

Romans 5-8

More than Conquerors

Studies by Chris Ramsbottom

Contents

Introduction	3
Study 1 – Peace & joy	5
Romans 5:1-11	5
Study 2 – The two realms	10
Romans 5:12-21	10
Study 3 – Dead & alive	16
Romans 6:1-14	16
Study 4 – Free to be slaves	22
Romans 6:15-7:6	22
Study 5 – Do or do not	27
Romans 7:7-25	27
Study 6 – 2 ways to live	34
Romans 8:1-17	34
Study 7 – Now & not yet	39
Romans 8:18-30	39
Study 8 – God’s unstoppable plan	43
Romans 8:31-39	43
Bibliography	48

Introduction

The book of Romans used to scare me. Not only is it Paul's longest letter in the New Testament, it is also his densest. As a result Romans became something of a black hole for me. Perhaps this is the case for you as well?

Or perhaps you love Romans? Certainly it has been a favourite of many scholars down the centuries. Augustine was converted reading a verse from Romans. At the time he was a wild-living teacher in Milan. One day as he sat crying under a fig tree because of his wicked ways he heard a child's voice saying: 'Take up and read.' He took this as a divine command to open his Bible and duly did so to Romans 13:13-14: 'Let us walk properly as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and sensuality, not in quarrelling and jealousy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.' In his *Confessions* Augustine says: 'I wanted to read no further, nor did I need to. For instantly, as the sentence ended, there was infused in my heart something like the light of full certainty and all the gloom of doubt vanished away.'

Martin Luther called the letter to the Romans 'the most important piece in the New Testament'. He said it is 'purest Gospel' and that it is worthwhile for Christians to memorise it word for word! 'It is impossible to read or meditate on this letter too much or too well. The more one deals with it, the more precious it becomes and the better it tastes'.

These studies are based on Romans chapters 5-8. It would be worthwhile to read the whole of Romans before starting these studies. At the very least you should read chapters 1-4 to understand the context of these studies.

In chapters 5-8 Paul explains what it means to be justified by faith. They contain some of Paul's most profound and essential teaching for the Christian. However, it is easy to get bogged down in the detail, to not see the wood for the trees. As you work through these studies try to focus on the big picture. I have included a number of diagrams throughout to help you see how Paul's argument fits together¹.

As you read through certain sections of this letter it may help you to know that Paul employs a style of writing known as a *diatribe*. This is where a teacher tries to persuade a student of the truth through imagined dialogue in the form of questions and answers. The imaginary debater (*interlocutor*) raises objections and false conclusions. The teacher would give a strong denial: 'By no means!' followed by the correct teaching.

My hope is that as we work through these wonderful chapters we would have more of an appreciation for what Jesus has done for us. These chapters will encourage us to do just that. They will also challenge our thinking and the way we live.

So don't be scared by the book of Romans. As you read it my prayer is that you will follow in the footsteps of Augustine and Luther, and discover the riches and depths of this wonderful letter of Paul. I am indebted to Geoff Gertzen for his editing of these studies and his constant encouragement.

Chris Ramsbottom - November 2014

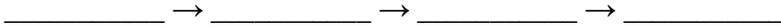
¹ These came from *Read/Mark/Learn: Romans*

3. What is the result of the Christian being justified (v1)? What does this mean? How is this peace achieved?

4. What further benefit flows from being justified (v2a)? Why do you think Paul uses the word 'stand' here?

Think about it: Is it possible for a Christian to lose their standing with God? Why/why not?

5. What 2 things are the Christian to rejoice in (v2b-3)? Does that surprise you? Complete the diagram below. Where does suffering ultimately lead (v3-4)?



6. On what does Christian hope rest (v5)? How can we be sure of this?

7. How did God demonstrate his love (V6-8)? When did this happen?

Memory verse: Read v8 together and memorise it.

8. How does the Christian's knowledge about what God has done in the past give us confidence in the future (v9-11)? What should our response be?

Think about it: "If you don't understand or believe in the wrath of God, the gospel will not thrill, empower or move you." (tweet by Tim Keller, 27th Oct 2014). Do you agree?

Think about it: How can Christians be sure that they will be saved from God's wrath?

Discuss: Tragedy strikes a Christian friend. They start to doubt that they are really a Christian because if they were, God wouldn't let this happen. How would you answer them from this passage?

Think about it: How does peace with God affect:

- *our view of suffering*
- *our moment of death*

Think about it: How might this study change the way you pray this week?

Pray the Bible

- Thank God for the peace we have with him through faith in Jesus.
- Pray that we would rejoice more in our future hope.
- Pray that we would rejoice in our present sufferings.
- Thank God for the Holy Spirit, the sign of God's love in our hearts.
- Thank God that we can be sure of our salvation because of what Jesus has done for us on the cross.

*For further study: Look up the terms atonement, propitiation and imputed righteousness. Read the excellent section on justification in *The Cross of Christ*. [pp. 212f]*

Study 2 – The two realms

Romans 5:12-21

What are some of the reasons people give for death in the world?

Read Romans 5:12-21

1. This is a passage full of contrasts. Find in which verses the following ideas occur and complete the table below:
 - sin vs grace/righteousness
 - death vs life
 - one vs many

	Verses		Verses
Sin		Grace/righteousness	
Death		Life	
One		Many	

2. Now divide the passage into different sections and give each section a heading.

3. Who is affected by Adam's sin (v12)? In what way?

Think about it: Most people think of themselves as generally 'good'. How would these verses challenge their thinking? How could you use these verses to explain the world we live in?

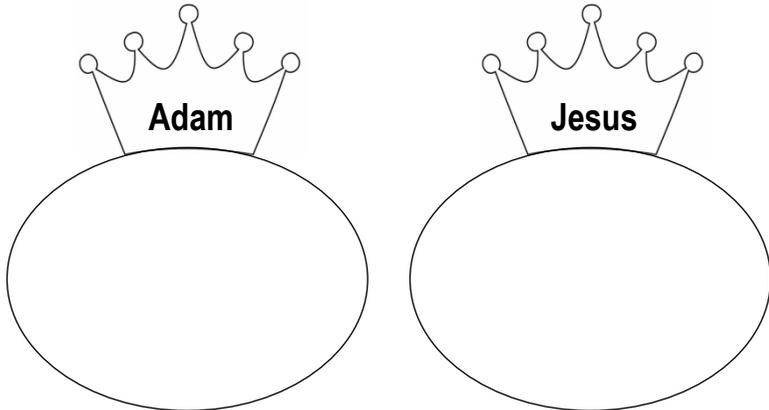
7. What are the differences between Adam and Jesus (v15-17)?

<u>Adam</u>	<u>Jesus</u>

8. How are Jesus and Adam similar (v18-19)? How do we know that Paul is *not* teaching that every person will be saved?

9. What is one of the purposes of the law (v20-21)?

10. Paul uses the word 'reign' throughout these verses (v14, 17, 21). Contrast the two 'realms' (of Adam and Jesus) by completing the diagrams below:



Think about it: According to this passage how should the Christian view their conversion?

Think about it: What part do we play in moving from the realm of Adam to the realm of Jesus?

Think about it: All who come from Adam are in need of the second Adam. How should this motivate our thinking around evangelism and missions?

Pray the Bible

- Thank God for his amazing grace.
- Thank God for his free gift of righteousness.
- Thank God for the promise of eternal life we have through Jesus.
- Thank God that he has rescued us from the realm of Adam to the realm of Jesus.
- Pray for our hearts to be gripped by these truths.
- Pray for personal evangelism and world missions - the urgent need to tell a dying world about Jesus.

For further study: Think of some other examples of people/things in the Bible who/which are 'types' of Jesus. What is the difference between a 'type' and an 'antitype'?

Study 3 – Dead & alive

Romans 6:1-14

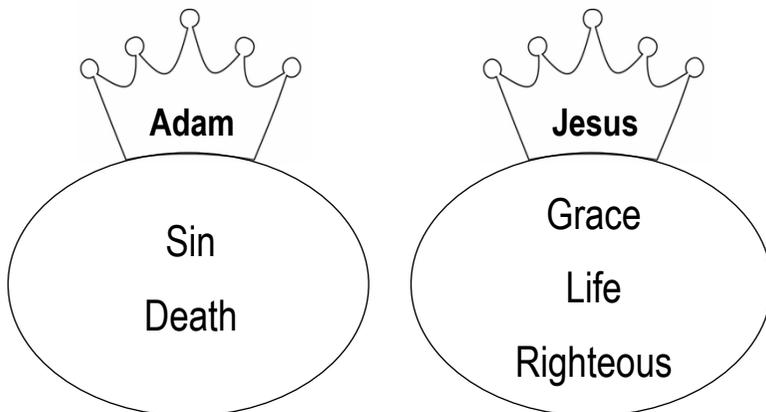
John Wesley taught that Christians could achieve perfection in this life.
Do you agree?

Read Romans 6:1-14

1. Paul begins with a question (v1). Why does this question come about (5:20)? What is Paul's 'short' answer (v2)? What question does his answer raise for us?

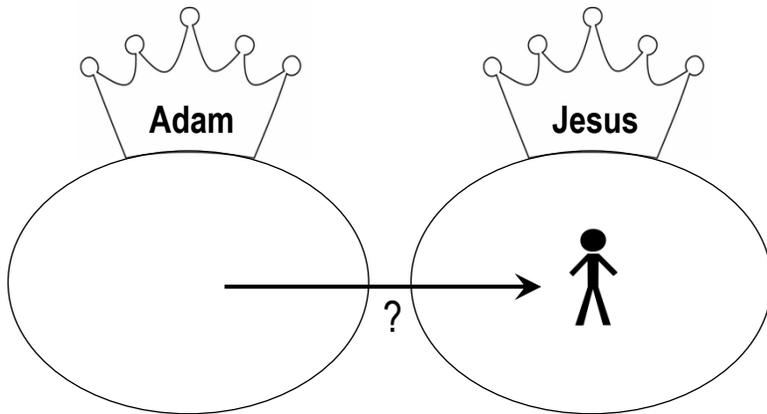
2. According to Paul, what happens to the Christian when they are 'baptised into Christ' (v3-5)? [2 things – one past and one future]

In the previous study we were introduced to the idea of two realms; one established by Adam and the other established by Jesus. We represented this idea like this:



In this study we will see that Christians have been transferred from Adam's realm to Jesus' realm.

3. What has made this possible (v5)?



4. When the Christian's 'old self' was crucified with Jesus, in what sense was sin 'done away with' (v6-7)? What does Paul *not* mean here? What *does* he mean?

Think about it: Why do Christians find it so hard to stop sinning?

Think about it: What does it look like to put sin to death:

- in your family life
- at work
- in your relationships with others
- in the way you spend your leisure
- in the way you spend your money
- in the way you speak

Think about it: How do these verses encourage us to fight against sin?

Think about it: When will Christians achieve perfection? How does that encourage you when you sin?

Pray

Share with your group a particular sin that you are struggling with. Be honest! The aim is not to judge but to help each other. Keep each other accountable by following up with each other in the next few weeks/months. You may like to break up into smaller groups to do this. Then pray for each other to put sin to death.

For further study: If you'd like to explore 'union with Christ' more, compare these verses with Romans 5:12-21, 1 Corinthians 15:20-24, Ephesians 2:1-10 and Philippians 3:8-11.

Study 4 – Free to be slaves

Romans 6:15-7:6

Should Christians still keep the Ten Commandments today?

Read Romans 6:15-7:6

Recap: What objection did Paul ask and answer in the previous study?

1. What objection does Paul raise now (v15)? Why might the fact that Christians are 'under grace' lead us to think that we can continue to sin?

5. Paul contrasts two different ways to live (v20-23). [Think back to the two realms] Complete the table below:

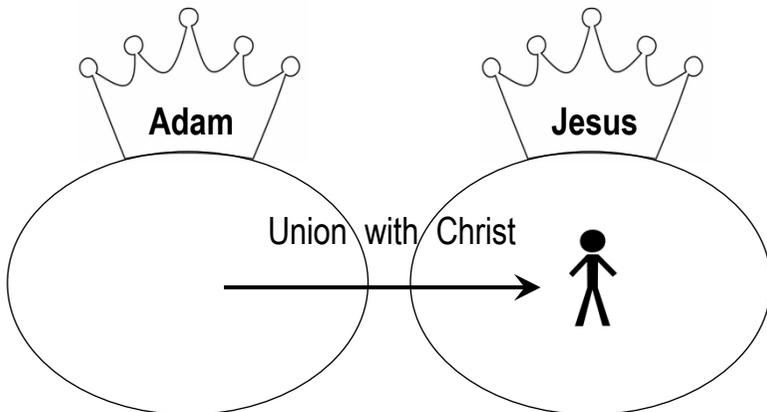
When?	Previously...	But now...
Relation to sin		
Relation to righteousness		
Fruit		
Result		

Think about it: How does this contrast motivate the Christian to obey God?

6. How is the principle 'that the law has authority over a person only as long as they live' illustrated by marriage (v1-3)?

7. How does this principle apply to the Christian's relationship with the law and with Jesus (v4-6)?

8. Contrast the life lived under the 'old way' and the life lived under the 'new way'. [Think back to the two realms]



Think about it: How would you describe Christian freedom?

Think about it: Respond to this statement: “It doesn’t matter if I sin, because God will forgive me anyway.”

Think about it: Describe the ways that you could help each other in your struggle with sin.

Think about it: To what extent do you put your gifts, talents and time at God’s disposal? In what areas of your life is radical change needed?

Pray

For further study: Look up ‘sanctification’ in a Systematic Theology. [for example Grudem] How does sanctification differ from justification?

Study 5 – Do or do not

Romans 7:7-25

**DO NOT READ
THIS SIGN**

You did, didn't you?

Read Romans 7:7-25

1. What question does Paul now ask (v7a)? Why might what Paul has said previously lead to this conclusion (5:20, 6:14, 7:6)?

2. What is the relationship between sin and the law (v7b-11)?

Think about it: Can you think of any other examples of the law teaching us about sin besides coveting?

3. Why would it be wrong to blame the law for our sinful behavior (v12)? What is the law?
4. How then can something good lead to something bad – death (v13)?

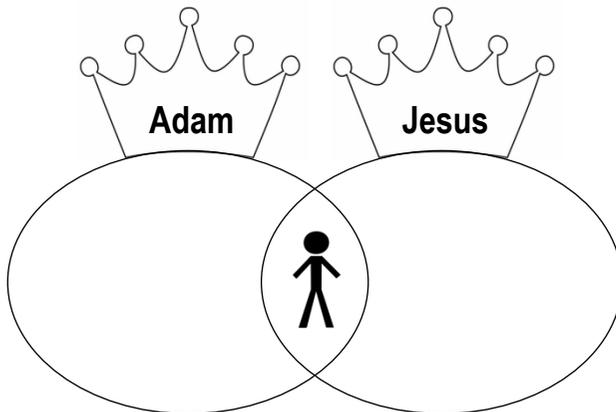
Think about it: Have you experienced the same struggles as Paul in your own Christian life? Do you think this is normal (1 Jn 1:8)?

Think about it: Should you be bothered if you're not struggling with sin as a Christian?

7. What does Paul conclude with regards to his struggle (v21-23)? What sort of language does Paul use here?

8. Is Paul's cry in v24 hopeless? Why/why not? Who will ultimately rescue us (v25)?

Think about it: We could depict the Christian life as one in which we live in the overlap of the two realms. We might represent this as in the diagram below. How does this help with our expectations and experience regarding sin in our lives?



Think about it: Some Christian authors speak of lives that are constantly victorious over sin. How does this contrast with Paul's experience? How do you think Paul would react to such teaching?

Pray the Bible

Say Psalm 51 together:

Have mercy on me, O God,
according to your unfailing love;
according to your great compassion
blot out my transgressions.

Wash away all my iniquity
and cleanse me from my sin.

For I know my transgressions,
and my sin is always before me.
Against you, you only, have I sinned
and done what is evil in your sight;
so that you are proved right when you speak
and justified when you judge.
Surely I was sinful at birth,
sinful from the time my mother conceived me.
Surely you desire truth in the inner parts;
you teach me wisdom in the inmost place.

Cleanse me with hyssop, and I will be clean;
wash me, and I will be whiter than snow.
Let me hear joy and gladness;
let the bones you have crushed rejoice.
Hide your face from my sins
and blot out all my iniquity.
Create in me a pure heart, O God,
and renew a steadfast spirit within me.
Do not cast me from your presence
or take your Holy Spirit from me.
Restore to me the joy of your salvation
and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me.

Then I will teach transgressors your ways,
and sinners will turn back to you.
Save me from bloodguilt, O God,
the God who saves me,
and my tongue will sing of your righteousness.
O Lord, open my lips,
and my mouth will declare your praise.
You do not delight in sacrifice, or I would bring it;
you do not take pleasure in burnt offerings.
The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit;
a broken and contrite heart,
O God, you will not despise.

In your good pleasure; make Zion prosper
build up the walls of Jerusalem.
Then there will be righteous sacrifices,
whole burnt offerings to delight you;
then bulls will be offered on your altar.

5. What are the characteristics of those who 'live according to the Spirit' (v5-11)? What is their mindset? What is their relationship to God?

Think about it: Do you set your mind on worldly things (such as sinful desires, riches and honour) or on what the Spirit desires (such as righteousness, love, humility and self-control)?

6. What do we learn about the Holy Spirit (v5-11)? Who is he? What does he do? Who has the Spirit? Who doesn't have the Spirit?

7. What are the results of having the Spirit live in us (v11)? Why is this such good news? [think back to previous studies]

8. What obligation is there for those who have the Spirit (v12-14)? What does it mean to 'put to death the misdeeds of the body'?

Think about it: What attitude do you have towards sin? What would help you to put sin to death in your own life? How can we help each other to do this?

9. What privilege do Christians have when they have the Spirit (v15-17)? Do you think of yourself in this way?

Think about it: How do these verses give assurance to the Christian who is struggling with sin?

Think about it: How can we encourage each other in our struggle against sin?

Pray

Spend time thanking God for the gift of his Spirit and the difference he makes in our lives.

For further study: 'Father', 'Son' and 'Spirit' all appear in these verses. Where else in the Bible do we see Trinitarian language? Why is the doctrine of the Trinity important for Christians?

Discuss: "Christians shouldn't worry about the environment; they should be getting on with the important task of evangelism."

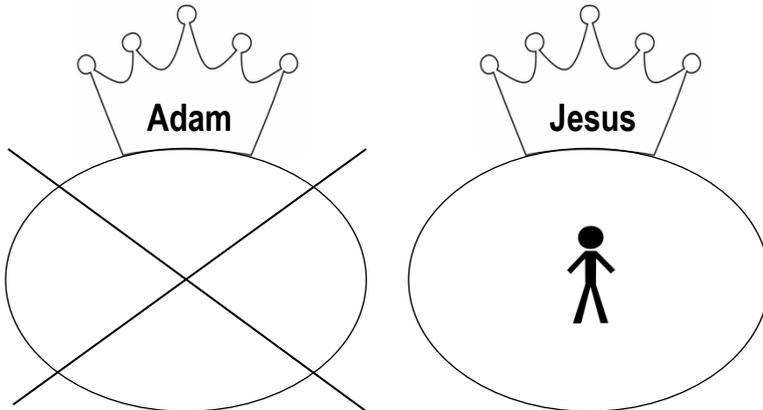
3. In what way is the life of the Christian similar to the creation (v23-25)?

4. How would you define Christian hope (v24-25)?

Think about it: Should Christians expect 'their best life now'?

8. What does this study teach us about the suffering we face in the present?

Think about it: These verses teach us that God will bring Adam's realm of suffering and death to an end and complete his plan to glorify us with Jesus (see below diagram). Are you waiting eagerly for that time?



Pray

Share any sufferings that you are going through at the moment with your group. Pray for them in light of this passage.

Study 8 – God’s unstoppable plan

Romans 8:31-39

Have you ever been separated from a loved one? What was it like? What did you miss?

Read Romans 8:31-39

1. Look back at verses 28-30. How do Christians know that God’s plan is unstoppable? Where are we currently in this chain of events?

Think about it: Why would this be an encouragement to those who are currently experiencing suffering?

Think about it: How does this help us to have a correct perspective about suffering?

Think about it: How does this help us to live now in the face of suffering?

8. How do verses 38-39 summarise what we have been studying in Romans chapters 5-8? [think back to the diagrams we have been using]

Pray

The hymn below was written by Charles Wesley in 1747. It picks up on many of the themes from these verses. Write your own prayer based on the words of Romans 8.

Love divine, all loves excelling,
Joy of heaven to earth come down,
Fix in us thy humble dwelling,
All thy faithful mercies crown.

Jesus, Thou art all compassion,
Pure unbounded love Thou art;
Visit us with Thy salvation,
Enter every trembling heart.

Come, almighty to deliver,
Let us all Thy grace receive;
Suddenly return and never,
Never more Thy temples leave.

Thee we would be always blessing;
Serve Thee as Thy hosts above:
Pray, and praise Thee, without ceasing;
Glory in Thy perfect love.

Finish, then, Thy new creation,
Pure and spotless let us be:
Let us see Thy great salvation,
Perfectly restored in Thee.

Changed from glory into glory,
Till in heaven we take our place,
Till we cast our crowns before Thee,
Lost in wonder, love and praise.

For further study: Read the rest of the book of Romans.

Bibliography

Grudem, W. 1994. *Systematic Theology*. Nottingham: IVP.

Moo, D. 1996. *The Epistle to the Romans*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.

St Helen's. 1999. *Read/Mark/Learn: Romans*. Fearn: Christian Focus.

Stott, J.R.W. 1986. *The Cross of Christ*. Nottingham: IVP.

Stott, J.R.W. 1994. *The Message of Romans*. Nottingham: IVP.