

ROMANS

MMXXII



Group Member Booklet

Romans MMXXII

It is hard to overstate the value of Romans to our New Testament collection, and to the Bible overall. Martin Luther, the fellow who started a worldwide revolution known as the Reformation after he finished reading Romans, said that Romans 3:21-26 is, *“the chief point and very central place...of the whole Bible”*. It is one of the true heavyweight books of Holy Scripture.

But even that is an unfair caricature. For Romans is no lumbering, clumsy monster; it is a brilliant piece of literature, as clever as any coded computer program known to mankind, actually much more clever. And it is beautiful; a masterful script, elegant and rich and running over with ornate detail.

It is brilliant and beautiful chiefly because it tells us the story of the gospel with elaborate and attractive precision. It tells the story of how God might be able to welcome us into his presence and glory, though we are so unattractive and unappealing in our natural state. It describes how the love of God, and the perfect obedience of Jesus, even unto death, combine to deal with our sin without doing us in completely. And how they offer to us all a chance to be declared right with God, through faith, that we cannot receive in any other way.

Of course, it requires effort to get the most out of Romans, like it does with many beautiful and brilliant things. Sometimes you have to dig to get the gold. But any effort expended will pay off abundantly. You might find yourself brought to tears, that your heart is strangely warmed, and that your spirit is steeled as you give yourself to learning this letter. We hope for each of these things, and much more, as we study the Apostle Paul's titanic description of the gospel that we simply know as Romans.

Grace and peace

p.s. studies have been prepared using a variety of source materials, group guides, commentaries, etc.

p.p.s. at the back of this booklet there are materials to help you share the Lord's Supper with your group, if you'd like to do that.

Study Timetable

We've prepared these small group studies to use following the Sunday message. Here's a suggested timetable for their use (but feel free to use them in the way that works best for you).

Sunday Sermon Date	Passage	Mid-week (growth group)	What?
		Leader training session: Wednesday 27 April	
Sun 1 May	Romans 1:1-15	2-5 May	Study 1: Romans 1:1-15
Sun 8 May	Mothers' Day Special	9-12 May	Study 2: What is the Gospel, exactly?
Sun 15 May	Romans 1:16-32	16-19 May	Study 3: Romans 1:16-32
Sun 22 May	Romans 2:1-3:20	23-26 May	Study 4: Romans 2:1-3:20
Sun 29 May	Romans 3:21-31	30 May to 2 June	Study 5: Romans 3:21-31
Sun 5 June	Romans 4:1-25	6-9 June	Study 6: Romans 4:1-25
Sat 12 June	Romans 5:1-11	13-16 June	Study 7: Romans 5:1-11
Sun 19 June	Romans 5:12-21	20-23 June	Study 8: Romans 5:12-21
Sun 26 June	Romans 6:1-23	Catch-up study, dinner, prayer night, Lord's Supper, etc.	
	Winter School Holidays		

Sermon notes: Sunday 1 May

4. Given that most of us are Gentiles (i.e. not Jewish by birth), can we read Paul's words pretty much as if they were written directly to us?

5. Is there anything specific about his relationship to the Roman Christians that you think is noteworthy?

6. Finally, what's the deal with Rome, and did Paul ever get to see these believers? See also Acts 19:17-22, 23:6-11, Romans 15:23-28, Acts 28:28-31.

Pray

Heavenly Father,

We thank you for Romans, which explains in depth the riches of the gospel.

Help us to love you with our minds, by giving our attention to it.

We further thank you for the Apostle Paul, and his service in bringing your gospel to the non-Jewish world, even all the way to us.

We thank you that because of the gospel we can belong to you, and are loved by you.

And we praise you for your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, upon whom all the promises of old centre.

Amen.

Core questions / personal study #1

Read

Romans 1:1-15 then write your initial response below.

Think & write

1. In this opening passage, what do we learn about the author, the recipients and the subject of the letter to the Romans?
2. Given that most of us are Gentiles (i.e. not Jewish by birth), can we read Paul's words pretty much as if they were written directly to us? What is noteworthy in the way he describes (these) Gentile believers?
3. What's the deal with Rome? Did Paul ever meet these believers? See Acts 19:17-22, 23:6-11, 28:28-31 & Romans 15:23-28?

Pray

Heavenly Father,

We thank you for Romans, which explains in depth the riches of the gospel.

Help us to love you with our minds, by giving our attention to it.

We further thank you for the Apostle Paul, and his service in bringing your gospel to the non-Jewish world, even all the way to us.

We thank you that because of the gospel we can belong to you, and are loved by you. And we praise you for your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, upon whom all the promises of old centre.

Amen.

Sermon notes: Sunday 8 May

Study 2: What is the gospel, exactly?¹

Start

If someone says, “I’ve got some good news and some bad news”, which do you want to hear first?

What are some examples of good news you have received or heard lately?

Share any feedback or reflections from Sunday’s message.

Think and talk

1. Last week we read Paul’s basic summary of the gospel: Jesus Christ is (our) Lord. Read 3 passages from either Peter (in Acts), or from John’s Gospel/epistle, and compose a one or two-sentence summary of the gospel based upon those verses.

- Peter: Acts 2:29-39, Acts 3:17-26, Acts 4:8-12
- John 3:16-18, John 3:35-36, 1 John 1:5-2:2

2. Did you notice features in common between Peter’s description, and the description of the gospel from John’s writings? Did you notice any differences? What does this tell you about the gospel?

¹ Based on a study by Anne Graham Lotz:

<https://www.christianitytoday.com/biblestudies/articles/evangelism/031016.html>

3. Read Romans 1:14-16. Why was Paul obligated to declare the gospel (see also 1 Timothy 1:12-16)? Does this inform your sense of obligation to share the good news? Would you describe Paul's attitude to gospel proclamation as inclusive or exclusive?
4. What are some "other gospels" being preached today? How does Jude (the half-brother of Jesus) encourage us to defend the gospel (see Jude 3-4, 17-18)?

Pray

Heavenly Father,

We praise you that Jesus Christ is Lord, in his life, death, resurrection and return.

We praise you that we have received all the blessings of the gospel by our belief in Jesus as Lord.

And we further ask for your guidance and strength to defend the gospel and declare the gospel in wise, careful and creative ways to the world around us.

Amen.

Core questions / personal study #2

Read

Peter's description of the gospel in his speeches from Acts (2:29-39, 3:17-26, 4:8-12) then write your initial response below.

Think & write

1. Compose a one or two-sentence summary of the gospel based upon Peter's description. How does it compare to Paul's description in Romans 1-4? What does this tell you about the gospel?
2. Read Roman 1:14-16. Why was Paul obligated to declare the gospel (see also 1 Timothy 1:12-16)? Does this inform your sense of obligation to share the good news?
3. What are some other gospels being preached today? How does Jude 3-4, 17-18 encourage us to defend the gospel?

Pray

Heavenly Father,

We praise you that Jesus Christ is Lord, in his life, death, resurrection and return.

We praise you that we have received all the blessings of the gospel by our belief in Jesus as Lord.

And we further ask for your guidance and strength to defend the gospel and declare the gospel in wise, careful and creative ways to the world around us.
Amen.

Sermon notes: Sunday 15 May

4. What are the results of rejecting God's witness to himself in creation? How have humans responded instead? See v.21-25.

5. Verses 26 to 28 appear to zero in on homosexuality. Is God, the Apostle Paul, or even this passage, especially against homosexual folks?

6. What does the repeated refrain "God gave them over" reveal about God's wrath? And how does God's wrath connect with the gospel, which is where the passage starts?

Pray

Dear Lord,

We praise you for intervening in our lives through Jesus' life, death and resurrection, at the very moment that we had rejected you and pushed you away.

Forgive us for ways in which we continue to worship and serve created things rather than you as our Creator and Saviour.

Help us to first believe, and then share, the wonderful and powerful gospel which saves everyone who believes.

Amen.

Core questions / personal study #3

Read

Romans 1:16-32 then write your initial response below.

Think & write

1. How would you describe salvation and righteousness in your own words? What does “a righteousness that is by faith from first to last” mean?
2. What happens when humans reject God’s witness to himself in creation? How have humans responded instead? See v.21-25.
3. What does the repeated idea “God gave them over” reveal about God’s wrath? And how does God’s wrath connect with the gospel Paul begins the passage with (in v.16-17)?

Pray

Dear Lord,

We praise you for intervening in our lives through Jesus’ life, death and resurrection, at the very moment that we had rejected you and pushed you away.

Forgive us for ways in which we continue to worship and serve created things rather than you as our Creator and Saviour.

Help us to first believe, and then share, the wonderful and powerful gospel which saves everyone who believes.

Amen.

Sermon notes: Sunday 22 May

Study 4: Romans 2:1-16; 3:9-20

Start

What's your general attitude towards laws: are they strict rules for life or suggestions that mostly apply to other people, or somewhere in between?

Share with the group your recap from Sunday's message.

Read

Romans 2:1-16 and discuss your first thoughts.

Think & talk

1. Describe the person referred to in v.1-5? How might they respond to those described in Romans 1:18-32? And what is Paul's message for them?
2. What do these opening verses reveal about the character of God and what is the point of his patience?
3. In v.6-11, what are the grounds for God's judgment on the day of his wrath? Will anyone be saved on the basis of what they have done?
4. Who is being referenced in v.12-16, and do you think they will be rewarded on the day of God's wrath? What does this mean for us?

Some cutting observations (*The Free Gift of Life*, G Cheng, Matthias Media)

By this stage of the argument, Paul has radically undercut some of the pomposity of those who see themselves as superior to the degenerate sinners of chapter 1. He has reminded his readers that God is perfectly just and fair, and that everyone will be exposed as sinful by his perfect standard of righteousness. But the Jewish sense of privilege rested on more than simply moral behaviour, however far they fell short of the required standard in reality.

The Jews knew that they were privileged simply because they had the law, and so could take pride in being those especially chosen and marked out by their physical circumcision—the cutting away of the male foreskin—and their other legal distinctions such as food laws, ritual cleanliness and temple worship. But as Paul points out in Romans 2:17-29, not even these privileges help the Jews to gain right standing with God, because true Jewishness was never, and will never be, a matter of mere outward observance. It is a matter of inward heart-obedience, wrought by the Spirit of God.

5. Read Romans 3:9-20. How does Paul's quotation of Old Testament Scripture here reinforce the point he is making? And how does each quote help us understand what sin actually means?

6. If the Jewish law didn't leave people on right terms with God, what was the point of it, according to the Apostle? What lessons does that hold for any ethical commands in the New Testament that apply to us today?

Pray

Dear Lord,

You are good, holy and righteous and we are not.

Forgive us for thinking that we're better than others, when we fall so far short of your perfect standards.

Give us soft hearts that neither condemn others, not condone or justify our own sin.

We rest upon your kindness and patience.

Amen.

Core questions / personal study #4

Read

Romans 2:1-16 then write your initial response below.

Think & write

1. Describe the person referred to in v.1-5? How might they respond to those described in Romans 1:18-32? What is Paul's message for them?
2. Describe the person referred to in v.12-16? Do you think they will be rewarded on the day of God's wrath?
3. What do we learn in these verses about God's character? What is the basis for God's judgment on the day of his wrath (v.6-11)? Will anyone be saved on that day? See also Romans 3:9-20.

Pray

Dear Lord,

You are good, holy and righteous and we are not.

Forgive us for thinking that we're better than others, when we fall so far short of your perfect standards.

Give us soft hearts that neither condemn others, not condone or justify our own sin.

We rest upon your kindness and patience.

Amen.

Sermon notes: Sunday 29 May

Study 5: Romans 3:21-31

Start

What is the best gift you've ever received? What is the nicest thing someone has ever done for you?

Read

Romans 3:21-31 and share your opening observations with the group.

Think & talk

1. The word "but" at the start of v.21 signals that Paul is making a major new point. What is it?
2. Verses 24 & 25 add more light and shade to our understanding by introducing the concepts of redemption and sacrifice of atonement. What do these mean?
3. How does the cross of Christ (the shedding of his blood, v.25) demonstrate both God's mercy and his justice?

4. How are these great gifts accessed by Christians? And how does that exclude boasting as Paul claims in v.27-31?

5. How does the righteousness we freely receive from God on account of the life and death of Jesus affect the following:

a. Our sense of worth?

b. Our sense of guilt?

c. Our certainty about the future?

d. Our need to impress God and other people?

Pray

Heavenly Father,

We praise you for your grace in gifting us a righteousness not of our own, but one based upon Jesus' perfect life and sacrificial death.

We also praise you for your justice in not sweeping wrongdoing under the carpet, but dealing with it justly.

And we delight that we are free from our captivity to sin and death, and that you are no longer angry with us.

Amen.

Core questions / personal study #5

Read

Romans 3:21-31 then write your initial response below.

Think & write

1. After arguing that all fall short of the glory of God, what new major point does Paul make in this section? How do the concepts of redemption and sacrifice of atonement deepen our appreciation of Jesus' death?
2. How does the cross of Christ demonstrate both God's mercy and justice?
3. How does the righteousness we receive by faith affect: our sense of worth, our sense of guilt, our certainty about the future and our need to impress God/other?

Pray

Heavenly Father,

We praise you for your grace in gifting us a righteousness not of our own, but one based upon Jesus' perfect life and sacrificial death.

We also praise you for your justice in not sweeping wrongdoing under the carpet, but dealing with it justly.

And we delight that we are free from our captivity to sin and death, and that you are no longer angry with us.

Amen.

Sermon notes: Sunday 5 June

Study 6: Romans 4:1-25

Start

What do you know about Abraham? Why is he often referred to as Father Abraham?

Share your thoughts from Sunday's message.

Read

Romans 4:1-25 and discuss your initial impressions.

Think & talk

- 1. In v.1-5 how does the example of Abraham reinforce Paul's argument in chapter 3? You'll need to read Genesis 15:1-6 as well.**

- 2. How does the quote from David in Psalm 32 (in v.6-8) further reinforce the point?**

- 3. Paul then addresses the question of whether forgiveness & righteousness is only available to the Jews/those under the law/the circumcised? How does Abraham's example show that God's gift is more widely available?**

Core questions / personal study #6

Read

Romans 4:1-25 then write your initial response below.

Think & write

1. How does the example of Abraham reinforce Paul's argument in Romans 3? You'll need to read Genesis 15:1-6 as well.
2. How does this chapter show that the words spoken of Abraham—it was credited to him as righteousness—are also for us?
3. Why do we find it difficult to believe that God justifies us through faith rather than by our own efforts? How does this trap express itself in your life?

Pray

Heavenly Father,
We thank you for your gift of righteousness, which is available to us by faith. Forgive us for believing deep down that we make a contribution to our righteousness, and for the many silly ways that expresses itself. And teach us to follow our father in the faith, Abraham, who trusted your promise and became the father of many nations.
Amen.

Sermon notes: Sunday 12 June

Study 7: Romans 5:1-11

Start

Where do you think is the most peaceful place on earth?

Read

Romans 5:1-11 and share your opening impressions, plus any feedback from Sunday.

Think & talk

1. What does “peace” mean in connection with God and the Bible? Is it different to how we normally use that word?
2. In what ways does this peace look different to worldly peace?
3. Paul moves from peace with God, to the love of God in v.6-8. How do these verses unpack God’s love for us, and our natural situation before him?

Core questions / personal study #7

Read

Romans 5:1-11 then write your initial response below.

Think & write

1. What does peace mean in this passage? Is it different to how we normally use that word?
2. The Apostle Paul moves from peace with God to the love of God in v.6-8. How do these verses describe God's love for us, and our natural position before him?
3. How would you use this passage to counsel a Christian friend who is anxious that they are not right with God?

Pray

Dear Heavenly Father

We praise you for your love which sent your Son to die for us when we were your ungodly enemies.

We thank you that we have peace with you, having been reconciled by Jesus' blood.

We ask that you might increase our hope and allow us to rejoice, even through sufferings, confident of our right standing with you now, and looking forward to our future salvation.

Amen.

Sermon notes: Sunday 19 June

Study 8: Romans 5:12-21

Start

Can you think of decisions that people (parents, politicians, etc.) have made on your behalf which have impacted your life in significant ways?

Are there ways in which you share the looks, likeness or mannerisms of your family?

What did you learn or take away from Sunday's sermon?

Read

Romans 5:12-21 and share your first thoughts.

Think & talk

- 1. As determined individuals we hate the idea that we are impacted by the actions or decisions of others. Why is this? How have we been impacted by Adam's actions?**

- 2. Is there any sense in which being caught up in Adam's sin is fair? Whether we believe it is fair, or conclude that it just *is what it is*, what's the end result of being caught up in Adam?**

- 3. The point of this passage is not only to show that we are caught up in Adam's sin, but to contrast how we might be caught up by Jesus' actions too. What is the free gift Paul mentions in v.15?**

4. From v.15-21 note how Adam’s one action is contrasted to Jesus’ consistent obedience? Why is Christ’s accomplishment greater than Adam’s?

	Adam	Jesus
v.15		
v.16		
v.17		
v.18		
v.19		

5. What role has the (Old Testament) law had in relation to this whole matter?

6. How could you use this passage to respond to a friend who thought they didn’t need God, believing they were good enough on their own? How could you use this passage to respond to someone who thought they could never make up for their sinfulness?

Pray

Dear Lord

We praise you for the obedience of Jesus, which brings righteousness and life to those who trust in him.

We confess that we are by nature infected by sin, and thank you for declaring us to be not guilty.

And we ask that you might keep revealing the sin in our lives, so that we might become more obedient to you.

Amen.

Core questions / personal study #8

Read

Romans 5:12-21 then write your initial response below.

Think & write

1. How have we been impacted by Adam's actions? Why do we hate the idea that we are restricted by the actions/decisions of others?
2. The point of this passage is to not only show that we are caught up in Adam's actions, but to contrast how we might be caught up by Jesus' actions too. How is Adam's action contrasted to Jesus' action?
3. Why does Paul say that Jesus' action is greater than Adam's? How does this passage challenge people who believe they're good enough without God? How does this passage assure people who think they can never make up for their sinfulness?

Pray

Dear Lord

We praise you for the obedience of Jesus, which brings righteousness and life to those who trust in him.

We confess that we are by nature infected by sin, and thank you for declaring us to be not guilty.

And we ask that you might keep revealing the sin in our lives, so that we might become more obedient to you.

Amen.

Sermon notes: Sunday 26 June

Extra material: sharing the Lord's Supper

This extra material is to assist you in sharing in the Lord's Supper together.

Someone will need to make the necessary preparations, to lead the Lord's Supper and to have the supplies of bread and wine (or juice) ready to go.

The words in italics are for the service leader to read out; the bits in bold are for everyone to say/pray.

Read

Romans 5:5-1 or 1 John 19:17-42

Sharing together

1. Introduction

The leader will introduce the Lord's Supper

At the heart of the Christian life is active trust in the Lord Jesus Christ and his sacrificial death for sin.

In this symbolic meal, originating from Jesus' Last Supper with his disciples, we express and strengthen our trust in him, as we eat and drink with our brothers and sisters in Christ.

The Lord's Supper is an outward and visible sign of the grace shown to us in Christ.

As we share bread and wine together, we are invited to feed on him in our hearts by faith with thanksgiving.

We are faced again with God's love for the unworthy and are strengthened by faith in the one whose body was given and whose blood was shed for us.

Let us come then with heartfelt repentance and genuine trust in the Lord Jesus, recognising the significance of sharing in this way.

If in good conscience it would not be right for you to participate, please use this time to reflect on God's love for us in Christ.

2. Prayer of Confession

Allow some time for silent, private confession...

Knowing the goodness of God and the times we fail to respond with love and obedience, let us confess our sins together.

**Heavenly Father,
You have loved us with an everlasting love,
but we have often gone our own way
and rejected your will for our lives.
We are sorry for our sins and turn away from them.
For the sake of your Son who died for us
forgive us, cleanse us, and change us.
By your Holy Spirit enable us to live for you and to please you in every way,
for the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.**

3. Assurance of forgiveness

*God is slow to anger and full of compassion.
He forgives all who humbly repent
and turn to his Son Jesus Christ,
in whom there is no condemnation.*

4. Thanksgiving

**We thank you Heavenly Father for every spiritual blessing in Jesus our Lord,
in whom we have the forgiveness of sins,
the gift of your Spirit and the hope of sharing in your glory.
We who were once far away have been brought near by the blood of your
Son.
He loved us and gave himself for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.
Therefore, we lift our voices to praise you, saying,
Glory be to God in the church and in Christ Jesus
throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.**

5. Words of Institution

We thank you, Father, that on the night before he died, Jesus took bread, and when he had given you thanks, he broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying,

'Take and eat. This is my body given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.'
After the meal, he took the cup, and again giving you thanks, he gave it to his disciples, saying, 'Drink from this, all of you. This is my blood of the new covenant, which is shed for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.'

Therefore Father, we thank you for these gifts of bread and wine, and pray that we who eat and drink them, in the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, believing our Saviour's word, may be partakers of his body and blood.

To Jesus Christ who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

6. Sharing the Supper

The service leader might say these words for every person sharing in the supper, or each person might say them to the person next to them as the bread and wine are shared around the group.

- 1. With the bread: Take and eat this, remembering that Christ died for you, and feed on him in your heart by faith, with thanksgiving. Amen.*
- 2. With the wine/juice: Drink this, remembering that Christ's blood was shed for you, and be thankful. Amen.*

7. The Lord's Prayer

**Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done on earth as in heaven.**

Give us today our daily bread.

**Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.**

**Lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.**

For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours, now and for ever. Amen.

8. Conclusion

Father of all, we give you thanks and praise that when we were still far off you met us in your Son and brought us home.

Dying and living, he declared your love, gave us grace, and opened the gate of glory.

May we who share Christ's body live his risen life; we who drink his cup bring life to others; we whom the Spirit lights give light to the world.

Keep us in this hope that we have grasped;

so we and all your children shall be free,

and the whole earth live to praise your name. Amen.

9. The Grace

The Grace is not a prayer to God but a blessing that should be said to one another.

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ

And the love of God

And the fellowship of the Holy Spirit

Be with us all, forevermore. Amen.

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