

Two Year Bible Trek
Week 94
Romans 1-8

Key Concepts: The key concept in Paul's letter to the church in Rome is that Jesus the messiah has completed the work of God, begun in Abraham and continued in the people of Israel; that is bringing about the restoration of humanity and blessing the whole world, by defeating the powers of sin and death.

Background: Paul's letter addresses a particularly difficult time in Jewish-Christian/Gentile Christian relationships. In the late 40s CE Emperor Claudius had expelled all Jews from Rome. It is likely that the Gentile Christians saw this as a repudiation of Judaism and God's covenant with them. Paul's letter however aims to show that this is not so and that the Good News of Jesus is intended first for the Jews and then the Gentiles.

Brief Summary: Greetings (1:1-1:17) Paul introduces himself (an apostle), Jesus (Son of God), Paul's calling (to help people follow Jesus), his love for and desire to see the saints in Rome and a clear statement that the gospel is for both Jews and Gentiles.

The Problem (1:18-3:20) Paul opens the main body of the letter by stating that the problem in the world is that human beings are sinful, meaning that they are not living after the manner in which God created them to live. Even though people ought to be able to look at creation (which is God's handiwork) and see clearly how God would have them to live, they do not. They choose to be blind. And even those who know God, Jews and Gentiles, fall short of God's expectations. Gentiles fall short even when God is in their hearts and Jews fall short even though they know the law. Therefore no one has a right to judge anyone else. Within this section is the famous line, "None is righteous, no not one."

The Solution (3:21-4:25) The solution to the problem of sin is God's faithfulness to the covenant he made with Abraham to bless all of creation. This faithfulness (righteousness in Romans) has been demonstrated in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. All who have faith in Jesus are made members of God's family, just as did Abraham, through faith and not Law.

Peace and Hope (5:1-5:21) The result of the work of Jesus is that people have access to grace, peace, endurance and a hope that never fades. This is so because we have been reconciled to God. Paul makes it clear that Jesus reversed the effects of the fall in Adam and thus offered life to "all people."

Baptism and New Life (6:1-6:23) Because believers have been baptized into Christ they have died to sin and been raised to a new life. They are no longer slaves to sin but have been freed to become slaves to righteousness (meaning their lives are guided by God in Christ). We read that the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is life eternal.

Law and Spirit (7:1-39) Paul begins an extended discourse on the Law. The Law was good, given by God, but it could not give life. All it could do was point out our failings because even when we desired to be completely faithful, we could not be. Deliverance from this difficulty comes through Jesus Christ. In Christ, God has done what the Law could not; allowing us to be guided by the life-giving Spirit rather than being condemned by the Law. Through the Spirit we are set free to be God's children complete with an inheritance of glory. Because this is our future we can have hope. Finally Paul reminds us that because we have been called and chosen by God, to be part of God's family, then nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus.

1. How does Paul's Greeting help set the table for the rest of the book?
2. What do you think about Paul's contention that people ought to be able to see God in nature?
3. How has your faith in Jesus helped you in making better life choices?