

Romans 5-8

A new life with unshakeable hope

Fellowship Group Guide
Gracefields Church

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Howzit, molweni, hello!

Welcome to your *Fellowship Group Guide* for Romans 5–8. This guide is here to help you work your way through these rich and encouraging chapters of the New Testament.

A couple of things to notice about this guide:

- **Introduction:** This section shows how Romans fits into the bigger story of the Bible, and how chapters 5–8 fit within the letter itself. Helpful information for you to know!
- **Notice the three elements of every study:** *understanding* the Bible, *connecting* it to life, and *praying* through it. This 3-part format is really important, because the goal of reading and studying God’s Word is that it changes and renews us. Please make sure that you include all three elements when you meet.
- **Meditate on the Bible.** Our hope is that this guide points you to a deeper knowledge of the Bible. Please read the relevant Bible passages ahead of time; reflect, ponder, and pray. Doing that as part of your regular routine will enrich the times you have with your Fellowship Group.

We hope you enjoy your time with your Fellowship Group. Studying God’s Word together is a great joy and is one of the ways God renews us into His image. Romans 5–8 is especially helpful for understanding the Christian life, so we hope and pray these studies will encourage and strengthen you in your walk with God.

Warmly, in Christ,

Kyle Johnston

Romans: An introduction

The letter to the Romans has profoundly shaped Christian theology and spirituality throughout history. From John Chrysostom in the fourth century, to Martin Luther in the sixteenth, to John Wesley in the eighteenth, Romans has repeatedly been the letter through which believers have come to a renewed understanding of God's grace in Jesus Christ. This historic impact highlights the importance of understanding Romans – and not just as an individual letter, but as part of God's mission to restore humanity.

So let's review how this important letter connects with the larger mission of God as we learn about it in the Bible.

Biblical Context: The Mission of God

From the moment of Adam's rebellion, God was determined to restore humanity. This restoration would come through a redemptive plan that was always intended to include not only Israel, but – through Israel – all the nations of the earth.

The Promise of 'All Nations'

God's call of Abraham marked a decisive step in this plan. Abraham was promised that "all the families of the earth" (Gen 2:3) would be blessed through him. While this promise offered blessing, it also carried a warning: nations that opposed God's purposes would face judgment. Throughout Israel's early history, some Gentiles—such as Rahab, the Gibeonites, and Ruth—responded in faith and were welcomed among God's people. This inclusion of people from other nations acted as a signpost towards a larger future ingathering.

‘All Nations’ in the Psalms

The Psalms expand this promise, portraying Israel’s vocation in this way: “Praise the Lord, all you nations” (Ps 117:1). God’s anointed King would rule universally, receiving the nations as His “inheritance” (Ps 2:8). While David and Solomon partially reflected this vision, the Psalms anticipate a greater King whose reign would extend to the ends of the earth. In line with the original promise and warning, those who rejected this King would face God’s wrath, but those who sought refuge in Him would rejoice (see Ps 2:10-12).

‘All Nations’ in the Prophets

Israel’s unfaithfulness to God seemed to threaten God’s redemptive purposes. Yet the prophets reaffirmed God’s promises, announcing a future restoration and a new covenant (see Jer 31). They foresaw a day when a new David-like King would arise: “I the LORD will be their God, and my servant David will be prince among them.” (Eze 34:24). This future Davidic King would also be God’s Servant, who would be “a light for the nations” so that God’s salvation could “reach to the end of the earth” (Isa 49:6).

Strikingly, this Servant would achieve victory through suffering:

“it was the LORD’s will to crush him and cause him to suffer, and though the LORD makes his life an offering for sin, he will see his offspring and prolong his days, and the will of the LORD will prosper in his hand. After he has suffered, he will see the light of life and be satisfied; by his knowledge my righteous servant will justify many.”

(Isa 53:10–11).

God’s Servant would bear sin, suffer judgment, and yet be vindicated. Through Him, God would justify many, while those who refused to come would be judged.

The King, Israel, and ‘All Nations’

Jesus of Nazareth is presented as the fulfilment of these hopes. As the true Son of David and God’s anointed King, He established the new covenant

through His life, death, and resurrection. By bearing the curse of sin, Jesus satisfied God's wrath and reversed Adam's legacy of condemnation – the Lord Jesus brought justification and life to humanity (Rom 5:12-21).

And just as sin and death came to all through Adam, now grace and life are available to all through Christ. Which means that God's people can be made up of anyone who has faith in Christ – the church is a community that can include people from 'all nations!' Empowered by the Holy Spirit, the gospel would spread from Jerusalem to 'all nations' – as the Lord Jesus said to His disciples: "you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth" (Ac 1:8).

In Jesus, the promise to Abraham finds its fulfilment and God's blessing begins to flow outward to the nations.

But to the Gentiles? Israel's Reluctance and Resistance

Despite Jesus' commission, the early church struggled to embrace God's mission to the Gentiles. Initially centred in Jerusalem and largely Jewish, the church was hesitant to cross ethnic and cultural boundaries.

Persecution, divine intervention, and repeated demonstrations of the Spirit's work among Samaritans and Gentiles were required to convince Jewish believers that the grace of God truly extended to ethnic outsiders and former enemies (see Ac 8-15).

The conversion of Paul marked a turning point. Appointed as an apostle to the Gentiles, Paul proclaimed the gospel widely, insisting that salvation came through faith in Christ alone (not adherence to the Law of Moses). Although many Jews believed this gospel message, widespread rejection led Paul increasingly to focus on the Gentiles. The result was a growing Gentile component within the Christian movement, alongside widespread rejection by ethnic Jews. These social dynamics raised difficult theological questions about Israel, the Gentiles, the place of the law, the nature of the church, and God's faithfulness—questions that the letter to the Romans directly addresses.

Historical Context: Who, When, and Why?

Who: The Roman Church

The Roman church likely began through Jewish believers returning from Pentecost (cf. Ac 2:10) and other believers joining them who had been scattered by persecution. Reading the letter, we can see that the church consisted of both Jews and Gentiles, but experienced significant tension (you'll see this throughout the letter – and in a very specific way in chapter 14). The church in Rome was experiencing tension and disputes over the law of Moses and Jewish customs. These conflicts threatened the unity necessary for mission. And so, Paul addresses them directly, helping Jewish and Gentile Christians understand their common spiritual foundation in Christ. Paul wants them to understand that they are essentially the same: they were both dead in Adam, and both made alive in Christ (cf. Rom 5:12-21).

When Was Romans Written?

Romans was written shortly before Paul returned to Jerusalem with a financial gift for the impoverished church there. Evidence strongly suggests it was written from Corinth during Paul's winter stay, around AD 55–58, as he prepared to travel to Jerusalem and later hoped to visit Rome on route to Spain (cf. Rom 15:24).

Why: The Purpose of the Letter

Romans was written for several interconnected reasons.

- Firstly, *for evangelism*. The letter to the Romans was written to motivate the church of Rome to be involved in God's mission to the Gentiles, specifically to Spain (Rom 15:24). This shows us that the Gospel is for everyone.
- Secondly, *for unity*. If this mission is going to succeed, the church (that consists of Jews and Gentiles trusting in Jesus) needs to be unified in both the mission and in their shared life as those on mission as one people (Rom 15:5-9). This shows us that the Gospel creates unity.

- Thirdly, *for gospel clarity*. The tensions between Jew and Gentile actually reveal a deeper issue: how someone is made right with God. Because justification is by grace alone, there is no contribution from human works. This raised all sorts of questions for Jewish believers related to Old Testament promises and the role of the law, all of which Paul clarifies in this letter.
- Fourthly, *for God's glory*. The desire to see the church unified and on mission together serves a greater purpose: God's glory. God's plan was always to restore His image bearers (Gen 1:26-27) who have "fallen short of the glory of God" (Rom 3:23). Through Jesus' atoning death, resurrection and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, believers are "predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son" and "glorified" (Rom 8:29-30). Ultimately, the mission is to reach "all nations" (Jew and Gentile) for the glory of God!

All of these reasons are relevant to us at Gracefields. We must remain united, even though we come from various cultural backgrounds. Like the Roman church, our purpose is to honour God and reach out to others. We aim to be a unified church on mission, reaching out to people and encouraging them to find hope and life in the Lord Jesus.

The Structure and Message of Romans

The letter to the Romans can be divided into four main parts, with sections at the start and end that give us helpful information about Paul, the Roman church, and the reason he writes.

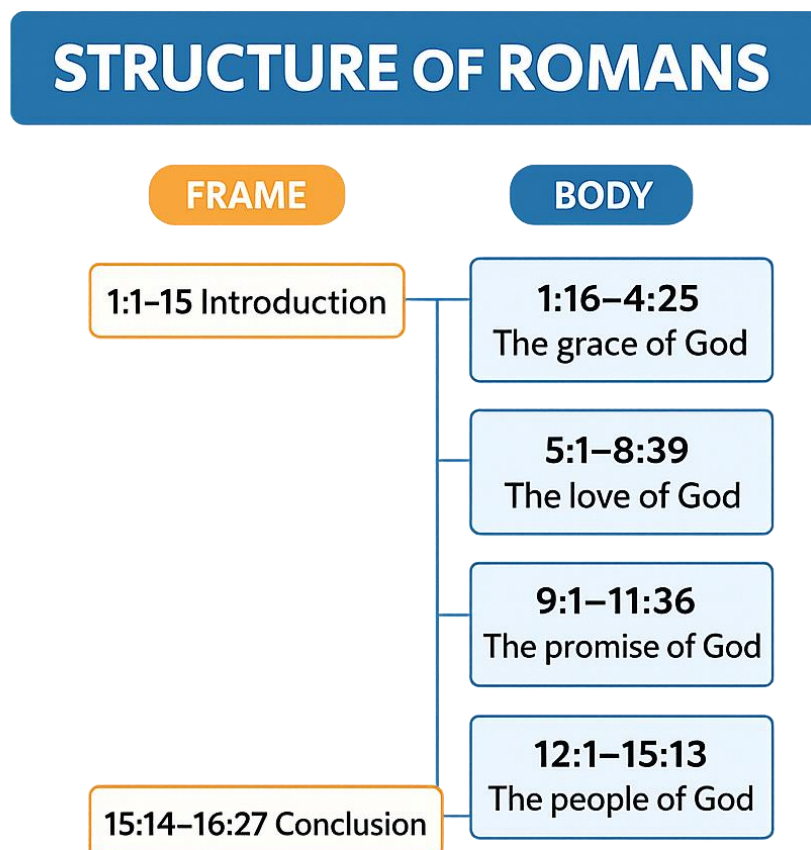
In the first four chapters, Paul explains the gospel of justification by grace. In doing this, Paul explained how God's salvation promises, made in the Old Testament, have been fulfilled in Christ. furthermore, this 'gospel salvation' is available to everyone – and is only received through faith. This was the case for Abraham, and it will be the same for everyone else.

In chapters 5-8, Paul builds on this gospel foundation, showing us that those who are justified have a new life with God, characterised by unshakeable hope. Despite our challenges with sin and suffering, we will never be separated from His love!

In chapters 9-11, Paul addresses a question that arises from his argument: *If both Jews and Gentiles are equally guilty of sin and now have equal forgiveness and access to God through faith, and if the blessings of Israel (the Old Testament people of God) are now enjoyed by the church... then what does that mean for the promises made to Israel as Israel?* And so, in these dense but important chapters, Paul explains how God remains faithful to His promises, explaining that His faithfulness (despite human rebellion) actually leads to an overflow of grace.

Finally, in chapters 12-15, Paul teaches us how to live out our faith in everyday life and relationships. Having understood and received salvation by grace, in these concluding chapters we get a picture of what it means to be a church shaped by grace.

We could visually summarise this structure with the following diagram:



The Message of Romans 5–8: a new life, filled with hope

This study series focuses on Romans 5–8. Perhaps we could summarise the message of this section by saying that those who are justified have *a new life, filled with unshakeable hope*.

So this term we will reflect again and again on our new life in Christ, and the hope we have in Him. We will start with two introductory studies before jumping into Romans 5-8. Here's how the term will unfold:

- Study 1: Understanding idolatry
- Study 2: The normal Christian life – repentance and faith
- Study 3: Romans 5 v 1-11
- Study 4: Romans 5 v 12-21
- Study 5: Romans 6 v 1-14
- Study 6: Romans 6 v 15—7 v 6
- Study 7: Romans 7 v 7-25
- Study 8: Romans 8 v 1-39

In Romans 1-4, we learnt about the righteousness that comes by faith. Now, in Romans 5-8, we learn about the consequences of that righteousness: *a new life with God, filled with hope*.

A new life: Because we have been united to Christ, we are now dead to sin and alive to God! This means that we can learn to “live a new life” (Rom. 6:4). The surprise is that this new life is characterised by ongoing struggles with sin and suffering. Which brings us to the other theme: hope.

A life filled with hope: To be righteous by faith means that all the future blessings promised to Israel now belong to those who are ‘in Christ’. Which means that every Christian can be assured of deliverance from all of their struggles with sin and suffering, from God’s wrath, and into a future of eternal glory.

Paul captures this experience of a new life filled with hope so well in Romans 8:23-25, where he says that, as Christians, *“we wait eagerly for our adoption to sonship, the redemption of our bodies. For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what they already have? But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently.”*

Our tagline for this section is ‘the love of God’ and you can see the connection between hope and love in both chapters 5 and 8:

- “Hope does not put us to shame, because God’s love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit” (Rom 5:5)
- “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? ... No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.” (Rom 8:35, 37)

Romans really is a life-changing book, and this section is full of hope. Our prayer is that the wonder of God’s grace, and the unshakeable hope it gives us, would strike your heart afresh as we reflect on God’s Word together.

Weeks 1-2: The aim of these introductory studies

Before we dive into our studies in Romans, we're taking two weeks for a pair of stand-alone studies. These grow out of themes in Romans and prepare us for what the letter will teach, but they also stand on their own as vital biblical truths.

During these same weeks our Sunday preaching will be focused on our Winter Life Series, *When In Doubt*. Once that series wraps up, our Sunday sermons and our Fellowship Group studies will move through Romans together.

These two studies are not “extras.” They will help us see the nature of idolatry, the call to repentance and faith, and what the normal Christian life looks like. In doing so, they aim to deepen our understanding of grace and prepare us to study Romans 5-8.

Week 1: Understanding idolatry

Romans 1 v 18-32

Understanding the Bible

Opening Discussion Question: what is idolatry – and how does it show itself today?

Read Romans 1:18-32.

1. According to Romans 1:18-20, how do humans respond to God revealing Himself?
2. Verses 21-23, and verse 25, define the essence of sin. So, what is sin? And how is this more than just 'bad behaviour'?
3. In verses 24-28, we see God's response to idolatry. How would you summarise God's response?
4. How does this heart-based idolatry then shape a person's life, according to verses 24-32?

Connecting the Bible

1. Can you remember what idolatry looked like in your life before you became a Christian? How does that connect to what these verses teach?

2. Sadly, even after conversion, idolatry can still distort our hearts and lives. Most of us will struggle with various forms of idolatry. Can you identify what you are most tempted to idolise at the moment? Here are some questions¹ that can help you reflect:
 - a. What do you most love? What do you treasure, delight in, or long for?
 - b. What do you want out of life? What are your goals and expectations?
 - c. What do you most fear? What's your greatest nightmare?
 - d. What do you think you most need to be happy and fulfilled?
 - e. When life is hard, where do you find refuge, safety, and comfort?
 - f. What do you pray for the most? Talk about? Daydream about?

3. How does this idol lead to distortions in your behaviour and lifestyle?

¹ Counsellor David Powlison developed these questions to help people think more clearly and deeply about their motives. The goal is to uncover the motives behind our actions, allowing us to better identify when something may start to take on excessive importance (moving from a good thing to a 'god' thing).

Consider a hypothetical example: imagine a man who places all his energy into his career, believing it will make him important and fulfilled. But success at work requires so prioritising his career that he has very little room for anything else. As a result, he neglects his relationship with God – as well as his wife, children, friendships, and even his own health. Over time, this leads to stress and difficulties in many areas—spiritually, relationally, emotionally, and physically. Can you see how his distorted desires eventually created a distorted existence?

4. Having identified our idols, we need to confess, repent and be assured of forgiveness. That's the focus of our next study. For now, conclude your evening by rejoicing in the wonderful truths in **1 John 1:5-2:2**. Read these verses and encourage one another.

Praying in light of the Bible

1. Thanksgiving: let's thank God for giving us His Word. His Word shines a bright light into the darkness of our idolatry, enabling us to see ourselves clearly.
2. Confession: spend some good time confessing your idolatry, and asking God for forgiveness.
3. Rejoicing: God is always better than our idols, and worshipping Him is what recentres our hearts and lives. Spend time thanking God for His grace, forgiveness, and kindness to us.
4. In your praying, please also remember to pray personally for others. In light of what they have shared, what would a thoughtful prayer for a group member contain?

Week 2: Repentance and faith

Romans 8 v 1-13

Understanding the Bible

Opening Discussion Question: how would you describe the normal Christian life?

Read Romans 8:1-13.

1. What is the spiritual status of a Christian, according to Romans 8:1?
2. According to verses 2 and 4, what does receiving the Holy Spirit mean for our Christian life?
3. Verses 5-11 emphasise that all Christians have the Spirit – this explains why we can live a new life. But having the Spirit brings an implication – what is that implication, according to verses 12-13?
4. Taken together, verse 5 and verse 13 help us understand what a life of repentance and faith looks like. Could you summarise these two verses into a single sentence that describes the Christian life?

Romans 8:1-13 reveals the importance of ongoing repentance and faith in the Christian life. If we allow sin to go unchecked, it can lead to trouble; therefore, we must continually repent and "put to death the deeds of the body" (v. 13). And because we have received new hearts, we can, through faith, focus our "minds on the things of the Spirit" (v. 5).

Connecting the Bible

1. In our previous study, we identified our idols. Let's consider afresh how our idols are weak, dangerous, and offensive to God. Can you share how your idolatry is:
 - a. Weak (it doesn't bring about what it promises)?
 - b. Dangerous (how does it harm you and others)?
 - c. Offensive to God (what message does your idolatry send to God)?

2. A lifestyle of repentance and faith involves setting our minds on the things of the Spirit. One way we can do that is by considering how Jesus is superior to our idols. So, in a simple way, can you explain how Jesus is better than your idol?²

² Try to base what you say about the Lord Jesus from verses in the Bible. Also, it might help to include how Jesus is better than the idol by identifying how He is not weak, dangerous, or offensive to God!

3. A lifestyle of repentance and faith involves regular prayers of confession. A good confession includes a confession of (a) the sinful behaviour, (b) the underlying idolatry, and (c) a sincere 'sorry' to the Lord. But it also includes (d) a heartfelt rejoicing in God's grace. Take a few moments to write down or speak aloud your own prayer of confession.

4. Try to get practical here: what would it look like for you to live a lifestyle of repentance and faith?

Praying in light of the Bible

1. Thanksgiving: let's thank God for giving us His Spirit. Romans 8 gives us hope – because we see that we are not alone when it comes to living the Christian life. If you are a Christian, “the Spirit of God dwells in you” (Rom 8:9)! Praise God!
2. Confession: perhaps you have already prayed and shared your prayers of confession. If not, this time at the end of the study gives you an opportunity to do so.
3. In your praying, please also remember to pray personally for others. Considering what they have shared, what would a thoughtful prayer for a group member contain?

Week 3: Sermon notes on Romans 5 v 1-11

[illegible]

Week 3: The assurance of hope

Romans 5 v 1-11

Understanding the Bible

Opening Discussion Question: What are some of the best things about being a Christian?

Read Romans 5:1-11.

1. Paul starts by summarising his argument in chapters 1–4: we are justified through faith. Next, in 5:1–3, he describes the results of justification. What are they?
2. Looking at 5:3-4, how does suffering enhance hope?
3. Hope coexists with our experience of God's love. How is it possible for anyone to experience the love of God? (v 5)
4. What has God done to demonstrate his love for us? And so how can anyone know for sure that God loves them? (v 6-8)

5. What does Jesus' death in the past mean for how we view God's judgement ("wrath") in the future? (v 9-10)

6. Verse 11 captures how we should feel because of God's gracious love and our hope for the future. What does Paul say Christians do?

Connecting the Bible

1. This passage focuses on our relationship with God:
 - a. How would you describe your current relationship with God?
 - b. How does your description compare to what Paul describes in 5:1-2.

2. Reflect on your experiences of suffering. Did you experience the 'spiritual chain reaction' Paul describes in 5:3-4?
 - a. If so, could you please explain your experience?

 - b. If not, could you explain what you think was happening instead?

3. How does 5:6-8 give you assurance of God's love?

4. Romans 5:11 teaches us that we should be full of joy and confidence because of God's gracious love given to us through Jesus. What does this joy and confidence look like in your everyday life?

Praying in light of the Bible

1. Give thanks to God for our justification, and all the blessings that we now enjoy!
2. Ask God for help in persevering through trials; ask that our suffering would indeed produce character and hope.
3. Give thanks to God that we can be sure that we will be saved on the day of judgment.
4. Add additional prayers, drawn from your discussion and any specific needs identified by group members.

Week 4: Sermon notes on Romans 5 v 12-21

[illegible]

Week 4: Christ has triumphed over sin and death

Romans 5 v 12-21

Understanding the Bible

Opening Discussion Question: when do you tend to lose hope?

Read Romans 5:12-21.

1. According to verse 12, how did death come to all people? In other words, why does everyone die?
2. In verses 15-19, the apostle Paul contrasts Adam with Jesus. Can you give a summary of the difference between these two?

In Adam	In Christ

3. In verse 18, Paul writes: “just as one trespass resulted in condemnation for all people, so also one righteous act resulted in justification and life for all people.” Does God exclude anyone in His offer of salvation? And, conversely, what is essential for **anyone** to be saved?

4. The introduction of the law of Moses increased sin (verse 20). How did God’s grace respond to sin’s increase?

Connecting the Bible

1. Do you ever lose hope in your struggle with sin? Share with your group what that hopelessness looks like.

2. Do you ever lose hope when you consider your mortality? When you think about your inevitable suffering, ageing, and impending death? Share your thoughts with your group.

3. Jesus is more than a match for sin and death! Try and keep this personal: how does this passage give you hope as you face the twin enemies of sin and death?

4. Jesus' salvation is available to everyone: to all people, cultures, ethnicities and social classes. What can we do, practically, to make Gracefields a more inclusive and welcoming church family?

Praying in light of the Bible

1. Give thanks to God! Because Jesus has conquered sin and death!
2. Pray in light of the details that people have shared regarding their struggles with sin and death.
3. Pray that this grace, which is available to all, reaches more and more people in the Deep South. Ask God to help us become more welcoming and inclusive as church members.
4. Feel welcome to pray any additional prayers, drawn from your discussion or any specific needs identified by group members.

Week 5: Sermon notes on Romans 6 v 1-14

[illegible]

Week 5: Dead to sin and alive to God

Romans 6 v 1-14

Understanding the Bible

Opening Discussion Question: what gives you hope for your ongoing moral renewal?

Read Romans 6:1-14.

1. Briefly, look back over 5:12-21. Why might the question in 6:1 arise?
2. According to verses 3-5, what does it mean for a Christian to have “died to sin”?
3. Verses 6-7 restate our union with Christ, while verses 8-10 focus on the future implications. What does the future hold for those who are ‘in Christ’?
4. Paul gives commands in verses 11-14. What are they – and what do they tell us about what it means to live the Christian life?

Connecting the Bible

1. Sometimes it feels like sinning is inevitable. In our despair or discouragement, we might feel or think that we may as well just “go on sinning, so that grace may increase” (Rom 6:1). How does this Bible passage respond to that?
2. How does Romans 6:1-14 inform how you think about your identity?
3. But if we have a new identity, why do we struggle so much with sinful desires and behaviours?
4. Are there any sins that you have grown tolerant towards? What would it look like to proactively offer that part of your life to God?

Praying in light of the Bible

1. Let's start with thanksgiving! Praise God for the remarkable work He has done – He has united us to His Son! And “if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him” for eternity!
2. Pray that we would remember who we are; ask the Holy Spirit to remind us of our true identity – especially when we feel discouraged by our struggles with sin.
3. Ask God to give us hope: our future is certain.
4. Finally, pray about the specific struggles people shared. Pray about those areas in our lives where the struggle with sin is particularly hard at the moment.

Week 6: Sermon notes on Romans 6 v 15 – 7 v 6

[illegible]

Week 6: Slaves of God and married to Christ

Romans 6 v 15 – 7 v 6

Understanding the Bible

Opening Discussion Question: why should you be motivated to pursue godliness?

Read Romans 6:15-7:6.

1. What question is Paul asking in 6:15 (and how is it similar-but-also-different to the question he asked in 6:1)?
2. In Romans 6:15–23, Paul explains the obligation a believer has to growing in holiness. He explains this obligation with the metaphor of slavery. Complete the following table to clarify how different these two types of slavery are:

	Slavery to...	Freedom from...	Present experience	Future destiny
V20-21				
V22				

3. In Romans 7:1-6, Paul explains the Christian's relationship to the law using another metaphor: marriage. There are three related questions to grapple with here:
 - a. How does 7:4-5 describe our 'old marriage' to the law?
 - b. How does 7:6 describe your 'new marriage' to Christ?
 - c. So what does this mean for your relationship to the law?
4. In summary, then, how does Paul answer the question he raised in 6:15 – *why should Christians pursue holiness?*

Connecting the Bible

1. Based on the slavery metaphor in this passage, what would you say to someone who said: “I don’t want to be a Christian because I want to be free to do what I want”.
2. Based on the marriage metaphor in this passage, what would you say to someone who said: “It doesn’t matter if I sin, because God will forgive me anyway.”
3. Can you share an example from your past that demonstrates the point Paul makes about sin bringing shame in verse 21? In other words, how have you experienced the truth what Paul says in verse 21?
4. John Owen was a famous theologian who wrote a book called *The Mortification of Sin*. In that book, he counsels us how to respond after we have sinned. Read this quote slowly, and share your reaction to it with your Fellowship Group:

Say to your soul, ‘What have I done? What love, what mercy, what blood, what grace have I despised and trampled on? Is this how I respond to the Father for his love, to the Son for his blood, and to the Holy Ghost for his grace? Is this how I repay the Lord? Have I defiled the heart that Christ died to wash, and that the blessed Spirit has chosen to dwell in? What can I say to the dear Lord Jesus? How can I hold up my head with any courage before him? Do I consider communion with him of so little value that, for the sake of this vile lust, I have left little room for him in my heart?’

5. Our old marriage to the law is over! How does the metaphor of being united to Christ in a new marriage motivate you to honour and obey Him?

Praying in light of the Bible

1. Let's take time to thank God! Though we used to be slaves to sin, we have come to obey from our hearts the pattern of teaching that has now claimed our allegiance! We have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness!
2. Thank God for the gift of His Holy Spirit! We have been released from the law; we now serve in the new way of the Spirit!
3. Ask for forgiveness for the many ways we still sin. Ask God to help us understand sin within a relational context: when we sin, we are committing a horrendous act of ingratitude. Ask the Holy Spirit to give us a sensitivity to sin, and a desire to honour Christ.
4. Pray for anything else that was raised during the discussion.

[illegible]

Week 7: The Law vs Sin

Romans 7 v 7-25

Understanding the Bible

Opening Discussion Question: what role do you think *ongoing confession of sin* plays in the Christian life? Why do you think this?

1. Look at Romans 3:20, 5:20, and 7:5 – and summarise what Paul has said about the law. Given this context, why does Paul anticipate the question being asked in verse 7?
2. How does Paul answer the question in verses 7-12?
3. Paul anticipates another question in verse 13: Can you summarise both the question and his answer?
4. In answering this question, Paul reveals a sobering principle about the normal experience of the Christian life. That principle is identified in verse 21: can you explain what that principle is?

Connecting the Bible

1. Paul's spiritual journey included an unexpected (and unpleasant) realisation: *the more he tried to follow God's law, the more he understood his own sinfulness*. In what ways has this experience been reflected in your spiritual journey?
2. Paul shows us that the essence of sin is what we *desire*, not just in how we *behave*. Why is it helpful to know that God's commands are about internal desires before they are about external behaviours?
3. Paul summarises his Christian experience in Romans 7:21-25. He realises that, in the end, he must rely completely on the grace of Jesus and the help given by the Holy Spirit. How does the tension and struggle of Paul's Christian experience encourage you?
4. We must remember that we are both wretched (verse 24) and forgiven (Rom 7:25 & 8:1). Which of these two truths do you tend to be more aware of? What would it look like to learn to hold them both together?
5. What is the benefit of doing a confession together when we meet as a church on Sundays? What is the potential danger?

Praying in light of the Bible

1. Praise God for His Law: because of the perfect standards it sets forth, we have come to see ourselves for who we truly are: sinners who need forgiveness. Spend time thanking God for revealing this important truth to us.
2. Praise God for His grace: despite our sin, and despite our many ongoing struggles with sin, we are forgiven! “Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!”
3. Ask God to protect us from legalism.
4. Finally, pray about the specific struggles people shared. Try to keep your prayers personal and practical.

Week 8: Sermon notes on Romans 8

[illegible]

Week 8: Unshakeable hope

Romans 8 v 1-39

Understanding the Bible

Opening Discussion Question: As you look at your life today, what makes it hardest for you to trust that God is for you, and that He will finish His work in you?

1. Read this chapter as a whole, and highlight every verse that gives you hope.
2. Looking at Romans 8:1-4, why will believers no longer be condemned – and what hope do we have for living a new life of obedience to God?
3. According to Romans 8:5-17, why is a life of obedience inevitable for the Christian?

4. In verses 18-30, Paul teaches us that we don't only have hope in the face of our *struggles with sin*, we also have hope amid our *struggles with suffering* (Rom 8:18). Consider:
 - a. Verses 19-22: Why is creation groaning in hope?
 - b. Verses 23-25: Why are Christians groaning in hope?
 - c. Verses 26-27: Why is the Holy Spirit groaning in hope?

5. The glorious conclusion of this entire section (Rom 5:1-8:30) is given in verses 31-39. What does the apostle Paul want us to clearly understand?

Connecting the Bible

1. Do you ever feel condemned? When and why? How do verses 1-4 give you hope when you experience those feelings of condemnation or despair?

2. Do you belong to Christ, by faith? If not, what is stopping you coming to Him as Lord and Saviour? If you do belong to Christ, what aspect of your spiritual adoption are you most grateful for?

3. In what specific ways do you think you are growing into the likeness of Christ at the moment?

4. Nothing and no one can separate you from God's love – how does that glorious truth comfort you today?

Praying in light of the Bible

1. Let's start with thanksgiving! Praise God for the remarkable assurance of hope He gives us. Despite our struggles with sin and suffering – we will make it home. Nothing and no one can separate us from His love!
2. Pray that we would walk with the Spirit, seeking to weaken the desires of the flesh, and seeking to obey God in every area of our lives.
3. Ask God to give us firm hope: our future is absolutely certain.
4. Finally, pray about the specific struggles people shared. Try to keep your prayers personal and practical.

The Renewal Course

The Renewal Course is an eight-week pastoral care programme that helps people pursue meaningful change in a supportive small-group setting.

Participants identify a personal area for growth and, throughout the course, engage in practices that deepen fellowship with God and encourage genuine, lasting renewal.

Fellowship Groups remain the primary place where pastoral needs are noticed and cared for. Still, there may be times when you would benefit from stepping out of the regular study rhythm for more intentional pastoral support.

The Renewal Course offers a structured setting where you can work through a specific struggle with guided help.

When should you consider signing up for the Renewal Course?

Consider signing up if you are:

- Finding it difficult to cope in a specific area, such as anger, anxiety, escapism, disappointment, or loss.
- Needing more focused support than your weekly Fellowship Group Bible study can provide.
- Wanting to learn structured practices that encourage spiritual renewal.

How does someone apply for the Renewal Course?

Contact Kyle at kyle@gracefieldschurch.org.za