



PATHWAY BIBLE GUIDES

Peace with God

ROMANS

BY GORDON CHENG



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Peace with God
Pathway Bible Guides: Romans
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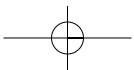
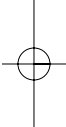
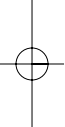
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BEFORE YOU BEGIN

Paul's letter to the Romans lights up what it is to be a Christian, and does something even better for us: it steers us away from our own small concerns to the wonder and glory of God himself, and his purposes for his world. In Romans we learn about God's free gift of life in the gospel, and how through that gospel he makes us *righteous*—that is, right with him—as opposed to self-righteous. And being right with God, and in the eyes of God, is the only sort of righteousness that really counts for anything.

In Romans we also learn how God manages to achieve making us righteous, while still remaining true to himself. How can a God who can't bear to look at evil and imperfection still bear to look at us, and then declare that we are fit to be his own dear children? The answer in Romans is that this happens through the gospel, and only through the gospel—the gospel which is the good news that Jesus died to take the just punishment we all deserve. We can be right with God, this gospel teaches, by trusting in him.

This set of nine studies in Romans doesn't cover everything. This is not because some bits are unimportant. Like visiting the city of Rome itself for the first time, you quickly discover that there is enough in Paul's letter for a joyful lifetime of discovery. Rather, this guide pays a visit to all the key landmarks—including Romans 3:21-26, which Martin Luther

noted in the margin of his Bible was “the chief point, and the very central place of the Epistle, and of the whole Bible”.¹

Indeed Martin Luther, in other good advice, recommended that the letter to the Romans was an excellent one to learn off by heart, thus showing the high value he put on this book. Whether or not as the reader you decide to take this advice, this Romans guide in our *Pathway* series is meant to start you on the discovery of the glorious treasures buried not too far below the surface of Paul’s letter to the Romans.

Gordon Cheng

August 2005

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1. Quoted in Douglas Moo’s commentary on *Romans*, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1996, p. 218.

1. GETTING TO KNOW ROMANS

Romans 1:1-15, 15:22-33



Getting started

In this first look at Romans we will be looking at who Paul was, and what his plan was in writing to the Romans. In the early verses of Romans Paul gives a very simple gospel summary in just a few sentences. Without referring to Romans, or to any gospel outline you've learned, how would you summarize the gospel in a couple of sentences?



Light from the Word

1. Here are some key passages out of Romans:

- Romans 1:1-15
- Romans 9:1-5
- Romans 15:22-33

Read these passages together, and then divide the group in half.

a. Group 1: From the passages listed, and from Acts 9:1-22, what can you work out about Paul and what he is like?

b. Group 2: From the passages listed, and from Acts 2:7-11, what can you discover about the Romans? Has Paul met them?

Get back together as a full group to summarize your answers.

2. From what you've read, what clues can you discover about why Paul is writing, and what's on his mind?

7. Why does Paul want to visit Rome? What can we learn from his example about how to help other Christians?



To finish

Go back to your original summary of the gospel. Is there anything you would change? What?



Pray

Paul was deeply committed to seeing the people he knew come into relationship with God and to grow in knowledge of him. Pray that we would have the same concern.

Two helpful activities

Romans is such an extraordinarily useful book that Martin Luther suggested it be learnt by heart. This would be a wonderful (if rather demanding!) group exercise. But there are other activities which are a lot easier, and nearly as helpful.

One very easy activity will be to get as familiar as possible with Romans by reading it outside your group time. Skim reading many times is useful. One way of doing this is to read the editor's headings (a helpful summary, but not part of the Bible). An even better way, however, is to cross those headings out and add your own. If you have internet access, the English Standard Version (on which these studies are based) can be found at www.esv.org, and small sections can legally be printed off for personal and group use.² You can then print sections out with wide margins and gaps for the purpose of writing down comments, subheadings, and questions.

A second helpful activity is to keep checking footnotes and cross references, to see where Paul quotes the Old Testament. The Old Testament was Paul's Bible, and he used it to prove a point in much the same way we might use the letters of Paul. Checking what Paul is referring to will help us make sense of what God is saying to us now.

For the next session in particular, a helpful piece of reading would be the book of Habakkuk. At just over three pages, this won't take long. In approaching the book of Habakkuk, it will help to know that the Chaldeans (also known as the Babylonians) were a wicked and cruel traditional enemy of Israel. By the time Paul writes Romans, Babylon has been well and truly destroyed. Understanding Habakkuk is one key to understanding Romans.

2. Visit www.gnpb.org/page/esv.copyright for copyright details for the ESV.