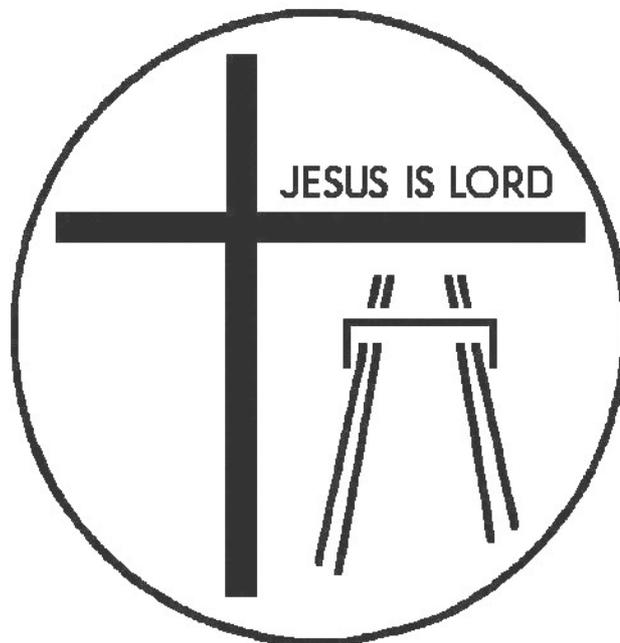


PAUL'S LETTER TO THE ROMANS

Part 2

***6 Home Group Studies on the
Book of Romans***



Midrand Presbyterian Church

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<p>LESSON 7</p> <p>GOD'S PERFECT PLAN</p>

Setting the Scene:

1. When did you first hear the gospel message? What was your initial response?

From the Word:

Read Romans 10:1-15.

Going Deeper – Group Discussion:

2. What is wrong with trying to be saved your own way?

3. What part do our thoughts and our words have in our response to salvation?

4. What promise is given to people who believe and confess that Jesus is

Lord?

5. How does God's righteousness motivate us to godly behaviour?

6. What does this passage teach about the way the good news is spread, understood, and accepted?

Reflection:

We have already seen that the Bible teaches that God was a God of love. He wanted to do something for man. He wanted to save man. He wanted to free man from the curse of sin. How could He do it? God was just God. He was righteous, and holy. He had warned man from the beginning that if he obeyed the Devil and disobeyed God, he would die physically and spiritually...

All through the Old Testament, God gave man the promise of salvation if by faith he would believe in the coming Redeemer. Therefore God began to teach His people that man could only be saved by substitution. Someone else would have to pay the price for man's redemption...

Thanks be to God – that is exactly what happened! Looking down over the battlements of heaven He saw this planet swinging in space – doomed, damned, crushed, and bound for hell. He saw you and me struggling beneath our load of sin. He made His decision in the council halls of God. The angelic hosts bowed in humility and awe as heaven's Prince of Princes and Lord of Lords, who could speak worlds into space, got into His jewelled chariot, went through the pearly gates, across the steep of the skies, and on a black Judean night, while the stars sang together and the escorting angels

chanted praises, stepped out of the chariot, threw off His robes, and became a man!

(from *Peace With God* by Billy Graham)

Making It Relevant – Life Applications

7. What aspects of God’s character are shown through his plan of salvation?

8. How are you encouraged by God’s plan to save the world?

9. Why is it difficult for us to follow Jesus, sometimes?

10. What can we learn from Israel’s response to God’s plan of salvation?

11. How can you guard against trying to earn God’s approval and acceptance?

12. Why is it important to tell others about your faith in Jesus Christ?

LESSON 8
CALLED BY GOD

Setting the Scene:

1. Think of a time when you received recognition or special honour or privilege. How did this make you feel?

From the Word:

Read Romans 11:1-15.

Going Deeper – Group Discussion:

2. Why did people think that God must have rejected the Israelites?

3. What does God's answer to Elijah show us?

4. How do people try to earn God's grace?

5. Why are some people open to the Good News and others are closed?

6. Why can we be confident that God's grace is for all who receive it?

Reflection

The fact that God has chosen some to be saved does not mean that He has chosen the rest to be lost. The world is already lost and dead in sins. If left to ourselves, all of us would be condemned eternally. The question is does God have a right to swoop down, take a handful of already doomed clay, and fashion a vessel of beauty out of it? Of course He does. C. R. Erdman put it in right perspective when he said, "God's sovereignty is never exercised in condemning men who ought to be saved, but rather in the salvation of men who ought to be lost." The only way people can know if they are among the elect is by trusting Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour (1 Thess 1:4-7). God holds people responsible to accept the Saviour by an act of will. In reproving those Jews who did not believe, Jesus placed the blame on their will. He did not say, "You are *not* willing to come to Me that you may have life" (John 5:40), emphasis added). The real question of a believer is not, "Does the Sovereign God have the right to choose people to be saved?" but rather it is, "Why did He choose me?" This should make a person worship for all eternity.

(from *Alone in Majesty* by William MacDonald)

Making it Relevant – Life Applications:

7. What hope does God offer all people?

8. What can you learn from this passage about God's sovereignty and our responsibility?

9. What things does this passage make you feel grateful for?

10. In what different things do people put their hope for salvation?

11. Why is it important that we not take our salvation for granted?

LESSON 9
THE BIG PICTURE

Setting the Scene:

1. Describe a time when someone you know was joyful during difficulties. How did this affect you?

From the Word:

Read Romans 12:1-13.

Going Deeper – Group Discussion:

2. What does it mean to be living a sacrifice?

3. What does Paul mean when he tells us to be changed within by a new way of thinking?

4. What hinders Christians from thinking and acting like parts of one body?

5. What advice does this passage offer about getting along with each other?

6. How should we react during times of trouble?

Reflection:

Would you buy a house if you were only allowed to see one of its rooms?
Would you purchase a car if you were permitted to see only its tires and taillight?
Would you pass judgment on a book after reading only one paragraph?
Nor would I.

Good judgment requires a broad picture. Not only is that true in the purchasing of houses, cars, and books, it's true in evaluating life. One failure doesn't make a person a failure; one achievement doesn't make a person a success.

"The end of the matter is better than its beginning," penned the sage.

"Be ... patient in affliction," echoed the apostle Paul ...

We only have a fragment. Life's mishaps and horrors are only but a page out of the grand book. We must be slow about drawing conclusions. We must reserve judgment on life's storms until we know the whole story. ...

"Do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself."

He should know. He is the Author of our story. And he has already written the final chapter.

(from *The Eye of the Storm* by Max Lucado)

Making It Relevant – Life Applications:

7. Why is it difficult to wait for God to act on our behalf?

8. Is it difficult for you to be patient when you face trouble? Why or why not?

9. List some of the areas of your life where you need to be more patient.

10. How is it possible for troubles to be a blessing?

LESSON 10 TRUE LOVE

Setting the Scene:

1. Think of a time when a friend showed love for you in a special way. How did that make you feel? How did you respond?

From the Word:

Read Romans 13:8-14

Going Deeper – Group Discussion:

2. What is the one debt we owe to each other?

3. What one rule sums up the whole law?

4. Write in your own words how this passage describes true love.

5. What does Paul mean when he describes believers as “people who belong to the day”?

6. How can we “put on” or “clothe” ourselves with the Lord Jesus?

Reflection:

We aren't always sure ourselves what we mean when we use the term *love*. That word has become one of the most widely misused words in our language. We use the word to describe the basest as well as the most exalted of human relationships. We say we “love” to travel, we “love” to eat chocolate cake, we “love” our neighbors – but most of us don't do much more than just say it and let it go at that! No wonder we don't have a very clear idea of what the Bible means when it says: “God is Love.”

Don't make the mistake of thinking that because God is Love that everything is going to be so sweet, beautiful, and happy and that no one will be punished for his sins. God's holiness demands that all sin be punished, but God's love provides the plan and way of redemption for sinful man. God's love is the cross of Jesus, by

which man can have forgiveness and cleansing. It was the love of God that sent Jesus Christ to the cross!

Never question God's great love, for it is as unchangeable a part of God as His holiness. No matter how terrible our sins, God loves you. Were it not for the love of God, none of us would ever have a chance in the future life. But God is Love and His love for us is everlasting!

(from *Peace with God* by Billy Graham)

Making It Relevant – Life Applications:

7. What are some of the misconceptions people have about love?

8. How is God's view of love different from the world's view?

9. Why is it important that we love others?

10. How do you usually respond to the "unlovable people" in our society?

11. In what ways do you demonstrate your love for your friends?

Suggestion:

If you have not read Peter Chapman's the *Five Languages of Love*, it may be a worthwhile read as it helps us to understand how we experience and share God's love.

<p>LESSON 11 ACCEPTING ONE ANOTHER</p>
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Setting the Scene:

1. Describe a particular time when you sensed a spirit of unity among Christians.

From the Word:

Read Romans 14:13-23.

Going Deeper – Group Discussion:

2. What issues caused division among the believers in Rome?

3. How did Paul counsel the Roman believers to deal with these issues?

4. What is the key point that Paul made in this passage?

5. When should Christians defer to fellow believer's beliefs?

6. Explain why it is important to maintain unity than to maintain our personal rights.

Reflection:

Accepting others is basic to letting them be. The problem [in Paul's day] was not a meat problem; it was a love problem, an acceptance problem. It still is. How often we restrict our love by making it conditional: "If you will (or won't), then I will accept you." Paul starts there: "Accept one another!"... Those who didn't eat [meat] (called here "weak in faith") were exhorted to accept and not judge those who ate. And those who ate were exhorted to accept and not regard with contempt those who did not eat meat. The secret lies in accepting one another. All of this is fairly easy to

read so long as I stay on the issue of eating meat. That one is safe because it isn't a current taboo. It's easy to accept those folks today because they don't exist!

How about those in your life who may disagree with us on issues that are taboos in evangelical Christian circles today? ... Going to movies ... Playing cards ... Not having a "quiet time" every morning ... Going to a restaurant that sells liquor ... Listening to certain music ... Dancing ... Drinking coffee ...

There are a dozen other things I could list, some of which would make you smile. But believe me, in various areas of our country or the world some or all of these things may be taboo. ...[D]on't assume that all areas are identical when it comes to taboos. ... (Remember our goal is acceptance, the basis of a grace state of mind.)

(from *The Grace Awakening* by Charles Swindoll)

Making It Relevant – Life Applications:

7. What issues cause debates among Christians you know?

8. How can believers handle controversial issues in a way that builds up the Church rather than harms it?

9. How can believers show love and acceptance to one another in spite of differing opinions on certain issues?

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10. Do you feel that there are some existing issues that are in need of repentance or reconciliation?

<p style="text-align: center;">LESSON 12 LET IT SHINE</p>

Setting the Scene:

1. How has the positive example of another believer encouraged you?

From the Word:

Read Romans 15:14-21.

Going Deeper – Group Discussion:

2. What was the basis of Paul's confidence in the Christians in Rome?

3. List some of the things God had accomplished through Paul's life.

4. What has God accomplished through your life?

5. Why did Paul prefer not to minister others had already ministered? Was this a wise decision?

6. What principles of evangelism from Paul's life can you apply in your life?

Reflection:

A few nights ago a peculiar thing happened. An electrical storm caused a

blackout in our neighbourhood. When the lights went out, I felt my way through the darkness into the storage closet where we keep the candles for nights like this. ... I took my match and lit four of them. ...

I was turning to leave with the large candle in my hand when I heard a voice, "Now, hold it right there."

"Who said that?"

"I did." The voice was near my hand.

"Who are you? What are you?"

"I'm a candle."

I lifted up the candle to take a closer look. You won't believe what I saw. There was a tiny face in the wax ... a moving, functioning, fleshlike face full of expression and life.

"Don't take me out there!"

"What?"

"I said, don't take me out of the room."

"What do you mean? I have to take you out. You're a candle. Your job is to give light. It's dark out there."

"But you can't take me out. I'm not ready," the candle explained with pleading eyes. "I need more preparation."

"I couldn't believe my ears. 'More preparation?'"

"Yeah, I've decided I need to research this job of light-giving so I won't go out and make a bunch of mistakes. You'd be surprised how distorted the glow of an untrained candle can be. ..."

"All right then," I said. "You're not the only candle on the shelf. I'll blow you out and take the others!"

But just as my cheeks got full of air, I heard other voices.

"We aren't going either!"

... I turned around and looked at the three other candles. ... "You are candles and your job is to light dark places!"

"Well, that may be what you think," said the candle on the far left. ... "You may think we have to go, but I'm busy. ... I'm meditating on the importance of light. It's really enlightening." ...

"And you other two," I asked, "are you going to stay in here as well?"

A short, fat, purple candle with plump cheeks that reminded me of Santa Claus spoke up. "I'm waiting to get my life together. I'm not stable enough."

The last candle had a female voice, very pleasant to the ear. "I'd like to help," she explained, "but lighting the darkness is not my gift. ... I'm a singer. I sing to other candles to encourage them to burn more brightly."

... She began a rendition of 'This Little Light of Mine'. ... The other three joined in, filling the storage room with singing. ...

I took a step back and considered the absurdity of it all. Four perfectly healthy candles singing to each other about light but refusing to come out of the closet.

(from *God Came Near* by Max Lucado)

Making It Relevant – Life Applications:

7. How does Paul’s example inspire you to get more actively involved in evangelism?

8. What has hindered your witness for Christ?

9. How can you overcome that hindrance?

10. Are you reluctant to talk about God with others? How can you overcome that reluctance?

11. What are some creative ways of sharing the gospel?

12. Who shared the gospel message with you? How can you thank that person?
