

A Clearer Vision of Life in the Meantime--An Overview of Romans

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Dominant Thought: The good news of Jesus saves and transforms.

Objectives:

I want my listeners to understand the big themes of Romans.

I want my listeners to find encouragement with the good news of Romans.

I want my listeners to read through Romans.

I have good news for you today. Jesus loves you. Today, we begin a study of [Romans 8](#). [Romans 8:1](#) begins, “There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.” Before we walk through this beautiful chapter, I’d like to take us on a tour of the letter to the Romans so we can get a big picture view of the letter before looking at [Romans 8](#).

One way to summarize the letter of Romans is to say, “**The good news of Jesus saves and transforms.**” We are calling the series, “A clearer vision of life in the meantime.” So many people think about being right with Jesus so we can go to heaven. It is good to be right with Jesus and to be with Him in the new heaven for all of eternity. However, God has some plans for us now. We have life to live in the meantime. [Romans 8](#) gives us that guidance. Romans as a whole helps us live life in the meantime. As we move through the entire letter to the Romans, I’d like to look at four descriptions of the good news of Jesus to help us in the meantime.

First, the good news of Jesus saves ([Romans 1.1-16](#)).

In Romans, Paul gives us a clear picture of the gospel. It centers on the saving work of Jesus Christ. In the opening verses, we read that Paul is “an apostle and set apart for the gospel of God” ([Romans 1.1](#)). The gospel or good news was promised through the prophets in the Holy Scriptures.

We recently finished studying the prophet Isaiah who spoke of the coming of Jesus 700 years before His birth. For example, [Isaiah 53:5](#) reads, “But

he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed.”

Jesus descended from David by the Holy Spirit. The gospel writer Luke shares that story. Jesus was appointed Son of God by His resurrection from the dead ([Romans 1.4](#)). In case we miss it, Paul concludes the verse by saying, “Jesus Christ our Lord.” Then, he continues in [Romans 1.5](#), “Through whom we received grace and apostleship to call all the Gentiles to the obedience that comes from faith for his name’s sake.”

Paul writes to a church in Rome that has a collection of Jews and Gentiles. There are racial and religious issues to overcome. And in the opening verses, Paul centers the letter on the good news of Jesus who saves us—Jews and Gentiles.

[Romans 1](#) culminates in [Romans 1:16](#), “For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.”

Paul is not ashamed of the good news for it is the power of God for salvation for everyone who believes—Jews first and also the Greek or Gentiles or the nations.

We will get to [Romans 8](#) next week. [Romans 8](#) begins in [Romans 8:1](#) “There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.” It echoes the opening verses of God’s power for salvation.

While we were in the Philippines, we had two opportunities to share the 3 Circles gospel presentation. Hope shared it for a class at the National High School. Weston shared it with the City Church of Christ after a yummy potluck dinner. In the 3 circles, we draw one circle representing beauty before sin. The second circle represents brokenness as a result of our sins. And the third circle represents Jesus coming to earth, dying on the cross and raising from the dead. When we talk about the second circle of brokenness, we show how we can't leave the brokenness on our own power. It's like a bungee cord that snaps us back into brokenness. We can't earn it with good deeds. We can't numb it with substances. We can't fill it with impure relationships. We can't save ourselves.

There's only One who is powerful enough to save us. The good news is Jesus saves us.

From what?

Second, the good news of Jesus saves us from sin ([Romans 3.21-26](#); [Romans 5.8](#)).

As you read through the rest of [Romans 1-3](#), we read about the wrath of God revealed against all godlessness and wickedness of people ([Romans 1.18](#)). Then Paul gives a long list of wickedness: sexual impurity, same sex relationships, greed, gossip, and disobeying parents to name a few.

Then, Paul declares in [Romans 3.23](#), “for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” To sin means to miss the mark. Archery season will begin in a few weeks. It will be time to sight in your bow to make sure everything is accurate and on target.

I taught about sin earlier this summer at church camp. I knew the fifth and sixth graders were going to archery in the afternoon as part of their recreation. I told them, “I predict you will all sin this afternoon.” They looked at me strangely. I reminded them that sin is described as missing the mark. So, unless they hit the bullseye every time they shoot an arrow, then they would miss the mark—a description the Bible uses for sin.

The bullseye is God's glory. When we sin, we fall short of God's glory; His weighty presence, goodness, holiness, perfection, and love. We miss God's glory.

Then, Paul gives us a handful of verses to show us what God has done for our sins. In [Romans 3.24-26](#), Paul describes how we are freely justified by God's grace. To be justified is to declare innocent. We are not guilty. To use the words from [Romans 8.1](#), “Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.”

Grace is receiving the opposite of what we deserve. Instead of receiving punishment, you receive a promotion. You cannot earn it. It is a gift—freely given.

Paul uses some other big Bible words: redemption and atonement. Redemption is a marketplace term to buy or purchase back. Jesus paid the price for our sins. Atonement, or propitiation in some

translations, could mean, “Jesus turns God’s wrath away from us by taking it on Himself” (Jack Cottrell, *Set Free*, p. 183).

How did that happen? [Romans 3.25](#) tells us “through the shedding of His blood” Jesus turned away God’s wrath upon humanity. It happened on the cross. Jesus the perfect One is the One who saves us from sin.

We receive this salvation through faith ([Romans 3.25-26](#)). To believe or to trust in Jesus is how we accept God’s salvation. We trust in Jesus to turn God’s wrath away from us.

[Romans 5:8](#) reminds us that God saves sinners. Paul writes, “but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”

The good news of Jesus saves us from our sins.

Third, the good news of Jesus saves us from death ([Romans 6.1-10](#); [Romans 8.1-11](#), [31-39](#); [Romans 10.8-10](#)).

Not only does the good news of Jesus save us from sin, but also from death. In [Romans 6.1](#), Paul asks the question, “Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? By no means! We are those who have died to sin.”

Then, Paul describes uniting with Jesus' sin baptism. To be submerged under water unites us with Jesus in His death and resurrection. Uniting with Jesus in baptism shows our love for our King. Baptism starts our new life with Christ. I tell people often, “Baptism is not the end. It’s the beginning of your walk with Jesus.”

As we were riding around the Philippines, brother Andy and I were talking about the Bible. He shared with me how he teaches baptism and salvation. It’s a sentence I’ve read in Jack Cottrell’s teaching. He was a long-time teacher at Cincinnati Christian University. Andy was quoting Dr. Cottrell, “We are saved *by* grace, *through* faith, *in* baptism, *for* good works” (*Set Free*, p. 243).

Our salvation is for the good of the world. It is not simply to get us out of hell and wait to go to heaven. God has a plan for us.

As we walk through the opening verses of [Romans 8](#), Paul teaches the war between the flesh and the Spirit. In [Romans 8:6](#), we read “For to set the

mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace.”

The good news of Jesus saves us from death and gives us His Spirit to lead and guide us. We will spend more time on the work of the Holy Spirit as we walk through [Romans 8](#) in the coming weeks.

One of the ways the Holy Spirit helps us is through His Word—the Bible. Paul highlights the importance of Scripture as a way we experience the truth of salvation. I invite you to read through Romans in the coming weeks. Read it more than once. When we start working through [Romans 8](#), then I'll encourage you to memorize a verse from the beloved chapter.

In [Romans 10.8-13](#), Paul quotes [Deuteronomy 30.14](#), “The word is near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart” ([Romans 10.8](#)). The quotation from Deuteronomy concludes, “so that you can do it.” We need the Spirit’s help to follow God’s will.

Then, Paul shares in [Romans 10:9–10](#), “because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved.”

The good news of Jesus saves. It saves from sin and it saves from death, but that it not all. The good news of Jesus transforms our will.

Fourth, the good news of Jesus transforms our will ([Romans 12.1-2](#); [Romans 8.29](#)).

N.T. Wright shares, “We are saved, not *from* the world but *for* the world” (*Into the Heart of Romans*, p. 18). We are saved for good works as Paul writes in [Ephesians 2.10](#). We are to represent Christ to the world. We have a mission.

Listen to [Romans 12.1-2](#), “Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God’s mercy” (“mercies,” is more accurate). Since we have read through 11 chapters of God’s mercy, kindness, and love, how shall we live? Paul says, “Offer your bodies as a living sacrifice.” D.L. Moody has been credited with saying, “The problem with a living sacrifice is it can crawl off the altar.” In the Old Testament, the sacrifices were killed. Blood was drained or sprinkled. Then, the animal was roasted. No turning back.

A living sacrifice is a different challenge. We are called to live for Jesus— holy and pleasing to God. Holy is clean and set apart. Like the special dishes you bring out at Christmas. Acceptable can mean “well pleasing.” Paul calls it “true and proper worship” ([Romans 12.1](#)). In reading [Ephesians 5.10](#), the command “find out what pleases the Lord” caught my attention. What pleases the Lord? Love, kindness, mercy, forgiveness, truth, generosity, patience. [Romans 8](#) will help us lean into what please the Lord.

In [Romans 8:29](#), “For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.” For those who are in Jesus, we are being transformed or conformed into His image. We renew our minds instead of letting the world press us into its mold. We leave an impression for Jesus on the world.

Paul closes his letter with a long list of names in [Romans 16](#). Many of the names are hard to pronounce. Many are not very memorable. Many appear nowhere else in the Bible, but they appear there at the end of Romans.

[Romans 16](#) gives us a list of servants of Jesus, those who have been saved from sin and death and transformed by the good news of Jesus. They have a clearer vision of life in the meantime. They didn’t simply wait to die and go to heaven. They joined their King on His mission to rescue the world from evil.

There’s Phoebe a servant, maybe a deaconess of the church. Priscilla and Aquila, Paul’s co-workers in Christ Jesus who risked their lives. They actually hosted a church in their home. Paul’s dear friend Epenetus, the first convert to Christ in Asia. Mary works very hard. There were a couple of Jews who were in prison with Paul and were in Christ Jesus before Paul. Urbanus, a co-worker in Christ. Apelles, whose fidelity to Christ has stood the test. Paul’s dear friend Persis, another woman who worked very hard in the Lord.

What would Paul say about you if he wrote a letter to our church?

Did you notice—in Christ, to the Lord, in the Lord. Sounds a little like [Romans 8:1](#) “There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.”

Want to know what life's like in the meantime? You'll need friends who love Jesus. You'll need the Word of God and the presence of the Holy Spirit. You'll need the finished work of Jesus on the cross. You'll need to trust. It sounds risky. You may be in prison. Your life may be in danger. You may be tested. It is so worth it.

We looked at the last chapter in Romans. The last verse of [Romans 8](#) reminds us of the good life with God, too. "Nothing in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord" ([Romans 8.39](#))

The good news of Jesus saves and transforms. Will you trust that good news today? Tomorrow? For the rest of your life?