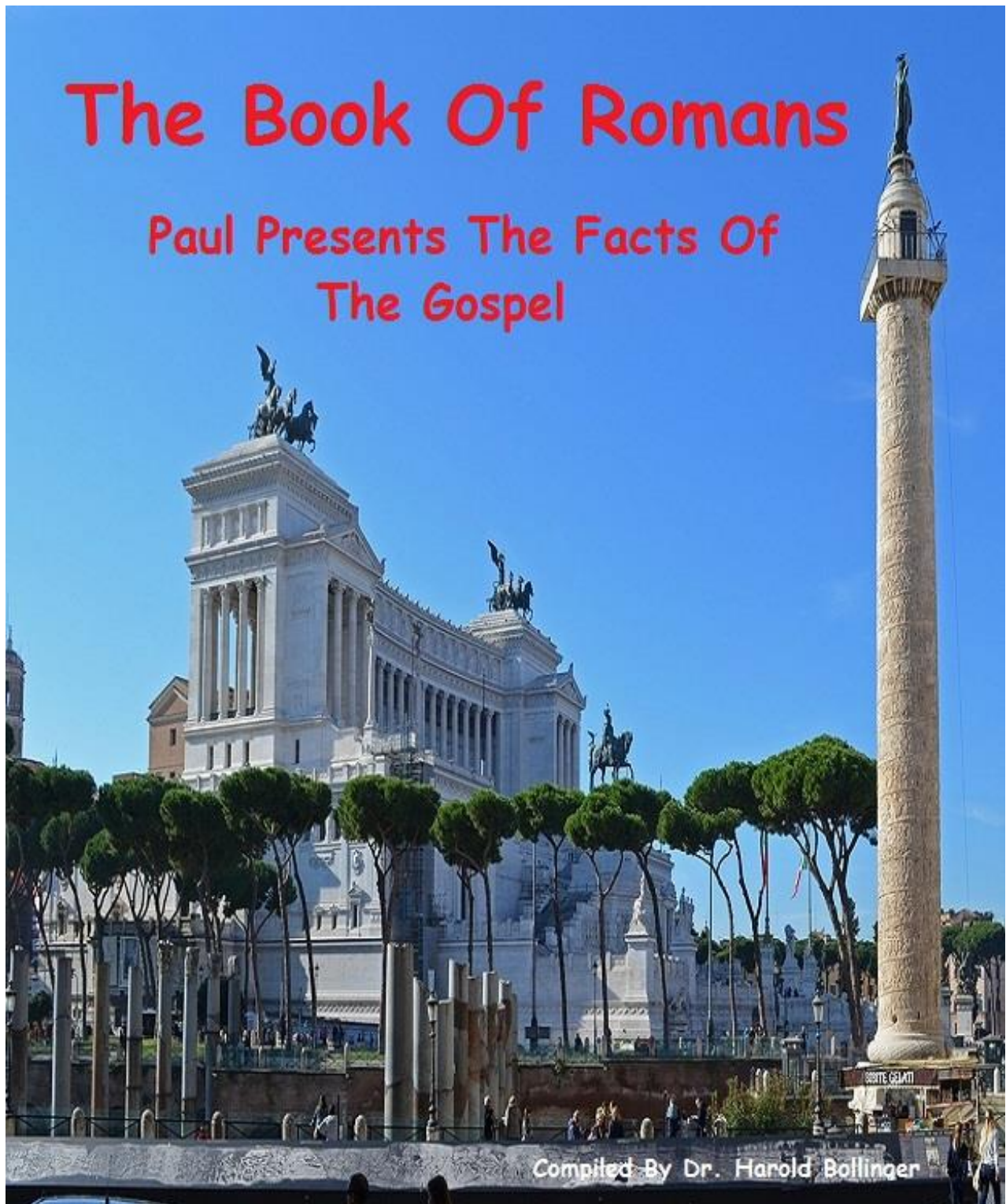


The Book Of Romans

Paul Presents The Facts Of
The Gospel



Compiled By Dr. Harold Bollinger

Romans

OVERVIEW:

The apostle Paul was intelligent, articulate, and committed to his calling. Like a skilled lawyer, he presented the case for the gospel clearly and forthrightly in his letter to the believers in Rome.

Paul had heard of the church at Rome, but he had never been there, nor had any of the other apostles. Evidently the church had been begun by Jews who had come to faith during Pentecost (Acts 2). They spread the faith on their return to Rome, and the church grew.

Although many barriers separated them, Paul felt a bond with these Romans. They were his brothers and sisters in Christ, and he longed to see them face to face. He had never met most of the believers there, yet he loved them. He sent this letter to introduce himself and to make a clear declaration of the faith.

After a brief introduction, Paul presents the facts of the gospel (Romans 1:3) and declares his allegiance to it (Romans 1:16-17). He continues by building an airtight case for the lostness of mankind and the necessity for God's intervention (Romans 1:18-3:20).

Then Paul presents the Good News—salvation is available to all, regardless of a person's identity, sin, or heritage. We are saved by *grace* (unearned, undeserved favor from God) through *faith* (complete trust) in Christ and his finished work. Through him we can stand before God justified, "not guilty" (Romans 3:21-5:21). With this foundation Paul moves directly into a discussion of the freedom that comes from being saved—freedom from the power of sin (Romans 6:1-23), freedom from the domination of the law (Romans 7:1-25), freedom to become like Christ and discover God's limitless love (Romans 8:1-39).

Speaking directly to his Jewish brothers and sisters, Paul shares his concern for them and explains how they fit into God's plan (Romans 9:1-11:12). God has made the way for Jews and Gentiles to be united in the body of Christ—both groups can praise God for his wisdom and love (Romans 11:13-36).

Paul explains what it means to live in complete submission to Christ—using spiritual gifts to serve others (Romans 12:3-8), genuinely loving others (Romans 12:9-21), and being good citizens (Romans 13:1-14). Freedom must be guided by love as we build each other up in the faith, being sensitive and helpful to those who are weak (Romans 14:1-15:4). Paul stresses unity, especially between Gentiles and Jews (Romans 15:5-13). He concludes by reviewing his reasons for writing, outlining his personal plans (Romans 15:22-33), greeting his friends, and giving a few final thoughts and greetings from his traveling companions (Romans 16:1-27).

As you read Romans, reexamine your commitment to Christ and reconfirm your relationships with other believers in Christ's body.

THE BLUEPRINT

A. WHAT TO BELIEVE (Romans 1:1-11:36)

Paul clearly sets forth the foundations of the Christian faith. All people are sinful; Christ died to forgive sin; we are made right with God through faith; this begins a new life with a new relationship with God. Like a sports team that constantly reviews the basics, we will be greatly helped in our faith by keeping close to these foundations. If we study Romans carefully, we will never be at a loss to know what to believe.

1. Sinfulness of mankind
2. Forgiveness of sin through Christ
3. Freedom from sin's grasp
4. Israel's past, present, and future

Romans 1:1-11:36

This letter is from Paul, Jesus Christ's slave, chosen by God to be an apostle and sent out to preach his Good News. [2] This Good News was promised long ago by God through his prophets in the Holy Scriptures. [3] It is the Good News about his Son, Jesus, who came as a man, born into King David's royal family line. [4] And Jesus Christ our Lord was shown to be the Son of God when God powerfully raised him from the dead by means of the Holy Spirit. [5] Through Christ, God has given us the privilege and authority to tell Gentiles everywhere what God has done for them, so that they will believe and obey him, bringing glory to his name.

[6] You are among those who have been called to belong to Jesus Christ, [7] dear friends in Rome. God loves you dearly, and he has called you to be his very own people.

May grace and peace be yours from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

[8] Let me say first of all that your faith in God is becoming known throughout the world. How I thank God through Jesus Christ for each one of you. [9] God knows how often I pray for you. Day and night I bring you and your needs in prayer to God, whom I serve with all my heart by telling others the Good News about his Son.

[10] One of the things I always pray for is the opportunity, God willing, to come at last to see you. [11] For I long to visit you so I can share a spiritual blessing with you that will help you grow strong in the Lord. [12] I'm eager to encourage you in your faith, but I also want to be encouraged by yours. In this way, each of us will be a blessing to the other.

[13] I want you to know, dear brothers and sisters which I planned many times to visit you, but I was prevented until now. I want to work among you and see good results, just as I have done among other Gentiles.

[14] For I have a great sense of obligation to people in our culture and to people in other cultures, to the educated and uneducated alike. [15] So I am eager to come to you in Rome, too, to preach God's Good News.

[16] For I am not ashamed of this Good News about Christ. It is the power of God at work, saving everyone who believes—Jews first and also Gentiles. [17] This Good News tells us how God makes us right in his sight. This is accomplished from start to finish by faith. As the Scriptures say, "It is through faith that a righteous person has life."

[18] But God shows his anger from heaven against all sinful, wicked people who push the truth away from themselves. [19] For the truth about God is known to them instinctively. God has put this knowledge in their hearts. [20] From the time the world was created, people have seen the earth and sky and all that God made. They can clearly see his invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature. So they have no excuse whatsoever for not knowing God.

[21] Yes, they knew God, but they wouldn't worship him as God or even give him thanks. And they began to think up foolish ideas of what God was like. The result was that their minds became dark and confused. [22] Claiming to be wise, they became utter fools instead. [23] And instead of worshiping the glorious, ever-living God, they worshiped idols made to look like mere people, or birds and animals and snakes.

[24] So God let them go ahead and do whatever shameful things their hearts desired. As a result, they did vile and degrading things with each other's bodies. [25] Instead of believing what they knew was the truth about God, they deliberately chose to believe lies. So they worshiped the things God made but not the Creator himself, who is to be praised forever. Amen.

[26] That is why God abandoned them to their shameful desires. Even the women turned against the natural way to have sex and instead indulged in sex with each other. [27] And the men, instead of having normal sexual relationships with women, burned with lust for each other. Men did shameful things with other men and, as a result, suffered within themselves the penalty they so richly deserved.

[28] When they refused to acknowledge God, he abandoned them to their evil minds and let them do things that should never be done. [29] Their lives became full of every kind of wickedness, sin, greed, hate, envy, murder, fighting, deception, malicious behavior, and gossip. [30] They are backstabbers, haters of God, insolent, proud, and boastful. They are forever inventing new ways of sinning and are disobedient to their parents. [31] They refuse to understand, break their promises, and are heartless and unforgiving. [32] They are fully aware of God's death penalty for those who do these things, yet they go right ahead and do them anyway. And, worse yet, they encourage others to do them, too.

[2:1] You may be saying, "What terrible people you have been talking about!" But you are just as bad, and you have no excuse! When you say they are wicked and should be punished, you are condemning yourself, for you do these very same things. [2] And we know that God, in his justice, will punish anyone who does such things. [3] Do you think that God will judge and condemn others for doing them and not judge you when you do them, too? [4] Don't you realize how kind, tolerant, and patient God is with you? Or don't you care? Can't you see how kind he has been in giving you time to turn from your sin?

[5] But no, you won't listen. So you are storing up terrible punishment for yourself because of your stubbornness in refusing to turn from your sin. For there is going to come a day of judgment when God, the just judge of all the world, [6] will judge all people according to what they have done. [7] He will give eternal life to those who persist in doing what is good, seeking after the glory and honor and immortality that God offers. [8] But he will pour out his anger and wrath on those who live for themselves, who refuse to obey the truth and practice evil deeds. [9] There will be trouble and calamity for everyone who keeps on sinning—for the Jew first and also for the Gentile. [10] But there will be glory and honor and peace from God for all who do good—for the Jew first and also for the Gentile. [11] For God does not show favoritism.

[12] God will punish the Gentiles when they sin, even though they never had God's written law. And he will punish the Jews when they sin, for they do have the law. [13] For it is not merely knowing the law that brings God's approval. Those who obey the law will be declared right in God's sight. [14] Even when Gentiles, who do not have God's written law, instinctively follow what the law says, they show that in their hearts they know right from wrong. [15] They demonstrate that God's law is written within them, for their own consciences either accuse them or tell them they are doing what is right. [16] The day will surely come when God, by Jesus Christ, will judge everyone's secret life. This is my message.

[17] If you are a Jew, you are relying on God's law for your special relationship with him. You boast that all is well between yourself and God. [18] Yes, you know what he wants; you know right from wrong because you have been taught his law. [19] You are convinced that you are a guide for the blind and a beacon light for people who are lost in darkness without God. [20] You think you can instruct the ignorant and teach children the ways of God. For you are certain that in God's law you have complete knowledge and truth.

[21] Well then, if you teach others, why don't you teach yourself? You tell others not to steal, but do you steal? [22] You say it is wrong to commit adultery, but do you do it? You condemn idolatry, but do you steal from pagan temples? [23] You are so proud of knowing the law, but you dishonor God by breaking it. [24] No wonder the Scriptures say, "The world blasphemes the name of God because of you."

[25] The Jewish ceremony of circumcision is worth something only if you obey God's law. But if you don't obey God's law, you are no better off than an uncircumcised Gentile. [26] And if the Gentiles obey God's law, won't God give them all the rights and honors of being his own people? [27] In fact, uncircumcised Gentiles who keep God's law will be much better off than you Jews who are circumcised and know so much about God's law but don't obey it.

[28] For you are not a true Jew just because you were born of Jewish parents or because you have gone through the Jewish ceremony of circumcision. [29] No, a true Jew is one whose heart is right with God. And true circumcision is not a cutting of the body but a change of heart produced by God's Spirit. Whoever has that kind of change seeks praise from God, not from people.

[3:1] Then what's the advantage of being a Jew? Is there any value in the Jewish ceremony of circumcision? [2] Yes, being a Jew has many advantages. First of all, the Jews were entrusted with the whole revelation of God.

[3] True, some of them were unfaithful; but just because they broke their promises, does that mean God will break his promises? [4] Of course not! Though everyone else in the world is a liar, God is true. As the Scriptures say, "He will be proved right in what he says, and he will win his case in court."

[5] "But," some say, "Our sins serve a good purpose, for people will see God's goodness when he declares us sinners to be innocent. Isn't it unfair, then, for God to punish us?" (That is actually the way some people talk.) [6] Of course not! If God is not just, how is he qualified to judge the world? [7] "But," some might still argue, "How can God judge and condemn me as a sinner if my dishonesty highlights his truthfulness and brings him more glory?" [8] If you follow that kind of thinking, however, you might as well say that the more we sin the better it is! Those who say such things deserve to be condemned, yet some slander me by saying this is what I preach!

[9] Well then, are we Jews better than others? No, not at all, for we have already shown that all people, whether Jews or Gentiles, are under the power of sin. [10] As the Scriptures say,

"No one is good—
not even one.

[11] No one has real understanding;
no one is seeking God.

[12] All have turned away from God;
all have gone wrong.

No one does good,
not even one."

[13] "Their talk is foul, like the stench from an open grave.
Their speech is filled with lies."

"The poison of a deadly snake drips from their lips."

[14] "Their mouths are full of cursing and bitterness."

[15] "They are quick to commit murder.

[16] Wherever they go, destruction and misery follow them.

[17] They do not know what true peace is."

[18] "They have no fear of God to restrain them."

[19] Obviously, the law applies to those to whom it was given, for its purpose is to keep people from having excuses and to bring the entire world into judgment before God. [20] For no one can ever be made right in God's sight by doing what his law commands. For the more we know God's law, the clearer it becomes that we aren't obeying it.

[21] But now God has shown us a different way of being right in his sight—not by obeying the law but by the way promised in the Scriptures long ago. [22] We are made right in God's sight when we trust in Jesus Christ to take away our sins. And we all can be saved in this same way, no matter who we are or what we have done.

[23] For all have sinned; all fall short of God's glorious standard. [24] Yet now God in his gracious kindness declares us not guilty. He has done this through Christ Jesus, who has freed us by taking away our sins. [25] For God sent Jesus to take the punishment for our sins and to satisfy God's anger against us. We are made right with God when we believe that Jesus shed his blood, sacrificing his life for us. God was being entirely fair and just when he did not punish those who sinned in former times. [26] And he is entirely fair and just in this present time when he declares sinners to be right in his sight because they believe in Jesus.

[27] Can we boast, then, that we have done anything to be accepted by God? No, because our acquittal is not based on our good deeds. It is based on our faith. [28] So we are made right with God through faith and not by obeying the law.

[29] After all, God is not the God of the Jews only, is he? Isn't he also the God of the Gentiles? Of course he is. [30] There is only one God, and there is only one way of being accepted by him. He makes people right with himself only by faith, whether they are Jews or Gentiles. [31] Well then, if we emphasize faith, does this mean that we can forget about the law? Of course not! In fact, only when we have faith do we truly fulfill the law.

[4:1] Abraham was, humanly speaking, the founder of our Jewish nation. What were his experiences concerning this question of being saved by faith? [2] Was it because of his good deeds that God accepted him? If so, he would have had something to boast about. But from God's point of view Abraham had no basis at all for pride. [3] For the Scriptures tell us, "Abraham believed God, so God declared him to be righteous."

[4] When people work, their wages are not a gift. Workers earn what they receive. [5] But people are declared righteous because of their faith, not because of their work.

[6] King David spoke of this, describing the happiness of an undeserving sinner who is declared to be righteous:

[7] "Oh, what joy for those whose disobedience is forgiven,
whose sins are put out of sight.

[8] Yes, what joy for those
whose sin is no longer counted against them by the Lord."

[9] Now then, is this blessing only for the Jews, or is it for Gentiles, too? Well, what about Abraham? We have been saying he was declared righteous by God because of his faith. [10] But how did his faith help him? Was he declared righteous only after he had been circumcised, or was it before he was circumcised? The answer is that God accepted him first, and then he was circumcised later!

[11] The circumcision ceremony was a sign that Abraham already had faith and that God had already accepted him and declared him to be righteous—even before he was circumcised. So Abraham is the spiritual father of those who have faith but have not been circumcised. They are made right with God by faith. [12] And Abraham is also the spiritual father of those who have been circumcised, but only if they have the same kind of faith Abraham had before he was circumcised.

[13] It is clear, then, that God's promise to give the whole earth to Abraham and his descendants was not based on obedience to God's law, but on the new relationship with God that comes by faith. [14] So if you claim that God's promise is for those who obey God's law and think they are "good enough" in God's sight, then you are saying that faith is useless. And in that case, the promise is also meaningless. [15] But the law brings punishment on those who try to obey it. (The only way to avoid breaking the law is to have no law to break!)

[16] So that's why faith is the key! God's promise is given to us as a free gift. And we are certain to receive it, whether or not we follow Jewish customs, if we have faith like Abraham's. For Abraham is the father of all who believe. [17] That is what the Scriptures mean when God told him, "I have made you the father of many nations." This happened because Abraham believed in the God who brings the dead back to life and who brings into existence what didn't exist before.

[18] When God promised Abraham that he would become the father of many nations, Abraham believed him. God had also said, "Your descendants will be as numerous as the stars," even though such a promise seemed utterly impossible! [19] And Abraham's faith did not weaken, even though he knew that he was too old to be a father at the age of one hundred and that Sarah, his wife, had never been able to have children.

[20] Abraham never wavered in believing God's promise. In fact, his faith grew stronger, and in this he brought glory to God. [21] He was absolutely convinced that God was able to do anything he promised. [22] And because of Abraham's faith, God declared him to be righteous.

[23] Now this wonderful truth—that God declared him to be righteous—wasn't just for Abraham's benefit. [24] It was for us, too, assuring us that God will also declare us to be righteous if we believe in God, who brought Jesus our Lord back from the dead. [25] He was handed over to die because of our sins, and he was raised from the dead to make us right with God.

[5:1] Therefore, since we have been made right in God's sight by faith, we have peace with God because of what Jesus Christ our Lord has done for us. [2] Because of our faith, Christ has brought us into this place of highest privilege where we now stand, and we confidently and joyfully look forward to sharing God's glory.

[3] We can rejoice, too, when we run into problems and trials, for we know that they are good for us—they help us learn to endure. [4] And endurance develops strength of character in us, and character strengthens our confident expectation of salvation. [5] And this expectation will not disappoint us. For we know how dearly God loves us, because he has given us the Holy Spirit to fill our hearts with his love.

[6] When we were utterly helpless, Christ came at just the right time and died for us sinners. [7] Now, no one is likely to die for a good person, though someone might be willing to die for a person who is especially good. [8] But God showed his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners. [9] And since we have been made right in God's sight by the blood of Christ, he will certainly save us from God's judgment.

[10] For since we were restored to friendship with God by the death of his Son while we were still his enemies, we will certainly be delivered from eternal punishment by his life. [11] So now we can rejoice in our wonderful new relationship with God—all because of what our Lord Jesus Christ has done for us in making us friends of God.

[12] When Adam sinned, sin entered the entire human race. Adam's sin brought death, so death spread to everyone, for everyone sinned. [13] Yes, people sinned even before the law was given. And though there was no law to break, since it had not yet been given, [14] they all died anyway—even though they did not disobey an explicit commandment of God, as Adam did. What a contrast between Adam and Christ, who was yet to come! [15] And what a difference between our sin and God's generous gift of forgiveness. For this one man, Adam, brought death to many through his sin. But this other man, Jesus Christ, brought forgiveness to many through God's bountiful gift. [16] And the result of God's gracious gift is very different from the result of that one man's sin. For Adam's sin led to condemnation, but we have the free gift of being accepted by God, even though we are guilty of many sins. [17] The sin of this one man, Adam, caused death to rule over us, but all who receive God's wonderful, gracious gift of righteousness will live in triumph over sin and death through this one man, Jesus Christ.

[18] Yes, Adam's one sin brought condemnation upon everyone, but Christ's one act of righteousness makes all people right in God's sight and gives them life. [19] Because one person disobeyed God, many people became sinners. But because one other person obeyed God, many people will be made right in God's sight.

[20] God's law was given so that all people could see how sinful they were. But as people sinned more and more, God's wonderful kindness became more abundant. [21] So just as sin ruled over all people and brought them to death, now God's wonderful kindness rules instead, giving us right standing with God and resulting in eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

[6:1] Well then, should we keep on sinning so that God can show us more and more kindness and forgiveness? [2] Of course not! Since we have died to sin, how can we continue to live in it? [3] Or have you forgotten that when we became Christians and were baptized to become one with Christ Jesus, we died with him? [4] For we died and were buried with Christ by baptism. And just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glorious power of the Father, now we also may live new lives.

[5] Since we have been united with him in his death, we will also be raised as he was. [6] Our old sinful selves were crucified with Christ so that sin might lose its power in our lives. We are no longer slaves to sin. [7] For when we died with Christ we were set free from the power of sin. [8] And since we died with Christ, we know we will also share his new life. [9] We are sure of this because Christ rose from the dead, and he will never die again. Death no longer has any power over him. [10] He died once to defeat sin, and now he lives for the glory of God. [11] So you should consider yourselves dead to sin and able to live for the glory of God through Christ Jesus.

[12] Do not let sin control the way you live; do not give in to its lustful desires. [13] Do not let any part of your body become a tool of wickedness, to be used for sinning. Instead, give yourselves completely to God since you have been given new life. And use your whole body as a tool to do what is right for the glory of God. [14] Sin is no longer your master, for you are no longer subject to the law, which enslaves you to sin. Instead, you are free by God's grace.

[15] So since God's grace has set us free from the law, does this mean we can go on sinning? Of course not! [16] Don't you realize that whatever you choose to obey becomes your master? You can choose sin, which leads to death, or you can choose to obey God and receive his approval. [17] Thank God! Once you were slaves of sin, but now you have obeyed with all your heart the new teaching God has given you. [18] Now you are free from sin, your old master, and you have become slaves to your new master, righteousness.

[19] I speak this way, using the illustration of slaves and masters, because it is easy to understand. Before, you let yourselves be slaves of impurity and lawlessness. Now you must choose to be slaves of righteousness so that you will become holy.

[20] In those days, when you were slaves of sin, you weren't concerned with doing what was right. [21] And what was the result? It was not good, since now you are ashamed of the things you used to do, things that end in eternal doom. [22] But now you are free from the power of sin and have become slaves of God. Now you do those things that lead to holiness and result in eternal life. [23] For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord.

[7:1] Now, dear brothers and sisters—you who are familiar with the law—don't you know that the law applies only to a person who is still living? [2] Let me illustrate. When a woman marries, the law binds her to her husband as long as he is alive. But if he dies, the laws of marriage no longer apply to her. [3] So while her husband is alive, she would be committing adultery if she married another man. But if her husband dies, she is free from that law and does not commit adultery when she remarries.

[4] So this is the point: The law no longer holds you in its power, because you died to its power when you died with Christ on the cross. And now you are united with the one who was raised from the dead. As a result, you can produce good fruit, that is, good deeds for God. [5] When we were controlled by our old nature, sinful desires were at work within us, and the law aroused these evil desires that produced sinful deeds, resulting in death. [6] But now we have been released from the law, for we died with Christ, and we are no longer captive to its power. Now we can really serve God, not in the old way by obeying the letter of the law, but in the new way, by the Spirit.

[7] Well then, am I suggesting that the law of God is evil? Of course not! The law is not sinful, but it was the law that showed me my sin. I would never have known that coveting is wrong if the law had not said, "Do not covet." [8] But sin took advantage of this law and aroused all kinds of forbidden desires within me! If there were no law, sin would not have that power.

[9] I felt fine when I did not understand what the law demanded. But when I learned the truth, I realized I had broken the law and was a sinner, doomed to die.

[10] So the good law, which was supposed to show me the way of life, instead gave me the death penalty. [11] Sin took advantage of the law and fooled me; it took the good law and used it to make me guilty of death. [12] But still, the law itself is holy and right and good.

[13] But how can that be? Did the law, which is good, cause my doom? Of course not! Sin used what was good to bring about my condemnation. So we can see how terrible sin really is. It uses God's good commandment for its own evil purposes.

[14] The law is good, then. The trouble is not with the law but with me, because I am sold into slavery, with sin as my master. [15] I don't understand myself at all, for I really want to do what is right, but I don't do it. Instead, I do the very thing I hate. [16] I know perfectly well that what I am doing is wrong, and my bad conscience shows that I agree that the law is good. [17] But I can't help myself, because it is sin inside me that makes me do these evil things.

[18] I know I am rotten through and through so far as my old sinful nature is concerned. No matter which way I turn, I can't make myself do right. I want to, but I can't. [19] When I want to do good, I don't. And when I try not to do wrong, I do it anyway. [20] But if I am doing what I don't want to do, I am not really the one doing it; the sin within me is doing it.

[21] It seems to be a fact of life that when I want to do what is right, I inevitably do what is wrong. [22] I love God's law with all my heart. [23] But there is another law at work within me that is at war with my mind. This law wins the fight and makes me a slave to the sin that is still within me. [24] Oh, what a miserable person I am! Who will free me from this life that is dominated by sin? [25] Thank God! The answer is in Jesus Christ our Lord. So you see how it is: In my mind I really want to obey God's law, but because of my sinful nature I am a slave to sin.

[8:1] So now there is no condemnation for those who belong to Christ Jesus. [2] For the power of the life-giving Spirit has freed you through Christ Jesus from the power of sin that leads to death. [3] The law of Moses could not save us, because of our sinful nature. But God put into effect a different plan to save us. He sent his own Son in a human body like ours, except that ours are sinful. God destroyed sin's control over us by giving his Son as a sacrifice for our sins. [4] He did this so that the requirement of the law would be fully accomplished for us who no longer follow our sinful nature but instead follow the Spirit.

[5] Those who are dominated by the sinful nature think about sinful things, but those who are controlled by the Holy Spirit think about things that please the Spirit. [6] If your sinful nature controls your mind, there is death. But if the Holy Spirit controls your mind, there is life and peace. [7] For the sinful nature is always hostile to God. It never did obey God's laws, and it never will. [8] That's why those who are still under the control of their sinful nature can never please God.

[9] But you are not controlled by your sinful nature. You are controlled by the Spirit if you have the Spirit of God living in you. (And remember that those who do not have the Spirit of Christ living in them are not Christians at all.) [10] Since Christ lives within you, even though your body will die because of sin, your spirit is alive because you have been made right with God.

[11] The Spirit of God, who raised Jesus from the dead, lives in you. And just as he raised Christ from the dead, he will give life to your mortal body by this same Spirit living within you.

[12] So, dear brothers and sisters, you have no obligation whatsoever to do what your sinful nature urges you to do. [13] For if you keep on following it, you will perish. But if through the power of the Holy Spirit you turn from it and its evil deeds, you will live. [14] For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God.

[15] So you should not be like cowering, fearful slaves. You should behave instead like God's very own children, adopted into his family—calling him "Father, dear Father." [16] For his Holy Spirit speaks to us deep in our hearts and tells us that we are God's children. [17] And since we are his children, we will share his treasures—for everything God gives to his Son, Christ, is ours, too. But if we are to share his glory, we must also share his suffering.

[18] Yet what we suffer now is nothing compared to the glory he will give us later. [19] For all creation is waiting eagerly for that future day when God will reveal who his children really are. [20] Against its will, everything on earth was subjected to God's curse. [21] All creation anticipates the day when it will join God's children in glorious freedom from death and decay. [22] For we know that all creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. [23] And even we Christians, although we have the Holy Spirit within us as a foretaste of future glory, also groan to be released from pain and suffering. We, too, wait anxiously for that day when God will give us our full rights as his children, including the new bodies he has promised us. [24] Now that we are saved, we eagerly look forward to this freedom. For if you already have something, you don't need to hope for it. [25] But if we look forward to something we don't have yet, we must wait patiently and confidently.

[26] And the Holy Spirit helps us in our distress. For we don't even know what we should pray for, nor how we should pray. But the Holy Spirit prays for us with groanings that cannot be expressed in words. [27] And the Father who knows all hearts knows what the Spirit is saying, for the Spirit pleads for us believers in harmony with God's own will. [28] And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them. [29] For God knew his people in advance, and he chose them to become like his Son, so that his Son would be the firstborn, with many brothers and sisters. [30] And having chosen them, he called them to come to him. And he gave them right standing with himself, and he promised them his glory.

[31] What can we say about such wonderful things as these? If God is for us, who can ever be against us? [32] Since God did not spare even his own Son but gave him up for us all, won't God, who gave us Christ, also give us everything else?

[33] Who dares accuse us whom God has chosen for his own? Will God? No! He is the one who has given us right standing with himself. [34] Who then will condemn us? Will Christ Jesus? No, for he is the one who died for us and was raised to life for us and is sitting at the place of highest honor next to God, pleading for us.

[35] Can anything ever separate us from Christ's love? Does it mean he no longer loves us if we have trouble or calamity, or are persecuted, or are hungry or cold or in danger or threatened with death? [36] (Even the Scriptures say, "For your sake we are killed every day; we are being slaughtered like sheep.") [37] No, despite all these things, overwhelming victory is ours through Christ, who loved us.

[38] And I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from his love. Death can't, and life can't. The angels can't, and the demons can't. Our fears for today, our worries about tomorrow, and even the powers of hell can't keep God's love away. [39] Whether we are high above the sky or in the deepest ocean, nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord.

[9:1] In the presence of Christ, I speak with utter truthfulness—I do not lie—and my conscience and the Holy Spirit confirm that what I am saying is true. [2] My heart is filled with bitter sorrow and unending grief [3] for my people, my Jewish brothers and sisters. I would be willing to be forever cursed—cut off from Christ!—if that would save them. [4] They are the people of Israel, chosen to be God's special children. God revealed his glory to them. He made covenants with them and gave his law to them. They have the privilege of worshiping him and receiving his wonderful promises. [5] Their ancestors were great people of God, and Christ himself was a Jew as far as his human nature is concerned. And he is God, who rules over everything and is worthy of eternal praise! Amen.

[6] Well then, has God failed to fulfill his promise to the Jews? No, for not everyone born into a Jewish family is truly a Jew! [7] Just the fact that they are descendants of Abraham doesn't make them truly Abraham's children. For the Scriptures say, "Isaac is the son through whom your descendants will be counted," though Abraham had other children, too. [8] This means that Abraham's physical descendants are not necessarily children of God. It is the children of the promise who are considered to be Abraham's children. [9] For God had promised, "Next year I will return, and Sarah will have a son."

[10] This son was our ancestor Isaac. When he grew up, he married Rebekah, who gave birth to twins. [11] But before they were born, before they had done anything good or bad, she received a message from God. (This message proves that God chooses according to his own plan, [12] not according to our good or bad works.) She was told, "The descendants of your older son will serve the descendants of your younger son." [13] In the words of the Scriptures, "I loved Jacob, but I rejected Esau."

[14] What can we say? Was God being unfair? Of course not! [15] For God said to Moses,

"I will show mercy to anyone I choose,
and I will show compassion to anyone I choose."

[16] So receiving God's promise is not up to us. We can't get it by choosing it or working hard for it. God will show mercy to anyone he chooses.

[17] For the Scriptures say that God told Pharaoh, "I have appointed you for the very purpose of displaying my power in you, and so that my fame might spread throughout the earth." [18] So

you see, God shows mercy to some just because he wants to, and he chooses to make some people refuse to listen.

[19] Well then, you might say, "Why does God blame people for not listening? Haven't they simply done what he made them do?"

[20] No, don't say that. Who are you, a mere human being, to criticize God? Should the thing that was created say to the one who made it, "Why have you made me like this?" [21] When a potter makes jars out of clay, doesn't he have a right to use the same lump of clay to make one jar for decoration and another to throw garbage into? [22] God has every right to exercise his judgment and his power, but he also has the right to be very patient with those who are the objects of his judgment and are fit only for destruction. [23] He also has the right to pour out the riches of his glory upon those he prepared to be the objects of his mercy— [24] even upon us, whom he selected, both from the Jews and from the Gentiles.

[25] Concerning the Gentiles, God says in the prophecy of Hosea,

"Those who were not my people,
I will now call my people.
And I will love those
whom I did not love before."

[26] And,

"Once they were told,
'You are not my people.'
But now he will say,
'You are children of the living God.'"

[27] Concerning Israel, Isaiah the prophet cried out,

"Though the people of Israel are as numerous as the sand on the seashore,
only a small number will be saved.

[28] For the Lord will carry out his sentence upon the earth
quickly and with finality."

[29] And Isaiah said in another place,

"If the Lord Almighty
had not spared a few of us,
we would have been wiped out
as completely as Sodom and Gomorrah."

[30] Well then, what shall we say about these things? Just this: The Gentiles have been made right with God by faith, even though they were not seeking him. [31] But the Jews, who tried so hard to get right with God by keeping the law, never succeeded.

[32] Why not? Because they were trying to get right with God by keeping the law and being good instead of by depending on faith. They stumbled over the great rock in their path. [33] God warned them of this in the Scriptures when he said,

"I am placing a stone in Jerusalem that causes people to stumble,
and a rock that makes them fall.
But anyone who believes in him
will not be disappointed."

[10:1] Dear brothers and sisters, the longing of my heart and my prayer to God is that the Jewish people might be saved. [2] I know what enthusiasm they have for God, but it is misdirected zeal. [3] For they don't understand God's way of making people right with himself. Instead, they are clinging to their own way of getting right with God by trying to keep the law. They won't go along with God's way. [4] For Christ has accomplished the whole purpose of the law. All who believe in him are made right with God.

[5] For Moses wrote that the law's way of making a person right with God requires obedience to all of its commands. [6] But the way of getting right with God through faith says, "You don't need to go to heaven" (to find Christ and bring him down to help you). [7] And it says, "You don't need to go to the place of the dead" (to bring Christ back to life again). [8] Salvation that comes from trusting Christ—which is the message we preach—is already within easy reach. In fact, the Scriptures say, "The message is close at hand; it is on your lips and in your heart."

[9] For if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. [10] For it is by believing in your heart that you are made right with God, and it is by confessing with your mouth that you are saved. [11] As the Scriptures tell us, "Anyone who believes in him will not be disappointed."
[12] Jew and Gentile are the same in this respect. They all have the same Lord, who generously gives his riches to all who ask for them. [13] For "Anyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."

[14] But how can they call on him to save them unless they believe in him? And how can they believe in him if they have never heard about him? And how can they hear about him unless someone tells them? [15] And how will anyone go and tell them without being sent? That is what the Scriptures mean when they say, "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!"

[16] But not everyone welcomes the Good News, for Isaiah the prophet said, "Lord, who has believed our message?" [17] Yet faith comes from listening to this message of good news—the Good News about Christ.

[18] But what about the Jews? Have they actually heard the message? Yes, they have:

"The message of God's creation has gone out to everyone,
and its words to all the world."

[19] But did the people of Israel really understand? Yes, they did, for even in the time of Moses, God had said,

"I will rouse your jealousy by blessing other nations.
I will make you angry by blessing the foolish Gentiles."

[20] And later Isaiah spoke boldly for God:

"I was found by people
who were not looking for me.
I showed myself to those
who were not asking for me."

[21] But regarding Israel, God said,

"All day long I opened my arms to them,
but they kept disobeying me and arguing with me."

[11:1] I ask, then, has God rejected his people, the Jews? Of course not! Remember that I myself am a Jew, a descendant of Abraham and a member of the tribe of Benjamin.

[2] No, God has not rejected his own people, whom he chose from the very beginning. Do you remember what the Scriptures say about this? Elijah the prophet complained to God about the people of Israel and said, [3] "Lord, they have killed your prophets and torn down your altars. I alone am left, and now they are trying to kill me, too."

[4] And do you remember God's reply? He said, "You are not the only one left. I have seven thousand others who have never bowed down to Baal!"

[5] It is the same today, for not all the Jews have turned away from God. A few are being saved as a result of God's kindness in choosing them. [6] And if they are saved by God's kindness, then it is not by their good works. For in that case, God's wonderful kindness would not be what it really is—free and undeserved.

[7] So this is the situation: Most of the Jews have not found the favor of God they are looking for so earnestly. A few have—the ones God has chosen—but the rest were made unresponsive.

[8] As the Scriptures say,

"God has put them into a deep sleep.
To this very day he has shut their eyes so they do not see,
and closed their ears so they do not hear."

[9] David spoke of this same thing when he said,

"Let their bountiful table become a snare,
a trap that makes them think all is well.
Let their blessings cause them to stumble.
[10] Let their eyes go blind so they cannot see,
and let their backs grow weaker and weaker."

[11] Did God's people stumble and fall beyond recovery? Of course not! His purpose was to make his salvation available to the Gentiles, and then the Jews would be jealous and want it for themselves. [12] Now if the Gentiles were enriched because the Jews turned down God's offer of salvation, think how much greater a blessing the world will share when the Jews finally accept it.

[13] I am saying all of this especially for you Gentiles. God has appointed me as the apostle to the Gentiles. I lay great stress on this, [14] for I want to find a way to make the Jews want what you Gentiles have, and in that way I might save some of them. [15] For since the Jews' rejection meant that God offered salvation to the rest of the world, how much more wonderful their acceptance will be. It will be life for those who were dead! [16] And since Abraham and the other patriarchs were holy, their children will also be holy. For if the roots of the tree are holy, the branches will be, too.

[17] But some of these branches from Abraham's tree, some of the Jews, have been broken off. And you Gentiles, who were branches from a wild olive tree, were grafted in. So now you also receive the blessing God has promised Abraham and his children, sharing in God's rich nourishment of his special olive tree. [18] But you must be careful not to brag about being grafted in to replace the branches that were broken off. Remember, you are just a branch, not the root.

[19] "Well," you may say, "those branches were broken off to make room for me." [20] Yes, but remember—those branches, the Jews, were broken off because they didn't believe God, and you are there because you do believe. Don't think highly of yourself, but fear what could happen. [21] For if God did not spare the branches he put there in the first place, he won't spare you either.

[22] Notice how God is both kind and severe. He is severe to those who disobeyed, but kind to you as you continue to trust in his kindness. But if you stop trusting, you also will be cut off. [23] And if the Jews turn from their unbelief, God will graft them back into the tree again. He has the power to do it.

[24] For if God was willing to take you who were, by nature, branches from a wild olive tree and graft you into his own good tree—a very unusual thing to do—he will be far more eager to graft the Jews back into the tree where they belong.

[25] I want you to understand this mystery, dear brothers and sisters, so that you will not feel proud and start bragging. Some of the Jews have hard hearts, but this will last only until the complete number of Gentiles comes to Christ. [26] And so all Israel will be saved. Do you remember what the prophets said about this?

"A Deliverer will come from Jerusalem,
and he will turn Israel from all ungodliness.

[27] And then I will keep my covenant with them
and take away their sins."

[28] Many of the Jews are now enemies of the Good News. But this has been to your benefit, for God has given his gifts to you Gentiles. Yet the Jews are still his chosen people because of his promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. [29] For God's gifts and his call can never be withdrawn. [30] Once, you Gentiles were rebels against God, but when the Jews refused his mercy, God was merciful to you instead.

[31] And now, in the same way, the Jews are the rebels, and God's mercy has come to you. But someday they, too, will share in God's mercy. [32] For God has imprisoned all people in their own disobedience so he could have mercy on everyone.

[33] Oh, what a wonderful God we have! How great are his riches and wisdom and knowledge! How impossible it is for us to understand his decisions and his methods! [34] For who can know what the Lord is thinking? Who knows enough to be his counselor? [35] And who could ever give him so much that he would have to pay it back? [36] For everything comes from him; everything exists by his power and is intended for his glory. To him be glory evermore. Amen.

B. HOW TO BEHAVE (Romans 12:1-16:27)

Paul gives clear, practical guidelines for the believers in Rome. The Christian life is not abstract theology unconnected with life, but it has practical implications that will affect how we choose to behave each day. It is not enough merely to know the gospel; we must let it transform our lives and let God impact every aspect of our lives.

1. Personal responsibility
2. Personal notes

Romans 12:1-16:27

And so, dear brothers and sisters, I plead with you to give your bodies to God. Let them be a living and holy sacrifice—the kind he will accept. When you think of what he has done for you, is this too much to ask? [2] Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will know what God wants you to do, and you will know how good and pleasing and perfect his will really is.

[3] As God's messenger, I give each of you this warning: Be honest in your estimate of yourselves, measuring your value by how much faith God has given you. [4] Just as our bodies have many parts and each part has a special function, [5] so it is with Christ's body. We are all parts of his one body, and each of us has different work to do. And since we are all one body in Christ, we belong to each other, and each of us needs all the others.

[6] God has given each of us the ability to do certain things well. So if God has given you the ability to prophesy, speak out when you have faith that God is speaking through you. [7] If your gift is that of serving others, serve them well. If you are a teacher, do a good job of teaching. [8] If your gift is to encourage others, do it! If you have money, share it generously. If God has given you leadership ability, take the responsibility seriously. And if you have a gift for showing kindness to others, do it gladly.

[9] Don't just pretend that you love others. Really love them. Hate what is wrong. Stand on the side of the good. [10] Love each other with genuine affection, and take delight in honoring each other. [11] Never be lazy in your work, but serve the Lord enthusiastically.

[12] Be glad for all God is planning for you. Be patient in trouble, and always be prayerful. [13] When God's children are in need, be the one to help them out. And get into the habit of inviting guests home for dinner or, if they need lodging, for the night.

[14] If people persecute you because you are a Christian, don't curse them; pray that God will bless them. [15] When others are happy, be happy with them. If they are sad, share their sorrow. [16] Live in harmony with each other. Don't try to act important, but enjoy the company of ordinary people. And don't think you know it all!

[17] Never pay back evil for evil to anyone. Do things in such a way that everyone can see you are honorable. [18] Do your part to live in peace with everyone, as much as possible.

[19] Dear friends, never avenge yourselves. Leave that to God. For it is written,

"I will take vengeance;
I will repay those who deserve it,"
says the Lord.

[20] Instead, do what the Scriptures say:

"If your enemies are hungry, feed them.
If they are thirsty, give them something to drink,
and they will be ashamed of what they have done to you."

[21] Don't let evil get the best of you, but conquer evil by doing good.

[13:1] Obey the government, for God is the one who put it there. All governments have been placed in power by God. [2] So those who refuse to obey the laws of the land are refusing to obey God, and punishment will follow. [3] For the authorities do not frighten people who are doing right, but they frighten those who do wrong. So do what they say, and you will get along well. [4] The authorities are sent by God to help you. But if you are doing something wrong, of course you should be afraid, for you will be punished. The authorities are established by God for that very purpose, to punish those who do wrong. [5] So you must obey the government for two reasons: to keep from being punished and to keep a clear conscience.

[6] Pay your taxes, too, for these same reasons. For government workers need to be paid so they can keep on doing the work God intended them to do. [7] Give to everyone what you owe them: Pay your taxes and import duties, and give respect and honor to all to whom it is due.

[8] Pay all your debts, except the debt of love for others. You can never finish paying that! If you love your neighbor, you will fulfill all the requirements of God's law. [9] For the commandments against adultery and murder and stealing and coveting—and any other commandment—are all summed up in this one commandment: "Love your neighbor as yourself." [10] Love does no wrong to anyone, so love satisfies all of God's requirements.

[11] Another reason for right living is that you know how late it is; time is running out. Wake up, for the coming of our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed. [12] The night is almost gone; the day of salvation will soon be here. So don't live in darkness. Get rid of your evil deeds. Shed them like dirty clothes. Clothe yourselves with the armor of right living, as those who live in the light. [13] We should be decent and true in everything we do, so that everyone can approve of our behavior. Don't participate in wild parties and getting drunk, or in adultery and immoral living, or in fighting and jealousy. [14] But let the Lord Jesus Christ take control of you, and don't think of ways to indulge your evil desires.

[14:1] Accept Christians who are weak in faith, and don't argue with them about what they think is right or wrong. [2] For instance, one person believes it is all right to eat anything. But another believer who has a sensitive conscience will eat only vegetables. [3] Those who think it is all right to eat anything must not look down on those who won't. And those who won't eat certain foods must not condemn those who do, for God has accepted them. [4] Who are you to condemn God's servants? They are responsible to the Lord, so let him tell them whether they are right or wrong. The Lord's power will help them do as they should.

[5] In the same way, some think one day is more holy than another day, while others think every day is alike. Each person should have a personal conviction about this matter. [6] Those who have a special day for worshiping the Lord are trying to honor him. Those who eat all kinds of food do so to honor the Lord, since they give thanks to God before eating. And those who won't eat everything also want to please the Lord and give thanks to God. [7] For we are not our own masters when we live or when we die. [8] While we live, we live to please the Lord. And when we die, we go to be with the Lord. So in life and in death, we belong to the Lord. [9] Christ died and rose again for this very purpose, so that he might be Lord of those who are alive and of those who have died.

[10] So why do you condemn another Christian? Why do you look down on another Christian? Remember, each of us will stand personally before the judgment seat of God. [11] For the Scriptures say,

“As surely as I live,' says the Lord,
'every knee will bow to me
and every tongue will confess allegiance to God.' ”

[12] Yes, each of us will have to give a personal account to God. [13] So don't condemn each other anymore. Decide instead to live in such a way that you will not put an obstacle in another Christian's path.

[14] I know and am perfectly sure on the authority of the Lord Jesus that no food, in and of itself, is wrong to eat. But if someone believes it is wrong, then for that person it is wrong. [15] And if another Christian is distressed by what you eat, you are not acting in love if you eat it. Don't let your eating ruin someone for whom Christ died. [16] Then you will not be condemned for doing something you know is all right.

[17] For the Kingdom of God is not a matter of what we eat or drink, but of living a life of goodness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. [18] If you serve Christ with this attitude, you will please God. And other people will approve of you, too. [19] So then, let us aim for harmony in the church and try to build each other up.

[20] Don't tear apart the work of God over what you eat. Remember, there is nothing wrong with these things in themselves. But it is wrong to eat anything if it makes another person stumble. [21] Don't eat meat or drink wine or do anything else if it might cause another Christian to stumble. [22] You may have the faith to believe that there is nothing wrong with what you are doing, but keep it between yourself and God. Blessed are those who do not condemn themselves by doing something they know is all right. [23] But if people have doubts about whether they

should eat something, they shouldn't eat it. They would be condemned for not acting in faith before God. If you do anything you believe is not right, you are sinning.

[15:1] We may know that these things make no difference, but we cannot just go ahead and do them to please ourselves. We must be considerate of the doubts and fears of those who think these things are wrong. [2] We should please others. If we do what helps them, we will build them up in the Lord. [3] For even Christ didn't please himself. As the Scriptures say, "Those who insult you are also insulting me." [4] Such things were written in the Scriptures long ago to teach us. They give us hope and encouragement as we wait patiently for God's promises.

[5] May God, who gives this patience and encouragement, help you live in complete harmony with each other—each with the attitude of Christ Jesus toward the other. [6] Then all of you can join together with one voice, giving praise and glory to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

[7] So accept each other just as Christ has accepted you; then God will be glorified. [8] Remember that Christ came as a servant to the Jews to show that God is true to the promises he made to their ancestors. [9] And he came so the Gentiles might also give glory to God for his mercies to them. That is what the psalmist meant when he wrote:

"I will praise you among the Gentiles;
I will sing praises to your name."

[10] And in another place it is written,

"Rejoice, O you Gentiles,
along with his people, the Jews."

[11] And yet again,

"Praise the Lord, all you Gentiles;
praise him, all you people of the earth."

[12] And the prophet Isaiah said,

"The heir to David's throne will come,
and he will rule over the Gentiles.
They will place their hopes on him."

[13] So I pray that God, who gives you hope, will keep you happy and full of peace as you believe in him. May you overflow with hope through the power of the Holy Spirit.

[14] I am fully convinced, dear brothers and sisters, that you are full of goodness. You know these things so well that you are able to teach others all about them. [15] Even so, I have been bold enough to emphasize some of these points, knowing that all you need is this reminder from me. For I am, by God's grace, [16] a special messenger from Christ Jesus to you Gentiles. I bring you the Good News and offer you up as a fragrant sacrifice to God so that you might be pure and pleasing to him by the Holy Spirit.

[17] So it is right for me to be enthusiastic about all Christ Jesus has done through me in my service to God. [18] I dare not boast of anything else. I have brought the Gentiles to God by my message and by the way I lived before them. [19] I have won them over by the miracles done through me as signs from God—all by the power of God's Spirit. In this way, I have fully presented the Good News of Christ all the way from Jerusalem clear over into Illyricum.

[20] My ambition has always been to preach the Good News where the name of Christ has never been heard, rather than where a church has already been started by someone else. [21] I have been following the plan spoken of in the Scriptures, where it says,

"Those who have never been told about him will see,
and those who have never heard of him will understand."

[22] In fact, my visit to you has been delayed so long because I have been preaching in these places.

[23] But now I have finished my work in these regions, and after all these long years of waiting, I am eager to visit you. [24] I am planning to go to Spain, and when I do, I will stop off in Rome. And after I have enjoyed your fellowship for a little while, you can send me on my way again.

[25] But before I come, I must go down to Jerusalem to take a gift to the Christians there. [26] For you see, the believers in Greece have eagerly taken up an offering for the Christians in Jerusalem, who are going through such hard times. [27] They were very glad to do this because they feel they owe a real debt to them. Since the Gentiles received the wonderful spiritual blessings of the Good News from the Jewish Christians, they feel the least they can do in return is help them financially. [28] As soon as I have delivered this money and completed this good deed of theirs, I will come to see you on my way to Spain. [29] And I am sure that when I come, Christ will give me a great blessing for you.

[30] Dear brothers and sisters, I urge you in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to join me in my struggle by praying to God for me. Do this because of your love for me, given to you by the Holy Spirit. [31] Pray that I will be rescued from those in Judea who refuse to obey God. Pray also that the Christians there will be willing to accept the donation I am bringing them. [32] Then, by the will of God, I will be able to come to you with a happy heart, and we will be an encouragement to each other.

[33] And now may God, who gives us his peace, be with you all. Amen.

[16:1] Our sister Phoebe, a deacon in the church in Cenchrea, will be coming to see you soon. [2] Receive her in the Lord, as one who is worthy of high honor. Help her in every way you can, for she has helped many in their needs, including me.

[3] Greet Priscilla and Aquila. They have been co-workers in my ministry for Christ Jesus. [4] In fact, they risked their lives for me. I am not the only one who is thankful to them; so are all the Gentile churches. [5] Please give my greetings to the church that meets in their home.

Greet my dear friend Epenetus. He was the very first person to become a Christian in the province of Asia. [6] Give my greetings to Mary, who has worked so hard for your benefit. [7] Then there are Andronicus and Junia, my relatives, who were in prison with me. They are respected among the apostles and became Christians before I did. Please give them my greetings. [8] Say hello to Ampliatus, whom I love as one of the Lord's own children, [9] and Urbanus, our co-worker in Christ, and beloved Stachys.

[10] Give my greetings to Apelles, a good man whom Christ approves. And give my best regards to the members of the household of Aristobulus. [11] Greet Herodion, my relative. Greet the Christians in the household of Narcissus. [12] Say hello to Tryphena and Tryphosa, the Lord's workers, and to dear Persis, who has worked so hard for the Lord. [13] Greet Rufus, whom the Lord picked out to be his very own; and also his dear mother, who has been a mother to me.

[14] And please give my greetings to Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermes, Patrobas, Hermas, and the brothers and sisters who are with them. [15] Give my greetings to Philologus, Julia, Nereus and his sister, and to Olympas and all the other believers who are with them. [16] Greet each other in Christian love. All the churches of Christ send you their greetings.

[17] And now I make one more appeal, my dear brothers and sisters. Watch out for people who cause divisions and upset people's faith by teaching things that are contrary to what you have been taught. Stay away from them. [18] Such people are not serving Christ our Lord; they are serving their own personal interests. By smooth talk and glowing words they deceive innocent people. [19] But everyone knows that you are obedient to the Lord. This makes me very happy. I want you to see clearly what is right and to stay innocent of any wrong. [20] The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

[21] Timothy, my fellow worker, and Lucius, Jason, and Sosipater, my relatives, send you their good wishes.

[22] I, Tertius, the one who is writing this letter for Paul, send my greetings, too, as a Christian brother.

[23] Gaius says hello to you. I am his guest, and the church meets here in his home. Erastus, the city treasurer, sends you his greetings, and so does Quartus, a Christian brother. [24]

[25] God is able to make you strong, just as the Good News says. It is the message about Jesus Christ and his plan for you Gentiles, a plan kept secret from the beginning of time. [26] But now as the prophets foretold and as the eternal God has commanded, this message is made known to all Gentiles everywhere, so that they might believe and obey Christ. [27] To God, who alone is wise, be the glory forever through Jesus Christ. Amen.

MEGATHEMES

THEME: Sin

EXPLANATION:

Sin means refusing to do God's will and failing to do all that God wants. Since Adam's rebellion against God, our nature is to disobey him. Our sin cuts us off from God. Sin causes us to want to live our own way rather than God's way. Because God is morally perfect, just, and fair, he is right to condemn sin.

IMPORTANCE:

Each person has sinned, either by rebelling against God or by ignoring his will. No matter what our background or how hard we try to live good and moral lives, we cannot earn salvation or remove our sin. Only Christ can save us.

THEME: Salvation

EXPLANATION:

Our sin points out our need to be forgiven and cleansed. Although we don't deserve it, God, in his kindness, reached out to love and forgive us. He provides the way for us to be saved. Christ's death paid the penalty for our sin.

IMPORTANCE:

It is good news that God saves us from our sin. But we must believe in Jesus Christ and believe that he forgave our sin in order to enter into a wonderful new relationship with God.

THEME: Growth

EXPLANATION:

By God's power, believers are sanctified—made holy. This means we are set apart from sin, enabled to obey and to become more like Christ. When we are growing in our relationship with Christ, the Holy Spirit frees us from the demands of the law and from fear of judgment.

IMPORTANCE:

Because we are free from sin's control, the law's demands, and fear of God's punishment, we can grow in our relationship with Christ. By trusting in the Holy Spirit and allowing him to help us, we can overcome sin and temptation.

THEME: Sovereignty

EXPLANATION:

God oversees and cares about his people—past, present, and future. God's ways of dealing with people are always fair. Because God is in charge of all creation, he can save whomever he wills.

IMPORTANCE:

Because of God's mercy, both Jews and Gentiles can be saved. We all must respond to his mercy and accept his gracious offer of forgiveness. Because he is sovereign, let him reign in your heart.

THEME: Service

EXPLANATION:

When our purpose is to give credit to God for his love, power, and perfection in all we do, we can serve him properly. Serving him unifies all believers and enables them to show love and sensitivity to others.

IMPORTANCE:

None of us can be fully Christlike by ourselves—it takes the entire body of Christ to fully express Christ. By actively and vigorously building up other believers, Christians can be a symphony of service to God.

An invitation is given to open your heart's door.

Rev. 3:20

Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.

To ask Jesus to come into your heart please pray this Prayer:

Dear Lord Jesus, I believe you are the Christ, the Son of the Living God. I ask you to forgive me of my sins and coming into my heart. I accept you as savior and will follow you as Lord. Amen.

References:

Holy Bible: King James Translation

Holy Bible: Living Bible Translation

Additional comments and charts are taken from: *Life Application Study Bible*. Illinois: Tyndale House 2007. Print

