

A D-GROUP CURRICULUM

LIVE BY FAITH

FREED FROM SIN + DEATH

ROMANS CHAPTERS 1&2

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HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

PURPOSE

The book of Romans is a cornerstone of Christian theology, offering profound insights into faith, salvation, and righteous living. This study guide aims to help you “grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 3:18) through an in-depth exploration of Paul’s letter to the Romans. As you engage with this guide, you’ll be equipped to live out your faith more authentically and to share the transformative power of the gospel in your daily life.

STRUCTURE

This guide is designed for a 7-week study, with each week focusing on a specific passage from Romans. Each week’s study includes:

- 1. Introduction:** Provides context and key themes for the week’s passage.
- 2. Scripture:** The full text of the week’s passage from the ESV translation.
- 3. Daily Personal Study:** Five days of reflection questions to deepen your understanding.
- 4. Daily Prayer:** A focused prayer related to the week’s scripture passage.
- 5. Group Discussion Questions:** Divided into three sections:
 - Know: Reflects on personal experiences related to the passage.
 - Grow: Dives deeper into the text, often incorporating related Scripture.
 - Show: Encourages practical application of the passage’s teachings.

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

1. Personal Study

- Read the introduction and Scripture passage at the beginning of each week.
- Engage with the Daily Personal Study questions throughout the week, spending time in prayer and reflection.
- Use the provided space to journal your thoughts, questions, and insights.

2. Group Discussion

- Come prepared to share your reflections from your personal study.
- Engage openly and honestly with the Know, Grow, and Show questions.
- Be ready to both share your own insights and learn from others in your group.

3. Application

- Pay special attention to the “Show” questions each week, which challenge you to apply the Scripture to your daily life.
- Look for ways to live out the truths you’re learning in your family, workplace, and community.

4. Continuous Growth

- As you progress through the study, notice how Paul builds his argument throughout Romans.
- Reflect on how each week's passage contributes to the overall theme of "living by faith."

Remember, the goal of this study is not just to gain knowledge, but to be transformed by God's Word. As you engage with Romans, pray for the Holy Spirit to illuminate the text and guide you in applying its truths to your life.

"For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, 'The righteous shall live by faith.'" — Romans 1:16–17

INTRODUCTION TO ROMANS 1-2

Over the next year, we will be embarking on an incredible journey through the entire book of Romans, and this guide covers the first two chapters of Paul's masterpiece. As we dive into Romans 1–2, we're stepping into what many consider to be the apostle Paul's most comprehensive exploration of the gospel and its implications for our lives. Over the next seven weeks, we'll examine the foundations of our faith and the transformative power of God's grace. This letter, written to believers in Rome whom Paul had never met, provides us with a thorough understanding of post-resurrection theology and challenges us to live out our faith in profound ways.

Our study begins with Paul's powerful declaration that he is "not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes" (Romans 1:16). From there, we'll wrestle with difficult truths about human nature, sin, and God's righteous judgment. But even as we confront these sobering realities, we'll discover the depths of God's love and the hope found in Christ. As we progress, we'll be challenged to examine our own hearts, confront our tendencies toward self-righteousness, and understand what it truly means to "live by faith" in every aspect of our lives.

Throughout this study, we'll explore how the truths in Romans apply to our daily lives. We'll consider how to stand firm in our faith in a world that often rejects God's truth, how to extend grace to others while holding fast to the gospel, and how to cultivate a faith that transforms us from the inside out. As we journey together, let's approach these scriptures with open hearts and minds, ready to be challenged, encouraged, and changed by God's Word.

WEEK 1: HABAKKUK 2:3–4

INTRODUCTION

This week, we'll explore what it means to live by faith in our thoughts, words, and actions. We'll wrestle with the tension between instant gratification and trusting in God's timing, between pride and humility, and between our desires and God's plan. As we study, remember that faith isn't about having all the answers or never struggling; it's about trusting in God's grace, unfailing love, and character, even when—especially when—life doesn't make sense. This faith isn't passive; it's an active, transformative force that shapes how we think, speak, and act. So, let's approach this study with open hearts and minds, ready to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to live out our faith in ways that bring glory to God.

HABAKKUK 2:3–4 (ESV)

*3 For still the vision awaits its appointed time;
it hastens to the end—it will not lie.
If it seems slow, wait for it;
it will surely come; it will not delay.*

*4 “Behold, his soul is puffed up; it is not upright within him,
but the righteous shall live by his faith.”*

DAILY PERSONAL STUDY: HABAKKUK 2:3–4

Day One

Read Habakkuk 2:3-4. What specific words or phrases stand out to you? List them and note any repetitions or contrasts you see in the passage.

Day Two

Focus on the phrase “the righteous shall live by his faith” in Habakkuk 2:4. How does Habakkuk define faith in this context? Compare this with Paul's use of this quote in Romans 1:17. What insights do you gain about the meaning of “living by faith”?

Day Three

Examine the concept of waiting in Habakkuk 2:3. What does the passage suggest about God's timing? How might this relate to the patient endurance Paul discusses in Romans 5:3-5 or Romans 8:25?

Day Four

Consider the contrast between pride and faith implied in Habakkuk 2:4. How does this comparison help explain the nature of true faith? In what ways does this align with Paul's teachings on pride and humility in Romans 12:3 or Romans 3:27?

Day Five

Reflect on how Habakkuk 2:3–4 applies to your life today. What current situations require you to “live by faith”? How can the assurance of God's faithfulness encourage you in these circumstances?

DAILY PRAYER FOR THIS WEEK

Father, deepen my understanding of what it means to live by faith. Help me trust Your perfect character and timing, even when I can't see the outcome. In Jesus' name, Amen.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Know

Habakkuk's prophecy comes at a time of great distress for God's people. They were facing difficult circumstances and questioning God's goodness. As we begin our study, let's reflect on how faith operates in our own lives, especially during challenging times.

- The passage speaks about the righteous living by faith. How would you explain the difference between living by faith and living by sight or feelings?
- Describe a moment in your life when your faith was significantly challenged. How did it turn out? What helped you persevere?

Grow

This passage addresses the tension between God's timing and human impatience, as well as the contrast between pride and faith. These verses also lay the foundation for important teachings that we will explore in the book of Romans. Let's explore the depth and implications of this passage.

- Read Habakkuk 2:3. How does this verse challenge our desire for instant gratification? How does this verse encourage us to trust in God's timing, even when circumstances seem difficult?

- Habakkuk 2:4 contrasts the proud with the righteous. What do you think it means to be “puffed up” and how does this relate to our reliance on faith?
- The apostle Paul quotes Habakkuk 2:4 in Romans 1:17 and Galatians 3:11. How does this Old Testament passage connect to the New Testament teaching of justification by faith?
- Oswald Chambers wrote, “Faith is deliberate confidence in the character of God whose ways you may not understand at the time.” (“My Utmost for His Highest”) How does this quote relate to Habakkuk’s message? Can you think of examples from your own life or from Scripture where this kind of faith was demonstrated? (e.g., Abraham, Job, or the early church)

Show

True faith is not just about what we believe, but how we live in response to that belief. As we conclude our discussion, let’s consider how we can apply these truths about living by faith to our daily lives in practical ways.

- In our fast-paced, instant-gratification culture, how can we cultivate patience and trust in God’s timing as described in Habakkuk 2:3? (Romans 8:25)
- Based on our discussion of living by faith, choose one area (thoughts, words, or actions) in your life where you need to trust God more fully?

NOTES

WEEK 2: ROMANS 1:1–15

INTRODUCTION

In Romans 1:1–15, Paul lays the foundation for the gospel message he's about to unfold, emphasizing its continuity with Old Testament prophecies and its fulfillment in Jesus Christ. This passage invites us to reflect on our own faith and its impact on those around us. Just as Paul longed to visit the believers in Rome to mutually encourage one another, we too are called to build each other up in our spiritual community. As we dive into these verses, let's consider how our faith is known to those outside our church and how we can be both encouraged by and an encouragement to fellow believers. Remember, the gospel isn't just for new believers — it's a message we all need to be continually reminded of as we follow Jesus and deepen our relationship with Him.

ROMANS 1:1–15 (ESV)

¹ Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, ² which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy Scriptures, ³ concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh ⁴ and was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord, ⁵ through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of his name among all the nations, ⁶ including you who are called to belong to Jesus Christ, ⁷ To all those in Rome who are loved by God and called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Longing to Go to Rome ⁸ First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because your faith is proclaimed in all the world. ⁹ For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son, that without ceasing I mention you ¹⁰ always in my prayers, asking that somehow by God's will I may now at last succeed in coming to you. ¹¹ For I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to strengthen you— ¹² that is, that we may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith, both yours and mine. ¹³ I do not want you to be unaware, brothers, that I have often intended to come to you (but thus far have been prevented), in order that I may reap some harvest among you as well as among the rest of the Gentiles. ¹⁴ I am under obligation both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish. ¹⁵ So I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome.

DAILY PERSONAL STUDY: ROMANS 1:1–15

Day One

Read Romans 1:1–7 carefully. How does Paul introduce himself and his message? List the key phrases he uses to describe his calling and the gospel. How do these descriptions set the tone for the rest of the letter?

Day Two

Focus on Romans 1:8–10. What does Paul's prayer for the Romans reveal about his attitude towards them and his own faith? How does this example of "praying constantly" (v. 9) challenge or inspire your own prayer life?

Day Three

Examine Romans 1:11–12. What does Paul mean by "mutual encouragement?" How does this relate to the sermon series theme of "living by faith?" Consider how this concept might apply to your own relationships within your church community.

Day Four

Study Romans 1:13–15. What does Paul mean when he says he is "obligated" to preach the gospel? How does this sense of obligation relate to the idea of living by faith "for the sake of his name among all the nations" (v. 5)? How might this challenge your own approach to sharing your faith?

Day Five

Reflect on the phrase "the gospel of God" in Romans 1:1. How does Paul define this gospel throughout the passage? Compare this with the definition provided in 1 Corinthians 15:3–4. How does understanding the gospel as "the power of God for salvation" (Rom. 1:16) inspire you to live by faith more boldly?

DAILY PRAYER FOR THIS WEEK

Father, as I begin Paul's letter to the Romans, open my heart to the depth and breadth of Your gospel. Help me to understand my calling to live out my faith in ways that encourage others. May I be eager to share the good news and be unashamed of its power. Strengthen my faith and make it known to those around me. In Jesus' name, Amen.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Know

Paul's letter to the Romans stands as a comprehensive summary of post-resurrection theology in the early church. As we begin our study of this pivotal

epistle, let's reflect on our own understanding and experience of faith, which is central to Paul's message throughout Romans.

- When you hear the word "faith," what's the first thing that comes to your mind? How has your understanding of faith changed over time?
- What is the main theme and purpose of Paul's letter to the Romans? How does it serve as a comprehensive summary of post-resurrection theology in the early church?

Grow

Romans 1:1–15 serves as Paul's introduction, where he establishes his authority, outlines the gospel, and expresses his desire to visit Rome. This passage sets the foundation for the letter's theological teachings. Let's explore how these verses can deepen our faith and our relationships with God and each other.

- Romans 1:1–4 — Paul identifies himself as a "servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle" and links the gospel to Old Testament prophecies. How does your identity in Christ influence your daily life? How does the connection between the Old and New Testaments deepen your understanding of the gospel?
- How would you define "Gospel"? Read 2 Thessalonians 2:13–14. How do these verses explain the Gospel and our relationship to God?
- Romans 1:5–6 mentions "the obedience that comes from faith." In your view, what is the relationship between faith and obedience? How do they influence each other?
- Romans 1:11–12 — Paul desires to visit Rome for mutual encouragement in faith. How has spiritual community impacted your faith journey? What are practical ways we can encourage each other's faith in our group? (Consider Hebrews 10:24–25)

Show

Paul's introduction highlights the gospel's power and the importance of faith. Let's consider how we can apply these truths in our daily lives and take concrete steps to live out our faith authentically.

- Reflecting on Paul's introduction in Romans 1:1–7, how can you more intentionally "set apart" your life for the gospel this week? What specific actions or changes might this involve?
- In what ways is the gospel the power of God for salvation (Romans 1:16)? How does this truth affect how you live out your faith in your daily life, particularly in sharing it with others from different backgrounds or belief systems?

NOTES

WEEK 3: ROMANS 1:16–17

INTRODUCTION

In Romans 1:16–17, Paul lays the foundation for the gospel message he’s about to unfold, emphasizing its continuity with Old Testament prophecies and its fulfillment in Jesus Christ. This passage invites us to reflect on our own faith and its impact on those around us. Just as Paul longed to visit the believers in Rome to mutually encourage one another, we too are called to build each other up in our spiritual community.

As we dive into these verses, let’s consider how our faith is known to those outside our church and how we can be both encouraged by and an encouragement to fellow believers. Remember, the gospel isn’t just for new believers — it’s a message we all need to be continually reminded of as we follow Jesus and deepen our relationship with Him.

ROMANS 1:16–17 (ESV)

¹⁶ For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. ¹⁷ For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, “The righteous shall live by faith.”

DAILY PERSONAL STUDY

Day One

Read Romans 1:16–17. What does it mean to be “not ashamed of the gospel?” Have you ever felt hesitant to share your faith? How does Paul’s boldness inspire you? Consider Jesus’ words in Mark 8:38.

Day Two

Focus on the phrase “it is the power of God for salvation” in verse 16. What does this tell us about the nature and effectiveness of the gospel? Reflect on how you’ve experienced or witnessed this power in your own life or the lives of others.

Day Three

Consider the phrase “to the Jew first and also to the Greek” in verse 16. What does this reveal about the universality of the gospel message? How might this impact our approach to sharing our faith with people from different backgrounds?

Day Four

Meditate on the concept of “the righteousness of God” mentioned in verse 17. How is this righteousness revealed through faith? Compare this with other scriptures that talk about God’s righteousness (e.g., Psalm 71:15–16, Isaiah 51:5–6).

Day Five

Reflect on the progression “from faith for faith” in Romans 1:17. What might this mean? Consider how this relates to the overall theme of “living by faith” in the Romans series. How does this challenge you to grow in your faith journey?

DAILY PRAYER FOR THIS WEEK

Gracious God, open my heart to the power and righteousness revealed in Your gospel. May I be unashamed of this good news. Strengthen my faith and help me to understand and apply these truths, that I might be transformed by Your Word. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Know

Reflect on what it means to stand firm in your faith. Paul was writing in 57 AD to a persecuted church he had not yet visited. Reflect on what it means to stand firm in your faith in our modern context.

- Reflect on what it means to stand firm in your faith in our modern context. Have you ever been in a situation where you were hesitant to share your faith? What held you back, and how did you overcome feeling ashamed?
- If you had to explain the core of the gospel message in one sentence to a friend who’s never heard it before, what would you say?

Grow

Now, let’s examine Romans 1:16–17, the thematic cornerstone of Paul’s epistle, which hinges on the doctrine of justification by faith.

- Read Romans 1:16–17. What does Paul mean when he says he is “not ashamed of the gospel?” In our current culture, how often do you feel ashamed of the gospel or things pertaining to it? Why do we feel this way?

- In verse 17, Paul introduces the concept of “the righteousness of God.” How is this righteousness revealed through faith, according to the text? How does this relate to living by faith in your everyday life?
- Read 1 Corinthians 1:18–22 alongside Romans 1:16–17. How do these passages complement each other in explaining the perceived “foolishness” of the gospel message?
- Paul quotes Habakkuk 2:4, “The righteous will live by faith.” How does this Old Testament quote support Paul’s argument about the gospel? Who is someone that comes to mind that needs to hear this message?

Show

After Martin Luther read this passage in Romans, he said it was like entering “paradise itself through open gates.” Consider how we can embody Paul’s boldness in our own cultural context.

- In Rome, associating yourself with the gospel could lower your social status, and under Nero, Christians faced severe persecution. Considering this context and Paul’s boldness, what is one specific step you can take this week to be more open about your faith in a setting where you might typically hesitate?
- How might understanding the gospel as “the power of God for salvation” change the way you approach sharing your faith with others? How can you demonstrate that you are “not ashamed of the gospel” in your daily life this week?

WEEK 4: ROMANS 1:18–25

INTRODUCTION

In Romans 1:18–25, Paul begins to unpack why we need the gospel so desperately. He reveals that from the moment we gain consciousness, we sense something is “off” in the world and in ourselves. God has made His existence clear through creation, yet we often choose to suppress this truth, exchanging it for lies that align with our desires. This passage challenges us to confront the ways we might be ignoring God’s revelation or replacing His glory with our own idols.

As we study these verses, we’ll explore how God’s wrath against sin is revealed, not just as punishment, but as allowing us to experience the natural consequences of turning away from Him. Yet even in this heavy topic, we find hope — for it’s against this backdrop that the gospel shines brightest, reminding us of God’s grace in revealing Himself to us despite our rebellion. Let’s approach this study with open hearts, ready to examine our own lives and deepen our appreciation for the transformative power of the gospel.

ROMANS 1: 18–25 (ESV)

¹⁸ For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. ¹⁹ For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. ²⁰ For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. ²¹ For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. ²² Claiming to be wise, they became fools, ²³ and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things. ²⁴ Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves, ²⁵ because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen.

DAILY PERSONAL STUDY: ROMANS 1:18–25

Day 1

Read Romans 1:18-20. How does God’s wrath relate to the gospel message from last week? How does nature reveal God’s “eternal power and divine nature” to you?

Day 2

Focus on Romans 1:21–23. What does it mean to “exchange the glory of the immortal God for images?” How might we be guilty of this in modern times? Compare this with the first two commandments in Exodus 20:3–5. How does this deepen your understanding of idolatry?

Day 3

Examine “God gave them up” (v. 24–25). How does this relate to free will? Compare with the Prodigal Son story (Luke 15:11–32). How does this affect your view of God’s love and justice?

Day 4

Reflect on the idea of “exchanging the truth about God for a lie” (v. 25). How have you seen this play out in society or in your own life? Compare this with Jesus’ words in John 8:31–32 about truth and freedom. How does remaining in God’s truth bring freedom?

Day 5

Consider how Romans 1:18–25 shows humanity’s need for salvation. How does this enhance your appreciation for the “power of God for salvation” from Romans 1:16?

DAILY PRAYER FOR THIS WEEK

Father, open my eyes to see the reality of sin and its consequences. Help me recognize the ways I may have exchanged Your truth for lies. Increase my gratitude for Your revelation in nature and in Scripture. May this study deepen my understanding of the gospel and my need for Your saving grace. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Know

In Romans 1:18–25, Paul begins to unpack the human condition and our need for the gospel. Before we dive deeper into the text, let’s reflect on our own experiences and observations that relate to these truths.

- Share a time when you’ve seen someone reject evidence or the truth and pursue their own desires. What happened? What were the results?

- Share about a time when you were in awe of God's creation. What did that experience reveal to you about God?

Grow

Examine Romans 1:18–25 more closely. Paul presents a sobering picture of humanity's rejection of God and its consequences. As we discuss these verses, consider how they challenge or affirm your understanding of God, humanity, and our relationship with Him.

- Read 1:19–20. What are some ways that God has revealed himself to the world?
- Why is it so easy for us to “exchange the truth about God for a lie?” (1:25) What are examples from scripture of mankind doing that? What are some instances from your own life?
- Read 1:24–25. What do these verses reveal about our hearts? What do they reveal about God's heart?
- What is God's wrath? Why is it justified?

Show

Having explored the depths of Paul's message in Romans 1:18–25, let's consider how we can apply these truths to our lives. These questions will help us move from understanding to action, allowing God's Word to transform not just our thinking, but our daily living.

- It's really easy to read these verses and see others and not ourselves. If you're a believer, and someone asked you “How did your heart change from that to what it is now?”, how would you answer them? What is the story of the gospel in your life?
- What are some ways you can reflect the truth of God in the midst of a world that doesn't always see God as the source of truth? What's an example of living by God's grace and for His glory?

WEEK 5: ROMANS 1:26–32

INTRODUCTION

In Romans 1:26–32, Paul vividly describes what happens when God gives people over to their sinful desires. This passage isn't just about specific behaviors; it's about the heart of our rebellion against God and its far-reaching effects. Paul uses our sexuality and relationships as a powerful example of how we can exchange God's design for our own desires, but he doesn't stop there. He goes on to list numerous other ways we trade God's best for what we think is best.

As we study these verses, let's approach them with humility, recognizing our own need for God's grace. Remember, the goal isn't to point fingers, but to understand the depth of our need for the gospel — the same gospel Paul declared he was “not ashamed of” because it is “the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes” (Romans 1:16). Let's examine our own hearts, celebrate God's transforming grace, and consider how we can lovingly stand for truth in a world that often rejects it.

ROMANS 1:26–32 (ESV)

²⁶ For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature; ²⁷ and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in themselves the due penalty for their error. ²⁸ And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done. ²⁹ They were filled with all manner of unrighteousness, evil, covetousness, malice. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, maliciousness. They are gossips, ³⁰ slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, ³¹ foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless. ³² Though they know God's righteous decree that those who practice such things deserve to die, they not only do them but give approval to those who practice them.

DAILY PERSONAL STUDY: ROMANS 1:26–32

Day 1

Examine the phrase “God gave them up” (v.24, 26, 28). How does this relate to God's wrath (v.18)? How does this understanding differ from common misconceptions about God's wrath?

Day 2

Reflect on verses 26–27. How do these fit into Paul's argument about exchanging truth for lies (v.25)? Consider how this principle applies beyond sexuality. Where in your life are you tempted to exchange God's truth for a lie?

Day 3

Study the list of vices (v.29–31). Choose three and consider how they manifest in society today. Compare this list with the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22–23). How does this highlight our need for the gospel?

Day 4

Consider the phrase "give approval to those who practice them" (v.32). How is this approval a further rejection of God's truth? How can we resist cultural pressure to approve sin while still showing Christ's love?

Day 5

Reread Romans 1:16–32. How does Paul's description of sin emphasize our need for the gospel (v.16–17)? How does this challenge you to be "not ashamed of the gospel?" Pray for opportunities to share the gospel this week.

DAILY PRAYER FOR THIS WEEK

Father, help me to understand the seriousness of sin and its consequences. Give me a heart that grieves over my own sin and the sin in our world. Yet, fill me with hope in the power of Your gospel to transform lives. Help me to stand firm in Your truth while extending Your love and grace to others. In Jesus' name, Amen.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Know

In Romans 1:26–32, Paul describes the consequences of rejecting God's truth and the moral decline that follows. Before we dive into the specifics of this challenging passage, let's reflect on our own experiences with moral choices and societal pressures.

- Share a time when someone (parent, family member, teacher, etc.) allowed you to have what you wanted even though it wasn't best for you. What did you learn?

- What's something you believed or practiced in the past that you now realize was misguided or wrong? How did your perspective change?

Grow

Now let's examine Paul's sobering description of a society that has turned away from God. These verses present a challenging picture of human sinfulness, but they also point us towards the transformative power of the gospel.

- Read Romans 1:26–32. It seems generally that Christians tend to focus on vv.26–27 and not vv.28–32. Why do you think that is?
- Why do we treat the sin of others as objective (“You are wrong for doing that.”) but our own as subjective (“At least I didn’t do that.”)? Does this passage in Romans—and scripture as a whole—treat sin as a tiered list?
- Paul speaks to sexual relationships in 1:26–27 as an example of God’s perfect design versus our brokenness. He shows how people take the desire that God has given us for that intimacy and distort to fit their designs instead of His. What is God’s design for sex? How can we share that good news with the world?
- Read 1 Corinthians 6:9–11 alongside this passage. How does Paul’s reminder that “such were some of you” inform how we should view and interact with those caught in sin?

Show

As we conclude our discussion of this challenging passage, let’s consider how we can apply these truths to our lives. Paul’s words call us to examine ourselves, to rely on God’s grace, and to live out our faith in practical ways.

- This passage is clear that homosexuality is a sin, just as covetousness, gossiping, and foolishness are sins. Along with everything else Paul lists in vv.28–32. How can we as believers make sure we aren’t elevating one sin above others when showing and sharing the gospel?
- All sin is ultimately the fruit of wrong belief about God (rooted in our hearts). Of the sins listed in this passage, where do you see yourself? What could be the underlying root of that sin in your heart? And how does the gospel speak against that and transform your heart and belief?

NOTES

WEEK 6: ROMANS 2:1–11

INTRODUCTION

Paul now turns our attention to the sobering realities of human nature and God's judgment. In Romans 2:1–11, Paul addresses the subtler, yet equally dangerous, issues of self-righteousness and hypocrisy. This passage challenges us to look inward, examining our hearts and actions in light of God's impartial judgment. We're reminded that God's grace is meant to lead us to repentance, not enable sin, and that true righteousness is not merely knowledge of God's law, but also living it out.

As we study these verses, let's approach them with humility, recognizing our own tendencies towards self-righteousness. Remember, as Tim Keller puts it, "We are more sinful and flawed in ourselves than we ever dared believe, yet at the very same time we are more loved and accepted in Jesus Christ than we ever dared hope." This week, let's allow God's Word to search our hearts, reshape our understanding of judgment and mercy, and deepen our appreciation for the gospel's transformative power in our lives.

ROMANS 2:1–11 (ESV)

¹ Therefore you have no excuse, O man, every one of you who judges. For in passing judgment on another you condemn yourself, because you, the judge, practice the very same things. ² We know that the judgment of God rightly falls on those who practice such things. ³ Do you suppose, O man—you who judge those who practice such things and yet do them yourself—that you will escape the judgment of God? ⁴ Or do you presume on the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance? ⁵ But because of your hard and impenitent heart you are storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath when God's righteous judgment will be revealed. ⁶ He will render to each one according to his works: ⁷ to those who by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, he will give eternal life; ⁸ but for those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, there will be wrath and fury. ⁹ There will be tribulation and distress for every human being who does evil, the Jew first and also the Greek, ¹⁰ but glory and honor and peace for everyone who does good, the Jew first and also the Greek. ¹¹ For God shows no partiality.

DAILY PERSONAL STUDY: ROMANS 2:1–11

Day One

Read Romans 2:1–4. How does Paul's warning against judging others relate to Jesus' teaching in Matthew 7:1–5? Reflect on how God's kindness towards you challenges your attitude towards others.

Day Two

Examine Romans 2:5–8. Contrast “storing up wrath” with seeking “glory, honor, and immortality.” How do our daily choices reflect our ultimate values and priorities? Compare with Jesus’ teaching in Matthew 6:19–21.

Day Three

Study Romans 2:9–11. How does Paul emphasize God’s impartial judgment? Consider how this challenges our notions of favoritism or spiritual elitism. Relate this to Peter’s realization in Acts 10:34–35.

Day Four

Focus on the phrase “God’s kindness is meant to lead you to repentance” in verse 4. How does this relate to the overall theme of God’s grace in Romans? Reflect on how God’s kindness has led you to repentance in your own life.

Day Five

What is the connection between “doing good” (v.7, 10) and faith? How does this relate to James’ teaching on faith and works (James 2:14–26)? Consider how this challenges or enhances your understanding of “living by faith.”

DAILY PRAYER FOR THIS WEEK

Father, as I study Your Word, help me to examine my heart honestly. Guard me against self-righteousness and hypocrisy. May Your kindness lead me to repentance and may the reality of Your grace and just judgment motivate me to live faithfully. Help me to extend the same grace to others that You have shown to me. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Know

In Romans 2:1–11, Paul addresses the issue of judgment and hypocrisy among those who consider themselves morally superior. Before we delve into the specifics of the passage, let’s reflect on our own experiences with judgment and being judged, as these themes are central to Paul’s message.

- Think of a time when you judged someone too quickly and later realized you were wrong. What did you learn from that experience? Have you ever been in a situation where you felt unfairly judged? How did it make you feel, and how did you respond?
- In your opinion, what's the difference between constructive criticism and harmful judgment? Can you share an example of each from your life?

Grow

As we explore Romans 2:1–11, we see Paul unveiling God's impartial judgment and the true nature of righteousness. This passage challenges us to examine our hearts, confront our tendency towards self-righteousness, and understand the relationship between God's kindness and judgment.

- Read Romans 2:1–4. Paul addresses those who judge others while doing the same things themselves. How does this passage challenge our tendency towards self-righteousness? How does it relate to Jesus' teaching in Matthew 7:1–5?
- In verse 4, Paul speaks about God's kindness leading to repentance. How have you experienced God's patience and kindness in your own life? How does this compare with Tim Keller's quote: "The gospel is this: We are more sinful and flawed in ourselves than we ever dared believe, yet at the very same time we are more loved and accepted in Jesus Christ than we ever dared hope."?
- Look at verses 5–8. Paul warns about storing up wrath for ourselves through unrepentant hearts. How does this challenge the modern cultural theology that "God is too good to judge?" Consider Jeremy Treat's statement: "God is love. God is holy. God is just. God is not wrath. His wrath is the rightful expression of his holy love in the face of sin and evil."
- In verses 9–11, Paul emphasizes God's impartiality in judgment. How does this align with Jesus' parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector in Luke 18:9–14? How should this shape our view of ourselves and others?

Show

Paul's words in Romans 2:1–11 are not merely theoretical; they demand a response from us. As we conclude our discussion, let's consider how we can apply these truths to our daily lives, cultivating humility, grace, and a lifestyle that reflects the transformative power of the gospel.

- How can we cultivate a spirit of humility and grace towards others, especially those who don't share our faith, while still holding to the truth of the gospel?
- Based on this passage, in what area of your life might you be judging others while overlooking your own faults? What's one step you can take this week to address this?

WEEK 7: ROMANS 2:12–29

INTRODUCTION

In Romans 2:12–29, Paul addresses those who might think they’re “on the right team” spiritually, believing they can escape God’s judgment due to their religious heritage or knowledge. This passage serves as a sobering reminder that God cares more about the inward transformation of our hearts than outward religious observances. Paul confronts the tendency to boast in our spiritual pedigree or accumulate religious accolades, emphasizing that true righteousness stems from living out God’s Word, not merely knowing it. As John Piper reminds us, “The apex of glorifying God is enjoying Him with the heart. But this is an empty emotionalism where that joy is not awakened and sustained by true views of God for who He really is.”

As we study these verses, we’re called to examine our own hearts, recognizing the subtle ways we might be relying on “cultural Christianity” or a false sense of spiritual security. This section challenges us to confront the hypocrisy that can creep into our heart, pushing us to rely on God’s grace rather than our own self-righteousness.

ROMANS 2:12–29 (ESV)

¹² For all who have sinned without the law will also perish without the law, and all who have sinned under the law will be judged by the law. ¹³ For it is not the hearers of the law who are righteous before God, but the doers of the law who will be justified. ¹⁴ For when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do what the law requires, they are a law to themselves, even though they do not have the law. ¹⁵ They show that the work of the law is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness, and their conflicting thoughts accuse or even excuse them ¹⁶ on that day when, according to my gospel, God judges the secrets of men by Christ Jesus. ¹⁷ But if you call yourself a Jew and rely on the law and boast in God ¹⁸ and know his will and approve what is excellent, because you are instructed from the law; ¹⁹ and if you are sure that you yourself are a guide to the blind, a light to those who are in darkness, ²⁰ an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of children, having in the law the embodiment of knowledge and truth— ²¹ you then who teach others, do you not teach yourself? While you preach against stealing, do you steal? ²² You who say that one must not commit adultery, do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols, do you rob temples? ²³ You who boast in the law dishonor God by breaking the law. ²⁴ For, as it is written, “The name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you.” ²⁵ For circumcision indeed is of value if you obey the law, but if you break the law, your circumcision becomes uncircumcision. ²⁶ So, if a man who is uncircumcised keeps the precepts of the law, will not his uncircumcision be regarded as circumcision? ²⁷ Then he who is physically uncircumcised but

keeps the law will condemn you who have the written code and circumcision but break the law.²⁸ For no one is a Jew who is merely one outwardly, nor is circumcision outward and physical.²⁹ But a Jew is one inwardly, and circumcision is a matter of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter. His praise is not from man but from God.

DAILY PERSONAL STUDY ROMANS 2:12–29

Day One

Read Romans 2:12–16. Reflect on the concept of God's impartial judgment. How does this challenge our understanding of fairness and justice? Consider how this relates to the series theme of "living by faith." How might this impact your daily decisions, knowing that God judges everyone equally?

Day Two

Focus on Romans 2:17–20. Paul addresses those who rely on their religious identity and knowledge. How might you be prone to similar attitudes in your Christian walk? Reflect on Jesus' words in Matthew 7:21–23. How does this challenge you to live out your faith authentically?

Day Three

Examine Romans 2:21–24. Consider areas in your life where your actions might not align with your beliefs. How can this misalignment affect your witness to others? Reflect on James 1:22–25 for further insight on being doers of the word, not just hearers.

Day Four

Study Romans 2:25–27. What does Paul mean by "circumcision of the heart?" How does this relate to the larger theme of inward transformation versus outward appearance in the Christian life? Compare with Colossians 2:11–12 for a deeper understanding of spiritual circumcision.

Day Five

Reflect on Romans 2:28–29. What does it mean to be a "Jew inwardly" or, for Christians today, to have a faith that is internal and grace-driven rather than merely external? How does this concept challenge you to grow in an authentic faith in Christ? Consider Galatians 3:26–29 in your reflection.

DAILY PRAYER FOR THIS WEEK

Lord, as I study Your Word, reveal any areas of hypocrisy or self-righteousness in my heart. Help me to live out my faith authentically, relying on Your grace rather than my own efforts or religious knowledge. May my life reflect Your transforming work within me, so that I may truly live by faith. In Jesus' name, Amen.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Know

In Romans 2:12–29, Paul addresses the complex relationship between God's law, human conscience, and true righteousness. Before we delve into the specifics of this passage, let's reflect on our own experiences with unwritten rules and hypocrisy.

- Think back to your childhood. What was one rule or expectation in your family that everyone knew but wasn't necessarily written down? How did that unspoken rule impact family dynamics?
- When you hear the word "hypocrisy," what's the first thing that comes to mind? Why do you think hypocrisy is often viewed so negatively, especially in religious contexts?

Grow

Paul's message in this passage challenges our understanding of true righteousness and the danger of religious pride. As we explore these verses, let's consider how they apply to our own spiritual lives and our understanding of God's judgment and grace.

- Read Romans 2:12–16. Paul talks about those who sin "apart from the law" and those who sin "under the law." What do you think he means by this? How does this relate to the concept of conscience that Paul mentions in verse 15? Consider Jeremiah 31:33 — "I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts." How does this Old Testament prophecy align with Paul's argument?
- In verses 17–24, Paul addresses those who rely on their religious identity and knowledge. How might Christians today fall into similar traps of religious pride? C.S. Lewis once wrote, "Pride leads to every other vice: it is the complete anti-God state of mind" (*Mere Christianity*). How does this quote relate to Paul's warnings?
- Examine verses 25–27 regarding circumcision. How does Paul redefine what it means to be truly circumcised? Compare this with Colossians 2:11–12. How does this concept of "spiritual circumcision" apply to Christians today?

- In verses 28–29, Paul emphasizes inward transformation over outward appearance. How does this relate to Jesus' teachings in Matthew 23:25–28 about the Pharisees? John Piper states, “The apex of glorifying God is enjoying Him with the heart. But this is an empty emotionalism where that joy is not awakened and sustained by true views of God for who He really is” (*Desiring God*). How does this quote help us understand the kind of inward transformation Paul is calling for?

Show

Having examined Paul's teachings on true righteousness and the dangers of religious hypocrisy, let's consider how we can apply these truths to our daily lives. These questions will help us move from understanding to action, allowing God's Word to transform not just our thinking, but our daily living.

- Based on this passage, what area of your spiritual life do you feel needs more alignment between your beliefs and actions? What's one practical step you can take this week to address this?
- In light of verse 24, how can you be more mindful of representing Christ well to unbelievers in your daily interactions? Choose one specific area (e.g., work, social media, family) to focus on this week.

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES:

- *Romans 1–7 For You: For Reading, for Feeding, for Leading* by Timothy Keller — <https://www.amazon.com/Romans-1-7-You-Timothy-Keller/dp/1908762918>
- “Knowing the Bible: Romans” by Jared Wilson — <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/course/knowing-bible-romans>
- *Exalting Jesus in Romans* by Tony Merida
- *Romans: A Concise Guide to the Greatest Letter Ever Written* by Andrew David Naselli — <https://www.amazon.com/Romans-Concise-Greatest-Letter-Written/dp/1433580349>

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