

ROMANS 1-5

Seized by the Gospel

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An Introduction to Romans

Martin Luther on Romans

This letter is truly the most important piece in the New Testament. It is purest Gospel. It is well worth a Christian's while not only to memorize it word for word but also to occupy himself with it daily, as though it were the daily bread of the soul. It is impossible to read or to meditate on this letter too much or too well. The more one deals with it, the more precious it becomes and the better it tastes.

John Stott on Romans

Paul's letter to Romans is a kind of Christian Manifesto . . . a manifesto of freedom through Jesus Christ. It is the fullest, plainest and grandest statement of the gospel in the New Testament. [It is the message] that human beings are born in sin and slavery, but that Jesus Christ came to set us free. For here is unfolded the good news of freedom, freedom from the holy wrath of God upon all ungodliness, freedom from alienation into reconciliation, freedom from the condemnation of God's law, freedom from what Malcolm Muggeridge used to call 'the dark little dungeon of our own ego', freedom from the fear of death, freedom one day from the decay of the groaning creation into the glorious liberty of God's children, and meanwhile freedom from ethnic conflict in the family of God, and freedom to give ourselves to the loving service of God and others.

Eugene Peterson on Romans

The letter to the Romans is a piece of exuberant and passionate thinking. This is the glorious life of the mind enlisted in the service of God. Paul takes the well-witnessed and devoutly believed fact of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth and thinks through its implications. How does it happen that in the death and resurrection of Jesus, world history took a new direction, and at the same moment the life of every man, woman, and child on the planet was eternally affected? What is God up to? What does it mean that Jesus "saves"? What's behind all this, and where is it going? These are the questions that drive Paul's thinking. Paul's mind is supple and capacious. He takes logic and argument, poetry and imagination, Scripture and prayer, creation and history and experience, and weaves them into this letter that has become the premier document of Christian theology.

Using this Guide

Studying Romans for Biblical Understanding and Life-Change

Here's how to get the most out of your time:

Seek God

God is the focus of our study. The intent of Paul, the author of Romans, is to shine forth the gospel. Tim Keller says the message of the gospel is, *"I am more flawed and sinful than I ever dared believe, but I am even more loved and accepted than I ever dared hope."* This is the theme of Romans: We are flawed, and we are lost, but we have a flawless God who finds us, redeems us, and sets us free from sin and shame and adopts us into his family.

Settle into your study each day and pause to acknowledge God's presence with you. Do this again when you gather with your group to share what you are learning, experiencing and practicing.

Expect God to be present. Christian spirituality is entering into the reality that God is always present, always seeing, always hearing, always knowing and always moving toward us.

Set a Place and a Time, Five Days a Week

Right now, determine when and where you will meet with God. Put it on your calendar. Guard this time like you guard time for your favorite person, event or show. Each week is divided into five days of studying and meditating upon the truths of Romans. Be sure to set aside 20-30 minutes each day.

Gather Together

Gather some friends to meet with weekly to discuss how you are experiencing God, his word and life-change through your study of Romans. Pray for each other. Listen to each other. Make it a safe time by not trying to fix one another with unsolicited advice. Be sure to be fully present with each other, knowing that God is fully present with you.

Expect Change

When we come to faith in Jesus Christ a miracle takes place. God, the Holy Spirit, comes to live in us. Jesus told his followers that his Father would send the Holy Spirit to be *with* them and *in* them (John 14:17). The Holy Spirit is committed to our transformation—he instructs us with truth, he convicts us against unrighteousness, he empowers us for the mission of God and he grows us in fruitfulness (love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness and self-control).

Follow the Teaching

www.womensbiblestudyLA.com/resources
Women's Bible Study LA YouTube Channel

Set Apart | Romans 1:1-7

Notes Page: Use this page to take notes on the talk, *Romans: Set Apart*. Find this talk at womensbiblestudyLA.com/resources.

Opening Video | Romans Overview

You can find this video at www.thebibleproject.com.

Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle and set apart for the gospel of God—² the gospel he promised beforehand through his prophets in the Holy Scriptures³ regarding his Son, who as to his earthly life was a descendant of David,⁴ and who through the Spirit of holiness was appointed the Son of God in power by his resurrection from the dead: Jesus Christ our Lord.⁵ Through him we received grace and apostleship to call all the Gentiles to the obedience that comes from faith for his name's sake.⁶ And you also are among those Gentiles who are called to belong to Jesus Christ.⁷ To all in Rome who are loved by God and called to be his holy people: Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ.

Romans 1:1-7

⁵⁷At this (the religious leaders) covered their ears and, yelling at the top of their voices, they all rushed at Stephen,⁵⁸ dragged him out of the city and began to stone him. Meanwhile, the witnesses laid their coats at the feet of a young man named Saul . . . And Saul approved of their killing him . . . Saul began to destroy the church. Going from house to house, he dragged off both men and women and put them in prison . . .

⁹ Meanwhile, Saul was still breathing out murderous threats against the Lord's disciples. He went to the high priest² and asked him for letters to the synagogues in Damascus, so that if he found any there who belonged to the Way, whether men or women, he might take them as prisoners to Jerusalem.

³ As he neared Damascus on his journey, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him.

⁴ He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him,
"Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?"

⁵ "Who are you, Lord?" Saul asked.

"I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting," he replied.

⁶ "Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do."

⁷ The men traveling with Saul stood there speechless; they heard the sound but did not see anyone. ⁸ Saul got up from the ground, but when he opened his eyes he could see nothing. So they led him by the hand into Damascus. ⁹ For three days he was blind, and did not eat or drink anything.

¹⁰ In Damascus there was a disciple named Ananias. The Lord called to him in a vision,
"Ananias!"

"Yes, Lord," he answered.

¹¹ The Lord told him, "Go to the house of Judas on Straight Street and ask for a man from Tarsus named Saul, for he is praying. ¹² In a vision he has seen a man named Ananias come and place his hands on him to restore his sight."

¹³ "Lord," Ananias answered, "I have heard many reports about this man and all the harm he has done to your holy people in Jerusalem. ¹⁴ And he has come here with authority from the chief priests to arrest all who call on your name."

¹⁵ But the Lord said to Ananias, "Go!

This man is my chosen instrument to proclaim my name to the Gentiles and their kings and to the people of Israel. ¹⁶ I will show him how much he must suffer for my name."

¹⁷ Then Ananias went to the house and entered it. Placing his hands on Saul, he said, "Brother Saul, the Lord—Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you were coming here—has sent me so that you may see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit."

¹⁸ Immediately, something like scales fell from Saul's eyes, and he could see again. He got up and was baptized, ¹⁹ and after taking some food, he regained his strength.

Saul spent several days with the disciples in Damascus.

²⁰ At once he began to preach in the synagogues that Jesus is the Son of God.

²¹ All those who heard him were astonished and asked, "Isn't he the man who raised havoc in Jerusalem among those who call on this name? And hasn't he come here to take them as prisoners to the chief priests?" ²² Yet Saul grew more and more powerful and baffled the Jews living in Damascus by proving that Jesus is the Messiah.

²³After many days had gone by, there was a conspiracy among the Jews to kill him,
²⁴but Saul learned of their plan. Day and night they kept close watch on the city gates in order to
kill him. ²⁵But his followers took him by night and lowered him in a basket through an opening
in the wall. ²⁶When he came to Jerusalem, he tried to join the disciples, but they were all afraid
of him, not believing that he really was a disciple. ²⁷But Barnabas took him and brought him to
the apostles. He told them how Saul on his journey had seen the Lord and that the Lord
had spoken to him, and how in Damascus he had preached fearlessly in the name of Jesus.
²⁸So Saul stayed with them and moved about freely in Jerusalem, speaking boldly
in the name of the Lord. ²⁹He talked and debated with the Hellenistic Jews, but they tried to kill
him. ³⁰When the believers learned of this, they took him down to Caesarea and sent him off to
Tarsus. ³¹Then the church throughout Judea, Galilee and Samaria enjoyed a time of peace
and was strengthened. Living in the fear of the Lord and encouraged by the Holy Spirit,
it increased in numbers.

Acts 7:57-58; 8:1, 3; 9:1-31

DIG IN WITH YOUR GROUP

What do you hope to gain from this study and time with your group?

What most surprised you about Paul?

Share a significant encounter you've had with God in your life? If you don't feel like you've had a personal encounter with God that's okay—share how you hope to encounter God over the next 9 weeks.

What struck you most about Jesus' pursuit of Paul? How is he pursuing you today?

Pray for one another based on how you each desire to apply this passage to your life this week.

The Power of God | Romans 1:8-17

Day One | Exploring Romans 1:8-17

Pause to ask God to guide you and speak to you as you read his word. Read Romans 1:8-17 and answer the following questions. As you read look for repeated words and phrases, God, the Holy Spirit and Jesus.

What does this passage say about God?

(God the Father, God the Holy Spirit and God the Son who is Jesus. Christianity believes that God is triune, one God and yet three persons. It is a divine mystery but significant to the uniqueness of Christianity).

What does this passage say about the gospel?

What does this passage say about me?

If this passage is true, what do I need to do to respond? Be specific.

In light of this passage, how will I pray for myself and others? Record your prayer.

Day Two | Going Deeper

The word “gospel” is repeated multiple times in Romans 1:8-17. Today we explore this word and what it means for us in our everyday lives.

Look back at what you discovered about the gospel yesterday (page 7). What did you discover that incites awe and wonder in your mind and heart?

THE GOSPEL IN HISTORY BY SHAWN KENNEDY

As you can see the word gospel is mentioned throughout scripture in various ways and in various settings. Yet, the question still remains, “What is the gospel?”

The word “*gospel*” finds its roots in the Greek word, “*euangélion*.” The word *euangélion* literally mean “*news that brings great joy*.” When we hear the word gospel in today’s Christian culture our minds and hearts immediately run to the spiritual implications, but in the first century most minds and hearts would race to the political and historical implications. For those living in the time of Jesus, the word gospel was used to refer to life altering, history making, world shaping news.

BATTLE OF MARATHON

An example of this can be seen in the Battle of Marathon in 490 B.C. when Greece was invaded by Persia. The Persians thought this would be an easy and effortless victory, but the Greeks would prove them wrong. They would not only fight back, but successfully defeat the Persians. After the battle was won, Greece sent heralds or evangelists out to proclaim the good news or gospel of their victory to the surrounding cities.

Gerhard Kittel, the German protestant professor who wrote a well known and widely used book titled, “*The Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*” writes the following description of the Battle of Marathon.

“The messenger appears, raises a big right hand in greeting and calls out with a loud voice... By his appearance it is known already that he brings good news. His face shines, his spear is decked with laurel, his head is crowned, he swings a branch of palms and joy fills the city.”

Kittel describes a scene of someone bringing life altering, history making, world shaping news of great joy. It is not something that is happening, it is something that has happened.

CAESAR AUGUSTUS AND GOSPEL

If we continue this historical plight, we find that the words of Mark 1:1 (“*The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God*”) would have connected in the minds of his readers in

profound ways. For what Mark says about Jesus is the exact phrase attributed to Caesar Augustus. An inscription that was discovered from the first century reads, "The beginning of the gospel of Caesar Augustus" (Priene 105.40). When it was first inscribed it carried with it the message of life altering, history making, world changing news that Caesar Augustus was on the throne. The point that is being made and reinforced that this is good news, joyful news worth celebrating and rejoicing over. At least from the perspective of the Romans.

When the word gospel is used in the New Testament it is clearly referring to the life altering, history making, world shaping news about Jesus and his Kingdom. It communicates something has happened in history and as a result the world will never be the same. The gospel of Jesus is good news about a conquering king and battle won.

WHAT OTHERS SAY ABOUT THE GOSPEL

As I continued on my journey, I took the time to research how other pastors and theologians answered the question, "what is the gospel?" Here are some of the answers that stood out:

Tim Keller: *"A gospel is an announcement of something that has happened in history, something that has been done for you, that changes your status forever. It is not good advice, it is good news."*

Alistair Begg: *"Here's the gospel in a phrase. Because Christ died for us, those who trust in him may know that their guilt has been pardoned once and for all. What will we have to say before the bar of God's judgment? Only one thing. Christ died in my place. That's the gospel."*

N.T. Wright: *"The gospel is the royal announcement that the crucified and risen Jesus, who died for our sins and rose again according to the Scriptures, has been enthroned as the true Lord of the world. When this gospel is preached, God calls people to salvation, out of sheer grace, leading them to repentance and faith in Jesus Christ as the risen Lord."*

Scot McKnight: *"The gospel is the work of God to restore humans to union with God and communion with others, in the context of a community, for the good of others and the world."*

John Piper: *"The Gospel is the news that Jesus Christ, the Righteous One, died for our sins and rose again, eternally triumphant over all his enemies, so that there is now no condemnation for those who believe, but only everlasting joy."*

How has the gospel been life-altering good news for you?

Day Three | Ponder

Today we ponder the wonder of the gospel. It is a simple yet complex message of God's rescue and redeeming work accomplished in Jesus. The whole message of the Bible is the gospel. But today we look at a simple gospel outline referred to as *The Roman's Road* because all the passages are from Romans.

Sit with these verses in meditation. Christian meditation is not emptying the mind but filling it with the truth given in the Bible. As you meditate, consider how this life-altering good news impacts your life today. Look for the beauty of Jesus. Pause to worship him. Do not rush.

**Gospel Message: We're not alone. We all have a condition called sin.
Sin is any action or attitude that falls short of God's glory.**

²³for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. ²⁵God presented Christ as a sacrifice of atonement, through the shedding of his blood—to be received by faith. He did this to demonstrate his righteousness, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished—²⁶he did it to demonstrate his righteousness at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus.

Romans 3:23-26

*When people sin, they earn what sin pays—death.
But God gives his people a free gift—eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

Romans 6:23 (ERV)

Gospel Message: God is gracious. He doesn't wait for us to get our act together before he saves us from the condition of sin. Because of his great love and mercy he rescues us by the death of his son, Jesus, even while we are still in our sin.

⁶For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. ⁷For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die—⁸but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. ⁹Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God. ¹⁰For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life. ¹¹More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

Romans 5:6-11

**Gospel Message: God responds to our belief and confession of him as our Lord.
This is the way of salvation.**

⁹ . . . because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. ¹⁰ For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved. ¹¹ For the Scripture says, "Everyone who believes in him will not be put to shame." ¹² For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, bestowing his riches on all who call on him. ¹³ For "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."

Romans 10:9-13

**Gospel Message: Life in Christ promises lasting peace with God
and a secure relationship with him marked by love.**

Since we have been acquitted and made right through faith, we are able to experience true and lasting peace with God through our Lord Jesus, the Anointed One, the Liberating King.

Romans 5:1 (VOICE)

³¹ What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? ³² He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? ³³ Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. ³⁴ Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us. ³⁵ Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? . . . ³⁷ No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. ³⁸ For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, ³⁹ nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Romans 8:31-35, 37-39

Record your thoughts and prayers.

Day Four | Word Study | Righteousness

Today we dive deep by doing a word study on *righteousness*. The words *righteous* and *righteousness* appear 45 times in the 16 chapters of Romans.

Definitions

Righteousness | δικαίω; δικαίωσις, εως;f; δικαιοσύνη, ης;f: *to cause someone to be in a proper or right relation with someone else—'to put right with, to cause to be in a right relationship with'* [*Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*].

RIGHTEOUSNESS *The establishment of a right relationship—primarily between God and people, secondarily between people themselves. Righteousness is the fulfillment of just expectations in any relationship, whether with God or other people . . . Righteousness denotes the fulfilled expectations in relationships between man and wife, parents and children, fellow citizens, employer and employee, merchant and customers, ruler and citizens, and God and people. Depending on the fulfillment of one's expectations, an individual could be called righteous and his or her acts and speech could be designated as righteous. The opposite of righteous is "evil," "wicked," or "wrong" (cf. Ps 1:6; Zep 3:5).*

*In Israel the concept of righteousness transformed all of life, both religious and secular. Israel had been called into existence as a separate nation through which Yahweh (God) was to witness to the nations concerning his universal rule, his nature, and his expectations of life on earth. This meant that Israel required a revelation from God so that they might learn his will and be instructed in maintaining a relationship with him. The quality of a person's relationship with God is directly linked to his relationship with his fellow human [*Tyndale Bible Dictionary*].*

Commentary

*Therefore, 'the righteousness of God' is God's righteous initiative in putting sinners right with himself, by bestowing on them a righteousness which is not their own but his. 'The righteousness of God' is God's just justification of the unjust, his righteous way of pronouncing the unrighteous righteous, in which he both demonstrates his righteousness and gives righteousness to us. He has done it through Christ, the righteous one, who died for the unrighteous . . . And (God) does it by faith when we put our trust in him, and cry to him for mercy. [*John Stott, The Message of Romans*].*

Use of the Word in Romans

On the following pages, consider the use of the words in Romans and record your impressions in the margins. These are some key passages. To find all the uses of these words go to www.biblegateway.com and do a keyword search limited to Romans. And if you're up for it, go beyond and search the appearance of *righteous* and *righteousness* through the entire Bible.

*For in the gospel the righteousness of God is revealed—
a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written:
“The righteous will live by faith.”*

Romans 1:17

⁹ What shall we conclude then? Do we have any advantage? Not at all! For we have already made the charge that Jews and Gentiles alike are all under the power of sin. ¹⁰ As it is written: “There is no one righteous, not even one; ¹¹ there is no one who understands; there is no one who seeks God.

Romans 3:9-11

²¹ But now apart from the law the righteousness of God has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. ²² This righteousness is given through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference between Jew and Gentile, ²³ for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴ and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. ²⁵ God presented Christ as a sacrifice of atonement, through the shedding of his blood—to be received by faith. He did this to demonstrate his righteousness, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished— ²⁶ he did it to demonstrate his righteousness at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus.

Romans 3:21-26

² If, in fact, Abraham was justified by works, he had something to boast about—but not before God. ³ What does Scripture say? “Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.” ⁴ Now to the one who works, wages are not credited as a gift but as an obligation. ⁵ However, to the one who does not work but trusts God who justifies the ungodly, their faith is credited as righteousness. ⁶ David says the same thing when he speaks of the blessedness of the one to whom God credits righteousness apart from works: ⁷ “Blessed are those whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. ⁸ Blessed is the one whose sin the Lord will never count against them.

Romans 4:2-8

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! ¹⁸ Consequently, just as one trespass resulted in condemnation for all people, so also one righteous act resulted in justification and life for all people. ¹⁹ For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous.²⁰ The law was brought in so that the trespass might increase. But where sin increased, grace increased all the more, ²¹ so that, just as sin reigned in death, so also grace might reign through righteousness to bring eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Romans 5:17-21

⁹ You, however, are not in the realm of the flesh but are in the realm of the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, they do not belong to Christ. ¹⁰ But if Christ is in you, then even though your body is subject to death because of sin, the Spirit gives life because of righteousness. 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 because of his Spirit who lives in you.

Romans 8:9-11

¹⁶ Therefore do not let what you know is good be spoken of as evil. ¹⁷ For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit, ¹⁸ because anyone who serves Christ in this way is pleasing to God and receives human approval.

Romans 14:16-18

Summarize your understanding of righteousness from this study.

What about the righteousness given by God, found in Christ, causes you to worship?

Day Five | Seeing Jesus

Jesus is known as the second person of the trinity. He is fully God and fully human. He existed for all eternity and exists today, ruling and reigning over all creation. The gospel is fulfilled in Jesus through his life, death, resurrection and ascension to the right hand of God, the Father (Colossians 3:1-4). Today we look at Jesus as the fulfilment of the gospel and the one who gifts us with righteousness. Meditate upon the following verses—pondering them, mulling over them, letting them capture your mind and heart until you find yourself led to awe, wonder and worship.

*And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets [the Old Testament]
Jesus explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.*

Luke 24:27

¹⁹For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was preached among you by us—by me and Silas and Timothy—was not “Yes” and “No,” but in him it has always been “Yes.”

²⁰For no matter how many promises God has made, they are “Yes” in Christ. And so through him the “Amen” is spoken by us to the glory of God. ²¹Now it is God who makes both us and you stand firm in Christ. He anointed us, ²²set his seal of ownership on us, and put his Spirit in our hearts as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come.

2 Corinthians 1:19-22

*⁴Christ is the culmination of the law
so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes.*

Romans 10:4

By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain. ³For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, ⁴that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, ⁵and that he appeared to Cephas, and then to the Twelve. ⁶After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers and sisters at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep.

⁷Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles.

1 Corinthians 15:2-7

¹⁷Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here! ¹⁸All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: ¹⁹that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people’s sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. ²⁰We are therefore Christ’s ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ’s behalf: Be reconciled to God. ²¹God made Jesus who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in Jesus we might become the righteousness of God.

2 Corinthians 5:17-21

Power of God | Romans 1:8-17

Notes Page: Use this page to take notes on the talk, *Romans: Power of God*. Find this talk at womensbiblestudyLA.com/resources.

DIG IN WITH YOUR GROUP

How has your view of the gospel changed after this week's study?

Share your discoveries in studying the word *righteousness*.

Share one word that describes what you find most beautiful about Jesus after this study.

Pray for one person you would like to share the gospel with in the coming weeks.

Counterfeit Worship | Romans 1:18-25

Day One | Exploring Romans 1:18-25

Pause to ask God to guide you and speak to you as you read his word. Read Romans 1:18-25 and answer the following questions. As you read look for repeated words and phrases, God, the Holy Spirit and Jesus.

What does this passage say about God?

What does this passage say about the worship?

What does this passage say about me?

If this passage is true, what do I need to do to respond? Be specific.

In light of this passage, how will I pray for myself and others? Record your prayer.

Day Two | Going Deeper

Today we consider *the wrath of God*. The following article is a helpful guide to understanding this disturbing concept, leading to worship of Jesus and a deeper appreciation of the gospel.

Five Truths About the Wrath of God, by Joseph Scheumann

The doctrine of the wrath of God has fallen on hard times. In today's world, any concept of God's wrath upsets our modern sentiments. It's too disconcerting, too intolerant. We live in a day where we have set ourselves as the judge and God's character is on trial. "How can hell be just?" "Why would God command the Israelites to destroy the Canaanites?" "Why does God always seem so angry?"

The fact that so many people struggle with these questions, and many more like them, means that more than ever right thinking is needed about the doctrine of God's wrath. It is needed for motivation for Christian living, fuel for proper worship, and as a toolbox to confront objections to Christianity. Here are five biblical truths about the wrath of God:

1. God's wrath is just.

It has become common for many to argue that the God of the Old Testament is a moral monster that is by no means worthy of worship. However, biblical authors have no such problem. In fact, God's wrath is said to be in perfect accord with God's justice. Paul writes, "But because of your hard and impenitent heart you are storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath when God's righteous judgment will be revealed" (Romans 2:5). God's wrath, then, is in proportion to human sinfulness.

Similarly, Proverbs 24:12 says, "If you say, 'Behold, we did not know this,' does not he who weighs the heart perceive it? Does not he who keeps watch over your soul know it, and will he not repay man according to his work?" J.I. Packer summarizes: "God's wrath in the Bible is never the capricious, self-indulgent, irritable, morally ignoble thing that human anger so often is. It is, instead, a right and necessary reaction to objective moral evil" (*Knowing God*, 151).

2. God's wrath is to be feared.

God's wrath is to be feared because all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23). God's wrath is to be feared because we are justly condemned sinners apart from Christ (Romans 5:1). God's wrath is to be feared because he is powerful enough to do what he promises (Jeremiah 32:17). God's wrath is to be feared because God promises eternal punishment apart from Christ (Matthew 25:46).

3. God's wrath is consistent in the Old and New Testaments.

It is common to think of the Old Testament God as mean, harsh, and wrath-filled, and the God of the New Testament as kind, patient, and loving. Neither of these portraits are representative of Scripture's teaching on the wrath of God. We find immensely fearful descriptions of the wrath of God in both the Old and the New Testament. Here are just a few examples:

*Behold the storm of the Lord! Wrath has gone forth, a whirling tempest;
it will burst upon the head of the wicked.*

Jeremiah 30:23

*The Lord is a jealous and avenging God; the Lord is avenging and wrathful; the Lord takes
vengeance on his adversaries and keeps wrath for his enemies.*

Nahum 1:2

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

Romans 1:18

*From his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations, and he will rule them
with a rod of iron. He will tread the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty.*

Revelation 19:15

4. God's wrath is his love in action against sin.

This is counter-intuitive, but hear me out. God is love, and God does all things for his glory (1 John 4:8; Romans 11:36). He loves his glory above all (and that is a good thing!). Therefore, God rules the world in such a way that brings himself maximum glory. This means that God must act justly and judge sin (i.e. respond with wrath), otherwise God would not be God. God's love for his glory motivates his wrath against sin. Admittedly, God's love for his own glory is a most sobering reality for many and not good news for sinners. It is after all, "a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (Hebrews 10:31).

5. God's wrath is satisfied in Christ.

Here we have the ultimate good news: "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners" (1 Timothy 1:15). Because of Christ, God can rightly call sinners justified (Romans 3:26). God has done what we could not do, and he has done what we didn't deserve. Charles Wesley rightly exulted in this good news:

*And can it be that I should gain
An interest in the Saviour's blood?
Died he for me, who caused his pain!
For me, who him to death pursued?
Amazing love! How can it be
That thou, my God, shouldst die for me?*

How does an accurate understanding of God's wrath increase your worship of Jesus? How might a diminishment of God's wrath diminish your worship?

Day Three | Ponder

Today we ponder God as he is revealed in the Bible. Simply sit with these verses in meditation. Christian meditation is not emptying the mind but filling it with the truth given in the Bible. As you meditate, consider how belonging to this God impacts your life today. Look for the beauty of God. Pause to worship him. Do not rush.

- ⁹ You who bring good news to Zion, go up on a high mountain.
You who bring good news to Jerusalem, lift up your voice with a shout, lift it up, do not be afraid; say to the towns of Judah, "Here is your God!"
- ¹⁰ See, the Sovereign LORD comes with power, and he rules with a mighty arm.
See, his reward is with him, and his recompense accompanies him.
- ¹¹ He tends his flock like a shepherd: He gathers the lambs in his arms and carries them close to his heart; he gently leads those that have young.
- ¹² Who has measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, or with the breadth of his hand marked off the heavens? Who has held the dust of the earth in a basket, or weighed the mountains on the scales and the hills in a balance?
- ¹³ Who can fathom the Spirit of the LORD, or instruct the LORD as his counselor?
- ¹⁴ Whom did the LORD consult to enlighten him, and who taught him the right way?
Who was it that taught him knowledge, or showed him the path of understanding?
- ¹⁵ Surely the nations are like a drop in a bucket; they are regarded as dust on the scales; he weighs the islands as though they were fine dust. ¹⁶ Lebanon is not sufficient for altar fires, nor its animals enough for burnt offerings. ¹⁷ Before him all the nations are as nothing; they are regarded by him as worthless and less than nothing.
- ¹⁸ With whom, then, will you compare God? To what image will you liken him?
- ¹⁹ As for an idol, a metalworker casts it, and a goldsmith overlays it with gold and fashions silver chains for it. ²⁰ A person too poor to present such an offering selects wood that will not rot; they look for a skilled worker to set up an idol that will not topple.
- ²¹ Do you not know? Have you not heard? Has it not been told you from the beginning?
Have you not understood since the earth was founded?
- ²² He sits enthroned above the circle of the earth, and its people are like grasshoppers.
He stretches out the heavens like a canopy, and spreads them out like a tent to live in.
- ²³ He brings princes to naught and reduces the rulers of this world to nothing.
- ²⁴ No sooner are they planted, no sooner are they sown, no sooner do they take root in the ground, than he blows on them and they wither, and a whirlwind sweeps them away like chaff.
- ²⁵ "To whom will you compare me? Or who is my equal?" says the Holy One.
- ²⁶ Lift up your eyes and look to the heavens: Who created all these?
He who brings out the starry host one by one and calls forth each of them by name.
Because of his great power and mighty strength, not one of them is missing.

Isaiah 40:9-26

Day Four | Word Study | Glory

Today we dive deep by doing a word study on *glory*. Paul says humanity “exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like a mortal human being and birds and animals and reptiles” (Romans 1:23). Later he says, “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23). The word *glory* appears 18 times in Romans and over 285 times in the Bible. What is this glory that defines God? What is this glory from which we’ve fallen short?

Definition

Glory | δόξα, ης: the quality of splendid, remarkable appearance—‘glory, splendor’ [*Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*].

Commentary

... the Old Testament word for glory was always used in a secular sense for “honor” . . . something “weighty” in man which gives him “importance” . . . If in relation to man, glory (τιβ) denotes that which makes him impressive and demands recognition, whether in terms of material possessions or striking gravitas, in relation to God it implies that which makes God impressive to man, the force of His self-manifestation. As everywhere attested in the Old Testament, God is intrinsically invisible. Nevertheless, when He reveals Himself, or declares Himself, one may rightly speak of the glory of a manifestation which makes on man a highly significant impression [*Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*].

The deepest passion of the heart of Jesus was not the saving of men, but the glory of God; and then the saving of men, because that is for the glory of God [G. Campbell Morgan].

Once, as I rode out into the woods for my health, in 1737, having alighted from my horse to walk in divine contemplation and prayer, I had a view that was for me extraordinary ... I saw the glory of the Son of God, as Mediator between God and man, and his wonderful, great, full, pure and sweet grace and love, and meek and gentle condescension. This grace that appeared so calm and sweet, appeared also great above the heavens. The person of Christ appeared ineffably excellent, with an excellency great enough to swallow up all thought and conception — which continued, as near as I can judge, about an hour. This kept me the greater part of the time in a flood of tears, and weeping aloud. I felt an ardency of soul to be, what I know not otherwise how to express, emptied and annihilated. I wanted to lie in the dust, and to be full of Christ alone; to love him with a holy and pure love; to trust in him, to live upon him, to serve and follow him, and to be perfectly sanctified and made pure with a divine and heavenly purity. [*The Works of Jonathan Edwards*].

Use of the Word in Romans

Consider the use of *glory* in Romans and record your impressions in the margins. To find all the uses of this word go to www.biblegateway.com and do a keyword search limited to Romans. And if you’re feeling it, go beyond and search the appearance of *glory* through the entire Bible.

Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,² through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we boast in the hope of the glory of God.³ Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope.⁵ And hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us.

Romans 5:1-5

³Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?⁴ We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.⁵ For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly also be united with him in a resurrection like his.

Romans 6:3-5

¹⁶The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children.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.¹⁸ I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us.¹⁹ For the creation waits in eager expectation for the children of God to be revealed.²⁰ For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope²¹ that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the freedom and glory of the children of God.

Romans 8:16-21

²²What if God, although choosing to show his wrath and make his power known, bore with great patience the objects of his wrath—prepared for destruction?²³ What if he did this to make the riches of his glory known to the objects of his mercy, whom he prepared in advance for glory—²⁴even us, whom he also called, not only from the Jews but also from the Gentiles?

Romans 9:22-24

Day Five | Seeing Jesus

Today we look at the glory (worth, honor, value, weightiness) of Jesus Christ. Meditate upon the following verses—pondering them, mulling over them, letting them capture your mind and heart until you find yourself led to awe, wonder and worship.

³ Jesus is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven.

Hebrews 1:3

¹⁴ The Word (Jesus) became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

John 1:14

²² [A vision given to John of the new heaven and the new earth, heaven:] I did not see a temple in the city, because the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb (Jesus) are its temple. ²³ The city does not need the sun or the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and the Lamb is its lamp. ²⁴ The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their splendor into it. ²⁵ On no day will its gates ever be shut, for there will be no night there. ²⁶ The glory and honor of the nations will be brought into it.

Revelation 21:22-26

¹¹ For the grace of God has appeared that offers salvation to all people. ¹² It teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, ¹³ while we wait for the blessed hope—the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, ¹⁴ who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good.

Titus 2:11-14

¹¹ With this in mind, we constantly pray for you, that our God may make you worthy of his calling, and that by his power he may bring to fruition your every desire for goodness and your every deed prompted by faith. ¹² We pray this so that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and you in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

2 Thessalonians 1:11-12

Counterfeit Worship | Romans 1:18-25

Notes Page: Use this page to take notes on the talk, *Romans: Counterfeit Worship* Find this talk at womensbiblestudyLA.com/resources.

DIG IN WITH YOUR GROUP

What struck you most about the wrath of God?

Share your discoveries in studying the word *glory*.

How have you been tempted to exchange the glory of God for a lesser god?

Pray for each person to experience and see the glory of God in the coming week.

No Excuse | Romans 1:26-2:16

Day One | Exploring Romans 1:26-2:16

Pause to ask God to guide you and speak to you as you read his word. Read Romans 1:26-2:16 and answer the following questions. As you read look for repeated words and phrases, God, the Holy Spirit and Jesus.

What does this passage say about God?

What does this passage say about the judgment?

What does this passage say about me?

If this passage is true, what do I need to do to respond? Be specific.

In light of this passage, how will I pray for myself and others? Record your prayer.

Day Two | Going Deeper

We're heading into heavy territory. From Romans 1:18 to Romans 3:31, Paul builds an argument for the necessity of salvation through Christ alone. Paul was writing to Jews and Gentiles who made up the early Christian Church in Rome. Their differences were primarily about how to follow and worship God as new believers in Jesus. Paul had a message for both groups—"you're all in the same boat!" Theologian John Stott notes that the Jewish Christians in Rome "regarded Christianity as simply a part of Judaism and required their followers to observe the Jewish law, while Gentile Christians were supporters of a law-free gospel . . . Thus the Jewish Christians were proud of their favored status as Jews, and the Gentile Christians of their freedom, so that Paul saw the need to humble them both."

In this week's passage, Paul says everyone is exchanging "*the truth about God for a lie*," and worshiping and serving created things rather than Creator God (Ro. 1:25). Some are engaging in and approving shameful acts, while others are standing in judgment believing they are morally above those "sinners". Paul says their judgment condemns them because they are actually practicing the same things. No one is exempt from the list in Romans 1:28-32. Today, we'll look at the Bible and commentaries to help us understand Paul's intent in writing this passage.

Look over Paul's list of offenses and consider what you have been guilty of currently or in your past. This exercise, and Paul's writing, is intended to draw you to the "riches of God's kindness, forbearance and patience" which lead us to repentance—turning us from sin, to Jesus (Ro. 2:4). What grace that Jesus came to forgive us and rescue us from our sin! Paul is following the writing style of his time by dividing sin into categories of sexual immorality and all other immoralities.

²⁶ Because of this, God gave them over to shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural sexual relations for unnatural ones. ²⁷ In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed shameful acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their error.

²⁸ Furthermore, just as they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, so God gave them over to a depraved mind, so that they do what ought not to be done.

²⁹ They have become filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed and depravity. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit and malice. They are gossips, ³⁰ slanderers, God-haters, insolent, arrogant and boastful; they invent ways of doing evil; they disobey their parents; ³¹ they have no understanding, no fidelity, no love, no mercy. ³² Although they know God's righteous decree that those who do such things deserve death, they not only continue to do these very things but also approve of those who practice them.

Romans 1:26-32

Pause to receive and revel in God's kindness and forgiveness granted in Jesus.

God Gave Them Over

Paul would see the act of God "handing over" as punitive, but not as spiteful or vengeful. For him it is simply the case that man apart from God regresses to a lower level of animality. God has handed them over in the sense that he has accepted the fact of man's rebellious desire to be free of God (in terms of Genesis 3, to be "as God"), and has let go of the control which restrained them from their baser instincts. The rationale is, presumably, that God does not retain control over those who do not desire it; he who wants to be on his own is granted his wish. The important corollary also follows that Paul does not indict all human, including sexual, desire as unclean. Rather it is only when such desire has control of man, when it becomes the most important aspect of human life, that it is condemned. Paul would also, presumably, see the divine handing over as at least potentially redemptive, if it resulted in man's recoiling from the degenerate outworking of his own freedom (cf. 1 Cor 5:5), as no doubt had been the case with many of the Gentile God-worshippers who made up his audience [*Word Biblical Commentary on Romans*].

C.S. Lewis on Morality, Forgiveness and Life-Change

*The Christian does not think God will love us because we are good,
but that God will make us good because He loves us.*

*To be a Christian means to forgive the inexcusable
because God has forgiven the inexcusable in you.*

*The more we let God take us over, the more truly ourselves we become – because He made us.
He invented us. He invented all the different people that you and I were intended to be. . .
It is when I turn to Christ, when I give up myself to His personality,
that I first begin to have a real personality of my own.*

*I think that if God forgives us we must forgive ourselves. Otherwise,
it is almost like setting up ourselves as a higher tribunal than Him.*

Imagine yourself as a living house. God comes in to rebuild that house. At first, perhaps, you can understand what He is doing. He is getting the drains right and stopping the leaks in the roof and so on: you knew that those jobs needed doing and so you are not surprised. But presently he starts knocking the house about in a way that hurts abominably and does not seem to make sense. What on earth is He up to? The explanation is that He is building quite a different house from the one you thought of—throwing out a new wing here, putting on an extra floor there, running up towers, making courtyards. You thought you were going to be made into a decent little cottage: but He is building a palace. He intends to come and live in it Himself.

Day Three | Ponder

Today we ponder “*the riches of God’s kindness, forbearance and patience*” (Ro. 2:4). Simply sit with these verses in meditation. Christian meditation is not emptying the mind but filling it with the truth given in the Bible. As you meditate, consider how belonging to this God impacts your life today. Look for the beauty of God. Pause to worship him. Do not rush.

⁸ *The LORD is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love.*

⁹ *He will not always accuse, nor will he harbor his anger forever;*

¹⁰ *he does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities.*

¹¹ *For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear him;*

¹² *as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us.*

Psalm 103:8-12

But when the kindness of God our Savior and His love for mankind appeared, 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, whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior.

Titus 3:4-6

⁶ *And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus,⁷ in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus.⁸ For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—⁹ not by works, so that no one can boast.¹⁰ For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.*

Ephesians 2:6-10

I will tell of the kindnesses of the LORD, the deeds for which he is to be praised, according to all the LORD has done for us—yes, the many good things he has done for Israel, according to his compassion and many kindnesses.

Isaiah 63:7

¹⁵ *Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance:*

Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners—of whom I am the worst.

¹⁶ *But for that very reason I was shown mercy so that in me, the worst of sinners, Christ Jesus might display his immense patience as an example for those who would believe in him and receive eternal life.¹⁷ Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory for ever and ever. Amen.*

1 Timothy 1:15-17

Day Four | Word Study | Repentance

Today we dive deep by doing a word study on *repentance*. The invitation in Romans 2 is to repentance rather than judgment. Paul gives a list of transgressions at the end of Romans 1. In Romans 2 he anticipates there will be those who see this list as an opportunity for judgment. Most likely these are the religious people who consider themselves above such sins. Paul, however, is clear in verse 1, “*you have no excuse, you who pass judgment on someone else, for at whatever point you judge another, you are condemning yourself, because you who pass judgment do the same things.*” Paul then invites them to repentance.

³ *So when you, a mere human being, pass judgment on them and yet do the same things, do you think you will escape God’s judgment? “Or do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, forbearance and patience, not realizing that God’s kindness is intended to lead you to **repentance**?”*

Romans 2:3-4

Definition

Repentance | **μετανοέω; μετάνοια, ας** *f.* to change one’s way of life as the result of a complete change of thought and attitude with regard to sin and righteousness—‘to repent, to change one’s way, repentance.’ Though in English a focal component of repent is the sorrow or contrition that a person experiences because of sin, the emphasis in the New Testament seems to be more specifically the total change, both in thought and behavior, with respect to how one should both think and act.

Commentary

An important part of the teaching of this epistle is that God is a merciful God; his purposes are always purposes of mercy. He may at times be engaged in activities like judgment that seem to the casual observer to be directed against the sinner. But even God’s judgments must be seen in a context of mercy; they are meant to lead people to repentance and forgiveness. God never punishes for the sake of punishment. And if this is the case with judgment, much more is it so with God’s forbearance. So, before he brings out what is in store for the impenitent sinner, Paul has a short section in which he speaks of God’s kindness as leading people to repentance.

***Romans 2:4.** . . . That which is good and kind in God is directed towards bringing people to repentance. This term means a change of mind, specifically a change of mind about sin. It refers to that change which comes over a sinner when he sees his wrongdoing no longer as attractive but as damnable. He turns away from it. This means abandoning the security of the old way; God’s demand for repentance is a demand that we trust him, even though it means forsaking our human securities. In the New Testament repentance is not simply negative. It means turning to a new life in Christ, a life of active service to God. [Leon Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans*].*

Use of the Word in New Testament

The word *repentance* only appears once in Romans. We will look at it's use in the New Testament. Record your observations in the margins.

¹⁴After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. ¹⁵"The time has come," he said. "The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!"

Mark 1:14-16

³¹Jesus answered them, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. ³²I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."

Luke 5:31-32

Now the tax collectors and sinners were all gathering around to hear Jesus. ²But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law muttered, "This man welcomes sinners and eats with them."

³Then Jesus told them this parable: ⁴"Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them. Doesn't he leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the lost sheep until he finds it? ⁵And when he finds it, he joyfully puts it on his shoulders ⁶and goes home. Then he calls his friends and neighbors together and says, 'Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep.' ⁷I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent.

Luke 15:1-7

⁹ yet now I am happy, not because you were made sorry, but because your sorrow led you to repentance. For you became sorrowful as God intended and so were not harmed in any way by us. ¹⁰ Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death.

2 Corinthians 7:9-10

⁸ But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day. ⁹ The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.

2 Peter 3:8-9

Day Five | Seeing Jesus

Today we look at Jesus Christ, the righteous judge. Meditate upon the following verses—pondering them, mulling over them, letting them capture your mind and heart until you find yourself led to awe, wonder and worship.

³⁴ Then Peter began to speak: "I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism ³⁵ but accepts from every nation the one who fears him and does what is right.

³⁶ You know the message God sent to the people of Israel, announcing the good news of peace through Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all. ³⁷ You know what has happened throughout the province of Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John preached— ³⁸ how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power, and how he went around doing good and healing all who were under the power of the devil, because God was with him.

³⁹ "We are witnesses of everything he did in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They killed him by hanging him on a cross, ⁴⁰ but God raised him from the dead on the third day and caused him to be seen. ⁴¹ He was not seen by all the people, but by witnesses whom God had already chosen—by us who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead. ⁴² He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one whom God appointed as judge of the living and the dead. ⁴³ All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name."

Acts 10:34-43

In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and his kingdom, I give you this charge: ² Preach the word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction. ³ For the time will come when people will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. ⁴ They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths. ⁵ But you, keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry.

⁶ For I am already being poured out like a drink offering, and the time for my departure is near.

⁷ I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. ⁸ Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day—and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing.

2 Timothy 4:1-8

² Now we know that God's judgment against those who do such things is based on truth.

Romans 2:2

No Excuse | Romans 1:24-2:16

Notes Page: Use this page to take notes on the talk, *Romans: No Excuse*. Find this talk at womensbiblestudyLA.com/resources.

DIG IN WITH YOUR GROUP

Share your discoveries from day one.

Why can we trust that God's judgment is righteous?

Share your discoveries in studying the word *repentance*.

Together, pray prayers of praise to God for his patience and kindness toward you.

Not Alone | Romans 2:17-3:31

Day One | Exploring Romans 2:17-3:31

Pause to ask God to guide you and speak to you as you read his word. Read Romans 2:17-3:31 and answer the following questions. As you read look for repeated words and phrases, God, the Holy Spirit and Jesus.

What does this passage say about God?

What does this passage say about sin?

What does this passage say about me?

If this passage is true, what do I need to do to respond? Be specific.

In light of this passage, how will I pray for myself and others? Record your prayer.

Day Two | Going Deeper

In Romans 3, Paul sets up the need for Jesus' gift of righteousness through faith for all who believe by presenting the pervasiveness of sin (Ro. 3:23). He says, ". . . *we have already made the charge that Jews and Gentiles alike are all under the power of sin*" (Ro. 3:9). Understanding sin is not an invitation to shame but a pathway to freedom, forgiveness, salvation and intimacy with God. There is no reconciliation without facing what is true. When we hurt a friend we restore intimacy by acknowledging our wrong. We draw near to Jesus when we recognize our need for him as Savior. This is why looking at sin matters. Christ died for sin which tells us that it is a big deal. The bad news in Romans 3 is that all have sinned. The good news is that we are not alone—all have sinned—but there is a way of rescue. Today we read the following article to help us understand sin.

Understanding Sin | by Timothy Keller

In Luke 11, Jesus is instructing his followers on the subject of prayer, and in the midst of it he says, "If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children..." (Luke 11:13).

This off-handed reference to his own disciples as "evil" reveals an astounding (to modern readers) assumption by Jesus; namely, that even the best human beings are so radically corrupt that they can be referred to as evil persons. Nevertheless, in spite of calling them evil, Jesus obviously loves his disciples with the utmost tenderness and even delight, and he is willing to pay the ultimate price for them (John 13; 17:20–26).

This view differs totally from the view of sin and evil prevalent in the world today. No one, apart from those who hold Jesus' view of sin, can look at friends and family, take genuine delight in them, and say, "I love them—but they have lots of evil in them! And so do I!"

What then is the biblical view of sin? Sin is a distortion and dislocation of the heart from its true center in God (Romans 1:21–25). This distortion is expressed as a basic motive for all human life—the heart desire of every person to be his or her own savior and lord (the serpent's original temptation in Genesis 3:5 was "you will be like God").

Søren Kierkegaard used very modern terms when he defined sin as building your identity on anything besides God. That definition is just another way to convey the old biblical themes of idolatry, self-justification, and self-glorification.

Sin, therefore, is something that everyone is doing all the time (see Romans 1:18–3:20, with the summary in 3:20). People who flout God's moral law are doing this overtly, of course, but even moral, religious people are trying to be their own saviors by earning salvation and being good. It is just as possible to avoid Jesus as Savior (to be your own savior) by keeping God's law

as by breaking it. Everyone is separated from God equally—regardless of the external form of behavior.

The fundamental motives of self-justification and self-glorification are what distort our lives and alienate us from God. Unless a person is converted, these motives operate as the main driver for everything we do. This situation is true of every culture and class of people. In the ultimate sense, then, everyone is equally a sinner in need of Jesus' salvation by grace alone.

Once this radical view of sin is grasped, it revolutionizes the believer's attitude toward others who do not share his or her beliefs. Here are two ways it changes you in this regard.

First, it means you sense more than ever a common humanity with others. The biblical view significantly changes in Christians the natural and traditional human attitudes toward those who behave in ways that they do not approve. It is normal for human beings (whose hearts are always seeking to justify themselves and who are always trying to make the case that they are one of the "good guys") to divide the world into the good and the bad. If, however, everyone is naturally alienated from God and therefore "evil," then that goes for everyone from murderers to ministers.

The biblical teaching on sin shows us the complete pervasiveness of sin and the ultimate impossibility of dividing the world neatly into sinful people and good people.

It eliminates our attitudes of superiority toward others and our practices of shunning or excluding those with whom we differ.

Second, it means you expect to be constantly misunderstood—especially about sin! The gospel message is that we are saved by Christ's work, not by our work. But everyone else (even most people in church) believes that Christianity is just another form of religion, which operates on the principle that you are saved if you live a good life and avoid sin. Therefore, when others hear a Christian call something "sin," they believe you are saying, "These are bad people (and I am good). These are people who should be shunned, excluded (and I should be welcomed). These are people whom God condemns because of this behavior (but I am accepted by God because I don't do that)."

You may not mean that by the term "sin" at all, but you must realize and expect that others will hear what you are saying that way. They have to. Until they grasp the profound difference between religion and the Christian faith, they will probably understand your invoking of the word "sin" as self-righteous condemnation—no matter what your disclaimers.

For example, if most people hear you saying, "People who have sex outside of marriage are sinning," they will immediately believe you look down on them, that you think they are lost because of that behavior, that you are one of the "good people"

who don't do things like that, and so on. If people hear a Christian say, "Well, these people are sinning, but I don't think of myself as any better than they are—we are all sinners needing grace," they will think you have spoken nonsense. They have a completely different grid or paradigm in their minds about how anyone can approach and relate to God, and they are hearing the word "sin" through that grid.

This reality is why wise Christians will in general try to avoid public pronouncements on particular behaviors as sinful. Rather, they will try to help people hear the radical message of the Bible about the true inward nature of sin, its universality, and salvation by grace. They will try to explain that people are ultimately lost only if they are too proud to see they are lost and in need of a Savior who saves by sheer grace, just as a drowning person offered a

life preserver will only die if he won't admit he needs it.

Christians must talk to their friends about sin to explain our need for Jesus and for God's grace, but we must do so in a way that quickly puts the term in context—the context of the full message of Jesus' salvation.

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How do you think differently about sin after reading this article?

As you meditate on the truths in Romans 3, what do you sense God inviting you to do differently?

Day Three | Ponder

Today we ponder the grace extended by Jesus to rescue us from the chaotic, pervasive, universal condition of sin. Simply sit with these verses in meditation. Christian meditation is not emptying the mind but filling it with the truth given in the Bible. As you meditate, consider how belonging to this God impacts your life today. Look for the beauty of God. Pause to worship him. Do not rush.

²¹ But now apart from the law the righteousness of God has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. ²² This righteousness is given through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference between Jew and Gentile, ²³ for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴ and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.

Romans 3:21-24

¹⁶ For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. ¹⁷ For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. ¹⁸ Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because they have not believed in the name of God's one and only Son.

John 3:16-18

³ Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, ⁴ who gave himself for our sins to rescue us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, ⁵ to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

Galatians 1:3-4

If you have not surrendered to Jesus as your Savior and Lord, consider doing this today. Religion says that we must do something to gain God's favor. The gospel says that all we need to do is surrender to what Jesus has already done. Religious people focus on doing, gospel people rest in what has been done. You can pray a simple prayer:

Father God, thank you for what you have done for me by sending your son Jesus who died for my sin and set me free from condemnation and shame. My sin is great. Your grace is greater. Today, I receive the truth that Jesus is God, Savior and Lord and I surrender my life to him with joy and anticipation for all he has for me in this life and the next. Amen.

We'd love to send you resources to help on your new journey if you have made this decision today. Please email cherylfletch@gmail.com.

Day Four | Word Study | Sin

Today we dive deep by doing a word study on *sin*. We hate to beat this drum, but we need to for a complete understanding of the gospel.

Definition

Sin | ἁμαρτάνω; ἁμαρτία^a, ἄς *f.* to act contrary to the will and law of God—'to sin, to engage in wrongdoing, sin [*Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament*].

"Have sinned" (Ro. 3:23) is constative aorist, presenting a panoramic view of the human race as doing nothing except committing sin. The word is *hamartan* (ἁμαρτανω), "to miss the mark," thus, "to fail in obeying the law" [*Wuest's word studies from the Greek New Testament: for the English reader*].

Commentary

Romans 3:23. "All have sinned" sums up the human tragedy. The common factor is sin. The aorist tense pictures this as past, but also as a completion. It certainly does not mean that sin belongs wholly in the past, for Paul goes on to a present tense when he says fall short of the glory of God. Elsewhere in Romans the glory is often future (2:7, 10; 5:2; 8:18, 21). But there is also a present glory, for God "made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ" (2 Cor. 4:6; cf. 2 Cor. 3:18; John 17:22). But this is something Christ produces in believers. Sinners fall short of it. Not only did all sin in the past, but they continually come short of God's glory. The linking of God's glory with man's sin is intriguing. It would seem that God intended people to share in his glory (as we see in the story of Eden). But sin cut Adam off from all that, and sin cuts his descendants off still. This clear statement of universal sinfulness is basic to Paul's understanding of the human predicament and also of the salvation Christ brought. Were it not for our sin there would have been no need for Christ's redemptive activity; because of our sin there is no possibility of our achieving salvation by our own efforts [*Leon Morris, The Epistle to the Romans*].

Sin is desiring something not worthy of your heart . . . honoring and worshipping something less than God.

Richard Lints

*I am more flawed and sinful than I ever dared believe,
But I am even more loved and accepted than I ever dared hope.*

Timothy Keller

Sin isn't only doing bad things, it is more fundamentally making good things into ultimate things. Sin is building your life and meaning on anything, even a very good thing, more than on God. Whatever we build our life on will drive us and enslave us. Sin is primarily idolatry.

Tim Keller

I cannot continuously say no to this or no to that, unless there is something ten times more attractive to choose. Saying no to my lust, my greed, my needs, and the world's powers takes an enormous amount of energy. The only hope is to find something so obviously real and attractive that I can devote all my energies to saying yes.

Henri Nouwen

The essence of sin is man substituting himself for God while the essence of salvation is God substituting himself for man. Man puts himself where only God deserves to be; God puts himself where only man deserves to be.

John Stott

Use of the Word in Romans

The word *sin* appears 40+ times in Romans. Record your observations in the margins.

²⁰ *Therefore no one will be declared righteous in God's sight by the works of the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of our sin . . . There is no difference between Jew and Gentile,²³ for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,²⁴ and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.*

Romans 3:20, 22-24

⁶ *David says the same thing when he speaks of the blessedness of the one to whom God credits righteousness apart from works:⁷ "Blessed are those whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered."⁸ Blessed is the one whose sin the Lord will never count against them."*

Romans 4:6-8

¹² *Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all people, because all sinned—¹³ To be sure, sin was in the world before the law was given, but sin is not charged against anyone's account where there is no law.¹⁴ Nevertheless, death reigned from the time of Adam to*

the time of Moses, even over those who did not sin by breaking a command, as did Adam, who is a pattern of the one to come.¹⁵ But the gift is not like the trespass. For if the many died by the trespass of the one man, how much more did God's grace and the gift that came by the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, overflow to the many! ¹⁶ Nor can the gift of God be compared with the result of one man's sin: The judgment followed one sin and brought condemnation, but the gift followed many trespasses and brought justification. 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!

Romans 5:12-17

What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? ² By no means! We are those who have died to sin; how can we live in it any longer? . . . ⁵ For if we have been united with Christ in a death like his, we will certainly also be united with him in a resurrection like his. ⁶ For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body ruled by sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin ⁷ because anyone who has died has been set free from sin. ⁸ Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. ⁹ For we know that since Christ was raised from the dead, he cannot die again; death no longer has mastery over him. ¹⁰ The death he died, he died to sin once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God.

Romans 6:1-2, 5-10

Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, ² because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death. ³ For what the law was powerless to do because it was weakened by the flesh, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in the flesh, ⁴ in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

Romans 8:1-4

How have you experienced freedom from sin, given in Jesus?

Day Five | Seeing Jesus

Today we look at Jesus, our Savior from sin. Meditate upon the following verses—pondering them, mulling over them, letting them capture your mind and heart until you find yourself led to awe, wonder and worship.

Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus,² because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death.³ For what the law was powerless to do because it was weakened by the flesh, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in the flesh,⁴ in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

Romans 8:1-4

². . . He (Jesus) had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him.³ He was despised and rejected by mankind, a man of suffering, and familiar with pain. Like one from whom people hide their faces he was despised, and we held him in low esteem.⁴ Surely, he took up our pain and bore our suffering, yet we considered him punished by God, stricken by him, and afflicted.⁵ But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed.⁶ We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to our own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity (sin) of us all.

Isaiah 53:2-6 (a prophesy about Jesus)

*¹¹ Jesus is "the stone you builders rejected, which has become the cornerstone.'
¹² Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved."*

Acts 4:11-12

*¹⁴ And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world.
¹⁵ If anyone acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, God lives in them and they in God. ¹⁶ And so we know and rely on the love God has for us.*

1 John 4:14-16

Not Alone | Romans 2:17-3:31

Notes Page: Use this page to take notes on the talk, *Romans: Not Alone*. Find this talk at womensbiblestudyLA.com/resources.

DIG IN WITH YOUR GROUP

Share your discoveries from day one.

How did the study of sin bring you freedom?

How will you apply this study to your life this week?

Read the fruit of the Spirit from Galatians 5:22-23: *The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.* Then have each person share one aspect of the fruit that they desire to grow in this week. Have the person on their right pray for them.

Nothing But the Blood | Romans 3:21-26

Day One | Exploring Romans 3:21-26

Pause to ask God to guide you and speak to you as you read his word. Read Romans 3:21-26 and answer the following questions. As you read look for repeated words and phrases, God, the Holy Spirit and Jesus.

What does this passage say about God?

What does this passage say about me?

If this passage is true, what do I need to do to respond? Be specific.

In light of this passage, how will I pray for myself and others? Record your prayer.

Day Two | Going Deeper

Romans 3:21-26 speaks of Jesus' death as a sacrifice of atonement, through the shedding of blood. To understand this glorious truth we need to define some of the key words found in this passage.

Commentary

The significance of blood in the sacrificial system is that it represents life. The Old Testament repeatedly makes the point that "the life of the flesh is in the blood" (Lev. 17:11). Therefore, when the blood is poured out, the life is poured out. That's significant, because under the covenant of works in the garden, the penalty that was laid down for disobedience was death. God required that penalty for sin. That is why Jesus had to die to accomplish the atonement. When the blood is shed and the life is poured out, the penalty is paid. Nothing short of that penalty will do [R.C. Sproul].

Key Words in Romans 3:24-25

1. Justified/justification | ". . . and all are *justified* freely by his grace . . ." *'Justification' is a legal term, borrowed from the law courts. It is the exact opposite of 'condemnation.'* *'To condemn' is to declare somebody guilty; 'to justify' is to declare him not guilty, innocent or righteous. In the Bible it refers to God's act of unmerited favor by which He puts a sinner right with Himself, not only pardoning or acquitting him, but accepting him and treating him as righteous [John Stott, *Justification by Faith Alone*].*

2. Redeem/Redemption | ". . . through the *redemption* that came by Christ Jesus." *English words derive from a Latin root meaning "to buy back," thus meaning the liberation of any possession, object, or person, usually by payment of a ransom. In Greek the root word means "to loose" and so to free. The term is used of freeing from chains, slavery, or prison [Tyndale Bible Dictionary].*

2. Propitiation | "God presented Christ as a sacrifice of atonement (*propitiation*) . . ." *Commentators suggest that that language in Romans 3:25 that describes Christ as a "sacrifice of atonement" is best translated 'propitiation' which means the removal of wrath.*

*In his classic *The Cross of Christ*, John Stott parses out Christian propitiation with three crucial points. First, God's wrath is the reason why propitiation was necessary. Second, God is the one who makes propitiation. This wasn't man's idea, but God's. It is all due to his mercy and grace. Stott is all over this. He writes, "God does not love us because Christ died for us; Christ died for us because God loved us. If it is God's wrath which needed to be propitiated, it is God's love which did the propitiating". Third, God was the propitiatory sacrifice. What hung on the cross wasn't a thing. It wasn't a basket of fruit or a headless chicken. Stott notes that God giving his*

Son was God giving God. The blood that soaked into Golgotha's soil was not the blood of a man partly divine, but of God himself who had become a man.

One fact rings loud in all three of Stott's points. It is the fact that every right way to parse propitiation is profoundly about God. Stott says, "It is God himself who in holy wrath needs to be propitiated, God himself who in holy love undertook to do the propitiating, and God himself who in the person of his Son died for the propitiation of our sins. Thus God took his own loving initiative to appease his own righteous anger by bearing it in his own self in his own Son when he took our place and died for us."

*Who can fathom this wonder? Man would not make this up. Man could not. Do you see it? Do you see what he has done? What do we do but bow speechless? We put our hands over our mouths in awe. Do you see what he has done? He has loved us with a love inexhaustible [Jonathan Parnell, *The God-Centered Cross of Love Inexhaustible*].*

How do these truths ignite your heart in worship of God and move you toward kindness?

Day Three | Ponder

Today we ponder our freedom from the curse of sin, provided by the shed blood of Christ. We will meditate upon the hymn, *Nothing but the Blood of Jesus*, written by Robert Lowry in 1876. From hymnary.org: *(This hymn) was first published with Hebrews 9:22 quoted underneath the title. There were originally six stanzas, but typically only the first four are sung today. The two that are not used begin "Now by this I'll overcome" and "Glory! Glory! This I sing." The theme of the text is the redemptive work of Christ on the cross, seen through the image of His shed blood. The stanzas express the need for redemption from sin, and the matchless value of Jesus's redeeming blood. Find this hymn on youtube.com and sing along!*

*. . . the law requires that nearly everything be cleansed with blood,
and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.*

Hebrews 9:22

*What can wash away my sin?
Nothing but the blood of Jesus.
What can make me whole again?
Nothing but the blood of Jesus.*

Refrain:

*O precious is the flow
that makes me white as snow;
no other fount I know;
nothing but the blood of Jesus.*

*For my pardon this I see:
nothing but the blood of Jesus.
For my cleansing this my plea:
nothing but the blood of Jesus. [Refrain]*

*Nothing can for sin atone:
nothing but the blood of Jesus.
Naught of good that I have done:
nothing but the blood of Jesus. [Refrain]*

*This is all my hope and peace:
nothing but the blood of Jesus.
This is all my righteousness:
nothing but the blood of Jesus. [Refrain]*

Day Four | Word Study | Atonement

Romans 3:25 in the NIV refers to Jesus as *“a sacrifice of atonement.”* Here’s a fun way to learn about atonement: Watch the Bible Project Video on Atonement. Google or search youtube.com with *“Bible Project Sacrifice & Atonement”* and you’ll find a 6 minute video. Enjoy!

Record what you learn from the Bible Project Video on Sacrifice & Atonement.

Definition

ATONEMENT. The word ‘atonement’ means ‘a making at one’, and points to a process of bringing those who are estranged into a unity. Its use in theology is to denote the work of Christ in dealing with the problem posed by the sin of man, and in bringing sinners into right relation with God [*New Bible Dictionary*].

³ *“If the offering is a burnt offering from the herd, you are to offer a male without defect. You must present it at the entrance to the tent of meeting so that it will be acceptable to the LORD. ⁴ You are to lay your hand on the head of the burnt offering, and it will be accepted on your behalf to make **atonement** for you.*

Leviticus 1:3-4

Commentary on Atonement

From *Mounce's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*:

Old Testament noun:) תְּכַיִת (*kapporet*). Generally translated “atonement cover” or “mercy seat.” The word describes the golden cover placed on the ark of the covenant; on it were two cherubim whose outstretched wings formed Yahweh’s earthly throne. Because he “lived” there, the Most Holy Place had to be filled with a cloud of incense on the Day of Atonement, lest the high priest see him and die. All forgiveness and purging of sin, of course, is possible only because of the forgiving grace and mercy of God.

New Testament noun: ἱλασμός (*hilasmos*). *Hilasmos* refers to “an atoning sacrifice” or “propitiation.” This word occurs in 1 John 2:2 and 4:10. Jesus is himself the sacrifice that atones for sin. Our sins have destroyed our relationship with God, but Christ’s shed blood purifies us from all sin and restores us to fellowship with God (1 John 1:6–7). We should never forget that the root of our reconciliation with God is his incredible love, expressed when he sent his Son to be our atoning sacrifice.

New Testament noun: ἱλαστήριον (*hilasterion*). It means “atonement cover” or “sacrifice of atonement” or “that which propitiates or expiates.” In Hebrews 9:5, it corresponds to the Old Testament use—the atonement cover on top of the ark. That’s where God dwelt in all his glory. In Romans 3:25, Paul writes that God has presented Jesus as a “place of atonement.” This word must relate first to its Old Testament usage, so that Jesus is the person/place where God passes over our sins without punishing them because of his sacrifice. Christ now occupies the very place the atonement cover inhabited in the Most Holy Place for the removal of sins on the Day of Atonement. He’s also the One in whom God lives in the flesh, and the One through whom God’s wrath against sin (Rom. 1:18) is placated, resulting in a renewed relationship between God and rebels.

When we put these two Greek nouns together along with the verb *hilaskomai*, we see that Jesus is represented in the New Testament as the priest who performs the atonement sacrifice, as the One who is himself the atonement sacrifice, and as the place where the atonement sacrifice occurs. Everything we need for God’s forgiveness, for the removal of God’s anger, and for reconciliation with God himself can be found in Jesus.

Theology (the study of God) should lead to worship and changed lives. How can the doctrine of atonement change how you live this week?

Day Five | Seeing Jesus

Today we look at Jesus, our atoning sacrifice—accomplishing our salvation through his life, death and resurrection. Meditate upon the following verses—pondering them, mulling over them, letting them capture your mind and heart until you find yourself led to awe, wonder and worship.

²⁴ “Jesus himself bore our sins” in his body on the cross, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; “by his wounds you have been healed.” ²⁵ For “you were like sheep going astray,” but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.

1 Peter 2:24-25

¹⁹ For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in Jesus, ²⁰ and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.

Colossians 1:19-20

¹¹ So Christ has now become the High Priest over all the good things that have come. He has entered that greater, more perfect Tabernacle in heaven, which was not made by human hands and is not part of this created world. ¹² With his own blood—not the blood of goats and calves—he entered the Most Holy Place once for all time and secured our redemption forever. ¹³ Under the old system, the blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer could cleanse people’s bodies from ceremonial impurity. ¹⁴ Just think how much more the blood of Christ will purify our consciences from sinful deeds so that we can worship the living God. For by the power of the eternal Spirit, Christ offered himself to God as a perfect sacrifice for our sins. ¹⁵ That is why he is the one who mediates a new covenant between God and people, so that all who are called can receive the eternal inheritance God has promised them.

For Christ died to set them free from the penalty of the sins they had committed under that first covenant.

²⁴ For without the shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness.

²⁴ For Christ did not enter into a holy place made with human hands, which was only a copy of the true one in heaven. He entered into heaven itself to appear now before God on our behalf. ²⁵ And he did not enter heaven to offer himself again and again, like the high priest here on earth who enters the Most Holy Place year after year with the blood of an animal.

²⁶ If that had been necessary, Christ would have had to die again and again, ever since the world began. But now, once for all time, he has appeared at the end of the age to remove sin by his own death as a sacrifice. ²⁷ And just as each person is destined to die once and after that comes judgment, ²⁸ so also Christ was offered once for all time as a sacrifice to take away the sins of many people. He will come again, not to deal with our sins, but to bring salvation to all who are eagerly waiting for him.

Hebrews 9:11-15, 22b, 24-28 (NLT)

Nothing But the Blood | Romans 3:21-26

Notes Page: Use this page to take notes on the talk, *Romans: Nothing but the Blood*. Find this talk at womensbiblestudyLA.com/resources.

DIG IN WITH YOUR GROUP

Share your discoveries from day one.

How will you apply this study to your life this week?

For prayer this week, go in a circle and have each person pray a simple, one sentence prayer beginning with, "Thank you Jesus for _____."

Faith | Romans 3:27-4:25

Day One | Exploring Romans 3:27-4:25

Pause to ask God to guide you and speak to you as you read his word. Read Romans 3:27-4:25 and answer the following questions. As you read look for repeated words and phrases, God, the Holy Spirit and Jesus.

What does this passage say about God?

What does this passage say about faith?

What does this passage say about me?

If this passage is true, what do I need to do to respond? Be specific.

In light of this passage, how will I pray for myself and others? Record your prayer.

Day Two | Going Deeper

In Romans 3:27-4:25, Paul turns from the problem of sin to the solution for sin. Just like us, the original readers wanted to know what assured them of salvation and life with God. Some were holding onto their status as Jews, others their wisdom and understanding of Scripture. Here Paul is clear that when it comes to salvation there is nothing for us to boast in. Salvation is not something we earn or deserve, it is a gift given freely to all who have faith in Jesus Christ. We'll look at justification by faith today.

Justification by Faith

Romans 3:28 | “. . . we maintain that a person is *justified by faith* apart from the law . . . ”
Justification is brought about in the same way for all, *by faith*. We can do nothing to merit it, and the insistence on *faith* emphasizes that we simply receive it as God's good gift [Leon Morris, *The Pillar Commentary on Romans*].

Justification Proved by Abraham

*It is central to Paul's position that the way of salvation he has just been outlining, the way of salvation by God's grace, is no innovation. He is not prepared to jettison the Old Testament or the Judaism in which he had been raised. He holds that the true understanding of the Old Testament is that which sees it as pointing forward to what God would do in Christ. The true Jew is not the one who conforms to the outward regulations of contemporary Judaism but the one who is a Jew inwardly (Ro. 2:28–29). Such a Jew recognizes that Jesus is the Messiah and responds to what God is doing in Christ. Paul has made it clear that he sees God as saving by grace. Now he proceeds to show that this was true of Abraham, the great progenitor of the race. If God had acted in grace towards Abraham, if Abraham had been justified by faith, then Paul's point is established; whereas if Abraham had been accepted on the ground of his works, Paul's point that God had always acted in grace would not stand. Abraham is critically important [Leon Morris, *The Pillar Commentary on Romans*].*

Romans 4 argues that Abraham is justified by faith alone, not by works, circumcision or the law. How does Paul connect the faith of Abraham to our faith? What does this mean for you today?

Day Three | Ponder

Today we ponder the wonder of righteousness as expressed in Romans 4:4-8. Paul goes from Abraham to David by quoting Psalm 32:1-2. Simply sit with these verses in meditation. Christian meditation is not emptying the mind but filling it with the truth given in the Bible. As you meditate, consider how belonging to this God impacts your life today. Look for the beauty of God. Pause to worship him. Do not rush.

⁴ Now to the one who works, wages are not credited as a gift but as an obligation.

⁵ However, to the one who does not work but trusts God who justifies the ungodly, their faith is credited as righteousness. ⁶ David says the same thing when he speaks of the blessedness of the one to whom God credits righteousness apart from works:

*⁷ "Blessed are those whose transgressions are forgiven,
whose sins are covered.*

⁸ Blessed is the one whose sin the Lord will never count against them."

Romans 4:4-8

Day Four | Word Study | Faith

Today we do a word study on *faith*. The word appears over 250 times in the Bible, and 40 times in Romans!

Definition

Faith | πιστεύω^b; πίστις^b, εως *f.* to believe to the extent of complete trust and reliance—'to believe in, to have confidence in, to have faith in, to trust, faith, trust . . . In rendering πιστεύω and πίστις it would be wrong to select a term which would mean merely 'reliance' or 'dependency' or even 'confidence,' for there should also be a significant measure of 'belief,' since real trust, confidence, and reliance can only be placed in someone who is believed to have the qualities attributed to such a person [*Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*].

Commentary

Romans 4:5 | “. . . To the one who does not work but trusts God who justifies the ungodly, their *faith* is credited as righteousness . . .”

*The believer's faith is credited as righteousness. This is not to regard it as a meritorious work; it is the very absence of all work, of all claim on God. Whereas systems of justification by works all look to the worshipper to produce the desired righteousness, Paul is speaking of a system that requires him to produce nothing. All he does is to reach out in faith for God's good gift [Leon Morris, *Pillar Commentary on Romans*].*

Use of the Word in Romans

We will look at the use of the word *faith* in Romans, where it appears 40 times. Record your observations in the margins.

⁵ Through him we received grace and apostleship to call all the Gentiles to the obedience that comes from faith for his name's sake. ⁶ And you also are among those Gentiles who are called to belong to Jesus Christ.

Romans 1:5-6

¹⁶ For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile. ¹⁷ For in the gospel the righteousness of God is revealed—a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: “The righteous will live by faith.”

Romans 1:16-17

²²This righteousness is given through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference between Jew and Gentile, ²³for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. ²⁵God presented Christ as a sacrifice of atonement, through the shedding of his blood—to be received by faith. He did this to demonstrate his righteousness, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished— ²⁶he did it to demonstrate his righteousness at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus. ²⁸For we maintain that a person is justified by faith apart from the works of the law. ²⁹Or is God the God of Jews only? Is he not the God of Gentiles too? Yes, of Gentiles too, ³⁰since there is only one God, who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through that same faith.³¹ Do we, then, nullify the law by this faith? Not at all! Rather, we uphold the law.

Romans 3:22-26, 28-31

Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,² through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we boast in the hope of the glory of God.

Romans 5:1-2

⁹If you declare with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. ¹⁰For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved. ¹¹As Scripture says, “Anyone who believes in him will never be put to shame.” ¹²For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile—the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, ¹³for, “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved”. ¹⁷Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word about Christ.

Romans 10:9-13, 17

Accept the one whose faith is weak, without quarreling over disputable matters. ²One person’s faith allows them to eat anything, but another, whose faith is weak, eats only vegetables. ³The one who eats everything must not treat with contempt the one who does not, and the one who does not eat everything must not judge the one who does, for God has accepted them.

Romans 14:1-3

¹⁹ Let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification. ²⁰ Do not destroy the work of God for the sake of food. All food is clean, but it is wrong for a person to eat anything that causes someone else to stumble. ²¹ It is better not to eat meat or drink wine or to do anything else that will cause your brother or sister to fall. ²² So whatever you believe about these things keep between yourself and God. Blessed is the one who does not condemn himself by what he approves. ²³ But whoever has doubts is condemned if they eat, because their eating is not from faith; and everything that does not come from faith is sin.

Romans 14:19-23

Summarize what you learned about faith today. How will it impact how you live tomorrow?

Never be afraid to trust an unknown future, to a known God.'
Corrie ten Boom

Day Five | Seeing Jesus

Today we look at Jesus, the object of our faith. Meditate upon the following verses—pondering them, mulling over them, letting them capture your mind and heart until you find yourself led to awe, wonder and worship.

*Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses,
let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles.
And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us,² fixing our eyes on Jesus,
the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross,
scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.
³Consider him who endured such opposition from sinners,
so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.*

Hebrews 12:1-3

Faith | Romans 3:27-4:25

Notes Page: Use this page to take notes on the talk, *Romans: Faith*. Find this talk at womensbiblestudyLA.com/resources.

DIG IN WITH YOUR GROUP

Share your discoveries from day one.

How do you think differently about faith after this study?

How will you apply this study to your life this week?

Use Hebrews 12:1-3 to guide your time in prayer this week (page 59).

Peace with God | Romans 5:1-5

Day One | Exploring Romans 5:1-5

Pause to ask God to guide you and speak to you as you read his word. Read Romans 5:1-5 and answer the following questions. As you read look for repeated words and phrases, God, the Holy Spirit and Jesus.

What does this passage say about God?

What does this passage say about suffering?

What does this passage say about me?

If this passage is true, what do I need to do to respond? Be specific.

In light of this passage, how will I pray for myself and others? Record your prayer.

Day Two | Going Deeper

Paul begins Romans 5 with the word, *therefore*. When we see a “*therefore*” in the Bible we need to ask, “what is it there for?” To what is the “*therefore*” pointing? In Romans 5:1-2, Paul is pointing back to Romans 1-4 and his argument for justification through faith. We could rearrange the words to give clarity, saying, “*Since we have been justified (made right with God) through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand.*” Paul says that this “*peace with God*” changes our boasting and our suffering.

1. **Our boasting is changed.** We no longer boast in our own effort toward God but now we boast in God’s effort toward us. We boast in the grace granted in Christ that we might be justified by faith, not works.
2. **Our suffering is changed.** God’s peace allows us to glory in our suffering for what it produces in our life.

We will spend three weeks in Romans 5 because it is so beautiful and rich. This week we dive into the first five verses. Here are some thoughts and commentary to enrich your study.

Peace With God

*Paul speaks of peace with God, not “the peace of God”; he is not referring to a subjective feeling, but to the objective fact that the justified are no longer enemies of God but are at peace with him. The inward peace that follows is very important, but it is not the primary thought here. The justified person is no longer tormented by questions of his relationship with God arising from the fact that he is a sinner. Sinner though he is, he is at peace with God because of what God has done for him . . . Justification results in real peace with God, and that for all believers. Our peace is obtained through our Lord Jesus Christ. That it is Christ who brings us the blessing is the emphasis of this part of the letter [Leon Morris, *Pillar Commentary on Romans*].*

If you have peace with God, you have an answer to the accusation of your own conscience when you sin. I know that many young Christians, in that glory and first flush of love in their relationship with the Lord, really think that they are not going to sin again. They cannot imagine going back and doing some of the things they once did. But eventually they will be back doing some of those things. Perhaps they will not go back to all that they did formerly, but they will fall back. What do you say to your accusing conscience that says to you then, Are you a Christian? Could you possibly be a Christian and act like this? That is where justification by faith comes in. You remind yourself: My standing and my acceptance by God does not depend upon me. Even my sin doesn't cancel it out. The whole essence of this truth is that God has found a way to put aside my sin, by faith in the work of his beloved Son on my behalf. In that truth, Lord, I confess my sin, and put my trust in you [Ray Stedman]

Standing in Grace

'Grace' is normally God's free and unmerited favor, his undeserved, unsolicited and unconditional love. But here it is not so much his quality of graciousness as the 'sphere of God's grace' (NEB), our privileged position of acceptance by him . . . We have taken our stand firmly in or on this grace into which we have been introduced. Justified believers enjoy a blessing far greater than a periodic approach to God . . . Our relationship with God, into which justification has brought us, is not sporadic but continuous, not precarious but secure. We do not fall in and out of grace . . . No, we stand in it, for that is the nature of grace. Nothing can separate us from God's love [John Stott, *The Message of Romans*].

Hope of the Glory of God

Romans 5 begins, "Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand; and we exult in hope of the glory of God."

Here, instead of saying that our hope is eternal life, Paul says that our hope is "the glory of God." "We exult in the hope of the glory of God." This is crucial to see. Because this is the reason that our future life must be eternal and why it cannot be boring. Any amount of time short of eternity would be inadequate for a finite creature to experience the glory of God. It will take forever for us to see all there is to see and admire all there is to admire and enjoy all there is to enjoy of the glory of God. Therefore God ordains that there be eternal life for us.

We need to feel the force of this. The glory of God is all that God is for us in his greatness and his excellence. And God is infinite. So his glory is infinite. It has no boundaries, no limits, no end. Sometimes Paul stresses this with the phrase "riches of his glory." For example, in Romans 9:23 he says God's purpose is "to make known the riches of His glory upon vessels of mercy, which He prepared beforehand for glory." In Ephesians 1:18 Paul prays that we would know "what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints." In Philippians 4:19 he says, "My God will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus."

The point of this phrase is that his glory is a God-sized treasure. It is not small and exhaustible. It will not and cannot run out. You can't spend it down. It is God-sized wealth. It is infinite. Therefore it will take us finite creatures an eternity to see it all and taste it all and admire it all and enjoy it all. A finite creature cannot take in all at once infinite glory any more than a thimble can take in the Pacific Ocean all at once. And even if you enlarged the thimble to the size of the Pacific Ocean you would need endless days to dip out the glory of God from the ocean of God's glory, which has no bottom and no shores [John Piper, *The Triumph of Grace through Righteousness*].

How does the peace, grace and glory of God shape how you will live and love today?

Day Three | Ponder

Today we ponder the hope we have in Christ. Simply sit with these verses in meditation. Christian meditation is not emptying the mind but filling it with the truth given in the Bible. As you meditate, consider how belonging to this God impacts your life today. Look for the beauty of God. Pause to worship him. Do not rush.

¹²Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer.

Romans 12:12

⁴For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through the endurance taught in the Scriptures and the encouragement they provide we might have hope.

¹³May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Romans 15:4, 13

¹⁹If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied.

²⁰But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. ²¹For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. ²²For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive.

1 Corinthians 15:19-22

⁷Have nothing to do with godless myths and old wives' tales; rather, train yourself to be godly. ⁸For physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come.

⁹This is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance.

¹⁰That is why we labor and strive, because we have put our hope in the living God, who is the Savior of all people, and especially of those who believe.

1 Timothy 4:7-10

Day Four | Word Study | Suffering

Today we dive deep by doing a word study on *suffering*. The concept of suffering shows up this week in Romans 5:3-4 as well as other places in the New Testament.

We know that suffering is a reality in this life. M. Scott Peck began his best-seller, *The Road Less Traveled*, with a statement that invited everyone to read further. He said, "Life is difficult. This is a great truth, one of the greatest truths." Jesus said the same thing, adding the great hope of his presence, intervention and impending death and resurrection.

³³ [Jesus said:] "I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."

John 16:33

Definition

Suffering | θλιβω in the literal sense: "to press," "squash." (It means) 'crushings'. It's a word which describes the process of crushing an olive with heavy rocks in order to extract oil. Paul says we glory not only in what we're going to be, or who we are positionally (in Christ)—but also in the tribulations which happen constantly [Jon Courson, *Tree of Life Commentary: Romans*].

Commentary

The 'sufferings' in mind (in Romans 5:3) are usually translated 'tribulations'. These are not what we sometimes call 'the trials and tribulations' of our earthly existence, meaning our aches and pains, fears and frustrations, deprivations and disappointments, but rather literally, 'pressures', referring in particular to the opposition and persecution of a hostile world. . . . So Jesus warned his disciples that 'in the world' they would 'have trouble', and Paul similarly warned his converts that they 'must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God'.

What attitude should Christians adopt to these 'tribulations'? Far from merely enduring them with stoic fortitude, we are to rejoice in them. This is not masochism (the sickness of finding pleasure in pain), rather it is the recognition that there is a divine rationale behind suffering. First, suffering is the one and only path to glory. It was so for Christ; it is so for Christians. As Paul will soon express it, we are 'co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we might also share in his glory' (Ro. 8:17). That is why we rejoice in them both.

If suffering leads to glory in the end, it leads to maturity meanwhile. Suffering can be productive, if we respond to it positively, and not with anger and bitterness. . . . Suffering produces perseverance and we could not learn endurance without suffering, because without suffering there would be nothing to endure. Next, perseverance produces character. The word for character here is the quality of a person who has been tested and passed the test. . . . Then, character produces hope, perhaps because the God who is developing our character in the present can be relied on for the future too. . . . (And) what is the ultimate ground on which our Christian hope rests, our hope of glory? It is the steadfast love of God. The reason our hope will never let us down is that God will

never let us down. His love will never give us up . . . To be sure of God's love is the secret of joy, peace, freedom, confidence and self-respect [John Stott, *The Message of Romans*].

Use of the Word in the New Testament | Record your observations in the margins. The words *suffer* and *suffering* appear over 90 times in the New Testament.

⁴⁰ . . . They called the apostles in and had them flogged. Then they ordered them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go.

⁴¹ The apostles left the Sanhedrin, rejoicing because they had been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the Name. ⁴² Day after day, in the temple courts and from house to house, they never stopped teaching and proclaiming the good news that Jesus is the Messiah.

Acts 5:40-42

¹⁸ I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. ¹⁹ For the creation waits in eager expectation for the children of God to be revealed. ²² We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. ²³ Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption to sonship, the redemption of our bodies. ²⁴ For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what they already have? ²⁵ But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently. ²⁶ In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans. ²⁷ And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for God's people in accordance with the will of God.

Romans 8:18-19, 22-27

¹⁰ I want to know Christ—yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death,

Philippians 3:10

⁶ In all this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. ⁷ These have come so that the proven genuineness of your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.

1 Peter 1:6-7

Day Five | Seeing Jesus

Today we look at Jesus, the suffering servant. Meditate upon the following verses—pondering them, mulling over them, letting them capture your mind and heart until you find yourself led to awe, wonder and worship.

⁹ But we do see Jesus, who was made lower than the angels for a little while, now crowned with glory and honor because he suffered death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.

¹⁰ In bringing many sons and daughters to glory, it was fitting that God, for whom and through whom everything exists, should make the pioneer of their salvation (Jesus) perfect through what he suffered. ¹¹ Both the one who makes people holy and those who are made holy are of the same family. So Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers and sisters. ¹² He says, "I will declare your name to my brothers and sisters; in the assembly I will sing your praises." ¹³ And again, "I will put my trust in him." And again he says, "Here am I, and the children God has given me."

¹⁴ Since the children have flesh and blood, Jesus too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might break the power of him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil—

¹⁵ and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death.

¹⁶ For surely it is not angels he helps, but Abraham's descendants.

¹⁷ For this reason he had to be made like them, fully human in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people.

¹⁸ Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.

Hebrews 2:9-18

Peace With God | Romans 5:1-5

Notes Page: Use this page to take notes on the talk, *Romans: Peace With God*. Find this talk at womensbiblestudyLA.com/resources.

DIG IN WITH YOUR GROUP

Share your discoveries from day one.

What are your top three take-aways from the study on suffering?

How will you apply this study to your life this week?

Have each person share one way they are currently experiencing suffering (big or small). Pray for each person accordingly.

Love Poured Out | Romans 5:5-11

Day One | Exploring Romans 5:5-11

Pause to ask God to guide you and speak to you as you read his word. Read Romans 5:5-11 and answer the following questions. As you read look for repeated words and phrases, God, the Holy Spirit and Jesus.

What does this passage say about God?

What does this passage say about the love of God?

What does this passage say about me?

If this passage is true, what do I need to do to respond? Be specific.

In light of this passage, how will I pray for myself and others? Record your prayer.

Day Two | Going Deeper

Romans 5 tells us that God's love is poured out through the Holy Spirit. His love came to us when we were still in our sin. Few verses summarize the gospel as simply as Romans 5:8-9.

⁸But God demonstrates his own love for us in this:

While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

*⁹Since we have now been justified by his blood,
how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him!*

Romans 5:8-9

Summarize what you have previously learned in this study about the gospel, God's love, God's wrath, sin, justification and Christ's death.

If you could ask Jesus 3 questions about your salvation, what would they be?

Commentary

But God's love is greater: Christ did not die for good people, but for sinners. The cross is the means by which God demonstrates his love. Paul says that the cross shows us God's own love. One might expect him to say that the cross shows us the love of Christ. It does that, of course, but puts the emphasis on the love of the Father (cf. 1 John 4:10). "Christ's action is God's action. Christ's love is God's love". It would be easy to see the cross as demonstrating the indifference of God, a God who let the innocent Jesus be taken by wicked men, tortured, and crucified while he did nothing. And that would indeed be the case were it not that "God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself" (2 Cor. 5:19). Unless there is a sense in which the Father and Christ are one, it is not the love of God that the cross shows. But because Christ is one with God, Paul can

speaking of the cross as a demonstration of the love of God. There is no opposition between the Father and the Son in the means of our salvation. And it was while we were still sinners that Christ died. **"Still"** points to our state at the time. God did not make some indication that we were ready to amend our lives a precondition of bringing about our salvation. It was for people who had sinned and were still sinners that Christ died. There is a spontaneity about God's love. He loves because of what he is, not because of what we are. There is nothing in sinners to call forth the love of God. But he does love us, as the cross so plainly shows. **"Christ died for us"** comes at the end with impressive simplicity. It is a succinct statement of the essence of the Christian message [Leon Morris, *Pillar Commentary on Romans*].

(Paul) spells out two major means by which we come to be sure that God loves us. The first is that God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, who he has given us. This is the first mention in Romans of the work of the Holy Spirit and it teaches some important lessons. The first is that the Holy Spirit is God's gift to all believers (since Paul is listing the consequences of justification), so that it is not possible to be justified by faith without at the same time being regenerated (born again) and indwelt by the Spirit. Secondly, because of the tense of the verb, it teaches us that the Holy Spirit was given to us at a particular time, namely, at what point is popularly called our 'conversion,' or when we were justified. Thirdly, having been given to us, one of the Holy Spirit's distinct ministries is to pour God's love into our hearts. Indeed, he has done this in such a way that the initial outpouring remains a permanent flood . . . (Paul) writes here, not of the outpouring of the Spirit, but of the outpouring of God's love by the ministry of the Spirit in our hearts. . . . What the Holy Spirit does is to make us deeply and refreshingly aware that God loves us. It is similar to Paul's statement in Romans 8:16, "the Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children." There is little difference between being assured of God's fatherhood and of his love [John Stott, *The Message to the Romans*].

What do you face today that will be different if approached with the confidence of God's love for you?

Day Three | Ponder

Today we ponder the love of God poured out into our hearts. Simply sit with these verses in meditation. Christian meditation is not emptying the mind but filling it with the truth given in the Bible. As you meditate, consider how belonging to this God impacts your life today. Look for the beauty of God. Pause to worship him. Do not rush.

*But you, Lord, are a compassionate and gracious God,
slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness.*

Psalm 86:15

⁹ *[Jesus said:] "As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love."*

John 15:9

*See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God!
And that is what we are . . .*

1 John 3:1

⁴*But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, ⁵made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved.*
⁶*And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, ⁷in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus.*

Ephesians 2:4-7

¹*Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good. His love endures forever.*
²*Give thanks to the God of gods. His love endures forever.*
³*Give thanks to the Lord of lords: His love endures forever*
⁴*to him who alone does great wonders, His love endures forever.*
⁵*who by his understanding made the heavens, His love endures forever.*
⁶*who spread out the earth upon the waters, His love endures forever.*
⁷*who made the great lights—His love endures forever.*
⁸*the sun to govern the day, His love endures forever.*
⁹*the moon and stars to govern the night; His love endures forever.*

Psalm 136:1-9

Day Four | Word Study | Love

Today we will continue looking at *love* by now doing a word study. Romans can be broken into two sections and both relate to love. Romans 1-11 tell us of God's amazing love for us. Romans 12-16 invites us to live a life of love toward God and others.

Definition

If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels, but do not have love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. ²If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. ³If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing.

⁴Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud.

⁵It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. ⁶Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth.

⁷It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

⁸Love never fails . . .

1 Corinthians 13:1-8

Thoughts on Love

To love at all is to be vulnerable. Love anything and your heart will be wrung and possibly broken. If you want to make sure of keeping it intact you must give it to no one, not even an animal. Wrap it carefully round with hobbies and little luxuries; avoid all entanglements. Lock it up safe in the casket or coffin of your selfishness. But in that casket, safe, dark, motionless, airless, it will change. It will not be broken; it will become unbreakable, impenetrable, irredeemable. To love is to be vulnerable.

C. S. Lewis

My deepest awareness of myself is that I am deeply loved by Jesus Christ and I have done nothing to earn it or deserve it . . . Define yourself radically as one beloved by God. This is the true self. Every other identity is illusion.

Brennan Manning

God's love for us is everlasting. That means that God's love for us existed before we were born and will exist after we have died. It is an eternal love in which we are embraced. Living a spiritual life calls us to claim that eternal love for ourselves so that we can live our temporal loves – for parents, brothers, sisters, teachers, friends, spouses, and all people who become part of our lives – as reflections or refractions of God's eternal love. No fathers or mothers can love their children perfectly. No husbands or wives can love each other with unlimited love. There is no human love that is not broken somewhere.

When our broken love is the only love we can have, we are easily thrown into despair, but when we can live our broken love as a partial reflection of God's perfect, unconditional love, we can forgive one another our limitations and enjoy together the love we have to offer.

Henri Nouwen

Use of the Word in Romans | Record your observations in the margins.

⁸ *But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*

Romans 5:8

³⁸ *For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, ⁹ neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

Romans 8:38-39

⁹ *Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good*
¹⁰ *Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves.*¹¹ *Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord.*

Romans 12:9-11

⁸ *Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for whoever loves others has fulfilled the law. ⁹ The commandments, "You shall not commit adultery," "You shall not murder," "You shall not steal," "You shall not covet," and whatever other command there may be, are summed up in this one command: "Love your neighbor as yourself.*
¹⁰ *Love does no harm to a neighbor. Therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.*

Romans 13:8-10

Ask God to show you someone who might need an act of love and kindness from you today. Who is the person? How will you love them?

Day Five | Seeing Jesus

Today we look at Jesus, the God who loves. Meditate upon the following verses—pondering them, mulling over them, letting them capture your mind and heart until you find yourself led to awe, wonder and worship.

It was just before the Passover Festival. Jesus knew that the hour had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end.

²*The evening meal was in progress, and the devil had already prompted Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot, to betray Jesus. ³Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God; ⁴so he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. ⁵After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him.*

⁶*He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?"*

⁷*Jesus replied, "You do not realize now what I am doing, but later you will understand."*

⁸*"No," said Peter, "you shall never wash my feet."*

Jesus answered, "Unless I wash you, you have no part with me."

⁹*"Then, Lord," Simon Peter replied, "not just my feet but my hands and my head as well!"*

¹⁰*Jesus answered, "Those who have had a bath need only to wash their feet; their whole body is clean. And you are clean, though not every one of you."*

¹¹*For he knew who was going to betray him, and that was why he said not every one was clean.*

¹²*When he had finished washing their feet, he put on his clothes and returned to his place.*

"Do you understand what I have done for you?" he asked them. ¹³"You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and rightly so, for that is what I am. ¹⁴Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. ¹⁵I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. ¹⁶Very truly I tell you, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. ¹⁷Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them.

John 13:1-17

Love Poured Out | Romans 5:5-11

Notes Page: Use this page to take notes on the talk, *Romans: Love Poured Out*. Find this talk at womensbiblestudyLA.com/resources.

DIG IN WITH YOUR GROUP

Share your discoveries from day one.

How were you invited by the Scripture and the leading of God to love others this week?

Pray Ephesians 3:14-21 for each person in your group.

Jesus is Perfect | Romans 5:12-21

Day One | Exploring Romans 5:12-21

Pause to ask God to guide you and speak to you as you read his word. Read Romans 5:12-21 and answer the following questions. As you read look for repeated words and phrases, God, the Holy Spirit and Jesus.

What does this passage say about God?

What does this passage say about me?

If this passage is true, what do I need to do to respond? Be specific.

In light of this passage, how will I pray for myself and others? Record your prayer.

Day Two | Going Deeper

In Romans 5:12-21, Paul lays out an argument for the penalty of sin coming through the first human, Adam. He then presents Jesus as the perfect man who reverses the consequences brought about by sin. This is what we explore today.

List the consequences of sin, brought about by Adam, listed in Romans 5:12-21.

List what Jesus accomplished in his victory over sin as explained in Romans 5:12-21.

Five Truths about the Death of Jesus, by Joseph Scheumann

1. The death of Jesus was for his enemies.

God loves us when we're utterly unlovable. When Jesus died, he died for the ungodly, for sinners, and for his enemies. Paul gets at how contrary this is to human nature when he writes, "For one will scarcely die for a righteous person, though perhaps for a good person one would dare to die, but God shows his love for us in that while we were sinners, Christ died for us".

2. The death of Jesus purchased a people.

The death of Christ was effective in its purpose. And its goal was not just to purchase the possibility of salvation, but a people for his own possession. Hear Jesus's words: "All that the Father gives to me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out... And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day". If we say that Christ only purchased the opportunity of salvation for all men we gut biblical words such as redemption of their meaning. John Murray writes: "Christ did not come to put men in a redeemable position but to redeem to himself a people."

3. The death of Jesus is on our behalf.

Jesus's death was substitutionary. That is, he died in our place. He died the death that we deserved. He bore the punishment that was justly ours. For everyone who believes in him, Christ took the wrath of God on their behalf. Peter writes, "[Jesus] himself bore our sin in his body on the tree that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed."

4. The death of Jesus defines love.

Jesus's death wasn't just an act of love, it *defines* love. His substitutionary death is the ultimate example of what love means, and Jesus calls those who follow him to walk in the same kind of

life-laying-down love. John writes, "By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers. But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him? Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth."

5. The death of Jesus reconciles us to God.

Justification, propitiation, and redemption — all benefits of Christ's death — have one great purpose: reconciliation. Jesus's death enables us to have a joy-filled relationship with God, which is the highest good of the cross. We enter this world sinful, and as a result, we're alienated from God. Only forgiveness — forgiveness which was purchased at the cross — can heal the relationship so that we are able to enjoy fellowship with God.

Jesus is the true and better Adam who passed the test in the garden and whose obedience is imputed to us (treated as if it were ours through faith). Jesus is the true and better Abel who, though innocently slain, has blood now that cries out, not for our condemnation, but for acquittal. Jesus is the true and better Abraham who answered the call of God to leave all the comfortable and familiar and go out into the void not knowing wither he went to create a new people of God. Jesus is the true and better Isaac who was not just offered up by his father on the mount but was truly sacrificed for us. And when God said to Abraham, "Now I know you love me because you did not withhold your son, your only son whom you love from me," now we can look at God taking his son up the mountain and sacrificing him and say, "Now we know that you love us because you did not withhold your son, your only son, whom you love from us." Jesus is the true and better Jacob who wrestled and took the blow of justice we deserved, so we, like Jacob, only receive the wounds of grace to wake us up and discipline us. Jesus is the true and better Joseph who, at the right hand of the king, forgives those who betrayed and sold him and uses his new power to save them. Jesus is the true and better Moses who stands in the gap between the people and the Lord and who mediates a new covenant. Jesus is the true and better Rock of Moses who, struck with the rod of God's justice, now gives us water in the desert. Jesus is the true and better Job, the truly innocent sufferer, who then intercedes for and saves his stupid friends. Jesus is the true and better David whose victory becomes his people's victory, though they never lifted a stone to accomplish it themselves. Jesus is the true and better Esther who didn't just risk leaving an earthly palace but lost the ultimate and heavenly one, who didn't just risk his life, but gave his life to save his people. Jesus is the true and better Jonah who was cast out into the storm so that we could be brought in. Jesus is the real Rock of Moses, the real Passover Lamb, innocent, perfect, helpless, slain so the angel of death will pass over us. He's the true temple, the true prophet, the true priest, the true king, the true sacrifice, the true lamb, the true light, the true bread. The Bible's really not about you – it's about him.

Sinclair Ferguson

Day Three | Ponder

Today we ponder what Jesus accomplished through his life, death and resurrection. Simply sit with these verses in meditation. Christian meditation is not emptying the mind but filling it with the truth given in the Bible. As you meditate, consider how belonging to this God impacts your life today. Look for the beauty of God. Pause to worship him. Do not rush.

⁴² So will it be with the resurrection of the dead. The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable; ⁴³ it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; ⁴⁴ it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body.

If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body. ⁴⁵ So it is written: "The first man Adam became a living being"; the last Adam, a life-giving spirit. ⁴⁶ The spiritual did not come first, but the natural, and after that the spiritual. ⁴⁷ The first man was of the dust of the earth; the second man is of heaven. ⁴⁸ As was the earthly man, so are those who are of the earth; and as is the heavenly man, so also are those who are of heaven. ⁴⁹ And just as we have borne the image of the earthly man, so shall we bear the image of the heavenly man.

⁵⁰ I declare to you, brothers and sisters, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. ⁵¹ Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed— ⁵² in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet.

For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed.

⁵³ For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality.

⁵⁴ When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true:

"Death has been swallowed up in victory."

⁵⁵ "Where, O death, is your victory?

Where, O death, is your sting?"

⁵⁶ The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. ⁵⁷ But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

⁵⁸ Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, stand firm. Let nothing move you.

Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.

1 Corinthians 15:42-58

Day Four | Word Study | Grace

Today we dive deep by doing a word study on *grace*. Grace is the message of the gospel. Grace is the message of the Bible.

¹⁷For 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!

Romans 5:17

Definitions

Grace | *χαριτόω; χάρις^a, ἰσος* *f.* to show kindness to someone, with the implication of graciousness on the part of the one showing such kindness—'to show kindness, to manifest graciousness toward, kindness, graciousness, grace' [*Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*].

God's unmerited favor toward humanity and especially his people, realized through the covenant and fulfilled through Jesus Christ [*The Eardmans Bible Dictionary*].

Commentary

The New Testament word for grace, χάρις, is related to the Greek verb for "rejoice." In secular usage the term indicates that which brings joy and pleasure or wins favor.

In the writings of Paul: *This new grace holds a key position in Paul's letters. Nearly two-thirds of all uses of grace are found there.*

According to Paul, God's grace is inseparable from his love expressed in Jesus Christ (Rom. 1:7; 1 Cor. 1:3). Christ mediates salvation. Rich, he became poor (2 Cor. 8:9); in glory, he took the form of a servant (Phil. 2:7); through him, God reconciled mankind to himself (2 Cor. 5:18–21), "while we were yet sinners" (Rom. 5:8). The grace of Jesus Christ is through the cross (Gal. 2:20; Eph. 1:20; cf. Rom. 5:9). God freely (Gal. 5:4), human wisdom (2 Cor 1:12), and sin (Rom. 6:1) justifies all who believe, by faith and grace (3:24–25; cf. 5:1). Grace is the antithesis of law God, rich in mercy and love, brings children of wrath alive (Eph. 2:4–5).

This grace is received by faith (v. 8). In faith, one experiences grace's abundance (Rom. 5:17; Eph. 1:7; 2:7). Yet faithlessness, by legalism (Gal. 2:21; 5:4) or negligence (1 Cor. 15:2; 2 Cor. 6:1), can render this grace in vain. While grace cannot be presumed, in its abundance it can be wholly trusted as adequate for every sinner (cf. 1 Tim. 1:15–16).

God's graciousness in Christ is multiplied throughout the world through his people (2 Cor. 4:15). God gives Paul grace to preach in his mission to the Gentiles (Rom. 15:15; Eph. 3:8; cf. Acts 20:24). The Church receives this same grace for its offices and ministries (Rom. 12:3–8; Eph. 4:7,

11–12). Believers show God’s graciousness in the ministry of relief (2 Cor. 8:7), in godly living (cf. Tit. 2:11ff.), and in gracious speech (Eph. 4:29ff.; Col. 4:6) [*The Erdmans Bible Dictionary*].

Use of the Word in Romans | Record your observations in the margins.

²⁴ and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. ²⁵ God presented Christ as a sacrifice of atonement, through the shedding of his blood—to be received by faith . . .

Romans 3:24-25

²⁰ The law was brought in so that the trespass might increase. But where sin increased, grace increased all the more, ²¹ so that, just as sin reigned in death, so also grace might reign through righteousness to bring eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? ² By no means! We are those who have died to sin; how can we live in it any longer? . . . ¹⁴ For sin shall no longer be your master, because you are not under the law, but under grace. ¹⁵ What then? Shall we sin because we are not under the law but under grace? By no means! ¹⁶ Don’t you know that when you offer yourselves to someone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one you obey—whether you are slaves to sin, which leads to death, or to obedience, which leads to righteousness?

Romans 5:20-6:2, 6:14-16

⁶ And if by grace, then it cannot be based on works; if it were, grace would no longer be grace.

Romans 11:6

²⁰ The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus be with you.

Romans 16:20

Day Five | Seeing Jesus

Today we look at the beauty and perfection of Jesus. Meditate upon the following verses—pondering them, mulling over them, letting them capture your mind and heart until you find yourself led to awe, wonder and worship.

¹³For God has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, ¹⁴in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

¹⁵The Son (Jesus) is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation.

¹⁶For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him. ¹⁷He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. ¹⁸And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy. ¹⁹For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, ²⁰and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.

²¹Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior. ²²But now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation— ²³if you continue in your faith, established and firm, and do not move from the hope held out in the gospel.

This is the gospel that you heard and that has been proclaimed to every creature under heaven, and of which I, Paul, have become a servant.

Colossians 1:13-23

Jesus is Perfect | Romans 5:12-21

Notes Page: Use this page to take notes on the talk, *Romans: Jesus is Perfect*. Find this talk at womensbiblestudyLA.com/resources.

DIG IN WITH YOUR GROUP

Share your discoveries from day one.

How did the study of grace encourage you?

How will you apply this study to your life this week?

Pray for each person in your group—asking them to share one need for the days ahead.