

# Travel through Romans

sin ⇒ salvation ⇒ gratitude



**PAUL WRITES TO THE ROMANS ABOUT THE GREAT WORKS OF GOD IN MAN'S LIFE.  
LEARN MORE FROM THESE 20 BIBLE STUDIES.**

**By the Deputies Youth Care of the RCSA**

**“For in the gospel the righteousness of God is revealed a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written:  
‘THE RIGHTEOUS WILL LIVE BY FAITH.’”**

**ROMANS 1:17**

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# FOREWORD

Romans is probably one of the most important books in the history of Christianity. One of the reasons it is such an important book is because it is the closest thing to a “systematic theology” that we find in the Bible. This means that one theme is discussed at a time. As opposed to when several theological truths are mentioned in a jumble. In Romans the gospel of Jesus Christ’s salvation is thoroughly explained.

Paul calls the gospel in Romans the “gospel of God,” because God is the Author of man’s salvation. In the letter, Paul explains how the whole world is guilty before God. All have sinned, but God is rich in mercy: He extends his grace to more people than just the Jews. Next, Paul discusses the difficult issue of election and the place of Israel in God’s plan. In the final chapters, Paul shows what God’s will is and that gratitude is the appropriate response to the gospel.

Romans can therefore be explained in these three sections: sin, salvation, and gratitude. The Heidelberg Catechism, a very well-known and important confession of the Reformed Church, gets its division from the letter to the Romans. In question and answer 2 of the Heidelberg Catechism, it is said that we need to know three things in order to live and die in comfort:

1. How great my sin and misery are.
2. How I can be delivered from my sin and misery.
3. How I should be grateful to God for such a deliverance.

Romans has been a source of great comfort and hope for many believers throughout the centuries. We know that you will have a better understanding of God’s work and his abundant grace after working through these Bible studies.

Editor  
Wilna Myburgh

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A target shows that there is specific information that you need to notice in the section that the Bible study is about.



A light bulb shows you that an explanation follows with interesting information to better understand a word or concept.

**Sin** ⇒ **SALVATION** ⇒ **GRATITUDE**

⇒ Romans 1:1-3:20

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# Paul's zeal



## TO PREACH THE GOSPEL

**P**aul begins the letter in a very personal way by using personal and possessive pronouns more than twenty times in the opening verses.

These are words like "I," "me," and "mine." He wants to establish a personal relationship with his readers from the very beginning of the letter.

The introduction to the letter consists of three parts:

- **ROMANS 1:1-6:** Paul and the gospel
- **ROMANS 1:7-13:** Paul and the Romans
- **ROMANS 1:14-17:** Paul and evangelisation

### TAKE NOTE



- Paul makes an effort to show the Romans that he wanted to visit them but could not (verses 10, 11, and 13).
- The gospel of Jesus Christ is central to this letter from the beginning (verses 1 to 4, 9, 15, and 16 to 17).



**SAINTS / HOLY PEOPLE:** In Romans 1:7, Paul calls the believers in Rome “saints” (ESV) or “holy people” (NIV). In the New Testament, “saint” refers to someone who has been washed clean by the blood of Jesus; a believer who belongs to God; someone who has been called and set apart. If you believe in Jesus Christ, you are no longer a sinner, but a saint. What a privilege! Now we are called to live out this new identity.

- ❶ What is the implication of Paul calling himself a slave of Jesus in verse 1, and what does this mean for us today? See also Psalm 116:16.
- ❷ How was Paul appointed as an apostle? Read Galatians 1:1; 2:6-10 and Acts 9:1-6.
- ❸ Read Romans 1:2. How and where was the gospel proclaimed in the Old Testament? Also read John 5:39, and Luke 24:25 and 44.
- ❹ Read verses 3-4. What do we learn about the two natures, as well as the humiliation and exaltation of Christ, from these verses? Read 2 Samuel 7:12 and 16; and Psalm 2:7.
- ❺ Compare verses 5-7 with verse 15. What are the two purposes of evangelism? Why is it important for us today?
- ❻ To what extent is the statement about the church in Rome in verse 8 true for your church?
- ❼ What do verses 11 and 12 teach us about how believers (the church) should function?
- ❽ Verse 14 speaks of “Greeks and barbarians,” “educated and uneducated,” as well as Jews and Gentiles. What do you understand by these groups of people and how can we apply it to today?

🔍 Compare verses 13-16 with 1 Corinthians 4:1. What does this teach us about responsibility because we have the gospel? Compare also Galatians 2:7; 1 Thessalonians 2:4; 1 Timothy 1:11 and Titus 1:3.

1️⃣ Discuss the meaning of the following concepts in verses 16 and 17:

- Ⓐ Not ashamed of the gospel. (Compare 2 Timothy 1:8; 1 Peter 4:16).
- Ⓑ The power of God. (Compare 1 Corinthians 1:18-25; Ephesians 1:18-21 and 1 Thessalonians 1:5).
- Ⓒ Justification by faith. (See Habakkuk 2:4; Compare John 3:16 & 36; Ephesians 2:8-10; Galatians 2:16 and Philippians 3:9).



**RIGHTEOUSNESS:** The word righteousness is a legal term. The question of righteousness is about how someone can be justified before a judge in a court of law; how someone can therefore be acquitted.

## HOW DOES JUSTICE WORK?

Justice can happen in two ways:

1. A person can be innocent of a charge and then be acquitted and then justice is done.
2. A person can be guilty, convicted and then serve his sentence. When this sentence has been served, the judge can then acquit the person because the injustice has been paid for. And so justice is done.

In Romans 1:17 we see that the righteousness of God is given to people through faith. Through faith in Jesus Christ we receive God's righteousness. Because Jesus perfectly meets God's standards, and we are justified based on *what* He does and *who* He is, justice can still happen. This justice does not happen by works, but by faith!

We are righteous before God, not because of what we do, but because of what Jesus did for us and because we receive it freely.



# The sin and the salvation



**S**uppose a doctor has a patient who has a fatal illness. The doctor examines the patient and finds that this is indeed the case. However, the patient has his own opinion and believes that he only has a mild cold, and that he is not actually fatally ill. The most irresponsible thing a doctor can do is to leave his patient to his own incorrect self-diagnosis. The doctor will tell the patient that he is wrong and that he will treat him immediately.

The same is true with the gospel. Sin is literally life-threatening. It must be preached – and with it the cross; the treatment. In the following passages, up to Romans 3:20, Paul points out the guilt of sin: among the Gentiles (1:18-32), the moralists (2:1-16) (see the “Take note” on p. 12), the Jews (2:17-3:8) and then among all people (3:9-20).

## TAKE NOTE



- There is a connection between this passage and the previous one (especially verses 16-17).
- Paul explains why people need salvation in this passage.
- The entire passage is written in such a way that it highlights the contrast between God’s glory and people’s brokenness.

① What is the connection between 1:16-17 and this passage? What does the Lord reveal about Himself in the following verses: 16; 17; 18; 19-20?

② Read verse 19. Now discuss how people can come to know God.

- ③ It is clear that this passage focuses on the unrighteousness of people. Where does this unrighteousness come from and who should be blamed for it?
- ④ Create a brief definition of an “idol.” Discuss what it looks like in your life.
- ⑤ Read verses 24 and 26. Discuss the idea that God “gives” people certain behaviors. See “gives people over” (NIV) and “gave them up” (ESV).
- ⑥ What do you think are the implications of verse 32 for us as believers? To what extent and how should we address things that are wrong?



**WRATH:** Romans 1:18 tells how God reveals his wrath. God’s wrath can be described as his holy anger at the sin and injustice of this world, at the “godlessness and wickedness of people”.



### UNDERSTANDING GOD’S ANGER

It may sound strange that God gets angry, but when we remember that He is perfect, it makes sense. Since God is holy, perfect, and in all things good and righteous, He cannot tolerate sin and injustice before Him. God’s anger is therefore justified, since what angers Him goes against his nature and is not perfect. By law, God should have destroyed the entire world through his wrath after the fall.

- ⑦ Throughout the Bible we see that there is a battle between the “truth” and the “lie” (verse 25a). Discuss this battle with the help of the following passages: Genesis 3:1-4; John 8:44-47; 14:6-7; and 18:37-38.

### THE SPIRAL OF SIN

In verses 18 to 20, Paul points out a pattern of sin that is repeated in verses 21 to 24, 25 to 27, and 28 to 31.

- They have knowledge of the truth of God (verses 21, 25, and 28).
- They exchange the truth for a lie (verses 21, 25, and 28).
- God responds to this with judgment (verses 24, 26, and 28).

**HOMOSEXUALITY IN THE BIBLE:** Romans 1:26-27 is the longest passage in the Bible that specifically addresses homosexuality. It is also one of the most controversial passages in today's time with the LGBTQ+ movement we see worldwide. This debate is of course very lively in other denominations, with many church communities saying that the Bible allows for homosexual marriage.

8 Discuss how you think we as believers who have a high regard for the Bible should think about homosexuality, based on the following points:

- a Natural vs. unnatural sexual intercourse (Romans 1:26).
- b Homosexual orientation vs. homosexual behavior.
- c Are loving same-sex relationships wrong? Isn't it only same-sex promiscuity that is wrong?
- d What is the definition of marriage according to the Bible?

Use these passages for cross-references: Genesis 1:27; 2:21-25; 19:4-8; Leviticus 18:22-33; 20:13; Mark 10:5-12; 1 Corinthians 6:9-10; and Titus 1:8-11.

9 The section concludes with a long list of sins. Count how many other sins are mentioned. Compare 1 Corinthians 6:9-10. What does this say about the focus we place on homosexuality?

10 Verse 32 concludes with two truths: Sinners know God's decrees that they deserve death, and sinners also find it okay when others sin. What does this say about the fall of man?

## GOD'S GENERAL REVELATION

By general revelation it is meant that all people should know that there is Something or Someone greater than themselves. God has revealed this to people in two ways:

1 **INTERNAL:** Genesis 1 teaches us that all people are created in the image of God, and were made to live in a relationship with Him. Therefore, there is something of God created in every person and everyone longs for it. We also see this in the New Testament when Paul says to the people in Athens in Acts 17:27: "God did this so that they would seek him ..." So all people are aware deep in their hearts that there is a God.

2 **EXTERNAL:** Besides people knowing this, we should also be able to see it in God's works. Psalm 19:1 teaches us: "The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands". We also see this in Romans 1:20. God designed and made the world so that all people can see and know Him. All people know enough to be responsible for themselves if they choose against God and do not worship Him.



# Who decides right and wrong?

In this passage, Paul is in a dialogue with an imaginary character. Paul twice calls the character in this passage “O man” (ESV). He is therefore speaking to any human being; any human being who passes judgment on others.

Paul compares two groups of people to each other. In Romans 1:32 and Romans 2:2 two different groups of people are referred to, but both have knowledge of God as Creator and Judge. Both groups act in direct opposition to their knowledge.

The first group of people do things they know are wrong, and approve of it when others do it. The second group do things they know are wrong, and disapprove of it when others do it, which is hypocritical. The first group distance themselves from God’s judgment, while the second group appoint themselves as judges.

Paul is addressing the people who listened to the first chapter and think that they are not as bad as it is explained. This passage then deals with God’s judgment on self-appointed judges.

## TAKE NOTE



- Paul is addressing the moralists; people who think that they will be saved by living a morally good life.
- In every human heart there is an innate sense of right and wrong.
- Paul anticipates possible objections to his argument and then answers them in advance. The writing style is known as diatribe.

① Paul is addressing people here who think they are living a “good moral life.” How do verses 1-3 confront these people and how do the verses apply to you?

② How does Romans 2:6-8 compare with Romans 1:17?

- ③ How is God described to us in verse 4? What does this mean for repentance in your life?
- ④ How are people storing up wrath to punish themselves for the day of judgment? Read verse 5.
- ⑤ How should we understand verse 6 that each will be rewarded according to his works? Compare James 2:18; Matthew 16:27; 2 Corinthians 5:10; Revelation 20:12; 22:12 and Galatians 2:19-21.
- ⑥ Describe the paths and destinies of the two groups of people in verses 7-10.
- ⑦ Read verse 15. How do all people's consciences work to obey the natural laws in their hearts?
- ⑧ How can verses 12 to 15 help us understand how unbelievers are sometimes "better people" than believers?
- ⑨ How would you respond to the statement "Christians should not judge"?
- 10a What light does verse 16 shed on our understanding that we will be judged with the same judgment with which we judge others? Read Matthew 7:1-5; Luke 6:37; and John 8:7.
  - b We must not tolerate wrongdoing, but must hold one another accountable. How does this reconcile with 10a? See Matthew 18:15; Luke 17:3; and 1 Corinthians 5:12.

### WHAT IS THE NATURAL LAW OF RIGHT AND WRONG?

It is important to understand the concept of natural law in order to understand morality (what is right and wrong). One of the important questions that people have yet to answer throughout the ages is: How do people determine what is right and wrong? Some people say it is culture or religion (what is wrong for a Hindu is not necessarily wrong for a Muslim or Christian), or that each individual determines what is right and wrong for themselves.

The problem with these views is that right and wrong are determined subjectively. If it is not wrong for me to steal, then who are you to tell me that I cannot take your things.

There is an objective right and wrong that applies to all people regardless of your culture, religion or personal beliefs. There is a moral law created in the heart of every person, which gives you a sense of what you may and may not do. We call this law the natural law.



## Don't be boastful about your religion

**P**aul continues his argument here. In the previous section (2:1-16) he delivered his broad criticism of humanity in general. Now he focuses specifically on the Jews and their unfounded self-confidence. In the first part of chapter 2, Paul addressed the listener as “man” (2:1 and 3). From verse 17 onwards, Paul addresses the Jews directly. Paul therefore expects counterarguments from the Jews about what he has written.

The Jews may argue that they are different or better than other people because the Lord has made a covenant with them and given them circumcision and the law. In response to these questions, Paul writes about the law in verses 17-24 and about circumcision in verses 25-29. He shows very clearly that none of those privileges that the Jews had, would save them from God’s judgment.



### TAKE NOTE

- The heart of what is being addressed here is “religious pride.” It is thinking that you are more acceptable to God because of your religious activities and rituals.
- Paul makes the same point in the first part of Romans, but he uses a different emphasis each time.
- The law and circumcision are not completely worthless, but they must be seen in the right perspective.
- Paul builds his argument by using questions and possible objections. This is a familiar rhetorical device, known as a diatribe, which is still widely used today. A diatribe refers to a conversation with an imaginary opponent.
- Many Old Testament passages are quoted here. So it is clear that Paul is addressing the Jews here. They have knowledge of the Old Testament. The “we” in Romans 3:9 refers to the Jews.

- 1a Read verses Romans 2:17-20. What are the eight things that Paul points out that the Jews boasted about?
- b Do you think similar things are present in our Christian churches?
- 2 What five questions does Paul ask in verses 21-23? How do the questions show the Jews their sin?
- 3 Read Romans 2:24 again together with Isaiah 52:5 and Ezekiel 36:22. How does verse 24 challenge us in our time today? Think of some concrete examples.
- 4 How does Paul reason with people who create false peace for themselves? What role does obedience play in our relationship with God? Read verses 25-26.
- 5 Discuss verse 27. What are the implications of this verse for how we as believers deal with people outside the church?
- 6 Do you think there is such a thing as outward and inward Christianity? Is one right and the other wrong? How would you describe the balance between the two?

## THE JEWS, SIN, AND GOD'S JUDGMENT

Romans 2:17-24 gives the idea that the Jews are in no way "better" than the Gentiles because they also have sin. In Romans 3:1-9, four possible objections to Paul's argument are given:

- a The benefits of being part of God's people are of no value (verse 2).
- b Because God's people are unfaithful, it means that He is also unfaithful (verse 3).
- c If people's sin/injustice proves God's goodness/justice, then God is unjust when He punishes people's sin. Sin is then good to God and not bad (verses 5-8).
- d If God causes good things to come from bad things, we can do bad things, because then it is also good to God (verse 8b).



- 7 The objections we read about here are still being raised against Christianity today. How would you answer each of these objections based on Paul's answer? (Note again Paul's final answer at the end of verse 8.)

## WHAT IS A FALSE FAITH?

If we replace "Jew" with "Christian" and "circumcision" with "baptism" or "membership of church" in these verses, we see that you cannot be saved solely on the basis of your membership. One gets something like "false" or "apparent" faith. Read Matthew 7:21; 15:7-9; 23:27 and Luke 6:46.

### THIS PASSAGE GIVES FOUR CHARACTERISTICS OF "FALSE FAITH":

- Moral pride (verse 17).
- Studying the Bible only theoretically, without it changing you (verse 21).
- Hypocrisy (verse 22).
- A lack of an inner spiritual life, where prayer and honor to God are present (verse 29).



# ALL HUMANITY IS PUNISHABLE

**P**

aul is nearing the end of his argument. He first pointed out the guilt of the Gentiles in Romans 1:18-32, then the hypocrisy of people who think they are better than others in Romans 2:1-16. Finally, we read about the false self-confidence of the Jews in Romans 2:17-3:8. Now in the following verses he shows the guilt of all mankind.

## TAKE NOTE



- Paul quotes seven passages from the Old Testament from verses 10 to 18.
- Notice how this points out the wickedness of sin; how total depravity affects every part of human existence (including our mind, emotions, sexuality, consciousness, and will); and how sin literally affects every person.

- 1 Discuss verse 9. How should we understand and reconcile this with the fact that God made all people good?
- 2 Look at the following three passages and discuss the advantages that the Jews had:
  - a Exodus 19:3-6; Deuteronomy 4:8; Isaiah 11:1-10.
  - b What can we learn from the advantages that the Jews had, but did not use/realize they had? How can we employ these today?

- 3 Do you think it makes sense for God's law to be read in church every week? Why or why not?
- 4 List the parts of the body mentioned in verses 13 to 17 that are used to deliberately commit sin.
- 5 Romans 3:19-20 is not the only place where Paul addresses the issue of the law. Read Galatians 3:1-14 and discuss how we as New Testament believers should think about the law of God. How does this compare to your conclusion in question 3?
- 6 Look at verse 19 again. Discuss it in depth and keep the following in mind:
- a What is the implication of this verse for our faith?
  - b What is the attitude this should arouse in us?
  - c How does it make you feel? For example, uncomfortable, angry, irritated, excited, and so on.
- 7 Verses 19 to 20 are a conclusion of Romans 1 to 3. How should we understand one of the purposes of the law of God in light of this?

## TOTAL DEPRAVITY

One of the core concepts in Reformed theology is the total depravity of all people. This is not to say that there is nothing good in people. We all know that deep within people there is a sense of right and wrong, and that something of the goodness with which God created people remains in every person after the fall. Yet the fall affected and broke every aspect of man's existence – body and soul. Man and all of creation are therefore depraved in their totality. Sin has a negative influence on our existence every day.

Furthermore, total depravity also means that man's ability to return to God is depraved. Sin has therefore made it so that no man will seek God. We are totally depraved when it comes to our own salvation and redemption. We are unable to lift ourselves out of the pit of sin. We are spiritually dead, and need Someone to make us alive again. Because we are totally corrupt, we obviously cannot take any credit for our salvation. So all credit must go to God!

**SIN** ⇒ **Salvation** ⇒ **GRATITUDE**

⇒ Romans 3:21-11:36

⇒ Bible studies 6 to 15



**"THEREFORE,  
SINCE WE HAVE BEEN JUSTIFIED  
THROUGH FAITH,**

**WE HAVE PEACE  
WITH GOD THROUGH OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST."**

**ROMANS 5:1**



## GOD'S RIGHTEOUSNESS

**A**ll people of every race and class, the Jew and the Gentile, the religious and the irreligious, are all, without exception, sinful and guilty before God. This is the great human tragedy that Paul described in Romans 1:1-3:20.

In this passage there is a reversal. Paul introduces the passage with verse 21: "But now apart from the law the righteousness of God has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify." God has intervened in the human tragedy.

In the face of human unrighteousness, God's revelation of righteousness in Christ comes through the cross. Further in this passage Paul defends the gospel to the Jews, showing that Abraham himself was justified by faith.

### TAKE NOTE

- In these few verses the essence of the entire argument of the letter to the Romans is summarized.
- The connection between the Old Testament (law and prophets) and the New Testament is clearly shown here.
- Paul emphasizes the fact that justification/acquittal is free and cannot be earned.
- This chapter uses Abraham (and briefly David) as an example to illustrate what has already been explained in the previous chapters.
- This chapter beautifully shows the two different elements of faith – passive faith and active faith.



- ① Discuss the relationship between faith and keeping the law as described here in Romans 3:21-31.
- ② How did the Law and Prophets testify to the righteousness of God? Read verse 21.
  - Ⓐ How would you explain to someone what faith and grace are? See especially Romans 3:24 on where salvation begins.
  - Ⓑ Discuss how Romans 4:1-5 influences our understanding of how God saves people. What is one of the big “motivations” for why God would do it this way in these verses?
- ③ Look at verse 25a. What does it mean that the shedding of Jesus’ blood provides atonement?
- ④ What do verses 25b-26 teach us about God’s righteousness? Notice especially what it means that He has shown it in the “present time”.
- ⑤ Verses 27-31 give us two implications of justification by faith alone.
  - Ⓐ What are these implications?
  - Ⓑ How do these implications personally challenge you?
  - Ⓒ How do they challenge Christians and the church in general?
- ⑥ To understand Christianity, we must understand what faith is. Look at the following passages and discuss the concept of faith in depth:
  - Ⓐ Genesis 15:6; Luke 8:11-15; John 1:12; John 3:16; 2 Corinthians 4:13; Ephesians 2:8,9; and Hebrews 11:1-2.
  - Ⓑ Discuss whether you think there is a difference between “faith that saves or justifies” and “accepting and doing something in faith”.

## THE MEANING OF THE WORD FAITH

From the Protestant Reformation under the leadership of Martin Luther and John Calvin, come the well-known five solas. One of these is sola fide – faith alone. With this, Reformed theology wants to emphasize the fact that only through faith can one be acquitted of our guilt before God.

“Faith” of course has many different nuances, as we see in the various passages of text that we have already read. On the one hand, there is an active element of faith. Where you have to choose and act yourself. Where you make certain choices and decisions in trust. In this part of faith there can of course be

a “greater” or “lesser” faith. A less or more trust. However, this is not the part of faith referred to here.

Here we are referring to the faith that connects a person to the redemptive work of Jesus Christ and allows us to share in what Jesus did for us. This faith is outlined for us in the Bible as a “gift” from God; something that we cannot choose or do ourselves. There is also no question of a greater or lesser faith here. You cannot have a little or a half share in Jesus’ salvation, you are either a believer or not.

- 7 Verse 26 says that Jesus’ blood is an atoning (propitiatory) sacrifice for us. Look briefly at the following passages and discuss the idea of an atoning sacrifice and how Jesus fulfilled it:
  - a Leviticus 16 (especially verses 31-34).
  - b Hebrews 5:1-9.
- 8 In these verses, the one thing that makes Christianity radically different from other religions is mentioned – grace. Discuss this definition of grace, and say whether you agree or disagree with it: “Biblical grace is not getting what you deserve, and at the same time getting what you don’t deserve.”
- 9 Discuss the difference between “I believe in God” and “I believe God”. Also look at James 2:18-23.
- 10 What is the purpose of “outward” religious things such as circumcision and obedience to God’s law according to Romans 4?
- 11 It is repeated several times in Romans 4 that Abraham was counted righteous. Discuss the concept of sins being “counted”, especially how it is used in this passage. See for example verse 3 (ESV): “Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness.”



**CREDITED / COUNTED:** Note that the NIV uses the word credited, while the ESV uses counted. These words occur repeatedly – verses 3, 4, 5, 6, 9 and 11. It means to put something on someone’s account. In the context of work, wages are credited to someone because they deserve it, but in the context of justification, it is those who have not worked for it, and do not deserve it, whose faith is credited to them as righteousness.

- 12** Read the story of Abraham's calling (Genesis 12:1-9, especially verses 1-5) and God's covenant with Abraham (Genesis 15, especially verses 1-6) and discuss how it deepens our understanding of this passage. Focus especially on:
- a** Who Abraham was before and after his calling.
  - b** What Abraham did or did not do (for example, circumcision or keeping the law).
  - c** What God did or did not do.

### THE RIGHTEOUSNESS THAT ABRAM RECEIVES

Genesis 15 begins with the words that Abram should not be afraid, because: "I am your shield, your very great reward." This is the promise that the Lord makes to Abram. Abram wonders how this can be, because: "You have given me no children" (Genesis 15:3). This is a reference to Genesis 3 where the seed of the woman will crush the head of the serpent. The Lord then shows Abram the stars and then says: "So shall your offspring be" (Genesis 15:4). Abram believed God, and the content of this is that he will receive the seed, and this was then counted to him as righteousness. See also Galatians 3:16.

- 13** Discuss what Romans 4:23-25 means to you personally.

### REDEMPTION COMES FROM JESUS CHRIST

In the first Bible study we learned about the word righteousness. This is a legal term, the opposite of a conviction. Both are judgments of a judge. To convict someone is not just about punishing someone, but to declare them guilty or worthy of punishment. Acquittal or righteousness is therefore not just about withholding punishment from someone, but to declare them innocent. Therefore, they may not be punished.

Although faith allows us to share in the work of Jesus, it is not faith itself that acquits us. The acquittal (righteousness) that we receive is from Jesus Christ. This means that we are acquitted of our sin, not because our faith is so good, but because Jesus is so good. What He did is given to us; it is a gift from God. Justification by faith therefore means that we are acquitted of all our guilt before God through what Jesus Christ did for us.

# The glory of God

It is very interesting to see how Paul uses different pronouns in Romans. In chapter 3, Paul uses the word “they” as a reference to the world that is guilty before God. At the beginning of chapter 4, he uses the words “our forefather,” and later in chapter 4 (from verse 16), Paul begins to speak of Abraham as the father of “all who believe.” The rest of chapter four uses the word “we.”

Romans 5 begins with a series of “we know” affirmations. This shows us that Paul identifies himself with true believers, regardless of whether they are of Jewish or Gentile descent. After Paul has described the need for justification in Romans 1:18-3:20, and the Way to justification in Romans 3:21-4:25, he now goes on to describe the fruits of justification in Romans 5:1-11.



## TAKE NOTE

- Jesus looks at his enemies in a unique and amazing way, and we were part of those enemies of God.
- An important word that is repeated is “rejoice” in the ESV translation, and “glory” in the NIV translation.

- 1 Look at how Paul describes the peace between us and God in the first verses:
  - a What does it mean that there is now “peace” between us and God?
  - b What would be the opposite of peace and how does it play out in your relationship with God?



- 2 It is clear that there should be a feeling of pleasure and joy among believers when we realize what our salvation in Jesus means. Is this your experience? Why, or why not?
- 3 Verse 3 speaks of suffering. It refers specifically to the opposition and persecution that believers will experience in this world. How do verses 2 to 5 show that Christians walk the same path as Christ? Why do we rejoice in suffering?
- 4 In what two ways is God's love for us expressed in this passage? Read verses 5b and 8.
- 5 How are the "we" for whom Christ died described in the following verses: Verses 6, 8 and 10.
- 6 We live in a world where everyone thinks they are victims, or that their situation is caused by other people. What do you think are the implications of verses 6 to 8 for you and me as believers living in such a world?
- 7 How is the Person and work of each Person of the Trinity highlighted in this passage?
- 8 Why is the whole issue of "access to God" such an important concept? How should we as Christians understand this concept? Answer the question based on the following verses:
  - a Matthew 27:51.
  - b Romans 5:1-2.
  - c Hebrews 10:1-22.
- 9 Read Romans 5:1 and 8 again. The Bible describes sin as rebellion or rebellion against God. How does the idea of sin as rebellion against God give us a deeper understanding of these verses?
  - a Deuteronomy 9:7 and 9:23-24.
  - b Psalm 2:2-3 and 36:2.



- 10 Read verses 9 to 10. How does Paul say we can be sure of our full and final salvation?
- 11 Compare Romans 5:11 with Romans 2:17. How does the way Christians boast in God differ from the way Jews boasted in Him?

**GLORY:** The concept of glory literally means “weighty” or “heavy”; something that is weighty or heavy, and carries a lot of value or is important. For example, when we say something is a weighty matter, we mean that it is an important matter.



We would also say that someone’s opinion weighs heavily or carries weight; meaning that it has a lot of value. Glory therefore refers to something or someone that is inherently valuable. It is something or someone that is important and therefore should be exalted and honored.



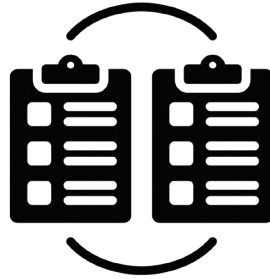
In the Bible, the term glory refers primarily to God. All honor and glory go to God, because he is the one who ultimately “bears all weight.”

## WE CAN SHARE IN GOD’S GLORY

It is striking that glory is attributed to Jesus Christ in the New Testament. In and through Jesus, God’s glory is made visible in this world. But, it goes even further – as believers we “boast in the hope of the glory of God” (Romans 5:2).

We can share in the inherent value of God! Think for a moment about what this means for our identity as believers, to share in God’s glory means that we share in that which carries the most weight of all in the world.

Therefore, nothing else needs to determine your identity. No sorrow or hardship, no joy or achievement can outweigh the glory of God! In Jesus we share in this glory, and that is who we are.



# A COMPARISON between Adam and Christ

**T**he passage begins with the word “therefore.” This strongly suggests that verses 12 to 21 are not a new argument, but a consequence. It is basically the summary of Paul’s argument up to this point.

In verses 9-10, Paul clearly pointed out that our salvation comes only through Jesus Christ. This immediately raises the question: How can one person’s sacrifice bring so much blessing to others? The answer comes in Paul’s comparison between Adam and Christ. The passage can be divided into three short sections:

- **ROMANS 5:12-14:** Adam and Christ are introduced.
- **ROMANS 5:15-17:** Adam and Christ are contrasted.
- **ROMANS 5:18-21:** Adam and Christ are compared.

## TAKE NOTE

- Different contrasts are highlighted here: death and life; disobedience and obedience; law and grace; and sin and righteousness.
- Jesus is presented as the beginning of a new humanity through his fulfillment of the Old Testament.
- People we read about in the Old Testament (Adam and Moses) are used to illustrate Jesus’ work.
- Jesus’ work is portrayed as greater than Adam’s work. Christ is more powerful to save than Adam was to destroy. His grace is always greater than our transgressions. Our trust therefore always lies in the grace of God.
- The law must play a role in our understanding of grace (verse 20).



- ① Count how many times Paul says in Romans 5:15-19 that all have sinned. What does it mean that Paul expresses this so strongly?

### WHO ARE THE “MANY” THAT PAUL IS REFERRING TO?

In Romans 5:19, Paul says that through the disobedience of one man many were made sinners, and that through the obedience of one Man many will be made righteous.

The first “many” refers to all people. The second “many” refers to verse 17 – those who receive the abundance of grace and righteousness. Paul also makes it clear throughout Romans that only those who have faith will be saved (Romans 1:16, 3:21, 4:1 and further). Finally, also that those who persist in their sin (which includes unbelief) will be lost.

- ② Discuss what original sin means. Then read the sections under this question about original sin, and compare it with your discussion.



**ORIGINAL SIN:** Original sin means that all people are conceived and born in sin through the first man, Adam, who fell into sin and plunged all of humanity into sin after him.

### WHAT DO WE BELIEVE ABOUT ORIGINAL SIN?

Some mistakenly teach that original sin simply means that all people are sinful and therefore deserve death, because all sinned like Adam. This view says that people are actually born neutral and then ultimately choose against God.

Others teach realism, which is a complex argument, which says that our souls were somehow present at the first sin, and therefore realize that sin in our own lives. Our souls therefore physically sinned with Adam and Eve, and are then later born as already corrupt and sinful people.

The traditional Reformed view of original sin states that it was Adam who sinned. His sin caused all humanity after him to be born guilty before God. We understand the death that came into the world through Adam’s sin (Romans 5:12) as both physical death and spiritual death. This death is already present from birth.

- ③ What insight do Romans 5:13,14 and 20 give us about our understanding of the Old Testament law?

## THE LAW INCREASES TRANSGRESSIONS

The Jews thought that the law came to increase righteousness. They thought that they could keep the law perfectly and thereby make themselves righteous. Romans 5 Paul shows that the exact opposite of what the Jews boast about happened.

4 Discuss why we see Adam as a “type” of Jesus:

- a Similarities.
- b Differences.
- c Fulfillment.

## ADAM AS REPRESENTATIVE HEAD OF HUMANITY

To explain original sin, we can say that we have a federal or representative understanding of original sin. There are several examples where the Lord worked with humanity through representation: Abraham gives a tenth to Melchizedek, and the writer of Hebrews points out that Levi also gave a tenth to him through Abraham (Hebrews 7:9-10). We also read of Achan (Joshua 7:11) who hid goods, and that it is then said that Israel was unfaithful to the Lord. Finally, with Christ’s death and resurrection we are shown that we died and rose with Him (2 Corinthians 5:14 and further).

Adam was created as the “federal head” or “representative head” of all humanity. He was created perfectly and was therefore our perfect representative. Adam was created with the potential to choose for or against God, and what he chose was 100% representative of what every person after him would choose in his situation. The fact that he chose against God therefore shows that all people would choose against God. Therefore, God can also hold us accountable for what Adam did.

Paul’s whole point with this passage in Romans 5 is that not only our original sin, but also our justification is dependent on a “Federal Head,” Jesus Christ. If we do not want to be held accountable for what Adam did, we certainly cannot accept the salvation and justification that Jesus achieved for us! After all, we did not contribute anything to it.

5 This passage links death and sin to the law and justification, and life to grace. So, holding on to the law brings death, and holding on to grace brings life.

- a Why is this so?
- b What does this mean for me and your life every day?



# Alive FOR GOD

**P**aul has preached the gospel in a wonderful way up to this point. He has made it clear that believers are declared righteous by faith, that they live by grace, and that they will be glorified. In the previous chapter it was indicated that the grace of the Lord is always greater than the sins of the believers. Believers therefore have an unshakeable comfort.

However, Paul did not say anything about the Christian life or sanctification. It seems as if he jumped directly from justification to glorification.

Paul already indicated in Romans 3:8 that people can misunderstand the law and gospel by thinking that one will receive more grace when one sins more. In Romans 6 he answers the question. Paul answers that God's salvation does not only involve our being saved from sin, but also from sinning. Grace not only makes us righteous, but also works sanctification in us.

## TAKE NOTE

- In Romans 6 Paul uses his familiar rhetoric (diatribe) that we have already come to know through the letter to the Romans: he anticipates certain questions and then answers them.
- The "theological" concepts (contrasts) that emerged in the previous section are repeated here and applied more practically; for example, death versus life.
- There is still an interaction between God's work and man's responsibility. The emphasis here shifts to man.



## PAUL'S ARGUMENT ABOUT SIN

We can summarize Paul's view of sin in Romans 6:2-14 as follows:

1. We are dead to sin (verse 2).
2. We have died to sin by being baptized into Christ's death (verse 3).
3. Because we share in his death, God also makes us share in his resurrection (verses 4-5).
4. We, sinful humans, were crucified with Christ so that we could be freed from the slavery of sin (verses 6-7).
5. Both the death and resurrection of Christ are decisive events (verses 8-10).
6. We must realize that we are now what Christ is: dead to sin and alive to God (verse 11).
7. Now we must put our bodies at the service of God (verses 12-13) and sin is no longer our master (verse 14).

- ① What is Paul's response in verse 2 to wrong conclusions about how we should live because of God's grace?

## WE ARE DEAD TO SIN

Just because we are dead to sin does not mean we are dead to the influence or love of sin. Paul is not referring here to the power of sin, but to the guilt of sin. Justification means that we are dead to sin.

- ② In what way does Paul use the word "baptism" here? Does it refer to the outward sacrament, or the inward working? Compare 1 Corinthians 12:13.
- ③ Read verses 3-5. Discuss the three things that are not only historical facts about Christ, but also our personal experience.
- ④ Sometimes you feel like a victim of your own sin: "Before I could control myself, I did this or that, said that or thought that." How do verses 6-11 address this victim mentality?
- ⑤a Read verse 13. Why does Paul put the command in both the negative and the positive?  
b How does this strengthen Paul's appeal to believers' lives?
- ⑥ How would you answer Paul's question in verse 21? Are you ashamed of the sin in your life?
- ⑦ There is a fine balance between God's grace and man's responsibility. How do verses 22-23 help us understand this balance?

## SLAVES OF CHRIST

People often say that they are pursuing freedom. Yet Romans 6:15-18 shows us that all people are actually slaves: either slaves of sin or slaves of God. Read John 12:26; Romans 1:1; Romans 16:1; Ephesians 6:21; and Colossians 1:7. It seems that the early believers considered it an honorific title to be a “slave of Christ.” The word servant is sometimes used instead of slave.

- 8 How do you feel about being a slave to God? How do you live accordingly?
- 9 How can we reconcile being slaves of Christ and having Christian freedom?
- 10 Discuss what you understand by Christian freedom in 1 Corinthians 9:19, 10:29-32; John 8:31-36; Galatians 5:1,13; James 1:23-25, 2:12; and 1 Peter 2:16.

## PEOPLE WHO KEEP THE LAW INCORRECTLY

### → ANTINOMIANISM: PEOPLE WHO ARE AGAINST THE LAW

Antinomianism comes from the Greek words *Anti* (“against”) and *Nomos* (“law”). It therefore means to be against the law. It is the technical term for people who reject the law of the Lord, and believe that one is saved only by grace.

This is what the book of Jude warns against. It says that there are people who abuse the grace of God as a cover for living an immoral life (Jude 4). It can also occur in a milder form when people take a negative attitude towards the reading of the law in church.

### → LEGALISM: PEOPLE WHO ONLY BELIEVE IN THE LAW

The opposite of antinomianism is legalism. It refers to people who believe that you are still a slave to the law, and that your salvation and relationship with God depend on whether you obey the law. They seek both their justification and sanctification in the law. This is what Galatians warns against.

## HOW TO BE A LAW-ABIDING FREE PERSON

Paul explains the right view in Romans. We must maintain a good balance. One must realize that your justification is God’s work, but that the law is still God’s will for man. That is why we keep the law – out of gratitude. We glorify God by keeping his law. And, in sanctification, we then grow.

Of course, it is also about your own motivation for keeping the law. We may never keep the law to be saved. No, we keep the law because we want to do it, because we are saved. Therefore, God’s law is never a heavy burden for us, but a safe playing field within which we can truly be free.





# THE CHRISTIAN'S STRUGGLE BECAUSE OF THE LAW

**S**o far in the book, all of Paul's references to the law have been in a negative light: The law reveals sin, but does not bring salvation; the law brings judgment, but not grace. Paul emphasizes this by making the point that believers are no longer under the law, but under grace (Romans 6:14). This is the basis on which Paul discusses the law again here. In Romans 7, Paul writes about the place of the law in God's plan of salvation. The word 'law' or related words occur in each of the first fourteen verses of the chapter. The question that is still being addressed here is: What is the place of the law in the Christian life?

- **VERSES 1-6:** Paul shows the legalists that the law no longer has 'authority' over us because we now belong to Christ.
- **VERSES 7-13:** Paul defends the law against the unfounded criticism of the antinomians (see p. 31) that the law causes sin and death.
- **VERSES 14-25:** Paul describes the inner conflict that believers still experience.



### TAKE NOTE

- Although the law has been discussed several times, this chapter is the most comprehensive treatment of it.
- This is not just a theoretical/theological treatment of the law. From verse 7 onwards we see Paul taking a very personal line, which should touch our hearts.
- The law, which is well-intended and well-made by God, is corrupted by sin.

### THE LAW IN ROMANS 1 TO 7

The theme of the law has come up several times in the first 7 chapters of Romans. Here are some things we have learned about the law:

- The “law” is not necessarily all the Jewish laws and rules or the literal ten commandments.
- There is a law written on every person’s heart, an innate right and wrong.
- The law of God, which is summarized in the ten commandments, corresponds to the law written on our hearts.
- You do not need to know the law of God to break or keep the law.
- Possessing (knowing) the law of God does not bring you salvation, but rather condemnation because everyone breaks the law.
- Yet the law is not bad, but perfect and good.
- The purpose of the law is to reveal sin, so that we may know what sin is.
- Trying to keep the law can be good or bad, it depends on the motivation with which you try to keep the law.

❶ Read verses 1 to 4a again. How does Paul explain our relationship with the law in terms of the fact that we died and rose with Christ?

❷ How do I know what my sin is? See also the Heidelberg Catechism Sunday 2.

- 3 Does the law itself have the power to make us holy?
- 4 What does the law do regarding sin in the following verses?
- a Verse 5
  - b Verse 7b
  - c Verses 9-11
  - d Verse 13
- 5 How does the law awaken sinful passions in a person? Compare verse 5.
- 6 The tenth commandment says that we must not covet. How do wrong desires cause you to break every one of God's commandments? Read verse 8.
- 7 Look again at verse 17. Doesn't this mean that we can find an excuse for our sin?
- 8 In verses 15 to 23, Paul shares a very personal struggle with sin. How does your struggle with sin make you feel?
- 9 Read verses 24-25. This is Paul's response to his struggle with sin. What does this teach us? Notice how he draws back to what we have learned so far in Romans!

### THE ROMAN PUNISHMENT FOR MURDERERS

In Romans 7:24 Paul says: "Who will deliver me from this body of death?"

This is a reference to the Roman method of punishment in which the body of the murdered person was chained to the murderer. The murderer was then released to wander wherever he could, but no one was allowed to help or comfort him. In the hot Eastern sun, the dead body would soon begin to decay, overwhelming the condemned person not only with the smell but also with the infection of the rotting flesh. This was one of the most horrible of all the punishments the Romans ever devised. This is what Paul compares our sinful flesh to, and only Christ can deliver us from it.

**ADAPTED FROM:** Manners & Customs of the Bible (North Brunswick, NJ: Bridge-Logos Publishers, 1998), 537.



- 10 In verse 24 we see that Paul concludes that he has no power of his own. He needs power outside of himself to be saved. With this in mind, look at the following passages and discuss the attitude that should be in our hearts:
- Mark 1:40-42
  - Luke 8:40-48
  - Luke 18:9-14

## OUR MOTIVATION TO KEEP THE LAW

The law is good and right, but it can never bring us salvation. Salvation can only come through grace. Our motivation to keep the law is not about gaining salvation.

We keep the law out of gratitude for our salvation through Jesus Christ. Yet that is not where we should begin. Both the Bible and our confessions begin somewhere else.

Our gratitude comes from the fact that we are new people, made new in and through Jesus Christ. This is the heart of Paul's argument in Romans 7. This is why he (and every true believer) experiences the inner struggle of "what I want to do (new man) I do not do, but what I do not want to do (old man) I do."

Question 86 of Sunday 32 of the Heidelberg Catechism asks: "Since then we are delivered from our misery, merely of grace, through Christ, without any merit of ours, why must we still do good works?"

This is what we confess in the answer to this question: "Because Christ, having redeemed and delivered us by his blood, also renews us by his Holy Spirit, after his own image; that so we may testify, by the whole of our conduct, our gratitude to God for his blessings, and that he may be praised by us; also, that every one may be assured in himself of his faith, by the fruits thereof; and that, by our goodly conversation, others may be gained to Christ."



**R**omans 8 is one of the most well-known and beloved chapters in the Bible. At the beginning of it we read how wonderful it is that the Spirit of God dwells in us. And, towards the end of the chapter we get the well-known passage that nothing can separate us from the love of God.

In Romans 7 we read about the law and how the law cannot absolve a believer. Now, in Romans 8 we see how God absolve us from sin, and how the power of the Spirit leads us to it. The Christian's life is a life in the Spirit. Yet the main idea in this chapter is not just about the sanctification of a believer, but about assurance. The Spirit assures us that we are children and heirs of God.

In this Bible study on the first 17 verses of Romans 8 it is about the ministry of the Spirit in the church. It is about his deliverance, indwelling, sanctification, guidance and redemption of the children of God.



### TAKE NOTE

- In chapter 7 the focus is on the “law,” while Romans 8 very clearly focuses on the “Spirit.”
- The word “therefore,” with which the chapter begins (NIV), indicates a summary or an interim summary. It is not just of chapter 7, but of Paul’s entire argument up to this point.
- The word “Spirit” occurs 17 times in this section in the NIV, and just less than that in the ESV.
- The word “flesh” (NIV) occurs 12 times in this section of only 17 verses. The ESV translation uses the word 13 times. Flesh can also be described by the phrase “sinful nature”.
- A new idea is introduced into Paul’s letter by this section: The freedom that comes through a life lived by the Spirit.



- ❶ Compare Romans 8:1 with Romans 5:1. How do the two verses fit together?
- ❷ According to this passage, what is the core work of the Holy Spirit?
- ❸ Why did the God have to send his Son “in the likeness of sinful flesh” according to verse 3? Also read Heidelberg Catechism Questions and Answers 14 and 16.
- ❹ Why is the law powerless to make us righteous or holy? Compare verse 3.
- ❺ What things did God do for us according to verses 3-4?
- ❻ Name the things that Paul mentions in verses 5 to 8 that are the contrast between the flesh and the Spirit?

# THE GREAT BATTLE BETWEEN THE “FLESH” AND THE “SPIRIT”



**FLESH:** Defining the word “flesh” is a very difficult task. It can refer to physical realities like someone’s body, or it can be more abstract, like someone’s desires. Sometimes it simply refers to life on earth, other times to sinful actions. The word “flesh” can be replaced by the phrase “sinful nature”.



**SPIRIT:** The opposite of “flesh” is “spirit.” Like “flesh,” “spirit” is also a fairly difficult concept to define. Sometimes it refers to a psychological state, sometimes to a non-physical reality, and sometimes to a personal spiritual being.

## THE “FLESH” VERSUS THE “SPIRIT”

In most cases, “flesh” and “spirit” are contrasted. The best-known passage that explains this best is Galatians 5:19-26. There we see how the works of the flesh (sinful nature) are contrasted with the works (fruit) of the Spirit. However, we must be careful not to confuse this with Greek dualism.

## THE VIEW OF GREEK DUALISM

In Greek dualism, it was taught that this physical world and body in which we live are bad, and one should strive for the spiritual world which is good. In dualism, life is therefore divided into compartments with certain things that are inherently bad and other things that are inherently good.

## THE BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVE

In the biblical perspective, everything was created good by God, both the physical and the spiritual world. However, sin has caused everything to now fall under the curse of sin and is no longer good by nature, but bad. That is why God sent his Son: to reconcile everything to himself and to bring out the good again. God is therefore engaged in a process of restoration, and one day everything will be perfect again.

When the Bible then speaks of the “flesh” in the sense of the struggle between good and evil, it refers to the fallen reality after the fall. The “spirit” then refers to those places where the restoration of God has already become a reality. Unlike in dualism, our physical reality is not inherently bad, and it will one day be restored to the original good state in which God created it.

- 7 How does the form of address in verse 9 indicate the work of the Spirit?
- 8 Compare verses 10 and 11 with each other, especially with regard to the work of God, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit.
- 9 What positive motivation to do good works do verses 5-12 (especially verse 6) give us?
- 10 According to verse 13, who must put an end to sinful practices? How should this happen?
- 11 What does the Spirit do for us according to verses 14-17?
- 12 Read verses 14 and 15 again. Believers are not slaves, but are made God's children through his work. God adopts us as his children. Is this your experience of Christianity? Why or why not?
- 13 In verse 16 we hear that the Spirit testifies with our spirit that we are children of God. Read Deuteronomy 19:15. What is the value of two witnesses?
- 14 Discuss the idea of "heirs." What does this mean for us?

### CHILDREN OF GOD SAY FATHER

Paul contrasts adoption as children with slavery. Believers are adopted as children. As a result, they cry out "Abba, Father." "Abba" is the Aramaic word for "father," and was used primarily within the family circle, underscoring the intimate nature of the relationship.

- 15 Discuss how the following passages contribute to your understanding of the work of the Holy Spirit: 1 Corinthians 2:12-15, 6:9-11, 12:13; 2 Corinthians 1:22, 5:5; Galatians 5:16-18; 1 Ephesians 1:13-17; and 1 John 3:24, 4:13.
- 16 Look at these passages and discuss what the Bible means by freedom: John 8:31-36; 2 Corinthians 3:17; Galatians 5:1-15; and 1 Peter 2:15-17.



# THE GLORY WE hope FOR



**S**uffering and glory are the themes that appear in this passage. First, the suffering and glory of God's creation (verses 19 to 22), then the suffering and glory of God's children (verses 23 to 27). These two things go hand in hand. That's how it was for Christ and how it will be for his followers. We will suffer for a short time and then enter into God's eternal glory in Christ.

The suffering and glory also indicate two dispensations: the present and the future, the "already" and the "not yet." We cannot compare the suffering and the glory with each other: No matter how painful the suffering may be, it is not even close to being comparable to the greatness of the glory that is to come. This affects not only the children of God, but also his creation.

## TAKE NOTE

- Although there is a theme of suffering, there is also a theme of hope that runs along with the suffering throughout the entire passage.
- There is a remarkable connection between the sin and fall of creation, and the redemption and restoration of creation.
- God's control over all things is emphasized here, without removing man's responsibility.
- Paul's entire argument so far culminates in the unwavering comfort and hope found in verses 31 to 39.



- ① Verse 20a says that creation was “subjected to futility.” How did this happen? See Genesis 3:17b-18. Discuss the implications of this for how we should relate to creation.
- ② Compare verses 19 and 21c with verse 23b. How is creation’s expectation the same as ours?
- ③ What is the hope of Christians? How does it differ from the common usage of the word in our society?
- ④ How will creation be freed from bondage (verse 21a)? Also read 2 Peter 3:7, 10.
- ⑤ Compare how the Old Testament, Jesus, Peter, and John speak about the new dispensation: Psalm 102:26-27; Isaiah 65:17-18; 66:22; Matthew 19:28; Acts 3:19-21; and Revelation 21-22.
- ⑥ What things are mentioned in verses 23-25 about believers who still live in incomplete salvation?
- ⑦a How are we, the Holy Spirit, Christ, and God the Father involved in our prayers according to verses 26-27? Also read Romans 8:34.  
b Also look at the following passages and discuss the role of the Holy Spirit in prayer: Psalm 51:11-13; John 14:25-26; and Jude 1:20.
- ⑧ Verse 28 is a very well-known verse that is easily misused. Discuss the dangers and comfort that the verse holds. How should we understand it?

***And we know that in all things  
God works for the good of those who love him,  
who have been called according to his purpose.***

**ROMANS 8:28**

## THE ORDER OF SALVATION (*ORDO SALUTIS*)

When we read through the entire Bible and especially the New Testament, it becomes clear that there are different elements in a person's salvation. In an attempt to thoroughly describe these elements, Reformed theologians described God's salvation of man in the "order of salvation".

The classical order of salvation consists of the following: Election – Calling – Rebirth – Faith – Repentance – Justification – Sanctification – Perseverance – Glorification.

Romans 8:28-30 is the closest we get to a detailed "order of salvation" in the Bible. Apart from faith, all the other elements of the path to salvation are clearly stated in these few verses.

One of the reasons why the order of salvation is important to us is because it so beautifully summarizes the relationship between God's work and man's responsibility. We have seen throughout the entire letter to the Romans that this is something that comes up again and again and here it is explained quite clearly.

Everything begins and ends with God. It is He who chooses, calls, acquits (justifies) and glorifies. Yet we are renewed in the image of his Son – we are therefore made holy. This happens through a lifelong process (perseverance) of confession and repentance.

Thus we see how life here on earth is a complex, but also an exciting journey with God. It is a journey that we can fully embark on, because we have an unwavering hope in the faithfulness and goodness of God that He will finish what He has started.

- 🕒 Read verses 29 to 30. What does it say about God that He has already glorified the same people He chose?
- 1️⃣🕒 Read verses 31 to 36 again. What questions does Paul ask and answer here? Have you experienced all of these answers as comfort in your life? How does it give you unwavering hope in the uncertain times in which we live?
- 1️⃣1️⃣ Read verses 37-39. What does the Lord proclaim about love in the conclusion of the entire letter so far?



- 12** In verses 38-39, Paul states that he is convinced of God's love. Do you also live in that conviction, or are there still things that make you doubt God's love?
- 13** Look at the following passages and think about how Jesus changes our perspective on suffering: Romans 8:36; Matthew 10:37-39; John 15:18-19; 2 Corinthians 1:3-7; Philippians 3:10; 1 Peter 2:19; 1 Peter 4:12-19; and 1 John 3:13.

### WHY DOES GOD ALLOW PAIN AND SUFFERING IN THE WORLD?

This is a very complex question and one cannot give just one answer to it. Throughout the entire letter to the Romans we see how small answers are given to this question, which together can form a good answer for us. In Romans 8, for example, we can look at verse 28 – how God makes all things work together for good. One verse that we easily overlook, however, is verse 36: "For it is written: 'For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.'" Perhaps one of the reasons why we struggle with this question is because we do not have a "theology of suffering."

The question we must also ask, however, is where evil comes from. Just because God is a God of love does not mean that there is no evil. Wherever someone goes against God's good will for his creation, it is evil.

That's what Paul tells us in Romans 7: It is precisely because God is a God of love that we know what evil is, and can see it. That's the argument Paul uses when he talks about the law and sin. It boils down to the fact that if there were no law, we would not have known what sin is. But now, because there is a law, we know what sin is (Romans 7:7-11).

## GOD'S ELECTION

**R**omans 9 to 11 are about the unique position of the Jews in God's plan. Paul has already referred to this in several places throughout the letter (1:16, 2:6, 2:17, 3:1, 3:29, 4:1, 5:20, 6:14, 7:1, and 8:2). Now he expands on those verses. The main theme is the Jews' unbelief, with all the questions it raises: How could such a privileged, favored people who had received nothing but favor from God fail to recognize the Messiah? The gospel was preached to them by the holy prophets in the Old Testament! Why didn't they embrace it? How can their lack of response to God's Word be reconciled with God's covenant and his promises? How does the conversion of the Gentiles and Paul's unique ministry to them fit into God's plan? What is God's future plan for the Jews and the Gentiles? Each chapter deals with a different aspect of God's relationship with Israel.

- **BIBLE STUDY 13:** Israel's fall and God's purpose in choosing them (9:1-33).
- **BIBLE STUDY 14:** Israel's mistake and God's displeasure with them (10:1-21).
- **BIBLE STUDY 15:** Israel's future and God's wisdom and grace (11:1-32).

### TAKE NOTE

- Romans 9 to 11 are probably some of the most difficult and controversial chapters in Romans and even in the entire Bible.
- Paul is still busy with the big idea that salvation comes through God's grace and not by merit. The discussion about Israel and election must be seen in this light.
- Verses 1 to 3 take on a very personal tone. Election was not just an "academic" or "intellectual" question for Paul, but something that touched him deeply in the heart.
- Many of the objections or counter-arguments addressed here are still exactly the same today: Is God's Word invalid now? (verse 6); Is God unjust? (verse 14); How then can God hold man to blame? (verse 19).



- ❶ How does Paul associate himself with the Jews? Read Romans 9:1-3, 10:1, and 11:1.
- ❷ Can Paul really be cut off from Christ? Read Romans 8:35 and Exodus 32:32.
- ❸ What can we conclude from verses 1 to 5 about why God chose a specific people for Himself in Old Testament times?
- ❹ What eight privileges did Israel enjoy according to verses 4-5? Compare Jeremiah 31:9, Exodus 29:42, Exodus 40:34, 1 Kings 8:10, 2 Samuel 6:2, Exodus 24:8, 2 Samuel 23:5, and Deuteronomy 4:7.
- ❺ What three objections do people raise to God's election in verses 6a, 14, and 19?
- ❻ What is the central principle that verses 6 through 13 highlight? Compare John 13:18, 15:16, and 17:6.
- ❼ In verse 14, Paul asks a question about God's righteousness. He answers it in verses 15 through 18 with the Lord's words to Moses (Exodus 33:19) and Pharaoh (Exodus 9:16). Why does Paul answer the question by referring to God's grace?

### THE HARDENING OF PHARAOH'S HEART

In Exodus there are roughly 20 references to Pharaoh and the hardening of his heart. There are also about ten places where this 'hardening' of Pharaoh's heart is attributed to God. It should be equally well realized that Pharaoh hardened his own heart in ten more passages. The hardening was therefore as much Pharaoh's own act as it was the work of God. Even more significant is the fact that Pharaoh alone was the agent of the hardening in the first sign and in the first five plagues. Only with the sixth plague did God harden Pharaoh's heart (Exodus 9:12), as He had told Moses in Midian that He would do (Exodus 4:21).

How did God harden Pharaoh's heart? God simply revealed Himself. He revealed his power, sovereignty, love for his people, hatred of sin, and so on, through the signs and wonders of the plagues. It was this revelation of God that hardened Pharaoh's heart.

The revelation of God without grace hardens a sinful heart. The unbeliever therefore hates and suppresses the truth in unrighteousness. The problem is not with the revelation or the Revealer, but with the recipient of the revelation. Thus, the need for powerful irresistible grace is clear! Without God's loving, merciful grace in our lives, we will harden our hearts against God who reveals Himself powerfully.

- 8 In verses 19 to 23 another objection to election is discussed: How can God blame a person for his sin, if he cannot choose against God's decision? Discuss Paul's answer to this accusation on the basis of the following questions:
- a How should we think about ourselves according to verse 20a? Read Job 40:3.
  - b What is notable about the two "objects" mentioned in verses 22 and 23? Also read Isaiah 29:16 and 45:9.
  - c What does God reveal about Himself according to verses 22 and 23?
  - d Read Proverbs 16:4. These verses (also verses 22 and 23) give us insight into why God chooses certain people and not others. How should we feel about this reason that God gives?
  - e What do we see about God's character toward objects of wrath in verse 22?
  - f What does it mean that God has prepared objects of mercy beforehand to share in his glory? Read Ephesians 1:4.
- 9 How does Paul show from the Old Testament that the promise to Abraham about a great seed does not mean all Israelites? Read verses 24-29, Hosea 1:6, 10, 2:22; Isaiah 1:9, 10:22; Matthew 8:11 and further.
- 10 Also read Isaiah 8:14, 28:16; Psalm 118:22; 1 Corinthians 1:23; and Galatians 2:21, and 5:11. Then discuss the conclusion drawn in verses 30 to 33.
- 11 This passage frequently refers to God's sovereignty (that God can do whatever He wants). Discuss this with the help of the following passages: Psalm 29:10, 103:19; Daniel 4:34-37; Matthew 10:29-30; and 1 Timothy 6:15.
- 12 Look at the following passages and discuss what it means for God to be just: Deuteronomy 10:17, 32:4; Psalm 9:5, 51:5-7, 119:137-138; Jeremiah 11:20; Romans 3:4; and 2 Timothy 4:8.

### ELECTION (PART 1)

Romans 9 to 11 bring us directly to the question of election. Reading chapter 9, one realizes that the question is not whether the Bible teaches election, but rather what the Bible teaches about election. All people who read the Bible honestly must therefore have some form of an election doctrine.

To begin, we must keep up with the entire argument of the letter to the Romans so far. There are a few truths that we have already considered, which we must accept as such if we are to make any sense of election:

1. All people are sinful and deserve to be punished with eternal death. This punishment has been brought upon all people by rebelling against God.

2. God is a just God who hates all sin and who wants to punish all injustice.
3. God is also a gracious and merciful God, who in his goodness wants to save people from their sin and misery.
4. This salvation, which God grants to people out of his grace, can in no way come from themselves by living righteously and doing good works, but comes only through faith in Jesus Christ as our only Savior and Redeemer.
5. God calls all people to repentance through the gospel of Jesus Christ. Those who respond faithfully to God's call are saved and those who persist in their unbelief are lost.

#### **WHY DO SOME PEOPLE RESPOND IN FAITH AND OTHERS IN UNBELIEF?**

This is where election comes in: The doctrine of election simply says that the reason why some people come to faith and others do not, is because God decided to grant faith to some people as a gift of grace and to leave other people to persist in their unbelief. The decision for faith therefore lies with God and not with people. The decision for unbelief lies with people and not with God. This is usually where many objections arise.

#### **THE TWO MOST WELL-KNOWN OBJECTIONS ARE PROBABLY THE FOLLOWING:**

→ Doesn't it make people robots who don't have free will?

No, election does not say that people cannot choose God, it says that people will never want to choose God. Sin makes our will so corrupt that we will always choose against God. So, there is no one who wants to believe that cannot believe. If someone wants to believe, God has already changed their will. Thus, each one finally gets what they want.

→ It is unfair that God only chooses certain people and not everyone.

No, it is not unfair, because the people who are not saved get what they deserve. The people who are saved only receive grace. If all people were neutral/innocent before God, it would be unfair to choose only certain people, because then everyone would have deserved heaven. However, because no one deserves it, it is not unfair. God can give his grace to whom he will (Romans 9:15).

#### **DOES ELECTION TAKE AWAY OUR FREE WILL?**

If we are truly honest, we will have to admit that election does not take away our free will (sin has already done that!) and it is not unfair either, because God is free to do with his grace what he wants! He does not owe anything to any human being.

#### **THE CHALLENGE OF ELECTION**

The real challenge is rather that it is uncomfortable to accept that God is sovereign and can therefore do whatever he wants. Our human, sinful hearts always want to put ourselves in the center and not God. The doctrine of election forces us to give up all control, and this is difficult, especially for us modern people who think we are in control of everything.

**READ PART 2 ON PAGE 51**





**C**hapters 9-11 all address the problem of Israel's unbelief. In chapter 9 the emphasis was on God's purpose according to election. In chapter 10 he attributes this to the human ability to hear, understand, accept, and believe the gospel. There must be a believing response to the preaching of the gospel. With chapter 10, Paul moves from the past to the present, to his explanation of Israel's own unbelief and his hope that they will come to repentance.

#### TAKE NOTE

- In the middle of his argument about election, Paul returns to the central argument of the entire book – that justification (righteousness) comes by faith and not by works.
- The balance between God's choice and man's responsibility is again emphasized here.
- The previous chapter focused on the fact that God chooses. This chapter focuses on the way in which God brings his elect to faith.
- It is striking how many quotations from the Old Testament are used in Romans 9 to 11. This shows us that Paul is specifically focusing on the Jewish believers.



- ❶ In verses 1 to 4, Paul addresses the Jews because they did not understand God's way of justification. Do you think this only applies to the Jews? How do we do the same today?
- ❷ Verses 9 to 10 are very familiar verses. Discuss how everything we have learned so far in Romans, but especially the previous Bible study on election, influences our understanding of these verses.
- ❸ It is a core part of our faith to confess it openly and sincerely (verses 9-10). Read the following passages and discuss what it means to confess your faith: 1 Corinthians 12:3; Philippians 2:9-11; 1 Timothy 6:12-13; and 1 John 4:2-3,15.
- ❹ In the previous Bible study in the section on Election, this statement was made: "Thus, each one finally gets what they want.." Discuss verses 11 to 13 based on that. Also think about what this would mean for people who do not believe.
- ❺ "If you believe in election, then you don't need to do evangelism. Everyone who needs to believe will believe." This is a very common criticism of the doctrine of election. Judge it by verses 14 to 15.
- ❻ Have you experienced what is said in verse 15b?

### HOW PEOPLE CAN COME TO FAITH

The core of Paul's argument in verses 14 to 15 is clearly seen when the six verbs are placed in opposite order: Christ sends messengers; messengers preach; people hear; hearers believe; believers call; those who call are saved.

- ❷ In Romans 10 it is very clear that it is about faith that saves/justifies. How does Ephesians 2:1-10 help us to understand this aspect of faith? Focus especially on verses 8 to 10.
- ❸ What role does the preaching of the gospel play in bringing people to faith? Compare Ephesians 6:19; 1 Timothy 4:13; and 1 Peter 4:11.
- ❹ Read Romans 10:16-21. Discuss Paul's two explanations from Scripture (verses 18 and 19) about why Israel did not respond to the preaching of the gospel?

## ELECTION (PART 2)

READ PART 1 ON P. 47-48

In Romans 10, one of the most common objections to election is very clearly refuted. The objection is that the doctrine of election makes one careless and lazy to preach the gospel, since all who must believe will believe anyway. If the decision lies with God and not with men, then why is it necessary to share and preach the gospel?

First of all, we must perhaps say that this objection completely oversimplifies the whole matter of election. We have already clearly seen that there is a very fine balance between God choosing and man's responsibility, and that this tension between the two must and will always be there. God chooses, but men must respond in faith.

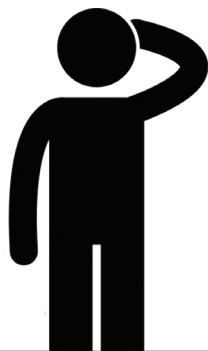
Furthermore, it becomes very clear in Romans 10 that the path that God uses to bring his elect to faith is the preaching, hearing and believing of the gospel. God doesn't just choose people and then one morning they wake up as believers. It's a process, a path, a journey. So we can say that God not only chooses who gets saved, but also how they get saved. God has decided that He wants to use other people to bring his children to Him. This is a wonderful privilege for us as believers. God makes us part of his work!

## ELECTION AND FAITH

The Bible makes it very clear, in Romans and in several other places, that a person is saved by grace alone through faith. Faith is therefore the most important aspect of salvation – without faith there can be no salvation (or justification as Paul calls it many times in Romans).

However, election goes a step deeper. It is the answer to these questions: Where does faith come from? Why do some people believe and others not? To describe the connection between election and faith, we can say, on the one hand, that faith is the fruit of election. In other words – all who are elected will believe, it must be so. On the other hand, we can say, that election is the origin of faith. In other words – all who truly believe are elected, it must be so.

Yet we must always keep in mind that the focus in the Bible is much more on faith than on election. Therefore, we should also focus much more on calling people to believe and not get too involved in debates about the election.

ISRAEL'S  
FUTURE

**P**aul began the three chapters, beginning with Romans 9, with the paradox of Israel's situation. They are extremely privileged and yet largely unbelieving. This cannot be attributed to God's unfaithfulness or injustice, but to his purpose in election (Romans 9:11), Israel's stumbling over Christ (Romans 9:32), and their stubborn rejection of God's outreach to them.

Paul discusses two implications of Israel's disobedience:

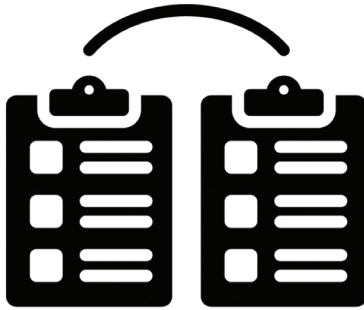
1. **ROMANS 11:1** Has God rejected his people?
2. **ROMANS 11:11** Have they fallen so far that they can no longer be saved?

Paul concludes the section by praising God: that his ways are far better than our human ways.

## TAKE NOTE

- Paul is personally involved in the matter of election, as we see in Romans 9:1-2, 10:1 and 11:1.
- This passage touches on one of the greatest controversial questions in the history of the Christian church: Is Israel God's chosen people or not?
- A variety of imagery is used here: The wild olive tree versus the tame olive tree; eyes that do not see and ears that do not hear; the dough that is consecrated to God, and so on.
- As we might expect when Paul is speaking specifically to Israel, there are a number of references to the Old Testament.
- Although Paul focuses on the Jews in this chapter, something is also pointed out for the "gentile nations," that is, for you and me.

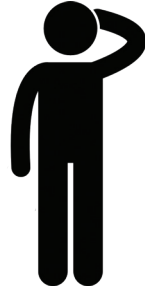




#### FOUR PROOFS THAT GOD DID NOT REJECT ISRAEL

- 1. PERSONAL PROOF:** Paul himself was an Israelite who had repented.
- 2. THEOLOGICAL PROOF:** In verse 2a it says that God chose them long before.
- 3. BIBLICAL PROOF:** In verse 2b the argument of Elijah is used, where Israel's apostasy did not include the entire nation and there was a "remnant chosen by grace".
- 4. CONTEMPORARY PROOF:** Verse 5 states that God is leaving a remnant today in the same way.

- ➊ Read verses 1a and 11a. How does Paul approach the argument about Israel's relationship with God in the past and in the future?
- ➋ Do you think it is at all necessary to wonder about the question of whether the people of Israel are still God's chosen people or not? Why or why not?
- ➌ Read verses 7 to 10. What is the interaction between God and man in the hardening of man's heart?
- ➍ Read Acts 13:46, 14:1-7, 18:5-6, and 28:16-28. How did Israel's stumbling lead to the salvation of all nations?
- ➎ In verse 12, Paul states that a small remnant led to a great blessing. How do you think the full number of the Jews can be a blessing?
- ➏ How did Paul's ministry make the Jews jealous, and how can the Jews' jealousy lead to their salvation? Read verse 14.



- 7 How does verse 16 indicate what Paul expects will happen through evangelism?
- 8 What is the warning to the Gentile believers in verses 17 to 22? And what is the promise to Jewish unbelievers in verses 23 to 24?

### THE METAPHOR OF THE OLIVE

The domesticated olive was usually grafted onto the branch of the wild olive. Yet the opposite was also done in special circumstances. This was done to revive the olive tree that had stopped bearing fruit. The juice of the domesticated olive renewed the wild olive and the tree bore olives again.

- 9 Read Romans 11:1 again, and verses 11 and 25 to 29. Discuss how Israel is both loved by God and enemies of God.



**ISRAEL:** The word Israel is used interchangeably in this chapter. It refers to the ethnic people of God on the one hand (verse 25), but also to the church (verse 26), the believers as the people of God. This includes the Gentiles.

- 10 Verses 30 to 32 give us insight into a theme that runs throughout Romans—that we are saved by grace, not by works. What do these verses teach us about why God decided that salvation would work this way?
- 11 What does verse 36, “For from him and through him and for him are all things,” mean?
- 12 Romans 11:33-36 is the conclusion of the entire first two parts of the book, Romans 1-3:20 and 3:21-11:36. Read these verses in light of everything that you have learned so far, and discuss what it means to you.

**SIN ⇒ SALVATION ⇒ Gratitude**

⇒ Romans 12:1-16:27

⇒ Bible studies 16 to 20



**Therefore, I urge you, brothers  
and sisters, in view of God's mercy,  
to offer your bodies as a living  
sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—  
THIS IS YOUR TRUE AND PROPER WORSHIP.**

**ROMANS 12:1**

# CHRISTIANITY

## in action

### PART 1

In Romans 12, Paul moves from explanation to encouragement: from the explanation of the gospel to the effect of the gospel. Here he gives the practical implications that follow from everything he has written about in the previous 11 chapters.

Believers can never be people who only know about the gospel; they must be people who always live it out. Faith without works is dead. That is why believers are encouraged to do good works. Believers do not come to holiness on their own. Through the working of the Spirit and the Word, believers are changed to live a life of gratitude in thought, word, and deed.



#### TAKE NOTE

→ In Romans 12 to 14 Paul directly and indirectly quotes Jesus several times.

#### PAUL (IN ROMANS 12-14)

- "Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse" (12:14).
- "Do not repay anyone evil for evil" (12:17)
- "Live at peace with everyone" (12:18).
- "If your enemy is hungry, feed him," (12:20).

#### JESUS

- "bless those who curse you ..." (Luke 6:28).
- "Do not resist an evil person" (Matthew 5:39).
- "Have salt among yourselves, and be at peace with each other" (Mark 9:50).
- "Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you" (Matthew 5:44).



→ "Give everyone what you owe them ... if it is taxes, pay taxes"(13:7).

→ "Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another ..." (13:8).

→ "... whoever loves others has fulfilled the law." (13:8).

→ "... and whatever other command there may be, are summed up in this one command: 'Love your neighbor as yourself'"(13:9).

→ "The hour has already come for you to wake up from your slumber, because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed" (13:11).

→ "Why do you judge your brother or sister?"(14:10).

→ "Each of us will give an account of ourselves to God"(14:12).

→ "make up your mind not to put any stumbling block or obstacle in the way of a brother or sister" (14:13).

→ "I am convinced, being fully persuaded in the Lord Jesus, that nothing is unclean in itself" (14:14).

→ "For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness ..." (14:17).

→ "Is it right to pay the imperial tax...?"  
"Give back to Caesar what is Caesar's"  
(Mark 12:13,17).

→ "Love one another" (John 13:34).

→ "'Love the Lord your God ... 'Love your neighbor as yourself'"  
(Matthew 22:37).

→ "So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you ..." (Matthew 7:12).

→ "... if he comes suddenly, do not let him find you sleeping"(Mark 13:36).

→ "stand up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is near"  
(Luke 21:28).

→ "Do not judge, or you too will be judged" (Matthew 7:1).

→ "Everyone will have to give account on the day of judgment ..." (Matthew 12:36).

→ "Woe to the world because of the things that cause people to stumble!"  
(Matthew 18:7).

→ "In saying this, Jesus declared all foods clean" (Mark 7:19).

→ "Do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink ..."  
"Seek first his kingdom ..." (Matthew 6:25, 33).

- ❶ In the context of chapters 9 to 11, what is the significance of Paul's use of the form of address "brothers"?
- ❷ Read Romans 9:16, 23 and 11:30-32. What is the mercy of God that Paul appeals to in Romans 12:1?
- ❸ Discuss the following statement: "People should not give their hearts to the Lord, but their bodies."



**BODIES:** Paul is very deliberate in his use of the word "bodies" in Romans 12:1. He makes it clear that because of sin, people use their bodies for all kinds of evil (read Romans 3:12-19; 6:13, 16 and 19 again). Furthermore, the Greeks saw the human body as a great embarrassment. It was seen as a prison for the soul. They had a proverb that "the body is the tomb of the soul." So Paul gives the right perspective on the human body in this chapter.

- ❹ Why are believers warned not to conform to the sinful world? Read Leviticus 18:3; 2 Kings 17:15; Ezekiel 11:12 and Matthew 6:8a.
- ❺ How are believers' minds renewed? Compare 1 Thessalonians 2:13; 4:1; and 2 Thessalonians 2:15; 3:5.
- ❻ In verse 3 the word "think" is used twice. What is the effect of faith on how you should think about yourself? Think in particular about the effect of the knowledge of your salvation through Christ on the cross.



**THE GIFT OF PROPHECY:** This means speaking under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. In some texts it refers to the prophets of the Old Testament, in other texts also to the work of apostles in the New Testament (Ephesians 3:5). There were other prophets who spoke words that had to be weighed and tested (1 Corinthians 14:29; 1 Thessalonians 5:19; 1 John 4:1). In Romans 12:6 a limitation is placed on prophecy: it must be in harmony with the faith we profess. In other words, it must always be in line with the truth of the Word of God. Compare Deuteronomy 13:1-4 and 18:17-22.



**SPIRITUAL GIFTS:** In Romans 12, seven gifts are mentioned. This is not the complete sum total of gifts in the church. It only indicates the fullness of the gifts. In Romans 12:6 it is clearly stated that it is God who gives the gifts. There are two other places in Scripture where gifts are listed. In Ephesians 4:7 it states that Christ gives the gifts and in 1 Corinthians 12:4 it is the Holy Spirit who gives the gifts to the church.

- 7 Why are gifts given to each person? How can and should I use my gifts? Read Ephesians 4:12 and 1 Corinthians 14:12.

### LOVE IN THE BIBLE, AND ESPECIALLY ROMANS

In the original Greek, there are three words used for love in the Bible

→ **PHILOS** – is directed towards family and friends. This love means “I like you, I like to visit you, I like to do things with you like barbecues, movies, going on vacation.”

→ **EROS** – has to do with outward attraction. This love says “you are beautiful to me, I want to touch you.” This is the love that leads to romance, marriage and a physical relationship.

→ **AGAPE** – has to do with self-sacrifice. This love says, “There is such a strong spiritual bond between me and you that I will do anything for you that the Lord asks of me, even if it costs me a lot of sacrifice.”

Up until this point in Romans, Paul has always referred to agape love in reference to God’s work (Romans 5:5, 5:8, 8:35, and 8:39). In Romans 13:9, Paul also uses this third word, agape – this is the love that God asks of us. It is a love that is self-sacrificing, and demands dedication. This is the same meaning of the word love that Paul writes about in the famous 1 Corinthians 13:13: “And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.”

- 8 In Romans 12:9-16, Paul focuses on agape love as the core of discipleship. He lists 12 components of love. Discuss each one and how it is applied.
- 9 Read verses 14, 17, 19, and 21. How is the command stated in the negative and positive each time? How can I practically live it out every day?
- 10 Read verse 19 and also Deuteronomy 32:35. Is it wrong to punish? Why may we not do it?

# CHRISTIANITY

## in action

### PART 2

**I**n Romans 12, Paul gives the practical implications that should follow from our gratitude for God's love for us. Believers' minds must be renewed: they must understand from God's Word what his will is, and then live it, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. This happens through our relationship with God (12:1-2), ourselves (12:3), our ministry to fellow believers (12:4-8), our love for one another (12:9-16), and also our love for our enemies (12:17-21).

In Romans 13, Paul talks about our relationship with the state and how we should live as obedient citizens (verses 1-7), our relationship with the law and that we should love our neighbor as fulfillment of the law (verses 8-10) and then finally the "already" and the "not yet" (verses 11-14) where Paul describes the tension we experience because we are already redeemed, but are not yet completely out of the world.

### TAKE NOTE

- When Paul wrote Romans 13, there were no Christian governments at any level. It was only the Roman government that ruled large parts of the world. Then there was the Jewish government that functioned under the Roman government.
- The section on the believer's relationship with the state is sandwiched between two commands: To love your enemy (Romans 12:20) and to love your neighbor as yourself (Romans 13:9).
- Paul mentions three times that authority comes from God, three times that the state is the servant of God, and three times that you should love your neighbor. He also mentions in three ways that the night is past and the day has come. Repetition is a form of emphasis: It means that something is really important.
- The incentive to obedience comes from the nearness of the Lord's return. Without Christ we were in darkness, but now we are redeemed and live in the dawn, the twilight before the return that will be full daylight.



## DIFFERENT VIEWS ON CHURCH AND STATE

There are various views on the relationship between church and state. Here are four of the views we hear most often:

- The state should control the church.
- The church should control the state.
- The state should favor the church over other institutions.
- The church and state should each function independently.

- 1 Read the different views above on the relationship between the state and the church. What do you think is the right relationship?
- 2 What three reasons does Paul give for why every person should submit to the governing authorities? Read verses 1b, 1c, and 2a.
- 3 Read John 19:11. What does Jesus' answer to Pilate teach us about authority?
- 4 Read verse 5. What does it mean that submission to the state is a matter of conscience?
- 5 What should believers do when the state demands something that is against God's will? Read Acts 5:29, Exodus 1:17, and Daniel 3.

## THE CHRISTIAN AND THE GOVERNMENT

As Christians, we must submit to the authorities – even if they are pagan or dishonest – because God has ordained that there should be governments. Romans 13 and other Bible texts teach that authority comes from God, and that every authority is in its position because God has ordained it so.

Believers must respect those in authority, pay taxes, obey the laws, and not incite riots. Only if their laws are directly against God's will, may we refuse to do so. We must also pray for our leaders, so that they will rule wisely and come to faith.

God also gives guidelines to the government: they must distinguish right from wrong according to his will, judge only external behavior, not serve their own interests, and always remember that they are God's servants. Jesus Christ is the supreme King, and all authorities are subject to Him.

Finally: Believers must be good citizens, but never stop praying for a just government, and confessing and proclaiming Biblical truth.



- ⑥ What do we learn from the fact that Paul calls the state the “servant of God”, and what functions should the state perform according to verses 4a, 4c and 6?
- ⑦ Do Romans 12:9 and Romans 13:4 match each other? Explain your answer.
- ⑧ Read verse 8. What does it mean that we owe love to one another?
- ⑨ What does it mean that love is the fulfillment of the law? Compare Matthew 22:37-40.

### GOD SETS LOVE FOR ONE ANOTHER AS AN OBLIGATION

God asks us to have self-sacrificing love. Actually, He doesn’t ask for it, He states it as an obligation we have to each other. By “one another” Paul means first and foremost the believing members in Rome. But further, he refers to the believing members in every local church. The letter to the Romans is intended for every congregation, for every believer.

Love is so important to God that his entire law is about it. Jesus himself taught us (Matthew 22:37-40). Love God and Christ by obeying his commandments. His commandment, the great commandment, is to love Him and love your neighbor. In Romans 13:8 it is about love for your neighbor. First of all, for your fellow believers who are with you in the congregation.

None of us can love one another with this self-sacrificing love on our own. This love comes from the Holy Spirit.

- ①⑩ Read Romans 13:12-14. What does it mean practically for believers to take up the “armor of light”?

# CHRISTIANITY

## in action

### PART 3

**B**oth of the previous chapters emphasized love. The love that was toward your neighbor and your enemies. In this passage, Paul gets much more practical in the sense that love must be lived out between those who are 'stronger' in the faith and those who are 'weaker' in the faith.

The weakness that Paul refers to is not about their character, but about their faith. Even more specifically, the weakness is not about their faith giving in during temptation, or that they cannot make decisions, or do not have self-control. The 'weaker' in faith refers to those who practice certain traditional cultural and ceremonial customs in their religion. These were quite possibly Christians who had converted from the Jewish faith and were still committed to certain diets and days.

### TAKE NOTE

- The observance of certain diets and Sabbath days were clear signs that separated the Jews and the Gentiles from each other.
- Non-principle matters should not be elevated as matters of principle.
- The line of Paul's argument:
  - He first states the positive principle of acceptance (verse 1).
  - Then he states three negative inferences that are derived from this:
    1. They should not look down on the weaker ones (verses 2-13a).
    2. They should not offend or destroy the weaker ones (verses 13b-23).
    3. They should not put themselves first, but be like Christ (15:1-4).
  - He celebrates the unity between Jews and Gentiles in the worship of God (15:5-13).



- ➊ Read Romans 14:1. What does it look like when someone is accepted by others? Compare Romans 14:3 and 15:7.
- ➋ How can healthy spaces be created to talk about issues where we differ from each other?
- ➌ Read verses 5 to 8. Is God glorified through diversity?
- ➍ With what knowledge do believers live according to verse 12?
- ➎ Review verses 3 to 10. What four truths does Paul use as reasons as to why the 'weaker' should be accepted?
- ➏ Read Romans 14:13. Is there judgment that is good? Compare Matthew 7:1 and Matthew 7:15-20.

### CULTURAL, CEREMONIAL AND MORAL CUSTOMS AND LAWS

- Cultural customs are customs that are tied to a particular culture, time and place. These customs vary and change as cultures change and are not principles that apply to all times. Clothing is probably the easiest example of this.
- Ceremonial laws are the laws that the people of the Lord had to observe in Old Testament times. They applied to ceremonies, rituals and feast days. They include things such as sacrifices and purification laws. However, these laws were fulfilled by Jesus and therefore it is no longer necessary to observe them today.
- Moral laws are the prescriptions that the Lord gives in his Word, which are valid for all times. Jesus did not come to take away or replace the moral laws. These are mainly the laws contained in the 10 commandments, but also other principles that apply to all cultures across all times, in all places. This passage in Romans helps us understand that it is very important that we make the right distinction between these customs and laws.



- 7 Read verses 13-14. How should the 'stronger' believer act when there are two consciences in conflict?
- 8 Read verse 15.
  - a How are we expected to consider one another in love?
  - b How can your actions affect someone's discipleship?
- 9 Read verse 17. How do you experience your citizenship in God's kingdom?
- 10 Romans 14:19 states that we must "make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification." How can you do this in your congregation?
- 11 How is a person's religious conviction formed? Is there a right and wrong conviction? Compare Romans 4:23.
- 12 What three things does Paul say in Romans 15:1-2 that strong believers should do so that unity among believers can be promoted?
- 13 Read 15:4. What does this verse teach us about the purpose of the Old Testament for today?
- 14 What is the greater purpose of unity of mind? Compare Romans 15:6-12.
- 15 Read Romans 15:13. How does "unity of mind" lead to joy and peace? Do you ever pray for it?

## CONDEMN SIN, NOT PEOPLE

### ROMANS 14:1-4

Just as we do not want to be condemned by other people, we may not and should not condemn others because we think and act differently than they do. God made us all, therefore we should not condemn anyone else. We should, however, help them on the right path if they sin against God.

# Conclusion OF PAUL'S LETTER

PART 1



**P**

aul has given a wonderful explanation of the gospel in Romans 1 to 11 and admonitions in Romans 12 to 15. But, the letter is not finished yet. Paul concludes the letter by speaking about his relationship with the church in Rome (1:8-13). He gives clearer reasons for why he has not yet met with them, and shares his plans to do so as soon as possible.

## TAKE NOTE

- Paul is very concerned that they have been offended by his letter.
- Paul describes his missionary work as a priestly ministry: service; priestly duty; offering; acceptable; sanctified.
- The purpose of evangelism (or also discipline) is to bring worship where it does not happen. It is when we worship God that we go out to proclaim his name. When people repent, they worship and testify with us. Worship therefore leads to testimony and testimony to worship.
- The last chapters are very personal and Paul openly shares his past, present and the future of his ministry.
- There is a reminder to the Romans to fulfill their duty to pray for Paul.



- ❶ According to verse 14, why is it important to have a comprehensive knowledge of the gospel?
- ❷ Why are converts described as offerings brought by God to the missionary?
- ❸ In light of the holiness of the tabernacle and temple, what is the significance of Gentiles being offered as offerings?
- ❹ Read verses 17-18a. What is the interplay between Christ and believers?
- ❺ Read verses 18b-19 and list the five characteristics of Paul's ministry.

### POWERFUL DEEDS, SIGNS AND WONDERS

Paul's only other place where he uses these words (verses 18-19) is in 2 Corinthians 12:12. There it is called the marks of true apostles. The apostles performed wonderful powerful deeds. The apostles did the signs as confirmation of the truth. This does not mean that God can no longer do this today. It would mean that we are limiting God in his omnipotence, but it is no longer necessary, in the sense that the Word of God has already been received and established. Thus, it is no longer necessary, because we have the Word.

- ❻ Read verses 19b-22. This is a summary of ten years and three missionary journeys of Paul. What do we learn about specific callings (including Paul's) in these verses? Compare 1 Corinthians 3:6,10-11.
- ❼ "To be helped" (verse 24b) became the Christian words used to refer to goods, money, or company given to missionaries to help them on their missionary journeys. How do you or your congregation help missionaries in this regard? Compare verse 32.

- 8 How should believers and congregations care for each other financially?  
Compare verses 26-27.
- 9 What reason does Paul give in verse 27 as to why believers have an obligation to one another?

### POVERTY IN JERUSALEM

It is certain that the believers in Jerusalem were in need. Although no specific reason is given, several suggestions have been made: Agabus predicted a drought and the poverty could be the consequences of that (Acts 11:27 and further); the believers had sold everything they had and given everything to the church and no longer had enough wealth to live on (Acts 2:44, 4:32), or the persecution of believers resulted in many of them no longer having work and income (Acts 8).

- 10 Read Romans 1:16 and 15:30. What is the responsibility that believers have toward one another?
- 11 What do we learn about prayer when it is associated with the word “struggle” (verse 30), something that requires a lot of energy?
- 12 Read Romans 1:10, 15:22-24 and Acts 23:11. How were Paul’s planning and prayer fulfilled?

### WHY DO WE PRAY FOR GOD’S WILL?

In Romans 15:32 Paul says: “so that by God’s will ...” The purpose of prayer is not that we bend God’s will to our will, but very clearly that our will be bent to God’s will. We find God’s revealed will in the Bible. This is how He wants all believers to live, but God also has a specific (permissible) will for each one of us. These are things that He allows to happen in your life, and which are not in the Bible. For these we pray “if the Lord wills” or “if it is God’s will”.

# Conclusion OF PAUL'S LETTER PART 2



In the last chapter of Romans, Paul conveys greetings from and to various believers. In this chapter we learn that there should be personal loving relationships in the church.

Paul's love for the congregation is not only about the mutual relationships, but is also shown in his warning to the congregation against false teachers and people who create divisions.

Although there was already praise to God at the end of Romans 11, Paul cannot help but conclude the letter with more praise and worship of God.

## TAKE NOTE

- The greetings conveyed to people are not only from the same group, but consist of people who come from various groups (gender, race and possibly rank).
- The greetings conveyed to and by various believers demonstrate the unity of the church.
- The praise that Paul brings consists of four parts:
  1. The power of God
  2. The gospel of Christ
  3. Evangelisation of the nations
  4. Praise for God's wisdom



- ① Read verse 1. What do we learn about relationships between believers from the fact that Paul calls Phoebe “sister”?
- ② Phoebe was known as a “servant” of the church in Cenchreae.
  - Ⓐ Do you know members of your church of whom this could be said?
  - Ⓑ Could it be your mindset to also be known like that?
- ③ Go through the list of names in verses 1 to 15 and mention what various people did for Paul’s ministry and for the kingdom.
  - Ⓐ What do you learn from this about why believers are saved?
  - Ⓑ Is the work of believers ever forgotten? Compare Revelation 19:8.
- ④ As you go through the list of names in verses 1-15, count how many times the words “in the Lord” and “in Christ” are used. What do we learn from this?
- ⑤ What do we learn from the fact that the church in Rome was made up of both Jews and Romans?
- ⑥ Read Romans 16:16. Paul writes: “Greet one another with a holy kiss. Peter also writes about a kiss of Christian brotherhood. Compare 1 Corinthians 16:20; 2 Corinthians 13:12; 1 Thessalonians 5:26; and 1 Peter 5:14.
  - Ⓐ What is the principle behind “the kiss”?
  - Ⓑ How can we as believers physically show our love and unity in Christ?
- ⑦ Are there believers you know, or have known in the past, who have stood out to you? Why do you say that?
- ⑧ Read verse 17. Paul warns against people who cause division.
  - Ⓐ Is all division wrong or bad? Compare Matthew 10:34-39 and 1 Corinthians 1:23-25.
  - Ⓑ How can I know whether it is right or wrong? Read verse 18.

### HOW DO I DISTINGUISH RIGHT FROM WRONG?

It is not always easy to test something, or to distinguish between right and wrong. There are questions that are useful to help with this: Is it in line with what the Word teaches? Does it glorify Christ or is there self-glorification present?

- ⑨ Read verse 20. What is the connection between God who gives peace and Satan who is crushed?



**PAUL'S GOSPEL:** In Paul's gospel: In Romans 16:25 Paul calls the gospel his gospel, writing: "my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ." Paul is saying that God is calling his church together through the gospel and that he is set apart to preach the gospel (Romans 1:1). The gospel has been entrusted to him to carry out.



**REVELATION OF THE MYSTERY** (Romans 16:25): The truth was a mystery for centuries, but God's truth is now known: Jesus Christ died, rose, and ascended and rules over his church. His church consists of Jews and Gentiles. The ESV says that it has been "kept secret for long ages", while the NIV says that the mystery was hidden.

- 10 How does God use the Bible to make believers stand firm in the faith?  
Compare Romans 16:25.

### SPREADING THE GOSPEL

In the last verses of Romans 16 Paul writes about the truth that was once hidden and later revealed by God. This truth must be made known to the whole world "by command of the Eternal God". God had already made known his will in the Old Testament that there is salvation for all nations. It is a command from God that the gospel must be spread. There are no restrictions – it must be made known to all groups of people. The further call is that people "might come to the obedience that comes from faith" (Romans 16:26).

**"to the only wise God be glory forever  
through Jesus Christ! Amen."**

**ROMANS 16:27**

**“FOR FROM HIM  
AND THROUGH HIM  
AND FOR HIM  
ARE ALL THINGS,  
TO HIM BE THE GLORY  
FOREVER!  
AMEN”**

**ROMANS 11:36**

In these 20 Bible studies, you will study all 16 chapters of the book of Romans. Romans consists of three sections: sin, salvation, and gratitude. According to these sections, the gospel of Jesus Christ is thoroughly explained, just as Paul wrote about it.