



BIBLE STUDY

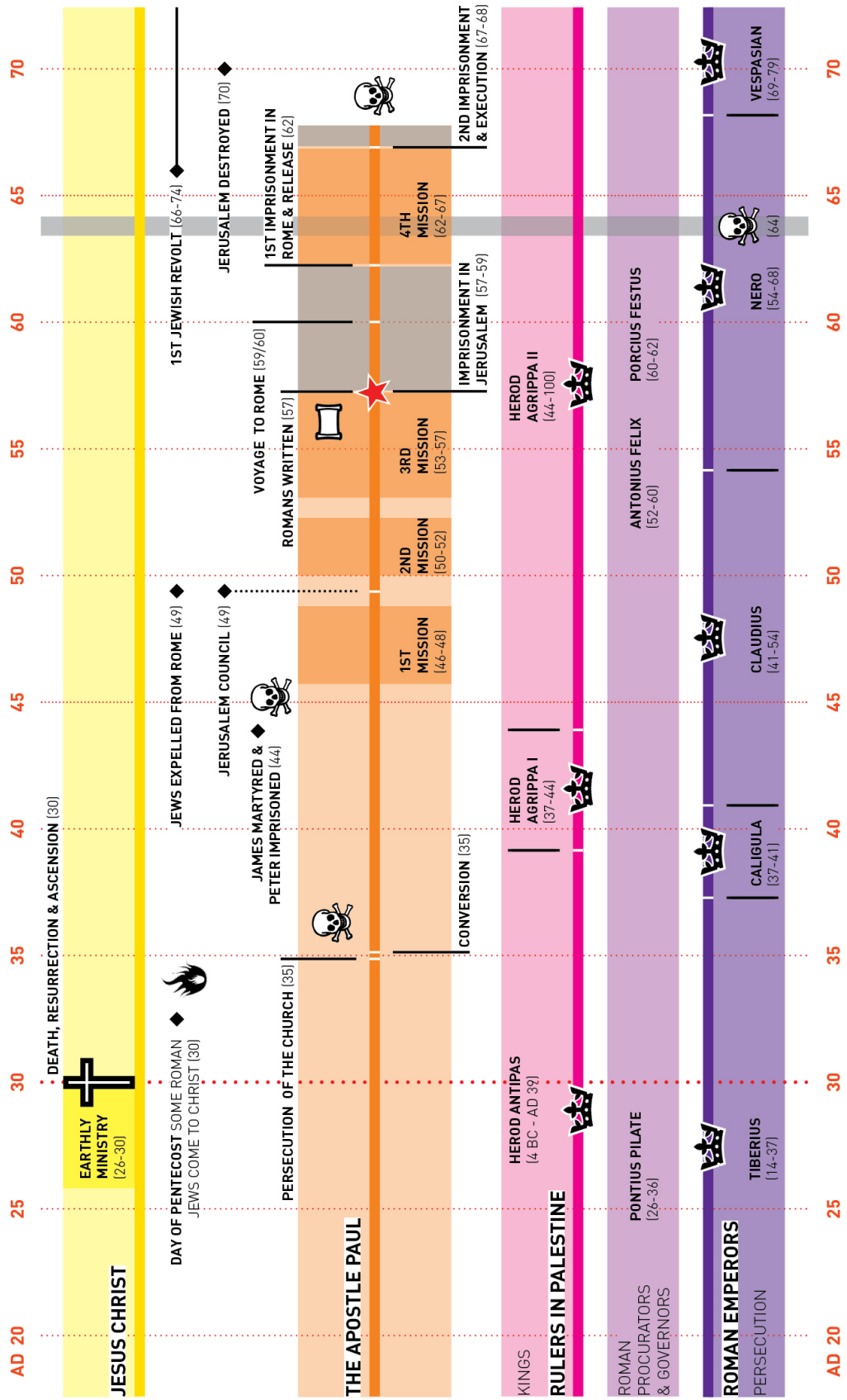
Righteousness and Faith

ROMANS 1-5

7 Bible studies in Romans and one discussion on church

ROMANS TIMELINE

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Growth Group

Growth Group is **more than just a Bible Study** – we also want to **pray and share our lives together**. However, it's time spent studying the Bible that ought to shape everything else that we do. In our Bible Study time this term we will be looking at the Old Testament book of Judges.

Righteousness and Faith

'The Righteousness of God' is one of the key themes in Romans. In what many consider to be the theme verses of Romans (1:16-17), Paul tells us that in the Gospel 'the righteousness of God' is revealed. As we study these opening chapters of Romans, we see the theme of God's righteousness coming through repeatedly. God is right when he judges and right when he forgives. God's righteousness is demonstrated as he faithfully keeps His promises. And God's righteousness is something that he credits to those who believe. That's why these Bible studies are called 'Righteousness and Faith.'

Romans

Romans is a treasured and influential part of the Bible. Quite likely, Martin Luther's conversion occurred as he pondered the meaning of 'the righteousness of God' in Romans 1:17, and John Wesley was later converted whilst hearing the introduction that Luther wrote in his commentary on Romans. John Calvin wrote about Romans that 'when anyone understands this Epistle, he has a passage opened to him to the understanding of the whole Scripture.' So as we read the opening chapters of this letter, be prepared for God to work through His word.

This letter was written by the Apostle Paul, most likely whilst he was staying in the city of Corinth in the year 57 AD (see Acts 20:3), maybe 25 years after his conversion on the road to Damascus.

Why did Paul write?

At the time of writing, Paul had never visited the church in Rome (Rom 1:13), yet he writes his longest and most detailed letter to this church. Why did he do this? This is one of the big questions for people who write commentaries. At the end of the letter, Paul provides two hints as to why he wrote.

First, this letter is a reminder of the gospel (Rom 15:15-16). Second, this letter is written so the Roman Christians might support Paul's missionary work (Rom 15:24).

This makes Romans a great part of the Bible for us to read. We need to be reminded of the gospel. And this letter will encourage us in God's mission in the world.

Bible Studies

Growth Group discussion on Church

Romans 1:1-17	Study 1 – God's Power
Romans 1:18-2:11	Study 2 – God's Wrath
Romans 2:12-3:20	Study 3 – God's Law
Romans 3:21-31	Study 4 – God's Righteousness
Romans 4:1-25	Study 5 – God's Gift
Romans 5:1-11	Study 6 – God's Peace
Romans 5:12-21	Study 7 – God's Life

Learning to Love Christ's Church

A Growth Group Discussion

1. What was going through your mind as you arrived at church on Sunday?

Were you expectant and happy to be at church?

Were you feeling compelled? Or weary?

Were you just glad to be around friends? Or would you have preferred to be elsewhere?

Were you there because you were on a roster?

Were you looking forward to teaching the Bible to the kids?

Were you anticipating the sermon and how the preacher might explain the passage which you pre-read for church during the week?

As our experience of church on Sunday changes from week to week, our enthusiasm for church and our attitude to members of our church may also. When everything hits a low point, you might find yourself asking the question, "Surely there's more to church than this?" You might even find yourself wondering if you would be better off in a different church. At other times we can find ourselves enthusiastic for all the wrong reasons. So, it is well worth pausing and thinking about why we do what we do as a church.

1. What are some 'good' and 'not so good' reasons to go to church?

2. What are some 'Biblical' reasons to go to church?

(e.g. Hebrews 10:24–25, Colossians 3:15–17, Ephesians 4:11–16, Romans 1:11–12)

Rather than trying to get more out of church we should learn to love Christ's church, shouldn't we? By this we mean more than just enjoying church. We mean growing in **service** and **love**, as we help each other grow together as followers of Jesus. We should desire to see Christ's church growing in maturity and in number as we share the gospel and our lives with each other and with our friends.

3. Discuss some of the following questions regarding church:

Why do we sing?

Why do we have a Sermon?

Why do we pray?

Why do we have supper/morning tea?

Why don't we take up a collection?

Why do we run KPC Kids?

Why have Youth Group?

What is the point of Growth Group?

Why have a prayer meeting?

Why have socials?

4. Help each other by sharing ideas for how to:

- prepare for church

- spend your time while at church (before, during, and immediately after)

- interact with people

- continue to love your church in between Sundays

5. Growth Group is an important part of church. Discuss the type of things we can do in Growth Group that we don't or can't do at church on Sunday.

6. Share your thoughts on the following comments:

Just being at Growth Group is encouraging to others.

Prayer times in Growth Group are more personal.

I get to know people in Growth Group.

7. Are there some things that your Growth Group can work on together to love and serve the rest of our church?

Think about it

8. Not only should we love and serve, but we should allow others to love and serve us—which will mean opening-up to each other and sharing our lives. What are some ways we can be doing this?

9. Hopefully this discussion has helped you refocus a little and perhaps be more thoughtful about why we do what we do as a church. As we begin to wrap up, make a list of words or phrases you would like to hear used by others to describe our church.

Pray together

for our church and for your involvement in serving each other. Pray we would grow together in loving our church. And pray we would each grow as followers of Jesus.

God's Power: Romans 1:1–17

Paul introduces himself to the Christians in Rome. He shares his great desire to visit them so that he can encourage them and be encouraged by them. As he's introducing himself and his aims, Paul can't help but talk about 'the gospel'.

Read Romans 1:1–8

1. What do these verses tell us about Paul?
2. What do verses 1–8 tell us about the Romans?
3. In a part of the letter that usually introduces the writer and readers, Paul has more to say about Jesus. Draw a timeline of Jesus' life (which started before he was born) from these verses.
4. How ought people respond to the gospel?

Think about it

5. Paul says that the Romans are loved by God and are saints. Are these words that could be said about you?

In these opening verses, we've learnt about Paul and his mission. We've seen that as a servant of Jesus he can't help but talk about his master. We've also seen that he has a particular mission to the Gentiles (v5), and it's because of this focus that he is writing to the Christians in Rome.

Read Romans 1:8–15

6. Why does Paul want to visit Rome?
7. Who is Paul 'obligated' to?
8. What is he 'obligated' to do?

Think about it

9. One reason Paul wants to visit is for mutual encouragement (for another reason, see 15:24). How can Christians encourage each other? Can you think of a time you've experienced mutual encouragement?

Paul wants to visit Rome to give the Christians in Rome a spiritual gift, that is, to encourage the believers there. And the way he's going to do this is by 'preaching the gospel'. As we've already seen, the gospel Paul preaches is all about Jesus (vv2-4): it's about Jesus' life, death, and resurrection; it's about how Jesus is the fulfilment of God's promises and Israel's hope. This gospel shapes Paul's life and ministry. In some

ways the rest of the letter is Paul explaining the message of the gospel and its implications for our life. In these final verses of our passage, we see why the gospel is so important for Paul (and for us).

Read Romans 1:16–17

10. Why might Paul be ashamed of the gospel?

11. How is the gospel God's power?

12. What does the gospel reveal?

Think about it

13. Are you sometimes ashamed of the gospel? How does v16-17 help with that?

14. What does it look like to 'live by faith'?

Just as the gospel was central to Paul and his ministry among Gentiles, it's also central to our lives as Christians. The gospel isn't 'Christianity 101', which we grow out of as we move on to the deeper things of God. The gospel is God's power to save. Through the gospel we know God and experience his righteousness. The gospel is the beginning, and the end, of our life with God.

The power of the gospel means that we too shouldn't be ashamed of it. Although it may seem weak, and we may feel weak in sharing this message with others, it's still God's power for salvation. Because of this, we should desire to be sharing the message of salvation so that others experience its power.

Pray

Thank God for his gospel, and the power of salvation in it. Pray that, like Paul, we wouldn't be ashamed of it.

Righteousness From God

'Righteousness' (or 'justification', it's the same Greek word) is central to Paul's message. In v17 Paul talks about the 'righteousness from God' (literally the 'righteousness of God') which is found in the gospel. But what is this? There are three main things the 'righteousness of God' might mean.

1. *God's justice or faithfulness.* God is our creator and our judge. So, the 'righteousness of God' can refer to the way that God rightly judges sinners (e.g. 3:25-26 which talks about God's justice.) God is also righteous in the way that he keeps his promises.

2. Our *right standing* before God through faith in Christ. We are unrighteous, but because we are united to Christ through His Spirit, he takes our sin upon himself, and we receive Christ's right standing before God.

3. God's *saving work.* The way God's righteousness is often spoken about in the Old Testament. The Psalmist thanks God because He has saved him from some affliction and praises Him for His righteousness (e.g. Ps 7:17). However, this meaning is often combined with the first. God's righteousness in saving His people has a flip side—He judges evil people (e.g. Ps 9:3-4).

God's Wrath: Romans 1:18–2:11

Last week we considered God's power in the gospel—his power for salvation—because in the gospel we find God's righteousness. However, God's righteousness stands in stark contrast with our world and the inescapable problem of sin.

Read Romans 1:18–32

1. What can people plainly know about God (v19-21, 32)?
2. What is the central nature of sin (v21, 25)?
3. What does it mean for God to 'give over' (v24, 26, 28)?

Think about it

4. How accurate is Paul's description of the world?
5. How has people's behaviour changed since Paul's time?
6. Do you think these things deserve death and God's wrath? Why/why not?
7. How do you think the average Australian might react to reading this part of the Bible?

Paul describes the deep problem of sin. At its heart, sin is a suppression of the truth—that we are accountable to our creator, God. Sin is idolatry: worshipping something that is not God. We might worship animals or lumps of wood, or we might 'worship' sex, money, career, or self-fulfilment. One of the sad things about sin is that it is self-deceptive. We might even deceive ourselves into thinking we are not like the people described in Romans 1:18–32.

Read Romans 2:1–5

8. What is the issue with passing judgement on others?
9. What will happen on the day of God's wrath?
10. How is God showing kindness? And why?

God's wrath is being revealed as God gives sinners over to their sinfulness (Rom 1:18–32). This revelation of God's wrath is incomplete, because in Romans 2:5 we are told the 'day of God's wrath' is yet to come.

Read Romans 2:5–11

11. How will God judge on the day of God's wrath?

12. How does v11 help understand "first for the Jew, then for the Gentile*?"

(*“Gentile” = “nations” = anyone but Israel)

Much has changed since Paul wrote this letter to the Christians in Rome, but three things have not. First, we are still awaiting the day of God's wrath, when Jesus will return to judge. Second, we live in a world that is experiencing partial judgement as God gives us over to our suppression of the truth. Finally, God's patience continues as he still leads people to repentance. But for how long?

Think about it

13. David expresses a similar thought to Romans 1:22 when he says, "The Fool says in his heart, 'There is no God.'" (Psalm 14:1, 53:1). How do we share the gospel of Jesus to "fools"?

14. How does living for God change our lives and our decisions?

Pray

Praise God for his righteousness and his just judgement. Confess your sin to God. Thank him for forgiveness in Jesus. And pray for each other as we seek to live for God.

God's Law: Romans 2:12–3:20

In Romans 1:18-2:11 we've seen the deep problem of sin and the reality of God's just judgement. But we're not done yet; there's still more to consider. We pick up from the "first for Jew, then for the Gentile" bit in 2:10. In this next section, when you read 'the law', think Old Covenant and the law given through Moses.

Read Romans 2:12–16

1. What difference does "The Law" make to our standing before God?

Read Romans 2:17–29

2. In what ways might Paul's Jewish audience feel superior to Gentiles?
3. Why shouldn't they feel superior?
4. What value does circumcision have?
5. What does 'inward circumcision' mean? (see Deuteronomy 10:16; 30:6)

Think about it

6. How does Paul's discussion about hypocrisy help us understand the way we should address sinfulness in others?

Read Romans 3:1–8

7. Sounds like Paul is covering a short Q & A. Have a go at completing the A's in your own words.
Q. What advantage is there in being a Jew?
A.

Q. What if some were unfaithful, will their unfaithfulness mean God has been unfaithful?
A.

Q. So if Jewish unfaithfulness shows God's faithfulness – then how can God punish the Jews?
A.

Paul appears to have been 'pointing the finger' at Gentile sinners in 1:18-32, while chapter 2 quickly pulls the rug out from under Jewish hypocrites too. It appears that some Jews (maybe even Jewish Christians) were thinking the outward signs of God's covenant (e.g. circumcision) entitled them to show contempt for God's kindness and patience (2:4). Yet true Jewishness isn't found in outward signs, but in an inward reality. But the inward reality of both Jews and Gentiles is troubling.

Read Romans 3:9–20

8. How are Jews and Gentiles alike?

9. What is the outcome of the law?

Think about it

10. How has ‘the law’ made *you* conscious of sin?

At this point in the letter, humanity’s plight seems insurmountable. Even God’s covenant people aren’t immune from sin. The law hasn’t declared anyone righteous; it’s just made people more aware of their sin and the righteousness God demands.

But God has a solution to this plight, because we don’t have one. Paul has already hinted at it (cf. 1:5, 16, and especially 17), and next week we will explore further the righteousness of God which has been revealed in the gospel.

Pray

Confess your sins to God (you might like to pray silently, or as a group pray a ‘general’ confession). Thank God for forgiveness in Jesus.

God's Righteousness: Romans 3:21–31

Brainstorm: In what ways is God's justice the same as and/or different from the justice of the Australian legal system?

Up to this point in his epistle, the apostle has shown the problem that all people (Jew and Gentile) face. That is - God is righteous, yet we are sinful. And God's wrath is being revealed against sinful people. Today's passage focuses on good news for sinful people. God's righteousness is good news for us. We're looking at a shorter section in this study, so you might like to start by reading the whole passage to get a 'feel' before looking at each part in detail.

Read Romans 3:21–24

1. There's a lot of big words in these passages. Make a glossary for Romans 3:21-24 – by including a definition for 'tricky' words on the passage.
2. Why has the 'righteousness from God' needed to be revealed 'apart from the law'? (think back to last week?)
3. There are two ways that Paul says there is 'no difference' between Jew and Gentile. What are they?
4. How can sinners be justified?

Think about it

5. How do the law and the prophets testify to the righteousness of God?

This is good news. The promises of God have finally come to pass in Jesus Christ, and these promises are good for everyone—Jew and Gentile. But how has God done this?

Read Romans 3:25–26

6. What has God done through Jesus?
7. How does this show God’s justice?

Think about it

8. How does Jesus’ death impact on those who died before he came?
9. How can it be fair for God to forgive sinners?

Read Romans 3:27–28

10. What part does ‘the law’ play in being justified?

Think about it

11. Why can’t Christians ‘boast’?

Read Romans 3:29–31

12. What is the outcome of God being the God of both Jew and Gentile?

Think about it

13. How does faith uphold the law?

These verses are one of the great passages of the bible, and two of the most amazing words; ‘but now’... After Paul’s long description of the depth of our sinfulness, which not even the law could curtail, it would be easy to feel hopeless in the face of God’s righteous wrath.

However, these verses tell the good news that in Jesus, God justifies sinners through Jesus sacrificial death. “But now” *is* the gospel in a nutshell!

Think about it

14. In what ways do people (e.g. you!) still try and obtain righteousness through the law?
15. Why will this not work?
16. Are you trusting in Jesus’ sacrifice alone for your salvation?

Pray

Thank God for the righteousness that comes through faith. Thank God that there is no difference between Jew and Gentile, that all people can be justified by faith.

God's Gift: Romans 4

Sometimes faith is thought of as 'believing in something without evidence'. If I told you that's not the way the Bible describes faith – what alternative definitions of 'faith' can you come up with?

Last week we heard the great news — a righteousness of God apart from the law (3:21). Paul then asks, “**Do we nullify the law by this faith?**” (3:31). It's a good question! Does faith undo everything that God has been doing since the time of Moses and Abraham?

In chapter 4 Paul does two things. First, he answers this objection and second, he helps us to understand what faith is.

Read Romans 3:27-4:8

1. Why would Abraham have had a reason to boast?
2. What is the significance in drawing attention to the difference between a wage and a gift?
3. Is being justified a wage or a gift?
4. What is the blessing that David talks about?¹

Paul has begun to answer the objection that faith nullifies the law, by showing that both Abraham and David are examples of being credited righteousness and being forgiven freely as a gift. To better understand the rest of what Paul says we need to dip into the story of Abraham in Genesis.

Read Genesis 15:1-6

5. What is the 'problem'? (And what is Abram's proposed solution?)
6. What does God promise?
7. How does Abram respond to the promise?
8. What does God do for Abram (v6)?
9. When does God make the 'covenant of circumcision' with Abram (hint: save time by looking ahead at the chapter headings in Genesis 12-17)?
10. Was Abraham credited with righteousness before or after he was circumcised?

Read Romans 4:9-15

11. Considering your answer to the previous question, who, then, is Abraham the father of?
12. How did Abraham receive the promise/blessing?
13. Who inherits Abraham's promise?

¹ You may like to read Psalm 32 (which Paul is quoting) later.

Think about it

14. How might we be tempted to think that we need to follow the law before we can be acceptable to God?

Read Romans 4:16-25

15. Who are Abraham's offspring?

16. What are the benefits of being one of Abraham's offspring?

17. What two examples of God's power does Paul give in verse 17?

18. How is this power shown in Abraham and Sarah's life?

19. How is this power shown in a Christian's life?

Think about it

20. How does this chapter describe faith?

21. What does it mean for faith to be credited as righteousness?

22. Why should we have faith in God?

23. Do you have faith in God?

Pray

Thank God that we can be the true children of Abraham through faith. Praise God for his mercy in crediting faith as righteousness.

Is faith a work?

Some people might ask why faith isn't considered a work... I mean, it comes from us, right? We need to put in the effort to believe, right? Well, yes and no.

The Bible says that our faith is authored ('pioneered' NIV) and perfected by Jesus (Heb 12:2), and Paul also makes it extremely clear in his famous passage on God's grace in Ephesians that even our faith is a *gift* from God! (Eph 2:8)

Yet we are still called to faith so that we can be declared righteous as we have seen in Rom 3-4.

Ultimately, even our faith is God's work in our life, through the Holy Spirit, which means there is zero room for boasting (Rom 3:27)! Pray that God would be at work bringing your friends and family to faith in him too.

God's Peace: Romans 5:1-11

Can you remember a time when you had a falling out with someone and then you were later reconciled? How were you able to be reconciled? How did you feel through this process?

In last week's study on Romans 4, we looked back to Abraham. We saw how being justified by faith apart from the law wasn't something new in Paul's message—God had been crediting faith as righteousness since Abraham. Circumcision and doing the works of the law wasn't the way to be declared righteous. This can only come by faith in Jesus.

In today's study we look at the privileges and benefits that come through Christ and think about how the death of one can bring forgiveness to many.

Read Romans 5:1-8

1. What do we have through faith in Christ?
2. What should cause us to rejoice?
3. Why was the time that Jesus died for us the 'right time'?
4. How does God show his love for us?

Think about it

5. How is it possible to rejoice during suffering?

There are a whole host of good things that are ours because of being justified by faith, not least of which is hope (v2, 5) and the knowledge of God's love (v5). However, during suffering we often forget that God loves us which can cause us to despair about the future.

Read Romans 5:9-11

6. What has happened to us (past tense)?
7. What does this give us confidence for (future tense)?

8. How well do you think this works as a summary of these verses?

9. “Our FUTURE **salvation** is the assured outworking of our PRESENT **justification** and **reconciliation**”

10. What should cause us to rejoice?

Think about it

11. Our confidence for future salvation is based on being justified already. How can you be sure that you are justified?

12. Do you rejoice in the things we’ve read about? How can we develop a culture of rejoicing in our Growth Group/Church?

Pray

Thank and praise God for the certainty of salvation that comes through trusting in Jesus’ finished work for us in his death and resurrection.

God's Life: Romans 5:12-21

Having reminded us of the great benefits we receive through faith in Christ, Paul has raised a question - how can ALL who have faith be reconciled through the death of God's ONE Son (v10). In the second part of chapter 5 Paul explains how this is possible by comparing Adam and Jesus.

Read Romans 5:12-14

1. How many people are affected by Adam's sin?
2. What is the relationship between sin and the law?
3. What is the relationship between sin and death?

Read Romans 5:15-21

4. Compare and contrast 'the gift' and 'the trespass'

	The Gift	The Trespass
v15		
v16		
v17		
v18		
v19		
v20		
v21		

Think about it

5. In this section Paul says that Adam's sin impacted 'all people' (v12, 18) or 'the many' (v15,19) and similarly Jesus' righteousness impacts 'all people' (v18) and 'the many' (v15,19). Does this mean that every person has been automatically justified?

6. How can the death of one man (Jesus) bring salvation for others?

This brings us to the end of our studies. Right back at the beginning we saw that this letter is about the Gospel. The good news about Jesus that is the 'power of God for salvation' (1:16-17). We then dove into the depths of the sinfulness of sin; sin that effects all people, Jew and Gentile alike. Sin which turns the law into an opportunity for hypocrisy. Yet God's mercy is greater than our sin, and he has provided a way 'apart from the law' (3:12) to be declared righteous—through having faith like Abraham.

God's righteousness results in many benefits: peace with God, access to God, hope for the future and the ability to rejoice when we suffer. And these have come through Jesus, the second Adam, who has broken the curse and brings grace to 'the many'.

But we haven't even looked at half of this letter. In the rest of the letter Paul explains how God's righteousness changes the way we live, as we are united to Christ by His Spirit. He also considers how the inclusion of Gentiles into God's people is in keeping with God's gracious promise.

Pray

Thank God for the many benefits he has given us in Christ, and that these benefits extend even to us. Thank God for the things you've learned or been reminded of during our Romans studies.



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ROMANS OVERVIEW

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	1:1-15	PAUL'S DESIRE: HIS MESSAGE & MISSION
	1:16-17	GOD'S GOSPEL: THE POWER OF SALVATION = RIGHTEOUSNESS BY FAITH IN JESUS
	1:18 - 3:20	GOD'S ANGER: THE WHOLE OF HUMANITY CONDEMNED (WITHOUT JESUS)
	3:21 - 4:25	GOD'S GRACE: JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH IN JESUS
	5-8	GOD'S ASSURANCE: THE HOPE OF SALVATION IN JESUS
	9 - 11	GOD'S PLAN: THE ELECTION OF JEWS & GENTILES IN JESUS
	12:1 - 15:13	GOD'S TRANSFORMATION: THE GOAL OF LOVE & UNITY IN JESUS
	15:14 - 16:27	PAUL'S MINISTRY: HIS PLANS & PARTNERSHIP

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