

THE LETTER OF PAUL TO THE ROMANS

Lesson 4 – Study Questions

Romans 2:12-3:8

Review: *From your experience at the Cornerstone meeting last week, share something that helped build your faith.*

DAY ONE

Read Romans 2:12-13

NOTE: (According to Paul) The “law” refers to the guidelines for living in holiness as set forth in the first five books of the Old Testament (the Torah, or the Pentateuch, also called “the books of Moses”). Gentiles are also judged by how they live because they “can live guided by their conscience by natural law as a means to show them the way to salvation.” *Agape*

1. As today’s lesson begins, Paul speaks directly in verse 12 to those “apart from the law.” How would you describe those who are “apart from the law”?

2. Looking back at 1:19-20 what should those who are “apart from the law” have come to understand?

3. From verse 13, note those who are found righteous in God’s eyes and those who are not.

THINK: Does our confidence in God’s forgiveness leave us “loopholes” in our need to be “doers” of the Word and not just “hearers”? St. Caesarius of Arles said “Since God is not only merciful but also just, let us believe in both. Let us not despair of his mercy because we fear his justice, nor love his mercy so much that we disregard his justice...Therefore, above all, we should consider and fear lest we believe that faith without good works can suffice for us.” *St. Caesarius of Arles, Sermons, Hahn & Mitch*

4. What reward will the righteous receive? (verse 13) What do you think this means?

5. Read James 1:22-25 and comment on how this passage parallels Paul’s teachings in today’s lesson.

6. CONNECTION: As followers of Christ, it is important that we both hear his Word and live his Word. In that way we become true “doers” of God’s Word and examples to others. Just as the Jews and Gentiles in Paul’s time were expected to live righteous lives, so too are the Christians and non-Christians today. And yet we are charged to bring the Good News to all. In what way or ways could living as Christians affect non-Christians and possibly open a pathway to Christ?

Read and record John 13:17. Write a prayer today as a “doer” of the word.

DAY TWO

Read Romans 2:14-16

NOTE: Paul here introduces the concept of justification, which is one of the ways he speaks about salvation in Christ, especially in Romans and Galatians. To be justified is to be established in a right relationship with God. *Hahn and Mitch*

7. From the first part of verse 14, even the Gentiles “who do not possess the law” can be justified. What may they do instinctively?

NOTE: When Paul refers to “a law to themselves” it does not refer, in the modern sense, to complete independence; rather, they find the moral kernel of law in their very being as human persons. *Sacra Pagina*

Our Catechism teaches, those who, through no fault of their own do not know the Gospel of Christ or his Church, but who nevertheless seek God with a sincere heart, and moved by grace, try in their actions to do his will as they know it through the dictates of their conscience- those too may achieve eternal salvation. *CCC 847*

8. In verse 15 we read that those who do not have the law written on tablets have it written in their hearts. Having the law written in the heart is a theme throughout Scripture. Record one or more of the following verses with this in mind:

Proverbs 7:2-3

Jeremiah 31:33

Hebrews 10:16

9. After reading verses 14-15, if you were asked, “How are the people who lived before the coming of Christ to be judged?” How would you respond?

10. According to verse 16, Paul says that God will judge through Jesus Christ “on the day.” To what day do you think Paul is referring?

11. According to what, and through whom, will all be judged?

12. CONNECTION: We have seen in today's passages that God's Word, the law, has been carefully inscribed in the hearts of all. It is a gift to each one of us from our God. Describe a situation you have observed or experienced when a person, without formal knowledge or exposure to God's Word, has acted in a way that shows God's law is written on his/her heart.

Read and record Luke 2:19. Like Mary, the mother of Jesus, treasure God's words that are in your heart. With this in mind, compose a short prayer to begin your quiet time with the Lord today.

DAY THREE

Read Romans 2:17-20

13. According to verse 17 who is Paul addressing and of what do they boast?

14. In verse 18 we learn why these people boast. Record their reasons.

15. In verses 19-20 Paul uses the following four images to describe how the Jews view themselves: a guide to the blind, a light for those in darkness, a corrector of the foolish and a teacher of children. Each image could evidence a person who is a "doer" of the Word. Choose one and describe how a person could give the appearance of fitting that image.

16. According to verse 20 what do the Jews have that they believe enables them to fulfill the law?

THINK: A Nash & Young song of the 1960's told us to "Teach your children well." Whether we have children of our own, or simply love the children of others, it is indeed our task to share God's Word with them by both faith and action.

17. Read Matthew 22:34-40. Summarize what Jesus teaches about the law.

18. CONNECTION: In verses 17-21 of chapter 2 Paul challenged the Jews of his day, asking them: “Who is the real Jew? Who is the true Jew who not only knows the law of God, but also keeps the law of God?” We might ask a similar question of ourselves: “Who is the real Christian who knows and keeps the law of God?” Record some ways in which you can refresh your knowledge of God’s law and ways in which you try to fulfill it as a good Christian.

Read and record Jesus’s words in John 8:31. Begin your prayer today asking God for the grace to live your life as a true Christian according to his Word.

DAY FOUR

Read Romans 2:21-24

19. Paul taught of the advantages the Jews enjoyed because they were instructed in the law. He ended verse 20 with questions challenging them to examine how they practiced living according to God’s law. Record his next two probing questions (verse 21).

20. Considering these two specific questions, of what do you think Paul is accusing these Jews?

21. In verses 22-23 Paul cites other examples of the Jew’s digressions, including adultery, idolatry and breaking the Law of Moses. According to the end of verse 23 how is God dishonored?

22. How do the words of Jesus in Matthew 15:7-8 relate to what Paul says in verses 22-23?

23. According to verse 24, Paul says that because of the actions of the Jews, God’s name is reviled among the Gentiles. Explain why those actions could indeed make Paul’s words true.

NOTE: According to Isaiah 52:5, the suffering of Israel prompts her enemies to revile God. Paul uses the passage in support of his point that the present immorality of Israelites is the cause of such defamation. *NABRE*

24. CONNECTION: If we say we are Christians, our words and actions are often closely scrutinized by others. Some watch to see if we live out our faith in our actions or if we simply profess the words of our faith. How do you ensure that you're responding in a Christian way when you're faced with a difficult situation or temptation? Can you share an example?

We have all had moments of impatience and aggravation that we regret. St. Faustina said "Patience, prayer and silence... these give strength to the soul." With this thought in mind write a prayer to begin your quiet time with the Lord.

DAY FIVE

Read Romans 2:25-29

NOTE: In our Commentary Msgr. Mikesch tells us that verses 25 through 29 concern the critical importance of circumcision to the Jews, as a sign of the Old Testament covenant between God and Abraham. To better understand the Abrahamic Covenant read Genesis 17:1-24. Pay particular attention to Genesis 17:10-11.

25. According to verse 25, circumcision has value if a Jew observes the law, but it is not of value if the Jew is not observant. Since circumcision is the sign of the Abrahamic covenant, what do you think Paul is saying this means to the Jew who broke the law?

26. According to verses 26-27, what may the uncircumcised Gentiles who keep the law do to the circumcised Jews who break the law?

27. Explain the surprising statement Paul makes about circumcision in verse 28?

28. What might Paul mean when in verse 29 he writes: "real circumcision is a matter of the heart"?

29. According to the end of verse 29, what reward will the person receive who truly lives in accord with God's covenant?

30. CONNECTION: For a Jew, circumcision is both a ritual and an outward sign of a relationship with God. Paul is reminding the Jews that physical marks and rituals alone do not suffice for salvation; rather, God has called them to live in obedience, obeying his Word as a free will response from a loving heart. This is also true for us as Christians. Outward signs of faith are not necessarily a sign of what is in our hearts. What are ways to keep our hearts obedient and our faith alive and vital? Record your thoughts.

Read and record Deuteronomy 30:6. Let these thoughts lead you into prayer.

DAY SIX

Read Romans 3:1-8

31. In verse 1 Paul asks if there is any advantage in being a Jew. What is his answer in verse 2 and what reason is given?

32. In verse 3 Paul asks if the faithlessness of some will nullify the faithfulness of God. What was his answer according to verse 4?

33a. To complete his answer, Paul quotes a verse from Psalm 51. Record this quote.

b. Refer to Psalm 51:4. What additional thoughts do you find in this verse that helps clarify Paul's teaching?

34. In verses 5 through 8 Paul describes the false reasoning of some sinners, "Let us do evil so that good may come." As outrageous as you may find this false reasoning, there are many today who fail to recognize the grave consequences of sin. Share some of the excuses that might be given for sinning.

35. What does Paul say about these people at the end of verse 8?

36. CONNECTION: The Jews had many advantages. They were God's chosen people and entrusted with God's laws. Through them the Messiah would come and they were the beneficiary of God's Old Testament covenants. This did not entitle them to special privileges; rather, it called them to greater responsibilities to God and to each other. We as believers and recipients of the New Covenant of salvation through Jesus are also called to a higher standard. What are some of the advantages you have received from God as a Christian and the responsibilities that might accompany these blessings?

Read and record Mark 4:25. Begin your prayer today thanking God for all you have been given and asking for the grace to use these gifts wisely.

Read pages 18-21 in the Commentary by Rev. Msgr. Gregory R. Mikesch, M. Div. M.A. The Cornerstone Catholic Scripture Study acknowledges that scripture quotations in this study are from the New Revised Standard Version Bible, Catholic Edition. Copyright 1989, Division of Christian Education of the National Council of Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

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