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Ministry Resources Hub

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Romans

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Romans

A. Background and Summary.

1. The name of the book comes from its recipients: “To all that are in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints” (1:7a). The Apostle Paul (1:1) is the undisputed author of Romans, writing from the city of Corinth most likely towards the close of his third missionary journey, before he returned to Palestine about 56AD.
2. Romans is a doctrinal book, setting forth the essentials of the Christian faith. It is not a narrative such as the book of Acts, nor was it written to correct false theology or rebuke ungodly living (e.g., Galatians, 1,2 Corinthians). The overall theme of Romans is the righteousness that comes through faith, by grace in Christ’s redemptive work. Chapters 1-11 present doctrine to support that theme, while chapters 12-16 show the outworking of faith in the lives of believers.

B. Chapter One.

1. The book opens with Paul’s salutation as a “bondservant of Jesus Christ” (1:1a). Immediately, he launches a concise gospel referencing the prophecies of Scripture. He points out Jesus’s genealogy as descended from the seed of David, which gives Him legitimacy to David’s throne, and validates that he is the Son of God by His resurrection from the dead (1:2-4). He mentions of his unceasing prayer for them and of his desire to come to Rome. He then pens the keystone of the Reformation which captured Luther’s attention: “the just shall live by faith (1:17b) which he no doubt took from Habakkuk 2:4. This is just one small example of why we need the Old Testament. Paul knew the Scriptures and had spent his life studying them. He was familiar with the Old Testament Scriptures such as Isaiah 53, Psalm 22 and others which describe the coming Messiah. Do not be deceived by progressive Bible teachers who tell us to “unhitch” or disconnect ourselves from the Old Testament.
2. Paul then goes into a description of God’s wrath upon unrighteousness: “For the wrath of God is revealed against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness” (1:18). He declares that no one is without excuse, because all of creation manifests the invisible attributes of God so that they are clearly seen (1:19-20). He then lists the various ways in which men have been given up by God due to their foolish, darkened hearts. These include vile passions such as homosexuality, all sorts of wickedness,

covetousness, maliciousness, envy, murder, strife, deceit, haters of God, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, unloving, unforgiving and unmerciful (1:28-32).

C. Chapter Two.

1. Paul then goes into the hypocrisy of judging the actions of others while doing those same things ourselves, and that those who do those things are “storing up wrath in the day of wrath and revelation of righteous judgement of God who will render to each one according to his deeds” (Psalm 62:12; Proverbs 24:12). The New Testament is clear salvation is not on the basis of works (Ephesians 2:8-9) but judgement is based upon our deeds (1 Corinthians 3:8-14; 2 Corinthians 5:10). For the Christian, our deeds are not to determine salvation but for our reward or lack thereof. It is unfortunate that many Christians believe that Christ’s positional atonement gives them a ticket to continue in sin without consequences.
2. Paul spends the rest of the chapter talking about the law and how Jews and uncircumcised Gentiles relate to it. He says: All who sin apart from the law will also perish apart from the law, and all who sin under the law will be judged by the law. For it is not those who hear the law who are righteous in God’s sight, but it is those who obey the law who will be declared righteous” (2:12-13).
3. He concludes the chapter with: “A person is not a Jew who is one only outwardly, nor is circumcision merely outward and physical. No, a person is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is circumcision of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the written code. Such a person’s praise is not from other people, but from God” (2:28-29).

D. Chapter Three.

1. In this chapter, Paul continues to present his argument that none of us are righteous in ourselves: “There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands; there is no one who seeks God. All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one” (3:11-12). Here, he is referencing (Psalm 14:1; 53:1-3 and Ecclesiastes 7:20). “For all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God (3:23). This passage in Romans is often used in evangelism to show someone the seriousness of their sin and is the first verse in what is often called the “Romans Road”. The Romans Road is a method of taking an unbeliever step by step through verses in a progression to show them their need for salvation. Unbelievers often think that they are good

persons. Romans 3:23 can be used to bring to expose the unrighteousness of someone before God.

2. He concludes his argument with: “all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. God presented Christ as a sacrifice of atonement, through the shedding of his blood—to be received by faith. He did this to demonstrate his righteousness, because in his forbearance he had led the sins committed beforehand unpunished— he did it to demonstrate his righteousness at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus” (3:24-26).

E. Chapter Four.

1. The chapter opens with Paul quoting from Genesis 15:6 “Abram believed the Lord, and he credited it to him as righteousness.” He then goes into a discussion of wages, which are earned in opposition to belief or faith in God by which they are justified (4:1-5).
2. He then discusses what would seem an impossibility to Abraham: “Against all hope, Abraham in hope believed and so became the father of many nations” (4:18a). Paul then points out that Abraham was old and Sara was also old and her womb dead. But then he brings in down in practicality to us: “to whom God will credit righteousness—for us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead. He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification” (4:24-25).

F. Chapter Five.

1. Paul opens with a profound statement of faith and how that faith is strengthened: “Therefore, since we have been declared righteous by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. We have also obtained access through Him by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. And not only that, but we also rejoice in our afflictions, because we know that affliction produces endurance, endurance produces proven character, and proven character produces hope. This hope will not disappoint us, because God’s love has been poured out in our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us: (5:1-5). The first verse in this passage is one of the final steps on the Romans Road which shows the result of salvation.
2. He continues with another verse, also on the Romans Road that brings the gospel in a personal way to us, “But God proves His own love for us in that while we

were still sinners, Christ died for us!” (5:8). This is usually the third verse used in sequence on the Romans Road. The second verse is found in the next chapter. He continues with a discussion of Adam’s disobedience bringing death to all mankind, but Christ’s obedience, many are made righteous.

G. Chapter Six.

1. Paul asks a rhetorical question with the answer: “What should we say then? Should we continue in sin so that grace may multiply? Absolutely not! How can we who died to sin still live in it?” (6:1-2). He goes on to use the analogy of baptism to illustrate our life in Christ. We are buried with Christ into His death but raised with Him in newness of life (6:3-5). This passage can be and often is used to teach someone about physical baptism. A person is immersed in water signifying dying with Christ and then being raised out of the water signifying being raised with Him. This can also be taught along with the Romans Road to present the need to publicly declare faith in Christ.
2. Paul goes on to say that if we died with Christ, we also died to sin and should not let sin rule over our mortal bodies (6:11-12). He then says that as we once offered ourselves slaves to sin, we now should offer ourselves as slaves to righteousness (6:19). He then concludes the chapter with a second verse used by many for the Romans Road presentation of the gospel: “For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord (6:23).

H. Chapter Seven.

1. Paul begins the chapter with a discussion of the law and its power over us. He uses the analogy of a woman who is under her husband’s authority until he dies. She then is released from that. We too, he continues are no longer bound by the law as we have died to it in Christ. He goes on to say: “But now we have been released from the law, since we have died to what held us, so that we may serve in the new way of the Spirit and not in the old letter of the law (7:6).
2. He continues with the argument that the law is useful in that we would not know sin except for the law. This is similar to Paul’s illustration of the child conductor (guardian) that wealthy families would have that escorted their children to school. He writes there: “Before the coming of this faith, we were held in custody under the law, locked up until the faith that was to come would be revealed. So, the law was our guardian (child conductor) until Christ came that we might be

justified by faith. Now that this faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian (Galatians 3:23-25).

3. He spends the rest of the chapter presenting his own struggles with the law and his flesh: When I want to do what is good, evil is with me. For in my inner self, I joyfully agree with God's law. But I see a different law in the parts of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and taking me prisoner to the law of sin in the parts of my body. What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this dying body? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, with my mind I myself am a slave to the law of God, but with my flesh, to the law of sin" (7:21-25).

I. Chapter Eight.

1. Chapter eight is an incredible chapter. Some Bible teachers believe it is the core essence of the Christian faith and key to our sanctification. In the previous chapter, Paul related his own struggles with his flesh ("For I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my flesh" -7:18). He related how this resulted in warfare between his flesh and his inner man or human spirit. In this chapter he gives us the key to win that struggle: "Therefore, no condemnation now exists for those in Christ Jesus, because the Spirit's law of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death" (8:1-2).
2. He continues with: "For those who live according to the flesh think about the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, about the things of the Spirit. For the mindset of the flesh is death, but the mindset of the Spirit is life and peace" (8:5-6).
3. He emphasizes that we are God's sons, and we are not obligated to live by the flesh but by the Spirit (8:12-14). He points out the sufferings of this life are not worthy to be compared with the glory which will be revealed to us (8:18). He relates that all creation is groaning from the bondage of sin but will be set free from that corruption into the glorious freedom of God's children (8:21).
4. He closes with: "We know that all things work together for the good of those who love God: those who are called according to His purpose. For those He foreknew He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brothers. For those He predestined, He also called; and those He called, He also justified; and those He justified, He also glorified" (8:28-30).

J. Chapter Nine.

1. Chapter nine begins a three-chapter discussion by Paul regarding Israel. He begins by expressing his great sorrow over Israel and their rejection of Jesus as their Messiah. He says, without lying, that he would rather that he be cut off from the Messiah for the benefit of his Jewish brothers. He continues with a discussion of God's election and there is no injustice with God. He quotes Exodus 33:19 of God's words to Moses in that God will show mercy to those to whom He will show mercy and have compassion upon whom He will have compassion (9:14-15).
2. God's sovereignty and election is a difficult topic for many Christians to accept or even understand. Christians have argued over this for hundreds of years. We do have a free will, but God's election is embedded throughout the New Testament. Paul continues with a lamentation over Israel by quoting Isaiah 10:22-23: "Though the number of Israel's sons is like the sand of the sea, only the remnant will be saved" (9:27). He concludes by pointing out that the "Gentiles who did not pursue righteousness, have obtained righteousness—namely the righteousness that comes from faith. But Israel, pursuing the law for righteousness, has not achieved the righteousness of the law. Why is that? Because they did not pursue it by faith, but as if it were by works. They stumbled over the stumbling stone" (9:30-32).

K. Chapter Ten.

1. Paul continues his lament for Israel: "Brothers, my heart's desire and prayer to God concerning them is for their salvation! I can testify about them that they have zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. Because they disregarded the righteousness from God and attempted to establish their own righteousness, they have not submitted themselves to God's righteousness. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes" (10:1-4).
2. He continues with the means of salvation which is near the end of the journey on the Romans Road: "If you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved" (Romans 10:9). He further drives this home with: "For everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved (Romans 10:13).
3. The balance of the chapter discusses the need for telling forth the gospel: "But how can they call on Him they have not believed in? And how can they believe without hearing about Him? And how can they hear without a preacher? And how

can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written: How beautiful are the feet of those who announce the gospel of good things!" (10:14-15). The chapter concludes with "But to Israel he says: All day long I have spread out My hands to a disobedient and defiant people (10:21).

L. Chapter Eleven.

1. Paul continues his lament over Israel, but firmly declares in another rhetorical question with the answer "has God cast away His people? Certainly not!" (11:1). He then goes on to state his own solid Jewish background. He reminds us of God's word to Elijah about reserving a 7,000 remnant who had not bowed their knee to Baal (1 Kings 19:18) which was the principal Canaanite deity.
2. He then goes into a discussion of the elect who have obtained God's grace but notes Israel was given a spirit of stupor (11:8; Isaiah 29:10). But he also states that Israel's rejection is not final and the thought that through jealousy over the Gentiles, they will come to salvation. He gives a stern warning to the Gentiles, using the analogy of Israel being branches which were broken off and Gentiles which were grafted, on and to remember that the branches do not support the root, but the root supporting the branches (11:18). He continues with "do not be haughty, but fear. For if God did not spare the natural branches, he will not spare you either" (11:20b-21).
3. Paul presents that this is a mystery and that the blindness to Israel has happened "until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in" (11:25). This means that Israel's spiritual hardening of their heart which began with their rejection of Jesus will continue until the last of the elect Gentiles have come to salvation. But he references Psalm 14:7 and Isaiah 59:20-21 which indicate that all the elect Jews will come to salvation, probably during the Great Tribulation. He breaks forth with what appears to be a doxology or praise of God: "Oh the depths of the riches and the wisdom and knowledge of God. How unsearchable are His judgements and His ways past finding out!" (11:33).

M. Chapter Twelve.

1. Paul opens the chapter with an exhortation: "Therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, I urge you to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God; this is your spiritual worship. "Do not be conformed to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may discern what is the good, pleasing, and perfect will of God" (12:1-2). This passage encapsulates a key

to Christian living. The world desires to have us conformed to it. God desires that we present our bodies as a living sacrifice and have our minds renewed. This is true Christian worship.

2. He then discusses various Christian gifts and that we all have different gifts. He gives examples such as prophecy, service, teaching, exhortation, giving, leading and showing mercy.
3. He gives practical advice for Christian living: "Love must be without hypocrisy. Detest evil; cling to what is good. Show family affection to one another with brotherly love. Outdo one another in showing honor. Do not lack diligence; be fervent in spirit; serve the Lord. Rejoice in hope; be patient in affliction; be persistent in prayer. Share with the saints in their needs; pursue hospitality. Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. Rejoice with those who rejoice; weep with those who weep. Be in agreement with one another. Do not be proud; instead, associate with the humble. Do not be wise in your own estimation. Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Try to do what is honorable in everyone's eyes. If possible, on your part, live at peace with everyone" (12:9-18).
4. The chapter concludes with what could be construed as an odd admonition: "If your enemy is hungry, feed him. If he is thirsty, give him something to drink. For in so doing you will be heaping burning coals on his head. Do not be conquered by evil, but conquer evil with good" (12:20-21). Scholars who have studied this passage, found that in Bible times, if the fire in one's hearth went out, they would go out of their houses with a suitable container on their head, to find a neighbor who had burning coals. It could be that an enemy would come to the door of someone who was at odds with them. Heaping burning coals upon their head would be an act of kindness, which seems to fit the context of the overall passage.

N. Chapter Thirteen.

1. Chapter thirteen begins with a lengthy admonition to submit to government authority. Paul says: for there is no authority except from God, and those that exist are instituted by God. So then, the one who resists the authority is opposing God's command, and those who oppose it will bring judgment on themselves" (13:1b-2). He gives various examples such as paying taxes, paying tolls, giving respect and honor.
2. Paul continues with instruction to not owe anyone except to love one another as this fulfills the law. He reminds the Romans of the law that they should be obeying not to: commit adultery, murder, steal, or covet (13:9). He also says that

love does no wrong to a neighbor as love being the fulfillment of the law. The chapter concludes with Paul's reminder that the hour is near; salvation is nearer than when we first believed. This is most likely a reference to Christ's coming. He concludes with: "But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no plans to satisfy the fleshly desires" (13:14).

M. Chapter Fourteen.

1. Paul opens with a discussion of accepting those who are weak in the faith and of those who have a different viewpoint: "Accept anyone who is weak in faith, but don't argue about doubtful issues. One person believes he may eat anything, but one who is weak eats only vegetables. One who eats must not look down on one who does not eat, and one who does not eat must not criticize one who does, because God has accepted him "(14:1-3).
2. Paul reminds us that regardless if we live or die; we belong to the Lord and we should not criticize our brother as we all will stand before the throne of God. He discourages putting a stumbling block in from of our brothers such as eating meat sacrificed to idols or consumption of alcohol. "It is a noble thing not to eat meat, or drink wine, or do anything that makes your brother stumble. Do you have a conviction? Keep it to yourself before God. The man who does not condemn himself by what he approves is blessed. But whoever doubts stands condemned if he eats, because his eating is not from a conviction, and everything that is not from a conviction is sin" (14:21-23).

N. Chapter Fifteen.

1. Paul gives a word to those of strong faith: "Now we who are strong have an obligation to bear the weaknesses of those without strength, and not to please ourselves. Each one of us must please his neighbor for his good, to build him up" (15:1). He also charges us to live in harmony with one another so we "may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ with a united mind and voice" (15:6).
2. Paul continues with reference to Isaiah 11:10-12 regarding the Gentiles: "The root of Jesse will appear, the One who rises to rule the Gentiles; the Gentiles will hope in Him" (15:12). He adds a blessing: "Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you believe in Him so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit" (15:13). He adds a personal goal: "My aim is to evangelize where Christ has not been named, so that I will not build on someone else's foundation, but, as it is written: Those who were not told about Him will

see, and those who have not heard will understand” (15:20-21). Paul was expressing his desire to preach to what we call today “unreached people groups”. The chapter concludes with what Paul desired to do on future travels including to Rome. He indeed would reach Rome, but as a prisoner.

O. Chapter Sixteen.

1. Paul opens the final chapter with a commendation of a sister named Phoebe who was a great benefactor to many including Paul. He continues with greeting to numerous people in the church at Rome. He adds a warning to watch for those who cause dissensions and obstacles contrary to the doctrine they have learned. “For such people do not serve our Lord Christ but their own appetites. They deceive the hearts of the unsuspecting with smooth talk and flattering words” (16:18).
2. The book and chapter conclude with Paul’s greeting, including that from his co-workers, as well and adding the promise that “The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus be with you” (16:20). He finishes with: “Now to Him who has power to strengthen you according to my gospel and the proclamation about Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery kept silent for long ages but now revealed and made known through the prophetic Scriptures, according to the command of the eternal God to advance the obedience of faith among all nations—to the only wise God, through Jesus Christ—to Him be the glory forever! Amen (16:25-27).

P. Discussion Questions, Application and Passing it on.

1. All of us should be familiar with the use of the Romans Road to salvation and be able to use it in our personal evangelism. Here are the steps. It is helpful to memorize the verses and to place a notation in the margin of your bible as to where the next verse can be found. Using Scripture and having someone read the passages is using God’s Word in a powerful way.
 - Start with Romans 3:23. Point out we all have sinned. Many people think they are good enough to gain entrance into heaven, but that is not true.
 - Go next to Romans 6:23. Tell the person who is open to hear that we earn wages by sinning. Those wages lead to death and hell.
 - Then go to Romans 5:26 which tells us that we have peace with God through faith. Also point out 5:8 that God showed His love for us that while we were still

sinners, Christ died for us.

- Romans 10:9 gives the practical confession of faith. Confessing that Jesus is Lord and believing in the heart that God raised Him from the dead.
 - Romans 6:3-4 provides an introduction to baptism. Make sure that you tell them that baptism in itself does not save but it is a declaration of what has already happened internally.
 - Romans 12:1-2 provides instruction of how to live a righteous life.
2. Have you struggled with the doctrine of election, or God's choosing someone for eternal life? How would you use what can be learned from the book of Romans to reconcile your thinking?
 3. Are you walking according to the Spirit as described in chapter eight? If not, what steps do you need to take?
 4. There is a false teaching called "replacement theology" that says that the church has replaced Israel as the focal point of God's redemptive work towards man. How would you refute this based upon Romans?
 5. Romans 8:28 is an oft-quoted verse for those going through trials in this life. But 8:29 is rarely included as the goals of those trials which is to conform us to the image of Christ. How might this knowledge adjust anything in your thinking about the trials who go through?
 6. Chapter thirteen presents a strong admonition to obey those in governmental authority. When would this not be true? Where do you see this in the book of Acts?

This New Testament survey was provided by Joshua Nations (JoshuaNations.org)