

IN CHRIST ALONE
Paul's Letter to the Christians in Rome Part 1

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Old Testament and the Christian faith. • Six great truths for Christian believers explained. • All have sinned so all need a Saviour. • Salvation from God through faith in Christ. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Faith in Christ alone, not church traditions or religious rules. • The righteousness of God given to all who believe. • Living and growing in the power of the Holy Spirit. • Saved for everlasting life as children of God. |
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THIS BOOK teaches us how we have all been sinners from birth. How we all need to get right with God, even 'good' people. Paul teaches that trusting God enables us to enjoy our lives even when our problems seem too much for us. Paul teaches the full meaning of God's salvation through faith in Jesus Christ.

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WE PRAY that you may have a new peace and purpose in life as you trust in God, read the Bible and use these commentaries. As you read, think about what Jesus said and did 2000 years ago and what He is calling you to say and do today to prepare the way for His return.

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IN CHRIST ALONE

**Paul's Letter to the
Christians in Rome**

**A Bible Teaching Commentary
for personal or group study**

by Fred Morris



Romans Part 1

Chapters 1 to 8

To the Reader or Leader

These commentaries help to explain the Bible in a way that is easy to read and understand. They are also easy to translate. You can use these books to study the Bible on your own or with others in a group. Each person should have his or her own book and a Bible if possible.



Bible reading: Where you see this, it means you or your group leader should always read the Bible passage first before reading this book.



Talk about this: Where you see this, there are questions to prayerfully answer yourself or to discuss in a group study. They also help the reader to remember the Bible verses.



Think about this: Where you see this, the question requires more time for personal meditation.



Ruled teaching boxes: Where you see this, the information gives extra teaching about life at the time the Bible was written and for today's believers.

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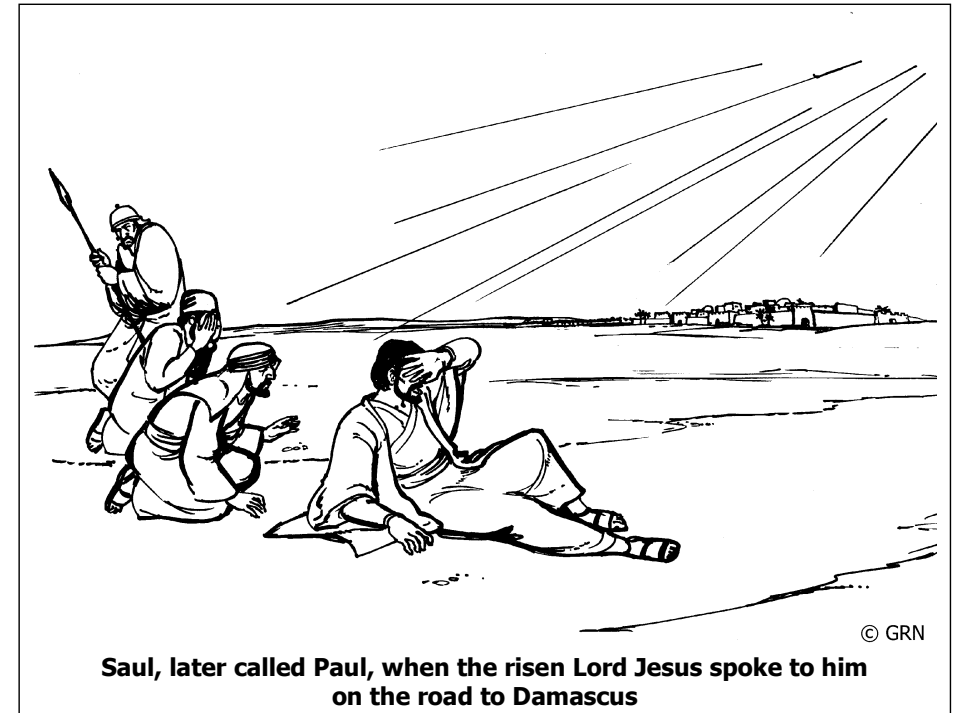
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ROMANS PART 1: CHAPTERS 1 TO 8

INTRODUCTION

Paul wrote his letter to the Christians who lived in the city of Rome, in Italy. It was the capital of the Roman Empire at the time of Christ and His Apostles. Many Jews lived in Rome and some of them were believers in Jesus. This is one of several letters written by Paul to believers who lived in a world of great wickedness as it is today. He helped them to understand the purposes and promises of God given in the Old Testament and the New Testament teachings of Jesus. He encouraged them to enjoy the blessings of their salvation and to show the glory of God glory to others. In every country, the Christian churches need these teachings from Paul today. We must all be strong in our understanding of the faith so that we may live in our societies as people of God.



Saul, later called Paul, when the risen Lord Jesus spoke to him on the road to Damascus

Paul was a Jew. He was taught by the best Jewish teachers in Jerusalem (Acts 22:3). He became a Jewish believer when the risen Lord Jesus spoke to him on the road to Damascus (Acts chapters 9, 22 and 26). Jesus chose him, as well as others, to teach the Good News of God (Romans 1:1). They became known as the first apostles or messengers of God. Paul believed the truth about Jesus and was baptised. The Holy Spirit later told him to preach to people who were not Jews, as well as to Jews. He started many church fellowships in Greece and Turkey. He taught them the truth of God from the Old Testament part of the Bible. Paul wrote letters to the new Christians when he travelled as a missionary and while he was

- **Repentance**, that is, turning away from sin toward God.
- **Forgiveness** of our sins by God and a new beginning in life.
- **Righteousness** of God, given by God to all believers.
- **Justification**, that is, forgiven and accepted through the sacrifice of Christ.
- **Freedom** as a servant of Christ to know the joy of serving God.
- **Assurance** of receiving everlasting life with God and Christ.

Anyone can enter into this truth through faith, through Christ alone, through the grace of God. At times these things are beyond our understanding, but we can trust Paul's teaching. It is the inspired word of God. Paul knew very well the Old Testament (History, Law and Prophecy). He gives fresh understanding to the Old Testament. He knew that God did not want His people to go back into slavery (Hosea 11:4,5). He was completely converted on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:3-20). He was sure of his calling to preach and teach Jews and Gentiles the Good News of God in Jesus, 'the mystery of Christ'.

Paul sums up the first seven chapters by saying those famous words in 8:1: "Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus."

Condemnation is the opposite of justification. Through the grace of God and the sacrifice of His Son Jesus, Christian believers are not condemned but are given a new start to life which promises:

- freedom from the punishment for sin.
- freedom from the guilt of sin.
- freedom from the control of sin.

In return, we are free to choose to become servants of the living Christ by loving and obeying Him (John 14:15,23).

At the end of chapters 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8, Paul talks about the debt we have towards Christ:

- Jesus died for our sins (4:25).
- Jesus made it possible for us to be right with God (4:25).
- Jesus made it possible for us to have eternal life (5:21; 6:23).
- Jesus frees us from the old life of living by laws and being trapped by sin (7:25).
- Jesus has made us secure in the love of God (8:38-39).

Jesus helps us by sending us the Holy Spirit. As a result we no longer need to struggle with sin. Nor should we be sad when we suffer, for we live in hope of God's glory (8:17,18). Now we can live a life full of His power and love and joy and holiness with the hope of eternal life and glory. Hallelujah!

Saul persecuted the followers of Jesus. But Jesus met him as he rode to Damascus. Saul the Jewish Pharisee then became Paul the Jewish apostle and teacher. Not even the Roman Emperor could silence him. Long after his death his letters speak to us. For twenty centuries the words of God through Paul have built up the family of God, His Church. The truth of Yahweh God will last forever. Amen.

[Romans part 1 2nd ed 2012 revised 2021]

in prison. Paul's letters are an important part of the Christian Bible (New Testament).

Paul did not start the church fellowships in Rome and Colosse, but he wrote letters to them and to the other churches. Paul wrote most of his letters before Matthew, Mark, Luke and John wrote their gospels. Therefore his letters helped Christians to know more about Jesus, the truth of God and how to grow strong in their faith. In each letter he wrote of the things they did well, but he also warned them when they did wrong and when their own teaching was wrong. Paul also wrote to help them when they did not know what to do, and with things they did not understand.

Paul's letter to the Romans helps all Christians to be ready to work for God; it is good teaching for a new Christian or a new group of believers. It is a useful guide for students, teachers and pastors. The teaching in his letter is a good foundation for all believers. We can build our lives on it.

WHY PAUL WROTE THIS LETTER

We don't know when the church in Rome began. Maybe some Jews who became Christians at Pentecost (Acts 2:10) went back to Rome and started the church.

Some Jewish believers in Rome said that all Christians (Jews and Gentiles) must keep the Law of Moses including circumcision, the special mark of the Jew. It was necessary for Paul to write about this false teaching to the Galatians, Corinthians and Philippians, as well as to the Romans.

Another reason Paul wrote to the Romans was because he had a plan. He wanted to go on another journey to tell more people about Jesus and start new church fellowships. He wanted to visit Rome (Romans 15: 23-24) and to go from there to Spain. The church in Rome was probably quite large at this time. So he wrote this letter to prepare the Romans for his visit. One million people lived there at that time. Paul waited until he knew that his plan was truly the plan of God.

Paul told them what he believed and what God the Holy Spirit taught him. He wanted to share about his belief in Christ as the Son of God and the calling he had to preach and teach this. He wanted to teach this Good News to all believers as one of the apostles. This would encourage them to witness to unbelievers. It is why every Christian should study the letter to the Romans.

Paul's letter helps to stop believers from following false teachings. If he were here today he would tell us that we CANNOT find the salvation of God by:

- having faith in God without trying to know Jesus.
- taking part in religious rituals, pilgrimages, good works.
- trying in our own strength to lose the desire for sin.
- trying in our own strength to behave in a good and moral way.
- trying in our own strength to find inner peace.
- being pleased for the good things God has created without thanking Him.
- trying to obey church laws and traditions.

These seven ways of trying to find and know God ARE NOT TRUE. They may bring comfort and fulfilment but not salvation. The central teaching of Paul in

It tells us that we can have victory over sin. And it reminds us that it is a joy and a privilege to be children of God. Paul is excited and amazed with his Good News of the salvation plan of God for all people.

But we must also remember that Paul is worried and saddened by the behaviour of some of the believers in the church in Rome. He is especially worried by those who came from the same race and religious traditions as himself (9:3). He wants everyone to live by faith in Christ whom God has offered up as a sacrifice for all people for all times. This is a new beginning for the people of God who we call the New Testament Church. May we all be prepared to put aside our traditions and grow in our understanding of what it is to live as God planned through Christ.



Talk about this:

1. Now we are the children of God, what are the blessings He wants us to share (8:17)?
2. What will Christ give Paul after all his troubles (8:23)?
3. What does God give us while we wait for His promises (8:2,5,9,11,13,15,26,27)?



Think about this: How can we trust the plan of God for our lives (8:31-39)? Are you walking in God's plan for you? How do you know?

CONCLUSIONS

In the first eight chapters of his letter to the Romans, Paul introduces some of his foundational Bible teaching. These are basic truths of the Christians faith which give the meaning of true salvation. Paul warns the Jewish believers not to burden the other Christians with their traditions and rules. Jews and Gentiles need to experience the freedom gained through faith in Christ, as Paul himself had experienced. "Righteousness does not come from the Law. It comes because I believe in Christ. It comes from God. It is received by faith" (Philippians 3:9).

Without faith, our salvation is incomplete. Faith is the doorway or entrance point to salvation. But it is also the doorway to experiencing the power of the Holy Spirit in our daily living and service for Him in caring for others. It brings new life or a new birth and then growth to follow on after birth. An important part of God's salvation plan is to produce fruitful lives, if we are prepared to suffer with Christ (8:17).

The faith and freedom of new believers should not be hindered by unnecessary rules and traditions of religious people. (Paul talks more about Christian growth in Romans Part 2.)

In the first eight chapters of his letter to the Romans, Paul introduces his readers to some of the greatest foundational truths of the Christian religion and the meaning of true salvation from God through His Son:



Bible reading: Romans 8:28-39

WE WILL WIN THROUGH CHRIST

“We know that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him” (8:28). What amazing words! This wonderful truth of God revealed to Paul is written down for us all to read. God works all the time in His world which is spoilt by sin. He works everywhere. He works only for good. He makes everything come together for our good, if we follow in the path His Spirit shows us.

We have been saved by God for His purpose (8:28), not our own. We chose to follow Christ, and it is the Spirit of God through Christ who shows us the way.

God called us because in His grace and mercy and He has a plan for us (Ephesians 2:8-10). He chose us and if we choose to follow, then the Spirit shows us the way. If bad things happen to us, if we have pain or suffering, if someone we love dies, if we lose our job, if we are persecuted or if we are put in prison when we don't deserve it, we know God will work it out for our good. That is His promise. Do not doubt that God is working for your good. Why? Because He loves us and because Christ will be honoured (8:29).

Do not look at others whose walk is very different to your own. Hold on to the faith that you have been given so that no one takes your prize (Revelation 3:11).

God wants us to be like His Son (2 Corinthians 3:18). Everything that happens to the Christian is to make us like Him. This is why Paul asks us these five important questions (8:31-35):

- Since God is on our side, who can be against us?
- God did not spare His own Son... Then will not He also freely give us everything else?
- Who can bring any charge against God's chosen ones?
- Who can sentence us to [eternal] death? Christ Jesus is at the right hand of God praying for us.
- Who can separate us from Christ's love?

We cannot wish for a better life than the life that God wants for us. We trust Him to do what is best in the midst of our sufferings. Christ Jesus is at the right hand of God praying for us (8:34).

Paul concludes Chapter 8 with these famous words: “I am absolutely sure that not even death or life can separate us from the love of God. Not even angels or demons, the present or the future, or any powers can do that. Not even the highest places or the lowest, or anything else in all creation can do that. Nothing can ever separate us from the love of God because of what Christ Jesus our Lord has done” (8:38-39). Paul proved this to be true through many times of great trouble (2 Corinthians 11:23-29). He proved that nothing can come between us and God.

Many Christians say that Romans chapter 8 is their favourite Bible passage. It speaks to us about living by faith through the guidance and power of the Holy Spirit. It tells us that all things work together for our good for those who truly love God. It tells us that no one can separate us from the love of God that is in Christ.

Romans 1-8 is the righteousness of God that is received through faith in our Saviour Jesus Christ alone. He says that all have sinned including religious people, and sin can only be forgiven through faith in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. May the Spirit of God help you to understand these things and to apply them in your life. Lack of understanding separates us from God (Isaiah 5:13). Unity with God brings peace in our lives through the Good News promised long ago (Romans 1:2).



Talk about this: Describe in your own words the seven things that hinder the true salvation of people who believe in God today.



Bible reading: Romans 1:1-7

PAUL, CALLED TO BE A SERVANT OF CHRIST

Paul began most of his letters like this. He said that he was “a servant of Jesus Christ ...” (1:1). Roman servants and slaves were sold and served their masters. He called himself the servant of Christ.

Paul also said that he was “called to be an apostle” and to live a holy life. Although he still lived in this world, with sinful men, he did not belong to it. He would never go back to his old way of life. He belonged to Jesus. He believed the words of Jesus and obeyed them (Mark 1:15). He was given the promised power of the Holy Spirit to do this.

God called Paul to preach the Good News of God (1:1). ‘Apostle’ means ‘messenger’. Paul knew the our Old Testament. He knew all the things that the prophets said would happen. He knew that they had come true. He knew that Jesus was the One the prophets spoke about (1:2).

This is the Gospel or Good News that Paul wanted to preach (1:3-4):

- Jesus was truly a son of man and truly the Son of God, Yeshua, the promised Messiah. Through him alone we are saved.
- God raised Jesus from death and Jesus is alive now as our Lord and Saviour. Paul knew this: he met Jesus! (Acts 9:5). Through Him alone we have eternal life.

Paul became an apostle and a leader but he was also a servant. Jesus Christ was his Lord, the master of his life (1:5). He very much wanted others to follow Jesus and not to follow false teaching or old traditions. But first, he wanted to build them up in their faith (1:6,7).



Think about this: Explain in your own words how and why we should encourage the faith of other believers.



Bible reading: Romans 1: 8-17

PAUL PREPARES THE WAY TO GO TO ROME

Paul wanted to prepare the way for his visit to Rome. He wanted the Romans to be ready when he came to Rome. He strongly believed that God wanted him to go

to Rome to preach the Good News of Jesus Christ (1:15 and Acts 23:11). He had a great desire and passion to do this.

In verses 8 to 16, Paul helped the believers in Rome to be ready for his visit. He wanted them to welcome him. He wanted them to know that Jesus was sending him as His apostle (messenger), leader and servant (1:1). It was important to him to prepare the way for his visit to Rome.

Paul told them that he was thankful to God for the Roman church (1:8). He praised them (1:8), he prayed for them (1:9-10), he planned to meet them (1:10), he longed to see them (1:11), he tried many times to visit them (1:13) and he gave many reasons to talk with them (1:11-16). In these ways he encouraged the church to welcome him.

Paul wanted to bless the believers in Rome and knew that their faith would be a blessing to him and to God.



Think about this: What message should preachers and teachers strongly desire to say to the churches today? Explain in your own words the preparation that is required to visit and minister to other believers. Why is it right to preach and to teach, expecting a blessing for yourself?

Paul did not know that he would be a prisoner when God sent him to Rome. He was able to preach and teach in Rome but he had to stay in his house because he was a prisoner (Acts 28:16). Paul wanted to go to Rome on the way to Spain. But the plan of God was different to Paul's plan. Soldiers took Paul to Rome as a prisoner in a house. There, he taught and preached to all who visited him. Whilst in Rome, he also wrote many other letters to teach the believers around the world. His letters have given guidance and blessing for nearly 2000 years. This proves that when things go wrong in our lives, the purpose of God can still be fulfilled if we trust and pray.

Paul said that one reason for wanting to visit Rome was that it was his duty to preach to all people in Rome (1:14,15). His desire to go to Rome was very strong indeed. Rome was the political and business centre of the world at that time. He wanted to fulfil his calling by God to preach the Good News to the Jews first and then to non-Jews (Gentiles) who lived in this important city (1:16).

Paul was not ashamed to tell everyone that God sent Jesus to die for our sins (1:16). This is the Gospel message or Good News which offers salvation and a personal relationship with Almighty God Himself.

Paul also said that the Good News:

- brings power from God (1:16).
- saves all who believe (1:16).
- is for all people (1:16).
- makes people right with God (1:17).
- enables people to live by faith in God (1:17).

It was an important time to establish the Christians in Rome with sound teaching before the persecution came.

As children of God we can now come freely (even boldly) to our Father in Heaven (Hebrews 4:16). Trouble did not stop Paul preaching. He continued forward. Trouble made his faith stronger and he worked harder (Colossians 1:24,29). The Holy Spirit helped him know that Heaven was real and so he could be happy even when trouble came. He lived in hope of eternal life.

FROM DESPAIR TO HOPE

Because Adam sinned, everything that God made is dying. The world and all its creatures do not improve over time; instead they decay. Evolution into better forms of life is a man-made myth, unproved by science. Devolution, pollution and decay, disease and death, remind us that all is not well with the world.

We know it was the will of God to curse the earth because of Adam's sin (Genesis 3:17-18). But mankind is God's highest creation. We are created in His image. So He gave us the responsibility to care for our world. He also set Abraham's family apart and gave them His rules and promises to live by faith. He then prepared a way for all mankind to live by faith above sin and corruption and decay. He did this by His Spirit entering the womb of Mary (Luke 1:35) to take on His seed the form of flesh and blood as the Son of God. He did this to save the people He created and loves (8:21) and also recreated after Noah's Flood.

The whole of God's creation groans (8:22). The world despairs because of Adam's sin. Because God judged Adam and said that he would die, everything else God made would also die (8:21). And now everything God made hopes and waits for Christ to come again. We live and wait with joy in our hearts for a better world to come (8:23). Amen!

We wait for Christ to come again and give us back the glory that Adam lost in the garden of Eden. There, everything that God made was perfect in every way. Now mankind, and everything else that God has made, suffers pain because of sin. "Everything God made is in pain..." Paul said (8:22). Everything rots and dies. We want very much to be free from this pain and suffering. We wait, wanting God to welcome us into His home, because we are His adopted children (8:23). This is our hope.

However, mankind is more important than plants or animals. Mankind is the greatest part of the creation plan of God. And God sent His only Son to die for mankind.

God gives us His Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit helps us when we feel we have no strength (8:26). The Spirit prays for us so that we will be strong and learn to trust God and see Him work in our lives.

Often, when we have trouble, we don't know how to pray. Should we ask God to save us from this pain? Or should we ask Him to help us while we bear it? Often we don't know what to think, but the Holy Spirit knows all about us and so He prays for us as God wants Him to (8:27). This is because God wants us to live in His image as at the time of creation.

Explain in your own words how Christians have hope in a world spoilt by sin.

experience a great emotional change in their lives. As we invite the Holy Spirit into our lives, we receive peace in our hearts (8:6). As we allow the Spirit of God to control our minds, He will guide us into all truth (John 16:13). The Spirit of God brings peace and changes the way we think and act. He dwells in us. Our sinful nature no longer controls us (8:9).

Paul reminds us that God is not pleased when we are controlled by our sinful nature instead of the indwelling Spirit of Christ. He says, "The Spirit of God lives in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ, does not belong to Christ" (8:9). Paul makes it very clear to his readers: if you have not trusted Christ as your Saviour, you do not have the Holy Spirit living in you and you will continue to live as you always did.

So Paul encourages the believers, "Your body is dead because of sin but your spirit is alive because you have been made right with God" (8:10). Christ gives us His life, by His Spirit. So although our bodies are dying, they still have this new life. The Spirit of God living in us gives us this new life. So now nothing need make us live our old life of sin.

The person who trusts in Christ no longer wants to live his old life of sin. If he goes back into his old ways, the Holy Spirit makes him feel guilty. Hopefully, he will repent, turning back to the way of God. When Christians sin, the Holy Spirit shows them where they are wrong. They feel pain because of their sin. They lose their inner peace. They feel troubled inside. The Holy Spirit speaks to the Christian again and again when there is sin in his life. But if we do not listen to the voice of the Spirit, and if we do not repent, but go on in our old ways of sin, the Spirit goes away and we are not able to hear His voice warning us. The Old Testament says, "...if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts" (Psalm 95:8).



Talk about this:

1. How can we stay free from sin and the punishment of God (8:1,2,5,6)?
2. What does the Holy Spirit do in the life of a believer (8:5-9)?

WE ARE THE CHILDREN OF GOD

In the Old Testament, God called His people His children (Hosea 1:10). Jesus was the perfect Son and always obeyed His Father. Now Christ says that we, His followers, are sons of God, just as Hosea prophesied.

Christians are sons of God and no longer live in fear of God. God is our father and we may call Him 'Abba' (8:15) as little children did at that time.

Paul said, "We are God's children and as His children, we will receive all that he has for us" (8:16-17). Because we belong to Jesus Christ, we too are God's sons and daughters by faith, and so we will share in what Christ receives from the Father. One day we will rise with perfect bodies to be with Him (8:23). We have God's promise of eternal life.

Paul also said, "We must share in His sufferings if we want to share in His future glory. What we are suffering now is nothing compared with the glory that will be shown in us" (8:17-18).



The start of the Reformation: Romans 1:17

Paul said that the Gospel, or Good News, includes the power of God to strengthen those who believe (1:16). He linked this with the power to live by faith alone (1:17) which was promised by the prophet Habakkuk nearly 700 years before: "The one who is right with God will live by faith" (Habakkuk 2:4). Faith to receive the salvation of God; faith to receive the righteousness of God; faith to receive the power of the Holy Spirit. This brings the blessing of God to believers and through them to other people, even to whole nations.

Many, many believers over a period of nearly 2000 years have held firm to the teachings of Paul. Sadly, some were persecuted, even put death, for refusing to have faith in religious traditions. Many more people believed Paul in the 16th century when the Reformation swept across Europe and later, the New World and the other colonies. Martin Luther had a revelation from God through reading Romans 1:17: it is faith in Christ, not just good works or traditions, that receives the righteousness of God. This was at the heart of Luther's early teaching and the early teaching of John Calvin. The Holy Spirit used them to begin the Reformation that enables us to live more like the New Testament Church today.

Paul's writings survived and are important for all in these Final Days.

Today, many people still do not want to listen to God's word. They hate God and they hate His truth. They trust themselves and not God. They do not want to let God come into their lives. All sin comes when people disobey God and turn their backs to Him. People who are made right with God "will live by faith", by believing the word of God (1:17).

This is a very important verse in Paul's letter. This truth of God is the chief reason for Paul's visit to Rome. The rest of his letter is based on this truth. This Good News "shows how God makes people right with himself" (1:17).

Paul wrote this letter from Corinth, after he was in Athens. Athens was a big city like Rome. There were many wicked people in it, like Rome. Paul preached in Athens, but only a few people believed. The people of Athens had hard hearts. They were not right with God. They were sinful and they did not have faith in God. Paul wanted the people of Rome to welcome him so that more people would believe the Good News of God in Jesus Christ. And he wanted the believers to know that they can only be right with God through faith. The Good News of faith in Jesus Christ makes this possible (1:17). This is why Paul quoted in this verse from Habakkuk 2:4. "The one who is right with God will live by faith." He wanted to see good things happen when he brought the Gospel to Rome (1:13). This is why he carefully prepared the way for his visit.

Paul also planned to ask them to support His proposed mission to Spain (15:24).



Talk about this:

1. Why did Paul want to visit believers in Rome (1:5, 14-16)?
2. How did he prepare the people for his visit (1:8-16)?
3. What did Paul say first to strengthen their faith (1:6,7)?



Think about this: Why was it important that Paul's plan to visit Rome was also God's plan?



Bible reading: Romans 1:18-32

THE ANGER OF GOD AGAINST SIN

God reveals the truth to us that He is God (1:19-20). But wicked people do not want to believe the truth! They push God away. They refuse to believe that He created the world, and that He loves and cares for them (Acts 14:15-17). They do not want to worship God, so they refuse to believe the truth about Him.

Paul says that it is easy to see the wonderful things about creation. "God has made it plain to them" (1:20; Acts 17:24-27). They do not thank Him for the good things that He gives us (Romans 1:21).

Ever since the world was created it has been possible to know the qualities of God. These qualities can be easily seen in what He has made (1:20). We have no excuse if we do not believe.

Paul is speaking here of his faith in the mighty Yahweh God who created everything in the world. His work of creation is described in the Old Testament (Genesis 1). But sin makes God angry (1:18).

God always gives us a way to return to Him, but many people say "No! I do not want to know God." They turn away from God and turn towards evil (Genesis 8:21).

God lets them go their own way (Romans 1:24,26). They do not want to think about God, so God let their minds stay dark. Paul spoke about the wrong things they do (1:23-31).

What were these wrong things?

- They chose to believe lies instead of what God says is true (1:25).
- They worshipped idols made by men (1:23).
- They used sex in wrong ways. This is against the purpose of God for men and women and can lead to serious illness or death (1:27).
- They did every kind of wrong (1:29).

Those who do not obey the Law are unholy (Leviticus 18:1-30). Paul knew this from the Law that God gave Moses. "They know that God says that people who do such things should die" (1:32).

The punishment of disobeying the Law of God is death instead of eternal life (Romans 6:23)

Three times Paul warns that when people reject God then He rejects them (1:24,26,28). Even when they know the truth of God (1:21) they do not think this is important (1:28). Even when they know that sin leads to death they do not stop



Bible reading: Romans 8:1-27

LIFE OF POWER THROUGH THE SPIRIT OF CHRIST

Paul knew that in the old life:

- the Law of God made him feel guilty.
- His own sinful acts made him feel guilty.

But Paul was able to write the wonderful words in Romans 8:1-2. "Those who belong to Christ Jesus are no longer condemned by God. I am now controlled by the law of the Holy Spirit. That law gives me life because of what Christ Jesus has done. It has set me free from the law of sin that brings death."

Paul is able in Chapter 8 to break away from the dark struggle with sin that he describes in chapter 7. Instead, he describes the light of the Spirit of life written on our hearts, as Jeremiah prophesied.

If we trust in Christ alone, He gives us the power of His Spirit (8:9). So now we can live, not governed by our old sinful nature, but by God. We live as the Spirit wants (8:4). We can keep the Law of God because we begin to take on the righteousness of God. We want to do what He wants. Because the Spirit is in our lives we no longer fear the judgement of God. We are free from 'the law of sin and death'. We have the Spirit of God all the time to give us power to live as God wants us to live. Paul called it "the law of the Spirit that gives us life" (8:2).

God's law of life in the Spirit is greater than the law of sin and death. We are set free by this greater law.

Paul encourages every believer to know that he or she is completely free from the power of sin and the punishment we deserve. We are forgiven and not condemned (8:1).

How can we stay free?

Firstly, a believer who desires to follow God is quickly made aware of sin through the indwelling Spirit of Christ. Sin is quick to condemn us.

Secondly, the Spirit changes the things we seek. We begin to seek the good things the Spirit wants (8:5). As long as we let the Spirit of God lead us, we have peace in our hearts (8:6).

Before, we thought about bad things. Now, we think about things of God. The Spirit helps us with what to think, and what to do (Philippians 4:8). We live under the guidance of the Spirit and desire to do what the Spirit wants us to do. So let us keep up with the Spirit and keep in step with the Spirit (Galatians 5:25).

How we think changes what we do! Our thoughts rule our actions. Before we came to Christ, we did not think about God and we did not want to keep His laws. We lived as enemies of God (8:7). We did not let the Spirit of God rule our lives. Our sinful nature ruled us and so we could not please God (8:7-8).

THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Up to this point, Paul has spoken very little about the work of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer. Some people do not feel any different. Others, like Paul,

Egypt... I will put my law in their minds. I will write my law on their hearts" (Jeremiah 31:31-33).

Abraham was told by God that all nations on earth would be blessed through his family. Therefore, Gentiles receive this promise through faith in Jesus our Saviour, the Jewish Messiah. This promise is for all people.

The Law is intended to bring life but actually condemns people for sin which leads to death (7:10). It is impossible to obey every part of the Law. The Law does not forgive sin. The Law does not give people power over sin. This is true of all religious laws of all faiths. No law can make a person right in the sight of God. Only the grace of God and our faith in Christ can do that. So the Old Testament Law guides us in the truth of God but also in the things that God hates. And it shows us the need of a Saviour, Jesus Christ.

Paul makes it clear that the Law of God is holy and good but the Law also makes clear what is sinful (7:7,12,13). We all sin, because we are born as sinners. It is natural for us to sin. Sin is a habit. The Law reminds us of sin. But the Law does not tell us how to overcome sin other than repeating altar sacrifices.

The Law is good but it awakens sin from within. It helped Paul to understand the trouble he had in obeying God and it also told him how much he needed a Saviour. "The Law is holy. But I am not" (7:14). "I want to do good but I do things I don't want to do," he said. The reason for this is that "there is nothing good in my sinful nature" (7:18). Because of the sin in us, there is nothing to help us keep the Law without knowing Christ. Thanks be to God for the Law that makes us aware of sin and thanks be to God for the sacrifice of His own Son who delivers us from the eternal punishment of sin.

Paul knew sin was an enemy of God. His life was like a battleground. He wanted to be on God's side. Life was one long struggle against sin. He felt at times he could not win.

"What a terrible failure I am!" he cried out. "Who will save me from this sin that brings death?" (7:24). Paul answered his own question. "I give thanks to God. [It is] through Jesus Christ our Lord" (7:25). Paul met Jesus on the road to Damascus. He was now able to win the battle through Jesus Christ his Saviour (7:25). Because Christ died for him, he had hope. Christ defeated sin and death for him when He died on the cross. The old Law that leads to death is gone. In its place is the law of Christ's love through the mercy of God. Paul knew that he must keep his eyes fixed on Jesus Christ in whom was his only hope (Hebrews 12:2).

God gave us the Law to face up to the reality of sin and the need of Christ's salvation.



Talk about this:

1. Describe the new way that is better than the Law.
2. How did Paul know that his problem with sin was ended (7:25)?



Think about this: How does Satan lose his control over us? Why do the Old Testament laws help us to know our need of a Saviour?

sinning, but instead encourage others to sin (1:32). Without receiving the salvation of God, the sin in us will lead us deeper into sin and will lead others into sin.

Paul ends this part of his letter with a depressing thought. He did this to bring everyone down to the same level before God: we must be ready to agree that all of us have sinned and deserve the punishment of God. This applies to Jews and Gentiles. It applies to church leaders and all believers, then and now.



Talk about this:

1. How is it possible to know that God exists (1:20)?
2. Why is God angry with people (1:18)?
3. Do we have any excuse for not loving God (1:20)?
4. What happens when we don't thank God (1:21)?
5. Why does Paul end chapter 1 with bad news not good news?



Bible reading: Romans 2:1-29

GOD JUDGES SIN FAIRLY

Paul now speaks about believers who judge others for their sin. Paul said, "You ... (whoever you are) have no excuse" (1:20; 2:1). Paul said, "There will be trouble and suffering for everyone who does evil (2:9) but there will be glory, honour and peace for everyone who does good" (2:10).

Why does he say this? Paul says, "You judge someone else" but "you do the same wrong things" (2:1). "How do you think you will escape when God judges you?" (2:3). Then he adds, "You are not sorry for your sins" (2:5).

Paul gives this hard teaching because the Jews thought they were better than all the other people and nations on earth. They believed that they were without sin. Jesus warned, "Do not judge [criticize, condemn] others. Then you will not be judged" (Matthew 7:1).

A day is coming when God will judge all people (2:5). He will judge all sin. And He will judge fairly (2:2, 5, 6, 11). God will judge people by the good and bad things they do (2:6-9). This is first for the Jews, then the Gentiles (2:9-10).

But Paul warns us not to judge other people for their sins. Only God can do that for we ourselves are sinners. We must learn to hate sin but love sinners so that they might turn back to God. We must help them to pray to Jesus to forgive their sins.

Paul tells his readers, "It is not those who hear the Law who are righteous in God's sight but it is those who obey the Law who will be declared righteous" (2:13).

The Jews thought that obeying the Law of God would save them from the anger of God and His punishment for sin. But it was not enough to hear the Law read out on the Sabbath. The Law did not save them from punishment. Paul is helping to teach the Jewish believers that all have sinned. They are all law-breakers (2:23). And they all need saving from the judgement of God and

punishment through the sacrifice of His own Son, Jesus, in our place. This is still true today. All believers, including the church leaders, have sinned.

GOD JUDGES HIS OWN PEOPLE

Paul continues to give strong teaching which is hard to accept. He says, that even God's own people will be judged. The Jews were proud because they were God's chosen people. But God would punish them because they knew what was right, and they still sinned.

The Jews will be the first to be judged (2:9,10) because they received the Good News first. They were called to live by faith in Yahweh God in the time of Abraham, 2000 years earlier.

The Jews tried to keep the Law, to show that they were God's people and to win God's favour. They were proud of their laws (2:17-24), but the full meaning of the laws was not in their hearts (2:25-29). They were circumcised as a sign to show that they were God's people, but God wanted them to be changed not only on the outside, but also on the inside, in their hearts.

So in these verses Paul showed that:

- God will judge us all for the sin in the world (2:3).
- God judges everyone in the same way (2:9-11).
- God is fair in the way He judges all people equally (2:2, 5, 11).
- God expects all people to do what is right (2:12-16).

Therefore the Jews sinned just as much as other people, even though they had God's laws (2:9). The Law did not change them in their hearts.

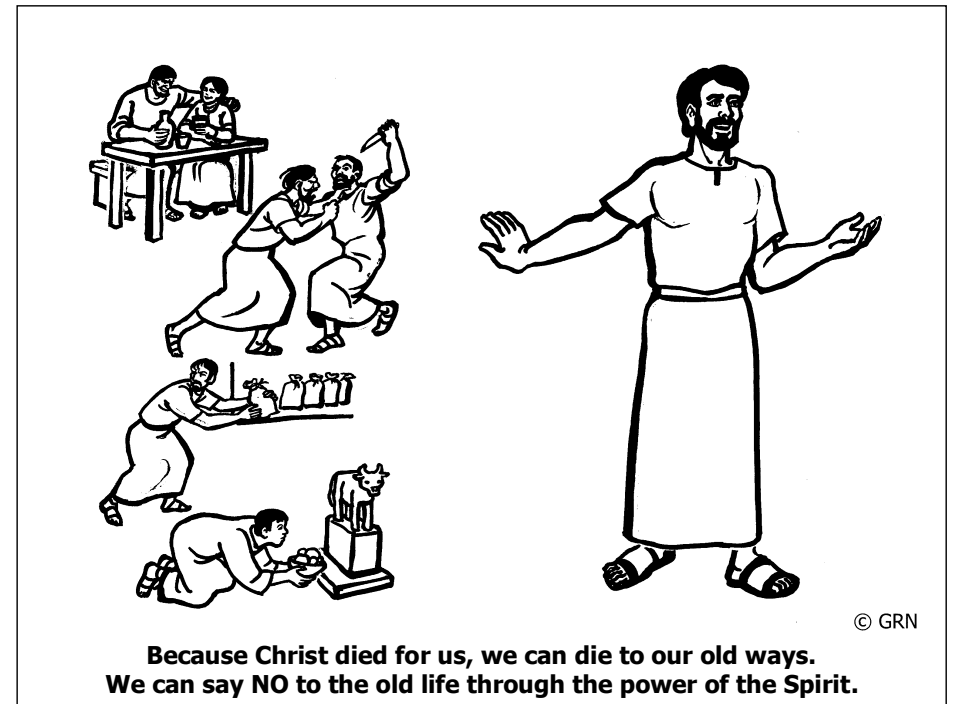
God wants all people to admit their sin and repent. This means they must turn round to face God, obey Him, and turn their backs to their old life. He does not force them to repent. He prepared the way for us to repent and come back to Him, but those who will not listen to God and repent will be punished (2:5-6). Paul says this applies to all people including people who believe in God and think that they are saved. Many religious people do not know God well enough to realise how sinful they are on the inside.

God gives eternal life to those who do good (2:7) but people are selfish and so they choose the path of evil (2:8). This is true for Jews and Gentiles. Paul said these things so that all believers could understand that everyone has sinned.

It is good to obey the laws of God, but not good enough. All believers must ask God to change their hearts. The Holy Spirit will do this. This is His work (2:29). Paul told them, "If you try to obey every part of the Law of God, men may praise you, but God will praise you only if you are changed on the inside." Our praise comes from God, not men.

Paul was making them ready for what he wanted to teach them in chapter 3 about being saved by trusting in Jesus Christ alone.

Paul was sad because the Jewish leaders were trusting in the Law for their salvation. But he was sadder when people outside the Church saw them doing bad things against God (2:23,24). We must all be careful to do what is right so that



Because Christ died for us, we can die to our old ways.
We can say NO to the old life through the power of the Spirit.

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Bible reading: Romans 7:1-25

SET FREE FROM LAW THROUGH CHRIST

Here Paul uses a Jewish example to explain things to the Jewish believers in Rome. He uses marriage vows as an example of obedience. "Brothers and sisters, I am speaking to you who know the Law..." (7:1-5). "But now we have died to what used to control us, we have been set free from the Law. Now we serve in the new way of the Holy Spirit. We no longer serve in the old way" (7:6).

Life in Christ is called "The new way of the Holy Spirit." Now it is possible to fulfil the Old Testament commandments of God without sinning again and again (6:17,18). Paul said, "I would not have known what sin was unless the Law had told me" (7:7).

So the Law is not bad but it reminds us of the sin that rules in our bodies. This was Paul's personal experience (7:8). The way of the Spirit is a new way of serving God. This new way is called the new agreement or covenant of God which is offered to all believers in the one true God Almighty. It is like the marriage agreement.

The prophet Jeremiah wrote in the Old Testament, "A new day is coming when I [Yahweh, God Almighty] will make a new covenant with the people of Israel. It will not be like the covenant I made ... long ago when I ... led the people out of

loves him. We happily give ourselves to serve our Lord Jesus, and by faith receive eternal life.

We can only say 'no' to sin if we have Christ to make us strong. We can only finish with our old life as slaves to sin if His Holy Spirit is living in us. Without the Holy Spirit we cannot live a holy life. His Spirit tells us how to live and we do what He tells us. The Spirit knows the truth and the truth sets us free (John 8:32).

God calls Christians to live for Him. They are called to be different (Titus 2:14). The good things that God gives you lead to holy living (Romans 6:22). God wants us to grow more and more like Jesus.

We become more like Him as we walk and talk with Him and as we follow His teachings. We trust Jesus, and the Holy Spirit gives us the power to follow Him each day (2 Corinthians 3:18). Christ calls His children to live holy lives. We are no longer slaves to bad things. We are free, and we have the freedom and the free will to do what God planned from the beginning (Romans 8:21). So we have the freedom to become slaves to the righteousness of God (6:18). And we use our free will to become slaves to Christ and slaves to what is good and right.

What is the difference between being slaves to the Law and slaves to God's righteousness? Very much! The first brings punishment, the second brings pardon. Also when we are under the direct rule of God, it brings the power to obey and a new direction in life. We are able to say 'no' to sin because we have the power of Christ living in us. And through the resurrection of Christ we inherit eternal life (6:22).

Now we belong to Christ, we are on a different road. We are no longer on the road to hell but on the road to Heaven. He has given us new birth so that we might share in what belongs to Him. It is a gift that can never be spoiled or even fade away. It is kept in Heaven for you (1 Peter 1:4).

Do not be misled by the use of the word 'slave' in the Bible. We are under the rule of God but we are also His children. And one day we will be with Him in Heaven. What a privilege to serve such a loving master!

When God saves us:

- He forgives us all our sins and sets us free so that we will not be punished for our sins (6:18,22).
- He puts us on the road to follow Christ (John 10:4-5).
- He gives us His Holy Spirit to make us strong to live a holy life and follow Jesus (1 Peter 1:15).
- He gives us eternal life and a new home in Heaven (John 14:2).



Talk about this:

1. Is it right to go on sinning if God forgives us (6:15)?
2. How does God free us from the power of sin?
3. After we choose Christ what else must we choose to do (6:19)?
4. What two things does Paul tell us about salvation (6:22)?

people do not say "evil things against the name of God" because of us (2:24). Church leaders today must understand this teaching from Paul.



Talk about this:

1. What happens when we judge other people (2:1; Matthew 7:1-5)?
2. What did the Jews boast about (2:17-20)?
3. Why did Paul say that the Jewish believers were wrong (2:21-24)?



Think about this: What does Paul say that is God's message to us today?



Romans 2:17-29 The Jews and the Law

Paul told the Jewish believers to stop being proud of who and what they were: guides, lights, instructors, teachers. Instead, he told them to really care for and be patient with those who are weak in faith: the blind, those who walk in darkness, those who are foolish and those who are childish or immature.

All Christians who learn the truth need to teach it first to themselves (2:21). They must practice what they preach. They need to show love to the unlovely. Without a change of heart, they will not know the blessings of God for themselves nor be a blessing to others. They will be unable to overcome the troubles of life.

Paul shocked the Jewish believers further by saying that non-Jewish believers were equal to them before God. The Jews have the sign of circumcision to show that they are God's chosen people. But what really matters is the inner change of heart. This is what pleases God (2:29). This is the purpose of our salvation. This is why Jesus said, "You must be born again" (John 3:3,7). It is not enough to be religious people who believe in God.



Bible reading: Romans 3:1-20

ALL HAVE SINNED: NO ONE IS RIGHT WITH GOD

Paul judged the Jewish believers for having faith in the Law for their salvation and for believing they were not sinners. God had given him this great understanding. In chapter 3, Paul tries to help the Jewish believers to understand more about faith in God. And he prepares the way for the church leaders to understand that everyone has sinned including themselves (3:23).

"Is there any advantage in being a Jew?" Paul asked (3:1). "There is great value in every way!" They alone were given the truth of God; the history of the creation and purpose of the world; the promises to Abraham; the commandments of God; His prophecies and His promises. Through the Jews, the Good News of God in Jesus Christ has blessed every nation.

The Jews had the Law that God gave to Moses (Exodus 20). The Law is "the very words of God" (3:2). The truth of God was given to them to value and to keep. It was a revelation from the heart of God.

But the Law proves that no one is right with God (3:10). Paul says that all people have done wrong. The Jews are sinners; Gentiles are sinners. There is no

difference between Jews and Gentiles. There is no one who is right with God (Psalm 14:1-3). All believers are sinners, even the most religious believers. We must all learn the same lesson.

Then Paul talked about a common error. Some people said it was all right to sin because God would always forgive them. They even said "Let us sin more so that God can forgive more." This is wrong teaching. Christians do not believe this. People who say these things are lying (3:8). It is a false doctrine to say, "Let us do evil so that good things will happen". People who say this do not understand God because God must judge all sin.

UNDERSTANDING THE OLD TESTAMENT

Paul then showed that people do not have God in their lives from birth (3:10-12). They look upon God without understanding. Because of this, they need the salvation of God (3:13-18).

Paul quoted from the Old Testament (Psalms, Ecclesiastes, Isaiah). He spoke to Jews who tried to keep the Law that God gave Moses (3:19). The Law cannot make us right with God. No, not at all! The Law shows us our sin (3:20).

Paul said this to help the Jews understand what he said in verse 23, that all have sinned. Paul wanted to lead them away from all their traditions and false beliefs. We all need to understand his teaching that:

- belief in God without being changed inside does not save us.
- obeying religious laws and traditions does not save us.
- being born to Christian parents does not save us.

We must trust in God alone and live by faith knowing that He saves us because Christ died in our place. Jesus said, "You study the Scriptures carefully. You study them because you think they will give you eternal life. These writings that you study tell about Me. But you refuse to come to Me and receive [this] life" (John 5:39,40).

Everyone in the world needs to know that they are sinners (3:19). Paul says that God shows us this by the Law (3:20). Everyone needs to be made right with God and to receive His gift of eternal life. Religious rules and traditions must not be allowed to hinder the joy of our salvation!



Talk about this:

1. What did Jews have that other people did not have (3:2)?
2. Are very religious people better than anyone else (3:9)?
3. Why did God give the Law (3:20)?



Think about this: Explain how religious traditions and false teachings can hinder our salvation and faith in God.

A SIGN OF NEW LIFE

Paul boldly orders his readers "Do not let sin rule..." (6:12). Say 'Yes' to the Holy Spirit and let Him help you choose the right things. Don't let any part of your body do wrong things ... but let every part of your body obey God. Make Jesus your King!

Christ suffered and died once to finish His work of salvation. Our death to sin must also be a finished work. We must believe that we are dead to sin (6:11). Do not obey the old evil ways (6:12). Paul says, "Instead, give yourselves to God... Give each part of your body to Him to do what is right" (6:13).

Paul tells us that the Christian life is all about doing what Christ told us when He lived here on earth. We should therefore study the four Gospels written by Matthew, Mark, Luke and John to learn more about Jesus. Our desire will be to worship God, do what He tells us, grow more and more like Jesus, and be His servant. Our faith must be an active faith. We give Him our hands, feet and minds for Him to use to do good works (6:13). We can only do this if we allow the Holy Spirit to live in us. He gives us strength to live for God (Acts 2:38).

One reason for Paul's instructions is to ensure that the Jewish believers are set free from both the old life of sin and the old Law (6:14). They must be neither slaves to sin nor slaves to the Law. They must be guided by the Law but salvation is by faith in the sacrifice of Christ. They have been set free from old religious ways and traditions and Christ has victory over sin in their lives. This applies to all believers.



Talk about this:

1. How does God free us from the power of sin and death in our lives (6:6)?
2. What do Christians do to show they belong to Jesus (6:3-4)?
3. If we are not now slaves of sin, who must rule in a Christian's life (6:12)?
4. If Jesus is our Master, what must we do when tempted by sin (6:11-13)?



Think about this: What are Christians set free from? What does it mean to become a 'servant of Christ' (1:1)? Is every part of your body given to God (6:13)?



Bible reading: Romans 6:15-23

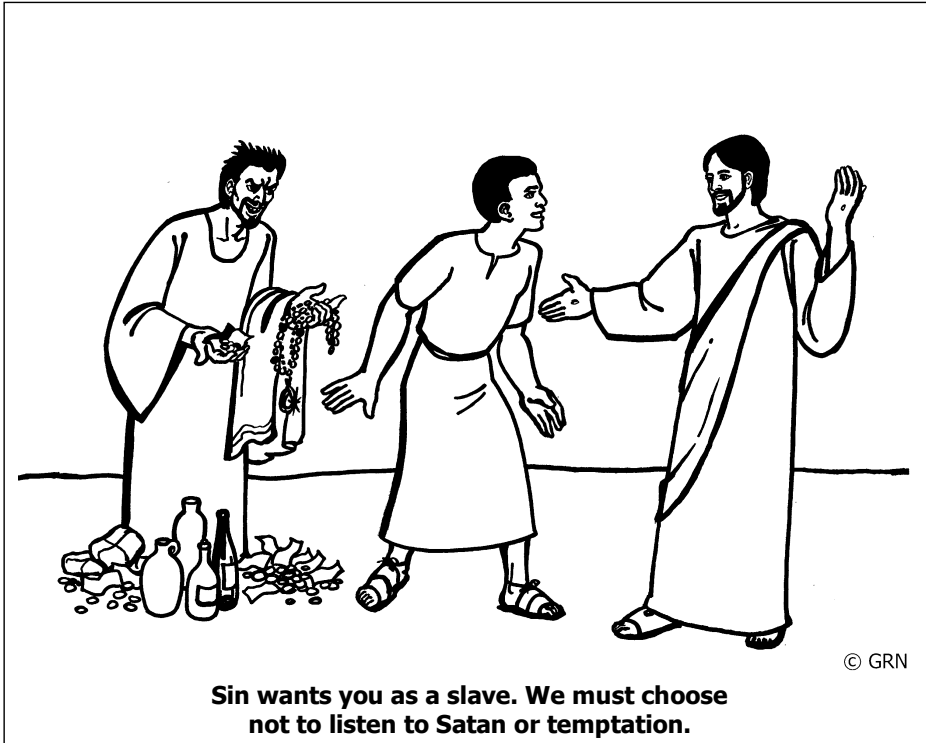
WE ARE SET FREE TO DO GOOD

What is salvation? Salvation is forgiveness and freedom from sin. Paul wrote: "At one time you gave your bodies to be slaves to your unclean ways ... Now give your bodies to be slaves to doing what is right and ... good" (6:19).

Without God, it is easy for men to sin. Soon after we are born we begin to sin. It is our nature because we are born in sin. We are created in the image of God but with the sin of Adam within us, which deserves eternal death (Genesis 2:17). But now that we are Christians Paul asks again, "Shall we sin because the grace of God has set us free?" (6:15). Of course not! Paul says that we are free to choose. We are free to be His slaves because we love Him as His bond servants (6:16-18; Leviticus 25:39). A bond servant promises to be true to his master, because he

with Jesus" (6:6). The new way of life has begun and baptism witnesses this to our friends and family.

Paul knew that Christians still sinned at times. But he wanted his readers to understand that sin must no longer be their master. We have a new Master.



Then Paul gives another teaching which is a foundation of Christianity: "Christ died once, for all time, so that people would stop their wrong ways and live" (6:10). No more sacrifices for sin are required to please God.

"In the same way, consider yourselves to be dead as sin is concerned. Now that you believe in Christ Jesus, consider yourselves to be alive as far as God is concerned" (6:11).

Paul warned the Roman church to understand these things. They must confess their sins and choose not to sin again. Nor must they repeat the sins of their youth when they did not understand the truth from God (1 John 3:9; 5:18).

Suppose we try to walk in the light of God's truth yet continue to sin? Then we are still in the darkness. Walk in the light and live as Jesus did.



God's way of salvation

There is only one way to be saved from your sins. Paul told the people of Athens, "Believe in the Lord Jesus. Then you will be saved" (Acts 16:31). Jesus himself said, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me" (John 14:6).

Why is this? It is because God will accept nothing more and nothing less than the death of Christ to pay for your sins and mine. No good life that we live nor good works that we do can set us free from our sins.

So God offers men and women salvation as a free gift. He promised, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved" (Acts 2:21). Paul wrote, "The grace of God has saved you because of your faith in Christ. Your salvation doesn't come from anything you do. It is a gift from God. It is not based on anything you have done. No one can boast about earning it" (Ephesians 2:8-9).

In the Old Testament, the Ten Commandments show us our sins. Other laws of God show how our sins must be punished. Christians believe that Christ received that punishment for us. We say that Christ alone fulfilled the requirements of the Law.

We receive the righteousness of God when we receive by faith what Christ achieved for us on the cross (3:27). Through Him we share in the same special relationship that He has with His heavenly Father. We share in the righteousness of God through Christ: His goodness, wisdom, justice, love and eternal life, just as Adam did before he sinned. This is made possible for all who have faith in Christ (3:26). The grace of God rules in the life of those who receive the righteousness of God through Jesus Christ our Lord (5:21). Hallelujah!



Bible reading: Romans 3:21-31

WE ARE MADE RIGHT WITH GOD...

Paul now makes things very clear for all believers. The Jews thought that they were alright if they kept the Law of Moses. They were God's people. Their teachers told them that all the other nations were poor fools without God. But God says that no one is good enough to go to Heaven. He shows us a new way to Heaven, not by 'being good enough' and trying to keep His laws but by a new way. It was written in the Old Testament long ago. This new way is Jesus. His sacrifice is God's new covenant of salvation for mankind (1 Corinthians 11:25). God says that He will make us right (righteous and not guilty of sin) if we trust Jesus Christ to take away our sins (3:22,24,25). Paul repeats these words: "Everyone has sinned" (3:23). Then he repeats the Good News for all (3:24,25). The blood of Christ is the only remedy for sin (3:25).



When Jesus died on the cross, He opened a new and living way, a way for men to come to God. It is the only way (John 14:6). This is the most important part of Paul's letter to the Romans: the Good News of salvation through Jesus Christ, for all who believe.

Being made right with God is His gift (3:24). No one can earn it. No one deserves it. He gives this gift to all who believe that Jesus died in their place, and who ask God to forgive and to save them. Because of the love and goodness of God, He gives eternal life to those who believe and trust Him (John 5:24). This is the grace and mercy of God. Paul says that the sacrifice of the blood of Jesus frees us from our sins because of God's great love and goodness. It is not because of anything we do. It is a free gift for those who trust in Jesus. Praise God! And by the grace of God alone, those who believe have eternal life (John 5:24). With God!

...THROUGH FAITH IN THE BLOOD OF JESUS

This free gift is for Jews and Gentiles. "God gave Jesus as a sacrifice to pay for sins" (3:25). This means that God sent Jesus to take our punishment. We sinners should have died, but Jesus died in our place. He died for the whole world. And through 'faith in His blood' God saves us from being punished for our sins (3:25). Because Jesus died in our place, God forgives sinners who believe in Jesus and turn away from their sins. All God's punishment fell on Jesus. This is the New Way.

grow in His righteousness and goodness, and other people see Jesus living in us (2 Corinthians 4:2).

Instead of sin ruling our lives, the grace of God rules in our lives. God now rules in our lives through faith, worship and love, not through rules, sacrifices and punishment. We are no longer slaves to these things. We are no longer slaves to sin. We have the Holy Spirit power of Christ at work within us.



Talk about this:

1. How did sin come into the world (5:12)? How does this affect our children?
2. What bad thing did sin bring into the world (5:12)?
3. Who brings the goodness of God to us (5:15)?
4. Did the Flood change the hearts of Noah's family?
5. God's goodness (grace) rules when we are right with God. Then what happens? Who makes this happen (5:21)?



Think about this: How can we 'rule in life'? Does Jesus rule in your life? How do you know this (5:17)?



Bible reading: Romans 6:1-14

DEAD TO SIN AND ALIVE IN CHRIST

In 5:20 Paul said, "Where sin increased, God's grace increased even more."

"What should we say, then?" Paul asks. "Should we continue to sin so that God's grace can increase?" (6:1). Paul said this because some people had a wrong idea. They thought a Christian could go on doing wrong things because the grace of God is so great. They continued to sin, wrongly believing God would forgive them.

Paul answered, "Of course not!" When we become Christians, the power of sin is dead. "So how can we keep on sinning?" (6:2). Paul says, "When we are baptised we become part of Jesus. Baptism by immersion in water is a sign of our new life in Christ. "We are baptised into Christ Jesus" (6:3). It is a new beginning. We are lifted up out of the water to begin our new life. "We are dead to sin and alive to Christ." God changes me, and I change because of the grace of God.

His love is great enough to forgive even the worst sins. The true believer is "joined to Christ". His power overcomes sin. Therefore we are no longer controlled by sin:


- because we were buried with Christ into His death (6:4);
- because He rose again from death and brings us new life in the Spirit (6:4-5);
- we serve Him instead of being "slaves to sin" (6:6);
- we are set free from sin to live holy lives. Death and sin have no power over us (6:7).

We know that our old life was put to death (6:6). When we believe in Jesus Christ, it means that we die to our old way of life when we could not help doing wrong. That way of life is finished. "The old person you used to be was nailed to the cross

Adam's sin led to death. Man's spirit, the part of him that loves God, died. Because of sin, man turned away from God. "Many died because of the sin of one man (Adam)" (5:15).

Although death came to us all because of the sin of this one man, Adam, many blessings come to us because of one man, Jesus Christ. He came to pour blessings on us (John 1:16). His blessings fill the whole earth. Those who trust Jesus enjoy the life of God, a life of blessing (5:17) even if we suffer.

Because Adam sinned, sin was passed on to all people. Therefore all people deserve to die. Because Jesus Christ died in our place, all people can have eternal life. People who know Christ as their Saviour, who believe and receive the gift of the goodness of God, are forgiven and receive everlasting life (John 3:16). Adam's disobedience made us sinners; the obedience of Christ makes us righteous (Philippians 2:8). Hallelujah!

 **Think about this:** If all people deserve to die because of sin, explain in your own words the purpose of God to save us.

THE GRACE OF GOD'S ETERNAL SALVATION PLAN

The Old Testament Law pointed to man's sin; it showed up sin. The Law showed the true way of God to live. The Law also showed man how he broke the Law. It showed that he was guilty and deserved to die. The more men and women heard and understood God's Law, the more they knew about their sin and punishment. Before the Law came, people sinned but did not know the truth. This is why Paul said that the Law increased sin.

However, when sin grew bigger, the mercy of God grew bigger. "Where sin increased, God's grace increased" (5:20).

God moves toward mankind because He loves us. We see in the Old Testament how sin increased throughout the history of mankind. And throughout history, God also increased the knowledge of His salvation plan to mankind. We see this in part through what He told Adam, Abel, Noah, Abraham, Moses and the prophets. Then the salvation plan of God was fully revealed in the life, death and resurrection of His Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ. It was the purpose of God from the beginning of time. The sin shown to us from the Old Testament is only put right with God through Christ. Paul says this is "the grace of God which brings eternal life because of what Jesus Christ our Lord has done" (5:21).

In history, God took many steps towards mankind to destroy or punish the effect of sin. God takes many steps towards each of us and as soon as we take one step towards Him He responds in love. When we obey the truth from God, He makes our faith stronger. We begin to understand how great, and wide and deep is His love. He is the God who loves to be good to us (1 Peter 5:10). His love washes away our sin and leads us into His Kingdom of righteousness.

Through Christ, God gives us His Holy Spirit to help us obey the Father's Word. Day by day, He helps us know the way of God and to walk in that way (Galatians 5:25). We have joy when we walk in God's way and praise and worship Him. We

Under the Old Way, people brought an animal to sacrifice. As they poured out its blood, they asked God to forgive their sins. But the blood of an animal could not take away their sin for ever. But now, because the blood of Jesus was poured out for us, God takes away all our sin. He no longer remembers it when we believe in Jesus. Through faith in the blood of Jesus we are saved from punishment for our sins. When we repent and turn away from our sins, God shows us His justice and mercy. Jesus paid the full price for sin. And our sin is taken away forever.

Here Paul reminded the Christians about more things they should have known from the Old Testament (Jeremiah 31:31-34). He wanted them to know that it is more important to trust in Jesus than to trust in the Law (3:28). But he said that it is good to have the Law. "We agree with the Law" (3:31). Faith in Christ enables the believer to obey the Law of God in truth and love and full understanding. They are able to live the Law by faith in Christ.


Jesus said, "Do not think I have come to get rid of what is written in the Law or in the Prophets. I have come to give full meaning to what is written" (Matthew 5:17). Paul said later, in Romans 10:4, that Christ fulfilled the Law.

"Because of the Good News (of Jesus Christ), the promises of God are for Gentiles as well as for Jews. Both groups are parts of one body (the Church of Jesus Christ). They share in the promise. It belongs to them because they belong to Christ Jesus" (Ephesians 3:6). This means that through Jesus, the promises of God are for everyone. No one is shut out. We all become children of Abraham and so the promises of God are for Gentiles too.

We believe that Jews and Gentiles can learn from each other and agree because we all belong to Christ Jesus. Because of the great love and mercy of God, He forgives all those who believe. He makes us right with Himself (3:24). None of us can boast because none of us can do anything good enough to deserve forgiveness (3:27). There are no first-class or second-class Christians. God forgives all who believe (3:30). All believers are special in the sight of God.

 **Talk about this:**

1. What is the New Way that God uses to make us right with Himself (3:21,22)?
2. Can a bad person get to Heaven (3:23-25)?
3. How can anyone be made right with God (3:24, 26)?

 **Think about this:** Read Psalm 14:3 and then Romans 3:23 and 6:23. Explain these truths in your own words.

 **Bible reading: Romans 4:1-25**

ABRAHAM WAS MADE RIGHT WITH GOD FOR US ALL

In this chapter Paul reminds the Jewish believers how Abraham was made right with God. God said that he was right because he believed. He was made right with God by faith (4:2-8). It was not because of circumcision (4:9-12), nor because he kept the Law (4:13-17a), but because he believed God (4:3). Paul reminds us

what it says about Abraham in Genesis 15:6. Paul reminds us that no one can be made right with God by what he does, or he would have something to boast about (4:2). No one can boast. God saves us by His special favour. You can't boast about this; "it is a gift from God" (Ephesians 2:8).

In this way Paul reminds the Jews again that their law-keeping will not lead them to the righteousness of God. Abraham was put right with God through faith in His promises. This was many years before the Law was given.

King David knew this truth and Paul used David's words in 4:7-8 to tell us this (Psalm 32:1-2). Paul proved to his readers that his teachings on forgiveness, salvation, justification and righteousness were based on the Word of God. Yes, God welcomes the sinner who repents and believes. Righteousness, that is being made right with God by faith alone, is not something new. It is as old as Abraham and King David. It can also be seen in Abel and Noah.

No wonder David was happy. God forgives sin and even takes away the guilt of sin (Psalm 32:5).

Paul reminds us that when God saves us by faith, it is His free gift to us (Romans 4:4-5). We do not deserve it and we cannot earn it, for we are all sinners.

God made Abraham righteous with Himself. This happened before he was circumcised (4:10). Circumcision was a special sign but it did not make Abraham righteous. God made Abraham right by faith alone.

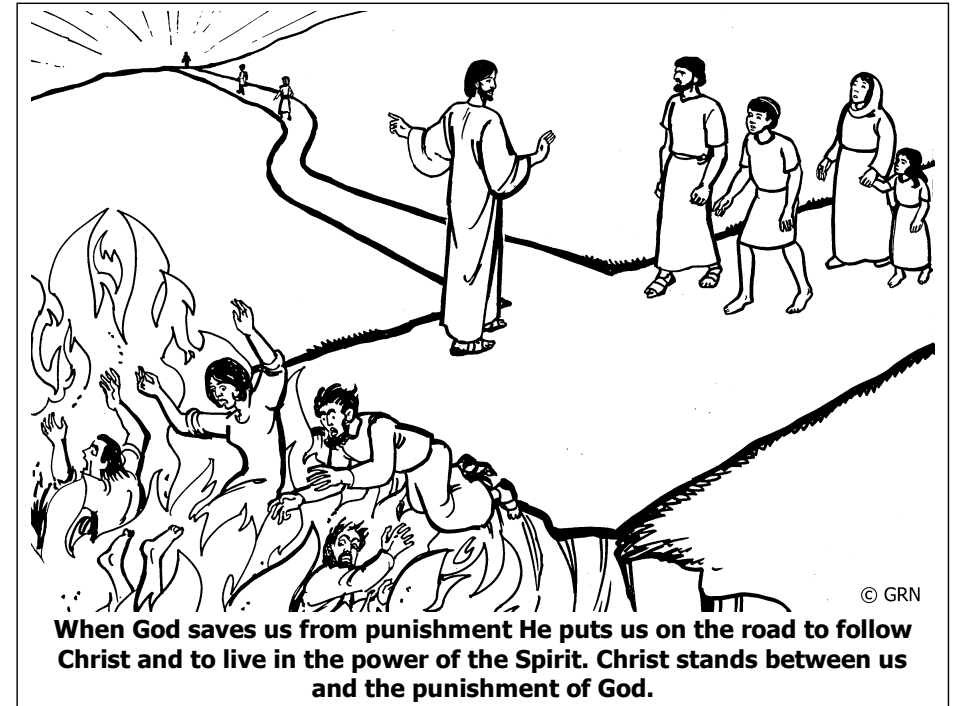
Abraham is called 'the father of all believers' (4:11). "His faith made him right with God" (4:13). People who have faith today to believe God, as Abraham did, become the 'children of Abraham' (4:16). Because Abraham believed, God gave him the promise that he would become the father of everyone who shares his faith (4:13,16). Abraham is the father of all believers in Christ because he showed us the way of faith which puts us right with God.

Our relationship with God is made complete through faith in Jesus Christ. This is for Jews, Arabs and other Gentiles who seek to know Yahweh, the God of Abraham. And Christ is the promised seed of Abraham (Galatians 3:16; Genesis 12:7; 13:15; 24:7). Through Jesus Christ, many nations are in the family of Abraham (Romans 4:18).

Paul decides it is necessary to make these things very clear to the believers in Rome before he talks more in the next chapter about the grace of God and about salvation through faith in Christ Jesus (5:2). In chapter 4, we read Paul's amazing understanding of the salvation plan of God. Jesus met Paul on the road to Damascus. Therefore we can trust Paul's understanding of the Old Testament in the light of his knowledge of the risen Saviour.

Paul was also taught by the Holy Spirit in Arabia and by some of the early church leaders (Galatians 1:11-19). He strongly believed that both Jews and Gentiles must come to God by believing in Christ. In this way, Abraham is the father of all believers. He shows the way of faith which leads to God and makes us right with Himself. This is why Paul says that Abraham is father to us all. God said that this would happen (Romans 4:17; Genesis 17:5; Galatians 3:29).

world. And He gave the Law of Moses to show what is right and wrong and to prove that we need a Saviour.



SIN WANTS TO MAKE US ITS SLAVE

Sin is like:

- a bad king ruling in my heart (5:21).
- a bad slave owner ruling my life (6:6; John 8:34).
- an enemy that wants to rule my mind (7:23).

Even after God gave the Law to Moses, sin ruled. And it kept on ruling in the world. Sin had to be punished. But only Christ our Saviour can truly break the power and rule of sin in our lives, when we trust Him (6:6). He took the punishment in our place.

"Adam opened the door to sin and let it loose in the world of men" wrote F. F. Bruce, a Bible teacher. Sin got so bad that God sent the Flood to destroy everyone except eight people (1 Peter 3:20). Noah's wicked neighbours were all drowned in the flood (Genesis 7:21).

Did Noah think, "It will be a wonderful new world now that sin is gone?" If so, God had to remind him, "man's thoughts are evil from the time he is young" (Genesis 8:21). Noah made a new start, but man's heart did not change. God punished the world but sin ruled in the hearts of men.

“That is not all. We are full of joy...” There is great joy in Heaven and on earth. The angels have joy (Luke 15:10), the Christian Church has joy, and through the grace of God the forgiven sinner has joy. Hallelujah!



Talk about this:

1. Why can we expect to share the hope of the glory of God (5:2)?
2. What good comes when we suffer for Christ's sake (5:3)?
3. How is the love of God poured into our hearts (5:5)?

How great is the love of God for us (5:8)?



Bible reading: Romans 5:12-21

DEATH BECAUSE OF ADAM BUT LIFE BECAUSE OF JESUS CHRIST

Now Paul teaches another foundation of the Christian church. When Adam disobeyed God, sin came into his life. God judged Adam. Because Adam sinned he had to die. At first, Adam was sinless and ageless. After Adam sinned he started to grow old. Sin and death passed on to Adam's children. All men die, because all have done wrong things (5:12).

In the first part of Romans, Paul showed us that sinful man could not save himself. Then Paul showed how a sinner could be made right with God because Christ died and rose from death. Now life in Christ replaces death in Adam. Adam brought death when there was life. Christ brought life when there was only death. Our new life is both physical and spiritual.

Because we are children of Adam, every child is born with the seed of sin in his life. As we grow up we cannot help doing wrong. Sin takes root, reaching into every part of our lives. Where people do not know God, this root of sin grows quickly. Even when parents pray and teach children about God, the sin is still there. We all want to go our own way instead of God's way. Soon we are living as enemies of God.

This is why children who are born to Christian parents cannot be called Christians until they are old enough to follow Christ for themselves. The decision to receive Christ into their lives cannot be made for them by their parents or relatives. This is one of the reasons why Christianity is different to all other world religions. Each person must choose for himself to follow Christ and be put right with God. If they are born to Christian parents they are not born as Christians. They need to be born again by turning to God (Ezekiel 18:23, John 3:7).

“Sin was in the world ... and death ruled ...” (5:13-14). Men were enemies of God. They needed God to make them right with Himself. God in His mercy, prepared a way for us all to be saved. God's day of salvation came when Jesus died for us on the cross then rose up again on the third day.

This plan of God defeated sin and defeated death and defeated the rule of Satan in our lives. This plan took place in the heart of God before He created the

WHAT ABRAHAM HOPED FOR

Abraham believed God could bring life out of death. He was 100 years old, so his body was almost dead. And Sarah's womb was dead (4:19). Abraham and Sarah were too old to have a son, yet God promised them a son. God said to Abraham, “Your wife Sarah will have a son by you, and you will name him Isaac” (Genesis 17:19).

Abraham felt like saying ‘Impossible!’ but his faith said ‘Yes’ to God. He believed that God could bring life out of death and give Sarah a son (Genesis 21:1-7). God kept this promise and Isaac was born.

If we are tempted to say that we can never have the faith of Abraham then we must remind ourselves that in Christ all things are possible through the kindness and mercy of God (2 Timothy 1:9).

Lack of faith (unbelief) is a root cause of all sin because it does not give glory to God. Abraham “became strong in his faith and gave glory to God” (4:20). “God accepted Abraham because he believed that God could do what he promised. So his faith made him right with God” (4:22; Genesis 15:6).

Moses wrote these things about Abraham, not just for people at that time, but also for us (4:23-24). Jesus said, “Your father Abraham was filled with joy at the thought of seeing My day. He saw it and was glad” (John 8:56). Paul said boldly, “We believe in God who raised Jesus our Lord from death” (Romans 4:24).

In Romans 4:25 Paul tells us why it was necessary for Jesus to suffer and to die. It is through Him that we receive our forgiveness and our righteousness. He ‘died for our sins’ and He ‘makes us right with God’. These two great blessings of forgiveness and righteousness (called justification) are the glorious work of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. This is the centre of Paul's amazing Good News of God for all who have faith to believe. It enables us to meet God free from sin! This verse is a reminder from Paul of all we have received in Christ before he leads us into chapters 5 and 6 on the joys of the Christian life.



Talk about this:

1. How did God make Abraham right with Himself (4:3)?
2. How are the promises of God to Abraham for us too (4:16)?
3. Who are included in the promises of God (4:16,17)?
4. How is Abraham our father (4:17)?
5. What does God give in return for faith (4:5,24)?
6. How does our faith give glory to God (4:20)?



Think about this: Explain in your own words the Christian teaching of justification. Why is faith more important than traditions?



Bible reading: Romans 5:1-11

WE HAVE PEACE WITH GOD

Paul next explains 'justification'. This is what happens when God forgives sinners and makes them right with Himself (5:1-3). Through Jesus:

- we have wonderful peace with God (see also Colossians 1:20).
- we have a way to come to God (see also Hebrews 10:19).
- we receive the grace of God and stand before Him, forgiven and made clean (see also Ephesians 4:32).
- we are given hope to share His glory (see also Romans 8:17)

'And that's not all. We are full of joy even when we suffer' (5:3). This is strange talk! When we suffer for Christ our hope grows stronger. Suffering makes us strong (1 Peter 5:10). Suffering makes us push forward to know Christ better (Philippians 3:10).

He encourages them to believe that "suffering gives everyone strength to go on" (5:3). This hope never lets us down, because God fills our hearts with His love. He does this through the Holy Spirit He gives us (5:5). We need to encourage this hope to grow. Hope in Jesus brings us the love of God. God pours His love into our hearts. The Holy Spirit does this work. He fills us with the great love of God. Sometimes hope seems to be just a dream but our hope depends on God who can be trusted.

In the old life of sin, we had no hope and no power. Then at the right time, Christ died for the people who were without God (5:6). Even if we are good, we don't expect anyone to die for us. But God showed His great love for us by sending Christ to die for us when we were bad people (5:7-8).

God poured His great love on us. Now we trust Him to finish the work that He started. Our hope is strong and sure: He, Jesus, is able to save completely and for all time those who come to God through Him (Hebrews 7:25).

Without Christ:

- People are weak and cannot change to live a better life even if they try (5:6).
- People still do wrong things (5:8).
- People are the enemies of God (5:10).
- But in Christ, sinners are the friends of God. They are made right with God (2 Corinthians 5:18). God and man faced away from each other. When we trust Jesus Christ, we turn to face God and He becomes our friend.

We are put right with God. We have been accepted by God because of ...

1. the grace of God (3:24)
2. The sacrifice of Christ (5:9)
3. Our faith (5:1)

The righteousness of God is a free gift to all who believe the Good News of Jesus Christ. Hallelujah!



Romans 5:3 Joy in our Suffering

Paul says that suffering can be good for us because it makes our faith grow strong. So we can rejoice in our suffering.

There are different causes of suffering:

- the suffering caused by our own sin.
- the suffering caused by the sin of others.
- the suffering that is caused by living in a fallen world that is in chaos and ruled by Satan.

We can rejoice in all our suffering if we continue to trust in God and grow in faith. God therefore allows suffering, since it enables Him to produce more of His righteousness in us. Suffering gives us strength to go on (5:3). It produces a mature Christian character. It builds faith and hope of eternal salvation. It enables us to prove the love of God dwelling in us through His Spirit (5:5).

It is not a good thing to suffer and to refuse to trust in God. Always seek God in prayer and through His Word. Seek God in worship. Learn how to rejoice in your suffering. Allow God to use your suffering for good. Open your eyes to see the power of God at work, so that you believe not because of "human witness but because of the power of God" (1 Corinthians 2:5). We need the power of God at work in our lives to endure suffering and persecution. In this way we grow in God.

Suffering and persecution will come to all who follow Christ (2 Timothy 3:12). When we believe in Jesus and receive the forgiveness of God and prepare to follow the Spirit of Christ, then we must be ready to suffer and die (Mark 8:34).

Jesus said, "People will hate you because of me" (Mark 13:13). We may have to suffer unfair treatment, persecution, war, hunger, poor health and many other evils. But we must remember that Yahweh God, who is mighty and powerful, chose to bring us into His presence through the suffering of His own Son, whose name Jesus, or Yeshua, means Salvation.

Those who "stand firm to the end will be saved" (Mark 13:13; Revelation 3:11).

Since we have been justified (made right in the eyes of God) by His blood (Christ died for us), how much more shall we be saved from the anger of God? (5:9; 1 Thessalonians 5:9). God is angry because of "the evil things people do" (1:18), but Christ stands between us and God's holy and righteous anger. Now, through faith in Jesus Christ, we are no longer enemies but friends with God. There is peace between a holy God and the sinner who believes. That sinner is able to take a new road in life and come to the Father. He is at peace with Him as a child of God.

Also, he is able to stand in the presence of almighty God. An unforgiven sinner may not do that. But through faith in Christ, we are made right with God. We become righteous and worthy to stand before Him.