

CHAPTERS 1–4

The Heart
of the Gospel

ROMANS



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A GUIDE TO THE BOOK OF

Romans

PART ONE

The Heart of the Gospel



**“For all have sinned
and fall short of the glory
of God, and are justified
by his grace as a gift,
through the redemption
that is in Christ Jesus.”**

ROMANS 3:23-24



A GUIDE TO THE BOOK OF

Romans

PART ONE

The Heart of the Gospel

by DR. JOHN H. MUNRO, SENIOR PASTOR
PASTORS & STAFF OF CALVARY CHURCH



SECOND EDITION 2021

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CALVARY CHURCH

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WHY WE STUDY THE BIBLE

At Calvary Church, our mission is to be and to make authentic followers of Jesus Christ. We take seriously the responsibility to model living a life of obedience to Christ. Though none of us do it perfectly, that's our aim. At the same time, we desire to encourage others in obedience to Him as well. We believe we love God and others best when we are being disciples and making disciples.

The primary way we fulfill our mission is studying and obeying the Scriptures. The Bible is a book about Jesus; it teaches us who He is and how we can know Him. It equips us for the good work of loving Him and serving Him. The Bible is the Word of God, living and active. God speaks directly through His Word.

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

As a church family, we are embarking on an in-depth study of a book in the Bible called Romans. *A Guide to the Book of Romans* provides some tools to help you explore it and understand it. The guide can be used as a personal resource for you as an individual or as a resource for the entire family.

INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

You'll find in the first chapter an introduction to Romans. Knowing the background and purpose of the book will help tremendously as you read and study it. You'll benefit from the explanation of the overall message of Romans and how it all fits together. The second chapter provides an overview of the first section, Romans 1–4. You'll see clearly the heart of the Gospel. Even if you know the Gospel, this is a great opportunity to grow deeper in it!

DEVOTIONAL GUIDE

For each sermon that is preached during our study, we offer a devotional for you to read on your own or with your family. If possible, choose a time each

week to spend 10–15 minutes with the devotional. You'll find the Scripture passage to read, a brief explanation of the text, questions to ponder, and ways to apply these truths to your life. Spend time praying about it, and jot down notes of prayer and praise. Don't underestimate the impact that sharing the Word of God together can have on you, your spouse, and your kids!

SING & WORSHIP

Throughout history, many great hymns of the faith have been inspired by the foundational truths in the book of Romans. Songwriters today continue its message through inspiring lyrics and music. Each week you'll find a song suggestion with the devotionals. For links to these songs and highlights of our corporate worship, visit calvarychurch.com/romans.

SERMON NOTES

Be sure to take notes each Sunday during the sermons from Romans. There is a note-taking page included every week. If you cannot be present one Sunday, go online at media.calvarychurch.com to listen to the sermon and take notes on your own.

MEMORIZE SCRIPTURE

Finally, we want to encourage you to memorize Scripture. It is God's Word and should be hidden in our hearts! In the "Application" chapter at the back of the book, you'll find *"The Roman Road"*—selected verses from Romans that clearly explain the Gospel. Commit to memorizing the plan of salvation.

There you have it! We're excited to study the book of Romans as a church family. May God bless you and your family from the pulpit, in your Life Group, and in your home as you use this guide to better know Him and His Word.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Thank you to the Calvary Church pastors and staff who contributed to the contents of this guide. Senior Pastor John Munro, Executive Pastor Rodney Navey, Pastor Jim Pile, Pastor Khalil Ayoub, and Pastor Eric Hill wrote the devotionals. Pastor Nathaniel Pearce wrote the group discussion guides. Pastor Timothy Hathaway oversaw the worship resources. Pastors Munro and Navey contributed the introductory and application articles, as bylined. Graphic design by Donna Peters.

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INTRODUCTION

Romans

by John H. Munro

THE IMPACT OF ROMANS

Arguably, no book has had such a powerful impact in the world as Romans. The transformation in the lives of those who have read, studied, and experienced the truths presented in this magnificent epistle is incalculable. It has transformed me.

Paul personally knows the impact of the Gospel in his life and is now committed to preach the Gospel to everyone: “For I am not ashamed of the Gospel for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith, as it is written the righteous shall live by faith” (Romans 1:16–17).

Augustine

After a life of self-indulgence, Augustine in AD 386 heard a child saying, “Take up and read! Take up and read!” Taking up the scroll at the side of his friend, he read Romans 13:13b–14: “Not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and sensuality, not in quarreling and jealousy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.” Augustine wrote, “I neither wished nor needed to read further. At once, with the last words of the sentence, it was as if a light of relief from all anxiety flooded into my heart. All the shadows of doubt were dispelled.” In an instant, Augustine’s darkness disappeared. The light of God flooded his heart. He became one of the world’s greatest theologians. The impact of Augustine continues to this day.

Martin Luther

At the beginning of the sixteenth century, an Augustinian monk, Martin Luther, was a professor of theology in the University of Wittenberg, Germany. He was teaching the book of Romans to his students, but Paul's reference to "the righteousness of God" filled him with despair. He pondered it night and day. Later he wrote, "I grasped the truth that the righteousness of God is that righteousness whereby, through grace and sheer mercy, He justifies us by faith. Thereupon I felt myself to be reborn and to have gone through open doors into paradise. The whole of Scripture took on a new meaning, and whereas before "the righteousness of God" had filled me with hate, now it became to me inexpressibly sweet in greater love. This passage of Paul became to me a gateway to heaven."

The Reformation

On the 600th anniversary of Luther nailing his famous 95 Theses to the Wittenberg door (1417), the impact of Luther's teaching continues. Luther's conversion to saving faith in our Lord Jesus Christ sparked the Reformation which continues to reverberate around the world. It began with Luther's study of Romans. Luther wrote: "This epistle (Romans) is really the chief part of the New Testament and the very purest Gospel, and is worthy not only that every Christian should know it word for word, by heart, but occupy himself with it every day, as the daily bread of the soul. It can never be read or pondered too much, and the more it is dealt with the more precious it becomes, and the better it tastes" (From Luther's preface to his commentary on Romans).

John Wesley

On May 24, 1738 John Wesley went to a meeting in Aldersgate Street, London where someone was reading Luther's *Preface to the Epistle of the Romans*. Wesley later wrote in his journal: "While he was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone, for my salvation; and an assurance was given me that he had taken my sins away, even mine; and saved me from the law of sin and death." Wesley's conversion launched the great revival of the 18th century.

Down through the centuries an innumerable number of people like Augustine, Luther, and Wesley have come to saving faith in Christ. Their lives have been transformed by the glorious message of the Gospel of Jesus Christ presented in Romans. Not only has world history been dramatically changed through the magnificent book of Romans, I guarantee that if you read, study, and appropriate its outstanding truths your life will also be changed! Who knows the impact it will have not only in your life but in the lives of others.

THE THEME OF ROMANS

I have chosen to preach through Romans because of its profound theme: the Gospel. Anyone who loves the Gospel and wants to learn about it will love the book of Romans. We talk a lot about “the Gospel,” but many people have a very hazy and sometimes distorted view of it. What is the authentic Gospel? What are its components? What is its relevance for us? What difference (if any) does it make in our lives? What are the distinctives and implications of the biblical Gospel? Douglas Moo in his commentary writes, “The message of the Gospel is that God brings guilty sinners into relationship with Himself and destines them to eternal life when they believe in His Son, Jesus the Messiah.”

The overwhelming theme of Romans is the Gospel. To know Romans is to understand the central doctrines of authentic Christianity. One commentator describes Romans as “a sustained and coherent statement of the Gospel.” Romans also emphasizes the importance of the application of these basic truths to our daily lives. We must never think of Romans as a dry theological treatise but as the living revelation of God to us. Here is authentic biblical Christianity in contrast to shallow, cultural Christianity.

THE HEART OF THE GOSPEL (CHAPTERS 1–4)

In these opening chapters, the theme of justification by faith is prominent. What is justification? What does it mean? Why is it necessary? How is it attained? What is the role of faith? What is the relationship of faith and works? Read pages 15–18 in this study for a brief overview of these first four chapters.

THE HOPE OF THE GOSPEL (CHAPTERS 5–8)

While Romans magnificently presents the cardinal doctrine of justification by faith, it also challenges us to grow in our faith. We will learn how the Gospel transforms the life of those who are living by faith (sanctification). We have the glorious assurance that we have peace with God even in the middle of suffering and trials. The reign of death was passed on all of us, and we were slaves to sin and death. But now flowing from God's grace, we receive the reign of life. God's grace is so amazing that it surpasses our sin (5:20–21). Paul emphasizes that greater blessings now flow to us through Christ than those which were lost through Adam. Where sin increased, grace abounded all the more.

We have died to sin and now live in the newness of life. God graciously has given us His Holy Spirit who “bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God” (8:16). Paul explains that we who are justified by faith are so united to Jesus Christ that God progressively transforms us into the image of His Son. And while there is always opposition, “we are more than conquerors through Him who loves us” (8:37). There is nothing in the whole universe which is “able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord” (8:39).

THE DEFENSE OF THE GOSPEL (CHAPTERS 9–11)

In these chapters, Paul explains why Israel has presently rejected the Gospel (other than a remnant). But in the future, “all Israel will be saved.” God is sovereign in all He does and is accountable to no one. Yet, in His sovereign purposes, the Gentiles are grafted into God's blessings. Paul as a converted Jew is zealous to see the nation of Israel come to Christ but brilliantly presents that God saves all those who call upon His name.

THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE GOSPEL (CHAPTERS 12–16)

Transformation begins as we place our faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. Now we present our bodies to God as a living sacrifice and are being transformed by the renewal of our mind. The renewed mind is saturated with and controlled by the Word of God. This enables us to discern God's will and to live lives of obedience to God. For Paul, the Gospel is intensely practical. The practical implications of

the Gospel impact every area of our lives. In these final chapters, Paul presents the various responsibilities of those whose lives have been transformed by the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The section brings much needed conviction as we learn how to live for Jesus Christ in a hostile world.

OCCASION OF WRITING

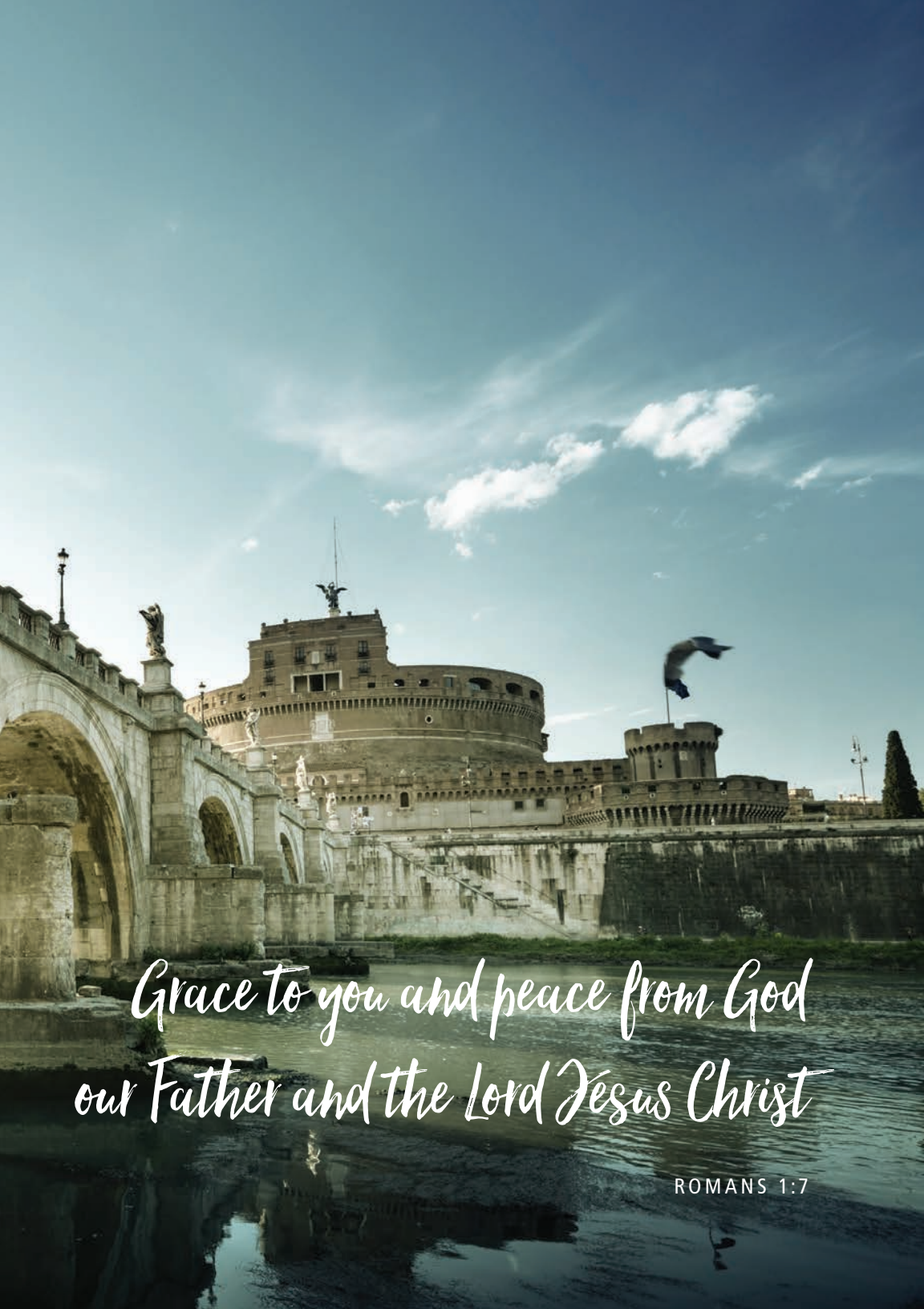
Paul writes to the Christians at Rome around AD 54–55 from Corinth. He mentions three places he wants to visit. First, he wants to take the funds which the Greek believers have given to the poor Christians in Jerusalem (15:25–27). Second, he wants to visit Spain as a pioneer of the Gospel, particularly to Gentiles. His ambition is “to preach the Gospel, not where Christ has already been named, lest I build on someone else’s foundation” (15:20). Between Jerusalem and Spain is Rome! So Paul desires to visit the believers in Rome for mutual encouragement (1:11–12; 15:30–33). He would then leave the Roman believers “for Spain by way of you” (15:28). Paul is passionate in bringing the Gospel to those who have never heard it and for showing great concern for all believers. He desires for the Roman Christians to pray for him in his missionary journeys.

PERSONAL PERSPECTIVE

Since coming to Calvary, I have preached through many books of the Bible including Ruth, Judges, Daniel, Jonah, Mark, Galatians, Philippians, Colossians, Hebrews, 1 Peter, and most recently Revelation. If I had to choose one book of the Bible, I think I would choose Romans. I have wanted to preach Romans but always felt I needed to do more study as I wanted its truths afresh to grip my own soul before preaching it to others. While I certainly don’t profess to understand every aspect of this book, I can say that my personal life has been impacted in incalculable ways through its truths. My prayer is that your life will also be changed as we study this book together.

Therefore, I invite you not only to study Romans but to live its truths and communicate them to others. Week after week, it is my incredible joy to expound the glorious message of the Gospel. This I guarantee: the more you study and the more you live this book, the more you will love not only Romans but the Christ who died for you while you were yet a sinner (Romans 5:8). 🙏





*Grace to you and peace from God
our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ*

ROMANS 1:7

IV

Romans

CHAPTERS I-4

I. INTRODUCTION TO ROMANS (1:1-17)

- *Greetings from Paul (1:1-7)*
- *Paul and the Romans (1:8-15)*
- *The Theme of Romans (1:16-17)*

II. THE HEART OF THE GOSPEL (1:18-4:25)

Condemnation: The Universal Reign of Sin (1:18-3:20)

- *The condemnation of the ungodly (1:18-32)*
- *The condemnation of the moralist (2:1-16)*
- *The condemnation of the Jew (2:17-3:8)*
- *The condemnation of the whole world (3:9-20)*

Justification: By Faith Alone (3:21-4:25)

- *The EXPLANATION of justification by faith alone (3:21-31)*
- *The ILLUSTRATION of justification by faith alone (4:1-25)*

The Heart of the Gospel

by John H. Munro

Martin Luther called Romans “the very purest Gospel.” I agree. It is the Gospel “of God” and concerns God’s Son. This is good news! In the first four chapters, Paul presents “The Heart of the Gospel.” How important it is that we understand the biblical Gospel.

Because of the deceitfulness and hatred of the devil, we should not be too surprised when there are attacks on the Gospel. In Galatians, Paul emphasizes that this Gospel “is not man’s gospel” but received “through a revelation of Jesus Christ.” Therefore, if anyone preaches a contrary gospel, they are under a curse! There are always those who distort the Gospel of Christ.

DISTORTIONS OF THE GOSPEL

One of the contemporary distortions of the Gospel is that it is only one belief of many. As long as we are sincere, kind, and help others, it doesn’t really matter what we believe. Another distortion of the Gospel — and a very popular one — is the “prosperity gospel.” I am sure you’ve heard it from some TV preachers who spread their false message to millions. If we accept this gospel (which, of course, is no gospel at all), we will be successful, wealthy, healthy, and feel tremendous about ourselves! In this way, Jesus is presented as a therapist who makes you feel good about yourself, or a guru who unlocks your secret potential, or a coach who ensures that you fulfill your own dreams.

In some contemporary evangelical churches, lip service is paid to the biblical Gospel, but in practice, the church becomes a mirror of the surrounding pop culture causing confusion and error. All these false “gospels” are self-centered, self-serving, self-actualized, self-reliant and ultimately self-destructive rather than being Christ-centered and God-glorifying. In these false gospels, there is little or no mention of sin, repentance, or the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit in our souls.

CENTRALITY OF THE CROSS

Central to the true Gospel is the cross of Christ. That God-given message can never be changed or repackaged to make it more palatable to people. If this is done, the power of the Gospel disappears and in its place arises a weak cultural Christianity which is no gospel at all.

The Evangelical Manifesto (May 7, 2008) stated it this way:

“All too often we have trumpeted the Gospel of Jesus, but we have replaced biblical truths with therapeutic techniques, worship with entertainment, discipleship with growth in human potential, church growth with business entrepreneurialism, concern for the church and for the local congregation with expressions of the faith that are churchless and little better than a vapid spirituality, meeting real needs with pandering to felt needs, and mission principles with marketing precepts. In the process we have become known for commercial, diluted, and feel-good gospels of health, wealth, human potential, and religious happy talk, each of which is indistinguishable from the passing fashions of the surrounding world.”

We must therefore be vigilant against these false gospels. Our study in the book of Romans provides an infallible guide as Paul presents “The Heart of the Gospel.” This magnificent epistle has the Gospel as its theme. At the beginning of Romans, Paul states his personal commitment to and passion for the Gospel. It is “the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith, as it is written, the righteous shall live by faith” (1:16–17).

ADDRESSING THE PROBLEM

After Paul's introduction in Romans 1:1–17, he begins his majestic exposition of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. It may shock the contemporary reader that Paul begins his presentation of the Gospel not with affirming God has a wonderful plan for our lives or we are wonderful people. He begins with the wrath of God which is “revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth” (1:18). To a contemporary audience, that seems a very negative, judgmental, critical, and not particularly helpful beginning! And therein lies our problem. Before we embrace our Lord Jesus Christ, we must understand that without exception all of us have a tremendous problem: we are sinful and unrighteous in the presence of a holy God.

In the opening chapters, Paul first deals with the pagan (1:19–32), then with those who look on themselves as moral people (2:1–16), and then with the Jewish person (2:17–29). All of them have this in common: all have sinned and come short of the glory of God (3:23). Every person without exception is under the condemnation of God and deserves His wrath. Paul therefore makes it very clear that our deepest problem is that we are fallen people. At its root is a form of pride where we refuse to glorify God and seek to go our own way. So, the opening chapters of Romans may present a gloomy picture, but it is a very realistic one. And it is absolutely essential we understand who we are in the sight of God. Unless we understand the bad news regarding ourselves, we will never understand or turn to the good news of Jesus Christ. In other words, if our diagnosis of the problem is wrong, we will seek a false remedy. So as Paul begins his exposition of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, he first affirms the reality and the universality of sin. Then he expounds the power and the purpose of God revealed in the Gospel as the only way to deal with this deep problem of sin.

THE GOOD NEWS

In Romans 3:21–31, Paul brilliantly presents the good news of Jesus Christ. Repeatedly he emphasizes that our justification before God is not based on anything we do but rather that it flows from the grace of God. So we are declared righteous before a holy God (justified) by grace alone through faith alone

because of Christ alone. We are “justified by His grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus” (3:24).

JUSTIFIED BY FAITH

In chapter four, Paul then presents illustrations of those who have been justified by faith apart from works. His two great examples are Abraham who lived before the Mosaic law and King David who lived after the giving of the Mosaic law. Both Abraham and David were justified by faith. Abraham did many good things, but he was not justified because of his innate goodness or because of his good deeds. He was justified by faith: “Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness” (4:3).

So justification is not something we work towards, but rather it is a gift of God we receive through faith. This grace is the opposite of the popular “God helps those who help themselves” concept. We do not deserve God’s salvation — it is by grace alone. The price for our sins has been paid (3:24). Now God does not take our sins into account. Salvation is received by us through faith alone.

Martin Luther made it clear that “the Gospel lies entirely outside of you.” By this, he meant that Christ and not ourselves has accomplished our salvation. Paul explains that the way of salvation points to Christ alone. Faith is the empty hand outstretched receiving the grace of God. 🙏

“This epistle is really the chief part of the New Testament and the very purest Gospel, and is worthy not only that every Christian should know it word for word, by heart, but occupy himself with it every day, as the daily bread of the soul.”



MARTIN LUTHER

HYMN

*“Be still, and know that I am God. I will be exalted among the nations,
I will be exalted in the earth!’ The Lord of hosts is with us;
the God of Jacob is our fortress.” — PSALM 46:10–11*

A Mighty Fortress Is Our God

1. A might-y for- tress is our God, a bul- wark nev- er fail- ing;
2. Did we in our own strength con- fide, our striv- ing would be lo- sing;
3. And though this world, with dev- ils filled, should threat- en to un- do us,
4. That word a- bove all earth- ly pow'rs, no thanks to them, a- bid- eth;

Our help- er He, a- mid the flood of mor- tal ills pre- -vail- ing;
Were not the right Man on our side, the Man of God's own choos- ing;
We will not fear, for God hath willed His truth to tri- umph through us:
The Spi- rit and the gifts are ours through Him who with us si- - deth

For still our an- cient foe doth seek to work us woe; His craft and pow'r are great,
Dost ask who that may be? Christ Je- sus, it is He, Lord Sa- ba- oth, His name,
The Prince of Dark-ness grim, we trem-ble not for him; His rage we can en- dure,
Let goods and kin- dred go, this mor- tal life al- so; The bo- dy they may kill.

and, armed with cru- el hate, On earth is not his e- - qual.
from age to age the same, And He must win the bat- - tle.
for lo, his doom is sure, One lit- tle word shall fell him.
God's truth a- - bi- deth still, His king- dom is for- ev- er.

Text & Tune: Martin Luther, 1529

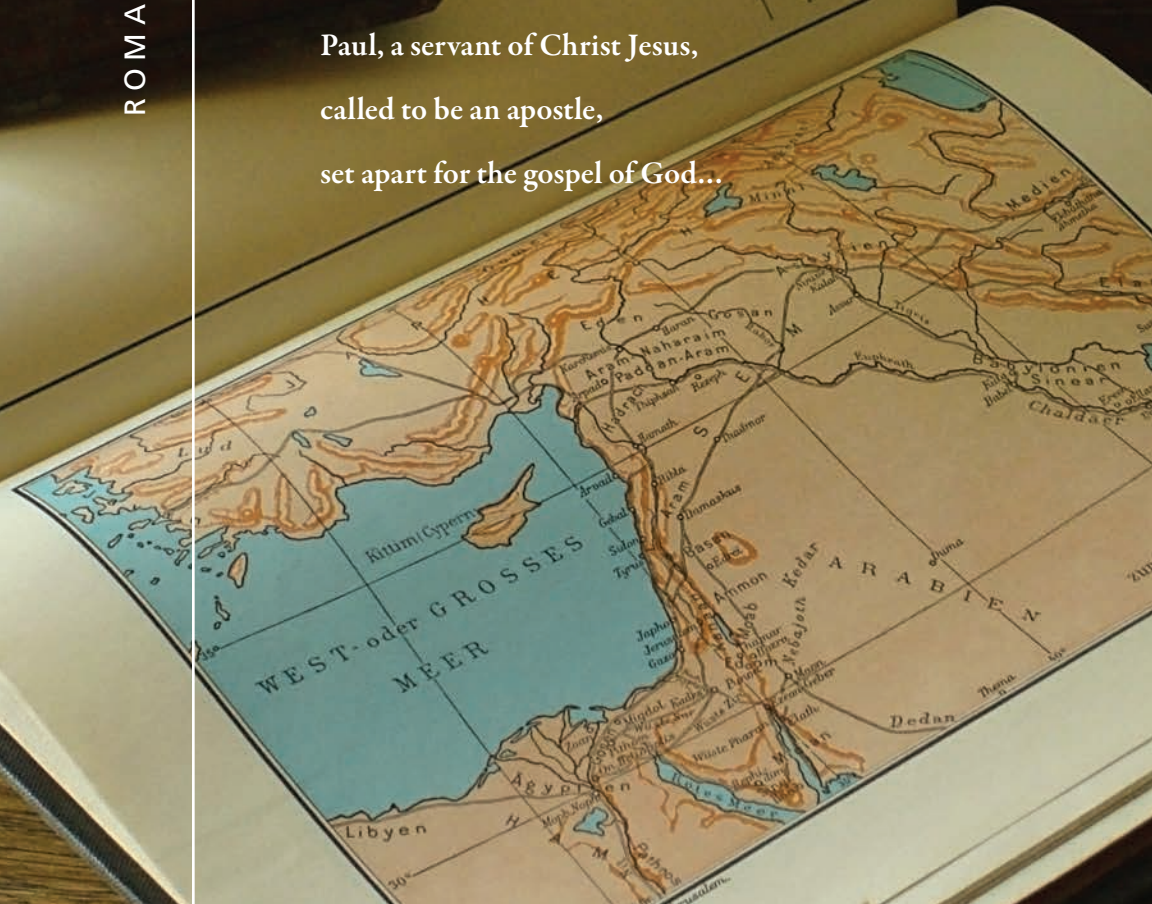
I

ROMANS 1
CHAPTER 1

The Heart of the Gospel

ROMANS 1:1

Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus,
called to be an apostle,
set apart for the gospel of God...



READ | ROMANS 1:1

THINK ABOUT

Calvary Church's Articles of Faith state, "We believe the 66 books of the Old and New Testaments to be verbally inspired by God, inerrant in the original text, and the supreme and final authority in faith and life." Human writers were led by God to write down the very words He wanted in each book. There's no book like it. It's unique.

God used Paul to record 13 of the 27 books of the New Testament. Paul wrote Romans as a letter to the followers of Jesus in the city of Rome. And just like every book in the Bible, it points people to Jesus and the good news of salvation. Hundreds of years before Jesus took on human flesh and entered the human race, prophets foretold His coming. We find over 300 specific references to the Christ as we read the Old Testament, even of His resurrection from the dead (the greatest news of all) in Psalm 16:10 and Acts 2:31. The Bible is unique, but so is Jesus. He is the Son of God.

APPLY

Romans should be read and studied because God led Paul to write it down. When we read the Bible, we are listening to God. Romans is a very clear explanation of the Gospel. God intended for us to understand His great love in rescuing us from our sin. It's a simple message of salvation, and yet it explores the riches of God's grace, mercy, and sovereignty. What a great privilege and joy to know the Gospel and grow deeper in the Gospel. Read and study this letter!

ASK

How did we get the book or letter of Romans?

Why is the Bible unique?

What is the primary message of Romans?

PRAY

Praise God for His provision of salvation through Christ.

Ask for a clearer and deeper understanding and appreciation of the Gospel.

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SING

“Perfect Wisdom of Our God” — *Getty Music*

THE BIG IDEA

As the Apostle Paul, under the inspiration of the Spirit of God, sets sail in his writing of this magnificent letter to the Romans, he first presents a three-fold introduction of himself. This was important since many of the believers in the church at Rome had not met Paul. Note that Paul's resume does not seek to attract attention for himself. It is primarily about the calling that God has placed upon his life and his response to that call.

KEY POINTS

- He presented himself as a *servant* of Jesus Christ (v. 1a).
- He presented himself as an *apostle* (v. 1b).
- He presented himself as a *preacher* of the Gospel (vv. 1c–4).
- He presented himself as a *missionary* to the Gentiles (vv. 5–7).

DOCTRINE

- The Calling of God (v. 1)
- The Gospel (v. 1)

LIFE APPLICATION

- What story does your life tell about your journey with Christ?
- What difference has the Gospel made in your life?
- Are you living for Christ and calling others to do the same?

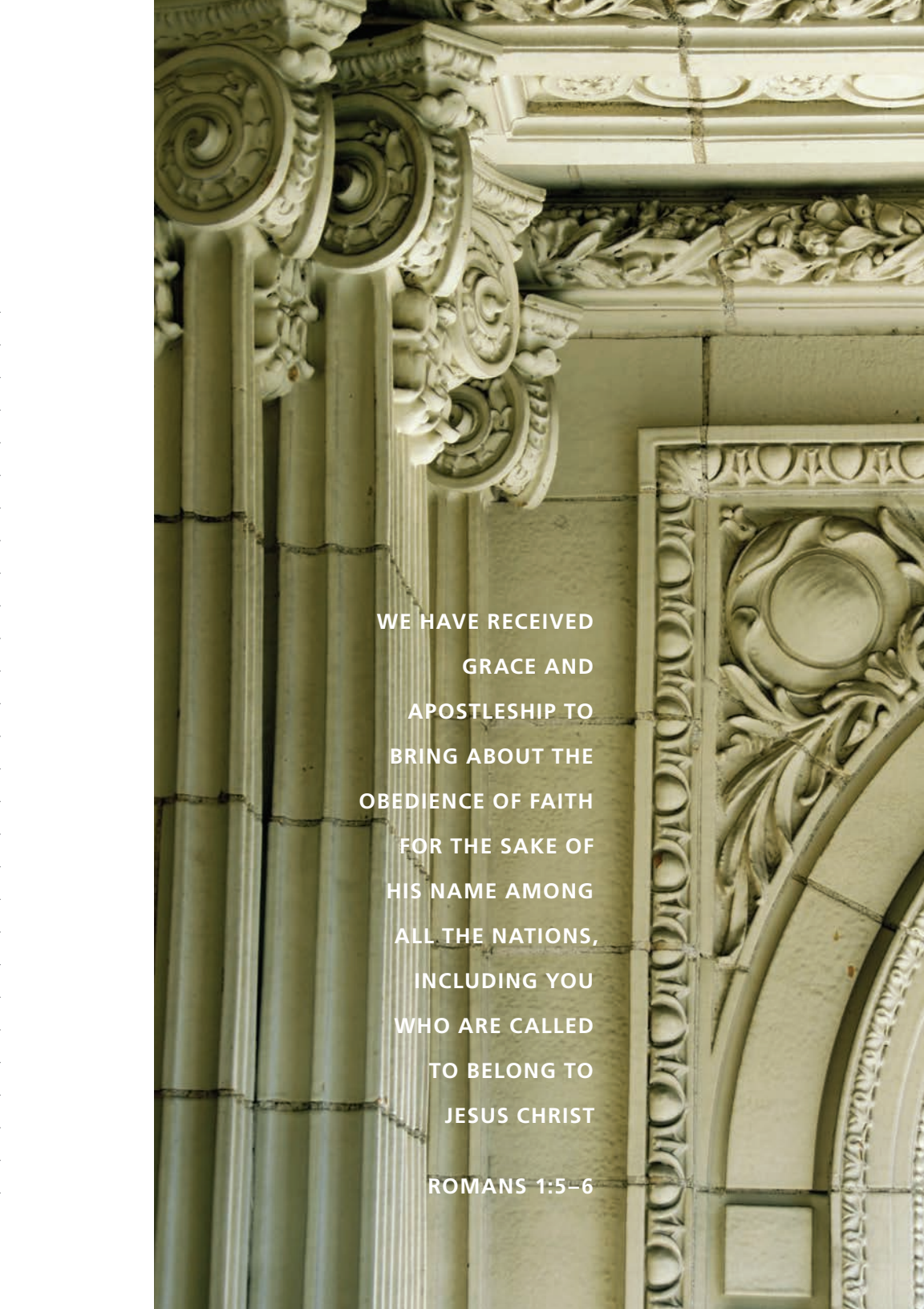
DISCUSSION

- How would you introduce yourself in writing to a group of believers you had not met previously?
- How could Paul simultaneously be a servant of Christ, apostle, preacher, and missionary to Gentiles?
- How did Paul explain the good things that happened to him and through him? See 1 Corinthians 15:3–10.

“THE HEART OF THE GOSPEL”

An Introduction to Romans, Chapters 1-4

A series of horizontal dotted lines for taking notes.



WE HAVE RECEIVED
GRACE AND
APOSTLESHIP TO
BRING ABOUT THE
OBEDIENCE OF FAITH
FOR THE SAKE OF
HIS NAME AMONG
ALL THE NATIONS,
INCLUDING YOU
WHO ARE CALLED
TO BELONG TO
JESUS CHRIST

ROMANS 1:5-6

I

The Uniqueness of the Gospel

ROMANS 1:1-7

Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God,² which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy Scriptures,³ concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh⁴ and was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord,⁵ through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of his name among all the nations,⁶ including you who are called to belong to Jesus Christ,⁷ To all those in Rome who are loved by God and called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

READ | ROMANS 1:1–7

THINK ABOUT

The primary message of Romans is the Gospel. In these opening verses, Paul connects the Old Testament to the New Testament. God spoke through the prophets, and all the Old Testament writers, to foretell the coming of Jesus to earth. The New Testament then records His rescue mission. He came to earth, lived a sinless life, died for our sins, and rose from the dead. That's the Gospel (1 Corinthians 15:1–8). Jesus made it possible for men, women, boys, and girls to be made right with God. No other message brings salvation; the Gospel of Jesus Christ is unique.

At the same time, the Gospel is for all people. Paul traveled all over to make sure as many as possible heard the good news about Jesus. Even though he had not yet traveled to Rome, he wrote to explain God's love (the cross) and God's power (the resurrection). The believers in Rome benefited from studying the Gospel. They were able to understand it better, share it, live it, and grow deeper in it.

APPLY

Take a few minutes and write out what you believe the word Gospel means. Read back over Romans 1:1–7 and 1 Corinthians 15:1–8. Meditate on the Gospel. Now write your statement like you would explain it to someone who hasn't heard about it before.

ASK

What did each person write down?

Was it easy to put into words? Why or why not?

Is there someone you could send a copy of what you've written and ask them to tell you what they think?

PRAY

Praise God for His provision of salvation through Christ.

Ask for a clearer and deeper understanding and appreciation of the Gospel.

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SING

“Jesus Paid It All” — Hall & Grape

THE BIG IDEA

The Gospel is unique because it originated with God and provides the news of the completed redemptive work through Christ.

KEY POINTS

Paul was called to proclaim the Gospel of God to all (v. 1).

The Gospel came in fulfillment of God's promise to redeem the world (v. 2).

This Gospel is unique because of its association with the only Son of God (vv. 3–5).

The Gospel brings man into relationship and fellowship with Christ (vv. 6–7).

DOCTRINE

The Foreknowledge of God (vv. 1, 7)

The Trinity (vv. 1–4)

Salvation (vv. 5–6)

LIFE APPLICATION

The Gospel is potent enough to penetrate the hearts of all mankind.

One reason we believe the Gospel is because of the prophecies before Christ's coming.

Those who follow Christ obey Him and live for His name and glory.

DISCUSSION

What did God promise about His Son before He came to earth?

How important is the resurrection to the Gospel?

Distinguish between the local church and the universal church.

Why was Paul concerned about the Roman believers (hint: v. 7)?

“THE UNIQUENESS OF THE GOSPEL”

Romans 1:1-7

A series of horizontal dotted lines for taking notes.

A low-angle photograph of a building with a red facade and green shutters. A street lamp is visible on the left, and a tree is in the upper left corner. The text is overlaid on the right side of the image.

*If anyone is in
Christ, he is a
new creation.
The old has
passed away;
behold, the
new has come.*

2 CORINTHIANS 5:17

I

The Priority of the Gospel

ROMANS 1:8–15

First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because your faith is proclaimed in all the world.

⁹ For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son, that without ceasing I mention you ¹⁰ always in my prayers, asking that somehow by God's will I may now at last succeed in coming to you.

¹¹ For I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to strengthen you — ¹² that is, that we may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith, both yours and mine. ¹³ I do not want you to be unaware, brothers, that I have often intended to come to you (but thus far have been prevented), in order that I may reap some harvest among you as well as among the rest of the Gentiles. ¹⁴ I am under obligation both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish.

¹⁵ So I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome.

READ | ROMANS 1:8–15

THINK ABOUT

There is nothing more important in life than the Gospel. Paul had a heavy burden to take the message about Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection all over the world. One place he had not been yet (at the time of the writing of Romans) was Rome. He was excited about their faith and what God was already doing there, but he was eager to go and share as well.

Sharing the Gospel would allow Paul to:

1. Encourage the believers
2. Be encouraged as he enjoyed fellowship with them
3. Help those who were not followers of Christ to come to saving faith

Everyone needs the Gospel. We never grow past the need to hear, think about, share, and thank God for what He has done for us in Jesus' life, death, and resurrection. We never outgrow the Gospel; as followers of Christ, we grow deeper in the Gospel.

APPLY

How eager are you to share the Gospel with others? People all over the world need to hear about Jesus. Make a list of people in your family, at your school or work place, and in your neighborhood for whom you can pray. Think of how you might communicate with them! You might even write down the name of a place you would like to go on a missions trip.

ASK

If you were talking with another follower of Christ about the Gospel, what would you say?

If you were talking to someone who was not a follower of Christ about the Gospel, what would you say?

PRAY

Pray for the people on your list with whom you will try to share the Gospel.

Ask for God to prepare their hearts and to give you the words.

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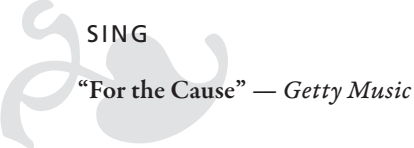
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THE BIG IDEA

Paul shows genuine care for people he had not previously met and for the work of God in a city he had not previously visited. He shows love for the people, interest in their growth in Christ, and gives priority to the proclamation of the Gospel to Jews and Gentiles alike.

KEY POINTS

He was thankful for them and their faith in Christ (v. 8).

He prayed for them (vv. 9–10a).

He committed his desired trip to Rome to God's will (v. 10b).

He desired to impart spiritual food and to share in each other's faith (vv. 11–12).

He revealed his ministry intentions among Jews and Gentiles (vv. 13–15).

LIFE APPLICATION

Believers must make prayer a priority in their lives.

Believers must keep their hearts pliable to God's will.

Growing believers take steps to facilitate the spiritual growth of others.

Our passion for prayer must extend beyond those we know to include others we do not know—for example missionaries serving further afield.

DISCUSSION

What is intercessory prayer? For whom are you interceding?

Do you agonize in prayer for those beyond your immediate circle of relationships?

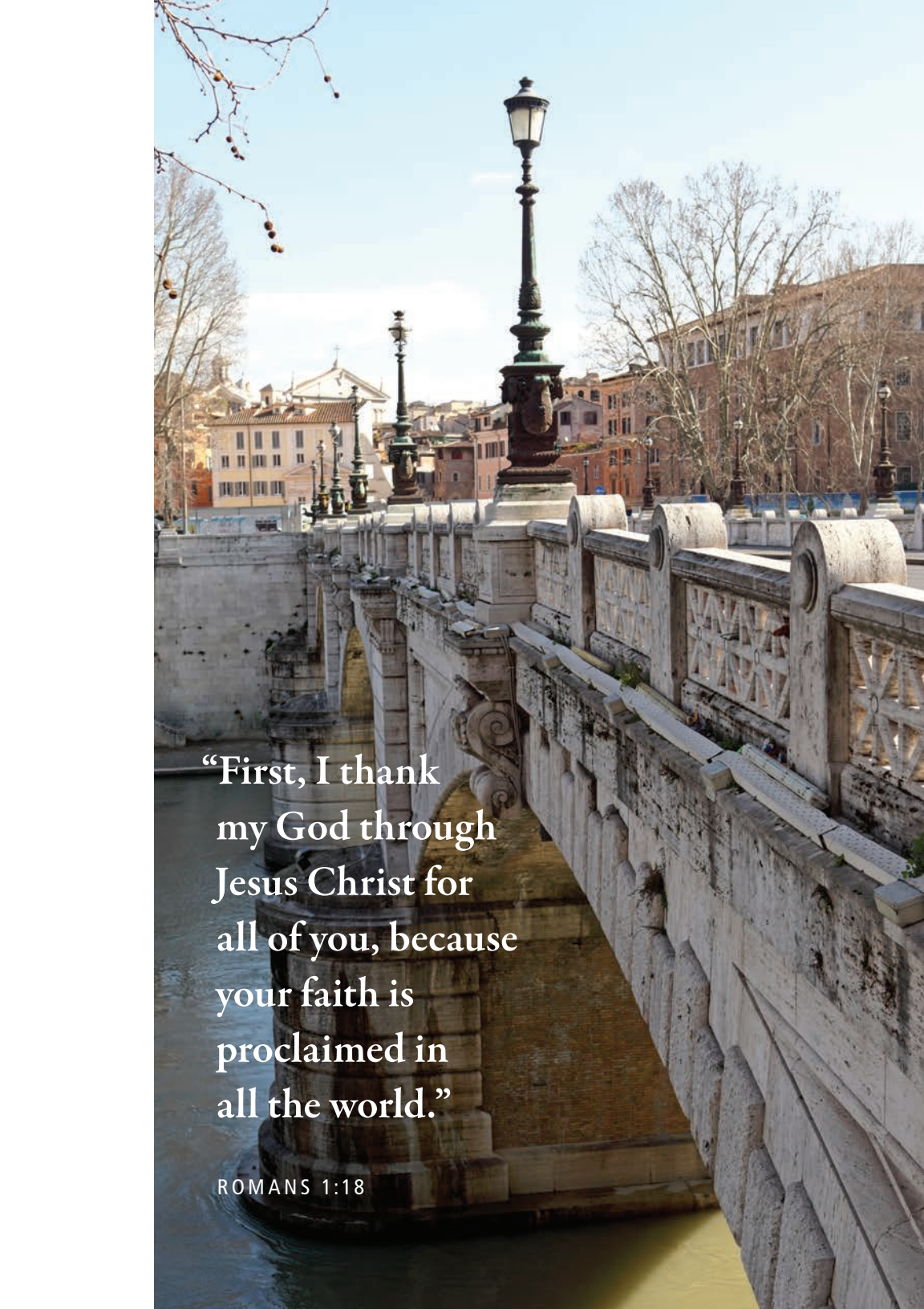
Do you have a desire to see the lost saved?

What are you doing to lead the unsaved to faith in Christ?

“THE PRIORITY OF THE GOSPEL”

Romans 1:8–15

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“First, I thank
my God through
Jesus Christ for
all of you, because
your faith is
proclaimed in
all the world.”

ROMANS 1:18

I

The Power of the Gospel

ROMANS 1:16-17

For I am not ashamed of the gospel,
for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone
who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.

¹⁷ For in it the righteousness of God is revealed
from faith for faith, as it is written,
“The righteous shall live by faith.”

READ | ROMANS 1:16–17

THINK ABOUT

In these two extraordinary verses, Paul presents his theme for the book of Romans and also the theme of his life. In 2 Corinthians 11, Paul details many of the hardships he faced. He mentions that he experienced imprisonment, flogging, lashings, beatings, stoning, shipwrecks, and much more.

Why was Paul willing to go through so much difficulty and never be ashamed when sharing the Gospel? The answer is found in these verses. He knew “the Gospel is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes.” (v. 16). He also knew that in the Gospel, “the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith” (v. 17).

APPLY

Tim Keller said it well, “The Gospel will always cause offense, because it reveals us as having a need that we cannot meet. So we will always be tempted to be ashamed of it.” As believers, we must continually pour ourselves into the depths of God’s Word and His Gospel, reminding ourselves that the Gospel is the power of God for salvation. In believing this Gospel, we receive and experience the righteousness of God.

ASK

When are you most tempted to be ashamed of the Gospel?

Since the Gospel is good news, who are some people in your life with whom you need to share this news?

PRAY

Ask God to search your heart for any area in which you may be ashamed of Him. If you are guilty, confess it.

Praise God that the good news of the Gospel is the power of salvation to everyone who believes.



SING

“The Gospel” — Ryan Stevenson

THE BIG IDEA

These two verses present the theme of Romans and Paul's rationale for writing this letter. He briefly explores the nature, power, and the equal reach of the Gospel to all who believe—Jews and Gentiles. The righteousness of God is revealed through salvation.

KEY POINTS

Paul is not ashamed of the Gospel (v. 16a).

The Gospel powerfully leads those who believe to repentance (v. 16b).

The righteousness of God is revealed in the Gospel (v. 17).

LIFE APPLICATION

We must not be ashamed of the Gospel that led us to faith in Christ.

The Gospel is powerful to penetrate the hearts of all mankind.

The Gospel is "good news" to all.

DISCUSSION

How can we know if someone is ashamed of the Gospel?

When last did you see the power of the Gospel at work in the salvation of a soul?

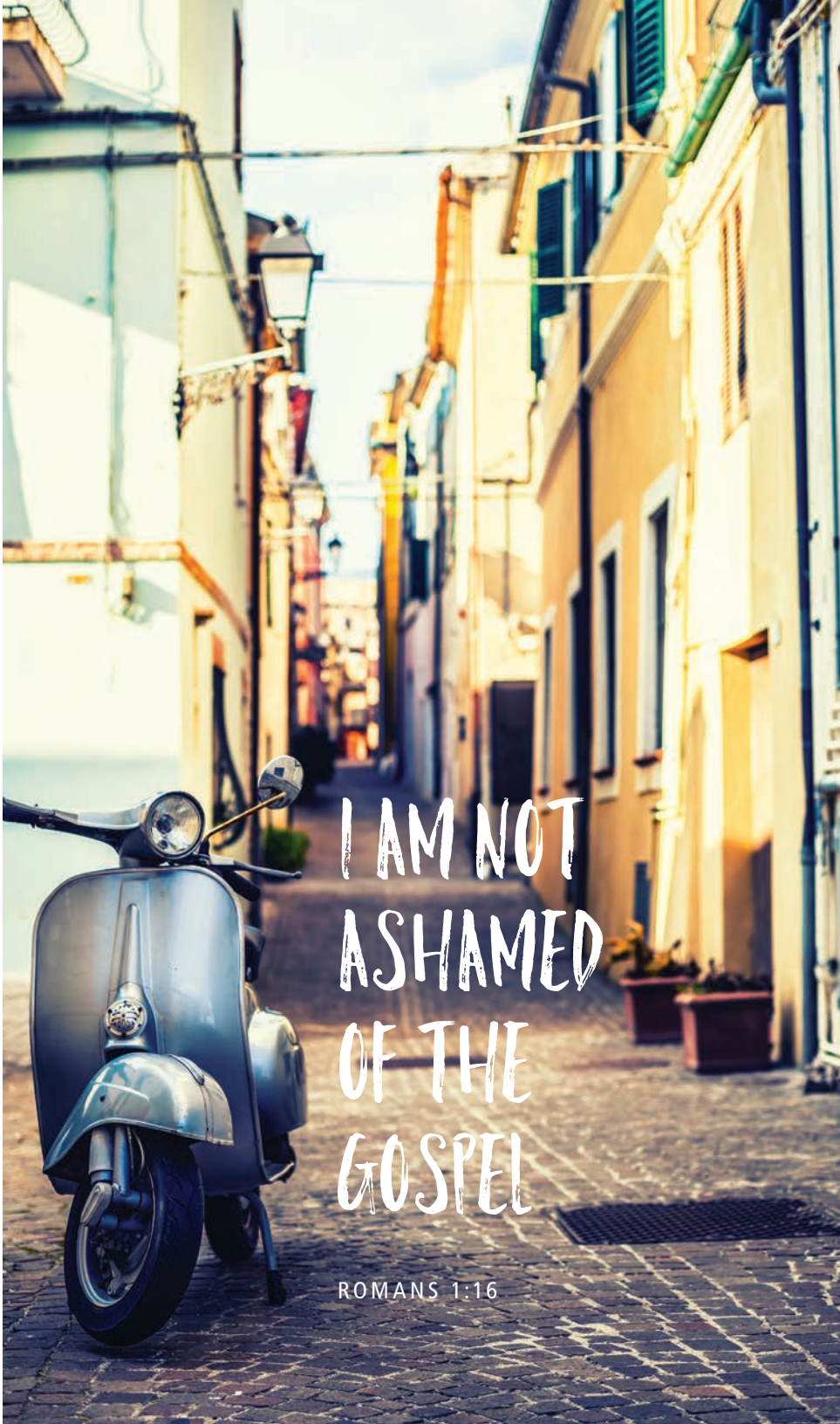
What does it mean to be "righteous"?

Why is it important for the "righteous" to live by faith?

“THE POWER OF THE GOSPEL”

Romans 1:16-17

Series of horizontal dotted lines for taking notes.



I AM NOT
ASHAMED
OF THE
GOSPEL

ROMANS 1:16

I

ROMANS 8 CHAPTER 1

The Wrath of God

ROMANS 1:18

For the wrath of God
is revealed from heaven
against all ungodliness and
unrighteousness of men,
who by their unrighteousness
suppress the truth.

READ | ROMANS 1:18

THINK ABOUT

Wrath is not exactly an encouraging word. When used to describe God, it speaks of the just punishment He gives for sin (ungodliness and unrighteousness).

God is not morally neutral but is absolutely and completely holy and pure.

He is perfect and good. All that He is and does is right. Therefore, He cannot condone, tolerate, or associate with sin. He must punish all wrong doing.

Jesus experienced the wrath of God on the cross. He came to earth to take our place. He died the death that each one of us should have died. As the Lamb of God, He willingly sacrificed Himself as the only adequate payment to appease God's wrath.

APPLY

The right response to God's holiness and wrath is to confess our sins and ask for His forgiveness. Jesus died for our sins on the cross. He paid a price we cannot pay. The debt has been paid in full for all who authentically follow Christ. Out of love, God sent His only Son that whoever believes in Him would not perish but have eternal life.

Everyone who chooses to continue living without Christ chooses to make themselves subject to God's wrath. Confess your sin and follow Christ, or continue in sin and be subject to the wrath of God.

ASK

How can God be a God of love and a God of wrath?

How can someone avoid the wrath of God and experience the love of God?

Why did Jesus take your punishment?

PRAY

Praise God for His righteous response to sin.

Confess your need for His grace, mercy, and forgiveness.

Pray for someone who is facing the wrath of God.

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SING

“Jesus in My Place” — *Summit Kids*

THE BIG IDEA

All humankind stands condemned before God and therefore experiences His wrath. The natural propensity of sinners is to practice unrighteousness and all types of ungodliness while rejecting and suppressing the truth God reveals to our hearts.

KEY POINTS

The wrath of God is revealed to all (v. 18a).

The wrath of God is against all ungodliness and unrighteousness (v. 8b).

The wrath of God is against those who suppress the truth (v. 18c).

DOCTRINE

The **doctrine of revelation** deals with God disclosing or unveiling Himself to mankind. God has clearly provided warning prior to discharging His wrath, the rationale for pouring out His wrath (Ezekiel 5:7–17), and the evidence of doing so (Exodus 32:1–35, John 2:13–17). **Natural** and **special revelation** impact all humanity.

LIFE APPLICATION

No person who practices ungodliness and unrighteousness will escape God's wrath.

Since we are tainted by sin, all mankind is equally in need of God's grace and mercy.

Genuine repentance is required in order to escape God's eternal wrath.

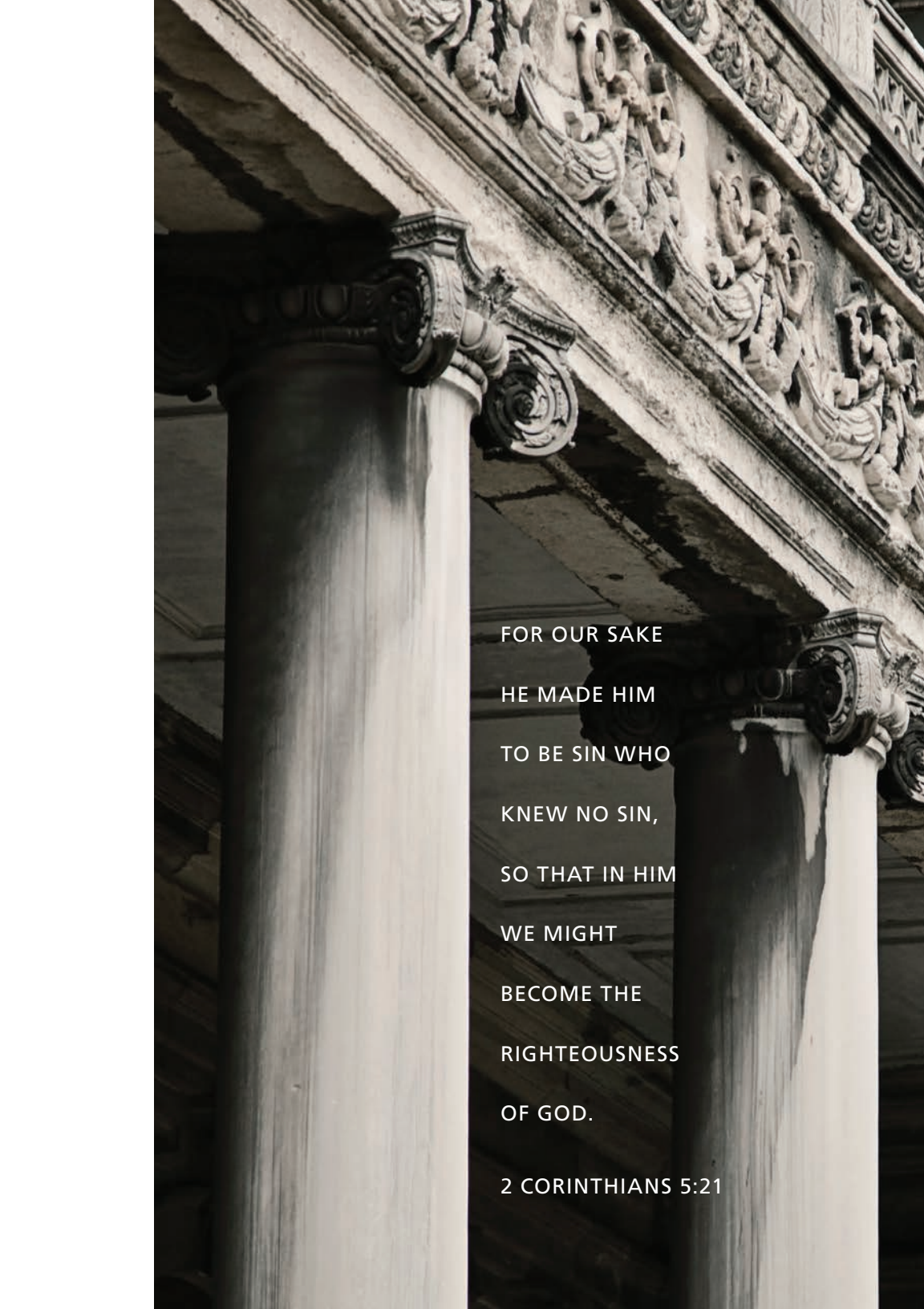
DISCUSSION

In what ways is God's wrath experienced in humanity?

How is truth suppressed in our post-modern culture?

How may we show our support for truth in society and in our lives?

How is God's wrath revealed to mankind? Why?



FOR OUR SAKE
HE MADE HIM
TO BE SIN WHO
KNEW NO SIN,
SO THAT IN HIM
WE MIGHT
BECOME THE
RIGHTEOUSNESS
OF GOD.

2 CORINTHIANS 5:21

I

No Excuses!

ROMANS 1:19–23

For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them.²⁰ For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse.²¹ For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened.²² Claiming to be wise, they became fools,²³ and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things.

READ | ROMANS 1:19–23

THINK ABOUT

From Genesis until today, humanity has made excuses for its rebellion against God. We are constantly replacing God's glory with things that are made by human hands. From the worship of our jobs, money, families, relationships, religious activities, reputation, leisure, pleasures, and most of all ourselves, we are people who have become simple-minded and pursuers of that which is futile. We all have been guilty of worshiping the gift above the Giver. God has given us much evidence on a daily basis that He is ever-present. We have no excuse for neglecting worshiping Him daily. Everything from our spouses, children, abilities, material possessions, food, to all of creation point to the divine nature of God.

APPLY

Evaluate in your life areas that you have been neglecting to give God the glory He demands. Ask these questions, because they will reveal what is going on in your heart: Where does my money go? What do I spend most of my time doing? Where does my mind drift to when I have idle time? The answers to these questions will reveal to you the desires of your heart. Make a conscious effort this week to see God in everything! Stop making excuses for why you don't give God everything, and realize He is the owner of everything.

ASK

What excuses do you make for not serving and worshiping God?

What are some areas in your life in which you are living in disobedience?

PRAY

Praise God for His grace, mercy, and pursuit of you.

Pray that He will open your eyes to the blind spots in your life and make you sensitive about justifying your sins.

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SING

“O Praise the Name” — Hillsong Worship

THE BIG IDEA

God has revealed Himself and truth to all our hearts. As such, all humankind stands condemned before God and are equally in need of Christ and the salvation He offers. Those who reject Christ's free offer of eternal life will have no excuse.

KEY POINTS

God has revealed to mankind all we need to know about Him (vv. 19–20a).

There is no excuse for those who choose to reject God (v. 20b).

Knowledge of God does not always result in a relationship with God (vv. 21–22).

They trade the incorruptible glory of God for all forms of corruption (v. 23).

LIFE APPLICATION

Those who choose to reject God do so to their peril.

A person's rejection of God today could lead to his rejection for eternity.

To reject the revealed truth of God equates one to a fool.

DISCUSSION

What are some examples of corruptible things for which we trade God's glory today?

Does human knowledge usually lead us toward God or away from Him?

Why do "smart people" often seem to choose the corruptible things of the world above Christ?

“NO EXCUSES!”

Romans 1:19-23

A series of horizontal dotted lines for writing notes.

I

A Depraved Society

ROMANS 1:24–32

Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves,²⁵ because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen.

²⁶ For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature;²⁷ and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in themselves the due penalty for their error.

²⁸ And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done.²⁹ They were filled with all manner of unrighteousness, evil, covetousness, malice. They

are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, maliciousness.

They are gossips,³⁰ slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents,³¹ foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless.

³² Though they know God's righteous decree that those who practice such things deserve to die, they not only do them but give approval to those who practice them.

PROVERBS 1:7

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction.

2 TIMOTHY 3:1–5

But understand this, that in the last days there will come times of difficulty. ² For people will be lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, ³ heartless, unappeasable, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not loving good, ⁴ treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, ⁵ having the appearance of godliness, but denying its power. Avoid such people.

READ | ROMANS 1:24–32

THINK ABOUT

Do you know what human depravity means? It means that all of us are sinful to the core of our being, and there is no innate goodness found in us (see Romans 3:10–12). In this passage, Paul describes the essence of mankind’s depravity by saying that we “exchanged the truth of God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator” (1:25). He also helps us understand the extent of our sinfulness in verses 28–32. We indeed live in a “depraved society”!

APPLY

This portion of Scripture reminds us just how lost someone is before knowing Christ as Lord and Savior. If you are a follower of Christ, take a few moments to reflect upon who you once were in your depravity, and then, thank God in prayer for rescuing you out of your sinfulness. Also, jot down some ways you’ve seen God change you since coming to saving faith in Christ. What a blessing it is to know God personally through His Son. Read and study this rich theological letter with an attitude of thanksgiving.

ASK

What does God want you to understand about human depravity?

What does Romans 1:24–32 tell us about all people?

What is God’s solution for our sinfulness?

PRAY

Praise God for His provision of salvation through Christ (Romans 1:16-17).

Ask God for a clearer and deeper understanding and appreciation of the Gospel in light of mankind’s depravity.

Praise Him, “who is blessed forever! Amen” (Romans 1:25).

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SING

“What A Friend We Have in Jesus” — *Scriven & Converse*

THE BIG IDEA

There exists divine consequences for a depraved generation and culture. The blatant rejection of truth caused God to give mankind “over” to the depravity of their hearts and minds. God has removed all restraints and has allowed those who reject the truth to burn in their passion and desire for that which will ultimately lead to their destruction. This is partially what it means to trade the “glory of God for corruptible and debased things of this world.”

KEY POINTS

God shows the nature, purpose, and depth of divine withdrawal (vv. 24–25, 28).

He particularly reveals the results of divine withdrawal from depraved mankind (vv. 26–27, 29–31).

How sad to see the greatest height of man’s depravity (v. 32).

LIFE APPLICATION

Sin always has consequences.

Those who reject God’s truth and refuse to repent will experience the wrath of God.

All sexual immorality, including homosexuality, is contrary to God’s design for us.

DISCUSSION

What specific sins in a person’s life do you think may incur the wrath of God?

Why do people choose to disregard the truth, wisdom, and knowledge of God?

What practically happens to a person, culture, or country when God gives them up?

“A DEPRAVED SOCIETY”

Romans 1:24-32

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II

Judging & Being Judged

ROMANS 2:1-11

Therefore you have no excuse, O man, every one of you who judges. For in passing judgment on another you condemn yourself, because you, the judge, practice the very same things.² We know that the judgment of God rightly falls on those who practice such things.³ Do you suppose, O man—you who judge those who practice such things and yet do them yourself—that you will escape the judgment of God?⁴ Or do you presume on the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance?⁵ But because of your hard and impenitent heart you are storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath when God's righteous judgment will be revealed.

⁶ He will render to each one according to his works:

⁷ to those who by patience in well-doing seek for glory

and honor and immortality, he will give eternal life; ⁸ but for those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, there will be wrath and fury. ⁹ There will be tribulation and distress for every human being who does evil, the Jew first and also the Greek, ¹⁰ but glory and honor and peace for everyone who does good, the Jew first and also the Greek. ¹¹ For God shows no partiality.

DEUTERONOMY 16:18–20

You shall appoint judges and officers in all your towns that the Lord your God is giving you, according to your tribes, and they shall judge the people with righteous judgment. ¹⁹ You shall not pervert justice. You shall not show partiality, and you shall not accept a bribe, for a bribe blinds the eyes of the wise and subverts the cause of the righteous. ²⁰ Justice, and only justice, you shall follow, that you may live and inherit the land that the Lord your God is giving you.

TITUS 1:7, 9

For an overseer, as God's steward, must be above reproach... ⁹ He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it.

READ | ROMANS 2:1–11

THINK ABOUT

The previous passage, Romans 1:18–32, is a tough passage. Paul writes about the wrath of God and then describes a depraved society which practices homosexuality, wickedness, envy, murder, slander, disobedience to parents, and more. This society not only commits these sins but encourages others to do so.

In reading the verses in Romans 1, it would be very easy to say they don't apply to us. We are quick to condemn others of sins that we are not tempted to commit, or if we do commit them, we do so in secret! In Romans 2:1–11, we see that there really is no place to hide. From society's point of view, you may not be the worst sinner, but beneath your outward religiosity and morality, there may well be hidden and secret sins. You may be good at judging other people, but what about yourself? What particular sins do you judge in others? What areas are there in your life where you think "you will escape the judgment of God?" (v. 3)

APPLY

We all have met judgmental, mean-minded, and critical individuals who are professing Christians. They love to criticize and gossip about others. But what about you? Who have you recently judged? What do you see in others that you criticize?

Paul makes it clear that God's kindness and patience are "meant to lead you to repentance" (v. 4). Where do you see God's kindness to you? It is very easy to take God's goodness and kindness for granted rather than as a motivation to love and serve God and others. So let's focus on judging ourselves rather than judging others: "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what is done in the body, whether good or evil" (2 Corinthians 5:10).

ASK

What did you learn from this passage about the judgment of God?

What did you learn about your own judgmental attitudes?

What changes are you going to make?

PRAY

Lord, help me not to take You for granted, but may Your kindness and goodness lead me to be less judgmental of others and more like Jesus Christ.

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SING

“Good Good Father” — Chris Tomlin

THE BIG IDEA

The main purpose of this passage is to help the moralistic Jews see that they also stand condemned before God. They were quick to label Gentiles as sinners and condemn them. The Jews needed to understand that God will use the same measuring rod to judge them and that they are no better than Gentiles.

KEY POINTS

Those who delight in passing judgment will also be judged by God (vv. 1–3).

The wrath of God is experienced by all those who reject God’s grace (vv. 4–5).

God will appropriately judge everyone according to their deeds (vv. 6–11).

LIFE APPLICATION

While it is not wrong to judge, those who do so must be prepared to be judged accordingly.

All men are equally sinners in need of God’s grace.

While we can hide some of our deeds from men, God sees all things and will judge accordingly.

The good deeds of humankind are not meritorious for salvation.

DISCUSSION

What do you think about those who say that it is unbiblical to “judge” someone?

Under what circumstances should we “judge” someone?

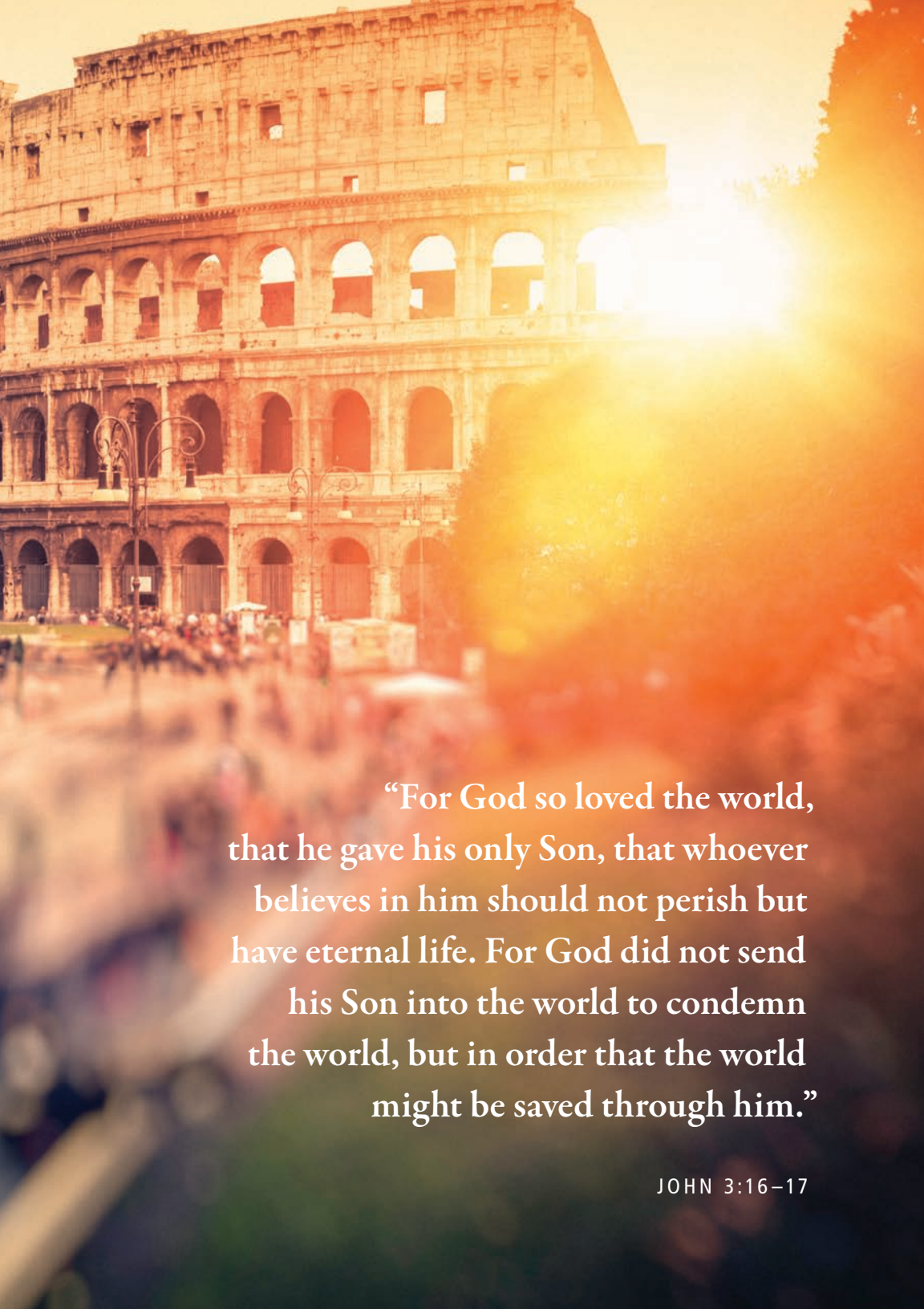
What image would you have in your mind of God if He showed partiality?



CLAIMING
TO BE
WISE
THEY
BECAME
FOOLS

ROMANS 1:22





“For God so loved the world,
that he gave his only Son, that whoever
believes in him should not perish but
have eternal life. For God did not send
his Son into the world to condemn
the world, but in order that the world
might be saved through him.”

JOHN 3:16–17

II

Principles of Divine Judgment

ROMANS 2:12-16

For all who have sinned without the law will also perish without the law, and all who have sinned under the law will be judged by the law. ¹³ For it is not the hearers of the law who are righteous before God, but the doers of the law who will be justified. ¹⁴ For when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do what the law requires, they are a law to themselves, even though they do not have the law. ¹⁵ They show that the work of the law is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness, and their conflicting thoughts accuse or even excuse them ¹⁶ on that day when, according to my gospel, God judges the secrets of men by Christ Jesus.

READ | ROMANS 2:12–16

THINK ABOUT

All people deserve to be judged and condemned by God (divine judgment). We have no excuses. God has made Himself known to everyone. No one can say, “I didn’t know” and escape His judgment.

From this text alone, we can observe a number of ways God reveals Himself:

1. The law is written on our hearts. The Creator made us with a sense of morality.
2. We have a conscience. It is not always trustworthy, but we typically are aware of when we sin against God and others.
3. Our thoughts also make room for God and make us wonder about Him.

Does God exist? Yes! As the Designer, He placed within us built-in “God-detectors” to show us the way (the heart, the conscience, and the mind). We can only love, process, and think correctly when we have been transformed by the Gospel, but these “God-detectors” point us to Him in the meantime.

APPLY

Stop trying to figure it all out by yourself. God will judge the secret feelings and thoughts we have one day. They will be used to hold people accountable for rejecting Him. Why not go ahead and talk to someone now about your thoughts and feelings? Talk to someone you know who loves Jesus and will give you biblical direction and truth.

ASK

What do you believe about Jesus Christ?

What do you think most often about God? What fears or doubts do you have?

With whom do you feel most comfortable talking about God?

PRAY

Thank God for making Himself known.

Ask Him to show you more and more of Himself.

And ask Him to help you make Him known as well.

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SING

"Cornerstone" — Hillsong Worship

THE BIG IDEA

All humankind is infested and impacted by sin. Some sin under the law (Jews) while others sin without the law (Gentiles). God is the only one who sees and knows the condition of the heart. While we can hide things from our fellow man in the inner recesses of our hearts, God knows all and will judge each person accordingly.

KEY POINTS

Sin under or outside the law has similar divine consequences (v. 12).

God expects us to put His Word into practice (v. 13).

God speaks to the conscience of man innately (vv. 14–15).

God's knows and will judge the innermost secrets of man's heart (v. 16).

LIFE APPLICATION

Hearing God's Word without putting it into practice alienates us from God.

Hearing the Word of God without doing it hinders righteousness.

God knows the secrets of our hearts and speaks to us accordingly.

DISCUSSION

What kind of judgment is in view for the believer?

What other passage(s) in the Bible speaks of God's knowledge of man's heart?

How can we show that we are putting the Word of God into practice?

“PRINCIPLES OF DIVINE JUDGMENT”

Romans 2:12–16

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II

Profession but Not Possession

ROMANS 2:17-29

But if you call yourself a Jew and rely on the law and boast in God¹⁸ and know his will and approve what is excellent, because you are instructed from the law;¹⁹ and if you are sure that you yourself are a guide to the blind, a light to those who are in darkness,²⁰ an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of children, having in the law the embodiment of knowledge and truth—²¹ you then who teach others, do you not teach yourself? While you preach against stealing, do you steal?²² You who say that one must not commit adultery, do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols, do you rob temples?²³ You who boast in the law dishonor God by breaking the law.²⁴ For, as it is written, “The name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you.”

²⁵ For circumcision indeed is of value if you obey the law, but if you break the law, your circumcision

becomes uncircumcision. ²⁶ So, if a man who is uncircumcised keeps the precepts of the law, will not his uncircumcision be regarded as circumcision? ²⁷ Then he who is physically uncircumcised but keeps the law will condemn you who have the written code and circumcision but break the law. ²⁸ For no one is a Jew who is merely one outwardly, nor is circumcision outward and physical. ²⁹ But a Jew is one inwardly, and circumcision is a matter of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter. His praise is not from man but from God.

PSALM 51:1-4

Have mercy on me, O God,
according to your steadfast love;
according to your abundant mercy
blot out my transgressions.

² Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity,
and cleanse me from my sin!

³ For I know my transgressions,
and my sin is ever before me.

⁴ Against you, you only, have I sinned
and done what is evil in your sight,
so that you may be justified in your words
and blameless in your judgment.

READ | ROMANS 2:17–29

THINK ABOUT

Knowing about God does not make you a follower of Jesus. The Jews had much knowledge about God. God chose them to be His people and to make Him known to others. He gave them the law and an outward sign of His covenant with them — circumcision. They would have professed to know God.

Paul makes it clear that what makes someone right with God is not knowledge alone. It is God's work through the cross and His work in a person's heart. God shows us our sin and our need to be forgiven. The Holy Spirit is at work drawing us to Himself and revealing His great love. He then changes our love for self and sin to love for Him.

APPLY

Only God can change hearts. Has He changed your heart yet? If you have placed your faith in Jesus' death and resurrection and surrendered your life to Him, there should be a noticeable difference in you. The Great Physician does heart surgery that transforms your relationship with God. You begin to love Him more than yourself. Your relationship with Him affects the way you talk, the way you treat people, and how you live your life.

Ask yourself, "Have I only made a profession of faith or am I in possession of faith?" Another way to ask that question is, "Am I in possession of my life or have I given Jesus possession of my life?"

ASK

Why do you think some people do not give God control of their lives?

How can you tell when someone is an authentic follower of Jesus Christ?

PRAY

Ask God to reveal His great love and the condition of your heart.

Thank Him for the free gift of salvation.

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SING

“In My Heart” — Sovereign Grace Music

THE BIG IDEA

The law came through the Jews, and they boasted of the privilege afforded them in the possession of the law. Yet God did not possess them. It is not the possession of the law that matters to God, but His possession of our hearts. The Jews labeled the Gentiles as blind, foolish, ignorant, immature, and sinful. They needed to realize that they were as guilty as the Gentiles they despised.

KEY POINTS

The Jewish perception of superiority is wrong (vv. 17–20).

Jews and Gentiles are equally guilty and condemned (vv. 21–23).

Circumcision and uncircumcision explained (vv. 24–27).

The divine requirement is circumcision of the heart, not the external procedure according to Scripture (vv. 28–29).

DOCTRINE

Sin entered the world through the disobedience of Adam (Genesis 3, 1 Timothy 3:14–15). It was **imputed** to all at conception (Psalm 51:5, Romans 5:12–21) and therefore impacts every person completely. All mankind is **depraved** and acts upon the condition of the heart.

LIFE APPLICATION

While the Jews are God’s chosen people, they are not superior to Gentiles.

Jews and Gentiles are equally guilty and need God’s grace and forgiveness.

Keeping the law could not save, and external circumcision was inadequate.

DISCUSSION

Is it possible for some persons to be “bigger” sinners than others?

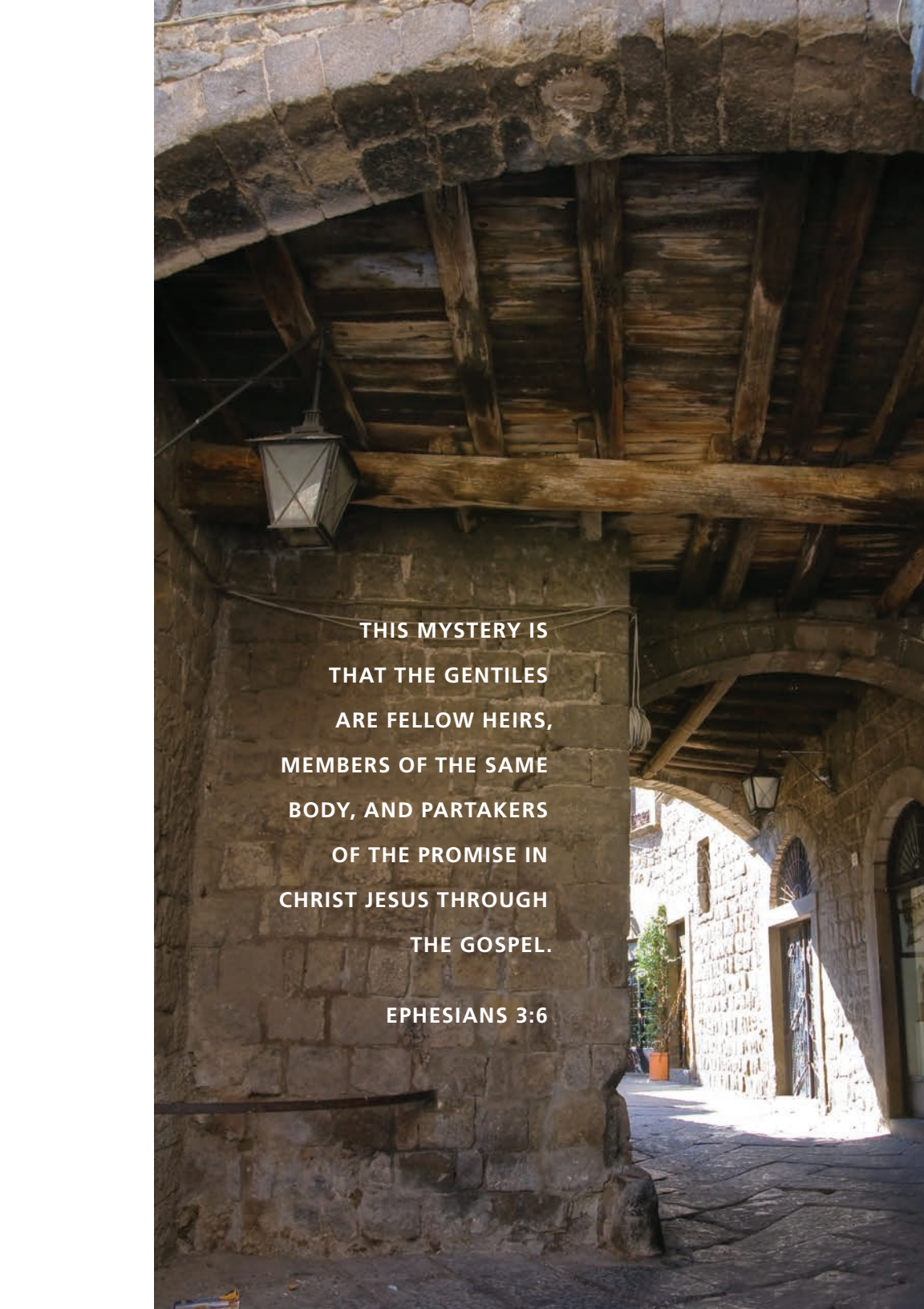
Why was circumcision of the heart more important than external circumcision?

Why is it difficult to admit guilt? How have you seen this in your life?

“PROFESSION BUT NOT POSSESSION”

Romans 2:17-29

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THIS MYSTERY IS
THAT THE GENTILES
ARE FELLOW HEIRS,
MEMBERS OF THE SAME
BODY, AND PARTAKERS
OF THE PROMISE IN
CHRIST JESUS THROUGH
THE GOSPEL.

EPHESIANS 3:6

III

Final Arguments

ROMANS 3:1–8

Then what advantage has the Jew? Or what is the value of circumcision? ² Much in every way. To begin with, the Jews were entrusted with the oracles of God. ³ What if some were unfaithful? Does their faithlessness nullify the faithfulness of God? ⁴ By no means! Let God be true though every one were a liar, as it is written,

“That you may be justified in your words,
and prevail when you are judged.”

⁵ But if our unrighteousness serves to show the righteousness of God, what shall we say? That God is unrighteous to inflict wrath on us? (I speak in a human way.) ⁶ By no means! For then how could God judge the world? ⁷ But if through my lie God’s truth abounds to his glory, why am I still being condemned as a sinner? ⁸ And why not do evil that good may come?—as some people slanderously charge us with saying. Their condemnation is just.

READ | ROMANS 3:1–8

THINK ABOUT

Whether it is in a sport or in the workplace, people are always looking for an advantage. In sports, teams consider playing at home an advantage. Championships are often won and lost because of home court advantage. Advantages set up a team or company to succeed.

In this passage, Paul argues that the Jews had a tremendous religious advantage. God's divine Word was given to them through the law and the prophets. It was not God's fault that the Jews had been unfaithful even though they were given the very words of God. God has been and always will be faithful and just!

APPLY

What about you? If you are reading this and have chosen to open your Bible today, you are at an advantage! God is literally speaking to you through His Word. Think about that. The God of the universe has revealed Himself to you and has given you an opportunity to respond to the Gospel. Will you take advantage? Let's trust these words, live by these words, and act on these words.

ASK

How much do you value the Word of God?

Over the past seven days, can you honestly say that you have treasured the Word of God?

How can you make it a habit to read your Bible daily?

PRAY

Thank God that He has given us the Word of God.

Praise Him for His faithfulness even in the midst of our unfaithfulness.

Repent, if necessary, for not valuing His Word the way you should.

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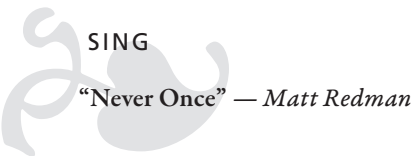
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THE BIG IDEA

Having put forth the case that all Jews are guilty of sin and stand condemned before God, now Paul presents final arguments as the Jews debated with him. The Jews posed three questions: What advantage is it to be a Jew? Will Jewish unbelief cancel God's faithfulness? If sin commends God's righteousness, how can He judge us?

KEY POINTS

Jews are privileged to have been entrusted with the oracles of God (vv. 1–2).

The unfaithfulness of Jews does not cancel God's faithfulness but establishes it (vv. 3–4).

The righteous Judge ultimately determines when and how to judge (vv. 5–8).

LIFE APPLICATION

Jews have a special relationship with God, but they are equal with humanity.

The depth of man's depravity cannot lead God to become unfaithful to His promises.

God sees and judges all with righteousness and equity.

DISCUSSION

How did the Jews come to have a special relationship with God?

Could God's relationship with the Jews be considered partiality?

What similarity exists between God's treatment of the Jews and the blessings given to you?

“FINAL ARGUMENTS”

Romans 3:1-8

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III

A Guilty Verdict

ROMANS 3:9–20

What then? Are we Jews any better off? No, not at all. For we have already charged that all, both Jews and Greeks, are under sin,¹⁰ as it is written:

- “None is righteous, no, not one;
¹¹ no one understands;
no one seeks for God.
¹² All have turned aside; together they have
become worthless;
no one does good,
not even one.”
¹³ “Their throat is an open grave;
they use their tongues to deceive.”
“The venom of asps is under their lips.”
¹⁴ “Their mouth is full of curses and bitterness.”
¹⁵ “Their feet are swift to shed blood;
¹⁶ in their paths are ruin and misery,

¹⁷ and the way of peace they have not known.”

¹⁸ “There is no fear of God before their eyes.”

¹⁹ Now we know that whatever the law says it speaks to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be stopped, and the whole world may be held accountable to God. ²⁰ For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin.

ECCLESIASTES 7:20

Surely there is not a righteous man on earth who does good and never sins.

PSALM 14:1–3

The fool says in his heart, “There is no God.”

They are corrupt, they do abominable deeds;
there is none who does good.

² The Lord looks down from heaven on the children of man,

to see if there are any who understand,
who seek after God.

³ They have all turned aside; together they have become corrupt;

there is none who does good,
not even one.

READ | ROMANS 3:9–20

THINK ABOUT

In reading the text today, did you pick up on all the terms and phrases that indicated everybody is out of the boat: none, no one, not even one, together, no human being? If a relationship with God were described as being in the boat with Him, nobody would be able to go on the trip.

Nobody has a ticket. You can't earn one, and you can't buy one. The Judge's verdict is clear and right. All are under sin; every person has sinned and is guilty of disobedience to God. The evidence is inarguable. The list is long. There's no use trying to defend yourself; you're guilty. You're a sinner.

APPLY

It's always much easier to deal with our problems when we can blame others. You know how it goes. You may say, "The reason I hit my brother is that he took my game." No one makes us sin. We do it ourselves. Instead of obeying God and acting Christ-like, we choose to do what we want to do or make someone pay for not doing what we want them to do.

Learn how to own up to your failures. You may want to practice right now, "Hi, my name is _____, and I'm a sinner." The Bible has already pronounced your guilt. Only in Christ can you receive a pardon or forgiveness. God is much better to us than we deserve.

ASK

Why is it hard to admit when we sin?

Can you think of an example when you blamed someone for your bad choice?

How does it make you feel that God loves you even though you don't deserve it?

PRAY

Acknowledge your bent toward sin and ask for God's help.

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SING

“In Christ Alone” — *Getty Music*

THE BIG IDEA

All people are sinners and therefore guilty before God. The Apostle Paul makes it clear that we are all depraved and have turned our backs towards God. The law cannot justify anyone.

KEY POINTS

All are equal in God's eyes (v. 9).

God gives us a description of the depravity of humanity (vv. 10–18).

The law is insufficient and unable to save us (vv. 19–20).

LIFE APPLICATION

The entire human race is equally sinful in God's eyes.

The characteristics of depravity are evidenced in all humanity.

The law reveals and highlights our sin, but it offers no resolution.

DISCUSSION

What causes some people to perceive themselves as superior to others?

What happens in your mind when you are faced with your own propensity to sin?


How can it be accurate to propose that "none does good"?

“A GUILTY VERDICT”

Romans 3:9–20

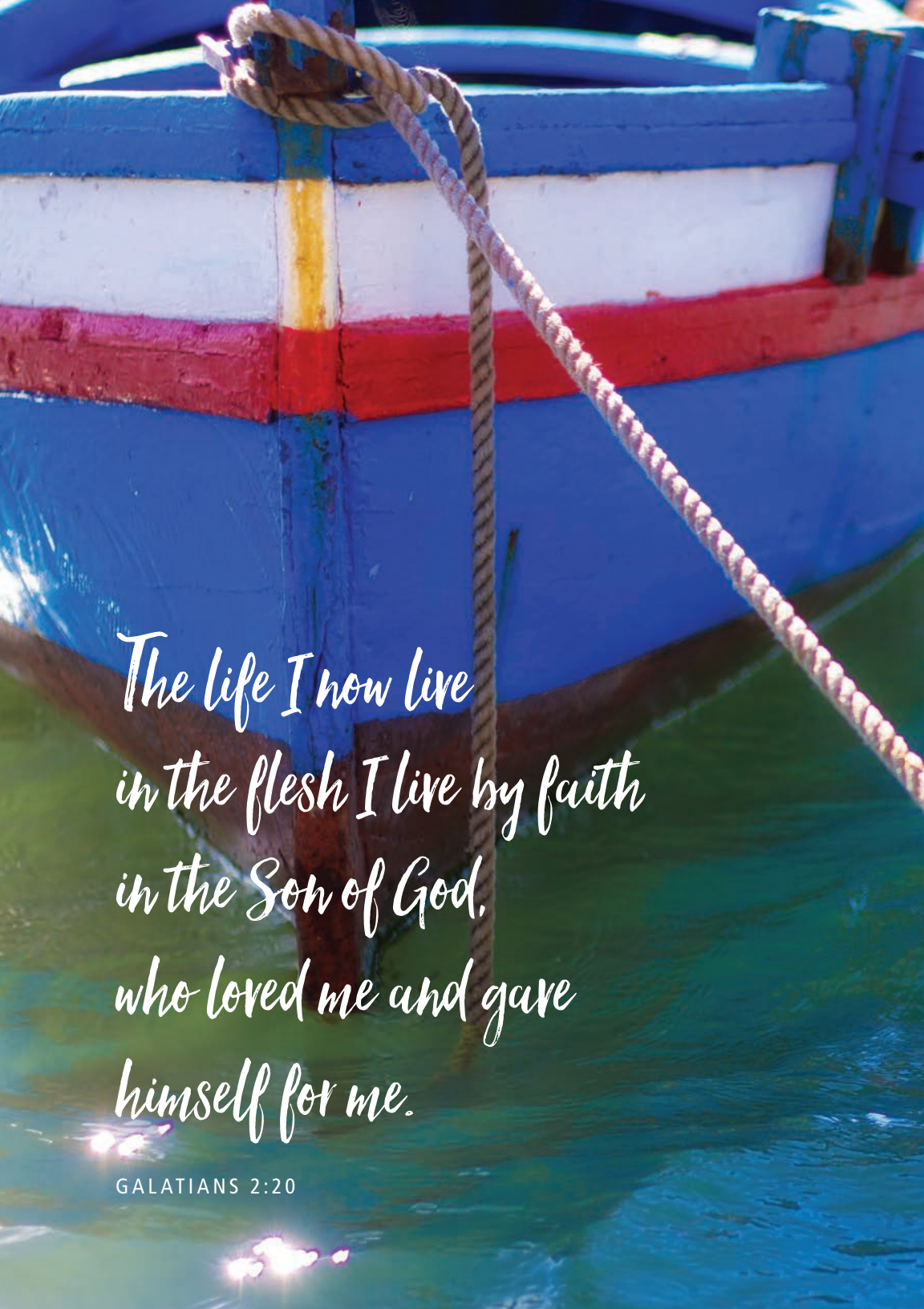
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RATHAPLEENAMCCCCXCIV



THE HEART IS DECEITFUL
ABOVE ALL THINGS,
AND DESPERATELY SICK;
WHO CAN UNDERSTAND IT?

JEREMIAH 17:9



*The life I now live
in the flesh I live by faith
in the Son of God,
who loved me and gave
himself for me.*

GALATIANS 2:20



III

Grace Alone

ROMANS 3:21-24

But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it—²² the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction:²³ for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,²⁴ and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus...

READ | ROMANS 3:21–24

THINK ABOUT

What does it mean to fall short? At school or work, we are evaluated on our performance. When I did not perform to the expectations my parents had set for school, I dreaded taking my report card home. At most companies, you have an annual performance review where your boss sits across the desk to evaluate how well you are doing your job. During those performance reviews, there are always areas for improvement. As we look at this passage, we will never be able to meet the requirements of God's righteousness. The task is impossible. We are too sinful, selfish, and ungrateful.

APPLY

It is good to take an honest look at yourself and your standing before God. James 1:22–25 tells us to look in the mirror. We often look in the mirror and play the comparison game. Instead of comparing ourselves to others, look in the mirror of God's Word and ask, "What does God see?" Where have you fallen short of God's demands of your life? These are not easy questions to answer! When we take a hard look at our motives, thoughts, actions, and obedience, it is humbling to know that the God of the universe still loves us! When we are saved by grace, God sees the blood of His beautiful and majestic Son, Jesus Christ. He no longer sees your sin and failures, rather He sees us as a son or daughter. Fall in love with His grace and mercy today, and repent of the sins in your life that keep you from pursuing Him fully.

ASK

Are there areas of your life that you are not living up to God's standards?

When is the last time you repented and asked for forgiveness from your family for your shortcomings?

How does the grace of God affect you each day and your view of life?

PRAY

Praise God for His Son and His forgiveness.

Pray that you will have the fortitude and desire to fight the sin in your life with a holy vengeance.

Beg God to give you strength to keep you from falling into temptation and the power to see the schemes of the devil.

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SING

“Amazing Grace” — Newton

THE BIG IDEA

After establishing that all of us are sinners and hopeless on our own, Paul now explains that our only hope is in Christ and His finished work on the cross. Having declared us guilty of sin, in Christ we can be justified by faith.

KEY POINTS

- Our salvation is not according to the law as it is weak (v. 21).
- Our salvation is a gift by faith in Christ alone (vv. 22a, 24).
- Salvation is offered equally to all mankind (vv. 22b–23).
- Salvation is offered freely by grace (v. 24).

DOCTRINE

Justification is the declaration by God that sinners trusting Christ are now righteous. In the grace of God, Christ's righteousness is imputed to them.

LIFE APPLICATION

- The law is weak in that it could not bring us into relationship with Christ.
- Ever since sin entered the world, a payment that included blood was required.
- God has graciously and freely offered salvation to all people everywhere.

DISCUSSION

- How does Revelation 5 aid your imagination of the law that is "weak"?
- With the Old Testament sacrificial system, why was Christ's death needed?
- Why is it necessary for us to be saved by "grace alone"?

“GRACE ALONE”

Romans 3:21-24

A series of horizontal dotted lines for taking notes.

HYMN

“But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ — by grace you have been saved — and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.” — EPHESIANS 2:4–7

Amazing Grace

1. A - maz - ing grace! how sweet the sound! That
 2. 'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear, And
 3. Thru man - y dan - gers, toils and snares I
 4. When we've been there ten thou - sand years, Bright
 5. A - maz - ing grace! how sweet the sound! That

saved a wretch like me! I once was lost, but
 grace my fears re - lieved. How pre - cious did that
 have al - read - y come. 'Tis grace hath bro't me
 shin - ing as the sun, We've no less days to
 saved a wretch like me! I once was lost, but

now I'm found; Was blind, but now I see.
 grace ap - pear The hour I first be - lieved!
 safe thus far, And grace will lead me home.
 sing God's praise Than when we'd first be - gun.
 now I'm found; Was blind, but now I see.

Text: John Newton, 1779 ♪ *Tune: Virginia Harmony, 1831*

III

The Justice of God

ROMANS 3:25-26

...whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. ²⁶ It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

READ | ROMANS 3:25–26

THINK ABOUT

Do you know and understand what propitiation means? It is a rich theological term that means that Christ's death on the cross appeased God's wrath and satisfied the justice He requires concerning our sin (1 John 4:10). In the Old Testament, the Hebrew equivalent of this word was used to describe the Mercy Seat — the place in the tabernacle where the high priest would sprinkle blood from a slain animal on the Day of Atonement to ceremonially make atonement for the sins of the people (Leviticus 16:14–16).

We know that we cannot satisfy God's justice and wrath by our own works. Therefore, Jesus experienced the wrath of God on the cross as a propitiation for our sins. Jesus' great sacrifice was not done in secret, but God put Him "forward" in a public display for all to see on the cross. He died the death that we should have died so that by "faith" our sins are covered by "His blood" (v. 25).

APPLY

The right response to Christ's great sacrifice as the propitiation for our sins is to trust Him by faith. We do that by confessing our sins and asking for His forgiveness. The debt has been paid in full for all who trust in Him: "It was to show His righteousness at the present time, so that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus" (v. 26). Give thanks to God today for the blessing that His Son's death on the cross was the satisfaction for your sins!

ASK

Am I right with God?

Has the blood of Christ covered my sins?

PRAY

Praise God for His righteous response to sin.

Confess your need for His grace, mercy, and forgiveness.

Pray for someone who is facing the wrath of God.

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SING

“Wonderful, Merciful Savior” — Selah

THE BIG IDEA

People often divorce the justice of God from the love of God. Here, Paul shows how salvation is inseparably linked to God's justice and love. God's justice requires that sin be atoned individually and collectively. Seeing that both the law and human attempts are inadequate to meet divine demands, the Father, through His love for mankind, sent His Son to atone for sin on the cross.

KEY POINTS

Christ is the propitiation for man's sin (v. 25a).

Reunion with God comes only through faith (v. 25b).

Salvation reveals the righteousness of God, the just and justifier (v. 26).

DOCTRINE

Propitiation is a term that shows how Christ satisfied the righteous demands of a holy God.

Salvation is the biblical idea of deliverance from sin and its consequence.

LIFE APPLICATION

God is both the judge who pronounces us guilty and the One who justifies us.

Forgiveness of sin can only be received through faith in Christ.

One can only come into relationship with God on the conditions established by Him.

DISCUSSION

Compare God's love with the human concept of love.


How is the love of God anchored in His nature?

How is the justice of God similar and dissimilar to the justice of the world?

“THE JUSTICE OF GOD”

Romans 3:25-26

A series of horizontal dotted lines for writing notes.

A detailed close-up photograph of classical architectural carvings. The image shows several acanthus leaves and volutes (scrolls) carved into a light-colored stone or marble. The carvings are highly detailed, with deep shadows and highlights that emphasize their three-dimensional form. The background shows more of the architectural structure, including a fluted column and a decorative frieze.

FOR CHRIST ALSO SUFFERED
ONCE FOR SINS, THE RIGHTEOUS
FOR THE UNRIGHTEOUS,
THAT HE MIGHT BRING US TO GOD,
BEING PUT TO DEATH IN THE FLESH
BUT MADE ALIVE IN THE SPIRIT

1 PETER 3:18

III

Faith Alone

ROMANS 3:27–31

Then what becomes of our boasting? It is excluded. By what kind of law? By a law of works? No, but by the law of faith. ²⁸ For we hold that one is justified by faith apart from works of the law. ²⁹ Or is God the God of Jews only? Is he not the God of Gentiles also? Yes, of Gentiles also, ³⁰ since God is one—who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith. ³¹ Do we then overthrow the law by this faith? By no means! On the contrary, we uphold the law.

READ | ROMANS 3:27–31

THINK ABOUT

We have been learning that central to “the heart of the Gospel” is the great truth of justification by faith alone, through grace alone, in Christ alone. Romans 3:21–31 contains some of the greatest words in the New Testament. We rejoice that we are justified not by what we do but rather through trusting in what Christ has done for us. We “are justified by His grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus” (3:24).

It is essential that we get the Gospel right. There is only one Gospel! See Galatians 1:8 to learn how passionate Paul is in defending the heart of the Gospel.

An excellent guide as to whether you truly understand the heart of the Gospel is whether or not you are boasting in yourself or focused on self. A good test of a worship service is to ask, “Who is receiving the praise?” God alone is worthy of all praise. In the Gospel, Paul makes it clear that our boasting is excluded. If we contributed in any way to our salvation, we could boast, but it is all pure grace. See Ephesians 2:8–9.

Also, there is not one Gospel for Jews and another Gospel for Gentiles. How could there be? All of us have sinned, and all of us stand in need of the same remedy: justification by faith alone apart from works.

APPLY

It is easy in Christian circles to “boast” of our spirituality. Most of us don’t do this in an obvious way, but we may subtly give the impression of how spiritual we are. As sinful humans, we like the attention to be on ourselves; whereas in the Gospel, God receives all of the glory as it is all of His grace. For an example of how Jesus saw boasting, read Luke 18:9–14. When you give all the praise to God and don’t exalt yourself over other people, you are beginning to understand the heart of the Gospel.

ASK

What do you find yourself boasting about? Are you still thinking that God’s acceptance of you is dependent, at least in part, on what you do?

In the first century, the Jews looked on themselves as superior to the Gentiles. Are there any groups of people to which you think you are superior?

While we are not saved by our works, those who are saved will demonstrate good works. Paul says, “we uphold the law” (v. 31). See also Ephesians 2:10. In what ways are you demonstrating that you are an authentic follower of Jesus?

PRAY

Lord humble me under Your mighty hand. Thank You for Your amazing grace in my life, and help me to demonstrate my thankfulness.

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SING

“My Faith Looks Up to Thee” — Palmer & Mason

THE BIG IDEA

The Apostle Paul presents yet another point relative to the Gospel and the law. Here it is clearly stated that justification by faith is not against the law, rather it complements and establishes it.

KEY POINTS

Biblical salvation leaves no room for boasting in human accomplishments (vv. 27–28).

Biblical salvation offers justification to everyone equally (vv. 29–30).

Biblical salvation confirms the law (v. 31).

LIFE APPLICATION

Since salvation is a free gift, it leaves no room for boasting.

Christ's work on the cross makes it possible for all people to be saved.

All humanity stands equal before the Lord.

DISCUSSION

How does the fact that salvation is free impact you?

How did God satisfy His holy nature and the law while saving mankind?

Do you think God would remain 100% holy and just had He not offered us salvation?

“FAITH ALONE”

Romans 3:27-31

A series of horizontal dotted lines for taking notes.

HYMN

“The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters. He restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name’s sake.

Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.

You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever.” — PSALM 23

My Faith Looks Up to Thee

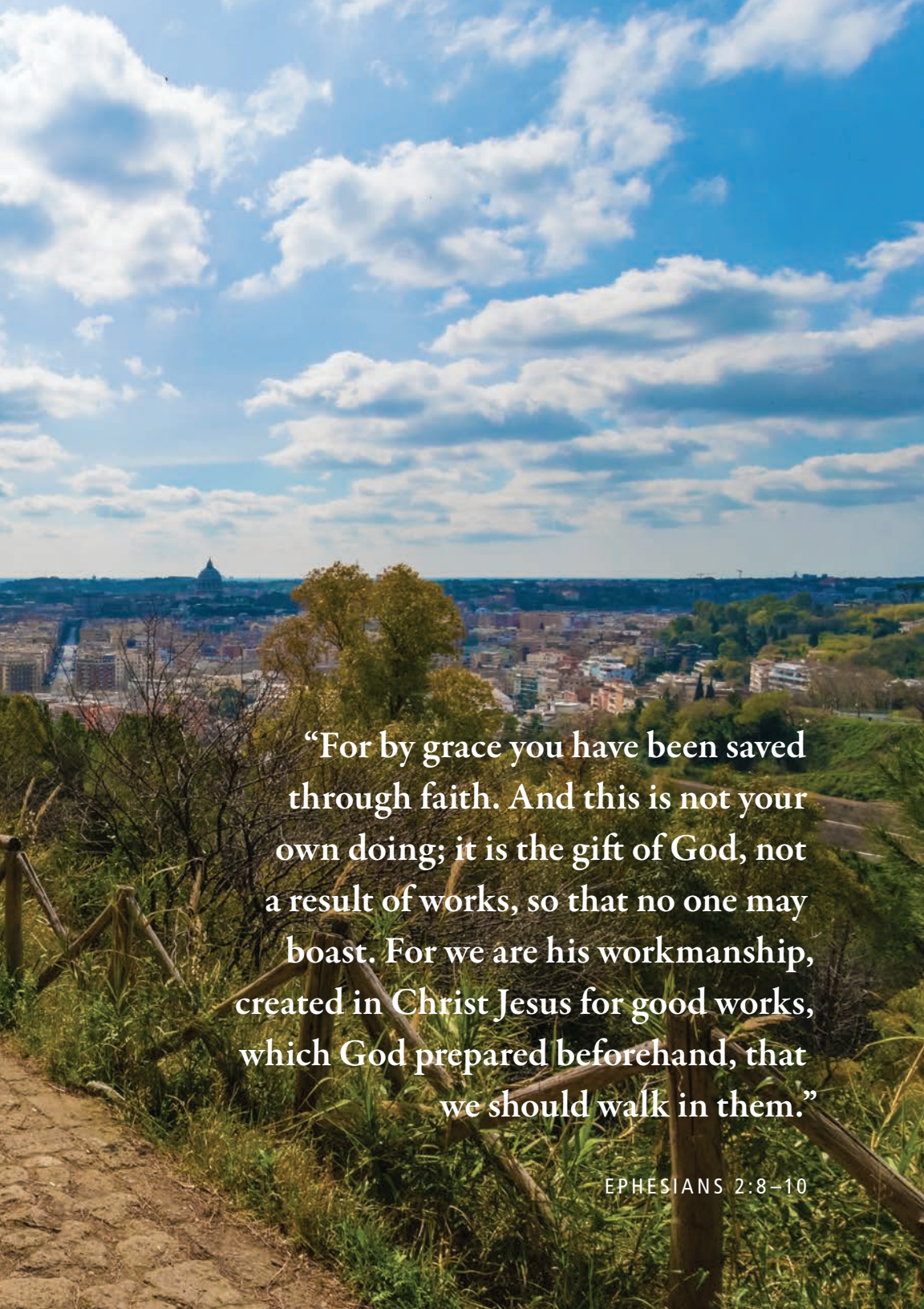
1. My faith looks up to Thee, Thou Lamb of Cal - va - ry,
 2. May Thy rich grace im - part Strength to my faint - ing heart,
 3. While life's dark maze I tread, And griefs to a - - round me spread,
 4. When ends life's trans - ient dream, When death's cold sul - - len stream

Sa - - vior di - - vine! Now hear me while I pray, take all my
 my zeal in - - spire! As Thou hast died for me, O may my
 be Thou my Guide; Bid dark - ness turn to day, wipe sor - row's
 ov - er me roll, Blest Sa - vior, then in love, fear and dis -

guilt a - way, O let me from this day be whol - ly Thine!
 love to Thee, Pure warm, and change-less be, a liv - - ing fire!
 tears a - way, Nor let me ev - er stray from Thee a - - - side,
 trust re-move; O bear me safe a - bove, a ran - - - somed soul!

Text: Ray Palmer, 1830 Tune: Lowell Mason, 1832





“For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.”

EPHESIANS 2:8-10

IV

Justification of the Wicked

ROMANS 4:1–8

What then shall we say was gained by Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh? ² For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. ³ For what does the Scripture say? “Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness.” ⁴ Now to the one who works, his wages are not counted as a gift but as his due. ⁵ And to the one who does not work but believes in him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness, ⁶ just as David also speaks of the blessing of the one to whom God counts righteousness apart from works:

⁷ “Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven, and whose sins are covered;

⁸ blessed is the man against whom the Lord will not count his sin.”

READ | ROMANS 4:1–8

THINK ABOUT

From Romans 3, we know that all people are sinners and deserve God's wrath or punishment. God is holy and has been offended by the wickedness of each person. So how could anyone escape eternal separation from God?

Consider Abraham and David. Instead of their sins being held against them, both men were accepted by God. Before Jesus' death and resurrection, God provided a means for people to know Him and walk with Him in anticipation of Christ's coming. They did not earn God's acceptance; that would be impossible. Rather, they believed God's promises. They loved God and trusted Him. That's genuine faith.

APPLY

When Jesus took on human flesh, God made Himself and His plan fully known. Jesus paid the debt of our sin and made it possible for our names to be cleared. The wicked can be justified before God, but there is only One Way. Jesus is the Mediator between God and man. If anyone places his trust in Jesus' death and resurrection, he can receive the promise of forgiveness and the righteousness of Christ.

“Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life” (1 John 5:12). It's beyond human comprehension that God would accept any of us. “Thanks be to God for His inexpressible gift” 2 Corinthians 9:15.

ASK

Have you placed your trust in Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection? How do you know?

What would you say to someone who is counting on their good works to get them into heaven?

PRAY

Try to express to God what His gift of salvation means to you. Tell Him how much you love Him.

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SING

“I’m Forgiven (You Are My King)” — BJ Foote

THE BIG IDEA

Paul now demonstrates how justification relates to the history of the Jews. Beginning with Abraham, the father of the Jewish nation, Paul explains how this patriarch was justified by faith, not works.

KEY POINTS

Abraham is justified by faith alone (vv. 1–3).

An illustration is given about the nature and extent of wages versus gifts (vv. 4–5).

Look at David's example of righteousness apart from works (vv. 6–8).

LIFE APPLICATION

Justification is a singular event, not a process. It is not to be confused with the process of **sanctification**.

No person can be justified by works—only by faith in Christ.

DISCUSSION

What are some implications of someone being justified by works?

How can we reconcile Paul and James' justification by faith and works respectively?

How could Abraham be saved by the same faith with which we are saved today?

“JUSTIFICATION OF THE WICKED”

Romans 4:1-8

A series of horizontal dotted lines for writing notes.

IV

Justification Apart from Works

ROMANS 4:9–17

Is this blessing then only for the circumcised, or also for the uncircumcised? For we say that faith was counted to Abraham as righteousness.¹⁰ How then was it counted to him? Was it before or after he had been circumcised? It was not after, but before he was circumcised.¹¹ He received the sign of circumcision as a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised. The purpose was to make him the father of all who believe without being circumcised, so that righteousness would be counted to them as well,¹² and to make him the father of the circumcised who are not merely circumcised but who also walk in the footsteps of the faith that our father Abraham had before he was circumcised.

¹³ For the promise to Abraham and his offspring that he would be heir of the world did not come through the law but through the righteousness of faith. ¹⁴ For if it is the adherents of the law who are to be the heirs, faith is null and the promise is void. ¹⁵ For the law brings wrath, but where there is no law there is no transgression.

¹⁶ That is why it depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace and be guaranteed to all his offspring—not only to the adherent of the law but also to the one who shares the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all, ¹⁷ as it is written, “I have made you the father of many nations”—in the presence of the God in whom he believed, who gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist.

GENESIS 15:1, 5–6

After these things the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision: “Fear not, Abram, I am your shield; your reward shall be very great.”

⁵ And he brought him outside and said, “Look toward heaven, and number the stars, if you are able to number them.” Then he said to him, “So shall your offspring be.” ⁶ And he believed the Lord, and he counted it to him as righteousness.

READ | ROMANS 4:9–17

THINK ABOUT

In Paul's defense of the Gospel, he now turns to the patriarch of the Jewish people, Abraham. In quoting Genesis 15:6, Paul reveals that Abraham was saved through faith and not by works. The Jews had difficulty with Paul's doctrine of justification. For the Jew, Abraham's circumcision, given to him by God, at the very least would have been in addition to his belief in God for salvation. Paul argues that Abraham was declared righteous by God well before ever being circumcised. This means that circumcision was not the basis for his justification; trust and surrender to God were.

APPLY

Are we not just like the Jews? Though we may understand in our minds that we are saved by grace alone through faith in Christ, often times the way we interact with God is attempting to earn salvation. It may be that you are tempted to act a certain way in hopes that God will love you more. Or maybe, you were baptized or attend church in hopes that God will accept you. The doctrine of justification apart from works of the law is amazing. It is given by grace alone. There is nothing more you can do to earn God's love. It is given freely to everyone who believes on the Lord Jesus Christ. Rest in what Christ has already done for you through the cross! Abraham was saved by faith. And the only way you and I can be saved is by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone!

ASK

Examine your heart. Are you trusting in Christ alone?

What kinds of actions or good works could we be tempted to trust for salvation instead of Christ?

PRAY

Thank God that our salvation isn't dependent on anything we have done but only on what He has done for us!

Ask God to reveal any areas in your life where you have been tempted to try to earn God's favor.

Praise God for the salvation He freely offers.

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SING

“Your Grace Is Enough” — Matt Maher

THE BIG IDEA

As is it true that Abraham was not justified by works, it is equally accurate that Abraham was not justified by the law of circumcision. It was critical to make this point because the Jews boasted frequently about their possession of the law and their efforts to keep it.

KEY POINTS

The blessing of salvation has been extended to all people (v. 9).

Abraham was justified apart from circumcision as a sign of belief (vv. 10–12).

Abraham was justified by faith alone (vv. 13–15).

Both Jews and Gentiles are heirs of the Abrahamic covenant (vv. 16–17).

LIFE APPLICATION

Salvation is offered to all people today.

Our salvation is dependent solely upon the finished work of Christ.

Christians today share in the promise made to Abraham.

DISCUSSION

What was the purpose of circumcision in the Old Testament? Why is it no longer required?

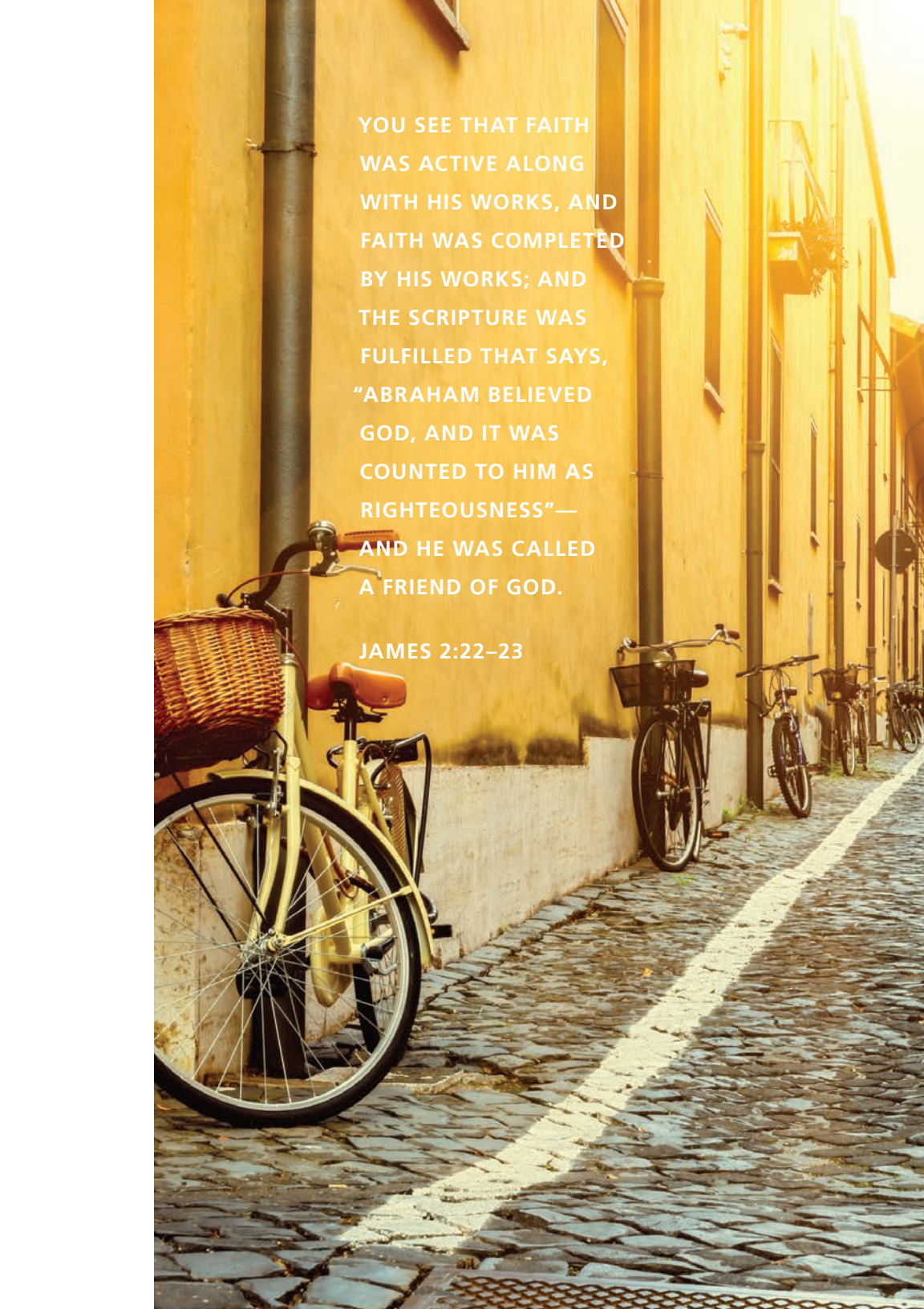
In what ways do we share in the “faith” of the Abrahamic covenant?

What connection should exist between our belief and practice?

“JUSTIFICATION APART FROM WORKS”

Romans 4:9-17

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YOU SEE THAT FAITH
WAS ACTIVE ALONG
WITH HIS WORKS, AND
FAITH WAS COMPLETED
BY HIS WORKS; AND
THE SCRIPTURE WAS
FULFILLED THAT SAYS,
“ABRAHAM BELIEVED
GOD, AND IT WAS
COUNTED TO HIM AS
RIGHTEOUSNESS”—
AND HE WAS CALLED
A FRIEND OF GOD.

JAMES 2:22-23

IV

The Faith that Saves

ROMANS 4:18–25

In hope he believed against hope, that he should become the father of many nations, as he had been told, “So shall your offspring be.”¹⁹ He did not weaken in faith when he considered his own body, which was as good as dead (since he was about a hundred years old), or when he considered the barrenness of Sarah’s womb.²⁰ No unbelief made him waver concerning the promise of God, but he grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God,²¹ fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised.²² That is why his faith was “counted to him as righteousness.”²³ But the words “it was counted to him” were not written for his sake alone,²⁴ but for ours also. It will be counted to us who believe in him who raised from the dead Jesus our Lord,²⁵ who was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification.

READ | ROMANS 4:18–25

THINK ABOUT

In our study of Romans, we have been learning that all of us deserve to be judged and condemned by God because of our innate sin (chapters 1–3). However, in this wonderful portion of Scripture, we learn from Abraham’s example that we are all justified by faith in Christ. “It [justification] will be counted to us who believe in Him who raised from the dead Jesus our Lord, who was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification” (Romans 4:24–25).

From this passage, we observe beautiful features about our salvation in Christ:

1. It gives us hope (v. 18).
2. Our faith is unwavering (v. 20).
3. True faith gives glory to God (v. 20).
4. True faith trusts God’s promises (v. 21).
5. Salvation is by faith (v. 22).
6. Faith is counted to us as righteousness (vv. 22–23).
7. We are justified by God’s resurrection power, not human effort (vv. 24–25).

APPLY

What wonderful truths about our salvation! Take some time to write down your thoughts about the features listed above. Then, share them with your family and friends. Also, encourage someone else to journal their thoughts regarding the features listed in this rich passage. Talk to someone you know who loves Jesus and will give you biblical direction and truth.

ASK

*Is there an area of your life that you must strengthen in light of these truths?
What should you do to strengthen that area, day to day?*

Who can you disciple regarding these magnificent truths of salvation?

THE BIG IDEA

Justification is consummated through the resurrection of Christ, not human efforts. Paul teaches that our justification comes on the basis of Christ's power and accomplishments of the cross alone. No human effort is involved!

KEY POINTS

Condemnation through Adam is compared to righteousness through Christ (vv. 18–19).

The law and sin are compared to the limitlessness of God's grace (v. 20).

Sin and death are compared to grace and eternal life (v. 21).

DOCTRINE

A theological dictionary defines **sin** as transgression, wrongdoing, transgression of the law of God, or the "missing of the mark."

Imputed sin is the sinful nature that all mankind inherited from Adam.

LIFE APPLICATION

Adam's act of disobedience in the Garden of Eden plunged the whole world into sin.

The law is only a shadow of the perfect to come and was not intended to give salvation.

We become heirs of Abraham ultimately through the Messiah's work on the cross.

DISCUSSION

How do you feel about eternal condemnation, brought by Adam?

If the law is weak and cannot save, why did God call the Jews to follow the law?

Take time to thank God for His grace that results in salvation.

“THE FAITH THAT SAVES”

Romans 4:18–25

A series of horizontal dotted lines for taking notes.

HYMN

“As for me, I would seek God, and to God would I commit my cause, who does great things and unsearchable, marvelous things without number.” — JOB 5:8–9

To God Be The Glory

1. To God be the glor - y, great things He has done; So loved He
2. O per - - fect re - demp - tion, the pur - chase of blood, To ev - ery
3. Great things He has taught us, great things He has done, And great our

the world that He gave us His Son Who yield - ed His life an a -
be - lie - ver the pro - mise of God; The vil - est o - ffend - er who
re - joic - ing through Je - sus the Son; But pur - er, and high - er, and

tone - ment for sin, And o - pened the life gate that all may go in.
tru - ly be - lieves, That mo - ment from Je - sus a par - don re - ceives.
great - er will be Our won - der, our trans - port, when Je - sus we see.

Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, Let the earth hear His voice! Praise the Lord,

praise the Lord, Let the peo - ple re - joice! O come to the Fa - ther, through

Je - sus the Son, And give Him the glor - y, great things He has done.

Text: Fanny Crosby, 1875 🎵 *Tune: William Howard Doane, 1875*



Know It by Heart

by Rodney Navey

We highly recommend you memorize key verses in the Book of Romans and lead your family to do so as well. Since Romans is a letter written to help us better understand the Gospel and the impact it has on our lives as followers of Jesus Christ, it makes sense that we could highlight key verses to lead us down the road of understanding and explaining salvation. Many have called this “The Roman Road.”

MEMORIZE THE ROMAN ROAD

Traditionally, five verses are included in “The Roman Road.” No problem if you want to stick with the main five, but we’re adding in two more as bookends. Our goal is to provide a clear, succinct way to share the Gospel with anyone:

- Romans 1:20 *“For His invisible attributes...”*
- Romans 3:23 *“For all have sinned...”*
- Romans 6:23 *“For the wages of sin...”*
- Romans 5:8 *“But God shows His love for us...”*
- Romans 10:9 *“If you confess with your mouth...”*
- Romans 10:13 *“Everyone who calls...”*
- Romans 12:1–2 *“I appeal to you therefore, brothers...”*

Work hard to memorize the verses completely and their addresses. Yes, that means word for word and every word. No, not just the general idea or a loose rendition.

MEMORIZE SCRIPTURE WORD FOR WORD

Why word for word?

Every word is inspired by God (*2 Timothy 3:16*).

Meditation is aided by correct recall (*Joshua 1:8*).

When sharing with others, they should get an accurate account and address for Scripture (*2 Timothy 2:15*).

It's also good for the brain to work on details. Our kids are stretched and strengthened by healthy mental exercises, and we adults need to stay sharp and keep growing too.

Scripture memorization, in general, is a lot of work and requires review. But it has great rewards. Invest in your relationship with God. Invest in witnessing to unbelievers. Invest in discipling those who are saved. And by all means invest in loving, learning, and living the Scriptures.

SUGGESTIONS FOR SCRIPTURE MEMORIZATION

Here are a few suggestions to help with the process:

Write each verse.

You may want to do this every day for a while. Write the verse on a napkin when you are having lunch. Write it on a note card. If you have artistic ability, write it out with flare. If not, use a computer to put together a nice copy.

Speak each verse.

Read it out loud each day, especially when you are first learning it. Say it to yourself and say it to others. Memorizing Scripture is easier when you do it with others. They can hold you accountable and challenge you.

Carry each verse.

Take it with you while you are memorizing it. Soon, the passage will be in your heart, but for now, take your note card with you. You'll have moments while you are waiting or having a break that you can work on it. You'll be amazed at how many moments you can find in the day to take a look at it, especially if you'll put your phone down (i.e. unless you are using your phone to aid your Scripture memory).

Play each verse.

One helpful game is to use a white board or a sheet of paper to leave out certain words. Children enjoy guessing which words are missing. As you leave out more words, more memory is required to quote the passage.

Celebrate each verse.

Once the passage is completely memorized, enjoy a nice reward. Take the family out to dinner or get some ice cream. Go to the Christian bookstore and get a good book to read or game to play.

Keep each verse.

Don't just drop the verse once it is memorized. Review, review, review! From time to time, read back over it. If you've memorized it as a family, periodically use it for devotions. Keep it before you and your family, or you will lose it.

Share each verse.

You will have many opportunities to share the verses you memorize with yourself and others. The more you use them, the more they will stick. Preach to yourself—you need to hear certain things from God. Share with others. It's always great to have a Word from God.

Again, Scripture memory is work, but it's great work because it's God's work. David Mathis notes in *Habits of Grace: Enjoying Jesus through the Spiritual Disciplines*: "Scripture memory, at its best, is about feeding your soul today and mapping your life and mind onto the very life and mind of God... When we learn the Scriptures by heart... we're listening to and learning the voice of our Creator and Redeemer Himself" (pp. 67–68).

WHY SHOULD YOU MEMORIZE SCRIPTURE?

Before we get more specific about memorizing “The Roman Road,” let’s take a look at one more list. Why memorize Scripture in general? After all, we have the Bible in print, on our computers, on our tablets, and on our phones. Do we need to commit the time and brain power necessary to do this?

Yes, based on at least six reasons:

Address Sin

Scripture memory is required if you are going to address the sin in your life: “I have stored up Your Word in my heart, that I might not sin against You” (Psalm 119:11). That’s enough reason to engage in the process for yourself and your family. Jesus modeled the use of the Word in fighting temptation. Throw your lot with Him.

Divine Guidance

Scripture memory is required for divine guidance at any moment: “Your Word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path” (Psalm 111:105). When you or your children are making decisions and living life, what does God draw from in your hearts and minds to lead you? The clearest and surest way He leads you is through His Word. In the immediacy of a given moment and the thought processes of each day, your heart will be ready to receive His guidance.

Be Prepared

Scripture memory is required for ongoing training to do God’s work: “All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work” (2 Timothy 3:16–17). Training occurs through each avenue of Bible intake; but can you see the value of having God’s Word at His disposal in your heart and mind? He may correct or convict you at any given moment. He may desire to lead you in a relationship or in ministry to another person. Will you be prepared and ready?

Meditation on His Word

Scripture memory is required to obey God’s command to meditate on His Word

day and night: “This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success” (Joshua 1:8).

Hiding Scripture in your heart puts you in a much better position to fulfill God’s will of meditating on His Word day and night. It’s a matter, then, of training yourself to think through it as you go through your day and as you settle in for the night.

Effective Prayer

Scripture memory is required to pray according to God’s will (or at least more likely): “If you abide in Me, and My Words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you” (John 15:8). How else does His Word abide in you? You memorize it; you hide it in your heart. The more His Word is stored within your heart and mind, the more you will know how to pray. His Word is His will, and unless you pray according to His will, your prayers are not going to be effective (1 John 5:14–15).

Can you pray in God’s will without memorizing Scripture? Well, yes, but it’s less likely. The less you know His Word, the less likely you are to know His will. You should be prepared to pray about situations and for people at a moment’s notice. If His Word is in your heart, you’ll be ready.

Life Change

Scripture memory is required for life change and fruitfulness: “His delight is in the law of the Lord, and on His law he meditates day and night. He is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither” (Psalm 1:3).

It’s possible to carry God’s Word around at all times. You were created with the capacity to memorize so that you could remember God, His ways, and His Word. As you meditate on what you have memorized, He grows you and shapes you into a person of character and integrity. His Word is a sword that cuts, (Hebrews 4:12–13), and like a fire or hammer that breaks in pieces, (Jeremiah 23:29).

God will transform your mind and heart by the power of His Word, (Romans 12:1–2). His Spirit uses Scripture to convict, teach, and mold. Changed hearts and minds lead to changed lives. A changed life lived for Him will bear much fruit and bring Him much glory (John 15:5). The Word in your heart makes a lot of sense, doesn't it?

In his book, *The Discipline of Grace*, Jerry Bridges offers wise counsel: “We cannot effectively pursue holiness without the Word of God stored up in our minds where it can be used by the Holy Spirit to transform us... memorize Scriptures that deal with the particular temptations to which you are especially vulnerable. Then ask the Holy Spirit to bring them to your mind at times of temptation” (p. 175).

BACK TO THE ROMAN ROAD

You preach the Gospel to three different audiences. First, you preach to people who are not followers of Jesus Christ. You do so because you obey your King, but also because you want them to understand how much God loves them. Secondly, you preach to yourself. You need reminders of how much God loves you. Thirdly, you preach the Gospel to other believers to encourage them in their walk with Christ.

When you memorize the verses that make up “The Roman Road,” you are prepared to preach or to share the best news in the world. No matter where you are in life, you never outgrow your need for the Gospel. As you mature in the faith, it's a matter of growing deeper in the Gospel.

VERSES & KEY POINTS

During the study in Romans, you will examine and discuss these verses in their context. For now, commit to hiding them in your heart and understanding the key ideas in each verse.

ROMANS 1:20

“For His invisible attributes, namely, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse.”

- God created the world.
- He reveals Himself through creation.
- Everyone is created by God and responsible to Him.

ROMANS 3:23

“For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”

- All people are sinners by nature and by choice.
- The measurement of a person’s heart and behavior is the perfection of God.

ROMANS 6:23

“For the wages of sin is death but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

- Sin has eternal consequences.
- The ultimate death is separation from God.
- God has provided a relationship with Him that cannot be earned by works.

ROMANS 5:8

“But God shows His love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”

- God loves you.
- The cross proves His love.
- We don’t deserve His love.

ROMANS 10:9

“If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.”

- Confessing Jesus is Lord means to surrender and repent.
- Believing God raised Him from the dead indicates trust in His work.
- Being saved means being saved from sin to a relationship with God.

ROMANS 10:13

“For everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”

- Everyone includes any one.
- Calling on His name means to ask for forgiveness and a relationship with Him.
- God promises to save everyone who calls on His name.
- When He saves us, He adopts us into His family.

ROMANS 12:1-2

“I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.”

- Authentic followers of Christ offer themselves completely to God.
- We were created to worship God.
- Growth in faith means His followers are less like the world.
- Growth in faith means transformation into Christ’s likeness.
- Followers of Christ do God’s will.



FOR THE WORD OF GOD AND FOR THE TESTIMONY OF JESUS CHRIST

REVELATION 1:9

The logo for Calvary, featuring the word "Calvary" in a white, elegant serif font. Above the letter 'v' is a small, stylized icon of a cross with a crown on top. The logo is set against a solid black square background.

Calvary