

9-SESSION BIBLE STUDY
WITH VIDEO ACCESS

IN VIEW OF
GOD'S
MERCIES

THE GIFT OF THE
GOSPEL IN ROMANS

COURTNEY DOCTOR

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GOD'S
MERCIES

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GOSPEL IN ROMANS

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About the Author

Courtney Doctor is an author, Bible teacher, frequent conference and retreat speaker, and periodic blogger. She received an MDiv from Covenant Theological Seminary in 2013 and is the author of *From Garden to Glory: A Bible Study on the Bible's Story* and *Steadfast: A Devotional Bible Study on the Book of James* and the co-author of the resource *Remember Your Joy: A Bible Study of Salvation Stories in the Old Testament*. She currently serves as the Coordinator of Women's Initiatives for The Gospel Coalition. Her greatest desire in all of this is to be able to faithfully study, apply, and teach the Word of God and help others do the same. Find her online at courtneydoctor.org.

Dedication

To Craig: you, like Paul, are a man completely captured and captivated by the mercies and goodness of God. Your passion for the beautiful gospel of grace that God has lavished on us is a joy to behold. Thank you for all the ways you love God and love me. I am eternally grateful for you.

A Word from Courtney

Welcome! I am so excited to study Romans with you. Many people might shy away from this book of the Bible thinking it's just an academic look at doctrine and theology. But while Romans contains both doctrine and theology—and certainly helps us understand the glories of God and His marvelous salvation—Paul was not, first and foremost, writing a systematic theology book. He was writing a personal letter to a church—a group of new Christians in the capital city of the Roman empire—to instruct, encourage, correct, and compel them to continue in the gospel.

Romans is a passionate letter written by a man completely captured by the beauty and majesty of God and His glorious salvation. Paul wanted his readers (then and now) to know how amazing and all-encompassing the gospel actually is—that it's powerful, planned, eternal, and free. Paul also wanted his readers to rejoice and rest in the glorious ramifications of this salvation for everyone who is in Christ: peace, life, freedom, adoption, love, hope, and all the other mercies we'll see.

Paul's hope was to exalt Jesus and point his readers to Him. He wanted us to understand the depths of the gospel of grace and to know the hope of a transformed life. Because, after God saves us, He invites us to join Him on His twofold mission—working in us, sanctifying and conforming us to the image of Jesus, and working through us, sending us out to others with the good news of salvation in Christ.

Oh, friend, I need to be reminded of each of these every day. I need to grow in my understanding of the gospel of grace, to rejoice and rest in the way the gospel informs the moments of my days, and to join God in His work of conforming me to Jesus as He sends me with the message of this glorious gospel to the ends of the earth. Join me in asking God to do that in each of us through this study!

How to Use This Study

We are going to approach our study of Romans with an inductive approach—a method that will be helpful no matter what book of the Bible you are studying. On most days of study, we will first observe the text by asking, *What does it say?* Then we will attempt to interpret the text by asking, *What does it mean?* In the last step we will seek to apply the text by asking, *What do I do?* This order helps us slow down and really examine the passage. Let me further explain.

What Does It Say/Observation: As we observe the text, we want to notice things like repeated words and specific details and to note any illustrations. We'll ask the basic *who*, *what*, *when*, *where*, and *how* questions. If you don't know the meaning of a word, look that word up and write down what you learn. Also, write down any questions you have as you read.

What Does It Mean/Interpretation: When we move to interpretation, we'll ask questions about meaning. We'll consider the intent of Paul, the author, and see the passage through the lens of the original audience—the believers in Rome who heard it first. At this point, we are not asking what this text means to me; we're asking what it would have meant to them.

What Do I Do/Application: The last step is to ask how this passage is meant to transform me. We want to consider what God has done and then ask how He wants us to respond in return. Our responses might include: repent, obey, believe, pursue holiness, wait, trust, be still, speak up, give, go, or worship. We'll let the interpretation of the text inform the application of the text.

Each session is broken into five increments of daily study per week. Plan on approximately twenty minutes of study each day (or an hour and a half each week). Each week will begin with prayer—a time for you to ask God to meet you as you study His living and active Word. I've provided a prayer to start your study each session, but I encourage you to journal your own prayers throughout the week. Share with God your gratitude, joy, repentance, sorrow, questions, and commitments.

I recommend you have a print Bible in front of you, rather than using an app on your phone or computer. The Bible passages found in this Bible study book are mostly from the English Standard Version, but feel free to use whatever translation you prefer.

Here are some other features of the study:

Digging Deeper

At the end of each day of study, you will have the opportunity to dig a little deeper into the text. I've listed three other Scripture passages for you to look up and see how they relate to the Romans passage we're studying for that day. We want to be students of the whole counsel of God's Word, and this section will help us do that!

Definitions

You might come across words and phrases you are unfamiliar with or want more clarity about their meaning. To provide this insight, I've included pull-out definitions throughout each session and a glossary of terms as an addendum on lifeway.com/mercies. Note: these definitions are based on my personal study and experience. We will use **THIS STYLE** to mark these terms throughout the study.

A Closer Look

We will just begin to scratch the surface of Romans in nine sessions. We could spend years together in this glorious book. So, our thirty-thousand foot overview will limit the amount and depth of what we can cover. However, there are some passages, phrases, or concepts I want to call special attention to for a deeper dive together. These designated callout sections are marked throughout the study as “A Closer Look.”

Memory Work

A memory verse(s) is provided each session. Spend a few minutes each day memorizing it. The discipline of hiding God's Word in your heart will bear much fruit in your life and the lives of those around you. And a little memory verse “quiz” is provided at lifeway.com/mercies!

Video Teaching

You have access to video teaching that provides additional content to help you better understand and apply what you just studied in the previous session. You'll find detailed information for how to access the video teaching sessions that accompany this study on the card inserted in the back of your Bible study book.

Feel free to take notes on these video teaching sessions in the space provided on the Group Session pages. If you're doing this study with a group, you can use the questions and prompts provided on the Group Session pages to help you review the previous five days of study and discuss the video teaching together.

I'm truly looking forward to studying Romans with you. May God powerfully meet you in the study of His Word. My hope is that you will behold the mercies of God in new ways, be transformed more into the image of Jesus, and rejoice more in the gift of the gospel that is ours in Christ.

Much love,

Courtney



You'll find detailed information for how to access the video teaching sessions that accompany this study on the card inserted in the back of your Bible study book.

SESSION ONE

Introduction



#InViewofGodsMercies

VIDEO & GROUP GUIDE

Session One: MERCY SPEAKS

WATCH Session One video teaching.

1. Believe that God has called you to this study.
2. Do the personal study.
 - Read
 - Think
 - Pray
 - Apply
3. Show up to your small group discussion.
4. Expect God to work.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1 Courtney said, “We do not study God’s Word merely to be informed; we study God’s Word to be transformed.” Why is that important to know as you study God’s Word?
- 2 Share a recent experience of how God used His Word to bring about change in your life.
- 3 When it comes to God’s Word, which do you find the most joy in: reading it, meditating on it, praying through it, or applying it? Which do you struggle with the most? Why?
- 4 What are some hindrances, distractions, or obstacles you might face in being able to complete the personal study each week? If you’re a Bible study veteran, what tips would you offer in how to stay the course in our study?
- 5 Do you expect God to work in you through this study? What is one thing you are asking Him to do?



To access the video teaching sessions, use the instructions in the back of your Bible study book.

SESSION TWO

Mercy Calls Us

ROMANS 1:1-17



Introduction

Here we go! As we embark on this journey together, remember that studying God’s Word is both an extremely practical and a wonderfully supernatural activity. As you show up to this study in very ordinary ways—maybe still wearing your pajamas or sitting at a desk eating lunch or hoping the kids sleep for just thirty more minutes—God Himself is at work. His Word is living and active; it’s acting on you as you study. Whether you have followed Jesus for a long time or are just trying to figure out who He is, the Holy Spirit is moving, opening your eyes and heart, enabling you to understand and apply the Word. And, as we’ll see later in Romans, if you are in Christ, your mind is being renewed and you are being conformed more into the image of Christ. So pray, ask for insight and wisdom, do your homework, and know that God is at work in you as you study His Word.

In this first session of study, we’re going to spend some time grounding ourselves in the historical context of the letter—who wrote it, to whom it was written, and why. Understanding context is an important step in any study. We can’t know what God’s Word says to us until we know what God was first saying to the original readers (we’ll talk more about this on Day Two). This first session will be a little bit different than the others because for the first few days, we won’t be asking, *What does it say? What does it mean?* and *What do I do?* Instead, we’ll spend our time getting to know Paul and the church in Rome.

As we work our way through Paul’s opening words, seeking to understand why they’re important, we’ll end the session looking at his grand thesis statement in Romans 1:16-17, your memory verses for the week. My hope is that we’ll see anew the power and **MERCY** found in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

MEMORY VERSE

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

ROMANS 1:16-17, CSB

MERCY

God’s compassion, patience, and loving-kindness that causes Him to withhold what we deserve (wrath and judgment) and by grace give what we don’t deserve (salvation and life).

Prayer for the Week

Father, Your Word is life itself. Thank You for not leaving us alone but for speaking to us through it. Please give me a mind to understand, eyes to see, ears to hear, and a heart that longs to obey. I praise You for the gift of Your Son and the life that is ours in Him. In His name I pray, **Amen.**

DAY 1

From Whom?

READ ROMANS 1:1-17.

In my house we have two different artists' replicas of Caravaggio's famous painting, *Conversion on the Way to Damascus*. I love this painting because it reminds me of both the power and mercy of God. In it, Paul is lying flat on his back after having been knocked off his horse by God Himself.

We don't know if Paul was actually riding a horse, but we do know he fell to the ground, blinded by a great light. This drastic encounter was, ultimately, God's great kindness to Paul.

Paul was radically changed from someone who hated and persecuted Christians into a man willing to give his whole life to the spread of the gospel. God's mercy, majesty, and great salvation completely captured Paul. Keep this in mind as we learn the backstory of the man who wrote the glorious letter we're studying.

Read Acts 7:54–8:3.

Who stood by (giving approval) for stoning Stephen to death?

What did Stephen pray for (v. 60)?

We first encounter Saul (his Jewish name)—also called Paul (his Roman name)—at the stoning of Stephen. Prior to the events depicted in the painting, Paul stood by and approved of the killing of Stephen, ravaged the early church, contributed to the first great persecution of Christians, and literally dragged men and women into dark, damp, and dangerous prisons—all because he hated the name of Jesus and everyone who followed Jesus.

Read Acts 9:1-19.

Why was Paul going to Damascus?

How did Jesus describe Paul's actions?

What did the Lord tell Ananias about Paul (vv. 15-16)?

When Paul talked about the “*power* of God for salvation to everyone who believes” (Rom. 1:16, emphasis mine), he spoke from experience. I love Caravaggio's painting so much because it portrays the power of God, knocking Paul off his horse—maybe literally, definitely figuratively—to save him.

How have you experienced God's power of salvation?

As you saw in Ananias' reaction, many of the early Christians were skeptical of Paul's conversion and slow to trust its legitimacy. If I had been there, I might have felt the same way. Sometimes it's hard to believe that certain people have been saved.

Read Acts 9:26. What did Paul try to do, and what response did he receive?

Are there specific people you think of as too far gone, too hopeless, for God to save? Write down anyone who comes to mind.

If the people on your list were saved, would you rejoice or be disappointed? Explain.

Are there any sins you consider too heinous for God to forgive? If so, take a minute to write them down.

Read Hebrews 7:25. What is Jesus able to do?

If there are people whom you think are too far gone to be saved, please take a moment and pray for them. And remember, nothing is impossible with God!

If there are sins (your own or the sins of others) that you think are too heinous for God to forgive, please take a moment and ask Him to remind you that “he is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him” (Heb. 7:25).

Before we turn our attention to the text of Romans, let’s note the dates and locations surrounding the writing of this letter.

Observe the following on the map on the next page:

- AD 33: Jesus was crucified, raised from the dead, and ascended into heaven near Jerusalem.
- AD 33–34: Paul oversaw Stephen’s death.
- AD 34: Paul met Jesus on the way from Jerusalem to Damascus.

After Paul’s salvation encounter with Jesus, more than a decade passed before he began the first of his three missionary journeys around the Mediterranean Sea and Roman Empire. Those three journeys occupied his time for the next fifteen years. From various locations on these journeys, he wrote the majority of his thirteen letters we find in the New Testament. The letter to the Romans, even though it’s the first of Paul’s letters we encounter as we turn the pages of Scripture, was most likely the sixth letter he wrote.

- AD 57: Paul wrote Romans to the Christians in Rome from Corinth, a town just west of Athens, during his third missionary journey (AD 53–57).

We are finally ready to open our Bibles to the book of Romans!

Read Romans 1:1. List the three things Paul said about himself as a way of introduction.

What do you think each description means?

None of us are first-century **APOSTLES**, but in what ways might each of these things be true of us also?

Paul, a zealous Jewish Pharisee, became a passionate follower of Jesus. His life shone with the joy of a man who knew he'd been forgiven, redeemed, and made new. As we read Acts and Paul's other New Testament letters, we learn that Paul, in his effort to proclaim this gospel that saved him, endured beatings, stoning, hunger, exposure, imprisonment, and was shipwrecked numerous times (2 Cor. 11:23-28). But, because he knew the power of the gospel, he knew those sufferings paled in comparison to the "surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus" (Phil. 3:8) and proclaiming Him to all the world. As you work on your memory verses today, may Paul's gratitude and passion for the gospel be yours as well.

APOSTLE

The New Testament uses the word *apostle* to refer to the twelve men and Paul who "having seen the risen Christ, [were] a witness of His resurrection, and commissioned by Him, preach[ed] the gospel to all the nations."¹

DIGGING DEEPER

Check out these verses to help you better understand today's passage:
Acts 26:12-18 • Galatians 1:1 • 2 Peter 1:21

DAY 2

To Whom?

READ ROMANS 1:1-17.

One of my seminary professors said something in class one day that really rattled me. He said, “The Bible was written *for* you, but not *to* you.” As you read that statement, you may react like I did—with indignation and frustration. I thought, *What do you mean it wasn’t written to me?* I’d learned that the Bible was like a love note from God written directly to me.

Not only did I eventually come to agree with him, but his point proved tremendously helpful in my ability to understand, interpret, and apply the Bible in my own life. He meant that the words in the Bible, as we saw yesterday, were written by real people, to real people. If you were to read a letter I had written (back when that was something I did), knowing to whom I had written the letter would prove to be tremendously helpful. A letter I wrote to my mom would read very differently than a letter I wrote for a job application.

In the same way, if you read a letter I wrote to my husband when we were dating as if I had written it to you, you would be confused at best and uncomfortable at worst. But if you knew when and to whom I had written the letter, you would most likely find joy in the love expressed.

The people who first received the Scripture are called the original audience. We have to first understand what God, through the human author, was saying to them before we can know what God is saying to us. That was my professor’s point.

Read Romans 1:7. How did Paul describe the people to whom he was writing?

Paul addressed his brothers and sisters in Rome with words that express our foundational identity in Christ. I like how Dr. Michael Kruger said it, “Our identity is built on three actions that God takes toward us in chronological order: (1) He loves us; (2) He calls us to himself, and (3) He makes us holy.”² (The word used for *saints* can also be translated *holy ones*.)³

In what ways have you experienced each of these aspects?

- Loved by God
- Called by God
- Made (more and more) holy by God

Have you ever wondered how this church in Rome came to be? If Paul had never been to Rome, how did the church there get started? How had anyone in Rome even heard about Jesus and the events of His life, death, and resurrection—events that happened thousands of miles away in Jerusalem? There were no TVs, cell phones, Internet, planes, trains, or automobiles. So how was a church started? How did the good news about Jesus reach Rome so quickly?

Read Acts 2:1-12,37-41.

What day did this event take place?

Where were members of the crowd from?

What was the result of Peter's preaching (v. 41)?

Based on the events in Acts 2, describe how the church in Rome might have started.

Most likely, the church in Rome began with some Jewish men and women who were in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost. They heard the gospel, realized Jesus was the fulfillment of all the Old Testament promises, and believed. They then took the gospel back home to Rome. As they faithfully lived out and proclaimed this good news, **GENTILES** living in the area heard and also believed. As the church grew, it comprised both Jewish and Gentile Christians. As we make our way through the letter, let's keep in mind that this was a multi-ethnic congregation.

GENTILES

In Greek the word literally means "the nations." It is used to describe anyone who is not Jewish.⁴

What were Jesus' last words as He ascended into heaven (Acts 1:8)?

What were the three geographical categories Jesus mentioned?

How was the church in Rome part of the fulfillment of Jesus' words?

Envision life during this time in Rome, the capital city of the entire Roman empire. Based on what you know of people (yourself or others) who live in large, influential cities, what characteristics might describe this group of believers?

According to Romans 1:7, what two things did Paul want God to give to the believers in Rome? Write down a definition for each of them.

Before you work on your memory verses today, reflect on God's plan to build His church and the ways He has done so through the ages. The gospel cascades down through faithful people, like those in Rome, who, by the mercy of God, heard the good news of Jesus Christ, believed, and shared this good news with others. You and I stand downstream from them, the grateful recipients of God's plan and their faithfulness. And, if we're faithful to proclaim the gospel, others will receive it from us. What a gift, what a privilege!

DIGGING DEEPER

Check out these verses to help you better understand today's passage:
Psalm 102:18 • Jeremiah 29:7 • Revelation 7:9-10

DAY 3

Grace to You

READ ROMANS 1:1-7.

Thanks to Twitter®, Instagram® stories, and texting, we’re growing more and more accustomed to brief blurbs and snappy phrases. The short, pithy sentence captivates us. If we’re not careful, we can “like,” “heart,” or retweet based more on the entertainment value of the sentence than on the validity of its contents. Conversely, the first seven verses of Romans are one long sentence! (I guess Paul’s middle school English teacher forgot to teach him about run-on sentences.) Because we’re not used to reading such a long string of ideas, we will need to slow down and pay attention in order to understand what Paul was saying.

What Does It Say?

We’ve already seen that Paul described himself as “set apart for the gospel” (v. 1). He wanted to make sure his readers began to understand what the gospel is—one of the main themes in his letter to the Romans. As we study together, we will learn more and more about both what the gospel is and what the gospel accomplishes.

When was the gospel promised?	
Where was it promised?	
To whom does the gospel concern?	
What is the result of the gospel through Christ?	
Where is the gospel to go?	

The gospel is all about Jesus, who He is and what He has done. But Paul wanted his readers to understand that while the events central to the gospel—Jesus’ incarnation, death, and resurrection—were unique, the gospel is not new news. The Old Testament points to the coming of Jesus, and the New Testament proclaims that all the Old Testament promises have been fulfilled in Jesus (Matt. 26:56; Luke 24:27; 2 Cor. 1:20). This means that you and I, from where we stand in the story of redemption—after the resurrection and before Jesus comes again—have the key to understanding the Old Testament. The key is Jesus!

What Does It Mean?

How would you summarize Paul’s description of the gospel in Romans 1:1-7?

How would you describe the relationship between obedience and faith? Why do you think he might have included this phrase “obedience of faith” (or “obedience that comes from faith” in the NIV translation) in his description of the gospel (v. 5)?

The relationship between obedience and faith is an important one. Faith comes first. We don’t receive salvation through obedience, we receive it only through faith. God first gives us the faith we need to believe, and then He calls us to respond to this great gift by living a life of joyful obedience. Obedience flows from faith.

What Do I Do?

God’s eyes have always been set on the whole world. He told Adam and Eve to “Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth . . .” (Gen. 1:28, NIV). He told Abraham that he would bless him so “all the families of the earth [would] be blessed” through him (Gen. 12:3). Jesus told His disciples to “go and make disciples of all nations” (Matt. 28:19, NIV) and be His “witnesses . . . to the end of the earth” (Acts 1:8). The plan of God has always been to make a people for Himself and for that one people to be from every tribe, tongue, and nation. Or as the disciple John wrote, “For God so loved *the world*, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16, emphasis mine).

In line with the heart of God, Paul longed to see the gospel go to all the nations. Paul hoped the Roman Christians would help send him to Spain to preach the good news there (Rom. 15:22-24). One reason he was so “eager to preach the gospel” to the Christians in Rome was because he wanted them to be eager to proclaim it with him to the ends of the earth (Rom. 1:15).

In what ways do you participate in the spread of the gospel to the ends of the earth? Remember, this could mean sharing the gospel in your family, your neighborhood, your city, your country, or anywhere in the world.

Let’s close by going back to that phrase “obedience of faith” in verse 5. One author said it “means bowing the knee in trusting submission to Jesus the Lord, both at the start and all through the Christian life.”⁵

If you are a Christian, describe how you are currently “bowing the knee in trusting submission to Jesus?” If you are not yet a Christian, what might be keeping you from “bowing the knee in trusting submission to Jesus”?

Spend a few minutes writing down your understanding of the gospel, both what it is and what it does. (Don’t worry if this feels hard. Romans is going to teach us exactly what the gospel is, so just take your best shot at it for now. We’ll come back and do this again at the end of the study to see how your understanding has changed.)

If you are a follower of Jesus, you and I are to be ready at all times to explain to others the reason “for the hope that is in you” (1 Pet. 3:15). As you work on your memory verses today, think about what truths they teach us about the gospel message.

DIGGING DEEPER

**Check out these verses to help you better understand today’s passage:
Matthew 28:19 • Luke 1:68–75 • Luke 24:27**

DAY 4

Thankful for You

READ ROMANS 1:8-15.

What would it feel like to receive a personal letter from someone famous, someone you admire but have never actually met? And what if that person began the letter by telling you how he or she is thankful for you, thinks about you (not in a creepy way, but in a kind, thoughtful way), prays for you, and is eagerly planning to visit you? How would you feel? I imagine the believers in Rome felt similarly.

Paul had never been to Rome, but we can assume the people in the Roman church were well aware of who he was. He was an apostle. He had been set apart to proclaim the gospel and establish the church. God also inspired him to write at least thirteen of the letters in the New Testament. When they received this letter, imagine the joy they must have felt to realize he sincerely loved them, knew about them, prayed for them, and asked God to allow him to visit them.

What Does It Say?

Based on verses 8-15, write down four to five things describing how Paul felt about the Roman believers.

I spoke with a friend recently who told me she wanted to intentionally cultivate more gratitude in her heart. To do so, she was paying attention to the joys in life and making a daily list of things to be thankful for. That's a great discipline to develop. As I read today's text, I realize that what we're thankful for and why we're thankful reveal a lot about our gospel priorities.

Write down specifically

What Paul was thankful for	
What he prayed for	
What he longed for	
What he was eager for	

According to verses 11-12, what two results was Paul hoping his visit to the Romans would bring?

**RESOURCE
RECOMMENDATION**
I'm Praying for You
by Nancy Guthrie

Paul didn't see his potential trip to Rome as a one-way blessing. He knew that he, too, would be blessed. Paul demonstrated humility in his expectations to both give and receive, teach and learn, encourage and be encouraged, strengthen and be strengthened. We need to follow Paul's example and adopt his humility in all of life, but especially in ministry.

Do you disciple or mentor others? If so, do you look for the blessing and encouragement in that relationship to be mutual, or do you see yourself as the solitary dispenser of the blessings?

Do you teach or lead? If so, do you, like Paul, expect to receive blessing and encouragement even as you give those to others? The Christian life is one of mutual interdependence on one another, and we do well to walk in the humility it takes to both give and receive.

What Does It Mean?

Why do you think Paul felt he was “under obligation” to others to preach the gospel (v. 14)? In what ways does this change the way you think about sharing the gospel?

Few of us like to feel obligated. We don't want to owe anyone or feel indebted in any way. But have you ever heard someone say that sharing the gospel is “just one beggar telling another beggar where to find bread”?⁶ It's true. Think about that analogy for a minute. If you really were starving and you really had found a never-ending source of bread, would you—should you—have an obligation to tell other starving people about the bread? Yes! We all should feel that kind of obligation to share the gospel. As a carrier of the gospel, Paul had the life-saving news that spiritually dead, lost people needed to hear. So do we.

Paul said he was “eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome” (v. 15). Paul was writing to people who were already followers of Jesus—Christians. Why do Christians need the gospel preached to them (us)?

One reason we need to hear the gospel time and time again is because we are forgetful people. We need to be reminded of God's love and grace every day. We need to be told over and over how to run to Him, rest in Him, obey Him, and love Him. I encourage you to faithfully attend a church that proclaims the gospel. Surround yourself with friends who remind you of gospel truths. Preach the gospel to your own soul. And run to God's Word every day to hear the glorious truths of the gospel message again and again.

What Do I Do?

Look back at Paul's words in verses 8–15. Perhaps there is a group of believers you feel similar toward. If so:

Why are you thankful for the relationship you have with them?

What is your prayer for these believers?

When you consider your relationship with them, what do you long for?

What are you eager to do for them to help them grow in Christ?

List four to six ways you think the believers in Rome and Paul might have “mutually encouraged” each other (v. 12). How do you both encourage and receive encouragement from others in the faith?

Think for a moment about the early Christians in Rome. Spend some time in prayer thanking God for their salvation. Ask Him to cultivate an even greater love in your heart for all of your brothers and sisters in the faith.

And don't forget to work on your memory verses!

DIGGING DEEPER

Check out these verses to help you better understand today's passage:

1 Thessalonians 5:11 • Hebrews 10:24-25 • Jude 20-21

DAY 5

I Am Not Ashamed

READ ROMANS 1:16-17.

Today we are going to study the two verses you've (hopefully) been memorizing this week. These grand verses have greatly influenced the likes of Augustine, Martin Luther, and many others through the ages. My hope is that as we study, memorize, think about, and discuss these two verses, our grasp of the greatness of the gospel will grow and our worship of the One who saved us will increase.

What Does It Say?

How did Paul describe the gospel?

The word for *Greek* or *Gentile* in verse 16 includes all the nations that are not Jewish. Knowing this, who is the gospel for?

What does the gospel reveal?

Briefly write what you learn about each of these keywords just from these two verses.

GOSPEL	
SALVATION	
RIGHTEOUSNESS	
FAITH	

As you read these verses, did you wonder why Paul wrote, “first to the Jew, then to the Gentile” (v. 16, NIV)? Was he prioritizing the Jewish Christians over the Gentile Christians? No. Paul was simply referring to the chronological history of salvation.

God chose to work out His plan of redemption through the course of time, and He did it through the nation of Israel. We’ll be reminded in the sessions to come that it was Israel who received the promises of God. The Jewish people were the ones with whom God entered into covenant. The prophets and priests were Jewish. And Jesus came as a Jewish man to the Jewish people first. That is what Paul was referring to—salvation came first to the Jew and then to everyone else.

What Does It Mean?

Based on these verses, how would you describe the relationship between the gospel and righteousness?

What do you think Paul meant when he said “shall live” (or “will live”) (v. 17)?

Paul wanted his readers to understand that salvation can never be “earned.” Nothing can be brought to God in exchange for salvation—no good works, no amount of money, no family legacy. Nothing. Salvation is always and only given as a gift to those who come empty-handed and believe God. We are saved by faith alone. And we continue to live in the reality of our salvation by faith. That was Paul’s point: “the righteous” (those who have been saved by faith) are to (also) “live by faith” (v. 17).

What Do I Do?

I’ve been ashamed of the gospel before. The time most vividly seared in my mind was at a meat counter in a grocery store. Based on his conversation with the two people in front of me in line, the older man behind the counter was obviously sad about something. As I waited my turn, I felt the clear nudge of the Holy Spirit to offer him some hope from the good news of the gospel. But by the time it was my turn to ask for my two pounds of shaved ham, I had convinced myself to remain silent with several excuses. First, there

RIGHTEOUS

The state of being morally perfect and without sin.

GOSPEL

The good news that we can be made right with God through faith in the saving work of Jesus.

SALVATION

The death and resurrection of Jesus in the past means that we can be right with God in the present, and dwell with Him in the eternal future.

RIGHTEOUSNESS

An attribute of God. He is utterly perfect in who He is and in everything He does. It is also a free gift God graciously gives to all who trust in Jesus.

FAITH

The gift of God enabling a person to believe in Jesus and receive the salvation He accomplished.

were quite a few people in line behind me, and I didn't want to hold them up. Second, I wasn't sure where to start. Third, I didn't want to overstep into his personal problems. So I asked for my ham and walked away.

As I sat in my car in the parking lot, tears began to stream down my cheeks. I realized my "excuses" weren't the real reasons I chickened out. I was ashamed of the gospel. I didn't want the people behind me to think I was weird. I didn't want future encounters with the man behind the counter to be awkward. Basically, I cared more about what people thought of me than I cared about them. I'm ashamed that I was ashamed.

I find it encouraging to think that Paul had possibly, at some point, been ashamed of the gospel, too—and had learned not to be! If you, like me, have ever been ashamed of the gospel, confess it to God and ask Him to change you into someone who can say, with Paul, "I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation" (v. 16).

What have we seen in Romans so far that can help you not be ashamed of the gospel?

In verse 17, Paul talked about something that we are going to learn a lot more about—the righteousness of God. Righteousness is not a wildly popular topic of discussion. If you're a Christian, you might even shy away from using that word when you're talking to unbelievers. It calls to mind phrases like "self-righteous" and "holier-than-thou"—a way none of us want to be described. But, as we'll see over the next several sessions, our entire salvation is wrapped up in this word: **RIGHTEOUSNESS**.

According to verse 17, whose righteousness is revealed?

And that is Paul's big point—salvation is all about God's righteousness, not ours. Next session we'll see why we so desperately need God's righteousness, but for now, Paul was concerned with where

righteousness comes from. One of the problems in the Roman church was that some Jewish believers claimed a person's righteousness came through the Law—having it and obeying it. As the ones to whom the Law was originally given, they believed they were more righteous than their Gentile brothers and sisters in Christ. Paul is going to shatter this belief. But first:

What are some ways, other than faith in Jesus, someone might try to be right with God?

Name two to three mercies you have seen in our passage this session.

As we wrap up our first session of study together, try to say your memory verses three times without looking. I promise that memorizing Scripture will benefit you for years to come.

I've so enjoyed spending this time with you. May God, in His great mercy, give us all a greater hunger for His Word, love for His Son, and gratitude for our salvation.

DIGGING DEEPER

**Check out these verses to help you better understand today's passage:
Psalm 40:9-12 • 2 Corinthians 5:21 • Philippians 3:8-9**

Session Two: IT'S ALL ABOUT THE GOSPEL

WATCH Session Two video teaching.

1. Paul was set apart for the gospel.

2. The church is to be united by the gospel.

3. Paul began his letter with the core of the gospel.

VIDEO & GROUP GUIDE

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1 What day of personal study had the most impact on you? Why?
- 2 How did what you heard on the video teaching clarify, reinforce, or give new insight to what you studied this session?
- 3 What were the important aspects you included in your description of the gospel?
- 4 How did studying Paul's conversion encourage you?
- 5 In what ways have you experienced being loved by God, being called by God, and being made (more and more) holy by God?
- 6 What new mercies did you see in the passage this session?
- 7 What is the most significant thing you learned about God, the gospel, or yourself this session?



To access the video teaching sessions, use the instructions in the back of your Bible study book.