



CORNERSTONE CHAPEL

THE BOOK OF

ROMANS

WITH

PASTOR GARY HAMRICK



There is a common saying, "There's some good news, and there's some bad news." That saying could describe the book of Romans. It has a lot of good news (in fact, the word "Gospel" means "good news"). But the book of Romans also has some bad news about God's wrath and how we deserve it because of our sinfulness. Paul wrote a commentary on the culture in Romans 1 like its today's headlines—we are worshiping creation more than the Creator. There is more of an obsession about the planet and the environment than there is with God in our culture today. All this is symptomatic of a world that has denied the existence of God and disobeyed Him even though God has revealed Himself to an unrighteous world.

1. **Romans 1:1-25** – *"Paul, a bondservant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated to the gospel of God which He promised before through His prophets in the Holy Scriptures, concerning His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh, and declared to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead. Through Him we have received grace and apostleship for obedience to the faith among all nations for His name, among whom you also are the called of Jesus Christ; To all who are in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world. For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of His Son, that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers, making request if, by some means, now at last I may find a way in the will of God to come to you. For I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift, so that you may be established—that is, that I may be encouraged together with you by the mutual faith both of you and me. Now I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that I often planned to come to you (but was hindered until now), that I might have some fruit among you also, just as among the other Gentiles. I am a debtor both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to wise and to unwise. So, as much as is in me, I am ready to preach the gospel to you who are in Rome also. For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "The just shall live by faith." For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse, because,*

although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man--and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things. Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves, who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen."

2. Introduction to Romans

- a. Chronologically, Romans does not follow the end of Acts but rather fits into Acts 18 when Paul was in Corinth
- b. Paul wrote Romans to Believers in Rome around AD 57-58, three years before he actually arrived in Rome
- c. Unlike some of the other churches to which Paul wrote letters, he did not plant the church in Rome
 - i. However, Paul was familiar enough with the church that he mentioned twenty-six of the church's members by name
 - ii. The church was likely planted by Jewish Believers who trusted in Jesus during Pentecost in Acts 2
 - iii. The church was a combination of Gentile (Greek) and Jewish Believers
 1. This combination likely presented cultural challenges as those with a pagan background were interacting with those with an orthodox Jewish background.
 - a. In spite of these challenges, Jesus came to die for all people regardless of background
- d. While some of Paul's other New Testament letters addressed church issues, Romans focuses more on God and His great plan of redemption for mankind

3. Keywords found Romans

- a. **Gospel** (Romans 1:1)
 - i. Used twelve times in Romans
 - ii. Translates to **euaggelion** in the Greek and means "good news"
- b. **Grace** (Romans 1:1-7)
 - i. Used twenty-six times in Romans
 - ii. Translates to **charis** in the Greek, which is closely related to "love" and "mercy" and means "God's undeserved favor toward unworthy people"
 1. By his use of the word "saints," we know that Paul was writing specifically to Believers
 2. *Saints* in the Greek is **agios**, meaning, "set apart unto the Lord"
 - a. Every Believer in Jesus is a saint
- c. **Faith** (Romans 1:16-17)

- i. Used thirty-nine times in Romans
 - ii. Translates to **pistis** in the Greek and means “belief, trust, and reliance on God—who He is and what He promises”
 - d. **Wrath**
 - i. Used twelve times in Romans
 - ii. Translates to **orge** in the Greek, meaning “God’s righteous anger; His divine indignation and just punishment in response to human sin”
4. The book of Romans has some good news and some bad news
- a. The good news is that faith in Jesus Christ saves us, not what we do for God—but the first three chapters of Romans discuss the bad news: God’s wrath
 - i. God is love, but He is also just and holy, and sin makes Him angry
 - 1. It would be counter to God’s character for Him to allow human sin to go unpunished
 - b. Paul outlines three “bad” categories of all people
 - i. The unrighteous
 - ii. The self-righteous
 - iii. The over-righteous
 - 1. God reveals Himself in unique ways to each category
 - 2. We will not appreciate the good news or see our need for salvation until we understand the bad news
 - 3. **Romans 1:18-25** – *“For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse, because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man—and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things. Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves, who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.”*
5. The unrighteous

- a. While all people technically qualify as unrighteous, Paul was addressing the person with minimal knowledge of God and very little exposure to Christianity
- b. God says they are still guilty because creation testifies to who God is
 - i. **Romans 1:19-20** – *“Because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse.”*
- c. An individual has to work hard to deny the existence of God in light of creation, the complexity of the universe, the interdependency of all the systems of the cosmos, and the intricate details of the human body
- d. Sir Isaac Newton, the father of modern physics, stated, *“This most beautiful System of the Sun, Planets and Comets, could only proceed from the counsel and dominion of an intelligent and powerful being. ... This Being governs all things, not as the soul of the world, but as Lord over all: And on account of his dominion he is wont to be called Lord God ... Universal Ruler.”*ⁱ
 - i. The earth is twenty-five thousand miles in circumference and weighs six-septillion-five-hundred-eighty-eight-sextillion tons yet hangs suspended in space
 - ii. The earth spins on its axis at a thousand miles an hour and travels around the sun at sixty-seven thousand miles an hour
 - iii. A bolt of lightening travels an average distance of eight miles, and a single bolt contains fifteen-million volts, enough voltage to power one million lightbulbs for life
 - iv. The human heart weighs about a half a pound, but does enough work in twelve hours to lift the equivalent of sixty-five tons off the ground
 - v. In an area the size of a quarter in the palm of your hand there is one yard of blood vessels, four yards of nerves, twenty-five nerve ends, one hundred sweat glands, and three million cells
 - vi. A watch requires a watchmaker, a house requires a carpenter, an automobile requires a manufacturer, and creation requires a Creator
 1. **Jeremiah 32:17** – *“Ah, Lord GOD! Behold, You have made the heavens and the earth by Your great power and outstretched arm. There is nothing too hard for You.”*
- e. Man has inverted God’s divine order
 - i. God rules over mankind, and mankind is to rule over creation
 1. Today, creation is supreme, then mankind, and finally God (for people that even believe in Him)
 - a. There is more of an obsession with creation today than God—Animals are God’s creation, but they are not more valuable than a baby in the womb

2. Mankind is glorifying the created things rather than the Creator (**Romans 1:25**)
 - f. **Psalm 19:1-4a** – *“The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows His handiwork. Day unto day utters speech, and night unto night reveals knowledge. There is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard. Their line has gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world.”*
 - g. Mankind will deny the existence of God because they do not want to be accountable to Him, but we are without excuse because His existence is undeniable
 - i. Yet there is good news
 1. **Romans 5:8-9** – *“But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him.”*

Discussion Questions

1. Read **Romans 1:1-25** to provide a foundation for your Bible study time.
2. What is the focus of the book of Romans? (See #2d above)
3. Discuss the keywords found in Romans. Which word stands out to you? Why? (See #3 above)
4. What is the “good news” in Romans? What is the “bad news”? (See #4a above)
5. Why is understanding God’s wrath important? (See #4a-i above)
6. What are the three “bad” categories of all people that Paul describes in Romans? (See #4b above)
7. Who was Paul specifically addressing when discussing the “unrighteous”? (See #5a above)
8. Reread **Romans 1:19-20**. Why does God consider people with little to no exposure to Christianity still guilty? (See #5b above)
9. Read **Jeremiah 32:17**. Discuss how creation speaks to the reality of God. (See #5d above)
10. How has culture inverted God’s divine order? Why do people subvert God’s supremacy over creation? (See #5e-i-1 and #5g above)

11. Read **Romans 5:8-9**. What hope is there for the unrighteous if they are “without excuse”? (See #5g-i-1 above)
12. Close your meeting by allowing the Holy Spirit to lead your time of prayer.

* Unless noted, all Scriptures quoted are from the New King James Version (NKJV)

¹ ['General Scholium' from the Mathematical Principles of Natural Philosophy \(1729\) \(Normalized\) \(ox.ac.uk\)](#)

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"When a Culture Excludes God"

Romans 1:24-32

Pastor Gary Hamrick



What does a culture of any nation look like when it excludes God? Take a look around at American culture right now. It looks like that! Even though Paul wrote Romans 1 in the first century A.D., what he described then is just as apparent now. When man removes God from the equation, man resorts to his base nature, and our base nature is pretty perverse. In this study, we'll consider the sexual identity crisis, homosexuality, and the craziness of our culture with the hope that all will come to know the grace, forgiveness, and wholeness that is found through Jesus Christ.

1. [Romans 1:24-32](#) – *"Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves, who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen. For this reason God gave them up to vile passions. For even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature. Likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful, and receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due. And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting; being filled with all unrighteousness, sexual immorality, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, evil-mindedness; they are whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, violent, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, undiscerning, untrustworthy, unloving, unforgiving, unmerciful; who, knowing the righteous judgment of God, that those who practice such things are deserving of death, not only do the same but also approve of those who practice them."*
2. The first three chapters of Romans share the "bad news" about the human condition
 - a. We have to hear the bad news before we can appreciate and see our need for the good news
 - b. The world says that man is "basically good" (with a few exceptions like Hitler, Stalin, Osama Bin Laden, etc.), and that we should simply do what we can to improve our good condition
 - c. God says that man is bad because of our sin nature
 - i. We disobey Him constantly
 - ii. We need a Savior, which is why God sent His Son Jesus
 - iii. We would be subject to God's wrath were it not for Jesus
3. God's wrath

- a. **Romans 1:18** – *“For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness.”*
- b. The word *wrath* is found twelve times in Romans (proportionally more than any other book of the Bible)
 - i. *Wrath* in the Greek is **orge**, which means “God’s righteous anger; His divine indignation and just punishment in response to human sin”
- c. In the first two chapters of Romans, Paul describes three “bad” categories that account for all people:
 - i. The unrighteous
 - ii. The self-righteous
 - iii. The over-righteous
 - iv. God has revealed Himself through unique ways to each category
 1. Mankind is without excuse because God is intentional about reaching people
 2. Denying Him and subjecting ourselves to His wrath is our choice

4. The unrighteous

- a. While all people technically qualify as unrighteous, Paul was addressing the person with minimal knowledge of God and very little exposure to Christianity
- b. God says that His existence is evident through creation, so even those with little or no exposure to Christianity are accountable to acknowledge Him
 - i. **Romans 1:20-23** – *“For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse, because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man—and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things.”*
 - ii. **Psalms 19:1-2** – *“The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands. Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they display knowledge.”* (1984 NIV)

5. The natural fallout when a culture excludes God

- a. Paul described a Godless society in **Romans 1:24-32**
 - i. Three times Paul stated that God “gave them over”
 1. God will give people over to their base nature—which is “pretty perverse”—to allow them to see the misery that comes when they live according to their sinful desires, with the hope that they will turn back to Him

- b. **Romans 1:28** states that God gave them over to a *“debased mind”*
 - i. The NIV says *“a depraved mind”*
 - ii. The KJV says, *“a reprobate mind”*
 - 1. The Greek word is **adokimos**, which means “proven to be unworthy and without value”
- c. **Romans 1:24-25a** – *“Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves, who exchanged the truth of God for the lie.”*
 - i. People will begin to dishonor their bodies and believe the lies the culture teaches

6. Lies people believe today

- a. Those who believe that he can be “she,” and she can be “he,” and anyone can be “they” are dishonoring their bodies and exchanging the truth of God for a lie
- b. Those who no longer refer to women who give birth as mothers but instead “birthing people”—to account for women who identify as men who can give birth—are dishonoring their bodies and exchanging the truth of God for a lie
- c. Those who dismiss reparative or conversion therapy as emotionally damaging or dangerous—therapy that can help people heal from the wounds that led to same-sex attraction—but simultaneously say that puberty blocking drugs, hormone treatments, chemical castration, and surgical reassignments are normative, reasonable, and rational are dishonoring their bodies and exchanging the truth of God for a lie
- d. Those who believe biological men who identify as women should be allowed to compete in women’s sports (while shaming female athletes who object) are dishonoring their bodies and exchanging the truth of God for a lie
 - i. When Paul was writing Romans, Nero was emperor, and Nero was guilty of dishonoring his body and exchanging the truth of God for a lie
 - 1. Nero was married multiple times, and after one of his wives died, he took a pre-pubescent boy, had him castrated, and married him
- e. There is a movement among some in the secular professional therapy community to replace the word pedophile with “minor attracted person” (MAP)
 - i. The National Institute of Health website discusses using the term MAP because it is “less divisive” and “less stigmatizing”
 - 1. Pedophilia will become more accepted
 - 2. When you allow any sexual deviation to be accepted and celebrated, you will allow all sexual deviations to be accepted

- f. The enemy has worked hard while the Church has been hardly working, as Christians have been asleep in the pulpits and asleep in the pews
7. Christians can still lead the way with grace and truth
- a. **2 Timothy 1:12b** – *“I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that Day.”*
 - i. Despite what the world has tolerated, elevated, and celebrated, God calls homosexuality vile, unnatural, and shameful
 - ii. The world has legitimized, normalized, and legalized the matter but God’s view is the same yesterday, today, and forever
 - iii. He doesn’t bend to cultural re-definitions, and neither should the Church
 - b. When we are too afraid to speak the truth in love, we dishonor God, and we deprive people with same-sex attraction the good news of God’s grace, forgiveness, and wholeness that they can experience in Him
 - i. **Proverbs 13:15b** – *“The way of the unfaithful is hard.”*
 - ii. **Matthew 11:28-30** – *“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.”* (1984 NIV)
 - c. There is nothing more satisfying and fulfilling than a relationship with Jesus, as He is the One who brings wholeness to the soul, rest to the weary, and forgiveness to the sinful
 - d. **Romans 5:8-9** – *“But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him.”*

Discussion Questions

1. Read **Romans 1:24-32** to provide a foundation for your Bible study time.
2. How does Paul’s description of a culture that has excluded God compare to the culture we are living in today?
3. Discuss the natural fallout when a culture excludes God. (See #5 above)
4. Why does God sometimes give people over to their sinful desires? (See #5a-i-1 above)
5. Discuss the ways people “are dishonoring their bodies and exchanging the truth of God for a lie.” Why does God disapprove of these behaviors? (See #6 above)

6. Read **2 Timothy 1:12b**. What should we do when we are fearful to speak out about the issues in our culture? (See #7a above)
7. Read **Proverbs 13:15b**. Why does it matter whether Christians address the lies the culture is believing? (See #7b above)
8. Read **Matthew 11:28-30** and **Romans 5:8-9**. Discuss what it means to lead the way with grace and truth. (See #7b-ii and #7d above)
9. Close your meeting by allowing the Holy Spirit to lead your time of prayer.

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Some people are self-righteous, and they judge everyone else by their own standard. Some people are over-righteous, and they pride themselves in being better than everyone else. But both are sinful before God. In fact, ALL of us are “guilty as charged.” Paul makes the case that no one has an excuse for denying or disobeying God because He has revealed Himself through CREATION, CONSCIENCE, and COMMANDMENTS. But the good news is—God sent Jesus to save us from our sins!

1. **Romans 2:1-16** – *“Therefore you are inexcusable, O man, whoever you are who judge, for in whatever you judge another you condemn yourself; for you who judge practice the same things. But we know that the judgment of God is according to truth against those who practice such things. And do you think this, O man, you who judge those practicing such things, and doing the same, that you will escape the judgment of God? Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance? But in accordance with your hardness and your impenitent heart you are treasuring up for yourself wrath in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, who “will render to each one according to his deeds”: eternal life to those who by patient continuance in doing good seek for glory, honor, and immortality; but to those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness—indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, on every soul of man who does evil, of the Jew first and also of the Greek; but glory, honor, and peace to everyone who works what is good, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For there is no partiality with God. For as many as have sinned without law will also perish without law, and as many as have sinned in the law will be judged by the law (for not the hearers of the law are just in the sight of God, but the doers of the law will be justified; for when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do the things in the law, these, although not having the law, are a law to themselves, who show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and between themselves their thoughts accusing or else excusing them) in the day when God will judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ, according to my gospel.”*
2. The first three chapters of Romans share the bad news about the human condition
 - a. We must hear the bad news before we can appreciate and see our need for the good news
 - i. The world says that mankind is basically good, and people should do what they can to be even better

- ii. God says that mankind is bad because of our sin nature

3. God's wrath

- a. **Romans 1:18** – *“For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness.”*
- b. The word *wrath* is found twelve times in Romans
 - i. *Wrath* in the Greek means “God’s righteous anger; His divine indignation and just punishment in response to human sin.”
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4. The unrighteous

- a. While all people technically qualify as unrighteous, Paul was addressing the person with minimal knowledge of God and very little exposure to Christianity
- b. They have no excuse: God reveals Himself through creation
 - i. **Romans 1:20-23** – *“For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse, because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man—and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things.”*
 - ii. Life is too complex and interdependent to be the work of random chance and gradual modifications
- c. An unrighteous culture flips God’s natural order
 - i. They deny their Creator and worship creation
 - 1. For example, they save sea turtles and spotted owls but kill babies in the womb

5. The self-righteous (**Romans 2:1-16**)

- a. They consider themselves the standard and judge others by that standard

- b. They are self-seeking, judgmental of others' faults, and hypocritically ignorant of their own sins
- c. They try to use ignorance of the law as their defense
- d. They have no excuse
 - i. **Romans 2:1a** — *"Therefore you are inexcusable, O man, whoever you are who judge, for in whatever you judge another you condemn yourself; for you who judge practice the same things."*
 - 1. God is the standard, not man
 - 2. Ignorance is not a valid defense
 - ii. Conscience bears witness to a higher law and Lawgiver
 - 1. Conscience is our God-given inner witness testifying to what is wrong and what is right
 - a. Little children will act guilty for going against their conscience, even when their parents did not teach them to do so
 - 2. Because God gave all a conscience, the self-righteous are still guilty when they disobey God's law

6. The over-righteous

- a. **Romans 2:17-24** – *"Indeed you are called a Jew, and rest on the law, and make your boast in God, and know His will, and approve the things that are excellent, being instructed out of the law, and are confident that you yourself are a guide to the blind, a light to those who are in darkness, an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of babes, having the form of knowledge and truth in the law. You, therefore, who teach another, do you not teach yourself? You who preach that a man should not steal, do you steal? You who say, 'Do not commit adultery,' do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols, do you rob temples? You who make your boast in the law, do you dishonor God through breaking the law? For 'the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you,' as it is written."*
- b. The Jews, who had been given God's law through Moses, were the people through whom the promise and person of the Messiah came into the world
 - i. Paul was addressing those who know the law and boast in that knowledge
 - 1. They preach to others but are hypocritical as they themselves are not able to keep the law
- c. There is no partiality with God
 - i. Jesus came to save everyone, and nobody gets a "free pass" to heaven
 - ii. Those who know God's laws are first in privilege but also first in penalty

7. The purpose of the law

- a. God's indictment: We are all sinners
 - i. **Romans 3:9–20** – *“What then? Are we better than they? Not at all. For we have previously charged both Jews and Greeks that they are all under sin. As it is written: ‘There is none righteous, no, not one; there is none who understands; there is none who seeks after God. They have all turned aside; they have together become unprofitable; there is none who does good, no, not one. Their throat is an open tomb; with their tongues they have practiced deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips; whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness. Their feet are swift to shed blood; destruction and misery are in their ways; and the way of peace they have not known. There is no fear of God before their eyes.’ Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin.”*
 - b. The law is not meant to save us, but to show us how sick we are
 - i. Obeying the law cannot save us
 - ii. The law is meant to point us to a Savior
8. The salvation of God's grace
- a. **Romans 3:21–26** – *“But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe. For there is no difference; for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed, to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.”*
 - i. We are justified by God's grace
 - ii. Salvation is available to us through faith in Jesus' finished work on the cross

Discussion Questions

1. Read **Romans 2:1–24** to provide a foundation for your Bible study time.
2. The self-righteous person is described as someone who judges others by his standard rather than God's. Why does this standard fail to get a person to heaven? (See #5d-i-1 above)
3. The Bible tells us we all were born with a conscience. How does a conscience testify of God? (See #5d-ii above)

4. Describe a time you listened to your conscience or a time you did not. What was the result?
5. The over-righteous are those who know the law, can even teach the law, and put their trust in the law. Why is this not enough to save them? (See #6c above)
6. The Bible repeats that the Jews are first, and then the Gentiles. How does this statement not contradict God's impartiality? (See #6c-i above)
7. Read God's indictment of mankind in **Romans 3:9–20**. What are some ways you have seen proof that man is basically bad rather than basically good? And why do you think the world's narrative is so pervasive? (See #7a above)
8. The Bible says no one can keep the law or be saved by the law. Knowing this, what is the purpose of the law? (See #7b above)
9. The bad news is that we are all deserving of God's wrath, but what is the good news? If the law cannot save us, what can? (See #8 above).
10. Close your meeting by allowing the Holy Spirit to lead your time of prayer.

* Unless noted, all Scriptures quoted are from the New King James Version (NKJV)

January 28, 2024

"And Now, the Good News!"

Romans 3:21-4:8

Pastor Gary Hamrick



The world says, "Man is basically good." But God's Word says, "Man is basically bad and in need of a Savior!" Since man is guilty before God and deserves punishment, the question is—How can we be made right with God? Paul answers that question from three different angles. In this study, we will unpack what the Lord says through Paul in Romans 3-4.

1. **Romans 3:21-4:8** – *"But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe. For there is no difference; for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed, to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus. Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? Of works? No, but by the law of faith. Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law. Or is He the God of the Jews only? Is He not also the God of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also, since there is one God who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith. Do we then make void the law through faith? Certainly not! On the contrary, we establish the law. What then shall we say that Abraham our father has found according to the flesh? For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. For what does the Scripture say? 'Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.' Now to him who works, the wages are not counted as grace but as debt. But to him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness, just as David also describes the blessedness of the man to whom God imputes righteousness apart from works: 'Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven, and whose sins are covered; blessed is the man to whom the LORD shall not impute sin.'"*
2. The bad news
 - a. The human condition is sinful
 - b. Three things make us accountable
 - i. Creation
 - ii. Conscience
 - iii. Commandments

3. The good news
 - a. God provides a way to escape judgment
 - i. Faith
 1. Belief, trust, and reliance on God—who He is and what He promises—specifically, in Christ alone for salvation
 - ii. Grace
 1. God’s undeserved favor toward unworthy people
 - iii. Justification
 1. A formal acquittal by God whereby He pronounces a sinner to be righteous because of that sinner’s faith in Christ
 - iv. Propitiation (NLT: “the sacrifice for sin”)
 1. A sacrificial act by which the wrath of God was appeased and we were reconciled to Him
4. Salvation is not gained through law but rather through faith
 - a. **Romans 3:21-22a** — *“But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe.”*
 - b. **Romans 3:23** — *“For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”*
 - i. Obeying the law may make you noble, but it cannot make you righteous
 - ii. God’s righteousness is not found in the Law, but in the person of Jesus Christ
 - c. The Law’s purpose is to point to Christ, who is revealed in every book of the Old Testament:
 - i. Genesis – Jesus is the seed of the woman
 - ii. Exodus – He is the Passover Lamb
 - iii. Leviticus – He is our High Priest
 - iv. Numbers – He is the Cloud by Day and Fire by Night
 - v. Deuteronomy – He is the Prophet like Moses
 - vi. Joshua – He is the Commander of God’s Armies
 - vii. Judges – He is our Judge and Lawgiver
 - viii. Ruth – He is the Kinsman-Redeemer
 - ix. 1 & 2 Samuel – He is the Prophet of the Lord
 - x. 1 & 2 Kings – He is the Reigning King
 - xi. 1 & 2 Chronicles – He is the Glorious Temple
 - xii. Ezra – He is our Faithful Scribe
 - xiii. Nehemiah – He is the Rebuilder of everything broken
 - xiv. Esther – He is our Mordecai—our Advocate
 - xv. Job – He is our Ever-Living Redeemer
 - xvi. Psalms – He is our Shepherd
 - xvii. Proverbs – He is our Wisdom
 - xviii. Ecclesiastes – He is our Meaning for life

- xix. Song of Solomon – He is the Loving Bridegroom
- xx. Isaiah – He is the Prince of Peace
- xxi. Jeremiah – He is the Righteous Branch
- xxii. Lamentations – He is the Weeping Prophet
- xxiii. Ezekiel – He is the Son of Man
- xxiv. Daniel – He is the Fourth Man in the fiery furnace
- xxv. Hosea – He is the Faithful Husband
- xxvi. Joel – He is the Outpourer of the Holy Spirit
- xxvii. Amos – He is our Burden Bearer
- xxviii. Obadiah – He is our Mighty Savior
- xxix. Jonah – He is the Great Evangelist
- xxx. Micah – He is the Everlasting Ruler born in Bethlehem
- xxxi. Nahum – He is the Avenger of God's elect
- xxxii. Habakkuk – He is the Watchman
- xxxiii. Zephaniah – He is the Restorer of the remnant
- xxxiv. Haggai – He is the Cleansing Fountain
- xxxv. Zechariah – He is the One pierced for us
- xxxvi. Malachi – He is the Sun of Righteousness with healing in His wings

5. Salvation is by belief, not behavior

- a. **Romans 4:3** – *“For what does the Scripture say? ‘Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.’”*
- b. If a judge allowed a convicted criminal to go free, he would not be just, and likewise, God's holiness prevents Him from letting our sins go unpunished
- c. God's solution: a Savior
 - i. **Isaiah 63:5a** – *“I looked, but there was no one to help, and I wondered that there was no one to uphold; therefore My own arm brought salvation for Me.”*
 - ii. Jesus lived a perfect life, *“was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin”* (**Hebrews 4:15**), and died on the cross, making propitiation for us
 - iii. There is only one way to God
 - 1. **John 14:6** – *“Jesus said to him, ‘I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.’”*

6. Salvation is for all

- a. **2 Peter 3:9** — *“The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.”*
 - i. God's heart is for all to come to know Him
- b. **Romans 3:21-22** — *“But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe. For there is no difference.”*

- i. There is no difference between Gentiles (non-Jews) and Jews in relation to salvation
 - ii. Jews are privileged as they are the people through whom the Messiah came into the world, but all people have sinned, so all people need a Savior
- c. **Romans 3:29-30** — *“Or is He the God of the Jews only? Is He not also the God of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also, since there is one God who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith.”*
 - i. Circumcision among the Jews marked that they belonged to God
 - ii. Paul emphasized that their heritage had no bearing on their salvation

7. Salvation is by grace

- a. **Romans 4:1-5** – *“What then shall we say that Abraham our father has found according to the flesh? For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. For what does the Scripture say? ‘Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.’ Now to him who works, the wages are not counted as grace but as debt. But to him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness.”*
 - i. You cannot earn heaven because heaven is a gift
- b. **James 2:20b** – *“Faith without works is dead.”*
 - i. Works are evidence of salvation, but do not save us
- c. **Romans 3:24** – *“Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.”*
- d. **Ephesians 2:8-9** – *“For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.”*

Discussion Questions

1. Read **Romans 3:21-4:8** to provide a foundation for your Bible study time.
2. Review the definition of faith and grace. How do these definitions inherently exclude works as a means of salvation? (See #3a-i and 3a-ii above)
3. **Romans 3:21-22** addresses the righteousness of God, not through the law, but in the person of Jesus Christ. What does this mean for us? (See #4a and 4b above)
4. Review the many ways Jesus is revealed in the Old Testament. Which picture of Christ impacts you most and why? (See #4c above)

5. The Bible tells us we need to believe in Jesus' and His finished work on the cross to be saved. Why is this belief necessary? Why does God not simply grant salvation to all people? (See #5b above)
6. **Romans 3:29-30** emphasizes that a person's heritage has no bearing on his or her salvation. What are some modern ways you have seen people fall for this false notion that your heritage can save you? (See #6c above)
7. Review **Romans 4:1-5** and discuss why a works-based approach to God is not able to earn people a place into heaven. (See #7a above)
8. What are some examples you have seen of people adding to the simplicity of the Gospel? And why is doing so dangerous?
9. **James 2:20b** states, "*Faith without works is dead.*" How do we reconcile what might seem to be a contradiction between James and Romans? (See #7b above)
10. Close your meeting by allowing the Holy Spirit to lead your time of prayer.

* Unless noted, all Scriptures quoted are from the New King James Version (NKJV)



There are a lot of people in the world who have no hope—overwhelmed with grief, or pain, or sorrow, or anxiety—regretting the past, uncertain about the present, or worrying about the future. But God offers us a HOPE that the world does not have. In Romans 5, Paul tells us that there is a path toward hope that begins with suffering and includes perseverance and character. In this study from Romans 5, we will discuss each of these steps toward HOPE.

1. **Romans 5:1–5** – *“Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance, character; and character, hope. Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us.”*
2. Peace
 - a. True peace comes from being right with God
 - i. Justification
 1. A formal acquittal by God where He pronounces a sinner to be righteous because of that sinner’s faith in Christ
 2. When God sees us, He sees Christ’s righteousness, “just as if I’d never sinned”
 - b. **Romans 5:3** – *“And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance.”*
 - i. ESV and NIV use the word “sufferings” instead of “tribulation”
 - ii. Being at peace with God does not imply the absence of suffering
 - iii. A sinless life does not create a carefree life
 1. As Christians, we still sin, but we demonstrate our love for toward God by sinning less
 - iv. **John 16:33b** – *“Be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.”*
3. Hope
 - a. Jesus gives us hope that helps us better manage our sufferings
 - b. “Hope” is mentioned three times in the first five verses of Romans and is mentioned more than in any other book of the Bible except Psalms
 - c. **Romans 5:1–2** – *“Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.”*

- i. Hope comes from God, not from positive thinking
 - ii. Hope is rooted in a personal relationship with the Lord; it is the “happy certainty” in God (J.B. Phillips)
- d. **Psalm 31:24** – *“Be of good courage, and He shall strengthen your heart, all you who hope in the LORD.”*
- e. **Romans 5:3–4** – *“And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance, character; and character, hope.”*
 - i. Hope is borne out of suffering, but the path to hope has several “stepping stones”

4. Stepping stones to Hope

a. Suffering

- i. Job, **ʾīyôb** in Hebrew, means “persecuted one,” and Job lived up to his name
 - 1. Job is an example of how to suffer well
 - a. Job did not blame God
 - b. Job did not listen to his friends who tried to explain his suffering
 - i. Job’s friends tried to explain Job’s suffering as a result of a sin issue, and God rebuked them for this by the end of the book
 - 1. Damage is done when people feel the need to explain others’ suffering to them
 - c. Job acknowledged that man is limited in his understanding
 - i. God is not obligated to explain Himself to us
 - d. Job learned that you can’t control what is uncontrollable
 - i. Some people blame themselves and replay the past in their heads, but not everything is within our control; sometimes bad things just happen
 - e. Job pressed into God
 - i. **Job 19:25–27** – *“I know that my redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand on the earth. And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God; I myself will see him with my own eyes—I, and not another. How my heart yearns within me!”* (NIV)
- ii. Suffering well means taking responsibility for how we respond to trials
 - 1. Mel Robbins stated, “The same boiling water that softens the potato hardens the egg.”
 - 2. C. H. Spurgeon said, “The same sun which melts wax hardens clay.”

3. Elizabeth Elliott, whose husband was murdered in the mission field, said, "We want to avoid suffering, death, sin, ashes. But we live in a world crushed and broken and torn, a world God himself visited to redeem."
- b. Perseverance
- i. **James 1:2-4** – *"Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything."* (1984 NIV)
 - ii. Suffering is not an indicator of God's wrath
 - iii. Suffering is not an indicator of a bad God, but of a bad world
 - iv. **James 1:12** – *"Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him."* (1984 NIV)
 1. Suffering is unavoidable, but as Believers we do not need to suffer alone
 2. Sometimes God has to take us through the desert to strengthen our faith
- c. Character
- i. Character is who you are when no one is looking
 1. UCLA Coach James Wooden said, "Be more concerned with your character than your reputation, because your character is what you really are, while your reputation is merely what others think you are."ⁱ
 - ii. We learn character by persevering through the refining work of suffering
 1. *"Tribulation"* is from the Latin root **tribulum**, which was a flat board with spikes underneath, attached to an ox or horse, and driven over grain; these spikes would then separate the wheat from the chaff
 2. Suffering is how God reveals things in our hearts that we need to deal with
- d. Hope
- i. There are many broken people who hide their pain and try their best, but they need to know the hope of God
 1. **Romans 5:5** – *"Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us."*
 2. God's hope comes out of His love for us
 - ii. **Ephesians 3:17-19** – *"I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this*

love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God” (1984 NIV)

1. This love surpasses knowledge; God’s love must be experienced to be understood
- iii. **Hebrews 6:19a** – “We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure.” (NIV)
 1. We can have confident expectation that God will take care of us
- iv. **Romans 15:13** – “Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.”

Discussion Questions

1. Read **Romans 5:1–5** to provide a foundation for your Bible study time.
2. What is the source of peace? Discuss a time you experienced God’s peace despite your circumstances. (See #2a and 2b-iv above)
3. Peace with God does not imply the absence of suffering. Read **Romans 5:3** and discuss why God allows His children to suffer.
4. The world tries to offer hope through positive thinking, but what does God say about hope? How can we experience His hope in our lives? (See #3c, 3d, and 3e above)
5. The first step to becoming a person of hope is to suffer well, a concept exemplified by Job. Review the different ways Job suffered well, then discuss which one stood out to you and why. (See #4a-i above)
6. Review the two different analogies that Pastor Gary used to describe the opposing reactions a person can have to suffering. Discuss a time you hardened or softened your heart due to trials. Where did that choice lead you? (See #4a-ii above)
7. Read **James 1:2–4**. What does it mean to “consider it pure joy” to suffer? What are some ways you can learn to change your perspective on suffering? (See #4b-i, 4b-ii, 4b-iii, and 4b-iv above)
8. The Latin root for “tribulation” is *tribulum*, a device that uses spikes to separate the wheat from the chaff. How have you seen God use the spikes of suffering to make you more like Him? (See #4c-ii above)
9. Read **Ephesians 3:18–19** and **Romans 15:3**. What is our source of hope? Discuss a time you experienced this hope. (See #4d above)

10. Close your meeting by allowing the Holy Spirit to lead your time of prayer.

* Unless noted, all Scriptures quoted are from the New King James Version (NKJV)

ⁱ [27 Motivational Quotes by John Wooden to Inspire You to Be Better \(thewoodeneffect.com\)](http://thewoodeneffect.com)

March 3, 2024

“What Adam Ruined, Jesus Redeemed”

Romans 5:12-21

Pastor Gary Hamrick



When Adam and Eve sinned against God in the Garden of Eden by eating from the one tree that God had warned them not to eat, the human race became tainted. The genetic code of the human soul became permanently altered, and thus all of the descendants of Adam inherited the same sinful nature. That's why Paul said in Romans 3:23 that “all have sinned,” and why David said in Psalm 51:5 that he was sinful from conception. But in Romans 5, Paul taught us that what the first Adam ruined in the Garden, the “last Adam” (Jesus) redeemed on the cross! Paul contrasted the two lives of Adam and Jesus to help us understand that Jesus came as a cure to the sin problem that we all have.

1. **Romans 5:12-21** – *“Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned—(For until the law sin was in the world, but sin is not imputed when there is no law. Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those who had not sinned according to the likeness of the transgression of Adam, who is a type of Him who was to come. But the free gift is not like the offense. For if by the one man's offense many died, much more the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one Man, Jesus Christ, abounded to many. And the gift is not like that which came through the one who sinned. For the judgment which came from one offense resulted in condemnation, but the free gift which came from many offenses resulted in justification. For if by the one man's offense death reigned through the one, much more those who receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ.) Therefore, as through one man's offense judgment came to all men, resulting in condemnation, even so through one Man's righteous act the free gift came to all men, resulting in justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so also by one Man's obedience many will be made righteous. Moreover the law entered that the offense might abound. But where sin abounded, grace abounded much more, so that as sin reigned in death, even so grace might reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.”*
2. Adam is a type of Christ
 - a. Definition
 - i. *Type*, **typos** in the Greek, means “picture, resemblance, or pattern”
 - ii. A type of Christ paints a picture of Christ by foreshadowing or example
 - b. When an Old Testament man was a type of Christ, it was usually because of similarities; Joshua exemplified this
 - i. Name
 1. Joshua's Hebrew name **Y'hôšûa'** means “the Lord is salvation”

2. *Jesus* is a Greek transliteration of *Joshua*, **Y'hôšûa'**
 - ii. Succession
 1. Joshua succeeded Moses (who represented the law)
 2. Jesus succeeded the law
 - iii. Promised Land
 1. Moses led God's people to the border of the Promised Land, but could not lead them in—only Joshua could
 2. The law (represented by Moses) could never get people into heaven (represented by the Promised Land)—only Jesus could
 - c. Adam is a parallel contrast to Christ
 - i. **1 Corinthians 15:22, 45-49** – *“For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive. . . . And so it is written, ‘The first man Adam became a living being.’ The last Adam became a life-giving spirit. However, the spiritual is not first, but the natural, and afterward the spiritual. The first man was of the earth, made of dust; the second Man is the Lord from heaven. As was the man of dust, so also are those who are made of dust; and as is the heavenly Man, so also are those who are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly Man.”*
 1. The first Adam was natural, of earth and dust
 2. The second Adam (Jesus) is spiritual, of heaven
 3. The first Adam is who we resemble when we are born
 4. The second Adam is who we can resemble if we are born again
3. God formed man out of the ground
 - a. **Genesis 2:7** – *“And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being.”*
 - i. The word *man* in Hebrew is **'ādām**
 - ii. **'Ādām** literally translates to “red or ruddy” as clay because Adam was formed from dirt
 - b. As descendants of Adam, we are also dirt
 - i. **Genesis 3:19b** – *“For dust you are, and to dust you shall return.”*
 - ii. Our bodies have the same seventeen chemical elements as dirt
 - c. The word *human* comes the Latin **humus**, meaning “ground or soil”
 - d. The first time that *Adam* was used for the name of the first man was in **Genesis 2:19** – *“Out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the air, and brought them to Adam to see what he would call them. And whatever Adam called each living creature, that was its name.”*
 4. God gave man a perfect world
 - a. God told Adam he could enjoy Eden and was free to eat of every tree but the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil

- b. Adam was free to choose from many good options; only one tree was forbidden
 - i. God offers us free will because He wants a relationship based on love and obedience, not on forced compliance
- c. God created Eve, **Ḥaûâ** in the Hebrew, meaning “living”

5. Man fell into sin

- a. Satan presented Eve with three lies
 - i. That God is not good
 - ii. That God is holding back on them
 - iii. That if they eat of the fruit, they would be as wise as God
- b. These are the same three doors Satan still tries to enter through: *“the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life”* (**1 John 2:16**)
- c. Eve believed the lie, then handed the fruit to Adam, meaning Adam was standing there while Eve was tempted
 - i. He did not protect his wife; this is the sin of passivity
 - ii. He did not obey God; a lack of love led to his disobedience
- d. Adam’s sin tainted the human soul
 - i. We are not sinners because we sin; we sin because we are sinners
 - ii. We inherited Adam’s sin nature
 - iii. **Romans 3:23a** – *“For all have sinned.”*
 - iv. **Psalms 51:5** – *“Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived me.”*

6. The problem of sin

- a. We do not measure up to the perfect standard of God (**Romans 3:23**)
- b. The result of not measuring up to the perfect standard of God is eternity in hell

7. The solution of faith

- a. The good news is God desires to save us from hell
 - i. **2 Peter 3:9b** – God *“is patient with you, not wanting any to perish, but all to come to repentance.”* (NRSV)
- b. Hell was originally made *“for the devil and his angels”* (**Matthew 25:41**)
- c. God does not want us in hell but knows mankind cannot save itself
- d. God determined one righteous person would die for the sins of all, the Man Christ Jesus
 - i. **Luke 19:10** – *“The Son of man came to seek and to save that which was lost”* (ERV)

8. What Adam ruined in the garden, Jesus redeemed on the cross

- a. Through Adam
 - i. ALL became sinners (**Romans 5:12**)
 - ii. Judgment followed, bringing condemnation (**Romans 5:18a**)

- iii. Many were made sinners (**Romans 5:19a**)
 - iv. Sin increased, reigning in death (**Romans 5:20-21**)
- b. Through Jesus
 - i. ANY can be made righteous (**Romans 5:17**)
 - ii. The gift followed, bringing justification (**Romans 5:18b**)
 - 1. *Justification* is being made right with God through faith in Christ's finished work on the cross
 - 2. Notice salvation is a gift—not earned by your own efforts, but that of another, Christ Himself
 - 3. If we got what we deserved, we could never earn heaven; our wages would be death
 - 4. **Romans 6:23** – *“For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”*
 - iii. Many will be made righteous (**Romans 5:19b**)
 - iv. Grace increased much more, reigning in eternal life (**Romans 5:20-21**)
- c. **Romans 5:20-21** – *“Moreover the law entered that the offense might abound. But where sin abounded, grace abounded much more, so that as sin reigned in death, even so grace might reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.”*
 - i. Sin existed before the law, but the law clarified the gravity of sin
 - ii. Our sin was great, but His grace was greater

9. Two choices

- a. We can choose to put our faith in Jesus and go to heaven, or to reject Jesus and go to hell
- b. Some consider this an ultimatum because they do not understand their desperate situation; it is not an ultimatum, but an invitation
 - i. If you had terminal cancer and someone found a cure, you would not consider it an ultimatum for the doctor to tell you that you can only live if you take the cure
 - ii. The same is true with spiritual things: Jesus is the only cure to our sin problem
- c. To be born again, you must choose to trust Jesus as your Savior
 - i. **John 1:12-13** – *“Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God—children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God.”* (1984 NIV)

Discussion Questions

1. Read **Romans 5:12-21** to provide a foundation for your Bible study time.

2. We are all born resembling the first Adam but can resemble the second Adam by being born again. Discuss the ways you've been conformed to God's image. (See #2c-i above)
3. God put many trees in Eden, including the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. What is the significance of the inclusion of the forbidden tree? (See #4b-i above)
4. Satan presented Eve with three lies. Discuss a time you were deceived into believing one of these lies, or a time you countered one of them with the truth. (See #5a above)
5. Review the three doors through which Satan tries to enter. What is one way you have opened or closed one of these three doors to the Enemy? (See #5b above)
6. We are not sinners because we sin, but sin because we are sinners. Discuss why this is significant in our understanding of human nature and the world. (See #5d above)
7. The Bible offers Jesus as the simple solution to our sin problem, but some people will not accept that they cannot save themselves. Discuss why this may be. (See #7c above)
8. The Bible says we are all sinners, but that the second Adam died to offer us the gift of salvation. What is the significance of salvation being a gift? (See #8b-ii above)
9. Mankind has the choice between heaven with Jesus or hell without Him. Discuss why this is not the ultimatum some interpret it to be. (See #9b above)
10. Close your meeting by allowing the Holy Spirit to lead your time of prayer.

* Unless noted, all Scriptures quoted are from the New King James Version (NKJV)



The Christian life will have its share of temptations. That's because when a person trusts Christ as Lord and Savior, the spirit is regenerated but the flesh is not. The flesh is constantly at war with the spirit so that the spirit wants to please God, but the flesh wants to please self. In Romans 6-8, Paul gives us a few directives about how to get victory over sin and temptation.

1. **Romans 6:1-14** – *"What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it? Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin. For he who has died has been freed from sin. Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, dies no more. Death no longer has dominion over Him. For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God. Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord. Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts. And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God. For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace."*
2. Warning against abusing grace
 - a. **Romans 6:1-2** – *"What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it?"*
 - b. Chapter 5 ends with the statement that God's grace is greater than any sin
 - c. Chapter 6 starts with the warning not to abuse grace by using grace as a license to sin
3. The spirit is regenerated, not the body

- a. At salvation, we become free from the power of sin over us, not from the temptation to sin, which we are not freed from until we are in heaven with the Lord
 - i. D.L. Moody said, “When I was converted I made this mistake: I thought the battle was already mine, the victory already won, the crown already in my grasp. I thought that old things had passed away, that all things had become new; that my old corrupt nature, the Adam life, was gone. But I found out, after serving Christ for a few months, that conversion was only like enlisting in the army, that there was a battle on hand.”
 - ii. **1 Peter 2:11** – *“Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul.”*
 - iii. **2 Corinthians 10:3–4** – *“For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds.”*
- b. Paul pivoted between chapters 1–5 and chapters 6–8
 - i. Chapters 1–5 are positional, describing who we are in Christ
 - 1. Justification is our acquittal by faith in Christ that allows God to see us as if we had never sinned because He sees us through Christ
 - ii. Chapters 6–8 are practical, describing how to live for Christ
 - iii. Chapters 1–5 remind us we were dead in sin
 - iv. Chapters 6–8 remind us we are dead to sin

4. The death of the old man

- a. When Christ died, we died too
 - i. **Romans 6:5–6** – *“For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin.”*
 - ii. Christ’s work in the past takes effect in the present whenever people trust in Him as Savior
- b. The word *death* and its variants appear fifteen times in the first fourteen verses, emphasizing the connection between the death of Christ and the death of sin’s power over us
- c. When we willfully sin, we “give CPR” to the old man (the old self)
- d. In verse 6, the Greek word translated as “*done away with*,” or “*brought to nothing*” in the ESV, is **katargeō**, meaning “rendered powerless”—not “annihilated”

5. Three imperatives to gaining victory over sin

- a. Know and rely on the fact that the day you were saved, your old self died with Christ

- i. **Romans 6:6** begins with “*knowing this*”
 1. We must not depend on our feelings, but know and rely on the fact that the old man was rendered powerless over the Believer at salvation
- ii. **Galatians 2:20** – “*I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.*”
- iii. God calls us to knowledge (**John 8:32**, **2 Timothy 1:12**, **1 Corinthians 2:12**, **2 Corinthians 5:1**, and **1 John 2:3**)
- b. Conclude you are dead to sin and alive to Christ
 - i. God requires us to reckon, or conclude, we are dead to sin
 1. **Romans 6:11** – “*Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord.*”
 2. *Reckon*, or *count* in the NIV, is from the Greek **logizomai**, an accounting term meaning “to count, conclude, number, or take inventory”
 - ii. The pattern of temptation has been the same since Eden
 1. God declares (**Genesis 2:16–17**)
 2. Satan denies (**Genesis 3:2–5**)
 3. We decide whom to believe (**Genesis 3:6–7**)
 - iii. The Christian life is not only about dying to the old self, but getting on with living
 1. *Life* or some variant of *life* is repeated eight times in the first fourteen verses
 2. **Romans 6:4** – “*Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.*”
 - a. In baptism, going under the water symbolizes dying to sin, and going up symbolizes living for Christ
 3. **2 Corinthians 5:17** – “*Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!*” (NIV 1984)
- c. Do not let sin dominate, but dedicate yourself completely to Christ
 - i. **Romans 6:12–13** – “*Do not let sin control the way you live; do not give in to sinful desires. Do not let any part of your body become an instrument of evil to serve sin. Instead, give yourselves completely to God, for you were dead, but now you have new life. So use your whole body as an instrument to do what is right for the glory of God.*” (NLT)
 1. We must each decide who is master over our lives, self or Christ

- ii. **Roman 6:14** – *“For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace.”*
 - 1. Grace is a better motivator than the law
 - 2. Grace is internal motivation based on relationship
 - 3. The law is external motivation based on rules
 - 4. God’s love is behind His rules, and that should motivate us to holy living

Discussion Questions

1. Read **Romans 6:1–14** to provide a foundation for your Bible study time.
2. Read **2 Corinthians 10:4** and discuss what weapons you have used in your own spiritual battles.
3. Discuss how the first five chapters of Romans lay the foundation for the following three chapters. (See #3b above)
4. How does knowing the old man is *“done away with”* influence our Christian walk? (See #4d above)
5. The first step to spiritual victory is based on knowledge. Why is knowledge a better foundation than feelings in fighting against our flesh? (See #5a-i above)
6. Review the pattern of temptation, then identify a lie you believed and a truth that freed you. (See #5b-ii above)
7. How do you practically apply the three steps to victory over sin? (See #5a, #5b, #5c above)
8. The Christian life is a battle. Read **Romans 6:12–13** and discuss how to avoid growing weary in well doing.
9. Review the differences between grace and law as motivators and discuss one way God's love has compelled you to holy living. (See #5c-iii)
10. Close your meeting by allowing the Holy Spirit to lead your time of prayer.

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March 17, 2024

"The Importance of God's Law"

Romans 7

Pastor Gary Hamrick



Since Christians are under grace instead of the law, the question becomes—is the law of God pointless now? Some Christians think so! But Paul says otherwise. In Romans 7, Paul gives us three reasons why God's law is important in the life of the Believer today. In this study we will unpack Romans 7 and discuss the battle that lies between wanting to please God and wanting to live for our own sinful pleasures.

1. **Romans 7:4** – *"Therefore, my brethren, you also have become dead to the law through the body of Christ, that you may be married to another—to Him who was raised from the dead, that we should bear fruit to God."*
2. The role of the law
 - a. We are *"dead to the law"* (**Romans 7:4**) because it does not have dominion over us in regard to our salvation
 - b. This does not make the law bad; the law is still *"holy and just and good"* (**Romans 7:12**)
 - i. Paul did not just reference the Ten Commandments, but the whole six hundred laws of the Old Testament
 1. The dietary laws pointed to Christ but have now been fulfilled in Him and are no longer binding
 - a. **Matthew 15:11** – *"Not what goes into the mouth defiles a man; but what comes out of the mouth, this defiles a man."*
 - b. **Mark 7:19b** – *"In saying this, Jesus declared all foods clean"* (NIV)
 - ii. The moral law of God still has important implications for us today
3. The importance of God's law
 - a. The law explains what sin is
 - i. **Romans 7:7** – *"What shall we say then? Is the law sin? Certainly not! On the contrary, I would not have known sin except through the law. For I would not have known covetousness unless the law had said, 'You shall not covet.'"*
 - ii. Some things are clearly right or wrong without us knowing the law—this is our "God conscience"
 1. For example, murder is understood by most to be wrong—even those who have never read the law
 - iii. Some things are unclear to our conscience without the law
 1. Paul explained that he did not know covetousness was sin until reading so in God's law

2. Forgiveness is commanded by God but is not natural to us; it is “forward giving” those who wronged us to God, whether we feel forgiving or not
 - a. Revenge and bitterness can easily enslave us, but God wants us to be free
 - b. **Colossians 3:13** – *“Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.”*
- b. The law exposes sin in us
 - i. **Romans 7:15–23** – *“For I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. Now if I do what I do not want, I agree with the law, that it is good. So now it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me. For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh. For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out. For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing. Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me. So I find it to be a law that when I want to do right, evil lies close at hand. For I delight in the law of God, in my inner being, but I see in my members another law waging war against the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members.”* (ESV)
 - ii. God made us three in one—body, soul, and spirit—in reflection of His triune nature
 1. The body is the material part; the spirit, the immaterial; and the soul, the mind, will, emotions, reason, and belief
 2. The soul and spirit are inextricably linked, and sometimes used interchangeably in the Bible
 3. The soul and spirit live forever but are housed in a decaying body until separated by death
 - a. Jesus will one day give Believers their glorified bodies
 - iii. The war between flesh and spirit
 1. Before salvation, there was no war in us because our flesh, spirit, and soul all agreed to please self
 2. After salvation, our spirit was regenerated but our flesh was not, leading to internal war as the spirit now desires to please God, but the flesh still desires to please self
 - iv. The moral code helps us see the sin deep within ourselves
 1. **Psalms 19:7–8** – *“The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul; the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple; the statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes.”*
- c. The law expresses our need for a Savior

- i. **Romans 7:24–25a** – *“O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? I thank God—through Jesus Christ our Lord!”*
- ii. The phrase *“body of death”* referred to a Roman practice recorded by Virgil
 1. A murdered corpse would be chained to the murderer till the disease of the decaying victim would transfer to the murderer and kill him
- iii. We cannot rely on ourselves; only Jesus can save us from the decaying corpse of our old man
- iv. Before Jesus departed for heaven, He promised to give Believers the Holy Spirit to help us in this battle against sin (**John 16:17**)
 1. Romans 6 makes no mention of the Holy Spirit
 2. Romans 7 mentions the Spirit once
 3. Romans 8 mentions the Spirit twenty-one times—He is the one whom the Lord Jesus sent to help us in the battle against sin

Discussion Questions

1. Read **Romans 7** to provide a foundation for your Bible study time.
2. What does the Bible mean when it says we are *“dead to the law”*? Does the law still apply today? Why or why not? (See #2a and #2b above)
3. If we have a God-given conscience, why do we need the law? Discuss a time God’s Word made you realize that something you considered normal was sinful. (See #3a-ii and #3a-iii above)
4. Read **Colossians 3:13**. Describe a proper application of Biblical forgiveness. What are the benefits of offering Biblical forgiveness? (See #3a-iii-2 above)
5. If a Believer’s spirit is made new in Christ, why does the Christian life sometimes feel like an internal war? (See #3b-iii above)
6. Read **Psalms 19:7–8** and note the ways the law can minister to us. How has the law ministered to you recently? (See #3b-iv above)
7. Review what *“body of death”* signified in a Roman context. What does this picture say about our relation to the old man? (See #3c-ii above)
8. Knowing the battle against sin goes on until death, how can we achieve spiritual victory? (See #3c-iii above)

9. Close your meeting by allowing the Holy Spirit to lead your time of prayer.

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April 7, 2024

“No Condemnation, No Separation”

Romans 8

Pastor Gary Hamrick



In Romans 8, Paul opened and closed the chapter with two important exhortations: (1) There is no condemnation and (2) there is no separation from the love of God for those who are in Christ Jesus. Too many Christians walk around under the heavy weight of condemnation, shame, and guilt. In addition, some Christians believe the lie that God doesn't really love them. In this study, we will expose the lies we believe from either Satan, ourselves, or others.

1. The war within
 - a. Nonbelievers do not have an internal war
 - i. They have a “my pleasure” mindset
 - ii. They are restrained by conscience and the law of the land, but not by the Spirit
 - b. Believers have an internal war
 - i. **Romans 7:18–25** – *“For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh. For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out. For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing. Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me. So I find it to be a law that when I want to do right, evil lies close at hand. For I delight in the law of God, in my inner being, but I see in my members another law waging war against the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members. Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself serve the law of God with my mind, but with my flesh I serve the law of sin.”* (ESV)
 - ii. When a person becomes saved, his or her spirit is regenerated, but the flesh is not
 - c. The Holy Spirit serves as the Believer's help for the battle within
 - i. The Spirit is mentioned zero times in chapter 6, one time in chapter 7, and twenty-one times in chapter 8
2. **Romans 8:1–8, 37–39** – *“There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but*

according to the Spirit. For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God. . . . Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

- a. Two exhortations at the beginning and end of chapter 8
 - i. No condemnation (**Romans 8:1–8**)
 - ii. No separation (**Romans 8:37–39**)

3. Rein in sinful thoughts

- a. The mind
 - i. The battle begins in the mind
 - 1. *Mind* is mentioned six times in the last verses of chapter 7 and the first verses of chapter 8
 - 2. Most actions begin as thoughts
 - ii. **2 Corinthians 10:5** – “*We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.*” (NIV)
 - 1. We are commanded to rein in thoughts of revenge, hate, lust, and every other evil thing
 - 2. Though we may believe a thought will not harm anyone, it harms you and grieves God
- b. God knows all
 - i. **Psalms 139:1–2** – “*O Lord, you have searched me and you know me. You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar.*” (1984 NIV)
 - 1. In Hebrew, the last “me” of verse 1 is absent—the text reads, “*O Lord, you have searched me and you know.*” (1984 NIV)

4. Rein in the lies you believe

- a. The devil lies
 - i. **John 8:44** – Jesus says of Satan, “*he is a liar and the father of lies.*” (NIV)
 - ii. The devil tries to make Believers feel condemned, but Believers are not under condemnation
 - 1. **Romans 8:1a** – “*There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus.*”
 - 2. The word *now* tells us that we do not need to live in shame

- iii. The devil tries to convince unbelievers that they are not under condemnation
 - 1. He calls abortion, “choice”
 - 2. He calls fornication, “love”
 - 3. He calls drunkenness, “a good time”
 - 4. He calls cohabitation, “saving money”
- iv. The way to escape condemnation is through Jesus
 - 1. **John 3:17–18** – *“For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God’s one and only Son.”* (1984 NIV)

b. The self lies

- i. Some believe that God has forgiven them, but feel they cannot forgive themselves
 - 1. This seems holy, but in reality, treats Christ’s sacrifice as insufficient and places you as judge over God
 - 2. Solution
 - a. Look to Jesus’ victory, not your faults
 - i. Our sins are a big deal, but Jesus’ victory is a bigger deal
 - b. Stop wallowing and start worshipping

c. Others lie

- i. Some people are “exhumers”
 - 1. Exhumers bring corpses out of the ground
 - a. The word *exhumers* comes from the Latin **ex** meaning “out of,” and **humus** meaning “the ground”
 - b. They do not let the dead rest in peace
 - 2. Our sins were buried with Christ
 - a. Stop digging sins up from the grave
 - b. **Romans 6:4a** – *“We were buried with Him through baptism into death.”*
 - c. **Micah 7:19b** – God *“will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea.”*
 - d. **Jeremiah 31:34b** – God *“will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.”*
 - 3. Some people are like exhumers, bringing up the past and acting in the spirit of Satan rather than the forgiveness of God
 - a. Remind them God has forgiven you despite what they believe and walk away

5. No separation

- a. **Romans 8:37–39** – *“Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death nor life,*

nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

- i. There is no separation from the love of God
- ii. Not only does the Father not condemn you, He also does not stop loving you

Discussion Questions

1. Read **Romans 8** to provide a foundation for your Bible study time.
2. Paul teaches that the battle within begins in the mind. How can we as Believers rein in our thoughts? (See #3a-ii above)
3. Read **Psalms 139:1-2**. What principle does God teach through this passage? How can we apply this to our lives? (See #3b above)
4. The devil likes to rebrand sin. Discuss one lie he told you and how you overcame it. (See #4a-iii above)
5. What lie does the devil tell unbelievers that contradicts **Romans 8:1a**? How have you seen this belief permeate the culture? (See #4a-iii above)
6. Satan and the world are not the only liars. What is one lie you have told yourself? (See #4a-i above)
7. As Believers, we can still fall into sin. How do you rise from a fall rather than wallow in shame? (See #4b-i-2 above)
8. Pastor Gary described people who bring up the past as "exhumers." Discuss why. (See #4c-i above)
9. In an argument, we are sometimes tempted to bring up the past. Why should we avoid resorting to this tactic? (See #4c-i-3 above)
10. How does knowing that nothing can separate us from the love of God impact you? (See #5a above)
11. Close your meeting by allowing the Holy Spirit to lead your time of prayer.

* Unless noted, all Scriptures quoted are from the New King James Version (NKJV)



For the Christian there is a battle within—a battle between our spirit that wants to please the Lord and our flesh that wants to please self. In Romans 8, Paul gave us three encouraging ways that the Holy Spirit helps us to fight the battle of the flesh and spirit: He empowers us, adopts us, and prays for us.

1. Context

- a. Believers face spiritual warfare because they have a regenerated spirit housed in an unregenerated body
 - i. Not all appetites are sinful, only those desires that step outside God's boundaries
 - ii. **Romans 7:18–25** – *“For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh. For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out. For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing. Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me. So I find it to be a law that when I want to do right, evil lies close at hand. For I delight in the law of God, in my inner being, but I see in my members another law waging war against the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members. Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself serve the law of God with my mind, but with my flesh I serve the law of sin.”* (ESV)
- b. Believers no longer face condemnation or separation from God (**Romans 8:1, 37–39**)

2. An introduction to the Holy Spirit

- a. The Spirit is mentioned twenty-one times in chapter 8 to emphasize His role in spiritual warfare
- b. Three ways the Holy Spirit helps us win the war within
 - i. He empowers us
 1. **Romans 8:11** says He will “give life” to us
 - ii. He adopts us
 1. **Romans 8:15–17** says He “bears witness with our spirit”
 - iii. He prays for us
 1. **Romans 8:26–27** says He “makes intercession for us”
- c. Understanding the Holy Spirit
 - i. The Holy Spirit is the third person of the Trinity, which is one God revealed in a plurality of three persons—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit

1. **Genesis 1:26a** – *“Then God said, ‘Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness.’”*
 2. **Genesis 1:27** – *“So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.”*
 3. The plural pronouns for God in verse 26 indicate the plurality of persons in the Trinity, and the singular pronouns for God in verse 27 indicate that these three are one
 - ii. He is coequal and coeternal with God because He is God
 1. **Genesis 1:2** – *“The earth was without form, and void; and darkness was on the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.”*
 - iii. He is not an “it” or a “force,” but rather has all the attributes of personality.
 1. He has a mind
 - a. **1 Corinthians 2:11** – *“For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God.”*
 2. He has a will
 - a. **1 Corinthians 12:11** – *“But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills.”*
 3. He has emotion
 - a. **Ephesians 4:30** – *“And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.”*
 - iv. He indwells Believers
 1. **John 14:16–17** – *“And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever—the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you.”*
3. The Spirit empowers us
- a. **Romans 8:11** – *“But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.”*
 - i. “But if” can be translated as “and” or “since”
 1. Since the resurrection power lives within us, we do not sin from lack of Holy Spirit power, but from lack of willpower
 2. This should encourage us because we have the power that raised Jesus from the dead to help us

3. This should challenge us because when we sin, we choose to give in to the temptation
- b. **Romans 8:12–13** – *“Therefore, brethren, we are debtors—not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.”*
 - i. The “therefore” in verse 12 links verses 11 through 13
 1. Because of the Holy Spirit power mentioned in verse 11, we are able to—and called to—crucify the flesh
 - ii. **Romans 8:12–13** – *“Therefore, dear brothers and sisters, you have no obligation to do what your sinful nature urges you to do. For if you live by its dictates, you will die. But if through the power of the Spirit you put to death the deeds of your sinful nature, you will live.”* (NLT)
 1. We have the Spirit’s power, but we are responsible to use that power
 - a. Identify what pulls your flesh to sinful practices
 - b. Feed the Spirit, not the “beast” of your sinful desires
 2. Embrace the boredom and loneliness that may result from starving the flesh; being alone with Jesus is better than being in company with the world
 - a. Replace your sinful practices with time with the Lord and fellowship with other Believers
4. The Spirit adopts us
 - a. **Romans 8:15–17** – *“For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, ‘Abba, Father.’ The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together.”*
 - i. We must remember the Spirit bears witness that we are the children of God
 1. All are God’s creations, but not all are God’s children
 2. Know not only who you are, but whose you are
 - ii. Our Father requires the respect of obedience
 1. **Abba** is used in modern, colloquial Hebrew to mean “daddy”
 2. **Abba** was used in ancient Hebrew to mean “sir,” a term of respect for authority
5. The Spirit prays for us
 - a. **Romans 8:26–27** – *“Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. Now He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God.”*

- i. While all gifts of the Spirit are still available, this passage does not describe the gift of tongues
 - 1. The gift of tongues requires utterance, but this passage describes *“groanings which cannot be uttered”*
- ii. God prays for us when we do not have the words

Discussion Questions

1. Read **Romans 8** to provide a foundation for your Bible study time.
2. Review the three ways the Spirit helps us gain spiritual victory. Which one speaks to you and why? (See #2b above)
3. How does understanding that the Spirit has a mind, will, and emotions affect how you relate to Him? (See #2c-iii above)
4. How has the Spirit's resurrection power encouraged and/or challenged you recently? (See #3a-i above)
5. Ask God to examine your heart and reveal those things that do not please Him. What is one way you can starve the flesh? (See #3b-ii-1 above)
6. Discuss a time you felt isolated or bored from starving the flesh. What did you fill your time with instead? (See #3b-ii-2 above)
7. How does knowing who you belong to change how you think, talk, and act? (See #4a-i-2 above)
8. What is the significance of the term Abba in the context of “winning the war within”? (See #4a-ii above)
9. Have you ever been unable to speak your requests to God? How does the knowledge that the Spirit prays for you comfort you? (See #5a-ii above)
10. Close your meeting by allowing the Holy Spirit to lead your time of prayer.

* Unless noted, all Scriptures quoted are from the New King James Version (NKJV)

May 12, 2024

"All Things Work Together for Good"

Romans 8:28

Pastor Gary Hamrick



When life is good, it's easy to quote Romans 8:28 that "all things work together for good." But when life is not so good, is this verse still true? Are other verses in the Bible still true when our life circumstances do not fit with the promises of the Bible? The answer is YES. It's not that the Bible promise is lacking; it's that our understanding or perspective is lacking. In this study, we'll discuss a proper understanding and perspective of God's promise that "all things work together for good."

1. **Romans 8:28** – *"And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose."*
2. God's promises are sure
 - a. God's promises are reliable no matter how unreliable our lives are
 - i. In **Genesis 22:14**, Abraham called God **Jehovah Jireh**, meaning "God is my provider"
 - ii. In **Psalms 127:2**, the psalmist wrote God *"gives His beloved sleep."*
 - iii. We are called to believe in these promises even when we struggle
 1. God's Word is not inadequate or incomplete, but our understanding or perspective can be
3. *"All things work together for good"* does not equal "my expected outcome"
 - a. Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah
 - i. King Nebuchadnezzar had commanded all to bow to a golden image
 - ii. Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah—better known by their Babylonian names Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego—refused to bow even under threat of a fiery death
 - iii. **Daniel 3:16-18** – *"Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego answered and said to the king, 'O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter. If that is the case, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us from your hand, O king. But if not, let it be known to you, O king, that we do not serve your gods, nor will we worship the gold image which you have set up.'"*
 1. They relied on God's ability, not their expected outcome
 2. They wanted God to deliver them from the fire, but were prepared to be faithful even if such a rescue was not part of His plan
 - b. John the Baptist and the apostle Paul
 - i. These men were beheaded for the faith, not getting their deliverance in this life
 - c. The "others" in the Hebrews 11 "hall of faith"

- i. Hebrews 11 lists many people whom God delivered, but then lists the “others” who were also great men and women of faith and yet were not delivered
 - 1. **Hebrews 11:35b–40** – *“Others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection. Still others had trial of mockings and scourgings, yes, and of chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, were tempted, were slain with the sword. They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented—of whom the world was not worthy. They wandered in deserts and mountains, in dens and caves of the earth. And all these, having obtained a good testimony through faith, did not receive the promise, God having provided something better for us, that they should not be made perfect apart from us.”*
 - 2. They were commended not because everything turned out as they had hoped, but because their hope was in Christ
- 4. *“All things work together for good”* is the big picture, not the narrow view
 - a. **Romans 8:18** – *“For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.”*
 - i. The good that God promised may not come in our lifetime
 - b. Max Lucado’s book *In the Eye of the Storm* retold a Portuguese fable about a poor man who refused to sell his regal horse because the horse was like a member of the family
 - i. When the horse went missing from the stable, the villagers called the man cursed, and he responded, “Whether it be a curse or a blessing, I can’t say. All we can see is a fragment. Who can say what will happen next?”
 - ii. For each seemingly good thing, the villagers would call the poor man blessed, and for each seemingly bad thing, they would call the poor man cursed. But the man always responded in the same way: “All we can see is a fragment.”
 - c. **1 Corinthians 13:12** – *“For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known.”*
- 5. *“All things work together for good”* because God is good
 - a. God’s goodness toward us is based on His mercy and grace, not on our behavior
 - i. If you do not believe this truth, you could believe that you are bad because bad things happened to you or that you are good because good things happened to you
 - b. There is none good but God

- i. A rich young man called Jesus a good teacher, and to ascertain whether the man knew what calling Him good implied, he said in **Matthew 19:17b** – *“Why do you call Me good? No one is good but One, that is, God.”*
 - ii. **Psalms 34:8** – *“Oh, taste and see that the LORD is good; Blessed is the man who trusts in Him!”*
- 6. *“All things work together for good”* for those that love God, “the called”
 - a. This is a promise for God’s children, not the whole world
 - i. We are all made in God’s image, but we are not all children of God
 - 1. While God is merciful to unbelievers, He does not reward their disobedience
 - ii. This promise is only for those who have trusted in Christ for their salvation
 - 1. **Romans 8:17** – *“And if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together.”*
- 7. *“All things work together for good”* equals “God’s intended purpose”
 - a. **Romans 8:28b** – *“According to His purpose.”*
 - i. Even in suffering, God has a plan
 - b. **Psalms 27:13–14** – *“I would have lost heart, unless I had believed that I would see the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living. Wait on the LORD; be of good courage, and He shall strengthen your heart; wait, I say, on the LORD!”*
 - i. Sometimes God uses suffering to cause us to draw closer to Him and hear His voice

Discussion Questions

- 1. Read **Romans 8:28** to provide a foundation for your Bible study time.
- 2. When was a time God improved your understanding of one of His promises? (See #2a-iii-1 above)
- 3. How can we learn to accept that our expected outcomes may not be part of God’s plan? (See #3a-iii-2 and #3c-i-2 above)
- 4. How have you reminded yourself of the “big picture” amid trials? (See #4a above)

5. Review Max Lucado's story. What "fragment" in your life turned out differently than you expected? (See #4b-ii above)
6. Have you ever fallen for the lie that God is good to us based on our behavior rather than His goodness? How did that impact you, and how did God lead you to the truth? (See #5a above)
7. Read **Psalms 34:8**. How has trusting in the goodness of God blessed your life? (See #5b-ii above)
8. What is significant about God promising **Romans 8:28** only to Believers? (See #6a-i-1 above)
9. When was a time God used your suffering for your good and His glory? (See #7a-i above)
10. Close your meeting by allowing the Holy Spirit to lead your time of prayer.

* Unless noted, all Scriptures quoted are from the New King James Version (NKJV)

May 19, 2024

"Israel: Past, Present, and Future"

Romans 9–11

Pastor Gary Hamrick



Are the Jewish people God's "chosen people"? If so, why have most Jews not accepted Jesus as Messiah? Has the church "replaced" Israel in terms of promises God made to her that now belong to the church? We'll address these and other questions in this study from Romans 9–11. In these three chapters, Paul addressed the subject of Israel and the Jewish people, and how they fit into God's redemptive plan.

1. Context

- a. In chapter 9, Paul pivoted from talking about the human race generally to the Jewish people specifically
 - i. As a Jew, Paul grieved that many of his people rejected their Messiah, believing that their heritage meant they were saved already
- b. **Romans 9:1–3, 10:1–4, and 11:1–6** discuss how Israel fits into God's eternal plan
 - i. **Romans 9:1–3** – *"I tell the truth in Christ, I am not lying, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Spirit, that I have great sorrow and continual grief in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my countrymen according to the flesh."*
 - ii. **Romans 10:1–4** – *"Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they may be saved. For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted to the righteousness of God. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes."*
 - iii. **Romans 11:1–6** – *"I say then, has God cast away His people? Certainly not! For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin. God has not cast away His people whom He foreknew. Or do you not know what the Scripture says of Elijah, how he pleads with God against Israel, saying, 'LORD, they have killed Your prophets and torn down Your altars, and I alone am left, and they seek my life'? But what does the divine response say to him? 'I have reserved for Myself seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to Baal.' Even so then, at this present time there is a remnant according to the election of grace. And if by grace, then it is no longer of works; otherwise grace is no longer grace. But if it is of works, it is no longer grace; otherwise work is no longer work."*
- c. Questions this study covers regarding the Jewish people
 - i. Are the Jewish people God's "chosen people"? If so, what does that mean?

- ii. Is God done with Israel since the Jews rejected Jesus and played a role in His crucifixion?
- iii. Has the church replaced Israel in terms of promises God made to her that now belong to the church?
- iv. Do Jews have an automatic path to salvation?

2. Jewish history

a. Israel reborn

- i. The United Nations determined there should be a Jewish state in the Middle East in 1947
- ii. Israel was reestablished as a state following the War of Independence on May 14, 1948, when the British mandate officially ended over what was then called Palestine
- iii. Israeli Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion stated on May 14, 1948, that Israel would reclaim the Biblical homeland God promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob
- iv. US President Harry S. Truman supported Ben-Gurion's proclamation eleven minutes following the announcement
- v. The Jews returned to their homeland, but the Arab nations did not want a Jewish state

b. The 1948 Arab-Israeli War

- i. On May 15, 1948, seven Arab nations sent twenty-five thousand troops against Israel while Israel still had no military
 - 1. Egypt sent eight to ten thousand soldiers
 - 2. Transjordan, now Jordan, sent four to five thousand
 - 3. Iraq sent two to four thousand
 - 4. Lebanon sent one to two thousand
 - 5. Saudi Arabia sent a few
 - 6. Yemen sent a few
- ii. Israel won

c. The refugees

- i. Jewish refugees
 - 1. Six-hundred-fifty thousand Jews were in Israel at the beginning of the war
 - 2. By the end of the war, eight-hundred thousand Jews had fled to Israel
 - 3. Israel absorbed their own refugees despite their numbers doubling quickly
- ii. Arab refugees

- 1. The Arabs numbered fifty million people
- 2. The Arabs did not absorb their own refugees, but put them in refugee camps which their descendants live in to this day

- d. **Ezekiel 37:21-22a** – *“Then say to them, ‘Thus says the Lord God: “Surely I will take the children of Israel from among the nations, wherever they have*

gone, and will gather them from every side and bring them into their own land; and I will make them one nation in the land, on the mountains of Israel.””

- i. The reestablishment of Israel was prophesied twenty-five thousand years earlier in Ezekiel
- e. **Isaiah 66:8** – Israel was reborn in a day as Isaiah prophesied

3. The Jewish rejection of Jesus

- a. Most Jews have not accepted Jesus, just as it was in Paul’s day
 - i. **Romans 9:3** – *“For I could wish that I myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my countrymen according to the flesh.”*
- b. Paul said the Jews were more accountable because of their knowledge
 - i. **Romans 9:4–5** – *“Who are Israelites, to whom pertain the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the service of God, and the promises; of whom are the fathers and from whom, according to the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, the eternally blessed God. Amen.”*
- c. Many Jews stumbled then and now on Jesus, the “stumbling stone”
 - i. **Romans 9:30–33** – *“What shall we say then? That Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness of faith; but Israel, pursuing the law of righteousness, has not attained to the law of righteousness. Why? Because they did not seek it by faith, but as it were, by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumbling stone. As it is written: ‘Behold, I lay in Zion a stumbling stone and rock of offense, and whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame.’”*
 - 1. Those who do not break under their sin and come to faith in Jesus are crushed by Him for rejecting Him

4. No shortcut to salvation

- a. **Romans 10:9–13** – *“That if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. For the Scripture says, ‘Whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame.’ For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord over all is rich to all who call upon Him. For ‘whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved.’”*
 - i. Jews and Greeks (Gentiles) alike must believe in Christ to be saved and go to heaven
 - ii. **John 1:11** – *“He came unto his own, and his own received him not.”* (KJV)

5. Why are the Jews God’s people if most of them reject Him?

- a. The Jews are God's chosen people because through them, God revealed Messiah Jesus and His redemptive plan for the world
 - b. **Deuteronomy 7:6** – God told Moses, *“For you are a holy people to the LORD your God; the LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for Himself, a special treasure above all the peoples on the face of the earth.”*
 - c. **Genesis 12:3** – God told Abraham, *“I will bless those who bless you, but I will curse those who curse you. And through you I will bless all the nations.”* (GNT)
 - i. NKJV says, *“And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”*
 - d. We bless Israel and honor the Jewish people because of the role God chose for them
 - i. In the same way, we honor Mary for the role God chose her for
 - 1. We do not worship her; she also needed a Savior
 - a. **Luke 1:47** – Mary said, *“My spirit rejoices in God my Savior.”* (NIV)
 - 2. We respect Mary as the mother of Jesus
 - a. **Luke 1:42b** – The angel called her *“blessed among women.”* (1977 NASB)
 - ii. When we honor Israel, we honor our Lord
 - 1. **Matthew 25:40** – *“Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.”* (KJV)
6. There is no favored status regarding salvation
- a. **Romans 9:6** – *“But it is not that the word of God has taken no effect. For they are not all Israel who are of Israel.”*
 - i. We are saved by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone
 - ii. Not all Israel is Israel
 - 1. *Israel* translates to “governed by God”
 - 2. Only those who surrender to Christ are governed by God
 - 3. Paul was making a play on words to clarify that national identity does not translate to spiritual identity
 - b. Replacement theology
 - i. The misinterpretation of this verse has led to a false doctrine called replacement theology, once called supersessionism
 - ii. This school of thought claims the church has superseded Israel
 - 1. This claim argues that God transferred the promises and blessings from the Jews to the church because the people of Israel rejected and crucified Christ
 - iii. The church has not replaced Israel; God still has a plan and purpose for them
 - 1. **Romans 11:1-2a** – *“I say then, has God cast away His people? Certainly not! For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin. God has not cast away His people whom He foreknew.”*

2. Paul was saying he was a Jew, and God had not cut him or his fellow Jews out of His plan
 - c. The damaging effects of replacement theology
 - i. Replacement theology has led to Antisemitism
 1. This theology led Catholics to commission the Crusades and slaughter Jews and Muslims for their holy war
 2. Martin Luther wrote Antisemitic content because of his belief in replacement theology
 3. Adolf Hitler hailed Martin Luther in his book *Mein Kampf* and quoted him as one of the reasons for slaughtering the Jews in World War Two
 - ii. Antisemitism is rooted in Satan
 1. **Revelation 12:4** describes Satan crouched by the woman, waiting to devour her child
 - a. This child can refer both to Jesus and Israel
7. God's plan for the future of the Jewish people is that *"all Israel will be saved."*
- a. **Romans 11:25–27** – *"For I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own opinion, that blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written: 'The Deliverer will come out of Zion, and He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob; for this is My covenant with them, when I take away their sins.'"*
 - i. *"The fullness of the Gentiles"*
 1. The only prophecy that needed to be fulfilled prior to the rapture was Ezekiel 37, the 1948 rebirth of the Jewish state
 2. The first part of the second coming is Jesus coming in the clouds for the rapture
 3. The second part of the second coming is Jesus coming to establish the millennium
 4. The Lord will come when the fullness of the Gentiles comes, which is a number only God knows
 5. Jews can still get saved during this time, but this window is for the Gentiles
 - ii. *"All Israel will be saved"*
 1. After the rapture of the church, those left behind will face tribulation
 2. The tribulation will refine the Jews
 3. The first Holocaust killed one out of every three Jews
 4. In the "second holocaust," two out of every three Jews will die
 - a. The one-third that remains—the remnant—will see Christ and be saved
 - i. **Zechariah 13:6** – *"And one will say to him, 'What are these wounds between your arms?' Then he will*

answer, 'Those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends.'"

- b. The remnant of Israel will first pay a steep price
 - i. **Zechariah 13:8-9** – *"And it shall come to pass in all the land,' says the LORD, 'that two-thirds in it shall be cut off and die, but one-third shall be left in it: I will bring the one-third through the fire, will refine them as silver is refined, and test them as gold is tested. They will call on My name, and I will answer them. I will say, "This is My people"; and each one will say, "The LORD is my God."'"*

Discussion Questions

1. Read **9:1-3**, **10:1-4**, and **11:1-6** to provide a foundation for your Bible study time.
2. What can we learn about the character of God from the rebirth of Israel in a day? (See #2d and 2e above)
3. Knowing that greater knowledge leads to greater accountability, what steps have you taken to live according to what you know to be true? (See #3b above)
4. What factors contribute to people stumbling over *"that stumbling stone,"* Jesus? (See #3c above)
5. Discuss the ways you can practically honor Israel to honor God. (See #5d-ii above)
6. Review the meaning of replacement theology. In what ways have you seen this view infiltrate Christian thought? (See #6b-i, 6b-ii, and 6c-i above)
7. What is the significance of the fact that God is not done with the Jewish people? (See #6b-iii above)
8. How are you making use of your time till "the fullness of the Gentiles" comes? (See #7a-i above)
9. What is necessary for all Israel to be saved? What does this say about our human nature? (See #7a-ii-4 above)
10. Close your meeting by allowing the Holy Spirit to lead your time of prayer.

* Unless noted, all Scriptures quoted are from the New King James Version (NKJV)

May 26, 2024

"Predestination and Election"

Romans 9:6–18

Pastor Gary Hamrick



Does God predetermine some people to go to heaven and others to hell? Did Jesus die only for the elect, whom He decided to save? Can man freely choose Jesus, or is that God's choice? We will answer these questions and more in this study on predestination and election.

1. **Romans 9:6–18** – *"But it is not that the word of God has taken no effect. For they are not all Israel who are of Israel, nor are they all children because they are the seed of Abraham; but, 'In Isaac your seed shall be called.' That is, those who are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God; but the children of the promise are counted as the seed. For this is the word of promise: 'At this time I will come and Sarah shall have a son.' And not only this, but when Rebecca also had conceived by one man, even by our father Isaac (for the children not yet being born, nor having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works but of Him who calls), it was said to her, 'The older shall serve the younger.' As it is written, 'Jacob I have loved, but Esau I have hated.' What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? Certainly not! For He says to Moses, 'I will have mercy on whomever I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whomever I will have compassion.' So then it is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy. For the Scripture says to the Pharaoh, 'For this very purpose I have raised you up, that I may show My power in you, and that My name may be declared in all the earth.' Therefore He has mercy on whom He wills, and whom He wills He hardens."*
2. **Romans 9:13–15** – *"As it is written, 'Jacob I have loved, but Esau I have hated.' What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? Certainly not! For He says to Moses, 'I will have mercy on whomever I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whomever I will have compassion.'"*
 - a. The danger of misinterpretation
 - i. Some people read this passage and conclude that God randomly chooses people for hell, but the context is actually God's redemptive plan through Israel
 1. The passage mentions Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the patriarchs of Israel
 2. This passage is about God providentially choosing Jacob rather than Esau, who, as the older brother, originally possessed the birthright
 - b. Soteriology is "the study of salvation"
 - i. Calvinism

1. After John Calvin died, his followers came together to create the five points of Calvinism
 2. Calvinist soteriology
 - a. Calvinists believe that God only died for the elect
 - b. They reduce **Romans 9:13–15** to individualistic salvation, thinking God predetermined who would go to heaven or hell without man having a say in the matter
 - c. They emphasize the sovereignty of God
 3. Famous Calvinists
 - a. John MacArthur
 - b. John Piper
 - c. Jonathan Edwards
 - d. R. C. Sproul
 - e. Tim Keller
 - f. Al Mohler
- ii. Arminianism
1. After Jacobus Arminius died, his followers came together to create five points to counter Calvinism
 2. Arminian soteriology
 - a. They believe God knows who will be saved because He knows all things
 - b. They believe God desires for all to be saved but has given man the ability to choose or reject Him
 - c. They believe God died for all and will save any who call on His name
 - d. They emphasize the free will and responsibility of man for salvation
 3. Famous Arminians
 - a. John Wesley
 - b. Charles Wesley
 - c. A. W. Tozer
 - d. C. S. Lewis
 - e. G. Campbell Morgan
 - f. J. Vernon McGee
- iii. The Biblical view
1. Scripture records the balance of both God's sovereignty and man's responsibility
 2. These two soteriological views are man's finite attempts to define an infinite God
 3. Charles Spurgeon said, "I never have to reconcile friends. Divine sovereignty and human responsibility have never had a falling out with each other. I do not need to reconcile what God has joined together."

3. **Romans 9:13** – *“As it is written, ‘Jacob I have loved, but Esau I have hated.’”*
 - a. **Romans 9, 10, and 11** are about the history and role of Israel
 - b. The language of love and hate is an ancient way of making a comparative statement
 - i. This statement conveys that God chose Jacob over Esau, not that Jacob was more lovable than Esau
 1. Jacob’s Hebrew name, **lakōb**, means “deceiver”
 2. Jacob manipulated everyone he encountered to advance himself
 3. Jacob wrestled with the Angel of the Lord, an Old Testament appearance of Jesus
 4. Jesus had to strike Jacob’s hip and humble him before He could change his name to Israel, meaning “governed by God”
 5. The Lord transformed Jacob from a man who was out of control to a man under God’s control
 - ii. God uses this same terminology in Luke to compare how we should prioritize God over all else
 1. **Luke 14:26** – *“If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple.”*
 2. Jesus used this language of comparison to show how supreme our love for God should be, not that we should literally hate our family
4. **Romans 9:17–18** – *“For the Scripture says to the Pharaoh, ‘For this very purpose I have raised you up, that I may show My power in you, and that My name may be declared in all the earth.’ Therefore He has mercy on whom He wills, and whom He wills He hardens.”*
 - a. God only hardened pharaoh’s heart after pharaoh hardened his own heart
 - i. Pharaoh hardened his own heart during the first five plagues; God only hardened pharaoh’s heart for the last five plagues
 - ii. God did not violate pharaoh’s free will; He used what pharaoh had already decided
 - b. Predestined
 - i. Some form of the term “predestined” appears four times in the Bible
 - ii. Two of these instances are in Romans 9
 - c. Elect
 - i. Some form of the word “elect” appears twenty-seven times in the Bible
 - ii. Five of these instances are in Romans, mostly in chapters 9 to 11
 - d. Mercy
 - i. In comparison, God’s “mercy” appears over four-hundred times
 - ii. God is a merciful God

5. Predestination and election cannot violate the free moral agency of man
 - a. God pursues; we respond
 - i. **John 15:16** – *“You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you.”*
 - ii. **John 1:12** – *“But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name.”*
 - iii. **Revelation 22:17** – *“And the Spirit and the bride say, ‘Come!’ And let him who hears say, ‘Come!’ And let him who thirsts come. Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely.”*
 - b. God put the forbidden Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil amid the garden to give man the gift of freely choosing Him
 - i. **Genesis 2:16–17** – *“And the Lord God commanded the man, ‘You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will certainly die.’” (NIV)*
 - ii. What God offered in the garden, He still offers today
6. Predestination and election operate in conjunction with God’s foreknowledge
 - a. **Romans 8:29–30** – *“For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.”*
 - b. **1 Peter 1:2a** – *“Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father.”*
 - c. **Isaiah 46:9b–10a** – *“I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like Me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things that are not yet done.”*
 - d. We are predestined not because God predetermined who would and would not be saved, but because He omnisciently knows who will choose Him
7. Predestination and election are only mentioned regarding Believers, not unbelievers; prejudging some to hell would be inconsistent with God’s nature as revealed in Scripture
 - a. **John 3:16** – *“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.”*
 - i. God died for all because He loves all, not just the elect
 - b. **2 Peter 3:9** – *“The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.” (NIV)*
 - c. Chuck Smith said that if you are ever worried that you are not predestined or elect, then just turn your life over to Jesus and then you will be

- i. He created a resource on this topic: *Calvinism, Arminianism, and the Word of God: A Calvary Chapel Perspective*

Discussion Questions

1. Read **Romans 9:6–18** to provide a foundation for your Bible study time.
2. How do you avoid misinterpreting God's Word? (See #2a-i above)
3. Review the definition of Calvinism and Arminianism. What does each view emphasize, and how do the two show up in Scripture? (See #2b-i-2, 2b-ii-2, and 2b-iii above)
4. If **Romans 9:13** is not suggesting that God is fickle, what is the passage suggesting about His character? (See #3b-i and 3b-ii above)
5. How did God's sovereignty and man's free will operate together in pharaoh's life? How have you seen this tension in your life? (See #4a above)
6. When was a time you responded to God's pursuit? (See #5a above)
7. What does God predestine the elect for? (See #6a above)
8. How does the omniscience of God operate alongside His predestination? Why should this comfort us? (See #6d above)
9. How is prejudging some people to hell inconsistent with God's revealed nature? (See #7a and 7b above)
10. Close your meeting by allowing the Holy Spirit to lead your time of prayer.

* Unless noted, all Scriptures quoted are from the New King James Version (NKJV)

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"What is God's Will for My Life"

Romans 12

Pastor Gary Hamrick



Whenever we face major life choices, discerning God's will on the matter is vital. What is God's will for where I live? Who I marry? What career path I take? The questions are endless. And God has a perfect will for your life. But even if you don't hit the "bullseye" and discern His "perfect" will, there is still grace for God's children. He will redirect your path to move you in step with His will as you humbly seek Him. In this study, we will discuss five principles for discerning God's will.

1. **Romans 12:1-2** – *"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God."*
2. God does not desert us because we misinterpreted His will
 - a. The discerning of God's will
 - i. God has a good will, an acceptable will, and a perfect will
 - ii. God can redirect us out of situations that are not His perfect will
 1. God can use our missteps as stopping points along the path to His greater goal
 2. God might use what looks like missteps as opportunities for divine appointments
 3. **Proverbs 3:5-6** – *"Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths."*
 - iii. Our temporary missteps do not need to be permanent
 1. Marriage is the exception to moving on from missteps because marriage is a covenant before God
 2. God requires spouses to stay married except for two reasons
 - a. Adultery
 - b. The unbelieving spouse wants a divorce
 - b. The timing of God's will
 - i. Jesus always did God's will in His perfect time
 1. **John 7:8** – When Jesus' brothers pressured Him to go to the feast with them, He said, *"You go up to this feast. I am not yet going up to this feast, for My time has not yet fully come."*
 - ii. Moses understood God's will for his life, but had the timing wrong
 1. Pharaoh committed infanticide against the Hebrew boys, but the midwives saved those they could through civil

disobedience, including Moses, who was spared and floated up the Nile

2. Pharaoh's daughter found and adopted Moses
3. Moses knew God called him to deliver Israel, but acted prematurely by killing an Egyptian taskmaster who was beating a Hebrew slave
4. Later, Moses tried to make peace between two Jewish slaves, and one asked him if he would kill him as he had killed the Egyptian
5. Seeing his deed was known, Moses fled into the wilderness, where God shaped him for forty years before becoming Israel's deliverer
6. **Acts 7:25** – When recounting Israel's history, Stephen said of Moses, *"For he supposed that his brethren would have understood that God would deliver them by his hand, but they did not understand."*

3. **Romans 12:1-2** – *"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God."*

a. A consecrated life is necessary to discern God's will

i. In Old Testament times, people would sacrifice dead animals, but we are called to be living sacrifices

1. God cares what we do with our bodies

2. **1 Corinthians 6:19-20** – *"Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body."* (1984 NIV)

ii. God is not required to reveal more of His will if we are not listening to His will as revealed through His Word

1. **1 Thessalonians 4:3** – *"For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you should abstain from sexual immorality."*

2. Giving God our sexuality is part of being a living sacrifice. This requires two things:

a. Faithfulness in marriage (the unity of a man and a woman)

b. Abstinence in singleness

3. We must give God control over our bodies to be living sacrifices

a. **Psalms 101:3a** – *"I will set nothing wicked before my eyes."*

b. **Proverbs 4:24-27** – *"Put away from you a deceitful mouth, and put perverse lips far from you. Let your eyes*

look straight ahead, and your eyelids look right before you. Ponder the path of your feet, and let all your ways be established. Do not turn to the right or the left; remove your foot from evil."

4. **Romans 12:2** – *"And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God."*
 - a. God wants to renew our minds
 - i. **Colossians 2:8** – *"See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ."* (1984 NIV)
 - b. The world and the Lord have opposing values and ways of thinking
 - i. Relationships
 1. The world tells couples to "test drive" the relationship, but God tells couples to save themselves for marriage
 2. The world prioritizes outward beauty, but the Lord prioritizes inward beauty
 - ii. Careers
 1. The world cares about work location, pay, and upward mobility
 2. God cares about where we can serve Him best and influence others for His glory rather than where we can accumulate titles or money
 - iii. What matters is what God thinks and being at the center of His will
5. How to determine God's will
 - a. The counsel of God's Word
 - i. **Psalms 119:105** – *"Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path."*
 - ii. **Joshua 1:8** – *"This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success."*
 - b. The comfort of God's peace
 - i. **Colossians 3:15** – *"And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful."*
 - ii. Never go against your peace
 1. This lack of peace is not a feeling, but a break in your closeness with the Lord
 - c. The confirmation of God's people
 - i. **Proverbs 11:14** – *"Where there is no counsel, the people fall; but in the multitude of counselors there is safety."*
 - ii. Pray and consult with your trusted advisors

- iii. Do not take direction from others, but rather confirmation of what God has already told you
 1. Your direction should come from God

Discussion Questions

1. Read **Romans 12:1-2** to provide a foundation for your Bible study time.
2. Have you ever become fatalistic about missing the will of God? How do you remedy this mindset? (See #2a-i above)
3. Was there a time you misinterpreted God's will? How did God redirect you? (See #2a-ii above)
4. When has what appeared to be a misstep turned out to be a divine appointment? (See #2a-ii-2 above)
5. How do we trust our future to the Lord? (See #2a-ii-3 above)
6. Why is the timeline of God's will so important? How has God shaped you during seasons of waiting? (See #2b-ii-5 above)
7. Have you seen God reveal His will to you only after you consecrated yourself? (See #3a above)
8. How does a Believer live as a "living sacrifice," and how have you applied this principle in your life? (See #3a-ii-2 and 3a-ii-3 above)
9. Has God ever told you to do something that contradicted the wisdom of this world? (See #4b above)
10. What is one way God has revealed His will to you? (See #5a, 5b, and 5c above)
11. Close your meeting by allowing the Holy Spirit to lead your time of prayer.

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The first eleven chapters of Romans are doctrinal, but the last five are very practical. One of the themes Paul stressed in the last five chapters is our personal responsibility regarding how we treat one another. In fact, Paul used the phrase "one another" ten times in the closing five chapters to help us understand the practical ways we can properly treat each other, an important lesson because how we treat each other directly reflects our relationship with Christ.

1. Outline of Romans

- a. Romans is both doctrinal and practical
- b. Doctrinal chapters
 - i. Romans 1–3 is about the doctrine of sinful humanity
 1. All are guilty before God
 2. **Romans 3:23** – *"For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."*
 - ii. Romans 4–8 is about the doctrine of justification by faith
 1. All can be reconciled to God through faith in Jesus Christ
 2. **Romans 5:1–2** – *"Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God."*
 - iii. Romans 9–11 is about the doctrine of Israel
 1. The Church has not replaced Israel; God still has a plan and purpose for Israel and will honor His promises to the Jewish people
 2. **Romans 11:1–2a** – *"I say then, has God cast away His people? Certainly not! For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin. God has not cast away His people whom He foreknew."*
- c. Practical chapters
 - i. Romans 12–16 is about our responsibility in how we treat other people
 1. In the context of the passage, Paul described relationships between Believers, but we are also called to treat unbelievers in the same kind manner
 - ii. How we treat others reflects our relationship with Jesus Christ
 1. **Matthew 25:35–40** – *"For I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me.' Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give You drink? When did*

we see You a stranger and take You in, or naked and clothe You? Or when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?’ And the King will answer and say to them, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.’”

2. **Romans 12:18** – *“If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men.”*
3. **Romans 14:19** – *“Therefore let us pursue the things which make for peace and the things by which one may edify another.”*
 - a. The NIV says, *“Let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification.”*

iii. One another

1. Paul used the phrase *“one another”* ten times in the book of Romans to convey how the body of Christ should relate to each other
2. The phrase *“one another”* appears ten times in last five chapters of Romans, more than in any other book of the Bible

2. **Romans 12:9–16** – *“Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil. Cling to what is good. Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another; not lagging in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord; rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing steadfastly in prayer; distributing to the needs of the saints, given to hospitality. Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep. Be of the same mind toward one another. Do not set your mind on high things, but associate with the humble. Do not be wise in your own opinion.”*

3. Be kind and loving to one another

- a. **Romans 12:10a** – *“Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love.”*
 - i. *“Kindly affectionate”* is from the Greek word **philostorgos**
 1. **Philostorgos** comes from the root words **philos** meaning “friendly love,” and **storge** meaning “familial love”
 - ii. *“Brotherly love”* is from the Greek word **philadelphia**.
 1. Loving people like family means that though you may fight, you keep pursuing peace with them as far as it depends on you (**Romans 12:18**)

4. Show honor to one another

- a. **Romans 12:10b** – *“In honor giving preference to one another.”*
 - i. The ESV says, *“Outdo one another in showing honor.”*
 - ii. *Honor* in the Greek is **timē**, meaning “to pay an expensive price”
 1. You pay more for what is valuable
 2. The people in your life should feel valued by you

- b. Honor others with your deeds
 - i. Honor can be demonstrated with action
 - 1. **Galatians 5:13** – *“Serve one another in love.”*
 - a. No one is too good to serve another
 - ii. Honor can be demonstrated with words
 - 1. You can honor people by addressing them by their titles, by saying “thank you,” and by showing appreciation
 - 2. Lead with honor
 - 3. **Romans 13:7b** – *“Honor to whom honor is due.”* (BSB)
 - 4. **Proverbs 25:11** – *“A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in settings of silver.”*
5. Be mutually considerate
- a. **Romans 12:16a** – *“Be of the same mind toward one another.”*
 - i. This does not mean to think alike, but to think of others in the same considerate way you want them to think of you
 - b. **Luke 6:31** – *“Do to others as you would have them do to you.”* (NIV)
 - i. Ask yourself whether you would want to be treated in the way that you treat others
6. Love one another
- a. **Romans 13:8–10** – *“Owe no one anything except to love one another, for he who loves another has fulfilled the law. For the commandments, ‘You shall not commit adultery,’ ‘You shall not murder,’ ‘You shall not steal,’ ‘You shall not bear false witness,’ ‘You shall not covet,’ and if there is any other commandment, are all summed up in this saying, namely, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ Love does no harm to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.”*
 - i. The word used for *love* here is translated from the Greek **agape**, or **agapeo** in the verb form
 - 1. **Agape** is the highest form of love
 - b. Love helps you avoid breaking God’s law
 - i. Paul mentions the latter five of the Ten Commandments
 - 1. The first five commandments are about how we relate to God
 - 2. The last five commandments are about how we relate to each other
 - ii. God calls us to love like He loves
 - 1. **John 13:34–35** – *“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”*
 - a. Love is a commandment, not a suggestion
 - b. Love is not a mere feeling, but an action

- c. God loves us, and so we must similarly love the undeserving
- d. Love does not mean tolerating bad behavior or condoning sin, but loving people when it is inconvenient
- 2. **Proverbs 17:17** – *“A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity.”*

7. Do not judge one another

- a. **Romans 14:13** – *“Therefore let us not judge one another anymore, but rather resolve this, not to put a stumbling block or a cause to fall in our brother’s way.”*
 - i. The context of the passage is that Believers were judging each other on disputable matters, matters that are clearly spelled out in the Bible
 - ii. What is not spelled out in the Bible is left to our sanctified conscience provided that
 - 1. Our choice honors God
 - 2. We are not offending other people
 - iii. God calls us to live out our convictions
- b. **Romans 14:19–21** – *“Therefore let us pursue the things which make for peace and the things by which one may edify another. Do not destroy the work of God for the sake of food. All things indeed are pure, but it is evil for the man who eats with offense. It is good neither to eat meat nor drink wine nor do anything by which your brother stumbles or is offended or is made weak.”*
 - i. You do not have to exercise your rights if using them makes a brother stumble
 - 1. Instead of calling those who do not agree with us legalists or libertines, we are called to live in peace

8. Accept one another

- a. **Romans 15:7** – *“Therefore receive one another, just as Christ also received us, to the glory of God.”*
 - i. The ESV says, *“Therefore welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God.”*
 - ii. The NIV says, *“Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God.”*
- b. God wants us to accept people, not their sin
 - i. Paul is speaking of the rich differences found in the body of Christ
 - 1. **Revelation 7:9a** – *“After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb.”*
 - 2. **Acts 10:35** – Peter said of God, *“In every nation he accepts those who fear him and do what is right.”*

9. Admonish one another
- a. **Romans 15:14** – *“Now I myself am confident concerning you, my brethren, that you also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another.”*
 - i. Admonish in the Greek is **noutheteō**, meaning “to caution or reprove gently”
 - ii. God calls His people to warn each other when danger is approaching or when they are approaching danger
 - iii. Admonish gently and with humility, as you would want to be admonished
 - 1. As the proverb goes, “There but by the grace of God go I.”
 - b. **Colossians 3:16** – *“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another.”* (ESV)

Discussion Questions

1. Read **Romans 12:9–16** to provide a foundation for your Bible study time.
2. How do you value other people through your actions? (See #4a-ii-1 above)
3. How can you lead with honor in your relationships with others? (See #4b-i-2 above)
4. Discuss a time you applied the principle of **Romans 12:16**. (See #5a above)
5. How has a love for God helped you keep His law? (See #6b-i above)
6. What does **agape** love mean? And how can you live out **agape** love? (See #6b-ii above)
7. Have you mistaken others’ convictions as a personal attack on your own? How can you avoid judging others for their differences? (See #7b above)
8. How can we accept people without accepting their sin? (See #8b above)
9. Have you ever admonished a Believer? Were you able to admonish in kindness and humility? (See #9a-i and 9a-iv above)
10. Close your meeting by allowing the Holy Spirit to lead your time of prayer.

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There are three institutions that God ordained: the family, the government, and the church. In Romans 13, Paul described the role of government and our responsibility to those in authority. In this study, we will answer four important questions about government: 1) What does the Bible say is government's primary role? 2) Why should we submit to the governing authorities? 3) When is it okay to disobey governing authorities? 4) How did the Bible shape the United States government?

1. God ordained three institutions
 - a. The family
 - i. **Genesis 2:24** – *"Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh."* (KJV)
 - b. The government
 - i. **Genesis 9:6** – *"Whoever sheds man's blood, by man his blood shall be shed."*
 1. The first responsibility God gave government was the capital punishment of murderers
 2. God established government for the protection of its citizens
 - c. The church
 - i. **Ephesians 2:20** – *The church was "built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone."*
2. This study will answer the following questions about government
 - a. What does the Bible say is government's primary role?
 - b. Why should we submit to the governing authorities?
 - c. When is it okay to disobey the governing authorities?
 - d. How did the Bible shape the US government?
3. **Romans 13:1-7** – *"Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God. Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to evil. Do you want to be unafraid of the authority? Do what is good, and you will have praise from the same. For he is God's minister to you for good. But if you do evil, be afraid; for he does not bear the sword in vain; for he is God's minister, an avenger to execute wrath on him who practices evil. Therefore you must be subject, not only because of wrath but also for conscience' sake. For because of this you also pay taxes, for they are God's ministers attending continually to this very thing. Render therefore to all their due: taxes to whom*

taxes are due, customs to whom customs, fear to whom fear, honor to whom honor."

- a. Government leaders are God's ministers
 - i. Paul refers to government leaders as God's ministers or servants three times
 - ii. God established government as an institution, so government leaders are His servants used for the overall benefit of the people
 - iii. Throughout the Bible, God used government leaders, some of whom we would have never elected, to accomplish His purposes
 - 1. God used pagan rulers like Nebuchadnezzar and Darius
 - 2. God used imperfect rulers like David and Solomon
 - 3. God used disobedient rulers like Saul
 - 4. God used rulers to discipline His people or to spawn spiritual revival
- b. God is providentially involved in the appointment of authority
 - i. **Daniel 2:21a** – *"He changes times and seasons; he deposes kings and raises up others."* (NIV)
 - ii. Paul wrote Romans in the first century, during the reign of Emperor Nero
 - 1. Nero hated Christians and lit Christians up like torches
 - 2. Nero beheaded Paul seven years after Paul wrote Romans
 - 3. As Christians, we must respect government leaders as God's ministers even if we disagree with them, knowing God will use them for His overall purposes
 - iii. **Proverbs 21:1** – *"The king's heart is in the hand of the LORD as the watercourses: he turneth it whithersoever he will."* (ERV)

4. The role of government

- a. The Preamble to the US Constitution says, "We the People of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure [sic] domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defence [sic], promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America."
 - i. The preamble states that the government's role is to promote and protect justice, peace, safety, liberty, and the welfare of its citizens
- b. **Romans 13:3–4** – *"For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to evil. Do you want to be unafraid of the authority? Do what is good, and you will have praise from the same. For he is God's minister to you for good. But if you do evil, be afraid; for he does not bear the sword in vain; for he is God's minister, an avenger to execute wrath on him who practices evil."*
 - i. God says the government's role is to cultivate the good and punish the evil to maintain a free, orderly, and prosperous society

- ii. As citizens of a republic, we are responsible for voting for the candidate who most closely promotes the good and punishes the evil
 - 1. Those not governed by God's moral compass end up unraveling the moral fabric of the nation by making up their own morality or following the prevailing opinion
- 5. Submitting to the government
 - a. There are consequences for not submitting to government authority
 - i. **Romans 13:4** – *“For he is God’s minister to you for good. But if you do evil, be afraid; for he does not bear the sword in vain; for he is God’s minister, an avenger to execute wrath on him who practices evil.”*
 - ii. For example, not paying your taxes can result in jailtime
 - b. God calls us to honor and obey those in authority
 - i. **1 Peter 2:13–17** – *“Therefore submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord’s sake, whether to the king as supreme, or to governors, as to those who are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and for the praise of those who do good. For this is the will of God, that by doing good you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men—as free, yet not using liberty as a cloak for vice, but as bondservants of God. Honor all people. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king.”*
 - ii. **Titus 3:1–2** – *“Remind them to be subject to rulers and authorities, to obey, to be ready for every good work, to speak evil of no one, to be peaceable, gentle, showing all humility to all men.”*
- 6. The conditions for civil disobedience
 - a. We have a moral obligation to civil disobedience whenever the lower law of man conflicts with the higher law of God or with our sanctified conscience
 - i. The midwives’ disobedience
 - 1. In **Exodus 1**, Pharaoh ordered the midwives to murder Jewish baby boys, but the midwives disobeyed the king’s edict because infanticide is against God’s higher law
 - ii. Daniel and his friends’ disobedience
 - 1. In **Daniel 6**, King Darius ordered that no one should pray to anyone but to him, but Daniel prayed to God anyway
 - 2. In **Daniel 3**, King Nebuchadnezzar ordered all to worship his golden image, but Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah disobeyed and were thrown into the fiery furnace
 - 3. Daniel and his friends refused to obey the king because doing so would break God’s commandments to have no other gods before the Lord and to not bow down to idols
 - iii. The apostles’ disobedience
 - 1. In **Acts 4**, the apostles defied the priests’ order to stop preaching the Gospel

2. **Acts 4:19** – *“But Peter and John replied, ‘Judge for yourselves whether it is right in God’s sight to listen to you rather than God.’”* (BSB)
- iv. Though God sometimes delivered His people from the consequences of civil disobedience, these Believers were willing to face those consequence out of loyalty for God

7. The Bible’s effect on US government

- a. The University of Houston’s findings
 - i. The University of Houston reviewed fifteen thousand writings from fifty-five founding fathers and concluded that three thousand one hundred fifty-four of these writings had a significant impact on the Constitution
 - ii. In those three thousand one hundred fifty-four writings:
 1. The Bible was quoted sixteen times more than any other source
 2. Ninety-four percent of the quotes were based on the Bible
 - a. Thirty-four percent came directly out of the Bible
 - b. The other sixty percent used the Bible to inform their opinions
- b. The Bible passages that shaped our government
 - i. While John Locke’s *Two Treatises of Government* inspired our three branches of government, the founders substantiated this idea with **Isaiah 33:22** – *“For the LORD is our judge, the LORD is our lawgiver, the LORD is our king; it is he who will save us.”* (NIV)
 - ii. The separation of powers came from **Jeremiah 17:9** – *“The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?”* (NIV)
 1. Checks and balances were established because people’s hearts are desperately wicked
 - iii. Tax-exemption for churches came from **Ezra 7:24** – *“You are also to know that you have no authority to impose taxes, tribute or duty on any of the priests, Levites, musicians, gatekeepers, temple servants or other workers at this house of God.”* (NIV)
 - iv. The requirement that a president must be a natural-born citizen came from **Deuteronomy 17:15** – *“You shall surely set a king over you whom the LORD your God chooses; one from among your brethren you shall set as king over you; you may not set a foreigner over you, who is not your brother.”*
- c. Second US President John Adams said, “Our Constitution was made only for a moral and religious People. It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other.”

Discussion Questions

1. Read **Romans 13:1-7** to provide a foundation for your Bible study time.
2. How does the sovereignty of God affect how you react to elections and other government news? (See #3a-iii above)
3. How do you honor government leaders? (See #3b-ii-3 above)
4. What are some ways that government promotes and protects the good and punishes the evil? (See #4b-i above)
5. How do we protect against a moral unraveling in our own lives? (See #4b-ii-1 above)
6. **1 Peter 2:13-17** states that *"by doing good you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men."* How can you apply this principle in your daily actions and interactions? (See #5b-i above)
7. When is civil disobedience justified? (See #6a above)
8. How can we develop the courage to bravely face the consequences of civil disobedience? (See #6a-iv above)
9. Just as the Bible shaped how our nation is governed, the Bible should shape how our lives are governed. What is one way Scripture has changed how you live your life? (See #7b above)
10. Close your meeting by allowing the Holy Spirit to lead your time of prayer.

* Unless noted, all Scriptures quoted are from the New King James Version (NKJV)



Paul tells us that we are living in the "last hour." The return of Christ is near, so how should we live while waiting in constant expectation of His second coming? Pastor Gary summarizes Paul's instruction with five exhortations: Wake up, cast off, put on, walk right, and think not (about how to gratify sinful desires). In this study, we will learn how to live godly lives while we wait for Christ's return.

1. **Romans 13:11–14** – *"And do this, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Therefore let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light. Let us walk properly, as in the day, not in revelry and drunkenness, not in lewdness and lust, not in strife and envy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts."*
2. Introduction
 - a. Paul contrasted
 - i. Darkness and light
 - ii. Night and day
 - iii. Being asleep and awake
 - iv. Casting off and putting on
 - b. Paul used contrasts to highlight the importance of knowing the times we live in (**Romans 13:11a**)
 - c. We will cover the following questions about the times
 - i. Can you discern the times?
 - ii. Do you have a Biblical understanding of the hour you live in?
 - iii. Are you aware of the lateness of the hour?
 - iv. Are you ready for Christ's second coming and living with His return in mind?
(**Romans 13:11b**)
3. Discerning the time
 - a. **Romans 13:11** – *"And do this, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed."*
 - i. We were immediately saved when we trusted in Jesus, but the fullness of our salvation is not realized until we are with the Lord—through death or the rapture
 - ii. If Believers in the first century were called to take Jesus' second coming seriously, we in the twenty-first century must look toward His return with even more urgency

b. Knowing the time

- i. The Greek word for *time* in “*knowing the time*” is **kairos**, meaning “discern the season”
- ii. **Matthew 24:30–33** – *“Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other. Now learn this parable from the fig tree: When its branch has already become tender and puts forth leaves, you know that summer is near. So you also, when you see all these things, know that it is near—at the doors!”*
 1. Just as there are signs for the coming of each season, so the second coming of Christ comes with signs to let us know Jesus’ return draws near
 2. Jesus’ return is as certain as the coming of the next season

c. Now it is high time

- i. The Greek word for *time* in “*high time*” is **hōra**, meaning “hour”
 1. The 1984 NIV says, “*The hour has come.*”
 2. We are living in the last hour
 3. The time has come to live godly, ready for Christ’s imminent return

4. Five directives to godly living

- a. Wake up
- b. Cast off
- c. Put on
- d. Walk right
- e. Think not (how to glorify sinful desires)

5. Wake up

- a. **Romans 13:11** – *“And do this, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed.”*
 - i. Sleep is a state of unconsciousness and inactivity
- b. **Mark 13:35–37** – *“Watch therefore, for you do not know when the master of the house is coming—in the evening, at midnight, at the crowing of the rooster, or in the morning—lest, coming suddenly, he find you sleeping. And what I say to you, I say to all: Watch!”*
 - i. The Greek word for *watch* is **grēgoreō**, meaning “to be alert and vigilant”
 - ii. Christ urges us to reject complacency
- c. Be engaged because the time is short

- i. Exercising your faith may have consequences and lead others to try to silence you
 - 1. **Matthew 5:11-12** – *“Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”*
 - ii. The church is not called to silence, but to speak about Jesus
 - 1. Jesus was not ashamed to associate with us and die for us on the cross; we have no excuse not to make Him known and live for Him
 - 2. Paul chastised the church at Corinth for not speaking of their faith
 - 3. **1 Corinthians 15:34** – *“Awake to righteousness, and do not sin; for some do not have the knowledge of God. I speak this to your shame.”*
 - iii. **1 Thessalonians 5:5-7** – *“You are all sons of light and sons of the day. We are not of the night nor of darkness. Therefore let us not sleep, as others do, but let us watch and be sober. For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk are drunk at night.”*
- 6. Cast off and put on
 - a. **Romans 13:12** – *“The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Therefore let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light.”*
 - i. The word *armor* implies we are in a spiritual battle
 - b. We must first be established in our identity in Christ before we can influence the world
 - i. **1 Peter 2:9** – *“But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.”*
 - ii. Knowing who we are as Believers allows us to reject the false identities the world tries to put on us
 - c. We are not only called to leave behind the old self but also put on the new self that is renewed in the image of Christ Jesus
 - i. Paul listed new habits we put on as Believers
 - ii. **Colossians 3:12-13** – *“Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do.”*
 - 1. Putting on the presence of our Lord means putting on
 - a. Tenderness
 - b. Mercy

- c. Kindness
- d. Humility
- e. Meekness, not weakness, honoring the Lord
- f. Longsuffering, or patience
- g. Forgiveness, for Christ has forgiven us

7. Walk right

- a. **Romans 13:13** – *“Let us walk properly, as in the day, not in revelry and drunkenness, not in lewdness and lust, not in strife and envy.”*
 - i. We are called to reflect Christ who saved us, not the old self He saved us from
 - ii. **3 John 1:4** – *“I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth.”*

8. Think not (how to gratify sinful desires)

- a. **Romans 13:14** – *“But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts.”*
 - i. To “make no provision” for sin can be translated as to “give no thought” to the flesh
 - ii. The NLT says, *“Instead, clothe yourself with the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ. And don’t let yourself think about ways to indulge your evil desires.”*
 - iii. Do not even think about sinful desires because spiritual battles are won or lost in the mind; most sin is premeditated
- b. **2 Corinthians 10:5** – *“We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.”* (NIV)
 - i. Not thinking anything that coddles the flesh goes a long way to prevent sin
 - ii. Do not negotiate with the flesh, for the flesh is not regenerated like our spirits are and cannot be sated
- c. **Titus 2:11–13** – *“For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. It teaches us to say ‘No’ to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope—the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ.”* (1984 NIV)
 - i. Knowing and appreciating the grace of God helps us reject sin

Discussion Questions

1. Read **Romans 13:11–14** to provide a foundation for your Bible study time.

2. Why does Paul use two different Greek words for *time* in **Romans 13:11**? What concepts is he trying to communicate? (See #3b, 3c above)
3. Read **Mark 13:35–37**. What does it mean to keep watch? What should we watch out for? (See #5b above)
4. What does it mean to be spiritually asleep or awake? Discuss a time God called you to wake up. (See #5a-i, 5c-ii above)
5. The Bible tells us to cast off darkness and put on the armor of light. What does the word *armor* suggest, and how do we put the armor on? (See #6a, 6b-ii above)
6. Why do we need to be established in Christ before we can effectively influence the world for God? What is one way God has given you a new identity and how has it helped you stand against the lies of this world? (See #6b above)
7. Review the list of spiritual disciplines listed in **Colossians 3:12–13**; what is something God is calling you to put on? (See #6c-ii above)
8. Read **3 John 1:4**. What is the truth we are called to walk in? How are you living that out? (See #7a-i, 7a-ii above)
9. We are called to “*make no provision for the flesh*,” but what does this mean practically in your life? (See #8a-iii, 8b, 8c-i above)
10. How do you grow in your appreciation of the grace of God? How has this appreciation allowed you to say no to sin? (See #8c above)
11. Close your meeting by allowing the Holy Spirit to lead your time of prayer.

*Unless noted, all Scriptures quoted are from the New King James (NKJV)



Differences create potential for division. That is true in a business, a family, and a church. Satan loves to take advantage of people’s differences to incite division, discord, and judgment. This was the problem facing the church in Rome. But Paul encouraged church members to accept one another regarding “disputable matters”—matters about which the Bible is either silent or not specific. In those cases, we must decide for ourselves right or wrong based on our personal convictions. And then we must not judge one another when our convictions differ from someone else’s. In this study, we will learn how to keep unity and peace in the body of Christ amid our many differences.

1. [Romans 14:1–13](#), [Romans 15:1–2](#) – *“Receive one who is weak in the faith, but not to disputes over doubtful things. For one believes he may eat all things, but he who is weak eats only vegetables. Let not him who eats despise him who does not eat, and let not him who does not eat judge him who eats; for God has received him. Who are you to judge another’s servant? To his own master he stands or falls. Indeed, he will be made to stand, for God is able to make him stand. One person esteems one day above another; another esteems every day alike. Let each be fully convinced in his own mind. He who observes the day, observes it to the Lord; and he who does not observe the day, to the Lord he does not observe it. He who eats, eats to the Lord, for he gives God thanks; and he who does not eat, to the Lord he does not eat, and gives God thanks. For none of us lives to himself, and no one dies to himself. For if we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord. Therefore, whether we live or die, we are the Lord’s. For to this end Christ died and rose and lived again, that He might be Lord of both the dead and the living. But why do you judge your brother? Or why do you show contempt for your brother? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. For it is written: ‘As I live, says the LORD, every knee shall bow to Me, and every tongue shall confess to God.’ So then each of us shall give account of himself to God. Therefore let us not judge one another anymore, but rather resolve this, not to put a stumbling block or a cause to fall in*

our brother's way. . . . We then who are strong ought to bear with the scruples of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Let each of us please his neighbor for his good, leading to edification."

2. The context

a. The church at Rome

- i. Jews around the world came to Israel for Pentecost, one of the major Jewish feasts. Many of them were saved during Peter's sermon and brought Christianity back to the nations they inhabited. Among these new Believers were Jews living in Rome, who built a church in Rome upon their return; Paul addressed this letter to this church
- ii. Gentiles in Rome began to get saved and joined the church the Jewish Believers began, bringing in their different cultural practices
- iii. These differences made the church a place of rich diversity but also one of cultural clashes

b. A cultural divide

i. The '60s and '70s

1. When the flower children and hippies of the '60s entered the church, they met with the cultural differences of the older, more established churchgoers
2. Where the different generations of Believers worked on their differences, there was great revival, culminating in the Jesus Revolution
3. Where the different generations of Believers did not work on their differences, there was great division, culminating in the disintegration of churches

ii. The present day

1. 4,500 Protestant churches close each year
2. 3,000 churches open each year
3. In sum, 1,500 churches are lost annually

iii. Satan tries to divide and conquer God's people

3. When issues are not addressed by God's Word, we must give each other freedom to act based on our personal convictions

a. [Romans 14:1](#) – *"Receive one who is weak in the faith, but not to disputes over doubtful things."*

- i. Some questions are not directly addressed in Scripture, but are instead *"doubtful things"*
- ii. The NIV calls these issues *"disputable matters"*
- iii. The ESV calls these issues *"opinions"*

b. God's commands regarding disputable matters

- i. We should not judge each other for holding different convictions
- ii. We should not use their freedom to make others stumble

- c. Do not let Satan capitalize on your differences and divide the body of Christ

- i. People have differences of ethnicity, culture, personality, generational context, and spiritual background—none of which are bad, but all of which can divide us
 - ii. The same principle applies to businesses, teams, and marriages
 - iii. We must see our differences as complementary (leading to a rich relationship), not irritating (leading to conflict and judgment)
 - iv. Differences affect every aspect of life, and they can either be a cause for conflict or the basis for balance
 - d. Differences in the church at Rome
 - i. Dietary differences
 - 1. [Romans 14:2–3](#) – *“For one believes he may eat all things, but he who is weak eats only vegetables. Let not him who eats despise him who does not eat, and let not him who does not eat judge him who eats; for God has received him.”*
 - 2. During the time of the Roman empire, meat was sacrificed to false idols first and then put on the market
 - 3. The Gentiles had liberty to eat meat, knowing that the idols were false gods
 - 4. The Jews felt convicted to not eat meat, being conscious of the idols the meat was sacrificed to
 - ii. Differences in days
 - 1. [Romans 14:5](#) – *“One person esteems one day above another; another esteems every day alike. Let each be fully convinced in his own mind.”*
 - 2. The Gentiles had church on Sundays to commemorate the day the Lord rose from the dead
 - 3. The Jews had church on Saturdays to keep the tradition of the sabbath
 - 4. The sabbath is not about a day, but a principle
 - a. [Mark 2:27](#) – *“The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath.”*
 - b. The sabbath is not something to divide over, because God gave it to us as a gift to encourage us to rest
 - iii. The Gentiles and Jews were both right in that each followed his personal conscience and conviction
 - 1. Where God is clear, we better be clear; but where God is silent, we should leave others’ convictions alone
 - iv. The Gentiles and Jews were both wrong in how they treated each other
 - 1. Flaunting our freedom is a sin
 - 2. Contempt for others’ convictions is a sin
- 4. Principles for keeping peace regarding disputable matters
 - a. Where God is silent or non-specific, let your personal convictions speak for

themselves

- i. [Romans 14:5b](#) – *“Let each be fully convinced in his own mind.”*
- b. Where you have freedom, do not use this liberty where you may offend or stumble others
 - i. [Romans 14:21–22](#) – *“It is good neither to eat meat nor drink wine nor do anything by which your brother stumbles or is offended or is made weak. Do you have faith? Have it to yourself before God. Happy is he who does not condemn himself in what he approves.”*
 - ii. Defer to one another
 - 1. Do not bring alcohol to a house where the people feel convicted not to drink, unless they give you permission
- c. Where you have convictions against something, do not judge others for having freedom
 - i. [Romans 14:10–13](#) – *“But why do you judge your brother? Or why do you show contempt for your brother? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. For it is written: ‘As I live, says the LORD, every knee shall bow to Me, and every tongue shall confess to God.’ So then each of us shall give account of himself to God. Therefore let us not judge one another anymore, but rather resolve this, not to put a stumbling block or a cause to fall in our brother’s way.”*
 - ii. Homeschooling can be a great gift for parents to give their children, but this does not mean homeschooling parents can judge parents who choose to enroll their children in public or private schools
- d. Where you can promote peace and mutual edification, do so
 - i. [Romans 14:19](#) – *“Therefore let us pursue the things which make for peace and the things by which one may edify another.”*
 - ii. [Galatians 5:13–15](#) – *“For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ But if you bite and devour one another, beware lest you be consumed by one another!”*
 - 1. Instead of dividing over differences, unite under Christ’s love

Discussion Questions

1. Read [Romans 14:1–13](#) and [Romans 15:1–2](#) to provide a foundation for your Bible study time.
2. How have you seen Satan try to divide and conquer the body of Christ? How do you fight for Christian unity? (See #2b-iii above)
3. Define *“disputable matters.”* Was there a time you were part of an argument

regarding such a matter? How have you grown since then? (See #3a, 3b above)

4. What are some differences that you have learned to find complementary rather than irritating? How did you learn this lesson? (See #3c-i, 3c-iii, 3c-iv above)
5. How were both the Jews and Gentiles in this Roman church both right and wrong? How should we treat those we disagree with on matters of conscience? (See #3d-iii, 3d-iv above)
6. Give an example of how you allow your personal convictions to speak for you. (See #4a above)
7. Give an example of a time you deferred to another to avoid making your brother stumble. (See #4b above)
8. If there is a matter you have convictions against, how do you prevent yourself from judging those with liberty regarding the matter? (See #4c above)
9. What does God call us to do instead of dividing over differing convictions? How do you live out this principle? (See #4d above)
10. Close your meeting by allowing the Holy Spirit to lead your time of prayer.

*Unless noted, all Scriptures quoted are from the New King James (NKJV)



Life can be challenging. All of us could use some extra patience, comfort, hope, and peace in the face of these struggles. The good news is that God is all we need and more! Paul wrote in Romans 15 that our God is the God of patience, comfort, hope, and peace. In this study, we will unpack those titles for God to remind ourselves that He meets all our needs.

1. **Romans 15:4–6, 13, 30–33** – *"For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope. Now may the God of patience and comfort grant you to be like-minded toward one another, according to Christ Jesus, that you may with one mind and one mouth glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. . . . Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. . . . Now I beg you, brethren, through the Lord Jesus Christ, and through the love of the Spirit, that you strive together with me in prayers to God for me, that I may be delivered from those in Judea who do not believe, and that my service for Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints, that I may come to you with joy by the will of God, and may be refreshed together with you. Now the God of peace be with you all. Amen."*
2. Titles for God
 - a. God's titles show us who He is and what He offers:
 - i. The God of patience and comfort (**Romans 15:5**)
 - ii. The God of hope (**Romans 15:13**)
 - iii. The God of peace (**Romans 15:33**)
 - b. God lacks nothing and therefore can meet our every need
 - i. Our Heavenly Father promises to meet all our needs, not all our wants
 - ii. **Philippians 4:19** – *"And my God will supply all your needs according to His glorious riches in Christ Jesus."* (BSB)
 - iii. In **Romans 15**, Paul focused on how God meets our emotional needs for comfort, patience, hope, and peace
3. God of patience
 - a. God is patient toward us
 - i. **2 Peter 3:9** – *"The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance."* (NIV 1984)
 1. Some translations use the word, "longsuffering"
 - ii. **1 Timothy 1:15–16** – *"Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners—of*

whom I am the worst. But for that very reason I was shown mercy so that in me, the worst of sinners, Christ Jesus might display his unlimited patience as an example for those who would believe on him and receive eternal life.” (NIV 1984)

1. Paul emphasized that if God was patient with him and waited for his surrender, God can be patient with us
2. We would be in trouble if God treated us as our sins deserve
- iii. **Psalm 103:8, 10-11** – *“The LORD is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love. . . . He does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities. For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear him.” (NIV)*
 1. God is patient with us, but we better not abuse His kindness for there is a day of reckoning
- b. God brings trials to grow us
 - i. **James 1:2-4** – *“My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.”*
- c. People are impatient toward others
 - i. Impatience comes from a low tolerance of things that inconvenience us
 - ii. We have become accustomed to immediate results
 1. Instant rice
 2. Microwaves
 3. Fast food
 4. Amazon Prime shipping
- d. Patience is an important virtue
 - i. Max Lucado said, “Patience is more than a virtue for long lines and slow waiters. Patience is the red carpet upon which God’s grace approaches us.”

4. God of comfort

- a. We all face various trials
 - i. The loss of a loved one
 - ii. The end of a marriage
 - iii. The diagnosis from a doctor
 - iv. A wayward child
- b. God comfort us through our trials
 - i. **Isaiah 49:13b** – *“For the LORD has comforted His people, and will have mercy on His afflicted.”*
 - ii. **Matthew 5:4** – *“Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.”*

- iii. **Isaiah 66:13a** – *“As one whom his mother comforts, so I will comfort you.”*
- c. God’s comfort empowers us to comfort others
 - i. British Pastor John Henry Jowett said, “God does not comfort us to make us comfortable, but to make us comforters.”
 - ii. **2 Corinthians 1:3–4** – *“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.”*
 - iii. In time, the comfort we receive from God allows us to comfort others

5. God of hope

- a. The theme of hope
 - i. The word *“hope”* is found more times in Romans than in any other New Testament book
- b. The source of hope
 - i. There are a lot of hopeless people in this world because they look to themselves to keep hope alive rather than to God
 - 1. Edward Mote wrote the hymn “My Hope Is Built on Nothing Less” which says this: “My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus’ blood and righteousness; I dare not trust the sweetest frame, but wholly lean on Jesus’ name. On Christ, the solid Rock, I stand: all other ground is sinking sand; all other ground is sinking sand.”
 - 2. Hope is a firm reliance on the Lord, not positive thinking
 - 3. Evangelist William R. “Bill” Bright said, “With God life is an endless hope. Without God, life is a hopeless end.”
 - ii. **Job 19:25–27** – *“I know that my Redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand upon the earth. And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God; I myself will see him with my own eyes—I, and not another. how my heart yearns within me!”* (NIV 1984)
 - iii. **Psalms 31:24** – *“Be of good courage, and He shall strengthen your heart, all you who hope in the LORD.”*

6. God of peace

- a. God offers us a better peace
 - i. **John 14:27** – Jesus said, *“Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.”*
 - 1. The world’s peace is transitory and based on circumstances
 - 2. God’s peace is transcendent and beyond circumstances
 - ii. **Philippians 4:6–7** – *“Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be*

made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.”

1. God offers a peace greater than what the world can offer
- b. We must cling to God to receive God's peace
 - i. **Isaiah 26:3–4** – *“You will keep in perfect peace him whose mind is steadfast, because he trusts in you. Trust in the LORD forever, for the LORD, the LORD, is the Rock eternal.”* (NIV 1984)
 1. When we lack God's peace, we have become too rushed or worried to press into God
 - ii. The example of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow
 1. Longfellow was twice widowed
 2. Longfellow missed his second wife's funeral because his attempt to smother the fire that caught her hoop skirt left him in the hospital
 3. Longfellow had a son who was a Union soldier and fighting for his life in the hospital on Christmas Day
 4. Longfellow's turmoil inspired him to write the carol, “I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day” which says, “I heard the bells on Christmas Day their old, familiar carols play, and wild and sweet the words repeat of peace on earth, good-will to men!’ . . . And in despair I bowed my head; ‘There is no peace on earth,’ I said, ‘For hate is strong, and mocks the song of peace on earth, good-will to men.’ Then pealed the bells more loud and deep: ‘God is not dead, nor doth He sleep; the Wrong shall fail, the Right prevail, with peace on earth, good-will to men.’”

Discussion Questions

1. Read **Romans 15:4–6, 13, 30–33** to provide a foundation for your Bible study time.
2. Which of these names of God speaks to you and why? (See #2a above)
3. Discuss a time God supplied your needs. (See #2b above)
4. When was God patient with you? How has His kindness moved you? (See #3a-ii, 3a-iii above)
5. How is God shaping you into a more patient person? (See #3b above)

6. Read Max Lucado's quote. How has God's grace approached you on the foundation of patience? (See #3d-i above)
7. How has God's comfort empowered you to comfort others? (See #4c above)
8. Describe a time God was your Rock when your circumstances were sinking sand. (See #5b above)
9. When have you experienced God's transcendent peace? How did this peace affect your witness to others? (See #6a above)
10. How can we gain the peace that passes all understanding? How has God taught you to find peace in Him? (See #6b above)
11. Close your meeting by allowing the Holy Spirit to lead your time of prayer.

*Unless noted, all Scriptures quoted are from the New King James (NKJV)



In Paul's closing comments to the church at Rome, he warned about the sin of divisiveness that can destroy a church, a family, or an organization. God hates divisiveness for two reasons: (1) because it is inconsistent with His nature, and (2) because the source of division is Satan. God is about reconciliation; Satan is about division. God brings together things that are broken; Satan breaks things that are brought together. Someone who is divisive is not operating in the spirit of Jesus, but in the spirit of Satan. This is why Paul warned about people who cause division. This study will explain how we can identify a divisive person from someone who shares different ideas or opinions.

1. **Romans 16:1-2a** – *"I commend to you Phoebe our sister, who is a servant of the church in Cenchrea, that you may receive her in the Lord in a manner worthy of the saints."*
 - a. Paul's commendation
 - i. Ten out of the twenty-nine people that Paul commended in his letter to Rome were women. One of these women was Phoebe
 - b. Phoebe
 - i. Phoebe attended the church in Cenchreae, a town located by the city of Corinth that is in modern-day Greece
 - ii. Scholars think Paul asked the church to receive Phoebe well because she was the one who would deliver Paul's letter
 - iii. She traveled from Cenchreae, Greece, which was 150 miles from the church in Rome, Italy
2. **Romans 16:17-20** – *"Now I urge you, brethren, note those who cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and avoid them. For those who are such do not serve our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly, and by smooth words and flattering speech deceive the hearts of the simple. For your obedience has become known to all. Therefore I am glad on your behalf; but I want you to be wise in what is good, and simple concerning evil. And the God of peace will crush Satan under your feet shortly. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen."*
 - a. Paul's final exhortation
 - i. People who write letters tend to save the matters that are closest to their hearts for last, and so did Paul
 - b. Paul's warnings
 - i. Paul commended the church for their obedience, but warned the church against divisive people
 - c. Biblical math
 - i. God loves addition

1. **Acts 2:47b** – *“And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.”*
 - ii. God loves multiplication
 1. **Acts 6:7a** – *“Then the word of God spread, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly.”*
 - iii. God loves subtraction
 1. When Ananias and Sapphira exaggerated how much they had donated to gain men’s praise, God struck them dead for lying to the Holy Spirit (**Acts 5:1–11**)
 - iv. God hates division
 1. The only exception God provides is the natural division that happens in households where some believe in Jesus, and some do not (**Luke 12:51–53**)
3. Divisive people
 - a. Paul referred to division caused by false teachers, but there are also other types of divisive people
 - b. Reasons people are divisive
 - i. Pride, envy, and selfish ambition motivate the divisive person
 - ii. Divisive people destroy whatever they belong to and do not care because they care about their interests over those of the group
 1. **Romans 16:18a** – *“For those who are such do not serve our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly.”*
 2. The phrase *“their own belly”* refers to selfish appetites
 - c. Examples of divisive people
 - i. Korah’s rebellion
 1. Though God chosen Moses to guide Israel through the wilderness, Korah thought he could be a better leader
 2. In **Numbers 16**, Korah recruited Dathan and Abiram in his coup against Moses
 3. The Lord heard of Korah’s coup and opened the earth to swallow the rebels
 - ii. Absalom’s rebellion
 1. Absalom thought he could be a better king than David, his father, and acted empathetic to gain the people’s esteem
 2. **2 Samuel 15:6b** – *“He stole the hearts of the people of Israel.”* (NIV)
 3. Like Korah, Absalom came to a grisly end. He ended up with his hair caught in a tree and killed by Joab and his men
4. The nature of division
 - a. God hates divisive people
 - i. **Proverbs 6:16–19** – *“These six things the LORD hates, yes, seven are an abomination to Him: A proud look, a lying tongue, hands that*

shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked plans, feet that are swift in running to evil, a false witness who speaks lies, and one who sows discord among brethren.”

- ii. All men are redeemable, but God hates division for two reasons:
 - 1. Division is contrary to God’s nature
 - 2. Division comes from Satan
- b. Division is Satan’s game
 - i. Satan’s history
 - 1. Satan was created a beautiful angel
 - 2. Satan’s old name was “Lucifer,” meaning light-bearer, indicating he was likely chief over other angels (**Ezekiel 28:12–15**)
 - 3. However, God cast Satan down from heaven because of his pride (**Ezekiel 28:16–17**)
 - 4. Satan’s first action after he was cast down to earth was to divide Eve from Adam and Adam from God; and thus, sin entered humanity
 - ii. God’s intervention
 - 1. By contrast, God’s first action after men sinned was to reconcile men to Himself
 - 2. Satan divides, but God unites
 - 3. We are called to operate in the spirit of God, not Satan
 - iii. Satan seeks to divide people racially, socially, economically, and with any other tool he can find
 - iv. God calls us to separate from divisive people
 - 1. **Matthew 12:25** – *“Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation, and every city or house divided against itself will not stand.”*
 - 2. **Titus 3:10–11** – *“Warn a divisive person once, and then warn them a second time. After that, have nothing to do with them. You may be sure that such people are warped and sinful; they are self-condemned.”* (NIV)

5. Identifying divisive people

- a. What division is not
 - i. Division does not equate to different ideas and perspectives, for these are necessary and should be welcomed
- b. You will know divisive people by the following:
 - i. Their spirit
 - 1. Divisive people are not looking to contribute to the group, but to themselves
 - a. People with a Luciferian spirit think they are there to save the day; they are not team players but solo manipulators

- b. People who want to share different ideas can accept a “no,” but divisive people take every “no” personally
 - 2. **James 3:16** – *“For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice.”* (NIV)
 - ii. Their words
 - 1. **Proverbs 16:28** – *“A perverse man stirs up dissension, and a gossip separates close friends.”* (1984 NIV)
 - 2. Divisive people use triangulation, preferring to talk about you than to you
 - a. Triangulation is the practice of two people talking to others about their problems with each other rather than directly sorting out their problems between themselves
 - b. If you have become the go-between person, step back and refuse to play the game of referee
 - iii. Their attitude
 - 1. Divisive people are not humble or teachable, but self-righteous and disrespectful to authority
 - 2. **Jude 1:19** – *“It is these who cause divisions, worldly people, devoid of the Spirit.”* (ESV)
 - iv. Their actions
 - 1. Divisive people are disruptive and thrive amid conflict
 - 2. **Proverbs 22:10** – *“Drive out the mocker, and out goes strife; quarrels and insults are ended.”* (NIV)
6. Our role regarding divisive people
- a. Biblical steps to dealing with divisive people
 - i. We warn divisive people
 - ii. We avoid divisive people
 - iii. We distance ourselves from divisive people
 - iv. We are not told to fix divisive people, but to give them over to God
 - b. We must check our hearts to see if we are divisive

Discussion Questions

1. Read **Romans 16:1, 17–20** to provide a foundation for your Bible study time.
2. What is one way God has used Biblical math in your life? (See #2c above)
3. What motivates a divisive person, and how has God helped you root out these core issues? (See #3b above)
4. Who should we serve instead of serving our “own belly”? (See #3b-ii-1 above)

5. Read **Proverbs 6:16-19**. Do you recognize anything that God hates in your life? How can you submit this to God? (See #4a-i above)
6. Why does God hate divisive people? What kind of people are we called to be instead? (See #4a-ii, 4b-ii above)
7. What is the difference between a divisive person and a person offering a different perspective? (See #5b-i above)
8. Have you ever experienced triangulation? How do you refuse to play a divisive person's game? (See #5b-ii-2 above)
9. How should we deal with divisive people? How do we avoid falling into this Luciferian spirit? (See #6a, 6b above)
10. Close your meeting by allowing the Holy Spirit to lead your time of prayer.

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The Bible says there are "spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms," waging a battle over and around us (Ephesians 6:12, NIV). These evil forces are led by Satan, also known as the Devil, the Dragon, and the Serpent (among other titles). Satan, once called Lucifer, was a beautiful angel who recruited a third of the angels in an attempted coup against God. But Satan lost and was expelled from heaven, along with his army of angels (now known as "demons"), and he roams the earth today "like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour" (1 Peter 5:8, NIV). In this study, we will explore what spiritual warfare is, how to withstand it, and how God fights for His children!

1. **Romans 16:20–27** – *"And the God of peace will crush Satan under your feet shortly. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen. Timothy, my fellow worker, and Lucius, Jason, and Sosipater, my countrymen, greet you. I, Tertius, who wrote this epistle, greet you in the Lord. Gaius, my host and the host of the whole church, greets you. Erastus, the treasurer of the city, greets you, and Quartus, a brother. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen. Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery kept secret since the world began but now made manifest, and by the prophetic Scriptures made known to all nations, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, for obedience to the faith—to God, alone wise, be glory through Jesus Christ forever. Amen."*
 - a. Paul traditionally used scribes for his letters.
 - i. Tertius was the only scribe to identify himself.
 - b. There has been a long-standing spiritual battle between good and evil, but God will soon crush Satan.
2. The forces of the Enemy
 - a. Spiritual warfare has to do with the unseen forces of evil led by Satan at work today to tempt, discourage, afflict, and harm people.
 - b. Names of Satan
 - i. Peter calls Satan *"a roaring lion looking for someone to devour."* (**1 Peter 5:8**, NIV).
 - ii. Paul calls Satan the *"tempter"* (**1 Thessalonians 3:5**).
 - iii. John calls Satan a *"dragon,"* a *"serpent,"* and the one *"who deceives the whole world"* (**Revelation 12:9**).
 - iv. Jesus calls Satan a *"murderer,"* *"liar,"* and *"the father of lies"* (**John 8:44**, NIV).
 - v. **DISCUSS:** What do Satan's names tell us about his methods and how to counter them?
 - c. Satan intends only harm for people, especially for followers of Christ.

- i. Satan wants unbelievers happy to be living in the world, so they may die in their sins, eternally separated from God.
 - ii. Satan wants Believers frustrated in living for the Lord.
 - 1. Satan seeks to destroy and divide
 - a. Your life
 - b. Your marriage
 - c. Your family
 - d. Your faith
 - e. Your church
 - 2. **DISCUSS:** In what areas of life have you experienced a spiritual attack? How has God delivered you?
- 3. The origins of spiritual warfare
 - a. The spiritual forces of evil originated when Satan led a rebellion in heaven against God with a third of the angels (**Revelation 12:4**).
 - b. God then cast down Satan and his forces to the earth.
 - i. **Revelation 12:7-9** – *“And war broke out in heaven: Michael and his angels fought with the dragon; and the dragon and his angels fought, but they did not prevail, nor was a place found for them in heaven any longer. So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.”*
 - 1. In the distant past, Michael and other angels fought against Satan (then known as Lucifer) and his forces.
 - ii. **Isaiah 14:12** – *“How you are fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! How you are cut down to the ground, you who weakened the nations!”*
 - 1. Satan and his forces lost and were expelled from heaven in an instant.
 - 2. Satan has influence over the nations.
 - iii. **Luke 10:18** – *“And He said to them, ‘I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven.’”*
 - 1. Jesus’ statement harkened back to His preexistence, for He claimed eyewitness testimony to an event that happened before His incarnation.
 - 2. Jesus is fully God and fully man. He has always existed.
 - c. Satan and the angels who rebelled now roam the earth unseen.
 - i. The angels who rebelled are known as demons.
 - 1. The Greek word for demon is **daimōn**, meaning “spiritual beings.”
 - 2. When translated to Latin as **daemonium**, the word took on the meaning “evil spirits” or “lesser spirits.”
 - ii. Demons spread evil and torment.

1. Paul called demons *"spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms"* (**Ephesians 6:12**, NIV).
 2. Demons are spread across the world, even in churches, to lie and deceive mankind.
 - a. However, demons are not the only spiritual forces at work. Angels are also in our churches.
 - b. **Hebrews 1:14** – Angels are *"ministering spirits sent forth to minister for those who will inherit salvation."*
4. The difference between demon possession and oppression
- a. Spiritual forces of evil work from the outside on Believers, but they work from the inside on nonbelievers.
 - i. Tragically, because unbelievers are not indwelt with the Holy Spirit, demons can come live in them.
 - ii. Jesus rebuked demons often throughout His ministry.
 1. **Matthew 8:16** – *"When evening had come, they brought to Him many who were demon-possessed. And He cast out the spirits with a word, and healed all who were sick."*
 - a. Jesus never touched someone demon-possessed; He delivered them with a word.
 2. No one in that day had the Spirit of God within them, for Jesus had not died and risen again for mankind.
 3. Occult practice (seances, Ouija boards, tarot cards, witchcraft, mediums, spiritists) increase a person's risk of possession.
 - a. Hollywood glamorizes the occult, but these practices are dangerous.
 - iii. Believers cannot be demon possessed, but they can be demon oppressed.
 1. The Holy Spirit will not share space with demons.
 - a. **1 John 4:4** – *"You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world."*
 2. Demon oppression can take the form of lies, confusion, deception, fear, discouragement, anxiety, and hopelessness.
 3. Demons attack spiritually, emotionally, and physically.
 - a. Jesus healed a woman who *"had a spirit of infirmity"* (**Luke 13:11**).
 - b. Difficulties in spiritual warfare
 - i. Fighting an unseen Enemy is hard.
 - ii. Discerning between demonic and natural influences adds to the challenge of spiritual warfare.
 - c. Two extremes
 - i. Thinking everything is a spiritual attack leads people to blame their own sinful choices on the Enemy.

- ii. Dismissing the reality of spiritual warfare leads people to fight battles with their own strength rather than God's power.

5. How to fight spiritual battles

a. Beware Satan's constant scheming.

- i. **Ephesians 6:10-11** – *"Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil."*
- ii. **1 Peter 5:8-11** – *"Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of sufferings. And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast. To him be the power for ever and ever. Amen"* (1984 NIV).

- 1. Peter said the God of grace will strengthen us, just as Paul said that the God of peace will crush Satan under us.

b. Know who your real Enemy is.

- i. **Ephesians 6:12-18** – *"For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places."*

- 1. Many Bible scholars believe Paul was speaking of rankings in the demonic army.

- a. Principalities represent privates.
- b. Powers represent lieutenants.
- c. The rulers of the darkness of this age represent captains.
- d. The spiritual hosts of wickedness represent majors.
- e. Satan is over this demonic host.

- 2. People are not your Enemy; Satan is.

- a. Satan loves to divide and incite conflict.
- b. Believers must unite in prayer and realize they have a common Enemy.

- 3. Spotting the Enemy

- a. God is consistent but not predictable.
 - i. **Hebrews 13:8** – *"Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever."*
 - ii. Jesus healed by speaking the word, putting his hands on people, or spitting on the dirt and making a concoction.
- b. By contrast, Satan is predictable and incites people to familiar patterns of conflict.

- c. **DISCUSS:** What is a familiar pattern of spiritual attack you have faced? How have you found victory?
- c. Stand against the Enemy.
 - i. **Ephesians 6:11, 13–14** – *“Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. . . . Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness.”*
 - 1. God calls us to stand four times in **Ephesians 6:11, 13, and 14**.
 - a. God wants us to take a posture of no retreat.
 - b. When we take a stand despite being weary, Satan flees temporarily.
 - c. **James 4:7** – *“Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.”*
 - d. **DISCUSS:** How do you renew your strength in God to continue to stand against the Enemy?
- d. Our strength is in the Lord and in His power.
 - i. **Ephesians 6:10** – *“Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.”*
 - ii. We are not capable of fighting against demonic principalities—only God is.
 - 1. Be wary of entering spiritual conflict in your own power.
 - 2. **Jehovah Shalom**, the God of peace, will crush Satan under our feet (**Romans 16:20**).
 - 3. **Jude 1:9** – *“Yet Michael the archangel, in contending with the devil, when he disputed about the body of Moses, dared not bring against him a reviling accusation, but said, ‘The Lord rebuke you!’”*
 - 4. **DISCUSS:** Have you tried to attain spiritual victory on your own strength? What happened?
- e. We must guard our hearts, minds, and lives with the full armor of God.
 - i. **Ephesians 6:14–18** – *“Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God; praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints.”*
 - ii. God gave us five defensive armors, and two offensive weapons.
 - 1. The belt of truth
 - a. We need to wrap ourselves in God’s truth so we can recognize Satan’s lies.

- b. **DISCUSS**: What passage has God brought to your mind to help you call out Satan's lies?
- 2. The breastplate of righteousness
 - a. We need to keep our hearts right with God.
 - b. **Proverbs 4:23** – *"Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life."*
 - c. **DISCUSS**: How do you maintain a heart of integrity?
- 3. Feet fitted with the Gospel of peace
 - a. The more we advance the kingdom, the more we defeat the Enemy.
 - b. The Enemy flees at the name of Jesus.
 - c. **DISCUSS**: How do you incorporate sharing the Gospel into your daily rhythm?
- 4. The shield of faith
 - a. When you operate in faith, you are not operating in doubt.
 - b. When Satan attacks us with doubt, we must defend ourselves with faith in God.
- 5. The helmet of salvation
 - a. We must protect our minds from anxiety, worry, fear, and lies.
 - b. **2 Timothy 1:7** – *"For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind."*
- 6. The sword of the Spirit
 - a. The sword is the Word of God.
 - b. In **Luke 4**, every time Satan tempted Jesus to sin, Jesus quoted Scripture.
 - i. To be able to quote Scripture, you will need to read your Bible more than just during church services.
 - ii. To get Scripture into your heart, you need to study God's Word.
- 7. Prayer
 - a. Spiritual wars are fought on our knees.
 - b. We appeal to the throne of heaven to crush Satan for us.
 - c. **DISCUSS**: Do you have a time set aside for praying and reading God's Word? How have you made time alone with God into a habit?

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