

Creative Living Bible Study



This book belongs to:



Transformation *of the Heart*

Studies from the Book of Romans

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Transformation of the Heart

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Lesson 1

INTRODUCTION

The world is filled with confusion about spiritual truth. As human beings with spiritual natures, we seek to know a power greater than ourselves as well as the origins from which we came. We possess an instinct to worship someone or something. And we have a conscience sensitive to moral laws which informs us in how well we succeed or fail in obeying these laws. Our spiritual nature creates the need to understand spiritual truth.

Romans is a book that clarifies issues of spirituality. It explains our origins and declares the character of God, who rules the universe and alone is worthy of our worship. Romans makes clear how to know God personally and experience His strength to live a fulfilled life. It declares His great and sacrificial love for us and the power He provides for healthy, constructive and meaningful living.

One theme runs throughout the 66 books of the Bible--the theme of redemption. This is the means by which God brings mankind back into eternal relationship with Himself. Romans has been called the watershed of Scripture, because, of all the books of the Bible, it gives the most complete presentation of God's plan of redemption. Perhaps this is why the book of Romans is said to have been more instrumental than any other in changing lives and shaping today's western world.

Augustine, who lived in the 4th century and is regarded as one of the most influential leaders of the first thousand years of the Christian Church, was profoundly influenced by the Book of Romans. As a young man, he distressed his believing mother, Monica, as he wasted his brilliant mind and academic ability on immoral living and pagan philosophies. At age 30, he made a decision to trust his life to Jesus Christ after reading verses from Romans 13.

A thousand years later, Martin Luther, a monk and the son of a German coal miner, was tormented by his perspective of God as a terrifying judge. As he prepared to teach on the book of Romans at Wittenberg University, Luther was freed from his fear as he discovered that God's righteousness can be ours through our simple faith in Jesus Christ. Luther ushered in the Protestant Reformation, the greatest spiritual awakening the world has seen since the days of the apostles.

Others greatly influenced by Romans included John Wesley and John Bunyan. Wesley, an 18th century Anglican clergyman in England, entered the ministry after attending seminary and before he believed in Jesus Christ. Standing in a crowd of people listening to a preacher expounding on a portion of Romans, John Wesley was converted and became one of the strongest religious reformers the world has known. The Wesleyan revival swept England, breaking the back of corruption and transforming the nation as it gave birth to worldwide Methodism. John Bunyan, studying Romans in the Bedford jail, was moved to write *Pilgrim's Progress*, which has stood as a literary classic in the Christian world since the 1600's.

These are a few of the men touched by the book of Romans whose lives and teachings have shaped the western world. For them and for countless millions, Romans is a book that has brought freedom from spiritual confusion, unbelief and misconceptions of God. It has been called by some the most powerful human document ever written.

One can never study the book of Romans enough. No matter where we are on our spiritual journey, such a study can allow us to take great strides forward in spiritual understanding as it enlightens, uplifts and renews.

GREETINGS

Romans 1:1-17

It was around 56-58 A.D., about 30 years after the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ when the Apostle Paul wrote his letter to the Romans. He had no idea that, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, he was writing the most complete theological treatise ever written. He simply wrote out of genuine love for the believers in Rome.

Paul, or Saul of Tarsus, had once been a zealous Jewish religious leader devoted to persecuting and imprisoning Christians. One day on the road to Damascus, he was blinded by a bright light, and the confrontation that followed was with the Lord Jesus Christ himself, who charged Paul to take the gospel to the Gentile (non-Jewish) world (Acts 9).

Paul was faithful to that commission. Now, many years later, he had completed three missionary journeys across Asia Minor and Greece, establishing churches everywhere. He was staying in the Greek city of Corinth when he learned that Phoebe, a Greek believer, was going to Rome. Paul had always wanted to visit the church at Rome, which consisted of a number of groups meeting in homes around the city. These groups were probably established by converts under the great preaching of Peter on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:10) and also by converts from Paul's ministry who had moved to Rome.

But Paul's visit to Rome must be delayed until after he delivered charitable offerings he had collected from the Gentile churches to help the poor in the church at Jerusalem. So Paul seized the opportunity to write and send by Phoebe a letter to help firmly establish the Roman believers in their faith and prepare them for his future hoped-for visit. As it turned out, imprisonment in Jerusalem and shipwreck would delay Paul's visit to Rome for several years.

Rome in Paul's day was hailed for its political importance as the capital of the Roman Empire, as well as for its magnificent structures. Beautiful public buildings, aqueducts, baths, theaters and thoroughfares, along with extravagant all-night parties hosted by the ostentatious and vain young emperor Nero, made many view Rome as a superlative city. But others described Rome as "the sewer of the universe where all the scum from

every corner of the empire gathered." Architecture and political pride stood beside "shame for staggering urban social problems not unlike those of cities today" (*The NIV Study Bible*, p.1702).

Paul writes out of love for those believers who endured the pressures of Roman residence and thrived in their faith even though they had received no apostolic teaching. In the seventeen-verse introduction to his letter to the Roman believers, Paul lays out the great theme of this document: the righteousness of God as seen in His dealings with man and as offered to any individual who believes in His Son, Jesus Christ.

Read Romans 1:1-17.

1. How does Paul describe himself (Romans 1:1)?

Reference: Note 1, *apostle*, p. 11.

2. In this introduction, what did Paul say about the good news, or gospel, and about Jesus Christ (1:2-4)?

Reference: Note 2, *gospel*, p. 11.

3. To what were the believers in Rome called (Romans 1:5-6)?

4. Where did the grace and peace come from that Paul extended to the Roman believers (Romans 1:7)?

Reference: Note 3, *saints*, p. 11.

5. a. Why did Paul thank God for the Roman believers (Romans 1:8)?

b. What did Paul promise the Roman believers (Romans 1:9-13)?

6. a. Paul had been persecuted greatly for his declaration of the gospel across the Roman world. In spite of the humiliation, why was Paul still unashamed to declare the gospel (Romans 1:16)?

b. According to Romans 1:17, how do we receive the righteousness of God?

Note: *Righteousness* is the state of being "in the right" in relation to God. *Faith* is believing and acting upon God's Word.

BUILDING ON THE BASICS

Choosing a Good Master

Paul was a man with one of the sharpest intellects of all time. Romans still stands as one of the greatest masterpieces of logic in literature. He was also "a Hebrew of Hebrews," probably able to proudly trace his genealogy back to Abraham on both paternal and maternal sides. Paul was born and educated in Tarsus, a great Greek university center. He was also a freeborn Roman citizen, a privilege shared by only one in five in his day.

These characteristics made Paul a part of three great cultures of his day. Yet he identified himself as a "slave of Jesus Christ." The six million slaves in the Roman Empire were seen as property, not persons. But in loving devotion and total submission to Christ, Paul so introduced himself.

William Penn once said that either we shall be governed by God or ruled by tyrants. The truth is, we all serve some master. People devote themselves to acquiring material things or power or recognition or pleasure or some other self-gratification or cause. Whether we are conscious of our choice, we all choose our devotions and thereby our master.

Paul, for all the advantages afforded to him, chose Christ as his Master. As we begin our study of Romans, we will look at some "masters" that compete for our allegiance and what the Bible has to say about choosing our master.

1. a. What are some things we can easily place on the throne of our lives besides God? To what can we become enslaved?

b. What results from such devotion?

2. a. What "masters" are referred to in 1 John 2:16-17?

b. What warning and encouragement is found in the following?

1 John 2:17

Matthew 7:24-27

3. What is characteristic of the one who chooses God as his master?

Deuteronomy 6:5

Micah 6:8

Proverbs 3:5-6

4. Why should we place the Lord on the throne of our lives according to the following?

Psalm 100:3,5

Psalm 18:30,32

Jeremiah 10:23; 29:11

5. What do we all seek which can only come from the Lord?

Isaiah 26:3

Isaiah 33:6

Psalm 112:1, 7-8

John 10:10b

6. According to Psalm 23, what blessings come when the Lord is our master Shepherd?

7. a. How did Paul compare his life before and after making Christ his master?

Philippians 3:7-9 (cf. 3:4b-6)

b. *Optional question:* What did Paul find in knowing and serving Christ that made his life in Christ so much better, even with hardship and persecution?

S U M M A R Y

8. What things in your life seek first place?

9. Why is it important to keep a careful watch on what is mastering our lives?

10. a. What does the Bible promise if you choose Jesus Christ as the Master of your life?

Matthew 11:28-30

b. What is your desire today?

LESSON 1 NOTES

1 *apostle* is one who is sent by authority with a commission. The apostles were Jesus' authorized agents or representatives. Sometimes the word is used more generally as messenger (cf. John 13:16). In the technical sense, it is used (1) of the Twelve (Mark 3:14)--in which sense it is also applied to Paul (Romans 1:1)--and (2) of a larger group including Barnabas (Acts 14:14), James the Lord's brother (Galatians 1:19), and possibly Andronicus and Junias (Romans 16:7).

2 *gospel* (1:1) means "the Good News." In the New Testament, the gospel refers to the message that Christ died for our sins, was buried, and rose again, and now is able to save all who trust Him (1 Corinthians 15:1-4). The gospel was promised in the Old Testament, beginning in Genesis 3:15, and touched on by Isaiah (Isaiah 1:18; 53; 55) and other prophets. Although promised by the prophets, they did not fully understand it (1 Peter 1:10-12). Jesus Christ, the Son of God, became a man, born of a Jewish virgin in the line of David as prophesied (Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:18-25). Through His substitutionary death and victorious resurrection, Christ is able to give victory over sin and eternal life to all who believe.

3 *saints* (1:7). The meaning of this word in the Greek is related to "holiness" or "sanctification." All Christians are saints and are sanctified in that they are positionally "set apart" to God and are experientially being made increasingly "holy" by the Holy Spirit.

4 *first for the Jew* (1:16). "Not only in time but also in privilege. 'Salvation is from the Jews' (John 4:22), and the Messiah was a Jew. The 'very words of God' (Romans 3:2), the covenants, law, temple worship, revelation of the divine glory, and Messianic prophecies came to them (Romans 9:3-5). These privileges, however, were not extended to the Jews because of their superior merit or because of God's partiality toward them. It was necessary that the invasion of this world by the gospel begin at a particular point with a particular people, who in turn were responsible to carry that gospel to the other nations." *The NIV Study Bible*, p. 1706.

5 *salvation* (1:16). Paul did not explain salvation here; he would thoroughly explain it in his letter. See *gospel* definition, note 2.

Lesson 2

MAN'S PREDICAMENT I

Romans 1:18-32

The believers in Rome woke daily to the rule of the young and unprincipled Emperor Nero. The inner city problems of Rome were horrible, but the elite experience was very different. While the market places of the city began to bustle with the common people, the handmaidens in sheer gowns in Nero's palace prepared oil baths in warm salt water pools for their mistresses. The afternoon brought gladiator shows or participant sports in huge gymnasiums with adjacent open baths.

Nero loved grand and extravagant entertainment, often hosting all-night parties at his palace. With pomp and childishness, he would flaunt his huge dining room ceiling that rained down flowers and perfume under the larger revolving roof perfectly synchronized with the heavens. Scantly-clad dancing girls entertained the guests as they drank from golden goblets, gorged and feasted, and, as passions rose, indulged in pleasures of all kinds until dawn.

In 64 A.D., six years after Paul sent his letter to the believers in Rome, Nero blamed the Christians for a fire that destroyed large areas of the city. The populace believed Nero caused the fire himself and stood aghast as the emperor carried out torture of Christian men, women and children in the arena (cf. Tacitus, *Annals*, 15.44).

Under the rule of this ungodly man, the believers in Rome could readily appreciate Paul's words describing such a person in Romans 1. Paul's letter began by explaining man's historical pattern that leads to such corruption. He declared that everyone is given the knowledge of God's existence and eternal power through the splendors of nature. Even so, men choose to

"suppress the truth by their wickedness" and "neither glorify God nor give thanks to Him." This response to the Creator, Paul continues, brings God's wrath, a judgment manifested in God "giving over" man to his foolish thinking as he persists in "worshiping the creature rather than the Creator." The results lead to sexual perversion and a depraved mind given to practicing and promoting all kinds of destructive behavior.

Paul proclaims that the one who refuses to acknowledge God, ignoring the understanding God has given, sinks deeper and deeper into all kinds of wrong behavior. His life-style exhibits debasing passion and vile thinking. God's response is to allow man to suffer the consequences of his behavior.

Read Romans 1:18-27.

1. Toward what is the wrath of God directed (Romans 1:18)?

Reference: Note 1, *wrath of God*, p. 19.

2. How has God revealed Himself to all (Romans 1:19-20)?

3. a. What choices does man make regarding the revelation of God (Romans 1:21a)?

b. What is the result (Romans 1:21b-23)?

c. What outward manifestations display man's decision to reject God (Romans 1:24-27)?

Read Romans 1:28-32.

4. a. What basic sin is identified in Romans 1:28a?

b. What is God's response (Romans 1:28b)?

Note: *God gave them over* (vv. 24,26,28) shows how God's judgment is in letting sin run its destructive course.

5. a. Study and list the sins found in Romans 1:29-31.

b. What knowledge do these sinners have (Romans 1:32a)?

c. What is the twofold sin found in Romans 1:32b?

BUILDING ON THE BASICS

Worship and Wholeness

According to the Bible, God made man in His image with the capacity to have a relationship with Him. For this reason, we feel incomplete until we know and worship our Creator. St. Augustine said centuries ago, "Thou hast made us for Thyself, O God, and our hearts are restless until they find their rest in Thee." Pascal, the French physicist, stated it this way: "There is a God-shaped vacuum in the heart of every man which only God can fill through His Son, Jesus Christ."

As we see in this lesson, instead of filling this vacuum by worshiping God, man prefers to go his own independent way. He exalts his own thinking and creates material objects of worship (1:22-23). While they meet no real need, they allow him to continue to do what he wants when he wants (against his God-given conscience). He becomes consumed by sexual passions and perversions and begins to "worship and serve created things rather than His Creator" (1:25).

The result of this cycle historically is the destruction of individual character (1:28-32) and the demise of entire societies. Not too many years would pass before the growing moral void in the great Roman Empire would lead to its extinction.

The fact that man's rejection of God immediately leads him into worshipping idols (material things) proves man's spiritual need to worship. Idolatry is the worship of images that is prevalent in societies around the world today. But in a broader sense, idolatry is the deifying of self and other created things rather than God (1:25; cf. Colossians 3:5).

In his book, *The Pursuit of God.*, A. W. Tozer says, "Before the Lord God made man upon the earth He first prepared for him a world of useful and pleasant things for his sustenance and delight. In the Genesis account of the creation these are called simply 'things.' They were made for man's use, but they were meant always to be external to the man and subservient to him. In the deep heart of the man was a shrine where none but God was worthy to come. Within him was God; without, a thousand gifts which God had showered upon him....Our woes began when God was forced out of His central shrine and things were allowed to enter. Within the human heart,

things have taken over. Men have now by nature no peace within their hearts, for God is crowned there no longer, but there in the moral dusk stubborn and aggressive usurpers fight among themselves for the first place on the throne....God's gifts now take the place of God, and the whole course of nature is upset by the monstrous substitution."

Man's deepest needs--to experience a relationship with God and receive from that relationship a lasting sense of security, self-worth and being loved--can only be met as we know and worship our Creator. The good news of Paul's letter to the Romans is that lasting wholeness--peace with God and ourselves--can be experienced. In this lesson, we will make some observations about the relationship between worship and personal wholeness.

1. a. What does man choose to worship rather than God as referenced in Romans 1:18-32?

b. Which of these are prevalent in our world today?

2. a. The first of the Ten Commandments states that we should have no other gods before God. The second is that we should not make or bow down to idols (cf. Exodus 20:3-4). What general results of misdirected worship is God seeking to spare us from, as seen in Romans 1:18-32?

b. How is idolatry contrasted with worship of God in the following passages?

Psalm 135:14-18

Isaiah 46:1-7

3. a. What are some reasons God is worthy of our praise?

1 Chronicles 29:11

Psalm 33:6-9

Psalm 113:4-6

Psalm 145:8-9

Psalm 146:7-9

John 3:16

b. When we worship the Lord, what needs are met through the resulting intimate relationship with Him?

Isaiah 1:18 (1 John 1:9)

Psalm 62:1-2

Philippians 4:6-7

James 1:5

Romans 8:31b,38-39

4. a. What is the call to worship found in Psalm 100?

b. What is the promise of Psalm 16:11?

S U M M A R Y

5. a. What is idolatry, and to what does it lead?

b. What are the results of idolatry in our world today?

6. How can we detect, on a daily basis, what we are truly worshiping in our lives?

7. a. How would you define true worship of God?

b. What does the Bible promise true worship will bring about in your life?

c. What is the relationship between true worship and personal wholeness (defined as *fulfillment* or *being at peace with God and self*)?

LESSON 2 NOTES

1 *wrath of God is being revealed* (1:18). "Not a petulant, irrational burst of anger, such as humans often exhibit, but a holy, just revulsion against what is contrary to and opposes His holy nature and will. God's wrath is not limited to the end-time judgment of the wicked (1 Thessalonians 1:10; Revelation 19:15; 20:11-15). Here the wrath of God is his abandonment of the wicked to their sins (vv. 24-32)." *The NIV Study Bible*, p. 1707. See also, Note 2, *Judgment Day*, p. 28.

Lesson 3

MAN'S PREDICAMENT II

Romans 2:1-3:8

In the first three chapters of Romans, Paul creates a hypothetical courtroom scene. To this courtroom he brings three types of people before God, who is the righteous judge bound to administer justice and punish evil.

Chapter 1 exhibits the case of the pagan person who spurns the revelation of God around him. The prosecution proves his practice and promotion of evil. He is clearly guilty.

Chapter 2 states the case for the Jewish or Gentile moralist. This person thinks he is justified before God because he is better than the reprobate of Chapter 1. However, the prosecution points out that this person also violates the laws of God. Through his judgment of others, he demonstrates his ability to know right from wrong. Yet he is blind to his own faults of cheating, lying, gossiping and slandering others, harboring bitterness and other sins. By his own standard of judgment, the self-righteous Jew or Gentile stands guilty alongside the pagan.

Finally, Paul presents the case of the "religious" Jew who trusts in his ancestry and his knowledge of God's laws to justify Him before God. He sees himself as a guide to the sinners of the world, yet he neither trusts God nor obeys the laws he teaches. Paul declares that no Jew has ever received righteous standing before God because of lineage and circumcision, but only by obeying God from a heart of devotion. Because the religious Jew fails to do this, he stands just as condemned as the pagan or Gentile to whom he finds himself spiritually superior.

Paul continues to reason from the standpoint of the religious Jew: "But if my sinful behavior shows how merciful and good God is, why am I not acquitted?" "God forbid!" says Paul. "If God reasoned that way He would judge no one." Paul continues, "You deserve God's righteous and impartial judgment, and will receive it."

Note: In addition to the NIV Bible, the New Living Translation and study Bibles such as Life Application Bible or The NIV Study Bible can aid understanding of Romans.

Read Romans 2:1-11.

1. a. Why is the self-righteous person who stands in judgment of others also guilty (Romans 2:1,3)?

b. Which of the sins in Romans 1:21,29-32 are common to even "moral" Jewish or Gentile people?

2. a. As stated before, "God's wrath is not an irrational burst of anger, such as humans often exhibit, but a holy, just revulsion against what is contrary to and opposes His holy nature and will."¹ There will be a final judgment where each person will be held accountable for their actions (Romans 2:5,16). Until then, God extends kindness, patience and tolerance toward mankind. The self-righteous person mistakes God's goodwill toward him as approval, but what is God really seeking to do (Romans 2:4; see also 2 Peter 3:9b)?

Note: *Repentance* is a sorrow for sin and turning to God with a resolve to live a life that pleases Him.

Reference: Note 2, *Judgment Day*, p. 28.

b. What phrases describe the two kinds of people in Romans 2:7-8?

c. What will each receive from God (2:6, 9-10)?

Reference: Note 3, *first for the Jew*, p. 28.

d. What will be true of God in all His judgments (Romans 2:11)?

Read Romans 2:12-16.

3. a. From where does the Gentile receive the laws of God upon which he will be judged (Romans 2:14-15)?

b. In addition to these laws of conscience, the Jew has the benefit of receiving the written laws of God. For what will the Jew be held accountable (2:13)?

Read Romans 2:17-28.

4. a. List the things the "religious" Jew mistakenly depends on to make him right before God (2:17-20).

Reference: Note 4, *the law*, p. 28.

b. What renders the "religious" Jew guilty (2:21-24)?

5. a. Paul declares that circumcision, which marked the Jew as the recipient of God's promises to Abraham, is of no benefit if the one circumcised does not obey God from a heart of devotion. While the Jew sees his spiritual standing as far superior to that of the uncircumcised, what is really true (Romans 2:25-27)?

Reference: Note 5, *Circumcision*, p. 28.

b. Who is the true Jew in God's eyes (Romans 2:28-29)?

Read Romans 3:1-8.

6. In this epistle, Paul often raises rhetorical questions which his readers would likely ask. The Jew's perspective might be: "If we aren't automatically put right with God by being Jewish, what advantage is there in being a Jew?" How does Paul answer this question (3:2)?

7. *Optional:* The religious Jew also might ask: "Even though entrusted with God's promises and commands, what if some are unfaithful (as evidenced by the sinful conduct mentioned in 2:21-24)? Would God then be unfaithful to His promises to Abraham? How did Paul answer this question (Romans 3:4; cf. Titus 1:2; Deuteronomy 32:4)?

8. *Optional:* Some might even ask, "If my sinful behavior shows up how merciful and good God is, why am I not acquitted?" (3:5-7). How does Paul answer this question (3:6, 8c; see also last paragraph of commentary, p. 22)?

BUILDING ON THE BASICS

The Value of a Non-Judgmental Heart

The Jewish moralist was deceived in believing that his judgmental attitude about the pagan's sin made him righteous before God. However, Paul pointed out that a judgmental attitude involves pride, self-righteousness and a lack of compassion, all of which violate God's supreme laws of love and faith. Thus, the religious Jew was as guilty of sin before God as the pagan.

It is human nature to criticize others to make ourselves feel superior. We are prone to fiercely judge others, all the while feeling very superior to them. We can even be convinced we are acceptable before God because of our judgmental attitude toward people who oppose Him.

But far from making us righteous before God, a judgmental attitude reflects pride, arrogance, and a lack of love and compassion. These attitudes separate us from God and others and should point us to our need of God's salvation from our own sin.

The good news is that God wants to create a non-judgmental heart in us. In this lesson, we will look at the need to overcome judgmental attitudes and how we can allow God to give us a heart of wisdom and humility.

1. a. What are we instructed to do regarding defending what is right?

Romans 12:9

Deuteronomy 1:16

b. What is the sure standard for distinguishing right from wrong according to Psalms 19:7-11?

2. a. What is the difference between standing for right, or making fair judgments, and having a judgmental attitude toward people?

b. What negative attitudes often accompany a judgmental attitude toward others? How did a judgmental attitude affect the Jews of Paul's day?

c. How does a judgmental attitude affect our relationships with others and with God?

3. Why does God want us to have a non-judgmental spirit? How does a non-judgmental attitude affect our relationships with God and others?

4. What did Jesus teach regarding judgmental attitudes toward others?

Matthew 7:1-2

Matthew 7:4-5

Luke 18:10-14

5. a. It is easy to have a judgmental attitude toward one who has wronged us. Even though we have been hurt, what supernatural responses does God want to build into our lives for our good?

Romans 12:14,17a (Matthew 5:44)

Colossians 3:13

b. How did Jesus respond to those who wronged Him?

1 Peter 2:23

6. a. These responses are not natural to human nature. Only Jesus Christ can produce these responses in us. The Scriptures make clear that the strength to overcome evil with good can only come from Christ living His life in and through us. How do the following describe this experience?

Colossians 1:27b

John 14:23

b. How does this begin?

John 1:12 (speaking of Jesus Christ)

Revelations 3:20

c. What results when we receive Christ into our lives?

Ezekiel 36:26-27

S U M M A R Y

7. How do you benefit from cultivating a non-judgmental attitude in your life? What is avoided and what is gained?

8. Are you struggling with a judgmental attitude toward someone? How do you want to respond to this situation?

9. Without Christ in control of our hearts, it is extremely difficult to overcome a judgmental attitude. Perhaps the following prayer in some way expresses the desire of your heart.

Lord Jesus, I need you. Thank you for dying on the cross to take the penalty for all the wrongs of my life, including my harsh judgments of others. Please take control of my life and give me a heart that pleases you. Amen.

LESSON 3 NOTES

1 *The NIV Study Bible*, p. 1707.

2 *Judgment Day* (cf. Romans 2:5,16). In the New Testament, judgment is one of the aspects of the coming of the kingdom of God. At that time, God will overthrow every resistance, both among evil spiritual powers (1 Corinthians 6:2-3) and also among men (Matthew 25:31-46). This judgment will affect all men, because all are responsible to God according to the grace that has been granted them (Matthew 11:20-24; Luke 12:17ff; Romans 2:12-16). This present world will be shaken and destroyed (Matthew 24:29,35), and a new world will replace the present one (2 Peter 3:13; Revelation 21:1). God will entrust the administration of this final judgment to His Son at His appearance in glory (Matthew 3:11-12; John 5:22; Romans 2:16, etc.). *The Zondervan Pictorial Study Bible*, p. 460.

3 *first for the Jew* (Romans 2:9). "The statement *first for the Jew, then for the Gentile* (lit. *Greek*) does not imply special consideration for Jews. Instead, in the light of the divine standard of impartiality (*God does not show favoritism*), it emphasizes that the entire human race is dealt with by God." Walvoord & Zuck, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, New Testament, p. 445. See also Note 24, p. 11.

4 *the law* (Romans 2:17-27). The Old Testament Scriptures were given to Israel as prophets wrote under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. They held the righteous precepts of God which the nation of Israel was entrusted with in order to reveal the righteousness of God to the world.

5 *Circumcision* is the cutting off of the foreskin, a practice which originated in various western Semitic cultures as a religious act. The Hebrew rite was instituted by God as a sign of the covenant between Him and Abraham (Genesis 17:1-14). God commanded Abraham and all his household to be circumcised. The rite was required of every male Jew (descendant of Abraham) and any foreigner joining themselves to the Hebrew nation. This act assured the recipient of admittance to the fellowship of the covenant people and of a share in the promises of God to Israel. Circumcision metaphorically symbolized cutting away "pride and sinfulness of the heart" (Leviticus 26:41, Deuteronomy 10:16, Jeremiah 4:4, Acts 7:51). Because circumcision predated the Law, the heart attitude behind this act was first and foremost true faith in God.

Lesson 4

GOD'S GIFT OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

Romans 3:9-31

Paul declared the theme of his letter to the Romans as he wrote, "I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes....For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is *by faith* from first to last, just as it is written: 'The righteous will live *by faith*'" (Romans 1:16-17). The rest of his letter would expound on these words, as we see clearly in Romans 3.

Paul began by proving every person's need for salvation (Romans 1:18-3:20). He created a hypothetical courtroom situation, bringing the three types of people one by one before God, the righteous judge. First he presents the pagan who rejected God altogether. Then he presents the self-righteous person (Jew and Gentile) who thought himself good because he condemned the ungodly behavior of the pagan. Finally Paul brings forward the religious Jew who relied on his Jewish heritage and his knowledge of God's laws to make him righteous. One by one, Paul clearly exposes each as guilty of breaking the laws given them by God, laws written on their consciences and, in the case of the Jew, recorded in the Old Testament.

Having clearly demonstrated man's predicament, Paul proceeded to explain the good news. God offers us a righteousness apart from keeping the laws perfectly, and He does so without violating His own righteous judgment. By sending His Son to take the death penalty for all sin, those who put faith in Him are made right with God as a gift. God "freely by His grace" declares the one righteous who puts their trust in "the redemption that came by Christ Jesus" (3:24). This is true for both Gentile and Jew "through the same faith" in Jesus Christ (3:30).

Paul anticipated the question, "If we are justified by faith apart from observing the law, does this mean the believer no longer has to keep God's laws?" "Not at all!" stated Paul, explaining that faith in Jesus Christ enables us to live a godly life (3:31).

Helpful Definitions:

Justification: God's declaration of a guilty sinner as "not guilty" on the basis of Christ's work received by faith.

Grace: God's undeserved favor toward those who believe in Christ's redemptive work on their behalf.

Redemption: God's purchase of man out of slavery to sin.

Propitiation: satisfaction of God's righteous demands.

Atonement: the sacrifice that satisfies the righteous wrath of God toward man's sin.

Remission: cancellation or pardon of a debt of sin.

Reconciliation: brought back into intimate relationship with God.

Note: To better understand this lesson, be sure to read "*Why did Christ have to die in my place?*" p. 37.

Read Romans 3:9-20.

1. What fact has Paul proven thus far (Romans 3:9b,20)?

2. Romans 3:10-18 refer to Old Testament Scriptures describing the sin of Jew and Gentile alike. What various manifestations of man's independence did Paul highlight in these passages?

Read Romans 3:21-31.

3. a. What does God give and to whom (Romans 3:21-22)?

Note: *apart from the law* (3:21) means not on the basis of good deeds. *to which the Law and the Prophets testify* (3:21) means to which their Scriptures referred (Genesis 15:6; Psalm 32:1-2; Habakkuk 2:4).

b. Why is God's provision of righteousness needed by all (Romans 3:23)?

c. What does the gift of God's righteousness entail according to Romans 3:24?

Reference: *Justification, redemption*, See *Helpful Definitions*, p. 30. Also Note 1b and 1d, "*Why did Christ have to die in my place?*," p. 37.

4. a. How can God acquit the believer of sin and remain just (Romans 3:25-26a)?

Reference: *propitiation*, See *Helpful Definitions*, p. 30 and Note 1a, "*Why did Christ have to die in my place?*" p. 37.

Note: *left the sins committed beforehand unpunished* (3:25b). The sins of God's people in the Old Testament were symbolically atoned for through animal sacrifices which pointed to the once-and-for-all atoning sacrifice of Christ on the cross years later.

b. What do the following verses reveal about the need for Christ's sacrifice? (Note 1, p. 37 may be helpful here.)

Romans 6:23a

Leviticus 17:11

Hebrews 9:22b

Hebrews 10:10

5. Find the single phrase common in the following verses which describe what is required to be declared "not guilty" and be given Christ's righteousness by God.

Romans 3:22

Romans 3:25

Romans 3:26

Romans 3:28

Note: Saving faith looks to Jesus Christ's sacrificial death for us as the only way we can be made right with God.

Reference: Note 1, "*Why did Christ have to die in my place?*" p. 37.

6. Why can the believer not boast about his righteous standing before God (Romans 3:27-28; Ephesians 2:8-9)?

7. What is true of God and the righteousness He offers (Romans 3:29-30)?

8. Does faith in Christ's redemption exempt the believer from obeying God's laws (Romans 3:31)?

BUILDING ON THE BASICS

Receiving God's Free Gift

The Bible tells us that from the beginning, the penalty for going our own way apart from God has been death, or separation from a holy God (Genesis 2:4-17; 3). Feeling guilt and a spiritual vacuum, man has devised many ways to try to reconcile his relationship with his Creator. Manmade religions, trying to live a good life, ethics and philosophies, are all ways mankind in general has sought to address the spiritual void inside. Yet man still experiences the void created by his need to be right in his relationship with God.

The Bible says this is because no one, whether pagan, moralist or devoutly religious, can be right with God through his own efforts. The price cannot be paid by man, for "all have sinned..." (3:23), and "the wages of sin is death" (6:23).

The good news declared in Romans 3:24f is that God, motivated by His great love for us, has Himself paid the price for our relationship with Him to be restored. He came to earth in the person of His Son, Jesus Christ, and paid the penalty for our sin as He died on the cross. This payment allows us to be acquitted of guilt and to enter the presence of holy God once again.

Thus salvation is a gift purchased by God, absolutely free of charge to us! "The *gift* of God is eternal life in Jesus Christ our Lord" (6:23), and we are "justified *freely* by His grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus" (3:24).¹

Our part is to simply turn from going our own way apart from God and place our faith in Jesus Christ's provision for our sin. As we take this step of

faith, Romans 3 declares, God not only pronounces us not guilty but also clothes us with Christ's perfect righteousness. One writer described it thus:

*Because the sinless Savior died
My guilty soul is counted free,
For God, the Just, is satisfied
To look on Him, and pardon me.*

Paul ends this chapter declaring that faith in Christ not only makes us right with God but also gives us a new heart. Changed on the inside, we are motivated and empowered to live by godly principles.

What good news! God's gift of salvation is free and as Isaiah said, "without money and without price" (Isaiah 55:1). As we continue our study of *Transformation of the Heart*, let's look more closely at the rewards of receiving God's free gift of salvation.

1. What mental, physical and social problems does man experience as a result of his choice to go his own independent way from God?

2. In what ways do people try to deal with guilt and fill the spiritual vacuum inside?

3. a. What continues to separate man from holy God according to these Old Testament passages?

Isaiah 53:6a

Isaiah 59:2

b. How does sinful man at best stand before a holy God?

Isaiah 64:6

4. a. How did the prophet Isaiah describe God's gift of redemption through Christ hundreds of years before His death?

Isaiah 53:4-6, 10-12

b. How are we made right with God according to Romans 3:22, 24-25?

Reference: Note 1, *Why did Christ have to die in my place?, redemption, propitiation*, p. 37.

c. What is the result of receiving God's gift of righteousness in Christ?

Romans 5:1

5. Romans 3:31 points to the fact that faith in Christ empowers us to live according to godly principles. Why does faith in Christ change our daily lives according to the following?

Ezekiel 36:26-27

2 Corinthians 5:17

S U M M A R Y

6. a. How are we made right with God?

- b. Why did Christ have to die on the cross for us?

- c. What happens to our heart when we place our faith in Christ?

If you have never received Christ into your life and would like to do so now, the following is a suggested prayer:

Lord Jesus, I need you. Thank you for dying on the cross in my place to pay the penalty for the sins of my life. Thank you for forgiving my sins and giving me eternal life. Please take control of my life and make me the person you want me to be. Amen.

If you prayed that prayer, what is Christ's promise to you?

Revelation 3:20b

Hebrews 13:5b

7. Receiving Christ is a once-and-for-all decision that places us in the family of God eternally (1 John 5:14-15). But as a follower of Christ, we continue to find cleansing from sin, forgiveness, and a new start through the blood of Christ shed on the cross.

- a. Are there specific sins troubling you today? What is God's promise?

1 John 1:9 (1 John 1:7b)

Note: Confession is simply agreeing with God about our sin.

LESSON 4 NOTES

1 "Why did Christ have to die in my place?" This is one of the most important yet least understood questions of the Christian faith. The following explanations of various biblical terms answer this question:

a. Propitiation is a biblical word meaning "satisfaction" and refers to the righteous demands of God being satisfied." God will not compromise His attributes of righteousness and justice which are legitimately outraged by man's deliberate violation of His will. But God's attribute of love motivated Him to provide a way to bring man back into fellowship with Himself *without compromising* His attributes of absolute righteousness and justice. God's holy character demanded that man's sin be paid for. Therefore, God came into the world in the person of His Son, Jesus Christ. Because Christ was born without sin and never committed an act of sin, He qualified to bear the holy wrath of God due the human race as He willingly died on the cross for our sin. In so doing He "satisfied" the just demands of God's holy character against man's sin. This act set God's love free to pour out grace on those who receive His gift of salvation. In this way, God is "just and the one who justifies the man who has faith in Jesus" (Romans 3:26). See *d. Justification* below.

b. Redemption is a biblical word meaning "to buy out" or "to set free by the payment of a price (ransom)" and refers to a slave being purchased out of slavery. Romans 3:24 says we are "justified freely by his grace through the *redemption* that came by Christ Jesus." As born sinners, we are in the slave market of sin, so to speak. But Christ, the only free man who ever lived (because He was sinless), paid the ransom price of His own blood to purchase sinners out of the slave market of sin and set them free to become sons of God. Only by the price of death can one be set free (Romans 6:23), and only one who is free (sinless as Christ was; cf. Heb. 4:15; 2 Cor. 5:21) can buy a slave's freedom. By paying the ransom price of His shed blood, Jesus purchased the person who puts faith in Him out of the slave market of sin and sets him free to become a son of God (Gal. 3:13; 1 Tim. 2:5-6; 1 Pet. 1:18-19; Gal 4:4-5).

c. Reconciliation means "to change a person from enmity to friendship." The Bible says that man is born at enmity with God. Sin erects a barrier between man and God because of a sense of guilt in man. This guilt puts him at odds with God. Reconciliation is the aspect of Christ's death on the cross which removed the barrier of man's sin and its consequences and thus took away guilt which caused enmity against God. Christ's death on the

cross removed every barrier between a holy God and sinful man. Reconciliation is available to all men, no matter how sinful. While reconciliation is available and sufficient for everyone, only those who accept the gift of this reconciliation personally by faith receive it. "Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Romans 5:1). "When we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to Him through the death of His Son" (Romans 5:10).

d. Justification refers to God declaring us "not guilty" and righteous in His sight, even though we are guilty of sin. God is able to do this because of the life and death of Jesus Christ acting as man's substitute. When God declares a person righteous in His sight, He does so on the basis of the life and death of the One who was acting on his behalf. "Jesus our Lord...was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification" (Romans 4:24-25). When we put faith in Jesus Christ to save us from sin, God declares us justified, or not guilty, and righteous. We are justified by the death of Christ which paid the penalty for our sin, and we are justified by the life of Christ whose life of righteousness is also credited to us. This justification, which is all by God's grace and received by faith, brings us into fellowship with God as a child in His family.

Lesson 5

RIGHTEOUSNESS BY FAITH

Romans 4

Paul's clear purposes in writing to the believers in Rome were to prepare them for his visit and to explain the gospel he would proclaim among them. A subtle third purpose was to address the conflict between Jewish (circumcised) and Gentile (uncircumcised) believers.

Judaizers, who insisted one must be circumcised and follow Jewish laws in addition to receiving Christ, had followed Paul from city to city throughout his ministry, confusing Jew and Gentile alike who placed their faith in Jesus Christ. It is not certain if the Judaizers had reached Rome before Paul, but clearly he sought to clarify for the Romans the concept of justification by faith apart from works.

First, Paul showed how both Jew and Gentile were guilty of transgressing God's laws (Romans 1:18-3:20). Then, he explained that God declares righteous the one who puts faith in His Son, Jesus Christ (Romans 3:21-26). Christ's righteousness is imputed (credited, transferred) to the believer in exchange for his unrighteousness imputed to Christ on the cross. The believer is justified with God because his sin was transferred to Christ and the righteousness of Christ transferred to him.

Finally, in Romans 3:27-31, Paul emphasized that we receive God's gift of righteousness by faith alone, not by works. Observing Jewish laws and rites, such as circumcision, is not required, although obedience to God is a natural outcome of true faith in Jesus Christ.

Now, in Romans 4, Paul proves from Old Testament Scripture that we are made right with God through faith alone. He uses the life Abraham, the father of Israel, to demonstrate that:

(1) God justified Abraham because of his faith, not his works (4:2-3).
"Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness."

(2) God did not declare Abraham righteous because he observed religious rites such as circumcision, because the rite of circumcision was established years later (Romans 4:9-11).

(3) God did not declare Abraham righteous because he kept Jewish laws because they were established centuries later (Romans 4:13-17).

Paul further explains that this makes Abraham not only the biological father of the Jews, but the spiritual father of Jew *and* Gentile alike whom God declares righteous because of their faith (4:12,18-24).

Helpful Definitions:

Justification: God's declaration of a guilty sinner as "not guilty" on the basis of Christ's work received by faith.
"Just-as-if-I'd never sinned."

See Note 1d, p. 38. Rom. 4:25; 5:18.

Grace: God's undeserved favor toward those who believe in Christ's redemptive work on their behalf.

Redemption: God's purchase of man out of slavery to sin.
See Note 1b, p. 37. Rom. 3:24; 8:23.

Propitiation: satisfaction of God's righteous demands.
See Note 1a, p. 37. Rom. 3:25.

Atonement: the sacrifice that satisfies the righteous wrath of God toward man's sin. Rom. 3:25.

Remission: cancellation or pardon of a debt of sin.

Reconciliation: brought back into intimate relationship with God.
See Note 1c, p. 37.

Review Romans 3:27-31 and Read Romans 4:1-17.

1. First, Paul shows that Abraham was not justified by works (4:2). On what basis did God cancel Abraham's sin and credit him with righteousness (4:3)?

2. How did David describe God's grace and justification as a gift in Psalm 32:1-2 (Romans 4:7-8)?

3. Secondly, Paul shows Abraham was not justified by religious rite (circumcision). What does Paul point out about Abraham's circumcision (4:9-10)?

Note: Abraham was circumcised at least 13 years after being declared righteous by God because of his faith (cf. Genesis 15:6; 17:24).

4. Finally, Paul shows Abraham did not inherit the promise of God by obeying the laws of Moses because those laws came hundreds of years later. How did Abraham receive God's promises to him and his descendants (4:13,16a)?

Reference: Note 1, *heir of the world*, p. 47.

Notes: *not through law* (4:13). The promises of God are not merited or conditioned upon keeping the law. *those who live by the law* (4:14) refers to those who claim the promises of God based upon keeping the laws of God. Paul has shown this impossible (Romans 1:18-3:20).

Read Romans 4:18-25.

5. God had promised Abraham innumerable descendants through whom He would bring blessing to the world. But Abraham at 99 and his wife

Sarah at 89 were still childless. Even so, what was Abraham's response (4:18-21)?

Note: Read Genesis 12:2-3; 15:4-6; 17:17-19; 18:10-14; 21:1-4 for a review of Abraham's story.

6. The Jew saw Abraham as the father of Israel. Whom does Paul declare Abraham the father of (Romans 4:11b-12, 16)?

7. Paul uses Abraham to prove God credits righteousness to the man or woman who trusts Him. What does God call us to believe today (4:24-25)?

BUILDING ON THE BASICS

Faith that Transforms

We are made right with God through faith, not works! Paul focuses on this biblical truth throughout his letter to Rome and especially in Romans 4.

Faith, or "trust in the Lord," is one of the fundamental principles of the Bible. There is no other way for a person to be right with God (Hebrews 11:6). "We can come to God without great intelligence, wealth, or high social standing...without rituals and ceremonies, priest or penance, but not without faith."³ Dr. W. H. Griffith Thomas put it, "Faith is our response to God's revelation; the link between God and man, and the channel of all divine blessings."

Faith is necessary to have a relationship with God, but that faith must be in what God asks us to believe, not in what we decide to believe. What does God require us to believe for faith that pleases Him?

Biblical faith has two parts. First, we must understand and then believe completely what God has revealed in His Word about Himself, about Christ, and about us. But this is not all that faith involves, because even devils know and believe these things (James 2:19).

Biblical faith also involves a conscious decision to accept what God has done for us through Christ's work on the cross. This will lead to a deep trust in God and assurance that, "By His grace *I* am made right with God because of Christ; what Christ has accomplished applies to *me*." According to the Bible, faith that pleases God is centered in Jesus Christ and what He has done. Each believer is called to declare his faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord (Romans 10:8-10).

The Bible also tells us that faith comes as a gift from God (Ephesians 2:8) given as we hear God's Word (Romans 10:17). The natural outcome of true faith in Christ is a life of loving service to Him as well as a life of peace and power from claiming the many promises of God's Word.

Thus, biblical faith affects our entire life and world view. As we continue our study of *Transformation of the Heart*, we will observe biblical faith, its benefits and its transforming power.

1. a. What do people tend to place trust in apart from God?

Proverbs 11:28

Proverbs 28:26

b. What are some other things modern men and women trust in?

c. Why do these things prove untrustworthy?

2. Why did Abraham's faith please God?

Romans 4:20-21

3. From where does faith come according to the following?

Ephesians 2:8

Romans 10:17

4. What does biblical faith require us to believe:

about God? Hebrews 11:6

about ourselves? Romans 3:23; 6:23

about Jesus Christ? 2 Corinthians 5:21 (1 Peter 3:18a)

Romans 10:8-9

5. What are some benefits of faith in Jesus Christ?

John 1:12 (speaking of Christ; also Galatians 3:26)

Acts 10:43

Romans 5:1

John 3:14-16

6. Why does faith in Jesus Christ change our lives from the inside out?

John 14:16-17, 23

Romans 5:5

Reference: Note 2, *Holy Spirit*, p. 47.

7. As God's dearly loved children, what does He tell us to do amidst the pressures and uncertainties of life?

Proverbs 3:5-6

Philippians 4:6-7

Psalm 55:22 (1 Peter 5:7)

8. What is the most convincing reason we should trust God?

Romans 8:32

S U M M A R Y

9. What is biblical faith?

10. What are some benefits of placing your faith in Christ?

11. How does faith change you from the inside out?

12. a. What pressing issues are you facing in your life today?

b. What does God encourage you to do as you face these issues with faith?

LESSON 5 NOTES

1 *heir of the world* (Romans 4:13). "*World* here refers to the creation, as in 1:20. No express mention of this heirship is made in the Genesis account of Abraham. He is promised "offspring like the dust of the earth" (Genesis 13:16) and possession of the land of Canaan (Genesis 12:7; 13:14-15; 15:7,18-21; 17:8), and that all the peoples on earth will be blessed through him (Genesis 12:3; 18:18) or his offspring (Genesis 22:18). But since, as Genesis already makes clear, God purposed through Abraham and his offspring to work out the destiny of the whole world, it was implicit in the promises to Abraham that he and his offspring would "inherit the earth" (see Psalm 37:9,11,22,29,34; Matthew 5:5). The full realization of this awaits the consummation of the Messianic kingdom at Christ's return." *The NIV Study Bible*, p. 1711. Reference: Note 1, *Second coming of Christ*, p. 89.

2 *Holy Spirit*. God has made Himself known in the Bible as a Trinity; three divine persons with the same essence as God. The Holy Spirit, known as the Third Person of the Trinity, indwells every person who personally receives Christ (John 1:12; 14:16-17). The Scriptures reveal the Holy Spirit not as an "it," but rather as a "He," a distinct personality. In John 3, Jesus tells Nicodemus that the Holy Spirit is the member of the Trinity who brings about regeneration or spiritual birth in the believer. While the Holy Spirit cannot be seen, we can see the evidence of His work (John 3:8).

The Scriptures further tell us that when we ask God (Luke 11:13) to "fill" us with His Spirit (Ephesians 5:18b), He responds by super-naturally instructing and empowering us to live the Christian life (Ephesians 3:16-20; Ezekiel 36:26-27). Sometimes the Bible refers to this as "Christ in you," as in Colossians 1:27b.

3 John Blanchard, *Right With God*, p. 105.

Lesson 6

BLESSINGS IN CHRIST

Romans 5

Thus far in his letter to the believers at Rome, Paul has shown that sin has separated every person who has ever lived from God. But when God placed man's sin on Christ at the cross, Christ paid the death penalty for man's sin in full. When a person puts faith in Christ, God credits Christ's payment for sin to his account. Paul proved from the life of Abraham that it is *faith* in the revelation of God that makes us right with him, not our works. Abraham was not just the father of the Jews, but of those who accept Christ's work on the cross on their behalf and live by faith in Him.

With this said, Paul begins to write about the Christian experience, which holds much cause for rejoicing. The great blessings which come from personal faith in Jesus Christ include peace with God, grace to live a life that pleases God, and eternal life.

Paul ends Chapter 5 by contrasting the unbeliever, a descendant and heir of the first man, Adam, with the believer, descendant of Christ and heir to every spiritual blessing in Him. Adam brought sin and death to all mankind through His disobedience. But Jesus, through His death and resurrection, brings peace, restoration and life to all who place their faith in Him.

Helpful Definitions:

Justification: God's declaration of a guilty sinner as "not guilty" on the basis of Christ's work received by faith. "Just-as-if-I'd never sinned." Note 1d, p. 38.

Grace: God's Riches At Christ's Expense. *Grace* either refers to:
a. God's undeserved favor toward those who believe in Christ,
or **b.** The power God gives to live a godly life.

Redemption: God's purchase of man out of slavery to sin.
Rom. 3:24; 8:23; Note 1b, p. 37.

Propitiation: satisfaction of God's righteous demands.
Rom. 3:25; Note 1a, p. 37.

Atonement: the sacrifice that satisfies the righteous wrath of God toward man's sin. Rom. 3:25.

Remission: cancellation or pardon of a debt of sin.

Reconciliation: brought back into intimate relationship with God. Note 1c, p. 37.

Read Romans 5:1-11.

1. List the blessings given to those who are justified by faith in Jesus Christ (5:1-2).

Notes: *access* (5:2). Jesus ushers us into the presence of God (cf. Hebrews 10:19-22). *hope in the glory of God* (5:2) refers to the Christian becoming what God made him to be before the fall of man recorded in Genesis 3. This happens through a heart transformation by the Holy Spirit (Col. 3:10; Ezek. 36:26-27) and a total transformation into Christ's likeness when we see Him (1 Jn. 3:2).

2. Paul also points to how God even uses suffering to bless the believer. What does suffering produce (5:3-5)?

References: Note 1, *hope does not disappoint us*, p. 55, and Note 2, *Holy Spirit*, p. 47.

3. How has God demonstrated His great love for us (5:8)?

4. What reasons to rejoice does Paul mention in Romans 5:9,11?

Note: *saved from God's wrath* means spared on judgment day (see Note 2, Judgment Day, p. 28).

Reference: Note 1d, *reconciliation*, p. 37, and Helpful Definitions, p. 49.

Read Romans 5:12-21.

5. How does Paul contrast the far-reaching results of Adam's sin and Jesus' sacrifice?

Adam's sin brought:

Jesus Christ's sacrifice brought:

5:12

5:15

5:16

5:17c

5:17a,18a

5:18b

5:20

5:19

5:21

5:21

6. What phrase in Romans 5:17 reveals who will experience the blessings Jesus Christ brought to the world?

BUILDING ON THE BASICS

The Peaceful Heart

Peace among individuals and nations is a major issue in our world today, as it has been in every generation of history. Personal peace is also difficult to obtain. In a high-tech world, we are continually bombarded with information, opportunities and demands. People have little time to reflect and often lose track of what is really important. Pressures strain and break relationships at home and in the workplace. The faith, hope and love we were made to thrive on escape us, and we have little peace.

God wants to restore peace to our lives. His gift in Jesus Christ is first peace with Him. Then He helps us find peace with ourselves and others and with the circumstances of life. God's peace is supernatural--it surpasses understanding. And His peace is protective--it guards our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus (Philippians 4:7).

"Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you." Jesus said. "I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid" (John 14:27). "You [Lord] will keep in perfect peace him whose mind is steadfast, because he trusts in you" (Isaiah 26:3). Let's take a closer look at the peace that comes through faith in Jesus.

1. a. What can destroy our peace as human beings?

b. What is man's sinful nature prone toward according to the following?

Psalm 120:6-7

Isaiah 59:8

2. What is the result of a lack of peace in the world around us?

3. According to Romans 5:1, how can we know peace with God?

Reference: Note 1, *Justification and Reconciliation*, pp. 37-38.

4. Referring to question #5 above, what brings a lack of peace when we are without Christ ("in Adam")?

b. What brings peace when we are "in Christ"?

5. How do the following verses refer to Jesus Christ regarding peace?

Isaiah 9:6

Isaiah 53:5 (Colossians 1:20)

6. What are some benefits of God's peace?

Psalm 4:8

Proverbs 14:30a

Philippians 4:7

7. What is the source of peace that passes understanding in the heart of the Christian?

John 14:27 (Jesus speaking)

Galatians 5:22

Reference: Note 2, *Holy Spirit*, p. 47.

8. a. Sin destroys peace, and when we lose our peace, sin is often present. How can we get God's help to identify sin (a definite act of disobedience) which has broken our peace?

Psalm 139:23-24

b. How can we restore peace with God?

1 John 1:9

Note: Confession involves agreeing with God about our sin and asking Him to help us change. It might be said that to confess means to: "Call it sin. Call it forgiven (on the cross). And call on God to change you."

9. God's Spirit often guides us by giving us a lack of peace about a certain direction. What does Colossians 3:15a instruct?

Note: When we sincerely desire to do God's will and lack peace about a certain direction, we should not move ahead.

10. What will God's Spirit lead us to do in relationship to other people?

Psalm 34:14

Romans 12:18

11. What do the following verses reveal about God's peace?

Isaiah 26:3

Isaiah 32:17

S U M M A R Y

12. Why is faith in Jesus Christ necessary to experience complete and lasting inner peace?

13. How can the Holy Spirit use peace (or lack of peace) in our lives (*Building on the Basics* Question 7 and 8)?

14. a. Is there any sin you need to confess in order to restore God's peace in your heart?

b. What is His promise (*Building on the Basics* Question 8b)?

15. a. Is there a relationship in which you want to ask God's help to pursue peace?

b. What is His promise as you ask His help (1 John 5:14-15)?

16. What are the benefits of God's peace in your life?

Note: God's peace continues as we trust and obey God's Word. The following bring encouragement and instruction.

When worried or fearful: Isaiah 41:10; Jeremiah 29:11

When confused: Proverbs 3:5-6; James 1:5

When feeling inadequate: 2 Corinthians 9:8

When fearing death: John 14:1-3; Psalm 23:4,6

LESSON 6 NOTES

1 *hope does not disappoint us* (5:5). "The believer's hope is not to be equated with unfounded optimism. On the contrary, it is the blessed assurance of our future destiny and is based on God's love, which is revealed to us by the Holy Spirit and objectively demonstrated to us in the death of Christ. Paul has moved from faith (v. 1) to hope (vv. 2:4-5) to love (v. 5; see 1 Corinthians 13:13)." *The NIV Study Bible*. p. 1712.

Lesson 7

IDENTIFICATION WITH CHRIST

Romans 6

Thus far in his letter to the believers at Rome, Paul has shown how the believer is set free from the *penalty* of sin by God's grace (Romans 3:23,26). In Romans 6-8, Paul explains how God's grace also sets the believer free from the *power* of sin.

Paul explains that the moment we place our faith in Jesus Christ, God places us into Christ, identifying us with Him in His death, burial and resurrection. This means that just as He died and left this life in which sin, guilt and death hold all captive, so the believer united with Christ in His death also dies to the power of sin in this world. Because we are also united with Christ in His resurrection, we are raised to live a totally new life in Christ in the presence of God. From our position in Christ, sin still seeks to control us, but we are no longer held captive by sin's power.

Our identification with Christ's death and resurrection therefore sets us free to live for God, giving us new power to say no to sin and yes to righteousness. But to appropriate this power over sin, we must first understand and then rely on our identification and union with Christ. Then we must continually choose to serve Christ and obey His leadership, drawing on His strength to resist the sin that still seeks to control us.

Paul uses the slavery common in that time to illustrate how ridiculous it would be to go back and serve a master from whom you had been set free. Sin is like an old master, but the more we see ourselves united with Jesus Christ and set free from slavery to sin to serve Him, the more God is able to produce the holiness and purity of His Son in us.

Repeated concepts in Romans 6:

- 1 Sin results in death (Romans 6:16, 21, 23).
- 1 Believers have been set free from sin (6:18, 22) and are no longer slaves to it (6:6, 20).
- 1 Believers are "slaves to righteousness" (6:16, 18-19; cf. 13) have been given an inner drive to please God.
- 1 Because they are alive to God (6:11) and have eternal life (6:23),
- 1 Believers should present themselves to Him (6:13, 19) not letting sin master them (6:6, 11-14, 22).

Helpful Definitions:

Regeneration: the implanting of spiritual life in a believer.

Sanctification: God's gracious work in the believer to make him more and more like Jesus Christ in holiness and purity.

Read Romans 6:1-4.

1. a. In Romans 5:20, Paul spoke of the grace of God in Christ being infinitely greater than all our sin. What question about being justified by faith did Paul anticipate some would ask (Romans 6:1)?

b. How did Paul answer this question (Romans 6:2)?

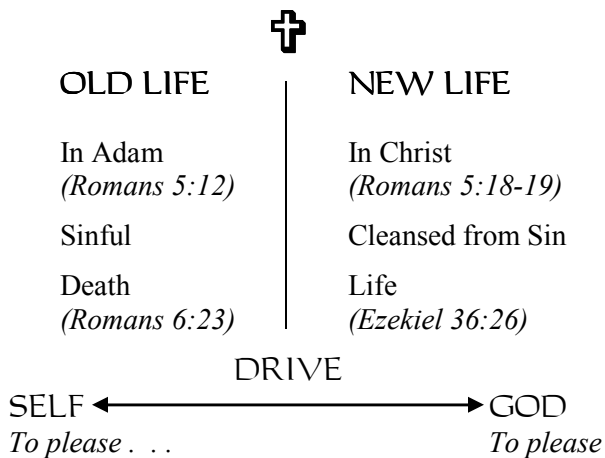
Note: *died to sin* (6:2) means set free from the power and bondage of sin.

Important Reference: Note 2, *died to sin*, p. 64.

c. What happens at the moment a person puts faith in Jesus Christ for salvation (Romans 6:3-4)?

Note: *baptism* (6:3) means to be placed into or identified with. See Note 1, *baptism*, p. 64. *live a new life* (6:4) means raised with Jesus Christ to new life in God's presence, forever set free from the power of sin and death.

2. a. The following diagram illustrates principles of identification with Christ. How would you summarize what this means in your life?



Read Romans 6:5-14.

3. What are the results of being united with Christ in his death (6:5-7)?

Note: Romans 6:6-7. *old self*: the person we are spiritually before receiving Christ. *body of sin*: figurative expression for self in its pre-Christian state, dominated by sin. *freed from sin* means set free from the bondage and power of sin.

4. Because God has united us with Christ in his resurrection, what is true of Him that is also true of us (6:8-10)?

5. a. What is the first step toward a believer experiencing victory over sin (Romans 6:11)?

Reference: Note 2, *died to sin*, p. 64.

b. In light of this, what choices should we as believers make (Romans 6:12-13, 19b)?

Note: *parts of your body* means all the separate capabilities of our being.

6. In Romans 6:14, Paul personifies sin as an enslaving power from which the Christian has been set free through identification with Christ. It makes no sense for the believer to serve this old master again. And the power to overcome sin cannot come from knowing and trying to keep moral laws, which reveal sin but have no power to set one free of sin's mastery.

Instead, the power to resist sin comes through God's grace and our being bound to Christ. What does God's grace accomplish in our lives that enables us to live a godly life?

Titus 2:11-12

Read Romans 6:15-23.

7. a. What two options do we have as believers (6:16)?

b. What had the believers in Rome chosen, for which Paul praised God (6:17-18)?

Note: *form of teaching* probably refers to the teachings of Christ which new converts in the early church received.

8. a. What "benefits" from slavery to sin did the Roman believers experience prior to conversion (Romans 6:20-21)?

b. What resulted from their union with Christ (6:22)?

c. How did Paul summarize this contrast in Romans 6:23?

BUILDING ON THE BASICS

The Transformed Heart

The wonderful news of Romans 6 is that through our identification with Christ, God gives us a new heart just like the heart of His Son. This new heart desires only to please God. It is totally dead to sin and absent from any desire to sin. If you have put your faith in Christ, this is the "real" you.

In her book, *31 Days of Praise*, Ruth Myers described the battle and victory of the Christian life as follows:

Sin fights against the Holy Spirit within us for control of our bodies and our personalities. And sin is cagey. It masquerades as our master who deserves our loyalty. It poses as an essential part of us, pretending to be our true nature. . . if we yield to its demands or swallow its bait, it either dulls our consciences or plagues us with guilt, whipping us even after we confess to the Lord. In countless ways indwelling sin causes us distress, struggles, and defeats.

But from God's viewpoint, it is not our true, new self who sins, but sin that still lives in us (Romans 7:17, 20). Our sins spring from our old sinful tendencies that are no longer our true identity. The real you, the real me, hates sin and is aligned against it. The real you is distressed when sin prevails and longs for your whole personality to be conformed to the image of Christ. The real you is dead to sin and alive to God.³

If we do not realize who we are in Christ and see ourselves with a new heart just like His, we will constantly be angry with ourselves for our imperfections and lack of improvement. We will find ourselves defeated and guilt-laden. But God wants us to continually *know* that we are brand new in Christ, *count on* it being true, and *yield* our lives to Him to empower for His glory.

As we continue our study of *Transformation of the Heart*, let's take a closer look at the new and real you in Christ.

1. a. Review the Ruth Myers quote above. How does sin seek to control us (paragraph 1)?

b. What encouragement do you find in paragraph 2? How does this describe the new you in Christ?

c. Why is it important for you to see yourself this way?

2. How is identification with Christ referred to in the following verses?

John 14:19-20

2 Corinthians 5:17

Galatians 2:20a

Galatians 3:27

Ephesians 2:6

3. How is the transformation God works in us through our identification with Christ described in Ezekiel 36:26?

4. a. How does God see us in Christ, in spite of our imperfections?

Colossians 2:10

Note: *fullness of God* refers to God's image and glory.

Colossians 2:13b (Romans 8:1)

Colossians 3:12a

Ephesians 2:10

b. God does not want us to be burdened down with guilt. What is His desire as we abide in Christ?

Ephesians 3:17b-19

S U M M A R Y

5. Why is it important to understand our identification with Christ in His death and resurrection?

6. a. Has this lesson helped you have a more positive perspective on yourself? If so, how?

b. How would you summarize who you are in Christ?

7. Jesus invites everyone to become one with Him. What open invitation does He give in Revelation 3:20?

The following prayer from Ruth Myers' book is a good one to cut out and pray daily as we seek to firmly grasp the powerful truths of Romans 6.³

"Thank you, Lord, that I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ is living in me. And the life which I now (this moment) live in my body, I live by faith in your Son, who loved me and sacrificed Himself for me (Galatians 2:20). I yield my entire body to you, as an instrument of righteousness, to do your will. Thank You that Christ has set me free from the condemnation of sin, and that His resurrected life in me is infinitely more powerful than the downward pull of sin!

Thank You, Lord, You are my sufficiency this moment, this hour, this day. I'm counting on your life in me--your love and patience, your gentleness and guidance and power--to meet my needs and overflow to others."

LESSON 7 NOTES

1 *baptism* (6:3-4) here refers to the Christian's identification with, or immersion into, Christ's death and resurrection which renders the believer dead to sin (see Note 2 below). Jesus inaugurated baptism in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:19), and this baptism always quickly followed one's conversion in New Testament times (Acts 2:38). The action symbolized identification of the new believer with the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus (Romans 6:1-4); i.e. it depicted dying with Christ, being cleansed of and set free from the bonds of sin, and being raised to a new life in Him.

2 *died to sin* (6:2; *dead to sin*; 6:11). Death in the biblical sense means separation, as in the separation of body and spirit in physical death or separation from God because of sin ("the wages of sin is death," 6:23). Therefore, to be dead to sin means that "in our innermost being we have been separated from sin; sin is no longer our nature and we no longer need to let it be our master. According to Romans 7, sin still indwells us; the old sinful patterns and potential are still written in our minds and bodies. But we are to see ourselves in the light of the cross and the empty tomb. These stand within us as a powerful barrier between indwelling sinfulness and the new person we truly are in our innermost being. We're to let them serve as a powerful blockade, separating our new selves from what remains of our old sinful tendencies. The cross and the empty tomb form an immovable boundary between who we were and who we have become, between our former realm of sin and guilt and death and our new realm of righteousness and life." Ruth Myers, *31 Days of Praise*, pp. 131-132.

3 *Ibid*, pp. 132-133; 135-137.

Note: It is helpful to complete Lesson 7 to understand Lesson 8.

Lesson 8

THE CHRISTIAN'S BATTLE WITH SIN

Romans 7

In the first five chapters of Romans, Paul explained how we are set free from the *penalty* of sin by God's grace (Romans 3:23,26). In Romans 6-8, Paul shows how it is also by God's grace we are set free from the *power* of sin.

In our own strength, we cannot resist the pulls of sin, but by God's grace, we can grow in purity and holiness. The power God gives to live the Christian life begins with the miracle of our identification with Christ, which Paul explained in Romans 6. The moment we receive Christ, we are identified with, or placed into, His death and resurrection. Having died with Christ, we are also raised with Him and set free from this world's bondage to sin and death to live a new life. We are given a heart like Christ's that desires to please God.

In this lesson's passage, Paul goes on to explain that our identification with Christ also sets us free from bondage to the law. The law brings bondage because it arouses the sinful nature which always wants to do what is forbidden. The sinful nature strives to be free from God's laws. But breaking the laws of God does not bring freedom, but condemnation leading to death and eternal separation from God.

Through identification with Christ, believers are set free from condemnation under the law. Identified with Christ in his death and resurrection, we are no longer under the law's judgment because Christ took the judgment for our sin on the cross. Not only this, but God has given us a new heart to obey Him (Ezekiel 36:26-27), and a new understanding that His laws are given for our good. The Spirit of God

actually resides within us to empower us to overcome sin and live the Christian life (Romans 7:6).

So if our identification with Christ sets us free from bondage to sin and the law, why do Christians struggle with sin? Paul deals directly with this question regarding the believer's very real battle with disobedience. From his own experience, he discusses the losing battle of wanting with all your heart to do the right thing, but finding sin's pull too strong to resist.

Paul begins to address this issue by stating that the laws of God are not the cause of this problem. God's precepts are holy, good and right guidelines for constructive living. The law does not cause man's rebellious tendency to break God's laws. It simply exposes his inclination to disobey "precisely because God has said it is wrong." And the law does not cause man's death, although it is the standard by which man is proven guilty and deserving of eternal separation from a holy God.

No, the law is not the problem. The problem is a sin nature dwelling within each person, including the Christian. We struggle with sin because we have a fleshly nature which forcefully pushes us to disobey. The dilemma simply stated is that our *real* self, our new inner being positioned in Christ, loves God's laws and wholeheartedly wants to obey them. But a sin nature still resides in our flesh which refuses to serve God and pulls us toward serving sin.

Paul ends by stating that it is impossible to win the battle with sin in our own strength. But victory is possible, Paul declares, if we fight the battle from our position in Christ, with Christ at our side, and in His strength!

Read Romans 7:1-6.

1. *Optional:* In Romans 7:1-4, Paul declares that our identification with Christ's death has broken the law's authority over us (cf. Romans 6:2-7; also commentary paragraphs 2-4). He illustrates this through showing how a woman is no longer bound to the law of marriage when her husband dies. She is free to marry again. What can we conclude about the law (7:4)?

Note: *died to the law* (7:4) means to the law's power to condemn us.

2. a. What controls the unbeliever (7:5)?

Note: *when we were controlled by the sinful nature or flesh (7:5)* refers to the bondage to sin experienced before receiving Christ. *death (7:5)* means wrong living, separation from God, and physical death.

b. What are we set free to do because of our identification with Christ's death and resurrection (7:6)?

Note: *released from the law* means from its condemnation when we fail to keep it.

Important Reference: Note 3, *released from the law (7:6)*, p. 72.

Read Romans 7:7-25.

3. a. How does Paul describe the law in Romans 7:12-13?

b. How does man's sinful nature respond to the law (7:8, 10-11)?

Note: *For apart from the law, sin is dead (7:8)* means without God's laws, sin is not fully perceived or identified. *sin nature or sin (7:8)* means everything in us which is more loyal to our old way of selfish living rather than to God. When we leave this body, we will finally be free of this *fleshly* nature. *death (7:10-11)*: Paul is speaking of his pre-Christian experience here. See note under 2.a. above; also Romans 6:23a.

Important Reference: Note 1, *sin...deceived me*, p. 72.

4. a. How does Paul describe the struggle with the sin nature as a Christian (Romans 7:15, 16, 19)?

Reference: Note 2, *Christian or non-Christian*, p. 72.

b. What explanation does he give for this problem (Romans 7:17-18, 20)?

Note: *no longer I who do it* (7:17). This is not a "sin made me do it" escape from responsibility, but rather a statement illustrating the great control sin can have over a Christian's life. Also, the real self is now the "new self" in Christ. *I myself* (7:17) means the real self or inner being in Christ (cf. 7:22) which delights in God's law.

5. a. How does Paul sum up the conflict (Romans 7:21-23)?

b. What solution to the problem did Paul introduce (Romans 7:24-25; cf. 7:6)?

Note: *body of death* (24) refers to the sin nature that hangs on like a corpse after receiving new life in Christ. **Reference:** Note 2, *Holy Spirit*, p. 47.

BUILDING ON THE BASICS

Abiding in Christ

Every Christian battles sin. Although in our innermost heart we have been changed to want to be holy, as long as we are in earthly bodies we still have a sinful nature. This old nature wants to do wrong, and even more so when it is denied or forbidden. But in Christ, we can "put to death" (Romans 8:13) the deeds of this sinful nature. Like an unruly child that needs consistent and firm discipline, the sinful nature can be controlled, but only as we abide in Christ. He alone is strong enough to deal with the power of sin as we stay united with Him.

In Romans 7, Paul describes the desperate feelings that come when we find ourselves defeated again and again. Every Christian has experienced these feelings many times. But God doesn't want us to live in defeat. Jesus came to give us abundant life (John 10:10b) and complete joy in Him (John 15:11). In our battles with sin, Christ wants to help us first see ourselves as we are in Him--holy and dearly loved--and to learn to fight the battles against sin with His strength, not our own.

Faith in Jesus Christ frees us from the penalty of our sin. We need not worry that we will be cut off from God when we fail or make mistakes. And faith in Christ also provides victory over the sin that seeks to dominate us. As we continue our study of *Transformation of the Heart*, we will look at how to experience this victory as we abide in Him.

1. To be victorious in the battle with sin as a Christian, we must first see ourselves correctly. What must we continually remember about our position in Christ?

Romans 6:18

Galatians 2:20 (2 Corinthians 5:17)

2. To draw on the power of Christ, we must continually stay united with Him. In John 15, Jesus compared Himself to a vine and the believer to a branch that must stay connected to the vine to thrive. What does Jesus tell us in John 15:4-5?

3. To abide in Christ means to depend on him and not ourselves. What is our source of strength to fight sin in our lives?

Colossians 1:27b

Ephesians 3:20

4. To abide in Christ means to stay yielded (in submission) to Him. What must we continually choose in order to experience victory over sin?

Romans 6:13

Note: *parts of our bodies* refers to the different capabilities and areas of our lives.

5. a. To abide in Christ means to stay connected (or unified) with Him spiritually. One way we do this is through prayer, which is simply talking with God. What aspects of prayer mentioned in the following verses can help us in our battles with sin?

Psalm 62:8

Philippians 4:6

James 1:5

1 Peter 5:7

b. Abiding in Christ also involves seeking the wisdom and prayers of other believers. How can this support us in the battle against sin?

James 5:16

Matthew 18:19

Proverbs 12:15

6. How does reading God's Word give us Christ's wisdom as we face the battle with sin?

Psalm 119:105, 130

7. The Christian's struggle with sin is ongoing in this life, but what is the outcome of the battle as we abide in Christ?

Romans 5:3-5

2 Corinthians 2:14

S U M M A R Y

8. Why is it important to face the battle with sin seeing yourself as you are in Christ?

9. a. Why must we abide in Christ as we fight battles with sin?

b. What characterizes our lives if we are abiding in Christ?

10. a. Are there areas in your life where you are fighting the old sin nature right now?

b. What keys to winning this battle have you been reminded of in this lesson?

c. As you abide in Christ, what does He promise in the battle with sin (2 Chronicles 20:15b)?

LESSON 8 NOTES

1 *sin...deceived me* (Romans 7:11-12). "Sin deceives people by misusing the law. The law was holy, expressing God's nature and will for people. In the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3), the serpent deceived Eve by taking her focus off the freedom she had and putting it on the one restriction God had made. Ever since then, we have all been rebels. Sin looks good to us precisely because God has said it is wrong. Instead of paying attention to his warnings, we use them as a "to do" list. When we are tempted to rebel, we need to look at the law from a wider perspective--in the light of God's grace and mercy. If we focus on his great love for us, we will understand that He only restricts us from actions and attitudes that ultimately will harm us." *NIV Life Application Bible*, p. 2040.

2 *Christian or non-Christian in Romans 7:13-25?* "Whether Paul is describing a Christian or non-Christian experience has been hotly debated through the centuries. That he is speaking of the non-Christian life is suggested by: (1) the use of phrases such as 'sold as a slave to sin' (v. 14), 'I know that nothing good lives in me' (v. 18) and 'What a wretched man I am!' (v. 24)--which do not seem to describe Christian experience; (2) the contrast between chapter 7 and chapter 8, making it difficult for the other view to be credible; (3) the problem of the value of conversion if one ends up in spiritual misery. In favor of the view that Paul is describing Christian experience are: (1) the use of the present tense throughout the passage; (2) Paul's humble opinion of himself (v. 18); (3) his high regard for God's law (vv. 14,16); (4) the location of this passage in the section of Romans where Paul is dealing with sanctification--the growth of the Christian in holiness." *The NIV Study Bible*, p. 1716.

In our study, we will assume the latter position.

3 *released from the law* (7:6). "Some people try to earn their way to God by keeping a set of rules (obeying the Ten Commandments, attending church faithfully, or doing good deeds), but all they earn for their efforts is frustration and discouragement. However, because of Christ's sacrifice, the way to God is already open, and we can become His children simply by putting our faith in Him. No longer trying to reach God by keeping rules, we can become more and more like Jesus as we live with Him day by day. Let the Holy Spirit turn your eyes away from your own performance and toward Jesus. He will free you to serve Him out of love and gratitude. This is living 'in the new way of the Spirit.'" *NIV Life Application Bible*, p. 2039.

Lesson 9

POWER FOR CHRISTIAN LIVING I

Romans 8:1-18

After depicting the struggling Christian who fails in his own strength to control his sinful nature (Romans 7), Paul now proclaims the super-natural power that God provides every believer for godly living.

Paul begins by stating that there is no condemnation for the believer because Christ took our condemnation on Himself on the cross. Because the believer has been identified with Christ in His death and resurrection, he has been forever set free from bondage to sin and death.

In the cross, the believer not only finds forgiveness for all his sins, but also receives God's power for overcoming sin on a daily basis. Paul explains that this power comes from the Holy Spirit,¹ who dwells in each person who puts faith in Jesus Christ.

The Christians Paul wrote to in Rome were familiar with the ministry of the Holy Spirit. Some had been present on the day of Pentecost in Jerusalem when Peter spoke with boldness and 3,000 people accepted Christ (Acts 2:5, 10-12, 14-40, 41). That day, they had seen the Holy Spirit supernaturally enable people to hear the message of Christ in their own languages. Others in the church at Rome had seen and experienced the work of the Holy Spirit through Paul's ministry in Asia Minor and Greece. They recognized the supernatural power imparted by the Holy Spirit in a believer's life.

Paul goes on to explain other aspects of the Holy Spirit's work. The Spirit gives the Christian inward assurance of his adoption by God. As a

dearly loved child, the believer can fearlessly and freely call God, "Abba, Father" meaning "Daddy." God's children are also heirs with God's Son, first to temporal suffering for righteousness in this world and then to immeasurable eternal glory with Christ.

The question left by Romans 7, "Is the Christian doomed to a life of defeat?" is answered in Romans 8 with a resounding "No!" Through the cross of Christ, God has provided everything we need to overcome sin and live for Him.

Helpful Definition:

Glorification: when the believer finally stands in God's presence "conformed to the likeness of His Son" (8:29) and with a new immortal body like His (1 Corinthians 15:42-44).

Read Romans 8:1-8.

1. a. What is the first assurance Paul gives the defeated and guilt-laden Christian described in Chapter 7 (8:1)?

b. Why is this true (8:2)?

Note: *law of the Spirit of life* means the controlling power of the Holy Spirit which sets us free to live a new life in Christ. See Note 2, *Holy Spirit*, p. 47.

2. To what end did God place our condemnation on His Son (8:4)?

Reference: Note 2, *in the likeness of sinful man* (8:3), p. 81, and Note 3, *to be a sin offering* (8:3), p. 81.

3. How does Paul contrast the person controlled by his sinful nature with the Spirit-controlled believer (8:5-8)?

Controlled by sinful nature: **Controlled by the Holy Spirit**

Read Romans 8:9-11.

4. How is the Holy Spirit related to every true Christian (Romans 8:9)?

Note: *You...are controlled not by the sinful nature* literally means "But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit" This refers to identification with Christ and new life in Him.

5. a. How does Romans 8:10 describe the believer's body and spirit?

Note: *your body is dead* refers to the body of sin (See 7:24) which will die physically because of sin. *your spirit is alive* refers to our new spirit in Christ which is righteous and will live forever.

b. What will the indwelling Spirit of God eventually bring (8:11)?

Note: *give life to your mortal bodies* refers to the new resurrection body we will be given by the indwelling Holy Spirit. See Helpful Definition: *Glorification*, p. 74.

c. How does 1 Corinthians 6:14 confirm or restate this promise?

Read Romans 8:12-17.

6. In light of God's blessings in Christ, how should the believer live (Romans 8:12-13)?

Note: *put to death the misdeeds of the body* (8:13) means to regard as dead the power of sin in your body (cf. 6:11; Galatians 5:24), and by the Holy Spirit's power put to death the sins of your former life (Eph 4:22-31; Col. 3:5-10).

References: Note 4, *sons of God*, p. 81.

7. a. What confidences does the indwelling Holy Spirit give to the believer (8:14-16)?

b. What will the believer experience as a co-heir with Christ (8:17)?

Reference: Note 5, *if indeed we share in His sufferings*, p. 81.

BUILDING ON THE BASICS

Following the Spirit

In Romans 7, Paul described the struggle and defeat of the Christian who battles his old sin nature in his own strength. Now in Romans 8, Paul shows the way to victory in this battle. He begins by emphatically stating that there is "no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus" (8:1). This is because of the believer's identification with Christ in His death and resurrection (Romans 6). This baptism into Christ performed by the Holy Spirit (6:3-4; 8:2) allows God to see the believer as "in

Christ," whose death on the cross paid the penalty for every sin the believer will ever commit. Therefore, we will never again be eternally condemned when we fail in the battle against sin.

Then Paul focuses on the ministry of the Holy Spirit in the life of the Christian. The word Christian means "Christ in one," and Jesus promised he would send the Holy Spirit, or Spirit of Christ, to indwell each believer's heart (John 14:16-17). It is the Holy Spirit who produces the life of Christ in us, enabling us to unselfishly and joyfully serve God and others. Romans 8:6,13 tell us that as we choose to let the Spirit control our minds, He empowers us to defeat, or "put to death, the misdeeds" of the old sin nature.

Because the Holy Spirit is the source of power in the Christian's life, it is important to know who He is. Throughout Scripture, the Holy Spirit is revealed along with the Father and the Son as a full and distinct person of the Godhead. As a divine Person, the Holy Spirit is eternal, everywhere present, almighty, perfectly wise, perfectly just and perfectly good (Hebrews 9:14, Psalm 139:7-10, 1 Corinthians 2:10-11).

The Holy Spirit's distinct role is the Sanctifier who frees us to lead new lives in Christ (2 Corinthians 3:17). It is the Holy Spirit who leads us to spiritual rebirth, brings Christ's presence to us, keeps us in touch with God, makes us realize God's love, gives us power to witness and to live the Christian life, and gives us spiritual gifts with which to serve the body of Christ (Titus 3:5, John 14:16-18, Romans 8:26, Romans 5:5, Acts 1:8, Romans 8:5-9, 1 Corinthians 2:4-12). He teaches, encourages, comforts, pleads for us and leads us into all truth (John 16:13, Acts 9:31, John 14:16, Romans 8:27).

Romans 8 tells us that allowing our minds to be controlled by the Holy Spirit is the key to "life and peace" (8:6) and experiencing victory over the sin that seeks to control us. As we continue our study of Romans, we will look at how we can appropriate the transforming power of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

1. a. How do the following sum up the end result of fighting sin in our own strength as believers?

Romans 7:21-23

b. The Spirit-controlled life is a life of abiding in Christ. What does Jesus tell us in John 15:5 about living the Christian life without the Spirit's control?

2. a. How do the following describe the three different types of people in the world?

natural person (without Christ): 1 Corinthians 2:14

worldly (carnal) Christian: 1 Corinthians 3:1-3

spiritual person controlled by the Holy Spirit: 1 Corinthians 2:15,16

b. What must we continually choose as Christians?

Romans 8:5

3. What did Jesus promise about the Holy Spirit?

John 14:16-17

John 14:26

4. What does the Holy Spirit produce in our lives?

Galatians 5:22-23

Acts 1:8

5. Why does God put His Spirit in our hearts?

Ezekiel 36:27

Ephesians 3:16-17a

Ephesians 1:13-14

6. Being controlled by the Holy Spirit is a command for the Christian. How is this command stated in Ephesians 5:18?

Note: The analogy here with wine shows how being filled with the Spirit controls one's life as completely as alcohol does when one is drunk.

7. To appropriate the filling of the Holy Spirit, we must:

a. Confess any sin in our lives, claiming 1 John 1:9.

b. Present every area of our lives to God.

Romans 12:1-2

Note: *body* refers to all the areas and capabilities of our lives.

c. Ask God to fill us with His Spirit.

Luke 11:13

S U M M A R Y

8. Are there areas in which you are struggling to be more Christlike? What hope is offered in this lesson? What one or two verses would you like to claim for your situation?

9. a. Have you ever imagined Christ living His life in you through the power of the Holy Spirit? What difference would it make in your home, workplace, neighborhood?

b. What is your prayer regarding the Holy Spirit and your life? If you have never asked Christ to fill, or control and empower you with His Spirit, perhaps you would like to ask Him for the first time now. The following is a suggested prayer that you can pray daily:

*Lord Jesus, I acknowledge that I have tried and failed to live the Christian life in my own strength. Thank you that you have forgiven my sins through your death on the cross for me. I now invite you to take control of my life. Fill me with the Holy Spirit as you have commanded me to be filled and as you promise to do if I ask. Live your life through me, Lord, in the power of your Spirit. I pray this in the name of Jesus.
Amen.*

LESSON 9 NOTES

1 Reference: Note 2, *Holy Spirit*, p. 47.

2 *in the likeness of sinful man* (8:3). God provided deliverance from sin by sending His own Son, not in sinful flesh but *in the likeness* of it. His human nature was protected and preserved from the indwelling principle of sin that has plagued all other human beings since Adam (cf. Luke 1:35)." Walvoord & Zuck, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary, New Testament*, p. 469.

3 *to be a sin offering* (8:3). "Jesus gave Himself as a sacrifice ('sin offering') for our sins. In Old Testament times, animal sacrifices were continually offered at the temple. The sacrifices showed the Israelites the seriousness of sin: blood had to be shed before sins could be pardoned (see Leviticus 17:11). But animal blood could not really remove sins (Hebrews 10:4). The sacrifices could only point to Jesus' sacrifice, which paid the penalty for all sins." *NIV Life Application Bible*, p. 2041.

4 *sons of God* (8:14). "God is the Father of all in the sense that He created all and His love and providential care are extended to all (see Matthew 5:45). But not all are His children. Jesus said to the unbelieving Jews of His day, 'You belong to your father, the devil' (John 8:44). People become children of God through faith in God's unique Son (see John 1:12-13), and being led by God's Spirit is the hallmark of this relationship." *The NIV Study Bible*, p. 1717.

5 *if indeed we share in His sufferings* (8:17b). The Greek construction here does not set up a condition but states a fact; i.e. we will suffer in this world as Christ did, then be glorified with Him.

Lesson 10

POWER FOR CHRISTIAN LIVING II

Romans 8:18-39

The believers at Rome would certainly experience great persecution, but Paul assures them that through the Holy Spirit's power, God makes us more than conquerors in the battle with evil in this world. Paul explains that all creation groans alongside believers in wait for Christ's return, when He will finally put an end to evil.¹ In the meantime, the Holy Spirit is always there to strengthen and guide us in our weaknesses and pray for us according to God's will when we do not know how to pray (8:26).

"If God is for us, who can be against us?" Paul proclaims. "He who did not spare His own Son, but gave Him up for us all--how will he not also, along with Him, graciously give us all things?" (8:32).

Who will condemn the believer? God does not, Paul declares. He justifies us. Jesus does not; He sits at the right hand of God praying for us (8:34). What's more, Paul proclaims, nothing "will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (8:38-39).

Romans 7 raised the question, "Is the Christian doomed to a life of defeat?" Romans 8 answers this question with an absolute "No!" With new life in Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit within, with God on our side and eternal life ahead, Paul declares that we are more than conquerors as we face the temporal struggles with evil in this world.

Helpful Definition:

Glorification: when the believer finally stands in God's presence "conformed to the likeness of His Son" (8:29) and with a new immortal body like His (1 Corinthians 15:42-44).

Read Romans 8:18-27.

1. How does Paul compare the present with the future for the Christian (8:18).

- b. What is the state of creation since the fall of man (8:19-22)?

Reference: Note 1, *Second Coming of Christ*, and Note 2, *will be liberated from its bondage to decay*, p. 89.

2. How are we to wait for the final stage of our adoption as God's children (8:23-25)?

Note: *redemption of our bodies* refers to glorification. See Definition above.

Read Romans 8:26-30.

3. What aspects of the Holy Spirit's ministry in our lives are mentioned in Romans 8:26-27?

4. a. What promise does Romans 8:28 give us?

b. Toward what end does God work all things in our lives?

Romans 8:29

Reference: Note 3, *foreknew...predestined...firstborn among many brothers* (8:29), p. 89.

5 What sequence of events in the Christian's life are listed in Romans 8:30?

Read Romans 8:31-39.

6. What reasons to rejoice does Paul give in Romans 8:31-32?

7. What final words does Paul write regarding condemnation of the believer (8:33-34)?

8. a. What question does Paul raise and answer regarding Christian suffering (Romans 8:35-37)?

Reference: Note 4, *face death all day long*, p. 89.

b. What was Paul's absolute conviction (Romans 8:38-39)?

BUILDING ON THE BASICS

Transformed by God's Love

No more beautiful words can be said than "God loves you." This is a message we all, in our heart of hearts, need to hear. We need to know that God created us, with all that we would call imperfections, for loving purposes. He sees us, knows everything about us and still loves us.

This is the one of the underlying themes of Romans thus far. In spite of our sin, and even before we seek Him, God has made a way for us to realize and experience His love. In His infinite love, He sacrificed His own Son's life, and Jesus Christ gave His life willingly, to free us from the *penalty* for sin, which is separation from Him.

Not only this, but He provides freedom from the *power* of sin that still seeks to separate us from God's love. By identifying us with Christ's death and resurrection, He gives us new life as His own child and a new heart like Christ's. Then in love, God Himself makes His home in our hearts, placing His Holy Spirit there to empower us to experience victory as we fight for good in our lives and in the world around us.

"God is for us!" Paul declares. "Nothing can separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (8:31,39). The more we grasp this love, the more it transforms our hearts and lives.

Do you know God is for you? Do you know how much He loves you? As we continue our study of *Transformation of the Heart*, we will look at what God's Word says about His love for you and me.

1. a. Psalm 119:64 declares the "The earth is filled with your love, O LORD." Why is it that people are not experiencing God's love?

b. What are some of the results of not experiencing God's love?

c. How are we affected by an understanding of God's love?

2. What does God's Word reveal to us about His love?

Psalm 86:5

Psalm 103:8

Psalm 103:11-14

Psalm 103:17

3. a. What do you observe about God's love from the following?

John 3:16 (Romans 8:32)

b. The Scriptures tell us that God was in Christ, seeking to reconcile the world to Himself (Hebrews 1:3; John 14:9-10). What do you observe about God's love as reflected in the life of His Son?

John 10:11 (John 15:13)

Galatians 2:20c

Romans 8:34-35,39

4. a. God knows everything about us and still loves us immeasurably. How is this reflected in the following?

Psalm 139:1-4

Psalm 139:13-16

Psalm 139:17-18

b. What aspects of God's unconditional love are reflected in 1 Corinthians 13:4-7?

5. The Bible describes the believer as "the Bride of Christ" (Revelation 19:7; 21:9). What is the Lord's commitment to you in Hosea 2:19-20a?

S U M M A R Y

6. What have you learned about "the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord" from your study of Romans up to this point?

7. a. What concerns or challenges are you facing right now?

b. Romans 8:31 declares, "God is for you!" What does this mean to you as you deal with the issues in your life today?

c. "Christ Jesus...is interceding (praying) for you" (Romans 8:34; Hebrews 7:25). What does this mean to you as you face the challenges in your life?

d. Why is it a comfort to you that nothing can separate you from God's love?

8. What does God's love motivate you to do for Him and for others?

LESSON 10 NOTES

1 *Second coming of Christ.* Before He was crucified (John 14:3; Matthew 24:30-31) and again after His resurrection (John 21:22), Jesus promised that He would return to earth. He taught that the time of this event, referred to as *the day of Christ*, or simply *the Day*, is known only by God (Mark 13:32). Jesus promised to return in person, with a body (Acts 1:11), and His coming will be visible and unmistakable, with great glory and majesty. When He comes, He will judge everyone (II Timothy 4:1) and usher in the glorious new world of righteousness and peace. Some believe there will be two returns of Christ, one in the Rapture (1 Thessalonians 4:17), the other after the great tribulation (Revelation 7:14). Others see all the references in the Bible to Christ's return as aspects of one single event at the end of history. *The NIV Topical Study Bible*, page 1075. References: Amos 8:3,9,13; 9:11; Micah 4:6; 5:9-15; II Thessalonians 1:6-10; Revelation 19:11-16; Acts 1:9-11.

2 *will be liberated from its bondage to decay* (8:21). The physical universe is not destined to be destroyed but renewed (see 2 Peter 3:13; Revelation 21:1), freed from death and decay with Christ's coming. See Note 1.

3 *foreknew* (8:29). "Some insist that the knowledge here is not abstract but is couched in love and mixed with purpose. They hold that God not only knew us before we had any knowledge of Him but that He also knew us, in the sense of choosing us by His grace, before the foundation of the world (see Ephesians 1:4; 2 Timothy 1:9). Others believe that Paul here refers to the fact that in eternity past God knew those who by faith would become His people.

predestined (8:29). Predestined here refers to moral conformity to the likeness of His Son.

that he might be the firstborn among many brothers (8:29). The reason God foreknew, predestined and conformed believers to Christ's likeness is that the Son might hold the position of highest honor in the great family of God." *The NIV Study Bible*, p. 1718.

4 *face death all day long* (8:36). "These words were written to a church that would soon undergo terrible persecution. In just a few years, Paul's hypothetical situations would turn into painful realities. This passage reaffirms God's profound love for His people. No matter what happens to us, no matter where we are, we can never be lost to His love. Suffering should not drive us away from God, but help us to identify with Him further and allow His love to reach us and heal us." *NIV Life Application Bible*, p. 2043.

Lesson 11

SALVATION FOR THE JEWS I

Romans 9

In each city Paul visited, the first place he went was to the synagogue to explain salvation through Jesus to the Jews (1:16; 2:9-10). Paul longed for his brothers in Judaism to embrace their Messiah, but only a few believed.

Now in his letter to the Romans, Paul takes three chapters to talk about salvation of the Jews. He begins by recounting the fact that through the centuries, God had poured out spiritual blessings on His chosen people. He gave them His presence, His revelation, godly forefathers and prophets, and finally brought His Son, the Messiah, into their midst. But Israel had continually rejected godly leadership, believing their good works and ancestry made them right with God. Now they rejected their promised Messiah, Jesus.

Because of this rejection, Paul explains that God has shifted His grace to the Gentiles, to make the gift of salvation available to all people, but also to make the Jews jealous so they would return to Him. Paul uses Old Testament prophecies of Isaiah to show that all Jews would not be saved. Only those of true faith, who receive their Messiah, rather than stumble over Him, would be heirs of God's promises to Israel.¹

Read Romans 9:1-29.

1. What is Paul's deep longing (9:1-4a; 10:1)?

2. Paul emphasizes how greatly God has blessed Israel as His adopted children with His presence, His revelation and with His Son, the Messiah,² born in their midst (9:4-5). But Paul points out that all Abraham's natural children are not heirs of salvation (9:6-13). What makes a descendant of Abraham a "child of the promise" (9:8) with his father Abraham (1:16-17; 2:29)?

3. a. Paul uses the Old Testament examples of God's choice of Isaac over Ishmael and Jacob over Esau to show that God is sovereign in whom He calls to believe (9:8-18). He does this to prove that the Jew is saved by God's gracious calling, not on the basis of works or Jewish ancestry. What has God, in His sovereignty, stated about Himself (9:15)?

b. Upon what does a person's salvation depend, whether Jew or Gentile (9:16)?

Reference: Note 3, *election* (9:11-25), p. 97.

4. a. Paul continues to declare God's sovereignty in saving some and using the hardened hearts of others for His purposes. He shows that God hardened Pharaoh's heart to display His power and proclaim His name in all the earth (9:17-18). What question would the Jew immediately raise with this example (9:19)?

Reference: Note 4, *hardened Pharaoh's heart*, p. 98.

b. Rather than address the question, Paul addresses the arrogant mindset that dares to judge God. What does Paul declare (9:20)?

5. *Optional*: After bearing Israel's defiance of His leadership (9:22), even through the death of His Son, their Messiah, how would God use Israel's hardness of heart (9:23-24)?

Note: *objects of His mercy* (9:23) refers to those Jews and Gentiles who would be saved through faith in Jesus Christ.

References: Note 3, *called*, and Note 5, *Romans and anti-semitism*, p. 97,98.

6. Paul quotes Old Testament prophets Hosea and Isaiah (9:25-29). What do these quotes demonstrate about God's calling of Gentiles and judgment of Israel's unfaithfulness?

Hosea (Romans 9:25-26):

Note: *them...who are not my people* refers to Gentiles.

Reference: Note 6, *Hosea* (9:25-26), p. 98.

Isaiah (Romans 9:27-29):

Read Romans 9:30-32.

7. a. Paul declares that God is just in sovereignly choosing those to whom He will show mercy (cf. 9:15). However, it is not on the basis of divine election that God rejects Israel and extends His grace to the Gentiles. Why does God judge Israel?

Romans 9:30-32

Note: *a law of righteousness* (9:31) refers to righteousness by works, "the attempt to use obedience to the law to put God in one's debt." *The NIV Study Bible*. *stumbling stone* (9:32) refers to righteousness gained by faith in Jesus, the Messiah, a righteousness that most Jews stumbled over.

b. What parable did Jesus use to depict Israel's actions (Luke 20:13-16)?

Optional verses: Luke 19:41-42, 44b; John 1:11

8. Why were most Jews missing God's way to be made righteous through Christ (10:3)?

Reference: See notes on question #7 above.

BUILDING ON THE BASICS

Comfort in God's Sovereignty

The clear message of Romans 9 is that God is sovereign, and specifically in His election, or choosing, of believers. Paul demonstrates this truth in God's initial choice of Israel as His people, in His turning from the hardness of Israel to declare His love to the Gentiles, and in His always keeping a remnant of Jewish believers.

While these doctrines raise many unanswerable questions, the believer can rest in God's proven love for mankind through the sacrifice of Christ for our salvation. We can trust that the "Judge of all the earth will do right" (Genesis 18:25b), for His way is loving, perfect and just.

In this lesson, we will focus on the great comfort and stability the doctrines of God's sovereignty and election afford our lives as believers. As we face a hostile world or times of confusion, crisis or suffering, knowing that God is in control and is working for good in these situations can bring great poise and calm to the Christian.

The doctrine of God's sovereign election,³ that God chooses each believer and gives him faith to believe, gives the Christian strength and encouragement. Jesus said that His followers would always be in the minority and would often be hated by the society around them. Among the "few" on the "narrow" road of faith (Matthew 7:13-14), the believer will often find the world coming against him (John 15:18-21). Yet he finds grace and comfort in knowing he was chosen by God, called and elected by the Creator of the universe, to be His child and His ambassador of reconciliation in the world (2 Cor. 5:18-20). Because God gave him the faith to believe, he did nothing to earn his salvation and therefore has no fear of losing his place as God's child.

While understandably perplexing, the doctrines of God's sovereignty and election give the believer assurance, strong encouragement and confidence to face the battle for truth with courage and poise. Let's observe these principles of transforming love from Scripture.

1. a. How do the following describe God's control in the world?

2 Chronicles 20:6

Job 42:2

Colossians 1:16-17 (speaking of Jesus)

b. What can we know in times of difficulty and crisis that brings calm and poise to us as believers?

John 16:33

Romans 8:28

Psalms 37:23-24

2. What conditions did Jesus predict which would cause the Christian to need strong encouragement and confidence?

Matthew 7:13-14

John 15:18-21

3. a. What is election (see Note 3, p. 97)?

b. How do the following describe the believer's election?

Ephesians 1:4-6

Ephesians 1:7-8

1 Peter 1:1-2

4. How can an understanding of being chosen by God strengthen and encourage the believer in his spiritual journey?

5. a. As described in Romans 10:14-16, what does God call each believer to do?

Matthew 28:18-20

2 Corinthians 5:18-20

b. The doctrine of election assures us that as we share the gospel of Christ, God will be drawing some to Himself. However, what do the Scriptures proclaim alongside the doctrine of election?

Romans 10:13

John 3:16-17

2 Peter 3:9b

Revelation 22:17

S U M M A R Y

6. How can faith in the sovereignty of God revealed in the Bible give you poise and confidence as you face difficulties in your life?

7. Why is the doctrine of election encouraging to you as a believer as you seek to live for Christ in a hostile world?

8. a. Of what does the doctrine of election assure you as you seek to be a part of sharing the gospel of Christ at home and throughout the world?

b. Even though it may be difficult to reconcile with the doctrine of election, what is God's heart for and invitation to each person?

LESSON II NOTES

1 *God's promises to Israel* (9:4). This refers especially to the promises of God made to the patriarchs of Israel--Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, (Gen. 12:2-3, 7; 13:14-17; 17:4-8; 22:16-18; 26:2-5; 28:13-15)--as well as the many Old Testament promises regarding the coming Messiah (e.g., 2 Sam. 7:12,16; Isa. 9:6-7; Jer. 23:5; 31:31-34; Eze. 34:23-24; 37:24-28).

2 *Messiah*. (Hebrew) or Christ (Greek). This was the name for the anointed one prophesied throughout the Old Testament who would bring salvation to the Jews (e.g., 2 Sam. 7:12,16; Isa. 9:6-7; Jer. 23:5; 31:31-34; Eze. 34:23-24; 37:24-28). Orthodox Jews who have not recognized Jesus as the Messiah are still waiting for Messiah's coming, and will recognize Jesus when He returns again to earth. cf. Romans 11:25-29; see Note 1, *Second coming of Christ*, p. 89.

3 *elect, election, called* (Romans 9:11; 11:28; 9:24; 8:28,30). "In the Old Testament God chose numerous people to serve Him: Abraham, Moses, Aaron, the Levites, Saul, David and the people of Israel in general. This continued in the New Testament with the election of Jesus to bear our cross and to be nailed with our punishment, and the election of the disciples, Paul, the church and individual Christians to a great task--the task of proclaiming the message of reconciliation. The *elect* are chosen not only for a task, but

also to be saved. Some emphasize that God did His choosing from all eternity solely out of His love, while others see election as God knowing beforehand who would believe in Christ. God has chosen us in order to demonstrate His grace to us as sinners, to make us a part of a whole new creation brought about by Christ's death and resurrection, and to enable us to praise Him with good works as we witness to others of His love. Many are troubled by this teaching, because only some are chosen while others are passed by, but God's intention is to strengthen our faith and give us assurance, for we know that our salvation is based on God's power, not on human works. In the end, we must remain convinced that God works out His plan in perfect justice and love." *The NIV Topical Study Bible*, p. 775.

4 *hardened Pharaoh's heart* (9:17-18; Exodus 9:16). "God gave Pharaoh many opportunities to heed Moses' warnings. But finally God seemed to say, 'All right, Pharaoh, have it your way,' and Pharaoh's heart became permanently hardened. Did God intentionally harden Pharaoh's heart and overrule his free will? No, he simply confirmed that Pharaoh freely chose a life of resisting God. Similarly, if you continually ignore God's voice, eventually you will be unable to hear it at all." *NIV Life Application Bible*, p. 118.

5 *Romans and anti-Semitism*. It is important to realize Paul is not an anti-Semitic writer in Romans 9-11. He was proud of his Jewish heritage and loved his Jewish brothers enough to be condemned in their place if that would lead them to salvation (9:3). Furthermore, the gospel of Christ explained in Romans is not anti-Semitic, either. It does not imply the Jews were "Christ-killers;" it was the sin of man, Jew and Gentile, that put the Son of God upon the cross of Calvary. Jew and Gentile alike must assume responsibility for the death of Christ. Richard C. Halverson, *Prologue to Prison*, pp. 184-185.

6 *Hosea 2:23; 1:10* (Romans 9:25-26). "In the original context these passages from Hosea refer to the spiritual restoration of Israel. But Paul finds in them the principle that God is a saving, forgiving, restoring God, who delights to take those who are 'not my people' and make them 'my people.' Paul then applies this principle to Gentiles, whom God makes his people by sovereignly grafting them into covenant relationship (see chapter 11)." *The NIV Study Bible*, p. 1720.

Note: Paul's thorough knowledge of the Scripture is evidenced in his quotation of 10 different Old Testament books in Romans 9-11.

Lesson 12

SALVATION FOR THE JEWS II

Romans 10-11

The Jew could never merit salvation by his ancestry or good works. But God's righteousness, Paul declares, is a gift to Jew and Gentile alike who believe in Jesus Christ. God has established this way of salvation to which everyone must subject himself.

Because "faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ" (10:17), God continually sends his messengers to proclaim Christ to both Jew and Gentile. While Israel rejects the message, God proclaims it freely to the Gentiles, in part to stir the Jews to jealousy. Paul shows that the unbelieving Jew is without excuse, having access to the message of salvation as God continues to woo them.

Furthermore, through the ages, God has never rejected His people for rejecting Him. Rather, He has always graciously chosen a remnant of Jews to faithfully carry on Abraham's godly lineage. Elijah was among this remnant, along with 7,000 other men of his time (1 Kings 19:10,14). Paul also uses himself as an example of this elect¹ remnant. The faithless majority, however, seeking righteousness through works, do not find it. They instead become more hardened of heart, dull of hearing and blinded to the message of God's truth.

Consequently, when Israel rejected the gospel, the apostles began taking the message to the Gentile world (see Acts 13:46-48; 18:6). As a result, Gentile believers are being grafted into God's "olive tree," replacing those Jews cut off because of their unbelief. Paul warns Gentile believers to accept the gift of God's grace with humble gratitude rather than conceit, lest they also be cut off from God's blessing.

And if God is so gracious to the Gentiles, who are the wild olive branches, how much more merciful will He be to the Jews, who are original branches. By God's grace, Israel's spiritual blindness will not last forever. When the full number of Gentiles² have come into God's family, Jesus will return to earth, and Israel will turn to Him and be saved. Even though Jews have stood against the gospel during this Gentile age rather than being those who would take that message to the nations (cf. Gen. 12:3), God still loves them and will show His mercy to Israel as they are at last saved through faith in the Messiah.

In light of these truths, Paul closes this section of Romans declaring the Lord's greatness. "Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable His judgments, and His paths beyond tracing out! For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever! Amen" (11:33,36).

**Note: Building on the Basics
is shorter in this lesson.**

Read Romans 10:1-10:15.

1. a. According to Romans 10:9-10, what is involved in the salvation of Jew or Gentile?

b. What promises are given Jew or Gentile who puts his faith in Christ?

Romans 10:11

Romans 10:12

Romans 10:13

2. What must happen for people to be saved (10:14,17)?

Reference: Note 3, *word of Christ*, p. 107.

Read Romans 10:16-21; 11:1-10.

3. a. According to the prophecy of Moses, how would God use His revelation to Gentiles to draw His people to Himself (10:19; see also 11:11)?

b. What would God continue to do (10:21)?

4. a. In spite of their unbelief through the ages, God has never rejected His people. How has He always preserved Israel (11:5)?

b. Paul uses himself (11:1) and other Jewish believers of his day (11:5) as examples of this chosen remnant. What past example did Paul use (11:2-4)?

Note: Elijah was an Old Testament prophet who called Israel to repent during the reign of Ahab and Jezebel (1 Kings 19:10,14).

5. a. What phrase does Paul use to emphasize how these Jews were chosen (11:5b-6)?

Reference: Note 4, *his people, whom He foreknew*, and Note 5, *chosen by grace*, pp. 107,108.

b. How did God judge unfaithful Jews for their rebellion (11:8)?

Reference: Note 6, *hardened*, p.108.

Read 11:11-36.

6. When the Jews refused to believe, the apostles preached the gospel of Christ to the Gentiles. What happened as a result (11:11, 15a)?

Reference: Note 7, *life from the dead (11:15)*, p. 108.

7. a. Paul uses the analogy of an olive tree to represent God's people. In this context, how does he depict the Gentile believer (11:17)?

Note: The whole olive tree represents the people of God, the branches are individual Jews, the wild olive shoots are Gentile believers, and the olive root represents the patriarchs of Israel (Abraham, Isaac and Jacob) to whom God made irrevocable promises.

b. Against what does Paul warn the Gentile believer (11:18-21)?

8. What does Paul promise will come in the future (11:25-27)?

Note: *full number of the Gentiles (11:25)* refers to the total number of elected Gentiles. **Reference:** Note 8, *all Israel will be saved*, p. 108, Note 1, *Second Coming of Christ*, p.89, Note 2, *Messiah*, p. 97.

9. How does Paul summarize the Jew/Gentile situation until Christ comes again?

Romans 11:28-29

Romans 11:30-32

Reference: Note 3, *election*, p. 97.

10. For what does Paul praise God in his doxology?

Romans 11:33

Romans 11:34-35

Romans 11:36

BUILDING ON THE BASICS

Choosing God's Way

Only fifty years ago in western culture, society viewed commitment to Christ favorably. But today, faith in Christ is viewed almost as "politically incorrect." Why? Partly because our culture, with more information about the righteousness of God through faith in Christ than any other in history, has turned from God's message and attempted to create its own standards of righteousness. The person who embraces these worldly standards can view himself as righteous even if he is doing things that directly oppose God's standards as revealed in the Bible.

This is exactly what Israel had done through the ages. God had given a standard of salvation through faith from Abraham to the present day. But the Jews insisted on making their own standard, keeping it and proclaiming themselves righteous before God. They hardened their hearts to and even killed the prophets God sent to warn them, including His own Son. So God gave them over to their own way, which was still the wrong way to righteousness before God, no matter how zealously they practiced it. Finally, they became hardened to the truth.

There is warning in the Jewish experience. We need to guard against adopting our own or the world's standards of righteousness apart from God and His Word. No matter how zealously we believe we are righteous because we follow man-made standards, only God's way makes us right before God and opens our minds to receive more and more of His truth.

To ensure that we are choosing God's way, we need to continually be asking ourselves: Is the righteousness I possess my own, managed on my own effort, or is it the righteousness of God received as a free gift through Jesus Christ? Am I continually looking to God's Word for direction in my choices, or am I compromising, accepting the standards of the world around me? And am I seeking to be one who continually declares God's way of salvation by faith in Christ?

We also need to guard against becoming self-righteous or "superior" because God has given us knowledge. It is love from a transformed heart, for Him and others, that in the end proves we are indeed following God's way and not our own.

1. Compare the nation of Israel with our western culture today. What similarities do you see regarding spiritual truth?

2. a. What did most Jews do over the centuries that caused them to fall short of righteousness, or right-ness before God?

b. Do you see the same practice today in the church and in the world?

3. a. What results when our society sets standards of righteousness apart from biblical truth?

b. Why are the standards of society appealing at times to the believer?

4. a. How can we continue in Christ's righteousness, letting Christ live through us instead of slipping into worldly compromise? What do the following suggest?

Romans 12:1-2

Psalm 105:4

Psalm 119:2-3

b. What mindsets must we maintain as believers to prevent attitudes of self-righteous and superiority in relationship to non-believers?

Ephesians 2:1-5

Ephesians 2:8-9

5. a. Focusing on sharing the message of Christ and helping others grow in faith also protects the believer from compromising God's standards. What has Christ commissioned us to do as believers?

Matthew 28:18-20

b. Why is this necessary, according to Romans 10:14?

6. Loving God's Word can also protect us from compromise as believers. What will always be true of God's Word, no matter how the culture views it?

Psalm 19:7-11

S U M M A R Y

7. How can you continue to let Christ live through you as the standards of righteousness in the culture turn against God and His Word?

8. Is there a particular area in which you are struggling not to compromise? What are the keys to winning this struggle?

9. What is your prayer for our nation?

for yourself?

10. Perhaps you have been agreeing with the message of Christ but have never put your faith in Him personally. If you would like to make a decision once-and-for-all to put aside self-justification before God and receive God's gift of righteousness in Christ, the following is a suggested prayer.

Heavenly Father, I have been following my own standard of righteousness and see that you require nothing of me but faith in your Son Jesus Christ. I believe in my heart and confess with my mouth that Jesus Christ is the risen Savior of mankind. I receive Him into my life by faith as He has invited me to do. Thank you, Lord Jesus, for coming into my life. Please help me to follow your ways throughout the days of my life. Amen.

LESSON 12 NOTES

1 Reference: Note 3, *elect, election*, p. 97.

2 *full number of the Gentiles* (11:25). This is the total number of elected Gentiles.

3 *word of Christ* (10:17). This may refer to the gospel message of salvation through faith in Christ's atonement for our sin on the cross, or it may refer to Jesus speaking His message through the messengers He sends out to preach.

4 *His people, whom He foreknew* (11:2). "God chose the Jews ('His people, whom He foreknew') to be the people through whom the rest of the world could find salvation. But this did not mean the entire Jewish nation would be saved; only those who were faithful to God (the remnant), were considered true Jews (11:5). We are saved through faith in Christ not because we are part of a nation, religion, or family." *Life Application Bible*, p. 2047.

5 *chosen by grace* (11:5). God had preserved a remnant of believers in Israel not on the basis of their good works but because of His grace. Paul's life clearly exemplifies this, as he was persecuting Christians when Christ chose him (Acts 9). An acrostic often used for grace is:

God's

Riches

At

Christ's

Expense.

6 *hardened* (11:7-10). "The others were 'hardened' was God's punishment for their sin. It was a confirmation of their own stubbornness. In judging them, God removed their ability to see and hear, and to repent, thus they would experience the consequences of their rebellion." *Life Application Bible*, p. 2047.

Romans 11:8-10 "describes the punishment for hardened hearts predicted by the prophet Isaiah (Isaiah 6:9-13). If people refuse to hear God's Good News, they eventually will be unable to understand it. Paul saw this happening in the Jewish congregations he visited on his missionary journeys." *Life Application Bible*, p. 2047.

The spiritual dullness of the Jews had continued from Isaiah's day to Paul's day (11:8), and would continue.

7 *life from the dead* (11:15). This is probably a figurative expression used here to describe the conversion of the Jews as a joyful and glorious event (like resurrection)--which will result in even greater blessing for the world. *The NIV Study Bible*, p. 1723.

8 *all Israel will be saved* (11:26). "Three main interpretations of this phrase are: (1) the total number of elect Jews of every generation (equivalent to the fullness" of Israel (v. 12), which is analogous to the "fullness" ['full number'] of the Gentiles" [v.25]); (2) the total number of the elect, both Jews and Gentiles, of every generation; (3) the great majority of Jews of the final generation. The salvation of the Jews will, of course, be on the same basis as anyone's salvation: personal faith in Jesus Christ, crucified and risen from the dead." *NIV Study Bible*, p. 1724. Note 3, *elect*, p. 97.

Lesson 13

HOW SHALL WE THEN LIVE I

Romans 12-13

Having explained the great doctrines of Christian faith in Romans 1-11, Paul now turns to how those doctrines work themselves out in everyday life. Paul has explained that the Christian achieves victory over sin by identification with Christ (participating in the death and resurrection of Christ) and receiving the power of the Holy Spirit. Now Paul will show what the Spirit-controlled believer looks like as he lets Christ live through him.

Paul begins with the words, "Therefore, I urge you, dear brothers..." (12:1). "Therefore" refers to duty based on the doctrines of Romans 1-11. The urging is toward a lifestyle focused on glorifying God.¹ Paul reasons that we belong to Jesus Christ because He gave His own life that we might have spiritual and eternal life. Therefore, we owe Him our lives.

Life lived for God's glory begins by offering ourselves totally--body, soul and spirit--to God and His service. Conforming no longer to the world's pattern, we are new and different people transformed by the renewing of our minds. Our lives shall prove that God's will "is good, pleasing and perfect" (12:2).

The Spirit-controlled believer first of all has a demeanor of humility. He honors and serves other believers in Christ, using the spiritual gifts² given him by God to build the body of Christ.³ With love and devotion to each other, believers seek to help each other with daily needs.

In relationships, we seek to live at peace with everyone, including believers who may disagree with us and unbelievers who do us evil.

Leaving vengeance to God, who knows all and will repay justly, we are to bless our enemies and strive to overcome evil with good.

The believer submits to governing authorities, whom God has established for our good. This allows us to live free from a guilty conscience or the fear of recompense.

The hallmark of the Christian living under the Holy Spirit's control is a loving disposition toward everyone. Although tempted to sin at every turn, he wins the battle with sin as he chooses to reject the pull of the sinful nature and "clothe" himself "with the Lord Jesus Christ" (12:14).

Read Romans 12.

1. Where does Christian living begin, according to Romans 12:1-2? What is involved in living a consecrated life?

Reference: Note 4, *living sacrifices*, p. 117.

2. What is Paul warning against in Romans 12:3?

Reference: Note 5, *the measure of faith God has given*, p. 117.

3. a. To what does Paul compare the universal church (all believers) in Romans 12:4-5?

b. Within the body of Christ, how are we equipped to support the whole (12:6-8)?

Reference: Note 2, *spiritual gifts*, p. 116.

4. a. What attitudes and actions allow us to serve each other?

12:9-10

12:11-12

12:13

b. What further choices enable us to build up the body and have a solid testimony of God's love to unbelievers?

12:14-15

12:16

5. a. How are we to respond to mistreatment from others?

12:17-18

12:19-20

Note: *heap burning coals on his head* (12:20) means it may bring about his repentance.

b. What is the goal of these responses (12:21)?

Read Romans 13.

6. On what basis are we to submit to governing authorities (13:1-5)?

Reference: Note 6, *do what is right* (13:3), p. 117.

7. What are we commanded to pay governing authorities and why (13:6-7)?

8. Why should love be the supreme mark of our lives as believers (13:8-10)?

9. a. What motivation for living a life of love does Paul recount here (13:11-12)?

Reference: Note 7, *the day is almost here* (13:12), p. 117.

b. What behavior has no place in the Christian life (13:13)?

c. What assures us victory in our Christian walk (13:12b, 14)?

BUILDING ON THE BASICS

Loving and Being Loved

We can easily become overwhelmed by all the principles for Christian living in Romans 12-15. Yet, Romans 12:1 shows us that obeying these principles flows out of a life of gratitude and love for God. In response to His mercy, the believer naturally wants to please God and reflect His character in the way he lives. He is continually filled with thankfulness and love toward God as he realizes the great price Christ paid to set him free from the penalty and power of sin.

Love for God motivates the believer to present his body "a living sacrifice," that is to give his body completely to God to dwell in, to possess, and to use for His purposes in the world. Love for God also motivates the believer to "not be squeezed into the world's mold" (Phillips Translation, Romans 12:2), but instead allow God to form Christ's viewpoint in him. Then, transformed by identification with Christ (Romans 6:2-4; diagram p. 58), and filled with the Holy Spirit, the Christian is able to glorify God as he serves the body of believers with the special needed gifts God has given him. All this occurs because of a new-found love for Christ who first loved him.

Thus, love for God, fed continually by a growing realization of His love for us, is the key to living a life that glorifies God. Let's look at the transformation that takes place as we grow in our love for God and in our understanding of His unconditional love for us.

1. a. It is important to be continually refreshed in God's love for us. According to the following, what does a comprehension of God's love produce in us?

Ephesians 3:17b-19

1 John 4:19

b. What is God's desire for us?

John 15:9 (Jesus speaking)

Jude 1:21

c. What is the greatest demonstration of God's love for us?

Romans 5:8 (Ephesians 2:4-5)

2. a. How is God's love produced in our lives?

Galatians 5:22a

b. What does the Spirit enable us to do with God and others?

1 John 4:16

Deuteronomy 6:5

1 Corinthians 13:4-7

3. The reasonable response to God's sacrificial love is to love Him in return.
What can we do to demonstrate our love for God?

Romans 12:1-2

1 John 5:3-5 (John 14:21,23)

Romans 12:5-8

Romans 12:21

S U M M A R Y

4. Why is it important that we continually be refreshed in the love of God as we seek to live the Christian life?

5. a. In what ways does the world try to "squeeze you into its mold"?

b. What is the mind of Christ regarding these things?

6. a. In what ways can you serve the body of Christ (Romans 12:5-8)?

b. Is there something more you need to do to use your God-given gifts?

7. a. Have you ever presented your body to God to dwell in, to possess, to use for His purposes in the world?

b. Would you like to do this now? What is your prayer?

LESSON 13 NOTES

1 *glorifying God* for the Christian means revealing God's character to others in word and deed. 2 Corinthians 5:20 speaks of the Christian glorifying God as an ambassador for Christ--God's representative in urging people to be reconciled to God. We also reflect God's character by letting the Holy Spirit control our lives and produce His fruit in us (Galatians 5:22-23). Romans 12:1-15:13 is a picture of what the Christian life looks like when the Holy Spirit is in control.

Reference: Note 2, *Holy Spirit*, p. 47.

2 *spiritual gifts* (12:4-8). "The Bible lists numerous spiritual gifts. Many Bible interpreters divide them into natural gifts (such as speaking, serving others, showing mercy) and supernatural gifts (such as doing miracles and speaking in tongues). Some gifts may be enjoyed privately, but the main reason God gave them is to testify to Christ and to equip individuals to serve others and build up the church. Each believer has been given a special gift of the Spirit, so that he or she can make a unique contribution to the body, Christ's church. Some believe the supernatural gifts were limited to the apostolic age, while others think they have been, and will be, present in the church throughout her history, right up to the present day." *NIV Topical Study Bible*, p. 1278.

Spiritual gifts are discovered as we walk closely with the Lord, try different service opportunities, and observe the response of others. Your spiritual gift(s) will be in line with what you enjoy doing and what causes others to grow in faith. References to spiritual gifts: Romans 12:4-8; 1 Corinthians 12; Ephesians 4:7-13; 1 Peter 4:10-11.

3 *Body of Christ.* (12:5). The body of Christ in this sense represents all believers, whether in a church or in the world. Paul likens Christians to members of a body which have different functions (1 Corinthians 12:12-31; see Note 2, *spiritual gifts*). The body of Christ represents Christ in the world. He is the "head" of the body and therefore leader of the church (cf. Eph. 4:11-13; Col. 1:18).

4 *living sacrifices...for His good, pleasing and perfect will* (12:1-2). "God has good, pleasing, and perfect plans for His children. He wants us to be transformed people with renewed minds, living to honor and obey Him. Because He wants only what is best for us, and because He gave His Son to make our new lives possible, we should joyfully give ourselves as living sacrifices for His service." *NIV Life Application Bible*, p. 2050.

5 *the measure of faith* (12:3, also 12:6b). "The power given by God to each believer to fulfill various ministries in the church (see vv. 4-8). *God has given* (12:3). "Since the power comes from God, there can be no basis for a superior attitude or self-righteousness." *The NIV Study Bible*, p. 1727.

6 *do what is right and he will commend you* (13:3). "Paul is not stating that this will always be true but is describing the proper, ideal function of rulers. When civil rulers overstep their proper function, the Christian is to obey God rather than man (see Acts 4:19; 5:29)." *The NIV Study Bible*, p. 1726. The principle holds that when anyone in authority over a believer demands he disobey God, he must obey God and accept the consequences.

7 *The day is almost here* (13:12). "A clear example of the NT teaching of the 'nearness' of the end times (see Mt. 24:33; 1 Co. 7:29; Phil. 4:5; Jas. 5:8-9; 1 Pet. 4:7; 1 Jn 2:18). These texts do not mean that the early Christians believed that Jesus would return within a few years (and thus were mistaken). Rather, they regarded the death and resurrection of Christ as the crucial events of history that began the last days. Since the next great event in God's redemptive plan is the second coming of Jesus Christ, 'the night,' no matter how long chronologically it may last, is 'nearly over.'" *The NIV Study Bible*, p 1727.

Lesson 14

HOW SHALL WE THEN LIVE II

Romans 14:1-15:13

Continuing to address practical Christian living, Paul turns to the issue of unity among believers. The young churches of the time consisted of Jews and Gentiles. Although the Jewish believers had chosen to follow Christ, they still came from a background rich in ritual, laws and tradition. Their faith and worship felt hollow without incorporating these into their new lifestyle. The Gentiles, on the other hand, knew nothing of these Jewish laws. Their backgrounds included idol worship and a pagan mindset, which they struggled to get away from as they sought to make choices consistent with their new faith in Christ. These differing perspectives and previous lifestyles led to great confusion and controversy between the Jew and Gentile believers in the early church.

Paul addresses these disputes by encouraging all to put judgment aside and act in love toward each other. He reminds them that their salvation came through faith in Jesus Christ, not their works. Therefore, each was free to follow his conscience in areas in which Scripture provided no clear guidance--and should allow others that same freedom. Each person must follow his personal convictions of right and wrong with a heart of thankfulness toward God and a desire to honor Him, because one day each believer will give an account for his life to the Lord.

While each Christian is free to practice his faith according to his own conscience, Paul cautions against putting stumbling blocks in a "weaker" brother's way by taking part in something that person feels is sin. This is unloving and destructive, wipes out peace and joy, and tears down God's work in that person's life. The Christian's primary rule of conduct is to act in love to build up other believers.

Furthermore, the more mature Christian is called to bear the failings of weaker believers, meaning those still young in faith or those in trouble. As Christ modeled in His life and ministry, the stronger believer is responsible to serve weaker believers to build their faith.

Finally, Paul exhorts Jew and Gentile believers at Rome to accept and serve one another as the Lord Jesus Christ accepted and served them. Christ came as a servant to the Jew, to fulfill God's promises to the Jewish patriarchs, and as a servant to the Gentiles, that they might glorify God for His mercy to them. Furthermore, Old Testament prophecies show that God ordained Gentiles and Jews to worship Him together through common faith in His Son, Jesus Christ (15:8-12).

Having finished his teachings to the Romans, Paul declares his great longing for all who would read his letter: "May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in Him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit" (15:13).

Read Romans 14:1-12.

1. a. Summarize the principles stated in Romans 14:1-3.

Reference: Note 1, *whose faith is weak* (14:1), p. 126.

b. Why should we not judge another believer's actions (14:4a)?

2. a. What should guide our actions?

Romans 14:5-6

Romans 14:7-8

b. Rather than judging others or looking down on them, what should be the believer's focus (14:10-12)?

Reference: Note 2, *God's judgment seat* (14:10), p. 126.

Read Romans 14:13-23.

3. a. What should be the Christian's rule of conduct regarding disputable matters among believers?

14:13,15

14:19,21

Note: Romans 14:16 points to the fact that exercising freedom without considering the feelings of others can be destructive and lead to evil.

b. What are the results of abiding by this rule (14:17-18)?

4. What principles should guide the Christian's personal behavior (14:22-23)?

Read Romans 15:1-13.

5. What is the mature Christian called to do (15:1-3)?

Reference: Note 3, *Insults of those who insult you*, p. 126.

6. What purposes of Old Testament Scripture did Paul declare (Romans 15:4)?

7. a. What is Paul's desire for the Roman believers, Jew and Gentile (15:5-6)?

b. What will this require (15:7)?

8. a. Jesus served Jew and Gentile alike with His life (15:8-9). What did Jesus Christ's service to the Jew make possible for the Gentile (15:9a)?

b. *Optional*: What is characteristic of all the prophecies of Scripture Paul quotes in Romans 15:9b-12?

Reference: Note 4, *Root of Jesse*, and *Gentiles will hope in Him* (15:12), p. 126.

9. What is Paul's desire for all who read his letter to the Romans (15:13)?

BUILDING ON THE BASICS

Unity in Diversity

Paul is very practical in these last teachings in his letter to the Romans as he discusses how to deal with differences and disagreements in the church. There are certain things we all must believe without wavering to be Christian: that Jesus Christ is Lord; that man is sinful; that Jesus Christ is the Son of God whose blood shed on the cross atoned for man's sin; that Christ rose from the dead; and other things clear in Scripture.

But because the body of Christ is so diverse, there will always be differences of opinion among believers in areas that are not clearly defined in Scripture. There will always be disparities in levels of maturity in faith and in strengths and weaknesses. In Romans 14 and 15, Paul tells us how to deal with these differences in a way that will promote unity rather than division.

In Romans 14, Paul addresses the issue of differences of conviction in scripturally undefined areas. These issues were as potentially divisive then as they are today among believers. But unity is maintained as we face differences of conviction with our focus on building one another's faith. If this is our focus, we will be true before the Lord to our own convictions, but not insist others always agree with our perspectives. And we will support them in following their convictions in obedience to the Lord.

In Romans 15, Paul addresses a different issue of diversity in the body of Christ which has to do with the strong and weak, or mature and immature, in faith. Paul states in Romans 15:1 that the stronger believer is *obligated* to the weaker or less mature believer. In other words, being stronger or more mature in faith brings responsibility to bear the burdens of the weaker believer and build up the less mature, unselfishly bearing the cost or inconvenience as Christ would.

Criticizing or excluding someone we see as weaker or less mature in faith is not a mark of Christian maturity but of immaturity, as it reflects pride, self-centeredness and a lack of love. The mark of true maturity that builds unity is accepting the responsibility to serve the weaker believer by showing love, concern, sympathy and care. Paul points out that this is what Jesus does for us as He welcomes, accepts and cares for each of us in spite of our

imperfections. This response to weakness or immaturity in others brings unity instead of division.

What wisdom for church or family! Let's look more closely at these principles of unity in the midst of diversity.

1. a. What is the difference between an issue defined by Scripture and one that is not? Which is Paul talking about in Romans 14?

b. What is more important among Christians than coming to agreement on controversial or undefined issues?

John 13:35

Ephesians 4:3

Ephesians 4:13

2. When we disagree with another's conviction on a scripturally undefined issue, what response unites rather than divides? What do the following suggest?

Leviticus 19:18

Romans 14:13

Romans 14:19

2 Corinthians 6:6

2 Corinthians 6:3

3. a. Summarize how Paul describes the unity amidst diversity in the body of Christ in 1 Corinthians 12:12-25?

b. What does Paul point out about the "weaker" members of the body?

1 Corinthians 12:22-24

4. a. In light of this, and according to Romans 15:1-2, what is the stronger believer's obligation to the weaker or less mature in faith?

b. It is easy to criticize and exclude a person who is weak or immature. How does this demonstrate spiritual immaturity?

c. What must the more knowledgeable, "more mature" believer be aware of?

1 Corinthians 8:1

5. a. Paul instructs the stronger believer to follow Jesus' example in serving the weak. What does He invite us to do in our weakness?

Matthew 11:28-29

1 Peter 5:7

b. What spirit will the Holy Spirit create in us as we yield to His control?
Philippians 2:3-8

6. What choices will Christ empower us to make as we follow Him?
Colossians 3:12-14

S U M M A R Y

7. a. Are you experiencing strained relationships:
because others hold differing viewpoints?

because others are weaker or less mature in their faith?

b. What principles from this lesson instruct you in these situations?

8. Criticism often flags a superior attitude in us. Is there someone within your family or church who you have been tempted to criticize instead of love? What is your responsibility toward this person according to Romans 15:1-2?

LESSON 14 NOTES

1 *whose faith is weak* (14:1). The person strong in faith in this passage is one whose understanding of the gospel gives him confidence that one's diet has no spiritual significance. Those weak in faith were probably Jewish Christians at Rome who were unwilling to give up the dietary restrictions and the keeping of the Sabbath (our Saturday; the early churches met on Sunday) and other special days. Or they could have been Gentile believers who could not in good conscience eat meat that may have been used in idol worship.

(The above issue with Roman Jewish Christians is not to be confused with the Judaizers whom Paul came against strongly in his letter to Galatia. Judaizers taught that God is put in our debt when we practice works of righteousness, a heretical teaching that negated the grace of God found in Christ.)

2 *God's judgment seat* (14:10). This judgment of Christians has nothing to do with justification, which is credited to the Christian fully and forever through faith in Christ. Rather it speaks of the future account God will call each believer to make regarding how he used his life on earth for God's glory and to build His kingdom (2 Corinthians 5:10; 1 Corinthians 3:10-15).

3 *insults of those who insult you* (15:3) is a quote from Psalm 69:9 which shows how Christ bore man's hostility toward God. "You" refers to God and "me" refers to the righteous sufferer, identified here with Christ.

4 *Root of Jesse* (15:12) refers to Christ (Messiah). Jesus was a descendant of Jesse, the father of David (cf. 1 Samuel 16:5-13; Matthew 1:6), and the Messiah was to be a descendant of David (2 Samuel 7:11b-17; cf. Matthew 21:9).

Gentiles will hope in Him (15:12). This prophecy was fulfilled in the evangelism of Gentile peoples by the early church and the continuing evangelism of Gentile nations to this day.

Lesson 15

FINAL WORDS

Romans 15:14-16:27

Paul ends his letter to the Romans commending their spiritual character and maturity. He states that his letter, with its reminders of important matters, reflects his desire to fulfill God's calling on his life: to present to God a group of Gentile believers who greatly please Him. Paul expresses how thankful he is for all God has accomplished through his ministry, as he presented the gospel from Jerusalem to Illyricum (present-day Yugoslavia). Now his sights are on points west, and he longs to visit his dearly loved friends in Rome en route to Spain.

Paul explains his plan to first take an offering from Gentile believers in Macedonia and Achaia to the poor in the church at Jerusalem. This would be a dangerous mission for Paul,¹ and he requests earnest prayers for his protection and fruitfulness while there, so that he might come to Rome at last and be refreshed by the fellowship there.

Romans 16 begins with a long list of greetings and commendations to men and women in the church at Rome who had served with Paul in his missionary journeys and ministries in local churches.

Paul ends his letter with a warning to the Roman Christians to avoid those who would cause division and dissension among them. He sends greetings from the co-workers with him in Corinth, then concludes his epistle with a grand doxology, ending with: "To God be the glory forever through Jesus Christ! Amen."

Read Romans 15:14-22.

1. a. How does Paul view the believers in Rome (15:14; 16:19a)?

- b. What is Paul's calling and purpose (15:16, 20)?

- c. What had Christ accomplished through Paul (15:19)?

Read Romans 15:23-33.

2. a. What is Paul's plan (15:23-29)?

- b. For what does Paul seek earnest prayers (15:30-32)?

Reference: Note 1, *earnest prayers*, p. 134.

- c. What is Paul's prayer for the believers at Rome (15:33; 16:20b)?

Read Romans 16:1-16.

3. a. What do you observe about Paul from his greetings (16:1-15)?

b. *Optional*: Romans 16:16 summarizes the greeting section. What does this verse suggest Paul was trying to do through this section?

Read 16:17-24.

4. Describe the people Paul warns against (16:17-18)?

5. *Optional*: Who identifies himself as Paul's secretary as Paul sends greetings from Christians with him at Corinth (16:22)?

Read Romans 16:25-27.

6. a. What promise and encouragement for the reader is in this doxology (16:25a)?

b. What is God's purpose in unfolding the plan of salvation in Christ prophesied beforehand in the Scriptures (16:26c)?

c. How does Paul close his letter (16:27)?

BUILDING ON THE BASICS

Grace for the Future

Paul has completed his letter to Rome, penned through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Little did he know that millions would be helped to understand the foundations of the Christian faith through its pages, including you and me. We have seen how true Christian faith transforms us from the inside out. Not only is the gospel of Christ the only way to spiritual wholeness, but the change Christ brings allows us to discover the deepest of love relationships built around making Him known throughout the world.

As we close our study, we will review the main verses of this book, ones that you may want to commit to memory. These passages include the major doctrines taught as well as principles for godly living to be remembered as we each go forward in God's grace.

1. What is the theme of Romans? Romans 1:16-17

2. What do these verses say about every man's need for salvation and God's gracious provision?

Romans 3:22-24

Romans 6:23

3. How did Abraham, the father of faith, exemplify the faith that makes us right with God? Romans 4:20-21

4. a. What does faith in Jesus Christ bring? Romans 5:1

b. In Christ, what does suffering accomplish in our lives?

Romans 5:3-5

c. How does God demonstrate His great love for us? Romans 5:8

5. What is the essence of identification with Christ? Romans 6:5-7

6. a. What will result if we try to live the Christian life in our own strength?

Romans 7:18

b. Because of our identification with Christ, what can we know when we sin as believers? Romans 8:1

c. What is the key to living the Christian life?

Romans 8:5-6

7. a What assurances does the Holy Spirit give us in Christ?

Romans 8:15-16

Romans 8:26

Romans 8:28

Romans 8:31-32

Romans 8:34

Romans 8:38-39

8. How are we urged to respond to God's love in Christ?

Romans 12:1-2

Romans 12:10

Romans 12:21

Romans 15:7

9. What is God's desire for us as His children?

Romans 15:13

10. In light of the truths shared in Romans, what did Paul declare about God?

Romans 11:33, 36

Romans 16:27

S U M M A R Y

11. People who have read and studied Romans have found words insufficient to evaluate its worth.

"The most profound book in existence." --- Coleridge

"Cathedral of the Christian faith." --- Godet

"The chief part of the New Testament" --- Luther

"The constitution of the Christian faith."

"Watershed of the Bible." --- Authors unknown

How would you evaluate the worth of this book?

12. What teachings stand out to you as you think back over your study?

13. a. What have you observed:
about the character of God?

about God's love for you?

c. Perhaps you would like to end your study of Romans with a prayer of thanks to Him.

LESSON 15 NOTES

1 *earnest prayers* (15:30-32). Paul had been warned by Agabus the prophet in Miletus that the unbelieving Jews in Jerusalem were going to trap him and deliver him over to the Gentiles (Acts 21:11). So he asked the Christians in Rome to pray for his deliverance from these Jews. When Paul did arrive in Jerusalem he was arrested by unbelieving Jews (Acts 21:17-23:22). Paul would spend the next two years in prison in Caesarea (Acts 24:27) and the following two years under house arrest in Rome (Acts 28:30).

MAJOR FOOTNOTES DIRECTORY

Chapter	Page	
1	11	1 <i>apostle</i> (1:1). 2 <i>gospel</i> (1:1). 3 <i>saints</i> (1:7). 4 <i>first for the Jew</i> (1:16).
2	19	1 <i>wrath of God revealed</i> (1:18).
3	28	2 Judgment Day. 4 <i>the law</i> (Ro 2:17-27). 5 Circumcision.
4	37	1 "Why did Christ have to die in my place?" a. Propitiation. b. Redemption. c. Reconciliation. d. Justification.
	38	
5	47	2 Holy Spirit.
6	55	1 <i>hope does not disappoint us</i> (5:5).
7	64	1 <i>baptism</i> (6:3-4). 2 <i>died to sin</i> (6:2,11).
8	72	1 <i>sin...deceived me</i> (7:11-12). 3 <i>released from the law</i> (7:6).
9	81	3 <i>to be a sin offering</i> (8:3). 4 sons of God (8:14).
10	89	1 Second coming of Christ. 3 <i>foreknew</i> (8:29). 4 <i>face death all day long</i> (8:36).
11	97	1 God's promises to Israel (9:4). 2 Messiah. 3 <i>elect, election, called</i> (9:11; 11:28; 9:24; 8:28,30).
	98	4 <i>hardened Pharaoh's heart</i> (Rom 9:17-18); Ex. 9:16). 5 Romans and anti-Semitism.
12	107	4 <i>his people, whom he foreknew</i> (11:2)
	108	6 <i>hardened</i> (11:7-10). 8 <i>all Israel will be saved</i> (11:26).
13	116	1 glorifying God. 2 <i>spiritual gifts</i> (12:4-8).
	117	3 Body of Christ (12:5). 4 <i>living sacrifices...for His ... perfect will</i> (12:1-2). 6 <i>do what is right and he will commend you</i> (13:3).
14	126	2 God's judgment seat (14:10).
15	134	1 <i>earnest prayers</i> (15:30-32).

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Diana Schick has a degree in Education from Texas State University and a Masters degree in Religion from the International School of Theology. For fourteen years, she served as a staff member of Campus Crusade for Christ, International. In 1985, Diana founded Creative Living International, a non-profit organization through which the Bible studies she has written are distributed worldwide. In addition to writing, Diana has done extensive speaking, seeking to help individuals discover biblical principles for everyday challenges. Diana and her husband Michael live in Reston, Virginia, and have two daughters.



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Secrets of Kingdom Living: Studies on the Beatitudes
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