

Books of the Bible Summer Series

Letter to the Romans

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6-18-23 Father's Day

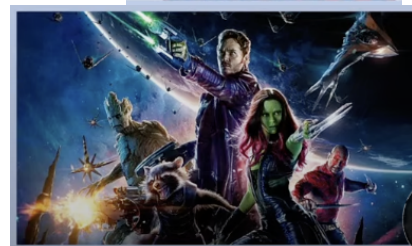
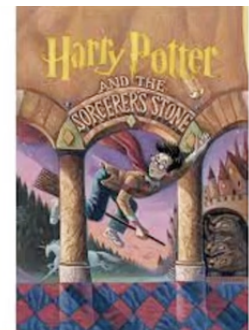
I've got my "Best Dad Bluey" sticker today!

We are in the Book of Romans today! Romans is the second longest New Testament letter next to I Corinthians (which is next week!). My wife likes to describe this letter as a full meal with steak and potatoes. This is a favorite book of many Christians; there are many quotable verses from this book. Even this morning, Michael gave the call to worship, "Grace, mercy and peace be to you from God our father and the Lord Jesus Christ" which is from Romans.

Introduction: First, let's talk about **family** because we are created for relationships, to be in relationship with others. In the garden, God created people to be in relationship with Him. Even though this is broken by sin, we still have a longing for relationship and this longing is found throughout our culture:

Examples:

- ***Fast and the Furious*** (or one of its 9 sequels): The leader, Dominic is all about family. His buddies and his family are all around him. There are FBI agents who try to infiltrate the group who steals DVD players and the climax is when an FBI agent must decide if he will betray his "family."
- ***Harry Potter***, the biggest book series of the past 30 years, is book and movie series about an abused and neglected boy who finds a secret family of people who have magical powers. He becomes famous and wealthy; the whole series is about Harry finding family and belonging somewhere.
- ***Guardians of the Galaxy***: A movie about people who are friends and everyone else is against them. By the end, everyone is friends and a family. They fail to beat the bad guy but the tree guy draws them all together and says "We are groot."



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We all long for friends and family who will stand by our side; we want to be “family.” Jesus also does this: he draws us in from different places, despite our family backgrounds. Sometimes we are in relationship with people we don’t even like but we are together in relationship as a family. This is, in my opinion, ultimately what the book of Romans is about.

Author: Paul *dictated* this book to Tertullus (who writes his own greetings at the end of this book). Paul was a servant of Jesus who formerly persecuted the early church and tried to wipe them out. He has an encounter with Jesus on the road to Damascus and is struck blind, healed, and called by Jesus to be His messenger. Paul goes all over the known world encompassing Greece and Rome, spreading the gospel to (particularly) Gentiles (people who are not Jewish).

When: This was written slightly before the Book of Acts ends. Paul wants to go to Jerusalem to take money to the poor. He says he wants to go to Spain after this but instead is arrested in Rome. This was written during this time.

Problem: There are two groups: those Jews who believe Jesus was the Messiah and believers who are not Jewish and have completely different backgrounds. The Jewish believers thought that all believers should continue following the Law of Moses including food restrictions and circumcision. But the Gentiles didn’t think they needed to follow these laws. How can they resolve this? Paul wanted **unity** in the church and he wanted them all to be a family together.

Let’s outline this book:

Chapt 1:1-17 Greeting; why Paul is writing this book.

1 Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle and set apart for the gospel of God—
16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile.

Verse 16 is a key theme included in the greeting. This is Paul’s concern: that the church be for everyone who believes through faith, not through the law. This is what he builds on for the rest of the book.

Chapt 1:18-17 Sin and Righteousness. Sin draws us away from God and breaks the world. Righteousness belongs to God and when we are made right or justified, sin is healed and we are in relationship again with God.

Look also at **Rom 3:9-11:**

9 What shall we conclude then? Do we have any advantage? Not at all! For we have already made the charge that Jews and Gentiles alike are all under the power of sin. **10** As it is written: “There is no one righteous, not even one;
11 there is no one who understands;
there is no one who seeks God.

And then skip to **Rom 3:21-22**

21 But now apart from the law the righteousness of God has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. **22** This righteousness is given through faith in^[h] Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference between Jew and Gentile, **23** for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, **24** and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.

This lays out again that it is not about being Jewish, it is about faith in Christ. Even if you live under the law, you are still broken because the law highlights your sin even more! But all can be in relationship with God through Jesus.

Chapters 5-8 Life through Christ: The meat of the book:

Chapters 5-7 Life Through Christ

Rom 5:17 For if, by the trespass of the one man, death reigned through that one man, how much more will those who receive God’s abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ!

Rom 6:22 But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the benefit you reap leads to holiness, and the result is eternal life. **23** For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in^[h] Christ Jesus our Lord.

He is saying, You are in sin, you believe in Christ but you still sin and do things that break relationships with God. you are not getting it right! Chapter 7 gives a clear picture of this:

Rom 7:4 We know that the law is spiritual; but I am unspiritual, sold as a slave to sin. **15** I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. **16** And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good. **17** As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me. **18** For I know that good itself does not dwell in me, that is, in my sinful nature.^[g] For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. **19** For I do not do the good I want to do, but the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing. **20** Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it.

He is saying that we have life through Christ yet we still sin. Why? If 'm in Christ, why do I keep doing these things?

Chapter 8 is the apex of the book which tells us it is all about living through the Spirit.

Rom 3:31 What, then, shall we say in response to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? **32** He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? **33** Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. **34** Who then is the one who condemns? No one. Christ Jesus who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us. **35** Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? **36** As it is written:

“For your sake we face death all day long;
we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.”

37 No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. **38** For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons,^[k] neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, **39** neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Amen! This is what Paul is saying in Romans: We have life through Christ but we keep on sinning. We judge others and ourselves because of this. But we have life in the Spirit through Christ and we continue to move towards him day by day because this is what the Spirit longs for in our lives. It matters what we do but Christ has already won: we can't earn it or lose it (vs. 39).

Chapters 9-11: Paul longs for Israel to believe. He acknowledges what they have done but that they are like a cultivated olive tree in which Jesus has broken off the branches which don't produce fruit and instead grafted in wild olive shoots. In **Chapter 11**, he wants the broken branches to be grafted back in:

Rom 11:28 As far as the gospel is concerned, they (Israel) are enemies for your sake; but as far as election is concerned, they are loved on account of the patriarchs, **29** for God's gifts and his call are irrevocable. **30** Just as you who were at one time disobedient to God have now received mercy as a result of their disobedience, **31** so they too have now become disobedient in order that they too may now^[k] receive mercy as a result of God's mercy to you. **32** For God has bound everyone over to disobedience so that he may have mercy on them all.

He says Israel has fallen away and broken off so that Christ might save the world and draw in the Gentiles, those outside of the sheep pen. But these promises are forever and God will call Israel back one day.

What do we do with all this? **Ch 1-11 is theology:** who God is, who we are, what God has done, Who the Jews and Gentiles are and how it all works.

Chapt 12-13 How Should We Live? Chapt 12 starts with “Therefore” (must find out what therefore is there for!).

Rom 12:1 Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. **2** Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

Offer yourselves to God, don't conform to the pattern of the world and live the way the culture around us lives, but renewed in your minds. A speaker I listened to once just preached on just this concept but he never read the rest of the verse which tells us to be renewed in our mind, the way that I think about the world, my brothers, the people sitting next to me so that I can test what God’s will is. We’ll come back to this!

Chapt 15 to End: Say “Hi.” Paul asks for a long list of people to be greeted. Paul knows these people and knows their stories.

At the end of the book is a beautiful poem to close out the book:

25 Now to him who is able to establish you in accordance with my gospel, the message I proclaim about Jesus Christ, in keeping with the revelation of the mystery hidden for long ages past, **26** but now revealed and made known through the prophetic writings by the command of the eternal God, so that all the Gentiles might come to the obedience that comes from faith— **27** to the only wise God be glory forever through Jesus Christ! Amen.

This is how Romans ends; Let’s go back to the idea of family:

Consider some questions:

1. ***How are we part of the family?*** God is righteous, the only one who is righteous, and we are in sin with a broken relationship with God. Being justified means to make it right with a straight line, to be aligned with God and have our sin forgiven. It’s in this justification through faith in Jesus that we are invited into God’s family. This means for us that:

- a. **We have authority** and we are his heirs (we have been given sonship); we are not like neighbors but we are his sons which gives us authority
- b. **We are called to live in unity and be in relationship with one another.** For example, Jews and Gentiles must live in relationship together. We aren't going to condemn one another about what we eat or not eat: relationships are the focus.
- c. **We are all wild olive shoots:** We aren't Jewish believers. We are Gentiles who have been brought into the family. Pay attention to the passage that talks about wild olive shoots. What should we do as members of this family: Let's look closely at a passage in **Chapter 12.**

Rom 12:9 Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. **10** Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves. **11** Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord. **12** Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. **13** Share with the Lord's people who are in need. Practice hospitality.

14 Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. **15** Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn. **16** Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position.^[a] Do not be conceited.

17 Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everyone. **18** If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. **19** Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay,"^[b] says the Lord. **20** On the contrary:

"If your enemy is hungry, feed him;
if he is thirsty, give him something to drink.
In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head."^[c]

21 Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

This is life in the Spirit! This living in the family of God: these are the family rules! The person you are mad at, the one you have been holding a grudge against: what does it look like to love them and not take revenge, overcoming evil with good? This is who we are, what Jesus has done and how we are called to live.

Note: Understand that Romans is a letter. We have taken it apart and highlighted certain parts. Some of you have even studied this verse by verse for months. But those who

carried this letter to the Romans didn't read it slowly over months: they read it outloud in front of everyone. We should do this: read it as fast as you can without pausing over all its various parts. Try doing this soon: read it start to finish out loud to your family or roommates.