



## **The Letter to the Romans**

# Path 3: Learning The Gospel Doctrines

## **Path 3:** The Letter to the Romans

**Supplemental Reading:**  
*“Let The Nations Be Glad: The  
Supremacy of God In Missions”*

by John Piper

&

*“Evangelism & The Sovereignty of God”*  
by J.I. Packer

**Memory Verses:**  
Romans 1:16-17, 3:23, 6:23,  
5:8, 10:9-10, 12:1-2

**Outside The Journey:**  
Finding a way to serve in your  
church or community

# The Letter to the Romans

## Disciple-makers,

The Gospel Journey is about studying the Word of God, led by the Spirit of God, in a discipleship relationship, to grow in the grace of the Gospel. The Field Guide is NOT to be taught as a Bible Study or even as the primary curriculum for the Gospel Journey. The curriculum is the Word of God, and we want there to be great freedom for those in a group to discuss what the Holy Spirit has been revealing to them in their study that week. We do not want the discussion to be limited to the content covered in the Field Guide.

With that being said, the Field Guide is an effort to prepare you for significant theological terms, concepts, and themes that will likely arise in the course of discussion in a given week of reading. Thus, we encourage you to read over the content we have chosen to include in the Field Guide a couple times before your weekly discussion, so that you are able to explain these terms, concepts, and themes faithfully and clearly as they come up. If they do not come up naturally, we'd encourage you to bring them up at some point in the discussion, as we believe they are things that a mature and equipped disciple of Christ needs to understand.

Again, our hope is that far more than what is covered in the Field Guide be brought up in discussion each week, and that this tool might prepare you to explain foundational Gospel terms, concepts, and themes found in each week's reading. Ultimately the Gospel Journey is about studying the Word of God, led by the Spirit of God, in a discipleship relationship, in order to grow in the grace of the Gospel. May your journey be blessed!

## The Harvest Team

# Intro to Romans

Romans is a letter written by the apostle Paul to Christians in Rome. His main point in this letter is to make clear the gospel of Jesus Christ – that God is being glorified in the salvation of sinners. Primarily, the letter points out that this gospel centers around the righteousness of God. It is God’s revealing his own righteousness that brings both judgement to ungodly and unrighteous people as well as provides the righteousness that is required for men to be saved. Paul’s secondary focus in Romans is the unification of the church body, specifically across Jewish and Gentile racial lines. He labors to point out that because all are condemned under sin, salvation must be by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone – so that all are one under the cross.

As you read, you will notice that Romans is full of massive and weighty theological words and truths. However, Paul’s style of writing communicates these complex truths in understandable and clear ways. For example, one aspect of this format is the dialogue between Paul and his hypothetical objector. Romans is unified, first and foremost, by the overarching message of the eternal plan of God for the salvation of men and women, from every people group. All of this is clear from the thesis of the book, Romans 1:16-17, which says, “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 Gentile. For in it, the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, for as it is written, ‘The righteous shall live by faith.’”

**The Gospel of God (1:1, 16-17)**

In his greeting, Paul makes clear that his life is now dedicated to the gospel of God. The word “Gospel” means “good news.” The good news is that God saves sinners by grace through faith in the provision of Christ. This gospel originates when God promises that Someone is coming to redeem that which has been lost in the Fall (See Genesis 3). This is anticipated throughout the entire Old Testament, and is made manifest in the coming of Christ. Thus, the focal point of the gospel is and has always been the redemptive purpose of God, which displays His glory throughout the Earth.

The most compact teaching about the gospel in the Bible is found in Romans 1:16-17, which declares that the gospel is God’s power to save all who believe, and goes first to the Jew and then to the Gentile. The results of believing this gospel are twofold. First, God declares those who believe righteous. Second, a powerful transformation begins in the life of the believer. Ultimately, it is clear that God’s gospel is for all nations.

(See also 1 Corinthians 15:1-4, 2 Corinthians 5:17-21, Titus 3:5-7)

## **God's Wrath (1:18)**

Paul is communicating here that when people suppress what can be known of God and seek to worship what is not God – or in Paul's own words, when people “exchange the truth of God for a lie and worship created things rather than the Creator” – God justly sets His wrath and anger against them. The natural consequence of suppressing the truth about God is that it will be a constant struggle to live consistently in the world that God created. So even now, as we stand in the kindness of God, we are to remember that God's kindness is meant to lead us to repentance (Romans 2:4), which is turning from our sin and to our Creator. Remember, God deals justly with those who reject the truth of Him and mercifully with those who believe in Him.

(See also Acts 17:30-31)

## **General Revelation (1:19-21)**

God reveals Himself in creation in such a way that all mankind is without excuse. Paul explains that God has revealed Himself since the creation of the world so that man might know Him as Creator. Yet people “exchange the truth about God for a lie” and “in the futility of their thinking, their foolish hearts are darkened”. Paul is arguing that because of the idolatry of

their hearts, many will persist in suppressing what they know to be true of God. Ultimately, it is their own idolatry that leads them to choose to worship the creation rather than the Creator, who is God.

(See also Ephesians 2:1-3)

### **Judgment by Works (2:6)**

We should notice here that God will in fact judge according to works. Does this mean we have to do enough “good” to receive eternal life? For Paul, the answer is certainly not! In fact, we cannot (Romans 8:7-8). It is by trusting in Jesus Christ and Him alone that we receive His righteousness – a righteousness gained apart from the law – and are judged by His works and not our own. Praise be to God for this good news! (See also Psalm 7, Galatians 2:16) We should notice here that God will in fact judge according to works. Does this mean we have to do enough “good” to receive eternal life? For Paul, the answer is certainly not! In fact, we cannot (Romans 8:7-8). It is by trusting in Jesus Christ and Him alone that we receive His righteousness – a righteousness gained apart from the law – and are judged by His works and not our own. Praise be to God for this good news!

(See also Psalm 7, Galatians 2:16)



## Gospel Response

In response to this week's reading, we are overwhelmed by the goodness of the gospel – that God reveals Himself to us, even in our sinfulness, and that He made provision for our wickedness through His only Son. Filled with a renewed gratitude for what Christ has done on our behalf, we are inspired and emboldened to carry forth the gospel and make disciples of all nations.

**Circumcision of the Heart (2:25-26)**

The Jewish people prided themselves in being the people of God, displaying outward conformity to their nationalistic identity through circumcision. Yet here in Paul's letter to the Romans, we see that our identity as the people of God is not found in what we know or our outward conformity, but rather, by our inwardly changed hearts that result in transformed lives. (See also Galatians 3)

**No One Is Righteous (3:10)**

No one is righteous because perfect righteousness before God cannot be earned or inherited by sinful men. Even the Jews, who were given the Law of God, fell short of God's righteous standard in their inability to obey the Law. While the Law of God does reveal His perfect standard, it was not meant to be a means for attaining righteousness. Rather, the Law was meant to reveal their need and point them to Christ, who is the fulfillment of the Law and through whom both Jew and Gentile are justified by faith. Fortunately, Jesus Christ's keeping of the Law earns the righteousness of God for those who cannot earn it themselves. (See also Acts 3:14, Acts 10:38, Romans 5:18, Galatians 2:15-16, Hebrews 4:15)

## **Righteousness by Faith (3:21-22)**

We all fall short of the righteousness of God. “There is no one righteous, not even one” (Romans 3:10). But the good news of the Gospel is that in Christ Jesus, the righteousness of God has been revealed apart from the law. Jesus died in our place and for our sin. Because He has no sin of His own, He is able to take our place in judgment. God’s wrath towards sin was poured out on Christ on the cross, where “He became sin, that we might become the righteousness of God” (2 Corinthians 5:21). This is the definition of the word propitiation, that God’s wrath is satisfied. Whereas other religions involve man working in order to attain righteousness, Christianity centers on Christ’s righteousness being imputed to those who trust in Him as the Provision of God. Therefore, salvation is the gift of God, neither earned nor deserved, but received by faith in Christ. (See also Ephesians 3:17, Hebrews 4:2, 11)

## **Gospel Response**

In response to this week’s reading, we are aware of our falling short of God’s standard of righteousness. We rejoice in the unmerited, righteous provision of God in Christ. Admitting and confessing our need, we surrender to Him in worship.

**Justification (4:3)**

In this week's reading, Paul introduces the weighty theological truth of justification. Justification is a legal term meaning "to declare righteous". Just like a judge makes a pronouncement of guilty or not guilty after hearing a case, God pronounces "not guilty" on all those who by faith surrender to Christ.

Those who are justified are declared righteous not because of their good works or religious efforts, but by the righteousness of Christ transferred to them, or imputed to them, by faith. God is able to do this, and still be a just God, because Christ paid for our sin on the cross and the wrath of God towards sin was satisfied in the shed blood of Christ. Because Jesus paid the price for our sin on the cross, we can be declared righteous by virtue of His righteousness. He became sin and we become the righteousness of God. Martin Luther called this "The Great Exchange."

The astounding truth of justification is that God no longer counts our sin against us because of the work of Christ and the death he died in our place and for our sin.

(See also Genesis 15:6, Ephesians 2:8-9)

## Faith (4:13)

Faith is a necessary requirement for justification. The object of saving faith is God's provision in Jesus Christ, who serves as mediator between God and man (1 Timothy 2:5). Faith is the means of justification, while Christ's righteousness is the basis of justification. We can have a relationship with God through faith in Christ, who defeated death and separation from God by His resurrection from the grave. It is by faith that God imputes the righteousness of Christ to us. The three ingredients of faith are knowing, believing, and trusting. You may know that Jesus died for the sins of the world, but do you believe He died for your sins and have you trusted Him as your Savior?

(See also Colossians 1:15-23, 2:13-15)

## Gospel Response

In response to this week's reading, we are humbled and grateful that our standing with God is not based on our own performance or nationality, but solely on faith in the promises of God. We confess that it requires daily surrender to walk in faith. As we share the gospel with others, we make sure that we share the story of trusting in God's promise of salvation, rather than outward religious activities or experiences. We thank and praise God that He has declared us righteous through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

**Peace with God (5:1)**

Paul says that “we have peace with God through faith.” The remarkable fact about the phrase “have peace” is that this is a present reality. While there is no striving or religious activity of our own that can bring about this kind of peace, but the good news of the gospel is because of what Christ has done, we have peace with God from now until eternity. (See also Acts 10:36, Philippians 1:2)

**Reconciliation (5:11)**

The word “reconciliation” is the idea of a peace being made between enemies. Paul says that we were not just separated from God, but enemies of God (Rom. 5:10). In our sin, we were in rebellion to God. “But God demonstrates His love for us in this, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.” The peace treaty, then, that satisfies the wrath of God towards our sin is the blood of Christ. (See also 2 Corinthians 5:19-19)

## **Christ, The Second Adam (5:19)**

Everyone is represented before God by either Adam or Christ. In Adam, there is only death because of sin. But in Christ, there is life and peace because of His righteousness. It is by Adam's disobedience that all men are made sinners, but it is by Christ's obedience that many of those sinners will be declared righteous. (See also 1 Corinthians 15:22, 45)

## **Gospel Response**

In response to this week's reading, we worship Jesus because His grace is stronger than the sin that we inherited from Adam. We praise God who loved us and died for us while we were still sinners and enemies of the cross. We are challenged to remember that to hold on tightly to salvation by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone.

**Dead to Sin, Alive to God (6:11-14)**

Paul tells Christians not to let sin reign in our bodies, but to present our lives to God as instruments of righteousness. Since Paul gives this as a command, the responsibility of the believer is to obey, but the power to obey comes from the Holy Spirit. Christ has conquered sin and death, and we can participate in that victory with Him and through Him.

(See also John 14:26, Acts 1:8, Ephesians 1:13, Philippians 2:12-13)

**The Freedom of a New Master (6:17-18)**

Given the scandalous grace of the gospel, Paul is answering the charge that grace would give believers the license to sin. This misunderstanding of grace is called “antinomianism,” which literally translates to “no law” for the believer. While the preaching of grace will inevitably expose the gospel to this charge, Paul’s quick response is that of course we are not free to sin ... in fact, how could we continue to sin against the Savior we adore? The gospel gives us the greatest freedom, which is freedom from sin and freedom to Christ.



Although worldly wisdom might define freedom as having no master, biblical freedom is having the right Master, Jesus Christ, and the life-giving boundaries of the Word of God.  
(See also John 8:28-34, Galatians 5:1, 1 Peter 2:16)

## Gospel Response

In response to this week's reading, we are humbled as we recognize our own inability and complete dependence on the Holy Spirit. While we are thankful for the gift of eternal life, we consider deeply the scandalous nature of the grace that saved us from our sin. As we present the gospel to others, is it so full of grace that it produces the misunderstanding of being free to sin?

**Released from the Law (7:6)**

What does it mean to be “released from the law?” Two mistakes Christians make are to believe: 1) there is no law now, so we can live as we please (antinomianism) or 2) obeying the law earns our righteousness and right standing with God (legalism). We are told that there is a “new way of the Spirit” that is different. Life and liberty come through following Christ, admitting our struggle, and relying on His Spirit to empower us to live in the freedom He gives. (See also 1 Corinthians 6:12, 10:23, Galatians 2:19-20)

**The Law Magnifies Christ (7:7)**

As Christ’s followers, we admit that the Law is good but we need His grace to follow Him and His mercy in our failure. With our minds being renewed, we serve the Lord, but in our flesh we still struggle. We have a new awareness of our flaws and our weakness, and yet a heightened appreciation and gratitude for His Spirit which gives us victory over our flesh. Christ is our Rescuer; He has released us from captivity to sin and made us alive to righteousness. (See also Galatians 2:13)

## **Romans 7 and The Believer (7:7-25)**

At times in Scripture, there are meaningful theological tensions that arise, this is a notable example of one of those tensions. Some scholars believe that Paul is describing his experience as a Christian, but others say Paul is describing a pre-Christian experience. Furthermore, Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones argues that this debate misses the entire point of this chapter of Romans. For more information on all of these views, consult The Gospel Coalition's Perplexing Passages series on Romans 7.

(See also Acts 15, 1 Corinthians 8:2)

## **Gospel Response**

In response to this week's reading, we praise God for how the Law of God shows us the greatness of God. We thank God that He has revealed Himself to us through the Law, and that He has revealed even more of Himself through His Son, Jesus Christ (Heb. 1:1-2). We praise God that we have been delivered by Christ. We remember that we are connected to God because of His love and redeeming grace. Finally, we ask God to help us understand and persevere through theological tensions.

**No Condemnation (8:1)**

When we think of condemnation, we may think of someone who has been tried and sentenced to punishment. There is an overwhelming sense of disapproval attached to being condemned. Conversely, those who are “in Christ” are no longer condemned; thus, there is no disapproval for our failure to obey the Law of God. Because Christ took our sin on Himself, we are no longer condemned by our sin; instead, we are freed by the law of the Spirit of Life (Rom. 8:2-3), which is given to those who have faith in Christ Jesus. We now view life through the lens of God’s Spirit as we are being renewed.

(See also 2 Corinthians 3:6)

**Life in the Spirit (8:2)**

Having been freed from the condemnation of sin, we now live by the Spirit and not by the flesh. Our lives are no longer governed by fleshly desires, but each day we live by the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit. The beauty of new life in Christ is to an ever-increasing degree, the power of the Holy Spirit sets us free from the controlling power of sin and death.

(See also Galatians 5:16-23)

## **Adoption (8:15)**

As Christians, we have been adopted into the family of God. Adoption gives us all the same legal rights and privileges that biological children would have – we are heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ of the coming Kingdom. Furthermore, we now can address God in an intimate way as “Abba Father!” His Spirit bears witness with our Spirit that we have this new relationship.

(See also Galatians 4:5, Ephesians 1:5)

## **Order of Salvation (8:29-30)**

You’ll notice an order in the way Paul uses salvific terms as you read these verses. Some have called this order “the golden chain of salvation.” From this passage we see a chain with links secured and held together by the Sovereign work of God himself as He draws us to Himself and bring us to glory.

(See also Ephesians 1:1-13)

## **Gospel Response**

In response to this week’s reading, we follow the Spirit, even if it leads to suffering, because of our hope in a greater glory. In our lives, this means changing our focus from the earthly to the eternal – putting to death the deeds of the body and bringing to life the things of the Spirit. Having been adopted as God’s children because of the gospel, we trust our Father and look forward to an inheritance with Christ in eternity.

**Election (9:11, 16)**

In displaying his willingness to sacrifice for his Jewish brothers, Paul begins this chapter with compassion for the lost. It is clear from this passage that when it comes to salvation, neither genealogy nor works are enough. God's unconditional election reminds us that nothing can thwart God's sovereign purposes and He will have "mercy and compassion on whomever he wills" (Rom. 9:15, 18).

Because "God's ways are higher than our ways" (Isaiah 55:8-9), this teaching may be difficult to understand and we know there is mystery involved in the will of God. While we are reminded that God has not revealed all things to us (Deuteronomy 29:29), one thing we do know is that we are not saved by what we do, but by what God has done. Election is a doctrine that we know to be true even though we cannot fully comprehend it. Remember, we have to trust that He is infinitely more loving and merciful than we could ever imagine.

Seeking to understand election produces humility because this doctrine tests our human desire for autonomy. Whenever we think about this doctrine, we should think about Jesus Christ. God planned from eternity past to send Him to rescue us from the bondage of our sin, and He never turns away those who come in faith – "whoever believes in him will not be put to shame" (Rom. 9:33).

(See also 2 Peter 1:10)

## **The Stumbling Block (9:30-32)**

In this section, we see why Israel did not live according to God's Law. While the Law was intended to point us to our need for a Savior, the Israelites tried to use God's Law as a means of earning righteousness. The truth is that righteousness was by faith in the Old Testament just as it is by faith in the New Testament. Thus, salvation is through faith in the provision of God, yet the tendency of man is to trust in his own ways. Jesus was sent as a stumbling block to those who wanted to justify themselves by works, but as hope for those who recognize their inability to do so.

(See also Hebrews 8)

## **Gospel Response**

In response to this week's reading, we realize that we did not find God, He found us. We do not place our trust in what we have done, but in Christ who will never put us to shame. Also, we repent of our tendency to question God, which is based in forgetting that we are created and God is the Creator. Ultimately, we worship God because He is beyond our understanding. Finally, we thank God for having mercy on us and pray for Him to have mercy on those we share the gospel with as well. As we share the gospel with others, we pray for a confidence that is not based on our presentation, but on the power of God which is effective for all.

**Confession and Belief (10:9-12)**

Paul teaches that confession is a verbal expression of something that has happened inwardly. Confession publicly confirms that there is evidence of faith. However, consider the content of this particular confession – “Jesus is Lord” and “God raised Him from the dead.” For Paul, the confession of faith involves more than knowing about the resurrection. We must agree He lived a perfect life and died for the sins of the world. We know that God approved Christ’s atoning work because He raised him from the dead.

That being said, faith that saves is not just intellectual. As Martin Luther said, “we are saved by faith alone, but not by faith that is alone.” Words and prayers do not save us without accompanying faith, but when a person has faith the heart believes and the mouth confesses Jesus is Lord. Thus, saving faith includes a deep internal trust in Christ. (See also John 1:12, John 6, 1 John 2:23, 4:2)



## **Faith Comes By Hearing (10:14-17)**

In this passage, Paul underscores the importance of the Word of Christ – the gospel – going out to all the earth. We are told that faith comes through hearing the Word of Christ as it is proclaimed by those who are sent. The Word of Christ is a reference to the specific good news to be preached. The message that is powerful to save is this: that Jesus was crucified and rose from the dead in victory over sin as Savior and Lord.

Paul uses a series of rhetorical questions to confirm this process. How can they believe unless they hear? How can they hear without being told? How can they be told without someone being sent? Amazingly, God sends us as His hands and feet to carry the powerful life-changing message of reconciliation. God uses sinners like us as ambassadors to reach the lost all over the earth.

(See also 2 Corinthians 5:20, Galatians 3:2)

**God Uses Israel's Rejection (11:1, 11, 17-20)**

One of the big questions that would have likely been asked by Paul's audience is this: if God's promise was given to the Jews, "has God rejected his people?" In this text, Paul responds quickly that his own salvation proves the contrary (Romans 11:1). God was still saving many Jewish people through Jesus at the time of Paul's writing, just as He is today.

While a partial hardening has come over the nation of Israel, God promises to save anyone who believes in Jesus – including Gentiles (Romans 11:25). As we have seen, Paul has displayed the disobedience of both Jew and Gentile alike to make it clear that it is God's mercy alone – rather than anyone's works – that brings salvation. Realizing that "branches were broken off" through Jewish unbelief so that Gentiles might be "grafted in" through belief, humbles everyone because it is God who saves (Romans 11:22).  
(See also Acts 2:36-41, Acts 10:9-48)

## **All Glory to God (11:33-36)**

After learning about major doctrines such as propitiation, justification by faith, reconciliation, adoption, sanctification, glorification, and election, Paul draws us back to the depths and riches of God. The God of the Bible is a God who is so far beyond our understanding (Psalm 145:3) that He is knowable, yet incomprehensible. As Creator, God is the initiator, sustainer, and culmination of all things (Romans 11:36). Given the character and nature of this amazing God, we joyfully respond in worship.

(See also 2 Timothy 2:15, 3:15-16, Ephesians 4:14)

## **Gospel Response**

In response to this week's reading, we are amazed at the depths of God's riches, wisdom, and understanding. We worship Him and are humbled by how little we can see from our perspective in time and history. While we praise God for inviting us into this salvation by grace, we pray that we will be faithful to join Him in His purpose to preach the good news to the ends of the earth.

**Transformed (12:2)**

The Greek word Paul uses for “transformation” is where we get the word “metamorphosis” in English, and it means that we become something different than we once were. The amazing truth is that when we are regenerated, or “born again,” we receive from God a new heart and disposition – our eyes are opened and we see God for who He truly is. Because of the gospel, we can have an intimate relationship with Him, through which we grow daily.

As Christians, we can look back to a moment of surrender as the genesis of saving faith; it is our beginning. In this verse, Paul speaks to the continual “metamorphosis” of the believer’s mind such that there is a daily practice of surrender, or dying to ourselves. While we cannot transform ourselves, God’s Spirit transforms us and leads us into the will of God for His glory and our good (Romans 8:28). (See also 2 Corinthians 3:18)

## Unity in the Body (12:3-5)

Paul's first example of God transforming us involves how we see our relationship to one another. God is not merely saving us as individuals; rather, He celebrates unity in diversity by calling different people with different gifts to live in community as one body. God has given different gifts to each person, yet those gifts are not meant merely for individual edification, but for the good of the whole body. In a world that divides over race, culture, age, and social status, in the church the gospel breaks down every barrier and unites us in love. By God's design, the world is meant to see unity amidst diversity at work in the body of Christ and know the power of the Gospel.

(See also Ephesians 4:13, Philippians 2:2, 1 Peter 3:8)

**Christians and The Government (13:1)**

We should not miss the context of this exhortation. Paul is writing to Christians in Rome at a time when governing authorities are ruthlessly persecuting them, even to the point of death. It is into this situation which Paul speaks and says “be subject to the governing authorities.” Interestingly, the reason Paul gives for this command is that God has placed these authorities where they are and by obeying them we are honoring God.

While the biblical view is that government should carry out God’s justice by punishing the evildoer (Romans 13:3), Christians must know that in a fallen world governing authorities do not always operate in a godly manner. Thus, Christians submit first to God and then to governing authorities – meaning that sometimes godliness might involve civil disobedience (See Exodus 1:15-21).  
(See also Proverbs 21:1, 1 Timothy 2:1-3)

## Gospel Response

In response to this week's reading, we begin to see the dynamic and transforming power of the gospel. Not only are we learning about what God has done for us, but we begin to see what God does in and through us relationally with others. God empowers a love for others in us that hates evil and authentically loves those around us even if they are our enemies. With confidence in God's character and work, we offer our entire lives as a sacrifice. We remember that even the governments and political systems of the world are not outside the bounds of the sovereignty of God.

**The Weaker Brother (14:13, 17, 20)**

As we follow Christ, there will be differences of opinion among believers in certain areas. In this passage, the main differences were over whether believers should eat certain types of meals or celebrate certain days as special. In response, Paul teaches that we all answer to God, not each other, and that we must not cause a brother to stumble in his walk with Jesus.

It is important to note that these disagreeable issues are not altogether unimportant. In fact, Paul does answer the issue at hand, declaring that all food is clean. However, what is most important for us personally is not that we keep a specific set of cultural rules, but that we walk in love towards brothers and sisters who differ with us. We would do well to remember that the Kingdom of God “is a matter of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.”

(See also Philippians 2:1-5)

**The Scriptures Give Us Hope (15:4)**

In what seems like an aside for the apostle Paul, there is a deep and abiding truth about God’s Word that we do not want to miss. Because the Scriptures were written for our instruction and encouragement, we continually return to what God says about everything – not only reading it, but being shaped by it. Furthermore, God’s



Word is the only infallible guide to what is good, true, and beautiful. Ultimately, the result of the process of seeking God in His Word over time will be the increase of our hope in Christ. Rather than looking to the news, social media, human philosophy or opinion, we need to hear from God because our hope comes from the Lord. (See also Proverbs 29:18, Ephesians 1:18, Colossians 1:13)

## **Gospel Response**

In response to this week's reading, we are encouraged to use whatever measure of faith the Lord has given us to serve others in the body of Christ. We are not to judge those who are weaker in faith, but are to love them through our freedom in Christ in order to support the work of God in their lives. This week, we see Christ who came as a servant and follow His perfect example, even in our disagreements.

**Christ Accomplishes Through Us (15:18)**

It is important that we remember that God can and does use us for His glory. As we challenge and invite people to follow us as we follow Christ, we remember that the ability to make disciples comes from the indwelling power of God's Spirit. In this verse, Paul takes no credit for the signs and wonders done through him. While Paul's life points back to the grace of God in Christ, his desire is to go to places where Christ is not known and to share the gospel with those held captive by sin.

(See also Ephesians 2:10, Philippians 2:12-13)

**Gospel Ministry Continues (16:17-19)**

Paul ends his letter to Christians in Rome by encouraging them to watch out for divisions. It is divisions in the body that often cause believers to falter. Instead, Paul wants these Christians to be strengthened according to the gospel. While division leads to weakness, it is the unity of the gospel that leads to strength.

We have read of the incredible ministry that God empowered Paul to have. Even in the midst of all kinds of trials, God gives strength to Paul to persevere. The fact that this is all God's work is evidenced clearly by Paul's appeal for those in Rome to "strive together with me in your prayers to God on my behalf." Paul does not think for a

moment that this was His work, but continually asks God to do the work and to use him in the process.

(See also Ephesians 3:7, Hebrews 13:20-21)

## **The Serpent Crusher (16:20)**

Paul intends his readers to think of the gospel that God promised in the garden of Eden. In the midst of unhindered fellowship with God, Adam and Eve rebelled. They, like us, decided to determine for themselves what was good, instead of believing and obeying God. The result of this tragic event is that Adam, Eve, and all of creation is cursed. Everything is broken. But, it is in the middle of this curse that God promises He will send Someone to redeem and renew all things – and we know now that Jesus is that promised One.

Christ's death on the Cross for our sin has defeated the serpent, removing the grounds of any accusations he could bring against us before God. Yet, believers are still troubled by the presence of sin and the effects of the curse in their daily lives. In light of all this, Paul says that the "God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet." This is the great New Testament hope, that one day Jesus will come back to usher in the fullness of His Kingdom. On that day, mankind's fellowship will once again be unhindered.

(See also Genesis 3:15, Psalm 89:23, Revelation 20:10)

## Gospel Response

In response to this week's reading, we praise God that His gospel is the power for salvation. We are thankful that God moves His gospel onward to people through those who make themselves available to God. Finally, we pray that God will allow us to be strengthened so that we too can guard against divisions. Our hope is to preach the gospel in such a way that more people come to the obedience of faith through the hearing of the word. We end our time in Romans, like Paul, praising God that He keeps His promises to save a people for Himself.



