



BIBLE STUDY GUIDE  
ON  
ROMANS

26 SESSIONS

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# SESSION 1

## Romans 1.1-7 - An Introduction

### GETTING STARTED

*These first questions are designed to get your group discussing Romans as a letter, and to help you grasp what experience they've had in reading it, talking about it or to understand things they've heard about it. Don't lose too much time on these introductory questions, and if your time is limited, you can skip them altogether.*

- What do you know about Romans?
- What are some famous verses?
- What controversial issues does it deal with?
- Have you read any parts and wondered 'What is this saying?' ?
- What would you say Romans is about?
- Looking at history, who has this book had an impact on and why?

### A FEW HELPFUL FACTS

**Author** - Paul

**Year of writing** - c. 57 AD

**Purpose** - There are tensions in the Roman church. Although Paul himself has never been there and doesn't know the Christians personally, he knows what they need: the gospel.

### READ ROMANS 1.1-7

#### VERSE 1

- How does Paul see himself?
  - How do you tend to see your relationship with Christ?
  - How would seeing Jesus as your master, and you as His servant/slave change things?
- What is an apostle?
- What is 'the gospel of God?'
  - How does understanding that the gospel is an announcement of good news, of victory over an enemy, of the triumph of a king on the field of battle AND NOT good advice, change the way we see it and relate to it and God?
- In what sense was Paul 'set apart' for this gospel?

## **VERSE 2**

How does the Old Testament point forward to the gospel?

- What OT prophecies in particular come to mind when you think of it foreshadowing the gospel?

## **VERSES 3 - 4**

What does Paul tell us about Jesus here - and why do each of these points matter?

- Break down the phrase 'Jesus Christ our Lord'. What does each part mean and what are the implications for us?
  - What happens if you forget or downplay one of these?
  - Is there one that you tend to forget/downplay more than the others?

## **VERSE 5**

What is the 'obedience of faith'?

- Why does it matter that we get this right?

## **VERSES 6 - 7**

How does Paul describe the Christians in Rome (and, by extension, us)?

- In a culture that can leave us feeling adrift and without roots, constantly seeking the approval of others, how does the gospel answer our deepest needs?

## **TAKE IT DEEPER**

As we will see over the next weeks, the book of Romans is all about the gospel.

The verses you have just studied already contain many key elements to it!

As a group, try to come up with a summary of the gospel based on and including elements of the verses you've just read, in such a way that you could use to explain to a non-Christian.

# SESSION 2

## Romans 1.8-17

### READ ROMANS 1.8 - 17

#### VERSE 8

What does Paul thank God for?

- Why thank God 'through Jesus Christ'?
  - Why are thankfulness to God, and approaching Him through Christ, both fruit of the gospel?
  - What do gratitude or ingratitude in our lives reflect?

#### VERSE 9

What does it mean to serve God 'in the gospel'?

- How is the gospel the power that doesn't only *save* us, but *sustains and empowers* us in the Christian life and a life of service?

#### VERSES 11 - 13

Why does Paul want to visit them in Rome?

- One of the reasons Paul wants to go to Rome is so that they can encourage him. Why is that noteworthy?
  - Do you see yourself as a means of God's encouragement for others? How can you help strengthen others' faith?
  - What is it about being around other believers that can strengthen our own faith?

#### VERSE 14

Why is Paul, a Jew, under obligation (or indebted) to Gentiles?

#### VERSE 15

Why does Paul want to preach the gospel to those who are already Christians?

#### VERSE 16

Why is Paul not ashamed of the gospel?

- What does Paul mean by 'salvation'?
- Is there anything in the gospel, or the message of Christianity that you're ashamed/embarrassed of? Or that another Christian might be ashamed of?
- What's offensive about the gospel? Think of different people's world views: why might the gospel be offensive to them?

## **VERSE 17**

Why is the gospel powerful?

- What does Paul mean by 'the righteousness of God'?
- Paul is not ashamed of the gospel because it's the power of God, revealing God's righteousness. How does the gospel undercut all shame?
- What does Paul mean by 'from faith for faith'?
- Paul quotes Habakkuk 2v4. What point is he making?
  - How should every day be lived by faith?
  - Consider the inverse: how do we not live by faith? For example, what is at the root of every sin, or of our self-righteousness; or of bitterness; of self-pity? How do each of these have a failure to believe the gospel at their root?

## **QUESTION TO CONSIDER INDIVIDUALLY**

*[can be as a take-home - doesn't have to be done in the group]*

What new perspective have you gained on the gospel thanks to the verses you read today? Think about the areas or circumstances in which you have felt ashamed of the gospel. Consider including these areas in your prayers: that you would grow in courage and conviction about the gospel and its power.

# SESSION 3

## Romans 1.18-32

*Even if you don't manage to get through all the questions, try to finish with the last question, which takes you back to the hope that comes with the gospel.*

### READ THE PASSAGE

This letter is about the good news of the gospel and why we need a righteousness that is a gift of God. The first place Paul turns is the sinfulness of humanity. Why go there first?

### VERSE 18

It begins with the word 'For...' why is this important?

- What is the wrath of God?
  - Paul does not say that the wrath of God *will* be revealed, but that it *is* revealed. Briefly, according to what follows in this chapter, *how* is it revealed *now*?
  - What does Paul say God's wrath is against? What does he mean?
  - Do you struggle with the idea of God being a God of wrath? If so, why?
  - Why would a God who refused to punish the wicked be unworthy of worship?
- What does Paul say humanity does with the truth?
  - Can you give some examples of how people suppress the truth?
  - Can you give some examples of how people who deny God's existence nevertheless suggest or live as if there are moral absolutes?

### VERSE 20

How are God's eternal power and divine nature displayed in the physical world?

- Can you give examples of how people see this, but suppress/don't follow through on what they are seeing?

### VERSE 21

What do honouring God and giving thanks to Him express? And, conversely, what does a failure to honour Him and thank Him express?

### VERSES 23 - 25

Paul describes how we exchange the worship of the Creator for created things. In what ways do we see this exchange happening in the secular west today? In what ways is the secular person still a worshipper?

### VERSES 24 - 28

Which phrase is repeated?

- We think getting what we want is a good thing. This passage suggests that is not always the case. Why should 'God giving people up to what they desire' give us pause for thought?
- Can you give current examples of God giving people/societies over to what they want?

### **VERSE 24**

Paul says that God has given humanity over to the '**lusts of their heart**'. The word he uses is *epithumia* - over-desires. Why is it helpful to understand that the major problem of our heart may not be that we desire wrong things, but that we may also *over-desire* good things, and make them our god?

### **VERSE 25**

Paul says that people worship and serve the creature rather than the Creator. How does worshipping something other than God ultimately control us or even enslave us, not free us?

### **VERSES 26 - 27**

In these verses, Paul deals with homosexual sin. However, before doing so he addresses the sinfulness of all sexual practices outside of marriage (**v24**).

Why does it matter that we notice this?

- Paul uses an argument from nature. What is that argument?
  - How does Paul describe same-sex physical relationships?

This is not all the Bible has to say on same-sex relationships. However, the Bible is clear that homosexual relationships that haven't been repented of, are a rejection of God's will and Christ's Lordship and leave those who engage in them outside the kingdom of God (1 Cor 6.9-10). But what we read here must be taken in the context of the whole of the letter: that God's wrath is revealed against sin (not just this sin, but *all* sin), but the gospel, the good news of Jesus, is the answer and our hope for our sin.

- Look at **1 Corinthians 6.9-11**. How are the wrath and the grace of God revealed in the gospel?

### **VERSES 28 - 31**

Why is it wrong (if tempting!), for Christians to concentrate on the sexual sins of others?

- How does today's passage undercut the idea found in some churches that homosexuality is not a sin, or in other churches that it is the only, chief, or worst sin?

### **VERSE 32**

How might we be guilty of 'giving approval' to sin? Think of some examples from day-to-day life.

- Why do we feel a need to justify sin in others?

### **TO FINISH - VERSE 25**

On a more positive note (!) go back to **v25**.

Paul describes God as 'The Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen.' We have to wait for chapter 3 before we get back to the gospel, but how do Paul's words here show us the way forward?

- Why should the reality of God's wrath lead us to greater joy and thankfulness for the gospel?
- Understanding the gospel gives you the freedom to be honest with yourself: in what area am I over-desiring? How can I practically address these areas in my life, so as to re-order my loves? Consider these questions on your own.

# SESSION 4

## Romans 2.1-29

### READ THE PASSAGE

Who is Paul addressing in this chapter?

- Chapter 1 was an indictment of the pagan Gentile world. How might a law-observing Jewish person have responded to chapter 1? How might a religious person today respond?

### VERSES 1 - 3

How might a religious/highly moral person be guilty of the same sins that they condemn in others? Consider also chapter 1.29 - 31.

- Why are we sometimes (often) quick to judge people for wrong attitudes or behaviours that we are guilty of ourselves?

### VERSE 3

What is Paul saying? (You may also consider Matt 7.1-5)

- Francis Schaeffer used the illustration of each of us having an imaginary tape recorder around our necks that recorded everything we said in judgment or criticism of others, or how others should behave. He made the point that all God would need to do to condemn us on the day of Judgement would be to play that recording back. Why?
- What sins are you tempted to condemn in others but excuse for yourself? Why are we sometimes (often) quick to judge people for wrong attitudes or behaviours that we are guilty of ourselves?

### VERSES 4 - 5

How is God's kindness shown to the rule-keeper/religious person?

- In what ways does the religious person have a hard and impenitent heart?
- What does the self-righteous person think they are storing up? What are they actually storing up?
- Why is self-righteousness appealing?

### COMPARE & CONTRAST

How are Romans 1 and 2 like a commentary on the two sons in Jesus' parable of the Prodigal Son?

### VERSE 6

What will be the basis God uses for the final judgment?

- Is Paul contradicting himself from 1.16-17 where he says salvation is through the gospel, by faith, with a righteousness given by God?

### READ PSALM 62

In Romans 2.6 Paul is quoting Ps 62.12. In that Psalm two types of people are contrasted by what they do. What is the contrast, and how does this help us understand what Paul is saying in 2.6?

- Do works matter? Why?

### **VERSES 7 - 8**

What indicators does Paul give for a life that is, or is not lived in right relationship with God? Explain what these are.

- If you've not answered this already, what does it actually mean to be self-seeking?
  - How do both religious/moral people, and irreligious/secular/pagan people do this?

### **VERSES 9 - 11**

Verses 9 - 11 tell us that God shows no partiality in His judgement. He has no favourites. The religious and irreligious will all be judged alike.

- Do you ever think God does have favourites and you're not one of them? What makes you think that?

### **VERSES 12 - 16**

What point is Paul making?

- How does our conscience 'accuse and excuse' us?
- Why is conscience not always a reliable guide to what we should do?
- How can you make your conscience a more reliable guide?

### **VERSES 17 - 24**

What are the kind of things a religious Jewish person might get their sense of worth from?

- Given this, what are they trusting in for their salvation?
  - How might Christians be guilty of something similar today?

### **VERSE 21**

What would it look like for us as individuals to 'teach ourselves'?

- How do you practically do this?

### **VERSE 24**

How do moralistic or religious people cause God to be blasphemed?

- How can you use your life, where God has placed you, to commend God and a life of faith in Him?

### **VERSES 25 - 29**

What was the significance of circumcision for the Jewish people?

- What is Paul's point in v25-27?

### **VERSE 29**

What does it mean to have a circumcised heart?

- What does it mean that our praise is from God, not man?

# SESSION 5

## Romans 3.1-20

As you read the passage, consider what main point Paul is trying to make in these verses.

### VERSES 1 - 2

What advantage did the Jewish people have over the gentiles?

- What are the advantages we have over non-Christians? Do you ever find those a reason for pride or self-righteousness?

### VERSES 3 - 4

Paul is anticipating a rejection of his message, because the majority of Jewish people have actually not responded to the promises of the gospel.

People from a Jewish background hearing this letter read may have responded, 'sure, but God's word has failed - they *haven't* believed the promise, they *haven't* believed the oracles. So *few* people, even/ especially Jewish people, believe the gospel'. How does Paul respond?

- Do you ever think that the fact that Bible-believing Christians are in a minority invalidates Christianity? How does Paul's answer address that?

### VERSES 5 - 8

In **v5** and **v7**, Paul expresses an argument that an unbeliever might make. What is it, and how does he answer it in **v6** and **v8**?

- Why do secular people dislike the idea of God's wrath?
  - If someone argues that God is wrong to inflict justice/wrath on us, what grounds remain for arguing in favour of social justice?
  - Why is God's judgement in eternity consistent with our desire for justice now?
- When someone is facing a period of temptation, how might they argue something similar to v7?

### VERSE 9

How is this a summary of chapters 1 and 2?

- One problem of Jewish nationalism was that they *did* consider themselves better than the gentiles. What is Christian nationalism, what examples of this do you see currently around the world, and how might they believe something similar to what Paul articulates from a Jewish perspective? Finally, why is it wrong?
- What does it mean to be 'under sin'? Why is it remarkable that both Jew and gentile are 'under sin'?

### VERSES 10 - 18

Paul describes a number of ways sin has affected humanity. What are they? What areas do they cover?

- If not already discussed, in what ways is our speech like 'an open grave' **v13**?

- Paul says, **v11**, 'No one seeks for God.' What does it mean to 'seek God'?
  - We can think of non-Christians as 'seekers'. What are they seeking for, and is it God?
  - Why might it be closer to the truth to describe humanity, not as seekers, but as runners and hidiers from God?
- **Look at John 6:44 and 2 Timothy 2:25.** What do Jesus and Paul tell us about what must first precede us seeking God?
  - How does the truth that you only came to God because He first sought you out, and that you only believe because He gave you the faith to do so, affect you?
- Why can Paul say in **v12** that 'no one does good'? Is that true?
  - **Consider 1 Corinthians 10:31** - how often is the motive for doing good God's glory? What might people's motives be?
- **In v15** Paul says humanity is swift to shed blood. What are the root reasons we become angry, or vengeful? What does this say about the state of our hearts?
- **Considering v18**, what is the fear of God? (Consider 2 Chron 17v10; Job 28v28; Psalm 111v10, 130v3-4; Prov 1v7, 8v13)
  - How is the fear of God the opposite of all the sins Paul has just listed?

## **VERSES 19 - 20**

What does Paul give as purposes of the law?

- Why is trying to obey the law and live a moral life a form of self-salvation? What is it doomed to failure?
- In **v20** Paul's conclusion is clear. What is it?
  - Do you ever find yourself thinking you are made right in God's sight by doing right? Why is this, do you think?
  - What are the negative results of thinking like this?

## **WRAP IT UP**

Summarise the main points and take-home messages of this passage in a sentence or two.

# SESSION 6

## Romans 3.21-31

### VERSE 21

What is the 'but' at the beginning referring to and why is it so significant?

- Why is what follows the 'but' in the next verses stunning good news? How does it compare to other religions?

### VERSE 22

How do we receive this righteousness?

- Why is it the object of our faith that matters and not faith in itself? For example what is wrong with someone saying, 'what's important is that we believe in something. *What we believe is secondary*'?

### VERSE 23

According to this verse, who needs this righteousness?

- What does it mean to fall short of the glory of God?

### VERSE 24

What does it mean to be justified?

- As a Christian, do you typically feel guilty or not guilty in God's sight? What difference does it make to our lives when we understand we've been declared not guilty in Christ?
- What does 'redemption' mean?
  - What are we redeemed from and by?
  - Verse 24 makes it clear that we are justified and saved as a gift - by God's grace alone. Why is this humbling?

### VERSE 25

In this verse, Paul specifies what he means by faith. What is our faith to be in?

What are the implications of this for what people say they believe?

- What is a propitiation? And how is Christ a propitiation by His blood?
- Given all this, what is faith?
  - It is possible as Christians to trust in our faith and not in Christ. What are some signs that we might be doing this?

### VERSES 25 - 26

What does it mean that God passed over former sins? How could this be just?

- What does it mean for God to be both just and justifier? Or, put another way, how can a just God justly justify us, although we are sinners?
  - What goes wrong if we think God is one or the other but not both: just (wrathful against sin) but not a justifier, or that He is a justifying/forgiving God but not a just/wrathful one?

### **VERSE 27**

Having presented the incredible truth of a righteousness from God that's a gift, received by faith, Paul turns to the issue of boasting. Why 'boasting' do you think? Why turn there?

- What problems does boasting bring to us as individuals or wider society?
- How does the gospel of justification by grace through faith undermine these negative effects of boasting?
- What are the kinds of things you are tempted to boast in, that make you feel good about yourself?
  - Why does the gospel give us far greater confidence than anything we could boast in?

### **VERSE 31**

How does justification by faith lead us to 'uphold the law'?

### **THE IMPACT OF THIS MESSAGE**

What does the gospel of salvation by grace through faith have to say to the person:

- Who says that as long as they believe something, they're ok...
- Who feels like they'll never be good enough...
- Who looks at their life and works and thinks "I'm doing pretty well here!" (Whether they are a Christian or secular person)...
- Who tends to compare themselves (favourably or unfavourably) to other Christians...
- Who has done stuff in their past of which they feel great guilt and who feels unworthy of forgiveness...
- Who does not think deeply about these matters but is instead pursuing his or her 'best life now'...

# SESSION 7

## Romans 4.1-25

### RE-READ VERSES 1 - 6

Paul has been making the case for justification by faith in Christ. He now says, 'What then shall we say was gained by Abraham...' and in **v6**, 'just as David also speaks...'. What's Paul doing by name-dropping here?

### VERSES 1 - 3

Paul homes in on Abraham. Did Abraham have anything to boast about before God? If not, why not?

- How was Abraham justified?

### VERSE 3

In this verse Paul uses the word 'counted' (or in some translations 'credited'). It's *the* critical word in this chapter. Go through the whole passage and document (count!) how many times the word is used.

- What does it mean to 'count something to someone'?
- Given this, what does it mean in **v3** that Abraham's faith was 'counted to him as righteousness'?
- Martin Luther said Christians are '*simul justus et peccator*' - at the same time righteous and sinful. How does the example of Abraham, and what Paul says in **v5**, exemplify this?
  - Do you tend to think of yourself as a sinner, or as righteous? Why is Luther's approach better?

### VERSE 5

In what ways could a Christian be described as someone who stops trying to be saved?

- In what ways might Christians still (wrongly) trust in their own moral performance?
- If God were to ask you, 'why should I let you into heaven?' What would you reply?

### VERSES 7 - 8

In these two verses Paul quotes from one of David's Psalms - **Psalms 32**. Read the whole Psalm.

- How does this Psalm pre-empt the gospel? i.e. what gospel themes do you see in this Psalm?
- Consider **v1-2** of the Psalm which Paul quotes in **v7-8**, what does this tell us of how David was counted righteous before God?
  - David does not pretend he is sinless. Why is justification by faith, and the forgiveness that comes with it, the only way to see yourself as you really are, without it crushing you? Or without becoming proud?
  - Do you tend more to being crushed or proud? How does the gospel speak to you?

### VERSES 9 - 13

What point is Paul making about the order of Abraham's faith and circumcision?

- In fact, according to **v11**, what was circumcision?
- What does this tell us about the order of God's grace and our obedience? Do we receive grace because we obey, or obey because we've received grace?
- In **v13**, Paul says Abraham did not receive the promise of being father to many nations through the law. Why is this (obviously!) correct?

### **VERSES 14 - 15**

According to these two verses, no one can be justified by observing the law. Why is that?

- What does Paul mean by 'where there is no law there is no transgression'?

### **VERSE 16**

Paul gives the great alternative to trying to save yourself. What is it and who is it for?

### **VERSES 17 - 22**

In this verse Paul holds up Abraham as an example to us of what faith looks like in practice.

- What does faith look like in **v18-19**?
  - Are there any areas in your life where you have experienced this kind of faith?
- What does faith look like in **v20-21**?
  - Has there been a time recently when you have needed to trust God like this?

### **VERSES 24 - 25**

According to these final verses, what will saving faith look like for us?

### **TO CONSIDER**

You may have heard people say (or even thought yourself) that the Old Testament taught salvation by works and only in the New Testament do we get salvation by grace through faith. How does Paul's use of the example of David and Abraham undermine this?

Does this also have anything to say to the idea that the God of the Old and New Testaments are two different gods?

### **BE HONEST WITH YOURSELF**

(Questions for personal reflexion)

If God were to ask you, 'why should I let you into heaven?', what would you reply?

What are things you sometimes slip into thinking help save you or make you 'more accepted' in God's sight?

Reflect on the verses you have read and if necessary, repent of the times you have trusted in yourself and your works rather than fully trusting in Christ's death and resurrection that paid the price once and for all for you.

# SESSION 8

## Romans 5.1-11

### VERSE 1

Paul begins by saying we have been justified by faith. If you are a Christian, because of Christ's death on your behalf, you have been declared not guilty before God. Why does this change everything? For example, what does it do for feelings of shame, or guilt, or unworthiness? Why does it change the way you see God and yourself?

### VERSES 1 - 2

What 3 things flow from being justified by faith?

- How does peace with God differ from the peace of God?
- What does it mean to stand in grace?
- Why is the glory of God something we can look forward to as Christians with joy and hope?
- How does Christian hope differ from the way people usually think of hope?

### VERSE 3

Other than hope of the future glory of God, what else can we now rejoice in?

- Why is it deeply counter-intuitive to rejoice in sufferings?
- When we resent suffering or difficulties in our lives, what does it reveal about us?
- Why does knowing you are justified by faith enable you to rejoice in suffering?

### VERSES 3 - 4

What are the good purposes for which God allows suffering in our lives?

- How does suffering produce endurance?
- How does endurance produce character?
- How does character produce hope?
- When things are not going well, how do you typically respond? How can what Paul says here change that?
- Looking back, have you experienced a difficult time and seen what Paul says here working out in your own life? That you learnt endurance, or grew in character, or realised better where your real hope lies?

### VERSE 5

Paul says that the love of God has been poured into our hearts by God's Spirit. How does this affect the way we see ourselves, treat others and respond to God? (See also **1 John 4.18-19**)

- Are there people you struggle to love - maybe even who are making your life difficult? How might knowing what Paul writes here challenge you to a different response?

## **VERSES 6 - 8**

Let these verses sink in. Read v8 a few times, accentuating different parts.

What does Paul tell us about the staggering nature of God's love for us?

- How might reminding yourself of this change how you experience times where you feel burdened by your sin?

## **VERSES 9 - 10**

What point is Paul making in these verses?

- Paul talks about salvation in a future sense. Why, having been saved by Christ, is there still a promise that you will be saved?
- Why does Paul say we are saved by Christ's *life*?

## **VERSE 11**

The Christian life should be one of joy and rejoicing. Why? And why is justification by faith at the root of this joy?

## **TAKE IT WITH YOU**

Take a few minutes to write down the wonderful truths you have been reminded of this in this passage. Write them somewhere where you will see it throughout the week and be encouraged and built up by the reality of this Good News!

(For example, write it on a post-It and stick it anywhere - on your laptop, your fridge, your mirror... Maybe you could even design a new screen saver for your phone. The possibilities are endless!)

# SESSION 9

## Romans 5.12-21

### VERSES 12 - 14

According to these verses, what are the two problems humanity faces?

- How do you see these two problems continue to afflict humanity?
  - How does secularism seek to address them?
- In **v12**, Paul says that death spread to all because all sinned. However, the tense he uses for 'sinned' implies one single past action. What one single sin is he referring to, and how does this include everyone?
- The rest of the passage is based on this idea of Adam and Christ being our representative heads. Where do we still see the concept of one person representing a whole people show itself in other cultures and still, to some degree, in the West?
- How does the biblical concept of our being 'in Adam' or 'in Christ' - that they are our representatives, our 'federal heads', that humanity shares a corporate identity in Adam or Christ - compare to Western individualism? Do you appreciate this idea, or resent it? Why?

### VERSES 13 - 14

What is Paul referring to when he says that sin is not counted as sin where there is no law? And how does this differ from Adam's sin?

### VERSE 14

Considering this verse, what does it mean for death to reign?

- As you look at our post-Christian, secular societies, how do you see death still reigning?
- Paul describes Adam as a 'type' of Jesus. What does he mean by that?

### VERSES 15 - 17

Paul makes a number of contrasts between what Adam brought upon humanity, and what Christ has:

- In **v15**, what contrast is Paul making? (See also 1 Corinthians 15:22)
- In **v16**, what contrast does he make between Christ's free gift and the result of Adam's sin?
- Does the concept of grace and justification by faith minimise sin, or say 'it doesn't really matter', or sweep it under the carpet? Why or why not?
- Again, what contrast is Paul making in **v17**?

### VERSE 17

What does it mean to 'reign in life'?

- How might the message that *in Christ you reign in life* impact how you live and see life?

### **VERSE 18**

This is a summary verse. Summarise in your own words the difference between Adam and Christ.

- Is Paul teaching universalism (the idea that all will be saved)?

### **VERSE 19**

Why does the obedience of Christ matter?

### **VERSE 20**

How does the law increase the trespass?

- Do you ever find yourself wanting to do something just because you've been told you can't? After all, 'rules are meant to be broken!' aren't they?!
- How did/does God respond to humanity's increasing sin?

### **APPLICATION**

Basing your answer on what you saw in today's passage, how do you pick yourself up again when you stumble in sin - in your thoughts, words or actions?

# SESSION 10

## Romans 6.1-14

### GETTING STARTED

How and why do you think people can change their behaviour? What are the good and bad sides of each way?

### VERSE 1

Why might believing in God's grace lead one to think that it's ok to sin or give in to temptation?

- Do you ever find yourself thinking along these lines?

### VERSE 2

What does it mean that we died to sin?

### VERSES 1 - 2

Why do you think we continue to do things that we know are wrong/sinful?

- What does this say about us?

### PAUSE TO LOOK AT THE BIG PICTURE

Looking at **v3-11** as a whole, how does the concept of 'union with Christ' feature in this passage?

### VERSES 3 - 4

How do these verses summarise Christianity?

### VERSES 5 - 7

How does Christ's death and resurrection deal with every aspect of our sin problem?

- In **v6** Paul talks of 'the old self' and the 'body of sin'. What are these, how do they differ, and what has Christ's death done about them?
- How does someone's identity influence the way they live? How should our identity as Christians, as those united with Christ, change the way we live?
- In **v6**, what does it mean to be enslaved to sin?
  - How should knowing we are no longer enslaved change the way we see decision making in the moment of temptation?
  - Do you truly believe that you don't have to sin?

### VERSE 11

What does it mean to 'consider yourself dead to sin and alive to God'. How should you practically do this?

- How might this help you in the moment of temptation?
- Considering **v5-11**: In what sense do we already get to experience resurrection life now?

## **VERSES 12 - 13**

What does it mean, and what will it practically look like, not to let sin reign but rather to present yourself to God and your members as instruments of righteousness?

## **VERSE 14**

Why should knowing you are not under law but under grace break sin's power over you?

- Do you actively reflect on why you do what you do, or preach the gospel to yourself? If not, what could you do to change that?

## **PERSONAL REFLECTION**

Go back over **v14** and its questions.

Think about an area (or areas) in your life in which you regularly struggle with the same sin or temptation. Take time to think of a "game-plan" based on these verses (and v14 in particular) that you can put into practice when these temptations come knocking at your door. Remind yourself that sin does not have dominion over you - because you are in Christ you can resist, you can choose His way, the better way.

# SESSION 11

## Romans 6.15 - 23

### GETTING STARTED

What images does slavery conjure up for you?

### VERSE 15

In this verse Paul repeats what he wrote in **v1**. Why do you think he feels the need to repeat himself?

- Someone has said that you have to repeat a message at least 7 times before people get it. Have you experienced times when the Lord has had to repeatedly bring something to your attention before you got the point?
- We are to obey God because we live under grace, and not despite the fact of His grace. Why is this something that we need to be reminded of?

### VERSE 16

Paul asks a direct question here. How would you answer? Has the reality that everyone is a slave to something - to sin or to God - sunk in?

- 'Sin' is a generic term for anything other than God that people give themselves to as their highest good. Dig down into that: what specific things can people give themselves to that they become enslaved to?

### VERSE 16 & 21

Paul says that sin leads to death. How come / In what way?

- How does obedience lead to righteousness?

### VERSE 17 - 18

What 'before and after' contrast is Paul drawing?

- Paul begins this contrast with 'thanks be to God'. Does the gospel warm your heart? Do you remind yourself of it and use it as the basis of thanksgiving to God? List some of the things God has done for you in Christ that could be the basis of such thanksgiving.
- What is Paul referring to when he talks of 'the standard of teaching'? Break that phrase down and draw out its implications.
- We are exposed to various messages/teachings in the course of our lives that shape and form us - either as slaves to righteousness or to sin. The gospel has that effect, but so to do the messages of the world. How does the world preach at you?

### VERSE 19

How does lawlessness (choosing to live contrary to God's law in one area) lead to more lawlessness in our lives?

- How does presenting yourself as a slave to righteousness lead to sanctification? How can our actions and habits shape our character for good?

- Can you give an example of where you have practically done this?

### **VERSE 20**

What do you think Paul means when he says that when we were slaves of sin we were free in regard to righteousness?

- What is the irony in this freedom from righteousness?

### **VERSE 22**

Why does it matter that we understand that we have already been set free from sin and become God's slave?

### **VERSE 23**

What's the difference between a wage and a gift?

- Why does this difference matter when it comes to life and death?

### **WRAP IT UP**

How would you summarise Paul's message in this passage. What difference should it make in our lives?

# SESSION 12

## Romans 7.1 - 25

### GETTING STARTED

As we look at chapter 7, first look back to **6.15**: what question is Paul still dealing with? In **v1-6** of chapter 7 Paul will give a further reason why we don't go on sinning.

### READ VERSES 1 - 7

Paul is giving another reason why we can't just carry on sinning if we're not under law but under grace. What reason is that? i.e. what point is he making in these verses?

### VERSE 4 - 6

With these verses in mind, think further about the metaphor of being married to Christ. Not continuing in sin is the 'negative' side of this metaphor, but what are some of the positives?

### VERSE 7

Why does Paul need to anticipate the question, 'Is the law sin?'

- How does Paul answer the question? What does he say the purpose of the law is?

### VERSE 8 - 9

What effect can the law have on us?

### VERSE 9 - 10

What experience with God's law and his own heart is Paul describing here?

It was clearly the 10th Commandment, 'You shall not covet' that helped Paul see all this. Briefly look at the Ten Commandments in **Exodus 20.1-17**. Why might it have been the command not to covet that brought the reality of sin and his true spiritual condition home to Paul?

### VERSE 7 - 12

Paul describes how the law against coveting revealed something to Paul about his own covetousness and the more he tried not to covet, the more covetous he became. What about you? Have you experienced something similar? Have you read a rule/command/law and immediately thought 'I'm not going to obey that!' or found a desire to break that command growing inside you?

- Is the problem with God's law, or does it lie elsewhere (**v10-13**)?

### READ VERSES 14 - 23

What conflict is going on in Paul's heart, mind, and life?

- Is Paul talking about his past, pre-Christian life or his current life as a Christian? What makes you say one way or the other?
- Have you experienced this same inner struggle in your own life?

- Given what Paul writes here, what should concern you more - that you don't see your sin, or that you do and grieve over it? What is the attitude of someone growing in holiness, that they become less aware of their sin or more?
- Why should being conscious of your sinfulness actually be an encouragement to you?

### **VERSE 24**

What is Paul's summary judgment about himself?

- Why is understanding we are 'wretched' key to understanding the gospel of God's righteousness in Christ and of the joy and peace that come with it?

### **VERSE 25**

Where does Paul find the answer to his wretchedness? Can he sort himself out himself?

# SESSION 13

## Romans 8.1 - 13

### GET THE CONTEXT

Look back at 7.24. How does 8.1 answer Paul's question there?

- What does the truth that as a believer there is 'no condemnation' for you, mean to you?
- Do you ever feel under condemnation? Why do you feel this way? How does v1 answer this?

### VERSE 2 - 4

These verses are what follows v1. How does being '*in Christ Jesus*' free us from condemnation?

- What does it mean that 'the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us' (v4)?
- What might be the negative consequences in a Christian's life if they still think they either are, or could be in the future, under God's condemnation?

### VERSE 5

How does this verse explain what it means to walk according to the Spirit (v4)?

- How does what you set your mind on - what preoccupies you, or where your thoughts turn when they can - shape your character and lifestyle?
- What does it mean to set your mind on the things of the Spirit? (What are the things the Spirit wants us to concentrate on?)
  - How can you practically do this? How can you develop a habit of thinking deeply about God and the gospel?
  - How does thinking deeply about the gospel change the way you see and live life?

### VERSE 6 - 8

What are the consequences of doing the opposite - of setting your mind on the flesh?

### VERSE 7

Is the mind neutral? What are the implications of this?

### VERSE 9

Paul says some extraordinary things about the life of the Christian - what are they?

### VERSES 10 - 11

What are the consequences of having Christ's Spirit dwell in us?

### VERSE 13

Given all the above, what must we actively do?

- What does putting to death - or mortification - of sin in our lives mean in practice?

## **GO BACK TO VERSE 12**

How does knowing we are debtors, but not to the flesh, influence our fight against sin? To what or whom are we debtors?

- Have you ever found yourself defending your sinful choices because of self-pity - that your life is hard and you're owed this moment of pleasure, or that you deserve this, or that God or others owe you? How does knowing you are a debtor to grace challenge that thinking?

## **APPLY IT**

Based on these verses, how can you preach the gospel to yourself in moments of temptation?

# SESSION 14

## Romans 8.14 - 25

### VERSE 14

What does it mean to be led by the Spirit? (Taking v13 into account)

### VERSES 14 - 15

Do you think of yourself more as God's child or God's slave? Why?

- What's the difference between a slave and a son? What does a son enjoy that a slave doesn't?
- In a wealthy Roman household, if the master had no heirs he could legally adopt one of his slaves as his son. How would that new son's position in life change?
- If you are a Christian, you have been adopted by God as His child. What does that tell you about how your position has changed?
  - Whether male or female, we are all 'sons' - we are all heirs. Rather than being sexist, what does this tell us about how God sees us?
  - Why is the past tense in 'you *have* received the Spirit of adoption' important? What makes us God's sons?

### VERSE 15

What might a slave fear? And why do we not have these fears as Christians?

- The opposite of a spirit of fear is '*the Spirit of adoption as sons*'. This means the way you see yourself and carry yourself in the world should be very different from someone living out of fear. What might living out of the knowledge of your adoption look like?
- What does the term *Abba* mean, and what does the fact that we can call God 'Abba!' tell us of the relationship we enjoy with Him?

### VERSE 16

Paul is talking here of the Spirit assuring us we are God's children. Rather than this being something that fills us with anxiety - 'do I have it or don't I?' it is helpful to break this down further:

- Who/what does the Spirit testify alongside?
- How might our lives give evidence both *for* and *against* us being God's children?
- How does the testimony of the Spirit help us when it feels like we are on trial like this?

### VERSE 17

Paul says that with Christ you are an heir of God. What will you inherit?

- What does the fact that Paul talks here of suffering tell us about the Christian life? What is it not?

### VERSE 18

How does Paul handle the suffering of this life?

### **VERSES 19 - 21**

What does Paul tell us about the brokenness of the world that can help us understand present suffering?

### **VERSE 22**

How do the groans of childbirth differ from other groans, for example those you hear on a cancer ward?

- How does the image of childbirth help us understand present suffering?
- Is there something you are currently groaning over? How can the future God has in store help you handle this present trouble?

### **VERSE 23**

Paul says 'we wait eagerly for adoption as sons'. How can he say this having told us we are *already* adopted?

- Why is the problem of evil and suffering an argument for God and the new heavens and the new earth, rather than an argument against?

### **VERSES 23 - 25**

Paul says our *physical bodies* will be redeemed. Why does this give us hope in present suffering?

### **PERSONAL APPLICATION**

Think of a specific situation in your life where you are suffering or struggling. This week, as you come up against this area again, practice reminding yourself of the truth found in this passage (you are a loved child of God and an heir to His glory - which means all suffering will cease and be completely outweighed by glory). Try and find ways to actively remind you of this and let it sink in and encourage you.

# SESSION 15

## Romans 8.26 - 39

### VERSES 26 - 27

What is our weakness?

- Have you ever experienced a time when you just didn't know how you should be praying for something that burdened you - when you just couldn't find the words?
  - According to **v27**, in such situations, what is the Father doing?
  - According to **v26-27** how does the Spirit help in such times?
  - Considering **v26-27, v34** and **Hebrews 7.25**, who intercedes for you?
  - How do you respond to the fact that you do not stand alone, but that the Godhead is praying for you?

### VERSE 28

What can we know even when we don't know the words to pray?

- According to v28, for whom do all things work for good? Is it for everyone? Do things on their own work for good?
  - What does it mean to love God, and why is our response to trials and difficulty a good indicator of whether or not we truly love God?
  - How does this help us understand why it is for such people that God works all things for good?
  - How might God turn bad things for our good?
- Are there any areas where it's not so much your circumstances that need to change but your attitude to them?
- How might all things - both the good and the bad - not work for the good of those who do not love God or are not in relationship with Him?
- What can knowing that God works all things for your good give you?
- Can you - or anything else - ruin God's plan for your life?

### VERSES 29 - 30

How does this chain of things that God has done for us help us understand how all things work for good for those who love God? What is the 'good' that God is working all things for?

- Considering **v29**: what is God creating, and who tops it all?
- Take each verb from **verses 29 - 30** in turn. What does it mean that God:

- Foreknew you?
- Predestined you?
- Called you?
- Justified you?
- Glorified you?

- In v30, Paul talks about our future glorification as if it has already happened. Why?

### **VERSES 31 - 35**

In these verses Paul asks multiple questions. If you had to summarise one overarching, all encompassing answer for all the questions, what would you say?

- Considering these verses, what has Christ accomplished for us?

### **VERSE 37**

How can we be *more* than conquerors? Surely we are either conquerors or not?

### **VERSES 38 - 39**

What does it mean that nothing can separate you from the love of God in Christ?

- How is that possible?
- What should this tell us about how we should respond to guilt, or anxiety, or fear, or despair?

### **TAKE HOME MESSAGE**

Take a few minutes of each person to formulate a take-home message from the passage. Then share yours with the group. As a group, try to cover as many aspects from the passage as possible.

# SESSION 16

## Romans 9.1 - 29

### RECAP

Briefly re-visit **Romans 8.29-30 and 38-39**. These verses tell us that our salvation and perseverance are all down to God's grace, calling, power and mercy. But... what question/s does this raise about God's 'chosen' people - the Jewish people? And why does this explain the subject Paul tackles next in Romans 9?

### READ ROMANS 9.1 - 29

#### VERSES 1 - 2

How does Paul feel about this issue? Why is this startling?

#### VERSES 1 - 5

What could Paul wish for and why?

#### VERSE 3

How is Paul's attitude a reflection of Christ's?

- What does this tell us about what drove Paul and his proclamation of the gospel?
- Given **v4-5**, why is the rejection of Christ by the Jewish people so surprising?

#### VERSE 6

What reason for the rejection of Christ by the Jewish people does Paul immediately rule out?

#### VERSES 6 - 8

In these verses, what point is Paul making?

#### VERSES 10 - 13

What was the basis for God's choice of Jacob over Esau? (Was it to do with their own choice or actions?)

- How does **v11** rule out the idea that God's choice is based on Him 'foreseeing' how people will respond to Him?
- In considering **v13** - 'Esau I have hated', look at **Luke 14.25-26**. How does this help us understand what God is/is not saying?
- If you struggle with the biblical doctrine of election, what are the problems with any other ideas as to why some people are saved and others not?

#### VERSE 14

What questions is Paul pre-empting? Have you ever wondered this yourself?

#### VERSES 15 - 16

What does God's choosing depend on?

### **EXODUS 33. 18 - 22**

Compare v15 with Exodus 33.18-22 from which Paul quotes. What does this tell us about God having mercy on those He chooses?

### **VERSE 17**

Why does Paul use the example of Pharaoh?

### **LOOK AT EXODUS 4.21, 8.15 & 9.17**

What do these verses tell us about divine sovereignty and human responsibility? How does Romans 1.24 help us understand what is going on?

- What was the reason behind God raising up Pharaoh?

### **VERSE 19**

What questions is Paul anticipating? Do you find yourself asking the same?

- How does Paul answer these questions? (v20)
  - If someone resists this as an answer, what does it demonstrate?
  - Why is thinking we can create God into a more acceptable version of God dangerous?

### **VERSES 22 - 23**

What characteristics of God does He display in election, predestination and salvation?

- If God condemned everyone, or if He showed mercy to everyone, would we see as full a display of His character?
- What does it say about us that we are often ok with Him displaying the riches of His mercy but not His wrath and power?

### **VERSE 22**

Does God treat people as they deserve?

### **VERSES 24 - 29**

Paul returns to the question of Israel and the Jewish people. In v24-26, from whom is God redeeming a people for Himself?

- What does this say about God and about salvation?
- Considering v27-29, what do these verses tell us about who in Israel will be saved and why?

### **TAKE IT DEEPER**

How does the God of Romans 9 differ from our frequent preconceptions about God?

- Why should this stimulate us to worship?

# SESSION 17

## Romans 9.30 - 10.21

### VERSES 30 - 33

What problem is Paul addressing?

- Why might secular unbelievers be more open to the gospel than moral, religiously minded people?
- Looking again at **v32-33**: What has 'Israel' done wrong?
- Why is Christ a stumbling stone to some people?
- In chapter 9 Paul showed us how God is sovereign over salvation. Here he shows us how people are morally responsible for their response to Christ. Is he contradicting himself?

### 10 VERSE 1

What is Paul's heart's desire for his own people and what does he do about it?

- How does what we pray about reveal what we really think about things?
- Is there anyone you particularly want to see saved and are praying for?

### VERSE 2

Why is religious zeal or commitment not enough for salvation?

- How does what Paul says here compare with the well-known saying, 'It doesn't matter what you believe, provided you are sincere'?

### VERSES 3 - 4

How does Christ end the search for righteousness?

### VERSE 5

Paul quotes Moses in Leviticus 18.5. What does he mean that the person who does the commandments 'shall live by them'?

- But that is not all he says. In **v6-8** he quotes from Deut 30.11-14. Read **Deut 30.1-14** (to put the key passage in context)
  - How would you summarise what Deut 30.1-14 is saying?
  - How does this help us understand what point Paul is making in **v6-7**?

### VERSES 8 - 9

What are the key components of 'the word of faith' shown in these verses?

### VERSE 10

Why is confessing with our mouths important? What's wrong with a 'private' faith?

## **VERSE 11**

Why is shame a powerful emotion? How does faith in Christ rid us of shame?

## **VERSES 12 - 13**

Why is the gospel inherently equalising?

- How does Paul describe the grace of God? Is this the way you see the gospel?
- Look at **v13**: What is the only thing people need to do to be saved and why is this the case?

## **VERSES 14 - 15**

In **v14** Paul talks of people needing to hear 'someone preaching'. The word for preaching is the word for a public declaration - like a herald in the street announcing good news. So this is much wider than 'hearing a sermon'. What are the implications of this for ourselves?

- In what ways can you be a herald for the gospel?

## **VERSE 16**

What is the problem? And why, in the case of Israel specifically, and religious people in general, is this ironic?

## **VERSE 18**

In this verse, Paul is quoting from Psalm 19. Look at **Ps 19.1-4a**. What point is Paul making? (Remember he is specifically addressing the issue of the Jewish people in his day).

## **VERSES 19 - 20**

In **v19** Paul tackles the question, 'well, ok, the Jewish people may have heard the gospel, but maybe they didn't understand it?' How does he respond to this?

## **VERSE 21**

What is the condition of the Jewish people and what is God's heart towards them?

- How should God's heart for His stubborn people influence us in our interactions with those we share the gospel with?

# SESSION 18

## Romans 11

### VERSES 1 - 5

What question is Paul addressing and how does he answer it?

- Given his past, why is Paul a good example for not thinking that God has given up on people?
- Is there someone, or a type of person, you have or are tempted to give up on, as having no prospect of coming to Christ? Conversely, have you seen someone come to Christ who you would never have imagined that happening to?
  - Considering **v5-6**, why is grace the reason why we should not think God has given up on ethnic Israel - or anyone else?

### VERSES 7 - 8

Israel tried to find righteousness by its own efforts, rather than as a gift from God. They hardened themselves to His gift, and as a result God further hardened them. Paul then quotes from Moses and Isaiah: Look up **Deuteronomy 29.2-4** and **Isaiah 29.10**. What does the fact that Paul can use such examples from Israel's past tell us?

- How might an individual or a church have a culture that rejects grace, and what might this look like in practice?

### VERSES 9 - 10

What are the consequences of refusing and resisting God?

### VERSES 11 - 12

In these verses, Paul deals with another question. What is it, and what two answers does he give?

- In what ways might a Jewish person be jealous of a Gentile's Christian faith, or of Gentiles as a group coming to faith?
  - As an example, look at **Acts 6.1-7**. Luke describes how, after the early church organised itself to practically care for one another, a large number of Jewish priests converted. How might those two things (practical care and the conversion of priests) be connected to each other, and why might this be an example of the 'jealousy' Paul is talking of?
  - Would a committed member of another religion look at your own life, or at your church, and be envious of it? Can you give any examples of this being the case?

### VERSES 12 - 16

In these verses, Paul raises an element of hope. What is it?

- As you look at the level of acceptance/rejection of Christianity in our own culture, are you hopeful or despondent and why?

### VERSES 17 - 24

What danger does Paul highlight in realising that you are chosen by God, and experiencing things others are not? How does Paul say we should rather think?

- There can be times when those who believe in predestination, election and God's sovereignty can come across as proud, arrogant and judgmental of other Christians. Why might this be the case, and why is it totally antithetical to the whole concept of grace?
- Tragically, there is a long history of anti-semitism in the 'Christian' West and the wider church. Why is a hatred of Jewish people totally contrary to the gospel generally, and what Paul writes here in particular?

### **VERSES 20 - 22**

The term 'spiritual presumption' is the idea that it doesn't matter how you live/behaviour because you're chosen, you believe in Jesus, and God is a God of grace anyway. Why is such a view dangerous?

- In **v22** Paul says we are to note the kindness and the severity of God. Which of those do you tend to lean towards naturally. What goes wrong if you - or a church - emphasises one over the other?

### **VERSES 25 - 32**

What great prospect does Paul bring up?

- What might Paul mean by 'all Israel will be saved'? And how should this inspire us?

### **VERSE 33 - 36 TO WRAP IT UP**

The issues covered in ch 9-11 are a cause of debate, and even argument/conflict. Paul says we should have a different response. What is that?

- Why are humility and worship appropriate responses to God's sovereignty? Are they for you?
- Why is a sense of mystery an appropriate part of worship?
- In **v34** Paul quotes **Isaiah 40.13** and in **v35 Job 41.11**. This means, as Paul now moves into worship he is recalling and meditating on God's word. Why does true worship require us to meditate on God's truth?
- How might meditating on God's word in your personal life inspire and increase your personal worship? Are you already doing this?

# SESSION 19

## Romans 12.1-8

In Romans 12, Paul turns from the basics of the Christian faith to its practical implications for how we should live. He begins with what it means for each of us individually (**v1-2**), for the body of Christ (**v3-13**), and for how we interact with the world (**v14-21**). Given all that we know about God and His mercy, how should we then live? What does what we believe mean for how we live? Romans 12 begins to address this.

### VERSE 1

What is the “Therefore” there for? That is: What is the reason behind / the motivation for presenting their bodies as living sacrifices to God?

- What does it mean to offer your *body as a living sacrifice*? (Address each word in italics.)
- What does it mean that our living sacrifice be *holy and acceptable to God*?
- Why is this true spiritual worship?
  - What other things might people wrongly think are true spiritual worship?

### VERSE 2

What does it mean to be conformed to this world?

- What does it mean to ‘be transformed by the renewal of your mind’?
- What does it mean that ‘by testing’ you may discern what is the will of God?
- Why is it important for us to know that God’s will is ‘good, acceptable and perfect’?

### VERSES 3 - 5

Paul implies that we are tempted to be proud. How does thinking about ourselves according to the faith God has given us help us to be more sober in our judgement? How does knowing we belong to all others in the body of Christ help us think humbly about ourselves?

### VERSES 6 - 8

What does it mean that we should use our gifts according to the grace that God has given us?

- Consider the various gifts listed here. Did anything catch your eye?

### REFLECT

What areas do you think (and or others think) you are gifted in? Are you actively seeking to use them to upbuild your church family? If not, what practical steps could you take to do so? If so, what steps could you take to grow in this area?

# SESSION 20

## Romans 12.9 - 21

This is Paul's practical teaching on what it means to live in community with others – believers and unbelievers; those who are for us and those who are against us.

### VERSE 9

Paul makes an opening statement, the first book-end, which is complemented by verse 21, the second book-end and closing statement to this section.

- Why is **v9a** crucial to keep in mind as you consider **v9b**?
  - What might 'abhorring what is evil' look like nowadays?
  - How can we practically go about 'holding fast to what is good'?

### VERSE 10

Considering **v9a** and **v10**, what kind of behaviours do these verses rule out?

- In the church context, what areas or topics might provoke even Christians to behave differently from what we read here?

### VERSES 9 - 16

Consider these verses as a whole. In what ways should our love for others express itself?

- How does looking to Christ and His example empower us to love others?

### VERSE 14

This verse begins the section on interacting with those who oppose us. This advice can apply to our relationship with believers, with whom we may sometimes find ourselves at odds with. However, it seems especially relevant for our relationship with nonbelievers who oppose us and our faith.

- What does it mean to "bless" someone?

### VERSES 17 - 21

It is helpful to look at these verses as a whole.

- What do they tell us about how we are to respond to evil?
- Check back to the questions on v9. How do these verses add to your thoughts on that verse?
- What might "doing what is honourable" look like?
- Why is **v18** interesting (particularly the first part)? How does it help to alleviate pressure? It might help to think of examples.
- In what way is **v19** reassuring, particularly when considering evil that you or others have had to face?

- Why is it necessary for God to be *just* and not just *loving*?

## **VERSE 21**

This verse beautifully sums up the entire passage.

- What is our foundation for living this out? What truths from Romans can we come back to when we are struggling with the feeling of evil being stronger than us or “overcoming” us?

## **PERSONAL REFLECTION**

Take time to review verses 9 - 21. Can you identify a particular area in your life where you are struggling to put one of these verses into practice?

- How do these verses challenge your thinking in regards to this area?
- Romans 8 tells us that “you have no obligation to do what your sinful nature urges you to do”, “but letting the Spirit control your mind leads to life and peace” (NLT). Bring this area of struggle before God in honesty and humility and ask for His transforming love and power to take hold of this area of your life.

# SESSION 21

## Romans 13.1 - 7

### GETTING STARTED

*Briefly* consider these questions as a group - *(but don't take too long!)*

- The governing authorities introduce a 30km/hr speed limit in your city for after 10pm at night. Do you obey it?
- You are a parent. The government introduces a new law saying that at the start of each day the school should gather and pledge allegiance to the flag of the country. What do you tell your child?
- The government passes a new law that on the 25th March each year all citizens must gather in set places to pay homage to the President/Leader. How do you respond?
- The government bans access to restaurants based on skin colour. Do you accept this? Protest it? Don't know?
- During a respiratory virus pandemic, the government bans access to restaurants based on vaccination status. Do you accept this? Protest it? Don't know?
- The government says you must use someone's preferred pronouns. Do you obey?
- The government says pastors may not refer to any sexual activities as sinful or wrong. Should your pastor obey? Disobey? Don't know?
- Your country invades a neighbouring country and orders all people aged under 30 to report to the army to enlist and join the fight. Do you obey or disobey?
- Your country is invaded by a neighbouring country. Your government orders all people aged under 30 to report to the army to enlist and join the fight. Do you obey or disobey?

What is guiding your decision making?

### BIBLE OVERVIEW

Before looking at obedience to governing authorities in this particular passage, what does the rest of the Bible teach about obedience generally?

Consider:

- **Genesis 3.1-5:** what part did disobedience play in the first sin?
- **1 Sam 15.22:** what part does obedience to God play in our relationship with Him?
- **Ephesians 6.1:** why should we obey our parents, and what do you think Paul means by 'in the Lord'?
- **Hebrews 13.17:** why and how should you obey your church leaders?
- **Titus 3.1:** what role do church leaders have in encouraging obedience to civil authority?

### ROMANS 13 IN CONTEXT

- What is the historical context Paul is writing in?

- What is Paul's personal context/experience of governing authorities?
- What is the context of chapter 13 within Romans itself (in particular the theme of Law/law-keeping)?

## **CLOSEUP - ROMANS 13. 1 - 7**

### **VERSE 1**

- Who is subject to the governing authorities?
  - Is anyone exempt?
- What governing authorities are instituted by God?
  - How would you define what 'the governing authorities' are?
  - Why do you think God institutes civil authorities?

### **VERSES 2 - 5**

What does the person who refuses to obey deserve and why?

### **VERSES 3 - 4**

What role of governing authorities does Paul highlight?

- How should you define what good and bad conduct is?
- Can you give some examples of areas the Bible says authorities should address:

### **VERSE 7**

Read **Matthew 22.19-21**. What did Jesus mean when He said this?

- In what way does this reference to Jesus' words help us interpret verse 7?

## **PERSONAL REFLECTION**

When we react strongly to various rules and regulations implemented by the government, it should make us think - 'why am I reacting as strongly as I am?'. Does my reaction towards the command to obey reveal something about me? Does my criticism of those who *do* obey reveal something about me? Does my criticism of those who *don't obey* reveal something about me?

# SESSION 22

## Romans 13.8 - 14

### VERSE 8

Verse 8 links back to **v7**. Re-read **v7**. According to what Paul writes there, in what areas might we be in danger of 'owing' people?

- Why might we be tempted to not give people what is due them in these areas?

### VERSES 9 - 10

Paul lists some of the Ten Commandments and then quotes from **Leviticus 19.18**. Why does love fulfil these laws in particular and God's Law in general?

- Look at **v10**: Who is our neighbour?
- What is the link between loving our neighbour and our relationship with the State as described in **v1-7**?
- GK Chesterton said, 'The Bible tells us to love our neighbours, and also to love our enemies; probably because generally they are the same people.' Discuss!
- Look at **Ephesians 5.1-2**. How does Paul say we can love others? What can motivate us to love? How does a Christian motivation for love differ from how secularism views love?

### VERSES 8 - 10

Paul is not simply saying that to love others is to fulfil the law. He is also saying that obeying God's law is to love others: that the way we truly love others is by obeying God's law in all our dealings with them. How might this conflict with how some people think of 'loving' v 'hating' other people?

### VERSES 11 - 12

Paul gives us a further motivation for righteous living. What is it and how might this influence how we see this life?

### VERSES 12 - 14

Paul says we are to 'cast off' and 'put on' in two different ways. The first is in **v12**: what does Paul say we are to 'cast off' and 'put on'?

- Paul is contrasting the works of darkness with the armour of light. Look at **Ephesians 6.13-18** where Paul gives another description of the kind of armour we are to put on. How might understanding the armour of God positively influence the way you live and the behaviour-determining choices you make?
- In **v13-14** Paul says that, as Christians, there are things we should not do and things we should do. What are they?

### VERSE 14

Paul gives us the second 'put on': we are to cast off the works of darkness (v12) and 'Put on the Lord Jesus Christ.' How does what you wear change the way you behave, and how does this help us understand Paul's meaning here?

- What does it mean to put on the Lord Jesus Christ?
- How might remembering you are clothed with Christ change the way you relate to your neighbour, and to the wider culture and State?
- What does **v14** tell us about the flesh and how we should handle it?
- Often we can be halfhearted in resisting our flesh - we don't make total provision for it, but we do make some provision for it. Why is this, do you think?
  - How does putting on Christ address this?

### **REFLECTION QUESTION**

In what ways might you act differently in daily life if you imagined that Jesus was right before you, and that you are clothed with Christ?

# SESSION 23

## Romans 14

### VERSES 1 - 3

When Paul talks of 'opinions' (v1) he is talking about areas and practices that the Bible does not address directly - areas that are considered 'matters of conscience' or 'disputable'. What are some reasons why people quarrel over these kinds of 'opinions'?

- As a follow-up, considering **v3**: What are some reasons why people disdain or pass judgment on others?
- In contrast, Paul says that rather than quarrel with those who are 'weak in faith', we are to welcome them. What does it mean to 'welcome' someone?
- Look at **v3** and **15.7**. How does the gospel inspire us to welcome others?
- Paul describes believers as 'weak' or 'strong'. What is the error those who are 'weak' make?
- Again, looking at **v3**: what attitude do the 'strong' tend to have to the 'weak'?

### VERSE 4

What do we need to bear in mind as we disagree with a fellow believer? Why should this alter the way we treat them?

- Do you tend to the characteristics of the weak or the strong?
- What are some potential 'debatable matters' that the Bible doesn't directly address that Christians in a church like yours might divide into groups of 'strong' and 'weak' over?

### VERSE 5

When it comes to disagreements, what principle does Paul establish?

- Is this the same as saying that truth is relative, that what might be true for you is not necessarily true for me?

### VERSES 6 - 9

What attitude to life does Paul say should be forming our view of different issues?

- This tells us that 'being fully convinced in our own mind' is not the same as inventing our own set of ethics. Instead, knowing you are the Lord's will radically influence the way you see life. How might this work practically? Meaning, how might knowing you are the Lord's influence your view on an issue over which the Bible does not speak directly?
- Look again at **v9**: For what purpose did Christ die and rise again? What does this tell us about the level of importance we should give to our obedience to Christ/his lordship over us?

### VERSES 10 - 12

In these verses, as well as welcoming one another and remembering that our fellow Christians belong to Christ, Paul gives us another reason why we should not be judgmental in our attitude. What is it?

- Why is this a good motivation for not judging others?

### **VERSES 13 - 15**

When it comes to what one is permitted to eat or not, Paul is fully convinced in his own mind, but he does not impose that on others. Instead, one over-riding principle guides him. What is it?

- In **v13-14**: How might the 'strong' cause the 'weak' to stumble and sin?

### **VERSE 15**

Why should reminding ourselves that Christ died for our brothers and sisters change the way we think/speak/treat them?

### **VERSE 17**

What is Paul meaning here? Try and rephrase it.

### **VERSE 22**

In the context of what Paul has already said in **ch14**, what do you think he means by keeping your faith between yourself and God?

### **VERSE 23**

Why is doing something that does not proceed from faith sin?

### **WRAP IT UP**

Summarise the take-home of this passage in a sentence or two.

# SESSION 24

## Romans 15.1 - 13

### VERSES 1 - 2

What are these two verses saying?

- What is the difference between pleasing your neighbour and pleasing them *for their good*?
- How can you *build up* those that are weak (weakness here refers to what we looked at in ch14)?

### VERSE 3

What is the relation between verses **1-2** and **verse 3**? In other words, what does the “for” tell us?

- Give some examples of Christ not pleasing Himself but seeking first to please the ‘weak’.
  - Look at **Psalm 69.9** which is quoted here. How does this example support what Paul's argument?
- With those examples in mind, what might it look like for you to emulate the behaviour of Christ in your life?

### VERSE 4

Many people struggle with reading the Old Testament. Some even see it as unnecessary, outdated or that “the God of the Old Testament is different from the God of the New”. But this verse paints a different picture.

In what way does the OT:

- Instruct us?
- Encourage us?
- Give us hope?

So let's not neglect reading the Old Testament!

### VERSES 5 - 7

In what way can the title given to God in **v5** be an encouragement to us?

- What is the ultimate goal of living in harmony with one another?
- In what way do the following lead us and others (incl. the weak) to glorify God?
  - Pleasing others rather than ourselves, for their good? (**v1-2**)
  - Building up the weak? (**v2**)
  - Reading the Scriptures (particularly the OT)? (**v4**)
  - Welcoming others? (**v7**)

### VERSE 8

In what way did God show his truthfulness through Christ?

## **VERSES 8 - 12**

What is the main point of these verses and citations from the Old Testament?

## **VERSE 13**

Why does believing in the gospel (as we've been studying it up until now in Romans) lead to true hope, joy and peace?

- How are the hope, joy and peace that the gospel provides different from that which the world builds on?

## **TO CLOSE**

Spend time reflecting on the hope, joy and peace that the gospel message brings. Pray that the Holy Spirit would encourage you in your faith and make you abound in hope.

# SESSION 25

## Romans 15.14 - 33

### VERSES 15 - 18

How does Paul think of his ministry? In his eyes, what is his role?

- What is it about Paul's work that means he can be proud of it? See also **1 Cor 15.10**.
- How do you tend to see your work and studies? How can Paul's view of his work help us in the way we see our work?

### VERSE 16

One way in which Paul thinks about his ministry is as a 'priestly service of the gospel of God.' Look at **Romans 12:1**: How does this help us understand something of what Paul means by 'priestly service'?

- What does this tell us about our own evangelism and witness as Christians?
- Obviously, we are not the apostle Paul, who was uniquely called and gifted. However, as you reflect on the opportunities you do have, do you seek to give a reason for your hope (1 Pet 3.15), or walk in wisdom to outsiders and make the most of every opportunity (Col 4.5)?

### VERSE 18

- What is Paul aiming for from the Gentiles he preaches to? Look back at **Rom 1.5** for further detail.
  - What does this tell us about the level of response Paul is looking for when the gospel of Christ is understood and believed by those he preaches to? How does this compare with the expectation in some forms of Christianity today?
  - When you read something in the Bible that challenges your current behaviour or way of thinking, is your disposition to obey, to make excuses, to ignore it, or a mixture? Why?
- Paul summarises his ministry in two words, what are they?
  - This verse makes it clear that church ministry needs these two elements too. How will they be expressed in a church context?

### VERSES 19 & 25 - 26

What different types of 'deeds' was Paul carrying out? Why is this interesting?

- Look at **2 Cor 12.12**. This is Paul's only other use of the words 'signs' and 'wonders'. How should this inform how we think of these in terms of our own evangelism?
- Considering Paul's works of generosity, how can and should our lives embody the gospel in ways that make it attractive to outsiders?

### VERSES 26 - 27

Why do the Gentile churches 'owe' the Jerusalem church?

- In what way does the gospel lay upon us the debt of caring for the poor and needy (2 Cor 8.8-11)?

### **VERSES 30 - 32**

How does Paul say the Christians in Rome can work together with him?

- In what specific areas does he request this?
  - How much do you pray for the ministry of the church, or for missions? Do you see this as a way you too can engage in the works? What have you found helpful in doing this, or what changes could you make to do this more?

### **WRAP IT UP**

Summarise what you have learned about church ministry and evangelism based on this passage. How might you apply this in your own church context and lifestyle?

# SESSION 26

## Romans 16

### GETTING STARTED

Before looking at some of the individuals in more detail, what does the fact that Paul can write a list of names like this tell us?

### VERSES 1 - 2

- What do we learn of Phoebe? How does Paul describe her?
  - What did it mean to be a patron?
  - How might you use your money now, or in the future, to fund gospel work? As you look forward to earning more, how might you put in place certain practices to become a patron like Phoebe?
- Paul asks the church in Rome to welcome Phoebe in a certain way. What is that way? Why do you think he might need to ask this? How might they welcome her in a way that is not worthy?

### VERSES 3 - 5

What do we learn of Prisca and Aquila?

- In what ways might we risk ourselves for others in the church today? Or, if not risk, put ourselves out for others?
- How does risk-taking like this model the gospel?

### VERSES 1 - 15

Try and identify all the women in the list of people.

- What does the presence of Phoebe, Prisca and these other women tell us about the presence and participation of women in the life and ministry of this church?
- What do some of Paul's comments in this list of greetings imply about the structure of the church in Rome?

### VERSE 17

What is Paul's warning in this verse?

- Why is divisiveness in the church destructive?
- How can such people be identified by their teaching? And what does this imply about how individual Christians should be able to assess this?
  - How is your grasp of Christian doctrine? Can you discern false teaching? If not what could you do to better equip yourself?
- How does Paul further describe them in **v18**? What should this teach us about how we appraise teachers and preachers?

- How can you tell whether a pastor/preacher/teacher is in it for themselves or not?

### **VERSE 19**

They are a church that wants to be obedient to God and His word. And yet Paul says, 'But I want you to be wise as to what is good and innocent as to what is evil.' What does this mean?

- How can you, personally, become more innocent as to what is evil, and more wise as to what is good?

### **VERSE 20**

What does Paul's statement that 'the God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet' tell us and why is it encouraging? For example, look at Gen 3.15 and Col 2.15.

### **VERSE 25**

What does the gospel have power to do? (See also Rom 1.16)

### **VERSE 26**

What second thing does Paul say the gospel has power to influence in our lives?

### **ROMANS WRAP UP!**

We've come to the end of Romans! What's your favourite passage in this letter? What have you learnt, or been provoked to think about as you've studied it?