



TO THE SAINTS AT ROME

By
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2023



May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus, that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

ROMANS 15:5-6

Syllabus

DAY	LESSON	CLASS DISCUSSION
Sun, 4/2	1	1:1-17, 15:14-33, 16:1-27- Plans to Go to Rome
Wed, 4/5	2	1:1-17, 15:14-33, 16:1-27- Plans to Go to Rome
Sun, 4/9	3	1:18-32- Idolatry of the Pagans
Wed, 4/12	4	2:1-29- Idolatry of Israel
Sun, 4/16	5	3:1-20- The Advantage of Israel
Wed, 4/19	6	3:21-31: But, Now!
Sun, 4/23	7	4- The Faith of Abraham
Wed, 4/26	8	4- The Faith of Abraham
Sun, 4/30	9	5- God's Grace & Us
Wed, 5/3	10	5- God's Grace & Us
Sun, 5/7	11	The New Exodus
Wed, 5/10	12	6- Passing Through the Waters of Baptism
Sun, 5/14	13	7- The Purpose of the Law from Mt. Sinai
Wed, 5/17	14	7- The Purpose of the Law from Mt. Sinai
Sun, 5/21	15	8- The Hope of God's Family
Wed, 5/24	16	8- The Hope of God's Family
Sun, 5/28	17	9- Reshaping a Remnant (Part 1)
Wed, 5/31	18	10- Reshaping a Remnant (Part 2)
Sun, 6/4	19	11: Reshaping a Remnant (Part 3)
Wed, 6/7	20	12- Transformed by Faith
Sun, 6/11	21	13- God's Family Living in the World
Wed, 6/14	22	14-15:13- Glorifying God with One Voice
Sun, 6/18	23	
Wed, 6/21	24	
Sun, 6/25	25	

Plans to Go to Rome

READING: Romans 1:1-7, 15:14-33, 16:1-27

QUESTIONS

1). Why was Paul planning to go to Rome?

2). Describe the dynamic of the church(es) in Rome.

3). What is the Gospel (Rom. 1:1-4)?

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4). What does the Gospel mean (Rom. 1:14-17)?

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The Idolatry of the Pagans

READING: Rom. 1:18-32

Paul begins to describe how the world is broken, given to idolatry. This problem exists in both the pagan and Jewish worlds. In this chapter, Paul describes the idolatry of the pagans. They have rejected the Creator and turned to idols. While the world could continue longer in its present condition, God has determined to bring judgment.

QUESTIONS

- 1). How were the pagans aware of the Creator?
- 2). How did the pagans respond to the Creator?
- 3). Why does Paul cite homosexuality as evidence of the world's brokenness?
- 4). What happened to society when God was rejected?

The Idolatry of Israel

READING: Rom. 2:1-29

Jewish readers would have readily agreed with Paul's characterization of the pagan world. However, the same problem of idolatry in the pagan world existed among the Jews. Israel had a long, sad history of idolatry. Paul makes a case against Israel proving their idolatry.

QUESTIONS

1). Cite four cases of Israel's idolatry.

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2). How had Israel failed to be a light to the world (Rom. 2:24)?

3). Describe the true, authentic Jew (Rom. 2:29).

The Advantage of the Jews

READING: Rom. 3:1-20

The Jews were God's chosen people in the world. God's selection of the family of Abraham over other families was a great privilege, but also a serious responsibility. Israel had an advantage in knowing God. Unlike the pagans, Israel had been given the oracles of God. God's word/law was to enable them to become a light to the pagan world. Sadly, Israel failed in this sacred trust. They broke the law. Paul's conclusion to this point in the letter is that both the pagans and Jews are sinners.

QUESTIONS

- 1). Describe Israel's advantage over the pagans to know God.
- 2). What was the responsibility of Israel's advantage/privilege?
- 3). What evidence does Paul cite to prove Israel broke the law?
- 4). Both the pagans & Jews were sinners. What did/does this mean?

But, Now!

READING: Rom. 3:21-31

To this point, Paul has painted a hopeless portrait of the human family. The pagans have rejected God. Despite their advantage, Israel failed their sacred trust and rejected God. Everyone that God attempted to work through has failed Him. But, now! These are among the most hopeful words in Romans. The feeling of the letter shifts dramatically. God will now send Jesus, His Son and the lone faithful Israelite, to save the human family.

QUESTIONS

- 1). How was God able to keep His covenant despite the world's unfaithfulness?

- 2). Under the Law of Moses, where was Israel's place of mercy?

- 3). Where is the place of mercy now?

- 4). How is mercy received and justification accomplished?

The Faith of Abraham

READING: Rom. 4

In this letter, Paul is making the case for how salvation is received by faith, not adherence to the Law of Moses. To prove this point, he cites the example of Abraham. Abraham had a relationship with God without the Law of Moses.

QUESTIONS

- 1). What was Abraham's spiritual condition when God came to him?
- 2). How did Abraham become righteous?
- 3). How is one justified or brought into the family of Abraham?

SUMMARY of ROMANS 1-4

<u>GENTILES</u> <i>Symbol of Sin & Death</i>	<u>ABRAHAM & SARAH</u> <i>Symbol of Faith & Life</i>
Ignored the Creator- 1:20, 23	Believed in the Creator as life-giver- 4:17
Knew Creator's power, but did not worship Him- 1:20	Trusted God's power- 4:21
Did not glorify God- 1:21	Glorified God- 4:20
Dishonored by God- 1:24	Worshipped God & were blessed with children- 4:18-21
Dishonored their bodies- 1:26-27	Given the ability to conceive- 4:19

God's Grace & Us

READING: Rom. 5

Understanding the past is important. Being able to prove God's covenant faithfulness was and is critical. Having done this, however, what does God's covenant faithfulness mean to us? As this second section of the letter commences, Paul explains the impact of God's grace in our lives.

QUESTIONS

- 1). Being justified by faith in God's grace gives us a relationship with God. How does Paul describe this relationship (Rom. 5:1-2)?

- 2). Outline the process by which we can be sustained by God's grace when we suffer (Rom. 5:3-5).

- 3). What is reconciliation (Rom. 5:6-11)?

- 4). What does the sin of Adam & Israel prove (Rom. 5:12-17)?

- 5). What was the purpose of the Law of Moses (Rom. 5:20)?

- 6). What is meant by grace "super-abounding"?

The New Exodus

READING: Rom. 6-8

In chapters six through eight, Paul draws on Israel's Exodus to explain how God's grace leads us out of sin into a new life with a hopeful future. Some have referred to Paul's approach here and in other places as describing a new exodus. Notice the following chart.

<u>ORIGINAL EXODUS</u>	<u>NEW EXODUS</u>
Israel liberated from slavery in Egypt & cross the Red Sea	Liberated from sin by faith & baptism- Rom. 6
Law given at Mt. Sinai	Law explained- Rom 7
Israel led by a cloud & pillar of fire to the Promised Land	God's family led by the Spirit to the inheritance- Rom. 8

The use of Exodus narratives is a common method of Paul's writing. Using language and imagery of the original Exodus helps explain God's use of the Messiah. Romans chapters six through eight is the most extensive Exodus narrative used by Paul. Below are two shorter examples.

Galatians 1:3-4: *"Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, who gave himself for our sins to deliver us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father."*

Philippians 2:12-14: *"Do all things without grumbling or disputing, that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, holding fast to the word of life, so that in the day of Christ I may be proud that I did not run in vain or labor in vain."*

Passing Through the Waters of Baptism

READING: Rom. 6

As Paul begins his Exodus narrative, he writes about the consequence of passing through the waters of baptism. Baptism is how we share in the death and resurrection of the Messiah. Like the Messiah was raised to new life, we are transformed. We are planted in righteousness and begin to grow in our new life.

QUESTIONS

- 1). How does this text give assurance of our salvation?

- 2). Explain what it means to use our members as instruments of righteousness.

- 3). What is profited from unrighteousness?

- 4). How does the first verse connect with the last verse?

The Purpose of the Law from Mt. Sinai

READING: Rom. 7

Romans chapter seven gives the most extensive explanation in the Bible about the purpose of the Law of Moses. Earlier, Paul stated that the Law of Moses was given so that sin might abound and increase (Rom. 5:20). This strange idea is explained in greater detail in this chapter.

QUESTIONS

- 1). How did the law create the knowledge of sin?
- 2). How did the law connect Israel to Adam?
- 3). What problem did the law reveal?
- 4). Why wasn't Israel's love for the law enough to justify them?
- 5). How did God use the law like a trap for sin?

The Hope of God's Family

READING: Rom. 8

The eighth chapter of Romans is among the most hopeful passages in the Bible. Contextually, Paul is finishing his explanation about the law from chapter seven (8:1-11). He explains how the law's intention of giving life is finally achieved when God by the Spirit gives resurrection life to all those who belong to the Messiah.

QUESTIONS

1.) How did God destroy sin trapped by the law (Rom. 8:1-4)?

2.) Contrast the following (Rom. 8:5-11):

- Those in the flesh-
- Those in the spirit-

3.) What does the Spirit lead us to do (Rom. 8:12-17)?

4.) Identify different ways Creation is suffering (Rom. 8:18-25).

5.) How are we to respond to the suffering of Creation?

The Hope of God's Family

Continued

6). Describe the personal interaction we experience when the "Searcher of Hearts" and "the Spirit" communicate (Rom. 8:26-27).

7). What is God's purpose (Rom. 8:28-30)?

8). Describe the inseparable bond of the Messiah's love (Rom. 8:31-39).

9). Read Psalm 44. How is the Messiah the answer to the psalmist?

Reshaping a Remnant

Part 1

READING: Rom. 9

As hopeful as the Gospel is, the Gospel also brings a sad reality to bear. While the Gospel is for everyone, everyone will not obey the Gospel. Everyone can be saved by believing the Gospel, but not everyone will believe.

In Romans chapters nine through eleven, Paul begins to grapple with this harsh reality. As strangely surprising as it may be to us, God anticipated rejection of His purposes. Yet, God was able to be faithful to His covenant and offer salvation to everyone despite of man's rejection of Him.

Jewish rabbis often recounted their history. This happens in the Psalms. Like a Jewish rabbi, Paul tells the history of Israel. However, he does something different from other rabbis. Paul corrects a misinterpretation of history. Israel's misreading of history contributed to the rejection of the Messiah (Acts 13:26-28). Paul teaches Israel's history through the cross of Christ. While Israel had persisted in their rejection of Christ, they could still believe.

QUESTIONS

1). Why did God reshape Israel (see Jeremiah 18:1-6)?

2). Israel thought the promises made to Abraham meant the entire nation would forever remain God's people. How do Hosea's and Isaiah's prophecies concerning exile and a remnant disprove this mistaken notion?

Reshaping a Remnant

Part 2

READING: Rom. 10

The opening lines of this chapter, Paul summarizes the main point of his argument from Romans 9:6-26: "*For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes*" (Rom. 10:4). The Messiah is the end of the law for righteousness. But, what is the law for righteousness? Paul uses this term "righteousness" in its broadest possible meaning. This would include the following:

- 1). God's covenant faithfulness. The Messiah represents God's faithfulness to the covenant He made with Abraham. He is the end or the final part of the covenant.
- 2). Membership into God's covenant family. Believing Jesus is the Messiah is the only way to become part of God's covenant family. Therefore, membership is not limited by ethnicity. Membership is entirely based on faith. This is why the Gentiles could become part of God's covenant family.
- 3). Faith is the law of God's covenant family, not the Law of Moses. Faith is the law of the covenant family. As has already been explained in Romans 7-8:4, the Law of Moses was fulfilled in the Messiah.

QUESTIONS

- 1). How does Paul use Deuteronomy 28-32 to discern the times?
- 2). How did God use the Gentiles to bring back Israel to His family?
- 3). How was the prophecy of Isaiah 65:1-2 fulfilled?

Reshaping a Remnant

Part 3

READING: Rom. 11

Paul is trying to convey to Jewish readers the important historical concept of God saving a remnant by grace. Whenever God punished Israel, a remnant was always saved. Jews who came through periods of exile, emerged with reshaped hearts and a renewed commitment to God. Now, as Israel had rejected the Gospel, they were experiencing another period of exile. Through belief in Jesus the Messiah, however, a remnant of Israel could experience a new exodus.

QUESTIONS

- 1). How is Paul similar to Elijah?
- 2). What was the intention of Israel's stumble?
- 3). Explain the illustrations of the first fruits & olive tree.
- 4). How did God use the Gentiles to fulfill His covenant?

Transformed by Faith

READING: Rom. 12

Paul focuses his writing toward those in the city of Rome who had become part of God's family (Rom. 12-15). What was/is this newly reconstituted family of faith to do? There are two themes in this section of Paul's letter regarding the new life of the family of God.

1. How the family is to live among themselves: unity.
2. How the family is to live in the world.

QUESTIONS

- 1). How are our lives transformed?
- 2). Upon what is unity based?
- 3). How is the unity of God's family threatened today?
- 4). How are we to use our abilities in God's family?
- 5). How are we to respond to evil and why?

God's Family Living in the World

READING: Rom. 13

Christians must properly understand the role of government as designed by God. This will help us understand our relationship to the world. If we are not careful, we can develop attitudes and behaviors which make us and the Church indistinguishable in the world. When the Church is viewed as just another political action committee, Christians have gone wrong. Christians must pray for leaders and work to help bring order to God's creation.

Also, Paul discusses living in the present age. He uses imagery which brings to mind someone waking in the morning and getting dressed for the new day. By the resurrection of the Messiah, a new day has dawned. Through faith, we are reborn and given new life (Rom. 6). While we live in the same world, living in this world is drastically different. As we seek to discern the dawn, our minds are being renewed and our lives are being transformed by love.

QUESTIONS

- 1). What is the role of government and how does Paul's explanation of government fit into the context of Romans 12-13?
- 2). How does Paul discuss the consequences of the dawning of the new day?
- 3). What do we owe our fellow man? How will our repayment change the world?

Glorifying God with One Voice

READING: Rom. 14-15:13

Paul identifies a natural consequence of the reshaping of God's family: unity. He uses the Gospel to solve the problem of division. In his work and evidenced in his letters, Paul applies Gospel solutions to problems. How can Jewish Christians and Gentile Christians glorify God with one voice? Paul uses the Gospel to provide an answer.

There does appear to be an open hostility among the saints at Rome regarding the issues addressed in this chapter. However, quiet condescension can be as destructive as open hostility. Saints can gather under one roof, but fail to glorify God with one voice. Paul writes about how love can bring saints of diverse backgrounds together in one family.

QUESTIONS

1. Why does Paul avoid making assumptions about meat-eaters and vegetarians among the saints in Rome?
- 2). Describe the group Paul refers to as the "weak in faith."
- 3). Explain the meaning of the word "conscience" and how the term is used in 1 Corinthians 8:5-7.