

JUSICE  
PEACE  
HOPE

THE LETTER TO THE ROMANS 9-16

Bible Studies prepared by Chris Jolliffe

# Justice Peace Hope (Part 2)

## Romans 9-16

Most Christians are familiar with Romans 1-8, where Paul sets out the length and breadth of the gospel: from the charge that Jews and Gentiles are all alike under sin (chs 1-3:20), to the breathtaking news that 'now a righteousness from God has been known, apart from the law', which comes 'through faith to all who believe', a righteousness won for us by Christ but credited to us through faith, not works (ch 4). Christ's righteousness gives us assurance and ultimate confidence (ch5), and our union with him helps us in our ongoing struggle with sin (chapter 6-8:17). These studies reopen with the confident boast that 'if God is for us, who can be against us?' (Rom 8:31) as we live in hope for the Day of Christ.

Yet whilst many Christians are familiar with chapters 1-8, we often puzzle over chapters 9-16 - particularly those chapters which seem to speak of Israel (chs 9-11), and then Paul's mission (15.14-16.27). We puzzle over them because we struggle to see the common thread that weaves throughout the letter. But if we were to search for it, we'd see that the reason Paul wrote *Romans* was because he wanted the Christians in Rome to partner with him in his missionary work, and because he wanted them to live in harmony with one another as Jews and Gentiles 'united in Christ'. To do this, he has to set forth the gospel that declares all equally sinful before God, but all fully righteous in Christ, because of his death, and all able to deal with sin because of Christ's Spirit of righteousness 'at work within our members'. Paul knows that only a church which is deeply soaked in the reality of justification (chapters 1-4), and convinced of the ministry of the Spirit in the lives of believers (chapters 5-8), and who is wise about the sovereignty of God in conversion (chapters 9-11), will be a church that is shaped by God's grace in their inward face to one another, and their outward face to their world (chapters 12-16).

Christians need to be ever shaped by God’s overwhelming grace. It is the grace of God to us in Christ that forms us as a people from many nations, united in Him. It is by being shaped by God’s grace that we know how to relate internally to one another, and then in our outward face to the rest of the people of the world. Expect for God to shape us. May God keep overwhelming you with his grace.

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<sup>1</sup> (most of the questions from the following studies have come from Christopher Ash’s commentary Teaching Romans (volume 2), which I have found to be excellent).

## **Study 1 - Romans 9:1-29**

### **Let God be God**

*(Prior reading: Genesis 15-21, and Exodus 32-34. Leaders should prepare a brief summary in their own words)*

#### **Reflect**

- What is God's role in salvation?
  
- Is there anything offensive to you in this?

*Pray for God to help you understand.*

*Read Romans 9:1-29*

#### **To clarify understanding**

1. How does Paul make it clear that his grief is very deep (vv 1,2)?
  
2. What is it that grieves him so deeply (v3)?
  
3. List the privileges of Paul's fellow Jews (v4,5).
  
4. Why does Paul say that Christ comes from them, rather than belongs to them (as the other privileges) (v5)?
  
5. What does Paul mean by claiming that God's word had not failed? What word? Why might people think it had failed? (v6a)?

6. Put verse 6b into your own words.
  
7. Recall Genesis 15-21. How does the example of Isaac and Ishmael support Paul's point (v10-13)?
  
8. Recall Exodus 32-34. How does the quotation in verse 15 develop Paul's point (vv14-16)?
  
9. Why was Pharaoh raised up and hardened as king of Egypt (vv17-18)?
  
10. How does Paul answer the objection that people can't help being hardened (vv19-21)?
  
11. Why did God overcome Pharaoh so slowly and patiently, and how is this same purpose of God being seen today (vv 22-29)?

**To encourage an honest response**

1. In what ways can we be religious without being genuinely Christian?
  
2. How much does it grieve us when we see unbelief in members of our family, our neighbours, work colleagues etc.?



## **Study 2 - Romans 9:30-10:21**

### **The Way of Salvation**

#### **Reflect**

- What happens to those who have never heard the gospel?
  
- What are you assuming about God in your answer? What are you assuming about those who haven't heard?

*Pray for God to help you understand*

*Read Romans 9:30-10:21*

#### **To clarify understanding**

1. What surprising contrasts are there in 9:30, 31?
  
2. Who is the 'stone' (9:32,33)? How does his 'being in Zion' help us to understand?
  
3. What does it mean to 'stumble over the stumbling stone' (9:32-33)?
  
4. Why does Paul think it is worth praying for the Israelites (10:1)?
  
5. What is the difference between trying to establish our own righteousness and submitting to God's righteousness (10:2-4)? Who is God's righteousness, and how does the connection with 9:32,33 help us understand this?
  
6. What does Moses mean by Leviticus 18:5 (quoted in 10:5)?

7. Read Deuteronomy 30:11-14 (and also the whole of Moses' sermon in Deut. 29:2-30:20).
  - a) What do you think Moses meant by telling them they could do the law?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  - b) How does Paul help us understand the full meaning of what Moses had said (10:6-10)?
  
8. What is Paul's main emphasis in 10:11-13?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
9. What is the logic of 10:14,15?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
10. What do we learn about different responses to the preaching of Christ in 10:16-21?

**To encourage an honest response**

1. In what ways do we begin to treat a relationship with God as a matter of our own initiative? Why does this appeal to our pride?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. How does it help us to understand the safety that comes from submitting to Jesus the King?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. What kind of excuses do we make for not doing what the Bible teaches, and how does the passage 10:6-10 undermine our excuses?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
4. What will it mean for us really to grasp that the word of Christ can bring rescue to anyone?

*Pray*

## **Study 3 - Romans 11**

### **God's Kindness and Sternness**

#### **Reflect**

- What relevance (if any) does Israel have for us today?

*Pray for God to help you understand*

*Read Romans 11*

#### **To clarify understanding**

1. Why is the problem addressed in verse 1 the same as the problem addressed in 9:6? Put it in your own words.
2. How does the example of Paul begin to answer the question of verse 1?
3. How do the verses about Elijah help us to understand about Jews who will become real believers in Christ (vv2-6)?
4. How is the division within the Jews described in verse 7?
5. Who does the hardening, according to the quotations in verses 7-10?
6. What is the surprise of verse 11?
7. According to verses 11-15, how will it be that more of the Jews come to faith in Christ? Look carefully at the processes Paul describes, and look back also at 10:19.
8. Why should some of the Jews become envious? (v14)

9. How are Gentiles grafted in to the olive tree that represents the people of God (vv16-20)?
  
10. Why does becoming proud place someone in danger of being cut off from the people of God (vv20-24)?
  
11. How do the processes Paul describes in verses 25-32 parallel the processes he describes in verses 11-15?
  
12. What is it that has made Paul so very thrilled about God at the end (vv33-36)?

**To encourage an honest response**

1. Think of people you know who have had some of the privileges of being taught the Bible, a Christian family, or belonging to a church, but are now hardened against Christ. In what ways do we get used to their unbelief, and cease to really grieve over it? Why do we get used to it?
  
2. How can this chapter help us not to give up on them?
  
3. In what ways have you seen the beauty of grace in the lives of others? How can we live together as Christians to show this attractive kindness of God?
  
4. In what ways do we get used to enjoying the privileges of grace, and begin to think we deserve them (a bit)? How does this chapter warn us against this kind of complacency or presumption?

*Pray*

## Study 4 - Romans 12

### The shape of genuine love

#### Reflect

- 'Love' can mean anything, and nothing. What does sincere love between Christians look like?

*Pray for God to help you understand*

*Read Romans 12*

#### To clarify understanding

1. (12.1) What has Paul taught about the kindness and mercy of God earlier in the letter (see especially 3:21-26, 5:1-11, 9:6-29, 11:30-32)<sup>2</sup> ? Try to sum this up in your own words.
2. What is true worship (12:1)?
3. What does a transformed mind really want to do (12:2)?
4. How ought we to think of ourselves, under grace (12:3-5)?
5. What seven examples does Paul give of gifts (12:6-8)?
6. What theme brackets 12:9-21 (look at v9, v21, and also v17)?
7. Which of 12:9-21 seem to apply to how we behave in church, and which might refer to how we relate to those outside of the church?

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<sup>2</sup> If you're leading a group, divide these passages amongst members of the group, and give them 3 minutes to read, and give 2-3 points about God's kindness and mercy from each passage.

8. What picture does Paul paint in 12:9-21 of a church shaped by grace?

**To encourage an honest response**

1. How might we be tempted to use our gifts to achieve something different from the purposes for which they were given (e.g. teaching, but aiming to achieve some other goal than people learning)?
2. In what ways is the church in 12:9-21 counter-cultural? Look carefully and ask whether we show these counter-cultural ways of behaving. If not, how can we encourage one another to do so?
3. Can you think of examples of non-Christians taking notice of Christians because of any of the loving and good behaviours described in 12:9-21?

*Pray*

## **Study 5 - Romans 13**

### **The reasons for genuine love**

#### **Reflect**

- What debt to we have to our government? What debt do we have to one another?

*Pray for God to help you understand*

*Read Romans 13*

#### **To clarify understanding**

1. What is the main positive point Paul teaches in 13:1-7, and what are the main reasons he gives?
2. Why does Paul say we should love our fellow human beings (13:8-10)?
3. What ought we to understand about the time in which we live (13:11, 12a)?
4. How ought we to respond to living in this time (13:12b-14)?
5. What does it mean to 'clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ' (13:14)?

**To encourage an honest response**

1. In what ways do we try to get around the challenge of submitting to authorities? (13:1-7)?
2. How does the command to love help us to understand how to put the commandments into practice (13:8-10)?
3. In what ways can we 'clothe ourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ and ... not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature? (13:11-14)?

*Pray – perhaps consider how to pray specifically for your Federal, State and Local politicians.*

## **Study 6 - Romans 14.1-15:13**

### **The cost of genuine love**

#### **Reflect**

- Have you ever known a conflict where someone thought they were wrong?
- What conclusion can be drawn?

*Pray for God to help you understand*

*Read Romans 14:1-15:13*

#### **To clarify understanding**

1. Paul calls some of the Christians in Rome 'weak in faith' and others (including himself) 'strong in faith'. Look carefully at 14.1-23 and see,
  - a) what two or three issues seem to have divided these groups;
  - b) what attitudes each group seems to have had towards the other.
2. Is it likely that 'the strong' were mainly Gentile Christians, and 'the weak' traditional Jewish Christians. Try to imagine how these issues might have arisen and these attitudes been shown.
3. What argument does Paul give in 14:1-3 for them to accept one another?
4. How often does Paul refer to Jesus as 'Lord' in 14:4-9? In these verses, what difference should it make to know that Jesus is Lord?

5. Why is it so important for each to be convinced that what he is doing is right? (14:5-8)
  
6. What argument does Paul use in 14:10-12?
  
7. Read 14:13-21.
  - a) Who is actually right in their disagreements about what they can eat?
  
  - b) How might the 'strong in faith' have caused the 'weak in faith' to stumble?
  
  - c) How is the consequence of causing the 'weak' to stumble described in verses 15 and 20?
  
  - d) What does it mean for a church to live under the rule of God and to serve Christ, according to verses 17, 18?
  
8. What does Paul mean when he says that, 'everything that does not come from faith is sin' (14:23)?
  
9. What argument does Paul use to encourage the 'strong' not to please themselves with their behaviour (15:1-3)?
  
10. What effect ought Scripture to have on a church (15:4)?
  
11. What does Paul want the church in Rome to be like (15:5-6)?
  
12. On what basis has Christ accepted us (15:7)?

13. How does accepting one another bring praise to God (15:7)?
14. What do the four Old Testament quotations have in common (15:8-12)?
15. How does this help us understand the point they are making?
16. How does Paul's final prayer sum up themes in the letter as a whole? (15:13)

**To encourage an honest response**

1. How does selfish behaviour divide a church?
2. What kind of a Lord is Jesus (according to this passage), and how does his Lordship encourage us to live together under grace?
3. For what kinds of reasons are we tempted to look down on one another in our church?
4. How can we avoid making one another trip up in our Christian lives?
5. Do we feel that the rule of God over all the world is beginning to be seen in the life of our church? How can we take encouragement from this and cooperate in it happening more and more?

*Pray*

## **Study 7 - Romans 15:14-16:27**

### **Gospel Partnership**

#### **Reflect**

- How does the ministry of the Apostle Paul still impact our lives today?

*Pray for God to help you understand*

*Read Romans 15:14-16:27*

#### **To clarify understanding**

1. What is Paul's authority and how does he describe his job (15:14-19)?
2. What does he mean by describing this job as being like that of an Old Covenant priest in the temple (15:16)?
3. What is Paul's ambition (15:20)?
4. How does the verse he quotes in 15:21 help us understand his ambition?
5. What two reasons does Paul give for planning to visit Rome now (vv 23, 24)?
6. What does he hope the church in Rome will do when he visits (v24)?
7. What must Paul do first (vv 25-29)?

8. What does Paul ask them to pray for him (vv30-33)?
  
9. What characteristics do you notice in the people Paul greets (16:1-16)?
  
10. Why does Paul need to add the warning of 16:17-20? What is going wrong and how are they to guard against it?
  
11. What encouragement does Paul give them in 16:20? How does Genesis 3:15 help us understand this? (who does the 'crushing' and under whose feet? Can you explain this?)
  
12. What is God able to do and how does he do it (16:25, 26)?
  
13. Why does all the glory go to 'the only wise God' at the end of the letter (16:27)?

**To encourage an honest response**

1. If we are involved in any sort of Christian service, what temptations are there to influence people in ways that benefit us, rather than offering them to God?
  
2. What sort of ambitions do we have as Christians, especially when we think about Christian service? How does Paul's example challenge us (15:20-24)?

3. In what ways do we express the sort of gospel partnerships that Paul is engaged in (15:25-29)?
4. Why is intercessory prayer such struggle? How can we help and encourage one another in it (15:30-33)?
5. How do the people Paul greets (16:1-16), and Paul's fellow workers (16:21-23), challenge and encourage us to Christian zeal?
6. In what ways can we pretend to be keen Christians but actually be serving ourselves? How does it cause division in the church when we do this (16:17-20)?
7. How has Romans moved us more deeply to give all the glory to God (16:25-27)?

*Pray*