

BIBLE CHALLENGE

A 6 day study of the book of Romans

The story so far: We continue to look at Paul's letters, specifically his letter to the church at Rome. Paul's reason for writing Romans, was not to deal with a conflict, but to introduce himself since he is planning a journey to Rome, and from there to push further west, to Spain (see Romans 15:20-28). Paul's argument in Romans goes something like this: We've run up a debt we can't pay (sin), but God has set our relationship with him right as a free gift and an act of gracious kindness. How do we receive such a gift? Not by doing god works; not by following empty ritual; not by keeping the law; but by faith. Paul then spelled out the benefits of living in God's grace, including peace with God, access to God, hope, a reason to rejoice, etc. Paul will now, in chapter six, deal with an obvious objection to grace, namely that if he is preaching grace and forgiveness for everybody without their having to earn or deserve it, isn't he just encouraging people to sin all the more?

Monday:

Read: Romans 1:1-17

What to look for:

- Note the three ways in which Paul describes himself in the opening verse: as a servant of Christ (one who is not an independent authority, but is subject to his master at all times); called to be an apostle (not a volunteer, but one who has been drafted); set apart (a specialist, someone who does one thing).
- Paul defines the gospel in these opening verses as:
 - Having been promised before hand
 - Centered in a person (it's all based on Jesus)
 - A gospel of grace (everything God does for us because of Jesus)
 - For everyone (for the whole world, no one is excluded).

Note vs. 16-17. This is the theme of the book. The dynamite-power of God is the gospel message of salvation through the grace given in Christ to all who believe. This gospel is what puts us right with God – he shares his righteousness with us and it comes to us through Christ; it is not a righteousness we possess by which we are found wanting and which we must struggle to attain.

Tuesday:

Read: Romans 1:18-2:1, 12, 3:20-24, 28

What to look for:

- In this section of Romans, Paul is building a case, much as a prosecutor would, against humanity and its sinfulness. He makes an argument and then presents exhibits one after another to support his case.

- According to vs. 19-20 we are all without excuse because God has made himself plain to us. But we have responded (vs 21-25) to God by turning away from him.
- Paul then launches into his “sin-o-rama”, a catalog of sin (1:24-2:1) designed to bolster his argument that all have sinned and are rightfully under God’s wrath. This leads to the heart of his message in 3:21-24, which Martin Luther called the “chief point of the whole Bible”. We are set right with God, not by following the law, but by God’s gracious action for us in Christ, in which we have faith. Everyone has sinned and fallen short of the glory of God, no exceptions and no excuses, please. BUT (notice the word is in capital letters indicating something really important) we are justified – put right with God – freely by his grace, apart from what we do or deserve. It is *only* by faith that we can have that relationship with God.

Wednesday:

Read: Romans 5:1-11

What to look for:

- Having told us *how* God saves us, Paul is going to now focus on the blessings and benefits that come as a result of God’s grace. Note the word *Therefore* in 5:1. In Paul’s writing that is always a key that he is summarizing what he has just said and moving on to the next thought. In other words, “*Therefore* in light of everything I’ve just said about grace and our faith in it, because of what God does and not what we do, now I’m going to tell you about some of the results of that relationship, made possible by God’s actions.”
- Note the benefits Paul outlines that come as a result of God’s action on our behalf:
 - We have peace with God;
 - We have access to God;
 - We have hope;
 - We can rejoice in our sufferings;
 - We are given God’s love through the Holy Spirit;
 - We have a reason to rejoice.

Thursday:

Read: Romans 6:1-14

What to look for:

- The objection to grace that Paul is going to speak to is contained in vs. 1. His answer to that objection is found in vs. 2-4, that Jesus has taken your place and by dying he has conquered sin.
- It is through baptism (vs.3) that what Jesus has done for us has an effect on us.
- The result (vs 6-7) is that as far as sin is concerned, we are dead; it no longer has absolute, unchallenged rule over us. Sp, once the

ransom has been paid for your freedom, why continue to live under bondage? The other half of the story is in vs. 4 – Jesus not only died, but also rose. By dying Jesus conquered sin; by rising he conquered death. So, in baptism we not only die, we also gain a whole new life. It's Jesus' life we now live.

- Vs. 12-14 – sin is no longer our master. We've been freed by the death of Jesus, though it doesn't take long to realize that sin is not gone from our lives. Sin will continue to threaten to enslave us, but because we have been claimed by God through our baptism, we are freed to fight back. Our behavior grows out of our freedom; it is not a condition for our freedom.

Friday:

Read: Romans 7:14-25, 8:1-3a, 9, 15-39

What to look for:

- Paul, in giving us a description of his own struggles (7:14-25), names ours, too. Note that he writes in the present tense...there will always be a struggle going on within us.
- Note how often the word "I" shows up in this section – the nature of sin is that it is ultimately self-centered. Paul's problem is that he has great intentions but he can't pull them off. Will power isn't enough; he's helpless to battle sin alone.
- Paul changes his key word in chapter 8 from "I", and makes a different pair of words more prominent: Holy Spirit. What does that suggest to you? Notice also how Paul uses the words "In Christ" at 8:1 and again at 8:39. "In Christ" is Paul's favorite term for describing a Christian. Now, because we are in Christ, there is no condemnation. Jesus took it all on himself so the case against us is closed.

Monday:

Read: Romans 12:1-8, 13:8-10

What to look for:

- Note in vs. 1 one of the hallmarks of worship as identified by Paul, that we are to offer ourselves up to God out of response to his great mercy for us...and not just our thoughts or our prayers or our spiritual time, but our whole selves as encompassed by the word "bodies".
- If you want to know what love looks like, check out the Ten Commandments. The commandments explain to us what it means to live out our relationship to Christ (8:10).