

The Book of Romans

In Brief:

Author – Paul the apostle (Romans 1:1).

Recipients – Christians in Rome (1:7), apparently more than one congregation (16:3-16).

Place of writing – Corinth (see Romans 16:1, 15:25-26, 16:23 with Acts 20:1-6, 1 Corinthians 1:14, etc.¹).

Time – About 57 A.D. during the three month period mentioned in Acts 20:1-3, shortly before Passover (Acts 20:6). Before writing Romans, Paul had already written 1 Thessalonians, 2 Thessalonians, Galatians, 1 Corinthians, 2 Corinthians, and probably 1 Timothy.

Purpose – To pave the way for a future visit by Paul to Rome (Romans 1:10, 15:30-32) and clarify the precepts of the gospel Paul preached everywhere. The theme embraces the universal nature of the gospel, and the universal need of all mankind, Jew and gentile, for righteousness through faith in Jesus Christ.

Key Words – Some of the key words in the book of Romans, and the frequency of their use in the epistle, include: law (78 occurrences); sin (60); faith (39); righteousness (39); spirit (29); flesh (26); grace (24); gospel (13); Israel (12) & Jew (11); works (9); justification (3).

Overview: A primary theme of Romans is the lesson that on our own we are failures in living godly lives, and that only God's gift of life through Christ can remedy our failure. God's grace and our faith are key elements in securing our salvation. Paul first writes about God's graciousness in sending his Son to bring the good news of our salvation, then builds a case for understanding that all mankind needs this one answer that God has provided, because all have sinned. Paul proceeds to show how faith on our part is the key to embracing the eternal life God has made available, and has been in every generation. He demonstrates that sharing in Jesus is the only means by which death can be overcome. Paul continued to write about the difficulty even godly people have in doing the right thing, the struggle we all have in disciplining our flesh to keep God's commandments, which would result in condemnation under law. However, we have the assurance that God is not only helping us to receive life through Christ initially, but is also helping us to keep what he has given by his Spirit. A discussion of God's sovereignty follows, and Paul expresses his particular concern for fellow Jews who had not accepted Christ, and the need to keep reaching out to them. The final chapters of Romans present practical teachings for Christian living, and personal thoughts about Paul's travels at that time, with his hopes for a near future visit to Rome, including greetings expressed to many he had previously met in other places and that he knew to be residing in Rome.

¹The time and place of writing can be discerned from various references in the book of Romans that correspond to references in Acts and the Corinthian letters. Paul's host when he wrote Romans was Gaius, the name of a Corinthian disciple. The letter was to be carried by Phoebe of Cenchreae, a port city adjacent to Corinth. Paul was on his way to Jerusalem and had already been to Macedonia, as indicated in Acts and 2 Corinthians, and was taking the gift from the Macedonian and Achaian churches to the Jewish believers, which was the trip begun in Acts 20.

Flesh

One of Paul's keywords in Romans is "flesh" (Greek "sarx") as opposed to "spirit" (Greek "pneuma"). Unfortunately, some recent translations, including the NIV, have substituted other words or phrases rather than simply translating the word. The NIV in several passages substitutes the expression "sinful nature" and offers a footnote "or flesh." This creates some awkward contradictions since Jesus had "flesh" (1:3) but does not have a "sinful nature" (2 Corinthians 5:21, 1 Peter 2:22, Hebrews 4:15). This substitution unfortunately seems to reflect a doctrinal bias of the translators. Note the following passages where the word "flesh" occurs in the Greek text of Romans

Rom 1:3 concerning His Son, who was born of a descendant of David according to the flesh, (NAS)

Rom 2:28 For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly; neither is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh. (NAS)

Rom 3:20 because by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight; for through the Law {comes} the knowledge of sin. (NAS)

Rom 4:1 What then shall we say that Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh, has found? (NAS)

Rom 6:19 I am speaking in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you presented your members {as} slaves to impurity and to lawlessness, resulting in {further} lawlessness, so now present your members {as} slaves to righteousness, resulting in sanctification. (NAS)

Rom 7:5 For while we were in the flesh, the sinful passions, which were {aroused} by the Law, were at work in the members of our body to bear fruit for death. (NAS)

Rom 7:18 For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh; for the wishing is present in me, but the doing of the good {is} not. (NAS)

Rom 7:25 Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, on the one hand I myself with my mind am serving the law of God, but on the other, with my flesh the law of sin. (NAS)

Rom 8:3-9 3 For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God {did:} sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and {as an offering} for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh, 4 in order that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. 5 For those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who are according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. 6 For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace, 7 because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able {to do so}; 8 and those who are in the flesh cannot please God. 9 However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him. (NAS)

Rom 8:12-13 13 So then, brethren, we are under obligation, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh — 13 for if you are living according to the flesh, you must die; but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live. (NAS)

Rom 9:3 For I could wish that I myself were accursed, {separated} from Christ for the sake of my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh, (NAS)

Rom 9:5 whose are the fathers, and from whom is the Christ according to the flesh, who is over all, God blessed forever. Amen. (NAS)

Rom 9:8 That is, it is not the children of the flesh who are children of God, but the children of the promise are regarded as descendants. (NAS)

Rom 11:14 if somehow I might move to jealousy my fellow countrymen and save some of them. (NAS)

Rom 13:14 But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh in regard to {its} lusts. (NAS)

Romans 1

Romans 1:1-7, opening remarks and greeting

How did Paul describe his relationship to Christ, and his particular area of responsibility?

Paul describes himself as "set apart" for what?

Before becoming a Christian what Jewish sect had Paul belonged to? (See Acts 26:5,

Philippians 3:5)

The Greek word Paul used here that means “set apart” is the root of the Greek word we get the term “Pharisee” from. Pharisees considered themselves “separated unto the law” but now Paul considered himself “separated unto the gospel.” (Spiros Zodhiates, Word Study New Testament)

The word gospel is one of our key words in Romans, turning up 13 times. The word means “good news.” Whose good news is it in v.1?

When does the gospel come into the picture, historically and Biblically?

And it is good news about who or what in v.3?

In his flesh, who was Jesus the descendant of?

Why was this important?

We understand that Jesus is consistently referred to as the son of David in prophecy, and in the gospels. We also understand that Joseph, who was descended from David through Solomon’s lineage was not Jesus father in the flesh (Matthew 1). We have a different genealogy of Jesus reported in Luke which is apparently his literal fleshly lineage through Mary (Luke 3:27ff, where Joseph is mentioned as not the biological father of Jesus, and then the real human ancestry is presented, Mary’s paternal forebears, through David’s son Nathan). Of course, Jesus had a masculine gene set provided by God’s Spirit, and as John the Baptist pointed out, God could make children of Abraham out of rocks if he wanted to (Luke 3:8), so Jesus may have been the son of David in a miraculous sense as well.

In regard to the flesh, Jesus was David’s son. What about in regard to the Spirit?

What fully and finally demonstrated that Jesus is God’s son?

Paul presented himself as a servant of Christ Jesus. What is our relationship to Jesus, or his to us, in v.4?

What was Paul’s mission and where did he get it?

As pictured in v.5, grace (another key word in Romans) is not static or inactive. What is it paired with here?

The word “gentiles” just means nations. So where was Paul called to work?

Two words are paired together as the thrust of the gospel call Paul presented in v.5. What are these two things that go together, hand in hand?

What call had set apart the people to whom Paul wrote?

Where did these people happen to live?

The two things they were “called to” in v.6-7 must be synonyms or closely related. What are these two things those loved by God are called to?

In whose name did Paul send his greetings?

In his opening remarks Paul has already asserted the central role of the gospel of the resurrected Jesus in God’s plan for all nations, and affirmed that God consistently worked toward the coming of Jesus through the ancients, including David and the prophets. Our response to God’s call as expressed by Paul and others is to be faith and obedience, so that we like Paul may be set apart as a people belonging to God.

Romans 1:8-15, Paul’s desire and motivation to preach in Rome, and to all nations

What did Paul know about the Roman Christians, and what did it prompt him to do?

How did Paul know about them?

How thoroughly did Paul serve God?

And how did he serve him?

What was he constantly doing for the Roman believers?

What did Paul hope for, in his prayers and seeking of God’s will?

If Paul came to Rome, what would he be able to bring them, and for what purpose?

What would he in turn receive from them?

Are there ways that Christians can mutually encourage each other, besides public speaking?

What had Paul previously planned, and why hadn’t he done as planned?

Paul had never yet been to Rome, but what did he hope he might do there?

In what sense would Paul have been obligated to the gentiles of all categories as indicated in v.14? Had they done something for him, or what?

What was Paul eager to do?

Paul had been in several major cities of the eastern Roman empire, and preached the gospel in those places. However, he had a great desire to visit Rome itself with the message of Christ to assist and encourage the believers who were already there, and to preach to those who did not yet know Christ. Paul mission among the nations as a messenger of the Gospel is described in terms of both eagerness and obligation. Nevertheless, Paul did not know the will of God in this matter of his travels, and so prayed frequently for the opportunity to go there and preach, as we also ought to pray for fellow believers and for opportunities to serve God where we can.

Romans 1:16-17, affirmation of the power of the gospel, the overall theme of the letter
What did Paul assert about himself, and about the gospel?

What about the gospel might people then or now have found embarrassing or a cause for shame?

Are people today ever ashamed of the gospel? Explain.

Paul wrote that the gospel is God's power, power for what?

How does anyone get the benefit of the power that saves?

Who had the first opportunity to receive salvation through the gospel?

Who all is included in the opportunity to be saved by believing the gospel?

What does the gospel reveal?

This righteousness comes from God, and how does it become ours?

Paul quotes a portion of Habakkuk 2:4, to confirm what point?

Note: Habakkuk 2:4 is also quoted in Galatians 3:11 and Hebrews 10:38.

Gospel, righteousness, and faith are immutably bound up together, as Paul affirms in this opening summary of the core message of Romans.

Romans 1:18-32, the moral failure of mortal man
What is wrath?

Whose wrath was Paul concerned about here?

What provokes God's wrath?

What is wickedness?

What does wickedness suppress or hinder?

Do you think people today wilfully ignore obvious information about God and what he has done? Explain.

Paul asserts that some things about God are plain and open to see and know. What kinds of things?

So Paul argues that creation itself tells us what?

Remember that as Paul describes the downward progression of human wickedness, it began with turning away from basic truth about God.

In v.21 Paul continues the thought that denying or ignoring a knowledge of God has far reaching effects. What do men resist doing?

Where does human thought go, without the light of the knowledge of God?

When humans deny God, and claim wisdom, what is really happening?

Does 21st century humankind worship images or things in lieu of God?

As mankind turns away from God, what does God allow to happen? (v.24)

Where do sexual sins originate, and what effect do they have?

As humans choose untruth as the basis of their lives, what do they end up worshipping?

Again, do people today worship and serve created things instead of God?

Explain.

When people embrace sexual impurity (v.24) where does that road lead (v.26-27)?

Paul seems to be saying that God's wrath is being revealed (v.18) in harmful and disastrous consequences that come from acting out wicked thoughts (v.27). What might some of these consequences be?

Again, emphasizing that the slide into moral chaos begins with ignoring what is readily knowable about God, what kind of behavior goes along with or follows sexual perversion? (v.28-31)

On the whole, is it possible for people to ignore God and still have a society that honors human dignity and values and pursues what is best for everyone (or even anyone)?

When human appetites are allowed unrestrained fulfillment, what effect does that have not only on the “wicked” but on everyone?

What do you understand from the final statement in v.32, regarding not only those who do these things, “but also those who approve of those who practice them.”? What does this mean for us?

Laying the groundwork for the conclusion that everyone needs the gospel message and God’s forgiveness, Paul has discussed the downward spiral we can see in human lives and human cultures that choose man’s way over the knowledge of God. Paul wanted us to have a sense of the depravity that surrounds us, and how it grows progressively worse and worse as men ignore and deny the truth about God.

Romans 2:1-16, Human departure from God’s ways results in just condemnation

Having described the downward spiral of human lives and societies in denial of God’s true nature, Paul discusses the problem for those, Jew or gentile, who think they do know God and think they are doing fine with being good.

What does 2:1 say we are without, if we judge others by some standard or other?

How is any excuse for judgment of others removed?

What is the basis of God’s judgment?

When it comes to judging others for their sins, what does Paul say is going on in our own lives?

In v.4, what are all of us actually depending on to forestall condemnation by God?

When God shows kindness and patience, what is his purpose?

Hypothetically, if we don’t repent, what are we accumulating?

Basically, what is Paul saying to any of us who might suppose we’re doing pretty good at being righteous?

In 2:6, what is the basis of judgement?

And what was in 2:2?

What is the one way to stand before God on our own and receive eternal life?

What is the other alternative, and what produces this outcome?

Who will be condemned?

How important is race or heritage in the outcome of judgement?

For those who do good, what would the outcome of judgement be?

Why are Jew and Gentile going to face the same judgement with the same standards?

So in v.12, who will be punished for sin?

Who will be judged by what the law teaches and commands?

What is necessary to be considered righteous on the basis of the law? (v.13)

Since Paul says people can sin apart from the law, and be condemned apart from the law (v.12), what sort of standard exists for people (gentiles) who do not have the law (v.14)?

Even without revelation and commandments from God, what do all people have in some measure in their hearts? How is this demonstrated?

Just on the basis of their own hearts or consciences, what experience does everyone have with living up to their own standards? (v.15)

If the secrets of men's hearts are revealed at judgement, and everyone has some standard of right and wrong in their hearts that they don't always live up to, then what will be the outcome on that judgment day? (v.16)

Since Paul's gospel declared this, what is a basic point that the gospel must make clear to those who hear it, before the power of the gospel can do them any good?

Romans 2:17-29, actions and motives matter

Since in the previous verses Paul was emphasizing that everyone, Jew and Gentile, fails in the area of living up to whatever standard of right and wrong they may know, and therefore stands accused by their own conscience before God, he now emphasizes the idea that what we do means more than what we say, and a clean heart is more important than a genealogy or ritual observance.

Who did Paul specifically address his comments to in these verses, at least rhetorically?

What might be a basis of confidence for those of Jewish heritage?

How might knowing the law lead to a sense of self-righteousness?

Consider for the moment someone who is not a Jew, but was raised in a family that had Christian scruples. Could these same tendencies apply? Explain.

If “you” teach others, what should happen to “you” in the process? (v.21)

Paul lists several things that would clearly be violation of Jewish law, and of Christian principles as well. What does he say happens when people say one thing, in the name of God, but violate the very teachings they present as God’s standard?

Circumcision was a specific sign of the covenant between God and Abraham, and integrated into the Sinai covenant between God and Abraham’s Israelite descendants. What did Paul say circumcision required to be meaningful?

Returning to his argument that Gentiles also have a moral standard based on conscience or culture or life experience, how does he suggest God would view the uncircumcised but morally upright Gentile?

What about the circumcised but law violating Jew?

So in order for the law to do a person any good, what must they do?

What was Paul breaking down with his arguments directed at Jewish ideas of justification in these verses?

In v.28, what did Paul say makes a person a real Jew?

Who or what can and who or what cannot give a person the kind of heart described?

Since physical circumcision is a cutting off of a bit of very personal flesh, what do you think heart circumcision would be?

Whose praise should we care about?

In these verses Paul is not teaching that God had disavowed his ancient covenant with Abraham or the promises made to Israel, but he does teach that circumcision and law keeping go hand in hand, in order to be of benefit, and that violation of the law leads to condemnation, not only by virtue of the law itself, but even by comparison with Gentiles who have similar moral standards for their own reasons. The law in itself can only justify those who keep it completely, without violation, and that is a huge problem since no one succeeds in keeping the law completely, neither the law God gave at Sinai nor even the law of one’s own conscience.

Romans 3:1-8, rebutting a twisted interpretation

Paul had concluded in the previous verses that generally speaking, the Jew would find himself convicted by the law he celebrated, just as the gentile would be convicted by his own conscience, and that a righteous gentile would enjoy the same standing with God as a Jew who kept the law. In these verses Paul corrects what seems to have been a common

misunderstanding of that message.

As Paul wrote, was there anything special about being Jewish, since sin is a problem for both Jew and gentile?

What does it mean, to be entrusted with God's word?

What does this tell us about Paul's view of the Old Testament writings?

When humans are unfaithful, what does that actually tell us about God, his plan or his character?

Who wrote the passage Paul quoted in v.4, and in what circumstances?

At the time when David had committed the sin that led to the Psalm of repentance, what did Nathan the prophet say David and done? (See 2 Samuel 12:9, 14)

Based on the idea that God's forgiveness and generosity are highlighted in contrast to human sin, what were some people suggesting about accountability? (v.5)

In fact, do we make God look good by doing evil (again, recall what Nathan told David)?

Nevertheless, what were some people suggesting as a conclusion from what Paul taught about human sin and God's righteousness?

Concluding that sin is somehow a good thing results in what?

Paul affirmed that Jew or gentile, we are all dependant on God's merciful forgiveness. However, he insisted that this did not lead to a conclusion that sin is permissible or somehow a twisted way of giving God glory. He emphatically argued that sin is devastating (1:18ff) and results in condemnation, unless we embrace the one solution God has offered in the gospel.

Romans 3:9-20, no one can stand on their own righteousness.

Paul had just written of people whose condemnation is just. Now what does he say about the rest of us?

What is the big common ground for Jews and Gentiles?

With a series of verses from the Psalms, Ecclesiastes, and Isaiah, how does Paul paint the human condition?

How many are righteous?

How many really get it, or seek God?

Who has followed their own way, apart from God?

Who says the right thing?

Where do people go and what do they do?

All in all, again, how does Paul picture the plight of the common man?

Paul seems to be referring to all of the Old Testament with his reference to the law in v.19 (see John 10:34, 15:25 or 1 Corinthians 14:21 for similar usage). In a sense, what is the law then telling people to do, and to acknowledge?

What does the law, or the Old Testament, make people aware of?

With scathing language from the scriptures, Paul asserted that all of us have been caught up in sin and made costly choices to our own detriment as well as the harm of others. He also said that the law brings this tragic problem to our attention, the grievous need for something we can not provide for ourselves. In the verses that follow, Paul will succinctly point out the gospel answer to that universal need.

Romans 3:21-31, how to be counted righteous

Paul has declared that no one will be considered righteous in God's sight on their own merits, because everyone's obedience to doing what is right falls short. However, he has also stated that the gospel is God's power to save.

Where does the righteousness under consideration here come from?

Does it come from obeying (the) law?

What relationship do the Law and Prophets (ie, the Old Testament) have to this righteousness from God? (v.21b)

Again in v.22, as in v.21, where does this righteousness come from?

If righteousness is not attained through law, then what is it acquired through?

Who gets or has this righteousness?

What is the great leveler here, that puts everyone in the same position of need before God?

What does everyone fall short of?

What does that mean?

Because of sin, we cannot justify ourselves by any means whatsoever. Nevertheless, how can we be justified?

Who all can be justified, and at what cost?

In fulfilling the Law, and receiving its testimony, what was Jesus presented as? (v.25)

What does atonement mean?

What about justification?

Jesus' blood plus what on our part provides our justification and atonement?

How does the sacrifice of Jesus demonstrate the justice of God? (v.25-26)

Not only is God just, who is he for those who believe in Jesus?

When we try to justify ourselves, it often amounts to rationalization, making excuses and explanations. What about when God justifies those who have faith in Jesus?

Since God shown no favoritism (2:11), and there is no difference since all have sinned, and our justification is a free gift of God through faith in what Jesus has done, what is excluded for each and everyone of us, no matter who we are? (v.27ff)

Paul restates his teaching, what cannot justify us, and what can justify us?

Whose God are we talking about here?

On what basis will circumcised (Jew) and uncircumcised (Gentile) be justified?

Though Paul's explanation of the value of the law comes in chapters 6-7, what does he assert here about faith and the law – are they in conflict? Or does faith make the law useless?

The classic conclusion in Romans 3:23, all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God, is something every Christian should know. God has provided a universal answer in Christ to a universal need in sinful humanity. Everyone, everywhere, needs to know that God offers them atonement, justification, and redemption through the blood of Jesus.

Romans 4:1-12, Abraham's justification by faith

With a rhetorical question, Paul turns to the scriptures to illustrate his point that faith is and always has been the basis of justification and righteousness before God.

Though nearly 2000 years removed from Abraham, what relationship could Paul claim

with him?

First then, if Abraham had been justified by works, by doing the right thing all the time, who might that make him better than?

No matter how well he or anyone lived, what would still be their position before God?

However, the scripture does not say that Abraham was considered righteous for what he had done, instead, what does it say?

Paul emphasized that the description is of Abraham being “credited” as righteous. What is the difference between something being earned and something being credited?

So the contrast is emphasized in v.5 that we (anyone) obtain righteousness not as an earned obligation, in fact God owes us nothing for any good thing we may do, but how?

What kind of people are or can be justified in this way, by trusting God?

Who else besides Abraham’s story did Paul turn to for confirmation of his teaching?

What is the gift or blessing David wrote of in Psa. 32?

So again what kind of people is it that God is willing to justify, by faith, not on the basis of what has been earned?

Considering our own history and background, would we want to be people who stand before God to be justified on the basis of what we have done, or on the basis of forgiveness and covering?

In v.9 Paul again reminds us with another rhetorical question that some might suppose Israel has a special privilege in this opportunity to be forgiven and blessed by God. However, he again asserts that the basis of the forgiveness and justification for Abraham was what?

And in answer to his questions in v.10, when was Abraham credited as righteous because he believed God? Before or after circumcision was given? (Genesis 15:6-8, 17:9-11)

Thus when Abraham did receive circumcision as a sign of the covenant God made with him (v.11), what did it have to do with his righteousness?

What is the purpose or value of a sign or seal as circumcision is described?

Recall, what relationship had Paul claimed with Abraham in v.1?

Now in v.11, who does Paul tell us Abraham is father of?

As in v.3, 4, 5, 10, what word (besides belief) did Paul use to describe how the uncircumcised become righteous in God's sight?

Paul had affirmed in 2:25 that circumcision had value only if a person kept the law. Now he tells us that Abraham is the father of certain circumcised people... those who do what?

And as an emphasis on his point that righteousness cannot be dependant on circumcision, what sequence did Paul again remind us of in v.12?

Paul's discussion of Abraham's faith and the righteousness God credited him with continues in the verses that follow, emphasizing still more emphatically that it is faith that facilitates God's gift of righteousness in Christ, and not obedience to law (any law). Faith precedes law, and faith provides what law cannot, the blessing of having transgressions forgiven and sins covered.

Romans 4:13-25, faith and the promise

In the previous verses, Paul established that Abraham's being credited with righteousness by faith preceded his circumcision, and that the circumcision was a sign/seal of the covenant already established on the basis of faith.

What was the promise of Abraham's heritage based on, and what was it not based on?

Suppose some people were so successful in following the law that they were worthy of receiving the promises made to Abraham. What would that say about people who are not that successful, and depend on faith (which would include Abraham)?

In fact, no one is that successful in following the law, but instead, what does the law (any law) bring upon those who violate it?

Can one break a law that doesn't exist, or step over a line that isn't there? (v.15)

Nevertheless, there always are standards, as Paul has already written, even if we made up our own on the basis of conscience. And based on any such standard, wrath is the inevitable result of the inevitable violation.

If some people could succeed in achieving righteousness based on law, then everyone would have to be held to that standard. Since no one (chapter 3) succeeds in living wholly righteous lives on the basis of keeping the law, what do we again come down to as the basis of the promise received by Abraham and passed along to his heirs?

And again, who are the heirs of Abraham (v.16)?

What prophetic promise did Paul cite to verify his assertion that Gentiles who have faith are also Abraham's descendants?

Whose perspective makes Abraham the father of those who have faith?

How did Paul describe God here? (v.17)

In Abraham's lifetime, God spoke of things that had not yet happened and people who did not yet exist with certainty. What does that reveal about Him, and what does it have to do with us, and coming to God in faith?

As an old man with an old wife who had never born a child, what did Abraham still hope for?

How are hope and belief connected?

Is it possible, and is it reasonable, to believe in and expect the amazing when facing the mundane realities of life?

Abraham had no basis for confidence in himself or Sarah in the production of children, yet he had confidence. What was his confidence based on?

When we look at the "real world" limitations of ourselves and fellow believers, can we like Abraham keep on trusting God without wavering?

Verse 17 has an obvious reference to the resurrection of Jesus. Connecting verse 17 to verse 19 gives another reference point to God giving "life to the dead." What else did Paul have in mind?

When Abraham glorified God, what was he persuaded of? (v.20-21)

How would that sequence (being persuaded God has the power to do what he says, and giving him glory in faith) apply to us?

Who needed to know that God credited Abraham with righteousness because of faith?

Why?

Our faith is based on God bringing the dead to life, much as Abraham's was. Whose death to life experience is key to our faith?

Paul refers to Jesus being "delivered over to death" (4:25, NIV). What does that say about Jesus' death?

So in v.25, why did Jesus die?

And if his death paid the price for our sins, what does his resurrection make possible?

Romans 4 stresses the role of faith in being acceptable to God. We must trust him, as Abraham did, and only on that basis can we be counted righteous. The primary focus of our faith is the heart of the gospel, the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus. Because he was delivered to death for our sins we have forgiveness, and because he is alive and victorious over death we have justification. We need faith in a savior who both died for our sins and rose again in victory to be forgiven and justified.

Romans 5:1-11, faith, peace, hope, and rejoicing

5:1 is a classic statement of the value of faith, putting our trust in Jesus Christ. Being justified by faith, what is there between us and God?

Who accomplished the peace we enjoy?

If we stand, where do we stand?

Hebrews speaks of boldly coming into the presence of God, through Jesus Christ. Here Paul describes the same idea as standing in God's grace. Having this grace through faith, rather than falling short of the grace of God (3:23) what is our hope?

Paul speaks of rejoicing in hope. On the basis of that hope, what else can Christians rejoice in?

How is rejoicing in trouble made possible, even sensible?

What does suffering produce?

And what are the other steps in this sequence of growth through testing?

Paul seems to take us in a circle, beginning with rejoicing in hope (v.2) and ending with hope as an outcome of suffering, properly viewed (v.4).

Why doesn't hope let us down? (v.5)

How does God's love get into our hearts?

5:6 is another classic affirmation of God's purpose accomplished in Christ. When did Jesus come?

Many historical, political and spiritual elements came together to make the timing just right, but in a personal sense, what makes the timing right for each of us?

What was our condition and situation when Jesus died for us?

How often will people lay down their lives for others, even if the other is well known for being upright or a doer of good?

How does this make what Jesus did quite remarkable?

Despite our powerless and sinful condition, what was God's key attitude toward us?

How likely is it that God will finish what he started, considering the scope of his commitment to our salvation?

Paul had previously discussed wrath as the inevitable outcome of sin, unless we come to God in faith to be justified. So, who or what saves us from God's wrath?

What relationship do sinners have with God? (v.10)

What happened to that relationship, for the Christian, through Christ?

What does reconciled mean?

Paul previously stressed that while Jesus' death met one part of our spiritual need, his resurrection is just as vital (4:25). In 5:10 the emphasis on the living Christ is that he reconciled us to God by dying for us, and is able to do what on an ongoing basis to finish the process?

And again, what is our reasonable and appropriate reaction to the awareness of what God has done for us through our Lord Jesus Christ?

These verses talk about our hope, our faith, our justification, our reconciliation, our salvation. All through the passage, whose power and whose action is it that achieves the needed deliverance and ongoing assistance for the Christian?

Romans 5:12-21, Death through Adam, Life through Christ

Paul had just been writing about righteousness that is by faith, and the hope and joy that accompany being reconciled and saved. Jesus met our need at just the right time.

How did sin come into the world?

What did sin bring with it?

Who all has been affected by sin and death?

In v.12, is it just as a heritage from Adam that sin affects us, or do we have something to do with it ourselves?

As righteousness by faith came before the law, what else was already here before the law?

In a sense, when does sin count?

Even before the law was given though, Paul has already argued that everyone has a law within themselves, so between the time of Adam and Moses what was the human situation?

What is especially significant about Adam's sin, that is somewhat distinctive from everyone else afterward?

In v.14 who does Paul suggest Adam is symbolic of, in a problem/answer way?

Paul wrote that Adam foreshadowed Christ, but stressed the differences too in what each did and caused. How many sins caused the fall, and how many gifts brought redemption?

How many were afflicted with death because of the first sin?

How big an answer to the problem of sin and death is made available by God's grace?

Adam was "one man" and Jesus was "one man." What did Adam bring about? (v16)

And what did Jesus bring about?

Again Paul has made the point that for all men, what is there apart from the grace of Jesus Christ?

If we remain in the condition Adam left us in, who or what reigns? (v.17)

If we enter into the justification of Jesus, who or what reigns?

Paul's language here stresses the abundance of the grace of God in v.15 and v.17. How sufficient is God's grace as described?

Either death reigns over us, or else we reign in life through grace and credited righteousness. Who all can reign, instead of being ruled over?

How many sins brought death?

How many righteous acts are sufficient to

remedy
that sin and death? (v.18)

Whose disobedience, and whose obedience are the core of the problem and the basis of the solution (v.19)?

What is one effect and actually purpose of the law? (v.20)

Can there be too many sins for Jesus to deal with? Why or why not?

If death reigns (v.17) then what is the power behind the throne (v.21)?

If we reign in life (v.17) then what is the power behind the throne (v.21)?

What is the necessary companion of grace?

Grace and righteousness result in what?

Who is again central to all of this?

Romans 6:1-14, crossing the line

Paul has taught us that everyone has a deadly sin problem, but God has provided a universal answer in the righteousness of Jesus Christ which is credited to anyone by faith. He has shown that this was always God's promised intention, consistent with his relationship with Abraham and sufficient to meet the needs of all Adam's race, who like him have been enslaved by sin. In chapter 6 Paul will again address the idea that grace does not mean sin is irrelevant, that we have a way of life made possible by the freedom from sin we have received, and that we must live in a way that honors God and sustains our spiritual freedom.

Returning to a theme mentioned in 3:5-6, what idea does Paul once again repudiate?

Where is sin in relation to a Christian? Why?

What event did Paul focus on to typify the change Christians have undergone?

Who or what are Christians baptized into?

What event(s) in Jesus' life is(are) the focus of the baptismal experience?

Before baptism, what relationship does a person have with sin?

And afterward?

When Jesus' rose from the dead, whose glory was involved in that event?

Since Paul is connecting the resurrection of Jesus with our new life after being baptized into Christ, what must our new life come through?

Regarding the glory of God, recall that it rested on Mt. Sinai (Ex 24:16), filled the newly dedicated tabernacle (Ex 40:35), was revealed when the first priests were ordained (Lev 9:23) and filled the newly dedicated temple (1 Ki 8:11). Paul has mentioned God's glory here in Rom several times, including 1:23, 3:23 and 5:2 as what man has abandoned and fallen short of, but also what Christians hope for.

Again, after being raised from a spiritually dead condition, how are baptized believers supposed to live?

In v.5 what does baptism unite us with? And prepare us for?

As a figure of the resurrection of Christ, and what ours will be, what process has already occurred in baptism?

What is the penalty or consequence of sin?

So what does death do in regard to sin?

Baptism means dying with Christ, with an expectation of what? (v.8)

Jesus has died and risen, so what power does death have over him?

The "once for all" nature of Jesus' life and accomplishments is emphasized several times in Hebrews. What is the once for all act mentioned here?

Who (potentially) benefits from Jesus' death and resurrection?

After facing death once, what is Jesus status and purpose now? (v.10)

What is illustrated for us then, in Jesus dying to sin and living to God?

What does this mean about our daily lives?

As baptized believers, what can we choose to do or not do? (v.12)

Who chooses what to do with our body, in part and in whole?

In sacrificial obedience (see Rom 12:1) to whom shall we present our bodies for service?

In a kind of warning, what does Paul suggest can happen if we allow it to? (v.12, 14)

Law does not enable us to enjoy victory over sin, and freedom from its mastery. What does?

If not sin, then who shall our master be?

Romans 6:15-23, the gift or the just desserts

The law is not the answer to sin, and is not our master in Christ, but does that mean what we do doesn't matter, that sin is OK?

What is our obligation, having become servants of Christ and of righteousness?

What is the outcome of being enslaved by sin?

What is the outcome of being enslaved by obedience, living to please God?

Whoever we are, and whether Jew or Gentile, what was our former condition? (v.16)

And what changed our condition? (v.17)

Considering what was described in vv1-14, what do you think the doctrine or form of teaching that Christians have obeyed refers to? (Consider also 1 Peter 4:17)

What are the only two real choices for servitude?

How can a person be both free and a slave at the same time?

Why did Paul teach by analogy?

Do we still need teaching put into illustrations of human experiences? Explain.

As illustrated in ch.1, what is the tendency when in service to sin? (v.19)

If service to sin leads to ever more sinful behavior, what should service to righteousness lead to?

In the freedom mentioned in v.20 good or bad? Does everyone agree?

Paul points out that the things pursued in "freedom" from the control of righteousness yield no real or lasting benefit. In fact, what two things do come from them? (v.21)

What benefit(s) occur in service to righteousness, which is service to God?

Reminding us that we're not talking about earning eternal life, what are we actually capable of earning, as sinners?

And how do we acquire eternal life?

What's the difference between wages and a gift?

Romans 7:1-6, free from the law

Paul wrote that we are all sinners, but also that God provided a solution to our bondage to sin and the death penalty we faced, in the righteousness available to us by faith in Jesus Christ. In chapter 6 Paul illustrated the change that has taken place in Christians by describing the connection between baptism into Christ and separation from sin through the power of His death, burial and resurrection. Now in chapter 7 Paul describes how that same freedom from servitude to sin and death is also freedom from the law we could not keep without violation.

Not all of the Roman Christians were Jews, but what did Paul expect all of them to be familiar with?

Continuing the theme of being dead to the past, what authority did Paul describe as being limited by death?

How did Paul illustrate that the law no longer bound a person once a death had occurred?

Thus, how long is the God-given law of marriage binding on a person?

What would free a married woman to marry another man without committing adultery?

Using the particular law of marriage as his illustration, what did Paul say the Christian brothers had died to, by participating in Christ's death?

Instead of belonging to the law, who do the Christian brothers belong to then?

As expressed in v.4, what is the purpose of the new life and new relationship Christians have in the resurrected Christ?

Referring back to the reasoning about formerly being servants of sin, what effect did the law, with its rules, have on us?

When sin rules in the flesh, and knowledge of the law produces guilt, what sort of fruit is produced? (v5)

However, what has the Christian died to, thanks to Jesus' death burial and resurrection?

And what is the Christian released from?

Where is the motivation to serve the Lord found, if not in law and rules?

Paul used the word “new” to describe the way of serving God in the Spirit rather than in the written code of law. We are reminded again of the promise of a new covenant written on the heart instead of the broken covenant previously written on stone (see Jeremiah 31:31-34, Hebrews 8:7ff). When the writer of Hebrews spoke of the old covenant that had been broken, he wrote of God finding fault with the people. In the next few verses of Romans 7, Paul will likewise declare that the problem isn’t with the commands God gave, which were as good as any law could be, the problem is with the human habit of disobedience leading to condemnation, requiring a solution other than any law.

Romans 7:7-25, the human habit of failing our own expectations

Having written that Christians have died to the law and are free from it, Paul nevertheless emphasizes that the law is not bad, not a failure, but rather that it makes clear human failure to do what is right.

What mistaken conclusion might someone come to that Paul repudiates with rhetorical questions?

While the law is not sin, what does the law reveal?

Note that Paul does not say he would not have sinned apart from the law, but rather that he would not have known what sin was.

What effect did Paul ascribe to the commandment, “Do not covet”?

In your own experience, from childhood on, does being told not to do something sometimes have the effect of making the forbidden thing attractive? Why might that happen?

Is Paul suggesting people would behave better without rules, or what?

How did the law produce death as described in v.9?

Is Paul suggesting ignorance is better than knowledge?

Paul that the commandment was intended to bring life, but on a personal level, what did it bring?

In v.8 and again in v.11 Paul pictures sin as an active adversary. What does this adversary do, and with what effect?

So is the law good or bad or what?

The commandment was a means of being made aware of sin, and so a kind of device to deceive and discourage, but what actually produced the (spiritual) death Paul was talking about?

As described in v.13, what was one purpose of the law?

Why is it a good thing for sin to be seen for what it really is?

As previously mentioned, why does the law fail to meet our need? (v.14)

What is the problem described in 15-16, and was it unique to Paul?

How does the inner conflict described validate the law?

On the other hand, how does that same inner conflict demonstrate the weakness or inadequacy of the law?

Left to ourselves and governed by our own flesh, without spiritual direction or instruction, how would we do? (v.17-18)

Do you think people in general want to “do what is good” as Paul describes for himself?

Have you ever experienced the personal disappointment of wanting to do what is good and right, but letting evil have its way?

What causes the inner struggle between good and evil, and the failure to do the preferred good?

What was the law or principle that Paul used to describe his own experience with trying to “be good”? (v.21)

Where is the struggle taking place that is described in vv22-23?

Since this is the human condition in regard to sin and obedience to the law, where does that leave a person on their own? (v.24)

What is the answer to the question posed in v.24b?

What then is the only answer to the dilemma of not being able to “be good” by the standards of the law, or even as good as we’d like to be on our own?

For the believer, where is the mind leaning, in the great internal struggle, and where is the

flesh pulling?

One thing the law does is identify sin as sin. Unfortunately, in the human condition, the awareness of sin not only provides just condemnation, but also provides additional opportunities for rebellion and self deception. Given our inclination toward sin, we find ourselves in desperate need of help to overcome the control of the flesh, which help Paul again concludes is only found in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Romans 8:1-17, living according to the Spirit

Having acknowledged that the law is holy and good, but that human beings are weak in the flesh and disobedient to it, Paul says again that the only answer to sin is deliverance through Christ. Now, reemphasizing the message of chapter 6, he affirms that we have a new and different life in Christ empowered and informed by the Spirit of God.

If you are in Christ, what is gone?

There are two fundamental laws in under consideration. One law says that if you sin, what do you have?

The other law says that if you are in Christ, what do you have?

In reference to the law that Paul had been discussing in chapter 7, the law of commandments, what undermines or weakens that law?

Because of the fact that the law was given to mankind in the flesh, and thus weakened, basically beyond full obedience, what was it unable to do?

How did God do what the law could not do?

Jesus was like us, except for what?

Since Jesus differed from us in the matter of sin, what was he capable of being in our behalf?

Since Jesus showed by his own life that a man in the flesh could live without sin, what did that in itself do for us or to us? (v.3b)

At the same time Jesus condemned sin in the flesh, what did he meet or make it possible for us to receive credit for? (v.4)

So to live under the law, is to be condemned and dead in sin, and yet to live in Christ with the Spirit's help is to do what about the law?

If the flesh is in control, where is the mind?

What about if we live by the Spirit, then where is the mind?

If the mind is on what the Spirit desires, what would that be, what does the Spirit desire?

For the unchanged person, the person whose motivation is the satisfaction of the flesh, what is the product of the mind-set? (v.6)

In contrast, for the person with new life by the Spirit in Christ, what sort of things accompany that Spiritual mind-set?

What is the relationship between the mind of man in the flesh, apart from Christ, to God?

Is it reasonable to expect a person who has not died with Christ and been raised with him by the power of the glory of God to obey God or please him?

Why or why not?

So for the person who is not in Christ, whether a Jew under the law or a Gentile without the law, is it possible to really do what God wants or please God? (vv7-8)

Is it reasonable for a Christian to expect unsaved people, whether they are generally “good” people or not, to embrace Christian values and reasoning, without first being converted and beginning a new life?

What are Christians (“you” in v.9) controlled by?

What must you have to be a part of Christ?

In Christ, with the help of the Spirit, is the body in control, or what?

At the same time, what is alive within Christians?

That living spirit comes from righteousness, which comes from faith in Christ, and because of the power of the resurrection, what else will live? (v.11)

So by losing our life for Christ’s sake, giving up our life for him, what do we receive?

Who or what then do we have an obligation to, if not to our own bodies?

If our focus is on our flesh, satisfying it or preserving it, what will we get?

But if we put sin to death in our goals and purposes, what will we have?

Being led by God’s Spirit means having what relationship with him?

While the law made people aware of sin and failure and death, producing fear, what does the Spirit give instead?

When Christians cry out to God, who is he to them?

The word “Abba” has been described as a term of personal endearment, expressing a close relationship, somewhat analogous to the English word, “Daddy.”

Beyond mere words of affirmation, what other assurance or testimony do we have as Christians that God is our father? (v.16)

In v.17, what do Christians share with Christ, both good and difficult (which may be another kind of good)?

Isn't it remarkable that Jesus died for us so that he could share his inheritance with us?

Why would he do that?

Romans 8:18-27, the hope of final deliverance

What two things did Paul contrast in v.18?

What sort of sufferings might he have had in mind, or might occur to you?

Again we have the word glory, sharing in his glory in v.17, and glory to be revealed in us in v.18. What do you think Paul wanted to communicate to us and stir in us with that word?

When Paul wrote of created things in v.19, what attitude did he attribute to physical reality?

What is pictured here as the grand final event of all history?

Is the creation everything it might have been or is something wrong?

What is the creation subject to (v.20-21) that will finally be ended?

When will that end come?

As Paul described it, what has the universe been going through? (v.22)

Remembering Romans 5:12-21, what would have brought about the futility, decay, and groaning Paul describes in these verses?

What is the creation trying to “give birth” to, in God's purposes?

Meanwhile, as the cosmos tries to bring forth God's children, what do those children experience while here on earth?

In v.14-16 Paul wrote of Christians being sons of God as a reality. Now in v.23 he speaks of adoption as something to wait for. Is being the child of God already real, yet to come, or both in some sense? What is already real, and what is yet to come.

Similarly in v.24 Paul speaks of being saved as a reality, and yet since it is in hope, what remains to happen?

Paul had previously written of Christian hope in 5:5. Here in 8:24-25, what does he attribute to hope, what does hope do for us?

Think of some things you have hoped for, and then received, and how you felt. Do you think it is better to receive something you've hoped for, or something completely unexpected? Explain.

Paul was just writing about the fulfillment of hope, and how hope sustains us. What else do we have to help and sustain us?

What is one area of weakness Paul thought we all need help in?

A few verses back Paul was writing about the groans of creation in birth pangs, and the inward groanings of children of God awaiting glory. Now what sort of "groans" or more-than-verbal expression does he write about? (v.26)

Do you ever feel like there are things you just don't know how to express in prayer or otherwise communicate?

Just what is Paul assuring us of in these verses about the Spirit's help for Christians?

Is it a good thing or a bad thing that the Lord searches our hearts? Why?

What is completely open to God?

When the Spirit intercedes for saints, what is he in complete harmony with?

Romans 8:28-39, more than conquerors

These verses provide some of the most positive assurances of Christian success and security in the scriptures. We have assurances of God's foreknowledge and planning for the victory of the children of faith, and assurances that he is well able to finish what he started in our behalf. These verses are not about the internal conflict and tendency toward sin that we experience in the flesh, nor about our uncertainties or inconsistencies, but rather are altogether about

God's power and purpose to see his children successfully survive and thrive in every challenge and over every adversary.

What did Paul confidently affirm that "we know"?

Does working "for the good" mean everything is always good in Christian experience, or what?

The people God is working for are described in two ways in v.28. Who are they?

When does God know the end or the outcome of anything or everything?

Paul has already written at length in this letter about the need for our heart and will to be set on spiritual things, and the power of our choices in what we serve. Given that backdrop of asserting that we do make choices that matter, before and after becoming Christians, when Paul writes of being "predestined" what is he saying about God and about us?

What do God's purpose and foreknowledge and predetermined plan for his children all want to bring about in the Christian? (v.29)

So who does God want us to be like, and how much like him?

In this description, what is the relationship Christians have with Jesus?

While Paul has previously said much about our own role in determining who or what we serve, whose volition and plan and power are under consideration in v.30?

So then, whose "job" is it to justify the believer and glorify the saved?

To say that God "predestined" those he "foreknew" means that God always had a plan of how his people would be saved, and what those people would have to become in being saved, and both the knowledge and the power to accomplish his purpose for their (our) sake. So then, what would be the answer to Paul's rhetorical question in v.37?

And again, what is the answer to the premise and question of v.32?

So, considering God's demonstrated commitment to his plan for our salvation, what should we be anxious about?

If God (the judge) justifies the believer, who is there to bring charges against the recipients of God's grace?

If Jesus, at the right hand of God, has the authority to condemn, but has already died for us and is our defense attorney, who can condemn us?

Notice in v.32-33, what has God already done for us, and what is he doing for us?

And in v.34 what has Jesus done for us, and what is he doing for us?

Given the commitment and actions of the God the Father and Christ Jesus described here, what conclusion can we draw about Christ's love... what is the answer to Paul's questions in v.35?

What kinds of things did Paul mention as potential but ineffectual challenges to the Lord's love toward us?

Considering v.35-36, in the powerful assurances of these verses, was Paul suggesting an easy walk through life for Christians?

Despite potentially difficult circumstances and challenges in the flesh, what is the certainty of God's promise his consistency in bringing believers to glory?

V.37 sums up Paul's teaching of how Christians should view the challenges of the circumstances of our lives. What does it mean to be "more than conquerors"?

And on what specific basis are Christians "more than conquerors"?

Paul asserted that he was convinced in v.38. How did he demonstrate that in his life and experiences?

Expanding on the list of physical, mental and emotional challenges in v.35, what else did Paul exclude as insufficient to prevail against God's love for us?

Paul already wrote that the creation was subject to God's power for the purpose of bringing forth the glorious sons of God. What part of creation, no matter how powerful or beautiful or frightening or rebellious, can come between God and his child?

Again in v.39, what is the focus of God's love for us, where do we find it and share in it?

All in all, what is Paul's point, the thing he is stressing about God and our spiritual security in this section of verses?

Romans 9:1-18, God's way

With a very strong statement of his conviction, what did Paul describe as a source of great sorrow in his life?

In v.3, how strong was his desire to see his fellow Jews turn to Christ?

What advantages did Paul see that his own people had received from God?

In the Bible, the word Patriarch usually refers to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Jacob's twelve sons. Who were their heirs?

Historically, in terms of knowing God or achieving his purposes, where would any of us be without the people of Israel?

How did Paul describe Christ in v.5?

Did the rejection of Christ by many Jews mean God's plan didn't work?

Reminding us of the discussion of faith, and being heirs of Abraham by faith rather than genetics in chapter 4, what did Paul observe about the make-up of Israel? (v.6-7)

As Paul is describing, does being a Jew necessarily make you a child of Abraham?

Referring back to the fact that Abraham fathered at least 7 other sons, besides Isaac, who have no heritage in Israel, what does Paul describe as the key element here in v.7-8 in being the offspring or seed of Abraham?

Paul describes the children of promise in several ways in these verses. What are some of them in vv6-8?

Even though Abraham was already the father of Ishmael, what did God state in his promise? (v.9)

Continuing to illustrate that God had a plan and a means of fulfilling it, who else did Paul mention as examples of God choosing and promising based on his own wisdom and knowledge?

Since God chose Jacob before he or Esau were born, what was not a factor in the choice?

Did the fact that they hadn't been born mean that God didn't know what kind of men they would be or what they would do?

And yet, since they hadn't yet done anything when God announced how things would be, whose choice was it that mattered?

Since God can see the whole picture, and the end from the beginning, what is he capable of that we are not?

When Moses pleaded for God's forgiveness and mercy toward Israel, with much the same assertion of concern Paul made here (compare Ex 32:32/Rom 9:3), God told Moses what Paul repeats here (Ex 33:19/Rom 9:15). What does he have a right to do, or not?

God's choices are not arbitrary, but even if they were, what is Paul saying about his authority and his rights to choose?

What does "it" (the promise, being a child of God, an heir of Abraham) depend on then? (v.16)

Not only can God use an Isaac or a Jacob, what other sort of person can God use to accomplish his purposes?

Who are some other stubborn, rebellious, or evil people that God has used in ancient times?

Does he still have the authority and power to use unbelievers to accomplish things he wants in this world?

Does the idea that God used Pharaoh mean that God made him a bad man or a stubborn rebel?

In terms of his power and authority and wisdom, who can God have mercy on, or withhold mercy from?

Romans 9:19-29, what if...

Raising the kind of question Job wrestled with, where would God's limitless power and foreknowledge seem to leave us, sinful human beings?

In a response reminiscent of God's questions for Job, what was Paul suggesting our problem is with such questions?

God has never objected to real questions or honest seeking, what does he object to as Paul describes it?

What did Paul compare God to, and ourselves?

If we are pottery shaped by God, is it more important to figure out the potter's purposes, or to do what we are made for?

Paul has already taught in this letter that God does not manipulate us like puppets, but lets

us choose whom we will serve and how we will live. Nevertheless, does God have the power, the right, and the authority to use people like puppets if he wanted to?

In fact, in dealing with those people who are unwilling to accept the will of God, what attribute has God shown toward them? (v.22)

Could God, if he chose, simply strike down evil doers and destroy those who will not be saved?

Why hasn't he done that?

For whose benefit has God dealt with those like Esau and pharaoh as he did? (v.23)

Paul will have more to say about being called by God in chapter 10, but for now, who has he called people from?

Regarding the call of the gentiles, along with the Jews, what change is predicted in the quotations from Hosea in vv25-26?

How does God view those who have answered his call?

Regarding Israel, what had Isaiah warned, 700 years before?

In fact, while God could have justly annihilated Israel altogether on more than one occasion, what had he done instead as in the Isaiah quotation in v.29?

Paul has asserted in chapter 9 that his own fellow Jews, on the whole, had a big problem in not following through from the ancient gifts and promises to the fulfillment in Christ. Making the case that this did not represent a failure on God's part at all, he wrote with strong affirmation that God knew what he was doing in the sovereign choices he made, that while God has the power and authority to do whatever he wants with human beings he has followed the path of patient revelation of his purposes so that humans of every nation could receive and answer God's call, becoming the objects of his love, members of his family, and the remnant that will be saved out of all the earth.

Romans 9:30-10:4, the wrong path

With another rhetorical question, Paul again asserts the basis of righteousness. What works, and what doesn't?

By and large, did Israel obtain righteousness or not?

What or who is the stumbling stone Paul referred to?

As Isaiah had foretold, what is necessary to be able to stand unashamed?

What was Paul's heartfelt desire?

How did he act on that desire?

What was positive in Paul's assessment of the people of Israel?

How had they missed the mark?

As previously taught in chapter 3, and reaffirmed in 5-6, can we achieve righteousness on our own, or how can we have righteousness?

The law worked for the purpose God intended, but what comes after the law, or finalizes what the law was leading up to?

While the law was specifically for Israel, who is righteousness in Christ for?

Is it possible for Gentiles taught in the scriptures to make the same mistake as Israel had made in 9:32, or be in the same predicament as 10:3? Explain.

Romans 10:5-21, hearing, believing, confessing

Paul had just written that Christ is the end of the law. Here he cites a passage from Leviticus 18:5 about the way to be counted righteous through the law. What is the way?

From what we know, exactly how many people could truly be counted righteous by the keeping of the law then?

Since the common human condition is not to be righteous through doing what the law says (because of disobedience), what righteousness is truly available to us?

Quoting from Deuteronomy 30:12-13, which affirms that pleasing God is within our reach, who did Paul apply those statements to? That is, who brings righteousness within our reach and how was it done?

Rather than looking for other solutions, when God has already provided the one solution in Christ, Paul affirms that what we need is right at hand. What is it? (v.8)

Paul was affirming that the proclamation of faith in Christ as the means to righteousness is indeed the end of the law, consistent with what Moses had taught and promised. What is it we need to confess? (v.9)

What else needs to accompany that verbal profession?

Paul had previously written (chapter 6) that baptism is a burial with Christ and a new beginning of a new life with him. What would baptism be without believing and

acknowledging that Jesus is Lord and victorious over death?

Again in v. 10, what things go hand in hand to bring about justification and salvation?

As indicated in the quotation cited in v.11, what does the kind of belief we are reading about mean?

And what does it accomplish?

Affirming again that God's work of justification through faith in Christ is complete and universal, what did Paul write about Jew and Gentile in v.12?

Whether Jew or Gentile, who will be saved?

In order for people to call on the name of the Lord, what has to happen? (v.14)

Paul here wrote a sequence in reverse, effect and cause. What is the order in which things must take place, using his terms here, in order for people to be saved?

Citing another Old Testament passage from Isaiah, what did Paul say Isaiah was foreseeing with his reference to beautiful feet? (v.15)

Paul affirms the need for people to take the gospel to those who have not yet heard it in these verses, and what is required for that to happen?

Note: Paul will personally comment on his own place in the going and preaching, and an opportunity for the Roman church to participate by helping him in the 15th chapter.

Paul had said that God's word did not fail (9:6), even though men failed to follow it. Here the sad reality was that there was a mixed response on the part of Israelites. No matter what God did, what had to happen for it to do anyone of any heritage any good? (v.16-17)

Did everyone who heard Isaiah believe what he said? What about everyone who heard Jesus? And everyone who heard Paul and other preachers of the gospel?

Some things about God we can know from nature (recall 1:20), but what is the one way anyone can know what they need to know to have saving faith in Christ? (v.17)

Paul had written that Jewish zeal at that time was fervent, but not based on knowledge (10:2). Was the requisite knowledge available to the people he had in mind? (v.18)

In reading the gospels it is apparent that many of Jesus' most ardent opponents understood the substance of what he taught and who he claimed to be, but they opposed the man and the message. So did Paul seem to suggest that ignorance or lack of

understanding were the problems with his fellow Jews who opposed the message of Christ? Or really, what was the problem? (v.19, 21)

How are the Gentiles who received the message of Christ described in the passage quoted in v.20?

Nevertheless, in the prophetic passages Paul cited in v.19 & 21, what is God's position in regards to stubborn and disobedient Israelites?

Romans 11:1-10, a remnant

Citing prophecy, Paul had written that most of the people of Israel had stubbornly rejected God's gracious offer of righteousness by faith (10:19-21). They had rejected God by choosing their own way, but what about the converse, had God rejected them?

Where did Paul fit into all of this?

Paul illustrated the contemporary situation by referring to Elijah's conversation with God, when he thought himself all alone in serving God (1 Ki 19:10-18). At that time, how had God's servants and spokesmen been treated by Israel and her rulers?

In Paul's day, how were the followers of Jesus being treated by many leaders of Israel?

What feelings had provoked Elijah's outburst about how bad Israel was?

How had God answered Elijah's expression of despair about his people?

Out of all Israel, 7000 weren't very many, but it was a lot more than 1. How did that equate with the situation in Paul's time where the Jewish people had been exposed to the gospel?

What was Paul's assertion about his own generation of Jews, in regard to salvation?

In contrast to the Jewish mainstream of his day (recall 10:1-5), how was the remnant of Paul's time set apart to God (11:5-6)?

Was Israel looking for a deliverer and a kingdom in Paul's generation?

Out of Israel, who found the Messiah and the kingdom they sought?

On whose terms did the chosen find and receive God's gift of grace?

As with Pharaoh, what did being stubborn and disobedient lead to for Israel?

Considering who the rock is in 9:33, who and what was Paul talking about with the quote

in 11:9? In other words, what table became a snare, etc.?

Apart from accepting Christ on God's terms, what is the predicament Israel finds herself in?

Again, what is the cause and what would be the solution to the problems enumerated for Israel in these verses?

Romans 11:11-21, don't be proud in your salvation

Paul had asked whether God rejected his people (v.1) and the answer was no. Now the question is whether the disobedience of Israel that he spoke of was irreversible. Is it?

While we know from other scriptures that God always intended for redemption in Christ to be available to everyone, Paul here mentions an impact preaching to the Gentiles had on Israel. What was that impact?

Paul then suggested that while Jews largely rejected the gospel, Gentiles benefitted. What would be even better, for all concerned?

Among the Roman Christians, who was Paul especially writing to in this section about the Jewish unbelief?

Though Paul was an Israelite, what was his special purpose as an instrument of God?

When Paul did as God had directed and preached to the nations, he knew it was controversial and confrontational to his own people. What did he hope that might accomplish?

Did Paul expect his preaching among the Gentiles to provoke a large scale turning of the Jews toward Christ, or what? (v.14)

Building on the idea that a large scale Jewish turning to Christ would be a great thing for everyone, what did Paul say their acceptance of the gospel would amount to here?

In the context, Paul does not seem to be writing of the resurrection of the dead when Jesus returns in v.15. If that isn't what he referred to, what else might he mean by "life from the dead"?

It seems likely the "firstfruits" mentioned in v.16 refers to Jews who have believed in Jesus. If that is so, then how are Gentile believers (v.13) supposed to regard the whole of the Jewish people?

In the illustration of branches and root, who would the branches be, and what about the root?

Even though “the branches” are holy, what has happened to some of the original branches? (v.17)

How are the Gentiles pictured in this parable?

After many generations of the church being primarily Gentile, do we still see Jews as the “original” branches, and the Gentiles as “grafted” branches? Explain.

In providing this illustration, what attitude is Paul warning Gentile believer not to adopt?

Pictured here as root supporting branches, and as Paul has stressed before, who is dependent on whom in salvation?

Whatever anyone else has done or failed to do, on what basis do we stand or fall? (v.20)

While Paul has emphasized God’s help for those who have received his Spirit, and the certainty of his loving support, what does he warn against here?

If others who were “God’s people” have fallen because of stubbornness and unbelief, what could happen to us as well?

Romans 11:22-32, one basis for salvation, and God isn’t finished yet

Is God a god of love or a god of justice?

Paul didn’t use the words “love” and “justice” here, rather kindness and severity (or sternness). Who is the kindness directed toward, and who the severity?

What should the Christian who has benefitted from the kindness of God do?

How can those with whom God is stern remedy their situation?

Is anyone ever too far gone for God to accept them back?

What does the amazing work of God in bringing pagans to salvation demonstrate about God and Israel? (v.24)

Paul writes of a mystery in v.25, apparently referring to what he had just described. The mystery relates (apparently) to the fact that anyone, pagan Gentile or stubborn Jew, who has been apart from God, can be grafted in and supported by the root. Since God can break off branches or graft in branches, from any stock, what attitude is again excluded on our part?

Verse 25 suggests that God knows how long the current situation of preaching the gospel to save souls will continue, that he knows when it will be finished. Since the world still

continues, what can we conclude about the “full number of the Gentiles,” have all who will be saved been saved yet?

Volumes have been written on Paul’s statement in v.26, “And so all Israel will be saved...” Considering everything Paul has already written about Jews and Gentiles and sin and redemption, would it be likely that he means every descendant of Israel who ever lived will be saved?

Since Paul wrote that “not all who are descended from Israel are Israel” in 9:6, is it possible “all Israel” in 11:26 refers to those who are not only born in that family, but also genuinely believe God, in whatever generation, the true Jews who are a remnant for God in any generation, a sort of “full number of Israel” corresponding to the “full number of the Gentiles”?

Paul also wrote that “a man is a Jew if he is one inwardly; and circumcision is circumcision of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the written code.” (2:28) Is it possible then that the “all Israel” of 11:26 refers to those who are Abraham’s children by faith (4:11-12, 16), who have been circumcised inwardly by the Spirit?

Many in recent generations have thought that the “all Israel” reference referred prophetically to a time when the nation of Israel would again occupy their land and then experience a great turning to God, so that a final generation of Jews would be saved. Much of what has been written and proclaimed from this perspective has not held up well over time, and has been subject to continual revision. Nevertheless, is it possible that “all Israel” refers to a particular generation of Jews turning en masse to faith in Christ?

Besides the four major ideas mentioned above there are no doubt others, and variations on these, regarding Israel as a people in God’s ongoing plans. It is clear that God does not want Christians of Gentile origin to look down on Jews or have disdain toward them. It is clear that Jew and Gentile alike have the same sin problem that needs resolution. It is clear that the means of salvation is the same for all, through faith in Christ. It is also clear that God has sovereign authority to determine the means of salvation and to judge those who reject it, whoever they are, and whatever they have previously experienced. The language in Romans 11:25ff suggest that God certainly has not washed his hands of the Jewish people, that he isn’t finished with them yet, and that in the process of saving all those who can be saved from the Nations (Gentiles) God is reaching out to Jews as well, perhaps in ways unique to their identity and heritage. It seems unlikely that we should await some sign or event regarding the Jewish people as a whole in any particular generation, since Paul consistently taught that we should live with an expectation of the Lord’s imminent return (as in 8:18-23, or 1 Thess. 5:1-7). How ever we understand the specific meaning of the phrase “all Israel will be saved,” Christians are to view the Jewish people as a people to whom God extends his open arms, desiring their acceptance of his offer of life in Christ, and to diligently uphold the light of truth until God’s purposes are fulfilled.

And Paul reminds us in v.26b, where did the deliverer, the anointed one, come from?

What family would he turn away from godlessness?

Whose sins would he take away, according to a covenant he himself established?

Even if (some) Jewish people reject God's plan and don't want to be different or answer to his call, can they undo what they are or what they have inherited?

It has often seemed to a hostile world that Jews are disproportionately represented among the wealthy, the powerful, the talented, the influential, and perhaps they are, because what does Paul affirm about God's gifts?

Speaking of mercy and disobedience in v.30-31, Paul suggests that the Gentile Christians have a responsibility, what is it?

We mustn't forget, who needs God's mercy, and who is he willing to show it to?

According to v.33, we may not completely "get it", but who does?

What is the answer to the rhetorical questions of v.34?

And as in v.35, who is God indebted to, who supplies him with anything he needs?

In v.36, recapitulating the idea of the sovereignty of God described in chapter 9, what is God the source of, and where must we turn for answers and for meaning?

So in view of God's greatness, and our own neediness, what are we left to do?

Romans 12:1-8, using what we have

At the end of chapter 8 Paul had strongly affirmed that we can depend on God, his love for us and his commitment to us being absolute. Then in chapters 9-11 Paul wrote about the fairness and sufficiency of God's plan and methods, even if men do not willingly accept his way or pursue it, and he especially expressed his grief for the plight of the mainstream of Judaism that had rejected the gospel of Christ. In the discussion of God's ongoing interest in the descendants of Abraham, Israel in the flesh, Paul reminded those of us who are of Gentile heritage that what we have received in Christ is a gift of God's grace, and nothing that should invoke personal pride or an sense of superiority. He warned in the final verses of chapter 11 that those who do not continue in faith can be broken off, just as disobedient Jews had been broken off, whereas any who turn to God in faith can be added in, whether Jew or Gentile. In view of that perspective on the greatness and sovereignty of God, and our own dependence upon his grace and mercy, whether Jew or Gentile, Paul continues in 12:1 with, "Therefore,..."

Since any Christian enjoys the benefits and promises of the Christian life and hope as a result of God's mercy, how should we all respond?

So God is not asking us for animals or dead things presented in sacrifice, but what, and with what characteristics?

What sort of service or worship is God wanting from us?

The NIV describes the dedication of our lives to holy service as a "spiritual act of worship." The KJV had called it a "reasonable service." The word here rendered "spiritual" or "reasonable" is the Greek word "*logikos*" from which we get "logic" and refers to commitment of the heart and mind, not merely duty or following rules, but a reasoned decision to seek what pleases God. Service to God, or worship of God, that is "holy and pleasing" to him is also rational.

While Paul had earlier written in chapter 6 that we have a new life of service to God through our sharing in Jesus' resurrection, what process still needs to take place in our lives and minds? (v.2)

From the earlier description in 1:18ff, what is the pattern of the world?

Paul wrote in chapter 8 of being able to please God only by having a mind controlled by the Spirit. When we shape our thoughts according to God's word and follow the way of the Spirit, what will we be capable of doing? (v.2, and recall Heb. 5:14)

What resources might we use to test (and approve) what God's will is?

Renewing a theme that Paul stressed in chapter 11, how should each of us view ourselves? (v.3)

Again, our mind has a real place in effective service to God, and our judgment here is not directed toward others, but where? What is the purpose of this thoughtful evaluation?

In a synopsis of a theme Paul had written about in 1 Corinthians 12-14, what did he compare the Christian community to? (v.4-5)

Is it a strength or a weakness that church members differ from one another?

Explain

Within the human body and the body of Christ, what is the relationship between the members?

Paul had asserted that he taught on the basis of the grace he had received in v.3. Grace equates not just with a free gift, but the gift includes an opportunity (and responsibility). Who all has something to offer, to put to use, in the body of Christ, by the grace of God? (v.6)

If someone excels at anything in the church, and that person's gift is by grace, then as with justification by grace (Rom 3:24), a fair question would be, "where, then, is boasting?" as in 3:27. If we serve in the body of Christ, using what God has given us, what is there to boast about?

Although there was a spiritual gift of prophesy (see 1 Cor. 12:28-31), not all prophesying was done by divinely inspired prophets. As noted in "The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament" for this word, *A prophecy is something that any believer may exercise as telling forth God's Word. This, however, does not make him a prophet which is used in the NT in a very restrictive sense. A prophet prophesies, but one who prophesies is not necessarily a prophet.* Speaking forth the word of God in an authoritative way would satisfy this idea as a practice even in churches that had not received spiritual gifts (recall Rom. 1:11-12). As Revelation 19:10 affirms, "the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy."

Paul writes that one having a gift for prophesying should use it, in proportion to his faith. Why wouldn't he? Why wouldn't everyone use the gifts they have for the good of the church?

What categories of functioning for the overall benefit of the body did Paul cover here?

The apostles, and then some others in connection with them, exercised spiritual gifts of a miraculous nature to confirm the message of Christ (recall Heb 2:3-4). If a person has "natural" talents for teaching or speaking, or has learned how to encourage or lead, is the natural or learned gift any less a gift of the grace of God than the miraculous event?

Are some people better at showing mercy than others? Some better at encouraging?

In any case, what should each of us do with the skills or talents or training we have as Christians, always bearing in mind the first 3 verses of this chapter?

Romans 12:9-21, the right attitude, the right reasons

Paul had been writing about seeing ourselves honestly, and using what we have in service to the body of Christ, the church. The last "gift" he mentioned was showing mercy cheerfully (12:8). What "gift" does he now urge us to use properly in v.9?

How could love be insincere?

Not everything is to be loved. What is excluded?

Rejecting evil doesn't leave us empty. What are we to hold on to?

How should Christians regard one another?

And what should we do about it?

Paul had written about a zeal that was misdirected (10:2), but what does he advocate here for Christians?

What is zeal, and just how can we keep it up, as we are instructed to here?

Consider that zeal or spiritual fervor must not depend on external circumstances, or we would not be told to personally maintain them.

What end or purpose should our zeal or fervor be directed toward?

In v.12 Paul lists three things, hope, affliction, and prayer, along with the ways we should behave in relation to them. What is the Christian hope and where does it come from?

If we have that hope, then what attitude will it foster in our lives?

Affliction might come from many sources, including harassment, health problems, or poverty, among others. Whatever the source of any affliction we may experience, what is the attitude with which to face it?

Hope is something that we get from knowing the promises of God, and affliction is something we usually experience from sources outside our control. What about prayer, is prayer just supposed to be a response to events or episodes in our lives?

Who are Christians specifically to share with?

What might be included in sharing with brethren who are in need?

When Paul wrote about elders (Titus 1:4ff, 1 Timothy 3:1ff) he said that they must be hospitable. What about the rest of us?

What are some ways of showing hospitality?

Paul wrote that we should hate what is evil (v.9), does that apply to people who harm us? (v.14)

Given the instruction in v.14 about blessing and not cursing, what effect should that have on our language and our thinking during the many mishaps of any given day?

What kinds of things should Christians share with each other, and why is this good?
(v.15)

“Live in harmony with one another.” Whose responsibility is that? Is it only with brethren who share the same sentiment or are easy to get along with, or what?

Again, Paul warns us against pride, but this time with an emphasis on our relationship with who?

Are all Christians going to be well off?

Attractive?

Smart?

Well groomed?

How are we supposed to act toward and think of those who fall below our own standards in any of these areas, or any areas at all?

Inevitably we are going to be the victims of other people’s bad behavior sometimes. How are we to respond, and not to respond?

When it comes to our behavior, whose opinion is supposed to matter, and why?

In v.18, what are we supposed to do to the best of our ability?

What if there are people around us who are hard to get along with?

Again, in v.19, what is excluded for Christians, and why would it be forbidden?

If we are concerned about justice or having the scales balanced, who can we depend on to take care of things the right way?

If we have God’s perspective on justice and judgment and the value of the human soul, how will we treat those who would harm us?

Is heaping burning coals on someone’s head (v.20) a good thing, or a bad thing? Explain.

What becomes possible when we break the cycle, and don’t reward evil behavior with evil behavior, or give in to the pressures exerted against us?

Romans 13:1-7, doing good in the civil realm

Paul had written that Christians are to overcome evil with good and leave justice (and vengeance) in the hands of God. Here we have Paul writing about the role of civil authorities, and the fact that they are part of how God dispenses justice here and now.

How should Christians view and behave toward governing authorities?

Does this apply to federal, state, or local authorities, for us?

What about authority in a school or a church or family?

There are various forms of government in this world, but where does all authority originate, and who is able to raise up and bring down any ruler? (Recall 9:17 in connection with this as well)

Who is the source of all authority, and what does it mean if we resist authority?

Overall, as Paul teaches here, even if corrupt people are in rule (remember, Nero ruled Rome when Paul wrote this), what is the general means for avoiding problems with those in authority?

What do even poor rulers generally uphold, or what do they usually punish?

In America we have the notion that rulers serve the people, but really, who do they serve (whether they acknowledge it or not)?

When should we be afraid of the governing authorities?

What has God given civil authorities to enforce their decisions?

What are the two things we want to avoid by being obedient to governing authorities? (v.5)

In the same line of reasoning, what is another responsibility Christians must accept as a civic obligation? (v.6)

In paying taxes, whose work are we supporting?

Again, at what level does this obligation hold, federal, state, local, or what?

What else is to be rendered besides being obedient to authorities, and paying our taxes?

Romans 13:8-14, the meaning of the Law, Christian motivation

In reference to rulers, Paul wrote to give them their due in every way, and to pay every kind of debt. So what kind of debt should Christians have, in v.8?

On the one hand, the idea of being debt free is extolled in other scriptures (see Proverbs 22:7, for example), and there is a genuine economic principle here for Christians, but what is Paul emphasizing about the Christian way of life in these verses?

Paul wrote that love fulfills the law, and cites examples of several commandments found in the decalogue. How is it that love would fulfill the command not to steal or not to commit adultery?

So basically, if we love our neighbor, as in v.9, then how are we going to treat them, as in v.10?

If we love one another (sincerely, as in 12:9), then are we going to do things that harm others, physically or mentally or economically? Or what will we do?

In v.11 Paul says we know what time it is, so what time is it?

In view of the time, what do we need to do, and what does this picturesque language mean?

Even though we don't know the day of the Lord's return, or the day of our own death, what do we know about either of those days today, as compared to yesterday?

If what Paul wrote in v.12 was true then, it must be more true now. What would "the night" refer and to and what would "the day" refer to?

In our present day, there are several religionists and others touting the idea of the world ending in some sense in about 4 years, 2011 or 2012, supposedly based on some calculations from ancient sources. However, when it comes to the impending day of the Lord, how should Christians live each day of their lives?

What must Christians discard?

Paul would later write another letter in which he expanded on the idea of the armor of light (see Ephesians 6:11ff). Here he stresses the importance of staying in the protection of God's truth, and talks about life style choices. How should we live, in v.13?

Also in v.13 what should we avoid, no matter how common or accepted they may be in our culture?

Wearing the armor of light (v.12) means being clothed in Christ (v.14). If we're going to "wear Christ" what effect is that going to have on our doing and thinking?

As Paul had emphasized in chapter 7 regarding the inner struggle to do good when evil is present with us, Spirit versus flesh, what needs to be given no room, and not just less room?

Generally speaking do people who are addicted to substances or behaviors manage their addiction by cutting back or by stopping? Why?

Similarly, how much giving in to the flesh is safe for the Christian still living in this world?

Romans 14:1-18, allowing for imperfection

Recall that Paul wrote about working in the body according to our individual measure of faith in 12:3, 6. Now he addresses dealing with others in the body who have weak faith. What is the general rule for dealing with a fellow believer who has weak faith?

In the matters Paul uses to illustrate his point, there seems to be a right answer and a wrong answer, and yet he describes them as “disputable” (NIV) in 14:1. How could questions about which we could know a “right answer” still be disputable?

What did Paul use to illustrate his point in v.2?

And in v.5?

Clearly in Christ no one was required to follow dietary restrictions or treat one day as more sacred than another, though under the law the Jews had been required to do both. Why might these things in particular have become disputable matters in the churches?

Remembering that even Peter didn’t immediately connect the teaching and saving work of Christ with being free from dietary restrictions, until the Lord confronted him quite strongly on the subject (recall Acts 10:9ff), how should Christians who by faith “got it” regard Christians who still had issues about diet or sacred days from their past?

From time to time someone who is unhappy about something the church is doing might say something like, “my faith is weak, therefore you should do what makes me comfortable,” or reasoning to that effect. However, in this chapter, what does Paul say to the one whose “faith is weak”?

One believer knows the freedom to eat anything God has provided, another feels the need to restrict his diet. Which has God accepted?

How should each regard the other?

In the case of the believer who embraces more liberty in Christ, to do what God has approved, whose servant is he?

And the one who feels conscience bound to avoid meat, even if God has given permission to eat, whose servant is he?

Who does each depend on to be able to stand?

Paul has written not to look down on our brother, and not to condemn our brother, over matters that have to do with mundane choices, and not what God requires of us. Without disputing his message, he does quantify the two positions as “stronger” and “weaker”

though. What is the stronger and more desirable position, in personal faith?

It would be inconceivable that Paul in v.5 would include anything that would involve idolatry, but other than that, some might honor special days from a Jewish heritage (the most likely application here), and perhaps some might celebrate birthdays or secular holidays that were innocent in their nature. Was it wrong to celebrate no holidays at all and regard each day the same? Was it wrong for others to honor some days, with the understanding that it was not required by God? (Note: to be “fully convinced in his own mind” – v.5 NIV – should remind us of 12:2, an informed mind that knows God’s will.)

What is the attitude with which each person should regard their days and their food? (v.6)

Who is bound up in our lives, and deaths, and all of our decisions?

To whom do we each belong, whatever our blind spots or hangups may be?

In v.9, what perspective does Paul bring to bear on the way we view and treat our brothers and sisters in Christ?

V.10 indicates that these are not just hypothetical notions, Christian judging Christian over matters that can be left to personal choice while we learn and grow. Do we still have a problem with judging or looking down on brothers?

Again, as in the matter of leaving vengeance and justice in the hands of God (12:19ff), who does judgement belong to, and who will face it?

Just who all is going to bow before the Lord and acknowledge him?

When will everyone do that? When is a good time to start doing that?

Exactly who will you or I give an accounting for before the throne of God? (v.12)

So then, in the matter of judging, who should each of us focus on in particular? (Recall 12:3)

Paul has repeated the message of v.13 several times already here in Romans, and it is found in the words of Jesus and other New Testament letters. Why does it have to be stressed so much?

How had Paul described love in 13:10?

An application of that principle is here in 14:13b. What should we firmly decide to do or not do?

Again, expressing the truth that there is a “right” answer about special religious diets in v.14, Paul nevertheless says there is a problem with pushing someone to accept that when they haven’t really understood it. What is the problem?

Back in chapter 2 in discussing Jews under the Law and Gentiles restrained by conscience, Paul had written that violating one’s conscience amounted to sin that would bring condemnation. Now he revisits that idea. What can happen when someone does something that is not wrong in itself, and yet they believe it is wrong? (v.14-15)

If we know something is morally acceptable to God, and also know that a brother or sister is not yet persuaded or has a personal weakness with that “thing”, what is our best choice?

If I had a brother or sister who for health reasons was on a restrictive diet and badly needed to lose weight, would there be any harm in inviting them to a restaurant and then ordering a large dessert in front of them? Explain.

All in all, what should we be willing to do for a brother or sister?

Whatever sacrifice we might make for a brother’s security, what is the qualifying sacrifice that makes it fair to ask of us? (v.15)

In a theme Paul will revisit regarding his own work as an apostle, what outcome should our good choices have, to really be good choices? (v.16)

Back in 13:14, what did Paul say we should leave no room for?

Now in 14:17, what is not the emphasis or meaning of the kingdom of God?

On the other hand, what is the kingdom of God about?

So how can we be pleasing to God?

If we adopt the values and attitudes taught in this chapter, who will we most likely be admired by?

Romans 14:19-23, watching out for each other

Paul had just written in the previous verses that serving Christ with righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit is pleasing to God. What Paul now says in v.19 with a “therefore” must be related to serving Christ as described. What are we to really try hard to do?

Paul mentions two things to strive for together. One is peace, the other is mutual edification (ie, building each other up). In some respects these things are complementary,

but may require a balancing effort. Which is to be more highly valued, peace or building each other up?

Peace without building up might not be truly desirable, but how much real building up is likely to occur when there is no peace between brethren?

Paul addressed himself to those whose faith is strong in v.1, and does so again in 15:1. What perspective must strong Christians have toward things they like that might be a problem for other believers?

The issue here isn't really food, as Paul describes it. It's OK to eat any food God has made he asserts (v.20, and recall v.6, 14), but there is a more important issue. What is it?

Cain asked the question, "Am I my brother's keeper?" (Gen. 4:9) How would Paul answer that question?

What are some ways a person might condemn himself by what he approves? (v.22)

If a Christian is in doubt about something they are thinking of doing or consuming, what advice would you give them and why?

Paul had much to say about faith earlier in this letter. Here in v.23 what does he seem to mean by faith?

Whatever we might do that is contrary to faith, that does not come from trusting God, is what?

So, how important a role does our conscience play in our decisions and our justification?

What is the best way to have a conscience that guides us properly, and doesn't inhibit genuine peace and freedom in Christ?

Romans 15

Review from Romans 14:

In verse 1, what is the instruction, and who is it addressed to?

In verse 6, what is the emphasis on attitude for all?

In verse 8, what does Paul remind us all of? Why?

Again, what does verse 12 give as the basis for these teachings?

In 14b what principle did Paul give us? What does it mean?

What is the point in verse 17?

Stated in a positive way, how are these principles summarized in verse 19?

Romans 15:1-6, the Christ-like perspective.

Who is this addressed to? (Note both the pronoun and the description.)

What is the attitude or behavior that Paul states as an obligation?

There is a genuine purpose in the kind of “pleasing” mentioned here, what is it?

In this context, if what “the weak” or our “neighbor” want is harmful or wrong, should “we who are strong” please them? Explain.

What does Paul remind us of about Christ? Why?

And what does Paul tell us about the scriptures, particularly the Hebrew scriptures, here?

What is supposed to come from the scriptures; and what is it supposed to accompany in us; and what should these things produce?

What is God the source of, according to verse 5?

What are we to do, having the things that God supplies?

Romans 15:7-13, One family, united in praise and service.

What theme does Paul stress again in verse 7?

Where did Christ do his work?

What some of the purposes included in his work, mentioned here?

Why should the gentiles glorify God?

What means of glory or praise is stressed in 9-11?

Given the context here and the emphasis in verses 9-12, what are some things that praising, especially in song, should enhance or accomplish in us?

What position does Christ, the root of Jesse, hold?

According to verse 13, what are some things God supplies to his people, and when does he do it?

What should be the outcome of God's supply plus our trust? What do you understand this to mean?

Recall in 14:17, what does the kingdom of God consist of? Who is the agent for these things?

Now in 15:13, again what comes in conjunction with and through the Holy Spirit?

Romans 15:14-22, Paul's service and goals.

What did Paul expect of the Christians he wrote to?

How could he think this, when he'd never been to Rome or met many of the believers there?

What prompted Paul to write as he did?

What was his responsibility or mission, and who gave it to him?

What did Paul describe himself as in verse 16?

So who did he serve?

Whose gospel did he proclaim?

So who did he work for?

Who sanctified his offering, or made it acceptable?

So who did he work with?

In verse 17, who did Paul serve?

What did Paul talk about?

What was Paul accomplishing – or who was accomplishing this? How?

What had Paul done so far, and what did he desire to do?

Who was Paul most concerned about?

What did his concern for those who did not know prevent?

Romans 15:23-33, Paul's travel plans.

Paul wrote this letter from Corinth in about 58 (Acts 20:1-4). What did he say about the regions where he had been working?

What had he wanted to do for a long time?

Where was he planning to travel to, and what would he do along the way?

What did he expect the Roman church might do if he visited as he thought?

At the time he wrote this, where was Paul going? Why?

What theme of this book did Paul return to in discussing the mission he was currently undertaking?

In fact, while Paul was making his travel plans, what was he also concerned about (verses 30-32)?

Not only was Paul concerned about the unbelieving Jews, but who else concerned him, and why?

Whenever Paul was able to come to Rome, what did he hope for in their meeting together?

How did Paul close the “formal teaching” portion of the letter to Roman Christians?

Romans 16:1-2, Phoebe

Who was accompanying and perhaps carrying Paul’s letter to Rome?

What do we know about her background or origin?

Note: CENCHREA was a seaport town in Greece about 7 miles east of Corinth. Paul had spent some time there, and sailed from Cenchrea when he left Corinth to return to Syria, Acts 18:18

What did Paul describe Phoebe as in v.1?

And what word did he use to describe her activities in v.2?

Note: Phoebe is called a servant, Greek diakonos, which Thayer defines as “one who executes the commands of another, especially of a master; a servant, an attendant, a minister a) the servant of a king b) a deacon, one who, by virtue of the office assigned to him by the church, cares for the poor and has charge of and distributes the money collected for their use c) a waiter, one who serves food and drink” and a helper, Greek prostatis, which Thayer defines as “1) a woman set over others 2) a female guardian, a protectress, a patroness, caring for the affairs of others and aiding them with her resources”
Some would interpret the word servant here as deaconess, relating to Thayer’s meaning “b” above. However, we have no clear directions in the New Testament regarding specially appointed deaconesses, unless it might correspond to the widow devoted to prayer and service in 1 Timothy 5:3-16. It is more likely that the word is used in its general sense, a servant, as it is used many other times in the New Testament (ie Matt 20:26, 23:11)

How was the Roman church to treat this sister?

In the verses that follow there are 16 specific mentions of people to “greet” and an additional general injunction to greet one another. What does it mean, to “greet” someone?

Why is it important to greet brethren, specifically and generally?

Romans 16:3-6, various greetings

How did Paul describe Priscilla and Aquila? (v.3)

And what else did he say about them?

What are some other things we know about this couple from Acts? (Particularly in Acts 18:1-4, 18-28)

Paul had addressed this letter to “all in Rome ... called to be saints” (1:7). According to 16:6, where did one assembly of Christians come together in the area of Rome?

What did Paul mention about Epenetus?

And about Mary?

From verses 1-6, what are some things that Paul admired in men and women?

Romans 16:7-16, more greetings

Who did Paul mention in 7, and what do we know about them?

Note: Though several English translations list the second name in verse 7 as Junias, the Greek name is Junia, as rendered in the KJV and some others, a feminine name.

What might Paul have meant by saying these two were of note or outstanding among the apostles?

List the blessings or affirmations Paul uses to refer to the people mentioned in 8-11.

What did Paul admire about the three women mentioned in 12?

And what was his own relationship with Persis?

Would you like to be a person that someone far away would describe as a man or woman who has worked hard in the Lord?

What other commendations does Paul extend toward those mentioned in 13-15?

And generally, covering all those he didn't mention by name and might not know personally, what does Paul instruct the believers to do in 16?

What do you understand the intent of this form of greeting to be?

Not only here in Rom 16:16, but also in 1 Cor. 16:20, 2 Cor. 13:12, 1 Tim. 5:26, and 1 Pet. 5:14 a greeting with a holy kiss or kiss of love is commended. What do you think would set apart a holy kiss from any other kind of kiss?

Why do you think it is not often practiced literally in American churches?

Since the direction to greet brethren is given 16 times here, besides the instruction about greeting with a holy kiss, and since there are instructions about greeting each other in Phil. 4:21, 2 Tim. 4:19, Tit. 3:15, Heb. 13:24, and 3 John 14 that make no reference to a kiss, are there other forms of greeting that will suffice for the purposes of welcoming and expressing affection toward our fellow believers?

In Rom. 16:16b, who did Paul convey greetings from?

Considering where he was (Corinth) and what he was doing (gathering the collection for the saints), what "churches of Christ" were included in this greeting?

While verses 1-16 reflect friendliness on Paul's part, what do they convey to us as a matter of attitude and behavior among ourselves?

Romans 16:17-21, warnings and affirmations

Along with greeting and acknowledging all the hardworking faithful brethren, who else should Christians be aware of and watch for?

So who should Christians treat divisive people who teach rules or requirements different than the scriptures?

Paul had taught acceptance of people with weakness of faith regarding particular foods or holy days in ch. 14-15. When might such differences become the kind of issue he warns about here?

Is there a difference between a brother who believes some foods are wrong to eat, and practices a limited diet, and a brother who insists that all believers must abstain from certain foods in order to be in the church? Explain.

What sort of people was Paul writing about and what motivations did he ascribe to them? (v.18)

Some people have an appetite for food or drink or nice things. What kind of appetites was

Paul pointing out here?

Do Christians still have a need for this warning?

Was Paul putting the church in Rome down by mentioning this, or what?

Describe Paul's attitude and intention as he mentioned in verse 19.

How does this fit into needs the church and its teachers have today?

What did Paul assure these believers of? (v.20)

Who were some people that were with Paul in Corinth at the time he wrote this epistle?

Romans 16:22-27, final greetings, farewell

Who wrote the letter down for Paul?

What reasons would Paul have had for using a scribe to record this letter?

Where did the Corinthian church apparently meet, at least some of the time? (v.23)

Who would the "him who is able" in v.25 refer to?

What did the Roman church need, and how could they receive it? (25-26)

Paul had written in this letter of "the gospel" and "the gospel of Christ" and "the gospel of God." However, how did he describe it in v.25?

Why would Paul attach the word "my" to the gospel, and what was his point in describing how it was made known to him?

What was then and still is now a key resource for revealing the gospel and proclaiming Jesus Christ?

Who are these resources for? By whose authority?

What is God's desire in giving and preserving the sacred text?

What was Paul directing toward God in these final verses?

And, as described in this epistle, and summed up in v.27, how does glory come to God?

Romans in Brief Review

1. Romans 1:8 what did Paul know about the Roman church?
2. Romans 1:16-17, 16:25 what is the book of Romans really all about?
3. Romans 1:20, 3:23 what did Paul affirm and demonstrate about all mankind?
4. Romans 2:12 what is the universal problem and need?
5. Romans 3:22, 28 what is the one and only solution to the universal problem?
6. Romans 4:3 what is Abraham an example of?
7. Romans 5:1 what comes through faith?
8. Romans 6:1-2 what is the wrong response to grace?
9. Romans 6:3-4 what is baptism supposed to be and do?
10. Romans 6:23 how do we obtain life or death?
11. Romans 7:21-23 what is the great conflict and where is it waged?
12. Romans 8:1-2 what is the solution to man's great inner conflict?
13. Romans 8:26 who is the helper within, and how does he help?
14. Romans 8:37-39 what great confidence can Christians have?
15. Romans 9:2 what was one of Paul's great longings? How strong was it?
16. Romans 9:8 who are the children of Abraham?
17. Romans 9:21 what is God's right?
18. Romans 9:30-32 again, what produces righteousness and what does not?
19. Romans 10:2 what does Paul indicate should be combined?
20. Romans 10:14-15 what is the sequence Paul says is needed for the unsaved to be saved?
21. Romans 11:17-21 what attitude toward Jews should Christians reject? Why?

22. Romans 12:1 what does God want from us?
23. Romans 12:5 what are we if we are in Christ?
24. Romans 12:17-18 what are some guiding principles for Christians and a shared goal?
25. Romans 13:1 where does authority come from, and how should Christians view authorities?
26. Romans 13:8-10, what is the one debt that can never be paid in full, and what all does it cover?
27. Romans 13:12 what is happening and what should it mean to us?
28. Romans 14:8 who do we belong to, and what does that mean for our attitudes?
29. Romans 14:19 what should we try very hard to do?
30. Romans 16:6, 12, what did Paul find especially commendable about some of the Christian women he knew?
31. Romans 16:25-27, where did Paul's gospel come from, and what was it's purpose?