ROMANS

Romans
Key Verse:

INTRODUCTION TO ROMANS

Romans is the gospel according to Paul. Paul was a highly educated Pharisee. While he was vigorously persecuting Christians, he met the Risen Christ, who forgave him and called him to be an apostle to the Gentiles (Ac 9). God's original purpose in choosing Israel was to make them a kingdom of priests and a holy nation--God's missionaries to the whole world (Ex 19:5-6; Ge 12:3). But the Jews of Paul's day despised Gentiles; their laws forbade fraternizing with them. It is remarkable that God chose Paul, a Hebrew of Hebrews (Php 3:5), as a missionary to the Gentiles.

Rome was the center of the Gentile world. The Christians in Rome were a small minority, mostly immigrants trying to survive there. Paul was eager to visit them to encourage their faith and their missionary vision. He did not know whether or not he would be killed by hostile Jews before he got to Rome, so he wrote them the message on his heart. He wrote about the gospel, God's one universal answer to mankind's universal sin problem. God wants all men everywhere to repent, acknowledge him as Sovereign Lord, and live by faith in Jesus.

Paul wrote this letter from Corinth, toward the end of his third missionary journey. He was on his way to Jerusalem with an offering from the Gentile churches. He wanted Jewish Christians to accept God's mission, and Gentile Christians to have a sense of God's history.

The book of Romans may be divided as follows: (i) Introduction--1:1-17; (ii) Mankind's universal sin problem--1:18-3:20; (iii) God's one solution, the gospel--3:21-4:25; (iv) Real freedom in God's love--5-8; (v) God's sovereignty in world mission--9-11; (vi) Life together--12-16.

FOR HIS NAME'S SAKE

Romans 1:1-7

Key Verse: 1:5

1. The gospel of God (1-4)

Paul was a servant of Jesus Christ. He did not belong to himself; he belonged to Jesus--as do all Christians (7). He was set apart for the gospel of God. The gospel is Jesus. God promised in the Scriptures to send him, and God kept his promise. Jesus was fully human, and he is a king. He is God's son, David's descendant--the Messiah. God raised him from the dead. He alone is able to save us from Satan's grip, from the power of sin and death.

2. Grace and apostleship (5a)

God saves us so that we can do his work. His grace forgives useless sinners, and changes them into useful servants of God. God gives us his mission so that we can live for his glory, for the sake of his name.

3. The obedience that comes from faith (5b)

Paul was a disciple-maker in obedience to Jesus' command (Mt 28:19,20). He called people from the unbelieving world to believe and obey the gospel. If faith is real, obedience comes from it. It is the discipline of obedience that makes a disciple.

Prayer: Lord, help me to learn the obedience that comes from faith, and live for the sake of your name.

One Word: For the sake of his name

I AM OBLIGATED

Romans 1:8-15

Key Verse: 1:14

1. I constantly remember you in prayer (8-10)

It is hard to pray faithfully for anyone. Paul had never been to Rome, but God whom Paul served with his whole heart wanted the gospel planted there--for Rome was the hub of the world. So Paul prayed for the Christians in Rome. He thanked God for their lives of faith which challenged the materialism and moral corruption of Rome. He prayed that he might visit them and share with them in the world mission task.

2. Eager to preach the gospel (11-15)

Paul had a burden for all the people of the Gentile world. His prayer for Rome and his desire to preach the gospel there were expressions of that burden and of his commitment to world mission. Jesus, to whom he owed everything, had laid on him an obligation to the Gentile world. His obligation to preach the gospel to people for whom Christ died included good and bad sheep; hopeful and hopeless people. Jesus who died for my sins died for the whole sin-sick world. I too have an obligation.

Prayer: Lord, help me to serve you with my whole heart and do what pleases you.

One Word: A debtor to God's grace

THE RIGHTEOUS WILL LIVE BY FAITH

Romans 1:16-17

Key Verse: 1:17

1. I am not ashamed of the gospel (16)

Jesus Christ died on the cross for our sins, and God raised him from the dead to defeat sin and death, and to give us forgiveness of sins, eternal life and the kingdom of heaven. This is the gospel. Crucifixion was a shameful way to die. Jesus bore all our shame on the cross. He cuts through our useless pride and washes away our dirty sins. He makes us right with God. The gospel is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes. No one is worthless to God. No one has special privileges. We must not allow our pride and self-righteousness to keep us from claiming the righteousness and the salvation God has provided.

2. By faith from first to last (17)

Righteousness from God is a gift of his grace. It can be received by faith alone. When we receive God's forgiveness, our relationship with God is made right. Then we cannot live by our feelings or by our reasonable thinking; we must trust God and obey him and walk by faith.

Prayer: Lord, clothe me in the righteousness of Christ; help me to live by faith in him from first to last.

One Word: The righteous will live by faith

GLORIFY GOD AND GIVE HIM THANKS

Romans 1:18-25

Key Verse: 1:21

1. God’s wrath revealed (18)

God loves the world. He is angry when he is ignored. God reveals his wrath by removing his hand of care and restraint (24,26,28) for a time, so that mankind might suffer in slavery to sin and repent.

2. Suppression of truth (19-20a)

God is our Creator and Sovereign Ruler. All truth begins here. When men deny God, ignore his laws and live according to their sinful natures, they suppress the truth. When we obey God as our Creator and Lord, we have truth in our hearts.

3. They are without excuse (20b-25)

God revealed himself in the creation. He made a beautiful world and provided everything mankind needed to be happy. Pride and ingratitude are the roots of sin. When we are not thankful, we become critical. When we do not honor God as God, pride becomes our master.

When creation order is broken, men make foolish exchanges. (23,25,26) When we exchange truth for a lie, we suffer the consequences of a futile mind, darkened hearts and a defiled body.

Prayer: Lord, give me a thankful and humble heart every day.

One Word: Thank God and honor him as God

HOLD TO THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD

Romans 1:26-32

Key Verse: 1:28a

1. Misuse of sex (26-27)

"God created them male and female..." (Ge 1:27) He created sex to bind a man and woman into one, to make a family to glorify God. Physical union represents the joining together of mind and heart. God blessed man and woman to live joyfully and fruitfully as stewards of his world. When people rebel against God's laws and seek meaning and temporary pleasure in the misuse of sex, they cannot escape the consequences of broken creation order. They must live as slaves of their sinful natures.

2. A depraved mind (28-32)

When people do not retain the knowledge of God in their hearts they lose life's meaning. When people are not slaves of God, but slaves of sinful desires, their minds become depraved. Human relations become loveless, filled with hatred and distrust. The role models of society teach that right is wrong and wrong is right--to justify themselves. Moral anarchy and chaos is the result.

Prayer: Lord, come and dwell in my heart and rule my thoughts and actions.

One Word: Retain the knowledge of God

JUDGMENT BASED ON TRUTH

Romans 2:1-5

Key Verse: 2:2

1. No excuse for judging others (1-3)

We are sinful human beings, and our view of people is clouded by our sinful nature. When we compare ourselves with others, we look at our own strong points and despise others' weaknesses; but if we are honest, we find in ourselves the same sinful desires that we condemn in others. Bible study should make us humble, not critical and self-righteous. We must be strict with

ourselves and generous with others. God will surely judge the world on the day of his wrath. His judgment is right because it is based on truth.

2. To lead us to repentance (4,5)

God is patient. He does not mete out instant punishment for sinners. He is merciful and kind. But we must not fool ourselves. God's day of wrath will come. His righteous judgment will be revealed. His kindness and patience should not make us proud, but humble and repentant. The fool says there is no God. Unless we turn from our stubborn ways and repent, we will taste God's wrath.

Prayer: Lord, purge me of pride and stubbornness, and give me a repentant heart.

One Word: God wants us to repent

GOD'S JUSTICE

Romans 2:6-16

Key Verse: 2:7,8

1. God's just standard (6-11)

God's judgment is righteous because he is just. He judges every person according to what that person has done. His righteous standard is Jesus (16). God does not look at the outward things, but at the inner motives of the heart--at what a man seeks. Man was created to glorify God. When a man seeks glory, honor and immortality from God, God will give him eternal life. But when men are self-seeking and reject the truth to follow evil, there will be wrath and anger, trouble and distress.

2. Not what we know, but what we do (12-16)

God does not judge us by how much we know but by how we put what we know into practice. Those who know the Bible will be judged more strictly. But God created all men in his image, with consciences, so every man can know enough to be responsible for his own choices and his actions. God judges the secrets of the heart by the perfect standard, Jesus.

Prayer: Lord, I want to seek you, and glorify you. Forgive my self-seeking habits.

One Word: Who can stand before the Judge?

STUDY THE BIBLE, LIVE BY IT AND LOVE GOD

Romans 2:17-29

Key Verse: 2:29

1. God's name blasphemed among Gentiles (17-24)

One who knows the Bible--Jew or nominal Christian--must seek to obey it, and not live a double life. Just knowing the Bible does not save anyone--we must humbly obey God's word. When we teach, we must teach ourselves first. Bible teachers who do not teach themselves are a hindrance to the proclamation of the gospel to the world. In these verses Paul shows that religious people are the worst sinners of all.

2. Circumcise the heart (25-29)

Circumcision was a ritual performed on male Jewish babies which confirmed them as God's covenant people. But through the years, it had become just a ritual. Moses and Jeremiah both were aware of this problem; they both talked about circumcision of the heart. Circumcision of the heart is repentance; it is loving God (Dt 30:6; Jer 4:4). When we repent, the Holy Spirit circumcises our hearts. Then we can live before God, not before men.

Prayer: Lord, circumcise my heart that I may love you and live by your word.

One Word: Practice what you preach

GOD'S FAITHFULNESS

Romans: 3:1-8

Key Verse: 3:4

1. Let God be true (1-5)

To be entrusted with God's word is a great blessing, because God is giving us an opportunity to serve him, and serving our Creator makes our lives rich and meaningful. The Jews were entrusted with the word of God, but because of their lack of faith, they failed in their stewardship of the word and did not share God's word with the world. Yet God did not fail. God's word is true. Anyone who, in faith, takes hold of God's promise will be saved; and those who reject God's word through unbelief will be lost. God is faithful to do what he says he will do.

2. Who is responsible--me or God? (6-8)

Everyone who knows the truth and rejects it is responsible for his own rejection. We cannot blame God for our disobedience and unbelief.

Prayer: Lord, thank you for your great faithfulness to keep your promise to save and your promise to judge. I come to you with no excuses, claiming only Jesus' righteousness. I believe your promises and seek your mercy.

One Word: God is faithful and true

NO ONE IS RIGHTEOUS

Romans 3:9-20

Key Verse: 3:10,11

1. There is no one who is good (9-18)

The conclusion of Romans 1:18-3:20 is: “There is no one righteous, not even one.” People who are cut off from God become worthless. Paul brings together many quotations from the Old Testament to support his conclusion. Verses 11-12 emphasize that all people are under the power of sin. Verses 13-14 show that one's words expose what is in one's heart. Verses 15-17 show that those lost in sin are directionless and without peace. Verse 18 says that those under sin have no fear of God. Only fools do not fear God. Paul is telling us that everyone needs Jesus.

2. Everyone is accountable to God (19-20)

Every human being--Jew, Gentile, Christian, non-Christian--must stand before the judgment seat of God. No one can take refuge in any excuse or past privilege. The ground before God's judgment seat is level, and all of us must someday stand there as unrighteous sinners. We need an advocate–Jesus.

Prayer: Lord, I need Jesus--and so does the world. Help me to see the world and myself from your point of view.

One Word: No one is righteous

THROUGH FAITH IN HIS BLOOD

Romans 3:21-26

Key Verse: 3:25

1. A righteousness from God (21-23)

God revealed his righteousness in the creation, for he created a world that is good. The problem arose when mankind rebelled. All have sinned and fall short of God's glory. God revealed his righteousness in the Law, but his people broke the Law. How can despairing sinners have hope? Our hope is in God. He is the only one who can restore broken lives and mend broken relationships. Jesus is God's righteousness. God clothes us in his righteousness when we believe in Jesus.

2. A sacrifice of atonement (24-26)

Sin cuts us off from God. The outcome of sin is death and hell. God is just; he cannot take sin lightly. He sent his only Son to be a sacrifice of atonement, to take our punishment on himself

and die in the place of sinners. God promises that through faith in the blood of Jesus we are justified freely by his grace. To be justified means to be forgiven and made righteous. To be righteous means to have a right relationship with God. This is eternal life.

Prayer: Lord, thank you for cleansing my sins by the blood of Jesus.

One Word: The blood of Jesus makes me righteous

WHERE, THEN, IS BOASTING?

Romans 3:27-31

Key Verse: 3:27

1. No place for pride (27)

The gospel is God's one solution to man's sin problem. There is no other way. God marvelously designed this gospel. We have seen that ingratitude and pride lie at the root of sin (1:21). The gospel is designed to cut out the root of pride and make way for simple gratitude. God saves us by grace alone, through faith alone. We can do nothing to deserve God's grace. Jesus' atoning sacrifice pays the whole price. All I can do is repent and accept Jesus as my Savior. There is nothing to be proud about--but everything for which to be thankful. The only response to grace is acceptance and thanksgiving.

2. The same gospel for all (28-31)

There is only one gospel. It is God's universal solution to man's sin problem. Every human being who would come to God must stoop down and go humbly through the way of the cross, for this is the only way God has provided.

Prayer: Lord, have mercy on me, for I am a sinner. I claim no other righteousness than Jesus. Thank you for saving me through him.

One Word: Only one gospel

SAVING FAITH

Romans 4:1-8

Key Verse: 4:5

1. Abraham's faith (1-5)

We are saved by grace through faith in Jesus. What does it mean to have faith? Abraham's faith is the kind of faith God accepts. Abraham was justified by faith. He believed God, and his faith was credited to him as righteousness. God did not accept him because he was naturally good or

because he did some good work that earned God's approval. He simply believed God. To be credited as righteous means to be forgiven and cleansed of sin, and to be made right with God.

2. David's faith (6-8)

David also believed in God who forgives sinners. David was blessed--not because he was a king, or because he was a victorious general, or because he was popular, or because he was a talented musician and poet. He was happy because he knew that God forgave his sins. Repentance before God and faith in Jesus is the secret of a happy and blessed life.

Prayer: Lord, teach me the simple, trusting faith of David and Abraham.

One Word: God forgives sinners who believe

THE FOOTSTEPS OF ABRAHAM

Romans 4:9-12

Key Verse: 4:12b

1. The father of all who believe in Jesus (9-11)

Abraham lived some 2,000 years before Christ, but he is the ancestor of our faith. He sets the standard of faith for all God's people down through the ages. So we must learn faith from him. Circumcision is the rite that marks a Jew. This rite began with Abraham. It was a sign of his obedience and faith, and of his covenant with God. But this rite did not make Abraham righteous. Once, before he was circumcised, Abraham was fearful and full of doubt. God showed him the stars and promised him a son. He believed God's word of promise. God forgave him and credited his faith as righteousness (Ge 15:6).

2. The father of Jews who believe (12)

Abraham is the physical ancestor of the Jews. But Jews only become his true descendants when they walk in the footsteps of his faith. A real Jew is one who accepts God's new covenant in Jesus' blood by faith.

Prayer: Lord, help me not to depend on dead ritual, but to live by obedient faith.

One Word: Walk in Abraham's footsteps

FAITH THAT BELIEVES GOD'S PROMISES

Romans 4:13-25

Key Verse: 4:17

1. World mission faith (13-17a)

God promised Abraham that he would be the father of many nations (Ge 17), and that his offspring would be heirs of the world (13). God promised, "All people on earth will be blessed through you" (Ge 12:3). These promises were fulfilled in Jesus, who died for the sins of the world, and whose gospel of forgiveness and salvation has gone out to the ends of the earth. Abraham had a sense of God's history, and his faith was world mission faith (Gal 3:8).

2. Resurrection faith (17b-25)

Abraham believed in the almighty power of God who gives life to the dead; so he believed that God would give him a son, even though it seemed impossible. He hoped against all hope because he believed that God had the power to do what he promised. When I believe that God raised Jesus from the dead to forgive my sins and give me eternal life, I am walking in the footsteps of Abraham's faith.

Prayer: Lord, teach me resurrection faith so that I can participate in your work of sharing the gospel with the whole world.

One Word: One man of faith

REJOICE IN SUFFERING

Romans 5:1-5

Key Verse: 5:3

1. Peace with God (1)

When we did not know God, we could not but live as his enemies. We could not have peace in our hearts because of our rebellious spirits. But we have been justified--made right with God--by faith in Jesus. So, we have peace with God, and the peace of God takes root in our hearts.

2. Joy (2-5)

When we stand in God's grace, we can rejoice. We rejoice in the hope of sharing God's glory. We also rejoice in suffering. People who live without God become bitter and rebellious when pain or tragedy strikes. But when we stand in God's grace, with his peace and joy in our hearts, he can use our sufferings to train us in faith and in Christian character. Suffering draws us close to Jesus, so we grow in his love; God's Spirit, his hope and his love then fill our hearts.

Prayer: Lord, thank you for the peace and joy which you have put in my heart. The world can neither give nor take away this joy and peace.

One Word: Rejoice in suffering

GOD DEMONSTRATED HIS LOVE

Romans 5:6-11

Key Verse: 5:8

1. Christ died for the ungodly (6-8)

No human being is worthy of God's love, nor of Christ's sacrifice. I was ungodly, powerless, and sinful. But he loved me with one-sided love. I can never doubt God's love for me, for he demonstrated that love when he sent Christ to die for me, a worthless sinner. Some people forget this amazing love of God and blame God for all their problems. This is foolish. When we experience hard things in life, it is the very time to learn the depth of God's love.

2. Saved through his life (9-11)

The day of God’s judgment will surely come. However, we do not need to be afraid. If God loved and saved us through the death of Jesus when we were his enemies, we can be very sure that he will save us and give us eternal life on the day of judgment. Jesus died in my place to reconcile me to God. By faith, I can glorify God and enjoy him forever.

Prayer: Lord, thank you for the blood of Jesus, which saved me when I was helpless and powerless and was living as your enemy.

One Word: God demonstrated his love

THE CONSEQUENCES OF ONE LIFE

Romans 5:12-14

Key Verse: 5:12

1. Sin and death entered through one man (12-13)

The gospel is rooted in history. God is the Creator of the world, and he is the Sovereign Lord of history. But the course of history can be changed by one man. Sin entered the world through one man Adam, when he deliberately disobeyed God. Death entered the world through sin. All men die, because all men sin. The law, given through Moses, defines sin. But even in lawless times when people could not (and cannot) diagnose sin as sin, it still infects the human race and brings death. Humanity's greatest problem is the sin problem.

2. A pattern of the one to come (14)

Adam was a pattern of Jesus. One man, Adam, changed the course of history; one man, Jesus, also changed the course of history. When we believe in Jesus and obey him, we move from

Adam's history into Jesus' history. Jesus' history moves toward God and life; Adam's history moves toward death and hell.

Prayer: Lord, help me to stand firmly in Jesus' history. Let my one life be a blessing and make a difference for good.

One Word: One person is important

GOD'S GIFT OF LIFE

Romans 5:15-21

Key Verse: 5:21

1. The gift is not like the trespass (15-17)

Adam disobeyed God. By his seemingly simple act, he cut the life line between God and man and brought death to the human race. But God gave the precious gift of his own son, Jesus. This was a gift of God's love and life. It was a gift of grace that overflowed to all people. It was a gift of righteousness that makes all who accept this gift right with God. This gift reestablishes God's spiritual life-line to mankind.

2. Life-giving obedience (18-21)

Adam's one act of disobedience resulted in condemnation for all men. Jesus, although he was God's Son, had to learn obedience (Heb 5:8). His great act of obedience was his death on the cross. This act of obedience brings forgiveness of sins and eternal life to all who believe in him. Sin reigns in death; but grace reigns through Jesus Christ to give eternal life to all who trust him.

Prayer: Lord, thank you for being a life-giving God. Help me participate in your life-giving work through obedience to you and your word.

One Word: Eternal life, God's gift

UNION WITH CHRIST

Romans 6:1-10

Key Verse: 6:5

1. United with him in his death (1-4)

A Christian is one who is united with Christ. John baptized with water for repentance, but Jesus baptizes with the Holy Spirit. We are brought into mystical union with Christ by the work of the Holy Spirit. When I repent and accept Christ's atoning death for my sins, I die with Jesus. His blood covers all my sins. I am no longer a slave to sin because Jesus purchased my freedom by

his blood. Now I belong to Jesus. This is a promise to be believed--not something that depends on my undependable feelings.

2. United with him in his life (5-10)

If we died with Christ, we shall also live with him. God raised Christ from the dead by his almighty power. Baptism into the body of Christ is a symbol of this. The risen Jesus has conquered sin and death, and he wants to live with me and work in and through me by his resurrection power.

Prayer: Lord, I do not understand the mystical union between Christ and myself, but I know that your eternal love, poured into my heart by the Holy Spirit, is the cord that binds me to you.

One Word: Union with Christ by the Spirit

OFFER YOURSELVES TO GOD

Romans 6:11-14

Key Verse: 6:13b

1. Do not let sin reign (11-12)

Our union with Christ is not a passive relationship. These verses contain a series of commands to be obeyed. This suggests spiritual struggle, because obedience doesn't come naturally. Paul calls the life of faith "the good fight" (2Ti 4:7). We have mortal bodies; the roots of sin and death are in us. Union with Christ does not mean the battle has ended; it is just beginning. We must consciously affirm the fact that we are dead to sin--especially when our sinful desires push us to deny it. We are alive to God.

2. Instruments of righteousness (13-14)

When we were slaves of sin, we thought we were freely using the parts of our body for ourselves, but actually, we were being used as instruments of wickedness. Now we belong to Jesus. So we must offer our hearts and heads, hands and feet, every part to God for his use. There is a war going on, and there is no neutral territory. Christ set us free so that God might use us. Only when we positively offer ourselves to God for his use can we be free.

Prayer: Lord, use me as an instrument of your righteousness and peace.

One Word: Offer yourselves to God

WHOLEHEARTED OBEDIENCE

Romans 6:15-18

Key Verse: 6:17

1. Slaves of the one you obey (15-16)

Does being set free from the law give us license to sin? No. We must not try to fool ourselves. We are slaves of whomever we obey. When I yield to my sinful desires and do something just because of the dictates of my sinful nature, this is not freedom; it is slavery. "My own man" mentality is appealing, but it is not possible for one to be his own man. Everyone belongs either to God or to Satan. Obedience does not come naturally. Even Jesus had to learn obedience (Heb 5:8). To obey God a decision of faith is necessary.

2. Obey God with your whole heart (17-18)

Jesus has set us free from our slavery to sin so that we can joyfully and wholeheartedly obey God. God doesn't want superficial, legalistic obedience like that of the elder brother in Jesus' parable (Lk 15:11-32). He wants us to obey his gospel with all our hearts. He wants us to live like beloved children, not like grudging, gloomy slaves. The word "wholehearted" means “with one’s whole heart.”

Prayer: Lord, I love you. Let your love and joy fill my heart so that I can obey your word wholeheartedly.

One Word: Obedience from the heart

THE WAGES OF SIN AND THE GIFT OF GOD

Romans 6:19-23

Key Verse: 6:23

1. The results of living naturally (19a,20,21,23a)

When we lived naturally, without God, we thought we were free--and we were free from the control of righteousness. But actually we were slaves to our feelings and desires. And what benefit did we receive from this taskmaster? We grew in impurity and wickedness, and did things of which we are now ashamed. We were destined to receive the wages we earned, death.

2. The benefits of being God's slave (22,23b)

We were bought by Jesus' blood and set free from the demanding taskmaster, sin; now we belong to God. Most of us are a long way from being holy. But just as we once became more and more deeply entangled in our sinful habits, so now we can grow in holiness, in closeness to God. The benefit we reap as slaves to God is holiness. We receive eternal life and the kingdom of God as a gift.

Prayer: Lord, help me to throw off the shackles of sin today. Help me to grow in Jesus' character, and to walk with you more closely each day.

One Word: The gift of God is eternal life

THAT WE MIGHT BEAR FRUIT TO GOD

Romans 7:1-6

Key Verse: 7:4

1. Married to “Mr. Law” (1-3)

Paul was a Pharisee. He speaks to those who tried, as he had, to solve their life problem by self-control. When Paul was “married” to the Law, he found that the law could not change the sinful nature. Rather, the law is a demanding taskmaster. It makes our sinful nature more rebellious. When Paul lived under the law, he was controlled by his sinful nature and he bore fruit to death.

2. Married to Jesus by grace (4-6)

According to the law, marriage is “until death do us part.” When one’s spouse dies, he or she is legally released from marriage. We died with Jesus and we are free from the law. When we are united with Christ in his death and resurrection, we belong to him. When we belong to Christ, his Spirit works in us to produce fruit that glorifies God and gives us joy and peace. We are free to walk in the new way of the Spirit.

Prayer: Lord, you died for me and set me free from sin and death. I belong to you. Work in me by your Spirit to produce good fruit.

One Word: Christ, my true husband

THE HOLY LAW

Romans 7:7-13

Key Verse: 7:13

1. Law exposes the sinful nature (7-8)

The tenth commandment is "Do not covet." It is the only commandment directed toward our inner desires. A well-disciplined person might keep his hand from stealing, but he cannot keep his heart from coveting. Paul was an able and self-righteous Pharisee. But he realized that his heart was full of worldly ambition and covetous desires; he knew that he was a sinner. He could not solve his own sin problem, so he despaired. Then he met Jesus.

2. The commandment is righteous (9-13)

God is righteous, and his law is holy and good. But law has no power to cleanse one's heart and life from sin. Law only makes demands which cannot be met. A person who longs for righteousness only realizes how sinful he is. Paul uses strong language. He said, "The good law killed me." The law diagnoses sin; it is used by God to bring conviction of sin. But the law cannot solve our sin problem.

Prayer: Lord, I know that I am a sinner, unable to help myself. Thank you for forgiving me through the blood of Jesus.

One Word: Recognize sin as sin

WHO WILL RESCUE ME?

Romans 7:14-25

Key Verse: 7:24,25

1. Sold as a slave (14-20)

In this passage is Paul referring to his pre-Christian life? No. He writes in the present tense because this is the dilemma of human life; everyone is both good and evil. Only God is good. God's law is good, and if we don't break his laws, we are free. But because of Adam's fall, Satan's power rules the world, and I am in bondage to sin. (Jesus called Satan "the prince of this world."–Jn 14:30) As long as I am in the flesh, I must grow through struggling with my sinful nature.

2. Two laws at war within (21-25)

Everyone is both good and evil. I have God's image, so I delight in God's law; but there is another law or principle at work in me--the law of the sinful nature. I have no strength to defeat it. Who can rescue me? Only Jesus who died and rose again can rescue me! I must trust him and depend on him every day. Before he knew Jesus, Paul struggled with sin and lived a defeated life. After conversion, Paul struggled with sin and found victory and freedom and peace in Jesus.

Prayer: Lord, thank you for Jesus Christ. I claim today the freedom he purchased with his blood.

One Word: Jesus rescues me

THERE IS NOW NO CONDEMNATION

Romans 8:1-4

Key Verse: 8:1

1. Therefore... (1)

There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. What good news! If we have come to Jesus with humble and repentant hearts, trusting in his grace alone, we are forgiven, and we are in Christ Jesus. By faith, we have been united with him in his death and united with him in his resurrection. When we are in Christ, we may be sure that God will not condemn us. So we should not condemn ourselves, nor allow others' condemnation to bother us.

2. What the law could not do, God did (2-4)

The law is powerless to set us free from sin; it only binds us more tightly, because our sinful human nature has no strength to obey the law. But Jesus came in the likeness of sinful man to be a sin offering. He satisfied God's righteous requirements by dying on the cross for the sins of the world. He fulfilled the law by his obedient life and by his obedient death. He sets us free from sin so that we might live according to the Spirit.

Prayer: Lord, thank you for taking away the guilt and condemnation of sin and setting me free to live according to your Spirit.

One Word: No condemnation in Christ

TWO MINDS

Romans 8:5-8

Key Verse: 8:6

1. The mind of sinful man (5a,6a,7,8)

The mind of sinful man is set on the flesh (see the footnote). God created mankind with a physical as well as a spiritual nature, and said, "It is good." But he wants us to seek him and his righteousness first (Mt 6:33). When we only think about physical comfort and worldly pleasure, or when we worry about our physical bodies, excluding God from our hearts and minds, God is very sorry (Lk 17:27; Ge 6:6). The sinful nature is in rebellion against God, so one whose mind is set on the flesh cannot submit to God's law and cannot please God.

2. The mind controlled by the Spirit (5b,6b)

The mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace. When we are in Christ and our lives are founded on him, his Spirit controls us, and we have God's life and God's peace. The Spirit of God puts God's life in us; his Spirit gives us peace in our hearts. So we must set our minds to seek what God desires and what pleases him.

Prayer: Lord, forgive me for being preoccupied with things of the flesh so much of the time. Teach me to walk with you in a life led by your Spirit.

One Word: Set your mind on spiritual things

IF THE SPIRIT OF GOD LIVES IN YOU

Romans 8:9-11

Key Verse: 8:11

1. God’s Spirit lives in us (9-10)

If we are Christians, God's Spirit lives in us. No one can become a Christian without the work of the Holy Spirit (Jn 3:3). Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to Christ. Our physical bodies are mortal. Because of sin, the factors of death are already at work in us. But God's Spirit is also working in us. We must learn to yield to his gentle urging, and not to the urging of the sinful nature. Then we can walk by the Spirit.

2. The resurrection power of the Spirit (11)

The Spirit who dwells in us is the Spirit of God who raised Jesus from the dead. He is not passive; he is actively at work in us to give us God's life. And he is at work in us to change us little by little into the image of Jesus, and to lead us to the kingdom of heaven. Eternal life starts here and now, when the Spirit of God comes to dwell in us. He gives life to our mortal bodies now and forever.

Prayer: Lord, I am weak, but you are strong. I was dead in sin, but now am alive in Jesus. Lead me by your Spirit until your image is restored in me.

One Word: The Spirit who raised Jesus is in me

CO-HEIRS WITH CHRIST

Romans 8:12-17

Key Verse: 8:17

1. Our obligation (12-14)

We sometimes fool ourselves into thinking that we have an obligation to pamper our bodies, or to enjoy our physical lives. ("You deserve a break.") But we have only one obligation--it is to God who made us and redeemed us by Jesus' blood. If we live according to the flesh, we can look forward only to death, for our flesh will perish. But if we put to death the deeds of the flesh by obeying the Spirit, then we will live.

2. Not a slave but a son (15-17)

When we are slaves to sin, we are full of fear. The devil holds us in his power through fear (Heb 2:14,15; Lk 1:74,75). But God's Spirit leads us in life and peace. When we are children of God, his Spirit indwells us and leads us to claim our inheritance, the kingdom of God. So we are heirs

of God, co-heirs with Christ; we are privileged to share in Christ's suffering in order that we may share in his glory.

Prayer: Lord, thank you for freeing me from fear. I want to share in Jesus' sufferings and in his glory.

One Word: Not fear, but sonship, suffering and glory

FUTURE GLORY

Romans 8:18-25

Key Verse: 8:18

1. The waiting creation (18-21)

Because of man's sin, the ground was cursed (Ge 3:17). But God, who subjected all creation to futility, had a great hope. His hope is described in verses 21-23. All creation waits for the day of liberation, the day when Christ comes again to restore the spiritual order of Eden and make earth like heaven. (See Isa 11.) Jesus taught us to wait and pray for this time.

2. We wait patiently (22-25)

Sometimes we have high hopes for other people or for ourselves, but our expectations become burdensome. We put our hope in worldly things, only to see them turn to dust; or if we taste the glory of human achievement, we find that it only lasts for a moment. We must make God's hope for the world and for ourselves our own. When Jesus comes again, this world will become like heaven, and our bodies will be like Jesus' resurrection body. Waiting patiently on God is what faith is all about.

Prayer: Lord, may your kingdom come and your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

One Word: Hope of future glory

GOD'S PERFECT WILL

Romans 8:26-30

Key Verse: 8:28

1. The Spirit helps us in our weakness (26-28)

God's will for each person is that he be conformed to the image of his Son (29). It is more important than where we work, or who we marry. His Spirit is working in us for this purpose. We are spiritually so weak that sometimes we don't even know how to pray; but prayer is our

lifeline to God. So God's Spirit prays for us according to God's will. When we commit our hearts to God, he uses every circumstance to build our character, to deepen our faith and love (28).

2. God works through the gospel (29-30)

These verses summarize gospel work from God's point of view. God wants to create a new humanity, a people of God who bear the image of his Son Jesus. He called us in love. When we responded in faith, he justified us through Jesus' blood and began the work of bringing us to glory through the resurrection power of Jesus.

Prayer: Lord, work out your perfect will in me. Mold me into the image of Jesus.

One Word: God works in us for good

GOD IS FOR US

Romans 8:31-34

Key Verse: 8:32

1. God did not spare his own son (31-32)

God works for good in us because he loves us. He showed his love by giving up his own son for sinners like us. God saved us from sin at such a great cost to himself. He let his one and only Son suffer and die on the cross for me and you. Not only so, God continues to love us. He knows what we need and gives us all things necessary to help us grow in holiness and in the image of Jesus.

2. No one can condemn God’s chosen ones (33-34)

We are weak and we struggle to overcome the sinful nature. God does not condemn us when we struggle. So we should not condemn ourselves nor be crushed by the condemnation of others. Jesus does not condemn. He who died for us and rose to victory prays for us at the right hand of God. We must take hold of his love and his victory, repent, and grow.

Prayer: Lord, thank you for your great love that did not spare your own Son. Thank you for Jesus who died and rose and who is interceding for me.

One Word: God loves me and gives me all things

MORE THAN CONQUERORS

Romans 8:35-38

Key Verse: 8:37

1. Victory in Jesus (35-37)

God does not promise his children an easy, trouble- free life. Paul encountered trouble, persecution, hardship, famine, nakedness, and even the sword. But he was victorious in life and in death because he never doubted the love of God. Those who encounter the storms of life without God suffer terrible defeat. But when we hold on to God's love in every changing scene of life, we are more than conquerors through him who loves us.

2. Nothing can separate us from God's love (38-39)

The problems and trials of life do not separate us from God's love–they draw us closer to him. Paul shares with us his conviction that neither the sorrows or joys of life, nor the victories or defeats, neither angels nor demons, neither life nor death nor anything else can separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Prayer: Lord, thank you for the assurance that nothing can separate me from you. Thank you for victory in Jesus.

One Word: Victory in Jesus

ISRAEL'S GREATEST PRIVILEGE

Romans 9:1-5

Key Verse: 9:5

1. Great sorrow and unceasing anguish (1-3)

Paul was an apostle to the Gentiles, but he was first of all a Jew. His heart was broken because his own people rejected the Messiah and rejected God's mission. He would have exchanged his own salvation for theirs, had it been possible.

2. Israel's privileges (4-5)

Israel enjoyed the privilege of being God's "firstborn son" (Ex 4). God dwelt with them and showed them his glory in the desert (Ex 16:10). He gave them the Bible--the Old and New Covenants; he provided a way of forgiveness and a way into his very presence through temple worship. He gave them great men of faith as ancestors; but their greatest glory was the Christ, who is God over all. Everything else pointed to him. They enjoyed all the privileges of being God's people, but they rejected Christ. So they lost everything. We must not take our Christian heritage for granted and miss the point--which is knowing and serving Jesus himself, who is God over all.

Prayer: Lord, I praise Christ who is Lord of all. Help me to be faithful to the mission he gave me.

One Word: Don't lose the point

GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY IN MISSION

Romans 9:6-18

Key Verse: 9:8

1. Abraham's true offspring (6-13)

God is Sovereign. God has a plan for world redemption. God promised Abraham that all nations would be blessed through his offspring. Israel's failure to accept God's Messiah does not mean that God failed. God blesses faith, not human privilege. Abraham had many children, but he only had one son of promise (9). Those who believe God's promises and live by them are true children of Abraham. In Genesis we can find many reasons why God should choose Jacob rather than Esau, but Paul is looking at history from God’s point of view, so he doesn't mention human reasons. God wants us to trust him and to acknowledge his sovereignty.

2. To proclaim God's name in all the earth (14-18)

All sinners deserve to die; but God, in his mercy, made a plan to save sinners. Pharaoh would not acknowledge God, but the Sovereign God used him anyway; through him, God's mighty name was proclaimed in all the earth.

Prayer: Lord, I believe your promises; use me to proclaim your name in all the earth.

One Word: Believe God's promises

GOD IS SOVEREIGN; GOD IS MERCIFUL

Romans 9:19-29

Key Verse: 9:20

1. God calls all believers "my people" (19-26)

God is the Sovereign Creator. He makes each person for a purpose. But he is not bound fatalistically to any plan. He is free to use his sovereignty for his own purpose, and his purpose is world redemption. The Gentile world was destined for destruction because of their sins--idolatry and unbelief. But when God, in his mercy, called Gentiles to himself, some responded in faith and became his people.

2. A remnant will be saved (27-29)

Israel should have rejoiced to see the riches of God's mercy. But they rejected the Messiah and God's love and became objects of his wrath, like the unbelieving world. There is no promise that anybody will be saved because of past privilege. Throughout history God has spared and worked through a remnant of faithful people. So Isaiah's prophecy is fulfilled.

Prayer: Sovereign Lord, I have no claim on your mercy, but by your grace and mercy make me one of your remnant.

One Word: A remnant saved by God's grace

RIGHTEOUSNESS FOR EVERYONE WHO BELIEVES

Romans 9:30-10:4

Key Verse: 10:4

1. The stumbling stone (9:30-33)

It is not enough to be sincere or zealous. The people of Israel were zealous, but they lost God's blessing because they were proud. They thought they could do something for God before accepting what God had done for them. Jesus is the stumbling stone God laid in Zion. His death was shameful, so one can only come to him with a humble, repentant heart. Proud people do not want to repent, so they fall under God's hand of judgment. But anyone who confesses his sins and trusts in Jesus will be saved.

2. The righteousness of God (10:1-4)

Jesus is the righteousness that comes from God. He fulfilled the law; he kept God's promises. We are unrighteous sinners; until our sin problem is solved, whatever we do is sin. We cannot save ourselves by our own zeal or righteousness. God does not look at our zeal. He looks at Jesus. We must come to Jesus and submit to God's righteousness.

Prayer: Lord, I come, "Just as I am, without one plea, but that thy blood was shed for me."

One Word: By faith in Jesus alone

CONFESS AND BELIEVE

Romans 10:5-13

Key Verse: 10:9,10

1. The righteousness that is by law (5-8)

In Deuteronomy 30:11-14 Moses taught the people that they did not have to climb the highest mountain or go to the depths of the sea to find God. They must simply open their hearts to God’s word, love God and obey him–and live. “God’s word is very near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart so that you can obey it” (Dt 30:14; Ro 10:8).

2. Confess...and believe... (8-13)

The law of Moses was, however, impossible for people with a sinful nature to obey. So God gave us another word--the word of the gospel–the good news of God's forgiveness through Jesus. We cannot earn righteousness, but we can open our hearts to the gospel. This word is very near; "it is in your mouth and in your heart." If we confess with our mouths that Jesus is Lord and believe in our hearts that God raised him from the dead, we will be saved. God still reaches out his hand of mercy to save all who trust him and call on his name (13; Ge 4:26).

Prayer: Lord, help me to share your word of life with someone today.

One Word: Confess with the mouth; believe in the heart

FAITH COMES FROM HEARING

Romans 10:14-21

Key Verse: 10:17

1. Beautiful feet (14-17)

When people hear the word of God, faith is born in their hearts. So Jesus sent his disciples out to tell the good news of God's love and salvation; he still sends those whom he has saved to share the word of God. God chose to work through his word, proclaimed by weak human beings. Indeed, those who obey and go have beautiful feet. People cannot call on God if they do not believe in him. People cannot believe in him unless they have heard about him. They cannot hear unless someone tells them. So God sends us.

2. The Father, waiting for his prodigal people (18-21)

Faith comes through hearing, but didn't the Israelites hear? Yes, they did. But not everyone who hears believes. When God's chosen people Israel rejected his love, he reached out to the Gentiles. He hoped that this would make Israel jealous enough to repent and come back to him. God, like the Father of the prodigal son, waits.

Prayer: Lord, thank you for your word which brought me life. Help me to share it with a lost and dying world.

One Word: Faith comes by hearing the word

GOD'S REMNANT

Romans 11:1-6

Key Verse: 11:5

1. A remnant of one (1-3)

When Israel rejected God's Messiah, they rejected God's purpose for themselves. Did this mean that God and Israel completely failed? No. Paul was an Israelite. He accepted God's Messiah and God's mission on behalf of all Israel. God has always worked through a remnant of faithful people--not through the unbelieving majority. In the time of Elijah, Baal worship almost inundated the land, because the pagan queen Jezebel supported the priests of Baal. But one man, Elijah, stood on God's side. God told him that he was not alone. God's remnant was there.

2. A remnant chosen by grace (4-6)

A remnant is the small piece of cloth left over when the whole bolt has been used up. God's people are never a majority. He works even in the darkest time to keep spiritual life alive, and by his grace, he chooses a remnant through whom to work.

Prayer: Lord, give me grace to stand on your side and be a part of your remnant people.

One Word: A remnant chosen by grace

RICHES FOR THE WORLD

Romans 11:7-12

Key Verse: 11:12

1. Those who were hardened (7-10)

God's redemptive purpose will not be thwarted by man's unfaithfulness. God chose Israel and lavished his love on her. Israel rejected his gift of love when they rejected the Christ. Rejection of love results in the hardening of the heart. Deuteronomy 29:1-12 tells how God loved Israel and how she rejected that love (8). In Psalm 69, David pronounced a curse on those who rejected him, God's chosen king. Jesus is God’s chosen one. To reject Jesus is to reject God and bring hardness and curse upon one's self (9-10).

2. Riches and greater riches (11-12)

God called a new people of God from among the Gentiles. Is there any hope, then, for Israel? In God there is always hope, for God is not a fatalist. God hoped to make Israel jealous enough to repent and return. If the world was blessed by Israel's failure, how much more will it be blessed when they come to Christ.

Prayer: Thank you, Lord, for your costly grace. Help me to live as a debtor to you.

One Word: God wants all men to be saved

THE OLIVE TREE

Romans 11:13-24

Key Verse: 11:20

1. Life from the dead (13-16)

Paul, a Jew, was an apostle to the Gentiles, but he loved his own people. He prayed that his Gentile ministry might make the Jews jealous enough to repent and return to God. It would be like a dead man coming to life. The root of Israel is the Messiah–and God's Messianic promise (Isa 11:1). The whole olive tree is the people of God. If branches are connected to God and his Christ, they are alive. If they are cut off from him, they are dead. Paul prayed for Israel to recover her life and mission.

2. Grafted branches (17-24)

Paul is writing to Gentile believers. He wants them to have a sense of history. They should not be arrogant; they should fear God. Israel was cut off because of pride and unbelief. Gentiles are included by God's grace because of their faith alone. They derive their nourishment from being attached to the root, by being a part of God's people and his history. If Israel repents and believes, she can again be grafted into God's history.

Prayer: Lord, by grace you grafted me into Jesus and into your redemptive history. Help me to stand.

One Word: Stand by faith, connected to the root

GOD'S WILL FOR ISRAEL

Romans 11:25-36

Key Verse: 11:29

1. God's gifts and call are irrevocable (25-29)

God keeps his promises by any means. He promised to send the Deliverer, and he sent Jesus the Deliverer from Zion to take away the sins of the world. God used even Israel's disobedience. Because of Israel's disobedience, a door of salvation was opened to the Gentiles. But what about the Jews who rejected God's Messiah? Are they without hope? No. God continues to love them and to call them to repent and receive the Savior Jesus. God doesn't give up on anyone--but he doesn't compromise. The only way of salvation is through Jesus.

2. So that he may have mercy on all (30-36)

Some people live with the mistaken idea that they are not sinners. They do not realize that they are captives of the sinful nature. So they do not repent and thus cannot taste the mercy of God. God consigned all men to disobedience so that all might repent and be forgiven through the blood of Jesus. All people need God's mercy; I need God's mercy.

Prayer: Lord, indeed your thoughts are inscrutable and your ways are past finding out. I praise you for the depth and riches of your wisdom and mercy.

One Word: God's call is irrevocable

LIVING SACRIFICES

Romans 12:1-2

Key Verse: 12:1

1. In view of God’s mercy, offer your bodies (1)

God made us with his own hands. But we became his enemies because of our disobedience. When we were separated from him by our sins and destined for hell, he had mercy on us and bought us with Jesus' blood. We belong to him. Because of his great mercy, we must offer ourselves to him to live for his glory. This is the spiritual act of worship which God wants. It is not enough to feel holy once a week while sitting in a church. I must seek to do what pleases God every day.

2. Renew your minds (2)

God's people are called to be different. We must live in the world, but not conform to the patterns of the world. Our lives are transformed by the renewal of our minds. Our minds are renewed when, with the help of the Holy Spirit, we study God's word and seek to obey it. God gives us new birth. When we are born again by the Spirit and the word, we no longer make decisions based on "What do I get out of it?" Rather, we think, "How can I please God?"

Prayer: Lord, help me to live for Jesus' sake and the gospel's.

One Word: A living sacrifice

ONE BODY, MANY MEMBERS

Romans 12:3-8

Key Verse 12:5

1. Don't think of yourself too highly (3-5)

Following Jesus is personal, but the Christian life is not a one-man show. Each believer is a member of the Body of Christ. Each of us must put down roots in a particular Christian community. Each of us must recognize his own unique place in the Body of Christ, and we must recognize the unique and precious place of each of our coworkers and sheep. If we belong to Jesus, we are members of his Body and we belong to each other.

2. Different gifts (6-8)

A gift is something we have received by God's grace. It is not ours by "right." We do not earn gifts. They are given to us to be used–not for ourselves, but to glorify God and to build up others. Many of the gifts mentioned here are opportunities for serving others. In some cases, the nature of the gift suggests how it should be used to serve the Body: Leaders should be diligent; giving should be generous; mercy should be shown cheerfully.

Prayer: Lord, help me to see myself and others from your point of view and live an unselfish life.

One Word: Serve the Body with your gift.

SINCERE LOVE

Romans 12:9-21

Key Verse: 12:9,10

1. Never lack zeal (9-13)

Genuine love is not based on human feelings; it must be rooted in Jesus' redeeming love for us. Sometimes we are robbed of joy by rebellious children, evil men, unchanged sheep or hard experiences in the world. But when our love comes from Jesus' love, we can hate evil, be committed in love to our brothers and sisters, and be full of joy. Faithfulness in prayer is the secret of zeal that does not grow stale. We must have Jesus in our hearts.

2. Love is possible in a hostile world (14-21)

Jesus loved his enemies and prayed for them. He never harbored vengeance in his heart--even toward those who mocked and tortured him. So, as Jesus' people, we must bless those who persecute us. And we must forgive. The way to learn Jesus' mind is to repent of our pride day by day and moment by moment. Revenge and envy come from a proud heart. We must learn from Jesus (1Pe 2:21), and we must have Jesus in our hearts.

Prayer: Lord, forgive my lack of prayer and my pride. Give me the heart of Jesus. Help me to be loving even in a hostile world.

One Word: Let love be sincere

GIVE RESPECT TO THOSE TO WHOM RESPECT IS DUE

Romans 13:1-7

Key Verse: 13:7

1. God established governing authorities (1-5)

Paul was writing to a church whose very existence was a violation of Roman law. He knew that God's laws must have priority. But he did not use this as an excuse for disobeying the law. God ordained governments to hold man's sinful nature in check--so we should obey the law–not only because we fear punishment, but also because it is right to do so. The spirit of rebellion is never pleasing to God; it comes from the sinful nature.

2. Give to everyone what you owe (6-7)

Some people have the false idea that respecting a leader or a parent or a teacher is a violation of the principle of equality. So they do not respect anyone or anything. This is a grave mistake. If we do not respect others, we cannot respect ourselves. We should pay our debts, including taxes. Jesus said, "Give to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's" (Mt 22:21).

Prayer: Lord, forgive my rebellious spirit. Give me the mind of Christ who even respected little children. Help me to obey the law.

One Word: Pay debts and respect others

CLOTHE YOURSELVES WITH CHRIST

Romans 13:8-14

Key Verse: 13:14

1. Pay the debt of love (8-10)

We are debtors to God, for he loved us with costly love. He wants us to pay that debt by loving our fellow man. Only love fulfills his law. Real love builds up the loved one; it does not tear him down. Using another to gratify one's own desires is not love. We must seek God's best and highest will for those we love.

2. Put aside the deeds of darkness (11-14)

It is an urgent matter. We don't know when our Lord will come again. Paul says that the night is nearly over and the day is almost here. It is time to put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light. Many people hold on to dark secrets in their daily lives. Everything will be exposed soon. We can only defeat the darkness when we invite Jesus into our lives to rule our hearts and thoughts and actions every day and every night.

Prayer: Lord, clothe me with Jesus and with the armor of light. Expose all the dark places in my heart and in my thought world, and let Jesus rule.

One Word: Put on Jesus

WE BELONG TO THE LORD

Romans 14:1-12

Key Verse: 14:8

1. Accept others without passing judgment (1-8)

Christians are different. We come from different cultural backgrounds. We must love and accept one another as Christ loved and accepted us. Gospel truth cannot be compromised, but there are some disputable matters about which we can agree to disagree. We should not judge others or argue about whether to eat meat or which day to keep holy or how baptism should be administered, etc.. We must live before God, for we belong to him.

2. We will stand before God's judgment seat (9-12)

Christ died and returned to life so that he might be

the Lord of all. He alone is the judge (Jn 5:26-27). Each of us must examine himself or herself and be prepared to give an account of our lives before God. We do not need to make comparisons or judge others. We must acknowledge the Lordship of Christ, do what pleases him, and be prepared to stand before the judgment seat of God.

Prayer: Lord, help me to be strict with myself and generous with others. Help me to live before you.

One Word: Whether I live or die, I am the Lord's

BUILD UP ONE ANOTHER

Romans 14:13-23

Key Verse: 14:19

1. Don't cause a brother to stumble (13-15)

Instead of criticizing others, we should make a decision not to put any stumbling block in their way. I must repent of my selfishness. Even though my conscience is clear, if other believers are offended or tempted by what I do, I should not do it. I have a right to eat anything or dress any way or go anywhere, but if what I do damages or destroys another's character or faith, I am not acting in love.

2. Please God (16-18)

The kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking. It is a matter of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. I must not please my appetite; I must please God and bring joy and peace to fellow believers.

3. If you doubt, don’t do it (19-23)

We must live by faith, please God, and build up others. Whatever does not come from faith is sin.

Prayer: Lord, help me to build up others and not tear them down by what I do or say.

One Word: Act in love and build up others

WITH ONE HEART AND MOUTH GLORIFY GOD

Romans 15:1-6

Key Verse: 15:6

1. Please your neighbor for his good (1-4)

We are all inclined to be selfish. But Christ was not selfish. He did not please himself, but served others (Mk 10:45). Finally, he died to save others. Those belonging to Jesus should not be selfish, either. We should try to please our neighbor for his good. This means that we should act in such a way that the faith of others is built up, not torn down. In order to endure, we need hope. God encourages us through the Scriptures and by his Holy Spirit. God’s promises plant hope in our hearts. Because of this glorious hope, we can live by God’s word rather than by our own feelings and ideas.

2. A spirit of unity (5-6)

Jesus prayed for the unity of his disciples (Jn 17:21). When each of us makes it his aim to please Christ, and when we follow him closely, then we will be one in him. We can glorify him together with one heart and mind.

Prayer: Lord, forgive my selfishness. Help me to follow my Lord Jesus, and love my brothers and sisters in Christ. Grant true unity of mind and heart in Jesus to all of God’s people.

One Word: Glorify God with one heart and voice

ACCEPT ONE ANOTHER AS CHRIST ACCEPTED YOU

Romans 15:7-13

Key Verse: 15:7

1. Christ became a servant of the Jews (7-8)

Jesus, born a Jew, served God's purpose for the Jews. The Jews rejected God’s purpose for themselves when they rejected Jesus and rejected world mission to the Gentiles. But when Jesus

died and rose again for the sins of the whole world, he fulfilled God's promise to Abraham– "through your offspring all nations will be blessed." We must take this good news to all the world so that all the people of the world may glorify God through Jesus. Christ accepted and forgave sinners, so we must accept one another–including those whose culture and/or race is different.

2. So that the Gentiles may glorify God (9-12)

God promised through the prophets that someday the Gentiles would glorify God. He raised up his people to be a priestly nation, to bring all people to God. In Isaiah he promised that the people of all nations would hope in the Messiah.

Prayer: Lord, you are the hope of all the people of the world. I trust you and put my hope in you. Use me to share your gospel with the people of the world.

One Word: Jesus accepts us all

THE PRIESTLY DUTY OF A MISSIONARY

Romans 15:14-22

Key Verse: 15:16

1. Mission, a gift of God's grace (14-16)

It is by God's grace that we are Christians, and by his grace that we are missionaries and Bible teachers. God's people are called to be a kingdom of priests. A priest stands between men and God. He brings men to God and brings God to men. Paul saw the work of proclaiming the gospel as a priestly ministry. To call people to "the obedience that comes from faith" is to offer them to God. God shows that he accepts the offering when the Holy Spirit works to change people's hearts.

2. Go where Christ is not known (17-22)

Paul wanted all people everywhere to repent and believe and obey the Sovereign God. When all people love and obey God, then creation order is restored. So Paul wanted to pioneer places where Christ was not known, and lay foundations. He was so busy doing this that he had not had an opportunity to visit Rome, even though Rome was the strategic center of the Gentile world.

Prayer: Lord, help me to see the world from your point of view, and obey your world mission command.

One Word: A priestly ministry

FIRST TO JERUSALEM

Romans 15:23-33

Key Verse: 15:25

1. I want to visit you and go on to Spain (23-24)

Spain seemed to be the end of the earth. Paul wanted to preach the gospel there in obedience to Jesus' command, and he wanted the Christians in Rome to share in this missionary vision and work.

2. But first I must go to Jerusalem (25-33)

It was dangerous for Paul to go to Jerusalem (31). He was well-known as a Pharisee who had become a follower of Jesus, and the unbelieving Jews hated him. But he thought that it was worth risking his life to take an offering from the Gentile churches to the Christians in Jerusalem. This offering was the Gentiles' acknowledgment of their spiritual debt to Israel, and their spiritual identity as Abraham's children. Paul asked the Romans to pray: (i) for him--for his safety and for his visit to Rome; (ii) that the Jewish believers would accept the offering from the Gentiles, and that they would accept God's missionary purpose for themselves.

Prayer: Lord, give me missionary vision and a sense of history.

One Word: God's history and God's vision

PAUL'S COWORKERS IN ROME

Romans 16:1-16

Key Verse: 16:1,2

1. Phoebe, Priscilla and Aquila, and Epenetus (1-5)

Paul concludes his letter with personal greetings, words of encouragement and a benediction. He greets the people who had shared in his gospel work throughout the Empire, and who were now in Rome. Phoebe was the bearer of this very important letter. She had been a great help to many people, especially to Paul and he instructs the Church to welcome her warmly and supply all her needs. Priscilla and Aquila's house church was a missionary church. They were Jews, but they wholeheartedly participated in the ministry to Gentiles. They were self-supporting laymen and fruitful one-to-one Bible teachers (Acts 18).Epenetus' conversion brought hope that all Asia could be reached for Christ.

2. Hard-working women and others (6-16)

Paul recognized the women who worked hard making an environment for gospel work–Mary, Tryphena, Tryphosa, Persis. He acknowledges two outstanding apostles (missionaries) who were his seniors. He encourages them all to show the affection of Christ to one another (16).

Prayer: Lord, help me to receive others in the Lord and to encourage all those who work hard for you.

One Word: Welcome one another with affection

THE GOD OF PEACE WILL CRUSH SATAN

Romans 16:17-20

Key Verse: 16:20

1. Be both wise and innocent (17-19)

Satan is always busy trying to sow doubt and discord among brothers. Especially, he makes use of those who enjoy the peace salvation brings but dislike the cross of mission. Such people try to justify their selfish lives by encouraging others to join them. We must keep God's word in our hearts and not be deceived. We must ask God to crush Satan under our feet.

2. The grace of our Lord Jesus be with you (20)

God promised to crush Satan's head (Ge 3:15). He sent Jesus to die on the cross, and raised him from death to do this. God's grace given us through our Lord Jesus Christ saves us from sin and fills our lives with God's love. Grace is a free gift of love. If the grace of Jesus is with us in all of our relationships and in all our activities, we have victory and joy.

Prayer: Lord, crush Satan's ugly head when it rises in my heart. Fill me with the grace of forgiveness and the grace of your love and the grace of mission.

One Word: The grace of Jesus be with you

SO THAT ALL NATIONS MIGHT BELIEVE AND OBEY HIM

Romans 16:21-27

Key Verse: 16:26b

1. Fellow workers (21-23)

Paul was a disciple-maker. He traveled around with the young men he was discipling. One of his most promising young disciples was Timothy. He wrote about Timothy, "I have no one else like him..." (Php 2:20). There were others, too. Tertius was Paul's amanuensis. Paul was writing from Corinth, where he enjoyed the hospitality of Gaius.

2. The mystery long hidden (25-27)

Glory and praise to God who establishes us by the gospel and by the proclamation of Jesus Christ to all nations. In his great wisdom he has revealed to us the mystery kept secret until the coming of Jesus: God is the God of all people. He wants all people of every nation to repent, believe, and obey the gospel. God's heart is for the whole world. He calls us who know him to go and make disciples of all nations, teaching them the obedience that comes from faith.

Prayer: Lord, hasten the day when all people repent, believe, and obey the gospel.

One Word: That all nations might believe