

Romans is the longest and among the latest epistles written by Paul, during the time he was in Corinth toward the end of his third missionary journey, (where he planted churches in Ephesus, Philippi, Thessalonica, Corinth and other places) before he went back to Jerusalem to be persecuted by the Jews and then imprisoned by the Romans.

In the first chapter Paul stated;

**1:16**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.

**1:18**The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness.

**1:20** For since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse.

He then talks very plainly about how this relates to Jews - who had the law, and Gentiles who didn’t, and how *both* need to come to faith in Jesus for salvation.

**Romans 3:9**

**“**Well then, should we conclude that we Jews are better than others? No, not at all, for we have already shown that all people, whether Jews or Gentiles, are under the power of sin. **10**As the Scriptures say,

“No one is righteous— not even one. **11**No one is truly wise; no one is seeking God. **12**All have turned away; all have become useless.
No one does good, not a single one.” **13**“Their talk is foul, like the stench from an open grave. Their tongues are filled with lies.” “Snake venom drips from their lips.” **14**“Their mouths are full of cursing and bitterness.” **15**“They rush to commit murder.**16**Destruction and misery always follow them.**17**They don’t know where to find peace.” **18**“They have no fear of God at all.” **19**Obviously, the law applies to those to whom it was given, for its purpose is to keep people from having excuses, and to show that the entire world is guilty before God. ***20****For no one can ever be made right with God by doing what the law commands. The law simply shows us how sinful we are.”*

Paul tells us that the law’s purpose is basically to show us that we can’t keep it, and need another way to be made righteous.

**Romans 9:20**(KJV) “Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin.”

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*A.J. Jacobs – An agnostic Jew (NY Journalist) who describes himself as a “human guinea pig”. He wrote a book in 2008 called The Year of Living Biblically: One Man's Humble Quest to Follow the Bible as Literally as Possible. In it he describes his experience of spending an entire year of attempting to live as adherent to the Torah (Jewish law) as humanly possible. He grew his beard, wore a single-fiber robe, ate completely Kosher and attempted to submit to the over 600 commandments in the Bible, even the smallest and seemingly insignificant rules and ordinances. He struggled trying to comply with ancient Jewish rituals in the modern age, and attempted to interpret them into contemporary context.*

*Unsurprisingly, he failed miserably. There was so much he simply could not do, and found impossible to keep. Especially things like the sacrifices and temple worship.*

*He came away with a greater respect for what he calls “Bible Literalists” (Evangelical Christians), but concluded that one can simply not keep the Biblical Law in the modern age.*

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The early church came up with the same conclusion. When an abundance of Gentiles were coming into the church for the first time, there was much talk and questioning about whether to introduce them to the law and make them keep it, or simply instruct them in the grace of the Lord Jesus for salvation. They addressed this in something called *“The Jerusalem Council”.*

**Acts 15:6-11“**The apostles and elders met to consider this question. **7**After much discussion, Peter got up and addressed them: “Brothers, you know that some time ago God made a choice among you that the Gentiles might hear from my lips the message of the gospel and believe. **8**God, who knows the heart, showed that he accepted them by giving the Holy Spirit to them, just as he did to us. **9**He did not discriminate between us and them, for he purified their hearts by faith. ***10****Now then, why do you try to test God by putting on the necks of Gentiles a yoke that neither we nor our ancestors have been able to bear?* **11**No! We believe it is through the grace of our Lord Jesus that we are saved, just as they are.”

It is only through the grace of our Lord Jesus that we are saved. Not by keeping the law. Not by keeping Christian sacraments, not even by our own good works and holy behavior. It is solely by receiving the “free gift” (grace) of Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross by FAITH.

**21**But now God has shown us a way to be made right with him without keeping the requirements of the law, as was promised in the writings of Mosesand the prophets long ago. **22**We are made right with God by *placing our faith in Jesus Christ*. And this is true for *everyone who believes*, no matter who we are.

Remember Romans 1: **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.”

This is the essence of what the “*Gospel*” is - Good News!

But no one can understand it as good news, until they know that it’s the remedy for the bad news.

That’s why the next two verses give us a bad news/good news understanding of what this is about;

**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.” : )

These verses are the first step of what we call “Romans Road to salvation”. The second is very much like them, but presented in one verse

**Romans 6:23“**For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

They are both bad news/good news verses. The bad news is that everyone has sinned and deserves the wrath of God and eternal death. The GOOD NEWS is that Jesus gave His life as a sacrifice for our sin, and we can receive this by grace when we believe.

Paul explains this in our text;

**25**For God presented Jesus as the sacrifice for sin. People are *made right* with God *when they believe* that Jesus sacrificed his life, shedding his blood. This sacrifice shows that God was being fair when he held back and did not punish those who sinned in times past, **26**for he was looking ahead and including them in what he would do in this present time. God did this to demonstrate his -righteousness, for he himself is fair and just, and he *makes sinners right* in his sight *when they believe in Jesus*.”

This is called being “Justified By Faith”. Justified means, being made right. When I am justified, it is Just-as-if-I’d never sinned. When we believe and put our faith in Jesus, his righteousness is imputed to us, so our sins are not held against us. We are free from God’s wrath, and what’s more, we are given the gift of God, which is *eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

*Analogy: You’re trying to get into a top college. You take your SAT’s and get more than half the answers wrong. When your test is calculated, they don’t use your test to determine your grade, they use Jesus’s test, and it’s a perfect 1600.*

*Text continues:*

**27**Can we boast, then, that we have done anything to be accepted by God? No, because our acquittal is not based on obeying the law. It is based on faith. **28**So we are made right with God through faith and not by obeying the law.

**29**After all, is God the God of the Jews only? Isn’t he also the God of the Gentiles? Of course he is. **30**There is only one God, and he makes people right with himself only by faith, whether they are Jews or Gentiles. **31**Well then, if we emphasize faith, does this mean that we can forget about the law? Of course not! In fact, only when we have *faith* do we truly fulfill the law.”

So far in Romans we’ve looked at; The Wrath of God, The Judgement of God, and the Wages of sin. We see here that we are freely justified and made righteous by our faith in the sacrifice of Jesus’ blood on the cross. The is the good news of the gospel, and means as Romans 8:1 says, “there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.”

QUESTION: There is no condemnation for sin, but are there *consequences*?

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It’s very important to understand that while we may be forgiven of our sin and “saved” from eternal death and the wrath of God, we will still reap the consequences of our sin.

A criminal who comes to faith in prison, will be forgiven by God, but still have to serve out their term.

**Gal. 6:7“**Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. **8**Whoever sows to please their flesh, from the flesh will reap destruction; whoever sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life.”

Our flesh is our sin nature. It’s the part of the soul (mind/emotions) that will always try to please the ungodly impulses of our body and mind. It is the root of lust and pride. When we sin, we are, as Paul says “sowing”. That means planting seeds that will someday grow and reap destruction. Something will be destroyed, damaged, or effected as a result of our sin.

1st John 2:16 tells us that there are three types of sin in the world;

1. “the lust of the flesh”, 2. “the lust of the eyes”, 3. “and the pride of life.”

When we indulge in these things, there will always be consequences. Something will experience destruction as a result;

* In the case of the *lust of the flesh*, it may manifest in health problems, addictions and behaviors, some very serious, even leading to death.
* In the case of *lust of the eyes*, it could lead to envy and discontentment, often resulting in anger or depression that is destructive to our minds and emotions.
* In the case of *pride*, it can easily lead to selfishness and bitterness which has a devastating effect on our relationships with others and with God.

This is what it means to *“sow to please the flesh”.*

The good news is that we can also *“sow to please the Spirit”,* and THAT result is **life!**

Romans tells us later that;

**Romans 8:6** “The mind governed by the flesh is death, but the mind governed by the Spirit is life and peace.”

We can actually cultivate “life and peace” in our lives by allowing the Holy Spirit to govern (control) our mind instead of our flesh. That means resisting temptation, walking in the spirit, praying, worshipping, spending time reading and obeying God’s word.

*The life and peace we experience in the Spirit, is way more satisfying and fulfilling than anything we can experience in the flesh.*

But what about when we struggle, and our flesh gets the upper hand? When we can’t seem to keep from saying, thinking, or doing the wrong thing?

Are we condemned for these things, and will we experience God’s wrath because of these things?

No, not if we are justified through the grace of Jesus. But we WILL experience consequences, which is why God offers us His discipline.

**Heb 12:6** “The Lord disciplines the one he loves,
    and he chastens everyone he accepts as his son.”

Discipline may look like trouble, struggles, or even obstacles in our path. Often they are intended to make us stop, think, and pray before we continue in the direction we have been going. Sometimes it comes as a rebuke for the Lord or a sharp word of correction.

Why? Because the Lord loves us, and desires what’s best for us. He wants very much for us to avoid sin, and walk away from destructive behaviors.

**Rev. 3:19“**Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest and repent.”

Repent. That’s something we all can do. All that it requires is “changing your mind”, that’s what the word “repent” means.

If you think *one way* about your sin, repent, and think the *opposite*.

It’s the same way you became a believer.

One minute you didn’t believe, then you repented, changed your mind… and then you DID believe!

The Devil will tell you that you can’t do it. That you’re powerless.

That’s a lie. You have the ability to take every though captive.

**2nd Cor. 10:5** ”take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.”

Ask God to help you. He knows your weakness, and wants to help you. He understands what we go through because He Himself has been through it successfully. He is a very present help in time of need.

**Hebrews 4:15-16“**For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin. **16**Let us then approach God’s throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.”

**Pray that God will give you the power and understanding to allow *His Spirit* to govern *your mind*, and lead you into His life and peace. <>**