

Introduction

Picking only one book of the Bible as the most important strikes most Christians as about as useful as picking one of their children and announcing to the world that he is their favorite. It creates a lot of strife and causes a lot of argument about what has been overlooked, all to no useful end. Nonetheless, if we HAD to pick a most important book of the Bible, we could do worse than to pick the book of Romans.

Romans is the *magnum opus* of the apostle Paul, and arguably, of the Holy Spirit. In Romans, Paul sets out a systematic defense of faith in Christ: its necessity in a world plagued with sin, its coherence with the themes of the Old Law, its power to save man from himself, and its ability to reconcile him with God. Much of Paul's argument is geared toward his Jewish brethren, but the basic themes of the book resonate with men of any race and any time. We need a Savior. Romans shows us one. Despite the passage of two thousand years, Romans proclaims a gospel that is still the power of God to salvation.

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The Power of God to Salvation

One: Eager to Preach

Romans 1:1-7

1. In Romans 1:1, Paul describes himself in three different ways. What are these ways? What do they mean? Why does Paul mention them?
2. What does Romans 1:2 describe as the fulfillment of a promise from God? In what way is this true? Why is it important?
3. As per Romans 1:3, according to the flesh, who is Jesus? Why is this important? What does it tell us about Paul's audience?
4. In Romans 1:4, according to the Spirit of holiness, who is Jesus? How was the declaration of this truth accomplished? Why does Paul bring this up here?
5. Who is the "we" of Romans 1:5? What has this "we" received? What is this "we" supposed to accomplish? What does this have to do with the Romans?

Ashamed of the Gospel?

From the safety of two thousand years later, it's hard to imagine what Paul's defiant declaration in Romans 1:16 would have meant to its original hearers. To most people of Paul's day, the gospel WAS a shameful thing. It incited hatred wherever it went. Paul himself was reviled, imprisoned, beaten, and stoned, simply for preaching Christ.

And yet, Paul was not ashamed of the gospel. He preached the truth everywhere and to everyone. When one city drove him out, he went on to the next and continued preaching, in some cases before the bruises had faded. If tradition is to be believed, only martyrdom had the power to close the mouth of Paul.

By comparison, the challenges that oppose us seem puny. Few indeed are the Christians in the US today who have been injured or threatened for the cause of Christ. Even out-and-out verbal abuse is more the exception than the rule. Most of the time, the biggest deterrent in our path is the fear of ostracism, of being rejected by the world we already should have rejected ourselves.

Where, then, do we stand? Do we follow in the footsteps of Paul because the praise of God is more important to us than the praise of men? Or do we allow the social pressures of our time to keep us from the path that Paul walked at peril of his life? Do we treat the gospel like the power of God to salvation for everyone, or like a spiritual deformity we must hide at all costs? Paul wasn't ashamed. Why should we be?

The Power of God to Salvation: Lesson One

6. How is the church in Rome described in Romans 1:6-7? What is significant about this description?
7. What salutation does Paul use in Romans 1:6-7? How commonly does Paul use this? Why might he use it?

Romans 1:8-17

1. What cause for rejoicing does Paul describe in Romans 1:8? What should we learn from this?
2. According to Romans 1:10, what does Paul desire? What means does he use in Romans 1:9-10 to accomplish this desire? What does this tell us about Paul's previous relationship with the Romans? What does it tell us about his character?
3. What immediate objective does Paul describe in Romans 1:11? What does this tell us about the transmission of spiritual gifts in the first century? Why is this important?
4. What ultimate objective of Paul's coming is described in Romans 1:11-12? What does this mean? What does it tell us about the purpose of first-century spiritual gifts?
5. What attitude does Paul describe in Romans 1:15? What failure of action does he describe in Romans 1:13? Why might it be important to mention this to the church in Rome? How does Paul explain this difference in Romans 1:13-14?
6. How does Paul describe his attitude in Romans 1:16? What reasons does he give for this attitude? What should we learn from this?
7. What crucial information does Romans 1:17 give us about the gospel? What does this mean? Why is it significant?

The Power of God to Salvation

Two: The Wrath of God

Romans 1:18-25

1. What action of God's is described in Romans 1:18? Against whom does God act? What are these people like? What is the connection between this and Romans 1:16-17?
2. According to Romans 1:19-20, what reason does God have for revealing His wrath against these people? What does this tell us both about the natural world and about God?
3. In Romans 1:21, what knowledge does Paul describe the ungodly as possessing? What should this knowledge have led them to do? What did they actually do? What should this teach us?
4. According to Romans 1:22, what do the people of the world think of themselves? What are they actually? Is this pattern still evident today? If so, where?
5. What does Romans 1:22 describe as the fruit of the world's folly? Does this process still occur today? If so, where is it evident?

Paul's Time and Our Time

If we listen to many of the progressive talking heads of our day, we shortly come to the realization that they think America is heading toward a golden age of moral enlightenment. Premarital sex is no longer taboo, homosexuality is now honored, and everywhere, man is ascending to the throne previously reserved for God. What progress!

The problem is that this kind of "progress" has a distinctly old-school tinge. As Solomon says in Ecclesiastes 1:9, there is nothing new under the sun, and there is especially nothing new about evil. All of the immoral "advances" of our day were well known to the Greeks of Christ's day. Refusal to glorify God? Check. Licentiousness? Check. Self-worship? Check. Homosexuality? Check. Every other form of evil? Check.

For as long as the world has existed, people and nations have been walking the same weary path of evil, only to discover the same disastrous consequences that wait at its end. If our nation continues on its course, it too will meet the fate of the Greeks and the Romans. There is nothing new under the sun about that, either.

The solution to our moral malaise, however, is as old as the problem. The gospel that rescued men from sin in the first century will still rescue them today, if only we give it the chance. As was true in the first century, this is a crooked and perverse generation. Let us be lights in its midst.

The Power of God to Salvation: Lesson Two

6. How did God respond to those who rejected Him in Romans 1:24? What does this mean?
7. According to Romans 1:25, what are the two underlying reasons for the moral failure of the Gentiles? What should we take from this today?

Romans 1:26-32

1. To what general category does God give the wicked over in the first part of Romans 1:26? How is this connected to Romans 1:24? What does this tell us about God's attitude toward the specific acts that are described immediately afterward? Why is this important?
2. What specific action is described in the second half of Romans 1:26? Is there any reasonable doubt about what this activity is? In what terms is this activity described? What should we learn from this?
3. What similar activity is described in Romans 1:27? How clearly does Paul define this activity? What words does the Bible use to describe it? What consequences attach to it?
4. What decision do the Gentiles reach in Romans 1:28? How is this different from their reaction in Romans 1:21? How does God respond to this decision? What does this mean?
5. How is the resulting moral failure of the Gentiles described in Romans 1:29-31? Are these things true of every Gentile, or just of the Gentile race as a whole? What should we learn from this list?
6. What knowledge is described in Romans 1:32? Who possesses this knowledge? What does this tell us both about the universality of God's law and the fairness of His judgment?
7. In what two ways do the Gentiles react to this knowledge? Is this behavior pattern still evident today? If so, where?

The Power of God to Salvation

Three: No Partiality with God

Romans 2:1-5

1. Romans 2:1 begins with “therefore.” Why? What logical connection exists between Romans 1 and Romans 2? Why is this important?
2. To whom is Paul speaking in Romans 2:1? What does he tell them? How is this true?
3. What statement does Paul make in Romans 2:2? What does it mean? Does this refer back to anything in Romans 1? If so, what?
4. Paul then proceeds to describe two possible reactions of the sinner to the knowledge of the judgment of God? Romans 2:3 describes the first. What is it? Do we still see it today?
5. Romans 2:4 describes the second possible reason for sin. What is it? Is it still in evidence today? Ecclesiastes 8:11 may prove useful.

The Impartial Judge

If recent polls are to be believed, almost everyone in America believes in God. However, of all of those people, almost none of them think they are going to hell. Considering that the same Bible that proclaims the goodness of God also condemns the wicked, this appears remarkably inconsistent.

Perhaps the problem is that most of us aren't willing to apply the Bible's standards to ourselves. The Scripture reveals that liars will be eternally destroyed, all of us know that we have lied in the past, but our minds shy away from the inevitable logical conclusion. We refuse to believe that God would really, really, really do THAT. We believe instead that the King of heaven will bend the rules—because we deserve it.

The problem is that God is anything but partial. He's not just intellectually opposed to sin; He's emotionally revolted by it. He's about as likely to swallow sin as any of us are to swallow a mouthful of manure. There will be no bending of the rules on the Day of Judgment, and there will be no salvation for the wicked, because there is no partiality with God.

Mankind has only one hope, one way to escape eternal darkness: by taking refuge in the grace of Jesus Christ and living the life of a debtor to God. If we do not claim that hope, we will be destroyed. There's nothing amazing about that. The only amazing thing about it is how many look forward to favor from God on the Day of Judgment when they have refused it here already.

The Power of God to Salvation: Lesson Three

6. In Romans 2:4, what does Paul say the contemptuous sinner overlooks? What does this mean? What should we take from it?
7. According to Romans 2:5, what will the two kinds of sinners described in Romans 2:3-4 actually receive? When? Why? What's the point?

Romans 2:6-16

1. What does Romans 2:6 say? What does it mean? Why is it important?
2. Each man will receive one of two things from God. Romans 2:7 and Romans 2:10 both describe the first alternative. What is it? What must one do to receive it? How are these two verses worded alike? How are they worded differently? What should we learn from this?
3. Romans 2:8 and Romans 2:9 describe the second alternative. What is it? What must one do to receive it? How are these verses worded alike and differently? Why?
4. What statement does Romans 2:11 make about God? Why is this important? How does this relate to the preceding context?
5. According to Romans 2:12-13, in what sense are the Jew and the Gentile alike? Why? What does this tell us about God?
6. Who are the subjects of Romans 2:14-15? What does Paul reveal about them? How does this reaffirm the point of Romans 2:13? Why is this significant?
7. What does Romans 2:16 tell us about the date of the justification described in Romans 2:13? What will God judge on that occasion? What should we learn from this?

The Power of God to Salvation

Four: A Transgressor of the Law

Romans 2:17-29

1. What group does Paul begin addressing in Romans 2:17? Why does he bring them up here in his argument?
2. According to Romans 2:17-20, what do the Jews believe about themselves? Why is this important?
3. What contradiction does Paul expose in Romans 2:21-22? According to Romans 2:23-24, what result does this have? Why is this logically important?
4. What Jewish ritual does Paul introduce in Romans 2:25? Why does he introduce it?
5. According to Romans 2:25, what happens to the circumcised man who breaks the law? Why?

Boasting in the Law?

It's the nature of humanity to compare. We compare the skill of one preacher to another's, the size of our house to our friends', and the accomplishments of our children to other children's. Without this comparison process, it would be almost impossible for us to make decisions.

However, this extremely useful process can get us into serious trouble when we begin to compare our righteousness to the righteousness of the world, like the Jews of Romans 2. In this comparison, we see a lot to like about ourselves, just like the Jews did. We know the Bible; the people around us don't. We come to church three times a week; the people around us don't. We say all the right things; the people around us don't.

The problem is, though, that the world is the wrong standard for comparison. Almost everyone can find someone who is less righteous than he is. The thief can look down on the unrighteousness of the murderer, but that doesn't mean that the thief is righteous. In the same way, just because we're better than the world doesn't prove that we're good.

Indeed, the only true standard of righteousness is Jesus, a standard that all of us fail to meet—which is precisely why we don't like it. Jesus shows all of us up for the unrighteous people we are, and likewise shows that we cannot hope to stand before God on our own merits. However, this same righteousness of Christ also fitted Him to be the perfect sacrifice for our sins, so that what we cannot gain by law, we gain by grace.

The Power of God to Salvation: Lesson Four

6. What happens, as per Romans 2:27-28, when an uncircumcised man keeps the law? Why is this important to Paul's argument?

7. What does Romans 2:28 say about who is not a Jew? What does Romans 2:29 say about who is a Jew? What challenge would this pose to a Jewish audience?

Romans 3:1-8

1. What question is posed in Romans 3:1? How does this question follow logically from what Paul has just said?

2. What answer is given in Romans 3:2? Why is this answer sufficient?

3. What question is asked in Romans 3:3? What unbelief does Paul discuss here? To what faithfulness of God is he referring? What does this question mean? Why is it here?

4. What response does Romans 3:4 make to the question of Romans 3:3? Why is this response valid?

5. What question is asked in the first part of Romans 3:5? Who is the "we" of this question? Logically speaking, why is this question here?

6. What question does the second part of Romans 3:5 ask? How does this relate to the first question? What response is made in Romans 3:6?

7. What question does Romans 3:7 ask? How does this question arise? What answer is given in Romans 3:8? How does Romans 3:8 demonstrate the logical absurdity of Romans 3:7?

The Power of God to Salvation

Five: Justified by Faith

Romans 3:9-20

1. In Romans 3:9, who is “they?” Who is “we?” Why is this important?
2. Also in Romans 3:9, what is the status of everyone? Why? How does this connect back to Paul’s previous arguments?
3. In Romans 3:10-11, there are three parallel statements beginning with “There is.” What are they? What does their logical connection teach us?
4. Similarly, there are three parallels in Romans 3:12. What are they? What do they teach us?
5. What actions are attributed to the wicked in Romans 3:13-18? Do we have to commit every sin on the list in order to fall under its condemnation? Why or why not?

What Really Saves Us

Many of those in the denominational world who are aware of the Lord’s church like to accuse us of teaching works-based salvation because we say that a man must be baptized to be saved. In reaction to this, we spend a great deal of time discussing baptism and citing passage after passage that proves its necessity for salvation.

In the stance that we take, we are absolutely correct. We cannot be saved without immersion in water for the forgiveness of our sins. At the same time, however, we must be careful that we do not minimize the importance of faith. Ultimately, baptism only has significance as an expression of faith. Unless we believe, baptism is just a bath. With faith, baptism saves us from the consequences of the evil we have done. It makes us right with God.

Likewise, our pursuit of righteousness after baptism only has value as an act of faith. All the good works we perform are not enough and will never be enough to endear us to God by themselves. We stand condemned both by the evil we have done and by the good we have failed to do. However, our imperfect attempts to please God are spiritually vital as evidence of our faith. Despite our failures, they show our desire to seek His righteousness.

Let each one of us, then, consider ourselves not as earning salvation, but as receiving it from the grace of Christ. May we always trust not in ourselves, but in God who justifies the ungodly.

The Power of God to Salvation: Lesson Five

6. According to Romans 3:19, to whom does the law speak? What result does this speech have? Why is this point significant to Paul's argument?

7. What conclusion does Paul reach in Romans 3:20? Why? Why does Paul need to make this point?

Romans 3:21-30

1. What different kind of righteousness is revealed in Romans 3:21-22? What bears witness to this righteousness? How does any of this connect to what Paul has previously said?

2. According to Romans 3:22-23, to whom has this righteousness been revealed? Why was this revelation necessary? Why does Paul mention this?

3. What does Romans 3:24 tell us about the means by which this righteousness has been transmitted? To whom does this apply? Why does Paul say this?

4. According to Romans 2:25-26, what did God do with Jesus? What result did this have? What two reasons are given as to why God needed to demonstrate His righteousness in this way? What does this mean?

5. What question does Paul ask in Romans 3:26? How does this link back to Romans 2:17? How does he answer the question? Why? Where does this leave his argument?

6. What conclusion does Paul reach in Romans 3:28? Why? Why does he want to reach it?

7. What question does Paul ask in Romans 3:29? How does he answer it? What support does Paul give for this answer in Romans 3:30? Why does Paul need to make this point?

The Power of God to Salvation

Six: The Faith of Abraham

Romans 3:31-4:12

1. What rhetorical question does Paul ask in Romans 3:31? What answer does he give? Why is this logically important?
2. What Biblical hero does Paul introduce in Romans 4:1? Why?
3. In Romans 4:2-3, two possible sources of Abraham's righteousness are contrasted. What are they? Which one is true of Abraham? Why is this significant?
4. In Romans 4:4-8, Paul sets forth the logical implications of each kind of righteousness. What are they? Why are they important?
5. What question does Romans 4:9-10 ask? How is it answered? What makes this answer important?

Abraham Our Father

In the last part of Romans 3, Paul begins the second phase of his masterful argument for Christ. To this point, he has led his Jewish audience to agree with his indictment of the sin of the Gentiles, and then forced them to admit that when the Jewish nation is examined by the same standard, they likewise fail the test. Both Jew and Greek are under sin, and both can only be justified by faith.

However, this presented a deadly problem to the first-century Jewish mind. This embrace of faith appeared to reject the Law of Moses, which had guided the Jews in righteousness for centuries. Surely God would not abandon the Law!

Paul anticipates this objection and answers it brilliantly by referring to the life of Abraham. Abraham was revered by the Jews as the father of their people, a man whose righteousness won for him the name of "the friend of God." Paul points out, though, that this icon of Judaism was justified not by lawkeeping, but by faith. Indeed, this faith came to him not after he had practiced the rite of circumcision, but before, proving that in order to receive the righteousness of faith, one did not have to be circumcised.

Thus, Paul concludes, the Christian justification by faith follows a pattern that has been true for as long as men have believed in God. Even when we today trust in the promise of the Most High, we do not do so by ourselves. Instead, we walk in the footsteps of Abraham, the father of all who believe.

The Power of God to Salvation: Lesson Six

6. How does Romans 4:11 describe Abraham's circumcision? Many in the denominational world argue that baptism is similarly a "seal." Is this argument valid? Why or why not?

7. What two groups does Romans 4:11-12 describe as children of Abraham? What characterizes each group?

Romans 4:13-22

1. What does Romans 4:13 say? What does it mean? How does this match up with what Paul has previously said? Genesis 15:5-6 may prove helpful.

2. What assertion does Romans 4:14 make? How does Romans 4:15 support that assertion? Why is this significant to Paul's argument?

3. According to Romans 4:16, what are the consequences of the promise coming through faith and not through law? Why do we care?

4. What divine description of Abraham is repeated in Romans 4:17? In what two senses is this true?

5. According to Romans 4:17, what caused Abraham to believe? What, according to Romans 4:18, was the result of that belief? Why is this important?

6. What did Abraham not consider in Romans 4:19? What consequence did this "selective blindness" have in Romans 4:20? What should this teach us?

7. How does Romans 4:21 characterize the faith of Abraham? What result did this faith see? What does this teach us about faith today?

The Power of God to Salvation

Seven: Life Through Jesus Christ

Romans 4:23-5:11

1. According to Romans 4:23-24, for whose sake was righteousness imputed to Abraham? Why?
2. In Romans 5:1-2, Paul describes two effects of being justified by faith in Jesus. What are they? What is their significance?
3. Romans 5:2-4 lists two things that Christians rejoice/glory in. What are they? Why do Christians rejoice in either, especially in tribulation?
4. In Romans 5:5, what does Paul tell us about the hope discussed in Romans 5:2, 4? What explanation does he give? What does the explanation mean?
5. What action of Christ is described in Romans 5:6? How does the explanation provided in Romans 5:7-8 show the marvelous nature of this action?

While We Were Sinners

The idea of agape, of self-sacrificing love, can be a tough concept to pin down sometimes. What is not so difficult, however, is to understand what it looks like. The death of Jesus Christ sets the eternal standard for agape.

Throughout His ministry, Jesus taught things about the believer's relationship to others that His contemporaries found hard to accept and that we today still find hard to accept. To the rational, thinking man of the world, it seems ridiculous to love one's enemies and pray for one's persecutors. The human mind revolts at the thought of such seeming foolishness.

Later in His life, however, Jesus demonstrated what He meant in the most breathtaking way possible. He died on the cross for mankind, not for a mankind that was friendly to Him, not for a mankind that was good and deserved it, but for a mankind that was filled with evil and enmity toward God. Jesus died for the very men who had condemned Him to death and driven the nails into His hands. While we were yet sinners, He died for us.

That is the point to which our faith must lead us. We no longer have the option of being friendly only to those who are friends with us, of loving only those who love us first. Instead, we must be devoted to the good of everyone, friend, stranger, and enemy alike. This is the way that we let the light of Jesus shine in our lives. This is the way that we follow Him: to the cross, and then to the crown.

The Power of God to Salvation: Lesson Seven

6. In Romans 5:9, what else does Paul tell us about the effect of Christ on our lives? What does this mean? What reason does Paul give for this statement in Romans 5:10?

7. At first glance, the first part of Romans 5:11 appears to be worded similarly to the last part of Romans 5:2. What makes these two wordings different? Why does the difference exist?

Romans 5:12-21

1. What chain of events is described in Romans 5:12? According to this chain of events, why does death spread to all men? Why is this important?

2. In Romans 5:14, Paul mentions people “who had not sinned according to the likeness of the transgression of Adam.” Who are these people? What is Paul talking about?

3. How is Adam described in the last part of Romans 5:14? How is this typology explained in Romans 5:15?

4. Romans 5:16-17 outlines the different results caused by the different actions of Adam and Christ. What are these results? How are they different? Why is this important?

5. Romans 5:18 states that two things came to “all men.” What are these two things? Who are the “all men” to whom they have come? Why is this significant?

6. Romans 5:19 once again describes two differing actions of Adam and Christ. What are they? What is their result? In what sense are Adam and Christ responsible for these results? Consulting Romans 4:23-24 and Romans 5:12 again may help.

7. What chain of events is outlined in Romans 5:20-21? What is its eventual result? Why is this significant?

The Power of God to Salvation

Eight: Dead to Sin

Romans 6:1-7

1. What question does Romans 6:1 ask? Why is this a logical question at this point?
2. How does Paul respond to this question in Romans 6:2? Why? What does this response mean?
3. In Romans 6:3, Paul asks a question that logically supports Romans 6:2. What is this question? How does it affirm the position of the previous verse?
4. What does Romans 6:4 compare baptism to? What parallels between these two events does the verse cite? What does this teach us about baptism?
5. What does the last part of Romans 6:4 reveal about the status of the new Christian? How does Paul's statement in Romans 6:5 support this claim?

Crucified With Him

False doctrine, although it is destructive and evil, often has a certain symmetry to it. For instance, very often, groups that claim that only belief is necessary for salvation will often also argue that anyone who was once saved will always remain saved. By denying baptism, they deny the need to obey before salvation; by denying the possibility of falling away, they deny the need to obey after it.

Romans 6 presents a dreadful obstacle to both false doctrines. The language it uses to describe baptism could not be any more vivid. We actually die in the waters of baptism. Our old man of sin is crucified with Christ, so that we need no longer be enslaved to sin. Then, we rise from the waters of baptism to walk in newness of life. Dead before; alive after. There should be no question about the spiritual significance of baptism.

Because of this baptism, though, we are bound to live in a certain way. If we are truly dead to the enslavement of sin, then we will no longer allow it to reign over us. Paul's language clearly admits the possibility of choice, even for the baptized believer. We need to work to remain faithful to the commitment we made in the hour of baptism.

False Christianity is a very low-effort religion. It requires nothing from the believer, yet promises him everything. The true road to salvation is more difficult. Only by obedience to God's word can we truly taste the fruits of faith in Christ.

The Power of God to Salvation: Lesson Eight

6. Romans 6:6 describes an action with two results. What is the action? What are the results? How does this tie Romans 6:2-5 to the point that Paul wishes to make?
7. What assertion does Paul make in Romans 6:7? Why is this true?

Romans 6:8-14

1. Romans 6:8 connects an action to a belief. What is the action? What is the belief? Why is this connection valid?
2. What knowledge is described in Romans 6:9? Why would it be true? How does it connect with the belief of Romans 6:8?
3. Romans 6:10 describes both the consequence of the death of Christ and the purpose of His life. What are each of these? Why are they significant?
4. In Romans 6:11, Paul commands the Romans to share in two attitudes. What are they? How does this command logically follow from what Paul has already established?
5. What does Paul further command the Romans to do in Romans 6:12? How does this stem from the attitudes of Romans 6:11?
6. Romans 6:13 contains a negative and a positive command. What are they? What is the meaning of each? Practically speaking, what do they tell us about how Christians should live?
7. What state does the last part of Romans 6:14 ascribe to Christians? According to the first part of the verse, what logically follows from this concept? What does all of this tell us?

The Power of God to Salvation

Nine: Slaves of Righteousness

Romans 6:15-23

1. What question does Paul ask in Romans 6:15? Why is this question reasonable? How does it differ from the question of Romans 6:1?
2. According to Romans 6:17, to whom is everyone enslaved? What does this point tell us about Christians who reject God and return to the world?
3. Romans 6:17-18 depicts a spiritual transformation. In your own words, describe this transformation. What is its result?
4. What command does Paul give in Romans 6:19? What does it mean? How does it logically follow from what Paul has previously said?
5. What does Paul say in Romans 6:20? Does this mean that non-Christians are not responsible for their sins? If not, what does it mean?

Slaves to Obey

Slavery is not an institution that is in good odor these days, and with good reason. The brand of slavery that existed in the prewar American South was undeniably vicious.

During Paul's time, however, slavery in the Roman Empire was much more mixed in character. Some slaves, particularly those who worked in mines, were brutalized. Other slaves lived more pleasant lives. Indeed, history even records examples of educated Greeks who sold themselves into slavery so that they could become tutors in rich Roman households. However, every kind of slavery involves the loss of freedom of choice. There is no walking out on slavery, only obedience to it.

This is why Paul picks the metaphor of slavery to describe the relationship of humanity to good and evil. All of us pick either God or Satan and spend our lives serving the master we have chosen. There are no neutrals in the war of the spirit. If we think that we can find good for ourselves in a life without God, all we have done is allow Satan to enslave us without our even realizing it.

The only way to avoid slavery to evil is by dedicating ourselves to the service of good. We can't hope to drift somehow into righteousness. Instead, righteousness must be something we continually choose and pursue and seek. This leaves us without a lot of the choices that the world takes for granted, but only in this slavery can we find the freedom of the soul.

The Power of God to Salvation: Lesson Nine

6. Romans 6:21-22 contrasts two actions and two results. What are the actions? What are the results? How does this support Paul's argument?

7. Explain how Romans 6:23 summarizes the argument of the eight preceding verses.

Romans 7:1-6

1. What does Romans 7:1 tell us about Paul's audience? How does this help us to understand the book better?

2. What point is Paul making in Romans 7:1? How does this tie into Paul's earlier argument?

3. How does Paul describe the marriage relationship in Romans 7:2? Is "bound" here the same as "bondage" in 1 Corinthians 7:15? Why or why not? Why does it matter?

4. Romans 7:3 describes the same action leading to two different results. What is responsible for the difference in results?

5. How does Paul apply the marriage illustration of Romans 7:1-3 to the relationship between Christians, the law, and Christ in Romans 7:4? What's the point?

6. The last part of Romans 7:4 and Romans 7:5 describe two kinds of actions leading to two different kinds of fruit. What are the actions? What is each fruit? What does this tell us about what our Christian lives must be?

7. What does Romans 7:6 reveal about the status of Christians? What does this tell us that Christians should do?

The Power of God to Salvation

Ten: Sold Into Bondage

Romans 7:7-12

1. What is Paul's next question in Romans 7:7? What has Paul said recently that might lead someone to ask this question?
2. What answer does Paul make in Romans 7:7 to this question? How does his answer establish that the law is actually contrary to sin?
3. What does Romans 7:8 reveal about the operation of sin in our lives? Why does this make logical sense?
4. According to Romans 7:8, when was sin dead? According to Romans 7:9, when was sin alive? Why?
5. When does Paul say he was alive in Romans 7:9? When did Paul die? Why?

Sin Became Alive

In church circles, it is common to speak of "the age of accountability," the time at which children raised in the church need to be baptized. This is a term we normally think of experientially rather than Scripturally. We just know that at some point in the experience of children, typically in the early teenage years, a light bulb goes on inside the child's head. He gets That Look in Bible classes or the assembly that says he is giving thought to the condition of his soul, and shortly thereafter, he is baptized.

We see Paul's description of this familiar concept in Romans 7:8-10. According to Paul, the trigger for moral consciousness is law. Before a child understands the meaning of God's statutes, he is without law. He does as he pleases, only guided by fear of parental punishment. However, there comes a time for almost every child when he is forced to confront law for the first time. Either by consulting Scripture or the innate sense of justice that resides within each one of us, the child realizes that he has done something not merely unlawful, but evil. And in that moment, as Paul says, "Sin became alive, and I died."

This realization that we have sinned can be extremely unpleasant, but it is also extremely important. It serves the same function as the nerves that cause us pain when we have set a hand on a hot stove. It warns us of damage that has already occurred so that we will not damage ourselves further. It's important to be accountable to ourselves. It is what leads us to become accountable to God.

The Power of God to Salvation: Lesson Ten

6. What does Romans 7:10 say that the Law was intended to produce? What did it actually produce? According to Romans 7:11, how did this happen? Why?
7. What does Paul say in summary in Romans 7:12? How has Paul established that this is true? Why is it important?

Romans 7:13-23

1. What question does Paul ask in Romans 7:13? Why is this a good place to ask it? How does he answer it? Why? What does the answer mean?
2. How does Paul describe himself in Romans 7:14? How does Romans 7:15 explain this description? What does Paul mean by what he says?
3. What statement does Paul make in Romans 7:16? Why must this be logically true?
4. How does Paul portray himself in Romans 7:18? According to Romans 7:17, what result does this have? What is Paul talking about?
5. What does Paul say about himself in Romans 7:19? How does this back up his previous assertion? How familiar is Paul's experience to any godly person? Why?
6. What statement does Paul make in Romans 7:20? How is it different from the statement of 7:17? Does this literally mean that a little sin demon dwelt inside Paul? If not, what does it mean?
7. Romans 7:21-23 describes two laws. What are they? Which one does Paul desire? Which one does he obey? What result does this have? Why?

The Power of God to Salvation

Eleven: According to the Spirit

Romans 7:24-8:8

1. What question does Romans 7:24 ask? What answer does Romans 7:25 give? How do both question and answer relate back to Paul's previous argument?
2. Romans 7:25 describes a division. What is this division? What solution does Romans 8:2 reveal to this problem?
3. According to Romans 8:1, to whom is this solution available? Why is this important?
4. What does Romans 8:3 reveal about the ability of the Law to solve this problem? Why is this true?
5. In Romans 8:3, what does Paul say God did to solve the problem of sin? What did Jesus do to effect this solution? According to Romans 8:4, what are the consequences of this solution?

This Body of Death

In Romans 7, Paul describes one of the chief phenomena that makes the life of the Christian so difficult. Every human being possesses not just one attribute to his being, but two. All of us have minds, which we can turn in whatever direction we desire. However, we also have bodies and the collection of appetites that come with having a body, and these appetites constantly cry out to be fed.

There is nothing inherently evil about these appetites. Indeed, without the most basic of them, the desire to eat, all of us would probably starve to death. Our other appetites likewise have their necessary uses, but Satan is able to exploit all of them by tempting us to satisfy them with sin.

This leaves us with two choices: either we can give into the appetite and be forever ruled by our pleasures, or we can war against the appetite by devoting ourselves to God instead. The first way of living is very peaceful until it ends in destruction; the second way of living leads to the struggle that Paul describes between the flesh and the spirit.

The battle of flesh and spirit is never one that we can bring to a successful conclusion ourselves, but it is necessary for our salvation. In order to have freedom from the condemnation that our sins incur, we must be in Christ Jesus, and we can only be in Christ Jesus if we walk according to the spirit and not according to the flesh. Only if we allow God's law to guide us can we escape the destruction that the self-seeking inherit.

The Power of God to Salvation: Lesson Eleven

6. What two kinds of people are described in Romans 8:5? What does each kind do? How does this help define Romans 8:4? Romans 7:25 may help you in your answer.

7. What does Romans 8:6 explain about the consequences of having a mind set on the spirit or on the flesh? How does Romans 8:7 explain this statement? Why is Romans 8:8 a necessary consequence of these things? Romans 8:1 may help you explain things.

Romans 8:9-17

1. In Romans 8:9, what test does Paul say will establish whether a man is in the spirit? Is this the same thing as having the spirit of Christ? What does this mean? Romans 7:20 and 8:5 may explain things.

2. What does Romans 8:10 reveal about the results of having Christ in us? What does Romans 8:11 say about the results of having the spirit of God within us? How does this relate back to Romans 8:9?

3. What “therefore” statement does Paul make in Romans 8:12? Why does this logically follow?

4. What two actions are described in Romans 8:13? What different results do each of these actions have? How does this relate back to Romans 8:5-6?

5. What statement does Paul make in Romans 8:14? What does this mean? Romans 7:25 may shed some light on the subject.

6. What two spirits are described in Romans 8:15? What does each one lead to? Why is this important?

7. According to Romans 8:16, to what does the Spirit Himself bear witness? How does this happen? What are the consequences of this witnessing? Why do we care?

The Power of God to Salvation

Twelve: More than Conquerors

Romans 8:18-30

1. What statement does Paul make in Romans 8:18? How does this logically continue Paul's previous argument?
2. Romans 8:19-27 describes three groanings. In Romans 8:19-22, what is the first of these groanings? What causes it?
3. In Romans 8:23-25, what is the second groaning? Why does this groaning occur?
4. In Romans 8:26, what is the third groaning? What process does this verse describe?
5. Romans 8:27 describes someone as "He who searches the hearts." Who is this? What knowledge does He possess? Why? What's the point?

If God Is for Us

The Bible leaves us with little doubt about who is on God's side and who isn't. If we devote ourselves to obedience to His word in an effort to conform ourselves to the likeness of His Son, He is pleased with us. If we do not, He is not. We need only serve to be assured of His favor.

Too often, we pay lip service to the idea that God is on our side without really thinking about what it means or taking advantage of it. This is not some penny-ante potentate like Donald Trump, who could come to our assistance armed only with billions of dollars. This is God, who has the power to do anything He wants to, and is effective for our aid not only in the realm of the flesh, but even in the realm of the spirit.

No matter where we are, no matter what we are doing, no matter what trouble we are faced with, as children of God, help is only a prayer away. This does not mean that God will rescue us from the consequences of our actions like an overattentive parent. It does not mean that everything in our lives will always turn out for the best from a fleshly perspective. But it does mean that everything in our lives will turn out for the best from a spiritual perspective, and that guarantee is all that truly matters.

The Christian walk is often a hard one, but it should never be lonely. God will always be there to shoulder our burdens and lead us home. What can keep us from heaven if God is there to help?

The Power of God to Salvation: Lesson Twelve

6. What statement does Romans 8:28 make? What does it mean? How does the content of Romans 8:19-27 shape this meaning?
7. Romans 8:29-30 sets out a time line. In order, what are the events in this time line? What is meant by these things?

Romans 8:31-39

1. Romans 8:31 begins by asking “What shall we say to these things?” What things? How do “these things” relate to the second half of this verse?
2. In Romans 8:32, Paul uses a rhetorical question to frame an argument. What is this argument? What are its implications? Why is it logically valid?
3. Romans 8:33 asks a question. What is it? How is it answered? Why is this answer both true and significant?
4. We see yet another question in Romans 8:34. What is this question? What answer does Paul give to it? How does each element of the reply separately answer the question?
5. What question does Romans 8:35 ask? Judging from Romans 8:36, is this an abstract possibility or a real concern? What answer does Romans 8:37 give to this question?
6. What does Romans 8:38-39 say about the connection between Christians and the love of God? How does this statement support the answer of Romans 8:37?
7. Does Romans 8:38-39 mean that the Christian cannot choose to reject God? Why or why not?

The Power of God to Salvation

Thirteen: Review I

Romans 1:1-4:22

For each of the contexts listed below, explain both the main point of the context and its significance.

1. Romans 1:1-17
2. Romans 1:18-32
3. Romans 2:1-16
4. Romans 2:17-3:8

From Judgment to Glory

Never has mankind been taken on a greater journey than the one from Romans 1:18 to Romans 8:39. Paul begins on a minor-key note, describing the reasonableness of obedience to God, yet the universality of the Gentile refusal to do so. He then extends this universal condemnation of the Gentiles to condemn the Jews also, so that no man can hope to stand before God of himself.

Paul then explains God's solution to this problem that we cannot solve ourselves. Despite our sin, we can be justified by faith in the power of Christ to save us. In this, we follow in the footsteps of men of faith like Abraham, who, believing in the promise of God, was accounted righteous. The blood of Jesus not only justifies us despite our sin, but it also reconciles us to God. Indeed, it is fair to describe Christ as a second Adam, who gives us the opportunity for life instead of opening the door for our temptation, which led to sin and death.

However, Paul continues, this scheme of faith should not cause us to sin to pursue grace, nor should we regard it as license to sin. The Christian must consider himself as dead to sin and likewise dead to the Law. The Law is not evil, but good, but it caused us to recognize evil in ourselves, leading to conflict between our spirit and flesh. However, the Law no longer condemns the one whose mind is set on the Spirit, because its requirements have been fulfilled through Christ. All things now work together for the Christian, and nothing can separate him from the love of God.

The Power of God to Salvation: Lesson Thirteen

5. Romans 3:9-30

6. Romans 3:31-4:22

Romans 4:23-8:39

1. Romans 4:23-5:21

2. Romans 6:1-14

3. Romans 6:15-7:6

4. Romans 7:7-23

5. Romans 7:24-8:17

6. Romans 8:18-39

The Power of God to Salvation

Fourteen: The Children of the Promise

Romans 9:1-5

1. In order to go forward, we first need to go backward. Give a one-sentence summary of Paul's argument to this point in Romans.
2. Describe Paul's language in Romans 9:1. What point is Paul trying to make? Why would he want to make this point here?
3. What attitude does Paul express in Romans 9:2? Why does Paul feel this way? What should this teach us?
4. What does Paul say that he might wish in Romans 9:3? How does this show the depth of Paul's feeling? What should we take from it?
5. Who is the subject of Romans 9:4? What does this have to do with the overall argument of Romans? Why does Paul bring them up here?

The Problem of Israel

Every false doctrine ever spawned has arisen from one of two sources. Either it is the product of men who understood divine law and sought a way around it, or it is the product of an honest misunderstanding of Scripture.

We are no wiser than our fathers, and we are vulnerable to both. Each of us bears the responsibility to speak truth in our hearts about God's word, but we also bear the responsibility to be careful students of the truth that has been revealed to us. In the latter realm, we must be particularly careful to read the books of the Bible not in disjointed chunks, but as a whole, paying attention to their literary and historical contexts.

This is particularly important in Romans. In some ways, Romans is a victim of its own success. Paul did such a good job of making his case that no one today bothers to bring up the objections to which he was responding. If we allow ourselves to forget those original objections, our reading of Romans will quickly lead us to conclusions that Paul never even considered.

We see Paul address one of these long-forgotten objections in Romans 9-11. He's just finished explaining God's plan of salvation, but there's one logical problem. How is it that God's plan has largely been rejected by God's own chosen people? This is the problem that Paul is addressing, the problem of Israel, and if we overlook that central thread, we may well fall prey to false doctrine ourselves.

The Power of God to Salvation: Lesson Fourteen

6. In Romans 9:4-5, Paul catalogues the spiritual blessings that belong to the Jewish nation. Define the spiritual blessings listed below, and explain their significance.
 - a. The adoption:
 - b. The covenants:
 - c. The giving of the law:
 - d. The promises:
 - e. Christ according to the flesh:

Romans 9:6-9

1. What first comment does Paul make in Romans 9:6? Why does Paul need to say this?
2. What does the second half of Romans 9:6 say? What does this mean?
3. Why does Paul mention "Abraham's descendants" in Romans 9:7? What does he say about them? Why is this important? Matthew 3:9 may help.
4. What quotation from the Old Testament appears in the second part of Romans 9:7? How is this quotation significant to Paul's argument? The story of Genesis 21:9-14 may prove enlightening.
5. What statement does Romans 9:8 make? What was the significance of this statement in the time of the Old Testament?
6. What is the significance of Romans 9:8 in the time of the New Testament? Galatians 4:21-28 may have something useful to say on the subject.
7. How does all of this explain how the word of God has NOT failed?

The Power of God to Salvation

Fifteen: God's Purpose

Romans 9:10-13

1. There are few sections of Scripture in which context is more important than Romans 9. In context, what is Paul discussing throughout this chapter?
2. According to the inheritance laws of the patriarchal era, who between Esau and Jacob should have inherited from Isaac? How does this fit in with Paul's point in Romans 9:8?
3. Romans 9:11 states that God acted to further His "purpose according to His choice." In the time of Jacob, what was God's purpose? Genesis 12:3 may illuminate this question.
4. What was God's choice? Consider Romans 9:13 and Genesis 28:10-14 in your answer.
5. How did God ensure that His purpose according to His choice would stand? The sequence of Genesis 25:21-23, 28, 27:6-10, which explains Romans 9:12, may help you in your answer.

Two Visions of God

One of the most important big-picture issues in the Bible is the question of whether man is free to choose his own eternal destiny or not. The answer to this question defines the way we understand everything from God's purpose in creation to what will happen to us at the day of judgment, but perhaps most important, it defines the way we look at God.

If we accept the Calvinist argument and agree that it is God, not ourselves, who determines whether we shall be saved, here is what we must believe about Him: Because the Bible reveals that most men will not be saved, it must be true that God has chosen for most men not to be saved. By decree before the foundation of the world, He has condemned billions of sentient beings to eternal torment in hell with no opportunity to save themselves, ever. Calvinists describe the purposes of such a God as "unknowable." Some better descriptions might be "cruel," "capricious," and "evil."

By contrast, if we accept that man has the right to determine his own destiny, we are no longer forced to grapple with the nightmare of a callous, uncaring God. Still, it is true that most men will not be saved, but it is God's desire that they should be, and only their own desires that have kept them from heaven. The condemnation of such souls is tragic, but it is also just. By contrast, if we choose to love God and serve Him, we shall be assured of His reward. Our fate is not in another's hands. It is in our own.

The Power of God to Salvation: Lesson Fifteen

6. Why does Paul say that this choice was “not because of works” in Romans 9:11? What point is he trying to make? Think back to passages like Romans 3:28 in your answer.
7. Does anything in this context have anything to do with the free will of Esau or Jacob? Does anything in this context have to do with the salvation of Esau or Jacob? Why is this important?

Romans 9:14-18

1. What question does Paul ask in Romans 9:14? How does this fit into his overall argument in Romans 9? What answer does he give? Why is this important?
2. To support his answer, Paul quotes from the Old Testament in Romans 9:15. What does this quotation say? In its Romans 9 context, what does it mean?
3. What statement does Paul make in Romans 9:16? What is the “it” of the statement? What, then, does the overall statement mean?
4. What statement is made about God in Exodus 9:18? Using the context and your answer from the previous question, what does this statement actually mean?
5. The next Bible character introduced in Romans 9 is Pharaoh, whom Paul describes as having been hardened in Romans 9:18. What is the time relationship between Pharaoh’s first rejection of God and the first time he is described as “hardened?” Why is this significant? Exodus 5:1-2 and Exodus 7:3 may prove helpful in your answer.
6. This hardening process is described in varying ways in Scripture. Using Exodus 9:6-7, 33-35, and 10:1, outline the way in which this hardening took place. Does this mean that God denied Pharaoh the exercise of free will? Why or why not?
7. Paul quotes from Exodus 9 in Romans 9:17. Using the context of Exodus 9:13-16, explain what this quotation means. Does this have anything to do with individual free will? Why or why not?

The Power of God to Salvation

Sixteen: Concerning Israel

Romans 9:19-26

1. What question is asked in Romans 9:19? Whom does this question concern? Why is it being asked? Why is this important?
2. In Romans 9:20, with what other questions does Paul answer the question of Romans 9:19? In 9:20, who is the thing molded? What is the “like this?” What does Paul’s answer mean?
3. What other rhetorical question does Paul ask in Romans 9:21? In context, what is the “honorable use?” What is the “common use?” What does this question mean?
4. What final rhetorical question does Paul ask in Romans 9:22? Whom does this question discuss? What’s Paul’s point?
5. How does Romans 9:23 explain why God endured the vessels of wrath from Romans 9:22? What are these vessels of mercy? How did God prepare them beforehand for glory?

Biological Calvinism

As important as the debate about free will is in the religious realm, we must recognize opponents of the truth even in some of the adamantly irreligious. Much of our scientific community, and of the culture in general, subscribes to the belief that man is just a robot with the illusion of free will. We are guided not by our wills, but by uncontrollable genetic and environmental impulses. It is fair to describe such a belief system as a biological form of Calvinism.

Some of the most obvious manifestations of this belief are dreadfully familiar to us all. Homosexuals are homosexuals because of some (as-yet-undiscovered) genetic factor, alcoholics are alcoholics because their upbringing forces them to be, some users of pornography are addicts who can no longer change their behavior, and so forth. The result of these claims is to undermine God’s law by describing sin as an external affliction, not the result of a free choice of the will. Such a thing, of course, cannot be. Certainly, we can be influenced by other things in our behavior, but the choice remains ours.

However, we must be careful not to allow subtler forms of biological Calvinism within our own lives. We cannot begin to make excuses for our own sin by defending our anger, our sharp tongues, our unloving hearts, as “just the way we are.” No sin is inevitable. We sin because we choose to, and those traits continue to manifest themselves in our lives because we allow them to. Our search for responsibility should both begin and end with us.

The Power of God to Salvation: Lesson Sixteen

6. In Romans 9:24, from whom are the “vessels of mercy” called? What does it mean that they are called? 2 Thessalonians 2:13-14 may help.
7. What does the quotation in Romans 9:25-26 say? What does it mean? How does it relate back to what Paul said in Romans 9:23?

Romans 9:27-33

1. What outcry of Isaiah does Paul quote in Romans 9:27? What’s the point of this? How does it relate back to what Paul has said in Romans 9:22?
2. What is said in Romans 9:28? How does this support the statement of Romans 9:27? What is the word that is being executed?
3. What does the Isaiah prophecy cited in Romans 9:29 say? In context, what does it mean?
4. How does Paul describe the Gentiles in Romans 9:30? How does this description fit into the overall thrust of Romans 9?
5. How does Paul describe Israel in Romans 9:31? How does this compare with his description of the Gentiles? How does this fit into what Paul has been saying throughout the chapter?
6. What reason does Romans 9:32 give for Israel’s failure? Is this failure due to the choice of God, or due to the choice of Israel? Why is this important?
7. Romans 9:32-33 mentions a “stumbling stone.” Who is this stumbling stone? Why did it give the Jews such trouble? Matthew 21:42-44 may help.

The Power of God to Salvation

Seventeen: I Have Stretched Out My Hands

Romans 10:1-13

1. How does Paul describe the Jews in Romans 10:2? Why is it important for us to recognize that this logical category exists?
2. What does Paul say about the Jews' pursuit of righteousness in Romans 10:3? According to this statement, who bears the responsibility for their failure to achieve righteousness? Why is this significant?
3. How do the answers to the two preceding questions relate back to Paul's argument in Romans 9? Why do we need to understand this?
4. Romans 10:4-6 describes two different understandings of righteousness. What are they? Why does Paul bring them up here?
5. Romans 10:6-8 quotes from a passage in the Old Testament. What is this passage? What is significant about the way that Paul uses it?

Disappointment

Disappointment is a familiar, although unwelcome, part of life for all of us. Anything we attempt in any area of our lives has the possibility of disappointing us. Sometimes these disappointments are comparatively minor, like the model battleship we built in sixth grade that didn't turn out as cool-looking as we wanted it too. Sometimes these disappointments are life-shattering, like the disappointment of a man who learns that his wife has been unfaithful.

All of this Paul's statement in Romans 10:11 all the more striking. Paraphrasing Isaiah, he writes, "Whoever believes in Him will not be disappointed." This doesn't mean, of course, that all the myriad disappointments of human existence suddenly vanish once we turn to the Lord. It does mean, though, that we will never know disappointment in our relationship with God.

What a blessing! If we commit ourselves to the Lord according to His word, and we remain faithful to that commitment, the Creator of heaven and earth guarantees that we will receive what He has promised. We will not stay permanently dead. We will not appear before Jesus on the day of judgment and be condemned despite our obedience to His will. We will not arrive in the courts of heaven, only to discover that it has all the appeal of a cheap motel room. We will not be disappointed. Even though everything and everyone else in our lives may be faithless, God will remain faithful, and that is a promise well worth living for!

The Power of God to Salvation: Lesson Seventeen

6. What does Paul say about salvation in Romans 10:9-11? Is this meant to be a complete description of God's plan of salvation? How do we know? Romans 6:3-4 may help.
7. What phenomenon does Paul describe in Romans 10:12-13? How should this inform our understanding of Romans 9?

Romans 10:14-21

1. What "chain of salvation" is described in rhetorical questions in Romans 10:14-15? Why does Paul bring these concepts up in this context?
2. What does Romans 10:16 reveal to us about why the bulk of the Jews were not saved? How does this relate back to the "chain of salvation" of Romans 10:14-15?
3. In Romans 10:17, what does Paul say causes faith? Is this always true? What two possibilities does this leave open for why the Jews might not have believed?
4. How does Paul address one of these two possible reasons for unbelief in Romans 10:18? How does this connect with Romans 10:14-15?
5. What possible mitigating factor does Paul bring up in Romans 10:19? What in the verse makes this mitigating factor invalid? Once again, who is at fault here?
6. What quotation does Paul cite in Romans 10:20? How does this fit in with his overall theme?
7. How does God describe His behavior toward Israel in Romans 10:21? To sum up, describe God's attitude toward the Jews and the reason for the Jewish failure to be saved.

The Power of God to Salvation

Eighteen: A Remnant

Romans 11:1-10

1. What question does Paul ask in Romans 11:1? How does he answer it? Why? Why is this important?
2. What portion of Israel is described in Romans 11:2-5? How do the historical passages cited by Paul make it more likely that such a portion exists?
3. According to Romans 11:6, by what does this remnant exist? What does this mean? Consider passages like Romans 9:31-32 in your answer.
4. How is Israel described in Romans 11:7? How does this relate back to Paul's discussion in Romans 10:3? Why is it important?
5. In Romans 11:7, Paul describes some who were "chosen" and the rest who were "hardened." What does this mean? Consider 2 Thessalonians 2:13-14, Romans 10:17-21, and the discussion of Pharaoh in Lesson 15 in your answer.

The Hardening of Israel

In our analysis of what it means that God "hardens someone's heart," we tend to focus on Pharaoh and the cataclysmic collision between God and ruler recorded in the early part of the book of Exodus. However, it is well worth noting that other people and groups are also described as "hardened," and one of the most useful of these is the nation of Israel.

Paul describes the bulk of his own people in this way in Romans 11:7, as opposed to the remnant that was chosen. Thankfully, this choosing and hardening process is laid out in detail in the gospels and the book of Acts. In John 6, Jesus preaches the word to the multitudes that were following Him. His apostles listen; the rest fall away. In Acts 3-4, Peter and John preach the gospel. Thousands believe, but the Sanhedrin arrests the two apostles and imprisons them. In Acts 13, Paul preaches in Antioch. Some Jews react with belief, but most react with blasphemy.

There is no mystical process at work in any of this. Instead, the same pattern is evident in all three places. A servant of God preaches the word. The Jews react to the word in two different ways. Some believe it and are chosen by it. Some reject it and are hardened by it. Both of these things happen with any new idea. Our belief or unbelief is not the result of the direct operation of the Holy Spirit. Instead, it is the result of the word. We are not called or chosen by some unseen force; we are called and chosen by the gospel of Christ.

The Power of God to Salvation: Lesson Eighteen

6. Romans 11:8 states that God gave Israel “a spirit of stupor.” What does this mean? Consider the original context of Paul’s Old Testament quotation in Deuteronomy 29:1-4.
7. In Romans 11:9-10, what does Paul quote David as saying? Using the original context in Psalm 69:21-23, lay out what this actually means.

Romans 11:11-16

1. What rhetorical question does Paul ask in Romans 11:11? What does it mean? How does he answer it?
2. What consequence of the transgression of the Jews is described in Romans 11:11? What process does this describe? Why is it important? The story of Acts 13:45-46 may help.
3. What statement does Paul make in Romans 11:12? Why is this true?
4. What does Paul tell us about who his audience is in Romans 11:13? Does this seem different from the audience of Romans to this point? Why the change?
5. In Romans 11:13-14, Paul describes an event that would “magnify his ministry.” What is it? Why would this be true? Does Paul regard this as a certainty, or a possibility?
6. What does Romans 11:15 tell us about the significance of the acceptance of the Jews? Why might Paul consider this event as significant?
7. What statement does Paul make in Romans 11:16? About whom does he make this statement? What does it mean? What is its importance?

The Power of God to Salvation

Nineteen: Kindness and Severity

Romans 11:17-24

1. What metaphor does Paul employ in Romans 11:17? What do the various parts of this metaphor represent? What should we learn from this?
2. What application of this metaphor does Paul make in Romans 11:18? Why? What attitude should this create in us?
3. In Romans 11:19-21, Paul brings up a possible objection to this point. What is this objection? How does he answer it? What should our response be? Why?
4. In Romans 11:20, what reason does Paul give for why the branches were broken off? Why is this important?
5. Romans 11:22 describes two patterns of behavior and the reaction that each generates from God. Describe each behavior pattern and its attendant reaction. What should we learn from this?

Anthropomorphization

In dealing with animals, human beings often adopt a viewpoint called anthropomorphization. It's a big word, but it simply means attributing human characteristics to that which is inhuman. For example, we might say that Fluffy comes to the door when we get home because she loves us and misses us, when in reality Fluffy comes to the door because she is hungry and thinks that we make good cat-food-can openers.

It's mainly just amusing when we anthropomorphize our furry friends, but it can be a big problem when we do the same to God. It is true that we are created in His image, but that does not make Him human. Because of our humanity, we are prey to all sorts of frailties and foibles that are unknown to God. We have fears that God does not have, illusions that God does not share, and a perception of reality that is not the same as His. God is different.

This means that we cannot attempt to predict God's attitudes or behavior on the basis of our own. It's absurd to say, "God just wouldn't do that," simply because we ourselves wouldn't do that. God will always keep His promises and fulfill His purposes, and He will do what He must to accomplish both. We might have trouble imagining that God expects us to do EVERYTHING according to His will, but that is precisely what His nature demands. We might balk at the thought of the disobedient condemned to eternal destruction, but that destruction is exactly what His justice requires. God is different. We need to act accordingly.

The Power of God to Salvation: Lesson Nineteen

6. In Romans 11:23, Paul mentions a possible course of conduct for the Jews. What is it? What will happen if they pursue this course of conduct? Why? What should we learn from this?
7. What reason does Paul give in Romans 11:24 for why the above might happen? In real terms, what does this mean?

Romans 11:25-36

1. In Romans 11:25, Paul describes a “mystery.” What is this mystery? What is Paul saying here?
2. According to Romans 11:26, what will the result of the mystery be? Who is “all Israel?” Does this necessarily mean that we should look for a national restoration of Israel? Romans 9:6-8 may help.
3. In Romans 11:28, Paul describes two perspectives on the Jews. What are these perspectives? What do they mean? Consider passages like Acts 14:19, Deuteronomy 7:6-8, and Romans 9:24-26 in your response.
4. In Romans 11:29, Paul supports the conclusion of the previous verse by saying that two things are irrevocable. Name these two things and define them. Romans 5:18, 6:27, and 9:23-24 may prove useful.
5. In Romans 11:30-31, Paul outlines two parallel sequences of events. What are they? How do they logically work? Who is the “you” of the first case? Who is the “they” of the second case?
6. What statement does Paul make in Romans 11:32? In what sense is this true? What should we take from it?
7. How does Paul describe God in Romans 11:33-34? Why is this description appropriate here?

The Power of God to Salvation

Twenty: A Living and Holy Sacrifice

Romans 12:1-8

1. What basic command does Paul give in Romans 12:1? By what does Paul command it? What does it mean? Why is it a “therefore” from Paul’s preceding discussion?
2. How does the last part of Romans 12:1 describe this process of presenting our bodies to God? What does this reveal about the nature of being a Christian? Why is this important?
3. In Romans 12:2, Paul describes two possible courses of behavior, one we are not to pursue, and one we are. What are they? How do we pursue the good course? What will happen if we do? Practically speaking, what does this mean?
4. What commandment does Paul give in Romans 12:3? How do we do this? How is it connected with Romans 12:1-2?
5. In Romans 12:4, what observation does Paul make? How does he use this to make a comparison to the church in Romans 12:5? How does this passage help us to understand the church?

Expressions of Worship

I was chatting the other day with some preacher friends of mine, and the subject of the “five acts of worship” came up.” One of them noted that he preferred to speak of worship in terms not of actions but of expressions. The difference is an interesting one. An action is purely external, but an expression is the external manifestation of what is present within. An act of worship is the ritual we go through because we’re supposed to; an expression of worship is an overflowing of our devotion to God.

It is useful to think of “worship” in a strict sense as what we do in the assembly, but it also useful to think of expressing worship not just in a church service, but everywhere in our lives. “Worship” comes from an Old English word that means “to acknowledge the worth of something,” and although we do that in song, in prayer, and in remembering the Lord’s death, it is also something that we must do in the way we live our lives.

What do we believe about God? Is He just a mean guy to whom we have to listen, lest we get flambéed? Or is He the greatest, noblest, most wonderful Being in the universe, to whom we offer our days and hours because He deserves everything we have to give? The former is certainly an expression of fear, but only the latter is an expression of worship. Romans 12:1 is quite clear about what God wants. His entire plan of salvation expresses His love, and He both desires and deserves to be loved in return. That love is what our spiritual service of worship must express.

The Power of God to Salvation: Lesson Twenty

6. In Romans 12:6-8, Paul defines a number of gifts that have been given to Christians. Are these gifts miraculous, non-miraculous, or both? Why do we need to understand this today?
7. In Romans 12:6-8, Paul repeatedly links a particular gift with the manner in which it is supposed to be used. Most of these connections are obvious, but some are not. In Romans 6:8, why is leadership linked with diligence and mercy with cheerfulness?

Romans 12:9-16

1. What commandment does Paul give in the first part of Romans 12:9? What does this mean? What problem does it solve? How do we need to apply it?
2. In the second half of Romans 12:9, Paul tells us to do two things. What are they? Practically speaking, how do we need to apply this commandment in our lives?
3. In Romans 12:10, Paul gives two exhortations about our behavior in the church. What are they? How do they relate to one another? What sort of picture do they paint of the Lord's church? How do we carry them out?
4. Romans 12:11-13 sets out a list of actions and attitudes that Christians are to possess. What do the elements of this list have in common? The first item on the list may help you see this. Taking all of these things together, what do they teach us about the nature of our devotion?
5. What command does Paul give in Romans 12:14? Is this easy or hard to understand? Is it easy or hard to do? How can we learn to do it?
6. What are we instructed to do in Romans 12:15? If we are to fulfill this commandment in the church, what attitude are we to have? How do we develop it?
7. What commandment does Paul next deliver in Romans 12:16? What church problem does this commandment imply? What is the source of the problem? How do we find the right mindset?

The Power of God to Salvation

Twenty-One: The Fulfillment of the Law

Romans 12:17-13:7

1. What does Paul enjoin Christians to do in the first part of Romans 12:17? What does this mean? What does it have to do with his comment in the second part of the verse? How should we apply these things?
2. What general principle is given in Romans 12:18? How is the commandment of Romans 12:19 an application of this principle? How do the Scriptural quotations in Romans 12:19 and 12:20 support both points?
3. What further commandment on the subject does Paul give in Romans 12:21? What does this mean? How should we do it?
4. What statement does Paul make in Romans 13:1? What conclusion does he draw from this in Romans 13:2? What does this include? What does this not include? In answering this, consider the experiences of Paul and other early Christians recorded in Acts 4:18-20, 16:22-24.
5. In Romans 13:3-4, Paul describes two different actions and two different attitudes that result from these actions. What are they? Why does each action produce each attitude? What should we learn from this?

The Other and the Self

In Romans 12:17-13:14, Paul addresses two topics that initially seem to be unrelated: love and revenge. However, these two ideas are actually the two possible answers to the same basic question. How we view ourselves and others determines how we consider both.

If we have a mindset that is essentially selfish, we will spend our lives looking out for Number One. We think that our happiness and welfare are the highest good, and that we are entitled to possess both. Whenever anyone infringes upon either, our natural reaction is to strike out in revenge. We don't expect help from others (after all, we believe they should be as self-centered as we are), so we must help ourselves, in order to defend our priceless dignity and self-worth. This philosophy motivates everything from tribal blood feuds to corporate backbiting, and it is always driven by the self.

By contrast, when we learn to see the world through God's eyes, we adopt a mindset that is selfless. We recognize that although we ourselves possess immense dignity and worth, so too does everyone else. This godly valuation of others naturally leads us to expressions of love. We understand that it is just as important to care for and serve other people as it is to tend to our own needs, and we act accordingly. If sometimes things don't work out in our favor, if sometimes others wrong us, who cares? We don't have to defend ourselves because God will do it for us in all the ways that matter. This is the Christian understanding, and it first seeks others.

The Power of God to Salvation: Lesson Twenty-One

6. What other reason does Paul give for submission to government in Romans 13:5? Why is this logically true? What application of this does he make in Romans 13:6? How should this control both our actions and our attitudes?
7. What general summation statement does Paul make in Romans 13:7? What are some ways that we need to apply this in our lives?

Romans 13:8-14

1. In contrast to the commandment of Romans 13:7, what does Paul tell us to do in Romans 13:8? Why? What does this mean?
2. What truth about the law of God does Paul reveal in Romans 13:9? How should this alter the way we see our duty to God?
3. What does Paul describe love as not doing in Romans 13:10? From this, what does he reason must be true of love? In turn, how does this change the way we understand the laws of God? Why does this matter?
4. What reason does Paul give in Romans 13:11 for why Christians should devote themselves to love? What is he talking about? How should this change the way we understand our lives?
5. What statement does Paul make in Romans 13:12? What conclusion does this lead him to in the same verse? How do we apply this idea?
6. What admonition does Paul give us in Romans 13:13? What things described in the verse are not part of this proper behavior? What does this tell us about strife and jealousy in particular?
7. In Romans 13:14, Paul instructs us to do something and not to do something. Describe each. What do these two things tell us about the way that God expects us to behave?

The Power of God to Salvation

Twenty-Two: We Live for the Lord

Romans 14:1-4

1. What is the connection between Romans 13:8-14 and 14:1-4? Why is it important that we understand this?
2. In Romans 14:1, Paul gives a commandment, and then excludes a possible motive for obeying that commandment. Describe each. What is the purpose of the commandment? What is the purpose of the exclusion?
3. What thumbnail sketch of a specific dispute does Paul give in Romans 14:2? What else does Scripture tell us about this dispute? A study of Acts 15:28-29 may help.
4. In Romans 14:2, Paul describes the vegetable-eaters, the ones with the more restrictive beliefs, as “weak in faith.” Does this mean that everyone who holds a more restrictive belief on an issue is weak in faith? Or should we limit use of that term to this controversy? Why? Romans 14:14 may be useful.
5. In Romans 14:3, what command does Paul give to the eater, the one with the less restrictive conscience? If we find ourselves in this position, how should we apply the commandment?

Our Responsibility

One of the most conceptually important verses in the entire Bible is Romans 14:12. It describes a concept that is both exhilarating and frightening. Each one of us, individually, is responsible for ourselves before God. It is upon this foundation that true Christianity rests. There are no group rates for the passage to heaven. We don't get through the pearly gates because we listened to the right human teacher or belonged to the right congregation. Instead, we will be judged for the deeds that we ourselves have done in the flesh.

As a consequence of this, the prudent Christian does not rely upon anyone else, no matter how godly or well intentioned, to tell him about God's will for his life. Instead, the wise child of God searches the Scriptures himself and learns what he must do from the word. This too has its consequence. No two of us will read the Bible and define God's requirements in the same way. Sometimes, this is due to ignorance on one or both parts; at other times, it occurs simply because God has not spoken clearly on a given topic.

Because the church is a collection of individuals, we must be sensitive to these differences. Ignorance of the word must be gently corrected. Dishonest students of the word must be rejected. However, when two honest, informed Christians disagree on a passage, the Bible directs us to bear with one another, not reject one another. We are not the judges of one another's souls. God is, and we would do well to remember it.

The Power of God to Salvation: Lesson Twenty-Two

6. What command does Paul give to the non-eater, the one with the more restrictive conscience, in Romans 14:3? If we find ourselves in this position, how should we apply it?
7. Romans 14:4 sets forth a basic problem with judging based on our own conscience. What is this problem? How should this understanding change the way we deal with other Christians?

Romans 14:5-12

1. In Romans 14:5, Paul alludes to a second controversy. What is this one about? Passages like Colossians 2:16-17 may help you understand.
2. What important principle does Paul articulate in the second half of Romans 14:5? What does it mean? How should this change the way we consider our behavior?
3. In Romans 14:6, Paul outlines two different behaviors that lead to the same result. What are the behaviors? What is the result? What should this tell us about different opinions in areas where the Bible has not clearly spoken?
4. Romans 14:7-8 describes the purpose of the Christian existence. What is it? What does this idea mean for us in this context?
5. How does Paul describe the action and intention of Jesus in Romans 14:9? How should this change our understanding of our lives as Christians?
6. What two rhetorical questions does Paul ask in Romans 14:10? What statement does he then make that shows that they cannot be answered? Why is this true? How is it relevant to the discussion?
7. How does Romans 14:11 describe the scene on the Day of Judgment? How does Romans 14:12 explain the meaning of this for us personally, both generically and in matters of conscience?

The Power of God to Salvation

Twenty-Three: Things That Make for Peace

Romans 14:13-18

1. What conclusion does Paul reach in the first part of Romans 14:13? How does this conclusion follow logically from the preceding discussion?
2. In the last part of Romans 14:13, Paul instructs Christians to rather determine to do something. What is it? What does this mean for us? Paul's discussion in 1 Corinthians 8:9-11 may prove relevant.
3. What does Paul reveal about his knowledge in Romans 14:14? What does he say about the opinions that some others hold? What are the consequences of both knowledge and opinion? What does this tell us?
4. What statement does Paul make in the first part of Romans 14:15? Why is this true? What commandment does Paul give as logically proceeding from his statement? What does this commandment mean for us?
5. What further instruction does Paul give in Romans 14:16? How could this happen? How do we need to apply this?

Peace

One of the most shameful things that can occur in the Lord's church is when brethren tear apart the unity that should be theirs in Christ. Of course, there can never be unity with those who reject the truth. Light cannot have fellowship with darkness, and we cannot have fellowship with those who do not share our commitment to obeying God. That is not our choice. It is the Lord's.

Too often, however, when church splits and crises occur, the problem is not with doctrine. It is with personality. It is with those who arrogantly insist on having their own way rather than being subject to one another in the fear of Christ. If such is our attitude, we would do well to be afraid. The Scripture reveals plainly that God hates divorce, yet divorce is the breaking of a bond that is meant only to last for a lifetime. What, then, will God say to us if we choose to sever the bonds of love that are to bind brother to brother not just for a lifetime, but for eternity?

Peace with our brethren is not an option. It is not a bonus that is nice if we can get it, but no great loss if we can't. Peace is a commandment of God, and woe to us if we break it! Christ died for the peace of the church. When we remember that, what possible grievance can we have that would move us to mar it? What possible provocation is so great that we should forget it and follow the dictates of our selfishness instead? May it never be that any of us sully the sacrifice of Jesus with dissension. May we all forever pursue the things that make for peace.

The Power of God to Salvation: Lesson Twenty-Three

6. How does Paul describe the kingdom of God in Romans 14:17? Does this mean that the kingdom of God has nothing to do with eating and drinking? If not, what does it mean?
7. What statement does Paul make about one who “in this way serves Christ” in Romans 14:18? What is “this way?” Why is this true?

Romans 14:19-15:4

1. What principle does Paul set forth in Romans 14:19? What does this mean? How important is it? How do we need to apply it?
2. In Romans 14:20, what does Paul say is generally true of all things? What becomes true of them for the man who eats and gives offense? What logical conclusion does Paul draw from this in Romans 14:21? What description of a violation of this commandment does Paul provide in the first part of Romans 14:20? What should we draw from all of this?
3. In Romans 14:23, Paul describes two beginning attitudes. What are they? What same actions do the possessors of both attitudes pursue? What different results does each attitude meet with? Why? What does this mean for us?
4. What godly pattern of behavior does Paul outline in Romans 15:1? How does this statement follow logically from the preceding context? How can we apply this in our lives?
5. What basic point does Paul make in Romans 15:2? Why would this be true? Consider Paul’s discussion in Ephesians 4:11-13 for insight.
6. What example for our conduct does Paul point to in Romans 15:3? What support does he provide for the relevance of the example? What can we take from all of this?
7. What statement about the Old Testament is made in Romans 15:4? How is this verse often applied? In context, what does Paul refer to? What is its point for us?

The Power of God to Salvation

Twenty-Four: Accept One Another

Romans 15:5-21

1. In Romans 15:5, what prayer does Paul offer on behalf of the Romans? According to Romans 15:6, what result does he hope for? What does this tell us about the importance of unity in a church?
2. What general commandment does Paul lay down in the first part of Romans 15:7? What does this mean? What logical reason for this commandment does Paul give in the second half of the verse? How should we use this?
3. In Romans 15:8-12, Paul describes the servanthood of Christ to two groups. What are these groups? To what purpose did Christ serve each? What should we take from this?
4. What statement does Paul make in Romans 15:13? What does this mean? What is its relevance to the context?
5. What does Paul reveal about his belief in Romans 15:14? What contrasting action does he say he has taken in Romans 15:15? How does Romans 15:16 explain the necessity of Paul's actions? What should we learn from this?

Planning

Paul is the most prolific writer of the New Testament. In the thirteen books of the Bible that bear his name, he weighs in on an astonishing variety of spiritual topics, from circumcision to the appointment of elders. We know what Paul thought about many of the issues that vex us today, and we can reasonably ascertain what he would have thought about a great many more.

Despite the wealth of the insight that we have into the mind of Paul, his writings offer us much less insight into his life. He sometimes uses the details of his own experience as the foundation of arguments, say, about the depth of God's mercy or his own apostleship, but he rarely reveals what he is doing now or what he plans to do in future.

We see one of these rare glimpses in Romans 15:19-29. In this unusually chatty portion of Romans, we learn how Paul sees his own work and how he intends to continue it in the days and years to come. First, he says, he will come to Jerusalem to relieve the saints there, and then, by way of Rome, he proposes to preach the gospel in Spain.

We know, of course, that a different fate awaits Paul in Jerusalem. He will be falsely accused, jailed by the Roman government for years, and then brought to Rome, not as a free missionary, but as a prisoner awaiting trial. His tour of Spain may never have taken place. Paul's plans, as ours, didn't always work out as he wanted, but wherever he went, he served. Let us do the same.

The Power of God to Salvation: Lesson Twenty-Four

6. What does Paul say in Romans 15:17-18? What attitude does this reveal in Paul? Is this an attitude that we should seek in ourselves? If so, how?
7. What does Paul reveal about his preaching in Romans 15:20-21? Would there have been anything wrong about building on another man's foundation? What does this tell us about even Paul's place in the body of the Lord?

Romans 15:22-33

1. What does Paul say in Romans 15:22? What reason is he talking about? According to the first part of Romans 15:23, how has this changed? How does this relate to the context?
2. What does Romans 15:23-24 reveal about Paul's plans? Why has Paul formed these plans? Did this happen as Paul planned it? What should we learn from these things?
3. According to Romans 15:25-26, what is Paul doing now? How does this help us to place Romans in the historical context of the first century? Scriptures like Acts 20:15-16 and 2 Corinthians 8:1-2, 18-20 may help define this.
4. What principle does Paul set up in Romans 15:27? What did this mean in Paul's context? What does this mean in ours? In what way, if any, should we apply it today?
5. How does Paul describe his actions in Romans 15:28? What does this tell us about his mindset in service? How can we adopt this mindset in our service?
6. What statement does Paul make in Romans 15:29? What does this statement mean?
7. In Romans 15:30, what does Paul request from the brethren? What two objects for their prayers does he specify in Romans 15:31-32? How does this illuminate Paul's prayer life and shed some light on what our own should be like?

The Power of God to Salvation

Twenty-Five: Also the Church

Romans 16:1-16

1. Throughout the first 16 verses of Romans 16, what is the subject of Paul's writing? What does this tell us about the way he saw his relationships in the church and the way we should see our own?
2. Which minor Bible character is presented in Romans 16:1? Why is Paul writing about her? How is she described? Does this description give us reason to conclude that she held some office in the church? Why or why not?
3. What does Paul instruct the Romans to do with Phoebe in Romans 16:2? Why? What can we today learn from this instruction?
4. Which married couple makes their appearance in Romans 16:3-4? How are they described? Where else in Scripture do we encounter them? What do we have to learn from this?
5. What others in this section of greetings are also described as workers of some sort? Where? What does such a designation mean? Why is this important to us?

The Brotherhood

In some circles of the church, it is fashionable to sneer at all of the chit-chat and small talk that inevitably occurs whenever brethren assemble for some larger gathering, be it a wedding, a meeting, or a lectureship. Such sneering assumes that it is inherently less spiritual to inquire after Brother So-and-So's health than to sit down and do something useful, like study one of Paul's letters.

One of the problems with this criticism is that Paul himself would have disagreed with it. As the first 20 verses of Romans 16 reveal, Paul considered the literary equivalent of brotherhood small talk to be worthy of inclusion in the greatest of his letters. Even though he has never been to Rome, his life has become so intertwined with the life of the church that he knows literally dozens of the Christians there, from close friends like Aquila and Priscilla to those whom he merely greets by name. It is important to him to address these Christians not just theologically, but personally.

This is an attitude that we need to share. Christianity consists not merely of meditation on the word and hours spent with God in prayer, but of study with brothers and sisters and hours spent with Christians just for the sake of their company. The love of the Bible is not a dry, fleshless thing. It is vibrant and alive. It cannot merely be studied. It must be experienced. It appears in our dealings with enemies, strangers, friends, and family, but we see its fullest flower in our relationships with our brethren. Let us seek it, not decry it.

The Power of God to Salvation: Lesson Twenty-Five

6. How is Epaenetus described in Romans 16:5? Who else in this section is also described in this way? Where? Why would Paul use such a description? What does this teach us?
7. What man is mentioned in Romans 16:13? How is he described? What additional greeting is appended to his? What are we to make of all of this? Mark 15:21 may prove useful in your answer.

Romans 16:17-27

1. In Romans 16:17, what warning does Paul give to the church? According to Romans 16:18, why does he feel the need to supply such a warning? What meaning does all of this have in our day and time?
2. What comment does Paul make in the first part of Romans 16:19 that appears to call the necessity of the previous warning into question? How does Paul justify his warning? What does this mean? What can we learn from it?
3. What statement does Paul make in Romans 16:20? Does anything seem strange about the wording of this statement? If so, what? Scripturally speaking, what makes the wording appropriate?
4. What greeting is attached to this letter in Romans 16:22? What does this tell us about the composition, and perhaps the original method of delivery, of Romans? Compare Galatians 6:11. Why is this information relevant?
5. What politically prominent person is mentioned in Romans 16:23? What evidence beyond the Bible, if any, establishes this person's existence? What do we learn from this extra-Biblical evidence?
6. In Romans 16:25, what ability of God does Paul highlight? What makes this particular ability important here? What should we learn from it?
7. What result of the work of God is described in the last phrase of Romans 16:26? Where else in Romans do we see this phrase used? What do these bookends tell us about the nature of the book of Romans?

The Power of God to Salvation

Twenty-Six: Review II

Romans 9:1-11:36

For each of the contexts listed below, explain both the main point of the context and its significance.

1. Romans 9:1-9
2. Romans 9:10-18
3. Romans 9:19-33
4. Romans 10:1-21

Romans in Retrospect

In his introduction to the discussion of Romans, Paul makes a bold claim: that it is the gospel, mere words transmitted to the human heart, that is the power of God to salvation. By the end of the book, Paul's claim is amply justified. We see the power of God in full display, and it is this power that has changed humankind for millennia, and will continue to change them for as long as life endures.

As with anything else that is powerful, however, the power contained in the book of Romans is open to abuse. Millions have taken Paul's discussion of faith and works and used it to write baptism for forgiveness of sins out of the Bible. Millions more have amputated from its context his discussion of the historical nation of Israel and employed it to deny that man possesses free will at all. Indeed, the total misreadings and distortions of this critical text may well be as numberless as the fleas on a stray dog. Men love to rewrite Romans.

We need to learn from this. It is not enough, however, for us merely to wag our fingers at the wicked apostates, while paying no attention to our reading of the text. Bible study is serious business, and we need to take it seriously. We cannot hope to come to a proper appreciation of God's word if we only attend to it for four hours a week, go home, turn the TV on, and turn the brain off. We must think on these things—ponder them, meditate on them, be consumed by them—to benefit fully from them. Romans is for us. We need to use it.

The Power of God to Salvation: Lesson Twenty-Six

5. Romans 11:1-16

6. Romans 11:17-36

Romans 12:1-16:27

1. Romans 12:1-16

2. Romans 12:17-13:14

3. Romans 14:1-12

4. Romans 14:13-15:4

5. Romans 15:5-33

6. Romans 16:1-27