



CHRISTIANITY WITHOUT THE RELIGION

BIBLE SURVEY

THE UN-DEVOTIONAL

ROMANS 1-8

Week 2

DAY 8

What We All Have in Common

Romans 3:9-20

OPENING
up to the Word

Have you ever thought to yourself, “I’m not too bad. Basically, I’m a good person”?

DIGGING
into the Word

1. What elements are common to all people, Jews and non-Jews?
2. Notice the Old Testament verses Paul quotes in this section. Which book seems to carry the most weight with Paul? Why do you think he quotes so much from this book?
3. What is the main purpose of the law (v. 20)?

LIVING
out the Word

Have you ever heard statements like these? (a) *my great grandparents were charter members of this church*, (b) *my father is the board chairman*, (c) *my uncle is the pastor*, (d) *my family is influential in this church*, (e) *I was baptized here (10, 20, 30, 40) years ago and attend every week*, (f) *I’m a true Christian, but you obviously are not, because you don’t share my doctrinal understanding*. How do you feel when you hear these comments? Have you ever made comments like these?

WINDOW
on the Word

*In this section Paul appeals to Psalm 14:1-3. The harsh language upsets some people: “**they have together become corrupt; there is no one who does good, not even one.**” As you study this section, keep in mind the overriding truth: people are priceless and valuable to God. We are created in God’s image and God loves each one of us. However, the apostle argues, this value is not based on what we do. All have sinned and cannot earn a right standing with God. We are made pleasing to God through Jesus Christ. God’s goodness and grace is our goal, rather than our own righteousness.*



“Ruin and misery mark their ways, and the way of peace they do not know.’ ‘There is no fear of God before their eyes.’”

Romans 3:16-18

DAY 9

Breaking Down The Barriers

Romans 3:21-31

OPENING
up to the Word

What groups in our culture today need help to break down spiritual barriers between them? What can you do to help this process?

DIGGING
into the Word

1. Define these terms that are used in this section: (feel free to use a Bible dictionary, the glossary after Day 20 of this volume or the article on law after Day 10), (a) righteousness (v. 21), (b) Law (v. 21), (c) Prophets (v. 21), (d) justification (v. 24), (e) redemption (v. 24).

2. How does righteousness from God, given through faith in Jesus Christ (vs. 22-24), differ from righteousness from the law (2:5-13)?

LIVING
out the Word

1. Ask yourself this important question: *Do I live mainly by God's law or by God's grace?*

2. Ask yourself: *Do I live in faith knowing that the righteousness of God he gives me is apart from the law?*

3. How does God's grace impact your life today? How did it impact you in the past?

WINDOW
on the Word

Early English Bible translators coined the word **atonement** (*at-one-ment*), to convey the biblical concept of being reconciled to, or made one with God. Atonement comes through the death of Jesus Christ. His redemptive death breaks down all barriers between us and God.

Justification by Faith

DAY 10

Romans 4:1-8

Just-as-if-I-never-sinned is used by some as a definition of *justification*. Do you think this a good definition?

1. How was righteousness credited to Abraham?
How is righteousness credited to you and me?

2. Who is described as *blessed* in this section of Romans?

1. What do you learn about God from this section?

2. Doesn't this section of Romans clearly prove that God's righteousness must be divinely given by his grace, rather than earned or deserved by our human performance?

Abraham originally had the name Abram, which means "exalted father" or "the father is exalted." God gave him the new name, Abraham, which means "father of a multitude." This was to emphasize God's promise to Abraham that he would have many descendants (Ge 17:5), and that these descendants would be credited to God's power and goodness rather than Abraham's.

OPENING

up to the Word

DIGGING

into the Word

LIVING

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WINDOW

on the Word

Law in Romans

The word *law* appears in the book of Romans more than any other book in the Bible. But even the casual student of Romans will notice that the word is used in various different ways. The way in which it is used falls into four categories—which can be determined from the context.

Principle. Used in this way, the word *law* does not refer to a set of laws, but to the principle of law in general. Paul uses law in this way in Romans 2:12-13; 3:27; 4:15; 5:13 (last part) and 7:1 (last part). The aim of the principle of law is to restrain human evil tendencies, but it is ineffective in doing so. In fact, law has the opposite effect of *provoking* those tendencies (Ro 7:8). In Galatians 5:23 we read that “there is no law” against the fruit of the Spirit. Law in general has nothing to say about the activity of the Spirit in the life of the believer, therefore Christ-followers are not under law because they are led by the Spirit.

Force, or influence that impels to action. Paul uses law this way in Romans 7:21, 23 (first part); and in 8:2. In 7:21, Paul says he finds a force operating in his body which causes him to want to do the opposite of what he knows he should. He calls this force the “law of sin” in verse 23. Likewise, in 8:2, he refers to the “law of the

Spirit of life” that sets believers free from sin and death.

Mosaic Law, referring to the commandments and statutes given to Israel in the Sinai wilderness. Paul often precedes this with a definite article: “the law.” This usage appears in Romans 2:15, 18, 20, 26, 27; 3:19; 7:4, 7, 14, 16, 22 and 8:3, 4, 7. The Mosaic Law was not given to the entire world; it was part of the the old covenant between God and Israel, now obsolete (Heb 8:13).

The Pentateuch, or the five books that contain the law (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy). Paul uses law in this sense in Romans 3:21 (last part).

Additionally, a variety of phrases in the book of Romans refer to various types of law:

Law of faith (3:27)—a principle that demands only faith on our part.

Law of sin (7:23)—the principle by which sin exerts its influence on us.

Law of the Spirit of life (8:2)—the principle or “inner being” (7:22)—the mind of Christ (Philippians 2:5) that lives within us (Galatians 2:20) by God’s grace.

Shattering Thoughts

Romans 4:9-12

OPENING
up to the Word

Little by little, Paul is shattering Christ-less religious thinking. Have you ever had a cherished belief shattered? How did the experience change you?

DIGGING
into the Word

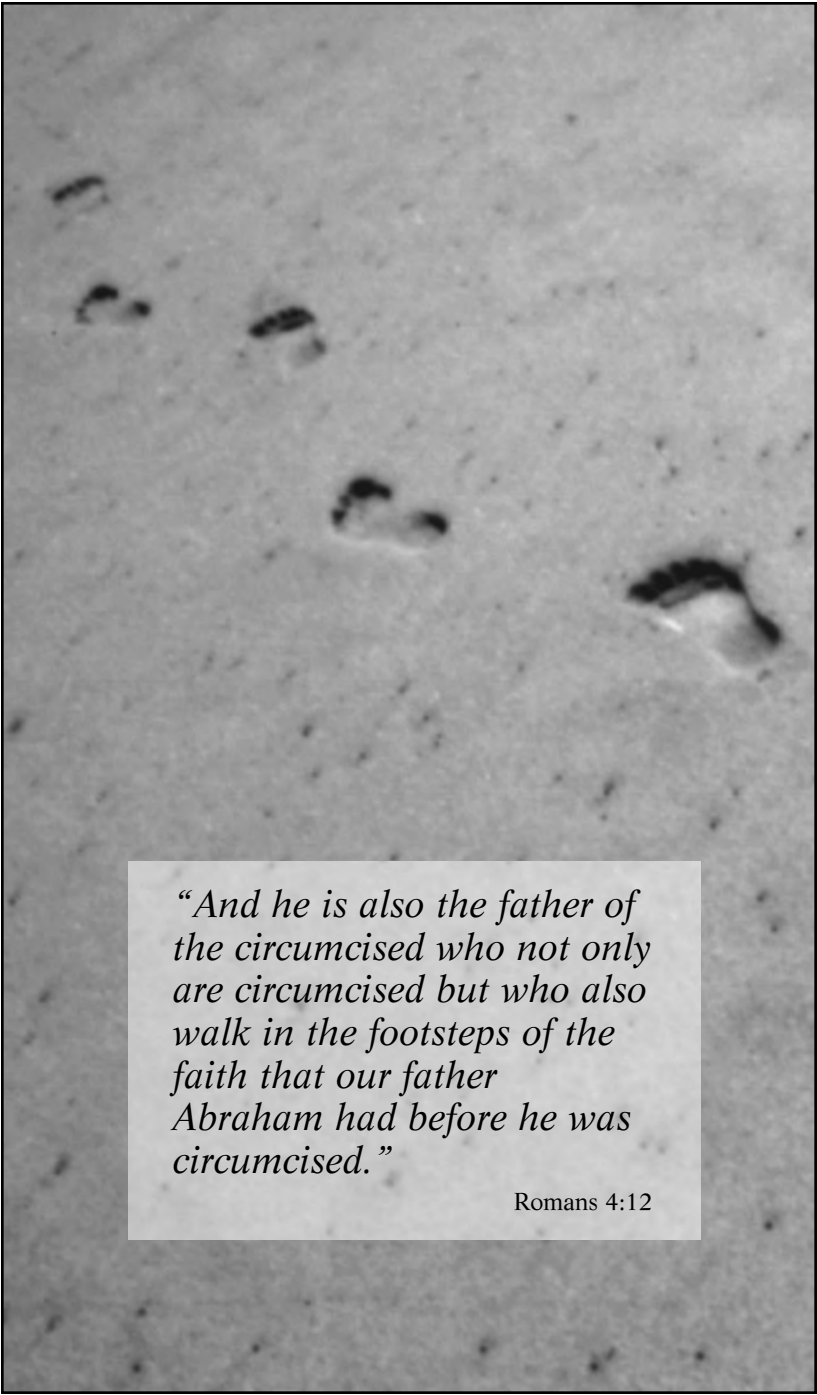
1. Some people were teaching that unless a person were to be circumcised, he could not be reconciled to God (Ac 15:1). How does the example of Abraham contradict that idea?
2. God promised Abraham that his descendants would be innumerable (Ge 15:5). What present-day people are the descendants of Abraham in God's eyes (Ro 4:11)?
3. In what way is Paul expanding a view of God for his readers?

LIVING
out the Word

1. Circumcision was a certification for Jews that they were God's chosen people. Circumcision set Jewish boys apart from others. In light of Paul's illustration of Abraham, are rituals or ceremonies necessary for God to grant you forgiveness and salvation?

WINDOW
on the Word

*For more background on **Abraham**, see Genesis 12:1-3 which outlines God's call when Abraham was 75 years of age, and Genesis 17:1-14 where circumcision is introduced. Abraham was **credited with righteousness** in Genesis 15:6, which was 14 years before his circumcision at the age of 99 (Ge 17:11). Paul is demonstrating that neither circumcision nor keeping the law is requisite to being made righteous. God's righteousness comes from God, through faith.*



“And he is also the father of the circumcised who not only are circumcised but who also walk in the footsteps of the faith that our father Abraham had before he was circumcised.”

Romans 4:12

Amazing Grace

Romans 4:13-17

OPENING
up to the Word

Think about the various ways in which you have received grace from God. Do you believe that you deserve these gifts?

DIGGING
into the Word

1. Paul writes in verse 13 that God promised Abraham that he would be “heir of the world.” Yet in the text in Genesis (see previous day’s Window on the Word), God only promises Abraham and his descendants the land of Canaan. What do you think Paul meant by this?

2. The promises given to Abraham and his spiritual descendants were conditional on (a) obedience to the law, (b) circumcision, (c) good works, (d) faith. See verse 16.

3. Verse 17 quotes Genesis 17:4, where God promises that Abraham will be “a father of many nations.” How was this fulfilled? (a) the Hebrew tribes would eventually become several nations, (b) Jews and Arabs would grow into many nations, (c) people of faith in Christ (both Jews and gentiles) would come from many nations. See Romans 4:16.

LIVING
out the Word

1. Grace is considered by many to be a heavy and abstract theological subject. What difference does it make to you personally whether the promises to Abraham are fulfilled by law or grace?

2. Verse 17 refers to “the God who gives life to the dead and calls things that are not as though they were.” Do you have faith that God will bring about the things he has promised you, even though they may not be fulfilled in this life?

WINDOW
on the Word

*According to Paul, the **law** (v. 14) is a spiritual paradox. The law can show people where they are going wrong, but it cannot keep people from avoiding the wrong nor can it provide a solution when wrong has been committed. **Jesus** provides the solution. He brings God’s grace, forgiveness and acceptance to those who turn to him in faith and trust. Abraham is **heir to the world** in the sense that he is the father of the faithful of all the earth.*

God Makes the Impossible Possible

DAY 13

Romans 4:18-25

Has your faith ever been stretched when you believed God could come through for you on what seemed like an insurmountable difficulty?

1. Abraham believed that God could make the impossible possible. What insurmountable problem did Abraham believe God was able to overcome for him (vs. 19-20)?

2. Abraham trusted in God to do for him what he knew he could not do for himself. He believed that God loved him and that God would care for him, not because of Abraham's goodness, but because of God's goodness.

3. Who else does Paul say will receive this reward of faith (v. 24)?

4. What is the role of Christ in this process (v. 25)?

1. If someone asked you, "What is the only way to enjoy a personal relationship with God?" how would you answer?

2. The impossible took place in the lives of Abraham and Sarah. Can you identify a contemporary example of God making possible the impossible? Consider Matthew 19:26.

***Sarah**, Abraham's wife, had always been childless. Then, when she was 89 years old God promised she would have a child. Although Sarah was initially doubtful, Abraham took God at his word and believed it would come to pass. Read Genesis 17 for more background on this event.*

OPENING

up to the Word

DIGGING

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LIVING

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WINDOW

on the Word

How To Have Peace With God

Romans 5:1-5

OPENING
up to the Word

“Finding God, you have no need to seek peace, for he himself is your peace,” claimed writer Frances J. Roberts. Do you believe that you have personal peace right now?

DIGGING
into the Word

1. What does Paul say is the means by which we can have peace with God (v. 1)?
2. If you didn't know anything about Paul except what you are reading in these verses, how would you describe the apostle?
3. Paul says because we now stand in grace, we can rejoice in hope. We can even rejoice in suffering. What are the two steps that lead from suffering to hope (v. 3)?
4. What is the means by which God places his love in our hearts (v. 5)?

LIVING
out the Word

1. Take a moment to write a definition or description of personal peace. What is it? How does one experience this quality in daily life? Do you have it right now or is your life in turmoil and struggle?
2. Paul was writing about peace with God, not necessarily peace of mind. How do these differ? Does one lead to the other?
3. Recall a time of suffering in your life. Did any good elements come out of that experience? What were they?

WINDOW
on the Word

*The apostle maintains that **suffering produces character** (vs. 3-4). The Greek word for character is dokime, a term used for metal that has been purged of all impurities through intense heat. Paul intends for us to understand that through Christ, suffering can make us better people—not bitter people.*

SALVATION

The book of Romans indicates that we can think about salvation in terms of:

A finished work in the past. If you have placed faith in Christ's finished work on the Cross for your sin, then you *have been saved*.

From that moment on, your eternal destiny was secure, because Christ's atonement has made you free to stand before God without guilt or penalty for your sin. To use Paul's word, you have been "justified" (Ro 5:1,8-9). That's why Paul could tell the Philippian jailer that he would be saved if he believed in the Lord Jesus Christ (Ac 16:31).

A continuous process in the present. Have you ever wondered how you can be saved from sin, but still sin? The Roman Christians and Paul struggled with this problem (Ro 6:1-2). Like Paul, you may cry out to be set free from ongoing sin. The answer is in Christ's atonement. The Holy Spirit provides power and grace to overcome temptation and anything else that faces you. We should trust Christ on a daily basis because we *are being saved* in the midst of trials and temptations. This lifelong process, called *sanctification*, involves Christ living his life in you (Gal 2:20). Justification saves you from the penalty of sin (eternal death), sanctification saves you from the power of sin, so that you become more and more like Christ.

A hope to hold on to in the future. In describing salvation, the book of Romans looks ahead to an ultimate outcome. Paul says that you will be "glorified" with Christ (Ro 8:17). That is, you *will be saved* in the sense that you will be completely perfected when you finally stand before God. You will be fully delivered from judgment, removed from sin's presence, restored to the image and likeness of God in which you were created, and will enter into eternal life with God. This is the eternal dimension of salvation called the believer's hope of glory.

Following Christ involves all three dimensions of salvation.