



What is a Life of Faith?



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Romans 4 – 7
INTEGRATED BIBLE STUDY GUIDE



How to get best value out of these studies...

Welcome to a new series of New Testament studies in the book of **Romans**. These Study Guides are designed in a three part format...

- 1 Opening questions to get you thinking are listed as **Appetisers**.
- 2 Those which get you to investigate the text are contained in the **Main Course**.
- 3 The **Take Away Value** section prompts you to reflect on what you've looked at and consider how it will change you and those in your group.

If you're using these Guides in a Small Group, it is vital that you have done preparatory work *before* you get to your meeting. This will be of great benefit not only to you, but to the other members of your group.

If you're doing these studies individually, make sure you let someone know you are doing so, and arrange a time to meet with them when you've finished (or even before) to let them know how your life is being changed by God's Word.

If you're after good commentaries or resources to complement your looking into the bible, speak to your Small Group Leader or one of the staff, and we'll try to be as helpful as possible. Most people aren't going to spend lots of dollars on theological works, so we're constantly on the look out for good quality titles that will result in money well spent.

We trust you'll find the guides helpful, and we welcome any feedback you can give us as you use them.

Always surround your time looking into God's Word with **prayer**, asking God to change your heart and life so that you – with God's people – might become more and more like our Lord Jesus Christ.

Recommended Reading:

F.F. Bruce, *Romans*, Tyndale Commentary, IVP. 1983.

St. Helen's Bishopgate, *Romans, Read Mark Learn Series*, Marshall

Pickering. 2000. (this would be a particularly useful resource for small group leaders)

J.R.W. Stott *The Message Of Romans, The Bible Speaks Today*, IVP. 1994

J.R.W. Stott, *Encountering the Gospel's Power*, John Stott Bible Studies, IVP. 1998.



Romans so far...

One of the keys to grasping the message of Romans 4-7 is to have a good idea of the ground already covered in chapters 1-3. There is a study guide for Romans 1-3 that might be useful. Before commencing this series it would be a great idea to spend some time reading through Romans 1-3 so you have the argument so far in place.

Essentially the apostle Paul has been explaining God's rightful anger with sin against him. God's anger means that to some extent punishment is meted out now. eg God gives us over to our sin and the frustration that goes with it. In any event there will be a day of final judgement when all will receive justice for their behaviour. This will happen when Christ returns. At that point all who sin/rebel will be punished. The problem is that because all sin all will be punished.

People look for alternatives to rescue them from their inevitable punishment at the hands of God. Some hope that the Law will justify them (ie the rules and regulations so prominent in the Old Testament) But in fact the law doesn't justify, it only condemns.

However, God is rich in mercy. Therefore he delays punishment. Sin is overlooked until the Son, Jesus, pays for our sin and atones the anger of God. Therefore God redeems us out of bondage to sin and justifies us. As a result we are declared right with God. God retains his righteousness while declaring right the unrighteous!

This is a good point to spring into the argument of chapter 4 which pulls apart the notion of faith as the prerequisite for being justified.

How Does Faith Work?

Romans 3:27 – 4:25

1

The sermon focuses on the fact that the benefits of being in Christ are received 'by faith alone'. Abraham is justified by faith alone. It has always been this way in the economy of God.

In this sense then Abraham is the true father of all who believe.

Appetisers...

1. What are some of the ways people think that they can be right with God?

2. The events of Sept 11 were shocking. One of the things that puzzled so many was what could have caused young men to commit acts that inevitably meant they would die. It is the same with the suicide bombers in the middle East. Press reports indicated these men were convinced that if they gave their lives for the cause of Holy War then Allah would reward them. Is it the same when Christians are martyred? What's the difference?

3. When people talk about faith in our society what do they mean? ie what is "Faith"?

Main Course...

The word 'faith' is translated as faith and belief in the new testament. Romans 4 explores in detail the nature of 'saving' faith. Get some background to chapter 4 by reading Romans 1:16, 3:22-23, 3:26, 3:27,3:30, 3:31. What do you think faith is from these verses?

4. Romans 4:16-17 form a hub for the passage. What is the 'promise'

11. Now we are justified as Christians should that lead us to feel no guilt when we sin or to feel guilty?

12. We resist sin but are aware that we still do sin. How do we live with that tension as Christians?

- 4 If the law just promotes sinfulness then isn't it bad? Does the law lead to death? What is the connection between sin and law? (look carefully at the argument in vv7-12)
- 5 Is the law good? For what purpose? In what way is the law limited?
- 6 Is the struggle to live to please God and the battle with the flesh realistic for us as Christians today?
- 7 When can we expect to get on top of this problem? (v25)
- 8 Earlier on in Romans Paul has stated that Christians have been freed from sin (6:7, 18 and 22) but now he is saying that he is 'sold as a slave to sin' (7:14). How is this possible according to Paul?

Take Away Value...

- 9 'If we live in the Spirit, if we walk by faith in the risen Christ, we can truly 'stand aside' while the Spirit gains new victories over the flesh every day.' (Watchman Nee, *The Normal Christian Life*, p120, Kingsway, 1962) How does this contrast with Paul's teaching in this passage? How would he respond to this teaching?
- 10 Is sin the normal for the Christian or abnormal?

being referred to? (It might be good to read Genesis 12;1-3 and see the way this is taken up in Gen 15,17 etc)

How are 'grace' and 'law' contrasted?

- 5 Read through Romans 4:1-8. How does Paul show that Abraham was not made righteous by 'works'?
- 6 How does the illustration in vv4-5 strengthen this?
- 7 Read vv 8-15. How was Abraham not made righteous by circumcision? Why wasn't he made righteous by the law?
- 8 Read vv 18-25. How then was Abraham made righteous? What was the 'saving' character of his faith?
- 9 What then is the basis for being counted as one of Abraham's descendants?

Take Away Value...

- 10 Abraham believed God that he would have a child when he was an old man. For us to have faith does it mean putting off children until we are almost a hundred? What is the object or goal of our faith today? How does it relate to the promise made to Abraham?

- 11 We talked earlier about the nature of faith. How is the faith spoken of in this passage different from the 'leap in the dark' faith that is the caricature of Christian faith in our society?
- 12 What is hard about believing we are made righteous by faith?
- 13 Paul torpedoed reliance on law, circumcision etc as a means of being made right. What things are we likely to rely on apart from faith in Christ?

5

Freed From The Law - Fruitful Living.

Romans 7:1-25

Introduction

Chapter 7 has been an exegetical interpretive minefield for 100's of years. Is it describing a non Christian experience or that of a Christian? Is it a weak Christian or the normal Christian experience?

Convinced bible believers hold different views on this one. Most of the books listed at the beginning of these studies will outline the various views in more detail. I (PH) tend to the view that Paul is describing what is the typical; experience/struggle for the believer.

Appetisers...

- 1 What level of sin should we expect in the life of the believer?
- 2 What would you say is your attitude to the law of God? (love it; hate it; ignore it; don't need it; or...)

Main Course

- 3 In 7:1-6 Paul returns to the argument as to why Christians are no longer under the law (6:15)

What is the point of the illustration from marriage?

How is the life lived under the law contrasted with the life we have in Christ?

- 13 " Problems that currently exist in our society are primarily due to a lack of education about the relevant issues" Do you agree or disagree?
- 14 How does knowledge of having died with and been raised with Christ help you live a godly life?

2

Experiencing Faith***Romans 5:1 – 11***

From Romans 1:18 - 4:25, Paul has been explaining the good news of justification by faith, ie how God declares condemned sinners to be righteous if they trust in Jesus death. From chapter 5 he now focuses on the implications of justification, ie what it means to be a justified person. The goal of this section (ch 5-8) is assurance of salvation.

Appetisers...

- 1 When you get together with friends or family what are the things you tend to get excited about? (some people are always talking about their kids achievements or sport or work or...)

When you are with Christian friends what is it about being Christian that you are most likely to give thanks for?

- 2 Say you have Christian friend who has been hit by tragedy. They are struggling to come to terms with it and how God could possibly have allowed it to happen. What sort of things could you say to be helpful?

Main Course...

- 3 In 5:1 Paul says we have peace with God. What is the connection in this verse between Justification and peace?
- 4 Justification also affects our thinking about the future. Why do justified Christians (excuse the tautology) 'rejoice in the hope of the glory of God'? What is this hope of glory?

- 5 No-one looks to suffer. Why should Christians rejoice in their suffering? (vv3-4)
- 6 It seems odd to link hope and love in vv5-8. Why does the love of God assure us that our hope won't be disappointed?
- 7 Explain in your own words the 'how much more' argument that Paul uses in vv9-10.
- 8 What does it mean to rejoice IN God? (v11) ie you tend to rejoice because of something occurring or rejoice WITH someone - but you don't tend to rejoice IN someone.

Take Away Value...

- 9 You get together with some non-Christian friends the day after you do this study in your home group and one of them asks you 'What is the best thing about being a Christian?' How would you respond? (think carefully about how you would express this for the non-Christian 'ear')
- 10 Why doesn't the world around us crave peace with God more? What do you think most non-Christians would think 'peace with God' is? How would most people think you could achieve peace with God?

- 5 What does it mean to 'count yourself dead to sin'? (v11)
- 6 Why does grace (v14) help you to not sin?
- 7 Paul moves to a second argument in chapter 6. He answers the question 'Shall we sin because we aren't under the law but under grace?' ie doesn't sin matter any more?
- 8 According to Paul what does the wilful persistence in sin demonstrate about the person who still claims to be a Christian?
- 9 What does it mean to be a 'slave to righteousness'? Doesn't God want people to willingly serve him rather than under duress?

Take Away Value...

- 10 Christians know they shouldn't sin. So why do we find it hard not to?
- 11 How do you think Christians today (in our context at church or elsewhere) would tend to ask the questions in v1 and v15?
- 12 Some argue that more emphasis on law (ie what Christians should and shouldn't do) will help us lead Godly lives. On the basis of what Paul is saying in this chapter what would you say?

4

Sin is not Freedom**Romans 6:1 – 23**

This passage confirms that union with Christ leads to holiness not sin. We are united with Christ in his death and resurrection - that being the case we have died to sin and are raised for a lifestyle of holiness. Its inconceivable that Christians could continue to live in sin.

Appetisers...

- 1 When the non-Christian world around us speaks about freedom what are they generally talking about? What are the major differences between that and the freedom spoken of in the bible?

- 2 You have a Christian friend who is clearly involved in a sinful lifestyle choice. You decide the right thing is to privately discuss the matter with them. When you do so they openly admit their behaviour is inappropriate but say "...but Christians aren't perfect - I'm certainly not! But isn't it great we have forgiveness." Subsequently they don't seem to change their sinful lifestyle pattern and don't see any need to. What action do you take (if any)? What would you conclude about their understanding of the grace of God?

Main Course...

- 3 Why would anyone use the argument of 6:1? How does this question fit into the overall theme of the first 5 chapters of Romans?

- 4 What does it mean to have 'died to sin'? (v2 & 10) To be baptised into Christ's death? (v3)

- 11 The word for rejoice is the same one used in 3:27-31 where it is translated as boast. Why are we permitted to boast in Romans 5 but excluded from doing so in Romans 3?

- 12 Do we boast/rejoice enough in the peace we have with God? What could we do that would help us do this more both publicly and privately?

- 13 Pick up the argument of Romans 5 and explain how we can be confident that we will be saved on judgement day.

3

Experiencing Life***Romans 5:12 – 21***

This study raises the notion of what the theologians call 'original sin'. However, it is important not to let the study of the passage be high-jacked by this discussion. Aim to try and understand the passage on its own merits rather than by introducing extraneous ideas into it.

Appetisers...

- 1 Try to think of one action/decision your parents took (that you had no choice about) that radically affected your life in some way.

- 2 There is, and has been for some time, a debate about whether the key to our development as people is more influenced by nature or nurture ie our genes or our surrounding circumstances or influences. What do you think is the more significant of the two?

Main Course...

- 3 In v12 Paul commences a comparison between Adam and Christ that he doesn't return to until v18. What is the point of v12? Do you think this verse is saying Adam was the first of many sinners or that because of his sin all people became sinners? Give reasons.

- 4 Looking at vv13-14 what are the consequences of Adam's sin?

- 5 In vv15-17 the differences between Adam and Christ are outlined. Summarise these.

6 In vv18-19 the similarity between Adam and Christ is spelt out. What is it?

7 How does the law highlight what Christ has done?

Take Away Value...

- 8 'The twin towers terrorist attack was so shocking because on the whole people are pretty good'
Based on the passage how would you respond to this?

- 9 We are a 'free choice' society. Are we neutral moral agents? Do you think this passage argues that we have a predisposition to sin? Why? Why not? (make sure you are getting the answers from the passage)

- 10 How does this passage increase our confidence that we will be saved?

- 11 How is the worlds view about death and its origins radically different from a Christian perspective? How does this affect the way we view our lives?