

## Lesson #6A - Romans 1 - 8 2019

Before starting this lesson, read Romans, chapters 1 - 8

The book of **ROMANS** is written to local churches that have been established in the city of Rome.

Acts 2 explains how they started. In 31 AD, on the day of Pentecost in Jerusalem, Peter had told the huge crowds that Jesus was the Messiah who was promised in the Old Testament. Three thousand Jews believed in Jesus. Included in this group are Jews from the synagogues in Rome. After the holy days of Pentecost were over, they returned to Rome, taking the message of Jesus with them.

At first, they continued to be part of the Jewish synagogues. In the services, they explained to everyone that...

Jesus is the promised Messiah.

Jews and Gentiles are right with God thru faith in Jesus.

But after awhile, these Jews are kicked out of the synagogues and they begin to meet in private homes. Over the years their numbers grow as Jewish believers from other places move to Rome. In time, there are several small churches. (16:5, 14, 15)

All the teachers are Jewish believers.

Gentiles start attending, believe and learn from the Jewish teachers.

Because there are no New Testament books written for the first 20 years, all their study is from the Old Testament.

The emphasis is still on keeping God's laws.

Another group of Jews have also been moving to Rome. They are militant Jews whose goal is to overthrow the Roman government. Their major tactic is to create riots and chaos in the streets.

So in **49 AD**, Claudius Caesar has had enough.

He declares that all **Jews** have to leave Rome. They can no longer live in the city.

This brings a major change in the local churches. Because there are now only **Gentile** believers, they become the leaders and teachers.

Five years go by.

In **54 AD**, Claudius dies and Nero becomes Caesar.

Within a short time, he decides that Jews can once again live in Rome.

By **56 AD**, Jewish believers are back in the local churches. But this creates problems.

During these last few years, some of the Gentile believers have become anti-Semitic and are teaching...

God is finished with the Jews.

Only Gentile believers should be leaders and teachers in the local churches.

Others are saying that anything Jewish is outdated and no longer has value.

Naturally, Jewish believers resent this. So to retaliate - they begin to teach...

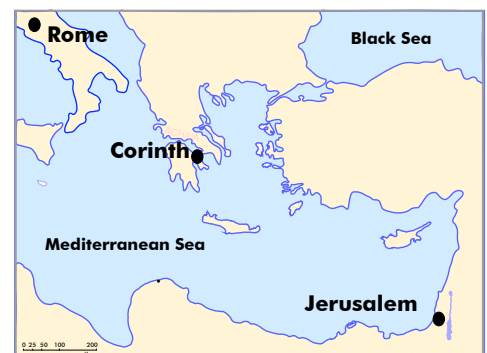
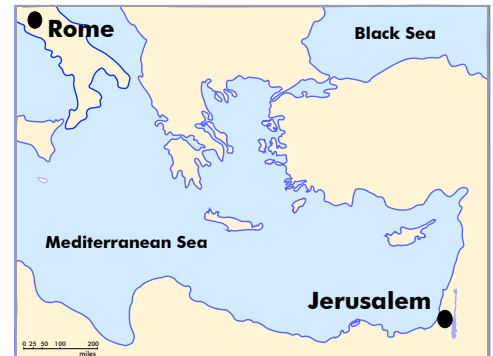
Jews are better than Gentiles.

They have the mark of circumcision that proves they belong to God.

If Gentile believers really want to be right with God, they have to follow Jewish laws.

Local churches in Rome still believe in Jesus, but the gospel - the good news of *how to be right with God* has gotten twisted and distorted. Paul hears about this in 56 AD while he is working in Corinth. So he writes them a letter, explaining that as soon as he returns from his trip to Jerusalem, he wants to come and visit them. He wants to use Rome as a new base of ministry and take the gospel further west to Spain.

A woman named Phoebe, is a leader in one of the churches near Corinth. Since she is traveling to Rome, Paul sends the letter with her.



He uses the opportunity of this letter to remind them about the basics of salvation - the basics of being right with God. He is writing mainly to **Gentile** believers. However, in one place he writes to **Gentiles**, including both believers and non-believers in the churches. Then every so often he addresses the **Jewish** believers to clarify *their* understanding of being right with God.

## ROMANS

### TEACHING ABOUT SALVATION

Thru faith in Jesus, there is...

**Personal salvation** for all who believe 1-8

From penalty and power of sin

**National salvation** for the Jews 9-11

**Practical salvation** for believers to live 12-16

Paul writes like a rabbi, theologian and lawyer all wrapped into one. His sentences are long and complex. Some of his explanations have so much detail and repetition, it is hard to follow. Yet this book is one of the most important in the New Testament. So I want to help us out with **definitions**, **explanations**, modern **examples** and **summary statements**.

## DEFINITIONS

**A righteousness from God** means **salvation** - *a way to be right with God*.

The word **law** in this book, can mean one of several possibilities, depending on the context.

- > It can mean the 613 Old Testament laws given to Moses.
- > It can mean just the 10 commandments.
- > It can mean all the Old Testament Scripture.
- > It can mean what people instinctively know about God's requirements, such as a law written on their heart.

**God's anger** or **wrath** means **God's judgment** - *His response to injustice, disobedience or evil*.

In chapter one, Paul begins by dealing with the moral corruption of Roman society.

Church members are concerned because it appears that nothing can change it. Paul tells them - *God has the power to change individual lives - this is why I am not embarrassed to proclaim the good news about Jesus. Salvation from beginning to end is about faith in Jesus.*

Paul then describes the pattern of what God does and how society and peoples respond.

**God** starts out by putting within peoples and cultures an instinctive knowledge about Him. As society looks at the beauties and workings of nature, they instinctively know there has to be a Supreme Being who made it. That person has to have power and be eternal with a divine nature.

But **society**, instead of responding to that knowledge, chooses to worship creation instead of the Creator.

When people got more truth about the Creator of the Universe, they chose to reject or distort the truth.

Then, after taking a final look at Him, they refuse to give Him any further consideration.

**God** then has to respond to that society and culture - He has to bring judgment.

But His judgment is not to destroy that society.

Instead, His judgment is to take His hands off of society - to remove His hand of restraint and let society do whatever it wants. He gives them total freedom.

In Paul's day, this is what God has done with the Roman empire. It is why there is such evil and moral corruption. Paul now describes Roman society.

*Furthermore, since they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, He gave them over to a depraved mind, to do what ought not to be done. They have become filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed, and depravity. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit and malice. They are gossips, slanderers, God-haters, insolent, arrogant and boastful; they invent ways of doing evil; they disobey their parents; they are senseless, faithless, heartless, ruthless. Altho they know God's righteous decree that those who do such things deserve death, they not only continue to do these very things, but also approve of those who practice them. Romans 1:28-32*

This also sounds like society in the United States. We can only understand what is happening in our country if we understand this pattern of society and culture.

Instinctive knowledge of God,  
Replacing God,  
Distorting the truth about God  
Putting God out of their mind

Our nation had a unique advantage. We started with a well-developed knowledge of God, based on Judeo-Christian principles. Even up to the 1950's, people still accepted these principles. But then little by little, our society began to replace God with things. So God made sure more truth was given and in greater clarity, but society began to distort that truth about God. And more recently, after taking a final look at God, the majority in our society have decided to not even include Him in their thinking.

Obviously God has to respond - He has to bring judgment. His judgment is not to zap us or destroy our nation. Based on Romans chapter one, God's response - His judgment has been to take His hands off our nation - to remove His hand of restraint, of protection, blessing and guidance. He has backed off to let society do whatever it wants. The result is...

- ...Open mockery of all things Christian
- ...Decisions by federal and local courts against Judeo - Christian principles
- ...Leaders who openly speak against godly values

When God in His judgment, gives a nation total freedom to do anything it wants, these are the results. He lets it have what it deserves. To put it another way...

**Unrestrained freedom means unrestrained violence,  
unrestrained immorality, intolerance and hatred.**

In chapter one, Paul says, God is revealing His **judgment on Roman society** for their wickedness.  
But He is also revealing His **salvation for individuals** in that society.

In the local churches in Rome there are Gentiles - some believers and some who are not believers. But even the non-believers have been condemning the evils of Roman society.

In comparison to what all *those* people are doing, they see themselves as good, moral people. God must be pleased with them. Paul tells them they are guilty before God just as much as those in Roman society.

Then Paul writes specifically to the Jews in these local churches.

They are believers, but they do not think of themselves as individuals. They see themselves as a unit.  
They believe they are right with God just because they are Jewish.

Paul reminds them, yes, they **know** what is right because they have always had God's laws. Yet in the first century, the Jews, as a people, are known thruout the empire for the **wrong** they have done.

Some 40 years earlier, when Paul was a teenager, studying to be a rabbi in Jerusalem, he knew that Jewish leaders had gone to Rome to raise money. They had convinced Jewish widows to sign over their money and property for improvements on the temple in Jerusalem. But after getting the money, the leaders stole it and kept it for themselves. When this financial scandal was brought to the attention of Tiberius Caesar in 19 AD, he expelled all Jews living in Rome. After several years, the Jews were allowed to return.

Thirty years after the 1<sup>st</sup> expulsion, Claudius Caesar expelled them again, this time for causing riots and chaos in the city streets.

Jews were also known for going into pagan temples to rob the idols of jewels and gold. Jewish writings tell about leading rabbis who flaunted their relationships of adultery. They bragged about them in their writings.

This is why Paul says to the Jews

*You then who teach others, do you not teach yourself? You who preach against stealing, do you Jews steal? You who say that people should not commit adultery, do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols, do you Jews rob temples? You who brag about the law, do you dishonor God by breaking the law? Let me just insert here, the understood answer to all these questions is yes, yes, yes. Paul continues, As it is written, God's name is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of YOU - God's people, the Jews. Romans 2:21-24*

We may wonder how Jews could do things like that. But our day is not much different. We read and hear about Christian leaders guilty of financial scandals, immorality, lies and deceit. Paul's words still ring true in our day, *God's name is blasphemed thruout our nation because of people who claim they are Christians.*

Paul continues,

whether it is Roman pagans, good, moral Gentiles or religious Jews, they all know what is right, but they are not doing it. Therefore everyone is guilty before God.

He knows the Jews will argue, **But we Jews are not guilty. Keeping the 10 commandments makes us right with God.** Paul answers this argument in 3:20,

**No one will be declared right in His sight by observing the law; rather, thru the law we become conscious of sin.**

The purpose of the 10 commandments was never to **make** people right with God.

Their purpose was to show the standards that God required and convince people they could never meet those standards. They could never be right with God by just trying to be good.

To use a simple illustration, God gave the 10 commandments to be like a mirror. When I look in a mirror, it **shows** my face is not clean. But no matter how I use the mirror, it cannot **make** my face clean. That is not the purpose of a mirror.

The 10 commandments **show** us our lives are not clean. We do not meet God's standards. But the law cannot **make** us clean. The law cannot **make** us right with God. That is not its purpose.

At this point, after giving all the bad news, Paul is finally ready to give the **good news about salvation.**

There is a way to be right with God, apart from the law. It comes thru faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe.

Paul knows this sounds too simple. There has to be consequences when a person is guilty of disobeying God. So Paul uses the legal terms of the day to logically explain it.

#### **GOD'S MASTER PLAN OF SALVATION.**

God requires absolute justice because He is absolutely holy.

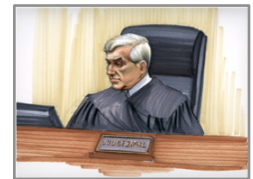
He has also provided a way to declare a guilty person is not guilty.

To help us understand this, I want to use an illustration we can relate to. But I want to emphasize, it is *only* an illustration.

Let's say that while I am driving, I deliberately go thru a red light. I'm in a hurry, I do not see any other cars, so I deliberately go thru that light. I get pulled over and am given a ticket. I appear in court, knowing the fine is 300 dollars. I plead guilty because I did it and it was deliberate. Now if the judge says, *it's OK - I'll just pretend you are not guilty*, **he** would be violating the law.

To have justice, the judge must declare that I am guilty and the fine is 300 dollars.

But if the judge also wants to show mercy, he can step down from the bench, come to the table where I am and write a check for 300 dollars from his own account. In this way, he has required the payment, but then is paying it for me so I do not have to pay it.



The judge puts the check on the table in front of me. I now have a choice. I can either accept the payment or refuse it. If I accept it, I do not have to pay it myself. I am free from the penalty.

But if I refuse it and say I want to do it my way, the judge has no alternative. He must withdraw his mercy and demand justice. I must now make the payment myself.

This is the picture of Jesus, who is both just and merciful in His dealing with us.

Jesus is perfect. Only those who are perfect can live in His presence. Only those who are perfect can spend eternity with God. But we are not perfect, so in justice, He pronounces the fact - we are guilty because we have not met His standards. He must demand the penalty for our disobedience. That penalty is separation from Him.

As a judge who is fair, Jesus had to pronounce everyone guilty. But then in mercy, He stepped down as judge, left heaven and came to this earth. He made the payment for us. While on the cross, all the sin of the human race, for all time, was put on Jesus. All of our imperfection was on Him and He was separated from God the Father in our place. He cried out, *My God, my God, why have You forsaken Me.*

Jesus made the payment for us. Now we have to choose - will we accept His payment or turn it down? If we turn it down, we will have to pay it ourselves. We will be separated from the Father for all eternity.

If we accept Jesus' payment, God the Father declares:

*Your fine is paid in full - payment made.*

*You are no longer separated from Me and never will be.*

*You are not guilty*

Now let me give you the words used in the Bible for these phrases

*Fine paid in full - **justified**.*

*No longer separated - **reconciled**.*

*Declared not guilty - **righteous** - right with God*



Paul is saying - **RIGHTNESS WITH GOD IS NOT ACHIEVED, BUT RECEIVED.**

In the last part of Romans 3, Paul uses a series of theological words to present God's master plan of salvation. I have explained them thru the illustration of the judge. Now I want to read the verses from the paraphrase Living Bible.

*But now God has shown us a different way to heaven - not by being good enough and trying to keep His laws, but by a new way.... Yes, all have sinned; all fall short of God's glorious ideal or God's standards;*

*yet now, God declares us not guilty ... if we trust in Jesus...*

*Because God sent Jesus to take the punishment for our sins and to end all God's judgment against us.*

*He used Jesus' payment and our faith as the means of saving us from being separated from Him.*

*But isn't this unfair for God to let criminals go free and say they are innocent? No, for He does it on the basis of their trust in Jesus who took away their sins. Romans 3:21-26*

Socrates and Plato were two of the greatest thinkers and Greek philosophers in the 400's BC. It is said that while discussing the Supreme Being, Socrates said to Plato, *it may be God can forgive sin, but I do not see how*. It is Paul who gives us God's answer in these verses of Romans 3.

Now let's go back to the illustration of the judge and my fine.

When I accepted his payment, he declared, *fine paid; charges dismissed*. He was saying I am free from the penalty. I will never have to make that payment of 300 dollars. It is a statement of fact. Even if I did not feel any emotion, it does not change what the judge said. However, as time goes by, the more I understand and start believing what the judge says, the more I enjoy and experience the results of his statement.

So it is with our relationship with God. When we accept the payment Jesus made for us, the Father declares, *fine paid, charges dismissed*. It is a fact that has nothing to do with my feelings. But the more I understand and believe the Father's declaration, the more I can enjoy and experience the results.

This is why Paul begins in Romans 5,

*Therefore, since Jesus paid our fine - since we have been justified thru faith, we have **peace** with God.*

He goes on to say we will have **joy** and access to **grace**. That means we will know how to utilize the grace that God has available for us. The Holy Spirit will fill us with a **sense of God's love** so we will not be disillusioned in time of suffering. We discover suffering develops **trust** and **character**.

In the rest of chapter 5 Paul gives the contrasts of salvation.

Sin and guilt came thru Adam and brought separation from God.

Rightness and acceptance by God comes thru Jesus and brings eternal life with God.

Jesus came as the 2<sup>nd</sup> Adam to undo the damage the first Adam did.

**Chapters 1-5** explain it is thru Jesus we are **SAVED from the penalty of sin**. We are no longer separated from God.

That is good news. But there is more.

**Chapters 6-8** explain it is thru Jesus we are also **SAVED from the power of sin**.

The reason we disobey God's rules is because we were born into the human race with a sin nature. We got it from Adam. We did not ask for it - we did not choose it - we were born with it.

If you question this concept, watch a 2-year-old in your home. You see them heading for something dangerous and say, **No, don't touch that.** You pull them away. The moment you let go, where do they head? Back to where you told them **No.** Distract them with something interesting in another part of the room and leave for just a moment. Guess where they will be when you come back? Right where you told them **No.** There is a magnet or power inside of us from the time of birth that is always pulling us toward that which is wrong.

The good news is that we have been freed from this power.

To describe it, Paul uses a phrase that is very confusing. He says, ***we died to sin.***

That sounds like we are not supposed to sin any more. But we do. We still disobey. Sometimes we even **want** to disobey. In our every day life, sin is **not** dead. It is very much alive.

For years I struggled with this verse. It always made me feel guilty, that I was not measuring up to what God expected of me. But Paul is not wanting us to feel guilty. He is giving us good news - it is part of the gospel.

When Paul uses the word “died”, he is using it with its basic meaning.

**Death** means *separation*.

**Sin** means the *sin nature* – when used in the singular in the book of Romans.

So **“We died to sin”** means **we have been separated from the sin nature in its power.**

When did this happen? According to Paul, it happened at 3 different time periods.

**Potentially**

“I died to sin” in the first century when Jesus died. He is the One who made it possible.

**Actually**

“I died to sin” when I picked up the check; when I accepted the payment of Jesus personally.

**Practically**

From that moment to the present, I continue to apply and experience being separated from the power of the sin nature.

When it happens in actuality - when we accept Jesus’ payment, God the Father says:

You are free from the **penalty** of sin - you can never again be separated from Me.

You are also free from the **power** of sin. I have given you a new and stronger power.

Again, an illustration is easier to understand.

I have a little radio that only runs on batteries. It has only one power source.

I have another radio that is controlled **either** by batteries or by electricity.

When I plug it into an electrical outlet, altho the batteries remain inside, the connection to the batteries is broken.

The power that now controls the radio is not the batteries, but the electrical current and it is a much stronger power.

In my second radio, I have a choice between 2 power sources.

**The radio with one power source** represents the non-believer.

The battery represents his sin nature empowered by Satan.

That is his only power source. It is why Scripture says he is a slave to sin, meaning he does not have any other options.

This is another reason why God gave the 10 commandments.

It is why governments have to make laws to control society.

Non-believers are controlled only by the sin nature and so need laws to restrain them.



**The radio with 2 power sources** represents the believer.

The battery once again represents the sin nature and the electrical current represents our new nature.

Paul says the moment we accepted Jesus’ payment, God the Father disconnected us from the power of the sin nature. He connected us to a new nature empowered by the Holy Spirit.

We now have 2 power sources available. The sin nature and the new nature. We can choose between them.





Scripture uses different words to describe the moment when God gives us our new nature. It is called *regeneration*, the *new birth* or *born again*, we become *a new creation*. It is called this because we get a brand new nature that we never had before.

When Paul says, *we died to sin*, he means, *God disconnected us from the power of the sin nature and plugged us into a new nature empowered by the Holy Spirit*. Let's see how it works in real life.

In every temptation...

There comes a point when we know - this is wrong.

Now we have to make a choice - which power connection will we choose?

Paul says that we are to make the choice based on the fact we **are** already disconnected from the power of the sin nature. This means we do not have to obey it. We are already plugged into the new nature empowered by the Holy Spirit.

But, God has also given us free will. We can choose to reconnect to the sin nature. Every time we disobey, we reconnect to the power of the sin nature. The Holy Spirit is still inside of us, but we no longer have access to His power. When we ask forgiveness from God, **He** immediately connects us back into the power of the Holy Spirit. We stay connected until we willfully disobey again.

**Romans 6** says there are 2 natures inside of me: the sin nature and the new nature.

God has plugged me into the new nature which is empowered by the Holy Spirit.

**Chapter 7** describes the struggle between these 2 power sources - we have freedom to choose the connection.

**Chapter 8** describes our life when we *stay* plugged into - *stay* controlled by the Holy Spirit

Paul is not teaching we will never be tempted or never sin again.

He is teaching that when we do connect back into the sin nature, we will never enjoy sin like we use to.

There will be a conflict - we will not only feel the guilt, but also be aware of the consequences.

How can we stay plugged into the power of the Holy Spirit more of the time? A wise American Indian once said, *I feel like I have two dogs inside of me that are constantly fighting*. When he was asked, *which one wins?*, he replied, *it all depends on which dog I feed - which dog I nourish*.

There is a continual conflict between our 2 natures. Which one will I be connected to most often? It all depends on which nature I feed and nourish.

If we continually fill our mind, ears and eyes with things that dishonor God, we will spend a lot of time connected to the sin nature.

The answer is to fill or nourish our mind and soul with things that honor God.

In the world around us, there are the beauties of creation - sunsets, walking in the woods, a sunny day at the side of lake. There is so much beauty in creation. There are the beauties of music, art and literature. There are good movies and healthy sports. There is ministry and relationships. If we look for it, there is so much around us that can nourish our mind and soul.

And of course, spiritually, our mind and soul need to be continually filled with knowledge of God and of His Word. We obey what He shows us and deal with any disobedience He points out. This is how we stay plugged into our new nature empowered by the Holy Spirit.

The wonder and good news of our **SALVATION**

We are free from the **penalty** of sin. Therefore we can spend eternity with God.

We are free from the **power** of sin. Therefore we have a stronger power to say *yes* to God.

We are free from **condemnation**. Therefore nothing can separate us from God's love.

We have so much to be thankful for!

## ***EXTRA INFORMATION FOR THE STUDIOUS AND INQUISITIVE***

### **Priscilla and Aquilla - their dates**

Lived in Rome - left in 49 AD

Moved to Corinth and stayed with Paul

Left for Ephesus w/ Paul in 52 AD

Stayed in Ephesus - had church in home 1 Cor. 16:19 - 55 AD

Moved back to Rome by 56 AD

In Ephesus again in 68 AD