

THE LETTER OF PAUL TO THE ROMANS

Lesson 12 – Study Questions

Romans 8:31-9:18

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

DAY ONE

Read Romans 8:31-33

1. As we begin Lesson 12 with verse 8:31, the caption changes to “God’s Love in Christ Jesus” (NRSV) or “God’s Indomitable Love in Christ” (NABRE). What a hopeful and reassuring message! Record verse 31. (Good memory verse)

2. Reread Romans 8:28-30 and reference the Commentary to describe what Paul is referring to when he says “these things” in verse 31.

NOTE: The introductory question: “What shall we say to all this?” ensures that this final part of Paul’s argument for hope builds upon the unfolding of God’s eternal plan for the “good” (v. 28) of the elect. From the total range of that plan and its implementation up to this point, one can only conclude that “God is for us” – a phrase that could well-stand as a summary of the gospel contained in the letter as a whole. *Sacra Pagina*

3. In verse 32 we read that God “did not withhold his own Son, but gave him up for all of us.” With what question does Paul end this verse?

4. There is another section in the Bible which describes a father giving up his son. Read Genesis 22:9-12. What connection do you see between verse 12 in the passage from Genesis and Romans 8:32?

5. How would you interpret what Paul is trying to convey with his question and statement in verse 33?

6. CONNECTION: If we choose to believe and to walk in faith, then we will be judged righteous and receive eternal life. On the other hand, in our earthly lives there will be situations in which we are judged, criticized, blamed and misunderstood by others; sometimes unfairly or undeservedly. At times we may even be our own most harsh and prejudiced judge. Nevertheless, God is with us and will give us the graces we need to overcome all who would come “against us.” Share an instance when some kind of human judgment was directed “against you” and how you recognized God’s unwavering presence, love and support.

Keep in mind that no matter what the circumstances we have a formidable ally in God. With this mindset, write a prayer.

DAY TWO

Read Romans 8:34-37

7. As today's lesson begins, Paul once again poses a question in which the answer is implicit. "Who is to condemn?" He goes on to confirm that Jesus, the Son of God, will intercede for us. How does this verse relate to verse 30?

THINK: As Catholic Christians we are part of a long line of believers in intercessory prayer. Remembering each other in our prayers and asking others to pray for us are integral parts of our tradition. Today Paul's words remind us of our most powerful intercessor, Jesus, the Lord. Be mindful as you pray today that Jesus loves you with an immeasurable, incomparable love. He is at the right hand of God interceding for you right now!

8. What three events in the life of Christ does Paul mention in verse 34?

9 Verse 35 is another scripture verse assuring us that nothing will separate us from the love of Christ. (Good memory verse) Record the things listed in verse 35 that might try to separate people from the love of God.

THINK: Can we separate ourselves from the love of God? CCC 1033 says: We cannot be united with God unless we freely choose to love him. But we cannot love God if we sin gravely against him, against our neighbor or against ourselves...To die in mortal sin without repenting and accepting God's merciful love means remaining separated from him forever by our own free choice. This state of definitive self-exclusion from communion with God and the blessed is called "hell."

10. In Paul's time Christians were suffering persecution and death at the hands of their Roman rulers. In verse 36 Paul uses a quotation from Psalm 44:22. How does this quote relate to the reality faced by Paul's readers?

11. A crucial turning point comes in verse 37 following the quotation from Psalm 44. The trials as listed may be the present reality but this does not mean that the forces behind the trials, including the threat of death, are getting the upper hand and successfully prosecuting the elect before the throne of God. We, and not they, are conquerors. (*Sacra Pagina*) Record verse 37. In what way are we conquerors?

12. CONNECTION: Paul, like the psalmist, wants his people (and us) to know that there will be times of suffering. But he asserts that the painful realities of life, which include any form of hardship or distress, are not a separation from God. Instead, these can be a path that leads to the Father. Give an example of this from your own life or from the life of someone you know- when a painful experience became a road to God.

Read and record John 17:15, often called "the Intercessory Prayer" of Jesus, and with grateful hearts offer your own prayer of thanksgiving.

DAY THREE

Read Romans 8:38-9:1

13. As today's lesson begins, Paul offers one of the most beautiful expressions of confidence in our Lord. Complete these verses.

For I am convinced that neither
Nor angels, nor rulers,
Nor things to come,
Nor height, nor depth
Will be able to separate us from

14. For each of the extremes listed in the previous question, try to give an example from today's world of something that might separate us from God.

15. Indeed, we are even more than conquerors since, through the love of Our Lord, we can do battle against forces of evil which are superior to us. Read Ephesians 6:10 and briefly describe how you could use the shield, helmet and/or sword to stand firm against anything that might "separate you from the love of God."

NOTE: The concluding phrase of 8:39 "the love of God that comes to us in Christ Jesus, our Lord" brings the entire sequence to a close on a hymnic note. In its own way, it sums up the entire argument for hope across Romans 5-8, which has so consistently depicted the complete study and continuity between the love of Christ and the love of God... "In Christ" (8:1-9:11) believers are grasped within the love of God and drawn irrevocably into the fulfillment of the Creator's design for human beings already manifested in the glory of the risen Lord. *Sacra Pagina*

16. As we continue the study of Romans, chapters 9-11 turn to God's inclusion of the nation of Israel in his plan. In verse 1 how does Paul emphasize that what he is about to say is the absolute truth?

17. Read John 14:26. How does Jesus describe the Holy Spirit and how does that confirm that Paul is speaking the truth?

18. CONNECTION: Matthew Kelley in his book "Dynamic Catholic" says there are four things dynamic Catholics have in common: Prayer, Study, Generosity, and Evangelization. Of these commonalities in Catholicism, choose one or more and briefly note how you see these in Paul's writing and how you can implement it/them in your own life.

Read and record 2 Peter 1:12 and pray today that you will continue to serve the Lord in truth.

DAY FOUR

Read Romans 9:2-4

19. It is obvious from verses 1-2 of chapter 9 that Paul is deeply concerned and sorrowful. Refer to the Commentary for the reason for his anguish.

20. Paul makes an extreme and extraordinary statement in the beginning of verse 3. Who has stirred these strong emotions in Paul? In your own words, what does he say?

21. Moses too had a time when he was willing to give up everything to save the people. Read and record Exodus 32:32.

22. Record the definition of the word “apostasy.” In what way could it apply to the object of both Paul’s statement and Moses’?

NOTE: It is hard to conceive of anything more devastating for Paul than being formally separated (*anathema*) from Christ and the salvation contained “in” him (cf. e.g. Phil 1:21). Yet were it in any sense permissible for him to do so and if it could really benefit them, he would pray to exchange his own hope of salvation for that of his “kinsfolk according to the flesh.” The condition is unreal. But it underlines the strength of feeling persisting throughout the entire section of the letter devoted to this issue (cf. 10:1; 11:1). *Sacra Pagina*

23. At the beginning of verse 4 Paul calls his people the Israelites. Read and record Deuteronomy 7:6 in which God establishes them as his chosen people.

24. CONNECTION: We may have family members or friends who at one time or another gave up the practice of their faith or chose to no longer follow the teachings of Christ. Perhaps we think that this cannot happen to us; however, we are all vulnerable and we are at war with a deceptive enemy. We need to understand how to stay, as St. Paul says in Colossians, “firm in faith.” We know that our bodies require exercise to be fit and firm; so, too, do our souls. In what ways can you exercise your faith to be more firmly holy?

Read 1 Timothy 4:7-8 and today choose and exercise one way to firm your faith.

DAY FIVE

Read Romans 9:5-10

25. As we continue to study verse 4, record the gifts that were given by God to the Israelites, the Chosen People.

26. In verse 5, Paul lists other gifts including the patriarchs. Refer to the Commentary and identify the patriarchs.

27. Of all the gifts listed in verses 4-5, which is the greatest?

NOTE: In verses 6-8 Paul emphasizes the word of God has not failed, because not all the Israelites “truly belong to Israel and not all of Abraham’s children are his true descendants.” Isaac was the designated heir of Abraham; Ishmael was the other son of Abraham and the slave, Hagar. Isaac was the one who would carry on the family line. In Genesis 21:18, God says of Ishmael, “I will make a great nation of him.” The common belief among the Jews was that Ishmael was the father of the Arab nations. *Commentary*

28. Read Genesis 17:15-21. In this passage God makes several promises to Abraham. With these verses in mind, what do you think is meant by the phrase “children of the promise” as found in verse 8?

29. Continuing his thoughts on divine selection, in verses 9 and 10 Paul points out both the long wait to see God’s promises fulfilled for Abraham and Sarah as well as later for Rebecca, the wife of Abraham’s son Isaac. Consider the Genesis passage you read above. How would you have felt if you were Abraham or Sarah (or later Isaac or Rebecca)? What questions might you have?

30. CONNECTION: When Paul says that the word of God has not failed, he indirectly raises a difficult question pertaining to the promises found in God's Word. Many times the fulfillment of these promises is long delayed and the answers are not as expected. We have all had experiences when we prayed for something and find God's answer long delayed or unexpected. As you have matured in your faith, what have you learned from these experiences?

Read and record Isaiah 55:8-9. Today begin your prayer time asking God for the grace to trust in his promises even when his answers are long in coming or fulfilled in surprising ways.

DAY SIX

Read Romans 9:11-18

31. As today's lesson begins, Paul speaks of God's "purpose of election." This selection process had nothing to do with performing good works. Read Genesis 25:19-26 and briefly note how the selection process was shown between Isaac's sons.

32. Today's verses are difficult for us as Gentile, New Testament Christians, to understand. This image of God is foreign to us. Which phrase in verse 13 strikes you as harsh? (Be sure to read Msgr. Mikesch's comments regarding the Hebrew Mind-set in which God was responsible for every action which took place in the world – good or bad.)

NOTE: Paul shows that a pattern of divine selection and exclusion was already at work before the founding of Israel as a nation. From Genesis 21:12 and 18:10 he shows that God made a distinction between the biological sons of Abraham, choosing Isaac over Ishmael to be the channel of his covenant blessings. Then...he shows that God made a distinction between the biological sons of Isaac, choosing Jacob over Esau to be a channel of covenant blessings...The point is that natural and biological descent from the patriarchs is not a guarantee of divine blessing because everything depends on the grace of God's call.
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33. Again we are shown that God is not limited by human restrictions or expectations. God is free to choose whomever he wills to carry out his work. What does Paul say about God's actions in verse 14?

34. The quotation in verse 15 is found in Exodus 33:19. Read verses 15 and 16 and summarize Paul's point regarding God's mercy.

35. Msgr. Mikesch states that verses 16-18 "reiterate God's complete freedom and control. His benevolence toward humanity is a free gift. It cannot be earned and is not deserved." What does Paul's example of God "raising up" Pharaoh show about God's power?

36. CONNECTION: Through the examples that Paul uses in today's lesson, we can see that Paul is trying to help the Jewish people understand that it was not surprising to see that the Gentiles were being called to the faith. He wants to show that God can and will choose to be merciful whenever and wherever he wants, regardless of whether or not his people deserve his mercy. Each of us has known the mercy and compassion of God and has seen his power at work in our lives. Describe a time when God's mercy or power was manifested to you.

Read Luke 18:9-14 and record the prayer of the tax collector in verse 13. Write a prayer today aware of God's unfailing mercy.

Read pages 66- 72 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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