



The Book of
ROMANS

Small Group Study 2: Romans 4–8

Introduction

The book of Romans changes people. The life of Augustine, one of the greatest teachers in church history, was rerouted by God when he read one verse from the book of Romans. Martin Luther, a leader in the Protestant Reformation, understood the gospel for the first time by studying the book. God has not only transformed people, but he has even altered the course of history through the book of Romans, and we believe that God wants to transform our church through it as well.

The book of Romans teaches heavy theology. However, we should remember that God has designed this book to transform us, not merely inform us. After eleven chapters, Paul begins Romans 12:1–2a with a “therefore,” saying,

Therefore, brothers and sisters, in view of the mercies of God, I urge you to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God; this is your true worship. Do not be conformed to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind (CSB, emphasis added).

How are we supposed to be transformed? By the renewing of our minds. Perhaps you know people who are all about life-change and transformation, but they don’t want anything to do with renewing their minds. In other words, things like engaged thinking (Romans 8:5) and meditating on God’s Word (Psalm 1:2) in order to understand (2 Timothy 2:7) are not high priorities for such people; they would rather do than think. At the opposite end of the spectrum are those who are all about theology and glorifying God with their minds, but their thoughts about God don’t transform their everyday lives. The book of Romans teaches us that a renewed mind is God’s plan for changing our hearts and lives.

We must not skip over laboring, thinking, and meditating on Paul's teachings if we want to be changed by God. As we dive into the necessary mind-work of studying Romans, don't forget the goal: God wants to transform us through this his Word.

God transforms wrath-deserving sinners into glorified worshippers through his gospel. God doesn't change us merely through the idea of heavy theology. He changes us by the subject of what theology in Romans is about—his righteousness revealed in the gospel. The gospel is the power of God for salvation (Romans 1:16). This salvation involves past justification (5:1), present transformation (12:2) and future glorification (5:9; 8:3). The gospel is powerful to accomplish this marvelous transformation because it reveals God's righteousness (1:17). Beholding God, in all his righteousness, is the key to true transformation.

Romans: The Basics

Romans is a letter from Paul to the Christians in Rome. Paul, the sender, identifies himself in the very first verse (1:1), and we know he is writing to Christians in Rome because he addresses the letter, “To all who are in Rome, loved by God, called as saints” (1:7). Paul is writing to all Christians, from both Jewish and Gentile backgrounds (2:1–4; 11:13–21; etc.). Paul loves the Christians in Rome and longs to see them and be mutually encouraged, but he hasn’t been able to visit them yet (1:11–13). Paul writes to the Romans to encourage them in the faith with his written words and because he wants to raise support for a missionary journey to Spain (1:13; 15:24–28). He also plans to visit the Roman Christians on his way to Spain. In other words, we can safely say that Romans is one of the most theologically-rich missionary support letters that has ever been written. Paul’s overall intentions remain clear: to encourage the Roman Christians with his words, to raise money for a trip to Spain, and to eventually visit the Roman Christians and be mutually edified by their fellowship together.

Romans: How to Study

Read, re-read, and re-read the book. There is no replacement for first-hand, prayerful, and reflective reading of God’s Word (Psalm 1). Read actively and inquisitively, ask the text questions, and interact with it. This is a great way to unclutter our thoughts and get rid of the assumptions of what we might think Paul is saying. Another way to interact with the text is to hear it read to you. The whole book takes just about an hour to listen to, and it’s an efficient way to consume Scripture throughout the week.

What should we look for when we read? Several things.

1. Look for repeated words and phrases.

Repeated words and phrases reveal the author’s interest. For example, God is the most common word in the book of Romans (161 times). The next most common word is Law (78 times). Even this surface analysis tells us that Romans is God-centered. As another example, we notice that the word “Spirit” occurs 21 times in Romans 8, while only once in Romans 7. This is just one example of the contrast between these two chapters that gives us a clue to the meaning of the text. Even “obedience of faith” (1:5, 16:26), which occurs at the very beginning and end of the book, gives us major clues. How does the book of Romans relate obedience and faith? As you read, keep looking for those repeated words and phrases.

2. Look for the logical connectors (for, therefore, but, etc. ...).

Romans is filled with logical connectors. Each one is a gold-mine. Here’s a simple example:

So, for my part, I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome. **For** I am not ashamed of the gospel, **for** it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. **For** in it *the* righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith. (Romans 1:15–17 NASB, emphasis added)

What does the word “for” do in these verses?

We can follow Paul’s logic by asking these questions.

Q: Paul, why are you eager to preach the gospel (1:15)?

A: “For I am not ashamed of the gospel” (1:16)

Q: Why are you not ashamed of the gospel?

A: “for it is the power of God for salvation” (1:16)

Q: Why is the gospel the power of God? Or What makes the gospel so powerful?

A: “For in it [i.e. the gospel] the righteousness of God is revealed” (1:17)

“For” links these statements together. They are not just independent ideas. They build on each other. If you wanted to write them backward, you could do it with “therefore”:

In the gospel, the righteousness of God is revealed (1:17), **therefore** the gospel is the power of God (1:16) ... **therefore** I am not ashamed of the gospel (1:16) ... **therefore** I am eager to preach the gospel (1:15).

Now, we can see clearly that the righteousness of God revealed in the gospel is what makes the gospel potent. Since it’s no impotent gospel, Paul is not ashamed of it. And if Paul’s not ashamed of the gospel, he’s eager to preach it. How can this chain help us identify why we are not eager to share the gospel?

Whenever you come to a connector word like “for” or “therefore,” underline it and look at the phrases or verses before and after to discover what ideas they are connecting.

3. Look for questions.

Paul asks at least 50 rhetorical questions in Romans. These clue us into his progression of thought. For example, Paul asks, “What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin so that grace may increase?” (6:1 NASB). When you encounter a question like this, ask yourself: What prompted Paul to raise this rhetorical question? How does Paul answer this question in the verses that follow?

4. Look for Old Testament quotes and allusions

The New Testament did not yet exist when Paul was writing Romans. So, when Paul wants to make his point from Scripture, he reaches for the Old Testament. Pay attention to when and how Paul uses it to ground his argument. Go back and read these passages.

For example, in Romans 3:9–18, when Paul wants to prove that everyone is unrighteous before God, he piles on several Old Testament verses, one after another. In Romans 10, when he wants to show the reader that salvation for the Gentiles was always God’s plan, Paul quotes from all three parts of the Old Testament: the Law, the Prophets, and the Writings. He is, in essence, arguing, “What I’m saying is right there in your Bibles.”

To summarize: Look and look and look at the text. The more you look, the easier it will get. Ask God’s Spirit for help as you study his Word. Once you’ve spent time wrestling with it yourself, feel free to use other resources, like commentaries, when you are stuck on certain passages.

Romans: The Big Picture

One of the key principles of interpreting any Bible book is this: The whole interprets the parts, and the parts interpret the whole. As you study the parts of a book, you’ll gain a better understanding of the whole of the book. And the more you study the book as a whole, the more you will be helped in understanding its parts correctly.

Think of it like you’re looking at Raleigh-Durham, North Carolina in Google Maps. Sometimes you zoom out to understand where you are, and sometimes you have to zoom in to get your bearings. When we get lost in a section of Romans, having a big picture helps re-orient us to what is going on. The big-picture summaries below are an attempt to understand the whole of the book as we prepare to zoom in with our weekly Bible studies.

The Big Picture in Paragraph

In the book of Romans, Paul declares the righteousness of God in the gospel (1:16–17). Paul wants the Christians in Rome to know that God is absolutely righteous, meaning he is forever faithful and true (3:1–8) and that he is righteous in his just condemnation of sinners (1:18–3:20). Paul also writes about God’s gracious salvation of sinners

who trust in Christ (3:21–4:25) and that God is righteous in the way he grants us Christ’s righteousness (3:21–30). God is righteous in his dealings with Israel and the nations (9–11). This means we can build our life on God’s faithfulness and his righteousness, and we can trust that he will never lie, never do wrong, and always come through on his Word (4:16–25). When we build our life on his righteousness, the result is unfailing hope (5:1–11; 8:20–39). Like Abraham, we learn to hope against hope in trusting God (4:18, see Week 2), and this hope bears incredible fruit in our lives: the obedience of faith (1:5; 16:26), the putting to the death of our sin (6:12–23; 8:13), and perseverance in suffering (5:1–5; 8:26–39). This tomorrow-hope in the faithfulness of God creates a people who are ready to give up preferences and be united to one another in love, like Jews and Gentiles (12:1–15:13). As you can see from the many times the word “righteous” is mentioned in this paragraph, the book of Romans is built on one solid foundation—the righteousness and faithfulness of God.

The Big Picture in Outline

Below is a proposed outline for the book of Romans. The “concepts” line helps identify some of the key doctrines that are covered in the selected passages.

1:1–17	<p>The righteousness of God revealed in the gospel</p>
1:18–3:20	<p>The righteousness of God in his wrath against unrighteous sinners</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unrighteousness of Gentiles (1:18–32) • Unrighteousness of Jews (2:1–3:8) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is God righteous in judging his own people? (3:1–7). • (In this section, Paul connects God’s righteousness to God’s faithfulness and truthfulness.) • The unrighteousness of all people (3:9–20) <p><i>Concepts: God’s righteous wrath, our unrighteousness</i></p>
3:21–4:25	<p>The righteousness of God in saving sinners through faith in Christ</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • God demonstrates his righteousness through the death of Jesus (3:21–26). • God’s gift-righteousness through faith to Jews and Gentiles (3:27–31) • Abraham’s faith in God’s faithfulness (4:1–25) <p><i>Concepts: God’s saving righteousness, justification by faith, grace, law</i></p>
5:1–8:39	<p>Faith in God’s righteousness creates unfailing hope</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hope enables perseverance in suffering (5:1–11), battle against sin (6, 8), etc. because hope is banking on the future faithfulness of God, on the grounds of the gospel (8:32). <p><i>Concepts: Hope, suffering, union with Christ, obedience of faith, Spirit</i></p>
9:1–11:36	<p>God’s righteousness towards Israel and the Gentiles</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • God is faithful and his Word has not failed, even if Jews do not believe. • God is faithful and righteous in all his dealings: in judging some and saving some. <p><i>Concepts: Israel, Gentiles, election, mercy</i></p>
12:1–16:27	<p>The fruit of hoping in God’s righteousness: transformation through total dedication to God</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Christian community (12:3–13:14) • Strong and weak: accept each other in love (14:1–15:13) • Closing remarks (15:14–16:27) <p><i>Concepts: The church, love, unity, missions</i></p>

Final Thoughts

Just as this book has changed the minds and hearts of many (like Augustine and Martin Luther), we look forward to how God will use Romans to transform our church in this season. With every Bible study in this series, our hope is that we all will see the gospel with greater appreciation, love God with greater passion, and apply the messages of Romans in ways that impact our everyday lives and bear witness for Christ in our communities.

“Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you believe so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.” - Romans 15:13

How to Use This Guide

In 2019, The Summit Church will study the book of Romans together. Pastor J.D. will preach through Romans all year long, and our Summit small groups will investigate the message and meaning of Romans in our small group rhythms.

This Bible study includes eight studies that comprise the second set in a larger series of studies produced for Summit small groups this year. Each Bible study series is designed to aid both our personal study of Romans and facilitate our small group discussions. This current volume will investigate Romans 4–8 which introduces us to God’s righteousness in the gospel.

Each study begins with some key verses and key principles for each passage, followed by a devotional introduction to prepare our hearts and minds. Then, the Study Guide section incorporates a series of questions specifically designed to help us engage the text of Romans in personal study and small group discussion, according to the H.E.A.R. method of Bible study:

- **Highlight:** Read and observe everything in the passage.
- **Explain:** Based on your reading, discover what the passage means in its context.
- **Apply:** Understand how the meaning of the passage affects your life.
- **Respond in Prayer:** Pray God’s Word back to him, asking to believe, share, and put the Bible into practice in your life and relationships.

Work on these exercises at any time throughout the week. Some may find it helpful to work through the exercises in sections—such as two or three blocks of 15 to 20 minutes each, while others may want to study the whole passage in one, hour-long sitting. Whichever approach you choose to take, please answer the exercises before your small group meeting. In small groups, we’ll discuss our answers to the Bible study questions together. To maximize our study of God’s Word and the impact it can have on our lives, we encourage everyone to work through all questions in each of the eight weekly studies, but small group leaders may choose to focus on some questions more than others.

In addition to resources in this booklet, we also encourage you and your small group to take full advantage of the following Romans-specific resources.

Discipleship Group Guides

As part of the Summit small group rhythms, we will produce Discipleship Group (D-group) guides throughout the year to assist your group in applying the truths of the gospel and the messages of Romans, encouraging us to grow deeper in fellowship and accountability.

Romans Scripture Journal

The Romans Scripture Journal is a special-edition resource from The Summit Church to aid your study of Romans in a few specific ways:

- The journal features larger font with extra spacing, wide margins, and blank pages and is designed to give you space to take notes and process what God is saying to you through his Word.
- The journal identifies key terms in bold that correspond with expanded definitions in a glossary at the back of the book.
- The journal includes recommended memory verses from each chapter of Romans, making it easier to hide God's Word in our hearts (Psalm 119:11).

You can find the journal at summitchurch.com/romansjournal.

Bible Reading Plan

Encounter God by reading his Word every day in 2019. In order to help us make daily Bible reading a priority, we have released a daily Bible reading plan for the people of The Summit Church. Our reading plan usually covers one chapter per day, and our scheduled readings allow us to read Romans in its entirety three times throughout the year. The 2019 reading plan also features many books with connections to Romans. Some books represent Scriptures quoted by Paul in Romans (e.g. Genesis, Psalms, Isaiah), while other books represent related themes (e.g. Galatians, James, Hebrews). Join thousands of brothers and sisters in Christ at The Summit Church as we encounter God each day through our 2019 Bible reading plan. You can find the plan at summitchurch.com/plan.

Additional Romans Resources

For even more resources, The Summit Institute has provided a list of recommended Romans resources to meet a variety of ministry needs. Visit summitrduinstitute.com/romans.

Week One: Romans 4:1–17

Key Verses

“Now to the one who works, pay is not credited as a gift, but as something owed. But to the one who does not work, but believes on him who declares the ungodly to be righteous, his faith is credited for righteousness.” - Romans 4:4–5 (CSB)

Key Principles

- Justification is a gift by faith, not a wage earned by works.
- Justification involves both forgiveness of sin and being credited righteousness.
- From Genesis and Psalms, Paul clearly shows that God justifies sinners by faith, not by works.

Read

Let's review Romans 1–3 before jumping into Chapter 4. Romans 1–3 proclaims that our God is righteous and never at fault in how he relates to unrighteous sinners. This has been Paul's argument all through Romans 1–3: God is righteous in condemning sinners (1:18–3:20), and he is also righteous in how he saves sinners who trust in Christ (3:21–3:30). Every person, both Jew and Greek, has turned away from God (3:9–3:18), and no one can make themselves righteous by performing good works (3:20). The only hope for unrighteous people like us is the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ (3:25). But the good news is that Jesus takes on the wrath of God for those who trust in him. On the cross, Jesus takes their punishment, which satisfies God's righteous demand for judgment. As a result, none of us earn righteousness through our own works, but we are gifted righteousness through Christ! This gift-righteousness that God grants to those who trust in him is what we call "justification by faith," literally "righteousification by faith."

During the original reading and writing of the book of Romans, the New Testament didn't yet exist. So, when the Christians in Rome received this letter, many of them would have wondered, "Is Paul's teaching in line with my Bible, the Old Testament?" So, another natural question they might ask after reading Romans 1–3 is, "This sounds good, but is this justification by faith what God teaches in his Word?"

In Romans 4, Paul answers this by referring to Genesis 15 and Psalm 32. He tells us that justification involves two aspects:

1. God forgives our sins. Meaning, our sins **are not credited** against us (Psalm 32:1–2).
2. God credits us righteousness we did not earn. We **are credited** as righteous, while we are still sinners (Genesis 15:6).

Paul shows that the Old Testament teaches both of these truths, but he does so in reverse order. In Genesis 15, God comes to Abraham (who is childless) and promises him that his descendants will be more numerous than the stars in the sky. Genesis 15:6 says "Abram believed God and it was credited to him as righteousness" (emphasis added). The word "credited" is one you'll want to take note of, as it is used multiple times this chapter (see verses 3–11; 22–24).

Genesis 15:6 puts the emphasis on Abraham's faith, not his works. In other words, Abraham did not earn righteousness by his works, it was credited to him by faith.

When we get paid for working, our wage is not a gift, but what we are owed (4:4). But when we trust God instead of working for our righteousness, righteousness is a gracious gift, not something we earn (4:5). Abraham believed God, and his faith was credited to him as righteousness. That is just one part of justification. God counting us righteous when we trust in him.

But justification also involves God not counting our sins against us. Paul goes to Psalm 32 to show this aspect of justification. Paul says that David speaks of the "blessing of the person to whom God credits righteousness apart from works" (4:6, emphasis added). He quotes Psalm 32 which says that the blessed person is the one whose "lawless acts are forgiven" and "whose sins are covered" (4:7). This is the person whose sin the Lord does not "credit" or "account" to him. (In 4:8, "charge" is the exact same word as "credited" or "counted.") This is why Paul refers to Psalm 32: It helps to clarify the other side of justification.

From Genesis and Psalms, Paul clearly shows that God justifies sinners by faith, not by works. In justification, God does not count our sin against us (Psalm 32), but counts us righteous when we trust in Him (Genesis 15). Justification by faith eliminates all boasting (Romans 3:27), so none of us can boast in God's sight, not even Abraham (4:2). We do not work to earn our salvation from God. Instead, we trust him, acknowledging our helplessness, fully relying on his grace to provide what he demands. And trusting God for forgiveness produces in us what it produced in David: a joyful song from the heart, praising God for not counting our wrongs against us.

Abraham was justified, not by circumcision, but by faith. Paul teaches this by using rhetorical questions as objections. In Romans 4:9–13, Paul tackles yet another objection: Wasn't Abraham circumcised? So, isn't justification limited to those who are circumcised and keep the law? And he responds by asking another question: Was righteousness credited to Abraham while he was circumcised or uncircumcised? Paul then tells the Christians in Rome that it was while Abraham was uncircumcised (4:10), showing that circumcision could not have been a condition for justification. Circumcision was only a sign and a seal (4:11), a tangible way for God's people to identify as different, just as physical acts like baptism and the Lord's Supper mark New Testament

Christians as different. To be Abraham’s children, we don’t have to be circumcised, but we do have to have the same kind of faith he had in God (4:11–12). This makes Abraham the father of any Jew or Gentile that trusts God like Abraham did, no matter if they are circumcised or not.

Paul goes on to say in Romans 4:13–17 that Abraham and his descendents did not receive the promise because of his keeping the commandments of the law but because of the righteousness given to him on account of his faith (4:13). Abraham did not even have the commandments from the law! Remember, the law is given in Exodus 19, which historically came at least hundreds of years after God’s promise to Abraham in Genesis 12. Moreover, the promise said that God would make Abraham a father of many nations, not just the Jewish nation (4:17, quoting Genesis 17:5). If God’s promise to Abraham is to rest on grace (4:16) and not be made void (4:14), it must depend on faith and not law-keeping (4:16).

Paul shows in Romans 1:18–3:20 that both Jews and Gentiles are unrighteous and under God’s wrath. Similarly in Chapter 4, he shows that the righteousness based on faith is available to both Jews and Gentiles. That God justifies the ungodly by faith is not a new teaching. In Chapter 4, Paul helps his readers see that the same truths in the Old Testament are still important today. Spend some time this week reflecting on what God has forgiven you from and the righteousness he’s given you.

Study Guide

The following study questions are meant to help us wrestle with the text of Romans. Set aside some time this week to meet with God and answer these questions for yourself. Complete each question before your weekly small group meeting. Then, when you gather with your small group, be prepared to discuss your answers together.



Read Romans 1:16–17 to remain focused on Paul’s major points. Then, read Romans 4:1–17 in preparation for this week’s study.

Highlight

1. Circle the number of times “credited” occurs in Romans 4:1–17. Who is crediting? What is being credited?

2. Highlight the parts in Romans 4:1–17 that are quotes from the Old Testament.

3. Underline the words that are the opposite of “work” and “wage” in Romans 4:1–17.

Explain

4. Paul uses Abraham as an example in Romans 4:1–17. In verses 1–5, what does Abraham’s story teach us about being justified by God?
5. What do verses 9–15 teach us about how faith, righteousness, and obedience work together?
6. From Romans 4:1–5, explain how being credited righteousness by faith eliminates boasting (4:2).
7. Why does Paul quote the Old Testament in Romans 4:1–17?
8. Why was Abraham’s faith not a work that earned the wage of righteousness? Why is it important that God declared Abraham righteous before he was circumcised?
9. How would you explain what saving faith is and is not from Romans 4:1–17?

Apply

10. How do you usually think of your works before God? What works hinder your ability to live by faith? How does Romans 4:1–17 challenge you in how you think of works? How can you help others trust God instead of working for righteousness?

11. What are some instances where you are tempted to boast in yourself? When do you feel like you have earned God's favor? How does Romans 4:1–17 challenge you?

12. How could Romans 4:1–17 help you share your faith with your One? How would you go about explaining forgiveness and gift-righteousness to your One?

Respond in Prayer

Each week of this study guide will include a recommended Scripture passage that helps us focus on the faithfulness of our great God. Set aside some time this week to read through the selected passage and use the prayer prompts below as your guide. We recommend praying through this passage on your own at home and together with your small group.

This Week's Prayer Passage: Psalm 32

Read Psalm 32.

Pray through the following prompts, according to the A.C.T.S. method.

- Adoration: “Be glad in the Lord and rejoice” (Psalm 32:11). Reflect on the kindness of God in forgiving your transgressions (32:1) and praise his glorious grace.
- Confession: “Then I acknowledged my sin to you and did not conceal my iniquity. I said, ‘I will confess my transgressions to the Lord,’ and you forgave the guilt of my sin” (Psalm 32:5). Do as the psalmist did: Run to the Lord and confess all your heart to him. Acknowledge how you have loved created things more than the Creator (Romans 1:25).
- Thanksgiving: Thank God for not crediting your sin against you (Psalm 32:2). And thank him for crediting Christ’s righteousness to you, apart from works (Romans 4:6).
- Supplication: Ask God to be your hiding place (Psalm 32:7). Ask him to protect you from trouble and surround you with joyful shouts of deliverance (32:7). Ask him to instruct you and show you the way you should go (32:9).

who's your **1**ONE?

Who's Your One? (summitchurch.com/one) is about each of us leading one non-Christian to faith in Christ this year. Read back through your notes from this week's study on Romans 4:1–17. How would you share the truths of Romans 4:1–17 with someone who is not a Christian? What words and phrases would you use?

This week, pray for your One. Keep a prayer journal with people from your small group. Write out specific prayer points and look for opportunities to build friendships, initiate to the spiritual, share the gospel, and help them make a decision.

Week Two: Romans 4:18–25

Key Verses

“He did not waver in unbelief at God’s promise but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God, because he was fully convinced that what God had promised, he was also able to do.” - Romans 4:20–21 (CSB)

Key Principles

- True faith is about trusting a Person (God), not mere propositions.
- A promise is more or less meaningful depending on who is giving it.
- Faith stands on God’s past faithfulness and hopes in him for future faithfulness to his promises.
- Faith trusts the firm foundation of God’s excellent Word, even when reasons to doubt God abound.
- When we trust God, he is glorified as the powerful Promise-keeper.

Read

We're told in Romans that Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him for righteousness (4:3). But what exactly did it look like for Abraham to believe God? Romans 4:18–25 gives us a fuller picture of what God promised Abraham and also what he promises us!

God had promised Abraham descendants. Abraham was over a hundred years old, and still he and his wife, Sarah, had no children. Abraham's body was as good as dead, and so was his wife's womb (4:19). As he considered his own resources to bring about the promise, things looked hopeless. If it was going to happen, it would have to be an act of God. Still, Abraham trusted God, believing that "what God had promised, he was also able to do" (4:21). Through Abraham's story from Genesis, Paul teaches some very important truths about the nature biblical faith.

Romans 4:18–25 shows us the object of faith—God. All throughout Romans 4, we see that "Abraham believed God" (4:3, emphasis added), and that God is presented as the supreme object of our faith. True faith is about trusting a Person (God), not mere propositions. We don't just believe that God justifies the ungodly, we believe "on him" (4:5). God is that Person "in whom Abraham believed" (4:17, emphasis added). And Genesis was not written for Abraham alone, but also for us (4:23–24). A promise is more or less meaningful depending on who is giving it. But we can trust the promises of God because God has continually shown himself to be faithful. We place our trust in the God behind the promise, not the promise itself! As 1 Peter 1:21 says, our "faith and hope are *in God*" (emphasis added).

Romans 4:18–25 also reveals that true faith rests on God's Word, not on the tangible evidence of our earthly senses, like sight or touch. Abraham had zero tangible evidence that God's promise would come true. In fact, everything pointed to the impossibility of him and Sarah having children, as Genesis and Romans affirm. The promise was so incredible that it made Sarah laugh when she heard it (Genesis 18:1–15). Yet Abraham "believed, hoping against hope ... according to what *had been spoken*" (Romans 4:18, emphasis added). Abraham trusted and believed God more than he trusted his circumstances. "He did not weaken in faith when he considered his own body ... and also the deadness of Sarah's womb. He did not waver in unbelief at *God's promise* but was strengthened in faith" (Romans 4:19–20, emphasis added). Faith trusts the firm foundation of God's excellent Word, even when reasons to doubt God abound.

Romans 4:18–25 demonstrates that faith brings glory to God. We know that God created all things for his glory, and so, everything we do is to be done for the glory of God. “So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do everything for the glory of God” (1 Corinthians 10:31). The reason why God’s wrath is against everyone is because everyone has failed to glorify him (Romans 1:21). That is what Romans 3:23 means when it says, “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” But in Romans 4:20, we read that Abraham “gave glory to God.” How exactly can Abraham, an unrighteous man, glorify God?

Abraham glorified God by trusting him. This trust in God is the essence of faith. In a literal translation of Romans 4:20, Abraham “was strengthened in his faith, giving glory to God.” Note that “giving glory” here is a participle, meaning that God is being glorified through the very act of Abraham’s faith. And the next part of the verse clarifies what Paul means. Romans 4:21 says, “-giving glory to God, and being fully assured that what God had promised, he was able also to perform” (NASB). When we trust God, we glorify him because we are making a statement about God in our hearts. We are saying, “I am fully assured that what God has promised, he is able to perform.” On the contrary, unbelief dishonors God. Unbelief says, “God is neither faithful, nor willing, to come through on his promise.” And so, when we trust him, God is glorified as the powerful Promise-keeper. Martin Luther put it this way, “[Faith] honors him whom it trusts with the most reverent and highest regard, since it considers him truthful and trustworthy.”¹

One further point about faith from Romans 4:18–25: Faith isn’t merely trusting in what God has done, it also hopes in what God will do in the future. Faith is trusting a Person (God) to be and do what he has promised to do. As Romans 4:18 says, Abraham “believed, hoping against hope” (CSB). Meaning, Abraham persevered in hope, even when there was no human reason for hope. Hope and faith intersect throughout the Bible. Hebrews 11:1 tells us that, “faith is the assurance of things hoped for” (ESV, emphasis added). Romans 8:24–25 says it this way, “hope that is seen is not hope, because who hopes for what he sees? Now if we hope for what we do not see, we eagerly wait for it with patience” (CSB). As a demonstration of his faith in God, Abraham hoped in what he did not see, trusting God with the future.

¹ Martin Luther, “Freedom of a Christian (1520),” in *American Edition of Luther’s Works*, eds. Jaroslav Pelikan and Helmut Lehmann (Philadelphia: Fortress Press; St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1957–1986), 31:147.

Oftentimes, we think that becoming a Christian is only about affirming past historical events—that Christ came, died for our sins, and rose again. And while believing those truths is important, it is not the full picture of biblical faith. God’s past faithfulness is grounds for trusting him for the future. Notice in the verses that follow, the past grounds our faith in God so that we trust him for the future. Romans 5:9 says, “How much more then, since we have now been declared righteous by his blood [past], will we be saved through him from wrath [future].” Again in Romans 8:32: “He did not even spare his own Son but offered him up for us all [past]. How will he not also with him grant us everything [future]?” Faith looks back on the demonstration of God’s love for us in Christ’s death, and then trusts God to fulfill all his promises in the future.

Romans 4 teaches that God justifies the ungodly by faith, not by works. Faith glorifies God by taking him at his Word above all other realities. Faith takes a stand on God’s past faithfulness and hopes in him for future faithfulness to his promises. Romans scholar, Thomas Schreiner, aptly summarizes the teaching of Romans 4, saying:

The faith that results in righteousness is not a vague abstraction. Genuine faith adheres to God’s promise despite the whirlwind of external circumstances that imperil it. Most important, faith receives its nourishment by anchoring on the God who made the promises. He can and will fulfill his pledges because he is the resurrecting God who creates life out of death, and because he is the sovereign God who summons into existence that which does not even exist.²

And so, this week, it is our hope that, through reading and wrestling with Romans 4, our faith will be nourished and anchored in the unchanging character and faithfulness of our righteous God.

Study Guide

The following study questions are meant to help us wrestle with the text of Romans. Set aside some time this week to meet with God and answer these questions for yourself. Complete

² Thomas Schreiner, *Romans*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1998), 239.

each question before your weekly small group meeting. Then, when you gather with your small group, be prepared to discuss your answers together.



Read Romans 1:16–17 to remain focused on Paul’s major points. Then, read Romans 4:18–25 in preparation for this week’s study.

Highlight

1. Highlight the times Paul quotes the Old Testament in Romans 4:18–25.
2. What are the words Paul uses to describe the impossibility of Abraham and Sarah having children? What words does Paul use to highlight Abraham's faith?
3. Highlight all the times a variation of the word faith or belief is used in Romans 4:18–25.
4. Go through and circle the times Paul uses these connector words: "so that," "therefore," and "because."

Explain

5. Why does Paul quote the Old Testament in Romans 4:18–25?
6. What specifically did Abraham believe about God in 4:21 and why is this significant?
7. How would you define unbelief from Romans 4:21–22? And why does unbelief dishonor God?
8. According to the “therefore” in Romans 4:22, why was faith credited to Abraham as righteousness?

Apply

9. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you identify any areas of unbelief in your life. Confess this unbelief to people close to you. What are some steps you can take to repent of your unbelief and to walk in faith?

10. Have you seen people around you who glorify God by trusting his promises, even in impossible situations? What are some ways you can encourage someone going through such circumstances right now?

11. What are you trusting God for right now? Which of his promises do you want him to come through on this year? Write down the Scripture(s) where you find those promises. Share them with your group.

12. How does the gospel give you words to encourage your One, particularly when he or she is going through difficult circumstances?

Respond in Prayer

Each week of this study guide will include a recommended Scripture passage that helps us focus on the faithfulness of our great God. Set aside some time this week to read through the selected passage and use the prayer prompts below as your guide. We recommend praying through this passage on your own at home and together with your small group.

This Week's Prayer Passage: Romans 4:18–25

Read Romans 4:18–25.

Pray through the following prompts, according to the A.C.T.S. method.

- **Adoration:** Praise God that he makes promises to sinners. Praise him that he is faithful and powerful enough to keep every promise he has ever made (4:21).
- **Confession:** How have you wavered “in unbelief at God’s promise” (4:20)? Go to the Lord and confess your unbelief in him. Confess to him the ways you have dishonored him in not trusting his Word.
- **Thanksgiving:** Thank God for the firm foundation of his Word. Praise God for Christ, who went to the uttermost to confirm God’s promises (15:8). Thank God for delivering up Jesus for our trespasses (4:24) and raising him from the dead.
- **Supplication:** What are some promises from Scripture you want God to fulfill? Ask him for them. As Charles Spurgeon famously described, plead God’s own handwriting before him.³ Go to God earnestly, hoping against hope, believing that what he has promised, he is surely able to perform (4:21).

³ C.H. Spurgeon, “Pleading Prayer,” in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 33 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1887), 352–353.

Who's Your One? (summitchurch.com/one) is about each of us leading one non-Christian to faith in Christ this year. Read back through your notes from this week's study on Romans 4:18–25. How would you share the truths of Romans 4:18–25 with someone who is not a Christian? What words and phrases would you use?

This week, pray for your One. Update your small group's prayer journal with specific prayer points and look for opportunities to build friendships, initiate to the spiritual, share the gospel, and help them make a decision.

Week Three: Romans 5:1–11

Key Verse

“Therefore, since we have been declared righteous by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” - Romans 5:1 (CSB)

Key Principles

- Being justified by faith brings many blessings to our lives, many of which can change our lives now.
- The gospel brings us a hope of a glorious future—eternity with God, living a perfected existence.
- God’s love for us, as demonstrated most clearly in the gospel, is a love like no other.

Read

As gospel-believing Christians, there are two mistakes that we can make that inhibit our ability to live lives of faith. The first is to see the gospel only as an abstract or theoretical idea, meaning that it never truly affects our emotions, attitudes, and affections. When we walk in this erroneous way of thinking, we do not actively talk to the God whom we proclaim. We may say we have peace with God because we know that God no longer feels like our enemy. But we don't enjoy the relationship that comes from having peace with a living God.

The second mistake is to reduce the gospel to a set of feelings. In this scenario, peace with God becomes something that we feel in our gut when we are confident, but when life throws us curveballs, we begin to doubt whether God has removed his blessing from us. We mistake feelings of anxiety as a sign that God's love is something beyond our reach. In contrast to both of these approaches, the gospel is a set of unchangeable facts that changes everything, completely, for those who trust in Christ. This reality is what we find in Romans 5:1–11, where Paul explains the many ways the gospel affects us now and in the future.

The words “since we have been justified by faith” are a great summary of Paul's argument from Romans 3:21 to the end of Romans 4:25. In 3:21–4:25, Paul explains how God brings justification to sinners, crediting Christ's righteousness to us. We were enemies of God and our future should have ended with God's wrath, but Jesus Christ earned us peace with God and a future full of hope and glory. Our present reality is marked by God's grace. This grace means that we are saved now, fully reconciled to God and able to live a life in relationship with him. It also means that we will be saved in the future and will live with our Redeemer for all eternity.

How exactly does a knowledge of these facts begin to change our lives, our minds, and our emotions here and now? All of these great facts of the gospel give us a tremendous, overwhelming **hope**, which Paul describes in 5:2–5. For Paul, this **hope** gives us joy (5:2, 11). It makes us steadfast in the face of difficult or changing circumstances (5:3–5). It helps us see beyond the brokenness in our lives to a better future and a truer spiritual reality. Sometimes in our culture, we describe **hope** as something that is uncertain, but the **hope** that the gospel brings is rock-solid and sure. We aren't placing our **hope** in things that pass or change. Romans 5:2 tells us that “we rejoice in the **hope** of the glory of God” (emphasis added).

But what exactly does it mean to “rejoice in the **hope** of the glory of God” (5:2, emphasis added)? It means we joyfully look forward to the glory of God being revealed to us and in us because God has already justified us and reconciled us to himself (5:1). It means that we can be confident—even in the midst of suffering—that God will reveal his glory in us on the last day. This **hope** we have in the gospel is a 100-percent guarantee, as God’s glory is unchanging and eternal. He has proven his trustworthiness in the ways that the gospel fulfills the prophecies of the Old Testament. So, when he tells us that heaven is our future, we can have an unshakeable confidence in that future!

To be clear, this **hope** is not naive but battle-tested. It’s not the type of **hope** that is wished for merely at the beginning, rather, it is the type of **hope** that endures through suffering and builds character. Tim Keller remarks:

[T]he benefits of justification are not only not diminished by suffering, they are enlarged by it. In other words, if you face suffering with a clear grasp of justification by grace alone, your joy in that grace will deepen. On the other hand, if you face suffering with a mindset of justification by works, the suffering will break you, not make you.¹

At the core of this hope is God’s love. Verse 5 says that hope does not put us to shame because God poured his love into our hearts. When we realize how much God loves us, the other circumstances of our lives begin to fade into the background and we are transformed. In the gospel story, God did something for us that we could not do for ourselves, much less for others. Look at how God’s love goes way beyond what we could ever do or imagine:

- God sent his only Son to die for us (Romans 5:1, 6, 8–10).
- Christ had to shed his blood in order to save us (Romans 5:8–11).
- Jesus died for us while we were God’s enemies (Romans 5:6, 8, 10).
- He then promises that we will have a great future living with him in perfect paradise (Romans 5:2; 8:17–25, 30).
- And in the meantime, he offers us friendship and reconciliation (Romans 5:1–2, 8–11; James 2:23).

¹ Tim Keller, *Romans 1–7 For You* (Purcellville, VA: The Good Book Company, 2014), 113.

This love is what really captivated the Apostles as they spread the gospel. Paul says God’s love compels us (2 Corinthians 5:14) and John says, “See what great love the Father has given us” (1 John 3:1) as he describes the gospel. God’s affection for us is the reason that we can be safe and secure about our future. Stay tuned for Romans 8 for more about how God’s Spirit will work in us in the areas of love, hope, and a glorious future.

Study Guide

The following study questions are meant to help us wrestle with the text of Romans. Set aside some time this week to meet with God and answer these questions for yourself. Complete each question before your weekly small group meeting. Then, when you gather with your small group, be prepared to discuss your answers together.



Read Romans 1:16–17 to remain focused on Paul’s major points. Then, read Romans 5:1–11 in preparation for this week’s study.

Highlight

1. Highlight Paul's conjunctions (e.g. therefore, since, but, because, for, so that, etc.) in Romans 5:1–11.
2. Romans 5:1–11 begins a description of the blessings that God gives believers in the gospel. List out all the blessings that you see mentioned in this passage.
3. Looking at verses 6–11, how does each verse describe the work of Christ in the gospel?
4. Why does Paul point out that Christ died for us “while we were still helpless” and “still sinners” (Romans 5:6–8)?

Explain

5. According to Romans 5:1–11, how does Christ’s salvation affect us right now in the present? How will Christ’s salvation impact us in the future?

6. Verse 3 says that we “rejoice in our sufferings.” What does this mean? How is it possible for Christians to rejoice in our sufferings without minimizing the pain we feel?

7. There are more first person pronouns (we, us, our) in Romans 5:1–11 than in the first four chapters combined. What does this mean? (Hint: Paul no longer distinguishes between Jews and Gentiles, as all believers are united in Christ.)

8. Paul says that believers have now “received reconciliation” (5:11). What does reconciliation mean in the context of what we have studied thus far in the book of Romans?

9. Paul says that God proves his love for us (5:8). What did God do and how is it proof of his love for us?

10. In Romans 5:1–11, Paul describes the hope we have in Christ. Placing our hope in earthly things will inevitably lead to disappointment, but why will this God-given hope never disappoint us?

Apply

11. How can hope in things God will do bring positive changes to your life right now?

12. Recall an experience of suffering in your life and be prepared to share it with your small group. As a group, take time to enter in and “weep with those who weep” (Romans 12:15). What keeps us from responding to God with the posture of joy and praise found Romans 5:1–11? What would it look like to respond with joy and praise in the midst of your circumstances?

13. How do you know that God loves you? How would you explain God’s love to your One?

Respond in Prayer

Each week of this study guide will include a recommended Scripture passage that helps us focus on the faithfulness of our great God. Set aside some time this week to read through the selected passage and use the prayer prompts below as your guide. We recommend praying through this passage on your own at home and together with your small group.

This Week's Prayer Passage: Psalm 40

Read Psalm 40.

Pray through the following prompts, according to the A.C.T.S. method.

- **Adoration:** Praise God because his deeds are wondrous and there are too many to tell about (Psalm 40:4)! Praise the Lord because no one compares with him (40:5). Praise God because he is a faithful, steadfast, and saving God (40:10).
- **Confession:** Ask God to forgive you for the ways you have been impatient with him and with others in your life. Ask God's forgiveness for how you have been fearful or felt ashamed about doing his will (Psalm 40:14). Ask God's forgiveness for letting our iniquities overtake our lives (40:12). Ask God's forgiveness for how we have restrained ourselves from telling others the good news (40:5, 9).
- **Thanksgiving:** Thank God that he will not restrain his mercy from us, even when we do not bring honor to him (Psalm 40:11). Thank God for making us secure in him (40:2). Thank God that he is trustworthy (40:3–4). Thank God that he has delivered us again and again (40:9, 13, 17), especially in Christ.
- **Supplication:** Ask God that he would hear our cries when we are in need (Psalm 40:1). Ask that God would put a new song in our mouths when we are experiencing difficulty or going through loss (40:3). Ask God for victory over sins, our own or those of the people around us, which threaten to overtake us (40:12). Ask God that you would see, understand, remember, and rejoice in his salvation of your soul (40:16–17).

who's your **1**ONE?

Who's Your One? (summitchurch.com/one) is about each of us leading one non-Christian to faith in Christ this year. Read back through your notes from this week's study on Romans 5:1–11. How would you share the truths of Romans 5:1–11 with someone who is not a Christian? What words and phrases would you use?

This week, pray for your One. Update your small group's prayer journal with specific prayer points and look for opportunities to build friendships, initiate to the spiritual, share the gospel, and help them make a decision.

Week Four: Romans 5:12–21

Key Verse

“So then, as through one trespass there is condemnation for everyone, so also through one righteous act there is justification leading to life for everyone.” - Romans 5:18 (CSB)

Key Principles

- Adam’s sin led to death and condemnation for humanity.
- Christ’s righteousness leads to life and justification for believers.
- God worked in patterns throughout the Old Testament that come to fruition in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Read

Original sin (the idea that all people inherit a sin nature because of Adam's first, or original, sin) is a concept that many believers wrestle with. It can be hard to wrap our minds around the reality that the decisions of Adam and Eve, and their failure to obey God in the garden, still impact our lives today. And yet, if we are honest with ourselves we know that we would make the same mistake they did, and we continue to do so today. Because of sin, all of us are in dire need of redemption. Romans 5:12–21 focuses on these two truths: original sin and our long awaited redemption.

First, it's important to note that Paul wanted the believers in Rome to know that sin came into the world through one man: Adam. "Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, in this way death spread to all people, because all sinned" (5:12, emphasis added). Because of Adam's sin, death and separation from God entered the world. And it didn't simply enter Adam's world, this passage states that it reigned from Adam to Moses. We all can attest that sin and death still wreak havoc in our world today.

As much as we might dispute the reality and fairness of original sin, Paul shows in Romans 5:12–21 how our sin nature and bent towards death and brokenness produce a great need for redemption. Paul is painting the picture that humanity needed Jesus, our true and better Adam, to come and redeem all of humankind.

Romans 5:14 describes Adam as a "type of the Coming One." Throughout Old Testament history, God used small stories of redemption and restoration (which, at times, seemed quite big) as ways to foreshadow how he would work salvation through his only Son, Jesus Christ. These past saviors, redeemers, representatives, shepherds, prophets, priests, and kings were not perfect, so there are many ways to contrast their lives with Christ, especially Adam. But we typically learn important things from these human figures that help us see the depth and breadth of the gospel on display in Jesus Christ. In Romans 5:12–21, Paul is showing how Christ triumphed in every area where Adam failed us. He is boldly proclaiming that Jesus Christ is the true and better Adam. This Christ is indeed humanity's long awaited redemption.

In Romans 5:12–21, Paul compares and contrasts what Adam and Jesus gifted to humankind.

Adam	Jesus
Sin (5:12)	The free gift of grace (5:15)
Death reigning over many (5:12)	Justification (5:16)
Judgment (5:16)	Righteousness (5:17, 19)
Condemnation (5:16)	Eternal life (5:21)
Separation from God (5:19; Isaiah 59:2)	Reconciliation with God (5:10–11)

Though it would be easy to despair when we look at what we inherited from Adam, Romans doesn't leave us hopeless. Romans 5:12–21 shows us that although death and sin entered through Adam, all of humankind has been offered life and redemption in Christ! In the words of Romans 5:18, "So then, as through one trespass there is condemnation for everyone, so also through one righteous act there is justification leading to life for everyone." Whereas Adam brought death, condemnation, and sin into our world through just one decision to be disobedient, God has made a way through one righteous act to provide redemption and life in Christ for all who believe.

Paul ends the chapter by proclaiming, "But where sin multiplied, grace multiplied even more so that, just as sin reigned in death, so also grace will reign through righteousness, resulting in eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (5:20b–21). Just in case we weren't quite getting it, Paul wants to be clear that the grace of God wins. He's made a way for our salvation. It might feel like sin has multiplied in our lives and the brokenness of this world is ever-present, but the grace provided in Christ will reign through righteousness. The true and better Adam has come, and he offers eternal life. Our great God brings a grace that is stronger than his judgment, and he brings eternal life that overcomes any form of death. May the Lord continue this work of grace in each and every one of us, transforming us more into the image of Jesus our Savior, as we study God's righteousness displayed in the gospel according to Romans 5:12–21.

Study Guide

The following study questions are meant to help us wrestle with the text of Romans. Set aside some time this week to meet with God and answer these questions for yourself. Complete each question before your weekly small group meeting. Then, when you gather with your small group, be prepared to discuss your answers together.



Read Romans 1:16–17 to remain focused on Paul’s major points. Then, read Romans 5:12–21 in preparation for this week’s study.

Highlight

1. Go back through all of Chapter 5 and list out the times that something was compared and found to be “much more” than what had come previously. What does this indicate about God’s work in the world?

2. From Romans 5:12–21, describe how grace entered the world.

3. How is Jesus like Adam? How is he different? Compare and contrast in your own words.

Explain

4. Paul repeats the words “gift” and “grace” several times in Romans 5:12–21. How do these words highlight the difference between Adam and Jesus?
5. Jesus is the obedient man in Romans 5:19. Why does “the one man’s obedience” matter to us?
6. What does Paul mean when he says, “The law came along to multiply the trespass” in verse 20?
7. In your own words, how would you summarize Romans 5:12–21?

Apply

8. How can you use Romans 5:12–21 to encourage or challenge someone struggling to know if God really saved them?

9. In what ways does this passage encourage you? In what areas of your life does it convict you?

10. Using Romans 5:12–21 (or previous passages in Romans), practice how you'll share the gospel with your One. Write out main ideas and key verses you would want to share.

Respond in Prayer

Each week of this study guide will include a recommended Scripture passage that helps us focus on the faithfulness of our great God. Set aside some time this week to read through the selected passage and use the prayer prompts below as your guide. We recommend praying through this passage on your own at home and together with your small group.

This Week's Prayer Passage: Psalm 96

Read Psalm 96.

Pray through the following prompts, according to the A.C.T.S. method.

- **Adoration:** Praise God because his deeds are marvelous, which we see most clearly in the gospel of Jesus Christ (Psalm 96:3). Declare that he is more glorious than any other god, idol, or source of happiness and fulfillment that we have sought after (96:4–5). Praise God because he is glorious and he deserves praise from everyone on earth (96:3, 8). Praise God alongside all of his creation because he has created it all (96:11–12). Praise God because he is both strong and beautiful (96:6).
- **Confession:** Ask God to divert away from idols that we seek after for beauty and strength (Psalm 96:3–6). Ask God to forgive you for looking for glory in anything other than him. Confess to God that things much less glorious than him have grabbed your attention and praise before you have given it to him. Ask God to forgive you because you have not properly understood his splendor and holiness, and you have not lived according to his holiness in your own life (96:6).
- **Thanksgiving:** Thank God that he has filled the earth with his own splendor, that we can know him and be part of his family. Thank God for putting a new song in your mouth by saving you and giving you an eternal hope (Psalm 96:1–2). Thank God that he does not leave the world to rot on its own: He reigns and he comes to judge it with righteousness (96:10, 13). Thank God that he has given us reason to rejoice (96:12).

- Supplication: Ask God that he would help you exult and rejoice in him, even when you do not feel victorious in your own life (Psalm 96:11–12). Ask for God’s help to “proclaim his salvation from day to day” (96:2) as you witness to your One. Ask the Lord to give you opportunity to share what you’ve learned this week with your One.

who's your **ONE?**

Who's Your One? (summitchurch.com/one) is about each of us leading one non-Christian to faith in Christ this year. Read back through your notes from this week's study on Romans 5:12–21. How would you share the truths of Romans 5:12–21 with someone who is not a Christian? What words and phrases would you use?

This week, pray for your One. Update your small group's prayer journal with specific prayer points and look for opportunities to build friendships, initiate to the spiritual, share the gospel, and help them make a decision.

Week Five: Romans 6:1–23

Key Verses

“Therefore we were buried with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too may walk in newness of life. For if we have been united with him in the likeness of his death, we will certainly also be in the likeness of his resurrection.” - Romans 6:4–5 (CSB)

“For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.” - Romans 6:23

Key Principles

- God’s work in Christ (past and future) determines how we ought to live right now.
- God’s grace is not only pardon from sin’s guilt, but power to fight sin.
- Through our union with Christ, we are given grace that inspires us not to be lax with our sin but, instead, to go to war with it.

Read

God unites sinners to Christ in his death and resurrection by faith. Paul presents this precious truth in Romans 6. Paul comes to this truth as he deals with the objections that might arise from his teaching on God's grace. He has said that sinners are justified by grace alone, apart from works (Romans 4:4–6). But at this point, someone could find fault with God and his grace. If our justification is based on God's grace and not our works, can't we just keep sinning so that we experience more grace? In other words, does the gospel encourage unrighteousness? (6:1).

Paul answers emphatically, "Absolutely not! How can we who died to sin still live in it? Or are you unaware that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?" (6:2–3). Paul means that since we are united to Christ in his death, we have died to sin, therefore, we cannot keep living in sin. (It's important to note that by "baptism," Paul is referring to their actual union with Christ at conversion, not water baptism. Water baptism is the outward sign of an already existing union with Christ).

Paul goes on to say, "For if we have been united with him in the likeness of his death, we will certainly also be in the likeness of his resurrection" (6:5, emphasis added). Notice the past tense of union with Christ in his death and the future tense of union with Christ in his resurrection. Believers live in the middle of these realities. God's work in Christ (past and future) determines how we ought to live right now. God's purpose in all this is clear: "so we too may walk in newness of life" (6:4b).

Now that's a lot of rich theology, but Pastor John Piper simply describes union in Christ this way:

It is the reality of all the ways that the Bible pictures our human connectedness to Christ, in which he is indispensable for every good that we enjoy. No saving good, no eternal good, no God-exalting good, no soul-satisfying good comes to us except as we are connected to Christ.¹

1 John Piper, *Ask Pastor John*, Desiring God, October 31, 2018, <https://www.desiringgod.org/interviews/what-is-union-with-christ>

In other words, our union with Christ is both a past and future reality that is for our good and his glory, and it impacts how we live our lives today. This present impact is one of the reasons why our church is asking you to start praying for your One! It is our desire for all people to come to know the saving good, eternal good, and soul-satisfying good that comes from union with Christ.

Paul explains this union further in 6:6–11. God crucified our old self with Christ, but why? “[S]o that the body ruled by sin might be rendered powerless so that we may no longer be enslaved to sin, since a person who has died is freed from sin” (6:6b–7). In other words, God did this in order to free us from slavery to sin. Like Piper said above, this union isn’t to restrict us but, rather, to free us from bondage to sin and gift us with the great soul-satisfying good that comes from a union in Christ.

Notice the words Paul uses in this passage: “consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus” (6:11, emphasis added). Note that the word “consider” is the same word Paul used all through Romans 4 when God credits—or reckons—righteousness to sinners. However, here, it is us reckoning ourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ. Paul is inviting the Christians in Rome to actively embrace their union in Christ and to live lives that display their death-to-life transformations.

So, what exactly does freedom from sin look like? Notice what Paul says in verse 12, “Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, so that you obey its desires.” Sinful desires don’t just go away because of our union with Christ! If they did, Paul wouldn’t have mentioned the existence of sin in our lives, and he wouldn’t keep talking about our battle with sin throughout the next two chapters. So, the answer isn’t that we will never be tempted to sin again, but, rather, it’s that we don’t let sin reign in our lives. Paul says we turn from serving sin to serving God because “sin will not rule over you, because you are not under the law but under grace” (6:14). Sin will not be our master, because our righteousness is not based on law-keeping but on God’s gracious gift. God’s grace is not merely pardon from sin’s guilt but power to fight sin.

This brings up the second objection in Romans 6: “Should we sin because we are not under law but under grace?” (6:15). Paul has the same answer, “Absolutely not!” The way you live shows which master you serve. There are only two ways to live—we either serve sin through unrighteousness or God through obedient righteousness (6:16). Paul thanks God for giving us a heart

that wants to obey him instead of sin (6:17). We are freed from slavery to sin (6:18, 22), but that does not mean we are without a master. In being set free from sin, we “have become enslaved to God” (6:22). God is an infinitely better Master than sin. Sin asks us to obey sinful desires and the wage it provides for obedience is death (6:23). God doesn’t provide wages but grants us a gift. And that gift “is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” (6:23).

Romans 6 is a treasure trove of precious truths and we’ve barely scratched the surface. Through Christ, we are given freedom from the penalty and power of sin, and one day we will be free from the presence of sin altogether. Through Christ, we are freed from obeying sinful desires and given a heart that longs to obey God. Through our union with Christ, we are given grace that inspires us not to be lax with our sin, but, instead, to go to war with it. These truths are not only life-changing, they are life-giving. We hope and pray that this week, you are in awe of a God who has made a way to be united with you through the work of Jesus Christ.

Study Guide

The following study questions are meant to help us wrestle with the text of Romans and see how the gospel displays God’s righteousness. Set aside some time this week to meet with God and answer these questions for yourself. Complete each question before your weekly small group meeting. Then, when you gather with your small group, be prepared to discuss your answers together.



Read Romans 1:16–17 to remain focused on Paul’s major points. Then, read Romans 6:1–23 in preparation for this week’s study.

Highlight

1. Circle all the verbs that show what God does in Romans 6:1–23 and underline all verbs that show what we are called to do.

2. Summarize Paul's point from Romans 6 in your own words. Try using a single sentence and compare with a few people in your group.

3. According to Romans 6:3–5, list the ways in which Paul says believers are united with Christ.

4. From Romans 6:15–23, list the ways in which Paul describes being under grace.

Apply

10. Based on our study this week, how would you counsel someone who says, “I just couldn’t help sinning in that way.” Use specific examples and verses.

11. Describe a time when you were tempted to believe that following your own desires was real freedom while obeying God was joyless slavery. What can you do differently in those moments?

12. How can you regularly remind yourself of your union with Christ, that you are dead to sin and alive to God? In what situations do you find yourself needing these reminders the most?

13. What attitude do you normally have toward obeying God? Based on our study of this passage, how could it change?

Respond in Prayer

Each week of this study guide will include a recommended Scripture passage that helps us focus on the faithfulness of our great God. Set aside some time this week to read through the selected passage and use the prayer prompts below as your guide. We recommend praying through this passage on your own at home and together with your small group.

This Week's Prayer Passage: Romans 6:1–23

Read 6:1–23.

Pray through the following prompts, according to the A.C.T.S. method.

- Adoration: Praise God for being a God of grace (6:1, 14), righteousness (6:13), sanctification (6:19), and eternal life (6:22).
- Confession: Ask God for mercy for the ways you have used his grace as a license to continue in sin (6:1). Confess to him all the ways you have obeyed the desires of sin and offered your body to sin (6:12–13).
- Thanksgiving: Thank God for uniting you to Christ in his death and resurrection (6:3–5). Thank God that he has set you free from the slavery of sin and made you a slave of God (6:22). Praise God for giving you a new heart that desires to obey God and not sin (6:17). Thank him for the gift of Christ, in whom is eternal life (6:23).
- Supplication: Ask God to help you grow in your union and communion with Christ, that you would learn to know and enjoy Jesus more and more. Ask God for strength to “put to death the deeds of the body” by his Spirit (8:13). Ask him for faith and hope to believe that one day you will be raised like Christ in glory (6:5) and to give you the courage to share that hope with your One.

who's your **1**ONE?

Who's Your One? (summitchurch.com/one) is about each of us leading one non-Christian to faith in Christ this year. Read back through your notes from this week's study on Romans 6:1–23. How would you share the truths of Romans 6:1–23 with someone who is not a Christian? What words and phrases would you use?

This week, pray for your One. Update your small group's prayer journal with specific prayer points and look for opportunities to build friendships, initiate to the spiritual, share the gospel, and help them make a decision.

Week Six: Romans 7:1–25

Key Verse

“But now we have been released from the law, since we have died to what held us, so that we may serve in the newness of the Spirit and not in the old letter of the law.” - Romans 7:6 (CSB)

Key Principles

- We can never live up to righteous standards and fulfill the law on our own because of our sinful nature.
- Because we live unified with the risen Christ, we are able to be fruitful in good works beyond what the law could lead us to.
- In Christ, we have begun to taste the goodness of our freedom from sin, so we fight against the “law” at work in our bodies in the present, with the hope of full freedom to come.

Read

In Romans 1:18–3:20, Paul drills home the idea that everyone is unrighteous, and that unrighteousness leaves us in an all-consuming mess. His argument came to a beautiful conclusion at the end of chapter 3, where we saw that we are saved through the redemption of Jesus Christ, and God gave righteousness to us as a gift. Here in chapter 7, Paul shows us that the law cannot help us with our sin problem by itself. Paul says that he is wretched and at war within himself. This piece of the argument is not particularly encouraging at face value, but it sets up the beautiful conclusion about what life in the Spirit looks like for a Christian in Romans 8 (which we'll study next week).

But before we get to the good news, we have to hear the sobering truth of Romans 7. It's important to pay attention to verse 1 and note that Paul is talking to a group of people who know God's law inside and out. So, when Paul starts talking about the law, he's not talking over his audience's heads, he's talking straight to their hearts. The chapter starts with an analogy discussing how a spouse becomes freed from marital vows when his or her partner dies, as you would expect from any normal covenant or contract. In this case, death changes our relationship to the law.

Paul then draws the analogy to our union with Christ in Romans 7:4–6. When it comes to our relationship to the law, we are the ones that have died, so we are no longer obligated to the demands of the law. Here, the resurrection becomes a crucial part of our justification. Because we live unified with the risen Christ, we are able to be fruitful in good works beyond what the law could lead us to.

Paul made similar arguments in Chapter 6 about us being dead to sin and now Paul is saying something similar about the law. He says that the law actually stirs our sinful passions! This leads us to the first of two sets of rhetorical questions and subsequent answers in verses 7–12, and then later in verses 13–20. Is the law bad because of how it aroused sin (7:5) and led to death (7:8)? Not at all, Paul still holds the law in high esteem.

To give us a more complete biblical perspective: God's law, given to Moses and the Israelites at Mount Sinai as part of a covenant, was a gift. The law describes how the Israelites could have lived as a society in such a way that put God's glory on display. Through the law, the Israelites

learned what displeased God, and they were alerted to what they needed to make sacrifices and ask forgiveness for. And even though the law is not binding on us, we can still look to the law to learn about God's character and standards. We can glean wisdom from it. It is a teacher that can help us grow. At every turn, the New Testament affirms the law as having these positive effects. In the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5–7), Jesus even explains the high standards that God's righteousness demands of our behavior.

So, why is Paul saying that the law is no longer our master or guide? First, he describes that, like many good gifts that God brings, humanity's nature did not respond rightly to the law. Human sinfulness used the law to stir up temptation and draw attention to sin. When we get entangled in sin, the forbidden fruit tastes sweeter because it is forbidden. But that is not what the law was designed to do. Second, we needed some other way to produce righteousness and fix the brokenness within each of us. Paul alludes to this in Romans 7:6, where he mentions the new way of the Spirit. In Romans 8:2–4, Paul will explicitly say that the Spirit will enable us to accomplish what the law could not do: live a righteous life!

Paul's second question is whether this is the law's fault (7:13). Of course not. This is where Paul describes what it is like to fulfill the law when we have sinful natures. We know we want to do the right thing and we have a desire to do good, but we just can't make ourselves do the right thing! It's a constant battle. The situation sounds so dire for this person trying to live by the law (7:13–25). In Romans 7, Paul reminds us that we can never live up to righteous standards and fulfill the law as long as our sinful nature is within us. So, we need an intervention from outside ourselves. And in Romans 8, we'll see that this is where God's Spirit intervenes in the lives of those who have believed the gospel.

In the meantime, Romans 7:13–25 reminds us just how much our sinful nature holds us back from the righteousness that God created us to live in. When we become Christians and the Spirit comes into us to give us desires for right living, a war rages inside of us. Because we live in a fallen world, we must constantly fight with the power of the Spirit to put to death the sinfulness that still dwells inside of us. Paul uses the term "law" 23 times throughout this chapter, and each use almost always refers to God's commands in the Old Testament. But these last few instances in verse 23, Paul uses "law" to mean something else. He says that God's law is not the force that is controlling his inner being. Rather, it's a natural tendency ("law") toward using

the members of his body for sin. In Christ, we have begun to taste the goodness of our freedom from sin, so we fight against the “law” at work in our bodies in the present, with the hope of full freedom to come. When Christ returns for us, we will be free to live God’s way, in God’s presence, free from our own sin and each other’s sin. For how the Spirit gives us a taste of that life now, read on in Romans 8 next week.

Study Guide

The following study questions are meant to help us wrestle with the text of Romans and see how the gospel displays God’s righteousness. Set aside some time this week to meet with God and answer these questions for yourself. Complete each question before your weekly small group meeting. Then, when you gather with your small group, be prepared to discuss your answers together.



Read Romans 1:16–17 to remain focused on Paul’s major points. Then, read Romans 7:1–25 in preparation for this week’s study.

Highlight

1. Summarize what Paul says about the law in Romans 7:1–25. Does he always mean the same thing by the word “law”?
2. What rhetorical questions does Paul ask in this passage? What answers does he expect his readers to conclude?
3. If you were to divide up this chapter into sections, how many sections would you make? Where would you put the dividers and why?
4. How do verses 7–25 describe the law as bad? As good?

Respond in Prayer

Each week of this study guide will include a recommended Scripture passage that helps us focus on the faithfulness of our great God. Set aside some time this week to read through the selected passage and use the prayer prompts below as your guide. We recommend praying through this passage on your own at home and together with your small group.

This Week's Prayer Passage: Isaiah 45:14–25

Read Isaiah 45:14–25.

Pray through the following prompts, according to the A.C.T.S. method.

- **Adoration:** Praise God because he was alive before creation, set creation in motion, and will be alive for all eternity (Isaiah 45:17–19). Praise the Lord because he is truthful: What he says is accurate and what he promises will come true (45:19, 23). Praise the Lord because he is the only God (45:22) and eventually, all creatures will recognize it (45:23).
- **Confession:** Confess to God that we act as if we do not know better than we act (Isaiah 45:20). Confess to God that he is righteous but we are not (45:23–24). Ask for God's forgiveness for how we have angered him and for how we have been unjustly angry against him (45:24). Ask God's forgiveness for praying and worshipping gods that cannot save us (45:20)
- **Thanksgiving:** Thank God for bringing an eternal salvation to his people (Isaiah 45:17). Thank God that he has called us to himself and that he has delivered on his promise to save his people (45:19). Thank God for justifying us and for giving us himself to glory in (45:25).
- **Supplication:** Ask God to help you in your efforts to help the gospel advance to the nations (Isaiah 45:22). Ask God for the privilege and joy of seeing others come to faith and join the family of God (45:22). Ask God to raise up the weak and humble those who are using their power against God's purposes (45:14). Ask God to save your One and ask him for the opportunity to share about his salvation in your life.

Who's Your One? (summitchurch.com/one) is about each of us leading one non-Christian to faith in Christ this year. Read back through your notes from this week's study on Romans 7:1–25. How would you share the truths of Romans 7:1–25 with someone who is not a Christian? What words and phrases would you use?

This week, pray for your One. Update your small group's prayer journal with specific prayer points and look for opportunities to build friendships, initiate to the spiritual, share the gospel, and help them make a decision.

Week Seven: Romans 8:1–17

Key Verse

“And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead lives in you, then he who raised Christ from the dead will also bring your mortal bodies to life through his Spirit who lives in you.” - Romans 8:11 (CSB)

Key Principles

- God’s Spirit dwelling in us gives us a life free from sin and death.
- We can have some victory over sin if we partner with God’s Spirit in putting sin to death in our lives.
- God’s salvation brings us from being condemned enemies of God to being perfected sons and daughters of God and everything necessary within that process.
- You will find that the greatest part of the gospel is the intimacy you can have, now and forever, with your Creator.
- It is crucial for us to remember that the heart of the gospel, the blessing that comes with all these benefits, is a relationship with God.

Read

Romans 7 left us contemplating the vicious cycle of sin, death, law, and condemnation. We know we are justified by faith in Christ's death, yet we are still trapped in deteriorating bodies that wrestle with sin. We are still left to face a broken world that afflicts us both from the outside and from within. And we are still left with the shame of failing our great God by our sinful behavior. Thankfully, Paul didn't conclude his letter to the Christians in Rome on that note. There is hope for our condition! Romans 8 will show us that we have eternal life, elevated status, victory, inheritance, God's love, and an incredible hope that breaks these cycles in our natural condition—all because Christ justified us by his death and resurrection.

Where do we get these incredible benefits? From God's Spirit who now dwells within us. Paul has already alluded to this new life we have in the Spirit in 5:1–11 and 7:6, but in this chapter, Paul makes it abundantly clear. Christians, it is crucial for us to remember that the heart of the gospel, the blessing that comes with all these benefits, is a relationship with God. God, the Spirit, now dwells inside of us because we are believers in Christ. The Spirit provides what we need to battle sin, to pray to our Father, to live a righteous life, and to be conformed to Christ's image. Now that you have God's Spirit inside of you, cultivate that relationship. You will find that the greatest part of the gospel is the intimacy you can have, now and forever, with your Creator.

So, let's look deeper into what the Spirit is doing in our lives according to Romans 8:1–17. First, if we live according to the Spirit, then our minds and bodies can move beyond the evil "law" at work inside of us (7:21–23). We can start to live lives full of life and peace. We begin our eternal life now, here on earth, through the Spirit. We won't be able to do this perfectly, or have complete victory over our sinful natures this side of heaven, but we can begin to put sin to death as the Spirit leads us.

Looking back on all eight chapters in Romans thus far, notice how important the resurrection is to our salvation. In Romans 4:25, Paul says that Jesus was raised from the dead "for our justification." Apparently, it is not just Jesus's death that activates the gospel story. In Romans 5:17 and 21, and 6:4, we receive eternal life because of the union we have in Christ's story of death and resurrection. Romans 6:4–5 also makes it clear that Christ's resurrection leads us into our new life. Romans 6 continues by saying that we can now be alive in God, set free from sin and death. In Chapter 8, the Spirit of the resurrected Jesus can also give life to our earthly bodies.

The resurrection confirms our hope in the future blessings of the gospel as well, as it points to how one day we will live forever with God and be completely conformed to Christ's image. And notice in Romans 8 who plays a vital role in all of this. The Spirit is the member of the Trinity who applies all these benefits of the resurrection to our lives right now and allows us to begin living for eternity today.

Lastly, the Spirit confirms the truth of the gospel. It is an incredible thing to consider that we would ever gain the status of adopted son or daughter of God. Romans 8:14 says, "For all those led by God's Spirit are God's sons." It goes on to say that the Spirit testifies together with our spirit that we are indeed the children of God (8:16). The Spirit helps us believe that what the gospel says is true and helps us pray to the Father who we are only beginning to understand. The Spirit confirms that everything in God's Word about heaven will be true and that we will share in that inheritance. In other words, so often we focus on the work of God the Father and God the Son, but here in Romans 8, we see that God the Holy Spirit also plays an incredible role in our union with Christ.

The trajectory of Romans 8 is astounding. At the beginning of the passage, we get the declaration that we no longer stand condemned for our sinfulness (8:1). By the end of the passage, we are so far from condemned sinners that we are actually children of God, inheriting what Christ deserved by his obedience. The final verse of our target passage for this week (8:17) actually says that we will be glorified with Christ. In the space of these 17 verses, we see the complete gamut of the gospel. We, who were once enemies of God, have now been justified—we will no longer be judged for our sin. But God did not leave us there, he sent his Spirit to help us overcome sin and become freed from its slavery (sanctification), and with Christ, we also receive sonship.

And that's not even close to the end of the story. One day, we will become fully new creations, dwelling with God in heaven, being perfectly righteous in all that we do (glorification). Glorification is not a word that we often focus on when it comes to our blessings in the gospel, but it is one of the most exciting aspects of what we have in Christ. We will become like him in so many ways. We will become the best versions of ourselves, and we ourselves will become glorious creatures, reflecting God's image perfectly. Oh, how great is the salvation of our God! He brings us from enemies of God to perfect reflections of his image, destined to live forever in peace and harmony!

Study Guide

The following study questions are meant to help us wrestle with the text of Romans and see how the gospel displays God's righteousness. Set aside some time this week to meet with God and answer these questions for yourself. Complete each question before your weekly small group meeting. Then, when you gather with your small group, be prepared to discuss your answers together.



Read Romans 1:16–17 to remain focused on Paul's major points. Then, read Romans 8:1–17 in preparation for this week's study.

Highlight

1. Compare and contrast main ideas and differences you see between Romans 7 and Romans 8 so far.
2. Make a list contrasting life according to the Spirit with life according to the flesh from Romans 8:5–11.
3. How does Paul describe the identity of believers in Romans 8:14–17?
4. What does this passage teach about the work of the Holy Spirit?

Explain

5. What has the Spirit of life done for all Christians that the law could not do? Why is this significant?
6. Is the power of the Spirit available to all Christians according to verse 9? Why or why not?
7. According to Romans 8:1–17, what does it mean that we are glorified with Christ?
8. What difference does it make for believers to relate to God as Father and not simply as Master?

Apply

9. Many Christians feel condemned because of their sin. How does Romans 8:1–17 encourage you and release you from feelings of condemnation?

10. How does Romans 8:1–17 encourage you to cultivate your relationship with God?

11. What practical steps can we take to have our “minds set on the things of the Spirit” (8:5)?

12. What is one truth from this passage that you can pray over your One?

Respond in Prayer

Each week of this study guide will include a recommended Scripture passage that helps us focus on the faithfulness of our great God. Set aside some time this week to read through the selected passage and use the prayer prompts below as your guide. We recommend praying through this passage on your own at home and together with your small group.

This Week's Prayer Passage: Romans 8:1–17

Read Romans 8:1–17.

Pray through the following prompts, according to the A.C.T.S. method.

- **Adoration:** Praise God because he is a triune God, that he is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and that he has invited us into relationship with all three members of this Trinity (Romans 8:1–17). Praise God because he is a God of life and peace, not hostility (8:6, 11). Praise God that he is not a God that enslaves, but, rather, sets free (8:1, 14). Praise God that he has resurrection power at his disposal (8:11).
- **Confession:** Ask God's forgiveness for how often we dwell on the flesh and do not commune with his Spirit who dwells inside of us (Romans 8:5). Confess to God that we have done things that necessitated Jesus' death for us to be able to live absolved from our sins (8:3–4). Confess to God the ways you have chosen the path toward death and have not pleased him with your actions (8:5–8).
- **Thanksgiving:** Thank God for sending his Spirit to dwell within us (Romans 8:11). Thank God for sending his Son to give us freedom and life by his sacrifice (8:2). Thank God for including us in his family so that we could become heirs alongside Christ (8:15–17).
- **Supplication:** Ask God to help you set your mind on the Spirit instead of the flesh (Romans 8:4–8). Ask God for the courage to suffer for Jesus's sake, where that becomes necessary (8:17). Ask God for the ability and opportunity to point your One to life and freedom in Christ.

who's your **1**ONE?

Who's Your One? (summitchurch.com/one) is about each of us leading one non-Christian to faith in Christ this year. Read back through your notes from this week's study on Romans 8:1–17. How would you share the truths of Romans 8:1–17 with someone who is not a Christian? What words and phrases would you use?

This week, pray for your One. Update your small group's prayer journal with specific prayer points and look for opportunities to build friendships, initiate to the spiritual, share the gospel, and help them make a decision.

Week Eight: Romans 8:18–39

Key Verses

“For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” - Romans 8:38–39 (CSB)

Key Principles

- God is working to redeem and restore all creation.
- The Spirit helps us to live our lives in sinful bodies amidst a broken world.
- God has been working this plan for our salvation for a long time, and he will continue working for our good for all eternity.
- Nothing can separate us from God’s love displayed through Jesus Christ.

Read

Romans has long been described by church leaders as the crown jewel of the New Testament. If Romans is the crown jewel of the New Testament, then Romans 8 is the gem that helps Romans have such an esteemed position in our Bibles. Romans 8 inspires such accolades because of its thorough explanation of:

1. The new life we have in the Spirit (8:1–17, 26–27),
2. The present and future implications of the gospel (8:1–39), and
3. The bold reminder of God’s love bringing all things in our lives to a purposeful end (8:17–39).

So, what makes this chapter full of hope and encouragement for believers? Paul addresses the need for hope right away in Romans 8:18 because we have “sufferings of this present time.” This is no small matter for Paul. Since becoming a Christian, there had not been a time in Paul’s life that was free from suffering. He experienced imprisonment, persecution, and one day, he would be killed because of his faith. This same suffering often marked the lives of the recipients of Paul’s letters (Philippians is a great example). Paul knew very well that we need encouragement and strength to remain faithful to Christ in light of the present reality of suffering. (Romans 1:11–13; 5:3–5).

Paul reminds us in Romans 8:18–25 that suffering is not something we experience alone. The whole world is experiencing suffering and has been since Adam’s original sin. In Romans 8, Paul takes us back to Genesis 3 to explain that all of creation is awaiting its redemption. In Romans 8:20, Paul uses a Greek word for “futility” to describe the brokenness of the world without God’s restoration, and this word, “futility,” connects to similar ideas and concepts in the book of Ecclesiastes. But our Messiah, the Christ, ushers in a new chapter to God’s work in the world through his life, death, and resurrection. Thus, creation is now on the verge of tasting its full restoration as God’s complete redemption unfolds first in his salvation of humankind.

Meanwhile, we are individually undergoing a restoration at the hands of the Spirit who lives inside of us. We are weak, we don’t know how to pray, we don’t know God’s will, and our faith fails. But the Spirit intercedes for us and helps us develop a real-time connection with our Heavenly Father. The Spirit also confirms that the hope we have in the gospel is true. Romans

8:29–30 tells us that in order for us to be saved, God knew us before Creation. God then set his rescue plan in motion thousands of years ago in a distant land through his only Son, and one day he will also glorify us (8:17). This plan has been in place for so long and Christ has accomplished so much on our behalf—why should we doubt that God will finish this work? The suffering we will experience is part of, not a distraction from, the sanctification and glorification that the Spirit is working in us.

All of the rhetorical questions from Romans 1–8 are answered in Romans 8:31–39. If God has accomplished all this—everything mentioned in the first eight chapters of Romans—through Jesus Christ on our behalf, how can we doubt God’s love for us? Do we think that the trials and tribulations we experience are going to derail God’s purposes for the people that he has chosen? Of course not! Nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord! Let God’s Spirit feed our souls with these words as we study Romans 8:18–39.

Study Guide

The following study questions are meant to help us wrestle with the text of Romans and see how the gospel displays God’s righteousness. Set aside some time this week to meet with God and answer these questions for yourself. Complete each question before your weekly small group meeting. Then, when you gather with your small group, be prepared to discuss your answers together.



Read Romans 1:16–17 to remain focused on Paul’s major points. Then, read Romans 8:18–39 in preparation for this week’s study.

Highlight

1. Take a look back at Romans 5:1–11. What key themes, ideas, words, and phrases do you see there that are also in Romans 8:18–39?

2. What do we learn about God’s Spirit in Romans 8:18–39?

3. How does Paul describe “future glory” in Romans 8:18–39?

4. What do we learn about God’s character from Romans 8:18–39?

Explain

5. What does it mean that we have been adopted as God's children?
6. How does creation waiting for its own redemption fit into the story of God's salvation for humanity?
7. How do we understand what verse 28 means in its context? What are some ways we may misinterpret verse 28?
8. How does the gospel help us in our suffering according to Romans 8?

Apply

9. Think of something you fear or worry could separate you from God's love. How does knowing that nothing can separate believers from God's love help deepen your relationship with him?

10. How do we express the type of hope found in Romans 8:24–25 throughout our lives and relationships?

11. How does our study in Romans 8 help you pray for your One?

12. As we conclude this study series in Romans 4–8, how has God worked in your life through your study of his Word? Share one or two verses that have impacted you and how the Spirit has applied them to your life.

Respond in Prayer

Each week of this study guide will include a recommended Scripture passage that helps us focus on the faithfulness of our great God. Set aside some time this week to read through the selected passage and use the prayer prompts below as your guide. We recommend praying through this passage on your own at home and together with your small group.

This Week's Prayer Passage: Romans 8:18–39

Read Romans 8:18–39.

Pray through the following prompts, according to the A.C.T.S. method.

- **Adoration:** Praise God because he is eternal. He existed long before us and he invites us into his eternal life (Romans 8:29–30). Praise God that he is more powerful than any other force that can come against us (8:32–39). Praise God that he is love and that his love for us is unimpeachable (8:35, 39).
- **Confession:** Confess to God where you have contributed to the brokenness of the world (Romans 8:19–25). Confess to God that we are weak in our flesh and are dependent on his Spirit to do what is right (8:26). Ask for God's forgiveness for how we have doubted his goodness in the midst of trying circumstances (8:31–39).
- **Thanksgiving:** Thank God for fixing creation and bringing it along in a process of redemption (Romans 8:18–25). Thank God for including us in that redemption and for bestowing an eternal love upon us (8:21, 37–39). Thank God for planning salvation from the beginning and for completing the process in eternity (8:29–30). Thank God for loving us with a love that cannot be thwarted (8:31–39).
- **Supplication:** Ask God to help you stay faithful in the midst of suffering (Romans 8:18, 35–39). Ask God to show us how we can share this amazing love with our friends and neighbors. Ask God to show you how and when he wants you to suffer and sacrifice for his sake (8:18, 36).

who's your **1**ONE?

Who's Your One? (summitchurch.com/one) is about each of us leading one non-Christian to faith in Christ this year. Read back through your notes from this week's study on Romans 8:18–39. How would you share the truths of Romans 8:18–39 with someone who is not a Christian? What words and phrases would you use?

This week, pray for your One. Update your small group's prayer journal with specific prayer points and look for opportunities to build friendships, initiate to the spiritual, share the gospel, and help them make a decision.