains to make clear in Romans 7:25 that the difference does not put the warfare behind us. Our death in Christ "to that which held us captive" and our "serving in the new way of the Spirit" (Romans 7:6) does not mean we never stumble back into experience of captivity. In fact, the "therefore" of Romans 7:25 explains that the victory does not make the warfare past; it makes it possible and real.

It seems to me that the groaning of Romans 8:23 as we "wait for our adoption, the redemption of our bodies" is essentially the same as the cry, "O wretched man that I am, who will deliver me from this body of death?" (Romans 7:24). In Romans 7:24, the focus is on the moral crippling connected with the body, and in Romans 8:23 the focus is on the physical. But the reference to the not yet of "adoption" in Romans 8:23 (that climaxes in conformity to our older brother, Romans 8:29) reminds us that both morally and physically, there is a massive "not yet" for the Christian.

And my contention is that there is a lot more continuity of the "not yet" from Romans 7 to Romans 8 — both spiritually and physically — than is sometimes realized.

– John Piper, in an article titled Clarifying Romans 7:14–25 As "Christian Experience", https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/clarifying-romans-7-14-25-as-christian-experience

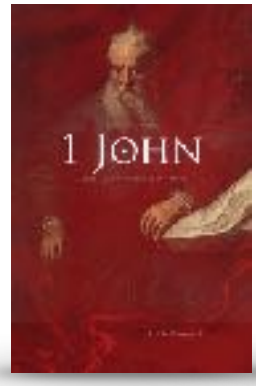
FINAL QUESTIONS: Look back through the entire study and all of your answers. What was new? What was convicting? What was encouraging?

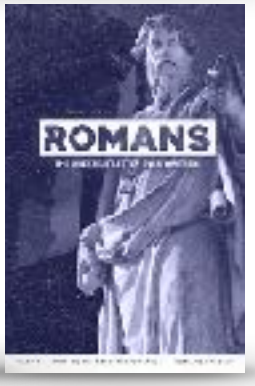
NEW:

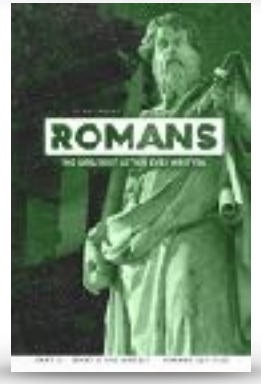
CONVICTING:

ENCOURAGING:

STUDY GUIDES AVAILABLE FROM EKKLESIA MUSKOGEE







STUDY GUIDE

ROMANS

THE GREATEST LETTER EVER WRITTEN.

THE GREATEST LETTER EVER WRITTEN

Martin Luther said the book of Romans is "the greatest letter ever written." Why would he say that? The Apostle Paul writes to the 1st century church at Rome, as well as to us today, about the depths of God's holiness, man's sinfulness, Jesus' sufficient work to save, and God's salvation given to sinners, free of charge. The book of Romans is the high point of all of Scripture, teaching most clearly who God is in sovereignty, what God requires in his holiness, and what God provides in his grace toward His people. This letter answers with great detail questions like *why do we need the gospel? what is the gospel? how deep is the gospel?* and then beautifully finishes with *how then should we live?* Come and study the greatest letter ever written.

PART 2 - WHAT IS THE GOSPEL? - ROMANS 3:21–7:25