

Riverwood-Punchbowl Anglican Church

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Paul's Letter to the

ROMANS

Chapters 1 to 8



Term 1, 2008

Introduction

The letter of Paul to the Romans is Paul's fullest explanation of the gospel, and is probably one of the most influential documents ever written. Martin Luther first grasped the truth of salvation through faith through his study of Romans - this was the start of the protestant churches. John Wesley was converted in 1738, during the reading of Luther's "Preface" to the book of Romans, and so started the 18th century revival, and the Methodist church. Much earlier, Augustine was converted when reading Romans 13, and went on to become one of the greatest christian thinkers of all time.

Romans has changed lives, and changed history. As we study the first half of the letter this term, be prepared to let it really influence the way you understand God and the way you live your life!

Summary of Romans 1-8.

Paul commences by showing how sinful all men are before God, and how we all deserve God's wrath. Paul emphasises how seriously God treats sin, which serves to underline how wonderful is the salvation which he offers us. (1:18-3:19)

Then he explains how God's righteous anger and our sin were both properly dealt with through the death of Jesus. We can be reconciled to God only by faith in Jesus. (3:20-5:21)

Paul then moves on to emphasise that though, we are only saved through faith, that faith must be reflected in our lives of obedience to God. Although Jesus has conquered the sin, we still struggle with it while we remain in our present bodies. (6:1-7:25)

Chapter 8 concludes our studies in this series, describing our life in the Spirit, and the triumph that we have through God's love, both in this life and the age to come.

All sides of the Truth

One of the great features of Romans is how Paul does not try to simplify reality. We do struggle with sin, *yet* Jesus has really conquered it. We are saved through faith apart from works of the law, *yet* God will repay each person according to his deeds. The Jews did have great special privileges, *yet* they were no better off. God does hate the sin of all mankind, *yet* he loves us so

much that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. God does work all things for the good of those who love him, *yet* we are surrounded by suffering. We have been set free, *yet* we are slaves.

This tension, does make Romans somewhat difficult to understand. However, we should try to grasp all sides of the truth, as Paul explores the different aspects in turn. We should avoid accepting one side of the truth, and ignoring the other sides.

If we find it difficult to understand it all, then we can be comforted by the fact not even Paul could attain a full understanding of God's will, as he says in 11:33-36, " How unsearchable are his judgements, how inscrutable are his ways! ... (yet) To him be the glory forever. Amen."

When was Romans written?

Romans was most probably written near the end of Paul's third missionary journey, about AD 57-58. He had finished his work in proclaiming the Gospel in Asia, and now desired to go to Rome, on his way Spain. Paul had never been to Rome, though he knew people there. He did eventually get to Rome, but it was as a prisoner!

Max Gilbert, 1995 (revised 2008)

Week 1

THEME The Power of the Gospel

Day 1 Romans 1:1-5

What do verses 1 and 5 tell us about Paul?

Day 2 Romans 1:6-7

To whom was the letter written? Were they Christians?

Day 3 Romans 1:8-13

Had Paul been to Rome before? Did Paul know anyone in Rome? (look at chapter 16)

Day 4 Romans 1:11-15

Why did Paul want to go to Rome?

Day 5 Romans 1:16-17

What is the gospel?

STUDY PASSAGE Romans 1:1-17

To Discuss:

- 1.** Verses 2-4 describe the gospel (or "good news") of God. What do we learn about this good news?

- 2.** Paul felt an obligation to preach the gospel in Rome (verses 14-15). Whom do you feel obliged to reach for the gospel? What steps can you take? What models does Paul give to us?

- 3.** Paul mentions the possibility of being ashamed of the gospel (verse 16). In what ways can we be ashamed of the gospel?

- 4.** The gospel is the "power of God to salvation" (verse 16). What does this mean? In what ways has this power changed your life, or the life of someone else you know?

PRAY

Thank God for his gospel of salvation, and for what it means in your life.

Week 2

THEME Everyone is guilty

This week's study covers **Romans 1:18-3:20**. It is a long passage, but it is important to read the entire section in the light of the concluding verse.

Day 1 Romans 3:20

What is Paul's final conclusion to this section?

Day 2 Romans 1:18-23 and 2:12-16

How does God reveal himself to all people?

Day 3 Romans 1:24-32

What is one way by which God reveals his wrath? (verses 18, 24, 26 and 28).

Day 4 Romans 2:1-11

Why does God sometimes delay judgement? (verse 4).

Day 5 Romans 2:17-3:8

How would you describe the Jews with whom Paul is debating?

STUDY PASSAGE Romans 3:9-20

To Discuss:

1. The Jews had many advantages (3:1-2) yet they were no better off (3:9). Compared to those who have not accepted the Gospel, what advantages do we have? Are we any better off, and how?

2. Verses 10 to 18 describe the sinful state of mankind. Think about each verse in turn, considering to what extent it describes you. Compared to this passage, how do you think we usually underestimate the seriousness of sin? Would God be just to condemn you?

3. What are the purposes of the law? (verses 19 and 20). Describe how you experience the law in these ways? Does the law have any other functions in your life?

4. What is God's verdict on every person human being, in regard to keeping the law?

PRAY

Imagine that the book of Romans stopped at 3:20, and that we are all condemned, awaiting God's wrath. What would the future of the world be? What would your future be? Take some time to grasp that awful thought. Then thank God that he has shown us great mercy, in rescuing us from that fate (as we will commence to study next week).

Week 3

THEME Gods Provision for Guilty Man

Day 1 Romans 3:21-26

How can we be made right with God? (v 25-26)

Day 2 Romans 3:27-31

What do you think Paul means by "boasting"? Why is it ruled out for Christians?

Day 3 Romans 4:1-8

Why was Abraham regarded by God as "righteous"? (v3)

Day 4 Romans 4:9-13

Was Abraham declared righteous before or after he was circumcised? (v10-11); was it before or after the Ten Commandments were given?

Day 5 Romans 4:14-25

Are you a "descendant of Abraham", and why? (v16) In what ways is Abraham a model for your faith?

STUDY PASSAGE Romans 3:21-26

To Discuss:

1. Paul gives three images of what God has done to deal with our rebellion against him and to make us right with himself:

(a)**justified** (v24) suggests a "not guilty" verdict in a law court. How is this remarkable in view of Rom 1:18-3:20? Can you imagine yourself as judge of the world? What would your verdict and sentence be?

(b)**redeemed** (v24) suggests being "bought out of slavery". From what sort of slavery has Christ rescued us? What difference does this make to you?

(c)**expiation** (v25) a difficult term, which includes "averting God's wrath", "making it right for God to disregard our sin", and the result for us ie being "at-one" with God. How have we been saved from God's wrath? (v25) How should we respond to this?

2. Why did Jesus have to die? How does God show his love for us? How does he show us how much he hates sin? (v25b-26)

3. What do you have to do to be justified, redeemed, and made at one with God?

PRAY Thank God that he has enabled our sin to be dealt with through the death of Jesus.

Week 4

THEME Finding Peace and Joy.

Day 1 Romans 5:1

What is the first result of having been made "not guilty" (ie justified) before God?

Day 2 Romans 5:2

What are two further results which follow from this?

Day 3 Romans 5:3-5a

Why does Paul rejoice in suffering?

Day 4 Romans 5:5b-8

In what ways does Paul say that God shows his love for us? Why are we unlikely objects his love?

Day 5 Romans 5:9-11

Once we are right with God, what can we be sure of?

STUDY PASSAGE Romans 5:1-11



To Discuss:

1. In what ways do you experience peace as a christian? (v1)
2. Paul describes positive effects of suffering (verses 3 to 5). Have you experienced this, or seen it in the lives of others? Is it *reasonable* to rejoice in suffering?
3. How do people usually react to suffering? How can we make our reaction to suffering more biblical?
4. This passage gives many reasons for why we should rejoice. What are they? How does this affect your life?

PRAY

Thank God for his love for us while we are still sinners, and for the peace and joy he gives us.

Week 5

THEME Christ, the new Adam

Day 1 Romans 5:12

Who was the one man, through whom sin and death came into the world?
(Genesis 3:17-19)

Day 2 Romans 5:12-19

Does Paul treat Adam as an actual person, or does he treat Adam and the events of Genesis 3 as symbolic?

Day 3 Romans 5:13-14

What are the differences between the sins of *Adam and us* on the one hand, and the sins of *the people who lived between Adam and Moses* on the other?

Day 4 Romans 5:15-17

What are the differences between Adam and Christ?

Day 5 Romans 5:18-21

What is the result of Jesus' act of righteousness?

STUDY PASSAGE Romans 5:12-21

To Discuss:



1. What impact did Adam's sin have on mankind? (verses 12, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19. Refer also to Genesis 3:16-19). How does this affect you personally as you try to obey God now?
2. The sentence in verse 12 is never completed. When does Paul repeat this thought and complete the sentence? (v18) Try to put verse 18 in your own words. What does it mean by "all men"?
- 3 What are the similarities and differences between Adam and Christ?
4. What is the Law in verse 20? What place does the law play in your life? In what ways does what Paul says about the law "ring true" to you now, or does it all relate to the time before Christ came?

PRAY

Thank God for what he has done for the world and us through Christ. Pray that many might accept the free gift eternal life that Christ has made available to all.

Week 6

THEME The Slave-Market Example: a new life requires a new life-style.

Day 1 Romans 6:1

One modern day equivalent of the question in verse 1 is, "If I give in and do what I know is wrong, God will forgive me, so it doesn't matter." Can you think of other ways we explain away the importance of doing God's will?

Day 2 Romans 6:12-13

The full argument in verses 2 to 11 is difficult to grasp, but the conclusion in verses 12-13 is clear. Put this conclusion into your own words.

Day 3 Romans 6:2-11

Paul describes the christian experience in terms of being united with Christ in both his death and his resurrection. Note how some of this is in the past, some in the present and some in the future.

Day 4 Romans 6:6-8

When you became a christian, was the change in your life dramatic, or was it gradual, or was it both? Explain.

Day 5 Romans 6:15-23

What is the end result of slavery to sin? What is the end result of slavery to God? (v 21-23)

STUDY PASSAGE Romans 6:15-23

To Discuss:

1. Paul compares our life before we were christians to that of a slave. Likewise he compares our life after becoming christians to that of a slave. How is this appropriate? Think of situations where you have felt like a slave to sin or a slave to God.

2. Paul implies that these comparisons are not fully appropriate (v19). In what ways are the comparisons inadequate? In what ways are the phrases "yield yourself" (v 16a), "obedient from the heart" (v17), and "the free gift" (v23) not typical of what we think of as slavery?

Can you think of other ways to express what Paul is describing about our relationship to sin and God?

3. How does our slavery to sin differ from our slavery to God?

4. How does being a slave of God and righteousness make a difference to your life?

PRAY

That God will make us willing slaves and that we will see the promised results, of "newness of life", "holiness", and "eternal life".

Week 7

THEME The Conflict Within

Day 1 Romans 7:1-4

How does death of her husband change the way the law applies to a wife?

Day 2 Romans 7:4-6

What difference has the death of Christ made to the way the law applies to us?

Day 3 Romans 7:7-12

What does the law do?

Day 4 Romans 7:13-20

What causes Paul to do the wrong which he does not want to do?

Day 5 Romans 7:21-25

Paul compares his struggle to a war. What is the result of this war, in the present?

STUDY PASSAGE Romans 7:14-25

To Discuss:

- 1.** Do you ever know the right thing to do, really want to do it, yet fail to do it? What stops you from obeying God as you want to?

- 2.** In verses 14-25, Paul gives several reasons why he feels so wretched. Which 2 of these do you identify with most? Are there any of Paul's comments that you would not say of yourself?

- 3.** Part of the importance of this passage is that it gives a necessary balance to his previous comments which, by themselves, could have been misunderstood. Reread 5:18-19, 6:6, 6:14, 6:18, 7:6. Paul insists on both (i) the victory of Christ over the power of sin and its penalties, and (ii) the present struggles that we have with sin. In what situations are you likely to ignore one or the other of these aspects?

- 4.** Who can deliver us from this wretched condition, and when will he do it? (7:24-25, 6:5)

PRAY

That God will sustain us in our struggle with sin and forgive us when we fail. Thank him that Christ has rescued us from the ultimate power of sin.

Week 8

THEME Life in the Spirit - life, peace and the power to obey God.

Day 1 Romans 8:1-4

What is one result of being a christian? (verse 1)

Day 2 Romans 8:5-8

What is the result of setting your mind on the Spirit? (verse 6)

Day 3 Romans 8:9-11

Does the Spirit of God dwell in all christians, or only in "specially spiritual" christians?

Day 4 Romans 8:12-14

What is one effect of the Spirit on our lives?

Day 5 Romans 8:15-17

What is another way we experience the Spirit in our lives?

STUDY PASSAGE Romans 8:1-17



To Discuss:

- 1.** God gives the Holy Spirit to every christian (verse 9). Reflect on your experience of the Holy Spirit, both when you first became a christian and later on. Encourage others in the group by sharing some of your reflections.
- 2.** According to verses 10 and 11, what are the results of having Christ or the Spirit dwelling in us? How much of this happens now, and how much after the resurrection? How would you express these verses in your own words?
- 3.** We often use the phrase "led by the Spirit", to refer to guidance from God. What does the phrase mean in verse 14? (Consider the context in verses 12 to 17). How do you know if you are led by the Spirit?
- 4.** It is only with the Spirit's help that we can pray to God as "Father" with full belief (verses 15 and 16). What does it mean to call God "Father". What impact will it have on us, if we really believe that God is our Father? What are our privileges as God's sons?

PRAY

Thank God for the gift of his Spirit and the difference it makes to our lives.

Week 9

THEME Triumph through God's Love

Day 1 Romans 8:18-25

How does Paul describe our present state, and the state of the world?

Day 2 Romans 8:18-25

What things will eventually replace this present state of affairs?

Day 3 Romans 8:26-27

How does the Spirit help us?

Day 4 Romans 8:28-30

".. in everything God works for good with those who love him" (verse 28).
What is God's purpose in doing this? (verse 29).

Day 5 Romans 8:31-39

What is the mood of these verses?

STUDY PASSAGE Romans 8:28-39

To Discuss:

1. Does God *react* to "bad" situations and try to fix them up? or has God planned all things? What differences to your life do your answers make? (verses 28-30)

2. God intends that Christians be "conformed to the image of his Son" (verse 29). Given this, what does "in everything God works for good" mean? What sort of things would you expect God to do (and not do) when he is working for good? How do you go about becoming conformed to the image of Jesus?

3. How might the things mentioned in verses 35 to 36 cause us to question the love of God for us? Does anything cause you to question the love of God?

4. Despite the obstacles, Paul proclaims that we are "more than conquerors"? (verse 37) In what ways are we more than conquerors? How do you live as a conqueror? Take time to reflect on God's love for you, and what it means to you.

PRAY

Thank God for his love for us, and that we might live boldly for him. Pray that we might be open to being conformed to the image of Jesus.

HOW TO USE THESE NOTES

- 1.** Read the daily Bible readings on the left hand side of the double page, and think about the question for the day. Make a note of the answer, and any queries you have.
- 2.** The questions on the right hand side of the double page are designed for group discussion. Think about these questions before you go to your discussion group.
- 3.** The study passages are linked with the sermon series. You may find it helpful to take notes of the sermons.
- 4.** Please don't be frustrated if you can't understand or answer the questions: the important thing is that you read God's word. Take your questions and comments to your home group.
- 5.** Use this guide for family or personal Bible reading, and if you would like to join a discussion group, please see one of the church leaders.

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