

# Men's Class on Romans Chapters 1-8

## Prepared by Matt Dabbs

### The major commentaries consulted include:

- Ben Witherington, Paul's Letter to the Romans: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary
- N.T. Wright, Paul for Everyone: Romans (Part 1)
- Cranfield, Romans: A Shorter Commentary

I have tried to cite where appropriate.

## Introduction

### *What we intend to accomplish:*

- Receiving – Processing - Applying
  - What does it say
  - What does it mean
  - Now what?
- Understand how we read the Bible
- Understand the context:
  - Of the world of Paul/Romans
  - Of individual verses, chapters, and the book as a whole.
- Draw you in to the world of the Bible in order to experience the text in all its dynamics and twists = make you hungry for it.
- To take what we find and let it challenge our thinking, our theology, and the way we understand God, self, and others.

### *How we will accomplish our goals:*

- Receiving – need an open heart
- Processing – study, class discussion
- Applying – introspection and discussion

### *Things we want to avoid:*

- Proof texting – we have to understand verses in context. Romans is HUGE on pulling out verses (especially 3:23) and leaving them to sit on their own. That has to be done at times out of convenience and brevity but that will not due in our discussion.
- Viewing the book as a general letter outlining Paul's theology (beliefs about God) with no other real purpose in sending this to the Roman Christians.

We have to look at the whole book

- Past problems in reading Romans did not take into account context and historical background that shed light on what is being talked about.

### **Genre - Reading the Bible flat vs. catching the contours:**

Reading something how it was meant to be read:

- Gospels – History/Story/narrative written to help us believe
- Acts – History written for Theophilus – story of church and sequel to Luke

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- Epistles - We are listening in on their conversation.
  - Letter – certain things expected
  - Wedding - “Dearly beloved, we are gathered here today...”
  - Letter - “Dear John, How are things with you? Hope you are doing well...”
  - Scientific paper, stock report, etc – the all read different and should be read different
- You don’t do a wedding like you read a letter and you don’t read every letter you get like you are listening to a wedding. Genre makes all the difference.

How does this apply to the Bible?

- This makes how we read the Bible more informed and helps us dig deeper.
- Romans as a letter/Epistle:
  - Author and recipients – why is it important to know who is who?
    - Who said something can have a dramatic impact on what it means.
  - Letters in ancient world – see handout #21 – contains “Greetings” and continual prayers
    - Form (Fee, 44):
      - Name of writer – Paul
      - Name of recipient – Church in Rome
      - Greeting – grace and peace...
      - Prayer or wish of thanksgiving
      - Body
      - Final greeting/farewell
    - Charein – Greetings
    - Charis – grace
  - Occasional – Letters are written for a reason. Romans is no different. Thought was that all other Paul’s letters written for specific problems but not Romans.
    - When you write a letter there is always a purpose – for Paul he was usually addressing specific issues in various churches in order to help them understand their calling and their identity in Christ more fully.
    - Problem – we only have one side of the discussion – we hear the answers but don’t often know the questions/problems. We can figure it out based on the answers.
      - Unity, unity – must be divisions problems.

## Context

Side note - Witherington thinks Paul wrote this after his winter visit to Corinth but before the Jerusalem collection (Rom 15).

*What was Paul’s relationship with the church at Rome?*

- Paul’s presence in Rome and his execution (See Acts – appeal to Caesar)
- Paul writes this in advance of his time in Rome to people he generally has never met (exception – Rom 16).
  - Why would Paul take the time to list all these people? He doesn’t have a similar list in many of his other letters...he does this because he doesn’t really know them

personally and is establishing credibility with them. Witherington says these are even moreso his co-workers than his converts (BWIII, 2, 5)

*Who is the church in Rome composed of?*

- Mostly Gentile Christians (1:13, 15:15ff, 11:13, 9:3, 10:1-2, 11:23-31
  - BWIII believes that in 3:1 and 7:1 Paul is debating an imaginary Jew
  - Jewish Christians there as well – 15:7ff, Rom 16
- Witherington believes there is an honor/shame component of Rom 16 – that he names mostly Jewish people to help build up their honor before the more established Gentile Christians in leadership at Rome.

## The Back Story

We read the gospels and then Acts and get the history of the church. Then we hit the letters. Arranged in order from longest to shortest for Paul.

- Acts we see churches established – Romans we see Paul dealing with some specific issues in a specific church – one that he has never actually been to personally (actually probably a conglomeration of house churches).
- In Letters – we see many of those churches and church leaders have specific issues and problems that need to be addressed.
- Edict of Claudius (See **Acts 18:2** and also Suetonius?) in 49 AD
  - Roman emperor Claudius ruled Rome from 41 to 54 AD. During his reign he issued a number of edicts including a prescription of “Yew juice” for snake bite ([Suetonius #16](#)) but also, and most importantly, an edict in 49 that Suetonius records as follows, “Since the Jews constantly made disturbances at the instigation of Chrestus [probably a misunderstanding of Christ], he expelled them from Rome.” ([Suetonius 25.4](#)). Acts [18:1-2](#) also makes mention of this edict as to why Priscilla and Aquilla left Rome. To make a long story short, when Claudius died the edict was void and the Jews were able to return to Rome.
- Paul’s aim – to help consolidate/unify the church in Rome after all the division they have undergone.

Big picture – little picture.

- The little picture forms the big picture and the big picture informs the little picture.
- Where is the author taking us? = Structure

As we study then we will do several things:

- Interpretation:
  - Context – keeping things in focus – being informed by what surrounding text.
  - Structure – big picture little picture
  - Genre – how does the fact that this is a letter change the way we read it and what we hear is going on?
    - Author, audience, etc
- Application – let it stretch us and open our hearts and minds for hearing it again for the first time.

## Romans 1

### **Romans in broader NT context:**

- Romans Date – 57 AD in perspective
- Romans 15:25-27:
  - Macedonia (Acts 20)
  - Achaia (Acts 19:21)
  - Jerusalem (Acts 21)
- Paul is writing his letter to the Roman Christians while on his way to Jerusalem after having been in Macedonia and Achaia. He has the collection for Jewish Christians there who are struggling financially (Acts 21 he arrives there). When he gets there he will be arrested

### **Structure of a Greek letter:**

- **1:1-6 – Introduction of the author**
- **1:7 – Addressee – to the all in Rome who are loved by God...**
- **1:7 – Greeting – “Grace and peace to you...”**
- **1:8 – Thanksgiving/prayer section**
- **1:10ff – Body**

### **Paul’s introduction of himself (1:1-6):**

- Church of maybe a couple hundred in a few homes in the city of Rome (Ch 16 shows he knows roughly 30 of them)
  - This impacts how we read the opening verses...
    - Lengthy intro – probably because Paul didn’t know that many of them.
    - Authority issues – see below
- Authority issues – In order to listen they must understand the person who is righting and his position – surprising what we find:
  - Slave or servant of Christ Jesus
    - 19<sup>th</sup> century American view of slavery helps us miss what is being said - We see slaves as powerless – to be a slave of the king was to have authority as they carried out the king’s official business. Thus, to be a slave to God/Christ was to share in his power and authority.
    - He is not on his own but is under the authority of another...Jesus Christ.
    - Christ Jesus – when you hear that in Paul – want you to hear that as “God’s anointed one – Jesus” rather than as a proper name.
    - Many of God’s foremost people in OT were called slaves of God (see Cranfield, 2) – Moses, Joshua, David, prophets, etc and was considered there a title of honor – totally belonging to God (basically Cranfield’s words)
  - *Does the servant/slave metaphor still apply today? How?*
  - Apostle – “one who is sent” – implied...with the authority of the sender to give their message or accomplish their purpose.
    - *Are there still apostles today?*
      - Not in an official way – but certainly by the meaning – those who are sent.
  - Appeal to the authority of the Gospel (1:2):
    - God + scripture as to where his authority comes from “the gospel promised beforehand through his prophets in the Holy Scriptures.”
    - *Why is it important that we look to God and scripture for our authority?*

- This is not of ourselves or by our might – this is dependent on God and what God wants to happen.
      - *What other places have people looked to base their authority?*
        - Self, others, etc.
- Paul is pointing away from himself – toward where his authority comes from.
  - Scripture
  - God
  - Christ
  - Gospel
  - Spirit of holiness
- Paul is putting Nero in his place and putting God/Christ in theirs.
  - “God’s Son” – 1:2 – title given to Caesar who was believed to be divine.
  - Gospel = good news. A term used for when the emperor was born or accomplished a great feat (See BWIII & NT Wright).
  - Line of David – the rights to the throne based on a lineage older than Rome itself.
  - Lord?
  - What is Paul saying here? Christ is the real king with the real kingdom
    - Remember back to his trial – “king of the Jews” and Jesus’ response – “My kingdom is not of this world.”
    - This is significant given the fact that Paul is writing to Christian in the city of Rome – where Caesar lived.
- *How does the Gospel fly in the face of the powers of this world?*
- *Do we ever get ourselves so enmeshed in this world that we might start thinking these kingdoms are the real deal rather than God’s kingdoms?*
  - For instance – are you as worried about your walk & relationship with God as you are your 401k/IRA?

Paul is talking about a string of events that have changed the world forever (N.T. Wright) that basically demand a response. N.T. Wright writes,

“[The Gospel] is more like a command from an authority we would be foolish to resist. Caesar’s messengers didn’t go round the world saying, ‘Caesar is lord, so if you feel you need to have a roman-empire kind of experience, you might want to submit to him.’”

- Because what Paul says is true we can never be the same.

### **The audacity of the claims:**

- Paul is writing to maybe a couple hundred Christians meeting in a couple of homes in a city of a half million to a million about their identity as citizens of the real and true world superpower, the kingdom of God.
- In less than 400 years the city of Rome itself would declare its empire a Christian one, if even in a somewhat loose fashion.
- *If Jesus lordship brought us this same kind of hope...what would change?*
- *How would it challenge us to dream bigger and see bigger possibilities?*
  - Think about this:
    - Rome in their day – 1,000,000 people
    - Christians in Rome – 100-500?
    - People in Pinellas county – 1,000,000

- Members at Northwest – 400-500.
- How many years would it take to turn this county upside down? Don't say it is impossible. If the most pagan city in the world could be impacted that greatly by it, what could happen here?
- Is this more or less likely to happen if we are “ashamed of the Gospel” and keep it a secret to those around us?

How can this be? – Listen to what Paul wrote – God has been making promises. He made good on them through his Son who was raised from the dead. Because of that resurrection we now receive grace and are called to faith and obedience. We now belong to him because God is the one who justified us.

### **Paul's plans to visit Rome (1:8-17)**

- Thanksgiving and prayer section
  - *What can we learn about the prayers of an apostle even for people he had never met?*
  - *How often do we pray without ceasing for someone?*
- Move from some complex ideas to some plans
- Paul's sense of mission:
  - He has been in prayer for them
  - He has been making plans to come and teach them the Gospel to build their faith
  - He wants to impart to them some spiritual gifts.
  - He wants to be mutually encouraged by their faith
- Greeks and non-Greeks (literally barbarians). Funny background here:
  - Greek word – Barbarois – almost like saying the civilized people and then the Blah-blah people – as that is how their language sounded to the Greeks (thanks to Cranfield for the onomatopoeic aspects of this word).
- Salvation to everyone who believes – BIG words. Gospel according to traditional Jewish teaching was exclusive to Jews. Not so in OT
- 1:17 – “For in the Gospel a righteousness of God is revealed (apocolupto – apocalyptic literature – revealing hidden things)-a righteousness that is by faith from first to last...”
  - *How is God's righteousness revealed in the “good news”?*
    - Righteousness – just, right, pure...has to do with justice.
    - God's justice is revealed in the good news because we see that Jesus took the penalty for our sins and now we are justified/made righteous by his blood.
    - How are we then to live? By faith.
- Key verse – “the righteous will live by faith” (Hab 2:4)
  - *How is faith important today?/What parts of life today need to reflect faith in Christ?*

We are about to launch out into humbling territory where we have to take an honest look at our lives and see how well we live up to the idea of “the righteous living by faith.”

## **Romans 1:18-32**

Bridging from the last section – 1:16-17:

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- The Gospel – reveals a righteousness from God and yet by faith
- The righteous will live by faith – Hab 2:4
- Paul points out that the world needs to be saved and it is the gospel that makes that possible. Mankind

*Think of the Jews and Gentiles hearing these words for the first time – The Jews might be thinking the Gentiles are getting hammered by Paul and in some ways they are – until 2:9*

### **What is being revealed and who is doing the revealing (1:18-32)**

- 1:17 – Righteousness being **revealed** through the Gospel that requires faith
- 1:18 – Wrath of God **revealed**...why? Because of vs. 20 – since the creation of the world God has made himself clear to mankind.
- 1:19 – “**plain to them** because God has made it plain to them – lit “manifested”(light is root - φανερον).
- As opposed to 1:21 – their hearts were **darkened** (as opposed to what God was manifesting/shining the light on).

### The order of things (1:17-21)

- First – God’s righteousness is **revealed** in creation (1:20)
  - God expected mankind to respond with belief/faith
  - Man responded with all this wickedness/**darkness** rather than faith and belief – instead of righteousness they responded with unrighteousness
- Second – God’s wrath is revealed – due to the wickedness of mankind (1:18)
  - Righteousness was expected but the opposite happened:
    - Godlessness & wickedness (1:18)
- Third – God’s righteousness is **revealed** (1:17) – The Gospel
  - God has made himself **clear** again through his son
  - Just like with creation he expects this revealing of himself to mankind to result in belief/faith and righteousness rather than wickedness.
- Paul’s point is mankind was supposed to respond God with belief/faith but instead they rejected Him and rebelled. No excuse because God made this very clear.
  - Clear in the beginning – creation
  - Clear in the Gospel – Jesus’ D,B,R
  - So we are without excuse because we have knowledge of the Gospel and that should lead us to believing in him.
  - Yet many Christians behave like pagans even though they know better. *Why is that and what does God think about it?*

### **They changed things – made things not as they were supposed to be (1:21-25):**

- The light was supposed to change them (back into the image of God?) but instead they changed God to fit their image.
- 1:23 – “changed the glory of the incorruptible God into a likeness of a corruptible image of a man...”
- 1:25 – “Who changed the truth of God into a lie”
- Idolatry - Worshipped and served the creature (literally the “created one”) **rather than** the one who created (same root word as “created one”)
  - How foolish it looks to bow to a piece of stone.
  - How foolish it looks to bow to the idol of power, arrogance and pride.

- The Gospel should reveal our lives for what they are and change us rather than the other way around.
- Idolatry – an image (NIV) – where else do we hear about “Image” in the Bible?
- Mankind – made in God’s image.
- ***To worship an idol is to degrade the image of God within you. Wright believes that to worship God makes the image of God within us shine more brightly (23).***
- Homosexuality – why this example?
  - N.T. Wright lays this out well in Romans for Everyone, 21-23
  - “His point is, ‘this is not what males and females were made for’ ...His point is not ‘there are some exceptionally wicked people out there who do these revolting things’ but ‘the fact that such clear distortions of the creator’s male-plus-female intention occur in the world indicates that the human race as a whole is guilty of a character-twisting idolatry’. He sees the practice of same-sex relations as a sign that the human world in general is out of joint.” (N.T.W., 22-23)

**Result of corrupting of self and of God’s intention – “God gave them over...”**

*What does it mean that God gave them over?*

- God let their desires/lusts (Wright) run their course.
- God didn’t force them into something they didn’t chose (Pharaoh in Exodus hardened his heart 3 times before God ever did). God doesn’t force people to do things outside their character.
- The natural result of engaging in sin is for life to deteriorate and get further and further from the original intention – relationship with God in righteousness and through faith.

*Is there such a thing as a small sin?*

*Is there such a thing as a “gateway sin” similar to a “gateway drug”?*

- Seems that all sins are big but some sins lead to more serious ones if not kept in check – or at least serious consequences within our hearts.

**The ugliness of sin:**

- In a post-modern world it is easy to hear the message that sin is okay – the old “if it feels good, do it” mantra
- *How does the world try to make sin look okay?*
- *Why is it even worse to sin when you had knowledge of God that should have led you away from sin?*

1:29-31 – Wright calls this “what human life looks like when God says, ‘All right, do it your own way.’ ..Evil is what you get when the mind is twisted out of shape and the body goes along for the ride.” (Wright, 25)

Their day sounds a lot like our own!

- How have the people – Jew and Gentile alike in the Roman church responded?
  - Disunity with each other.
- How have we responded?
  - Answer found in this question – do we find ourselves acting and believing like the godless, faithless ones or like righteous ones?

1:32 – “Although they know God's righteous decree that those who do such things deserve death, they not only continue to do these very things but also approve of those who practice them.”

Goes along with 1:22 – “Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools.”



- There is a way that seems right in the world that leads to death (Prov 14:12 – “There is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death.”)
- Can you imagine knowingly doing something you know deserves death?
  - What in our society have we determined as a nation deserves death?
    - Murder, etc
  - Crazy thing is, when we sin we do the same thing – Rom 6:23

Remember – Paul is not so much pointing at the world but also has three fingers and a thumb pointing back at the church who is disjointed and in a state of disunity. These words are for us. The bigger picture is not so we can step back and say, “Look how evil the world is getting these days” but for us to say “Whose image am I displaying in my own life?” “How have I exchanged God’s intention for my life for my own creaturely desires?”

## **Romans 2 – No Claim to Moral Superiority<sup>1</sup>**

Reading a Letter - Listening in on one side of the conversation

- A condemnation = response to a corresponding problem or sin.
- A compliment – praising something good
- Make some assumptions based on the one side of the conversation we do have.
- “Well, its about 65 degrees outside and sunny.” you would assume the person on the other end just asked “How’s the weather?”

Ch.1 – Already listened in on is that the pagans have done lots of bad things.

Remember background – Jews, Gentiles, Edict, Rome...So Paul starts in on the Gentiles in the crowd in chapter 1 and into chapter 2

Let’s listen in...

“You, **therefore**, have no excuse, you who pass judgment on someone else, for at whatever point you judge another, you are condemning yourself, because you who pass judgment do the same things.” (2:1)

*What would you infer was the occasion for Paul writing this?*

- Problem – passing judgment
- By whom – Gentiles. Why? “Therefore” points to chapter 1
- Against whom – anyone (Jew or Gentile) but most importantly other Christians.
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Infer occasion – there were Gentile’s in the Roman church who were passing judgment on others but were just as guilty of doing those same things themselves.

### **A Call to Self-Examination in 2:1-16**

Imagine Hitler serving as judge over crimes of genocide. Messed up right? How can you pass judgment and condemnation when Joe sins but you do things even worse than he does?

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<sup>1</sup> A term Ben Witherington III uses in his Romans commentary, 76-77

What Paul is about to say in 2:1-16 are pointed primarily at Gentile Christians and serve as a warning against moral superiority.

*What does Paul say is the problem with being judgmental with the faults of others in 2:1?*

- The one who judges is just as guilty.
- When we pass judgment on the lives and sins of others we often overlook the fact that we are just as guilty.

*How does reminding ourselves of our own sinfulness help us deal with others humbly?*

- We have to deal with sin with an attitude and heart of humility. We don't jockey for spiritual position over others...not even over non-Christians.
- These verses are not just about how we deal with other Christians. It is also about how we deal with the world.

### **Hypocrites or Humble?**

#### **See Story Below**

Difficult balance - dealing with sin without being arrogant or holier than thou.

- When we start treating the world like we are better than they are we run into the problem of not recognizing that our own righteousness does not come from ourselves but from God (1:17).
- We deal with sin...but we are also honest about our own shortcomings and failures.
- Notice the difference in dealing with a friend who is struggling:
  - Option 1 (hypocrite) – I can't believe you mess up that badly. What you did is horrible and without excuse. I sure hope God can forgive you!
  - Option 2 (humility) – I sure know how it feels to mess things up. I have done the same thing myself and it sure stinks. I know God can forgive you because he has forgiven me of a lot worse things than that.
  - Difference in attitude – one is jockeying for spiritual authority and position. The other is a humble recognition that none of us are righteous on our own.
- *How do people respond to hypocrisy?*
  - They don't listen and shut down – *Why?* – Even though the truth may be spoken by a hypocrite it just sounds so silly that the message is lost.
  - So you can run around and say Jesus is Lord all day but if your neighbor knows you are more like the Devil than you are like the Lord the message loses its power.

### **Transparency and authenticity are key to reaching the lost.**

The world thinks Christians are hypocrites because they don't hear much of option 2 from many of us.

*How do we make ourselves transparent and authentic to reach others?*

- Paul is wanting these Christians to allow an honest self-examination to lead them to deal more fairly with others.
- **Application** – we recognize the sin in our lives and allow it to humble us enough to deal with the sin in the lives of others in a humble and loving way.
- **Warning** – Instead of saying “Wow those Romans were stubborn and unrepentant” (1:5) it behooves us to ask ourselves the question, “When have I been just like that?”

2:4 – Repentance:

- Greek conception of repentance – a change of mind with the resulting change of attitudes and behaviors.

- Hebrew/Jewish conception (from Shuv) “to turn”
- *How does changing our mind/thinking result in changing the way we live?*
  - Andy Stanley in Breakaway – **Beliefs** influence **Decisions** with influence **Outcomes**. So if you can get someone to change their thinking you can ultimately get them to change their life.

God is just (2:6-11)

- Start with the last verse – “God does not show favoritism.” (2:11)
  - That flies in the face of the traditional Jewish understanding of their place with God.
  - **Addressing potential arrogance of abusing God’s grace** - Don’t think so much of yourself that you think God won’t punish you. He will.
- We get into the problem of mishandling the grace of God and sinning, knowing that we will be forgiven so we do it anyway. That is called **nominal Christianity** – Christianity is this get out of jail free card that we live however we want for 75 years and then at the pearly gates we go “gotcha...I was baptized when I was 16!” Doesn’t work that way – God knows our hearts and our actions and he will judge accordingly.
- Paul writes that God will repay and God will give righteous judgment.

**It really does matter how we live, the choices we make, etc. (2:6-9)**

- *Why is it easy in our world to wonder if our actions even matter anymore?*
  - There are few outlets of morality any more. Most voices we compete with are about doing what you want and how RIGHT that is.
- God is watching and judging and righteous.
- God is also graceful.

“Having the Law is no guarantee of doing the Law, and merely having it is no protection against God’s judgment on disobedience, for all human behavior will be judged by God.” – BWIII, 85  
The law? (2:12-16)

- There is a standard for everyone. God will judge accordingly.
- Having the Law does not mean one will always keep it and Not having the law does not mean that one will never keep it. Jews sometimes fail to keep it and Gentiles often keep it even though they don’t know what it is.
- We are all alike in the need to have a Renovated Heart (a phrase used by Dallas Willard).

**Paul turns attention to the Jewish Christians (2:17-29)**

- Jewish hypocrisy.
- The law can become a crutch to lean on that leads one to live however they want.
- This is the checkbox mentality of the law – we have the law = we are fine with God, therefore let’s live however we want.
- This is also to the in-crows – those who have been God’s people for a long time.
- Deals with hypocrisy
- “God’s name is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you.” – Ever seen the bumper sticker – “Jesus, save me from your people”? Same concept. Some say the single greatest cause of atheism in the world are quote “Christians” – nominal Christians who hold themselves superior over others.
- 2:25 - Why circumcision? Because that was their checkbox. **Gen 17:9-14** – sign of the covenant.

- So what can happen - the man who is circumcised begins to see himself as “In” and others as “out” because of what is done externally to his body.
- He loses the regard for what happens to his heart and he turns to ungodly things
- Then you have this Gentile, while he has never been circumcised, has a heart for God and follows God anyway even though his body has never externally received the sign of the covenant, his heart shows it.
- True circumcision is a circumcision of the heart.

### **Nominal Christianity:**

- Is it possible to be a Christian in name only?
- Nominal Christianity means you claim to be a Christian but you could really care less if you lived more like Jesus, came to church, etc. Someone asks you your religion and you say “Christian” or “Church of Christ”...when was the last time you were there? Oh, I haven’t been since I was a kid!
- But it can be more subtle than that
- Just like they could be circumcised outwardly and yet have rotten hearts we too can claim our membership with this church or that or that we were baptized by this preacher or that but if we are far from God, we are far from God.
- We can start moving in a nominal direction when we find ourselves:
  - Coming to church to make sure we get the Lord’s supper and then leave because we have little regard for the fellowship, message, or the fact that Christ is being worshipped.
  - We have more Bibles on the shelf than days we have been at church in the last three months.
  - Get caught up in a bunch of fine tuned doctrine but could care less about the sin in our lives
  - Are more about going to the right church than about God actually transforming our lives.

An illustrative story from Steve Furtick’s blog - <http://www.stevenfurtick.com/uncategorized/a-tale-of-two-ministers/>

Funny that I ran into this randomly when preparing this lesson.

This is a true story. I’ve altered a few details to avoid maligning anyone.

Recently a man I greatly respect was telling me how much he didn’t like a certain local pastor. We’ll call the local pastor Pastor Dale. He felt that Pastor Dale was super-arrogant. Conceited and haughty.

*“You can just tell he’s hiding something. I don’t trust him. There’s something fishy going on there. He’s sleeping with someone, stealing money...wait and see.”*

I happen to know Pastor Dale pretty well. I respect him a lot, and have never seen him demonstrate anything but the utmost integrity. Granted, he is very bold and audacious, and I see how people could construe that as pride. I see it as faith and passion.

I tried to defend Pastor Dale, but it was no use. The man had made up his mind.

Pastor Dale was up to no good, headed for a moral failure-and that was that.

Next, he began to compare Pastor Dale to another local minister in the same town. This other guy (we'll call him Dr. Ross) was a veritable Bible scholar. He had memorized massive portions of the New Testament...in **Greek**.

This man marveled at Dr. Ross' knowledge and trusted His Scriptural insights immensely.

*"The main thing that I like about Ross is, he's a humble guy. Has real integrity. Loves his wife. Humble, humble, man. A good man. Not like Pastor Dale..."*

A few months later, Dr. Ross left his wife. He took half their money and left the country to be with his mistress. He had been sleeping with someone else secretly for a long, long time. The last I heard, the situation wasn't resolved, and the family was torn to shreds.

Meanwhile, Pastor Dale is still preaching God's Word, still married, and hasn't-to my knowledge-stolen from or wronged anyone.

We make a big mistake when we judge people by outward appearances. The guy who seems humble and trustworthy might be a time bomb masked by meekness.

The guy who seems like he's strutting may be just that secure in his identity in Christ because He spends hours on his knees each week.

You never know.

It's best to keep your mouth shut.

Let God be the judge.

## **Romans 3 – Background**

### **Jews, Gentiles and the Law:**

Traditional view of the covenant and the law:

- Sinai – law given - - - - - > Jesus Christ (Cross) brought end to the law and a in with a new covenant. So the old covenant was a thing of the past.
  - Early church started with Jews who believed in Jesus Christ.
  - Later the church spread to the Gentiles.
  - Early Christian Jews did not check their Judaism or the law at the door.

In Romans 2 & 3, we have some interesting verses that should make us raise our eyebrows:

- 2:17 – “If you call yourself a Jew” – yes, they even Christian Jews were still Jews
- 2:25 – “Circumcision has value if you **observe the law**, but if you break the law, you have become as though you had not been circumcised.” He is talking to Christian Jews here...circumcision still has value.
- 3:1 – “What advantage, then, is there in being a Jew, or what value is there in circumcision? Much in every way!”
- 3:20 – “No one will be declared righteous in God's sight by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of our sin.”

Problem – Our logic says, “If no one will be declared righteous by observing the law then there was/is no place left for the law.” That is, if you only view the law as something important to salvation.

Old view – the law was about works righteousness. You had to do everything exactly right or else God wouldn't save you. Thought you have heard - no grace when there was law. So God gave the law until Jesus came, Jesus died and nailed the law to the cross and now everyone is just a Christian with no thought of the law whatsoever.

#### Problems

- Grace is all over the place in the OT. They understood their need for God's grace just as much as we do.
- Jesus' own words – Mtt 5:17 – He did not come to abolish it but to fulfill it. Jesus actually reinterpreted the law with a stricter standard than ever before.
- Look at Jews after Jesus D,B,R and see how they were behaving:
  - Acts 21:17-16
    - Jews who believed and were “zealous of the law”
    - 21:20 ff - But those Jewish Christians were concerned that Paul had turned against the Torah in teaching fellow Jews not to circumcise their children, turn away from Moses (another way of saying the Law of Moses), etc
    - 21:23ff – Paul pays the purification expenses for some men who had made a vow, why? To show he was still in keeping of the law (21:24). He did. He even purified himself along with them.
  - Acts 21:27-29 – More thought that Paul was an apostate from the law. Paul arrested and gives a speech of his conversion.
  - Acts 25:8 – Paul defends himself against accusations that he was apostate from the law – “I have done nothing wrong against the Jewish law or against the temple or against Caesar.”

Refining our view of the law in the early church.

#### Book of Acts:

- Accusations against Paul – that he is not keeping the Law of Moses = apostasy. Paul responds by taking a Nazirite vow (Acts 21:15-26).
- Notice Peter and his vision and Peter's adherence to the law
- First Christians did not have the view that Jesus died and so every aspect of the law was thrown away from then on.
- They still kept large portions of the law! Listen to how Paul speaks of the law 20 years after Christ has risen from the dead in Romans:
  - 2:25 – “Circumcision has value if you observe the law”
  - 3:1-2 – Entrusted with the very words of God
  - 3:19 – The law has something to say to those under the law
    - However – no one will be declared righteous by observing the law (3:20)
    - So we assume that they didn't keep the law because they couldn't be declared righteous by keeping it. Not so.
    - Peter was keeping the law (Acts 9). Paul was keeping the law (Acts 21)
- Problem – we think that once something no longer has power to save that it would be kept. But it was...this was part of their identity with God.
- Some things God said would last forever:
  - Circumcision – lasting sign of the covenant (Gen 17?)
  - Sabbath – lasting sign of the covenant (Exo 20? & Lev?)
- Some things God brought to an end:

- Dietary laws (Acts 9-10)
- Purity laws

Acts 10 – Gentile acceptance into the church based on God’s initiative:

- Turning point in the church
- Before – Gentiles could be considered a “god-fearer” but were not usually readily accepted into synagogue or definitely into temple worship. There was an outer court where they could worship.
- Blessings and curses:
  - To be blessed in OT was to be in right relationship with God, to experience God’s promises, and to observe the distinctive marks of Judaism (Circumcision, Sabbath, dietary laws, etc). We often think law works righteousness and that Jesus and NT was all about grace. Not so. Even under the law there was a HUGE grace component.
  - Covenantal nomism -

Circumcision:

- Acts 15:1,5 16:3

R. Simlai wrote “Six hundred and thirteen precepts were communicated to Moses. David came and reduced them to eleven [principles]. Isaiah came and reduced them to six. Micah came and reduced them to three. Again came Isaiah and reduced them to two. Amos came and reduced them to one, as it is said, “For thus saith the Lord unto the house of Israel, seek ye Me and live (Amos 5:4)...It is Habakkuk who came and based them all on one [principle], as it is said, “But the righteous shall live by faith.” (Hab 2:4).

## **Romans 3**

**[see appendix A for background on Romans 3]**

Give them a copy of what I put on the blog about misperceptions about the law to clear up some things we talked about last week.

Paul is funneling his way down to show that his Jewish and Gentile audience are more alike than they think – they all have sinned and they all must rely on God. They also cannot rely on human reason or wisdom to manipulate God to allow them to sin.

### **We cannot rationalize sin to be okay...EVER**

3:1-2 – It’s not all bad news. The Jews have much going for them.

- *What did God expect the Jews to do with the words he entrusted to them?*
  - He expected them to be a light to the Gentiles but they were faithless with that responsibility.
  - But that doesn’t make God any less faithful to his promises.

3:3-6 – God is righteous even if we aren’t. God’s judgment is righteous even if ours is messed up

3:7-8 – Rationalization

*What does it mean to rationalize?*

*Why would someone want to rationalize sin?*

- Because it makes it seem okay!

Paul gives two examples of people who rationalized a way to sin and feel good about it:

1. If I lie – it helps people see that God is way more truthful than I am. Then God would get more glory as people realize just how honest he is compared to the rest of us!
2. Let us do evil so that good might result!

Paul says this type of thinking deserves to be condemned.

## Sin

### What is it?

- *What would you say sin is?*
- Some would say “to miss the mark” but that doesn’t quite get the picture.
- Sin is rebellion – God tells us what he wants and when we do what we want anyway, it is called sin.
- Adam, Eve, Serpent – Sin is saying we know better than God what is best for our lives.
- Sin distorts our humanity and skews the image of God that is within each one of us.

### Consequences of Sin

- “Or you will surely die” (Gen 2:17).
- “wages of sin is death” (Rom 6:23)

### Who has done it?

- Everyone – Rom 3:23

### Pathways:

- Rationalize it – See Rom 3
  - Even if I do this – I am still nicer than most people
  - I do more good than I do evil
  - No one will ever know.
  - I can just ask for forgiveness later
- *Why is rationalizing so dangerous?*
- Justify it – redemptive violence as an example.
- *How might someone justify sin in their mind?*
  - They did me wrong so they deserve this
- Total rebellion – who cares what God thinks about it.
  - *What would be a good example of someone justifying sin?*

Paul is talking about the fate of God’s people and their failure to live up to their obligation – he will get to more of that in Chapter 9.

## Romans 3:9-20

Paul is about to do to the Jews what he did to the Gentiles in the first 2 chapters.

3:1 – Jews have advantage

3:9 – But that doesn’t make them better than anyone else

How do these two fit together?



- It is like saying the Jews got a head start in the race but that doesn't mean they are any better athletes than the rest of the field.

Most shocking for them to hear – “We have already made the charge that Jews and Gentiles are all alike under sin.”

Paul backs this up by quoting a dozen OT passages.

### **Romans 3:21-26**

3:21-22 – Righteousness apart from the law – the law doesn't make one righteous. Following all the rules does not make one righteous. Only God can make someone righteous – 3:22

Righteousness comes from faith in Jesus Christ...to all who believe? (3:22)

- 3:22 – Could well read “faithfulness of Jesus Christ” – in other words, because Jesus was faithful to God's plan salvation is made available.
- James 2:19 – Even the demons believe and shudder.
- The point is not that if anyone, anywhere, at any time has ever believed Jesus was the Son of God that they have an irrevocable place in heaven.
- He is saying that those who believe in him and have faith (what is faith?) will be saved.
  - Faith in NT – Faith comes from belief and results in faithfulness (that is the qualities of someone who has faith in something).
  - The idea is that something is believed in so strongly that faithfulness results. Think about it this way, if a wife was told her husband would be at the airport returning from Iraq at noon tomorrow, guess where she would be at noon tomorrow? At the airport. *Why?*
    - Because she believes what she was told so strongly that it moved her to faithful action.
- If you believe Jesus is the Son of God and put faith in Him, you will try to live a faithful life. That is what makes James 2:19 true – if everyone who believed was instantly saved, the demons and the devil would be saved because they certainly believe in who Jesus is. Difference – they have not lived faithfully in hope of Him as their savior.

3:23 – all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.

- That is a verse we hear ALL the time.
- Never, ever read that verse without 3:24 – “and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Jesus Christ.”
- *What does it mean to redeem something?*
  - You pay the debt for something or put down something for something of value.
  - Redeem something at a pawn shop or redeem a ticket for something of value.
  - Also used of slaves – manumission – slaves could be redeemed or redeem themselves to freedom from their masters. Christ has freed us from sin by paying the price himself.

So what did God do? Israel was disobedient – God sent his own Son to fulfill his promises to his people and bring reconciliation to the world.

3:24 - “Justified freely by his grace...”

- No more beautiful statement in all of scripture than that.

- No matter how hard we try or how much good we do we will never outweigh our sin. But God can and did through Jesus Christ.

3:25 – left sins committed beforehand unpunished?

3:25-26 – could spend a whole class here.

- Sacrifice of atonement – literally read a sacrifice on the mercy seat? Referring to the tabernacle and ark of the covenant. This was the place God bestowed mercy to his people.
- N.T. Wright points out that Christ Jesus is now the place of forgiveness rather than the temple or the sacrificial system.
- Forgiveness comes through the blood of Jesus
  - Passover – the blood brought pardon.
  - Sacrifice – the blood brings

### **Romans 3:27-31**

All of this is so humbling and even humiliating – those entrusted to share the good news with the world failed but God didn't fail! Instead he redeemed and restored and saved! So where is the boasting? Anyone who can stand up and say "I don't need the blood of Christ...I am righteous on my own!" Nope.

3:28 - "We maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from observing the law." *What does that mean for the Gentiles?*

- It means they are on even footing with the Jews.

"Do we, then, nullify the law by this faith? Not at all! Rather, we uphold the law." – The law upholds the fact that it was always about faith from the very beginning. So yes this is something new – that God set things right through Jesus Christ but it is also something very old – God had been planning this a long time and this was the intention of and fulfillment of the law.

## **Romans 4 – It All Comes Back to Faith**

### **Romans 4:1-8**

#### **Too narrow a view of God's family:**

Paul is making the point here that the Jews made God's family too narrow – the direct descendents of Abraham & are circumcised.

In fact, God's family is much bigger – those who, like Abraham, put their faith in God.

#### **Bookended by faith**

4:1 – "What, therefore, shall we say to have found, that Abraham, our forefather, discovered in this matter?"

Romans 1:17 – "The righteous will live by faith"

Romans 1-3 Paul pointed out that both groups had fallen short and now he comes back around to faith.

Two approaches to being justified by God – Who is indebted to whom?

- Works righteousness – I will work and God will owe me something. This attempts to place God as debtor to us. I worked so give me my wages.
- Grace righteousness – I will believe God and realize that I am indebted to God and not the other way around. This acknowledges that we are indebted to God.

Difference between “getting in” and “staying in”

- Getting in relationship with God does not require that we earn it. There is not any good deed that is required of us to enter God’s kingdom by way of earning our salvation.
- Staying in – once we are in relationship with God, we are expected to be obedient to God. We are expected to be holy as God is holy. We are expected to abstain from sin. We are expected to do good works – not because they merit the continued relationship with God but because that is the natural outcome of who we are – righteous people forgiven by a merciful God.

1:4 – When a man works he earns his wages

1:5 – When someone trusts in God and **does not work** his faith is credited (determined by mathematical process – BDAG = count something for or against someone) as righteousness.

Faith is counted for him as righteousness.

*What does it mean that he does not work?*

- Paul is saying that those who trust in God do not work for God as if their works earned them anything.
- Instead, they trust in God and put their faith in him and know it is God who has to decide for himself to count them righteous apart from their works.

**What this does and does not mean:**

This does not mean that God wants us to sit on the couch all day and relieves us of all obligation. It does – change the focus of and reason for why we work – not to earn anything but in recognition that God has counted us as his righteous ones through faith.

### Looking back to Abraham (4:9-12)

1:9 – New question, same subject.

- Subject – where does righteousness come from.
- New question – what happened with father Abraham? He is the ultimate example to a Jew as he was the first one God called to be Father of many nations.
- Gospels – “children of Abraham”
  - John 8:33 – we are Abraham’s descendents
  - John 8:39

**Children of Abraham:**

- Gen 17:1-8 – the covenant
- “father of many nations”
- 17:4 reads – Behold, [this is] my covenant with you and you will be אֲבִי (father of) אֲרַמּוֹן (a multitude of = **hamon**) nations
- 17:5 – No longer will your name be called Abram but your name will be Abraham (אַבְרָהָם)
- Abram (Av = father, Ram = is exalted)
- Abraham = (Av = father, **raham** = multitude)

- The Jews understood that their heritage as a people went back to God’s covenant with Abraham to:
  - Be father of many (17:4-5)
  - Possess the land (17:8)
- The sign of the covenant was circumcision (Gen 17:9-14)
  - But God counted Abraham righteous before he was circumcised:
    - Abraham declared righteous by God (Gen 15:6)
    - Abraham circumcised (Gen 17:23-24)
- Abraham was righteous in God’s sight while he still had a foreskin.
  - The Jews in Paul’s day were saying that God’s people had to be circumcised in order to be declared righteous.
  - Paul points to the pioneer of their heritage and their HERO – Abraham and says even he was righteous while he still had a foreskin.
  - Abraham himself was an idol worshipping pagan before being in covenant with God.

The righteousness is not found in the circumcision. The righteousness is found in those who walk in a trusting and believing way toward God as Abraham did. That is called **faith**. Because the righteous will live by faith (1:17).

“one cannot possibly suggest that circumcision was a necessary part of belonging to Abraham’s family. Had that been so, Abraham himself would not have qualified in those early days” – Wright, 70. Early days meaning the time between Genesis 15 and 17.

#### **Romans 4:13-15 – The law?**

Bigger picture – how did Abraham get into God’s family? Not by the law. There was no law at the time. Take home point – it is the same today. People can get in God’s family apart from the law.

What about the law? Abraham didn’t have the law but was declared righteous. There is a righteousness that comes apart from the law for those who believe – Abraham was the first. We follow in his steps.

- The Jews would be quick to say they have always followed in Abraham’s steps – they were his children.
- But this sheds new light on everything.

#### **Romans 4:16-17 – Father of us all**

This would be a shocking statement to the Jews – Abraham was the father of the Gentiles as well. God said Abraham would be the Father of many nations. The Jews took that to mean many people (countless generations of Jews). Paul took God to mean what he said – the father of many nations.

- Gentiles are often referred to in scripture as “the nations” = ethnos (where we get ethnic from)
- Rom 1:5 – NIV translates ethnos as “Gentiles”)
- They are synonymous.

- OT – nations meant the Gentiles (Deut 1:28 – “The ethnos (LXX) are stronger and taller than we are...”)
- Thanks to Wright for sharing these ideas:
  - Life to the dead = Jews (See Rom 11:15)
  - Nothing – Something = Gentiles (See Eph 2:12)

### **Romans 4:18-25 - God of the Possible Impossible**

This section ties in with 4:17 – “who gives life to the dead and calls things that are not as though they are.” – points to Abraham who had kids at 99, as good as dead.

Abraham should have had no hope to raise up a great nation of descendents – but he hoped any way. *Why?*

- Because he had a promise from God.
- Abraham was persuaded that God could do what he promised (4:21)

Paul brings his audience into the picture alongside Abraham –

The implication in this section is that God is able to accomplish what is impossible with us and we need to accept that. We accept it in Abraham’s story and we need to accept it in the story we are in – that God indeed did make the Gentiles righteous by faith apart from circumcision. That was seemingly impossible in the eyes of the Jews but Paul brings them back to another impossible story – how they even began as a people through a man who had faith in the God of the impossible. They need to realize that the Gentiles are made righteous just as they are – no matter how impossible that seems.

Wright also points this out (78):

Mankind	Abraham/those who have faith
Ignored God (1:20,25)	Believed in God (4:17)
Knew God’s power but failed to worship (1:20)	Recognized God’s power and trusted (4:21)
Failed to glorify God (1:21)	Gave glory to God (4:20)
Dishonored their bodies (1:24)	Regained his body even though old through God’s power.

Which way do we follow? Do we trust God or not?

Wright points out that this concludes the first major section by pointing out that things have come to completion that were started at the beginning – the intention given through Abraham has been made complete here and now through Christ and our faith.

### **Romans 5:1-21 – Boasting In Christ**

#### **Context:**

- Chapter 4 – Abraham believed (before he was circumcised) and God credited to him righteousness = justified by faith and proving that through Abraham that both Jews and Gentiles have a share in the family of God.

- 4:23-25 – “The words “it was credited to him” were written not for him alone, but also for us, to whom God will credit righteousness—for us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead. He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification.”
- We are pulled into the same story that Abraham and Moses were in – the story of how God is redeeming and reconciling the world to Himself.

### Chapter 5:1-5

- The fact that God has made us righteous gives us peace.

After all is said and done – what is the result of our righteous reconciliation?

- Peace and hope
- Peace – on the grounds of what? – We have access into God’s presence and he doesn’t kill us when we do.
  - 5:2 – “Through him we have been allowed to approach, by faith, into this grace in which we stand; and we celebrate (or boast) the hope of the glory of God.
    - Think about God being so glorious that when you stand in his presence you feel a profound sense of peace.
  - *How does that give us peace?*
  - Many people are haunted by their past sins and have no sense of peace because they doubt their forgiveness. Paul writes that we have reason to celebrate the grace of God and that peace that should result.
  - Peace = more than absence of war = whole inner state of being...wellness and health.
  - Think about a world outside of Christ who have no faith – have no peace.
- Temple – a place where people approached God – but only certain people really had access to God’s presence. Jesus changed everything (4:24-25)
- Think about having peace with God:
  - To be at peace – how? Because of reconciliation. The books have been balanced and things have been set right.
  - We don’t worry about the debt collector once the debt has been erased. That is what God has done but not because we deserved it – because he is gracious.
- “When we stand there in God’s own presence, not trembling but deeply grateful, and begin to inhale his goodness, his wisdom, his power and his joy, we sense that we are being invited to go all the way, to become the true reflections-of-God, the true image-bearers, that we were made to be.” (Wright, 83)
- *How does it make you feel to think that God is welcoming you into his presence and glory?*

*Have you found peace in and through your relationship with God?*

*What have you tended to put your hope in?*

### Boasting in Romans 1-5

- 5:2 – “Boast” = kauchomai (cacophony)
  - Could mean to celebrate (Wright, 80)
  - Other occurrences:
    - “Brag” – 2:17, 2:23
    - “Boast” – 1:30, 3:27, 4:2

- 1:30 – calls the pagans those who are loud tongued boasters – those loud in the mouth.
- 2:17 – Don't shout about of your superior status as a Jew
- 2:23 – Don't shout aloud of how great it is you have the Law.
- In 3:27 – he says we cannot boast in ourselves because we are sinful.
- In 5:2 & 11 – He says we can indeed boast in the Lord. This is a loud celebration of thanksgiving in response to what God has done. It is not boasting in self.

In Romans 5 we finally have something to talk loudly about – what God has done for us and the resulting peace we have.

5:3 – Glory in our sufferings – this is a perspective issue

- This question focuses us – “Where does suffering lead us?”
- Paul's answer = closer to God
- Therefore suffering has a place in our lives because it reminds us that we have something to hope for.
- No suffering = nothing to hope for.
- Because we suffer, we hope.

5:5 – Hope is being played out even right now = Holy Spirit inside of us. Deposit.

- *How does having the Holy Spirit here and now give us hope for what God has promised will eventually happen?*

### **Chapter 5:6-11**

AHA!

- Gentiles are sinner
- Jews are sinners
- All are unrighteous
- God has made a way – AHA!
  - The only way to “get it” is to give up on figuring out how you DID it.
  - As long as you are focused on how you got to the top of the mountain, the climb, which trail you took, etc – you will never enjoy the view at the top. Open your eyes to the beauty that can only be seen from the top of the mountain.
- Boils down to love – the cross is the emblem of the love God has for us.
- “While we were still sinners” - Undeserved = God's gracious acts on our behalf.
- If Christ died for us while we were SO BAD...how much more is he pulling for us when we are trying to get our lives wrapped around him...even if we aren't doing it perfectly.
- *How much hope does it give you toward a future with God if he was willing to go to those kind of lengths when we were in total rebellion?*

We have reason to boast – to be loud – to celebrate. The world might call it arrogant, bigotry, and narrow minded but we know it is truth and so we shout out in celebration of the one who has reconciled us and given us hope and peace.

### **5:12-21 Adam vs. Christ (Death vs. Life)**

Two models:

- Adam – sin/death
  - Brought death to mankind
  - Rom 6:23 – wages of sin = death.
  - *How does sin bring death?*

- Those owned by sin are no longer living for God but living for Satan. Result = death.
- Those who live under the rule of sin are likely to do deeds that result in death of self and others.
- Christ – righteousness/life
  - Brought life to mankind
  - *How does Christ bring life?*
    - His people are fully alive.
    - We are who we were made to be.
    - God made mankind to fully experience the life He designed for them to have – life in relationship with their creator.

Christ came and undid the mistakes of Adam and the mistakes of all the rest of us. He came to bring a GIFT – life.

Gifts in this chapter:

- Gift of grace – 5:15
- Gift = Jesus Christ in 5:16

5:17 – reigning in life through Jesus Christ – these are kingdom terms and language.

- We are part of a different kingdom than the world.
- Obedience of Christ results in our justification (5:19) *Why?*
  - If he had been disobedient we would have remained under the same problems that Adam faced.

5:20 – The law illuminated sin – it made it stand out more clearly. Cruel of God if he just left it like that.

5:20b – instead God poured out even more grace.

### **Gift:**

*How do you see your relationship with God as a gift?*

Bigger picture of what Jesus came to do:

- Death reigned in Adam and in every last one of us. How? Because we rejected God. But I am a good person – but we all have sinned and picked our way over God's.
- Jesus came to rescue us from ourselves and to bring life where there was death through grace. Why grace? Because if it had to be earned we were all doomed.

### **Looking Ahead - Chapter 6:**

- Going to see how this all takes place in the life of the believer:
  - How does one live in relationship with God?
  - How does one enter into the life God has in store for his people?
  - How does grace work in the life of the believer? Wages vs. free gift...

## **Romans 6 – This is Life or Death**

What is Romans 6:1-6 about? – Baptism



It is more than a proof-text. It continues Paul's line of thinking about how we deal with sin and what God is doing behind the scenes.

Letter – cannot be there to have conversation.

Tool of Paul – ask a question he knows will result from what he just wrote.

6:1 – “What shall we say then?” – In regard to what? To what he said in Chapter 5:12-21

- Adam brought sin (5:12).
- Christ brought righteousness and did away with sin which brought eternal life (5:21).
- God showed just how abundant his grace was because he was able to forgive so many sins (5:17)

Paul's anticipated question – well, should we sin more? I mean, if you take away the law and you put in grace by faith. **What is the motivation not to sin?**

Picture – Scale with sin on one side – Righteousness on the other

- Wouldn't adding more sin mean God would have to add more righteousness?
- Paul says that is not how it works and here is why.

You died to sin. So why talk about doing it/living in it? You can't. Here's why.

**Understand the reality that happened to you when you were baptized (6:1-6):**

- Burial picture – going into the ground/water to die.
- Resurrection – raised to walk in new life.
- You left the sin back there...you killed that part of yourself that was unrighteous.
- A righteous person doesn't ask – “does this mean we can sin more now, please?”
  - When you say that it shows something didn't die that should have.
  - Paul calls this our “sinful nature” or “flesh”

6:7 – when a slave dies he is no longer a slave.

- When we die to sin, it cannot master us anymore.

6:8-11 – The reality is, just like Christ died so death has no mastery over him

- 6:11 - We died to sin – it no longer masters us
- Not just dead – but alive – to God.

**No Platonic dualism (6:12-14):**

- Dualism says – whatever you do in your body doesn't really have an effect on your soul. Physical and spiritual are separate.
- Not so – What we do in the body matters.
  - Instruments of wickedness (6:13)
  - Instruments of righteousness (6:14)
- *How can we be used as instruments of righteousness?*
- *How is it possible to be a Christian and yet still be used for wickedness?*

**Newly expected question – “Can we sin more because God has so much grace?” (6:15-23):**

- Paul spends the rest of the chapter answering this question.

Slavery analogy continued:

- Slave to sin = death

- Slave to righteousness = life
- They changed from sin/death to righteousness/life
- Imagery:
  - Imagine Jesus raises someone from the dead. They walk around a bit and say “I sure do miss it back there dead in the grave!” Dumb.
  - Imagine someone forgiven and made righteous wanting to go back to sin and death again? Equally dumb.
  - Imagine a slave released who comes back to serve his wicked, abusive master. Dumb.
  - We have been **saved**. *Ever wonder what that means?* God rescued us from death through Christ. We are slaves who have been set free.

6:19-23 – We are all slaves of something.

- Decision to be made – we can make a concrete decision to give ourselves to God. The devil doesn’t have mastery over us unless we allow him to.
- *How do we allow the devil to gain control of our lives as our master?*
- *In what areas do we often struggle with giving control to God?*
- *Why is being a slave to God better than being a slave to the devil?*

6:21 – What benefits come from sin? *Can you name any?* – NONE

Why would we want to be a slave to God? – 6:22 – it leads to eternal life.

6:23 – more than a prooftext – it sums all this up very well.

- Sin = Death
- Righteousness = Life

## Romans 7

*What did you realize last week needed to be put to death?*

Romans 5 – Life comes through Jesus Christ

Romans 6 – We have to die before we can live.

- **Example 1** - of a slave – free from his master when he dies. Once we die to sin it can no longer master us. We die to sin through baptism.
- We raise united with Christ to share in his resurrection and eternal life.

Romans 7 –

- **Example 2** – Marriage. When someone dies the spouse is free to marry whom they please.
- She cannot marry a second man while her husband still lives.
- Death **releases** a spouse from the **lawful obligation**. Freedom to marry another.

Illustration for what has happened to the law – once you die to the old way there is a new way you are free to pursue.

**Reading Romans 7 properly:**

- Temptation is to read Romans 1 chapter at a time and see them as disconnected pieces
  - If you do that you read chapter 6 and slaves and sin then 7 about marriage and struggling with sin. Marriage seems out of place then...like it doesn’t belong.
  - It is an illustration to make the same point he was making in Romans 6 – death releases from previous obligations.

- Connection point - If you die to sin you are not bound to live by it as you used to be.

**Romans 7:1-3** – Not so much a theology of marriage, divorce, and re-marriage. He is making a point they would already agree with and using it as an illustration of what he is trying to get them to see.

- Clearly a Jewish component here – “men who know the law.”
- They have been leaning on works of the law for their connection with God (circumcision, Sabbath, dietary laws, etc) as that is how they had been taught to be holy.
- Paul is changing their paradigm. He is unteaching them those things. He is showing them that all those things have been fulfilled and need to be put to rest because God has put something better on the table.

**Romans 7:4-6** – You have died to sin and the law and released (like a spouse or a slave)

We saw in Romans 6 – need to die to sin/flesh in order to live for God. But there is still one **barrier** that does not need to get in the way – THE LAW!

**Why would they need to die to the law?**

- They need to drop their preconceived ideas that someone needs the law to approach God properly. Something better has come in its place (8:1ff)
- The law served its purpose – Paul will tell us what that was start in verse 7.  
“so that we serve in a new way of the Spirit and not in the old way of the written code.”
- He is referring back specifically to Roman 6 – dying to sin/flesh and being raised.

**Romans 7:7-13** – Struggling with Sin:

- The whole point here is that the law, by itself and left unfulfilled was dead and impotent.
- Paul anticipates their question – die to be released from the law? Paul, you are making the law sound like sin itself. “Is the law sin?” (7:7)
- The law was incomplete because it was not able to kill sin and death. It was not able to conquer the problem we faced. In fact, sin was able to manipulate us to use the law for evil rather than for good.
  - 7:8 – sin seized opportunity
  - 7:9 – intent of the law was to bring life.
    - Why didn’t that happen?
    - Because the law was powerless against sin. The law only showed us clearly what sin was but could not conquer sin, could not bring victory of sin. In fact, some people might not have thought of sinning in certain ways if the commandment had not existed.
      - Trina example – don’t jump in that pool! He would have never thought of that if he had not been warned not to do it.
- 7:11 – sin manipulated the law and deceived people. The law did not deceive, sin using the law deceived.
- 7:12 – Paul makes it clear that the law and commandment were both holy in and of themselves, they were just prone to be manipulated by sin to work out in our lives death instead of life.

Here is the point – the law was insufficient because it couldn’t kill sin and death. So God had planned in advance a new covenant that could bring victory and instead of bringing death, bring life to his people.

7:13 – Did the law then turn into death?

- 7:7 – the law is not sin.
- 7:12 – the law is holy, righteous and good.

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- Answer = certainly not!

### **Confusing verse alert #1**

- The law showed us what sin was.
- The law demands death for sin = “produced death in me”
- Again calls the law good – because it puts sin in its place.

### **Romans 7:14-25 – “Adam’s Lost Race” (BWIII)**

- Who is Paul talking about here?
  - I = Himself?
    - Before he was a Christian – but he speaks in the present tense.
    - After he was a Christian – he shouldn’t be struggling with sin and law like this. How can he ask question in 7:24 – who will deliver?
  - Any lost person?
    - This is Witherington’s view – connecting people with the problem of Adam/sin.
  - Jews without Christ and only with the law?:
    - Pro – all the talk of the law & that they know the law (7:1)
    - This is Wright’s view.

Hard to answer – Dilemma: If Paul is talking about himself, we figure he should have already been over these things since he was baptized. People offer two solutions:

Bottom line – you cannot reason your way through this to find the perfect situation Paul is speaking for. It breaks down in multiple ways when you apply too much logic to it.

What you are left with is someone who is not able to have life through sin or life through the law and so there has to be deliverance from somewhere else – The answer is Jesus! (7:25)

- Key verse – “sold as a slave to sin” also bookended at verse 25 “slave to the law of sin”
  - Makes sense of much of what he is saying – I do what I don’t want to do, hate what I do, and can’t do what I want to do.
- 7:17 – it is sin living in him that is doing it – not himself. Again, the slavemaster is running the show in his life.
- 7:18 - Desire to do what is good but cannot carry it out – Why? Because the slavemaster won’t allow him to do it.
- This whole section is from the perspective of a person whose life has been mastered by the slave master of sin. This was supposed to be put to death (Rom 5,6,7) and so we wouldn’t think this would actually apply to Paul himself.
- But he says that this does apply to him (7:25).
  - In his mind a slave to God’s law
  - In his sinful nature – a slave to the law of sin.
  - Both of these were supposed to have ended:
    - End of slavery to the law – 7:1-6
      - 7:6 – released from the law by death
    - End of slavery to sin – 6:1-6, 6:21-23
- Paul faces the reality we all face – ideally we have died to those things but in reality they still crop up. What is the answer? Romans 8:1-4

- There is new life that has sprung up and has made up the difference through grace. There is no condemnation where there should have been, by law, condemnation. God finishes the job for us because we are unable.

That leads us into chapter 8 – See **Romans 8:1-4**:

- Continued theme of being set free and God’s continuous pursuit of his people. God is willing to personally fulfill whatever needs to be done to bridge the way past sin to us.

**Application:**

- What are you still a slave to that you need to realize Christ has set you free from?
- Do you still find yourself in a spiritual wrestling match? How can you allow God to help you get out of it?
- What is the toughest part about being a Christian.
- How do these words bring us peace and joy (like we talked about in Romans 5)?
  - We have died and been set free from the shackles of sin. Yet we often dwell back in it. It is like being set free from prison only to run back in and lock the door behind you.

**Romans 8 – Which Spirit are You Living By?**

21 of 35 instances of “pneuma” in Romans occur in chapter 8 – there is something to it.

**Romans 8:1-4 – Our freedom is from Christ who did what we and the law were unable to do:**

- Romans 5:18 – “Consequently, just as the result of one trespass was *condemnation* for all men, so also the result of one act of righteousness was justification that brings life for all men.”
- Romans 8:1 – Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus...

Therefore – points back to 7:24-24 – That our deliverance from the struggle with our sinful nature (7:14-23) is Jesus Christ. What has Christ done?

- 3:24 – brought redemption
- 5:1 – we have peace
- 5:6,8 – Christ died for the ungodly (who deserved condemnation)
- 5:11 – brought reconciliation
- 5:15 – brought grace
- 5:21, 6:23 – brought eternal life
- 7:4 – brought death to the law

Christ has acted on our behalf to bring us back into relationship with God.

**Being “in” Christ (8:1-2)** – Romans 6:3 tells us how we get “in” Christ – through baptism and what God does to us in that submissive act.

- 8:2 says he brought freedom. This is what we have been talking about in chapter 6 & 7 – death brings freedom from obligation (7:1-4)

**8:3-4 – A power issue and the law’s fulfillment in us**

- The law was powerless due to the sinful nature – that is what he was talking about in 7:7-13 (especially 7:11). Sin manipulated the law to make it something it was not supposed to be.
- The law was not powerful enough to overcome sin on its own – it was only able to say “yep, that’s sin.”
- Sin had to be done away with
- Law couldn’t do it – why? 8:3 - powerless
- So we have a power issue here
- Enter Christ – he did have the power to take care of sin.
- Requirements of the law had to be met – Christ enabled that to happen.

*What does it mean in your life to know that Christ is more powerful than sin?*

*How does that inform us about our struggles (like in chapter 7)?*

- God has given us an advocate who has the power to overcome them.

Our struggles are a power issue – we have to hand it over to God or else give in to the powers that want to see our death.

### **8:5-17 - Which Spirit are you Living for?**

- Dichotomy here between sinful nature and the Holy Spirit
- Paul notes some differences between the two:
  - The things we do
  - Where they lead

### **8:8 - What do you think about 8:8?**

- A little bit of a scary verse

*Is there a difference between sinning and being controlled by the sinful nature?*

- Jim and I’s talk today – if you think a bad thought and then get hit by a car are you lost?
- Jimmy Allen’s line with up’s and down’s.

8:9 – Talks to them directly – those who have the Spirit of God in them are controlled by that nature

- *How do we get the Spirit of God?*
  - Acts 2:38 – baptism.
  - Full Gospel says only those who have the gifts of the Spirit in their life will be saved.

8:11 – Jesus’ resurrection points to our own:

- We saw this in Rom 6 – connected with Christ in his death and resurrection.
- This is a promise – Jesus bears witness to it and paves the way to show that God can make good on this promise of resurrection to eternal life.
- This is not like Lazarus – he died again.

8:12-17 – We have an obligation as children, not as slaves.

- Some people have a hard time with seeing themselves as God’s child because they had a poor relationship with their father.
- This is a good thing!
- Those who are led by the Spirit are children of God. Not those who claim to be children, but those who are in step with the Spirit.

Spirit of fear – *How does sin hold us hostage through fear?*

*How is it possible for some Christians to follow God through fear? (8:15)*

- Paul wants us to mature beyond fear in our following God and move on to see him as our father.
- Here is what makes God awesome – sin deserves death (6:23) and we all have done it. God has every right to kill us for our sin because we have rebelled against our creator. But when we respond with faith in Christ he takes us back. He forgives. He gives life again. He brings us out of darkness and makes us a light. We praise him for this generous and unmerited favor!

### **8:18-30 – Groaning for the Future**

- Have you ever just sat down and wondered why the world had to be like this?
- What is the deal with “the creation” in these verses?
  - Creation is not all that it was intended to be. Like us, it needs restored. Like us, it waits in eager anticipation of what God has in store.
  - Remember, Adam and Eve were put in charge over creation and they failed. Now creation too needs restored.
  - This tends to fly in the face of the idea that everything will be burned up and destroyed for all time (**2 Peter 3:10-13 – even that ends with new earth**)
- We groan and the creation groans – both in light that we all know there is something better in store for the world.
- Creation groaning like in childbirth? – Childbirth is traumatic but new life springs forth from the pain. There is something new about to be born in what was old.
- *Why do bad things happen to good people?*
  - Sin – this world has been corrupted and is not functioning the way that God initially intended. God is not doing evil to us. We broke it.
- Tension here – we know how things are and we know how they will be – response that generates in us is a longing for our home with God.

Spirit interceding for us – what is the tie in here?

- Connection with groaning (8:23) & hope because we cannot see it all (8:24)
- Comfort it brings to know that God is in touch with the Spirit that is in us. Why? Because we live in a messed up world and there are times we need to cry out for him.
- “He who searches our hearts” – *Have you ever thought about God searching your heart?*
  - This is more than a “what would he find” application that scares us into thinking better or keeping only good things in our hearts.
- Why is God searching? Because he is seeking to redeem our hearts as well.

8:28 – famous verse:

- Trust issue here – if you know God is working for your good in ALL things then we are able to endure it. If we don’t trust God then we aren’t so certain that he is always working for us or that it will necessarily result in good.
- *What does it mean to be “called according to his purpose”?*
  - We need to be living out our calling. This does not mean we all have to be full time ministers in order for God to work all things for the good.

8:29-30 – Christ the firstborn:

- Christ paved the way and we follow.

- This is what we were made for – to be reconciled back to the image of God. Sin distorts that within us but here in 8:29 – we are called back to conformity with God’s image through Christ.

### **8:31-39 – All is set**

- We learned in 8:29-30 that God has done everything it takes for us to be in relationship with Him (foreknew, predestined, called, justified, glorified).
- Sin can try to bring us death but God has been busy reconciling us from our sins through Christ.
- So only God could pull the plug on this master plan and we know that he isn’t going to because he has promised he wouldn’t and has already gone out of his way to show us the way.
- The Spirit is pulling for us, God is pulling for us, Christ is pulling for us – who can overpower them?
- No matter what you are going through, it isn’t big enough to pull you away from Christ. The only thing powerful enough to pull you away from Christ is you. Because we have to respond to God in faith.
- Satan is the adversary and accuser – he cannot separate us from the love of God.

## **Appendix A - The Law and Early Christians**

### Questions:

1. What happened to the law after Christ rose from the dead?
  1. typically – nailed to the cross
2. Did the God open the door to the Gentiles based on a Jewish acceptance or rejection of the Gospel?
  1. See Gal 3:14 – He redeemed us to make a way for the Gentiles.
3. Was the law totally done away with after the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ?
4. What was the accusation leveled against Paul in the book of Acts?
  1. Apostasy from the law
5. Could someone be forgiven under the OT covenant?
  1. See scriptures below including Heb 10

### **Background of Jew/Gentiles in NT:**

Jesus’ ministry:

- Woman at the well (John 4)
- Syrophonecian woman (Mark 7:24)
- Greeks who came to see him (John 20)
- John 10:16 – Jesus makes reference of other sheep who will later come in the sheep pen (Gentiles).
- Great commission – go into all the world (Mtt 28:19ff)

Jesus first had a mission to the people of Israel. The mission to the Gentiles was left to the apostles and is recorded in Acts.

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- Commission in Acts 1:8 – to the ends of the earth.
- That doesn't happen for 10 chapters in Acts

Acts 10 – Peter and the sheet (clean and unclean) – a metaphor for the Gentiles and also an end to dietary laws.

### **Law - Jews & Gentiles, Blessings & Curses (Gal 3:10-14)**

Those who were part of the covenant community were considered blessed. Those who were outside of that community (Gentiles) were considered under a curse. Additionally those inside the community could find themselves under a curse, not if they were sinless, but if they did not abide by all that was in the law. What is the difference? To be sinless would mean to keep every rule every time. That is impossible. But it was not seen as impossible to remain within the law all of the time. “In Jewish thought to ‘abide within all that was written in the law and do it’ meant living within the provisions of the law, including all its provisions for sin, through repentance and atonement. That was why Paul was able to describe himself as “blameless” before his conversion (Phil 3:6); not because he committed no sin, not because he fulfilled every law without exception, but because the righteousness of the law included use of the sacrificial cult and benefit of the Day of Atonement.” - p.171.

So the law had provision for taking care of (forgiving sin). To be in line with the law did not mean to live perfectly. It meant to keep the commands and if you failed, to do what you do with the heart you are supposed to have when you fail at the commands.

The did NOT view themselves as out if they failed a command and in if they kept it all perfectly (works righteousness).

Another problem with 3:10 comes in translation. The NIV translates this verse, “All who rely on observing the law are under a curse...” But a better translation is, “All who rely on works of the law are under a curse.” What is the difference? For Paul the works of the law are distinctive Jewish markers (circumcision, Sabbath, dietary laws, etc) that set them apart from the Gentiles. The Gentiles in Galatia have not done those things and so the Jews are excluding them. Paul is saying the distinctive marker of our identity and relationship with God is faith and not those “works of the law.” That means the Gentiles can be accepted without having to be circumcised, etc. Paul is not talking about the whole law here as the NIV translates it. He traditionally uses “works of the law” to mean the distinctive markers of the Jewish community that traditionally set them apart from the pagans/Gentiles. Paul is saying those Jews who put all their eggs in the circumcision basket above faith are under a curse because the blessings under the Abrahamic covenant came by faith and not by works of the law (circumcision, etc).

I have always read this passage as Paul speaking poorly about the law. Paul is not speaking poorly of the law. He is speaking poorly of those who misuse and abuse the law to the exclusion of their Gentile brothers and sisters in the faith.

The rubber meets the road in 3:13-14 - “Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: “cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree.” He redeemed us in order that the blessing given to Abraham might come to the Gentiles through Christ Jesus, so that by faith we might receive the promise of the Spirit.” Paul says this

discussion of blessings and curses/who is “in” and who is “out” has further implications when it comes to redemption. What did Christ do in redemption of both Jews and Gentiles on the cross and in the resurrection? The Dead Sea Scrolls connect being “hung on a tree” with crucifixion. It is possible that people were saying Jesus couldn’t be the messiah because he was crucified and those who are “hung on a tree” are under a curse (Deut 21:23). Remember what was said above, being cursed means you are put outside of the covenant community. “The curses of Deut 27 and 28 not only involve the withdrawal of covenant blessing, but climax in being put outside the promised land to live among the Gentiles...To affirm that the crucified Jesus was cursed by God, therefore, was tantamount to saying that he had been put outside the covenant, outside the people of God. Which also meant...that God’s resurrection of Jesus signified God’s acceptance of the ‘outsider’, the cursed law-breaker, the Gentile sinner.” - p.178. In other words on the cross Christ experienced the curses of being put outside of the covenant and its promises. In doing so he related with the Gentiles who were in the very same position. “The barrier between blessing and curse had been broken down; now ‘in Christ’ the blessing could come to Gentiles too....This is the conclusion Paul draws from his understanding of Christ’s death as bearing the curse of the law that the effects of the curse have been abolished for Gentiles, that the restrictiveness of a law which marked off Jew from Gentile as such had been overcome, not that the law had been abolished, rendered null and void, or without further relevance to Christians...” - p.179

This clarifies a few things for me. It clarifies what part of the law Paul is talking about here (works of the law - circumcision, etc). Again my tendency when reading this passage in the past has been to focus on law and seeing it in a negative light rather than realize the context and which part of the law Paul is talking about. It helps me understand blessings and curses a little better (being in or out of the community comes with blessings and curses and how Gentiles are viewed as a result). It also helps me understand how these concepts had an impact on Paul’s message and his handling of the Jewish and Gentile Christians in Galatia.

### **Scriptures traditionally used to say the Law was dead:**

- Romans 3:21 – “But now **apart from the law** the righteousness of God has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. 22 This righteousness is given through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe.”
- Galatians 2:15-21 – “We who are Jews by birth and not sinful Gentiles 16 know that a person is **not justified by observing the law**, but by faith in Jesus Christ. So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in <sup>[d]</sup> Christ and not by observing the law, because by observing the law no one will be justified. 17 "But if, in seeking to be justified in Christ, we Jews find ourselves also among the sinners, doesn't that mean that Christ promotes sin? Absolutely not! 18 If I rebuild what I destroyed, then I really would be a lawbreaker. 19 "For through the law I died to the law so that I might live for God. 20 I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. 21 I do not set aside the grace of God, for if righteousness could be gained through the law, Christ died for nothing!"
- Gal 3:10 – those who rely on the law are under a **curse**
- Hebrews 3:3 – “Jesus has been found worthy of **greater honor than Moses**, just as the builder of a house has greater honor than the house itself.

- Hebrews 7:11-12 & 27-28 – “If **perfection** could have been attained through the Levitical priesthood—and indeed **the law given** to the people established that priesthood—why was there still need for another priest to come, one in the order of Melchizedek, not in the order of Aaron? 12 For when the priesthood is changed, the **law must be changed also**.... Unlike the other high priests, he does not need to offer sacrifices day after day, first for his own sins, and then for the sins of the people. He sacrificed for their sins once for all when he offered himself. 28 For the law appoints as high priests men in all their weakness; but the oath, which **came after the law**, appointed the Son, who has been made perfect forever.”
- Hebrews 8:6- “But the ministry Jesus has received is as **superior** to theirs as the covenant of which he is mediator is superior to the old one, and it is founded on better promises.”
- Colossians 2:13b-15 “He forgave us all our sins, 14having **canceled the written code**, with its regulations, that was against us and that stood opposed to us; he took it away, **nauling it to the cross**. 15And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.”

### Scriptures that challenge that thinking:

- Peter
  - Acts 0 - was still keeping the law in Acts 10
- Paul
  - Acts 18:18 – Paul had taken a Nazirite vow
  - Acts 21:20-26 – Paul makes a vow and pays for purity rites for some men to show he is still in keeping with the law
  - Acts 25:8 – ““I have done nothing wrong against the law of the Jews or against the temple or against Caesar.”
  - 2:17 - “If you call yourself a Jew” – yes, they even Christian Jews were still Jews
  - 2:25 – “Circumcision has value if you **observe the law**, but if you break the law, you have become as though you had not been circumcised.” He is talking to Christian Jews here...circumcision still has value.
  - 3:1 – “What advantage, then, is there in being a Jew, or what value is there in circumcision? Much in every way!”
  - 3:20 – “No one will be declared righteous in God’s sight by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of our sin.”

Problem – Our logic says, “If no one will be declared righteous by observing the law then there was/is no place left for the law.” That is, if you only view the law as something important to salvation.

Old view – the law was about works righteousness. You had to do everything exactly right or else God wouldn’t save you. Thought you have heard - no grace when there was law.

So God gave the law until Jesus came, Jesus died and nailed the law to the cross and now everyone is just a Christian with no thought of the law whatsoever.

Problems

- Grace is all over the place in the OT. They understood their need for God’s grace just as much as we do.
- Jesus’ own words – Mtt 5:17 – He did not come to abolish it but to fulfill it. Jesus actually reinterpreted the law with a stricter standard than ever before.

Problem – we think that once something no longer has power to save that it would be kept. But it was...this was part of their identity with God.

## Grace & Forgiveness in the Old Testament

Hebrews 10:1-6 – “The law is only a shadow of the good things that are coming—not the realities themselves. For this reason it can never, by the same sacrifices repeated endlessly year after year, make perfect those who draw near to worship. 2If it could, would they not have stopped being offered? For the worshipers would have been cleansed once for all, and would no longer have felt guilty for their sins. 3But those sacrifices are an annual reminder of sins, 4because it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.

5Therefore, when Christ came into the world, he said:

“Sacrifice and offering you did not desire,  
but a body you prepared for me;  
6with burnt offerings and sin offerings  
you were not pleased. “

Seems to say that sacrifices did not result in forgiveness of sins. But so does Isaiah 1:13-17, Amos 5:21-24, Micah 6:6-8, etc. Then you have passages like those below:

- Leviticus 4:20ff – he will be forgiven.
- Exodus 34:6-7 – Highlights God’s grace and willingness to forgive sins and rebellion.
- Number 14:18-19 – Again God’s willingness to forgive.
- Jeremiah 36:3 – God will forgive those who turn to Him.
- Micah 7:18-19 – Shows God’s compassion and mercy and willingness to forgive.

Many, many more...notice in none of these does it say you will be forgiven once the Messiah comes. They were forgiven then and there.

The point is, God forgives those who turn to Him and God has always been full of grace. Jesus Christ did away with the need for sacrifice and also made a way for the Gentiles apart from the law. The early Jewish Christians still held onto many of their roots and kept many of their traditions.

## Romans 9 – God’s Sovereign Will for His People

### Notes for teaching:

"Too often chs. 9-11 have been taken as something of an afterthought or appendix, which they most certainly are not. Indeed, they more directly address some of the problems in the Roman Christian community, and one of the purposes of 1.18-8.39 is to provide a theological basis for what Paul will say in chs. 9-11 and urge in chs 12-15. Failure to recognize this has often led to the teaching of chs. 1-8 as if they were some kind of self-contained miniature theological textbook that tells us everything we always wanted to know about Pauline theology but were afraid to ask. This is a mistake. What follows in chs. 9-11 could be understood as the answer to the question - If What you say in chs. 1-8 is true, then what position do the Jews still have in God's salvific plans? This was...an important question for Roman Christians in light of their social situation, and doubly important for Paul to address after he has told his audience that God sets right the ungodly, even saves the unrighteous Gentiles and the wicked, and is impartial in his graciousness...Paul shows here (Rom 8:18-39) that salvation in Christ completes not only God's plans for creation, but also his plans for calling and forming a people for himself."

– BWIII, Paul's Letter to the Romans, 220-221.

Chapters 1-8 bring up some very important questions for a Jewish reader/listener to this letter. Cranfield sums it up well, "At this point the need for such a discussion has become urgent, since the very reliability of God's purpose as the ground of Christian hope is called in question by the exclusion of the majority of Jews. If the truth is that God's purpose with Israel has been frustrated, then what sort of a basis for Christian hope is God's purpose? And, if God's love for Israel has ceased, what reliance can be placed on Paul's conviction that nothing can separate us from God's love in Christ (8:38ff)?" – Cranfield, 215

He goes on to point out that chapters 9-11 have to be understood together or else the point Paul is making will be missed. He also points out that the key word in these three chapters (9-11) is mercy. The only adjustment I would make to what Cranfield has to say here is that Jervell points out in his work on Acts that there is a common misperception that there was a large-scale Jewish rejection of the Gospel. Acts is not so clear on that. Thousands of Jews become Christians in Acts. So the seeming failure of the promise of God is not so much the rejection by the Jews as it is seeing the Gentiles get in almost like they had skirted the stipulations they thought God had put in place concerning the covenant requirements (circumcision, etc). Although to be consistent with context it does seem in all of this that Paul is cognizant of the Jews who have rejected the messiah and wishes them to be saved (9:1-5).

### Class material:

Chapter 8 was all about the certainty of the promises of God and the working of his Holy Spirit to show that things were working toward a godly conclusion in the lives of believers. Problem – if God proved unfaithful or unjust in his dealing with people it would mean that we would also lose hope in these promises as well. In these chapters Paul is going to deal with that concern.

9-11 is a solid section that needs to be dealt with together. Obviously for lack of time we will have to split it up but notice the connecting points that come through Paul's questions:

9:6 – God's Word has not failed

9:30 – What shall we say – Some Gentiles came in, some Jews went out  
11:1 – Did God reject his people?

It is going to take 3 chapters to address all the concerns Paul believes his Roman readers (particularly Jewish Christians) will have with what he has written so far.

This raises some questions:

- If Gentiles are allowed in by faith, what of God’s special, chosen people who have such a long heritage and history with God?
- If Righteousness comes through faith in Christ was is to become of those Jews who have not put their faith in Christ? – Is God’s promise void?
- Will they be overlooked in favor of believing Gentiles?
  - This is not about Israel today or the land promises – this is about the end of time and what will happen in God’s eyes.

Even *bigger* question – does it show God to be unfaithful if he promised an inheritance to the lineage of Abraham but then gives it to someone else?

Again, Paul is addressing concerns ahead of time. He addresses their anticipated reactions since he won’t be there in person to explain himself.

### **Paul’s love for Israel (9:1-5):**

There is also going to be some concern for Paul’s motives. There had been rumors surrounding Paul and what he was doing with the Gospel.

Back story:

- Much of the last half of Acts is written by Luke (a companion of Paul) to assure the Jews that Paul was not apostate from the law.
- One of the reasons people believed this was because of the way Paul interacted with the Gentiles (See specifically Acts 21:28, 23:29, 24:5, 25:8)\
- So Paul is going to go to great lengths to assure him of his fidelity to the Jewish people
- Paul is also concerned for those Jews who have rejected the messiah.

Paul reassures him that he is saying this because of his love for Israel.

Paul’s first plug – his willingness to be cursed/cut off from Christ for the sake of the Jews (presumably those who have rejected Christ?)

Paul’s second plug – a list of special attributes of the Jews (9:4-5):

Paul’s point – yes, you are still important! Yes, you have much to offer! Yes, you are still special! Don’t think that just because God has adopted Gentiles in that it makes you any less special.

### **Illustration to connect with today:**

This is like an older child dealing with the birth of a sibling. There are adjustments to be made in the way they think, the way they see themselves, etc. But he cannot dislike the situation because it was his parents who made the decision to have another child out of love. It was their choice and he must accept it and realize it was made out of love.

9:4 – “who are Israelites” – Cranfield points out that often the “to be” verb is left out but here he uses it = emphatic that they are still Israelites. But Paul is implying that outside of Christ they are lost – why else would he desire to be cursed for their sake unless they needed a substitute?

So are they in or out? That is so often our thinking. The point is – God still has a plan for them. God is still waiting on them and hoping they will turn to him.

### **God’s Sovereign Choice (9:6-29):**

Witherington believes the remnant concept is very important to understand as background to this:

- God always has faithful people – even if it is less than it would seem. He hopes the rest will come to repentance and there are plans on God’s part to allow them to do so.
- This is nothing new – this is what is happening in Paul’s modern context waiting on the non-Christian Jews to come back around.

9:6-9

“It is not as though God’s word had failed.” – *Why would Paul say that at this point?*

- God promised things to Abraham that it almost seemed like he was going back on – circumcision for one.
- Again, if it is proven that God went back on his promises, then chapter 8 is a lie that we cannot put our hope in. Paul is going to make sure they don’t think like that and prove that God does what he says.
- Also the Jews who had rejected Christ (who Paul references in 9:1-5)...what was to happen to them?
- Reason – “For not all who are descended from Israel are Israel. Nor because they are his descendants are they all Abraham’s children.” [**spiritual vs. physical Israel and seed vs. children**]
- This is a descent issue. Paul says that what makes you a descendent is not genetics. After all, some people who are direct descendants of Israel turn away from God and are then under a curse = no longer part of Israel.
  - This is something they understood and would have readily agreed upon.
  - Based on blessings and curses we talked about earlier in Deuteronomy – if you break the covenant you are under a curse and no longer a part of the covenant community = you become like the Gentiles.
  - They also had a really early example – Ishmael and Esau
- Therefore, it makes sense that it could work the other way too – those who were outside the covenant and not genetic descendants of Israel (Jacob) could come in and be under the covenant. That means God is justified in making it go both ways.

We learned in chapter 4 that it was not circumcision but faith that made one a child/heir of the promise to Abraham. That thought is being built upon here.

Children of the flesh vs. children of the promise (9:8):

- Abraham had a child in his flesh (Ishmael) who was not a child of the promise = the same with Israel – they could be a direct descendant but if they rejected the promise they were outside Israel.

*What was the promise?*

- **Gen 17:1-16**
  - Make nations of you

- Promise of the land
- The generations must keep the covenant (17:9).

Paul is saying that God did make good on his promise – you just have to understand the promise in the beginning the way God meant it in order to see how it is being fulfilled in Paul’s day.

**9:10-21** – The fairness of God:

- Jacob and Esau – God planned out for them before they were born one good and one bad.
  - Therefore, it proves this is not about us...it is about God’s mercy. These decisions were made apart from anything Jacob or Esau did. It was God’s will.
  - **Mistake** - We make mistake in making this a salvation issue when it is not – the issue here is that God is using people for or against his plan (See Cranfield on that and also for the following OT scriptures) and not where they are destined to spend eternity.
  - Esau also received a blessing (Gen 27:39ff)
  - Deut 23:7 – don’t abhor an Edomite (a protection on Esau’s family)
  - In other words – it has always worked this way and God is merciful even to those he has chosen for other purposes than to advance his covenant people.
  - “The elder would serve the younger, not because the younger deserved better or had done better deeds, but because God In his unmerited favor decided to do it that way, showing mercy on Jacob more than Esau. But Esau’s historial role, however determined by God, does not mean that God cursed Esau and damned him for eternity.” – BWIII, 253
- Quote of Malachi 1:2-3 – not so much about loving and hating but about who God chose for what.
- Pharaoh – Different people are by God’s will in different ways. Some pro and some con. But all for God’s glory
- The question then is – why should a man be blamed for something if God purposed it to be that way? Is God unjust?
  - Paul’s response – No! But who are you “O man” – putting man in its place in humble admission that we don’t understand everything. Who are we to call God a liar?

But the point is – God has always been this way. This is nothing new. God has always had in mind that some would be faithful and others faithless. But all have opportunity for repentance if they so chose.

- Potter example:
  - The potter has dominion over the clay. He is free to do with the clay as he knows best. There are different purposes the vessels can perform and he makes each one for its own function. We cannot talk back. It is merciful for him to even consider that we, as a lump of clay, even have a role to play in this divine drama that is unfolding around us.
  - Not salvation issues here – we are quick to jump and say, “Well, God must be sending Pharaoh and Esau to hell without their ability to do anything about it.” Not so.
  - God is merciful in all of this.

Coming back to their situation the examples are parallel. God has endured much, waiting for repentance. He waited on Pharaoh. Now he waits on unrepentant Israel.



9:24 – The Gentiles are proof that vessels once intended for destruction can indeed come into covenant relationship with God. They can be retooled and reshaped. The same is true of unrepentant Israel.

**Scriptures are about a remnant – it has always been this way even in OT times.**

**Our Response (9:30-33):**

Illustrations for the white board:

**Israel** – Physical vs. Spiritual (true Israel). Hard to know what is to happen to those who are only of the physical persuasion. In other words – you have the right family tree but you don't hold to the covenant.

**Descendants of Abraham – the seed vs. the children**

John 8:40 – Children of Abraham do the things Abraham did. Romans 4 – Children of Abraham are by faith. But he does have a physical lineage. Esau was a child of Abraham but it didn't work out for him even though he and Jacob were in the womb at the same time.

“Unless we see salvation from the end of the process we will not understand this discussion. It does not happen in full or come to its completion before Christ returns and the dead are raised. This is so not only because salvation in its final form applies only to a resurrected person who evening the flesh is conformed to the image of the resurrected Jesus. It is also because Paul believes that even the saved person faces the danger of unfaithfulness and apostasy in this life. One is not eternally secure until one is securely in eternity.” – BWIII, 255

“Being chosen for historical purposes and being saved are not one and the same thing.” – BWIII, 255.

The point here is Israel and not Pharaoh (BWIII, 256) – their own temporal hardening as a result of God's saving his people with the hope that they will turn.

### **Romans 10 – God's Sovereign Will for His People**

**Romans 9-11 – Paul talking about the fate of Israel since God has allowed those to come to him by faith and not by works of the law.**

- Chapter 9 – God is going to do what God is going to do. He is righteous and we have to trust him.
  - Examples of Jacob, Esau, Pharaoh and the clay/potter

Look back at 9:30-33 – he makes a controversial statement:

- *Some* of Israel pursued but did not attain righteousness
- *Some* of the Gentiles did not pursue but did attain righteousness

Stumbling stone laid in Zion – “he who believes on *him*” = Christ.

This leads into 10:1

**Chapter 10**

### **10:1 – Paul’s appeal/desire**

- Paul begins with another appeal similar to 9:1-3
  - *What is Paul’s appeal?*
    - That all Israel might be saved.
  - *What does this imply?*
    - That some of Israel is lost. Why? They have rejected the Messiah.

### **10:2-4 – The reason for Paul’s appeal:**

- They have zeal – but what is the problem? Zeal for the wrong thing.
  - Zeal for something they established rather than something God established.
  - God established – righteousness by faith in God
  - They established their own system of righteousness.
- This is not about them getting into relationship with God – already had that.
- This is about them staying in relationship with God (See Sanders and BWIII, 260).
- Paul doesn’t want them to stumble over the stumbling stone (9:33). He wants them to build on it and be built up by it.
- Righteousness means “being in the right” – so to have your own righteousness means to make yourself right. Impossible. We cannot achieve it. That is why Paul tells them they must “submit to God’s righteousness.”
  - God wanted them to respond by faith and not have a “I can earn this” mentality. They needed to let God in order to let God.

Christ – the culmination of the law. Word is literally “end” of the law – means the end result of or the culmination of. This is more than that the law lead to Christ. This means that the law was intended to end up with Christ.

This is the very reason for the existence of the law. This is what makes what is happening to the zealous Jews who do not believe in Christ so much more a disappointment. They were born for this day and they have been blind to the truth that they were destined for.

The law purposed to bring people to faith in Christ – that is why the law in its original intention was good.

### **10:5-15 – The Law vs. Faith**

Paul is going to prove to them by their own scriptures what he is saying is true.

**10:5 – Law says** - Moses said someone would be righteous by doing the things in the law.

Problem – no one did.

Yet, God still was able to make his people righteous by faith.

**10:6-7 Faith says** – The point is not in our ability to find Christ (BWIII). The point is his ability to find us. Some Gentiles responded. Some Jews have not. But to both Christ has come and opened the door of possibility and God desires a response of faith from both and is willing to make both righteous.

Faith doesn’t say those things because faith waits and submits because faith knows God is going to make good on his promises and that we don’t have to go to high heights or low depths to make good on his promises.

**10:8** – Israel, the word is near you. What word? The word that showed Jesus as Lord. You should know the truth because the word is in your mouth and heart because they had a “head start” and already had a special status with God.

**10:9-13** – This is not some set standard of how to become a Christian. Paul is describing aspects of the response of faith God is looking for. God is looking for his people, the Jews, to acknowledge that which was the end point of the law:

- that Jesus is Lord – He is master, he calls the shots. This is confession at its finest.
- that he has risen from the dead
  - Why is that important? Because God did something in Christ that is a foretaste of the transformative work he is doing in us – we too will be raised.

**10:10** – Look back at 10:8 – heart and mouth. Paul goes back to this. This is where the law could be found (Deut 6:4ff – Shema – put in heart and talk about God’s law – it is to be on the heart and on the lips.)

**10:11** – **Shame** – Honor/shame society. This is talking about future glory. The world may try to shame you but on the last day everything will be made clear.

**10:12-13** – People have tried to make this a verse about how to be saved. Paul is not laying out a detailed list of prerequisites for salvation. The point is not about the calling on his name. The point is about the “All” or “Everyone” as evidenced by 10:11 – no difference between Jew & Gentile. This is about the broadness of God’s mercy and the truth that even Gentiles can experience it as well as Christ-believing Jews who have recognized/realized the end point of the law – Jesus as Messiah.

**10:14-21** – **Back to the Jews:**

- They have been given all kinds of opportunities
- Cranfield calls 10:14-15 four conditions/questions that have to be fulfilled in order for Israel to have opportunity. If they have opportunity they are held accountable for failure to do so if they miss it.
  - Sent – Preach – Hear – Believe – Call on
    - Sent – Prophets & now Paul (
    - Preach – Prophets & Paul (
    - Hear – Of course they did (10:18 + Psalm 19:4
    - Believe – not all did (10:16 + Isa 53:1)/Understand = Rom 10:19
    - Call on -

**Gentiles were spoken of before hand by the prophets:**

- Rom 10:19-21
- The point is they also had someone sent to preach and they heard, believed and called.
- They responded in faith just as some Jews did.
- The point is – God treated them the same and God would continue in relationship with his own people (Jews) if they would also respond in kind by faith.

10:21 – But concerning Israel – This has always been a problem. Witherington points out this is like a father waiting for a son (See also Hosea 11:1)

## **Romans 11 – “All Inclusive” Israel**

**Romans 9-11 – Paul talking about the fate of Israel since God has allowed those to come to him by faith and not by works of the law.**

- Chapter 9 – God is going to do what God is going to do. He is righteous and we have to trust him.
- Chapter 10 – God gave them every opportunity to turn to Christ but they did not believe.
- Chapter 11 – God’s unfolding plan for an “all inclusive” Israel

- Chapter 12 – “In view of God’s mercy” – mercy as the vine dresser who includes branches that should not be and willingly grafts back in branches that had been cut off...that kind of mercy.

Question – “Did God reject his people?” (11:1).

- Why ask that at this point?
- Because in Romans 11 he just got done saying they have not believed or called on God even though some were sent to preach to them. Righteousness is by faith (1:17) and they have tried to establish their own righteousness (10:3)...are they lost? Did God reject all of Israel?

Paul points to himself and says, “Obviously not!” because he is a Christian and a faithful Jew/Israelite.

### **Example of Elijah**

- Point is - Not the first time the Jews had been faced with apostasy – Elijah in 1 Kings 19.
- Elijah felt like he was the only one left (11:3). Implies many had fallen away.
- How God responded to Elijah is an example of how he would respond in Paul’s day (11:4).
- 11:5 – Remnant

### **Some obtained what they sought and some did not (11:7-10):**

- Some obtained what they were looking for – via accepting Christ
- Some did not – via rejecting Christ
- Elect – Greek = εκλογη
  - Has to do with being chosen. Does this mean God chose some and others he didn’t? We are afraid to say yes because that would seem to violate freewill.
  - God chose those who put their faith in Christ – **emphasis is that it was God’s choice**. Not earned.
  - Not necessarily saying God chose them before they were born (although he could if he wanted to based on Romans 9:10-13).
- Hardened – literally were petrified, turned to stone, calloused.
  - Why? Not because God made them hardened apart from any of their own doing. They hardened themselves by their refusal to believe to the very thing they were looking for since the beginning – the coming of the messiah. If you reject this as truth, you become hardened to God.

### **The Purpose of the Stumbling & The Olive Tree (11:11-24):**

- So it is clear that they have stumbled (9:33 – stumbling block and now in 11:11) but how far have they stumbled?
  - Not so far away that they can never be recovered.
  - We tend to see everything as black and white – they stumbled and so they are lost without hope. God sees them as having stumbled, but still in a position that the door is open if they will step through it and come to faith in Christ.

What Paul is about to write is all about grace and mercy

- Issues at stake here:
  - What has happened with the Gentiles?
  - What has happened with the Jews?
  - How should each feel about it?

Israel's rejection ushered in room for the Gentiles (11:11, 15, 25).

- Belief is up to each individual person.
- Some Jews believed in Christ apart from seeing Gentiles come in.
- Others needed to see Gentiles to come in so that they would realize that someone else was receiving a portion of their inheritance/relationship with God and be jealous enough to come over to Christ as well.
- Deut 32:21 – God will make Israel a jealous nation.

So here's the story – Christ comes first to the Jews. Some accept, some reject. As God sees some reject, he offers salvation to the Gentiles for 2 reasons – 1) in order to bless them & 2) in order to spur on the Jews who rejected Christ to put their faith in Him.

Olive tree illustration – BWIII, points out that in the prophets, the olive tree was often used to talk about judgment. We see that here with the pruning and grafting.

- Gentiles – wild olive branch (they don't produce usable oil) = humbling.
  - They are brought in even though they don't seem to belong.
- Jews – Native olive branches – they produce great/usable oil.
  - Those who stay faithful to the root remain
  - Those who reject the tree are cut off and can then produce no fruit.
  - But just like the Gentiles, they can be grafted back in and this fits a lot more naturally than does the wild olive branch, because these once belonged to that very tree.

Gentiles don't need to boast and brag over their position or that some were cut out so they could be included. They need to remember they too can be cut out. Those they boast over can also be brought back in.

**Take home lesson for us** – God is merciful. God is willing to go to great lengths to bring many into his fold. God is also a God of judgment and does not allow branches to remain that don't fit his criteria – faith in Christ.

And so we must be careful to remain in Christ, to not be boastful and to realize that we are at the hands of the great pruner who is not afraid to graft and is not afraid to prune.

### **All Israel Will Be Saved (11:25-36):**

- 2 ways of viewing this:
  - “All Israel” = spiritual Israel (Christian Jews + Christian Gentiles)
    - This is a nice approach because it appears to keep things consistent. Paul has said that righteousness cannot come by the law. He has implied that those of his countrymen who have rejected Christ are lost (at least until the turn to Christ). It keeps Paul consistent with himself.
  - All Israel means – every single Jew
    - We know some were lost. So this is hard to fathom.
    - Only way this is possible is if Paul is saying that in the fullness of time, when Christ returns that the Jews will have a second chance to turn and all will. I just don't see that.
    - Witherington thinks this does not include Gentiles and is about the end times.

- 11:28 – Seems to turn the conversation toward a Gentile listener but continues to talk about the Jewish situation.
  - Enemies – has the sense of an adversary here. In other words, when it comes to Christ...they stand against you.
  - Elect/chosen on account of the patriarchs – they are of the lineage God said he would bless and so God is ready to show them special favor.
- 11:29 – As Cranfield notices “Irrevocable” stands first in this sentence to give it emphasis. What is irrevocable?
  - God’s gifts – that is his special favor, the patriarchs, temple, etc that give them advantage (See 9:4).
  - God’s call – See 10:13ff – God’s call was irrevocable – in other words, the call still stands. It has not been revoked and the favor he has for them still stands. It has not been revoked.
  - Remember all this started in 11:1 with the question of whether or not God has rejected his people – answer is “no.” But they still need to repent and put their faith in Christ.
- 11:30-32 – non-xian Jews and Gentiles were now alike – both had been disobedient and both had opportunity to turn to God through Christ.
  - Because God still accepts them when they repent – it shows God to be merciful.

**Doxology (11:33-36):**

- These things are a mystery to us!

Further/better refined thoughts:

Context – **11:24** – He just said God would be able to graft them right back into their own olive tree...Now he will explain how that will work... “Don’t want you to be ignorant of **this** mystery” – points back to them being grafted back in.

“I do not want you to be ignorant of this mystery...” – this passage has still been a mystery to many on how to interpret it.

- Who is he talking to?
  - Jewish Christians?
  - Gentile Christians?
  - Both?
  - Context – Since **11:13** he has been referring to Gentiles as “you” and Jews as “they”...He has warned the Gentiles in **11:18** not to think they are superior. Continues that in **11:25**.
  - It is not until **12:3** that he seems to be speaking to all in the church (Jews + Gentiles).
  - He is explaining to the Gentiles Christians in Rome God’s plan for the Jews (especially those who have not believed in Christ).
- It is a mystery:
  - Cranfield says mystery in NT is something that was hidden, now revealed by God to be preached to all who will listen (Cranfield, 281). In other places in the NT it refers to “special revelation” (281) – see **1 Cor 13:2, Eph 3:3**.

- 3 events will take place:
  - Israel is hardened (not all, but some – Paul was not hardened, nor were other Christian Jews).
  - Fullness of the Gentiles come into the kingdom
  - All Israel will be saved
- Which “Israel” is he talking about?
  - You can jump through a number of logical hoops to try to make sense of this and make it fit our theology. Or you can read it for what it says.
  - “Spiritual Israel” vs. “Physical Israel”
    - Spiritual Israel – implies all those who are Abraham’s “faith” descendants (See **Romans 4**). Christian Jews + Christian Gentiles.
    - This is an easy fix to many difficulties to make sure Paul is consistent.
    - This is a nice approach because it appears to keep things consistent. Paul has said that righteousness cannot come by the law. He has implied that those of his countrymen who have rejected Christ are lost (at least until the turn to Christ). It keeps Paul consistent with himself.
    - Context – Paul is not talking about Gentiles in this picture. He is not answering any question about Gentiles – his focus is on the people of Israel here – Jews.
  - Physical Israel – All those who are Abraham’s “physical” descendants
    - We know some were lost. So this is hard to fathom.
    - Context – This does fit the context of what Paul is saying.
- **11:28** – Seems to turn the conversation toward a Gentile listener but continues to talk about the Jewish situation.
  - Enemies – has the sense of an adversary here. In other words, when it comes to Christ...they stand against you (temporarily according to **11:25-26**).
    - **Evidence of Jews persecuting Christians in the 1<sup>st</sup> century:**
      - 18 Benedictions:
        - Recited 3 times a day by pious Jews (Carson on John, 369-370).
        - #12 was re-written after 70 AD – “For the renegades let there be no hope, and may the arrogant kingdom soon be rooted out in our days, and the Nazarenes and the heretics perish as in a moment and be rooted out from the book of life and with the righteous may they not be inscribed. Blessed art thou, O Lord, who humblest the arrogant” (D.A. Carson, 370)
      - Accounts by Justin Martyr about stoning of Christians and punishing Christians if they would not deny Jesus as the Christ.
      - This was all over Christian Jews allowing Gentiles to worship Yahweh without first becoming Jews (that is much of what Paul is combating here and in Galatians).
  - Elect/chosen on account of the patriarchs – they are of the lineage God said he would bless and so God is ready to show them special favor.
- **11:29** – As Cranfield notices “Irrevocable” stands first in this sentence to give it emphasis. What is irrevocable?

- God's gifts – that is his special favor, the patriarchs, temple, etc that give them advantage (**See 9:4**).
- God's call – See **10:13ff** – God's call was irrevocable – in other words, the call still stands. It has not been revoked and the favor he has for them still stands.
- Remember all this started in 11:1 with the question of whether or not God has rejected his people – answer is “no.” But they still need to repent and put their faith in Christ.
- **11:30-32** – non-xian Jews and Gentiles were now alike – both had been disobedient and both had opportunity to turn to God through Christ.
  - Because God still accepts them when they repent – it shows God to be merciful.
  - Also...Cranfield believes it may go back to the whole jealousy thing – that some Jews will see the mercy God is giving the Gentiles and by that, return to God.
  - The point is, they still have to return.

So “Israel” may have a third meaning:

- Cannot be “Spiritual Israel” = Christian Jews + Christian Gentiles because that does not fit the context (although on the surface it makes things work out cleanly and neatly).
- Cannot be “Physical Israel” because we know that not every single Jew will turn to Christ through faith, which Paul has said is necessary for salvation by grace.
  - Remember also, Paul already said the children of Abraham were children by faith and not by heritage/genealogy alone in **Rom 4:12 (See also John 8:39-41)**
- Third option – the Israel that has always existed – Faithful Jews. Even in the OT, rebellious Jews were no longer considered true Israelites. Faithfulness changes from faithfulness to God through the law to faithfulness to God through Christ.

This fits the context and takes away the problem of not having faith in Christ.

#### **Doxology (11:33-36):**

- The point here is that God is all powerful, all merciful and that he cannot be out given.

## **Romans 12**

“When Paul turns to the parenthesis in ch. 12, he will build precisely on the lessons learned in chs. 9-11 about the **saving mercy** and **great righteousness of God** which believers appropriate the benefits of, and try to live on the basis of, through faith in Jesus Christ.” – BWIII, 278.

“Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy...” (Rom 12:1)

- Sheds knew light
  - Olive tree – God's mercy
  - Plan for Israel and Gentiles – God's mercy
- God is working all these things out apart from anything they have done to earn it.
- God is gracious! God is merciful!
- God is the kind of God you would want to give yourself totally to because He can be trusted. He has a plan. He is going to see it through to completion and making good on his promises!
- Therefore...offer your bodies as a living sacrifice.

What if...

- God is mean, God is ugly, unkind, ungracious, angry and unloving...now make yourself a living sacrifice for him! Or else! Doesn't work.



### **Living Sacrifice:**

- Sacrifice is something offered to God to be wholly consumed by him
- What happens when you start to view your life this way?
  - It is all God's.
  - You can't hold anything back
  - It must be pleasing/holy
  - Living like this is worship!

### **Which Pattern are you conformed to (12:2)?**

- Cranfield has a great/better translation of this verse – “Stop allowing yourselves to be conformed to this age, but continue to let yourselves be transformed by the renewing of your mind.”
  - Conform = middle voice
  - Transform = passive voice – something you allow to happen to yourself.
- We talk a lot about spiritual transformation as something we do but it isn't. Transformation is **done to us** because we cannot make ourselves holy, pure, etc. Only God can!
- Then you will be able to test and approve God's will...
  - How often do we ask God what his will is in a certain situation when we aren't standing in proper relationship with him?

### **Humility in the Body (12:3-8):**

- Audience shift? – “every one of you” – now talking to everyone both Jews and Gentile Christians.
- Think back to the olive tree – don't think of yourselves too highly! (**11:18, 21**).
  - If you know where you came from it is awful hard to boast.
- Think of yourself with sober judgment
  - Paul is addressing the disputes and division that they had among them. He is calling them to see themselves in a new light – one that recognizes God's grace and mercy and their own unworthiness.
  - Even faith itself is dependent upon God's actions on our behalf...otherwise we would have nothing to put our faith in if God had not made himself known to us.
- Body analogy (12:4-8):
  - Unity comes in understanding our function
  - Differing functions does not mean we have to conflict with each other or divide.
  - We have to remember who is the head
  - Message – unity
    - Jew & Gentile alike are all members of the same body – think about how foreign that would be to them – they were told not to even eat out of the same bowl or utensils but Paul says they are members of the same body now!
- Using our gifts:
  - Message – unity. The body functions for the sake of the head and at the direction of the head.
  - *How about us? Have you identified your passion/talent/skill within the body? How is God utilizing it for his purposes?*

### **Love and Unity:**

- Paul is not starting some new, unrelated section on love just like he doesn't do that in 1 Cor 13
- This is a great list of things to aspire to...but more than aspire...to practice
- If you live like this – you will have unity among you.
- This is being salt and light.
- One another:
  - Be devoted to one another
  - Honor one another above yourselves
- Qualities to have:
  - Zeal (12:11)
  - Fervor
  - Joyful
  - Patient
  - Faithful
  - Sharing with needy Christians
  - Hospitality (12:16)

How to treat our enemies – this is more than how to treat the man on the street. I think it boils down to the Jew/Gentile relations again. In Romans 11:28 – called Jews “enemies on your account”. Paul is here saying – even if you think the “other side” is your enemy...here is how you treat them anyway. Treat them with love and respect.

How many churches could have avoided splitting if they had put these concepts into practice?

- Do not take revenge
- Instead, feed them, give them something to drink
- In essence - Love them!

*What would life be like if we really lived like this?*

*How would people view the church?*

*Which of these is most difficult for you?*

## **Romans 13**

One way of viewing scripture – let's go to Romans 13 to read about how Christians should view government.

What do you find?

Breaks down into 2 sections:

1 – Christians and government

- Earthly rulers come from God and are even God's servants
- Obey them and do not rebel

2 – Love and avoiding evil

So we could spend some time there looking at each verse and trying to make application in a vacuum.

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Or...we could try to understand it in context.

What is the transition between 12 and 13?

It appears awkward because if you look at the end of 12 and end of 13 there is a lot about love

- Douglas Moo (NIVAP, 420) believes this is written to address the problem of extremism in the church – the attitude that we are not to be of the world might lead people to extreme behaviors (not paying taxes, revolt, etc). It can be a cover to do things your sinful nature wants to do.
- He also believes it fits the context of Romans 12:18-21 about not taking vengeance – God can do so through these leaders/government officials if he likes.

### **Government in Rome (See BWIII):**

Claudius ruled until his death in 54. Nero took power at the age of 16. Romans was written a couple years after this transition and thus deals with the problem of returning Jews to Gentile run churches in their hometown. Nero started off very peacefully. Only later did he turn to violence and even violence against Christians.

- Why did the Jews get thrown out of Rome and garner so much attention?
  - They were believed to cause revolts and rebellion.
  - They were believed to follow the leader of a rebellion (J.C.)
  - They were thought to have strange practices:
    - Believing in just one God and not participating in cultural practices of the day (which normally involved worshipping other gods) = seen as unpatriotic toward Rome.

Now that everyone is back and there is peace in Rome, Paul is urging them to not draw any undue attention to what they are doing and cause another stir.

In Romans 12 he was talking about unity in the church. Romans 13 is also about getting along with people and not causing a stink.

Where is the focus in this passage?

- Tend to put focus on things like capital punishment or just war (BWIII on just war)
- But the focus here is not so much on what the government can do but on how Christians should act. The world should see us as peaceable members of society.

### **Does the Government have limits?”**

Paul is also not saying that we do whatever the state tells us to do “no matter what” – we don’t check our brains or morals at the door. Rome occasionally demanded Christians to deny Jesus as Lord. Should we follow the government as legitimate authority and servant of God then? They also practiced emperor worship – is a Christian supposed to submit to that as well? Of course not!

- Acts 4 – Paul and John before the Sanhedrin directly violate their order

So the stipulation follows – Paul is calling them to respect the state as long as it is serving God’s purposes of bringing peace and justice (also from BWIII).

So Paul is not laying out a “theology of church-state relations” so much as he is probably addressing a specific problem of Christians in Rome – that they could find excuses to resist the government since, like Jesus, their kingdom was not of this world.

12:6 – revenue includes things like fees and duties.

Like Rom 12 these are also practical implications for Christian living based on God’s promises.

1 – God has a plan and is actually carrying it out before our eyes.

2 – Doing good is always a good thing to do

3 – Don’t make excuses not to carry out your duties (paying taxes, honoring the honorable, etc)

4 – Embracing love and fleeing evil

### **Christians and Debt (13:8):**

Let no debt remain outstanding...

- Playing off of 13:7
- Doesn’t say not to borrow money
- He does say not to let debt remain outstanding – pay on time.
  - We don’t want to make too much of this as he is using this to play into the drastic need to love one another.

### **Love, for the Day is Near (13:8-14):**

Carry over from 13:7 – paying debts of taxes to those outside the church in government. But what about those inside the church?

“Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for he who loves his fellowman has fulfilled the law.”

- This is an extreme statement – especially for the cultural strains of their day.

*How would we live if we viewed others as owing them so much love that no matter how well we treated them we could never pay it off?*

*How does that change the way we view others?*

13:9-10 – Sound familiar? See Matthew 22:34-40 & Lev 19:18

- *How does love for others accomplish all the other commandments?*
  - If you view people this way you won’t use and abuse them or sin against them.
- Is it interesting that he cites commands from the OT? The OT is still valuable to Paul as a moral and ethical guide. But more...it is the first part of the story of how God has been working among his people.
- Who is my neighbor? (Luke 10:25ff – who is my neighbor? Parable of Good Samaritan)

Love does no harm – not sure if this ties back in to what he said about respecting government.

Were there those in the church in Rome who were violent people or who were seditious?

Zealouts?

### **Life in light of the end - The day is near (13:11-14):**

Night and day – illustration of a sleeper who needs to wake up because the day is about to dawn.

Have to get clothed for the day.

*What day is he talking about?*

*How do we get clothed to ready ourselves for the day that is dawning?*

Viewing life with the end/goal in mind. God promised it, we believe it, now let's live like it!

He says to clothe yourself with Christ. Immerse yourself so fully in Him that he covers every aspect of your life and being.

Where eschatology and ethics go hand in hand.

## **Romans 14:1-15:13 – Weak and Strong**

What is the connection back?

Again, Paul is probably addressing the practical application of the theology/material explained in Rom 1-8.

- We figure he is addressing specific problems in the congregation and we are only hearing one side of the conversation – the solution/answer/response of Paul to what he has heard in the church.

Why end this section at 15:13 – he concludes many of his major sections with doxologies (See chps 8,11)

We learn in Romans 14 that we don't live in a bubble. The things we do have direct implications on others and on our relationship with God.

Matters that are disputable:

- Paul makes it clear that some things are more important than others.
- Some people make EVERYTHING a “test of fellowship” – basically if you don't agree with me you are in error and if you are in error then you are lost. Bases all doctrine on one man's interpretation.
- But none of us agree on everything!
- Paul is saying that is actually okay!

**Eating – Kosher laws:**

- Jews were not allowed to eat certain animals (pork, certain reptiles and birds...)
- They were also not allowed to eat meat that still had blood in it (**Deut 12:23-25**)
  - That means any meat could be unclean if it was not slaughtered properly.
  - What's the chance Gentile Roman butchers cared about kosher laws?
- Add in prevalence of idol worship and meat in the market sacrificed to an idol = not kosher
- Then add in potential Jewish rejection of Jewish Christians in synagogue = 1 less source of kosher meat (thanks to BWIII for info and insight on that!).

“One man's faith allowed him to eat anything...” = Gentile

Another only vegetables = Jew

Condemnation for things you disagree with (14:3):

- Paul basically says it is okay to think either way.
- So don't judge someone for something that is okay to believe!
- Paul is not saying to never judge someone. Just don't divide over the “small stuff”

- Gentile attitude = he only eats vegetables and feels horrible eating this yummy bacon. What a weakling.
- Jewish attitude = those guys eat all kinds of stuff we were always told growing up not to eat because it would make us “unclean”

So it all comes down to attitudes about clean and unclean (literally “profane”)- 2 spheres of existence:

- Clean/Kosher = Holy Use
- Unclean/Common/Profane = Unholy use
- Acts 10:15 & Mark 7:15-20 & Rom 14:14

God has accepted both:

- Slave/master – why that illustration? BWIII gives some great thoughts – basically a hierarchy is his approach – you don’t look down/condescend on someone who is on the same level you are. In that honor/shame culture you only do that if you are above someone else. They are all on the same level under God as master.

### **Holy Days (14:5-8):**

- Jew/Gentile issues again – day of atonement, Sabbath, Passover, etc.
- The message = Jews can’t see these as necessary for salvation and Gentiles shouldn’t look down on Jews for practicing.
- Interesting is he doesn’t call for conformity. Sounds like he thinks these days have cultural significance but are no longer necessary (otherwise why allow some not to practice?). It is okay for 2 Christians to believe 2 different things on the same issue.
- Problem – when we judge people on non-essentials.

14:8 – we belong to the Lord:

- How would that point of view help us not condescend on others?
- We realize people are not beholden to us and all of our opinions.

Practical application for today:

- There are essentials (faith, belief, baptism, abstaining from sin, etc)
- There are non-essentials.
- We stick by one and not the other and allow flex in areas we have different opinions and tastes on:
  - Worship style
  - Holy days (Easter, Christmas, Advent, etc)
  - Alcohol even falls under this (See 14:21)

### **Christ raised from the dead:**

- Unrelated point? Never. It advances the point Paul is making.
- 14:9-12 goes back to 14:4 – who has authority to judge? God does. Christ does. Christ is Lord and has demonstrated that by his resurrection from the dead.
- God is the one who has the “judgment seat” and so we don’t hold people to our standards but to God’s.
- 14:12 - While confession is important, slaves don’t have to give an account to other slaves. They report to their master who judges their work.

14:13 – Implication/result of 14:12 – if God is the judge then who are we to take his place?

### **Stumbling blocks (14:13):**

- We see the stumbling blocks they were putting in each other’s way:
  - The Jews tried to make Gentiles stumble with the law

- The Gentiles tried to make Jews stumble with their freedom (violate Jewish conscience)
- *What ways can we make people stumble today through things that are “perfectly okay”?*

#### **A matter of conscience – 14:14**

- Disputable matters are about attitude and conscience

#### **Acid test – how would your brother receive your actions whether right or wrong?**

- If people view our behavior as sin we should do our best to not make them feel that way. There may be times this is very, very hard. When it is, it is important that in those matters we don't take on the role of judge toward those who do things we don't like or approve of.

#### **Peace and mutual edification (14:19-23):**

- Bottom line – we come at this from 2 angles
  - Strong brother – try hard to avoid offending your brother
  - Weak brother – don't judge your brother who does things you don't agree with (when they are disputable)

14:23 – The test of doubt – don't do things you are unsure of!

### **Romans 15:1-13**

Romans 15:1-13 should really be included in a study of Romans 14. My notes are incomplete on this section for now.

#### **Additional notes/thoughts:**

##### **Broader Principle - Weak and Strong Faith:**

- Back in 1:17-18 he talked about righteousness that is by faith.
- Different levels of faith but it is still faith!
- Notice – he doesn't condemn weak faith. He doesn't ask the weak brother to step up and be strong first.
  - He asks the strong brothers to bear with the weakness of the weak brothers.

Typical argument – Bill says A, Sam disagrees and says B. Bill wins by claiming he is the weaker brother and therefore, Sam has to bend in order to keep Bill from falling away. That is manipulation.

No where in here does Paul encourage anyone to be the weak brother or to use it as a defense to get your way!

“Paul’s intention is to promote harmony within diversity rather than to remove the diversity – otherwise what would be the significance of saying ‘Let everyone be fully convinced in his own mind’ – Campbell (quoted in BWIII footnote 25 on p.332)

“Paul does not see diversity of lifestyle as the major problem, rather attitudes about those diverse lifestyles were. ” (BWIII, 333)

“Paul has no quarrel with those who continue to observe the law so long as they do not seek to compel others to live like them! Gentiles must not regard observance of the Jewish law as incompatible with Christian faith, and Jews must not regard it as essential to Christian faith” – Campbell cited in BWIII, 333.

Why vegetables? BWIII gives an excellent explanation – kosher meat was probably unavailable in Rome and so what do you do? Avoid meat. If Jewish Christians were not looked favorably on in the synagogue then they couldn’t get kosher meat there either.

## **Romans 14:1-15:13 – Weak and Strong**

### **Romans 15:1-13**

Romans 15:1-13 should really be included in a study of Romans 14. My notes are incomplete on this section for now.

Wright points out similarities between 14:13-23, 15:1-6 & 15:7-13 (p.744)

	14:13-23	15:1-6	15:7-13
13			
Open with a Command			
What the Messiah has done			
Scriptural support			
This gives us hope			
Conclude with praising God			

Wright believes the main point here is that God doesn’t just want them to be more welcoming. God wants unified praise of Jew and Gentile Christian alike (because this was the plan from the beginning).

NIV and NRSV have poor translation in 15:1 – “failings” is not so much the point as “powerless” (Wright’s thought).

Notice that the strong are actually supposed to lovingly help those who they view as weaker. It doesn’t usually work that way.

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15:5-6 – They are encouraged to find unity in their thinking (minds) and to worship God together (as Wright notes “with one mouth” is the literal translation).

### **Starts with the strong’s obligation to the weak:**

- Those who believe they have more freedom need to bear with the “powerlessness” of the weak – failings = bad translation according to Wright. He notes the word for “failings/powerless” is the same cognate as “weak” in Rom 14.

“The strong are to actively and lovingly to assume the burden that the weak are not able to carry for themselves, moderating their own conduct to identify as much as possible with them.” –

Moo, 471

- This does follow the example of Christ who, though strong, made himself weak to identify with both.

4 things the strong must do (BWIII, 341):

- Bear with their weaknesses
- Avoid judging
- Don’t try to please yourself
- Please your neighbor and edify them
- Focus – please your neighbor
  - In debates on issues we usually set out to please ourselves and push our views through. That is fine on the BIG issues – Lordship of Christ, resurrection from the dead.
  - But it is dead in the water to act like that on minutia.
  - Instead – pleasing your neighbor is more important than getting your way or forcing others to agree with you on everything.
- 2 Examples
  - 1 - Christ – If Christ didn’t try to please himself how can we try?
  - 2 - Scriptures – the stories of God working with those in the past (even those who were weak) gives us hope that he is going to carry this thing on to completion.
- 15:4-5 – Endurance comes from God as does our encouragement. It takes endurance and encouragement to continue on.
- God gives more than endurance and encouragement – he gives a spirit of unity.
  - Moo thinks this is not unity for the sake of unity or even a unity of all opinions. It is unity that the weak and strong bring together as they follow the example of Christ that results in unified praise.
  - Unity displays itself in our worship (15:6)
  - Being in one heart and praising with one mouth even with those we disagree with or have differences with.

The value of the OT:

- It is not binding on us but that doesn’t mean it is not valuable to Christians. Paul is talking about the OT in 15:5.

This is more than just about singing songs. This was the plan God had since the beginning – for all nations to worship together in perfect unity.

*How does Satan try to disrupt that unity?*

15:8-9 – the promise referred to is to Abraham of “all nations” – Supporting scriptures:

- Psalm 18:49 – precedent for the Jews to worship in the presence of Gentiles
- Deut 32:43 – from LXX of Deut that shows Gentiles and Jews worshipping together. Hebrew text doesn’t have “with his people” = Paul pulled the version that made his point (just like Rick Warren!) However, I side with an inspired biblical writer moreso than with Warren.
- Psalm 117:1
- Isaiah 11:10 – precedent for Gentiles worshipping the Messiah and putting their hope in him (go back to messiah and hope in 15:3-4 and now also in 15:13)

### **15:13**

After quoting to them scriptures to back up the need and precedent for unity among Jews and Gentiles he concludes this section pointing back to God:

- God of hope – hope in that he was able to bring all nations together just as he said he would and he will do it again in the age to come
- Fill us! With what? Joy and peace as we trust in him. Our being filled rests on our trust in God to do what he said he would do. Result = fills us with joy and peace
- If we are lacking joy and peace then maybe we need to start by trusting God more.

### **Paul’s plans for the Gentiles (15:14ff):**

“Brothers” = Jews in this case (BWIII, thinks Gentiles are the audience here)

He is reminding them that his mission to the Gentiles has come from God and that it is his duty and comes from the grace of God. Message = accept the mission and accept the Gentiles. This is a God thing, not a Paul thing.

Purpose – to make Gentiles acceptable offering to God (think back to 12:1-2). He wants them to be holy and pleasing. This is one of the reasons he has an interest in the church in Rome – center of Gentile world of the day.

### **15:17ff**

Focus on God and his acts and not on Paul’s deeds. He is talking about his evangelistic purpose here. God has sent him on a set purpose to reach a specific group of people and he glories in the fact that God is working in him and through him.

Ambition to preach where Christ was not known:

- Many churches make their evangelistic field places where Christ is already very much known and we get transfer growth rather than “new life”

15:23ff – ironic thing is he did go to Jerusalem and was arrested and ended up in Rome.

Wright believes that Paul is writing Romans to lay the foundation for his work from Rome west to Spain and that they must be unified in the congregation as well as in their theology (to a point, according to ch.14) in order for this to be a success.

## **Romans 16**

1. The text – Chapter 16 all comes down to honor. These people have been serving the Lord and played a pivotal role in the life of the church and the kingdom of God – Greet them, welcome them, honor them!

That is what we do.

The nature of letters in the ancient world and Romans 16.

- Letters in ancient world – see handout #21 – contains “Greetings” and continual prayers
  - Form (Fee, 44):
    - Name of writer – Paul
    - Name of recipient – Church in Rome
    - Greeting – grace and peace...
    - Prayer or wish of thanksgiving
    - Body
    - Final greeting/farewell (Rom 16)

Notice that Paul does not directly greet these people but asks that those in Rome greet them.  
*How does Paul know these people when he has never been to Rome?*

- Edict of Claudius – he probably met them elsewhere (Priscilla and Aquilla he met in Corinth (Acts 18:1-2) which directly mentions the edict of Claudius). Also 16:1-2 – Cenchræ is a port in Corinth = probably met Phoebe around same time as P & A in Corinth.
- A good number of these 26 names are Jews, if not all of them.

Greet – BWIII, points out that this verb literally means to wrap their arms around them and not just a subtle greeting. Embrace them! Jew/Gentile connection here? Reconciliation?

16:16 – Churches of Christ & holy kiss (Paul basically ends Romans with XOXO between 16:3 & 16:16)

16:20 – “The Satan” = the adversary

2. Exercise to put it into practice – Honor one another!
  - a. Half way through class write names of all those in the room on the white board
  - b. Hand out paper and pens
  - c. Have them write notes to all the men in the class – only on one side of paper
  - d. Collect the papers and cut them
  - e. Hand them out the next week in class