



INTERNATIONAL CHURCHES OF CHRIST

ROMANS:  
THE GRACE  
*of* GOD  
UNFURLED

**2021** POWER  
SERIES

FORTY DAYS DEVOTIONAL



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## OVERVIEW

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The letter to the Romans stands as the clearest and most systematic presentation of Christian doctrine in all the Scriptures. Paul began by discussing that which is most easily observable in the world—the sinfulness of all humanity.

All people have been condemned due to our rebellion against God. However, God in His grace offers us justification by faith in His Son, Jesus. When we are justified by God, we receive redemption, or salvation, because Christ's blood covers our sin. But Paul made it clear that the believer's pursuit of God doesn't stop with salvation; it continues as each of us is sanctified—made holy—as we persist in following Him. Paul's treatment of these issues offers a logical and complete presentation of how a person can be saved from the penalty and power of his or her sin.

The 2021 40 Days booklet is based on this great treatise by the Paul the Apostle.

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———— A 40 Days Devotional ————

The 2021 Edition is another Herculean  
attempt to call the disciples to a Bible  
inspired year.

Enjoy.

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**Romans: The Grace of GOD Unfurled.**

40 Days Devotional Booklet

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## INTRODUCTION

Indeed, the Book of Romans is one of the most profound books in existence; it is certainly one of the most valued parts of the Holy Scriptures. It has been appropriately termed the Cathedral of the Christian faith. Its profound theology and impressive style were reason enough for it to be assigned the first place among the Pauline epistles.

When Paul wrote this epistle to the church in Rome, that congregation must have already been in existence for a number of years, for Paul writes that he had desired to visit them “these many years” **(15:23)**. To him this church was strong enough to help him carry out further missionary activities.

They are not called recent converts; they are not treated as having been improperly instructed, but seem to have been an organized and well-grounded congregation **(15:14)**, “filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another”).

The epistle deals with no major error in the church; nor does it have to deal with organizational principles. It was a church that was universally famous **(1:8)**, and not merely because it was in Rome.

The Roman church was a group that had a large Jewish element, but was also filled with Gentile converts from paganism, both free as well as slaves. How the church in Rome was started is unclear.

The 2021 Devotional booklet is richly engineered from this powerful Pauline epistle. Thank you to all the great brothers and sisters who devoted themselves to writing this year.

May the study of this booklet the content therein, edify, encourage and strengthen your understanding and faith in the Grace of GOD as it unfurls.

### **The Team**

## FOREWORD:

### **2021 Edition, 40 days Booklet**

Transforming into a better Christian changes every aspect of us: : builds our character, sharpens our proficiency, increases our capacity, broadens our vision, enlarges our influence, deepens our devotion, and perpetuates our relevance to one another and the community all around us.

Our sincere desire as a leadership and as Writing team is centered on the transformation that this year's series will engender in all of us. This was the Apostle Paul's desire also for the Roman disciples of his time:

### **Romans 1:16 NIV**

[16] For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile.

Exceptional effort has been made with this edition, and our gratitude goes to all the writers, to all those involved in the conceptualization of the booklet and its reality.

Thank you to Chris and Rolayo Ogbonnaya for their steadfast confidence in this team. Designed to be easy to follow, our prayer is that each devotional will call you higher in every area of your faith. It will definitely be a rich resource to treasure.

Your brother in CHRIST.

**Okechukwu Emeka** (*Chief Editor*)

Memory Verse Romans

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## CHAPTER ONE

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### **Romans 1:16-17**

16For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile. 17For in the gospel the righteousness of God is revealed—a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: “The righteous will live by faith.”

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## GOD'S PROMISED GOSPEL – THE GOSPEL OF HIS SON.

### DAY 1

*Romans 1: 1-5, 9, (Cf. Luke 4: 18, Romans 16: 26) The letter to the Church in Rome was written by Paul to state that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, the promised Messiah, and the resurrected Lord. He emphasized that truly Jesus had fulfilled the Old Testament scriptures predicting that the Messiah would come from David's line. With this statement of faith, Paul declares his agreement with the teaching of all scriptures and of the apostles.*

Paul summarizes the Gospel – the good news about Jesus Christ, who came as a human descent; was part of the Jewish royal line through King David; died, buried and was raised from the dead; and opened the door of God's grace and kindness to be poured out to all mankind.

As recipients of this wonderful grace, we Disciples of Christ have both privilege and responsibility. We all like Paul and the apostles received forgiveness from our sins as an underserved kindness, and are also responsible to share the message of God's forgiveness with others.

In doing this, we are committing ourselves to living a new life as God's mouthpiece to the world.

- How are you doing with sharing your story of how God has saved you?
- To what extent are you willing to be used by God to call others to this grace?
- What sacrifices are you willing to make in helping others hear the gospel message?

Paul in **Romans 9: 1-3**, expressed concern for his Jewish “brothers” by saying that he would willingly take their punishment if that could save them. He had great sorrow and unceasing anguish in his heart concerning the salvation of his people.

- What do you feel about the wickedness, corruption and evil of our generation and our people?
- What are you willing to do about it?
- Are you still willing to sacrifice your time, money, energy, comfort and safety to help them come to faith in Jesus?

Sometimes we like the Romans try to get right with God through other means. We may think that attending Church, doing Church work, giving our offerings, and being nice will be enough. Paul explains in **Romans 9: 31-33** that God’s plan is not for those who try to earn his favor by doing good things; it is for those who realize that they can never be good enough and so must depend and look to Christ.

Our humility and complete surrender to Christ should always be the motivation for all that we do as Christians. Nothing that we will ever do on this side of eternity will make us merit the salvation that we have received from God.

Jesus is the Messiah – savior of the world! This is the Gospel message and it must resound with us now and forever.

Many things can bring us joy and excitement in life – buying a new car; building your own house; running a very profitable business; getting married to your heartthrob; giving birth to a baby; traveling to an exotic holiday resort, etc. In all these, our true joy and fulfillment should be that we are saved from a crooked world,



because nothing of all that we just mentioned can give us eternal peace and joy. Only Jesus' gift of salvation is eternal. Does this good news thrill you? Why?

- Write down 5 things you are grateful for?
- Write down 3 things you want to change to be more joyful?
- Write down the names of 5 friends who will share your conversion story with this week and proceed to study the bible with them with prayer and fasting!

**Share with your discipling partner!**

## LOVED BY GOD, BELONGING TO CHRIST AND CALLED TO BE SAINTS

### DAY 2

#### **ROMANS 1:7**

*Paul introduced himself as a servant of Christ in the opening text, appointed as an apostle by God to spread the gospel of Jesus Christ by the grace we have received. That grace sets us apart mandating us to call the world to obedience to Christ that comes through Faith in Christ. To all in Rome*

These words contain both the inscription of the epistle, and the apostle's usual salutation. The inscription of it is not to the Roman emperor; nor to the Roman senate, nor to all the inhabitants in Rome; but to all the saints there, whether rich or poor, bond or free, male or female, Jew or Gentile, without any distinction. Do you see this great picture? These saints are all one in Christ Jesus, and described as beloved of God

I can only imagine what it meant to be loved by God, personally this statement reminds me of my relationship and experience with my new born baby. As an inexperienced father, my son taught me how to love without condition and how to be patient- something I struggle with from time to time. God blessed us with our baby and as a responsible-inexperienced parent we had to learn on the job, thanks to good counselling and discipleship.

I still remember how my wife and I had to stay up through the night for several months providing nurture and care for him as a new born baby- feeding him, changing his diapers and rocking him at several intervals back to sleep- that was a demonstration of love and

affection even though we were tired and we needed to catch some sleep.

This experience had forged even a greater bond between my son & I. In the same way God demonstrates his love for us that he had to provide his son/sacrifice his one and only begotten son to redeem us back to himself and spare us his coming wrath. He had to change our diapers (spiritual mess-(sin)). He had to feed us day after day with both spiritual & physical food-the latter through his words and inspiration from spiritual leaders.

As Disciples of Christ, we are loved by God and this is evidenced in the grace we received from Christ through baptism (2 Timothy 1:9) and because of this, we should feel very confident and joyous because God loves us so much. It is by faith in Christ that we are beloved of God, for we have been redeemed by the precious blood of Christ, and become the object of His good pleasure and His divine love.

Be that as it may be, we also need to also remember/understand/rise up to our purpose as disciples. If a purpose isn't known, abuse is inevitable... Apostle Paul not only reminded us of how we are beloved by God but also how we are called to be saints.

### **Called to be Saints.**

The word "saint" is derived from a Greek verb (hagiazō [a]giavzw) whose basic meaning is "to set apart, " "sanctify, " or "make holy." In the history of the Old Testament religion, the idea of holiness or separateness was inherent in the concept of God.

God was unapproachable in the tabernacle or temple by the ordinary individual, being accessible only to the priests and only under carefully specified conditions. His presence (the Shekinah) dwelled in the Holy of Holies or the Most Holy Place, the most remote and inaccessible place in the wilderness tabernacle and later in the Jerusalem temple. Only the high priest was allowed to stand in God's presence in this area, and then only once a year at Yom Kippur (the Day of Atonement).

This idea of the separateness of God and his people is carried forward in the New Testament, which was written by Jews (except possibly Luke-Acts) who interpreted God's covenant with Israel through the teachings of Christ. Those who were dedicated to the teachings of Christ were frequently called saints by these writers (**e.g., Matt 27:52; Acts 9:13; 26:10; Rev 14:12**). Six of Paul's letters to churches are addressed to saints (**Romans, 1-2 Corinthians, Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians**).

Saints, in the New Testament, are never deceased individuals who have been canonized by the church and given sainthood. They are living individuals who have dedicated themselves to the worship and service of the one true God as revealed through his Son, Jesus Christ.

Even the children of such parents are called "sanctified" (**1 Cor 7:14-15**). That is, they are considered undefiled by paganism if at least one of their parents is a Christian. All saved are sanctified, but not all sanctified are saved. ([Biblestudytools.com](http://Biblestudytools.com))

We were not born Saints, nor did we become so through our own power, but are so by His grace (**Hebrews 10:14**).

By faith in Christ we are called out of the world to be Saints of the most high God. We are holy unto the Lord and set apart for Him (**1 Peter 1:9-10**) - and the intertwined blessings of grace and peace: (Charis and shalom) is the beautiful revelation of his affection and expectation towards us. As a fruit of everlasting love, men are first beloved of the Lord, and then called to be his saints.

### **PRAYER**

Heavenly Father, how I thank you for the good news of the gospel of Christ, and the truth it reveals, by faith in Christ. I have been redeemed by His precious blood and become beloved of God and called to be set apart to your praise and glory. May your grace and perfect peace pour through me to others - so that the love of Christ may be shed abroad to the honor of your name. AMEN

### **Questions to Ponder**

1. Do you understand that you are Loved by God?
2. Write down ways how you feel loved by God and share with other disciples.
3. In what way(s) are you living out GODs love for you?

**REF: ROMANS 6:19, 22, 2 THESSALONIAN 2:13, 2 TIMOTHY 2:21.**

## SHEPHERDING COMMENDATION - THE FAITH THAT IS BEING REPORTED.

### DAY 3

#### ***Romans 1:8-10***

*In this scripture the Apostle Paul commends the disciples in the church in Rome. He thanks God for them because of their faith that was being reported all over the known world.*

*He goes further to tell them how constantly he remembers them in his prayers at all times, and desires to visit them. This message of commendation from Paul would have been very encouraging and uplifting not only to the disciples in the church, but to their leaders. Individually and collectively. People like to be appreciated and commended for what they do, they like to be loved and like to be prayed for. It is a great inspiration in bringing out more in people and spurring them on to do even greater things for God's kingdom.*

We see Paul doing this same thing to churches in other cities like in Ephesus, Colossae and Thessalonica (**Ephesians 1: 15-16, Colossians 1: 3-4, 1Thessalonians 1: 3**).

We also see Paul, ending his letters to churches with personal encouragement, commendation and prayers for disciples by name. Paul was in prison most of this time, but despite his circumstances he was focused on meeting the needs of these churches. His heart and actions were on meeting the needs of others and not on his own circumstances.

**His personal encouragement was in encouraging others collectively and individually.**

For me as a Bible Talk Leader, Family Group Leader or a Shepherd, I understand I have shepherding responsibilities for all the disciples God has put in my care in the different groups I serve. A key aspect of this role is strengthening, encouraging and bringing out more in the disciples, individually and collectively, in the groups I lead.

At times it is front and centre in my thoughts and actions, and at other times it is not. I start well but it sometimes tapers off or I get distracted. I have realized I need to be more like the Apostle Paul to overcome this. It must come from the heart and will then translate to consistent appropriate actions from me to disciples and groups, who need this. They need my heart, my prayers, my encouragement and my committed intention to encourage them. I continue to grow in trusting God to take care of my circumstances rather than worrying about them. My focus therefore is not on myself but on others.

How have you been doing as a leader and a shepherd in appreciating, encouraging, loving and praying for the people God has put in your care? Is it in your heart to do, are you intentional, are you prayerful, are you trusting God with your circumstances, and to help you to grow in this area?

As a leader or shepherd, or as a disciples, here are some practical things you should strive to do consistently: Know members of your group well, know their strengths and weaknesses, connect with them, spend time with them, care about them, love them, commend them, believe in them, bring out the best in them, encourage their faith and love for God, and pray for them regularly.

## THE GOSPEL – GOD’S RIGHTEOUSNESS REVEALED

### DAY 4

**Romans 1: 16-17. Psalms 51: 12, Phil. 3: 8-9, Isa. 46: 12-13**

*Paul was not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, because it was the message of salvation. It had life-changing power, and it was/is for everyone.*

*When you are in the midst of your friends, family, colleague and strangers you need to continue to be excited to share the gospel with them. When you are tempted to be ashamed, remember what the Good news is all about! If you focus on God and what he is doing in the world and how he has transformed you, rather than your own inadequacy, you won't be ashamed or embarrassed.*

Today, ask yourself why the gospel message is not so attractive to you and others?

### **What are your answers?**

Write them down. Now, which of these reasons is worthy enough for you and your loved ones not to go to heaven, without the saving grace of God?

Is there anyone you know who does not deserve God's mercy and kindness? If no, then start sharing your faith like crazy today! Many will glorify God on your behalf for sharing with them.

Why did the message go to the Jews first? They were God's special people for more than 2,000 years, ever since God chose Abraham and promised him great blessings to his descendants. God did not choose the Israelites because they deserved to be chosen, but because he wanted to show his love and mercy to them, to teach them, to



prepare them to receive the Messiah into the world – to reveal his righteousness! He planned that through them he would tell the world of his goodness, mercy and love.

The Israelites had been learning about God by obeying the law, keeping the feasts, and living according to his moral principles. They were also obstinate people. And God desired a better intimate, deep and engaging personal relationship with his people.

Often, they would sin and fall short of God's divine requirements and God would discipline them. Then the same things would happen again and again. God had to send his Son to redeem them from that wayward way of life. God's love for them was very deep. In the same vein, God has extended that same love to us today, not because we deserve it, but because of the sacrificial price his Son paid for us on the cross. That price we could not pay for ourselves.

The gospel shows us both how righteous God is in his plan for us to be saved, and also how we may be made ready for eternal life with him in heaven. By putting our trust and faith in Christ, our relationship with God is made right.

God has brought his righteousness near to all mankind.

How are you living in response to God's grace and mercy? We cannot take God's grace for granted by the way we live. We need to be faithful to the very end.

We must be careful to live by faith. Paul helps connect our faith to our understanding of our salvation.

When we see our wretchedness and God's gift of eternal life through Jesus Christ, we will strive to be righteous "being sure of what we hope for, and certain of what we cannot see" (**Hebrews 1:1**). We stay away from sin and pursue a righteous way of life.

Are there any sins in your life that are holding you back from fully enjoying your relationship with God? Are you willing to talk to your trusted friend/discipling partner about them today? Sin is a burden you should not be carrying on this journey of life.

Allow God to set you free and let the gospel light shine on you!

## SALVATION – GOD’S POWER AT WORK IN MAN

DAY 5

### ROMANS 1:16-17

- Paul was not ashamed because his message was and still is the Good News.
- The Good News is the message of Salvation
- It has life changing power and it is for everyone.
- When tempted to be ashamed, remember what the Good News is all about.

If you focus on God and what God is doing in the world rather than your own inadequacies you will not be ashamed.

**QUESTION:** Pen down how you have been ashamed of the gospel?

### PSALMS 51:12

Sometimes we can grow and feel stagnant in our faith, as though we are just going through the motions? The Psalmist says here “Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me.” Has sin ever driven a wedge between you and God making him seem distant? David felt this way! When he sinned with Bathsheba and had just been confronted by Nathan the prophet.

In his prayer he cried, “Restore to me the joy of your salvation.”

God wants us to be close to him and to experience his full and complete life but unconfessed sins makes such intimacy impossible. Confess your sins (**James 5:16**) and God will give you back the joy of your relationship with him – speak to someone today!

**POINT:** When God forgives our sin and restores us to him, we need to reach out to others who need his forgiveness and reconciliation.

### **ISAIAH 46:12-13**

Listen to me, you stubborn-hearted, you who are far from righteousness. I am bringing my righteousness near; it is not far away; and my salvation will not be delayed. I will grant salvation to Zion, my splendor to Israel.

- Israel was tempted to waver between the LORD GOD and pagan gods.
- Isaiah affirms the sole Lordship of God. God is unique in his knowledge and in his control of the future.
- When you are tempted to pursue anything that promises pleasure, comfort, peace or security apart from God, we must remember our commitment to God.
- God offers not only future hope but also help for our present needs.
- We have His Salvation; therefore, Gods righteousness should be near and within us.

### **A SHORT POEM**

I delight greatly in the Lord; my soul rejoices in my God. For he has clothed me with garments of salvation and arrayed me in a robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom adorns his head like a priest, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.

### **(ISAIAH 61:10)**

End today's devotional with a prayer of thanksgiving.

## MAN'S NEED FOR SALVATION - GOD'S REDEMPTION STORY

### DAY 6

#### ***Romans 1:18-3:20.***

*The Greek verb traditionally translated as 'redeem' (exagorazein) literally means 'remove from the market place; in other words, purchase the freedom of a slave. Did you know that it is one of your priorities as a disciple to understand and savor the story of redemption as the Bible narrates it? The Scriptures (the supernatural report of God's doings throughout the ages), beautifully paints this staggering picture on its canvas, communicating the realities of redemption to mankind.*

The Bible captures and narrates God's epic tale of his quest to ransom his creation. Through the Bible, God gives each generation the opportunity to know this amazing gracious plan. The story begins with God (Yahweh) and Adam, and represents humanity in their rebellion against their gracious creator God.

The redemption narrative begins in Eden, and does not conclude until the New Jerusalem is firmly in place in Revelation. Recall the event in **Genesis 3, in verse 14 & 15**, God sets in motion his already planned and successfully implemented redemption project **(see Ephesians 1:1-15.)**

The word redemption comes from the New Testament. Luke writes in **Luke 1:68," Peter in 1 Pet 1:18-19**, re-echoes this theme "I believe that the New Testament writers got the word from the Old Testament.

The prophet Isaiah declares in **Is. 43:1**.

Please do note five clearly defined eras in God's story of redemption as the biblical writers have narrated it.

1. **Adam (Genesis 1–5).**
2. **Noah (Genesis 6–11)**
3. **Abraham (Genesis 12–50).**
4. **Moses (Exodus–Judges).**
5. **David (1 Samuel–2 Chronicles). Matthew 26:27-28.**

...let us examine God's original Intent - You know the story. The choice was autonomy. The covenant was broken and the curse was enacted.

Then the LORD God took the man and put him into the Garden of Eden to cultivate and keep it. (**Gen 2:15**). In addition to this perfect place, Adam and Eve are given each other (**Gen 2:18-25**), and as is implied by **Genesis 3:8**, they are given full access to their loving Creator. The only corner of the garden which was not theirs to use and enjoy was the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

God's perfect plan (and humanity's perfect world) was a matter of choice. Did Adam want this world? Or one of their own making? God's original intent was sabotaged by humanity, stolen by the enemy. Adam rejected the covenant, and all the cosmos trembled. **Genesis 2:17** makes it painfully clear what the consequences of such an insurrection would be: in that day, "you shall surely die." But amazingly, mercifully, even though Yahweh had every right to wipe out our rebellious race, he chose another course-redemption. In a move that continues to confound us, God spared the lives of Adam and Eve (and their unborn children) by redirecting the fury of the curse toward another-the battered flesh of his own Son.

This is the one the New Testament knows as “the last Adam” (**Rom 5:14; 1 Cor. 15:22, 45**). And although the first Adam did not die, the second surely did. But we are getting ahead of ourselves.

As we consider Genesis 3, what were the consequences of Adam’s choice?

...and God’s Final Intent - The New Jerusalem- After the cherub first appeared in Eden, a reappearance is divinely dictated in the design of the tabernacle in **Exodus 25–26** and **Exodus 36–37**. “Let them construct a sanctuary for us that I may dwell among them” (**Ex 25:8**).

The text tells us that the reason God wants this sanctuary is “so that I might live among them.” Do you hear the echo of Eden here? This will be the first time since the garden that God has dwelt with Adam. This brings us at last to **Revelation 21–22**, the end of the story. Pulse here and read **Rev 21:1-5**.

Do you see what John describes here? What John is describing here is what we Christians call “heaven.”

**Are you still strongly looking forward to this?**

*\*Some content curled from “The Epic of Eden-A Christian Entry into the Old Testament” by Sandra L. Richter*

## GOD'S ABANDONMENT BY MAN, AND GOD'S WRATH!

### DAY 7

#### *Romans 1:18-32*

*"The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of people who suppress the truth by their wickedness..."*

The dictionary meaning of "wrath" is "extreme anger" or "vengeance". **This word appears 31 times in the New Testament alone.**

We usually do not like to talk about God's wrath. Isn't He meant to be a kind and loving Father some say? To be sure, He is. But He also wants us to understand and revere this quality of His character which is part of His divine holiness.

Right from the time that man sinned and fell from grace in Eden, we have continued to resist and rebel against God, rejecting his ways and charting a path for ourselves. Indeed, through the ages, men have come up with many fine sounding arguments and theories to try and debunk the existence and authority of the Sovereign God (**vs 20b**). You and I used to be one of them. But what are the subtle warnings God wants us to heed in these scriptures?

**Vs 21** - We know God but gradually begin to glorify Him less and less (not centering our lives around honoring Him but on satisfying ourselves), we fail to give Him thanks (we ascribe our successes to our own abilities, self becomes our idol and center-piece).



**RESULT** – Our hearts become foolish and darkened. Our thinking becomes futile.

**Vs 25** – We exchange God's truth (what He reveals to us clearly in the Bible or nature) for lies. We start to reason that God cannot possibly expect us to walk on such a narrow road to heaven. We see people around us, what they do, how they live and it seems outwardly attractive, though not in line with God's will.

So, we come up with arguments to justify our imitating them and we belittle the authority of God's word. We are willingly do what created man says (**vs 25b**) before considering what the Creator has said.

**RESULT** – We begin to drift towards shameful lusts. (Rejection of God). Love of money, sexual indiscipline and abuse of alcohol are some examples of these.

**Vs 28** – We don't think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God. To retain means to hold on to. In other words, by our actions, we show that we have little interest in holding on to the knowledge of God. We spend much more time meditating, involved and enjoying social media than on the Scripture. At church we don't bother to take notes or go back to examine what was taught, like the Bereans.

**RESULT** – Our minds slip further and further away from God. Fits of rage, abusive language, malice, revenge, slander and greed take hold of us more easily and quickly than we ever imagined. We wonder "How did I get to this point? I, who was once a fired-up disciple. Sin always takes us further than we bargained for. Sin is deceitful, an enemy.

Have you ever been in sin and felt the “heavy hand of God” on you? I have; several times.

Perhaps it was a calculated lie, a hardening and stubbornness of heart, a refusal to let go out of bitterness and to forgive, an act of immorality. In those times, I knew no peace. Happiness eluded me. I felt the wall of sin cutting me off from my God.

Guilt, fear and frustration would pursue me until I was broken and retraced my steps in confession and repentance. I don’t want to know what His wrath will be like. Neither do you. 1 Thess. 5:9 “God did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ”

As Christians we must understand that our God is as fearsome as He is loving. Sin is deadly and God will judge every act of unrepentant disobedience.

These convictions should help us stand firm in times of temptation and repent quickly from sin out of holy fear for God. They should spur us on to grow spiritual depth and fight to retain our knowledge of Him so that we are not deceived by the many hollow philosophies of today that directly or indirectly oppose God, His word and His will.

**FURTHER READING: Eph 5:6-7, Col 3:5-6, Heb 10:26-31**

## CREATION BEARS CLEAR WITNESS TO ITS MAKER - GOD.

### DAY 8

#### ***Romans 1:19-20***

*One of my favorite movie quotes is from the 1995 movie, "The Unusual Suspect", starring Kevin Spacey. His memorable quote still sounds fresh in my mind even after 25 years. Here is the quote. "The greatest trick the devil ever pulled was convincing the world that he did not exist." This paradoxical statement however rings true today in our everyday thinking and lives, many today accept this statement without even knowing it, on the contrary our God has left his children with strong evidences of his existence.*

***Please read Romans 1:19-20 with emphasis on Verse 19,***

The reason for this is simply to tell us that in times of trouble or trials or even in plenty, we can look at the evidences of his existence and depend on him for strength to carry on. Our circumstances do not change the powerful truth of God's undeniable existence and sovereignty.

Satan's work is best done under the shadow or darkness, unseen and not suspect of any wrongdoing. Darkness is persistent in the world.

Sadly, I have found myself oftentimes, secretly doubting the LORDs ability to pull me through difficult situations by questioning his ability to resolve my situation, I have allowed my circumstances to cloud my sense of clarity, truth judgement and convictions.

Satan's purpose is to damage our relationship with God, destroy the bond we share as disciples, break-up our marriages, pull apart friendships and generally cause divisions amongst God's children.

Yet, when these aforementioned circumstances happen, we find ourselves asking the following questions;

1. Why is God trying to teach me about him and/or me?
2. Does God really exist?
3. After all the prayers, God! You failed to act, Why Lord!!

Oftentimes, we fail to see that the true enemy is the unusual suspect, Satan, sowing seeds of discord amongst us, breeding discouragement, doubt, anger, bitterness, jealousy, etc. within us.

While Satan delights to work under the cover of darkness, our Lord is the father of lights (**James 1:7**). He has been gracious enough to leave us with strong evidences of his existence by what we see, feel, touch, and even taste. So anytime I am faced with challenges beyond my understanding I remember to look at the wondrous evidences of my father's power and therefore depend on him for strength and comfort.

Our God is a true example of transparency, and in **Acts 14:17**, he leaves us with any room to doubt his involvement in our lives, his ability to meet our needs is never in question as Paul alluded to in this scripture.

To cap it all up, in **John 1:14**, He shows the full extent of his love and involvement in our lives by placing his Spirit in human form to dwell

among men and offered his himself as an atonement for our sins. This act was never shrouded in secrecy, not performed under the cover of darkness, but a once-for-all sacrifice.

So, when there are disagreements amongst us, when all seems lost and overwhelmed with our present challenges, rather than ask the question WHY, we must seek the root cause of the problems and depend on our God for help.

#### **Further Reading**

- **Psalm 19:1-4**
- **Isaiah 40:12-31**

Memory Verse Romans

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## CHAPTER TWO

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**Romans 2:13**

13For it is not those who hear the law who are righteous in God's sight, but it is those who obey the law who will be declared righteous.

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## GOD'S PRINCIPLES OF JUDGEMENT

### ROM 2:1-16

*Some of us may have heard the story of the large orchestra that the Emperor of China assembled centuries ago. A man was able to join, evading all obstacles, although he could not play a single note. Whenever the large group played, he would hold his flute against his lips, not daring even to blow softly for fear he might cause a discord. For years he earned a good salary and was able to live comfortably.*

*Then one day, the emperor declared that each musician play for him solo. The fake flutist knew immediately he was in a big trouble. Efforts to take quick professional lessons failed woefully as he really had no ear for music. On the day of his solo appearance, he took poison and passed out rather than face the music. From this event comes the old Chinese proverb that has pervaded all languages: "He dared not face the music."*

Today's passage is all about that day we will stand before God to face the music of all our past actions. God is the ultimate judge for all mankind. He is the one that will bring all our actions into account.

Our passage begins with vital lessons on hypocrisy. The heart of the lesson is not really about judging our fellow man, but our failing to live up to what we know and recognize as true. It might be useful to remove the splinter out of a brother's eye, but God wants us to pull out the two-by-four out plank off our own eye. There is always this fatal human tendency to exaggerate the faults of others and minimize our own.



So, when those who fellowship regularly in the household of God stubbornly refuse to repent from the sin of hypocrisy, it shows total contempt on the riches of God's grace. God's kindness, tolerance and patience had been spurned. **(Rom 2:4-6)**

All through the Bible, there are very few things God hates more than hypocrisy. The reason why he is showing us the qualities of his grace, and not judging mankind immediately, is because he understands the nature of our struggles. God's kindness cannot be held in contempt endlessly. A day of reckoning is on the cards when we would have no option but to face the music of our past deeds.

There are sure facts reflected in this passage about God's judgement

Many times, we tend to think that we are better than those who commit big sins like homosexuality and murder and we think that somehow, we are above God's wrath. This cannot be any further from the truth. God sees all sins as sins. He also knows the real you and me. He does not look at just what we see, He looks at the heart. Obviously, God's judgment will deal with what every person's thought, words and deeds, whether done openly or secretly.

**(Rom. 2:5-10)** Since man has continued to harden his heart to suppress the truth about himself, the wrath of God is being stored up to be unleashed on that day of reckoning. Verse 6 of our passage states it clearly.

Another fact revealed in this passage is that God's judgment is fair and just to everyone at all times.

Romans 2:11 says “For there is no partiality with God.” In other words, there is equal justice for all in God’s court. The moral and religious man will be judged in the same manner as the worst of sinners. There is no special treatment.

Still in today’s passage, we can see that every single soul in the world, from the beginning of creation till date has within them the inner knowledge of good and evil. The Knowledge can be through natural revelation or through conscience or through the revealed Word of God. Therefore, every soul would be held responsible for his or her actions on judgement day.

But of special interest to us today is the fact that every soul now has the God-given capability of coming to the knowledge of the truth and accepting the gift of salvation. It is thus the duty of every disciple of Jesus Christ, however, to make sure that every soul today hears the Gospel of Christ.

Having seen that God judges all men and women on the basis of knowledge, truth, guilt, deeds, impartiality, and motive, we should be inspired to do two key things- to work out our salvation daily with fear and trembling and re-commit our lives to making Christ known everyone in our community,

In light of the judgment of God, as disciples, the biggest lesson should be the urgency of a greater commitment to the proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus to the four corners of the world.

**Further Reading MATT 7: 2-3. Eccl 8: 11,1 COR 4: 5, JN5:27, ACT 17: 31**

## GOD'S JUDGEMENT WILL EXPOSE HUMAN SECRETS.

### *Romans 2:6*

*From the above:*

1. *It is certain that there will be a day in future when God will judge the "Secrets" of all Men/ Women – you and me.*
2. *This Judgement will be carried out by but Jesus Christ himself – The righteous Judge.*
3. *On that day, God will then give to each person according to what he/she has done.*
4. *You and I will not be the Judge: your Pastors, your Parents, your Relations will not.*

*Are you already thinking of and preparing for that day? It is a day certain to help us out with this study, let's ask ourselves some pertinent questions under which this devotional will be discussed.*

1. *Do you have secrets you have been carrying?*
2. *Why secrets?*
3. *Why will men's secrets be judged?*
4. *What do we do with our secrets today?*

### **1. Do you have secrets you have been hiding?**

Most of us keep or have secrets even as we read this devotional today. A secret is something hidden or conceived. Something not disclosed or confessed.

I once kept a secret when I was in the Secondary School. I did not do too well in my school exams. So, when the result came by post (then our exam result was sent to our parents by post). I withheld the report by not allowing my father to see it.

It was later on they discovered though. You can imagine that I suffered for it much later. Men and secrets go together. I could do that to my Parents not to God anyway who sees, knows all things even the thoughts and motives of our hearts. Which secrets are you still keeping? You and I have the opportunity to discuss our secrets with others so they become known. It has the potential to free you from guilt and shame. Do it today.

## 2. Why secrets?

- a. **It is in- human nature:** We hide, we conceal, we do not disclose, and we pretend because we feel shame, embarrassment, discomfort, pain or disgrace.
- b. **Most secrets are sins:** Think about it for a while. The reason we hide bothers on sin of some kind. Something considered not too pleasant to disclose to others. If you won a lottery today, or got a scholarship or a Job promotion, today, will others not know about it? But the reverse is most likely to happen if you become immoral or if you steal or cheat. The first instinct is to hide or conceal it.
- c. **God sees all secrets:** See **Eccl 12:14** “For God will bring every deed into Judgment, including every hidden thing whether it is good or evil”. **1 Cor. 4:5** “Therefore Judge nothing before the appointed time, wait till the Lord comes. He will bring to light what is hidden in the darkness and will expose the motives of men’s hearts. At the time each will receive his praise from God”. This is scary but so true.

God will bring to light what is hidden in darkness and will expose the motives of our hearts. Do you have anything, actions, motives hidden in darkness now that one you know about?

### 3. **Why will men's secrets be judged?**

We cannot fool God. We cannot decrease God. We cannot out-smart God.

He sees all things; He knows all things; He hems all things.

- Past, present and in the future. In fact, the scripture says in Heb. 4:13 "Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered laid bare before him the eyes of him to whom we must give account"
- No secrets with God.
- We will give account for all things we do.

### 4. **What should we do with our secrets today?**

If you still have any, open up, expose them, confess them or share them with a trusted friend today.

**Proverb 28:13** says "He who conceals his sin does not prosper, but whoever confesses and renounces them finds mercy".

Secrets belong to the devil: it is darkness. Get rid of it.

**Read/ Meditate: Psalm 32: 1-5**

Memory Verse Romans

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## CHAPTER THREE

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**Romans 3:10**

10As it is written:

“There is no one righteous, not even one;

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## JUSTIFICATION: IMPUTATION OF RIGHTEOUSNESS THROUGH FAITH ALONE

DAY 11

**Romans 3:21-31.**

*(Cf. 2 Timothy 1:10, Hebrews 1:3, 1John 1:7)*

*Romans 3:21-31 – Please begin today’s devotional, by reading the above passages slowly and thoughtfully.*

The first time I climbed Olumo Rock was in the mid 1970’s – way back – when there was no staircase. From the ground to the summit was rugged rock climbing. There was a point closer to the summit, where there was a deep gorge between two rock formations. Each climber needed to be helped by a guide, to either be thrown across or carried. My siblings and I were flung expertly and easily to the other side where another guide “caught” us. My Dad (being heavier) was carried. I could hardly believe my eyes. The young man just carried Daddy and leapt across, making it look easy! In order to make it to the top of Olumo, we had to trust those guys! We literally put our lives in their hands.

One of the most difficult things every Christian must grapple to understand, is how powerless we are to save ourselves and how we are justified only by grace through faith. Jew or Gentile, religious or irreligious “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God (**verse 23**)” No matter who you are, only Christ can make you right with God. The Jews were descendants of Abraham. They were self-assured because they were God’s chosen people. On top of that, they had the Law, which distinguished them, and set them apart from other nations. It was hard for them to understand that all these could not save them.



God knew that no one could measure up to his high standards of holiness, not even the most devout Jews. No Jew even succeeded in obeying the entire law. The only holy one is God himself. Therefore, he sent his son who is holy and righteous and who is “the exact representation of his being” (**Hebrews 1:3**) to save the Jews by faith. Paul himself had worked so hard to obey the law, yet he realized that he was powerless to save himself (See **Philippians 3:3-6.**)

Indeed, no Jew could be made righteous until they trusted Jesus Christ and put their faith in him.

The Gentiles, on the other hand, were steeped in sin, far away from God and lost. One is tempted to say that they were worse off than the Jews. Yet God in his mercy made the ground level for both Jew and Gentile at the foot of the cross. Indeed, all have equal access to Jesus Christ and are “justified freely by his grace...” (**Verse 24**)

“He did it to demonstrate his righteousness, at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus.” (**Verse 26**).

What about us? We too are only justified and made right, through trusting Jesus Christ to set things right between us and God. None of us is righteous enough to “earn” salvation and no one is so “lost” that they are beyond Christ’s saving power!

Paul reminds us that therefore we cannot boast. “Where then is boasting? It is excluded...because of the law that requires faith” (**verse 27**).

Just as I could not reach the summit of Olumo Rock on my own, all the more, we cannot attain justification without putting our faith in Jesus Christ through our obedience of his commands and instructions!

**Today:**

- Praise God for his grace!
- Write down how this devotional has helped you to better understand your salvation by faith.
- Write the steps you will take moving forward, to live by faith.
- Make and write down a renewed pledge to live your life in gratitude for these privileges.

Memory Verse Romans

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## CHAPTER FOUR

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### **Romans 4:18-21**

18Against all hope, Abraham in hope believed and so became the father of many nations, just as it had been said to him, “So shall your offspring be.” 19Without weakening in his faith, he faced the fact that his body was as good as dead—since he was about a hundred years old—and that Sarah’s womb was also dead. 20Yet he did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God, 21being fully persuaded that God had power to do what he had promised.

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## JUSTIFICATION EXAMPLES FROM THE OLD TESTAMENT-ABRAHAM & DAVID.

DAY 12

### ***Romans 4:1-25***

*As we continue to look at what Justification is, sometimes we become confused by this term.*

#### ***So, what is Justification in a biblical sense?***

*Justification is a legal state or condition in which God, by His grace, declares us to be righteous before Him because of our repentance and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. It is righteousness (right standing with God) bestowed upon us and it is not based on any of our work or effort.*

Paul in his message to the Church in Rome, deemed it fit to bring up this topic as a theological way of helping those who believed that they were justified through the “works” of the Law as opposed to those who never had the Law, but were justified by faith and not works (**vs 1–8**)

Paul examined the experience of Abraham as recorded in Genesis 15. Abraham had defeated the kings (Gen. 14) and was wondering if they would return to fight again. God appeared to him and assured him that He was his shield and “exceeding great reward.”

But what Abraham wanted the most was a son and heir, and though God had promised him a son, the promise had not yet been fulfilled. It was then that God asked him to look up at the stars and see if he could count them. “So shall thy seed [descendants] be!” God promised, and Abraham believed God’s promise. It was this faith that was counted to him for righteousness.

**He simply trusted God's Word.**

**(Vs 20-22)** He did not waver through unbelief regarding what God has promised.

This shows that Abraham went through a process of likely unbelief but chose to stay focused. He did not just believe, he lived it, dreamt it, followed it, and remained in it.

**Application:** I remember that the first thing I was told to do while studying the Bible in my early days, was to believe God and his word. Belief was the first requirement needed to continue my process, because one cannot continue a process that one does not have faith in.

- There is no doubt about how we came to God and what our status was before Him. The question is, are we still in the process of changing, transforming, and becoming matured because you believed?
- Are you weighed down by the feelings of guilt and shame associated with your sin or have you found the freedom to enjoy the righteous standing you have before God through justification?  
Psalm 32

**(Vs 9–17) Justified by grace, not law.**

The Jews gloried in circumcision and the law. If a Jew were to become righteous before God, he would have to be circumcised and obey the law. But Abraham was declared righteous when he was in the state of uncircumcision. From the Jewish point of view, Abraham was a Gentile. The promise to Abraham was given purely through God's grace. Abraham did not earn or merit it.

The fact that Abraham was justified by grace and not law proves that salvation is for all men.

Abraham is the father of all believers, both Jews and Gentiles. **Rom. 4:16-18**

**Application: Gal. 3:7, 29.**

- Today, we enjoy that justification and it is beautiful, no doubt.
- Do we reflect upon this regularly?
- Take some time to reflect on how gracious God has been to you.  
A sober reflection of this, will always help us to stay humble.

**(Romans 3:24, 4:16, 5:2, 6:14, 6:15, 11:6, 11:5-6, Ephesians 1:7, 2:5, 2:8, 2 Thess. 2:16, Titus 2:11, 3:7)**

## ABRAHAM: THE EXAMPLE OF FAITH TO ALL CHRISTIANS

DAY 13

### ***Romans 4:1-25***

*Paul's goal is that his readers understand the gospel so that it makes a difference in their lives. For that reason, Paul sets forth in chapter 4 the greatest example possible of what it means to be justified by faith through its application in the life of Abraham.*

*Paul's opening question is in anticipation of an objection that would be made against the gospel. He uses that very objection to prove the truth of the law of faith in its application in the life of Abraham.*

***"What then shall we say that Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh, has found? For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about; but not before God."***

To most of the Jews at that time, their perversion of the Mosaic Law had also led them to believe that God had accepted Abraham based on Abraham's righteousness. There were those then, and there are still some today, that claim that Abraham did not sin. Jewish tradition held that Abraham started serving God when he was three and that his righteousness was perfected by his circumcision. That view fit in with their works-based theology. They would attain righteousness on their own by keeping the law.

Paul's gospel was contrary to both their belief system and what they thought of Abraham who was their "forefather according to the flesh." Paul tackles the objection head on. What did Abraham find?



What did Abraham's life demonstrate? If Abraham was indeed justified, or made righteous before God, because of His works, as Jewish tradition claimed, then he would have a reason to boast about it. Paul is quick to point out that even if that were true, he could not even then boast before a holy and perfect God.

Did Abraham have a right to boast? How was he made righteous before God?

Return to the Scriptures (**vs. 3**) Paul does what each of us should do when an objection is raised about God or the Gospel. He goes back to the Scriptures. People can argue endlessly when there is only personal opinion, but their mouths are stopped when there is a source of truth. What then does the Bible say about Abraham's righteousness?

### **For what does the Scripture say?**

"And Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness." This passage is a quote from Genesis 15:3. Paul will discuss later in the chapter the particulars of what Abraham believed, but this sets up Paul's theses. Abraham was not made righteous because of what He did, but because of His belief in God's word. The term "reckoned"(logivzomai / logidzomai) is an accounting term for setting down the figure in the correct column.

It was used metaphorically Paul expands on the logic of this in **verses 4 & 5**. "Now to the one who works, his wage is not reckoned as a favor, but as what is due.

**Verse 5**, But to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is reckoned as righteousness."

When you work you earn wages. Getting paid after your labor is not the demonstration of a favor to you, but is rather the just payment due. The one for whom you have worked is in your debt until he has paid you your wages. You might be grateful to your employer for giving you a job. You might even be thankful for the high wage you are being paid. But you don't proclaim him to be gracious, good and kind just because he actually pays you the agreed upon wages. He owes it to you.

The example given by Abraham is not one of work to achieve righteousness. Instead, Abraham believed in "Him who justifies the ungodly." Abraham had faith in what God would graciously do on his behalf rather than in what he had done for God. It was that faith that was considered by God to be righteousness.

In **verses 9-12** Paul brings up an extremely important point in understanding the righteousness of Abraham. At what point in time did God acknowledge Abraham to be righteous.

**Please study those verses carefully.**

This is a wonderful truth, especially for us gentiles and gentile Christians. There was nothing Jewish about Abraham at the time that God reckoned Abraham's faith as righteousness.

In other words, Abraham was a gentile when God declared him to be righteous before Him.

God revealed Himself to Abram, (his name at that time which means "exalted father"), in **Genesis 12** while Abram was still living with his father and relatives in Haran.

Abram's father, Terah, was an idolater (**Josh. 24:2**). God called on Abram to leave his country, relatives and father's house to go to a land that God would show him. God promised to bless Abram, make his name great, and that he would be a blessing (**Gen. 12:1-3**).

Abram obeyed God and left for the land of Canaan. Abram eventually settled near Bethel in Canaan. In Genesis 15 God promises Abram a son and that he would have innumerable descendants like the stars in the heavens.

It is in **Genesis 15:6** that we find the statement, then he believed in the Lord; and He reckoned it to him as righteousness. Abram is still uncircumcised, and he still does not have a son. It is not until some 14 years later that God reaffirms His covenant with Abram and changes his name to Abraham, which means "father of multitudes." It is at that time that God institutes circumcision as a sign of the covenant. God reckons Abraham to be righteous long before he does anything "Jewish."

That is the point of this passage. Abram was a gentile, the son of an idolater, when God chose him out of all people. Abram was a gentile when God made a covenant with him and separated him out from among all people as someone who would be special to Himself. It was not until many years later that God refined the covenant and gave a sign of that covenant that was to mark Abraham's descendants from then on. That is why Abraham is the "father of all who believe" whether they are circumcised or not. He is the example of faith for both the gentile and the Jew, for true righteousness comes by faith regardless of ethnic heritage or cultural traditions. Paul makes this clear in the next section.

**Read verses 13-17**

Again, we find that righteousness is not based in keeping of law, but through faith in God. In this Abraham stands out as an example and a standard to us all today.

**Prayer:** Father help me understand and appreciate Father Abrahams example. Help me to be convicted and help me to imitate His example. Amen

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Memory Verse Romans

## CHAPTER FIVE

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### **Romans 5:3-5**

3Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; 4perseverance, character; and character, hope. 5And hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us.

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## THE BENEFITS OF JUSTIFICATION

### ROMANS 5:1-11

*Justification is declaring a person as just or righteous. it is a legal term signifying acquittal. Only a higher authority can declare someone acquitted or justified, in this case, only God has the jurisdiction and power to declare us justified.*

### Benefits of justification

The theme of the book of Romans is “Grace”, and justification is a result of grace. I don’t know why the Apostle Paul chose to write about grace to the church in Rome, but one thing is clear; without God’s grace, there can be no justification **Rom 3:23-24**.

The question is what does justification mean to and offer me?

Before I got baptized 21 years ago as a teenager, I was involved in a lot of sinful deeds, such as skipping classes to go smoke weed, treating girls with a lot of disrespect, my friends and I bullying other people and cheating in exams. I was guilty of many sins even at that young age. I was an enemy of God!

God’s grace was poured out fully upon me when I began studying the bible. I got baptized and I was declared justified, and I became a beneficiary of the following benefits:

- **Peace with God (Rom 5:1, Col 1:20 b).**

Before justification, I stood accused; I was a wrong doer, and an enemy of God. Justification removed the barrier and the offense that made me an enemy of God. Eph 2: 14-18.

- **Hope of Glory (Rom 5: 2b-5).**

Justification brought me a hope that I never had before. Not a hope on human capabilities, but a hope that regardless of my life circumstances, that regardless of what comes my way, I have something better awaiting me at the after this life. **1Pet 1:21.**

This hope, strengthens my resolve to endure suffering of all kinds, bearing in mind that on the long run suffering develops godly character in me and makes my justification evident to all.

- **Assurance of God's love (Rom 5:8).**

I realized that there can be no justification, no grace, and no salvation without God's love. Even while I was still an enemy of God, his love for me was the underlying influence for sending his son to die for me. My justification is a result of God's unfailing love for me. **John 3:16, Ps 22:5.**

God's love for me is reaffirmed in the justification i received through my faith in Christ Jesus.

- **Saved from God's wrath (Rom 5:9-10).**

Justification clears me of every wrong doing. It made me become righteous before God.

Before justification, I stood condemned, liable to punishment and a candidate for God's wrath. But God justified me through the blood of his son and now I am saved from his wrath.

- **Reconciled with God and a participant in the ministry of reconciliation (Rom 5:11, Col 1:21-22).**



To reconcile means; to make things compatible or consistent with each other. I had no hope of ever being reconciled with God before my justification. Darkness and light have nothing in common.

My life was totally incompatible with God's will and ways, but God's grace reached me through Jesus' death and I was freely justified.

My justification led to my reconciliation with God, and after being reconciled with God, He gave me the task of reconciling others to him.

**2 Cor 5: 18-19.**

Irrespective of what comes your way this year, be determined to be at peace with God, to stay justified through your faith in God, and to continue in the ministry of helping others become reconciled with God.

**Amen.**

## UNDOING THE UNIVERSAL RUIN WROUGHT BY ADAM'S FALL.

DAY 15

### *Romans 5:12-21*

*We go all the way back to the fall to help us see our origin and appreciate God's gift, His grace revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

Paul was not making a case for original sin by taking us all the way back to Adam to trace the basis for our guilt and condemnation as many try to input to this scripture. Much harm has come from the misinterpretation. We are not sinners simply because Adam sinned and so have inherited guilt. We are sinners because of our sins, not Adam's or by the extension of our genealogy. We will be judged for our disobedience and condemned for our sin. Death in all its glory is powered by the transgression, your transgression and mine alike.

On the contrary, the beauty and value of the grace of God needs to be seen clearly in contrast.

In the same way that the consequence of Adam's sin was universal, the consequence of Christ gift is universal. This however, does not mean that because Christ died, all are saved, or all will be saved. In fact, the grace of God stands as one of the greatest verdicts against both a universally inherited guilt from Adam as well as a universal salvation for all without responsibility from anyone. **Titus 2:11**

Very rarely will one good deed erase a series of wrongs and bad deeds. It is the way humans operate naturally. Relationships break from one

wrong action; friends become enemies, spouses divorce, corporations fire staff, leaders are rejected. Forgiveness is mouthed but never 'fully' given. We are wired to exert restitution, payback, time tested invested penance from one another in order to be accepted for who we were prior to the one trespass.

The gift of God cleans and wipes all our many sins at salvation and deals with the many more that disciples of Jesus will fall into in time. Jesus' righteous act created the way for all of us condemned before God because of our sins to be justified by Him. Justification with God was going to need more than the lopsided character changes the world tells us is all it takes to be a better person but which still leaves us separated and condemned by God. Justification is knowing that we are righteous with God and our actions and life are not only acceptable but pleasing to God. Jesus upturned the verdict from condemned to justified for those who live in obedience.

The disobedience made us sinners; the gift makes us saints. Culturally, we judge our own character by our best intentions and most noble acts, but we will be judged by our last worst act.

Hallelujah, counter culturally, we will not be judged by our last worst act, or the differential of our good works and bad works. We will be judged by our response to Jesus and his word.

The gift offers us life; life in death, life after death, life over death, life eternal!

The consequence of the fall was undone by Jesus Christ.

**Reflect:**

1. How well do you appreciate what God did to save you offering you a gift like no other in Jesus?
2. Does the world's universal ruin give you concern?
3. What will you do about it today?

**Prayer:** Thank you God for all you did to save me. Let your grace not be without effect in my life and all those who you bring my way for this is a gift like no other.

**1 Cor 15:45-56, Eph 2:10, Isaiah 53:11-12, Col 2:11-15, Titus 2:11-14, John 17:3**

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Memory Verse Romans  
**CHAPTER SIX**

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**Romans 6:12,23**

12Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you  
obey its evil desires.

23For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life  
in Christ Jesus our Lord.

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## THE BELIEVERS' UNION WITH CHRIST IN DEATH AND RESURRECTION.

DAY 16

### *Romans 6:15-23*

*The 17th and 18th Centuries were characterized by slavery which was forced on the peoples of the African continent by European and American slave masters. These slaves had no right to decide who their masters were or what tasks they would perform, rather, they had the wishes and opinions of their owners forced on them. This was the concept of slavery.*

However, as Christians, God has given us the right to choose whose slaves we would rather be. (v16...when you offer yourselves to someone to obey him as slaves...) The word “offer” suggests a decision made by self. This decision is often influenced by our motivation. The question therefore is; what motivates us?

**We can only be motivated by two things,**

**Worldly gratification** – the desire to please and satisfy our earthly and worldly needs in spite of anything and anyone else, even God!

**Heavenly gratification** - The desire to want to please God.

The main drivers of these two gratifications are sin and obedience respectively.

What motivates us determines whose slaves we are. If we are motivated by worldly gratification then we are slaves to sin which

leads to death. If we are motivated by heavenly gratification then we are slaves to obedience which leads to righteousness.

We have been redeemed from being slaves to sin through the death, burial and resurrection of Christ by our wholehearted response and obedience to the word of God, when we made the “good confession” and got baptized for the forgiveness of our sins. Our trust in and openness of heart towards Him availed us this amazing grace of being united with Him in death and resurrection. Praise be to God! Therefore, we ought not to continue to live in sin in order not to remain as slaves to sin.

In one instance, while addressing the Jews who had believed him, Jesus told them that if they held to his teachings, then they were really his disciples. They would know the truth and the truth would set them free. However, they misunderstood this statement and claimed that since they were Abraham’s descendants and have never been slaves to anyone, why would they need to be set free? Jesus responded to them in **John 8:34**, “I tell you the truth, everyone who sins is a slave to sin.” This further confirms that living life of sin is slavery to sin and being a descendant of Abraham does not exclude anyone from this slavery. The only thing that excludes anyone is holding to the teachings of Jesus in obedience to the word of God.

**2 Cor.5:14.**” For Christ’s love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died”.

There is a compelling force in the love exhibited by Jesus when he went to the cross for the sins of the whole world.



This love demands that all those who have been united with him in death and resurrection through baptism also exhibit same love in obedience to his teachings.

The main reason Jesus came and went to the cross was to reconcile the world back to God. Luke 19.10. This has to be a priority to all true believers. Christ's love should compel all believers to keep telling others about it.

I recall my conversion as an undergraduate and the struggles that came with it. The struggle to share about the love of Christ was the most challenging. I was convinced that Christ loved me so much considering where I was coming from and where I would have ended up. However, sharing about it among my friends, with whom I had compromised a lot of things was not that easy. God used other believers to help me see that having been redeemed from slavery to sin (my compromises) and becoming a slave to obedience, the only way I could show gratitude to God was to share about His love. This transformed my life.

What area of the Christian walk are you struggling with today? Who have you offered yourself to as slave to obey? What is your motivation? Is the Jesus' priority still same as yours? How faithfully are you holding to the teachings of Jesus?

**2 Cor.5:15** "And He died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again".

## UNION WITH CHRIST: AN ENSLAVEMENT WITH RIGHTEOUSNESS

DAY 17

### ***Romans 6:15-23***

*A slave is not in charge. He obeys and does the will of his master. He is a person entirely under the domination of some influence or person.*

*At every point of our lives, you and I are slaves – either to sin or to obedience to God. By virtue of Jesus’ grace and love, we have been rescued from death. He requires us to wholeheartedly obey His teaching.*

This passage talks about how we used to be slaves to sin, but by virtue of our salvation we have been set free to become slaves to righteousness. We are expected to live lives of submission and obedience to Christ, which involve humility; desire to know the Master’s will and the readiness to serve Him.

### **The question is:**

are you still wholeheartedly obeying; selectively obeying or out-rightly disobeying Him? To my shame, I am inconsistent; there are times I give in especially to the ‘little sins’ and have to carry the burden of guilt.

### **Slave to impunity and ever-increasing wickedness.**

We live in a world dominated by impunity, whatever feels good or comfortable is okay. The “goal post” of godly standard is constantly being moved. The concept of ‘absolute truth’ is being destroyed – truth is becoming personal opinion. Bad behavior, bad character, bad judgements are being justified.

Rather than feel broken about sin/indiscretion, the fault is shifted to the society, to the church, to our upbringing, etc.

Sexual sins are not being frowned upon as it ought; disobedience to laid down laws are accepted (we blame the authorities for everything/anything); stealing & dishonesty are justified (due to 'hunger and poverty'); business ethics are going down the drain. There is hatred, discrimination and divisiveness and every other vice that causes confusion and tension all over the place because everyone has a reason not to submit himself to constituted authority.

In considering even the basic things of life, we see ourselves disobeying traffic rules; not fulfilling our obligations to authorities; not settling outstanding bills/debts; giving bribes or business "PR"; "buying" children's admission into schools and the list goes on and on.

This has gradually and surely crept into our midst. Due to the increase in wickedness (**Matt 24:12**), all such impunity is becoming 'acceptable' amongst us. Disciples struggle to trust and transact businesses with one another (to our shame!), sin destroys the fabric of relationship and the society.

### **Slave to righteousness leading to holiness.**

This is the state we are encouraged to be. We must strive on a daily basis to live as slaves of Christ and His righteousness – *"What would Christ do in this situation?"*

**This used to be the Motto we lived by. What happened? What changed (the Bible or us?).**

It is not late to turn back. Now is the time to repent! None of us knows when Christ our Lord will be back or when our time on earth will be up!!! The CLOCK IS TICKING!!!! Tick! Tock!!

**Let's ALL REPENT!!**

**1Tim 4:15**

Be diligent in these matters; give yourself wholly to them, so that everyone may see your progress.

Righteousness is all encompassing. It encompasses our 'private lives', 'business lives/decisions'. Your righteousness is tested when other Christians are not with you. The decisions you make, expose the quality of your righteousness. Righteousness is not a part-time activity.

**Gal 5:22-26**

24. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

To die to the flesh is to imbibe the fruit of the Spirit. At times during the previous year, I took time to study and meditate on each of these characters. Such times helped me tremendously to focus on Christ and in pleasing Him. In 2021, God willing, I will do this more frequently. I'm inviting you on such wonderful and productive adventure. Let us live by the Spirit

**Phil 4:8**

Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable – if anything is excellent or praiseworthy – think about such things.

What is your mindset as a disciple of Christ? Does it reflect Christ?

**Rom 6:23**

For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Let's go back to Christ in our hearts and our lives as we are meant to be. Let us, once again before our God and man, be slaves of Christ and His Kingdom.

He is coming sooner than we think. Let's be ready.

**Ref: Gal 6:2; 1 Cor9:21; 1Cor 15:3,4; Matt 24:12**

Memory Verse Romans

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## CHAPTER SEVEN

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### **Romans 7:24-25**

24What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body that is subject to death? 25Thanks be to God, who delivers me through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself in my mind am a slave to God's law, but in my sinful nature a slave to the law of sin.

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## UNION WITH CHRIST: A DELIVERANCE FROM THE LAW.

### **ROMANS 7:1-6**

*The word law is used by Apostle Paul Nineteen times in Chapter 7 of the book of Romans. He refers to Christians breaking free from oppressiveness of sin, and uniting with Christ, becoming enslaved to God and righteousness.*

**There is a direct correlation between sin and the law.**

In **1 Corinthians 15:56**, “The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. As Christians our victory over sin is tied to our union with Christ in His death and resurrection.

Disciples have died to sin (**Rom 6:2**) and to the law (**Rom 7:4**), freed from sin, released from the law, walk in newness of life and serve in newness of the Spirit (**7:6**).

Our release from the law and its sin-controlling power is because we are now joined to the crucified and risen Lord (**7:4**). Christ’s death on the cross has joined us to Jesus Christ.

But the question is, “Then is the law sin?”

No, the law is holy and good (**Rom 7:7-12**). Sin is stirred up when our sinful nature comes into contact with the law and does not obey. The law has jurisdiction over the living. If a person dies, he is no longer under the law.



As baptized disciples of Christ, we died to the law and identified ourselves with Christ in His death and resurrection. We died to the law, to join Christ, under His authority.

We are re-united to Christ so that we might bear fruit for God **(7:4)** and serve Him in newness of the Spirit **(7:6)**.

What fruit are you bearing for God in your life? If you're not bearing fruit for God, you are not fulfilling the purpose for which He delivered you.

The law held us in bondage **(7:6)**. It did so by putting us under a curse because of our failure to obey it perfectly. The law is not the answer to our sin problem. Keeping the law can never reconcile us to God, because we've all violated His law many times.

Pasting God's commandments on the doors and entrances of our homes, back of our cars and trying to keep them by our own strength won't work either. Indeed, the law does not remove nor reduce the desire to sin.

We were "made to die to the law through the body of Christ" **(7:4)**. Jesus satisfied the demands of the law on our behalf, nailing it to the cross" **(Col. 2:14)**.

We are delivered from the condemnation of the law. The power of the law to ginger and control our sinful desires is broken, by being joined to Christ. In addition, we now have the Holy Spirit to give us the power to obey.

Our union with the Jesus through the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit, works in us to bear fruit for God.

Union with Christ produced great change, from before we met Christ to afterwards. Before we met Him, we were in the flesh, enslaved to sin, under the condemnation and power of the law. “But now we have been released from the law, having died to that by which we were bound” (7:6)

Also, our death to the law freed us to be joined in marriage to the risen Christ (7:4). We have a new relationship of love with our Bridegroom, who gave Himself on the cross to secure us as His bride.

One thing certain about marriage to me, is that it changes you forever. You are not on your own any more. You have to think about your wife before you make plans and decisions. You have to think about what pleases her. You have to take her into consideration in every action or decision that you make. You have to work at staying close in your relationship with her.

But in spite of these new dimensions and responsibilities, I can say with bold confidence and enthusiasm that marrying my wife for close to twenty-eight years changed me for the good.

In the same way, being joined to Jesus Christ changes everything. It gives you new responsibilities, and transforms you decidedly for the good.

We no longer have to strive in vain to meet its impossible demands as the grounds of our acceptance with God. Rather, Christ met those demands for us and we are joined to Him in love.

We live to please Him, but our whole motive has changed from duty that condemned us - to love that accepts us.

**Who are you? Are you in UNION with Christ?**

You are either a Christian or not a Christian; you cannot be partly or part time Christian. You are either 'dead' or 'alive'; 'Hot' or 'Cold' If you have not surrendered and submitted to the supremacy of Christ, you are not a Christian, you are under the condemnation of the law.

We must understand that as long as Christ remains outside of us, and we are separated from him, all that he has suffered and had done for our salvation remains useless, powerless and of no value for us.

If you submit and put your trust in Christ, who bore the curse of the law, you are released from the law and joined to a loving relationship so that you can bear fruit for God.

## THE LAW AND SIN

### **ROMANS 7: 7-13**

*The Law and Sin are not the same but like next door neighbors and are opposite in direction. Law is a custom or practice recognized as binding by a community especially because of having been so decreed by the governing authority. It can also be simply defined as a set of rules guiding people's steps or action so that they do not fall foul of the normal trends in their movement or actions with each other.*

Biblically, we have this law in **Exodus 20: 1-17** popularly known as the Ten Commandments; **Ephesians 5:3-5** and **Galatians 5:19-21** to mention a few. Sin, on the other hand is an action contrary to the law of God or offence against the State law. It is a violation of the law showing disobedience to its rules and damning its consequences.

In **John 15: 5**, God declared the structure of our creation by saying "without me you can do nothing". In order that we may not run aground, he gave the law for us to obey so that we may continuously enjoy our relationship with him and our neighbors without hitch. But the rebellion within us is like asking in pride "Oh yea? Says who? Hey, I know what is best. Sure, God. I can do that. Watch me!"

It all started in **Genesis 3: 1-24** where the command was given by God "not to eat from the fruit of the tree at the center of the garden or touch it or you will die." Adam and Eve ate it and were ejected from the garden and from God as repercussion for disobedience. Do you know that the Tree of Life was also in the garden?

God therefore set the Cherubim with a flaming sword to guard the Garden so that Adam and Eve would not have any chance to eat it and live forever. Every disobedience to the law is sin and every sin has punishment attached to the violation of the law.

There is something to learn on this topic. When we understand God's law, we will be driven to either hatred or humility. That is what the word of God always does. Whenever it is preached, whenever you share the gospel with somebody, it will do one of two things. It would either harden a heart or it will soften it. Law exposes sin and incites rebellion. It insults pride in us; it illuminates the sinfulness of sin. We all came to know sin through the law even though sin had always been in us before we knew the law.

In my conversion story in England, I was asked how I have been practicing my Christianity. I replied that we had been conducting crusades in Nigeria and people had been called to Christ and the sick healed through miracles. I was asked if I had personally led anyone to Christ in accordance with **Mathew 28: 18-20** and I answered "No". Then the brother asked: "if you die today" where will you go and I answered, "Heaven of course!". This confrontation brought irritation to my heart and we argued strongly until I left the venue. Thank God for his mercy. I invited myself back the following day with some humility and I got baptized within a week about 29 years ago.

**Mathew 28: 18-20** exposed how Jesus commanded me to serve him. I knew I had been doing the contrary, and it exposed my sin and incited my rebellion. My pride was raised, and my heart hardened until late that night when I could not find any scripture in the contrary to fight back, I became humbled.

Jesus gave an update of the 10 commandments in **Mathew 5: 17-48** which are plain enough for good understanding. In the world today, it has been estimated that there has been over 35million different human laws made. In the conclusion of the whole matter, however, in God's government, He has made only one law that has ten parts.

The whole universe can be governed with one law that a child can read and understand.

Jesus said, "If you love me, keep my commandments" **John 14: 15**. For us to show love to Christ, there is need to repent from our sins, and commit ourselves to him.

### **In Ephesians 2: 8**

we should have unflinching faith in Jesus Christ that make changes in our behavioral pattern through which we can be saved by Grace.

Memory Verse Romans

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## CHAPTER EIGHT

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### **Romans 8:5-8**

5Those who live according to the flesh have their minds set on what the flesh desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. 6The mind governed by the flesh is death, but the mind governed by the Spirit is life and peace. 7The mind governed by the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. 8Those who are in the realm of the flesh cannot please God.

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## FUTURE REALITIES ENTERED INTO, AND ENJOYED IN THIS EARTHLY PILGRIMAGE!

DAY 20

### ***Romans 8:18-25***

*In today's devotional, I will attempt to draw a distinction between the present value of human suffering as compared to its future glorious outcome should one persevere in hope through Christ Jesus.*

Apostle Paul in this passage and through the power of the Holy Spirit highlighted key lessons God wants us to learn:

- Our present suffering does not compare with the future glory that awaits us;
- Creation is waiting for with eager expectation for us to be revealed
- Creation which is subjected to frustration will be brought to the freedom and glory of the children of God (you and I);
- Children of God must wait eagerly for our adoption to sonship (sons & daughters), the redemption of our bodies;
- Between our present suffering and a future glory lies, hope;
- Hope reflects the past, present and future value of our salvation;
- Without hope, we cannot successfully navigate our earthly pilgrimage

I recall a time in my career when I had to endure harsh words, and oppression from my boss to the point where quitting the job became an option. I was falsely accused; malicious lies were told against me and my work was investigated with an intent to fault my integrity. For 6 years, I was denied promotion three times and it was as though I had been marked for destruction. My ONLY fault; I was told was for speaking up against wrongdoings.

While I prayed and fasted through this period, my motivation to stay on the job included my hope in God that He would defend and vindicate me, which He eventually did and I worked up until I retired to start my own business.

The fact is that good always triumphs over evil. I saw the future glory in staying on the job and persevering through those years of oppression believing by faith that God had my back.

When you look at your present suffering, do you imagine the future glory that awaits you if you persevere? The undeniable truth remains that our future reality is achieved through godly living, patience (**Psalm 37:7**) and waiting on God (**Galatians 5:5**). We must identify with Christ's Suffering (**1 Peter 4:13**) to enjoy this earthly pilgrimage.

God wants us to remember that our salvation has past, present and future value. It has past value because we got saved the moment we repented and got baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Consider the rights we enjoy as children of God (**John 1: 12**). Our Salvation is present because we are being saved. Its present value is immense if we are living the life – transformed lives, godly schedules and priorities. Yet, we will only receive the full benefits of our salvation when Jesus returns, and we are revealed as sons and daughters of God. Our salvation is also future because once saved is not always saved as we must continue to work out our salvation with fear and in trembling (**Philippians 2: 12**). While we can be confident of our salvation, we must continue to put our hope and trust in God knowing full well that our light and momentary troubles (**2 Corinthians 4: 17**) are achieving for us something which outcome is infinite/endless. That is the decision we all must make daily.

## THE STRUGGLE TO OBSERVE THE LAW

### *Romans 7:14-25*

*Paul's struggle to observe the Law as revealed in this passage is one with which only Christians can identify or relate with.*

*To start with, the Law of God is spiritual and allows nothing, but that which is done from a pure and excellent motive, and in perfect love, enthusiasm, gratitude and delight.*

When Paul compares his actual attainments with the spirituality of the Law, and with his own passionate desire and aim to obey it, he sees that he is yet a great degree "unspiritual" and under the power of evil inclinations from which he cannot set himself free, even though he is a disciple of Christ. He is "unspiritual" in exact proportion to the degree in which he falls short of perfect obedience to the Law.

Paul finds that while his body refuses to obey God and do that which he desires and which delights God, it quickly and eagerly responds to the impulses and desires aroused by sin.

The struggle to observe the Law is a reality that stares in the face of every disciple of Christ, and the fleshly body is at the core of it. Even though we have attained grace; our sinful nature is put off at baptism – **Col 2:11**, we suffer from what I term as "hangover" from the sinful nature just like Apostle Paul. This is so, because we are yet to receive our or identity in accordance with Jesus' resurrection; and replace our fleshly bodies with glorified bodies. We still have the same corrupt, frail bodies and so the "hangover" from the former nature remains

with us. We know what sin is, and how destructive it is to our relationship with God and at times to our fellow humans, but sometimes we do it anyway. So as Paul puts it in **verse 17**, there is a constant tug-of-war going on between the real me (regenerated mind) and the “hangover” from the sinful nature; sometimes the new me wins, sometimes the “hangover” prevails.

Brothers and sisters, this line of thought is so very hard to accept, yet we inherently know that it is true.

While this probably isn't good news for us to hear, at least it explains why we at times behave the way we do and have the kinds of thoughts we are glad no one else knows about.

We should also be comforted by knowing that the Apostle Paul openly admits that he, too, is plagued by this uncomfortable “hangover” in his own life; so, we probably shouldn't feel too bad about it. If anything, the lesson to take away for me is that as a disciple I should see myself as work in progress, and to never give up. I should see the struggle to observe the Law as a challenge, and strive to measure up to it; to continue to promote the desires of my regenerated mind over and above that of my body. We must determine to remain obedient to God, even knowing ahead of time that we won't always be.

Paul uses the inner self that loves and agrees with God's Law over and against other parts of his body that operate based on sin's laws. By this he makes the case that the hallmark of a true disciple of Christ is that God's Laws are what he or she goes by and strives to obey. When we fail, we are in reality being obedient to sin's laws.

This truth brings to the fore, the value of Jesus words - self-denial and making every effort. I need to be deliberate about denying myself and making every effort to live by the Spirit in order not to gratify the desires of the flesh - **Gal 5:16**.

**Psalm to ponder on:**  
**Psalm 119:1-16**

## THE BLESSING OF LIFE IN THE SPIRIT

***Rom 8: 1-15***

*“...The Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship...”*

Growing up as a child, I never felt I had a place or people to love me and give me a sense of belonging. My parents were not together and I did not have a proper loving family that I could call mine. I remember chatting with my friends and checking out things in their homes; wishing they were mine. They always made it clear that I was not a part of their family and for that reason there were boundaries I could not cross. One of them was the fact that I couldn't enter their parents' rooms. I remember feeling deeply hurt. I longed for a parent's room that I could go into freely and restrict others from entering.

Fortunately, an aunt that I never knew came to the village, saw me and asked if I would like to come stay with her in Lagos. I was overjoyed! I told everyone who cared to listen that I was going to Lagos! In my new home, I had to “unlearn” my village lifestyle and learn the ways of my new family. I was showered with love and a life I could never have imagined. We had a television, a VHS player, nice clothing, a sound education, good food and so on. My aunt gave me the family I always wanted but never had. One evening as I sat in the living room watching television with my new friends, I got up and went into my aunt's bedroom. In my head I told myself “you now have a parent's room!

You can go in there anytime you want and you can stop anyone else from entering!” I had an indescribable sense of joy within me.

As Christians, God has adopted us as sons and daughters of His kingdom, His church, His family. This is an amazing fact! We are His heirs and coheirs with Christ through the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross. As the mark of our sonship, we received the seal of the Holy Spirit, deposited in us till the day of redemption.

The Holy Spirit is our advocate. **(John 15:26, 16:7)** He guides us into all truth and righteousness, helping us lead a holy and blameless life for God. The Spirit helps us in our weakness, when we do not know what to pray for **(Rom 8:26-27)**. He searches our minds and intercedes for us in accordance with the will of God.

Growing up with my aunt, there were times I wanted to go back to the village because I missed somethings there. I was constantly reminded that the new life I had was far better and could not be traded for something less. In our Christian walk, there are times that it can be really hard. The devil will come at us with all sorts of things to discourage or distract us and make us give up. The Holy Spirit is there to urge us on and help us see that we have greater things ahead if we remain steadfast to the end.

## Conclusion

See the length that God has gone to secure/adopt us as his children. This should fill us with confidence and unshakable faith. We are the King's Kids! By His Spirit, we have all we need for life and godliness. “If God is for us who can be against us?” Brothers and Sisters, we are truly BLESSED!

## THE MINISTRIES OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

**Romans 8:18-27**

*In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness.*

*Today's devotional will help us further understand how the Spirit ministers to us.*

### **1. The Holy Spirit Points us to Christ Rom 8:15, Eph1:13-14**

The Holy Spirit reminds us of who we are in God. We are God's own children. He is our Abba, our “Baba”, our “Daddy.” We are co-heirs with Christ. In other words, all that the Son shares with the Father is now ours as well. We are conscious of our inclusiveness in God's family. We have His ownership seal on us. The Spirit in us confirms we are children of God and so intertwines our lives with Christ.

### **2. The Holy Spirit is our Helper: John 16:7,13**

Jesus Christ calls the Holy Spirit our Advocate, our Helper. As Christ returned to the Father, His goal was to not leave us as orphans. He knew His followers will need One to be with them and for them because those joined to Christ through faith are also returned to the world to live in it and experience its frustrations.

What kind of frustrations do you face in your day-to-day life; aggravated by the fact that you identify with Christ? In order to get by in Nigeria of today; secure admission to school, get a job, carry on our business etc., we experience so many frustrations that lead to temptation.



Cheating, exam malpractice, impersonation, falsifying age, school results or certificates, offering or receiving a bribe are just some of them.

I remember many years ago, my spouse and I were involved in invigilating JAMB examinations in one of the centers in Lagos. We went in thinking all will be normal. To our surprise, when the examination started there was uncontrolled exchange of answers from both within and outside the hall. Our spirit could not take it at all, so we had to walk away. Nobody missed us. This is just an example of the frustrations we face as Christians. When we find ourselves under pressure to compromise, instead of giving in, we can rely on the Spirit to help us and show us the way out of temptation.

The Holy Spirit teaches us and leads us to the truth: **John 14:16-17, 26** Does it not amaze you that the Bible which was written almost 2000 years ago can still speak to your situation today? Have you ever wondered how you can read the same passage several times and continue to get new insights from it? This is the work of the Spirit of Truth. We need to learn to rely on the wisdom of the Spirit and not lean on our own understanding, no matter how experienced we think we might be.

### **The Holy Spirit helps us in our weakness Rom 8:26**

In our weakness, the Spirit helps us to intercede with many groans that words cannot express. In other words, the Spirit leads us in prayers, connecting directly with God our Father to bring about divine answer to our prayers. The Spirit teaches us how to pray in accordance to the will of God.

Are you weak in the area of evangelism? Ask the Spirit to fill you with boldness, passion for God and compassion for lost souls.

### **Conclusion**

The Holy Spirit is our constant companion on this Christian journey. Let us allow the Spirit to minister to us on a moment-by-moment basis.

- Ask Him to give you insight and deeper understanding of God's word.
- Ask Him to help you in your area of greatest weakness.
- Ask Him to make you bold to preach and proclaim Christ.

## THE ROLE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IN NURTURING THE NEW CREATION

DAY 24

**Romans 8:16**

*The Spirit testifies with our spirit that we are God's children.*

*God by His grace made us His children and like the loving Father that He is, He did not leave us alone to live our Christian life all by ourselves. He gave us the Holy Spirit at our new birth in baptism. He chose to dwell in us; up close and personal. Every parent expects their new born to grow from one developmental stage to another. When that does not happen, there is an outcry for help and professional care. Likewise, God expects us to grow and mature. He gives us His Spirit to help us attain that goal.*

**Why is it important to God that we experience spiritual nurture.?**

**2 Corinthians 3:18-** God's goal is to transform us so that we can reflect Him. He wants people to see us and see Him in us. This transformation does not take place in a day. It comes as a result of the Spirits work in us.

We know that nurture plays a huge role in determining one's personality. I grew up in a polygamous home with many children. My parents did what they could, but there was little concerted effort to guide what we ate or how we fared. We more or less lived and grew by the day. As the saying goes, "you are what you are fed". This upbringing was not without its negative effects. I grew to be tough but timid, unemotional, unaffectionate, with so many life traps. Now after becoming a Christian, people say I am a good person, but most do not know the details of my growth journey.

I have had to tell them the story of how God had worked on me through his words and the nurturing of the Holy Spirit. I am still work in progress.

### What do we do to get Nurtured?

- It starts with your decision. Decide that you want to grow.
- Rom 8:6 Submit your heart and mind to the governing of the Spirit. Just as parents can carry their little child only if he willingly raises his arms, so we can only grow if we willingly yield ourselves to the Spirit's tutelage.
- **Eph 6:17** Spend meaningful time in the Word. (No fast-food menu, choose your menu based on your need) The word of God is the Spirit's sword. Read, study and meditate on the word.
- **John 14:25-26** God gives us the Spirit to teach us all things. He is your spiritual coach. Each day, ask the Spirit specifically to guide you and teach you what to do in different situations.
- **John 8:32** Apply what you are learning. It should be a conscious effort. Change does not use automatic gear; it is a manual one. You move from one phase of maturity to another.

### Conclusion

We are saved to declare the praises of God who called us out of darkness to His marvelous light. Our transformed lives are the first testimony to God's power. This transformation is only possible as we submit to the Holy Spirit.

Pick one area of your life and ask the Holy Spirit to start and finish this great work in you.

**Further Reading: Galatian 5:16, Luke 12:12, John 16:13, 1Corinthians 2:7-16**

## THE PERMANENCE OF LIFE FOR THE REDEEMED ONES

DAY 25

### *Romans 8 v 28-39*

*...For I am convinced that neither death nor life, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

God always had a plan to redeem us permanently for Himself. Choosing Jesus to die for us was not an afterthought or something he whipped up when He saw the world was spinning out of control. He had set that plan in motion even before the creation of the world, though Jesus came physically in the latter days.

This passage represents the message of the gospel of Jesus Christ, which is the basis for, and the call to hope in the life of a Christian. God is telling us that, no matter what happens to us in our life's journey, we can be assured that He is using it to work out something for our ultimate good and that His love for us transcends any eventuality.

This passage brings to my mind, a number of events in my life during which I had to believe that God must be working out something for my good.... Even though it didn't seem that way at the time.

In January 2012, the nation was at the tail end of a national strike and I was looking forward to being able to go out and back to business. Then I had a very bad home accident – I sustained severe burns on my hand and foot from hot palm oil! The look of the burn wounds that took over one hour daily to dress and the fear that the wound would

not heal and would need skin grafting operations were pale in comparison to the excruciating physical and emotional pain I experienced during the weeks that followed.

I asked myself so many questions. “Why did this happen to me?” “Why at this time?” “Is this how Jesus felt as he hung alone on the cross?”

” Does God feel I don’t love Him?” “What could be the good coming out of this?”

I had to conclude that for some reason God wanted to keep me at home. Maybe there was some accident or mishap along a path I would have taken if I had not been at home for 2 months nursing my burns. I will never know. I just had to trust that God is good and that through this, He was working out what was best for me. Other occurrences were the loss of 3 of the closest people in my life all within few years and a health condition that included my having a cardiac arrest on an operating table. Again, I had no choice but to hold on to the promises in the Bible and find reasons to be grateful to God. Getting to that point wasn’t easy.

What about you? Is there a situation in your life now that makes you despair and think: “What good can be in this? In all you are going through, He is working something out for your ultimate good.

It is not easy, but we just must trust God, knowing that while this world and all its woes and pleasures are temporary, God’s love is permanent and our redemption is permanent if we choose to continue loving Him and staying on the narrow path despite the challenges we face.

According to the Scripture, there is nothing existing in all creation that has the capacity to separate us from God's love. That is amazing!

**Conclusion:**

God's love for you is permanent and unshakable, in spite of every challenge or setback you might face. His love goes beyond this life and carries you into eternity with Him. **(1 Cor 2v9).**

Let His promises of tomorrow lead you like a light at the end of a dark tunnel as you fight to love Him with everything that you have.

**Further study: Gen 50 v 20; Mark 12 v 30; 1 Peter 1 v 20; 1 Cor 8v3**

Memory Verse Romans

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## CHAPTER NINE

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**Romans 9:27-28**

27Isaiah cries out concerning Israel:

“Though the number of the Israelites be like the sand by the sea,  
only the remnant will be saved.

28For the Lord will carry out  
his sentence on earth with speed and finality.”

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## ISRAEL'S PROBLEM AND CONDITION

**Romans 9:1-11:36**

### **Introduction**

*Sometimes, as Christians, we often take for granted the cost of our salvation. Prayerfully, at the end of this devotional, we will have the opportunity to reexamine our convictions and realign our priorities in line with the faith we profess as Christians.*

As we examine today's key scripture in **Romans 9-11**, it is important to understand the crux of the matter which is God's integrity. At the time of writing of the letters to the Romans, the Church was predominately made up of Gentiles and a handful of Jews.

As we read through Romans, we are accustomed to this setting and don't think much about it. However, this was a hard pill for the Jews to swallow who "questioned" God's integrity in bringing salvation to the Gentiles viz-viz the promises he made in **Deut. 14:1-2** about the Israelites being his treasured possession. One would have expected to see more Jews in the church and a handful of Gentiles, but it was the other way around which negated the OT promise of messianic salvation to the Jews. Did God change His mind or go back on His promises?

This, perhaps, was the stumbling block referred to in **Romans 9:33**.

In his book, "Encountering the Book of Romans: A Theological Survey", the author, Douglas Moo asserts that, "Paul contrasts the current plight of Israel (**Rom. 9:1-3**) with the promises God made to Israel

**(v.4–5).** Paul does not state Israel's plight in so many words. He expresses deep and sincere concern for them **(v. 1–2)** and even offers to put himself under a curse on their behalf **(v. 3).**" This action is similar to Moses' in **Exodus 32:32.**

Sometimes, we don't value what we have until we lose it. The Israelites were the ones "adopted as sons" **(Deut. 14:2; Exo. 4:22; Hosea 11:1)**, yet they seem cut off from God and excluded from salvation having received so much. They had a feeling of entitlement and sonship while taking their relationship with God for granted. Interestingly, Paul used this same analogy of adoption in describing Gentiles in **Romans 8:16 and 23)**, something that didn't go down well with the Jews.

"Although early Christians did believe that the Jewish religion was no longer a way to reach God, they had nothing at all against the Jewish people. Indeed, most of the New Testament authors were themselves Jews and sought in love to win them to the gospel."

How does this relate to us today? Sometimes our knowledge of God's word puffs us up and make us feel entitled. We walk around "condemning" people from other denominations because they are not "disciples" much like what we saw prior to the spiritual Tsunami we witnessed in 2003. You may feel like God has gone back on his promises concerning your life as you see people around you get on in life, married, and settled with their families while you remain single and searching. Or the lady who has aborted countless pregnancies now married and has recently given birth to a set of twins while you are still "waiting on the Lord".

Let us take heed then that our zeal is based on knowledge of God's word (**Rom. 10:2**) and not some carefully thought-out philosophy based on human understanding and wisdom.

**Reference:**

D. A. Hagner, "Paul's Quarrel with Judaism," in *Anti-Semitism and Early Christianity: Issues of Polemic and Faith*, ed. C. A. Evans and D. A. Hagner (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 128–50.

**Encountering the Book of Romans:** A Theological Survey by Douglas I. Moo

## GOD'S FREEDOM TO ACT IN HIS SOVEREIGNTY

DAY 27

**Romans 9:14-29**

*Today's devotional is about appreciating the sovereignty of God and the power of His grace inherent therein. God's sovereignty refers to His absolute power and authority to rule. God is sufficient in and of Himself and does not need to consult or gain approval of any man to do what He does. He is the potter. We are only clay.*

My knowledge of God's sovereignty is worthless if it does not reproduce in me deep convictions that produce godly fruit in my life.

**Let's consider the following:**

### **Sovereignty of God Creates Humility in Me**

Salvation begins and ends with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ. If you are reading this devotion as a baptized follower of Jesus, consider the fact that some people were met before you to study the bible. They did not make it, but you did. Just as the people of Israel rejected Jesus, so do many people reject the word of God today (John 12:48). Perhaps even some of your own friends and family members are yet to embrace the gospel.

That fact that God sent messengers to us and enabled us to accept the word of truth is not because we are more righteous than others. If salvation was by works, intelligence, wealth or family lineage, most of us will never even get near the gate of the Kingdom! Yet, God chose us and called us to belong to Him. I am completely humbled by this. How about you?

### **Sovereignty of God Ignites a Sense of Gratitude in Me**

Understanding that I am a product of God's sovereign choice fills me with a deep sense of gratitude. I am part of his Body through Jesus Christ. What about you? Are you grateful to God for saving you – for counting you worthy, even in your sin, to be a member of his Body? Aren't you lucky? What if you were not counted as one of His own? We must be deeply grateful to God for His favor – a truly unmerited gift. **(Psalm 7: 17; Ephesians 5:20; Col. 3:17; Thess. 5:18)**

### **Sovereignty of God Inspires a Life of Service Prompted by Grace**

In Gods sovereignty He extended His grace to you and I. He made us objects of His mercy and not objects of His wrath. What should be the impact of God's grace in your life? How does one show appreciation to a person who did him an uncommon favor?

A lifestyle of prayer, ministry and evangelism is not burdensome when it is our natural response to the grace we have received. There is power in the grace of God as he reigns sovereign in our lives. Let us explore this power to serve God. The Apostle Paul, a former murderer and tormenter of Christians, never lost sight of how much grace he had received through God's forgiveness. It was this grace that spurred him to do great exploits for God. **(1 Cor 15:10)**

### **Conclusion**

Gods sovereignty is not merely an intellectual topic to be discussed but a conviction to be lived out. As you start this new day, challenge yourself to pray, think about your personal ministry and ensure you speak to at least one person about Christ and His saving grace. I will do so too. May we continually exercise this sovereign grace of God in our lives.

## ISRAEL FAILS TO ATTAIN RIGHTEOUSNESS BY WORKS!

DAY 28

*Romans 9:30-10:21*

*"... what do you mean?! How dare you say such a thing? Who are you to talk to me like that? How can you tell me that my sacrifices are not acceptable, I fast two times weekly, I pray and join the worship daily, no forbidden food has touched my tongue since I was born, so what are you saying? As far as I am concerned, God is pleased with me, and so am I. What is this new teaching that you are bringing Apostle Paul?"*

These are possible responses from a full-blown Jew, he was brought up to think that as long as he makes effort in living a certain way, eat, talk and act according to some codes of behavior, he is right with God, that he is righteous! Why should he not? Why shouldn't that be enough to make the 'A' list in God's book?

This is the same thing we do when as parents there are expectations from children to ace their grades, come on top of the class, be of the best behavior, and be respectful; or as a young sister or brother (single or married) with expectations that certain things must be done to show affection. Rightly so, a logical way to ascertain progress or dedication is by some form of measurable parameters. Would it not seem unfair if a parent rejects the flying colors at the end of the term and one of the parties fail to recognize the dedication and showers of gifts? What then is expected? How can dedication, righteousness be shown if not by works or what is measurable?

Righteousness and works are two sides of the same coin! We do the acts of righteousness because we believe, trust and have faith in the

power of God to elevate our work to something worthy of Him. These virtues I believe makes the difference; they are all seated in our hearts. Like the case in the introductory conversation, or the example of the Pharisee who prays the temple, an average Jew believes justification comes only by works (**Luke 18:10-14**), similarly, as Christians, we may sometimes be caught in the web of righteous activities – attendance, giving and sharing, perhaps fervently engaging spiritual disciplines (prayers, fasting, meditation etc.). These are all necessary building blocks to keep our faith strong but they must all be bonded with the right heart.

Israel missed this, they refused to recognize the new order of things (**Eph. 2:8-10**); righteousness is not by works alone, our righteous acts are acceptable because we rely on God. A lot of humility and submission are required. It does not seem to make much sense to ask for help and be dependent on the things you can do by yourself – no. But therein lies the whole point, God wants me to depend on him and not think it's my works that have earned the grace and salvation I received.

Abraham was considered a righteous man (**Gen. 15:6**), what did he do? He simply believed God, he trusted, and had faith that God was able to do for him what has been promised, his belief did not stop in his heart, he got up early to sacrifice his only son (**Gen. 22**). That is righteousness earned by works through faith.

Today, God is looking up to you to show your righteousness by the things you will do as you rely on the Spirit. Forgive for God's sake, not because you will be asked, pay your debts, make every effort to fellowship because God wills it.



Memory Verse Romans

## — CHAPTER TEN & ELEVEN —

### **Romans 10:11-13**

11As Scripture says, “Anyone who believes in him will never be put to shame.”  
12For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile—the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, 13for, “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”

### **Romans 11:22-23**

22Consider therefore the kindness and sternness of God: sternness to those who fell, but kindness to you, provided that you continue in his kindness. Otherwise, you also will be cut off. 23And if they do not persist in unbelief, they will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again.

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## ISRAEL IS TEMPORARILY REJECTED, BUT THERE'S HOPE FOR ISRAEL

DAY 29

### *Romans 11:1-32*

*What got Israel to this state? It was pride. Israel believed that she had a monopoly on God and that God could not act in any other way apart from how he had always dealt with her. But Israel wasn't the only nation that God created.*

### *John 3:16*

*For God so loved the whole world that he gave his one and only son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.*

It is quite ironic that the same nation of Israel that God used to bring about salvation for the world, largely rejected that salvation.

For the sake of election, God patiently persisted with Israel, but most of the Jews became a stumbling block in the path of the Gospel, that even Paul almost got frustrated. Eventually, he shook the dust of his sandals at them and went all out for the Gentiles.

On several occasions, it was recorded that the Jews became jealous upon seeing many Gentiles embrace the new found Gospel (**Acts 5:17, Acts 13:45, Acts 17:15**).

One would wonder why they bothered at all, since they did not want the gospel of Christ in the first place. Again, it was a matter of pride and selfishness. They could not bear to see any other movement flourish more than theirs.

But God couldn't just stand idly by, waiting for the approval of the Jews before he could save Gentiles. What did he do? Of course, he boycotted them and started having a jolly good ride with the Gentiles (**Acts 13:46**).

Have you ever been in a situation like this or remotely close? Maybe you refused to run a particular errand because you felt it was beneath you and by so doing, held others to ransom, but suddenly became jealous when someone else took the job, did it well and earned the favor of the job owner?

Jesus once expressed this in a parable. Let's look at **Matthew 21:28-32**

It's not all bad news however, because according to Paul, there is still hope for Israel. He categorically says that all Israel will be saved. Indeed, as many as still believe the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ today, repent and get baptized will be saved.

So, you see, all hope is never lost where God is concerned. Have you been rejected on account of personal disobedience or do you currently feel rejected due to no fault of yours? God may be trying to get your attention.

Just like Israel, if your repent and turn to God, there will be refreshing times from the Lord.

**See also: Ps. 94:14; 1 Sam. 12:22**

## GOD'S MANIFOLD WISDOM & WAYS: A CALL FOR HIGH PRAISE.

DAY 30

**Romans 11:33-36;**  
(Cf. Ephesians 3:8-11)

*Paul lifts his heart in adoring high praise to his God, our God, and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Paul has been making an argument, what I call “the high praise of God”. He wonders at the ways of God which defy the full understanding of man. His ways and paths surpass the ability of man to trace out.*

The wisdom, judgements and knowledge possessed by God cannot be measured. The implication is that God's unchanging faithfulness to His people the spiritual Israel remains clear and sure. Verse 34 is taken from Isaiah 40:13-14 (please read it contemplatively), implying that no one in all creation (human and non-human, visible or invisible) knows enough to be God's advisor or counsellor.

God does not owe you or me or anyone as verse 35 expresses. God has infinite resources and there is no one who can add to them. Amazing truth right here. In our difficult times, are we still in love with God or just with his resources? God is the source, and the goal of all things. How are all these making you feel right now?

I love the way the scholar **David E. Garland** puts it:

*“the exalted and moving ascription of praise has in view, God's plans and operations in the history of salvation affecting the great salvation of humankind, Jew and Gentile”*

In **Ephesians 3:8-11**, the great Apostle Paul writes again in high praise of God's salvation plan for His church "To us, though I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, 9 and to bring to light for everyone what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God, who created all things, 10 so that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places. 11 This was according to the eternal purpose that he has realized in Christ Jesus our Lord"

In response to God's manifold wisdom, men have penned down high praises to God through the ages from the OT to the NT.

Walter Chalmers Smith in 1867 wrote this great hymnal verse in his Immortal, Invisible, God Only Wise "To all, life Thou givest, to both great and small. In all life thou livest, the true life of all, thy wisdom so boundless, and thy mercy so free, eternal thy goodness, for naught changeth thee".

My husband & I in response to God's deep and vast wisdom started to pray in new ways. We penned the following down and have been praying its words of high adoring praise for over nine months now.

"You O Lord are the one who comes from above. You are above all; we are the ones you have made and put on earth and we indeed belong to the earth, we speak as ones from the earth. You are above all. You testified, still testifying through Jesus and His Spirit to what you have seen and heard, but no one accepts your testimony. We accepted and still accepting your testimony and certify by our faith, hope and trust that you O God are truthful.

You are eternal O God, independent, self-existent Spiritual Being, the one and only wise God, Infinite in Holiness fearful in praise and perfection.

You are the supreme Spirit, who alone exist of himself and is infinite in all perfection, the Being whose actions and purposes spring from Himself alone without eternal advice or influence. You created all things visible and invisible. You O God are vastly incomprehensible.

You summoned the vast universe into existence with power and great glory. You alone are absolute in dominion. You are the Author of the awesome redemption story that you set it in motion before the foundation of the world in Christ.

In that story, you the Most Holy God are not just Israel's redeemer, but the redeemer of all sinners, all of us who abandoned your life giving, relationship enriching commands.

You are the sinners' redeemer. Our redeemer.

You have continued to transform pagans to saints, the corrupt and ungodly to the incorruptible. You are the one who freed us from our sins through your blood and appointed us saints in your powerful reigning kingdom to serve your God and Father.

You are the Amen, the Jealous & all loving God, eternally self-sufficient needing nothing that he has made. You revealed yourself in Scriptures and nature as illimitable in immensity, unimaginably massive & inconceivable in your mode of existence.

You O our God are indescribable.

By your infinite wisdom, you cannot err, grant us the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of you. We want to know you but we struggle with infinite appetite for distractions of many things in this world. Steady our pursuit of you dear Lord.

We struggle with the temptation of complacency and self & family concern. Grant us the power to know and understand and grasp and respond correctly to the love of Christ.

You are Holy, Holy, Holy, and worshipped by Cherubs and Seraphs who themselves cover the eyes in your magnificent presence. How awesomely beautiful and amazing you are. Grant use a healthy correct fear and honor and respect for thee.

You are the Ancient of Days, so powerful and immense that you hold the waters of the earth in the hollow of your palm.

You are Transcendent yet Immanent, Lover of man, destroyer of lies with truth, Freed us from their sins, Kingdom creator, Kingdom bringer, Invader and transformer of man's heart, Created all things visible and invisible for your pleasure, Alpha and Omega, King of the universe, Purchaser of mankind, Life owner, life giver, accomplisher of his purpose, Coming King, the Lamb and the Lion, Consuming Fire.....fills and overflows all space, bountifully caring, rides on the wings of the wind.

Ever living teacher, initiator and pursuer, you are much more than these for your thoughts are not our thoughts. They are loftier, holier, & life giving. Your voice is like granite, ours are non-existent.



You have the greatest riches in glory. Grant us to be strengthened with power through the Spirit in our inner self.

By your grace and Holy Spirit, please Lord direct our thoughts, affections, and designs and that of your people towards you our holy one. By your powerful providence Lord, please overrule events, so as to make our way plain.

Lead us step by step, as children are led by their parents. Keep us from being ruined by our falls, either into sin or into trouble, distress or crises.

Your calling and destiny in bringing your redemption story to pass was mired with many crises. During the days of Jesus' life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with fervent cries and tears to the one who could save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission. Help us to be fervent in our prayers. Help us to learn reverent submission.

As we struggle with our own crises, do not forsake us in our distress and affliction. Grant us Holy Spirit inspired patient endurance, not loving our lives, preferring to die in Christ with or without notice.

Let our eyes not become dull with self-conceit. Strengthen our heart to know and grasp the depth of your love for us in Christ. Let not our heart be deceived by delusion and conceit. Bless us with the ability to trust you, rest our heart and be controlled by you Holy Spirit.

Perfect your will and ways in our life. Guide and lead us through the twists and turns, successes and failures in our life.

Help us discover the depths of abundant life that you give.  
Allow us your slave to be shaped in your image as we spend more time with you and give our heart to you. Feed us with your spiritual food. Help us live a life of faith that others can imitate. Help us to be and remain salt.

Both **Leviticus 2:13** and **Ezekiel 16**, reveal that the Sabbath bread was dipped in salt and it created thirst and was a force for anti-decay, checks rottenness of a decaying rotten society. Retard moral degeneration. Restrain evil, and put a gag on viral words, wicked deeds, let your salt dissolve to do its work in our family, and lives. We need to be salt and also light.

Salt works silently, light openly retards the spread of evil. Only light can drive darkness out. Light displays the truth and delivers from darkness. Help us to be salt in character and light in conduct.

Let us not lose our saltiness nor put your Light in us out under a basket. May evil come under your judgement.

*We need you O Lord like the desert parched land longs for water.  
Steady our resolve and faith and trust for you.*

Satisfy us with the Spirit's love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control".

Attempt writing God a letter in response to his manifold wisdom

## THE SPIRITUAL SERVICE OF THE SAINTS – THE PRACTICE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

DAY 31

*Romans 12:1 – 2; 6:13*

### **WORK ON YOUR MIND**

*Imagine you own a house and every day you walked through the lawn from the street to the front door of your house. Over time, a well-worn path scars your front lawn. That is how our mind is also scarred by constantly working through a daily routine or pattern of behavior, a neuron-pathway is created in your brain that makes that routine or behavior a normal or automatic reaction when triggered.*

Here in **Romans 12:2**; we were called as Christians not copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by ‘the renewing of your mind’. Why is God interested in changing our old minds to new ones? One thing you need to understand is that your mind underpins your actions. Before you confessed Jesus as Lord, your mind was ruled by the flesh (**Romans 6:6; Colossians 2:11**). Your automatic reaction when triggered results in sinful, worldly and materialistic behaviors because of the neuron-pathways created in your brains caused by your old ways of thinking. Therefore, you find it difficult to live the righteous life.

### **RESET YOUR MIND (Romans 8:3 – 14)**

#### **Emphasis V.5 – 6;**

The common denominator to these two outcomes is the mindset. This mindset generates actions that are flesh or Spirit controlled. Therefore, how do we reset our minds on things of the Spirit?

#### **Ephesians 4:20 – 24**

- (a) V.20. You were taught in him in accordance with the truth in Jesus. The truth we obeyed in the message of the gospel is what changed our spiritual status from darkness to light.  
The more you get into the scriptures with a desire to take after the life and example of Jesus, the easier it becomes to set your mind on the transforming power of the Spirit.
- (b) V.22. put off your old life by changing your desires. Desires are powerful influencers of mind. They occur in torrents on per second basis. What kind of desires dominate your mind?  
Matthew 6:33. If you give attention to kingdom desires, and constantly pursue it, it certainly will influence your mind, action and faith.
- (c) V.24. "...put on a new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness. The fact that you are aware of your new life (Romans 6:4), and are dependent on the transforming power of the Holy Spirit, and make every effort to set your mind on what the Spirit desires, you are on the road to growing and transforming into the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.
- (d) Verses 24 – 31. "Put off" and "Get rid". These phrases call for action on some things that are negative and detrimental to wholesome and growthful living. I can't sleep with a snake under my bed. I must get rid of it. So, all these acts of sinfulness endanger our spiritual lives, hence we must 'put off' and 'get rid' of them all.

- (e) Verse 32. As beneficiaries of God's kindness, compassion and forgiveness, we must practice these acts of grace towards others. Acts 20:35. For any disciple to be effective in his/her service to God and his kingdom, there is a definite need for mind renewal and transformation.

**FURTHER SCRIPTURES: Colossians 3:2; Titus 1:15;**

Memory Verse Romans

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## CHAPTER TWELVE

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**Romans 12:10-12**

10Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves.

11Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord.

12Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer.

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## THE DEDICATION OF THE CHRISTIANS.

DAY 32

### ***Romans 12:1-2***

*Paul introduces chapter 12 to serve as an introduction to the more important defined responsibility of the disciple to God. These two verses set forth the fundamental obligations before us that will prepare us to face the huge, sweet & rewarding challenge of living on this earth.*

*Reading with our heart and mind, we sense the intelligent but humble obligation, commitment and intentional dedication we are called to, in view of God's generous gift of loving grace and salvific experience. Having understood what salvation is, how does your salvation make you feel? What does it make you think? What is the impact on your heart's orientation?*

Paul chooses to urge his readers rather than just instructing them. He uses the important word “parakaleo” (to motivate, appeal, beg, encourage, entreat, exhort) on the basis of what has been presented earlier, as opposed to just giving out a command, making his counsel here more potent and attention grabbing.

Mercy is used in **Isaiah 63:15** and **Hosea 2:19** (do your best to study these references as you study today), as also used here, denotes a characteristic of God which moves him to avoid the judgement of sin deserved by humanity. It significantly shows his gracious salvific act for us in Christ.

Here is what you must deposit in your mind and heart. Pagans (unbelievers) sacrifice to obtain mercy, the bible teaches that divine mercy already experienced in God's salvation by his people, is our



strong basis and motivation for sacrifice to him as a proper reverent (deep & solemn respect) response.

In Hebrew, to offer “your “bodies”, the word “body” means the whole person or parts of your body or your members. Our hands, feet, mind, eyes, ears, mouth, tongue, head, face, stomach, appetite, private parts, hair, knees, nose, muscular system, etc. the total you. This is what God calls us to present to him for his service. Without doubt, Paul views the body as the vehicle used to express, embody, or fulfil the desire and choices of the redeemed person. The Complete Jewish Bible (CJB) reads “to offer yourselves”. How have you been offering your body to the service of God especially during the lockdown and even now? Have you offered it to serving other things that you are now ashamed of?

Paul uses unconventional language “living sacrifices” in verse 1. The word “living” is in sharp contrast to the animal sacrifices in the OT. The animal is killed as it is offered. But here “living sacrifice” here in contrast has in view a “life” of service to God, not a dead one. Do you see the picture? God calls us to a life that refuses to conform to a pattern (mould, shape, influence, form, model, fashion, style) of the world.

Our pattern is Jesus who refused conformity to Satan’s solicitations in **Matthew 4:1-11**, but decided to do the will of God accepting the path that led to Calvary.

Our daily behavior or lifestyle shouts either conformity to Satan’s solicitations or conformity to the Lord’s commands. Critical to the process of being transformed is the renewing of the mind or setting

one's mind on the truths of faith as the Bible expresses them not as men express them today, and being true to one's original commitment (first love), reaffirming its necessity in the light of God's grace. Our continued dedication to the service of our God, brings discernment. Discernment leads to delight in doing God's will. What is God's will for us during a pandemic that has brought so much hardship in our community?

### **Diving Deeper**

1. Paint a picture of the daily agenda of the life of an authentic dedicated disciple living on earth in these hard-unpredictable times. Compare it with yours. Write down the gaps and ask God to help you.
2. Darkness is persistent. Conformity with the world is extremely powerfully attractive since its benefit are instant. List out the areas of your life you need to be more open and honest about. Choose a mature God-loving disciple to share with and pray with.
3. For your spiritual life to function properly you need to put God in charge. Think about it. Remember when you prayed like this... "Lord Jesus, I will go where you want us to go, do what you want us to do, say what You want us to say, and give what you want us to give. "Are you still able to pray this today and mean it these days?

**Further reading- Hosea 2:19; Mal 1:18-13; Dt. 10:12; Gal 1:4; 2 Cor. 4:4**

## MINISTRIES IN GOD'S CHURCH

### ***Romans 12:2-8***

*Ministries are created in God's church for the purpose of building up members towards unity and maturity in faith. Without any doubt, the building up of the body of Christ has to do primarily with its unity and maturity.*

*God in his infinite wisdom gave us all different gifts, talents, and skills that will be useful for service in His church, and God's expectation is for us to use those gifts, talents and skills for the benefit of others in his church and the world at large.*

In **1 Peter 4:10**, the bible says that "Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms".

From the above passage in **1 Peter 4:10**, it is clear that each and every one of us, have been blessed by God. We have been blessed with gifts, talent or skill that will be useful and beneficial for service in the ministries

In **Ephesians 4:7** "But to each one of us, grace has been given as Christ apportioned it".

### **God's grace is given to us individually and purposefully.**

Whatever our talent or gift may be, God's grace made it happen. He did not bless us with his grace and gift so that we get noticed and selfish with it. God wants us to honor him with it.

### **How can we honor him?**

We can honor him by making ourselves available and finding the ministries in his church where our gift and talent will be useful and become part of those working towards building the church of Christ in our modern-day movement.

### **What a great and awesome privilege.**

In **1 Corinthians 12:14-31** we can clearly see that, God made us all different and unique in our individuality.

Apostle Paul in **1 Corinthians 12** compares the body of Christ to a human body, each of us is different and unique but together we make the body of Christ complete.

No sincere member of the church is useless. Every single one of us, is important and have been blessed with one gift or talent that will be useful in the kingdom of God and his church here on earth. God wants us all to use our unique role in the body of Christ to serve one another and glorify him.

If you have been blessed with the gift of taking care of children, the kid's kingdom ministry is available for you. If you are talented in one sporting activity or the other, we have the sport ministry.

If you are talented in music, we have the music ministry.

Whatever gift or talent that we are blessed with, it must be channeled towards parts of the building of the church. The call is for us to use our God given talent to reach out and give God the credit.

The questions for further reflection for me and every one of us reading this piece are:

- How have I been contributing to the unity and maturity of the church with my God's given talent?
- And by extension, how have you that is reading this piece been contributing to the unity and maturity of the church with your God's given talent?
- Are we among the disciples that are helping the church to become more matured or we are just there, without any meaningful impacts?

### **In conclusion**

God wants us to use our gift to serve. There is eternal reward at stake.

We cannot afford to be passive in the kingdom of God anymore.  
Heaven is watching.

## THE CHRISTIAN CONDUCT.

### **ROMANS 12:9-21**

*The gospels, and the epistles are replete with God's commands. But the applications of these commands to different situations that we face day to day may be a big challenge. For example, how do we show love to our enemies, overcoming evil with good etc.*

*In these passages, God has used apostle Paul to show us how to respond to unjust persons, both disciples and non-disciples.*

*Also, how to bring tranquility into our homes. Between husbands and wives and amongst disciples etc.*

*This is just a wonderful passage!*

Paul comes to this chapter after dealing with tough theological issues. The application of these passages to our daily Christian walk will bring about a lot of peace to our troubled minds. Paul goes to great lengths to demonstrate practical ways for Christian living.

I have learned from these passages how to deal with difficult people in my life. I will now take us through some key verses in the chapter.

In **1 Corinthians 13**, apostle Paul states what Christian love means. Here he defines further the kind of love he is talking about.

The Apostle provides a comprehensive and mandatory list of traits that characterize the spirit filled life (**see John 15:8, Eph 2:10**).

He presented them under four (4) categories:

1. Personal duties **(v.9)**;
2. family duties (interpersonal relationship as disciples) **(v. 10-13)**;
3. duties to others **(v. 14-16)** and
4. duties to those who consider us enemies **(v.17-21)**

Christian love is to be shown purely and sincerely without self-centeredness which is described as brotherly love.

This means to be devoted to other Christians with a family sort of love (love seen amongst blood relations) not based on personal attraction or desirability. This quality is the primary way the world can recognize followers of Christ.

Whatever is worth doing in the Christian life is valuable enough to be done with enthusiasm and care **(v. 11.)** He enjoins us to be hospitable to strangers not just our friends that will reciprocate our gestures.

We have to be intentional about inviting disciples to our homes, irrespective of their economic standing. This character traits should be more evident among leaders as role models **(C. Titus 1:8 vv. 14-21)**. Paul goes in details on how as Christians we can overcome evil. He tells us to treat enemies as if they were our friends. We must not repay evil with evil. May I state here that the OT law of “eye for eye”, tooth for tooth” was never intended to be applied by individuals in the OT or NT; rather, it was a standard for the collective society to enforce good conduct among people. To rejoice and weep with others means that you must develop an empathy that grows from allowing their concerns to overlap and when necessary to supersede our own.

When you find it spontaneously easy to rejoice with others who rejoice as freely as you weep with those who weep, you will know that you have learnt what God requires of you. It is impossible to enter into people's lives unless you make time and efforts to get to know them.

This can only be achieved through intentional and deep fellowship.

To reiterate on the verse on repaying evil for evil: "never to pay back evil to anyone".

This is an absolute command that admits no exception. This is also repeated in verse 19 where the apostle says "Never take revenge". Absolutes not rationalization. Their applications are clear. There will never be a time or situation or person that is exempted.

No excuses are allowed.

Their application is universal and to all situations - home, office, business etc. We are forbidden to seek vengeance. Ask yourself the hard question whether what you are about to do is vengeance. If it is yes, please kindly refrain from taking the action in obedience. We all love revenge.

God calls you and I to be peacemakers. But note here that Paul does not use an absolute term, he rather says, "if possible". **V 18.**

He is totally realistic about the fact that no matter how hard we try, we may fail in this endeavor.



Our task according to **v. 18** is that regardless of the other partners response, we are to do all that we ought to do to seek peace with them.

Furthermore, the Apostle in verse 20 says: “If your enemies are hungry feed them...”. Who is your enemy? An enemy is not one who does evil to you once. A casual flip through the psalms of David, you will notice what an enemy does.

- a. He sets trap for you.
- b. Tries to take your life.
- c. Spreads slander and gossips about you.
- d. Waits to ambush you.

Put differently, an enemy is somebody who has made it his full-time job to make you miserable or to put you out of the way. To do good to an enemy is the hardest about the hardest thing to do. Yet Christ commands, “love your enemies” in **Matthew 5: 44**.

Paul here tells us how to do good to our enemies. Hard preaching! you may say. We are required to discover our enemies needs and meet them.

This is incredible to a carnal mind. “If he is thirsty, if ...”. Remember you don’t need to feel like it to meet an enemy’s needs. You do it not because you have whooped up warm and benevolent feelings toward him but because God commands you to and you want to please God. As Christians, we are called to obedience to the word of God.

We don't live by feelings but by feeding. Love begins with giving. **(cf John 3:16; Gal 2:20, Eph 5:25).**

I guarantee us that these passages if obeyed, will bring a lot of changes in our personal lives, our relationship with each other in the church and those outside the church.

I would therefore challenge us to personally spend time reading, studying, meditating and prayerfully applying the passages to our lives for personal conviction.

Memory Verse Romans

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## CHAPTER THIRTEEN

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### **Romans 13:11-12**

11And do this, understanding the present time: The hour has already come for you to wake up from your slumber, because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed. 12The night is nearly over; the day is almost here. So, let us put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light.

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## GOD'S ESTABLISHED STRUCTURE: SUBMISSION TO CIVIL AUTHORITY!

DAY 35

### *Roman 13:1-7*

*Being a part of these newly constituted people of God does not mean that we are exempt from civic responsibility. At one level, there is simply the practical matter that if Christians reject the law, life will be much harder for them, and this will hinder the work of God in building up the church.*

In those days, Christians did not participate in many civic festivals and activities tied to the Roman religion. There was no distinction between the sacred and the secular in the Greco-Roman world. Everything political was religious. Everything religious was political. Those who did not worship the Roman gods or participate in festivals honoring them were suspected of disloyalty.

Thus, Paul says, be careful how you behave regarding governing authorities. It's already hard enough out there. The people of God have been divided once before, nine years earlier. They have come back together again, "Jews and Gentiles" at one within the body of Christ.

Some few months back the Nigerian government locked down all forms of worship in the country and disciples clamored a return to physically meeting as a church. All sorts of reasons were given. What has not considered was the fact that if by any chance we met and didn't meet just one of all the laid down rules by the government, we shall be facing more sanctions than we started with.

In some offices, all forms of religious activities were banned because of the factions it created in the office environment. Anyone caught in the act of worship (because staff members still meet secretly – Christians & Muslims alike) would be summarily dismissed.

**Why anyone would go against that kind of authority still baffles me.**

Why now endanger the mission of God, carried out through the people of God, by acting in ways that will provoke the wrath of the civil authorities? For that matter, why engage in activities that could be treasonable, and even result in your death **(13:4)**? Don't make things harder for yourself, says Paul.

Does Paul think that God has put these rulers in charge? Yes, he does, but that doesn't mean that their rule is always in keeping with God's will. (Example - Nigerian Government). We know that Paul was deeply influenced by Jewish Wisdom literature, and the Wisdom literature does at times indicate that God has placed rulers in their positions of authority **(e.g., Prov 8:15-16;)**

The authority of rulers is not unqualified. God is watching, and rulers are expected to behave with wisdom and justice.

Paul offers fatherly advice to a people whose relationship to the civic society was strained at best. It's as if Paul is saying, don't allow yourself to be divided again. Don't do anything that will endanger the mission. Keep your eye on the ball. Pay your taxes. Show respect to those in charge. God has allowed these people to rule for a time, not forever.

Christ is going to return (**13:11**), and when he does, God will finally be king. Then we will know real justice and the things that seem so troublesome now will be a distant memory of a broken world.

Advancing the mission of God in the world, for Paul, is all that matters. It matters more than his reputation, his possessions, even his life. **Romans 13** does not provide a license for the government to engage in unjust practices. It does not give Christians a license to support unjust practices or look the other way when they can prevent them.

The real message of **Romans 13** is that we should do what we need to do to promote the mission of God. Blind allegiance to governing authorities will not serve this end.

**Further Reading:** Lk 4:6; Mat 22:21; 1 Tim 2:1-7; Acts 5:29; Ph 3:20; Jn 17:14

## OUR OBLIGATION OF LOVE

*Romans 13:8-10*

### What does Debt mean?

1. This is an Obligation that requires one party, the debtor, to pay money or other agreed upon value (Love) to the other party. It is a deferred payment or series of payments.
2. Something that is owed to someone else or the state of owing something.

I don't like owing anyone because I don't want to be obligated to anyone and I make every effort not to be in any form of debt. But in this passage, God is telling us that Love is a continuing debt, a debt that should continually be on my mind. It is a debt I owe as a Christian and which I should strive daily to pay.

It is a command and the fulfillment of the law.

### LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOUR AS YOURSELF –

**Romans 13;9b, Matthew 22:39 How do I love myself?**

### How will I love to be loved? Matt 7:12

These are questions to ask yourself (Please write down the answers in your journal/notebook)

### James 2:8

Loving others is doing right with God



### **How Should I Love? Matt 5:42**

Give to anyone who asks of you. (Everyone? Even those who may not repay?)

This is hard teaching for me at this time because the year 2020 has been a challenging year for me, my business, my finances has been badly affected and I am sure you all can relate. And, truthfully as I write I am flat broke and struggling to pay my staff their salaries, in fact, I have even considered relieving them of their duties.

This is not a time I want to share the little I have but giving is not limited to good times or times of plenty. I just try to do what Jesus expects of me and continue to give out of the 'little' I have

### **Lev 19:18**

Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge.

We have all hurt each other one way or the other,

What do you seek? Peace or Revenge?

Remember, "Love covers a multitude of sins"

Speak to each other in truth and let go of the hurts and grudges.

Honor the Lord and leave it all to him.

### **John 13:34**

Loving others as self was already a command in the OT, but Jesus made it new in the sense that Love is a service. The way you serve others show your love for them

Love others as Jesus loved you.

How has Jesus loved me?

He gave me a new identity. I am now a follower of Christ

He loved and redeemed me despite my sins

He gave me a loving family of likeminded believers

He .....

(Write out your own list and don't hold back)

**Now, go and love others the same**

Love is a debt that we will never finish paying in our lifetime or until Jesus comes, let it always be in your heart, continue to love even when it seems or feels like it is not being returned. Remember, God first loved you and gave his all for you

## HOPE'S PURIFYING POWER

### ***Romans 13:11-14***

*"The very least you can do in your life is figure out what you hope for. And the most you can do is live inside that hope. Not admire it from a distance, but live right in it, under its roof." – Barbara Kingsolver.*

*Hope - simply defined – is an expectation of something good. That which contrasts from one's present realities.*

It speaks of better things which lies in the near or far future, and helps one to have a healthy perspective, response - or attitude - to life's many challenges.

One of Hope's purifying powers - I believe – is that it helps those who have it develop a presence of mind that is focused – not on the present - but on the future.

In so doing, it makes the trials or temptations of life bearable, and brings peace into a troubled heart.

To the Christian, our faith in God is married to our belief in his goodness, and our hope in His promises. We believe God is good because, He sent His precious son to die for us while we were still in sin, so that those who choose to honor Him through repentance, will not be destroyed on the last day.

Those who have accepted His Lordship over them, and have been redeemed through the washing away of their sins in baptism, live in hope because of the promise He made. That He would return to take them to their eternal home. This hope is what guides (or should guide) the Christian, as they live out their lives daily.

In today's devotional taken from **Romans 13:11 – 14**, Paul – while admonishing the Christians in Rome to live in obedience to their civil and divine duty, reminded them why it was important that they do so. Because of the expected return of Jesus.

This return which the scriptures foretold would happen in the last days (**1 Cor 10:11. Heb 1:1 – 2. James 5:9**) was expected to inspire them to be careful about the way they lived their lives - seeing that they were already in the last days, and they have a hope of being with God someday.

Paul admonished them to desist from living like those who live in the darkness, those who do not know God, nor live in obedience to Him. They are those who indulge themselves in all kinds of sinful acts. They are indecent people who indulge in sexual immorality, drunkenness, gossip, divisiveness, jealousy, etc. Paul reminds them that these were acts of darkness, and are not behaviors of those who profess to be in the light.

Paul's admonition to the disciples in Rome is applicable to us today. We are disciples of Jesus. We acknowledged His Lordship over us the day we were baptized, and received God's forgiveness. We became children of light – because God is light.

Those who are walking as children of light distance themselves from the deeds of darkness.

There are those whose lives does not depict the Hope they profess. Whose lives have been taken over by sin. They indulge themselves in all kinds of sinful behaviors, and are short circuiting their eternal life. It is time for you and I to wake up from our slumber, and pay attention to our spiritual life. Let this year be a year of total transformation of heart and mind into the likeness of Christ.

And let's do this bearing in mind that our salvation is much nearer now than the day we were baptized. For this is the hope we profess.

The purifying power of hope in the life of a believer is beyond measure, and should never be underestimated. It helps the Christian to remain on track or get back on track when he loses his way

“But those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary; they will walk and not be faint. “– **Isaiah 40:31 (NIV)**

#### **ADDITIONAL SCRIPTURES:**

**Phil 3:18 – 21. Eph 4:17 – 32. Eph 5:8 – 21. Ezekiel 8. John 3:19 – 21.**

## SALVATION IN ESCATHOLOGICAL TERMS

DAY 38

### *Romans 13:11*

*And do this, understanding the present time. The hour has come for you to wake up from your slumber, because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed.*

One thing is most certain. All things concerning this earth will end someday! When? We do not know. **(Mathew 24:36)**

How did the apostles and first century disciples handle the phenomenon of end of life and judgment?

In the Romans passage above, Paul describes the moment as one in which salvation is closer now than when his readers first became Christians.

Does this mean that Paul did not think of Christians as saved? Not at all. The New Testament often describes salvation as something that has happened, is happening, and will happen. In this case, Paul is referring to salvation in the sense that all who are in Christ will have reached eternity, that time of final victory and judgment is fast approaching. **(Heb. 9:28)**

Paul believed that day could come any time. Two thousand years later, we are still looking forward to it. Talking about looking forward to this most glorious and infinitely spectacular event, what should our attitude be currently and permanently?

### **1Thess.5.4-9**

4 But you, brothers, are not in darkness so that this day should surprise you like a thief. 5 You are all sons of the light and sons of the day. We do not belong to the night or to the darkness. 6 So then, let us not be like others, who are asleep, but let us be alert and self-controlled.... 8 But since we belong to the day, let us be self-controlled, putting on faith and love as a breastplate, and the hope of salvation as a helmet. 9 - For God did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ.

- As a disciple of Jesus, I should not in the least be apprehensive about the day of the Lord. Rather I should be busy preparing for his coming.
- For, I do not belong to the darkness and unaware of His warning. I belong to the light and should live in readiness for his appearing.
- God who in His rich grace called me into His kingdom here does not want me to suffer wrath along with those in darkness.

Disciples should really be longing for the appearing of the Lord Jesus and the final redemption that he brings. However, is this the reality with us?

We may not live long enough physically to see His coming, meaning that our individual end could come up any moment. Have I been alert and daily ready to answer the ultimate call?

I recall some years back when I was diagnosed with Spondylosis, a degenerative disease of the spinal bone joints.

Read so much about its treatment, one of which is surgery. I read about MRI scan. I am claustrophobic. Just the thought of being confined in that coffin-like box terrified me. I could not sleep for over two weeks.

One of the sisters in church who heard about my ordeal said to me; “uncle so you are afraid to die?”. It jolted me momentarily. Then I accept the truth that I was afraid to die.

**Conclusion:**

- The end will certainly come someday, individually or collectively. We can't wish away the inevitable.
- We must be alert, watchful with eyes on the victor's crown.
- For our Lord is bringing final redemption for those who are faithfully alert and judgment for those who fall asleep.

**Further reading: 1 Peter 4:7; Phil 3:14; 2Pet.1:10-11**



Memory Verse Romans

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## CHAPTER FOURTEEN

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### **Romans 14:13**

13Therefore let us stop passing judgment on one another. Instead, make up your mind not to put any stumbling block or obstacle in the way of a brother or sister.

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## MANAGING DISPUTABLE MATTERS

**Romans 14:1; 15:13**  
**(Cf. 1 Corinthians 8:1; 11:1)**

*Disputable matters can be referred to as opinions that differ amongst Christians in God's church. They are matters which Christians are not meant to pass judgement on and matters that God has not revealed in his WORD as SIN. God doesn't explicitly condemn these matters but most times they fall within the Christians' liberty circle, where these matters are right or wrong, depending on the conviction and attitude of one's heart.*

The bible doesn't give a clear directive on these matters because we are not talking of clear-cut sins like stealing, adultery, jealousy, etc. where God's instructions are well spelt out. They are matters of the conscience in which God has given us freedom.

### DISPUTABLE MATTERS AND GOD'S CHURCH

In **Romans 14:1-2** the writer assumes there will be differences of opinions in the church. He says we are not to quarrel about issues that are just opinions but we must accept and handle them with love. Everyone cannot agree on every subject. Differences in opinions shouldn't cause division in God's church but can be a source of learning and fuller understanding of what the bible teaches.

The ancient system of sacrifice was at the centre of religious, social and domestic life of the Roman world. After a sacrifice was presented to a god in a pagan temple, only a part was burned.

Remaining parts may be sold in the market place and a Christian can easily and unknowingly buy such meat or eat it at the home of a friend. Christians who had once been idol worshippers may be reminded of their pagan days and this might weaken the newly found faith. For this reason, Christians shouldn't base their moral judgment on opinions, personal dislikes, or cultural differences, rather on the word of God (**Col. 2:16-17**). Paul wants us to be strong in faith and constantly check the effects of our behavior on other Christians (**Romans 14:13**). We are to honor the convictions of others but follow CHRIST as closely as we can.

Christians are called to accept one another without criticizing our differences in opinion areas. A common case of trousers wearing for women is not condemned in the bible, but most times because of our culture some Christians frown at others who find it comfortable wearing it. As Christians we need to find a balance in issues such as this.

Apostle Paul called all believers to act in love, maintaining peace in the church (**Romans 14:15**).

God created us to be inter-dependent so that those who are strong in the faith must (without pride or condescension) treat others with love, patience and self-control.

The Roman church was a diverse community made up of both Jews and Gentiles, slaves and free, rich and poor, strong and weak, making it difficult for them to accept themselves. Accepting means taking people into our own homes and into our hearts, sharing meals, activities and avoiding social and economic sentiments.

We must go out of our way to avoid favoritism, consciously spending time and seeking common ground for fellowship. In this way, we are accepting others just as Christ accepted us and God is glorified.

Let's remember these as we manage our varying opinions in the church of God;

Every Christian should do things that bring glory to God. **(Matt. 5:16; 1 Cor. 10:31)**

Only God is the true Judge of our lives. **(Romans 14:12; James 4:12)**

Our freedom in Christ should give room and accommodate fellow Christians. **(Romans 14:15)**

Love should motivate all we do as Christians. **(1 Cor. 8:1; Eph. 5:1-2)**

We must keep preaching unity in Christ Jesus. **(Eph. 4:3)**

Christians, especially mature ones, ought to become selfless and gracious in thoughts, deeds and speech. **(Col. 3:16-17).**

We must accept, listen to and respect each other, becoming more sensitive and gracious! Our principle should be essentially unity and love in everything.

**Further reading: -**

**Col. 2:16; Eph. 4:2; 1 Timothy 4:3-4; Matt. 7:1.**

## THE JOYS OF THE SPIRITUAL LIFE

### ROMANS 14:17

*There is a kind of happiness or excitement that is expressed when mention is made of eating and drinking and this has caused quite a number of people to misbehave. I am reminded of Esau who threw away his birthright over a single meal of porridge (Gen. 25:29-32) and a young Prophet who disobeyed God upon invitation to a meal and lost his life (1 Kings 13).*

For these men, the immediate gratification of their fleshy desires overrode their commitment to God.

In **Rom. 14:17** however, Paul talks about a greater source of spiritual fulfilment than what eating and drinking can supply. Eating and drinking can supply a momentary thrill or happiness, but joy is deeper and it is a fruit of the Holy Spirit. Joy is a spiritual state of being that emanates from a well-grounded relationship with God through the Holy Spirit.

### Let me paint a scenario for you:

Paul and Silas were arrested while on an evangelistic mission. They were thrown in jail and their feet were chained. What do you think would be the natural response of any ordinary human being at this time? Your guess is as good as mine. These men however shocked all who read their story. They started singing praises to God. How do you explain such a response? This can only be the Joy that the Holy Spirit himself supplies. They could have bemoaned their fate, but they chose to rejoice and God came to their rescue.

The joy of the spiritual life is also evident in how the beneficiary continues to give even when faced with pain and agony. Our Lord Jesus Christ continued to give of himself even while hanging painfully on the cross and nearing the end of his physical life. A hopeless thief gained paradise by simply putting his faith in the Lord. How many of us can think of others in our moments of pain, let alone even offer to be of service to them?

Our LORD Jesus had this deep joy, because of the depth of his personal relationship with his father and the hope of the blessing that was ahead for him.

One thing is certain: dwelling on ourselves and our wants will never produce true joy. Rather than being obsessed with ourselves, we must become obsessed with Christ. If we do, we will immerse ourselves in his word, and seek to know him more intimately and our joy will be made full (**Jn. 15:1-11**).

It is only through God's Spirit that we can experience true joy.

**See also: Ps. 5:11-12, Gal. 5:22, 1 Thess. 1:6**

## CHRISTIAN SHOULD AVOID OFFENDING EACH OTHER!

**Romans:14: 13 -23.**

*In this current world, offending someone seems rather easy. We probably have all offended someone whether it was intentional or not. One common example of an offence from the scripture is eating of food that had been sacrificed to idols. Hence Paul wrote the following; (1corinthians: 8:9)*

We can apply the basic principle from this passage to words we say, things we do or don't do to a fellow Christian.

### OFFENSIVE ACTIONS AGAINST EACH OTHER!

#### **LACK OF INTEGRITY (Mathew 5: 37)**

Have you made promises you didn't and still haven't kept? are you holding something that belongs to someone else you promised to give back and still haven't? are you an opportunist; taking advantage of unsuspecting and kind hearted Christians?

There are countless reports of Christians borrowing from one another and never wanting to pay back. This attitude deeply offends, leaving the lender with feeling of distrust and an attitude of never willing to lend to the next brother or sister whom may come to him or her for help. The bible says "let your yes be yes"

#### **GOSSIPING AND BACKBITING ONE ANOTHER. (Prov: 25:23)**

Negative or malicious talk may feel good for a moment, while you get something off your chest, but ultimately it does no good and can



actually, do great harm. It passes on negative energy into the person you said these things to and it ruins their positive perspective of the person you talked about. Backbiting is contrary to love, which is a reconciling force. These breads distrust.

### **DISCRIMINATING AMONG US (James 2:1-10)**

Discrimination, births tribalism, racism, favoritism and cliques. We cannot engage in an act of unjustified distinctions among us, it's disheartening to know that even among disciples of Jesus Christ, traits such as this exists, it not only offends fellow Christians but leaves a lasting scare on our spiritual lives.

### **MISUNDERSTANDING ONE-ANOTHER (2 Corinthians: 1:12, 2:4)**

It is a terrible state to be in when one's motives are misjudged and actions misinterpreted, something that you meant to be taken one-way being taken in quite a different light.

Christians ought to constantly strive for clarity in relating with each other. No assumptions

### **LORDING IT-OVER EACH OTHER (Acts: 19:16)**

We allow the excessive or coercive use of authority for unbiblical, sinful and self-serving purposes rather than for the glory of God and the edification and loving welfare of Gods people.

### **MY EXPERIENCE.**

As a young disciple, I was victimized by a high-handed leader, for daring to speak up about an ungodliness I observed towards same leader, I got ostracized, humiliated and a whole lot of other unimaginable sanctions were meted out on me back then.

But guess what, I'm grateful for the power of God in reconciliation.

**Ref. Scriptures: 1 Cor: 8:7-13, Mtt:16: 23, 1 Cor:6:12, Mk:7: 15-23.**

### **CONCLUDING THOUGHTS:**

Although we cannot keep people from getting offended, we should make sure that it's the truth that offends rather than our attitude, actions, or approach. We must follow biblical principles in all areas. As we relate with one another, we should do so in love, humility, and boldness, making sure we are living by the truth. "if it's possible, as far as it depends on you, leave at peace with everyone". **(Romans: 12:18)**

### **PRAYER**

Thank you, Father, for words that helps us to understand this problem, and the way of resolving them out peacefully, "preserving the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace".

Teach us Lord, to walk softly before you in this, with a concern for one another; to be patient and to learn to enjoy our liberties only as they do not offend another. We ask in Jesus name. Amen.

Memory Verse Romans

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## CHAPTER FIFTEEN

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### **Romans 15:1-2**

1We who are strong ought to bear with the failings of the weak and not to please ourselves. 2Each of us should please our neighbors for their good, to build them up.

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## UNITY OF THE WEAK AND STRONG IN CHRIST

DAY 42

### ***Romans 15: 1-13***

*As I ponder over the above subject, there is one standout experience where taking the high road of spirituality in an effort to unify the weak and the strong led to a victory for our community of churches in Nigeria. It was sometime in the early 2000s when confronted as a leadership with a situation where a brother had fallen into the same sin more than once. He would come forward to confess the same sin entirely of his own free will. Obviously struggling to repent of his immoral habit and as frustrating as it was to us in the fellowship, our leadership team kept challenging him to focus on his behavior and not the remorse that he presented after the fact.*

A leader from Lagos Church advised that we put him out of fellowship until he repents.

Our local leadership pondered over this possibility but decided to choose faith over fear. We declined the advice and sided with a brother who was struggling to break free from the claws of Satan. He was unable to free himself but we were convinced that despite his past records, disfellowshipping him was more likely to drive him right back into the sin than a separation from the church could teach him any intended lesson.

**Rom15:5-6 & 1 Cor. 12: 12-27** – Relying on scriptures such as these, two members of our leadership team were assigned to help and hold our brother accountable. These men counselled him constantly and demanded that the brother fight for his own “spiritual pride” as we all continued to pray for him. He eventually got stronger and finally steadied after months of discipling.

Our brother went on to relocate to a neighboring State due to a job opportunity and started a bible talk that became the foundation of one of our churches in the south of Nigeria today. What if we just tossed him out and he never made it back? But we did not, rather we persevered with the weak and true to the prediction of **scripture (Rom 15: 7)**, it ended in praise to God!

I have two teenage children. One of them is very spiritually minded and even shared some insights with me in preparing this message while the other is not quite there yet. However, I am extremely proud of both kids and rally my entire family to support the one who is not yet showing any sign of wanting to become a disciple as we model the way for him to follow.

In the same way that my family will not and can never give up on any member, our family of churches cannot give up on any member, no matter how weak. God is our place of refuge (**Ps 46: 1**).

Longsuffering spirit is one of the hallmarks of our faith (**Gal 6:22**), therefore those of us who are strong need to be willing to stretch out our strong arms to drag in and support those who are weaker lest they fall away and be lost forever.

We should never reject any disciple of Jesus who are sincerely seeking God regardless of how much they struggle or how many times they may fall. The weak and the strong must be united in the pursuit of righteousness in God's kingdom!

Memory Verse Romans

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## CHAPTER SIXTEEN

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### **Romans 16:17-18**

17I urge you, brothers and sisters, to watch out for those who cause divisions and put obstacles in your way that are contrary to the teaching you have learned. Keep away from them. 18For such people are not serving our Lord Christ, but their own appetites. By smooth talk and flattery, they deceive the minds of naive people.

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## REMEMBERING, GREETING AND APPRECIATING THE SAINTS IN THEIR WORK OF LOVE

DAY 43

### **Romans 16:1-27**

*Kindness is often taken for granted. As Disciples, we are no strangers to this fact. Our willingness to help others in their times of need can sometimes be misconstrued as naivety or even weakness. This applies both out in the world and within the body. More so the latter.*

The bible urges us to love one another as God has loved us. **(John 13:34)** Because of this instruction, it is easy for this to become expected, and go unacknowledged. Paul was conscious of this and addressed it in the later parts of his letter to the Romans. Especially in chapter 16.

Paul began this chapter by lifting up some of the disciples in the Roman church that were particularly known for their acts of love and service. **(Romans 16: 1-2)** Note the way Paul went about his greetings. He specifically mentioned the disciples, households and churches, and recognized their contributions. The lengthiness of **Romans 16** can be attributed to Paul's determination to address almost all the people that had contributed to the mission in one way or another.

Not only did Paul acknowledge the recipients of the letter, but also his coworkers.

### **Romans 16:21-23**

What impressed me the most about this chapter was Paul's memory. Going through the entire chapter, it is clear that a lot of names and

deeds were mentioned. Every time a person showed Paul kindness, or performed a selfless act that benefited the church, he remembered. The aim I believe was to spur them on to greater deeds. While they did what they did selflessly, in the hopes of contributing to the church and the mission. It didn't hurt to get a big thank you. So, what can we learn from Paul's show of appreciation and acknowledgement? I maulled over this for quite some time and focused on three points.

The first is appreciation. This needs to be reflexive. We were sent to spread the gospel, and while this is expected of us, it helps when our acts are acknowledged and appreciated.

Also, it is important to note that appreciation is also an act of love. So, failing to acknowledge the good someone has done for you would contradict the instruction we have been given by the LORD.

My second take from this scripture is the impression we leave on people when we are kind.

As I previously stated, Paul vividly remembered the names of everyone that ever extended a hand of kindness to him and he made sure to address every single one of them in his letter. We leave a lasting mark on the people we decide to help. This will come in handy when we later on hope to share the word with them.

My final take from this chapter is more of an observation, regarding the warning Paul threw into his letter in the midst of praise and acknowledgement. **(Romans 16:17-18)**

Paul urged the Roman church to be wary of those that would cause division between them. I tried to link this seemingly random warning with the theme of the chapter. Majority of Paul's letters to the Roman church were filled with warnings.

This makes me think that there is a sub theme to the chapter. Which is ensuring that the Roman church stayed united.

In conclusion, a small act of appreciation can go a long way. Let us get in the habit of appreciating one another in the hopes of strengthening our bonds and spurring each other on to greater deeds. And at the end of the day, may the LORD's name be glorified.



We are believers of all ages, races, and socioeconomic backgrounds in over 150 countries. We are simply a people who have found God and are committed to serving him and his children around us.

The Lagos Church is one of the congregations of the International Church of CHRIST worldwide.

From its humble beginnings the Church in Lagos remained steadfast in the desire to spread the gospel across all Nations, it has planted so many other Churches not just in Nigeria but also in the West Africa Sub-Region. Thus, Churches have been planted in Asaba, Abeokuta, Abuja, Benin, Calabar, Ibadan, Ilorin, Ijebu-Ode, Jos, Kaduna, Port Harcourt, Warri, Uyo and Yenagoa.

Others are Accra, Bissau, Banjul, Conakry, Cotonou, Freetown and Njamena. Today through the dedication and sacrifice of great men and women of faith, the Church has continued to grow. The membership of the Church in Lagos is about 2000 disciples and staff strength of people who committed. The Church in Lagos is divided into Twelve Regions spread across the whole of Lagos and its environs.

*May the LORD touch you specially through this booklet.*

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