

ROMANS

1-8

**A Study of the
EPISTLE TO THE ROMANS
(Chapters 1-8)**

“For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, ‘But the righteous man shall live by faith.’”

-Romans 1:16,17

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Additional copies of this study may be obtained from www.wildwoodfocus.org

INSTRUCTIONS

This study is formatted to be a daily study of Romans (Chapters 1-8) to be done over a period of 12 weeks. I have tried to design questions that will require, on average, about 20 minutes a day to answer. That being said, please remember that the death of a good Bible study is a legalistic adherence to a “list” or schedule. Godly discipline requires a sensitivity to what the Holy Spirit wants to teach us. If you find yourself being led in a direction different from where my questions would take you, forget my questions, and listen to the “higher authority.” Most of all, enjoy the Word of God. There is no book like it in all of creation.

Authorship: The apostle Paul wrote Romans and even the harshest critics do not dispute his authorship.

Place and Date: Paul wrote the letter from Corinth at the end of his third missionary journey during the three months he was in Greece (Acts 20:3). This occurred approximately A.D. 57. Paul expresses his desire to visit Rome soon in the letter. His first trip to Rome occurred in A.D. 60 and it was as a prisoner.

Recipients: Paul had never visited Rome and did not found the church/churches there. Paul addressed the letter to “all in Rome who are loved by God and called to be saints’ (Rom 1:7); he did not address it to ‘the church in Rome.’ That a church did exist in Rome is obvious, because Paul sent greetings to the church that met in the home of Aquila and Priscilla (16:5). Probably several churches were in Rome; perhaps this multiplicity of churches is why Paul addressed the letter to ‘the saints’ instead of to ‘the church.’

“Were these believers in Rome Jews or Gentiles in ethnic background? The answer is both. Aquila, for example, was a Jew (Acts 18:2), as were Andronicus, Junias, and Herodion, all three identified as Paul’s relatives (Rom 16:7, 11). According to Josephus [famous Jewish historian of the first century] and others a large Jewish colony lived in Rome (cf. Acts 28:17-28). But Rome was a Gentile city, the capital of a Gentile empire in which all Jews, believing and unbelieving, formed a small minority. In addition, though Paul never failed to witness and to minister to Jews, his calling from God was to be ‘the apostle to the Gentiles’ (Rom 11:13; cf. 15:16). So it is reasonable to conclude that his readers were mostly Gentile in background.

“This conclusion is supported by evidence in the letter. Paul addressed Jews directly (2:17), and he included Jewish Christians with himself when he spoke of ‘Abraham, our forefather’ (4:1, 12). On the other hand Paul directly said, ‘I am talking to you Gentiles’ (11:13). Several additional passages indicate that Gentile Christians made up a segment of his readers (11:17-31; 15:14-16). In fact the implication from 1:5, 13 is that Paul considered the Christian community in Rome predominantly Gentile.”¹

Purposes: “While Phoebe’s projected trip to Rome (Rom 16:2) was undoubtedly the specific occasion for Paul’s writing this letter, he had several objectives in writing. The most obvious was to announce his plans to visit Rome after his return to Jerusalem (15:24, 28-29; cf. Acts 19:21) and to prepare the Christian community there for his coming”

“A second purpose Paul had for writing this letter was to present a complete and detailed statement of the gospel message he proclaimed. Paul was eager ‘to preach the gospel also to you who are at Rome’ (1:15) and he wanted them to know what it was. As a result in this letter to Paul accomplished what Jude desired to do, ‘to write to you about the salvation we share’ (Jude 3). Perhaps Jude was kept from doing this because Paul already had, for Romans certainly is a very full and logical presentation of the Triune Godhead’s plan of salvation for human beings, from its beginning in man’s condemnation in sin to its consummation in their sharing eternity in God’s presence, conformed to the image of God’s Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

“A third purpose for writing this letter is not as obvious as the first two. It is related to the tension between the Jewish and the Gentile segments in the Christian community at Rome and a possible conflict between them.” Paul had been bothered by Judaizers in his ministry for a long

¹ Walvoord, John F. and Roy B. Zuck, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*. 1983.

time and their attempts to lead his converts away from the liberty of the gospel. The attacks by the Judaizers had become physically violent by the time Paul wrote this letter. “Whether the Judaizers had reached Rome before Paul or not, the Jew-versus-Gentile issue looms large in this letter. Paul did not take sides, but he carefully set forth both sides of the question.” On the Jewish side he emphasized “the historical and chronological priority of the Jews” (Rom 1:16; cf. 2:9-10). He also shows the “advantage of being a Jew” (3:1-2; 9:4-5). For the other side of the debate he points out that “‘since there is only one God’ (3:30), He is the God of the Gentiles as well as the God of the Jews (3:29). As a result ‘Jews and Gentiles alike are all under sin’ (3:9) and alike are saved by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and His redemptive and propitiatory sacrifice. Furthermore, in order to bring believing Gentiles into His program of salvation, extending His grace to all human beings, God temporarily halted His specific program for Israel as a chosen nation, since that nation through its official leaders and as a whole had rejected in unbelief God’s Son as the Messiah. During this period God continues to have a believing ‘remnant chosen by grace’ (11:5) ‘until the full number of the Gentiles has come in’ (11:25) and God takes up again and fulfills His promises to Israel as a nation.”

A forth purpose for Paul’s writing of Romans is related to the “Jewish-Gentile tension that runs throughout this letter” It is a “muted but definite undertone that questions God’s goodness and wisdom and justice as seen in His plan of salvation. No complaints against God are voiced, but they are implied. As a result this letter to the Romans is more than an exposition of Paul’s ‘gospel of God’s grace’ (Acts 20:24), a declaration of God’s plan of salvation for all human beings by grace through faith. It is a theodicy, an apologetic for God, a defense and vindication of God’s nature and his plan for saving people. It sets God forth ‘to be just and the One who justifies the man who has faith in Jesus’ (Rom 3:26). It exults in ‘the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God’ (11:33) and challenges the readers, ‘Let God be true, and every man a liar’ (3:4).”²

Unique Characteristics: “Romans is distinctive among Paul’s inspired writings in several respects. It was one of the few letters he wrote to the churches he had not visited (Colossians is another such epistle). It is also a formal treatise within a personal letter. Paul expounded the gospel in this treatise. He probably chose to do so in this particular epistle because the church in Rome was at the heart of the Roman Empire. As such it was able to exert great influence in the dissemination of the gospel. For these two reasons Romans is more formal and less personal than most of Paul’s other epistles.

“Paul also wrote Romans because he was at a transition point in his ministry, as he mentioned at the end of Chapter 15. His ministry in the Aegean region was solid enough that he planned to leave it and move farther west into unevangelized territory. Before he did that, he planned to visit Jerusalem where he realized he would be in danger. Possibly, therefore, Paul wrote Romans to leave a full exposition of the gospel in good hands if his ministry ended prematurely in Jerusalem.”³

² Walvoord, John F. and Roy B. Zuck, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*. 1983.

³ Bailey, Mark and Tom Constable, *The New Testament Explorer*. 1999.

Romans 1 - 8: An Overview

“The Gospel is the Power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes . . .”
Romans 1:16

Intro to Purpose of Book 1:1 - 17	The Problem: <i>We are Sinners</i> 1:18 - 3:18	The Solution: <i>Faith in Christ</i> 3:19 - 5:21	A Problem: <i>Christians Relationship to Sin</i> 6:1 - 7:24	The Solution: <i>Spirit Empowered Righteousness</i> 7:25 - 8:39
Week #1 1:1-17	Week #2 1:18 - 2:4 Week #3 2:5 - 3:2 <div style="border: 1px dashed black; padding: 2px; display: inline-block;">Week #4 3:3-31</div>	Week #5 4:1-25 Week #6 5:1-21	Week #7 6:1-14 Week #8 6:12-23 Week #9 7:1-13 Week #10 7:14-25	Week #11 7:25 - 8:17 Week #12 8:18-39

WEEK ONE:
Romans 1:1-17

Day One:

As you begin your study of the Word this week, take a moment to stop and pray. Ask God to guide you in your study of His Word.

1. Read Romans 1:1-17
2. Summarize these verses by making an outline consisting of numerous “sections”, attaching a brief description for each section. For example, one such outline of Romans 1:1-17 is given below.

1:1-6	An introduction to Paul.
1:7-15	The reason Paul wants to preach the gospel in Rome.
1:16,17	The power of the gospel

Write your own outline in the space below. Try not to refer to other outlines that may be presented in your Bible or elsewhere.

(NOTE: Making an outline is a wonderful way to immerse yourself in Scripture. It forces you to think through the content and organization of the text. In addition, it becomes a valuable resource for later review. If you have never done this before, you will probably find this hard to do the first time around. However, it will become easier over time. Persevere! You’ll be glad you did.)

3. Think of some questions that might lead to an important spiritual “discovery.” For example, Paul says he is “called as an apostle” (Romans 1:1). Accordingly, you might ask, “What does it mean to be called?” “Are all believers called?”
4. Write your questions in the space below, then pray that God would answer your question(s).
5. What observations do you have of this passage? To say it another way, what stands out to you most about what you read for this week?

Day Two:

1. Romans 1:1-6.
2. What do we learn about Paul and his relationship with God from these verses?
3. What do we learn about God and His gospel from these verses?
4. Look up and write out the following verses:
Romans 1:1.

1 Corinthians 1:1.

5. Give a word that could be substituted for “called” in the verses above (i.e. a synonym).
6. What do you think Paul means when he says that he was “called” to be an apostle?
- 7a. Is there any sense in which you can make the same claim to have been “called” by God? Explain.
- 7b. While a full study of spiritual gifts and individual callings falls beyond the scope of this study, in Appendix 1 following this week’s study, there is a brief survey of the New Testament idea that all believers in Jesus Christ have been set apart for something. In addition to this specific calling on the lives of each individual believer, there is also the Biblical notion that ALL believers are called to have certain characteristics. Read Romans 1:6-7 and 1 Corinthians 1:2 to see some of those characteristics.

Day Three:

1. Read Romans 1:7-15.
2. How do these verses characterize the recipients of Paul’s letter? Were they believers? Were they living commendable lives?
3. Write out the following verse:
Romans 1:15.

4. Frequently, the expression “to preach the gospel” is often meant “to tell people why and how to become a Christian.” How do we know that this is likely NOT the only meaning that Paul has in mind in Romans 1:15?

5. When Paul says that he is eager to “preach the gospel to you...who are in Rome,” what do you think he means? What particular message, if any, does he have in mind? (HINT: Obviously, one thing that Paul probably meant was that he wanted the church in Rome to preach the Gospel to the unbelievers who lived in that city, but what ELSE might he mean by this statement? Especially since this was a group of believers Paul was writing to who already had become Christians?)

NOTE: Two words that are crucial for understanding Romans are the words “gospel” and “salvation.” Consequently, the next two days will focus on getting a better understanding of what Paul means when he uses these words in Romans.

Day Four:

1. In Romans 1:15, the expression “preach the gospel” is translated from the Greek word “*euaggelizō*” (from which we get the word “evangelism”). Strictly speaking, the Greek word “*euaggelizō*” simply means “good news.” This expression appears frequently (52 times) in the New Testament. Most of the time this expression can be understood to mean the message directed to unbelievers as to why and how they can become a Christian. However, the expression has a much broader (and sometimes different) meaning than this. The following verses all contain the Greek word “*euaggelizō*”, where the underlined words indicate where it appears in the verse. Read these verses and note the meaning of the translated expression.

Matthew 11:4,5. “*Jesus replied, “Go back and report to John what you hear and see: The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and **the good news [gospel] is preached** to the poor.”*”

Luke 3:18. “*And with many other words John [the Baptist] exhorted the people and **preached the good news** [gospel] to them.”*”

Luke 8:1a: “*After this, Jesus traveled about from one town and village to another, **proclaiming the good news** [gospel] of the kingdom of God.”*”

Acts 5:42. “*Day after day, in the temple courts and from house to house, they never stopped teaching and **proclaiming the good news** [gospel] that Jesus is the Christ.”*”

1 Corinthians 15:1-8. “*Now, brothers, I want to remind you of the gospel I **preached** to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand. By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I **preached** to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain. For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Peter, and then to the Twelve.*”

After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, and last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born.”

2A. These verses illustrate that “*euaggelizō*” can take on a variety of different meanings. For example, explain how the meaning of “*euaggelizō*” is different in Luke 8:1a compared to Acts 5:42.

2B. How is the meaning of “*euaggelizō*” in Matthew 11:4,5 different compared to 1 Corinthians 15:1-8?

3. Read the following verses below:

Romans 1:9,11,15: *”God, whom I serve with my whole heart in preaching the gospel of his Son, is my witness how constantly I remember you...I long to see you so that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to make you strong--that is, that you and I may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith...That is why I am so eager to preach the gospel also to you who are at Rome.”*

Since Paul is writing to believers in Rome, and committed ones at that, it is unlikely that when he says he wants to “preach the gospel of his Son” to them that he means only the message about how to become a Christian, since they would already be familiar with that. Consider the following [very rough] paraphrase of these verses:

“I can't wait to visit with you and talk to you about the GREAT NEWS of Jesus. There is so much to know about Him and how He affects our lives. Not just about how He has caused us to come into faith. But how He continues to impact our lives after we become a Christian. I just know that as we interact about how our lives are impacted by Jesus, we will all be encouraged, you by me and me by you.”

Do you think this is a reasonable interpretation of what Paul had in mind when he said that he longed to “preach the gospel” to the Roman Christians?

4. In what way is knowledge of Jesus Christ good news for your life today? Do you see any impact to your daily life that would be considered “good news” for your life in this world today, besides the fact that you have knowledge that you will be spared judgment for your sins?

Day Five:

1. Write out the following verses:
Romans 1:16,17.

2. In addition to “gospel,” the other key word in Romans 1 is “salvation.” There are three aspects to “salvation:” past, present, and future. These are illustrated in the following three verses.

Titus 3:5. “*He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit...*” . . . Past tense

Philippians 2:12. “*Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed – not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence – continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling.*” . . . Present Tense

Hebrews 9:28. “*...so Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many people; and he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him.*” . . . Future Tense

- 3a. Explain how each of these verses illustrates one of the three aspects of salvation.

(1) Titus 3:5

(2) Philippians 2:12

(3) Hebrews 9:28

- 3b.** *Here is one explanation for how these three verses display the past, present and future of salvation: The essence of “salvation” is that believers are delivered (saved) from the power of sin. The past aspect of salvation is that we received a new nature. The present aspect is that we are learning to live by the power of the Spirit. The future aspect consists of receiving glorified bodies and being freed from our flesh. Do you agree with this summary?*

4. Just as in English, the Greek word for “saved” can be thought of as “delivered from” (as in, he was “saved from danger”/“he was delivered from danger”. Typically, when we see the word “saved,” we think of the “past” aspect of salvation, in which we have been “delivered from” eternal judgment. One possible interpretation of the expression “the gospel...is the power of God for salvation” is that “the gospel...is the power of God for deliverance from sin past, present, and future.” The essence of “salvation” is that believers are delivered (saved) from the power of sin. The past aspect of salvation is that we received a new nature. The present aspect is that we are learning to live by the power of the Spirit. The future aspect consists of receiving glorified bodies and being freed from our flesh. In other words, the gospel that the Book of Romans speaks of has a message that I need to understand in order to live the Christian life the way God designed it.

Do you think this is a reasonable interpretation?

5. In your own words, paraphrase Romans 1:16,17 without using the words “gospel” or “salvation.”

6. Romans 1:16-17 indicate that the gospel is the key to salvation, and salvation is linked to faith. Taking our understanding of salvation and gospel to apply to more than just the moment when one first trusts in Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of their sins, what role does faith play in the everyday lives of the Christian?

Day Six:

1. Reread Romans 1:1-17.
2. Read back through the questions and answers from this past week.
3. What did you learn about God this week that was either new or especially impacting for you?
4. Can you think of some personal applications from what you learned this week?

Prayer Requests and Notes

Appendix 1

In Romans 1:1, Paul surveys his life, and determines that he has been “called (by Christ) to be an Apostle.” When we read a statement like this, we often wonder, “Do I have a calling on my life as well, or is this calling unique to Paul?” The answer to those questions is yes and yes. Yes, the Bible does teach that God has called all of us to something great, and yes, the Bible does teach that our “callings” are unique and handcrafted to who God has made us to be. We are not all set apart or called to be an apostle, but God has called all believers to something. In this short appendix, we will examine some of the Scripture which points to the fact that God has created each of us for a specific purpose.

We Who are Called by Charissa Fry

This gift of a calling is not like a gift you get for your birthday. When my birthday rolls around, I hint to my parents or friends what I would enjoy receiving. Or, they simply ask me what I want and I willingly oblige them with my requests! God’s ability to give us gifts far surpasses the abilities we possess as humans to do so. Because He created us He knows us more intimately than we know ourselves. This allows Him to give each of us perfect gifts.

Psalms 139 explores how intimately we are known by God and how we are each set apart for something. The psalmist tells us God knows when we sit or lie down. He knows all our thoughts and all our habits. God knows what we will say even before we open our mouths to say it. The psalm also speaks of God creating us in our mother’s womb. He made us and did so perfectly. Psalm 139:16 “Your eyes have seen my unformed substance; And in your book were all written the days that were ordained for me, when as yet there was not one of them.” God made you exactly who you are with all of your quirks, your temperaments, your personality, your intelligence, and your likes and dislikes.

God didn’t stop at your creation. He continued to carry out all the plans He had for you in the days He ordained for you. We can see this idea clearly in the lives of Joseph and Paul. Genesis 37-48 contains the story of Joseph. The passage reveals God’s sovereignty in Joseph’s birth order, his Father’s favoritism, his brothers’ hatred, his being sold into slavery, his rise to prominence in Egypt, the false accusation that led to his unjust fall into prison, and his second rise to power as a man second only to Pharaoh himself. God redeemed his entire life story as He used all of Joseph’s experiences- good and bad- and all his education and training to equip him as he was placed in the perfect position to save thousands of lives and the lives of his own family. God called Joseph to an incredible life full of highs and lows, unexpected twists and turns, loneliness, power, temptation, honor, and special abilities which He used to save His chosen people, the Israelites.

In the New Testament we see Paul leading a similar life of extremes. Born into a Jewish family, Paul grew up according to the Law. He knew he hailed from the tribe of Benjamin. Paul received the best education when he studied under a leading rabbi of his day. As a Pharisee he waged a zealous war of persecution against the church. In Philippians 3 he states, “As to the righteousness which is in the Law, [I was] found blameless.” But God had plans for Paul; his time of redemption occurred during the birth of the church. He explains his calling in Galatians

1: 5-16b, “But when God, who had set me apart even from my mother’s womb and called me through His grace, was pleased to reveal His Son to me so that I might preach Him among the Gentiles.” God redeemed Paul’s Jewish education by sending him to preach eloquently and knowledgably to the Jews of his day about Christ. His education also served him very well among the Greeks and other gentiles. God took Paul’s incredible zeal against the church and turned into an amazing zeal for the spreading and growth of the church. God had set Paul apart from birth to be a skilled teacher and evangelist while taking the gospel to the gentiles.

In the same way, God sets us apart from birth for His calling on our lives. He guides us in our education and allows every experience of our lives to shape and mold us for His purposes. He uses all of our life to prepare us for our calling.

He also prepares us through the giving of spiritual gifts. Because we all have a calling we have all been especially gifted by God to fulfill our calling. Several passages in the New Testament point out the fact that all believers have received spiritual gifts. Ephesians 4, 1 Corinthians 12 and Romans 12 all contain lists of different spiritual gifts found in the time of the early church. These lists prove to be representative (though probably not complete) of the kinds of gifts that Christ gives to His followers to equip them to live out His calling on their lives. Jesus Christ expects each of us to use the gifts He has given us to build others up in the Body of Christ. As 1 Peter 4:10 says, “Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God’s grace in its various forms.” Ephesians 4:12-13 further describe the purpose for these gifts by saying that the gifts were given “to prepare God’s people for works of service, so that the Body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.” Therefore, however we are gifted, the purpose should be not just for our own edification, but for service and ministry to others.

One of the best ways to determine your spiritual gifting simply requires you begin ministering. As you minister you’ll figure out where you excel. Also, the more involved you are in the body of Christ, the easier it is for others to help see and cultivate your gifting. The input of other believers can often function as a more reliable guide to determining your gifting since we tend to be less objective about ourselves. Finally, of utmost importance is walking closely with the Lord. As you submit your life to Him, He fills you with His will for your life- your calling. As you continue to walk with Him, His passion becomes your passion. The Psalmists puts it this way, “Trust in the Lord and do good; dwell in the land and cultivate faithfulness. Delight yourself in the Lord; and He will give you the desires of your heart. Commit your way to the Lord, trust also in Him, and He will do it.” (Psalm 37:3-5)

The tasks that God has called us to, by definition, are tasks which no person in their own strength or experience is qualified for. Anyone can try to serve, but only God can bring about the desired results of spiritual maturity. In addition, everyone has done things which they feel have disqualified them from significant ministry. Paul was no exception to this rule. Paul had made many mistakes. Though greatly trained, Paul could never see a spiritual revival start based out of his own power. Therefore, when Paul reflected on what qualified him for the task God had called him to (in Romans 1:5), he focused on the grace of God. It is only by God’s grace that we receive His calling and His equipping for His service. Remember, God is a good God who has created you, shaped you, gifted you, and called you for a special purpose.

WEEK TWO:

Romans 1:18-2:4

Day One.

As you begin your study of the Word this week, take a moment to stop and pray. Ask God to guide you in your study of His Word.

1. Read Romans 1:18-2:4
2. Summarize these verses by making an outline consisting of numerous “sections”, attaching a brief description for each section. For an example, see Week One: Day One.
3. Think of some questions that might lead to an important spiritual “discovery.”
4. Write your questions in the space below, then pray that God would answer your question(s).
5. What observations do you have of this passage? To say it another way, what stands out to you most about what you read for this week?

Day Two:

1. Consider the following verse:
Romans 1:18. *“For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness...”*
2. The “ungodliness and unrighteousness of men” in verse 18 is contrasted with what in verse 17?
3. Verse 18 makes a remarkable statement about the knowledge that men possess about God. What is it?
4. Do you believe that people have an innate knowledge of God that they suppress? Examine your own experience with non-believers. Be honest.

5. Read Romans 1:18-21.
6. Explain what this means: “For since the creation of the world His *invisible* attributes have been *clearly seen* [Romans 1:20].”
7. How can you perceive the invisible attributes of God through what is created?
8. Read Romans 1:18-23.
9. Romans 1:21 states that even though “they *knew* God...they became futile in their *thinking*.” The Greek word that is translated “thinking” in this verse by the NIV is “dialogismos”, from which we get the word “dialogue.” It has the sense of “thinking back and forth in one’s mind.” The NASB translates this word “speculations.”
- 9A. If some knowledge of God is evident to all people, what would lead some to speculate about God? (i.e. What about God is not “evident to all men”)?
- 9B. How does God want mankind to respond to the knowledge He has made evident about Himself?
10. Verse 23 states that man “exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles.” Why does the Bible condemn this form of religious activity? Can’t this effort to build images be seen as a noble effort on man’s part to “honor/glorify God” and “give Him thanks”, especially in light of the imperfect knowledge of God that man possesses?
- 11A. In addition to Romans 1, also consider these verses:
John 4:23,24. “*Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth.*”
1 Corinthians 13:12. “*Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.*”

- 11B. How does God reveal Himself to us as Christians today? Is this revelation complete, or do we still have need for “speculations”? How does God want us to respond to the knowledge we have of Him?

Day Three:

1. Read Romans 1:18-32.
- 2A. Romans 1:18 states that the “wrath of God is being revealed” (NIV). According to the following verses, this “wrath” is manifested in God turning the world over to moral decay. What evidences do you see in the world today of this?
- 2B. Have you ever connected this concept which we so easily see (moral decay) with the wrath of God? What questions does this raise for you?
3. According to Romans 1:18-32, what preceded man’s devolution into moral decay? Is this surprising to you at all?
4. According to these verses a right response to the revelation of the knowledge of God is central to preventing moral decay. How do you respond to this on a personal level. (i.e. what implication does this have for your personal life and how you can nurture a true understanding of who God is)?
5. There are two extremes when it comes to Bible study. On the one hand, we can study the Bible and become “puffed up” in knowledge, with little overflow into love and good deeds. On the other hand, we can become concentrated on activity (church programs, missions, helping the poor) and disparage “theology”—literally, “the study of God.” What warning do these verses contain about this latter extreme?
6. These verses teach that righteousness is directly related to having a true concept of God. In other words, what we believe is important! This is a key insight, because the Book of Romans, particularly Chapters 1-8, can be viewed as addressing the question of how can I be righteous (cf. Romans 1:17). The answer? Believing the “good news” of who I am, who God is, and what God has done and is doing. Freedom from the power of sin is directly linked to believing the right things about God. Can you think of a time when

learning and believing a specific truth about God helped you through a struggle or sin? If so, below write about that time.

Day Four:

1. Read John 14:6. This verse indicates the Christian understanding that salvation is found only through faith in Jesus Christ. A popular notion is that it is wrong for people to go to hell who have not ever heard the name of Jesus, much less been given an opportunity to place their faith in His death on the cross for the forgiveness of their sins. A thought that underlies this popular notion is the sense that if people just had knowledge of Christ presented to them in the right way, then people would believe. This view basically views man as neutral towards God, leaning toward making the right decisions if only they knew what that right decision was. With this background, read Romans 1:18-32 again. How does this passage help respond to this popular notion and the beliefs that lie underneath it?
2. Reviewing your answer from question one above, is this hard for you to believe? What questions does this raise in your mind?
3. If you really believed this to be true, how might you apply it in your life?
 - 4A. Read Romans 1:21-27.
 - 4B. These verses are key New Testament verses concerning homosexuality being a sin. Below write out what you believe these verses to be saying about homosexuality.
 - 4C. Do you agree that these verses speak out against homosexuality?
5. If you had a friend who was struggling with the issue of homosexual temptation, what would you say to them? Tie together your study from days three and four of this week to help guide you in what you might say to this friend. Write your thoughts below.

[NOTE: Appendix 2 at the end of this week's study contains two sermon transcripts by John Piper on the issue of homosexuality.]

NOTE: We cannot help but ask why Paul focuses on sexual depravity in Romans 1:24 and again in Romans 1:26,27? Scholars generally agree that the sexual immorality mentioned in Romans 1:24 refers to temple prostitution, while Romans 1:26,27 refers to homosexuality. Both behaviors were distinctively Greek and would have been regarded by Romans and Jews as morally repulsive. Yet the Greeks were universally recognized as being the intellectual elite. The irony arises that the wisdom of the Greeks (cf. Romans 1:22) led them to practices that Paul's readers identified as abhorrent. In this fashion, Paul illustrates the inability of man-made wisdom--substituting for God's wisdom--to lead to righteousness.

Day Five:

1. Read Romans 2:1-4.
2. No doubt Paul's readers would have been startled to hear that they practice the "same things" as the immoral unbelievers Paul condemned in Romans 1:18-32. One possibility is that when Paul says "same things," he means "same in kind/just as bad." In other words, while Paul's readers may not practice temple prostitution, homosexuality, murder, etc., they engage in behaviors that are "the same" in terms of being an affront to God's righteousness. Does this seem like a reasonable interpretation to you?
3. Write out the following verse:
Romans 2:3.
4. What is significant about the fact that a person "passes judgment" on others? How does it make that person accountable for his or her own unrighteous behavior?
5. Take a moment and ask the Holy Spirit to help you think through areas in your life which are not pleasing to God that you may have rationalized as being "not that bad." Confess these sins and ask God to help you live righteously instead.

6. Have you, “O man”, ever passed judgment on another? Think of a recent occasion in which you judged another person. Just between you and God, explain how you have done “the same things” (be specific).
7. Do you believe that your sins are less deserving of judgment than the sins of those you have judged? Don’t just give the textbook answer. Be honest about how you really feel.
8. Now give the biblical answer to the question above. What does Romans 2:1-4 say about how deserving of judgment our sins are compared to other people’s sins?
9. Often the areas in which we are weakest are the areas we judge others on most harshly because we are so aware of them in ourselves. Do you find yourself judging others in a certain area? Examine your own behavior in that area before the Lord and ask Him to help you give grace to others who are struggling and help you surrender this struggle to Him and live in a way that pleases Him.

Day Six:

1. Reread Romans 1:18-2:4.
2. Read back through the questions and answers from this past week.
3. What did you learn about God this week that was either new or especially impacting for you?
4. Can you think of some personal applications from what you learned this week?

Prayer Requests and Notes

Appendix 2

By John Piper

The Other Dark Exchange: Homosexuality

Part One

October 11, 1998

Romans 1:24-28

Therefore God gave them over in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, so that their bodies would be dishonored among them. 25 For they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen. 26 For this reason God gave them over to degrading passions; for their women exchanged the natural function for that which is unnatural, 27 and in the same way also the men abandoned the natural function of the woman and burned in their desire toward one another, men with men committing indecent acts and receiving in their own persons the due penalty of their error. 28 And just as they did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer, God gave them over to a depraved mind, to do those things which are not proper.

Astonishing Relevance

In our exposition of Paul's letter to the Romans, we come now to this astonishingly relevant section in 1:24-28 where Paul touches on the reality of homosexuality. It is relevant for many reasons. For example, yesterday there was conference called "Here I Stand" to address the issue of homosexually active clergymen in the ELCA (Star Tribune, 10/10/98). On the front page of the Star Tribune there was the story of what appeared to be a hate crime against a homosexual student at the University of Wyoming who was in critical condition after being tied to a fence and beaten. In August, 641 Anglican bishops from around the world gathered for the Lambeth Conference in Canterbury, England, and voted overwhelmingly to affirm that homosexual practice is "incompatible with Scripture."

Full-page ads were recently taken out in USA Today and the New York Times and the Washington Post showing some 850 former homosexuals who gathered last summer at the Exodus conference and who declared there is power in Christ to be changed. Here in Minnesota, legal cases continually crop up about child custody and adoption of children by homosexual people. And most immediate of all, here in our church there are people who have homosexual desires and many more people among us who have people in their families whom they care about very deeply who consider themselves homosexual. The reality of homosexuality is inescapable today, and this would come as no surprise to the apostle Paul, and therefore should not to us.

One of the things that makes matters unusual today is the effort on the part of some people to defend the legitimacy of homosexual behavior from the Bible. Most common, for example, is the claim that the denunciations of homosexuality in the New Testament are not references to committed, long-term homosexual relations, which these people say are legitimate, but rather refer to promiscuous homosexual relations and to pederasty, which are not legitimate. To use the words of one scholar, "What the New Testament is against is something significantly different from a homosexual orientation which some people seem to have from their earliest days. In other words, the New Testament is not talking about what we have come to speak of as sexual inversion. Rather, it is concerned with sexual perversion" (Paul Jewett, Interpretation, April, 1985, p. 210).

Simply Denouncing Heterosexuals Engaging in Homosexuality?

With regard to our own text this morning, some would argue that what Paul is denouncing in 1:26b-27 is heterosexual people forsaking what is natural for them and engaging in promiscuous homosexual relations which are unnatural for them. Paul writes, "Their women exchanged the natural function for that which is unnatural, and in the same way also the men abandoned the natural function of the woman and burned in their desire toward one another, men with men committing indecent acts." So, the argument goes, it is not unnatural when a homosexual person has homosexual relations, it is only unnatural when heterosexual persons have homosexual relations and (by implication) homosexual persons have heterosexual relations.

There are at least three major problems with this way of interpreting these verses. I will mention them because the last one will take us into the overall exposition of this section of Romans. The first problem is that in verse 27 Paul says, "The men abandoned the natural function of the woman and burned in their desire toward one another." Now if these were men who were by nature heterosexual, and who were going against their natural desires, what is the meaning of "they burned in their desire toward one another"? It is a very strong term. Does a natural heterosexual burn with lust for another man? If not, it is very unlikely that what Paul is dealing with here is the subject of heterosexuals engaging in homosexuality.

There is such a thing as a bisexual, who seems to have desires for both men and women. But if that were in Paul's mind, the interpretation we are talking about wouldn't work either, because then the burning of a man for a man and a woman would both be natural (according to this interpretation), and Paul would be unjust to denounce either one. But he does denounce this unnatural burning and the acts that follow. So the argument doesn't work that says, Paul is only denouncing homosexual acts by heterosexual people.

The second reason the argument doesn't work is that when Paul says in verse 27b, "Their women exchanged the natural function for that which is unnatural," the Greek phrase for "that which is unnatural" (*ten para phusin*) is a stock phrase in Greek ethical literature of the time for homosexual behavior per se, not for homosexual behavior among heterosexuals - as though that's what made it unnatural.* So it is very unlikely that Paul is arguing that what's wrong and unnatural about these folks is that they are heterosexuals by nature and acting contrary to nature by doing homosexual acts. "Contrary to nature" in this text, as it most Hellenistic literature of the time, meant homosexual behavior per se. That's what Paul regards as unnatural.

The third argument against this kind of interpretation is the most significant, because it takes us into the deeper meaning of this text. But before I develop it, let me explain where we are going in these two weeks. My aim today is to give as sound and faithful an exposition of Romans 1:24-28 as I can, which will leave me little time for application. That is why I plan to continue the message next week. We will need to broaden our Biblical base and to tackle some practical issues next week.

Pray for Biblical Balance

My prayer for both weeks is that we as a church, and I in particular as the preacher, will find a Biblical balance between clear conviction about the sinfulness of homosexual behavior, on the one hand, and patient compassion to come alongside those of you who have homosexual desires, and your friends and relatives, and seek your good. I have no desire to drive homosexual people away. On the contrary, I would like to be able to say of our congregation what Paul said to the church in Corinth: after mentioning "fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, effeminate, homosexuals, thieves, covetous, drunkards, revilers, swindlers," he says in 6:11, "Such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God."

I would like us to be a church like that - justified sinners battling together to walk in purity, with all of our differing genetic, hormonal, environmental disorders that incline everyone of us, in varying ways, to do sinful things. We will talk more about that next week. It's a very important issue. But the point for now is simply this: we want to be a church where homosexual people can either overcome their sexual disorder, or find the faith and courage and help and love and power to live a triumphant, joyful, celibate life with the disorder.

Triple Repetition of Three-fold Sequence of Thought

Now we turn to the third reason for rejecting the interpretation of Romans 1:26-27 which says that Paul is not denouncing homosexuals who do what comes naturally, but rather he is denouncing promiscuous heterosexuals who act unnaturally by doing homosexual acts. The reason is that the overall argument of the passage assumes another viewpoint.

Let's look at it. Three times in this passage Paul repeats a three-fold sequence of thought. The three-fold sequence of thought goes like this:

· Step 1 - Human beings exchange God for what God has made; we prefer the creature to the Creator. · Step 2 - God hands us over to what we prefer. · Step 3 - We act out externally and bodily in our sexual relations a dramatization of the internal, spiritual condition of the fallen human soul, namely, the horrendous exchange of God for man and the images of our power.

Walk with me through the text. I will show you the three times that Paul gives us this sequence of thought.

First time through the three-fold sequence - verses 23-34

Step 1 "They exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man . . ." (verse 23).

Step 2 "Therefore God gave them over in the lusts of their hearts to impurity" (verse 24).

Step 3 ". . . so that their bodies would be dishonored among them" (end of verse 24). In response to the rejection of God's glory as their treasure, God wills that there be a disordering of their bodily life in dishonorable deeds. He hands them over to impurity "so that their bodies would be dishonored among them." The sexual disordering of the human race is a judgment of God for our exchanging him for the creature - all of us.

Second time through the same steps - verses 25-27

Step 1 "They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen" (verse 25). This parallels verse 23: they exchanged the glory of God for images. The "truth of God" is that he is glorious and to be desired above all things. The "lie" preferred by us humans is that the creature is more desirable than God.

Step 2 "For this reason God gave them over to degrading passions" (verse 26). That parallels verse 24: "God gave them over in the lusts of their hearts to impurity."

Step 3 ". . . for their women exchanged the natural function for that which is unnatural, and in the same way also the men abandoned the natural function of the woman and burned in their desire toward one another, men with men committing indecent acts" (verses 26b-27). That corresponds to verse 24b: ". . . so that their bodies would be dishonored among them." So the dishonoring of the body that Paul had in mind in verse 24 is specifically homosexual behavior. And notice carefully, now we can say more specifically than in the first sequence of thought: The sexual disordering of the human race, especially homosexuality (but not only homosexuality) is a judgment of God for our exchanging the truth of God for a lie.

Third time through the same three-fold sequence - verse 28

Step 1 "They did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer" (verse 28). That corresponds to verses 23 and 25: they exchanged the glory of God for images and they exchanged the truth of God for a lie. Here: they simply don't want God in their knowledge any more.

Step 2 "God gave them over to a depraved mind" (verse 28b). That corresponds to verse 24, "God gave them over in the lusts of their hearts to impurity," and verse 26, "God gave them over to degrading passions." This was God's response to the universal exchange of God for the creature.

Step 3 "[He gave them over . . .] to do those things which are not proper" (verse 28c). That corresponds to verse 24b: ". . .so that their bodies would be dishonored among them," and to verses 26b-27, where the women and the men are pursuing homosexual relations. So homosexual behavior is parallel with dishonoring the body and doing what is not proper.

Conclusions

Now let me close with four brief concluding statements:

1. The deepest problem of our lives, whether heterosexual or homosexual, is the terrible exchange of the glory of God for images (verse 23). The exchange of the truth of God for a lie (verse 25). The disapproval of having God in our knowledge (verse 28). Failed worship is our worst disorder. This is beneath all the maladies of the world. Repairing this, not first our disordered sexuality, is our main business in life.

2. The sexual disordering of our lives, most vividly seen in homosexuality (though not only there), is the judgment of God upon the human race because we have exchanged the glory of God for other things. Sometimes people ask, "Is AIDS the judgment of God on homosexuality?" The answer from this text is: homosexuality itself is a judgment on the human race, because we have exchanged the glory of God for the creature - and so is AIDS and cancer and arthritis and Alzheimer's and every other disease and every other futility and misery in the world, including death. That's the point of Romans 5:15-18 and Romans 8:20-23, which we looked at when talking about Romans 1:18.

And what we saw there was that those who believe in Jesus Christ and are justified by faith and become the children of God are not taken out of this world of woe, but are given the grace to experience the very judgments of God on the human race as the merciful pathway to holiness and heaven rather than sin and hell.

3. The reason Paul focuses on homosexuality in these verses is because it is the most vivid dramatization in life of the profoundest connection between the disordering of heart-worship and the disordering of our sexual lives. I'll try to say it simply, though it is weighty beyond words.

We learn from Paul in Ephesians 5:31-32 that, from the beginning, manhood and womanhood existed to represent or dramatize God's relation to his people and then Christ's relation to his bride, the church. In this drama, the man represents God or Christ and is to love his wife as Christ loved the church. The woman represents God's people or the church. And sexual union in the covenant of marriage represents pure, undefiled, intense heart-worship. That is, God means for the beauty of worship to be dramatized in the right ordering of our sexual lives.

But instead, we have exchanged the glory of God for images, especially of ourselves. The beauty of heart-worship has been destroyed. Therefore, in judgment, God decrees that this disordering of our relation to him be dramatized in the disordering of our sexual relations with each other. And since the right ordering of our relationship to God in heart-worship was dramatized by heterosexual union in the covenant of marriage, the disordering of our relationship to God is dramatized by the breakdown of that heterosexual union.

Homosexuality is the most vivid form of that breakdown. God and man in covenant worship are represented by male and female in covenant sexual union. Therefore, when man turns from God to images of himself, God hands us over

to what we have chosen and dramatizes it by male and female turning to images of themselves for sexual union, namely their own sex. Homosexuality is the judgment of God dramatizing the exchange of the glory of God for images of ourselves. (See the parallel uses of "exchange" in verses 25 and 26.)

4. Which leads us to one last word: The healing of the homosexual soul, as with every other soul, will be the return of the glory God to its rightful place in our affections.

The Other Dark Exchange - Homosexuality

Part Two

October 18, 1998

Romans 1:24-28

Therefore God gave them over in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, so that their bodies would be dishonored among them. 25 For they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen. 26 For this reason God gave them over to degrading passions; for their women exchanged the natural function for that which is unnatural, 27 and in the same way also the men abandoned the natural function of the woman and burned in their desire toward one another, men with men committing indecent acts and receiving in their own persons the due penalty of their error. 28 And just as they did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer, God gave them over to a depraved mind, to do those things which are not proper,

Seeing God at the Center

I confess that my main aim in these two messages is not to persuade you that homosexual behavior is wrong. It is wrong. But you can believe that and not be a Christian. So what does it profit a man if he knows everything that's wrong, and loses his own soul? My aim is much higher than to persuade you that there are many sexual disorders in the world - both homosexual and heterosexual. My aim is to transform the way you see Reality, and to put the glory of God back at the center, like the sun in the solar system of sexuality (and everything else) that holds all the planets of our passions in their proper order. When you exchange the sun for a man-made satellite all the planets leave their orbit and head for oblivion.

The murder of Matthew Shepard in Laramie, Wyoming, was committed by men who had exchanged the centrality of God's glory for the satellite of self-exaltation. And self-exaltation or self-determination over against God cannot hold the planets of passion in their orbit. I learned this from verses 28 and 29. Look at them with me. Romans 1:28-29a: "And just as they did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer, God gave them over to a depraved mind, to do those things which are not proper, (29) being filled with all unrighteousness, wickedness, greed, evil; full of envy, murder . . ."

There it is. Where does murder come from? It comes from this: "They did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer." Or as verse 23 says, "They exchanged the glory of God for images" - in this case money and hateful power. Or as verse 25 says, "They exchanged the truth of God for a lie."

The Root of all Our Disorders, and God's Judgment

We saw this in the text last week. The root of all our disorders - sexual and social and physical and emotional - is the exchange of the glory of God for other things. The solar system of our soul and our society was made to orbit around the glory of God as its all-controlling sun. And the entire human race has exchanged the glory of God for weightless, substitute satellites that have no gravity and can hold nothing in its proper orbit. Therefore all the world is disordered and decaying and moving toward destruction.

But we saw something even more stunning last week from this text. This disorder and decay in our lives and in our society and in our universe is the judgment of God, and is meant by him to be seen as a terrible drama of a horrific underlying spiritual evil. We saw this three times. After each statement that we have exchanged God for other things (verses 23, 25, 28), it says, God therefore hands us over to our depravity so that our soul and our society disintegrates into all sorts of evil deeds and dreadful diseases and death and destruction.

For example, verse 24: "Therefore God gave them over in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, so that their bodies would be dishonored among them." Verse 26: "For this reason God gave them over to degrading passions." And here in verses 26-27 he details homosexual behavior as one outworking of these degrading disorders. Then verse 28b: "God gave them over to a depraved mind, to do those things which are not proper." And here in the following three verses (29-31), he details twenty-one other outworkings of a depraved mind. No one escapes here. Homosexual, heterosexual, male, female, old, young, religious, irreligious - all of us are under the sway of a depraved mind. As Romans 3:9-10 says, "Both Jews and Greeks are all under sin; as it is written, "There is none righteous, not even one."

The root of all our problems in this world is that the human race has exchanged the glory of God for other things and that God has handed us over to bear the fruit of this exchange in ten thousand troubles - all of which should call us to repentance and worship rather than rebellion and atheism. And when I say all our problems, I really mean all. I mentioned last week that even our physical diseases and our natural calamities are owing to God's judgment on creation for our exchange of his glory for other things.

What if there Were Genetic Origins for Sexual Disorder?

This is crucial for dealing with the origins of homosexuality. I don't think anyone knows for sure what the physical components of homosexuality are. But what if genetic origins were found? What would this imply about the morality and fitness of the behavior? Very little, if nature itself is disordered and in need of redemption. So let's look at this matter more closely this morning.

Consider Romans 8:20-23, "The creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope." Notice that all of creation has been subjected to futility: things don't work the way they were originally designed to work. Winds, rains, rivers, volcanoes, bacteria, viruses, Swiss Air jet electrical wiring, brake linings, heart-attacks of 86-year-old men driving through a crosswalk while a blind student crosses the street, wild white blood cells, trisomy of the 21st chromosome, and ten-thousand heartaches from a fallen world - the creation was subjected to futility.

By whom? Verse 20 says, "By Him who subjected it in hope." That's not man and not Satan, but God. God subjected the world to futility "in hope." All the futility of this world is meant to waken us to the horrors of exchanging the glory of God for other things and to make us rely not on ourselves, but on God who raises the dead (2 Corinthians 1:8-9) and restores the glory (Romans 8:18-19).

Keep reading. Verses 21-22: ". . . that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption (= futility) into the freedom of the glory of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now." Paul pictures the miseries and futilities and pains of creation as childbirth before the resurrection when all the pain of our disordered bodies and sexuality will be replaced with glory of God among his people.

And Paul even addresses the crying question that we raised last week: But surely, if all this misery and disorder and dysfunction in the world is owing to God's judgment - his handing us over to the outworking of our ungodliness - then would he not lift the misery and the disorder and the dysfunction and the pain from his children who repent and believe the gospel? He gives his answer in verse 23: "And not only this [that is, not only does the "whole creation groan"] but also we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our body."

The answer is: No, God does not deliver his people all at once from the futility of this fallen, judged creation. He turns the effects of judgment into the means of grace for his people (Romans 8:28). And he saves us in stages. "Having been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved" (Romans 5: 9-10). We have forgiveness for sin now; we will have freedom from all sinning later. We have reconciliation with God now; we will have complete intimacy later. We have the firstfruits and the downpayment of the Holy Spirit now; we will have the full harvest of his power and presence later. We have some healing now (from our sexual disorders!); we will have full wholeness later. We see his beauty through a glass darkly now, later we will see face to face. We have peace with God now; we will have perfection later. That's the meaning of Romans 8:23.

What is "Natural"? The point of all this is that, whatever the physical or social or personal origins of the homosexual disordering of our sexuality, none of that would define it as good or "natural" or "normal." In a world where God is the Creator and Designer of life, "natural" means in sync with God's purpose and design, not just anything that has physical causes. Having a physical root makes nothing right. Physically-based, aggressive tendencies may lead to violent behavior, but we don't condone it. Physically-based lethargic tendencies may lead to laziness and neglect, but we don't condone it. Frenetic tendencies may lead to disruption and workaholism. A gloomy bent may lead to suicidal thoughts. An anxious bent may lead to paranoia. Addictive tendencies may lead to alcoholism or bondage to gambling or deadly smoking. A low frustration threshold may lead to outbursts of rage. Strong sexual desires may lead to lust or pornography or fornication or adultery or polygamy.

In other words, in a world where the effect of sin permeates to the roots of nature and disorders all of life, we cannot define as good and natural whatever has physical roots. There must be a higher norm than fallen nature. There are many physically-based abnormalities in the world. Therefore having a physical base or root is not sufficient reason for condoning anything as natural or good.

How then shall we live and love in this disordered world? At the risk of oversimplification and selectivity, let me try to give some brief biblical counsel concerning the personal, family and social dimensions of homosexuality.

Biblical Counsel for Someone with Homosexual Desires

First, a few words to those among us who have homosexual desires.

1. Acknowledge the presence and pain of a disordered sexuality, with all the ambiguity of where it came from - much like other disorders and disabilities -and do not define your God-given personhood by your disordered sexuality.
2. Put your faith in Christ alone for the forgiveness of all your sins and for the gift of God's righteousness and for the fulfillment of all his promises to you (Romans 1:16-17). The only sinner who can successfully battle his sins is a justified sinner. In other words, you fight against sexual sins from relationship, not for a relationship.
3. Begin to reorder your entire life around the centrality of the glory of God as your highest treasure. Homosexual sinning, like all other sinning, is an echo of exchanging the glory of God for other things. So restore the sun of God's glory to its place at the center of your soul and all the planets of your desires will begin to return to their God-given orbit.
4. Resolve to live a chaste and, if necessary, celibate life by the power of God's Spirit, with the confidence that if God does not heal now, he will in the age to come; and all the patience of purity of will be worth it (Romans 8:18). May God grant all the single people (and married!) at Bethlehem a passion for purity.
5. Seek wholesome friendships with both sexes, especially in groups. Here the burden lies heavily on the church to be a place where this can happen. We don't do very well at this. And so I call on us - especially families - to go out of our way to have people (especially single people) over for meals and other gatherings. The more we do things in groups rather than pairs, the more opportunities we create for wholesome non-sexual relationships.

6. I probably don't need to tell you that there are ministries like Outposts here in our cities that have insights and experience and encouragement and Biblical counsel from a depth of awareness that goes beyond what most of us can bring. This may be something God would use in your life.

7. Take a bold and compassionate stand for truth the way Joe Hallett did, and hold up God's purposes for human sexuality, namely, as an expression of Christ's love for the Church dramatized in the covenant love of marriage between one man and one woman.

Biblical Counsel to Parents

Now let me say a few words to parents.

1. For Christian parents, wayward children are more painful than a child's death. Because death usually is not intensified by feelings of guilt and failure and shame. How many of these feelings are legitimate is impossible to know for sure. The only hope for parents is the gospel - that whatever we have done poorly we may be forgiven by trusting in Christ for a righteousness that is not our own (Romans 1:16-17).

2. If we know our shortcomings, we should confess them to our children, and seek their forgiveness.

3. If we have grown children with homosexual desires we should love them and pray for them and speak Biblical truth to them when they will hear it.

4. In the fellowship of the church, search the Scriptures and seek counsel concerning the incredibly complex and painful issues of how to relate to your children if they go on living in sin.

5. If your children are still small or yet to come, realize that, in large measure, their healthy sexuality hangs on your healthy attention and teaching and touching and loving. I say this especially to you fathers. For both boys and girls, the development of a healthy sexuality hangs more on strong, loving, godly male figures in their lives than on the women in their lives - though both are very important. Biblically and experientially and psychologically this can be shown - that the role of the father (or of some crucial man) is paramount for normal sexual development of boys and girls.

If you ask, what is normal, healthy sexuality - what does it mean for a boy to grow up to be a man and not a woman, and what does it mean for a girl to grow up to be a woman and not a man - if you ask this, I urge you to think it through. I have done my best to answer that question in *What's the Difference: Manhood and Womanhood Defined* according to the Bible, (Crossway, 1990). In addition, I would urge you to read chapter 17, by George Rekers, in *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, (Crossway, 1991) Dr. Rekers is a Christian psychiatrist who teaches at the University of South Carolina and has devoted much of his career to demonstrating that you can take five-year-old boys who already act in homosexual ways and direct them toward normal heterosexual development when mother and dad are willing to realize their own needs to make necessary changes. The chapter is called, "Rearing Masculine Boys and Feminine Girls."

Speak the Truth in Love

Finally, one brief word about the social issues surrounding the controversy over homosexuality: marriage, domestic partners, housing, employment, parenting, adoption, education, diversity training, multiculturalism. Each of these issues requires serious reflection. I don't think the answers are easy. And I call you all to think and study and pray and discuss. How does a democratic, constitutionally-governed society determine its values, shape its laws around those values, preserve the inalienable rights of "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness" while limiting destructive behaviors and protecting minorities from majority hostilities? These are not easy questions, and they demand our best thinking, not sound bites or shrill slogans.

I would give one guideline and a closing declaration. The guideline is this: normalizing wrong behavior and endorsing wrong behavior and dulling the "reflexive recoil"* from wrong behavior is, in the end, harmful for persons and destructive to society. One example: the normalization and endorsement of homosexual behavior will profoundly weaken the fragile norm of long-term, committed heterosexual marriage and child-rearing which are essential to social survival.

My closing declaration is this: God has not called us to win elections, but to win souls and hearts and minds; he has not called us to control Congress, but to preach the gospel; he has not called us to be safe, but to tell the truth. He has not called us to avoid conflict, but to love everyone (1 Thessalonians 3:12). So speak the truth in love, entrust your cause to God, and keep the glory of God in the center of your soul, so that all the planets of your passions will be pulled into their proper orbit.

WEEK THREE:
Romans 2:5-3:2

Day One.

As you begin your study of the Word this week, take a moment to stop and pray. Ask God to guide you in your study of His Word.

1. Read Romans 2:5-3:2
2. Summarize these verses by making an outline consisting of numerous “sections”, attaching a brief description for each section. For an example, see Week One: Day One.
3. Think of some questions that might lead to an important spiritual “discovery.”
4. Write your questions in the space below, then pray that God would answer your question(s).
5. What observations do you have of this passage? To say it another way, what stands out to you most about what you read for this week?

Day Two:

1. Read Romans 2:5-8.
2. According to verses 7 and 8, there are only two kinds of people in the world. Describe these two types below.

3. By implication, if one does not belong to the group of “those who by perseverance in doing good seek glory and honor and immortality,” then which group does one belong to?
4. Write out the following verse:
Romans 2:7.
5. Would an objective observer of your life conclude that the essence of your life could be characterized by “perseverance in doing good?” (NOTE: The expression “perseverance in doing good” has the idea of “doing good” even when it is costly to do so; i.e., when it is unrewarding and unenjoyable.)
6. Reading verses like Romans 2:5-8 proves to be quite convicting, since our lives often are not characterized by righteous living. Does this mean that Christians will experience the wrath of God when they disobey? Are there any other possibilities? (NOTE: This is a difficult section. Bear with it. Romans 1-3 are basically one unit of thought that we have divided over four weeks of study. At the conclusion of week four, hopefully, we will have greater clarity.)
7. Is there a particular area/areas of your life where you struggle to persevere in doing good? When you find areas in your life like this, how should we respond?

Day Three:

1. Read Romans 2:9-16.
2. What is the point Paul is trying to make by consistently bringing up the issue of “Jews/Gentiles”?
3. By application, in our world today, in Norman, Oklahoma, we know very few Jews. Therefore, at first glance, this seems to be a passage with little application to our lives. However, if we look deeper, we see that in Paul’s day, the Jews were more closely associated with being the people of God. They were the ones who had received God’s promises, and their country housed God’s temple. Therefore, by application in America today, we could argue that the church is analogous to Israel for the sake of popular

opinion. In the same way, non-churched people, could be seen as analogous to the “Greeks” or Gentiles of Romans 2. Reread Romans 2:9-16 and substitute the words “Churched” for “Jew” and “unchurched” for “Gentile.” Given this rewording, can you see any application of these verses for us today?

4. Read Romans 2:9-16.
5. Write out the following verses:
Romans 2:14-15.
6. C. S. Lewis, in his classic book Mere Christianity, argues that one of the greatest evidences for the existence of God is man’s conscience. He argues that if man were the product of random chance and there was no divine Creator, we would never expect man to have a conscience. Do you agree with Lewis’ argument? Why or why not?
7. In what way would the conscience of someone who does not know Jesus Christ serve them? In what ways should the conscience of an unbeliever point them to God?
8. What role do you believe your conscience plays in your life? Think back through the last five years of your life. In what way has your conscience pointed you to God’s truth?

(NOTE: At the end of this week’s study is an appendix by Dr. Jeff Harwell on the role of the conscience in the Christian life.)

Day Four:

1. Read Romans 2:17-29.
2. Verses 21-23 make the following charges against the Jewish community:
(verse 21): “You who preach that one should not steal, do you steal?”
(verse 22): “You who say that one should not commit adultery, do you commit adultery?”
(verse 22): “You who abhor idols, do you rob temples?”
(verse 23): “You who boast in the Law, through your breaking the Law, do you dishonor God?”

We must surmise that these are rhetorical questions, for which the Jewish readers would have been forced to answer yes, for Paul then writes in verse 24: “For the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you.” In other words, your immoral behavior is giving God a bad reputation!

3. Many unbelievers say the same thing about Christians today. Write down some “charges” that one could make against the Christian community today. Try and mimic the style of verses 21-23. For example, “You who preach that one cannot serve God and Money (cf. Matthew 6:24), do you not consume yourself with making money?”

4. Write out the following verses:
Romans 2:13.

Romans 2:25.

5. It seems as if the emphasis in Romans, Chapter 2 is on performance. Paul seems to be saying that it’s not what you believe, it’s what you do that counts. Why do you think Paul is emphasizing this? Is this different from what you would have expected Paul to say? Is this different from what you have been taught previously or read elsewhere in Scripture?
 - 6A. In seeking to understand Paul’s intentions here, let’s back up and look at the big picture.
 - 6B. From Romans 1:18-2:29, Paul is making a strong point to an argument. What do you think that point is?
 - 6C. One possibility is that Paul argues from 1:18-2:29 that God desires right responses from people in response to His revelation of Himself, but that all people, from those who have never heard “the gospel” to those in church every Sunday, struggle to persevere in pursuing that righteousness. This manifests itself in many ways, from moral decay to a judgmental attitude toward others to a legalistic mentality that produces external codes to live by. In each case, however, the same principle holds true: all people fall short of attaining God’s righteousness through their efforts. If you read these chapters and felt

condemned (apart from Jesus Christ) then you have understood them correctly. I believe Paul's desire is to place all men "needy" before a holy God. Apart from the work of Christ, do you see yourself as "needy" or "desperate" before our holy God? If not, why not?

7. One last thought . . . I believe Romans 1:16-17 is a "thesis" statement for the book of Romans. Read those verses. If I am correct in my understanding of these verses, then how might we anticipate how Paul will help us to understand how we might live a life that pursues righteousness?

Day Five:

1. Read Romans 3:1-2.
2. According to verse 2, what is the great benefit of being a Jew? (**NOTE:** The careful reader might note that after saying "First of all..." Paul never follows with additional benefits. This suggests that when Paul says, "First of all" he means "Above all".)
3. What do you think is the greatest benefit of growing up in a Christian family/community?
4. Read through Romans 2:17-3:2, replacing "Jew" with "Christian", "the Law" with "the Word of God", and "circumcision" with "baptism". Do you think Romans 2:17-3:2 can be applied to Christians as well as Jews? Why or why not?

Day Six:

1. Reread Romans 2:5-3:2.
2. Read back through the questions and answers from this past week.
3. What did you learn about God this week that was either new or especially impacting for you?
4. Can you think of some personal applications from what you learned this week?

Prayer Requests and Notes

Appendix 3

By Dr. Jeff Harwell

The Conscience

“But the goal of our instruction is love from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith.”

(I Timothy 1:5)

The concept of the conscience as a third party observing ones actions and approving or condemning one before God and men on the basis of those actions is incipient in the Greek up to the time of the New Testament. But the word is as dramatically transformed by the New Testament writers as is the word *agape*. Prior to the New Testament, conscience was almost universally used as "evil conscience", whereby one was conscious of an inner accusation of ones past deeds as being evil. There is not a single use in the Old Testament of the word in its New Testament sense. Yet, there are some 31 such uses in the New Testament. Why the dramatic change? I believe the chief reason for the new emphasis is the new relationship of the Holy Spirit with the believer under the New Covenant, and the special role of the conscience in the Spirit's communications with the believer. Some of these 31 New Testament references are briefly discussed below.

1. Acts 23:1

"And Paul, looking intently at the Council, said, 'Brethren, I have lived my life with a perfectly good conscience before God up to this day.'"

Paul tells us that he is unaware of having acted contrary to that inner monitor of his activities which all men know.

- conscience (the Greek word-*sunedeises*), literally "one seeing with". This word is identical in root meaning to the Latin from which our word conscience comes; *con* (meaning with) plus *science* (meaning knowledge). This word pictures our inner watcher as an eye witness to our acts, who then accuses us or speaks on our behalf to God, in our presence.
- good (the Greek word-*agathas*), probably used to refer to that feeling which is awakened by that which is good, i.e., pleasant, agreeable, joyful, happy; perhaps in the this context it should be understood in terms of the feeling one has when exonerated of a misdeed by a respected and trustworthy witness.

2. Acts 24:14-16

"But this I admit to you, that according to the Way which they call a sect I do serve the God of our fathers, believing everything that is in accordance with the Law, and that is written in the Prophets; having a hope in God, which these men cherish themselves, that there shall certainly be a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked. In view of this, I also do my best to maintain always a blameless conscience before God and before men. "

Paul tells us that the knowledge of coming resurrection and judgment by God motivates him to evaluate by his conscience every act, considering himself as standing with the deed revealed before God and before men. He asks himself, "How would my conscience cause me to feel were this deed or thought revealed in the presence of God? In the presence of other men?" If in anything his conscience prompts him to feel guilt or shame before God or men concerning any act, thought, or attitude, then Paul has made it his way of life to refrain from that thing.

- blameless (the Greek word *-aproskopos*), literally, not striking against or stumbling against anything; metaphorically, without offense, i.e., before God or man.

3. Romans 2:14-15

"For when Gentiles who do not have law do by nature the things of the Law, these, not having law, are law to themselves, in that they show the work of the Law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness, and their thoughts alternately accusing or else defending themselves, on the day when, according to my gospel, God will judge the secrets of men through Christ Jesus "

Here we clearly see the "third party" role of the conscience; the individual, in this case an unbeliever, has a witness borne to him by his conscience concerning whether or not God would approve of an act. Sometimes the conscience, through their thoughts, condemns their deed; sometimes the conscience, again through their thoughts, commends their deed. One cannot help but wonder at the significance of Paul's addition of the phrase "on the day" when he refers to the conscience approving the action of the unbeliever. Note also that, while the judgments of the conscience are neither arrived at nor limited by reason, but rather by intuition, they are perceived in the thoughts. This is clear in that while the Gentiles do not have a written law from God, they demonstrate the work of God's law written on the hearts through their experience of either a guilty or a clear conscience with respect to a particular deed.

- bearing witness (the Greek word-*summartureo*), bearing witness with; in this case, the judgment of the law on their deed, thoughts (the Greek word-*logismos*), thought or reasoning. It can refer to the conclusion of a process of rational thought, and might thus refer to a judgment, but here it seems to be used of the same end product, arrived at not by reason, but by intuition, of the requirements of a holy God.
- accusing (the Greek word-*katagoroun-ton*), to accuse, as in a court; usually a formal accusation brought against one in a court of law concerning a point of law.
- defending (the Greek word-*apologoumenon*), speaking in defense of someone, again usually in a legal setting.

We see, then, that the conscience of a man can speak in his thoughts to accuse the man of having violated a point of God's law, or it can speak in his thoughts to defend him when he is not guilty. This "commending" aspect of conscience is first described in all of Greek literature by Paul in this passage. Combining this activity of conscience with Paul's statements concerning his diligence to maintain a blameless conscience, we see that one of the principles by which Paul lived was never to act in a manner that his conscience told him it would condemn, but only to do that which his conscience told him it would commend. Here again Paul takes the concept of conscience beyond where any past user of the word had taken it: conscience is able to commend or condemn an act before it has been committed. It can thus act either to constrain away from a certain act or toward a certain act. Paul was diligent to refer all acts to his conscience for a judgment before the thing was carried out. We also perceive from the role of conscience in the life of the unbeliever that the conscience is not dependent upon reason to arrive at its verdicts; rather, it acts as a kind of moral intuition, able to go beyond conclusions that can be reached by reason.

4. Romans 9:1

"I am telling the truth in Christ, I am not lying, my conscience bearing me witness in the Holy Spirit. "

While the unbeliever does have a conscience, in the believer the conscience can be the voice of the Holy Spirit. I believe that a principle means by which we are led by the Spirit (Romans 8:14; Galatians 5:18) or by which we walk by the Spirit (Galatians 5:25), is for us to give heed to the voice of the Spirit in our conscience.

5. Romans 13:3-5

"For rulers are not a cause of fear for good behavior, but for evil. Do you want to have no fear of authority? Do what is good, and you will have praise from the same; for it is a minister of God to you for good. But if you do what is evil, be afraid; for it does not bear the sword for nothing; for it is a minister of God, an avenger who brings wrath upon the one who practices evil. Wherefore it is necessary to be in subjection, not only because of wrath, but also for conscience's sake. "

Paul gives two reasons to submit to authority:

1. Fear of the sword given it by God.
2. The desire to maintain a good conscience before God.

Since it is God's will that we submit to authority, we know that our conscience will accuse us before God if we rebel against authority. We observe that

1. God's will is revealed through the voice of conscience and that
2. It is incumbent upon believers to heed that voice, and not to rationalize away its leading.

6. I Corinthians 8:7-12

Speaking of the fact that since an idol is nothing, then meat sacrificed to idols is still just meat, Paul says:

"However, not all men have this knowledge; but some, being accustomed to the idol until now, eat food as if it were sacrificed to an idol; and their conscience being weak is defiled. But food will not commend us to God; we are neither the worse if we do not eat, nor the better if we do eat. But take care lest this liberty of yours somehow become a stumbling block to the weak. For if someone sees you who have knowledge dining in an idol's temple will not his conscience, if he is weak, be strengthened to eat things sacrificed to idols? For through your knowledge he who is weak is ruined, the brother for whose sake Christ died. And thus, by sinning against the brethren and wounding their conscience when it is weak, you sin against Christ."

We learn from here that the conscience may be weak, the conscience may be defiled, and the conscience may be wounded. A weak conscience may be caused by a lack of knowledge. This helps us to understand Romans 12:1, 2, where we are told that the renewing of our minds enables us to prove the will of God. Part of the renewing process is, then, for us to grow in the knowledge of God's word. This renewing of our mind results in a strengthening of our conscience. Note, however, that a weak conscience is still to be used as a guide for conduct! If the believer whose conscience condemns him for eating meat sacrificed to idols nevertheless goes ahead and eats meat sacrificed to idols, his conscience can become wounded and defiled.

The idea of wounding means that it is less able to carry out its responsibility of commending and condemning the believer's acts; in the process of acting against conscience, the believer causes its voice to be muted, so that the believer is less able to perceive the voice of his conscience. This means that his ability to be led by the Spirit has also been weakened in all areas, not just those directly related to the area in which the judgment of the conscience has been rejected.

The idea of a defiled conscience is the idea of a pane of glass which has been smeared with mud, or of a pool of water which has had the bottom stirred up, so that it is no longer clear. The conscience is like a window into the mind of the Spirit. When the conscience is clear, its voice is readily perceived, and we readily perceive the mind of the Spirit concerning a contemplated act. When the conscience becomes defiled, the leading of the Spirit by means of the voice of conscience is made more difficult, in that it becomes more difficult for us to clearly discern the judgments of the conscience. When the conscience is clear, we perceive the will of God as though we were examining the bottom of a clear pool of spring water. When the conscience is defiled, all that we can perceive is the swirling mud; the bottom of the pool has been obscured from our sight. A defiled conscience may commend an act it should have condemned.

We must never act against the leading of our conscience. Instead, we must assume that it is adequately conveying to us the leading of the Spirit. As we obey it as though it were the voice of the Spirit, our conscience is strengthened and maintained clear.

The solution to a weak conscience is not, then, to ignore the voice of conscience, but to strengthen the conscience by deepening the understanding of the mind. This is consistent with the teaching of Romans 2:15, where we learn that the voice of the conscience is heard in our thoughts, and the teaching of Romans 12:1,2 where we learn that a renewed mind is necessary for proving what is the will of God. We must never, therefore, encourage dependence upon the conscience only in determining the leading of the Spirit, but must insist upon the use of the Word to produce a renewed mind as a supplement to the conscience.

7. I Timothy 1:19

"Keeping faith and good conscience, which some have rejected and suffered shipwreck in regard to the faith. Among these are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I have delivered over to Satan, so that they may be taught not to blaspheme."

The rejection of the necessity of keeping a clear conscience can lead to the destruction of ones faith. We must be careful to maintain a strong, healthy conscience, lest in ignoring it, we make it mute and loose the leading of the Spirit in our lives. Once the conscience has become mute, we can quickly become enslaved to the flesh again, and fall into deep sin. May God grant to each of us a desire to maintain a clear conscience and never to allow emotions or foolish doctrinal speculations to embolden us to act against our conscience. Notice that those who shipwrecked their faith rejected not just faith (which I take to refer to adherence to the doctrines of the faith) but also rejected the restraining voice of their conscience which Paul assumes must have been in concord with the faith.

8. I Timothy 4:2

"But the Spirit, explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons, by means of the hypocrisy of liars seared in their conscience as with a branding iron, men who forbid marriage and advocate abstaining from foods, which God has created to be gratefully shared in by those who believe and know the truth."

A seared conscience is one which has been crippled as a limb whose muscle has been consumed by fire. The conscience can become seared when one not only acts against his own conscience, but does so willfully and in such a way as to lead others deliberately away from God's truth. Such a person becomes an instrument for the evil one in warfare against the church of Jesus Christ. How far we can fall if we choose to act contrary to the voice of our conscience! We must never allow rationalization (in the mind) or strong desires (in the emotions) to embolden us to act deliberately in a manner contrary to the voice of our conscience or the word of God!

9. Hebrews 9:14

"How much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the Living God?"

How do we cleanse a conscience which has been defiled? By believing God's evaluation of the blood of Christ and repenting from any kind of legalistic basis for approaching God. This is nothing more than is prescribed by I John 1:9, *"If we confess our sins He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteous."* If you are aware of a condemning conscience, then cleanse it by applying to it the blood of Christ: confess that you accept God's evaluation of the blood of Christ as being completely adequate payment for all of your sins, and as securing acceptance by the Father for you at all times. This is the same faith in the completeness of the work of Christ on the cross that is the basis for salvation. Refuse to be duped by the Accuser of the Brethren into engaging in any kind of penance or good works which are done for the purpose of assuaging your guilt. Instead, just believe the teaching of Scripture concerning the sufficiency of the blood and your conscience will become clean.

10. Hebrews 10:22

"Let us draw near with a sincere heart, in full assurance of faith, having- our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our body washed with pure water."

An evil conscience is simply one that condemns us as unworthy to come to God because of our sins or because of our sinful nature. The solution to the problem of the evil conscience is to apply to it the blood of Christ: Admit that your conscience is correct in condemning your deeds and your old nature. We are sinners. Apart from Christ, no good thing dwells in us, that is, in our flesh. But then claim the adequacy of the blood of Christ to satisfy the Father concerning your sins, and draw near to God as one who is accepted. Don't suppress the accusations of an evil conscience; don't try in the power of your fleshly mind to silence it; rather, confess the acts for which your conscience condemns you and claim the adequacy of the blood of Christ and you will experience a cleansing of the conscience,

11. I Peter 2:19-20

"Servants, be submissive to your masters with all respect, not only to those who are good and gentle, but also to those who are unreasonable. For this finds favor, if for the sake of conscience toward God a man bears up under sorrows when suffering unjustly."

Peter tells us that servants who submit to unreasonable masters because they know it is God's will for them to do so, are submitting for the sake of the conscience. We learn from this that if they were to refuse to submit, their conscience would begin to accuse them that they had sinned. We are to act in such a way as never to cause ourselves to fall under the condemnation of conscience, for in the regenerate it becomes more and more the voice of the Spirit of God Who is leading us through the voice of our conscience.

Summary: Keep a clear conscience. Strive for a good conscience. As we go on toward maturity it becomes more and more the voice of the Spirit of God. You can help yourself develop a strong, easily heard conscience by obeying it. Here is an example. Suppose that you are in the habit of coming to work late. You have rationalized this habit, and muted the voice of conscience by doing so. Then you are confronted by a boss or a co-worker. The accusation of this other person awakens the voice of your conscience, and you feel acute guilt. Your conscience adds its voice to the voice of your accuser, so that you know intuitively, without having reasoned it out, that you have sinned. There are two things which you must not do at this point. You must not begin to rationalize away the condemnation of the conscience. To do so will be to risk developing a defiled conscience. You must also not decide to simply reject the witness of conscience and willfully disobey the Spirit. To do this is to risk developing a seared conscience. Your flesh, in its pride, will wish to rationalize; in its willfulness it will wish to have its own way no matter what. It may even react in anger toward the one who awakened the conscience, producing strong feelings of guilt and rejection.

If, instead, you confess your sin to man and to God, you will find that your conscience has been strengthened. For example, you will find your conscience at night telling you to go to bed earlier, or to set the clock earlier, or to lay out your clothing before going to bed. The next morning you will find your conscience telling you not to turn on the TV to listen to the news, or not to dawdle over the newspaper. You may not have been able to hear its voice concerning these things before it was stirred up by the voice of the boss or co-worker. If you obey your conscience as though it were the voice of the Spirit of God, you will find it continues to grow stronger and you will be able to hear it more and more clearly in still other areas of your life. But if you reject the need for a clear conscience, and rationalize away its condemnation, you will find that you can soon silence it again. This is, of course, not the only way by which your conscience may be strengthened. It frequently happens that the Spirit may use the Word to inject new strength into your conscience. You are probably aware of having this experience if you are routinely exposing yourself to the Word of God, both in hearing it taught and by studying it yourself. But your response to the conscience is still critical. God will not obey for you; He will go no further than to produce in you a willingness and an ability to obey. If you reject the voice of conscience, it will be wounded and weakened. If you confess your sin and begin to obey in the power of the Spirit, by faith, then your conscience will be strengthened and will remain clear.

A note regarding the role of conscience in the confession of sins: It is not your responsibility to dredge up everything your mind thinks might have been a sin. Instead, it is the role of the Spirit through your conscience to make the sin evident to you. All that is necessary is to listen for the voice of the Spirit through your conscience. He will convict you of any sin with which He is ready to confront you. Do not allow the Accuser of the Brethren to turn your desire to keep a clear conscience into an opportunity to discourage you with false guilt. God is able to make evident to you all that needs to be confessed. The rest will still be cleansed away by the blood of His Son, if we will only walk according to the light that we have (I John 1:7,8).

Finally, we must consider the problem of differentiating between the voice of the conscience and our emotions. They are not the same. The voice of the conscience lies below the emotions. It comes from deeper within. It resides within our heart of hearts. It is that part of us that knows and it knows with absolute certainty. Unlike emotions, which might slosh from one side of an issue to the other side, the conscience gives a clear affirmation to one and only one side and it never waivers. I myself perceive the voice of my conscience most clearly when I am debating within my own mind some particular course of action. Is it permissible for me before God, and in the light of Christian liberty, to do this thing I want to do? Is it necessary for me, before God and in the light of Christian liberty, to refrain from doing this thing I do not want to do? My mind may race to and fro, putting forward reasons both for and against my desired course. My emotions may range from anger to guilt, weariness or elation. But if I stop and ask, "What in my heart-of-hearts do I know is the right thing to do?" I always discern the clear, quiet whisper of my conscience, declaring with absolute certainty to my conscious mind the correct course for me to follow. That knowing which is beyond debate is the voice of conscience. We must practice, as Paul practiced, always maintaining it blameless before God and man if we are to ever experience an intimate personal walk with Jesus Christ.

All Scripture quotations in this paper are taken from the New International Version of the Holy Bible. Pronouns referring to the deity have been capitalized in the quotes from the *NIV* for clarity. This capitalization is the preference of the author of this paper and does not appear in the complete *NIV* Bible.

WEEK FOUR:
Romans 3:3-31

Day One:

As you begin your study of the Word this week, take a moment to stop and pray. Ask God to guide you in your study of His Word.

1. Read Romans 3:3-31
2. Summarize these verses by making an outline consisting of numerous “sections”, attaching a brief description for each section. For an example, see Week One: Day One.
3. Think of some questions that might lead to an important spiritual “discovery.”
4. Write your questions in the space below, then pray that God would answer your question(s).
5. What observations do you have of this passage? To say it another way, what stands out to you most about what you read for this week?

Day Two:

1. Read Romans 3:3-8.
2. Write out the following verse:
Romans 3:5.
3. How does the unrighteousness of man “demonstrate the righteousness of God?”
- 4A. Verse 3 makes a play on words that is brought out in the NIV. The word faith (Greek root: “pistis”) appears three times in verse 3. Man’s faithlessness is pitted against God’s faithfulness. A paraphrase of verse 3 is: “The fact that man turned away from God did not cause God to turn away from man, did it?”

- 4B. With (4A) in mind, how would you finish the rest of this sentence: “The fact that man turned away from God did not cause God to turn away from man, did it? Not at all, in fact it...”
- 5A. It is clear from these verses that our sin highlights God’s righteousness (by way of contrast). However, with this idea in mind, Paul anticipates two objections we might have to that idea in 3:5-8. What are those objections, and how does he answer them?
- 5B. Do these answers provide a motivation for you to “pursue righteousness” in your Christian life?
6. These verses speak a lot about God’s faithfulness, and our unfaithfulness. Can you think of a time in your life when God has been faithful to you, even when you have been unfaithful to Him? Reflect on that now and write out a prayer of Thanksgiving to God below for His faithfulness.
7. Read Romans 3:9-18.
8. It seems that Paul’s point in 3:9 is that all people, including himself, are sinful. That means that the laundry list of Old Testament verses that follow from 3:10-18, would speak of the nature of all mankind apart from the work of Jesus Christ. Knowing then that these vivid descriptions of mankind’s ugliness describe you and your friends, not just Hitler and Saddam Hussein, how do you respond to this? Is this description hard to believe? Why or why not?
9. Given these truths about the nature of mankind’s sinfulness, how should we react? How would understanding these principles cause you to relate to people differently, especially those who do not know Jesus Christ?

Day Three:

1. Read Romans 3:19-24.
2. These verses speak a lot about the “Law.” Using only Romans 3:19-24, what do you learn about the Law. What can the Law do? What can’t it do?

3. These verses also speak about Jesus Christ, specifically of the benefits that come when people put their faith in Him. What can Jesus do/provide for those who place their faith in Him?

- 4A. The concepts we observed in questions 2 and 3 are key, not just to understanding how one becomes a Christian and the subsequent benefits, but also for understanding growth in the Christian life. Romans 3:19-24, in many ways, looks similar to Galatians 2:21-3:3. Look up Galatians 2:21-3:3 and write out those verses below.

- 4B. In these Galatian verses, as in Romans 3:19-24, two theories of how to grow in your relationship with God are mentioned. One centers around “Law” and “human effort” and the other centers on “grace,” “faith,” and “Jesus.” Which theory does Paul/God say “works”?

- 4C. Take an example from your life of something you would like to see spiritual growth in. Maybe it is a recurring sin that you wish to overcome. Maybe it is a regular devotional/prayer time that you would like to establish. Maybe it is something else. Based on what you have learned from our study so far, what would it look like to try to “grow” in that area on the basis of Law/human effort? What would it look like to try to “grow” in that area on the basis of grace, faith, and Jesus?

Day Four:

1. Read Romans 3:21-28.
2. How many times do the words “just/justifier/justice/justified” appear in Romans 3:21-28?
3. Try to write a definition for the word “justify” based on what you know plus the context of Romans 3:21-28. (In writing this definition, know that the Greek word from which we get the word “justify” has the same root as the word we translate “righteous.”)

4. Rewrite Romans 3:28 using another word besides “justified.”
5. The following is a frequently cited illustration of Christ’s saving work in our lives. Read the illustration and identify the major omission in it. “A young man is brought before a judge for a serious traffic violation. The judge reads the charges to the young man and asks, “How do you plead, young man?” The plaintiff looks up at the judge and says, “I am guilty, Your Honor.” The judge then announces the punishment, “This court recognizes the plaintiff’s admission of guilt. As punishment for his crimes, the law requires that the plaintiff pay a fine of \$1000.” The young man hangs his head and states, “I do not have \$1000, Sir.” The judge then stands up, takes off his judge’s robe, walks around the bench to the young man’s side and says, “I am the father of this young man. I take on his punishment and agree to pay this man’s fine.” Pulling out his wallet, the father pays the fine. He then walks back around the bench, dons his robe, and declares his son forgiven, “You are free to leave this courtroom, young man. Your fine has been paid in full. You are a free man.” What major part of Christ’s saving work is unmentioned in this illustration? (HINT: See Romans 3:22, 26.)
6. Romans 3:22, 26 speak of the one who has faith in Christ producing righteousness, not just being forgiven. If you are a Christian, think back over your time as a believer in Jesus Christ. Do you see evidence of God producing righteousness in your life? Write down your thoughts below and thank God for this ongoing provision of His righteousness through our lives.

Day Five:

1. Read Romans 3:29-31.
- 2A. According to these verses, what does God want from all people?
- 2B. What does God promise to those who respond in this way?
- 2C. These verses speak of faith. Given the context of all of chapter 3, what specifically is this faith in?
3. Look up and write out the following verses:
Matthew 5:17.

Romans 3:31.

Romans 4:1-25

Day One:

As you begin your study of the Word this week, take a moment to stop and pray. Ask God to guide you in your study of His Word.

1. Read Romans 4:1-25
2. Summarize these verses by making an outline consisting of numerous “sections”, attaching a brief description for each section. For an example, see Week One: Day One.
3. Think of some questions that might lead to an important spiritual “discovery.”
4. Write your questions in the space below, then pray that God would answer your question(s).
5. What observations do you have of this passage? To say it another way, what stands out to you most about what you read for this week?

Day Two:

1. Read Romans 4:1-13
2. What do you know about the Old Testament figure Abraham? Since He plays an important role in this week’s verses, take a moment and skim through the following Old Testament Scriptures. Write below what you found out about Abraham. (Genesis 12:1-4; 13:12-18; 15:1-6.)

3. After arguing that his teaching on “justification by faith” is new in that it is at loggerheads with the spiritual path of the Law, Paul argues in Chapter 4 that his teaching is not new at all. On the contrary, “faith” has always been God’s ordained avenue for relationship with Him. Why is it important for Paul to make this argument? In other words, why is it important that Paul make this connection to these Old Testament saints, particularly Abraham?

4. How old was Abraham when God first promised him that he would make of him a great nation? (See Genesis 12:4)

- 5A. Three times God tells Abraham that he will “make him a great nation”, “make his descendants as the dust of the earth”, and “make his descendants as many as the stars of the heavens.” The third time, in Genesis 15:6, it is recorded that Abraham “believed” God. This is the FIRST instance in the Bible where it is recorded that someone “believed” God. The Hebrew word for “believe” is “*aman*”, and it has the sense of “placing one’s trust in.” The Hebrew word for “righteous” is “*tsedhaqah*”. Interestingly, Genesis 15:6 is also the FIRST instance where an individual is called “righteous” in Scripture.

- 5B. With (5A) in mind, explain why the story of Abraham effectively makes Paul’s point that “a man is justified by faith apart from works of the Law (Romans 3:28).”

Day Three:

1. Read Romans 4:14-17.

- 2A. Write out the following verses:
Romans 1:16,17.

- 2B. Consider the following verses:
Romans 3:28. “*For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from observing the law.*”
Romans 4:4,5. “*Now when a man works, his wages are not credited to him as a gift, but as an obligation. However, to the man who does not work but trusts God who justifies the wicked, his faith is credited as righteousness.*”
Galatians 2:21-3:3. “*I do not set aside the grace of God, for if righteousness could be gained through the law, Christ died for nothing!” You foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? Before your very eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed as crucified. I would like to learn just one thing from you: Did you receive the Spirit by observing the*

law, or by believing what you heard? Are you so foolish? After beginning with the Spirit, are you now trying to attain your goal by human effort?"

Galatians 3:11,12. "Clearly no one is justified before God by the law, because, "The righteous will live by faith." The law is not based on faith; on the contrary, "The man who does these things will live by them.""

Galatians 5:3-6. "Again I declare to every man who lets himself be circumcised that he is obligated to obey the whole law. You who are trying to be justified by law have been alienated from Christ; you have fallen away from grace. But by faith we eagerly await through the Spirit the righteousness for which we hope. For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any value. The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love."

- 3A. Paul talks at length here that a person is made right with God by faith, and not by the Law or by works. This is not just a truth that impacts how one "becomes a Christian" but also applies to how one grows in their relationship with God. In your opinion, what are some ways in which a Christian might try to grow in their relationship with God on the basis of their own hard work, or "keeping the Law?"
- 3B. What would it look like for a Christian to grow in their relationship with God on the basis of faith, and not works?
- 3C. Think for a moment about your own spiritual life. Are you attempting to grow in your relationship with God based on your own effort to keep a moral code or do "Christian activities" or are you attempting to grow in your relationship with God by faith? What difference would pursuing God by faith make in your own life?
4. According to Paul, how bad a mistake is it to live "by the Law?" Is it something that is not God's best, but basically innocuous; or is it really bad?

Day Four:

1. Read James 2:14-26.
2. In the space below, provide a reconciliation of the (inspired) statement that "You see that a man is justified by works, and not by faith alone (James 2:24)" with the (equally inspired) statement that "a man is justified by faith apart from works of the Law (Romans 3:28)." Do these verses contradict each other? Explain. (NOTE: When seeking to answer this, remember that both James and Paul look to Abraham for illustration of their

points. How does Abraham's life help us to see how these two statements can be reconciled?)

Day Five:

1. Read Romans 4:16-25.
2. Write out the following verses:
Romans 4:19-21.
3. Explain why the physical picture of Abraham's body being "as good as dead" and the "deadness" of Sarah's womb is a beautiful picture of man's inability to produce righteousness through his own efforts.
4. According to verses 23 and 24, for whose benefit is this Old Testament teaching on Abraham's life intended?
5. According to Romans 4, is a Christian any better able to live "righteously" than a non-Christian?
6. What areas in your life are you trying to crank out in the flesh? Ask God to help you live "righteously" by grace and faith rather than by law.

Day Six:

1. Reread Romans 4:1-25.
2. Read back through the questions and answers from this past week.
3. What did you learn about God this week that was either new or especially impacting for you?
4. Can you think of some personal applications from what you learned this week?

Prayer Requests and Notes

**WEEK SIX:
Romans 5:1-21**

Day One:

As you begin your study of the Word this week, take a moment to stop and pray. Ask God to guide you in your study of His Word.

1. Read Romans 5:1-21
2. Summarize these verses by making an outline consisting of numerous “sections”, attaching a brief description for each section. For an example, see Week One: Day One.

3. Think of some questions that might lead to an important spiritual “discovery.”

4. Write your questions in the space below, then pray that God would answer your question(s).

5. What observations do you have of this passage? To say it another way, what stands out to you most about what you read for this week?

Day Two

1. Read Romans 5:1-5.
2. What are the two references in verses 1 and 2 that suggest that Paul is now beginning a discussion of the spiritual life of the Christian *after* having received Jesus into his/her life?
- 3A. Two key concepts in Chapter 5 are the “Christian’s hope of glory” and “grace.” With respect to the former, read the following verses:
John 17:20-23. “My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one: I

in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.”

2 Corinthians 3:18. *“And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.”*

2 Corinthians 4:17. *“For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all.”*

Colossians 1:27. *“To them God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.”*

2 Thessalonians 2:14. *“And it was for this He called you through our gospel, that you may gain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.”*

Hebrews 2:10,11. *“In bringing many sons to glory, it was fitting that God, for whom and through whom everything exists, should make the author of their salvation perfect through suffering. Both the one who makes men holy and those who are made holy are of the same family. So Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers.”*

3B. Zondervan's NIV Bible Software Library describes the Christian's "journey to glory" as follows: *“The word "glory" implies more than a disclosure by God of who he is. It implies an invasion of the material universe, an expression of God's active presence among his people. Thus, the OT consistently links the term "glory" with the presence of God among Israel in tabernacle and temple (e.g., Ex 29:43; Eze 43:4-5; Hag 2:3). God's objective glory is revealed by his coming to be present with us, his people, and to show us himself by his actions in our world...Paul explores the great wonder that you and I are on a journey toward glory. Speaking of the work of the Holy Spirit in us, Paul says we "reflect the Lord's glory." This is because we "are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit" (2 Co 3:18). This process is hinted at in many passages (e.g., Ro 2:7, 10; 5:2; 8:17, 30; 2 Co 4:17; Php 3:21; Col 1:27; 3:4; 1 Th 2:12; 2 Th 2:14; 2 Ti 2:10; Heb 2:10; 1 Pe 1:7). The reality underlying it all is that, through our personal relationship with Jesus, the very splendor of God's presence enters our lives. Because of his presence, we are new creations, on a journey toward the very likeness of Christ (Ro 8:29; 1 Jn 3:1-2), to enter and to share the ultimate presence--the glory--of God, there to display in our transformed selves the beauty of our God.”*

3C. In light of (3A) and (3B) above, explain in your own words what Paul means when he writes in verse 2: *“...we exult in hope of the glory of God.”*

Day Three:

1. Read Romans 5:1-21.
2. How many times does the word “grace” appear in Chapter 5?
3. Give a definition for the word “grace.”

- 4A. Look up and write out the following verse:
1 Corinthians 15:10.

- 4B. How does your definition fit into 1 Corinthians 15:10?

- 5A. The word that is translated “grace” in the New Testament comes from the Greek word “charis,” from which we get charity. Here is how Zondervan’s NIV Bible Software Library describes this word: *“The biblical concept of grace is much greater than is suggested in the common definition of “unmerited favor.” “Grace” is a word that expresses a radical view of life and of relationship with God. Grace teaches that God’s attitude toward us is one of acceptance and love; knowing God’s heart, we can “approach the throne of grace with confidence” (Heb 4:16) with every sin and need. Grace is a dramatic statement about the human condition. Each person is helpless, trapped in sin and incapable of pleasing God or winning his favor. Grace is a proclamation. It is the triumphant announcement that God in Christ has acted and has come to the aid of all who will trust him for their eternal salvation. Grace is a way of life. Relying totally on Jesus to work within us, we experience God’s own unlimited power, vitalizing us and enabling us to live truly good lives...grace is not simply a basic orientation to relationship with God. It is also a practical approach to living the Christian life. This aspect of grace helps us to understand the warning found in Gal 5:4, that those “who are trying to be justified by law have been alienated from Christ; [they] have fallen away from grace.” Any attempt by believers to struggle toward a life of goodness by works of the law means a return to the futile way of religion. It involves reliance on ourselves and an abandonment of reliance on Christ, who alone can enable us to live righteous lives. We cannot approach Christian experience from the old perspective, for grace and religion are contradictory. We can only live by full commitment to the way of grace and all that grace involves.”*

- 5B. In light of (5A), what does Paul mean he says in verse 2, “this grace in which we stand.”

6. How often do you operate by grace? When do you find yourself acting in the flesh? Spend some time in prayer about these issues now.

Day Four:

1. Read Romans 5:6-11.
2. Consider the following verse:
Romans 5:6. *“You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly.”*
3. What does it mean in verse 6 when it says that we were “powerless/helpless”? Powerless or helpless to do what?
4. Consider the following verses:
Romans 5:9,10. *“Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him! For if, when we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life!”*
5. Complete the following sentences from Romans 5:9,10.

Verse		“having been . . .”	“we shall be saved . . .”
9	“much more . . .”		
10			

NOTE: When it says in verse 9 that “we shall be saved from the wrath of God,” it is likely referring to Romans 1:18 where it says that the “wrath of God is (being) revealed from heaven”. As discussed in Day Three’s lesson in Week 2, this “wrath” refers to God allowing man to devolve into moral decay.

6. A possible paraphrase of Romans 5:9,10 is: “Much more, having become Christians, God is now saving us from the power of sin, enabling us to live righteously through the life of Christ in us.” What do you think? Is this a reasonable interpretation of what Paul is saying in verses 9 and 10?
7. As a believer, do you have any excuse for sinning? How do you allow Christ to work in you rather than you working in your flesh?

Day Five

1. Read Romans 5:12-19.
2. Identify those parts of verses 12-19 that explicitly support the doctrine that all men and women are condemned sinners by virtue of being descendants of Adam and Eve. That is, write out those passages that indicate that men and women have inherited a “sin nature” from Adam and Eve that makes them condemnable in God’s sight.
3. Explain how the “gift” of salvation is *like* the inheritance of the sin nature from Adam and Eve.
- 4A. Explain how the “gift” of salvation is *not like* the inheritance of the sin nature from Adam and Eve.
- 4B. According to Romans 5:12-19, is grace stronger than our sin nature?
- 4C. Do we deserve the consequences of sin? Do we deserve the gift of salvation?
- 5A. Consider the following verse:
Romans 5:17. *“For if, by the trespass of the one man, death reigned through that one man, how much more will those who receive God's abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ.”*
- 5B. What do you think it means when it says in verse 17 that “those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life”?
6. Read Romans 5:20-21.
- 7A. Consider what the following verses have to say about “the Law.”
Romans 3:20b. *“...through the Law comes the knowledge of sin.”*
Romans 4:15b. *“...where there is no law, there is no violation.”*
Romans 5:13b. *“...sin is not imputed when there is no law.”*
Romans 5:20. *“And the Law came in that the transgression might increase...”*
Galatians 3:24a. *“Therefore the Law has become our tutor to lead us to Christ...”*

- 7B. According to these verses, what is the purpose of “the Law;” i.e., God’s rules for holy living.
8. Read Romans 5:20. With that verse in mind, complete the following sentence, “The more miserably I fail to live up to God’s righteous standards, the greater ...
9. According to Romans 5:21, is there an expectation that Christians will live lives that will reflect the righteousness of Christ?
10. After this week, do you have a new definition of grace? Are you applying the definition in the way you live or does it only live in your intellect?

Day Six:

1. Reread Romans 5:1-21.
2. Read back through the questions and answers from this past week.
3. What did you learn about God this week that was either new or especially impacting for you?
4. Can you think of some personal applications from what you learned this week?

Prayer Requests and Notes

WEEK SEVEN:
Romans 6:1-14

Day One:

As you begin your study of the Word this week, take a moment to stop and pray. Ask God to guide you in your study of His Word.

1. Read Romans 6:1-14
2. Summarize these verses by making an outline consisting of numerous “sections”, attaching a brief description for each section. For an example, see Week One: Day One.
3. Think of some questions that might lead to an important spiritual “discovery.”
4. Write your questions in the space below, then pray that God would answer your question(s).
5. What observations do you have of this passage? To say it another way, what stands out to you most about what you read for this week?

Day Two:

1. Read Romans 6:1.
2. Does the question, “Are we to continue in sin that grace might increase?” seem like a reasonable question given what Paul has previously stated? Why or why not?
- 3A. We are constantly being exhorted in Christian circles to do this or that. We are “challenged” to go on short-term missions projects, or to share our faith, or to lead Bible studies, or to be in Bible studies, or to memorize verses, or to give money, or to pray more, or...you name it. Can you think of some time in the recent past when you were “challenged” to do something? Write it below.

- 3B. Focusing on the incident that you identified in (3A), what do you think was the motivation behind the challenge? Was there the sense that you need to do this in order for you to grow in your spiritual life? Was there the sense that you owe God something back for what He has done for you?
- 4A. Write out the following verses:
Romans 4:4,5.
- 4B. In light of the verse above, respond to the following analogy: “God saved us by His grace. It was not something we worked for at all, but it was a free gift. Comparing our salvation to building a house, this is the equivalent to saying that God bought us a house, then laid the foundation for us. Our Christian life, now, is a matter of us working hard to build a house on God’s foundation that God Himself will be proud of.”
5. “Grace” is a potentially scary thing. Let us, for the moment, contemplate the idea that “grace” means that we are entirely incapable (“powerless/helpless”) of doing anything good for God on our own (i.e. our working in our own strength to build God a house He would be proud of.) Recognizing this, God expects us to give nothing back from ourselves, but has given everything to us as a free gift. Can you think of an objection to this? Complete the following sentence. “If Christianity really is a free gift, and there are no rules or obligations associated with being a Christian, then Christians would be free to do whatever they wanted, and that would be bad because...
6. Read Romans 6:1-3.
7. Look up and write out the following verses:
Romans 6:6.

Galatians 2:20.

Colossians 3:9,10.
8. In your own words, explain what it means when it says in verse 2 that “we have died to sin?” (HINT: What does this say about who you really are?)

Day Three:

1. Read Romans 6:4,5.
2. Write out the following verses:
Colossians 1:27.

2 Corinthians 5:17.

Galatians 2:20.

Philippians 2:12,13.

3. In your own words, explain what it means when it says in verse 5 that “we have become united” with Jesus Christ in “His resurrection?” (HINT: What does this say about who you *really* are?)

Day Four:

1. Read Romans 6:6-10.
2. Look up and write out the following verse:
Romans 6:14.
3. What does Romans 6:6-10,14 say about the power of sin in believers’ lives?
4. Do you *feel* as if you have been released from the power of sin and that Christ lives in you and enables you to live righteously? Be honest.
5. It is highly possible that everyone who answers question four honestly would say that they do not always feel as though they have been released from sin’s necessary rule in their lives. With that said, what do you think Paul means when he says that Christians are “dead to sin”?

6. Romans 6:14 connects the power to live righteously with “grace.” Do you understand that connection? Try and explain it as best as you can.

Day Five:

1. Read Romans 6:1-14.
2. In these fourteen verses, Paul makes many statements that are given as facts about the new identity of a Christian. In the space below, write down as many “positional truths” concerning a Christian’s true nature, as you can find in these verses. (For example, one positional truth is found in 6:2, “We died to sin.”)
3. In these fourteen verses, Paul also gives many commands that believers in Jesus Christ should do. In the space below, write down as many commands for Christians as you can find from these verses?
4. Given the truth contained in these verses, and all that you have learned from your study of Romans so far, write out what you believe Paul to be saying here is the proper “game plan” for living the Christian life?
5. Which positional truth that you wrote down in question 2 do you find most difficult to believe? How would really believing this truth make a difference in your Christian life?
6. Which command that you wrote down in question 3 do you find most difficult to live out? How would really doing that thing change your Christian life?

[NOTE: In Appendix 4 at the end of this week’s study is a paper by Mark Robinson discussing Romans 6:1-14 and the process of sanctification.]

Day Six:

1. Reread Romans 6:1-11.
2. Read back through the questions and answers from this past week.
3. What did you learn about God this week that was either new or especially impacting for you?
4. Can you think of some personal applications from what you learned this week?

Prayer Requests and Notes

Appendix 4

By Mark Robinson

The Relationship between Positional Sanctification and Progressive Sanctification in Romans 6:1-14

Introduction

On the pages of Scripture, the story of salvation history unfolds from Genesis on through Revelation. The problem of sin is introduced early in Genesis, and that is followed by the redemptive plan of God to impute His righteousness on His people on the initiative of His grace, in accord with the faith of the individual. In the New Testament epistles, this truth is made clear and explained in great detail for all of us who are now living in the post-crucifixion times. The beauty of God imputing His righteousness to man out of God's own gracious decision in accord with the faith of man, is clearly seen throughout the Pauline epistles, but especially in the book of Romans, chapters 1-5 in particular. What is also clear, however, in the book of Romans, is a tension that exists in the life of the redeemed person from the moment of their salvation, up until the time they are physically and ultimately glorified. This tension exists in the realm of sanctification, or the process of a believer maturing in holiness over the course of their days on this earth. It seems as if sanctification has at least three parts to it for a believer. There is a past component that becomes true of a believer at the moment of their conversion (Positional Sanctification). There is a present component that becomes true in the life of a believer in the process of their life as they grow in their knowledge, obedience, and trust of our Lord (Progressive Sanctification). Finally, there is a future component to sanctification that becomes true in the life of the believer when they physically die and are ultimately glorified in the presence of Christ in the resurrection life (Perfected Sanctification)⁴. It is in looking at each of these components and how they interrelate that we can best see what sanctification is, and how we can go about understanding it and developing it in our lives.

In finding out the relationship between Positional, Progressive, and Perfected Sanctification, there are few passages of scripture that address this better than Romans 6:1-14. In this passage, we see a long list of indicatives of the faith in Romans 6: 1-10. These are formal declarations that are true about every believer from the moment they trust Christ. These truths make up Positional Sanctification. Then in 6:11-14, we see a few imperatives of the faith, or commands that point to the humans' responsibility in their development in holiness. These indicate the process of Progressive Sanctification. Throughout these two sections, we see a

⁴ There are many individual views on sanctification, but virtually all evangelical viewpoints hold to this kind of three-fold division. See the discussion in the foreword of Melvin Detter, Anthony Hoekema, Stanley Horton, J. Robertson McQuilkin, and John Walvoord. *Five Views on Sanctification* (Grand Rapids: Londervan. 1987), 7.

tension of sanctification that will only be resolved in glory, or Perfected Sanctification. As we examine the major components of our Positional, Progressive, and Perfected Sanctification as described in Romans 6:1-14, we can better understand how each of these categories relate to one another and how it practically works its way into a working theology of sanctification for the believer.

Positional Sanctification

Romans 6:1-10 and 14 details two broad classes of what is positionally true of every believer from the moment they have first trusted Christ with regard to sanctification. The first class of truths in positional sanctification are things that have been done away with, or Something Old. Included in this discussion are the truths of a believer's death to sin, and the rendering ineffective of the "body of sin". The second class of truths in positional sanctification have to do with things that have been added to the believer as a result of their salvation, or Something New. Included in this discussion are the truths of a believer's new resurrection life, and the new residence in the domain of grace, instead of Law. These truths, also known as the indicatives of the faith, are the positional underpinnings of a believer's identity in Christ⁵.

Something Old

The first aspect of positional sanctification as it relates to truths of the believer concerning things that were eliminated is the believer's death to sin as discussed in Romans 6:2-3. The first question that needs to be answered is what is meant by death in this context. Death appears not to be a totally unresponsive state, otherwise why would there be a need for the imperatival commands to "not let sin rule" in Romans 6:12⁶. It seems, rather, that death to sin here does not mean the believer is now unresponsive to sin, but is now separated from sin's necessary power, as the believer is transferred from the realm of sin's necessary rule to the realm of grace⁷. As one author puts it, this death to sin is really an "Exodus" as the believer is delivered from the necessary bondage of sin in their lives⁸. When a believer is said to have died to sin, this is not a moral statement, as much as it is a theological-judicial statement, whereby in God's sight a man is removed from the just consequences of his sin, and is therefore removed from the necessary rule of sin in his life⁹. Inherent in this notion is the idea of being freed from sin, as

⁵Douglas Moo, Romans 1-8 (Chicago: Moody Press, 1991),383.

⁶ John Stott actually gives three reasons why death cannot be here looked at as unresponsive. 1. The same phrase is used of Christ in verse 10, and Christ was never responsive to sin. 2. The incongruity of this notion with the imperatives of Romans 11-13. 3. This would not be compatible with experience, for all Christians are in view here, not just some, and many believers do appear to be responsive to sin at least in some way. John Stott. Romans (Downers Grove: Intervarsity, 1995), 170.

⁷ Moo, 374.

⁸ F.F. Bruce, The Epistle of Paul to the Romans (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 1963), 137.

⁹ It is noted and argued for the theological-judicial sense in Cranfield's commentary. Cranfield argues against the moral sense here that this is referring to the conduct of the believer. Instead Cranfield argues that what is in question is man's ultimate definitive subjugation to sin as a necessary ruling force in their life. To this, the believer is now dead. C.E.B. Cranfield, Romans Volume I (Edinburgh: T&T Clark Limited, 1975), 299-300.

Romans 6:7 points out. In Romans 6:7 it is noted that it is death that unites one with being freed or justified¹⁰ from their sin. It is important to understand that it is just not any death that is here mentioned, but specifically our association with the death Christ died on our behalf¹¹. It is the death of Christ that separates the believer from the necessary rule of sin in his or her own life. Positionally, it is important to remember that all believers positionally are freed from the necessary rule of sin in their lives as a result of their having died to sin at the moment of their salvation.

A second of the positional truths as it relates to that which is old and has been done away with is the "rendering ineffective of the body of sin" as the old man is crucified in Romans 6:6. The first question that needs to be asked is, "Who is the old man that is crucified with Christ?" Looking at other places in Pauline literature where the old man is referred to we see that this is a reference to the entire person, before coming to Christ (c.f. Colossians 3:9, and Ephesians 4:22)¹². In a representative sense, God has taken all that which was in the believer that deserved to be crucified and dumped that on Jesus at the time of His very real crucifixion. By God crucifying that which is in us that deserved death, we are then redeemed by the saving work of Christ¹³. This crucifixion is the past, historical and real crucifixion of Jesus Christ as believer's representative that is here in view. It is the one time past event here that results in the present day outworkings of this crucifixion in today's life as seen in Galatians 2:20, and 6:14¹⁴.

The second issue that needs addressing in this passage is the identity of the "body of sin." We need to know what it is so we can know what we are now positionally free from. This body of sin is the entirety of the person before they came to Christ¹⁵. As John Stott said. "What was crucified with Christ was not a part of me called my old nature, but the whole of me as I was before Christ¹⁶." After one becomes a believer his or her pre-Christ self is been rendered ineffective and crucified; with the pre-Christ self being fully done away with, they will never be that person again. The use of the word (body) here is used to show the totality of one's existence before Christ and to highlight the physical temptations that we have as a result of our bodies¹⁷. The believer now has the benefit of having the old condemned self rendered ineffective and removed, being crucified on the cross. This is a powerful step in Positional Sanctification. For if that which is in us that deserved death has already been crucified with Christ, then we have exact hope that we will one day be glorified and achieve the perfected sanctification that will not come until this life is through.

¹⁰ Although many translators have chosen to translate this "freed", it is really better, given the lexical evidence of the rest of the New Testament usages, that the verb actually be translated have been justified. Stott, 177.

¹¹ Leon Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 1988), 253.

¹² Morris, 251.

¹³ William Newell, *Romans Verse by Verse* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1994), 212-213.

¹⁴ In Romans 6:6, the aorist tense of "crucify" is used, indicating a snapshot look at a historical event. In both Galatians 2:20 and 6:14, it is the perfect tense of "crucify", indicating a past event with continuing implications. Bruce, 138.

¹⁵ Bruce, 139. See also Cranfield, 309.

¹⁶ John Stott, *Men Mad New: An Exposition of Romans 5-8* (London: Intervarsity, 1966), 45.

¹⁷ Morris, 252. See also Moo, 393.

Something New

The believer does not just have things taken away from him or her positionally, but also has new things added to him or her positionally. This is first seen in the insistence of Romans 6:4,5, and 8, on the new resurrection life that the believer now shares with Christ. There is some debate as to whether this is truly a resurrection life that has begun now, or one that will begin when we die and are then glorified. This tension is found often in Paul who seems content to understand the complex subject of sanctification in an “already, not yet” mentality where it is true that to a certain degree we have a new life now, but to another degree, we will have a glorified life at a future date¹⁸. While this is difficult to understand, it is nonetheless, the teaching of scripture. Therefore, when we look at the resurrection life of the believer it can be divided into the new life that one experiences in the "now" time, and the resurrection life that is waiting only in the "future" time when believers are totally glorified.

The "now time" new life is described in 6:4. Here it is shown that the believer after having been identified with Christ actually lives a lifestyle that is deeply entrenched in a new ethical dimension where it can please God¹⁹. This is a truth that exists from the moment of conversion²⁰. This new life is one that is not marked by radical moments, but slow and steady progress²¹. This is a positional statement about the new life of the believer in the here and now. It is in this new life that we have a reference to a new moral life that will characterize the true believer. The believer is not just identified with the death of Christ, having the penalty and necessary power of sin removed from their life, but they are placed in a position where they can now live a new life. One that is not marked by death and unrighteousness as the life "in Adam" might suggest, but this is a life "in Christ" where life and righteousness are produced²². Remember these are the indicatives, the positional statements of sanctification for all believers. This is true of all true believers.

There is also a sense in Romans 6:5, 8 that the resurrection and new life that are spoken of there have more future eschatological glory in mind than present reality, though the tension does still exist and there seems to be an “already, not yet” tension in this setting as well. Romans 6:8 especially invokes many looks at the future life in glory, the Perfected Sanctification look at things. Many scholars feel that this resurrection life is referring to future glory²³. Among other indicators that this is an accurate view is that the construction used here is most often used to refer to eschatological glory (c.f. Ephesians 2:5 and Colossians 2:13), not the here and now²⁴. There is a sense that we will live with Christ, but this is a future promise of Perfected Sanctification, not just something in the here and now. Although this view of Romans 6:8 is not

¹⁸ Moo, 384.

¹⁹ Stott, 174.

²⁰ This an ingressive aorist, used to show that this is something that was started at the moment of conversion. Cranfield, 305.

²¹ Morris, 249.

²² See Romans 5.

²³ Cranfield, 312.

²⁴ Ibid.

held by all²⁵, it is nonetheless the best view in my opinion that it is referring to the future time when we will be glorified and live in the physical presence of the Lord forever. These are the positional promises that will result in our perfected sanctification in the long run. The positional sanctification "something new" promises concerning a new resurrection life give the believer great hope not only in the "already time," but especially in the time that is yet to come.

The second new thing that has been added to the life of the believer with regard to positional sanctification is that the believer is now no longer under law, but under grace. The Law here is seen as the Mosaic Law, and it no longer has the power over us as it once did²⁶. A cursory look at Romans 7, where the issue of the Law is dealt with more extensively, shows that the Law was actually powerless to help the believer to overcome sin. There is a second realm of help in this capacity, however, and that is the believer is delivered out of law, and into the realm of grace, a new dispensation in salvation history with relation of God to man²⁷. We see in Romans 8 that this is where the power of the Spirit and the realm of Grace make it possible to obey and please God, something that could never be done under the necessary rule of the Law²⁸. Therefore, positionally the believer has a tremendous advantage in sanctification, for the believer is not enslaved to the Law, but is under the dispensation of Grace where there is the resource of the Spirit that makes it possible to please God and obey Him.

Progressive Sanctification

Having seen the positional truths that hold for every believer that have been imputed the believer as a result of divine initiative, it is important to note next the imperatives of Romans 6: 11-13 which make up a framework for progressive sanctification, namely, the responsibility of believers to live a life consistent with their calling and position as outlined in Romans 6:1-10,14. The imperatival commands of Romans 6:11-13 give the believer two things to consider, and two things to do. The believer is to consider, or reckon, that they are dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus (Romans 6:11), and to consider that they are not to let sin rule in them that they would obey its lusts (Romans 6:12). The believer is to do two things also: namely, to not present their natural capacities as weapons for unrighteousness and sin (Romans 6: 13a) but instead they are to present their natural capacities as weapons for righteousness (Romans 6:13b).

Something to Consider

The first of the commands or imperatives in Romans 6 is the command to "consider yourself to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus." This verb could very easily be translated as simply "recognize"²⁹. There are things that are positionally true about the believer as we have seen in 6:1-10, but it is necessary here to show that the believer must recognize these positional truths and consider them to be true in their life to unleash their power. To translate this phrase in a very simple way, you could say, "In other words, live as though you had already

²⁵ Newell, 219.

²⁶ Moo, 405.

²⁷ Moo, 406.

²⁸ Bruce, 140.

²⁹ Cranfield, 315.

entered the resurrection life³⁰." The considering of these truths produces in the believer a determination to live in light of Christ's death³¹. Reckoning these things to be true in the life of the believer confirms three things: 1. The items of 6:1-10 are not totally passive on the part of the believer as God is working in his life. The believer needs to still appropriate what God has done by considering or reckoning it to be so. 2. The death to sin is not complete in that believers will still struggle with sin in this life, so believers need to continue to reckon these things to be true. 3. Part of the process in sharing in Christ's death is for the believer to reckon that what Christ has done on his behalf is true³². This reckoning or considering in 6: 11 is the proactive answer to the question asked in 6:1. The believer does not continue in a lifestyle of sin because he is different now (as explained in 6:2-10), but the believer must constantly remind himself of that and consider it to be true. As John Stott writes, "Regenerate Christians should no more contemplate a return to unregenerate living than adults to childhood . . . or discharged prisoners to their prison cell. For our union with Christ has severed us with the old life and committed us to the new³³." Believers must consider this to be true, as a part of their thinking as they are involved in their progressive sanctification.

The second "consider" imperatival command of progressive sanctification in this passage comes in Romans 6:12, where believers are admonished to "not let sin reign in your mortal bodies that you might obey its lusts." It first of all must be noted that this imperative can be given and achieved, not as a result of some special power of the believer in and of themselves, but because of the promise of Romans 6:14a that sin "shall not be master over you³⁴." With that promise, this verse can be achieved. Even with the promise, however, we must remember that believers are still capable of living a life that is in willful bondage to a sinful pattern. This obviously is the case, or this imperative would not be necessary. Our bodies will struggle with sin until glorification³⁵, therefore we need to always remember that we have a great need to not let sin reign in our bodies, for we now have an option to live under grace instead since sin's necessary ruling power was broken when we died to sin. There is serious eschatological tension in this verse, for there is such a sense that we have been promised that sin is no longer master over us in our positional sense, yet we are now asked to not let sin rule over us in the here and now. It seems that we will always struggle with sin until final glorification, therefore, this imperative shows the tension clearly of the "already, not yet" model of truths that relates our positional, progressive, and perfected sanctification together in an overlapping puzzle. There is a real sense where we are dead to sin's ultimate ruling power in this life, but that does not mean that believers still do not have to constantly make sure that they are not living as if they were still enslaved to sin in this life³⁶. As a part of a believers' progressive sanctification then, it is noted that they must consider not to let sin reign in their mortal bodies. This can be done and is seen most clearly through the imperatives that tell the believer what they are to do and what they are not to do.

³⁰ Bruce, 139.

³¹ James Dunn, Romans 1-8 (Dallas: Word, 1988), 324.

³² Dunn, 333.

³³ Stott, 180.

³⁴ Moo, 399.

³⁵ Believers struggles with sin are not merely a possibility, but a reality that needs to be addresses all the time, hence the present tense of the verb here. Dunn, 336.

³⁶ Moo, 400.

Something to Do

The two imperatives of progressive sanctification that give the believer something to do are found in Romans 6:13, and give both the positive and the negative side of sanctification. On the negative side first, we see in 6:13a, that believers are not to continue presenting their bodies' natural capacities as weapons for unrighteousness. The verb here rendered "continue presenting"³⁷ really has an active meaning about it. It does not mean simply a passive yielding of one's faculties, but an active "Give in service to" or "present for service"³⁸. Also, what has been translated "instruments" by some is better translated "weapons," and shows a brilliant word picture of how believers can use our capacities for good or for bad³⁹. As it is here stated, believers are not to present their natural capacities as weapons for the service of sin. "Unrighteousness here is the means by which the power of sin exercises its authority over and through the individual"⁴⁰. This boils down to an imperative of progressive sanctification where the believer is admonished to stop turning their abilities and resources over to sin as they once did to accomplish sinful products. In other words, stop enlisting as a weapon in sin's army. The opposite side of this argument is then taken up in the second half of verse 13. The positive side of the argument is presented in Romans 6:13b, and that is that believers should present their natural capacities as weapons of righteousness. The immediate follow-up to not presenting your bodies to sin is to present your bodies to righteousness. That is because there really can be no neutral position between service for God and service for sin⁴¹. You are either involved in one or the other; you cannot be neutral. Since believers are now alive and freed from sin positionally, it is possible then for them to present their bodies for service to righteousness unto God⁴². The verb "presenting" is an ingressive aorist verb that signals a need to start doing this action of presenting our bodies as weapons of righteousness for God. Here, righteousness and God are seen as inseparable. Therefore, the gift and the giver are equated, for if you are serving righteousness, then you are seeking after God⁴³. The believer is then encouraged to, as a part of progressive sanctification, to begin presenting their natural faculties to God by obeying unto righteousness that leads to sanctification. Therefore, the believer is to find himself enslaved, not to sin, but to God. This is the explanation that comes in Romans 6:15ff. This enslavement to God is a vital part of progressive sanctification, as we grow in righteousness.

Interaction between Positional and Progressive Sanctification

After looking at the major components of the Positional Sanctification Indicative statements of Romans 6:1-10, 14, and the Progressive Sanctification Imperative commands of Romans 6:11-13, as well as the overtones of the Perfected Sanctification in the eschatological hope, it is now necessary to see how these components relate in terms of a comprehensive view as it relates to application and how to live the Christian life.

³⁷ This is an active tense with the idea of a continuous activity involved.

³⁸ This is seen in the LXX usage of this verb in I Kings 10:8, and other ruler, rulee settings. Moo, 401.

³⁹ Everywhere in the New Testament this word is used, it refers to weapons. See Romans 13:12; 2 Corinthians 6:7; 10:4; John 18:3. Moo, 401.

⁴⁰ Dunn, 338.

⁴¹ Moo, 402.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Dunn, 339.

First of all, it is important to note the time line and chronological order of Paul's writing here in Romans 6. The positional indicatives came first⁴⁴. These are always going to be the foundation and starting point for the Christian life. As we saw in Romans 6:12, the imperative there is good, only as it relates to the indicative of verse 14a⁴⁵. The positional truths are not something to pass over lightly, but they are truths that prove to be extremely practical as we live out our Christian existence in the manner in which God intended. As Douglas Moo states, "It is only because we have been delivered from sin's power by God's act in Christ that we can be expected to cease obeying sin as master. The imperative 'Thou shalt' would be a futile and frustrating demand without the 'Thou hast' of the indicative⁴⁶."

It further must be noted that each of these truths, both the positional and the progressive, the indicative and the imperative, are all vital and necessary for the Christian to proceed in sanctification. There are truths that God has already worked in the lives of believers, but believers still need to remember them, and then to obey and do what He asks. We cannot divide indicatives from imperatives, the positional from the progressive because one without the other creates serious problems. If we stress the positional without the progressive, we have a problem with spiritual laziness, and we fail to do our part in obedience. If we stress the progressive without the positional, we have legalism that can only provide things to do without the power to get it done. Indeed, we must have both the positional truth as well as the progressive in our sanctification. They are distinct, but not separate⁴⁷.

There are eschatological implications for how we see these three aspects working together. It seems when we look at positional sanctification we see a clear picture of truths that have been declared so at a definitive point in time. When we look at Perfected Sanctification, we see a clear picture of truths that also will be declared so at a definitive point in time. It is the Progressive truths in the mean time that seem to give us the largest degree of wonder. How we live out our lives in the here and now is the important truth. We really have a need to live our lives at this point as if we were already in the eschaton, standing on the promises of the positional truths that we hold dear⁴⁸. The challenge in the here and now is to "appropriate and apply what God has done for us⁴⁹." As John Grassmick writes, "The fact that the indicatives of grace still necessitate the imperatives of grace reflects the fundamental eschatological structure of Paul's theology, namely, there are benefits of grace which have already been given at conversion and yet there are things which are still to come at the consummation of our salvation in glory. In between lies the present paradoxical and often perplexing character of Christian life experience that comes under the imperative⁵⁰."

Conclusion

It has been noted from Romans 6:1-14, that sanctification - the process by which we grow in holiness - is seemingly divided into three components: Positional Sanctification which

⁴⁴ Moo, 399.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Moo, 375.

⁴⁷ Moo, 399.

⁴⁸ Dunn, 351.

⁴⁹ Moo, 398.

⁵⁰ John Grassmick, Class Notes – 205A (DTS, Fall 1998), 78.

possesses the indicatives of the faith encompassing things that are true of every believer from the point of conversion. Progressive Sanctification which includes the imperatives of the faith encompassing the commands to live a life worthy of our calling in the here and now. Perfected Sanctification which possesses the promises of tomorrow when we will be glorified in the eschaton. Each of these components of sanctification have various categories of truth which relate and interrelate in various ways. The key hermeneutic to understanding this difficult subject of sanctification is to remember that each component is dependent on the other. "God has established a good work in us (Positional) and he will carry it out (Progressive) until the day of Christ Jesus (Perfected)⁵¹." What God has begun He will complete. We can take great comfort in that. As people who are living in the now time, somewhere between the regeneration of our conversion, and our glorification in the eschaton, we know that as we consider what God has done on our behalf, and if we consider that we are not to let sin reign in us any longer, and if we do not present our natural capacities as weapons of unrighteousness, but instead present them as weapons unto righteousness, then we know that we are in the process of sanctification, and we can claim the great truths of Romans 6 for ourselves, and be a slave to sin no longer.

⁵¹ A rough paraphrase of Philippians 1:6.

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WEEK EIGHT:
Romans 6:12-23

Day One:

As you begin your study of the Word this week, take a moment to stop and pray. Ask God to guide you in your study of His Word.

1. Read Romans 6:12-23
2. Summarize these verses by making an outline consisting of numerous “sections”, attaching a brief description for each section. For an example, see Week One: Day One.
3. Think of some questions that might lead to an important spiritual “discovery.”
4. Write your questions in the space below, then pray that God would answer your question(s).
5. What observations do you have of this passage? To say it another way, what stands out to you most about what you read for this week?

Day Two:

1. Read Romans 6:1-23.
2. REVIEW: In a sentence or two, summarize below the key ideas from Romans 6:1-14?
3. Now, in a sentence or two, summarize below the key ideas from Romans 6:15-23.

4. It has been said that these two sections (6:1-14 & 6:15-23) are mirror images of each other, simply using different illustrations to prove the same point. Do you think this is valid? Why or why not?

5. It seems clear that given the two rhetorical questions in 6:1 and 6:15 that this chapter is trying to answer the question, “If Christians do not work their way to God on the basis of their good deeds, and if God’s grace provides for all the believers sins, then why should Christians live a good life at all? What is their motivation for living a righteous life?” How do you think Paul answers that question in 6:1-23?

Day Three:

1. Read Romans 6:15-18.

2. These verses make the assertion that everyone will serve someone or something. It is further asserted that there are only two real masters that we can serve, “Obedience to God” or “Enslavement to Sin.” Think for a moment about this statement. It seems as though there are many possible things in our lives to “give our selves to.” If, biblically speaking, only two masters exist, then what does that mean for anything in our life that would take priority over our relationship with God?

3. What are some of the things that you are tempted to “give your life to” (which are not obedience to God)? Have you ever thought about those things actually enslaving you?

- 4A. Romans 6:18 makes another positional statement regarding the true nature of a Christian. What is that statement?

- 4B. Though Paul makes such a definitive statement about Christians’ being freed from sin, he spends a great deal of time encouraging Christians to refrain from sin and pursue righteousness. Why do you think God (speaking through Paul) deems it necessary to repeatedly tell people to avoid something that they are freed from / dead to?

- 4C. Do you see yourself as a “slave to righteousness?” What do you think it means to be a “slave to righteousness?” How would viewing yourself in this way change how you approached your life?

Day Four:

1. Read Romans 6:19-21.
- 2A. Once again, in this section, the world is seen in black and white. We are either slaves to sin or to God. We are either pursuing wickedness or holiness. This runs in great contrast to how we normally view the world. We tend to view the world as more gray than black or white. Things are “pretty good,” or “not the best.” Only in extreme instances do we normally call things perfect or wicked. Here, though, we see that God’s standards are not mitigated by our conventions of conversation. God sees sin as wicked, and desires righteous, holy behavior.
- 2B. In light of the thoughts above, do you find it difficult to believe that you were/are ever really offering your life to “ever increasing wickedness?”
- 2C. In light of the thoughts above, do you find it difficult to believe that you were/are ever really capable of seeing God produce His holiness/righteousness in your life?
- 3A. Verse 20 describes the situation of a person before they became a Christian. It says that before someone has trusted in Christ, they were free from the control of righteousness. What do you think this means? Think back to your life before you trusted in Christ (or if you are not a Christian to your life right now). Did you desire righteous living then? If you did, then what does verse 20 mean?
- 3B. Think back to things that you have done in your life before becoming a Christian. Romans 6:21 makes the point that there are many things that people do in their “pre-Christian” days that they are ashamed of now. Are there things that you have done in your life that you are now ashamed of?
- 3C. Romans 6:21 says that sinful actions lead to “death.” This statement is always true (sinful actions kill the purpose for which we were created), yet we do not always remember it. Think of the things you have done in your life that you are ashamed of. Even as Christians, daily we fall short of God’s perfect standard. We still do many things that we are “ashamed of.” How would remembering the true pain that sin causes help you to “present your body to God as a slave of righteousness” in the areas of your life where you are currently struggling?

Day Five:

1. Read Romans 6:22,23.

2. When you think of the “benefits” of the Christian life, what comes to mind? Be specific.
3. What does it mean in verse 23 when it says that the wages of sin is “death,” but the free gift of God is “eternal life?”
- 4A. “Eternal life” is a wonderful promise that is given to all believers in Jesus Christ. Romans 6:23 is a very famous verse that is used often (rightly so) by Christians to speak of both the cost of our sin (death), and Jesus provision for our sins (dying in our place to spare us from eternal judgment). In looking at this verse this way, however, we are only seeing part of the story. In reality, “eternal life” is a larger concept than just “heaven, not hell.” Eternal life has larger ramifications for the Christian life today.
- 4B. Write out the following verses, and then below the verse, write out what you believe this verse to be saying about the nature of “eternal life.”

John 17:3

John 10:10

Galatians 6:6-10

Romans 6:22

- 4C. In what way do you see “eternal life” as a motivator for you to pursue righteous living?
5. *Zondervan’s NIV Bible Software Library* has this to say about the meaning of “eternal life”: “We tend to think of eternal life as life with endless duration. That is part of it. But when the New Testament speaks of eternal life, its emphasis is on the quality or character of that life. Eternal life stands in contrast to biological life. Biological life is derived and fleeting; it has no shaping impact on the personality. Eternal life is God’s own life, burning brightly not only with his vitality but with his own character. The wondrous

message of the Scripture is that God has chosen to share this life--to share himself!--with human beings. "You have been born again," Peter writes, capturing the wonder of it, "not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God" (cf. 1 Pe 1:23). God's life alone is able to break the grip of death on humanity. God's life alone can provide a basis for a warm personal relationship with the Lord. God's life alone can lift humanity to the destiny for which we were originally intended. As the Bible presents the stunning possibility of eternal life now, that possibility is always linked with Jesus. It is only through faith in the Son of God that a person receives eternal life. It is only through faith that a close fellowship develops, and it is through this that God's life is released to find expression through us."

6. In light of the above, explain in your own words what Romans 6:23 is saying without using the words "death" and "eternal life."

Day Six:

1. Reread Romans 6:12-6:23.
2. Read back through the questions and answers from this past week.
3. What did you learn about God this week that was either new or especially impacting for you?
4. Can you think of some personal applications from what you learned this week?

Prayer Requests and Notes

WEEK NINE:
Romans 7:1-13

Day One:

As you begin your study of the Word this week, take a moment to stop and pray. Ask God to guide you in your study of His Word.

1. Read Romans 7:1-13
2. Summarize these verses by making an outline consisting of numerous “sections”, attaching a brief description for each section. For an example, see Week One: Day One.
3. Think of some questions that might lead to an important spiritual “discovery.”
4. Write your questions in the space below, then pray that God would answer your question(s).
5. What observations do you have of this passage? To say it another way, what stands out to you most about what you read for this week?

Day Two:

1. Read Romans 7:1-6.
- 2. Romans 7:1-6 presents an analogy to help the reader understand the relationship between a believer and “the law.” The idea in this analogy is to show that “in Christ” believers have a new way of relating to God. Without Christ, mankind was bound to relate to God on the basis of “the Law”. In order to more fully understand the implications of this study, we will spend some time today talking about what living under “the law” means.
- 2A. To the best of your ability, what do you think Paul means when he talks of living by “the law”?

- 2B. One possibility would be to see living by the law as a form of legalism. To the best of your ability, how would you define legalism in the Christian life?
- 3A. In the Christian life today, as in the day of Paul, we will often hear of many formulas for living the Christian life. Have a quiet time for one hour every day and you will be closer to God. Go to prayer meetings and know God. Join a Bible Study and you will be right with God. Serve the Lord overseas on a mission trip and you will be closer to God. What are some of the “formulas” that you have heard about how you can be closer to God?
- 3B. Is there a problem with these formulas? If so, what is it? If not, why not?
- 4A. Romans 7:1-6 tells us that the believer has died to the Law, and has therefore been freed from the Law to “marry” a new way of relating to God. What is that new way, and what do these verses have to say about it?.
- 4B. According to these verses, what are some of the byproducts of living under the new system (as opposed to living by the old system)?
- 4C. What do these verses tell us about pursuing God by legalistic formulas? Will they get us to where we want to go? (NOTE: Today’s study has focused on the downside of formulas/legalism. No doubt, in the midst of the formulas you have heard are good things to do. We will deal with the positive side of the “law” on day five. Today’s study, though is meant to show us the limits of living under “the law”.)
5. Once again, this section speaks a positional truth about the nature of who a believer in Jesus Christ is, and how they relate to God. What is the positional truth mentioned in these verses? What implication does that have for your life?

Day Three:

1. Read Romans 7:5-13

2. According to these verses, what is the relationship between “the law” and “sin”?
3. Romans 7:5 says that our sinful passions are aroused by “the law”. How can this be possible? How does Paul’s example of coveting in Romans 7:7-9 help us to understand this better?
4. Do you have any experiences with sin in your own life that are similar to Paul’s experience with coveting? In other words, have you ever been in a situation where the mere fact that something was forbidden made you desire it more?
5. Do you have any “besetting” sins in your life (a “besetting sin” is a particular sin that you habitually commit and is very discouraging to you, but deeply ingrained and seemingly impervious to your efforts to eliminate it)? Have you ever tried to really focus on that sin in a major effort to eliminate it? Were you successful? Can you relate that experience to Romans 7:5-8?

Day Four:

1. Read Romans 7:6.
2. Look up and write out the following verses:
Galatians 3:1-5.

Galatians 5:18.

3. According to the verses above, is a New Testament/New Covenant believer supposed to live differently from how an Old Testament/Old Covenant believer would have lived? Explain your answer.
4. Select an area from your life where you would like to see spiritual growth. Maybe it is in a task that you would like to accomplish (like sharing your faith or reading your Bible), or maybe it is a particularly besetting sin (like lust, coveting, or excessive partying). The

old way of the written code, would approach this problem by merely telling you what needed to be done. “Read your Bible.” “Share your faith.” “Stop lusting.” If we are to live differently now as believers (not according to the written code, but according to the Spirit) what would that look like? Specifically how can we live righteous lives without depending upon written codes and external legalism?

Day Five:

1. Read Romans 7:7, 12-13.
2. We have talked about all the reasons this passage gives as to why living by the law is insufficient, and all the problems with the law. The verses you just looked at though, speak of some of the benefits of the law. What are those benefits?
3. In what way is “the law” holy, and righteous, and good, as Romans 7:12 says?
- 4A. Write out Galatians 3:24 below.
- 4B. In what way can the “law” lead (be our tutor to lead) us to faith in Jesus Christ? (HINT: The law does show us the righteous standard of God. When we see that standard, though, we are unable to fulfill it. How does faith in Jesus Christ help us to attain the righteousness of God?)
5. Think of a commandment in the Bible that seems particularly difficult for you to fulfill. How does that commandment both condemn you (Romans 7:13), and lead you to the need for faith in Christ (Galatians 3:24)?

Day Six:

1. Reread Romans 7:1-13.
2. Read back through the questions and answers from this past week.
3. What did you learn about God this week that was either new or especially impacting for you?

4. Can you think of some personal applications from what you learned this week?

Prayer Requests and Notes

**WEEK TEN:
Romans 7:14-25**

Day One:

As you begin your study of the Word this week, take a moment to stop and pray. Ask God to guide you in your study of His Word.

1. Read Romans 7:14-25
2. Summarize these verses by making an outline consisting of numerous “sections”, attaching a brief description for each section. For an example, see Week One: Day One.
3. Think of some questions that might lead to an important spiritual “discovery.”
4. Write your questions in the space below, then pray that God would answer your question(s).
5. What observations do you have of this passage? To say it another way, what stands out to you most about what you read for this week?

Day Two:

1. Read Romans 7:14-25.
2. There is a lot of controversy about how these verses should be interpreted. Some have thought that these verses describe someone who is not yet a Christian (i.e. Paul thinking back to his days before he came to Christ.) Others believe that these verses describe the experience of all Christians in this life. Below, read Bob Reed’s reasons for why he believes that these verses are speaking of the Christian life. Is his argument convincing?

“To be fair, one should acknowledge that there is considerable controversy over this question. It is my opinion that these verses describe Paul’s experience as a Christian, or at the very least, the experience of a Christian who attempts to live righteously “by law.” The evidences for this position include: (i) Paul is writing in the present tense as

a Christian, not the past tense. For example, in verse 25, Paul writes, “So then, I myself in my mind am a slave to God's law, but in the sinful nature a slave to the law of sin.” (ii) These verses describe an inner turmoil that most Christians, if they were honest, are only too familiar with. (iii) Lest one complain that the previous evidence is based on experience, and experience should not be conclusive in determining what is true, note that Paul describes this same sense of inner turmoil in Galatians 5:17, “For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want.” There can be no question that Galatians 5:17 is intended to be descriptive of Christians. (iv) The very next section of Romans begins by stating, “Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus...” This reassurance make perfect sense if one presumes a context in which Christians, reflecting on their inner turmoil, would question their salvation. (v) Throughout Romans 7:14-25, Paul is careful to make a distinction between the “sinful nature” and who he really is. For example, in verse 20, Paul writes, “Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it.” This verse would not apply to a non-Christian, since a non-Christian could not claim that he/she was not the one doing the sinning. Only believers, who have been given a new nature, can make this claim.

- 3A. Consider the following verses:
Romans 6:6,7. “For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin--because anyone who has died has been freed from sin.”
Romans 6:17,18. “But thanks be to God that, though you used to be slaves to sin, you wholeheartedly obeyed the form of teaching to which you were entrusted. You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness.”
Romans 6:20,22. “When you were slaves to sin, you were free from the control of righteousness...But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves to God, the benefit you reap leads to holiness, and the result is eternal life.”
- 3B. In verse 14, Paul writes that he is “of flesh, sold into bondage into sin.” Assuming that he is describing his current life as a believer, how do you reconcile this statement with the verses in (3A)? (HINT: The key to this question is to remember the inner conflict between the believer’s new nature in Christ – Romans 7:22, and the believer’s flesh – Romans 7:18)
4. Write out the following verses.
Romans 7:15.

Romans 7:19.

- 5A. Are there certain habitual things in your life which you do but “you do not wish to do?” What are they?
- 5B. Explain in detail why you can’t seem to stop doing those things that “you do not wish to do.” In other words, if you sincerely “do not wish to do” them, then why do you keep on doing them?
6. Can you relate to Romans 7:23?

Day Three:

1. Read Romans 7:14-25.
2. What explanation does Paul give for why he “practices the very evil that he does not wish?”
3. Write out the following verses:
Romans 7:17.

Romans 7:20.
4. In your own words, explain what Paul means when he says, “I am not the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me.”
5. When someone becomes a believer in Jesus Christ, there is a fundamental change in their core identity before the Lord. Look up the passages below, and then beside the verse reference, write what we learn about the new core identity of someone who has placed their faith in Christ.

Ezekiel 36:25-27

2 Corinthians 5:17

2 Corinthians 5:21

Galatians 2:20

Galatians 3:26-4:7

Ephesians 1:13-14

Ephesians 2:1-7

5. How does understanding the “new identity” that believers have, help you to understand Romans 7:22 better? Do you think it would be fair to say that in the core identity of a believer they really desire to do the will of God? (NOTE: Today’s study deals only with the new identity that a believer has in Christ. Tomorrow’s study will deal with the reality of “the flesh” or “sinful nature” that remains while believers live out their lives on this earth.)
6. Have you ever stopped to really think about the new identity you have in Christ? Are there any truths you learned today in your study that you have a hard time really believing to be true? Spend some time meditating on your identity in Christ and thanking God for who He has made us to be in Him.

Day Four:

1. Read Romans 7:14-25.
2. Review: What explanation does Paul give for why he “practices the very evil that he does not wish?”
3. Review: Write out the following verses:
Romans 7:17

Romans 7:20

4. Our study from yesterday looked at the reality of a believer’s new identity in Christ. However, as a believer lives out this “new life” in Christ, they do so at an old address, their “flesh.” That is why Paul can write in Romans 7:14-25 about how in his inner man he “delights in doing the will of God,” but he “sees a different law at work in the members” of his body. Today’s study is designed to help us understand more fully the concept of “the flesh” in the believer’s life today.

5. Read the following verses, and beside the reference write down what you find about the flesh. (NOTE: The NIV frequently translates the Greek word for “flesh” as “sinful nature.”)

Romans 8:7-8

Galatians 5:17-21

Romans 7:18

Galatians 5:24

6. Knowing that we all have a “flesh” in this life, it is not a surprise that we all struggle with sin. There is a part of us that is particularly susceptible to temptation and sin. However, as believers in Jesus Christ, our flesh does not tell the whole story. In fact, our flesh is not even the dominant, necessary power in our lives. Galatians 5:16 tells us that if we walk by the Spirit (according to our new nature in Christ), we will in no way carry out the desires of our flesh. This is great news! God has given us the resources to resist the flesh and walk in His Spirit’s power. On our own, we (like Paul in Romans 7), do not possess the strength to resist the desires of our flesh. However, because Jesus Christ has saved us from this Body of death, we now have an option . . . obeying Christ in the power of His Holy Spirit. Take a moment and think of the particular ways in which you are personally tempted in your flesh. Write down some of your regular temptations in the flesh. Then, spend some time praying and asking God to “save you from this body of death,” giving you the power to walk forward in obedience to Him.

Day Five:

1. Read Romans 7:24,25.
2. One interpretation of Romans 7:14-25 is that it describes a believer who is inhabited by a “sin nature / flesh.” That is, by virtue of the fact that he/she is human, the believer still possesses a sin nature that is in rebellion against God and that compels him/her to sin. If that is the case, then in what sense has Jesus “set us free”?
3. The Greek word for “rescue (NIV)”/“set free (NASB)” in verse 24 is different from the Greek word for salvation, but it has the same general sense. That is, in context, both words have the idea that Jesus has delivered believers from the power of sin. Galatians 1:4 uses the same word to speak of how Jesus rescues us from this present evil world. Have you come to the point where you realize your need to be rescued by Christ? Not just rescued from the future punishment of our sins, but also from sin’s desire to reign in

our bodies now? If you have come to that point where you sense a need to be rescued, what statement of fact do you see in Romans 7:24-25 that would encourage you? How will you seek to apply this truth the next time you feel totally defeated by sin in your life?

Day Six:

1. Reread Romans 7:14-25.
2. Read back through the questions and answers from this past week.
3. What did you learn about God this week that was either new or especially impacting for you?
4. Can you think of some personal applications from what you learned this week?

Prayer Requests and Notes

WEEK ELEVEN:
Romans 7:25-8:17

Day One:

As you begin your study of the Word this week, take a moment to stop and pray. Ask God to guide you in your study of His Word.

1. Read Romans 7:25 – 8:17
2. Summarize these verses by making an outline consisting of numerous “sections”, attaching a brief description for each section. For an example, see Week One: Day One.
3. Think of some questions that might lead to an important spiritual “discovery.”
4. Write your questions in the space below, then pray that God would answer your question(s).
5. What observations do you have of this passage? To say it another way, what stands out to you most about what you read for this week?

Day Two:

1. Read Romans 8:1-4.
2. The word “condemn” appears twice in these two verses. It appears first in verse 1 when it says “there is now no condemnation” and again in verse 3 when it says God “condemned sin in the flesh (NASB)”/”condemned sin in sinful man (NIV)”. Give a synonym for condemn, as it is used in these verses, in the space below.
3. Romans 8:1 states there is “no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.” Why might a believer think they deserve condemnation by God? (HINT: What is the context of Romans 8:1?)

4. Verses 1-3 are confusing because they seem to contain an inconsistency. In verse 1 it says that believers are not condemned but the sin that is resident in believers' lives ("sin in the flesh") is condemned. If God is so opposed to sin, then how can He both hate sin and yet love and fully embrace Christians who are sinful? (HINT: Who is the real you?)

5. Read and consider the following verses:
Romans 8:3,4. *"For what the law was powerless to do in that it was weakened by the sinful nature, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful man to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in sinful man, in order that the righteous requirements of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the sinful nature but according to the Spirit."*

6. What is it that "the Law could not do (NASB)"/"was powerless to do (NIV)" (cf. verse 3)?

7. Verses 3 and 4 state that God sent His own Son so "that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us..." In plain English, explain what it means when it says "that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us..."

- 8A. Some might argue (as Paul has pointed out all along) that since Christians are not saved by their good works, then there is no incentive to do good. A similar criticism states that a system based on grace and forgiveness simply lowers the standard of righteousness to a sub par level leading to mediocre morals and sloppy living. How does Romans 8:1-4 contradict those criticisms?

- 8B. How do these verses encourage you toward pursuing Christ's righteousness? How do these verses say it is possible to live out Christ's righteousness?

Day Three:

1. Read Romans 8:3,4.

2. In verse 4, Paul qualifies "us". Complete the following statement: "...that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who..."

NOTE: If you have the NIV, you completed the above sentence by writing, "who live according to the Spirit." The NASB is more faithful to the original language. The Greek word translated "live" according to the Spirit is "*peripateō*", from which we get the English word "peripatetic" (i.e., "of or relating to walking"). The NASB translates this verse 4 "who walk according to the

Spirit.” All Christians are indwelt by the Spirit, but not all Christians “walk according to the Spirit.” God has condemned sin in our bodies and given us His Spirit, who indwells us, in order that we might live righteously, something we could never do on our own. However, it is our responsibility to “walk according to the Spirit.” This raises the question, what does it mean to “walk according to the Spirit?”

3A. Read and prayerfully consider the following verses:

Romans 8:4. “...in order that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who **do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.**”

Galatians 5:16. “But I say, **walk by the Spirit,** and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh.”

Galatians 5:25. “Since we live by the Spirit, let us **keep in step with the Spirit.**”

Galatians 5:18. “But if you are **led by the Spirit,** you are not under the Law.”

Romans 13:14. “Rather, **clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ,** and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature.”

Galatians 3:27. “...for all of you who were baptized into Christ **have clothed yourselves with Christ.**”

NOTE: All of these verses describe a way of living that is dependent upon the Spirit of God. Further, these verses clearly imply that Christians can choose, or not choose, to “walk according to the Spirit.” In this sense, the clothing illustration of Romans 13:14 and Galatians 3:27 is quite apt. Just as all of us continually put on and take off clothes, so believers can “put on” and take off Jesus Christ. Galatians 3:27 says that all believers begin their Christian lives by “putting on” Jesus Christ. The call in Romans 13:14 to “re-dress” ourselves implies that believers can also allow themselves to become spiritually naked.

3B. Notably absent from these verses is a description of what it means to “walk according to the Spirit.” What do you think it means?

4. Read the following verses:

Galatians 3:3-5. “Are you so foolish? After beginning with the Spirit, are you now trying to attain your goal by human effort? Have you suffered so much for nothing--if it really was for nothing? Does God give you his Spirit and work miracles among you because you observe the law, or because you believe what you heard?”

5. Explain what it means to “believe what you have heard.”

6. Do you see a connection in these verses between “walking according to the Spirit” and “believing what you heard?” Elaborate.

7. “Believing what you have heard” to our 21st century ears probably carries a different meaning than the one intended by the writers of our New Testament. James 2, for instance, describes “real faith/belief” as something that will always lead to action. In other words, we find out what we really believe by looking at what we do. In our lives today, we tend to divorce belief from action, calling any intellectual assent to a notion “belief.” Biblically speaking, however, casual mental assent is not belief/faith at all. With that said, walking in the Spirit / believing what we have heard from God, is the process whereby we acknowledge God’s righteous standard in Scripture, decide that it is true and right, and then act according to that belief. All the while we do this, we are acting, knowing that it is only because of the power that the Holy Spirit gives us that we are able to walk forward in the righteous commands that God offers. With that said, think of an area in your life where you really struggle to obey God. Brainstorm below about what it would look like to walk by faith in the power of the Spirit in that area.

Day Four:

1. Consider the following verses:
Romans 8:5-11. “For those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who are according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace, because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so; and those who are in the flesh cannot please God. However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him. And if Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, yet the spirit is alive because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who indwells you.”

2. These verses provide a number of descriptions of unbelievers. For example, unbelievers are described as those who are “according to the flesh.” Make a list of the different descriptions of unbelievers.

3. These verses provide a number of descriptions of believers. For example, believers are described as those who are “according to the Spirit.” Make a list of the different descriptions of believers.

- 4A. Consider the following verses:
Romans 8:11. *“And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit, who lives in you.”*
2 Corinthians 4:11. *“For we who are alive are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that his life may be revealed in our mortal body.”*

- 4B. What does the Bible mean when it says that “Jesus will give life to our mortal bodies?” (HINT: You may be tempted to say this verse speaks of the resurrection of believers and life after death. However, this is out of place with the thought context of Romans 8. The context is that the Spirit of God indwells believers so that the “requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us”.)

Day Five:

1. Read Romans 8:12-17

- 2A. Consider the following verses:
Galatians 3:26-29. *“You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.”*

- 2B. Can we conclude, based on Galatians 3:26-29, that anyone who is a believer is a “son of God?”

3. Romans 8:14 states that “those who are being led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.”

- 3A. Based upon (2), is it fair to say that “if one is being led by the Spirit of God, then they are a Christian?”

- 3B. Is it possible, maybe even common, for believers to live “according to the flesh,” and not “according to the Spirit?” In other words, is it possible for believers to not be “led by the Spirit?” (HINT: What is the context of Romans 8? Other supporting verses include Galatians 3:3, Galatians 5:16-18, Galatians 5:25.)

- 3C. Does Romans 8:14 imply that if one is not being led by the Spirit of God, then they are not a Christian? If not, what does Romans 8:14 mean when it says that “those who are being led by the Spirit of God are sons of God?”
4. The context of Romans 8 is that Christians are called to live “according to the Spirit.” Unlike unbelievers, Christians have been given the ability to live righteously because the Spirit of God indwells them. They therefore have an “obligation” to utilize this empowerment that God has given all His children. One interpretation of Romans 8:14 is that when a believer allows himself/herself to be led by the Spirit, they are showing their “true colors.” They are revealing who they really are; namely, “sons of God.” It’s not that those who are not living according to the Spirit are not Christians, it’s just that their Christianity is disguised. It is not manifestly evident. In contrast, “...all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.” Does this seem like a reasonable interpretation to you?
5. Re-read Romans 8:1-17. A possible summary of these verses is that God has empowered believers with His Spirit to live righteously. Therefore, we have an obligation to display what He has given us! In what areas of your life do you feel as though you are revealing your true identity in Christ as a “son of God?” Where is your life “out of tune” with your true identity as a “son of God?”

Day Six:

1. Reread Romans 8:1-17.
2. Read back through the questions and answers from this past week.
3. What did you learn about God this week that was either new or especially impacting for you?
4. Can you think of some personal applications from what you learned this week?

Prayer Requests and Notes

WEEK TWELVE:
Romans 8:18-39

Day One:

As you begin your study of the Word this week, take a moment to stop and pray. Ask God to guide you in your study of His Word.

1. Read Romans 8:18-39
2. Summarize these verses by making an outline consisting of numerous “sections”, attaching a brief description for each section. For an example, see Week One: Day One.
3. Think of some questions that might lead to an important spiritual “discovery.”
4. Write your questions in the space below, then pray that God would answer your question(s).
5. What observations do you have of this passage? To say it another way, what stands out to you most about what you read for this week?

Day Two:

1. Read Romans 8:18-25.
- 2A. Consider the following verses:
Romans 8:17. “*Now if we are children, then we are heirs--heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, **if indeed we share in his sufferings** in order that we may also share in his glory.”*
Romans 8:18. “*I consider that **our present sufferings** are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us.”*

Philippians 3:10. “I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and **the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings**, becoming like him in his death...”

Hebrews 2:9,10. “But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, now crowned with glory and honor because **he suffered death**, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone. In bringing many sons to glory, it was fitting that God, for whom and through whom everything exists, should **make the author of their salvation perfect through suffering**.”

1 Peter 4:13. “But rejoice that **you participate in the sufferings of Christ**, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed.”

2B. What are the “present sufferings” that are spoken of in Romans 8:18?

2C. Why do believers “groan inwardly”/“groan within ourselves” (cf. Romans 8:23)?

3A. Consider the following verses:

Galatians 5:17. “For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want.”

Romans 8:13. “For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live...”

3B. One interpretation of the “present sufferings” is that it relates to the spiritual warfare that takes place within the believer (cf. Galatians 5:17). God has given believers a new nature; indeed, Christ Himself indwells us (cf. Romans 8:9-11). Just as Christ suffered in putting to death the sins of the world, so He suffers in our life in putting to death the deeds of our sinful nature (cf. Hebrews 2:9,10). We are called to participate in that process (cf. Romans 8:13, Romans 8:17, Philippians 3:10, 1 Peter 4:13). Suffering comes into play both because (i) there is pain in our lives as we put to death fleshly things that we are addicted to, and (ii) there is frustration at the slowness and difficulty of this “sanctification” process. Given the context of Romans 8:18-25, does this interpretation seem reasonable to you? Elaborate.

4. Consider the following verses:

Romans 5:2b. “...and we exult in **hope of the glory of God**.”

Romans 8:18. “I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with **the glory that will be revealed in us**.”

Romans 8:19. “The creation waits in eager **expectation for the sons of God to be revealed.**”

Romans 8:21. “...that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into **the glorious freedom of the children of God.**”

Romans 8:23. “Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as **we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.**”

5. What is the “Christian’s hope of glory”?

- 6A. Consider the following verses:
Romans 8:24,25. “For in hope we have been saved, but hope that is seen is not hope; for why does one also hope for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, with perseverance we wait eagerly for it.”

- 6B. What is it that “we do not see” now, but for which we “eagerly wait?”

7. Complete the following sentence: “Right now my life has a lot of sin and spiritual failure in it, but one day...”

Day Three:

1. Read Romans 8:26-30.

2. A number of ministries of the Holy Spirit in the believer’s life are mentioned in Chapter 8 of Romans. Look up the following verses and identify the respective activity of the Holy Spirit:
Romans 8:11:

Romans 8:13:

Romans 8:16:

Romans 8:26:

3. Write out the following verses:
Romans 8:29,30.

4. Respond to the following statement: “When it comes to my sanctification, the ultimate outcome is never in doubt. God will produce His glory in me whether I choose to work with Him or against Him. In the end, it doesn’t matter what I do.”
5. Romans 8:28 is an often quoted passage regarding God sovereignly working His plans in and through our lives. Think of some tough events that you have endured in life. Is it difficult for you to believe that somehow God is working good out of your tragedy?
6. What do you think it means that “the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words”?

[NOTE: In Appendix 5 at the end of this week’s study is a paper by Mark Robinson on the theology of the Spirit in Romans.]

Day Four:

1. Read Romans 8:31-34.
2. Write out the following verses:
Romans 8:33,34.

Romans 14:4.

3. When you think of God, do you think of Him primarily as someone who places demands on you? Or do you think of Him as one who is primarily a giver rather than a taker in your relationship? Be honest.
4. How does your answer to (3) fit in with Romans 8:32?
5. Read Romans 8:35-39.
6. After asking “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?” Paul continues the question by asking “Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?” This is surprising. If Paul were thinking merely of events you would think he would have asked “What shall separate us from the love of Christ?” instead of “Who...” This suggests that the tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, etc. are the results of attacks by spiritual enemies working against Christians. What evidence do you see in verse 36 to support this interpretation?
7. Why might Christians think that they had become “separated” from the love of Christ when faced with persecution for their faith?

8. Does God's love guarantee that we will be spared difficult circumstances?
- 9A. The word that is translated "conquer" in verse 37 is the Greek word "nikaō", which can also be translated as "overcome." Consider the following verses:
1 John 5:4,5. "...for everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith. Who is it that overcomes the world? Only he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God."
- 9B. According to verse 37, God's love guarantees that we "overwhelmingly conquer" (NASB)/"we are more than conquerors" (NIV) in "all these things." What do you think this means?

Day Five:

1. Reread Romans 8:18-39.
2. Read back through the questions and answers from this past week.
3. What did you learn about God this week that was either new or especially impacting for you?
4. Can you think of some personal applications from what you learned this week?

Day Six:

1. Think back through all of Romans 1-8.
2. What did you learn in your study of Romans that was particularly impactful to you?

3. If you talked to someone who was thinking about studying the book of Romans, and asked you why they should do so, how would you answer them?

Prayer Requests and Notes

Appendix 5

By Mark Robinson

A Biblical Theology of the Holy Spirit in Romans

Introduction

The book of Romans is full of insight into the particular ministries of the Holy Spirit. It appears that the Holy Spirit's ministry is divided into two major sections: the positional actions and the provisional actions. The positional actions consist of the Spirit's indwelling, liberating, and testimony. The provisional actions consist of the Spirit's part in sanctification, prayer, and ministry.

Before looking at the actions of the Holy Spirit, we must first look at why this Spirit is truly Holy. In two separate places, it can be noted that the Spirit is given a divine status as the third person of the Holy trinity. The Holy Spirit is referred to as the "Spirit of God," and the "Spirit of Christ" (8:9). By naming the Spirit both as the Spirit of God and of Christ, Divinity is surely implied of the Spirit and an equal standing is assured of God and Christ and Spirit. In a second place also, we see that the Spirit is termed the "Spirit of Him" (8:11). Similarly here, we see an elevation of the Spirit to a Divine level. Now, with that in mind, let us look at the positional and provisional actions of the third person of the trinity, the Holy Spirit.

Positional Actions of the Holy Spirit

Indwelling of the Holy Spirit

The book of Romans very clearly asserts that the Holy Spirit dwells within the believer. Indeed the same Spirit which raised Jesus from the dead indwells the believer, and is given as a promise to give life to our mortal bodies one day as well (8:11). By saying that the Holy Spirit indwells believers, we mean that the Holy Spirit has taken up residence in believers' hearts as an active force, reminding believers of God's love for them (5:5). Also, the indwelling Holy Spirit is a "deposit," given by God, as a first fruit of the glory which is to come for the Christian (8:23). God has saved the believer from sin, yet He has not yet completely taken them out of the fallen world, and so the believer is left to "groan" in this world until he tastes glory in the next. In the meantime, God has sent the Holy Spirit as a foretaste of Glory Divine (Newell, 323).

Liberation by the Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit liberates the believer from the law of sin and death (8:2). Sin and its consequence of death no longer have any power over the believer, the condemnation is removed. As Newell points out, "It is the blessed Holy Spirit as the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus, who makes the deliverance an experience. That is, the constant operation of the Spirit makes effectual in those who have life in Christ Jesus, that deliverance which belongs to those in Christ (Newell, 290)." In fact, the Holy Spirit now sets up an entirely new framework in which we live. Being liberated from the law of sin and death, circumcision of the flesh is no longer needed. Being now liberated from that physical act, a new spiritual circumcision of the heart is performed by the Holy Spirit (2:29). What the physical Jewish circumcision was an external symbol for, the Holy Spirit has internalized.

Testimony of the Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit is seen as a main testimony to the authenticity of conversion and the mark of a true believer. Indeed, the Spirit is said to bear witness with our own spirit that we are children of God (8:16). This works itself out, and is seen by others that those who are under the control of the Spirit and are being led by Him, those are the true sons of God (8:14). The Holy Spirit must be present in someone's life, or they are simply not a true believer (8:9). The Holy Spirit must be present in the believer's life, because when a believer comes to faith, the power in which he lives now changes. "The Spirit becomes now the element in which the believer lives, like water to the fish, or air to the bird, vital, supplying, protecting (Newell, 299)."

The Provisional Actions of the Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit in Sanctification

The Holy Spirit plays a crucial role in the sanctification of a believer. First of all, a new standard of sanctification has been erected in the life of the Christian [different from the Old Testament Jew]. The new standard is to not follow all the laws and provisions of the Mosaic code, for it has no power over sin and death, but to serve in the newness of the Spirit (7:6). The believer serves in the newness of the Spirit by first of all, setting his/her mind on the things of the Spirit which are life and peace, and then by walking according to the power of the Spirit (8:4-6). Walking by the Spirit is possible for the believer because the indwelling of the Spirit has now enabled a believer to choose to obey God, an option that is not available to the non-believer (Newell, 296). The general pattern for sanctification laid out in Romans 6:11-13, is given its power and completion by the Holy Spirit, as it is by the Spirit that we can truly put to death the deeds of the body (8:13). As Sanctification goes along, the Holy Spirit produces fruit in us that we would not normally have. One such fruit is the fruit of hope (15:13). "Some human beings are naturally introspective and gloomy- Others are naturally jovial and buoyant: but the joy in which we as believers are to abound does not in any wise flow from nature, but from the direct, inworking energy of the Holy Ghost (Newell, 530)."

The Holy Spirit in Prayer

The Holy Spirit plays an integral part in the prayers of the believer. First of all, the Holy Spirit unites believers in love to pray (15:30). After believers unite to pray, the Holy Spirit helps us in our communication with God by completely knowing us. The Holy Spirit knows our conscience and thus can always relate to us, always knowing our desires (9:1). Also, the believer has difficulty praying as he ought, so the Spirit of God intercedes for him/her with groanings which cannot be uttered (8:26). The Holy Spirit knows the need of the believer and then passionately pours out those needs before the Father. The Spirit is our intercessor, and the Father knows the mind of the Spirit (8:27). "It is the Father here that is searching our hearts. How we used to shrink from the thought of such Divine searching! But here God is searching hearts to know what is the mind of the indwelling, Holy Spirit concerning a saint, to know what the Spirit groans for, for that saint; in order that He may supply it (Newell, 327)."

The Holy Spirit in Ministry

The Holy Spirit is the power source from which ministry is drawn (15:19). Paul did many great things in his ministry, but he took no credit. He acknowledged the Holy Spirit as the power for all that took place in his ministry. Indeed, Paul's ministry among the Gentiles was a work that he offered up to God, which was sanctified by the Holy Spirit (15:16). Paul's ministry, his priesthood, was sanctified unto God by the Holy Spirit, not by a fleshly action, such as the circumcision performed by the Jews. Finally, as one ministers, an important thing to remember is to not become a stumbling block to others. Remember that the most important thing is not how well we follow a list of do's and don'ts, but how well we are manifesting fruits of the Holy Spirit such as righteousness, peace, and joy (14:17). In fact, the kingdom of God is founded on such fruit.

Work Cited

Newell, William R. *Romans: Verse by Verse*. Kregel Classics, 1945.

OPTIONAL REVIEW:

Romans 1-8

1. Read through Chapters 1-8 of Romans several times.
2. Read through the outline below and see if you can find a succinct “heading” for each of the indicated sections of Romans. Try and write your headings so that by reading them, one after the other, you can “walk through” the main ideas in the Epistle to the Romans. (Feel free to rearrange sections, or come up with your own outline if you’d like.)

HEADING: _____

- 1:1-6 An introduction to Paul.
1:7-14 The reason Paul wants to preach the gospel in Rome.
1:16,17 The power of the gospel.

HEADING: _____

- 1:18-32 The wrath of God.
2:1-8 Every one who judges others is condemned.

HEADING: _____

- 2:9-16 God will judge Jews the same as Gentiles.
2:17-29 Jews should not think that they are exempt from God’s judgment.
3:1-2 What is the advantage of being a Jew?
3:3-8 The unbelief of the Jews only proves the truth of God’s righteousness.

HEADING: _____

- 3:9-18 No person can claim to be righteous before God.
3:19-31 Righteousness does not come through the Law, but through faith in Jesus Christ.
4:1-25 Righteousness by faith was illustrated by Abraham for our benefit.

HEADING: _____

- 5:1-5 We have been made to be glorified.
5:6-21 Jesus Christ will enable us to live righteously.

HEADING: _____

- 6:1-11 Consider yourselves dead to sin but alive in Christ.
6:12-23 Present your members as instruments of righteousness to God.

HEADING: _____

7:1-4

We are no longer under Law.

7:5-13

Sin, operating through the Law, produces spiritual death.

HEADING: _____

7:14-24

We are trapped in a body of death.

HEADING: _____

7:25-8:4

Jesus Christ has released us from spiritual death.

8:5-11

We have the Spirit of God in us.

8:12-17

We are under obligation to live according to the Spirit.

HEADING: _____

8:18-25

We look forward to the future glory that awaits us.

8:26-39

Nothing will keep us from our eternal destinies because God's love is secure.