

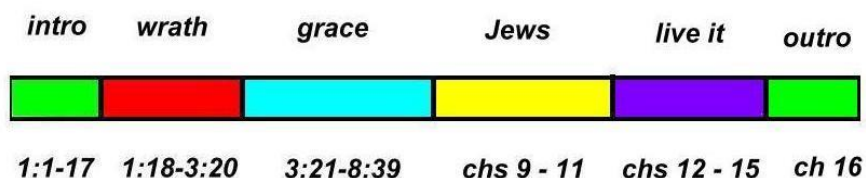
## Studies on Romans

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In preparing these studies I've used the following sources: "On Jesus as Attuned to Life, not Good and Evil" an essay by Mark Strom May 2010, talks by Mark Strom on Paul 9/4/2011 and Paul and the Open Cosmos/Society/Heart 15/8, 19/9, 24/10/2014 available at [www.gospelconversations.com](http://www.gospelconversations.com) , Mark Barry's timeline on Paul, Romans: Encountering the Gospel's Power by John Stott with Carolyn Nystrom, Issues Facing Christians Today by John Stott, Mark for Everyone , Luke for Everyone , Paul for Everyone Romans Part 1: Chapters 1-8 and Paul for Everyone Romans Part 2: Chapters 9-16 by Tom Wright, Preliminary Theological Certificate (PTC), Moore College, Doctrine II, The Power of God Unleashed Romans [chs 1-6] by Kerry Nagel, The Free Gift of Life Romans 1-5 and The Freedom of Christian Living Romans 12-16 by Gordon Cheng, Lion Handbook to the Bible Second Revised Edition, sermon by Mike Paget on Rom 13 at St Barnabas, Broadway, 14/9/2008.

Ed O'Conor

## Romans



## Study 1, Romans 1:1-17

### Getting started

1. How would you let someone know who you are?  
What resources would you point to so that someone could find out who you are?

### Bible

2. Read Rom 1:1-4.  
(a) How does Paul describe who he is?

(b) What is the gospel?

### Gospel

The idea of 'good news', for which an older English word is 'gospel', had two principal meanings for first-century Jews. First, with roots in Isaiah, it meant the news of YHWH's long-awaited victory over evil and rescue of his people. Second, it was used in the Roman world for the accession, or birthday, of the Emperor. Since for Jesus and Paul the announcement of God's inbreaking kingdom was both the fulfilment of prophecy and a challenge to the world's present rulers, 'gospel' became an important shorthand for both the message of Jesus himself and the apostolic message about him. Paul saw this message as itself the vehicle of God's saving power (Romans 1:16, 1 Thessalonians 2:13).

The four canonical 'gospels' tell the story of Jesus in such a way as to bring out both these aspects (unlike some other so-called 'gospels' circulated in the second and subsequent centuries, which tended both to cut off the scriptural and Jewish roots of Jesus' achievement and to inculcate a private spirituality rather than confrontation with the world's rulers). Since in Isaiah this creative, life-giving good news was seen as God's own powerful word (40:8, 55:11), the early Christians could use 'word' or 'message' as another shorthand for the basic Christian proclamation.

From Mark for Everyone by Tom Wright pp 231-232.

(c) What does it mean to call Jesus "our Lord"?

**Lord** (Greek, *kurios*) was used in the Greek of New Testament times in the wide sense of *possessor* or *owner* (Mark 13:35), or as a title of honour by subordinates to their superiors, or as a courteous appellation applied to near relatives.

From PTC, Doctrine II, study 13.

**Augustus** [Caesar] was the adopted son of Julius Caesar. He became sole ruler of the Roman world after a bloody civil war in which he overpowered all rival claimants. The last to be destroyed was the famous Mark Antony, who committed suicide not long after his defeat at the battle of Actium in 31 BC. Augustus turned the great Roman republic into an empire, with himself at the head; he proclaimed that he had brought justice and peace to the whole world; and, declaring his dead adoptive father to be divine, styled himself as 'son of god'. . . Augustus, people said, was the 'saviour' of the world. He was its king, its 'lord'. Increasingly, in the eastern part of his empire, people worshipped him, too, as a god.

From Luke for Everyone by Tom Wright pp 22-23.

On coins and on stone inscriptions Augustus was described as **lord**, saviour, reconciler of all things, bringer of peace, head of the body and image of the invisible god. All of these are used to describe Jesus in passages like Col 1:15-20. To the Romans Paul says they have got the wrong story and the wrong centre of it all but I can tell you the right story. . . Paul lets go of all his racial and cultural identity to explain how its Jesus rather than Augustus and he says it in a way that they don't have to come to Paul's culture to believe it. . . . In

Rom 12:1-2 Paul says don't present yourselves to Augustus and don't do the patterns of Rome ("this world") or Plato's dualism or social hierarchy but be transformed.

From Mark Strom's talk on Paul 9/4/2011 available on [www.gospelconversations.com](http://www.gospelconversations.com)

(d) What is the common thinking in today's world about someone being raised from the dead?

In most biblical thought, human bodies matter and are not merely disposable prisons for the soul. [The idea that the soul separates from the body at death comes from Homer who lived in Greece at about 850 BC. His ideas, expressed in the Iliad, were that you went to the underworld at death. Pythagoras (570-495BC), Socrates (470-399BC) and Plato (428-348BC) modified these ideas and thought of the soul as being liberated from the body at death and going up through the universe to the planets and stars to live with the gods.] When ancient Israelites wrestled with the goodness and justice of YHWH, the creator, they ultimately came to insist that he must raise the dead (Isaiah 26:19, Daniel 12:2-3) – a suggestion firmly resisted by classical pagan thought. The longing for return from exile was also spoken of in terms of YHWH raising dry bones to new life (Ezekiel 37:1-14). These ideas were developed in the second-Temple period, not least at times of martyrdom (e.g. 2 Maccabees 7). **Resurrection** was not just 'life after death', but a newly embodied life *after* 'life after death'; those at present dead were either 'asleep', or seen as 'souls', 'angels' or 'spirits', awaiting new embodiment.

The early Christian belief that Jesus had been raised from the dead was not that he had 'gone to heaven', or that he had been 'exalted', or was 'divine'; they believed all those as well, but each could have been expressed without mention of resurrection. Only the bodily resurrection of Jesus explains the rise of the early church, particularly its belief in Jesus' messiahship (which his crucifixion would have called into question). The early Christians believed that they themselves would be raised to a new, transformed bodily life at the time of the Lord's return or parousia (e.g. Philippians 3:20f.).

From Paul for Everyone Romans Part 1: Chapters 1-8 by Tom Wright pp 174-175.

3. Read Rom 1:5-6.

(a) What does obedience mean?

(b) In your Christian life, what things are you to obey?

(c) What do you think "obedience that comes from faith" means?

I always heard that phrase as kind of meaning "**the faith that makes you obey**" - the response to that is that you are an obedient person, you live an obedient life. . . . In a world completely locked up in law Paul now describes obedience as faith, to believe without reference to law whatsoever.

From a talk by Mark Strom on "Paul and the Open Heart" 24/10/2014.

4. Read Rom 1:7.

(a) In what sense are you a "saint"?

(b) What does being a saint mean in terms of our identity?

The entire story of the cosmos is predicated on the idea of God's love and being called to be his distinct people. . . . It's not about being pious but about being **distinct**. This is at the heart of the Old Testament idea too. We are distinct not by our piety but by our allegiance.

From a talk by Mark Strom on "Paul and the Open Heart" 24/10/2014.

5. Read Rom 1:8-17.

(a) Why is Paul going to Rome?

(b) What is the righteousness of God (v17) - to the Jew?

- to the Gentile?

I have taken a different interpretation of the phrase “**righteousness from God**” to that in most of the commentaries. Most take it as “the righteous status that God gives” i.e. justification. However, I think that here the phrase means “the gift of a righteous character, shown in action” i.e. new birth, sanctification.

From The Power of God Unleashed Romans booklet by Kerry Nagel 2010 p 9.

(c) What do you think it means by “**a righteousness that is by faith from first to last**” (NIV) or “the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith” (ESV)?

This slightly puzzling phrase could have a number of possible meanings. It could mean that an act of faithfulness on the part of God – the sending of Jesus to die on the cross – has the result or intention of producing faith in us. It could mean that Christian faith begins with the Old Testament faith and moves to the faith that we placed in Jesus. A number of other options have been suggested, but what is clearly excluded is any idea that being right with God is dependent upon human action. The option that might best reflect this is to reword the literal phrase “from faith to faith” as something describing a righteousness that is ‘completely by faith, with no other contribution from any good thing that we might imagine we have to offer’.

From The Free Gift of Life Romans 1-5 by Gordon Cheng p 11.

### To finish

6. (a) Are you righteous? Why/why not?

(b) What does it mean to live by faith?

## Study 2, Romans 1:18-32

### Getting started

1. What does it mean to have a wilful child?
  
2. What were you like as a child?

### Bible

3. Read Rom 1:18-21.  
(a) Does everybody know God? What about atheists or agnostics?

(b) Why don't some people believe in God?

(c) Read Gen ch 3.  
How is Rom 1:18-21 like Gen 3?

(d) Why is God so angry?

There are degrees to the **knowledge of God**, and these phrases cannot possibly refer to the full knowledge of him enjoyed by those who have been reconciled to him through Christ. For what Paul says here is that through general revelation people can know God's power, deity and glory (not his saving grace through Christ), and that this knowledge is enough not to save them but rather to condemn them, because they do not live up to it. Instead, they *suppress the truth by their wickedness* (v 18), so that they *are without excuse* (v 20). It is against this wilful human rebellion that God's wrath is revealed.

From Romans: Encountering the Gospel's Power by John Stott with Carolyn Nystrom p 15.

4. Read Rom 1:22-32.  
(a) Are we this bad? Who is Paul writing about?

(b) What does it mean when Paul says "God gave them over . . ." (vv 24, 26, 28)?

(c) Is Paul writing about AIDS in v27? Why/why not?

### **God gave them over**

When we hear of God's wrath, we usually think of "thunderbolts from heaven, and earthly cataclysms and flaming majesty," yet here we learn that his anger goes "quietly and invisibly" to work in handing sinners over to themselves (Stephen C. Neill, *The Wrath and Peace of God* [CLS, 1943] p 12f.). God abandons stubborn sinners to their wilful self-centeredness, and the resulting process of moral and spiritual degeneration is to be understood as a judicial act of God. This is the revelation of God's wrath from heaven (v 18).

From Romans: Encountering the Gospel's Power by John Stott with Carolyn Nystrom p 16.

Reverting to the question whether **AIDS** is a divine judgment on practising homosexual men, I think we have to answer "yes and no". "No" because Jesus warned us not to interpret calamities as God's specific judgments upon evil people (Luke 13:1-5). "No" also because AIDS victims include many women, especially faithful married women who have been infected by their unfaithful husbands, with a substantial minority of innocent haemophiliacs and children. But "yes" in the sense that Paul meant when he wrote: "Do not deceive yourselves; no-one makes a fool of God. A person will reap exactly what he sows" (Galatians 6:7 GNB). The fact that we reap what we sow, or that evil actions bring evil consequences, seems to have been written by God into the ordering of his moral world. Christians cannot regard it as an accident, for example, that promiscuity exposes people to venereal diseases, that heavy smoking can lead to lung cancer, excessive alcohol to liver disorders, and overeating (directly or indirectly) to heart conditions. Moreover, this cause-and-effect mechanism is viewed in Scripture as one of the ways in which God's "wrath", that is, his just judgment on evil, is revealed (Romans 1:18-32). Before the day of judgment arrives, Jesus taught, a process of judgment is already taking place (John 3:18-21, 5:24-29). AIDS may rightly be seen, then, as "part of God's judgment on society".

From Issues Facing Christians Today by John Stott pp 353-354.

### **To finish**

5. How much of what people believe is because of their ignorance and how much is an act of the will?

### Study 3, Romans ch 2

## Getting started

1. How do you feel about people who do things by the letter of the law?

## Bible

2. Read Rom 2:1-11.  
The underlying theme of this section is the judgment of God upon self-appointed judges.
- (a) What qualities of God's judgment do vv 1-4 illustrate?
  - (b) What qualities of God's judgment do vv 5-11 illustrate?
  - (c) Why is it dangerous to judge someone else (vv 1-4)?
  - (d) Verse 11 says, "God does not show favouritism". In view of the preceding verses what does this mean?
  - (a) What does it mean when someone says "don't judge me"?
  - (b) How is "judging someone" different to working out what someone is like?
  - (c) How should we treat people without judging them?
3. Read Rom 2:12-29.
- (a) What does Paul mean by "law"?

## Jewish law, Torah

Torah, narrowly conceived, consists of the first five books of the Old Testament, the 'five books of Moses' or 'Pentateuch'. (These contain much law, but also much narrative.) It can also be used for the whole Old Testament scriptures, though strictly these are the 'law, prophets and writings'. In a broader sense, it refers to the whole developing corpus of Jewish legal tradition, written and oral; the oral Torah was initially codified in the Mishnah around AD 200, with wider developments found in the two Talmuds, of Babylon and Jerusalem, codified around AD 400. Many Jews in the time of Jesus and Paul regarded the Torah as being so strongly God-given as to be almost itself, in some sense, divine; some (e.g. Ben Sirach 24) identified it with the figure of

'Wisdom'. Doing what Torah said was not seen as a means of earning God's favour, but rather of expressing gratitude, and as a key badge of Jewish identity.

From Paul for Everyone Romans Part 1: Chapters 1-8 by Tom Wright p 178.

(b) (i) What does it mean by having the law written on your heart (v 15)?

(ii) Is this the same as "circumcision of the heart by the Spirit" (v 29)? Why/why not?

4. If we live by the **law** (any law, it doesn't have to be the Mosaic law) then we either congratulate ourselves when we live up to the law or we condemn ourselves when we break the law. We live in a world where **performance** counts e.g. in education, sport, work and sometimes in relationships. If we fail to perform then it could mean missing out on a reward or getting that reward if we exceed expectations. Sometimes performing means doing better than others so we continually check our performance by comparing ourselves to others.

(a) Would you say these performance standards are like the law that Paul speaks of and that the comparisons we make are like Paul's idea of judging others? Why/why not?

(b) Is these a different way of living? What is it?

### To finish

5. How much of life is about obedience and how much is about character?

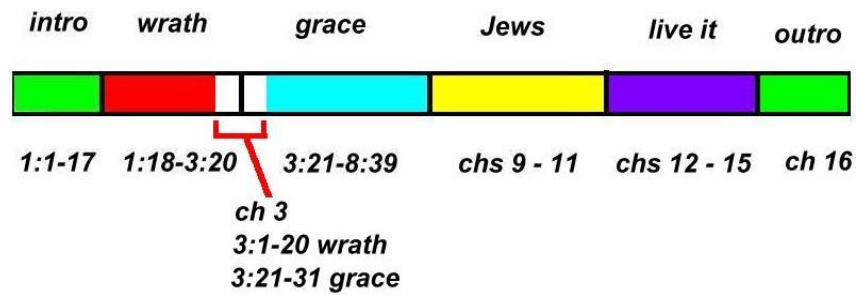
## Study 4, Romans ch 3

### Getting started

1. What is faith?
2. What is faith in Jesus?

### Bible

3. Read Rom 3:1.  
Why would Paul ask about the advantages of being Jewish (see Rom 2:17-29)?
4. Read Rom 3:1-18.  
(a) What *are* the advantages of being a Jew (see also Rom 9:4-5)?  
  
(b) What is some Jews did not have faith would God still save them (v 3)? Why/why not?  
  
(c) If God isn't going to save some of the Jews does that mean God is not faithful to his promises (see Gen 12:1-3)? Why/why not?  
  
(d) Are Jews any better than Gentiles (v 9)? Why/why not?  
  
(e) Are Christians any better than non-Christians? Why/why not?  
  
(f) Should we value Christians more than non-Christians? Why/why not?



5. Read Rom 3:19-31.
- (a) How do we get righteousness?
  - (b) What does the law do?
  - (c) What does faith do?
  - (d) What “faith” is Paul taking about?
  - (e) How does faith uphold the law (v 31)?

### To finish

6. Read Rom 3:23-24.
- (a) Which bits should we focus on now – sin or grace? Give reasons for your answer?
  - (b) How do we do that – focus on sin or focus on grace (depending on your answer to (a))?

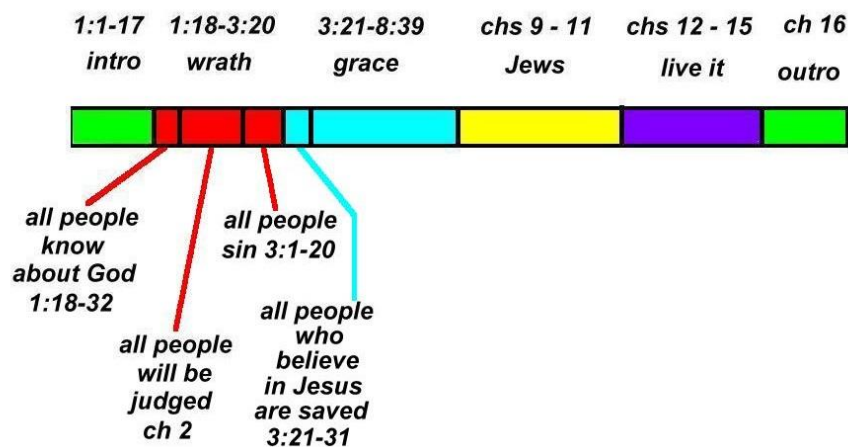
## Study 5, Romans ch 4

### Getting started

1. Have you ever made a promise and then things happened and you wished you had never made that promise? What did you do?

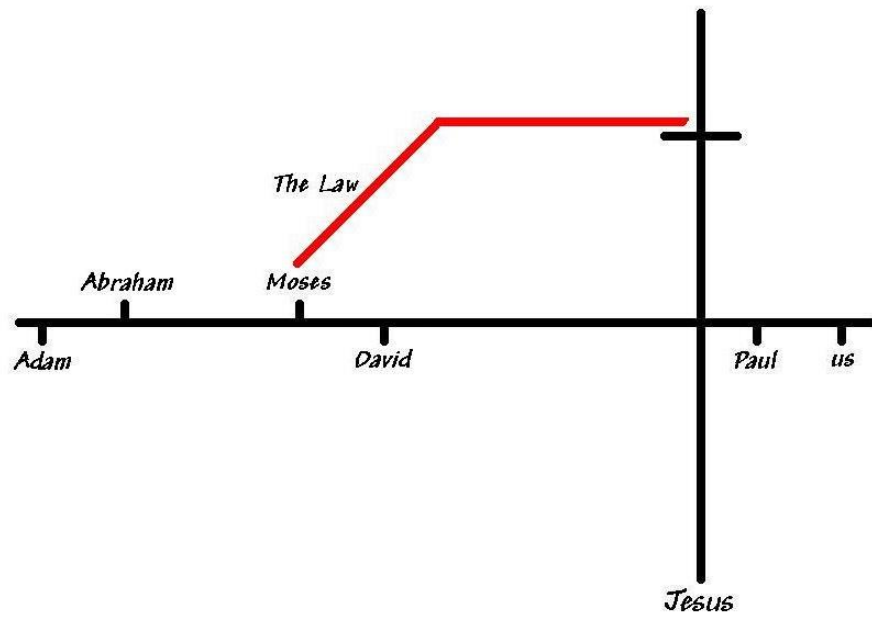
### The story so far . . .

## Romans



### Bible

2. Read Rom 4:1-15.
  - (a) What did Abraham discover (see also Gen 15:1-6)?
  - (b) (i) What did circumcision mean to a Jew in Paul's time (see Gen 17:1-14)?
  - (ii) How would the Jews have felt about Paul's point that Abraham was made righteous without being circumcised (Rom 4:10 and Gen 15:1-6)?
  - (c) What couldn't the law do (v 13)?



(d) When does faith have no value (v 14)?

(e) What happens if there is no law (v 15)?

3. Read Rom 4:16-25.  
How is our faith like Abraham's?

#### To finish

4. If it's all about faith where does law fit in?

## Study 6, Romans ch 5

### Getting started

1. Think of your life before adolescence. Compare what you were like before adolescence with what you were like after adolescence.

### Bible

2. Read Rom 5:1-11.

(a) What argument does Paul refer to prior to reaching the conclusion in Rom 5:1 "Therefore, . . ."?

(b) What are the different ways Paul expresses salvation?

3. Read Rom 5:12-19.

(a) (i) What concept does Paul refer to prior to reaching the conclusion in Rom 5:12 "Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man . . ."?

(ii) What *is* his conclusion?

(b) What is Paul referring to by "the trespass" (v 15, 17, 18)?

(c) What things are attributed to Adam?

(d) What things are attributed to Jesus?

4. Read Rom 5:20-21 and 5:13.

(a) What is Paul saying about law?

(b) What is Paul associating with sin?

(c) What is Paul associating with grace?

You need to keep in mind some of the themes Paul introduces because he builds on these themes e.g. sin, law, justification and righteousness, throughout the letter. Romans was written as a single document rather than a series of bits chopped up and examined as we do in our Bible studies. Reading it from start to finish allows the different themes to develop in our minds.

One theme that is central to Paul's discussion is the "in Adam" versus "in Christ" contrast which begins in Rom 5:12-21. You can set this out like a ledger where things associated with Adam go on one side and things associated with Christ go on the other side.

<b>in Adam</b>		<b>in Christ</b>
sin, death, death reigns (vv 12-14, 17) the trespass (v 15, 17, 18)	>	gift of righteousness (vv 15-17, 18) God's grace (vv 15, 17)
judgement and condemnation (v 16, 18)	>	justification (v 16, 18) life reigns (v 17)
disobedience/sinners (v 19)	>	obedience/righteousness (v 19)
law/sin increased (v 20)	>	grace increased (v 20)
sin reigns in death (v 21)	>	grace reigns, eternal life (v 21)

### **To finish**

5. What does it mean to be "in Adam"?

6. What does it mean to be "in Christ"?

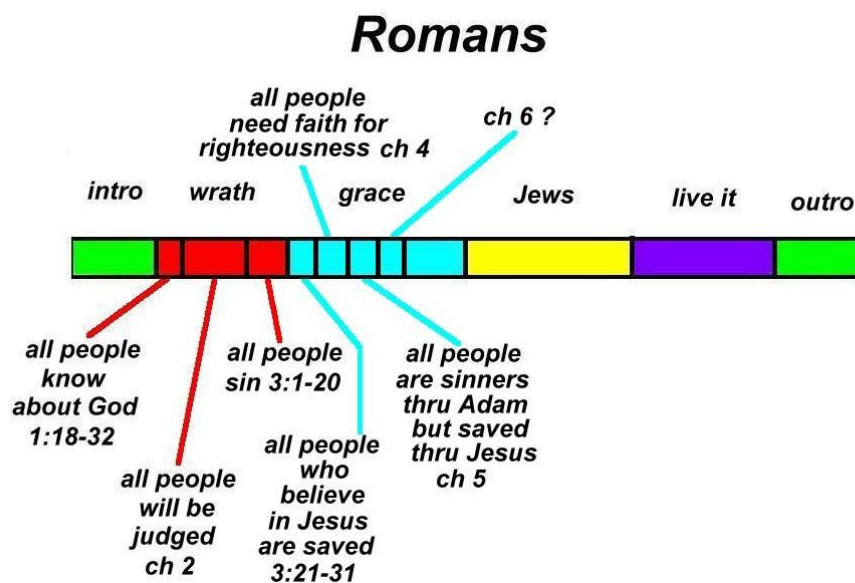
## Study 7, Romans ch 6

## Getting started

1. Do you sin much?
2. How do you feel after you have sinned?
3. What attitudes do Christians have about sin?

bad attitudesright attitudes

## The story so far . . .



## Bible

4. Read Rom 6:1-14.
  - (a) In your own words what is the answer to the question of verse 1?
  - (b) How is baptism a good way of describing what happens when someone becomes a Christian?

(c) What does baptism say about your new identity?

(c) What is Paul saying about being united with Jesus?

(d) How do you stop sin from reigning in you (v 12)?

“The major secret of holy living is in the mind” John Stott.

“Sin remains but it does not reign” Charles Wesley.

“You’re gonna have to serve somebody” Bob Dylan.

5. Read Rom 6:15-23.  
What does being under grace mean for our everyday lives?

### **To finish**

6. What is one deceit that has taken us all in?

7. (a) Do you feel free?

(b) What things do you feel obliged to do?

## Study 8, Romans ch 7

### Getting started

1. Why do you sin?
2. Do you want to sin? Why/why not?

### Bible

4. Read Rom 7:1-4.
  - (a) Who is Paul speaking to (v 1)?
  - (b) What point does Paul make by using the example of marriage?
5. Read Rom 7:4-6.
 

What does Paul say about the law?

The NIV translates the Greek word “sarx” as “**sinful nature**” probably because it has a commitment to conversational English. More literal translations use the word “**flesh**” for “sarx”. Various translations for Rom 7:5 are:

NIV For when we were controlled by the sinful nature, the sinful passions aroused by the law were at work in our bodies, so that we bore fruit for death.

ESV For while we were living in the flesh, our sinful passions, aroused by the law, were at work in our members to bear fruit for death.

NASB For while we were in the flesh, the sinful passions, which were *aroused* by the Law, were at work in the members of our body to bear fruit for death.

Notice the NIV has “we were controlled by the sinful nature” but the Greek is “we were in the flesh” as translated by the NASB. The NIV continues by using “controlled by the sinful nature” as opposed to “serve in the new way of the Spirit” (Rom 7:6). “Controlled by the sinful nature” leads us to thinking we have a sinful nature and a spiritual nature and our sinful nature is bad and makes us do bad things while our spiritual nature is good and lets us do good things and these two natures are at war with each other.

But does Paul want us to think this way when he is actually saying we are “in the flesh” or “in the Spirit”? We talked about being “in Adam” or “in Christ” in Study 6 which was on Rom 5. By summarising we have:

in Adam	in Christ
sin	righteousness
law	grace
death	life
flesh	Spirit

I have added to the ledger by putting “flesh” under “in Adam” and “Spirit” under “in Christ”. Romans ch 6 talks about doing away with the “body of sin” (Rom 6:6, 12, 13) so that there is a similarity between “body of sin” and “flesh”. It’s the same idea as no longer being “in the flesh”.

When Paul mentions “flesh” we should be reminded of all the things that go with being “in Adam”. We can choose to live “in Adam” but our identity has changed (remember our baptism in Rom 6) and we are now in Christ, in the Spirit.

6. Read Rom 7:7-13.  
How are law and sin associated?

7. Read Rom 7:14-20.  
(a) What does Paul want to do?

(b) What does Paul actually do?

We are *not* in the flesh, but in the Spirit (Rom 8:9). But we *can* think, act, and live *as though* we are in the flesh. In other words we can still choose to follow our old head, Adam. It's about choice, not infection. We have a lifetime of thinking and acting from Adam/flesh. That doesn't change overnight. Like any neural 'conversion' experience, some dramatic changes often occur when we come to Christ. Other stuff persists forever unless we encounter and indwell Father, Son and Spirit in transformative ways *through one another*.

From "On Jesus as Attuned to Life, not Good and Evil" by Mark Strom May 2010.

8. What does Rom 7:1-20 teach us about the Holy Spirit?

9. Read Rom 7:21-8:4.  
What can we do about this struggle with sin?

### To finish

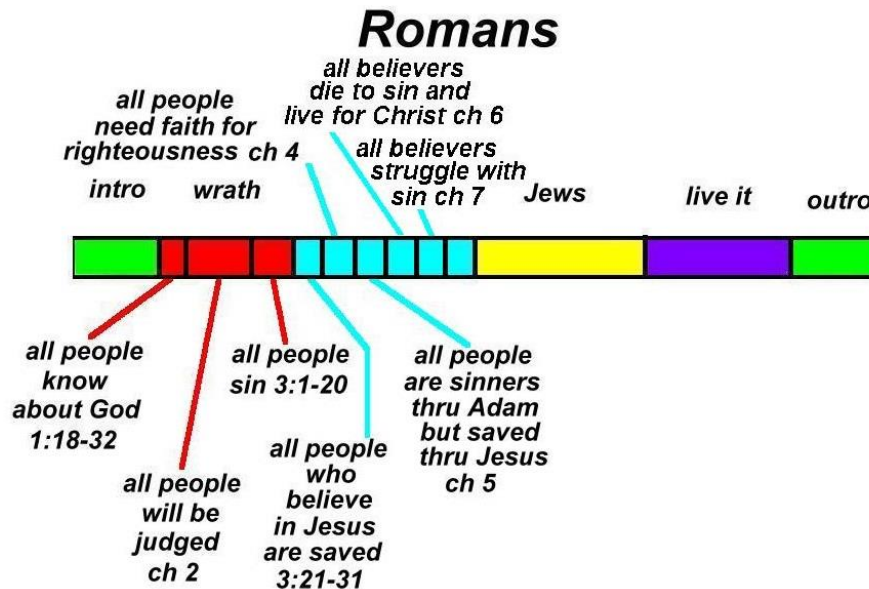
10. What do you get out of being "in Christ"?

## Study 9, Romans 8:1-17

### Getting started

1. What is hard to grasp about the Holy Spirit?

### The story so far . . .



### Bible

2. Read Rom 8:1-4.  
 Note: If your translation reads "sinful mind/nature/man" use "flesh" instead and leave out "controlled by" completely.  
 (a) What point has Paul made prior to reaching the conclusion in Rom 8:1 "Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus"?  
  
 (b) What couldn't the law do?  
  
 (c) How are the righteous requirements of the law fully met (v 4)?
3. Read Rom 8:5-11.  
 Note: In Rom 8:9 the original Greek says "you are not in the flesh but in the spirit".  
 (a) How is the Spirit described?  
  
 (b) What does Paul mean by "life" (vv 6 & 11)?

## 4. Read Rom 8:12-17.

What has Paul been referring to that leads him to “Therefore, brothers, we have an obligation – but it is not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh.” (v 12)?

Our “ledger” becomes:

in Adam	in Christ
sin	righteousness
law	grace
death	life
flesh	Spirit
	God's children
	co-heirs with Christ

The Christian discovers a new identity, picking up Israel's vocation in the Old Testament: **adoption**. When the Holy Spirit comes to dwell in a person's heart, the first sign is that they recognize God as father; this I think, is part of what Paul meant in 5:5 when he spoke of a love for God being poured out in our hearts by the holy spirit. The cry '**Abba, father**' uses the old Aramaic word which Jesus himself had used for God (Mark 14:36). Paul refers to the same cry in Galatians 4:5-6, where again there are powerful echoes of the Exodus story. This time he interprets what is going on in terms of the coming together of the holy spirit with our own spirit.

From Paul for Everyone Romans Part 1: Chapters 1-8 by Tom Wright p 146.

The children of Israel were promised an **inheritance**, namely Canaan. This was already widened dramatically in God's promise to the coming Messiah in Psalm 2:8: 'I will give you the nations as your inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth as your possession.' This in turn is projected back on to the promise to Abraham, as we saw in 4:13: the promise to Abraham and his family, declares Paul, is that they should inherit the *world*. Now, in the passage we are about to reach, we see what this means in fully Christian terms. It means that the whole world, the entire creation, is going to be made over to the Messiah and his people, and with their eventual vindication and resurrection that entire creation will itself be set free from corruption and decay.

From Paul for Everyone Romans Part 1: Chapters 1-8 by Tom Wright p 147.

### To finish

## 5. (a) What does it mean, personally, to have God as our 'Abba'?

(b) What do we get from being co-heirs with Christ?

## Study 10, Romans 8:18-39

### Getting started

1. (a) Have you ever felt very insecure?
- (b) What happened to make you feel so insecure?
- (c) How did you get through it?

### Bible

2. Read Rom 8:18-25.
  - (a) Why is there all this groaning?
  - (b) How will we be involved with the new creation (v 21)?

Can I act contrary to what it means to be like Jesus? Of course I can so I know something of the wider **groaning of the creation** that I'm caught up in. . . . Groaning because I have some sense of what life is meant to be but I experience so often something else. I have some sense of what life is without binary terms – when it's not good or bad, right or wrong, good or evil, included or excluded, whatever. I have these moments when I'm with people and I experience pure joy, pure delight of being in each other's company and doing something, creating something, thinking something, singing something, whatever, together. These marvellous moments say that the world doesn't have to be a repetition on Genesis chapter 3 but I find myself groaning because I don't experience this all the time. What's fascinating is Paul says the wider creation is waiting to be brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God [Rom 8:21]. The text is effectively saying that somehow or other the renewal of creation is bound up with us entering into our full renewal and liberation. I don't know if that's agency – that somehow the liberation and freedom of creation is bound up with God's work through the Holy Spirit leading us into the fullness of glory of the children of God. I can't make the case tightly from the text but it fits well.

From Mark Strom speaking on "Paul and the Open Heart" 24/10/2014.

3. Read Rom 8:26-27.
  - (a) What does the Holy Spirit do?
  - (b) What else have we learnt about the Holy Spirit in Rom 8?

4. Read Rom 8:28-39.  
Watch "Lump" Nooma video.  
(a) What are your first impressions of the video?

(b) Why did the boy hide under the covers?



(c) How does the father handle the situation?

(d) How is this like our heavenly Father?

(e) (i) When the father says "There's a moment when our junk catches up with us, when our sins catch up with us and sometimes it's easier to run upstairs than face the truth". What does he mean by that?

(ii) How does God's love for us, help in that situation?

(iii) What still needs to be resolved?

(f) The father repeats the phrase, "Nothing you can ever do could make God love you less". How does this fit in with Rom 8:28-39?

### To finish

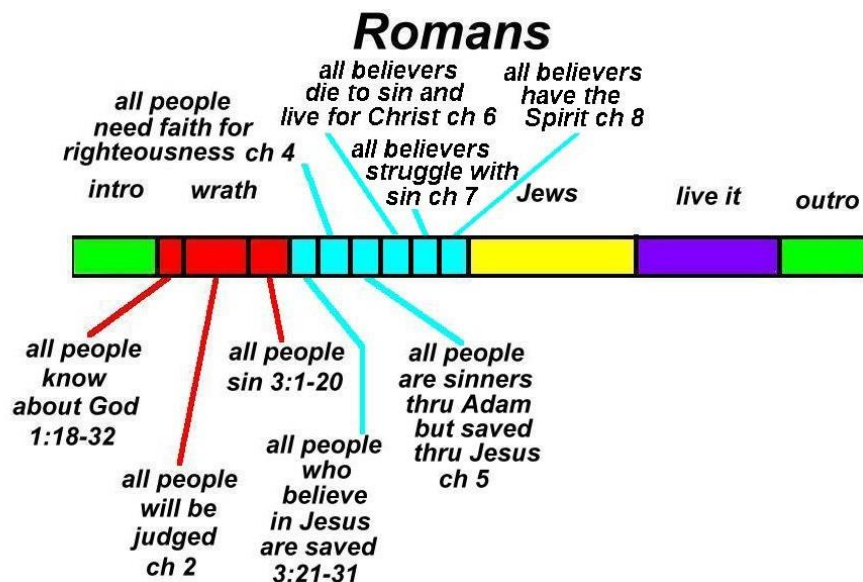
5. What things make you feel secure?

## Study 11, Romans ch 9

### Getting started

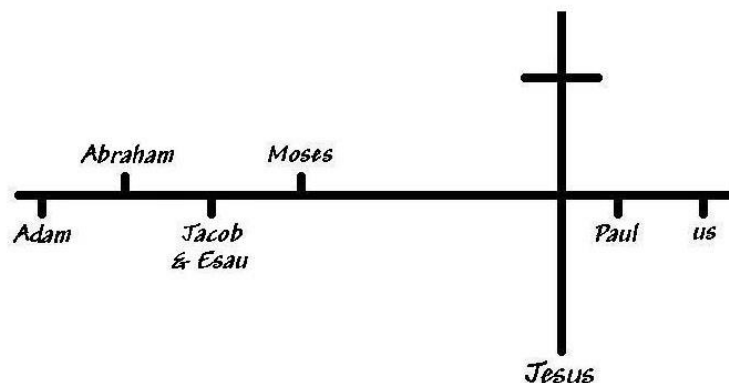
1. Sometimes things go wrong. Sometimes bad things happen to good people (even Christians). But God is in control of all things. Does that mean God is unfair or bad? Why/why not?

### The story so far . . .



### Bible

2. Read Rom 9:5 and Rom 3:1-2.  
What are the advantages of being Jewish?
3. Read Rom 9:6-18.



Abraham – Isaac – Jacob. Jacob had 12 sons and a daughter (Gen chs 29 – 35). God changed Jacob's name to Israel (Gen 32:28) and all of Jacob's sons had families that became the tribes of Israel.

Abraham had two sons, Isaac by his wife Sarah and Ishmael by Sarah's maid Hagar.

Isaac married Rebecca and they had twin sons – Esau (also known as Edom) and Jacob. There was continual tension between the two brothers and the two nations descended from them.

We move from Abraham, Isaac and Jacob to the time of the Exodus from Egypt, with Moses leading the people out despite the opposition of Pharaoh.

(a) What does “not all who are descended from Israel are Israel” (v 6) mean?

(b) Who are the “natural children” and who are the “children of the promise” (v 8)?

(c) (i) Is this passage about predestination/election or mercy? Give reasons for your answer.

(ii) Why would it be a problem for non-Christians if you talk about predestination/election?

4. Read Rom 9:19-33.

(a) (i) If someone is not a Christian because God has not elected or predestined them then why should that person be blamed for not believing in God?

(ii) What argument does Paul use?

(iii) Can you think of a better argument? What is it?

Beginning with **Hosea 2:23 [Rom 9:25]**, the prophet declares to the Israelites that God will receive them back again after rejecting them. They were called ‘not my people’, but now they are to be called ‘my people’. They were called ‘not beloved’, but now God will call them ‘beloved’. Then [Paul] quotes the earlier passage, **Hosea 1:10 [Rom 9:26]**: in the place where you were called ‘not my people’, you will be called ‘sons of the living God’. . . . He is continuing to tell the story of Israel, the story which began with Abraham and the other patriarchs, which continued through the Exodus, and which now reaches the period of the prophets. . . . the prophets themselves promised that God would make Israel pass through a period of judgment in order then to come out into salvation . . .

The quotation from **Isaiah 10:22 [Rom 9:27]** picks up on one of the best-known promises to Abraham (Gen 22:17), that his seed would be like the sand on the seashore. Well, says Isaiah, that may indeed come to pass; the number of Israel’s sons according to the flesh may well grow to that size; but even if they do, only a remnant will be saved. Only some of them will find their way into God’s new age, the time when mercy returns after cataclysmic judgment. Paul adds to his quotation from Isaiah 10 another one, this time from **Isaiah 28:22 [Rom 9:28]**, which insists that the YHWH, the Lord of hosts, will make a complete and decisive judgment on the earth. God must put the world to rights, and when he does so Israel can look for no special favours. What God will do, however, is ensure that a ‘remnant’ is rescued.

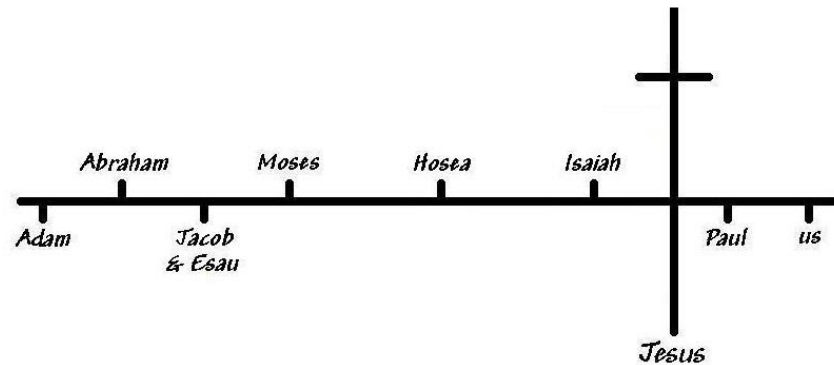
What is this ‘remnant’? . . . Many Jewish groups in Paul’s day took it for granted that, when God finally acted to judge and to save, by no means all ethnic Jews would be among those rescued. Many had rebelled against God and his word, and had appeared to want no part in his salvation. Devout Jews, observing this, picked up on these promises and declared that God was cutting Israel down to size, pruning his people quite drastically. . . .

The final quotation from **Isaiah 1:9 [Rom 9:29]** points in the same direction, and once more ties in to the Abraham story. Sodom and Gomorrah were the cities of the plain, now buried beneath the Dead Sea. They were destroyed in a great act of judgment, while Abraham, whose nephew Lot had gone to live in Sodom, looked on from a distance (Gen 19:27-28). Isaiah looks back to the story and declares that if God hadn’t left them a remnant, Israel as a whole, Abraham’s own family, would have gone the same way. Paul actually changes the word ‘remnant’, used by Isaiah here, to ‘seed’ [‘descendants’ in NIV], in order to tie it in to the discussion of Rom 9:7-8. . . .

In **Isaiah 28:16 [Rom 9:33]** the stone is the foundation of the new Temple that's yet to be built. It looks, in the passage, as though what the prophet has in mind is actually the coming King who will be the human foundation for the great community focused on the Temple. In **Isaiah 8:14 [Rom 9:33]**, however, the prophet declares to God's rebellious people that God will place in front of them a stone that people will stumble over or trip up on. This is part of the judgement that will fall. Even when God does something good, even when he provides for his people, those who are bent on rebellion will find a trap.

But in Isaiah 28, the prophet ends with a promise which Paul applies to both ideas together: anyone who believes in him will not be put to shame.

From Paul for Everyone Romans Part 2: Chapters 9-16 by Tom Wright pp 17-23.



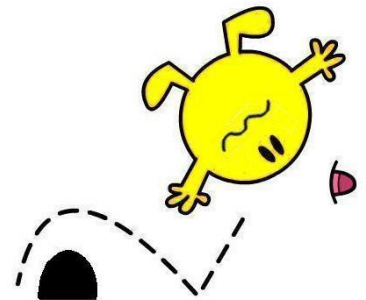
5. Why does God cause people to stumble (Rom 9:32-33)?

[Relating to Rom 9:31-32.] In the Old and New Testaments nobody is thinking if I keep enough laws I will be saved. Instead they are thinking if God is going to act one day (the Day of the Lord) how do you show yourself as one who is faithfully waiting for him to act? And the answer to that was **"keep the law"**. Their idea works itself out as becoming more and more legalistic in tithes etc. and yet they ignore the poor. Jesus' critique of this idea is that they have completely and utterly missed the point.

From Mark Strom speaking on "Paul and the Open Heart" 24/10/2014.

### To finish

6. How do you know if you are included in the 'remnant'?
7. How do you make sure you don't stumble?



## Study 12, Romans ch 10

## Getting started

1. How do people get saved?

## Bible

2. Read Rom 10:1-13.  
What is the righteousness that is by faith (v 6)?

3. (a) What do you *need to do* to be saved?

(b) Why do you need to do those things?

(c) Are these things 'works'? Why/why not?

Deuteronomy 28, 29 and 30 come near the end of Moses' long charge to the Israelites before they enter the promised land. These chapters tell a story of what is going to happen to Israel in the days to come. If Israel keeps God's commandments, God promises blessings; if they don't he warns of curses to come. . . .

But then Deuteronomy 30 has a fresh word, a further promise to which God commits himself (that's the point of a 'covenant'). . . . He promises to transform them, to change their hearts [**Deut 30:14 and Rom 10:8**], so they can at last keep his law the way he always intended. It won't be a matter of people needing to climb to heaven to get at the law; they won't have to go across the sea to find it. It will come and find *them*! Then exile will be over; the curse will be undone; Israel will be saved. . . .

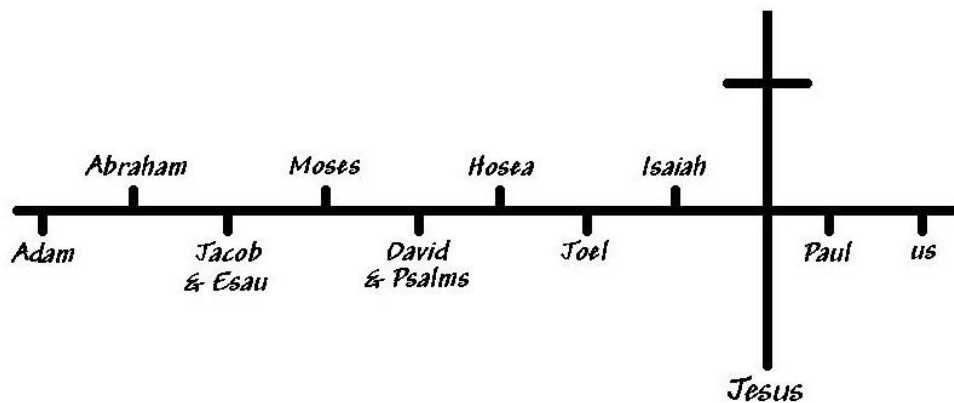
Paul is of course talking about Jesus himself. You don't have to go up to heaven – because the Messiah has already come down to you. You don't have to go down into the depths . . . – because the Messiah has already been raised from the dead. . . .

'Confessing Jesus as Lord' was what people did when getting baptized. . . . in Paul's world 'Lord' was a title for Caesar. Saying Jesus was 'Lord' meant, ultimately, that Caesar wasn't. When Paul quotes from the prophet Joel in verse 13, 'Lord' in that passage refers of course to the 'Lord' of the Old Testament, YHWH, Israel's God. As in several other places, and here looking back to Rom 9:5 in particular, Paul is quite clear that Jesus the Messiah, who died and rose again, was the personal embodiment of Israel's God, coming at last to do what he had always promised. . . .

What counts as the badges in the present of those who will be saved, who will 'not be ashamed', in the future? First, 'believing in him' [**Isaiah 28:16 and Rom 10:11**]; second, 'calling upon the name of the Lord' [**Joel 2:32 and Rom 10:13**].

From Paul for Everyone Romans Part 2: Chapters 9-16 by Tom Wright pp 28-33.

4. Read Rom 10:14-21.  
What has God done to get people to believe in him?



Paul begins with a chain of reasoning intended to show that he and his fellow apostles, in going to the Gentiles with the good news of Jesus, were not being disloyal to the traditions of Israel, but were actually fulfilling them. First he quotes from **Isaiah 52:7 [Rom 10:15]** which Paul and other early Christians saw as a prophecy of Jesus: how beautiful are the feet of the people who bring the good news, the gospel! . . . The point is that the news is so good, so welcome, that those who receive it are like people who want to kiss the person delivering the mail for bringing them such a wonderful message. . . .

Even in the Gentile world, plenty of people have heard this message and haven't believed it. . . . He quotes from **Isaiah 53:1 [Rom 10:16]**, where the prophet is describing the Servant himself: 'Lord, who has believed what we were talking about?' Why some people believe and some don't is a mystery which Paul leaves in the hands of God alone. . . .

Paul surprises us by quoting from Psalm 19 [**Ps 19:4 and Rom 10:18**], a passage about God's hidden yet powerful message going out in all the created order, the message which (as in Rom 1:18-20) all humans hear though not all heed. How Paul puts this revelation of God in all creation together with the more specific message of the gospel isn't clear, though it may be that he is thinking of something like what he says in Colossians 1:23. . . .

Paul now goes back to the 'law', and once again to Deuteronomy in particular. Did Israel know, he asks, that God was about to do such a thing, revealing his salvation to pagan nations (the nations from whose rule Israel longed to be free!) while Israel itself remained in unbelief? . . . God declares that he is going to make Israel 'jealous' [**Deut 32:21 and Rom 10:19**]. . . .

Having anchored his basic point in the law itself, Paul returns to Isaiah to ram home the point . . . those who weren't even looking for salvation from Israel's God have stumbled into it [**Is 65:1 and Rom 10:20**], while those who were only too eager for it are missing out [**Is 65:2 and Rom 10:21**].

From Paul for Everyone Romans Part 2: Chapters 9-16 by Tom Wright pp 36-39.

### To finish

5. (a) How would you decide if someone was a Christian?

(b) Why would you need to make that judgement?

(c) Is it wrong to try to decide if someone is a Christian or not (see Matt 7:1-2)?

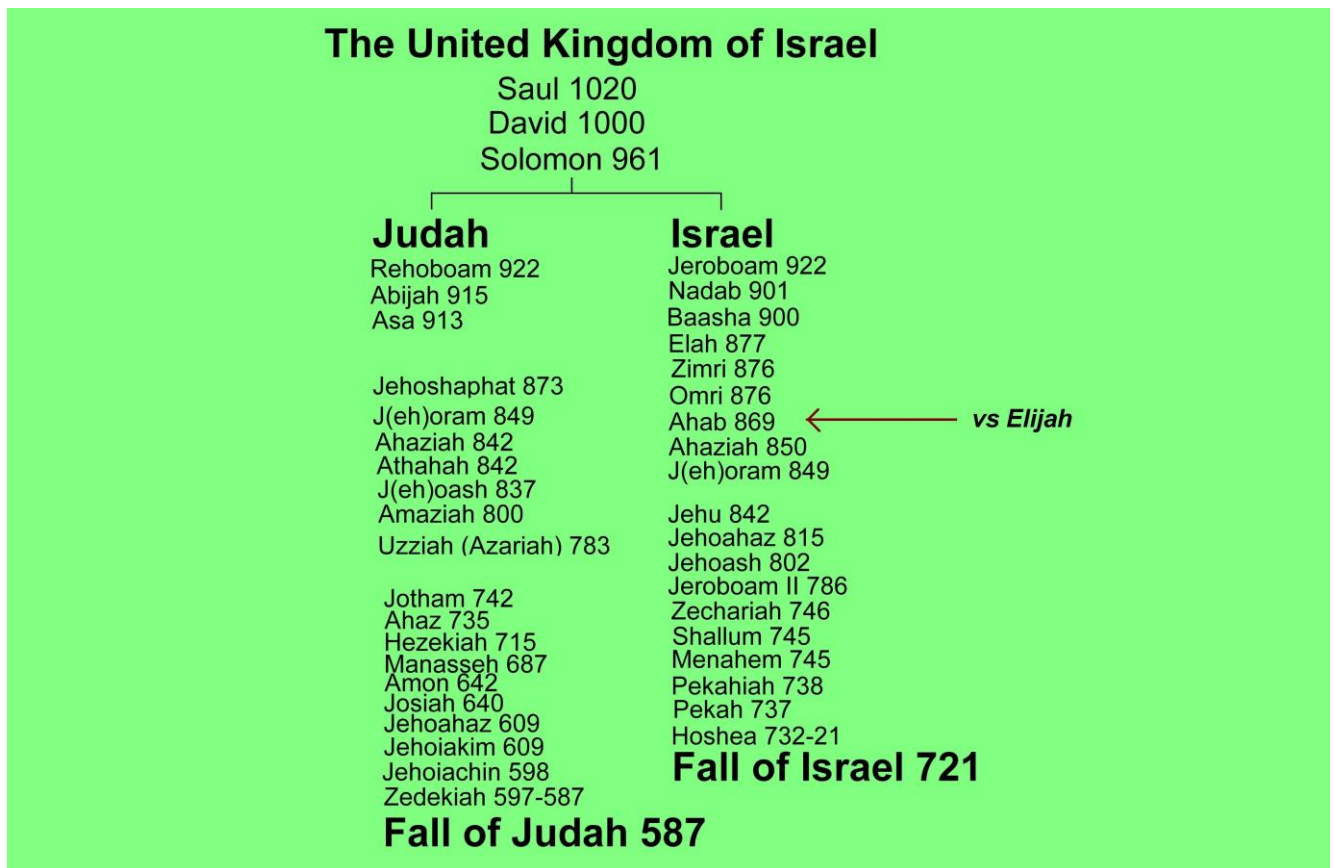
## Study 13, Romans ch 11

### Getting started

1. Have you ever been left out of a team or not received the bonus or promotion you expected? How did you feel?

### Bible

2. Read Rom 11:1-6.  
How does Paul use the example of Elijah (see 1 Kings 18 & 19) to answer the question "Did God reject his people" (v 1)?



3. Read Rom 11:7-10.
  - (a) What did Israel seek to obtain (v 7)?
  - (b) What pictures does Paul use to explain why Israel did not obtain what they sought so earnestly?

## 4. Read Rom 11:11-27.

(a) What emotions would a Jew feel when Gentiles were also becoming God's people?



(b) (i) How do Gentiles feel about coming into the kingdom while some Jews are out?

(ii) What does Paul say they should feel?

(c) Is Paul saying you can lose your salvation (v 22)?

## 5. Read Rom 11:27-36.

How does Paul respond to God's mercy?

**To finish**

## 6. Have you ever experienced rivalry between groups of people or on a one to one basis?

(a) How did you handle it?

(b) What has this chapter in Romans taught us about handling rivalries?

## Study 14, Romans ch 12

### Getting started

1. How conventional are you?

- (a) Do you care about what other people think about you?
- (b) Do you prefer traditional male/female roles?
- (c) How do you feel about religion?
- (d) What is most important when it comes to clothes – comfort, appropriateness or self-expression?
- (e) Are you are worried about Global Warming?
- (f) Do you think success is important?

### Bible

2. Read Rom 12:1-2.

When Paul says **don't be conformed** to this world we usually think of that as don't do the same sinful things that you see happening around you. But, in context, Paul was writing to Rome. Paul is saying don't be conformed to the Roman world: the Roman acts of allegiance to Caesar, Plato's dualism [the idea that the mind and thinking was what was really important and material things were insignificant] and the Roman system of social hierarchy.

From Mark Strom's talk on "Paul" 9/4/2011 at Gospel Conversations.

(a) Considering the paragraph above, what would *not conforming* have meant to Paul's readers?

(b) Looking at our "ledger" (below) which side would be conforming to the world and which side would be not conforming to the world? What does this mean practically?

#### in Adam

sin  
law  
death  
flesh

#### in Christ

righteousness  
grace  
life  
Spirit  
God's children  
co-heirs with Christ

3. Read Rom 12:3-8.

(a) What aspects of the cultural norms does Paul refer to when he says "do not think of yourself more highly than you ought" (v 3)?

(b) What does Paul suggest instead of thinking of yourself more highly than you ought?

(c) How does this passage fit in with the hierarchical structure of church today (see also 1 Cor 12:12-31)?

(d) What are spiritual gifts?

Paul introduces an idea of **gifting** which was a complete novelty for his time. The ancient world thought of gifting as a case where the muse visited someone and drops on them some inspiration but he only drops it on people who are worthy: the gods in their hierarchy pick out someone in our hierarchy and give them a taste of inspiration. What Paul says is dramatically different: every Christian person is gifted. . . .

Paul says you have a ready-made way of explaining who you are: God made you and you are his image and every means you have to amplify the cosmos is God's gift to you. Now that you see how the Greco-Roman patterns have defrauded you and as your mind is re-newed realise this: everything in your life which you have seen blessing or flourishing or how your life has touched another person's life, or your actions have brought in something new – every one of those things now name them as gifts. Don't name them by reference to the law or your ego, name them by reference to the God who gives all these things and realise they were not given just for you, they were given to give. They are graces because they are received as gifts and they are graces because they are meant to grace others.

From Mark Strom's talk on "Paul and the Open Heart" 24/10/2014 at Gospel Conversations.

4. Read Rom 12:9-21.  
How does this passage fit in with being transformed and using your gifts?

### To finish

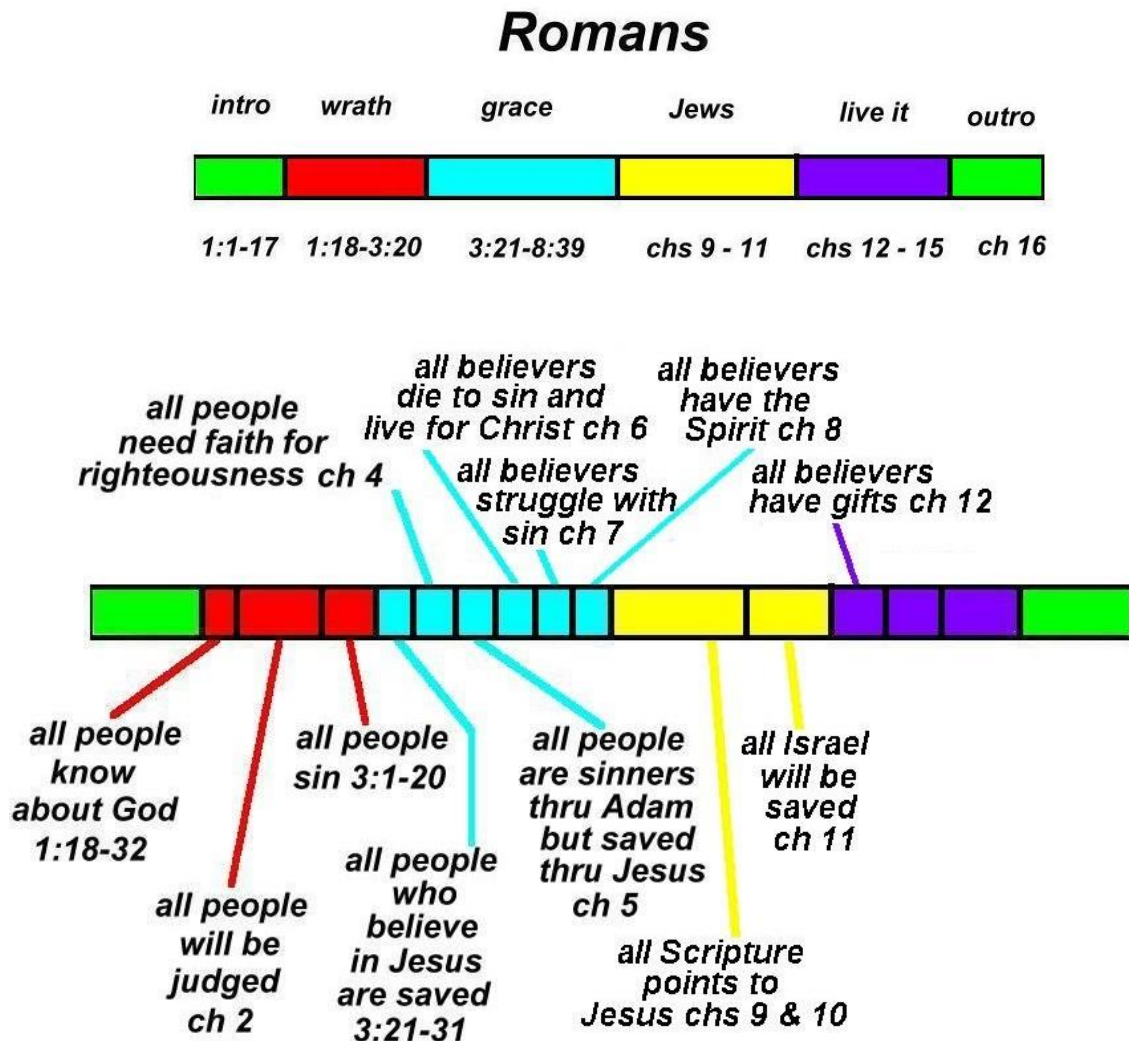
5. What is Paul saying to conventional people?

## Study 15, Romans ch 13

## Getting started

1. Which of these rules should we obey?
  - (a) A woman must wear a hat at church.
  - (b) Eat 3 meals a day.
  - (c) Don't lie.
  - (d) Go to church every week.
  - (e) Don't work on Sundays.
  - (f) Give away 10% of your income.
  - (g) Pray every day.
  - (h) Keep your promises.
  - (i) Love your neighbour as yourself.

## The story so far . . .



## Bible

2. Read Rom 13:1-7.  
Is it ever right to rebel against the governing authority? Why/why not?

Yes, when it does not allow the worship of God (Ex 5:1), when it commands believers to kill innocent lives (Ex 1:15-21), when it commands God's servants to be killed (1 Kings 18:1-4), when it commands believers to worship idols (Dan ch 3), when it commands believers to pray only to a man (Dan ch 6), when it commands believers to worship a man (Rev ch 13), and when it forbids believers to propagate the gospel (Acts 4:17-19).

From a sermon by Mike Paget on Rom 13 at St Barnabas, Broadway, 14/9/2008.

3. Read Rom 13:8-14.  
(a) What has "the present time" (v 11) got to do with loving one another (vv 8-10)?

(b) Can we scrap all the rules in question 1 and just have one rule "love your neighbour as yourself"? Why/why not?

(c) Should we scrap *all* rules except the one rule "love your neighbour as yourself"? Why/why not?

(d) The idea of "flesh" comes up again in v 14. Being "in Christ" is much the same as "clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ". So we have our "ledger" which we got from Rom chs 5, 7 & 8:

in Adam	in Christ
sin	righteousness
law	grace
death	life
flesh	Spirit
	God's children
	co-heirs with Christ

(i) Does this mean we chuck out all rules (law)? Why/why not?

(ii) How does Rom ch 13 explain how we should "clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ"?

## To finish

4. How would you reply to the statement "God has appointed the minister of our church so we must do what he says without question"?

## Study 16, Romans 14:1-15:4

### Getting started

1. Is your faith weak or strong? Give reasons for your answer.

### Bible

2. Read Rom 14:1-4.  
Why is Paul associating eating meat or vegetables with someone's strong or weak faith (see also 1 Cor 10:23-33)?
  
3. Read Rom 14:5-8.  
What is the underlying principle behind Paul's argument?
  
4. Read Rom 14:9-13.
  - (a) What expectations do we have for Christians?
  
  - (b) Do we judge Christians depending on our expectations? Give reasons for your answer.
  
  - (c) Can you see any problems if you were not to make any judgments on other Christians? What problems could you envisage?
  
  - (d) What has Jesus' death and resurrection (v 9) got to do with us judging other Christians?
  
5. Read Rom 14:13-15:4.
  - (a) What do you think Paul means by "destroying your brother" (vv 15 and 20) and causing someone to stumble" (v 20)?

(b) How would you decide when it was time to teach someone who had got it wrong and when to keep silent and do what they do in case you cause them to stumble?

### **To finish**

6. Imagine this scenario: Your friend's parents want you to wear nice clothes all the time because they think it is dishonouring God if you get around in what you consider to be ordinary clothes.

(a) Is this a case of the parents being weak in their faith or is it a case of older people trying to manipulate you into looking the way they think you should look? Give reasons for your answer.

(b) What would you do? Why?

**Study 17, Romans 15:5-33****Getting started**

1. (a) What is unity in the church?
  
- (b) Do we have unity? Why/why not?

**Bible**

2. Read Rom 15:5-13.
  - (a) What could be the cause of disunity in the church Paul is writing to?
  
  - (b) What does Paul mean by unity in his context?
  
  - (c) How does Paul's idea of unity relate to us?
  
3. Read Rom 15:14-22.
  - (a) What is Paul's relationship with the church in Rome (see also Rom 1:13)?
  
  - (b) How is Paul a "minister" (v 16)?
  
  - (c) Who are ministers in our context?
  
  - (d) How are we to "minister"?
  
  - (e) What motivates Paul?
  
  - (f) What motivates us?

4. Read Rom 15:23-33.  
(a) Why is Paul visiting Rome (see also Rom 1:11-13)?

(b) What sort of assistance (v 24) is Paul looking for?

**To finish**

5. (a) What are some reasons for leaving one church to go to another?

(b) Are you breaking the unity of the church if you leave one church and go to another? Why/why not?

(c) What if a minister leaves one church to go to another?

(i) What effect does that have?

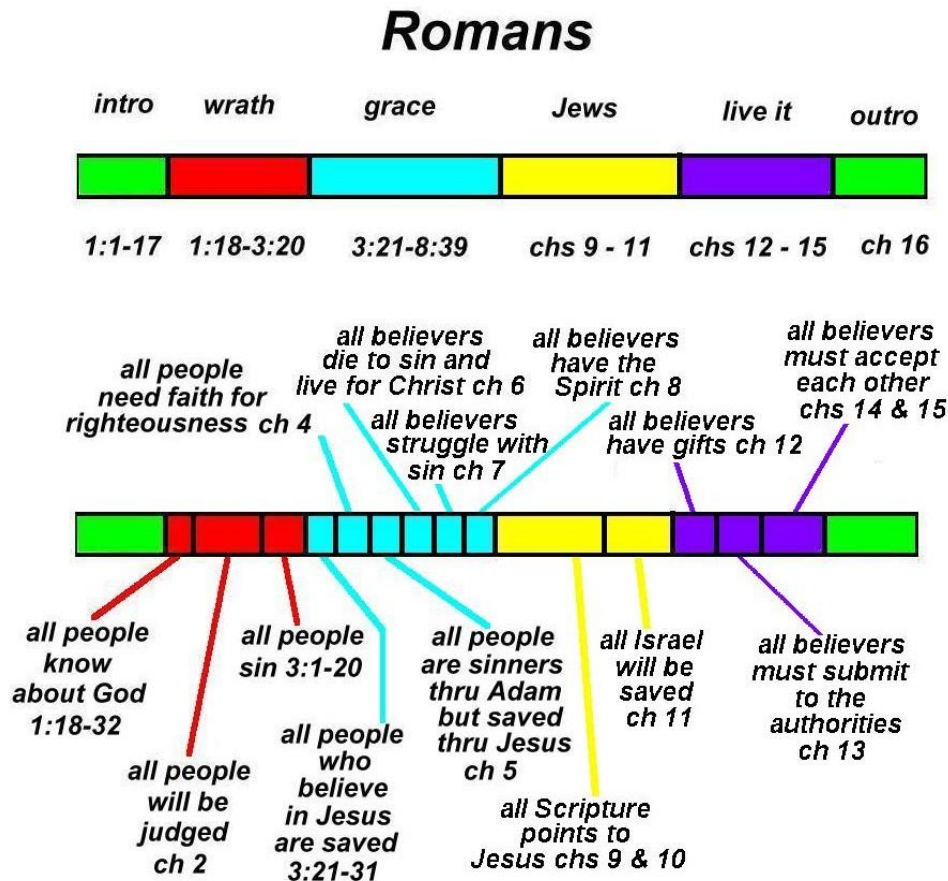
(ii) Is it breaking the unity of the church? Why/why not?

## Study 18, Romans ch 16

## Getting started

1. Can you think of people who were important to you when you were a young Christian? Why were they important?
2. When you hear someone speaking what factors determine whether you believe him or not?

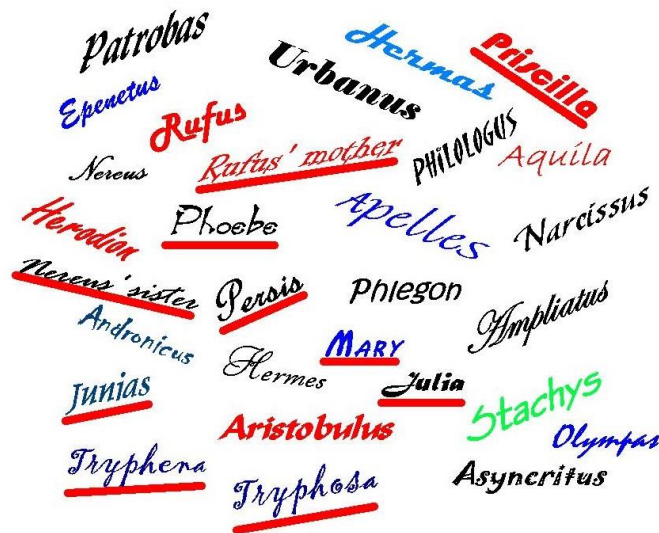
## The story so far . . .



## Bible

3. Read Rom 16:1-16.  
(a) How many of these people are women?

*Patrobas*  
*Epenetus*  
*Rufus*  
*Nereus*  
*Rufus' mother*  
*Philologus*  
*Aquila*  
*Herodion*  
*Phoebe*  
*Apelles*  
*Narcissus*  
*Nereus' sister*  
*Persis*  
*Philegon*  
*Andronicus*  
*MARY*  
*Ampliatius*  
*Junias*  
*Hermes*  
*Julia*  
*Aristobulus*  
*Tryphena*  
*Tryphosa*  
*Stachys*  
*Olympas*  
*Asyncritus*



(b) How does Paul feel about these women?

**Phoebe** (v 1) is described as a “servant” of the church in Cenchrea, near Corinth. She was most likely the person who carried the letter of Romans because of the commendation in verse 1 which would introduce her to the church in Rome. The word translated as “servant” can also be translated as “deaconess”. So besides having the responsibility of carrying Paul’s letter Phoebe also most probably had the role of deacon in her church in Cenchrea. 1 Timothy describes the role of deacons, which were usually men, but from the description of Phoebe they could also be women.

**Priscilla and Aquila** (v 3) are a married couple with Priscilla, the wife, and Aquila, the husband. Before living in Rome Priscilla and Aquila led a church in Ephesus. Priscilla is mentioned 5 out of 6 times in front of Aquila which implies that her leadership was at least as important as Aquila’s.

**Andronicus and Junias** (v 7) were also a married couple, probably, with Andronicus, the husband, and Junias, the wife. They are described as “outstanding among the apostles”. The word “apostle” means “sent one” so the apostles were “sent ones”. Individual churches could send out missionaries to preach the gospel in distant lands e.g. Paul and Barnabas were sent from the church at Antioch (Acts 13:1-3) and both were called apostles (Acts 14:4). Andronicus and Junias were probably sent out from a church and got a reputation for their outstanding work and ended up in Rome. They are another example of a husband and wife team in a leadership role.

4. Read Rom 16:17-20.
  - (a) How do you tell if someone is a fake?

(b) How would you know what false teaching was? What would you compare it with?

5. Read Rom 16:21-27.
 

What has God done for us?

### To finish

6. Have you any thoughts on Romans that you’d like to highlight?