

ROMANS - A STUDY GUIDE

THE CENTRAL QUESTION:

What does this book/story say to us about God?

This question may be broken down further as follows:

- a. Why did God do it/allow it?
 - b. Why did He record it for our study?
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1. When and from where was the book of Romans written? Were any other books written by Paul about the same time? Do you think Paul personally knew any of the Christians in Rome? (Romans 16) Why would Paul write a book to a church he had never visited? How much of Romans would you understand if you had to sit in church while someone read it out loud all the way through from beginning to end? Is Romans the first book that Paul wrote? If not, why do you think it is in the position of the first of his books in the Bible?
2. During his early years, Paul had been the foremost persecutor of the young church. How had Paul changed as a result of his experience on the road to Damascus? After the Damascus road, did he have a different Bible? Had he changed his Decalogue? Had he switched his Sabbath? Had he changed his diet? What about his Pharisaical attitudes? Had he changed anything except his picture of God? Why would that make such a difference in his approach and attitude toward people? Does it make a difference what kind of picture of God we have? A difference in our lives now? In our prospects for heaven?
3. Paul started his book (Romans 1:1) by calling himself, "Paul, a slave...." (*Slave* is the real meaning of the Greek word). Why would he consider himself a slave? Isn't the truth supposed to set us free? (John 8:32)
4. Paul seemed to have been really "proud" of the "good news" or "gospel." (Romans 1:16; compare Jeremiah 9:23) What do you think Paul was thinking of when he said, "Good news"? Are you proud to be a Christian? Proud enough to die for it? Do you know anyone—perhaps even a Bible writer—who seemed to know the truth about God, but was apparently embarrassed by it and certainly was not anxious to speak about his God? (Jonah 4:1-4) Of what was Paul actually proud? Romans 1:17 says the gospel reveals the "righteousness of God." Why would that need to be revealed? Romans 3:4 suggests that God is on trial. What would that mean? If we are going to preach the gospel, it must be good news. Bad news is not gospel.

How do you decide what is truth? Do you go with what feels right? Do you look for scientific proof? How do you decide if a biblical doctrine is valid or not? Would you want some evidence to support your position? What kind of evidence would you accept as valid? Was Paul convinced about the truth as he understood it? How do you fit together Galatians 1:8-9 and Romans 14:5?

5. In Romans we read of Paul's convictions about the truth. Would you be willing to give up your job, your freedom, even your life for the "truth" as you understand it? What truths are worth dying for?
6. In Acts 16:31, Paul and Silas told the Philippian jailer, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved—you and your family." Is that really true? Is faith/trust/belief/confidence enough for salvation/healing?

At first glance, it might seem that faith is not enough for salvation. Don't we have to confess our sins, and, maybe, do a lot of things that the Bible says are necessary before we can hope to be saved? And what about verses like Ecclesiastes 12:13-14; Romans 2:6; and Revelation 20:12-13 that suggest that we will be judged by our works? If we are saved by faith, how can we be judged by our works?

7. What do you think Paul meant when he quoted Habakkuk 2:4, "The just shall live by faith"? Was his understanding different from Martin Luther's? From Habakkuk's? What was Paul trying to say in Romans 1:16-17?

8. What is God's wrath? Why would Paul apparently begin his discussion of the "good news" (see Romans 1:16) by talking about God's wrath? (Romans 1:18) What does God do to people on whom He "pours out His wrath"? (Romans 1:24,26,28) Does He beat them up? Burn them up? Torture them in hell? Considering the terrible sins that they were committing, what could God do with them? What other biblical illustrations do we have of God's wrath? Did Jesus die the death of a sinner? (1 Corinthians 15:3; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Isaiah 53:6; DA 25.2) Was "God's wrath" poured out on Him?
9. What happens to the mind of a person who chooses to worship a frog, or a fly, or a beetle instead of our infinitely powerful and gracious Creator-God? (Romans 1:20,21) If you were God, what would you do with such people?
10. Read Romans 2:4 (*GNB*):

Surely you know that God is kind, because he is trying to lead you to repent.

What are the implications of suggesting that God's kindness is supposed to lead us to repentance? Is the truth about God important?
11. Critics and superficial readers of the Bible have often suggested that the writings of Paul and James are opposed to each other. Martin Luther was so opposed to what he regarded as James' emphasis on works that he put James at the end of the New Testament along with Hebrews, 2 Peter, Jude, and Revelation—as if they were some kind of apocrypha to the New Testament. But, what is the truth?
12. What did Paul say, categorically, is the condition of all men? (Romans 3:10-12,23; compare 1 Kings 8:46; 2 Chronicles 6:36; Ecclesiastes 7:20; 1 John 1:10; Galatians 3:22) What is the natural result of this condition? (Genesis 2:17; Romans 6:23)
13. Romans 3:25,26 is the only passage in Scripture that specifically talks about why Jesus had to die and the meaning of His death. Why would it be necessary through Christ's death for God first to demonstrate that He Himself is righteous before He can "put right" those who trust in Jesus? Has anyone ever questioned God's righteousness or His truthfulness? (See Genesis 2:17; 3:1-4) Does the righteousness of God Himself, His own personal righteousness of character, need to be revealed? (Romans 3:1-4) Has anyone ever suggested that God is not righteous? Has anyone questioned God's truthfulness or behavior? Why does God need to go to court? And what does all of this have to do with my salvation? To get an idea of what this passage might mean and the many very different opinions about it, try to read the passage in as many versions as you have available.
14. If we can actually be "put right" with God through faith, (Romans 3:26,28) is there any further use for the "law"? (See Romans 3:31) If we have already been put right with God through trusting Him, what would be the function of law?
15. What is the meaning of "Abraham believed God, and because of his faith God accepted him as righteous"? (Romans 4:3, *GNB*) Is this a legal transaction? Did any real change take place in Abraham? Why do you think God "accepted" him?
16. What does Romans 4:25 mean? Read it in several different versions.

Because of our sins he was handed over to die, and he was raised to life in order to put us right with God. (*GNB*), or,

Who was put to death for our trespasses [the Greek says only that, "He was given up for our trespasses."] **and raised for our justification.** (*RSV*)
17. What kind of peace comes with living the new life in Christ? (Romans 5 & 6)
18. What does it mean to be "justified by his blood"? (Romans 5:9)
19. Is Jesus pleading with the Father to forgive us? Does the Father's attitude toward us need to be changed? Is our salvation dependent on a change in God's attitude? (Romans 5:10)

20. When Adam sinned, did it make you a sinner? (Romans 5:12-19) What is “original sin”? Did his sin make you “guilty”? How did/does Adam’s sin affect you? And how does the life and death of Jesus deal with Adam’s sin and its consequences?
21. What is supposed to be the meaning of baptism? (Romans 6:1-4) Can you bury someone by sprinkling a little dirt on his head?
22. What is implied by the idea that we are to think of ourselves as dead, as far as sin is concerned? (Romans 6:11)
23. How are we supposed to understand Romans 6:14? Should it be put together with Romans 10:4 and Colossians 2:14 to prove that the keeping of the Ten Commandments is no longer necessary for Christians? That is what many of our Christian friends do. Are the Ten Commandments still binding?
24. Read Romans 6:23. This is a crucial text in our understanding of all of Scripture. It is a reminder of God’s original statement in the Garden of Eden, i.e., Genesis 2:17, *GNB*: “You must not eat the fruit of that tree; if you do, you will die the same day.”

As we know, as soon as Satan got an opportunity, he responded to that statement by saying that God is a liar:

Genesis 3:1-5, *GNB*: ¹ Now the snake was the most cunning animal that the LORD God had made. The snake asked the woman, “Did God really tell you not to eat fruit from any tree in the garden?”

² “We may eat the fruit of any tree in the garden,” the woman answered,

³ “except the tree in the middle of it. God told us not to eat the fruit of that tree or even touch it; if we do, we will die.”

⁴ The snake replied, “That’s not true; you will not die. ⁵God said that, because he knows that when you eat it you will be like God and know what is good and what is bad.”

This is the most fundamental question in the great controversy: **Does sin lead to death? Or, doesn’t it? Whom do we believe?** Bible-believing Christians will immediately say that we believe and trust God, but do we live as if sin is deadly? Every time we sin, we are saying to God, “Leave me alone for a few minutes—or maybe longer—while I do what I want to do.” By acting in selfish ways like that, we are saying as Eve did that we trust ourselves or even Satan more than we trust God at that point! Are we actually joining Satan’s side in the great controversy when we do that? Why do we like to sin? Is it because of our native selfishness? If no selfish people will be admitted to the new earth, do we really want to continue acting in selfish ways?

25. At what time in Paul’s life did he face the struggle in Romans 7:14-25? Was that before conversion? At the time of conversion? Or, after conversion? Have you ever found yourself in that struggle? Which commandment was it that led Paul finally to understand the real meaning of the commandments? What changed in his thinking? What should be the function of the commandments?
26. Doesn’t God know everyone? Even the number of hairs on their heads? (Matthew 10:30) Romans 8:29-30 suggests that those whom God foreknew (knew in advance) will be saved? Does this suggest that everyone will be saved? (Compare Matthew 7:22-23.) If not, how should we understand these verses?
27. Read Romans 8:31-34. After saying, “If God is for us, who can be against us?” and “Who will accuse God’s chosen people?” what was Paul trying to tell us by saying: “Christ Jesus, who died, or rather, who was raised to life . . . is at the right-hand side of God, pleading with Him for us”? Does the Father need to be pleaded with? Why would that be necessary? What does it mean? What is Jesus doing right now in the heavenly sanctuary?

Would it be correct to say that the One who is interceding on our behalf understands us better (Hebrews 2:17-18; 4:14-16) or even perhaps loves us more than the One with whom He is interceding? How does that fit with John 14:9, (*GNB*), “Whoever has seen me has seen the father”?

And what about the role of the Holy Spirit? Read Romans 8:26-27. In what way does the Holy Spirit intercede for us in our weakness?

28. Do Romans 9:1-21, especially 14-21, suggest that we are predestined? Either to be saved or to be lost? Does this mean that God’s will is completely sovereign and our will and our decision really count for nothing? Is that the way God runs His universe?

Certainly, all of us would recognize that God is all-powerful. So, how does He exercise that power?

29. Did God harden Pharaoh’s heart? See Exodus 9:34-10:1. (See handout, “**Hardening Pharaoh’s Heart.**”) And what are we to say about the death of Saul? (See 1 Samuel 31:1-6; 1 Chronicles 10:1-6)
30. How should we understand Romans 9:22? (Compare Proverbs 16:4.)
31. In Romans 13:1 (*KJV*), it says, “Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers.” What is the meaning of *soul* in the Bible? The Hebrew word is *nephesh*, and the Greek is *psuche*. What do these terms imply?
32. What should we learn from the relationship Jesus showed with the Jewish civil and religious leaders in His day? There are many verses suggesting that He tried to avoid conflicts with them. (John 4:1-3) But, on certain occasions, He addressed them directly and said some very startling things. (John 8:44) Should we follow His example in this respect and speak to the U. S. Congress like that?
33. Read Romans 13:8-10. If love is the fulfilling of all law, then what is the purpose of the Sabbath? If the first three commandments describe our love for God and the last six describe our love for our fellow human beings, then perhaps we do not need the Sabbath any more. Could that be true as many of our Christian friends suggest? If all God wants of us is love, why has He given so many detailed laws and requirements? (See Galatians 3:19-25) Shouldn’t God just have said, “I want you to love each other”? Look at the Ten Commandments. (Exodus 20:3-17; Deuteronomy 5:7-21) Is it necessary to say to people who are not doing all those wrong things to stop it? What is the purpose of the Sabbath? Does the Sabbath help us to become more loving and lovable Christians?
34. Read Romans 13:11-14. We call ourselves Adventists. What does that imply? Are we focused on the second advent of Jesus Christ? The signs that the Bible gives to indicate that “the time of the end” has come are now hundreds of years old: 1) the Lisbon earthquake on November 1, 1755; 2) The dark day and the moon turned to blood on May 19, 1780; 3) The end of the 1260 day-year prophecy in 1798; 4) The falling of the stars on November 13, 1833; and 5) The end of the 2300 day-year prophecy on October 22, 1844. Does it support our contention that God is completely trustworthy for us to keep saying, “The end is near... The end is near... The end is near,” and nothing seems to be happening?
35. What would happen in a church if the members really acted as suggested in Romans 14:1-23? What is the main point of this chapter? Do you feel comfortable saying to someone who disagrees with you, “Each one should firmly make up his own mind.” (Romans 14:5, *GNB*) Does Romans 14:3-6 mean we should give up our health practices and the Sabbath? Why would Paul conclude by saying, “And anything that is not based on faith is sin”? (Romans 14:23, *GNB*) If this is true, what really is sin? Is it an action? An attitude? Or, a broken relationship? (Numbers 20:12)

Read Romans 14:1-3,14. Read superficially, these verses might seem to suggest that Seventh-day Adventists are mistaken in their understanding of vegetarianism and healthful eating. These verses have sometimes been put together with 1 Corinthians 10:25-27; Mark 7:18-19; and 1 Timothy 4:1-5 to suggest that our health message is completely unbiblical. How do you understand these verses?

36. Now turn to 1 Corinthians 10:23-11:1. What we have just discussed is the setting for reading Romans 14. Where was Paul when he wrote Romans and Galatians? Was he not in Corinth? Read Romans 14:5. Are we really free to be convinced in our own minds about the seventh-day Sabbath? Why didn't Paul proceed to give a very clear resounding Bible study on the necessity of the seventh-day Sabbath? But, Paul moved right on and said that if one observes a certain day in honor of the Lord, he is just like the person who eats in honor of the Lord or the person who abstains in honor of the Lord.
37. In light of all that we have studied in Romans 14 so far, how should we understand Romans 14:22-23 (*GNB*)?
38. Read Romans 15:1-3. "The strong should help to bear the failings of the weak." That is exactly what Paul was trying to say in Romans 14. Does this agree with his writings elsewhere?
39. But what about calling sin by its right name? How are we supposed to do that?
40. Read Romans 15:1-6. There should not be any break between Romans 14 and 15. Romans 14:1-4 and Romans 15:1-2 show a very close connection. Paul was challenging us to accept new believers into the church without criticizing them because of their former behavior. Perhaps, the pagans who came into the church still thought the idols were real. Do not criticize them. Maybe the former Jews who came in were still constrained by their many little rules. Do not criticize them.

Do we have any examples from Paul himself about how to deal with new believers coming into the church and bringing with them some of their very unchristian behaviors? (See 1 Corinthians 12-14.)

41. How should we relate to people who believe that unless one speaks in tongues, he has not yet received the Holy Spirit? Some Pentecostal groups would suggest that until you have had that experience, you do not even understand the gospel. First John tells us that God can be trusted and that He will forgive us and accept us without any special manifestations. (1 John 1:9) First Corinthians 14 is a near-perfect example of how to correct people without insulting them. Do you agree with Paul's methods? Sometimes, we feel like we are having to bend down to accommodate our fellow brothers and sisters in the church. How far did God have to reach down to accommodate us?
42. About six months after beginning His ministry by being baptized by John in the Jordan River, Jesus attended the first Passover of His ministry. During that time, somehow—we do not know exactly how—Nicodemus was impressed by Jesus. Nicodemus was a Pharisee and a member of the Sanhedrin. He wanted to talk to Jesus, but he certainly did not want to be seen talking to Jesus in public! As you know God, would He (The Father? The Son? The Holy Spirit?) be willing to grant an interview with such a person at nighttime? (John 3) Can you imagine being embarrassed to be seen talking with your God? The so-called "sovereign" God that many worship would have denied such a request.
43. How was it that Paul got into trouble with the church leaders in Jerusalem? Wasn't it because of his close association with so many "sinners" (Gentiles)? But, isn't that what Jesus did? And Paul was determined to act as much like Jesus as he possibly could. To be forgiving one must necessarily run the risk of being misunderstood. Would it be safe for a Christian who is trying to be "all things to all men so that he might save some" to associate with hardened sinners? (Romans 15:3; Psalm 69:9)
44. Because He has given us the freedom to rebel, is God responsible for sin?

45. How many biblical characters remained faithful to God through their entire experience? What about Joseph? And what about Daniel? Were there others?
46. But, what about those who did not come back? What about King Saul? In his youth, he was tall and good looking, head and shoulders above others. God gave him a new heart and a right spirit. (1 Samuel 10:9) But, Saul wasted all those advantages and ended up by consulting a medium, trying to consult the dead; and then he went out the next morning and committed suicide in the midst of battle. (1 Samuel 28:3-25; 31:1-6) And what about Judas? How did Jesus treat Judas? Could the story of Judas have turned out like the story of Peter? Did Jesus look at Judas differently in the judgment hall than He did Peter? What if Judas had gone crying out to the Garden of Gethsemane as Peter did and knelt beside Peter as both of them poured out their hearts in repentance? Would God have taken him back? But, Judas was not willing to give up his pride.

Isn't the kindness of God supposed to lead us to repentance? (Romans 2:4)

47. Remember Paul's statement in Galatians 1:8-9? How many issues in Christianity would you be willing to die for? What was it that Paul was speaking about in Galatians 1? He was talking about the gospel, the good news, the truth about God. Would you be willing to die defending God's reputation? Will we ever be asked to put our lives on the line in defense of God? Is it worth risking the destruction of some new convert because we are arguing about what they eat, what they wear, or some other minor detail of little consequence?
48. Read Acts 10. It took a very dramatic event to convince Peter to associate with Gentiles and speak to them about God. Would you have dared to say, "No" to God three times?
49. Notice that Jesus worked using signs and wonders. Paul also talked about signs and wonders. (Romans 15:17) At the end of time, Satan will try to deceive by working signs and wonders.

Will God also work signs and wonders at the end of time?

50. Which is a greater miracle in God's eyes? A miracle of healing? Or, the miracle of converting a sinner to become a believer? There are three times in Scripture when there were many miracles: 1) In connection with the exodus from Egypt, 2) In the days of Elijah and Elisha, and 3) During the ministries of Jesus and the apostles. Were those times of great faith?
51. What was it that had prevented Paul from going to Rome earlier? (Romans 15:22) Paul thought that he had spent enough time in Asia Minor, Macedonia, and Achaia. He thought it was time for him to move on. There is no evidence that he ever reached Spain. Unfortunately, we know what happened when he carried a very generous offering back to headquarters in Jerusalem. Could such a thing happen in our day?
52. What do you think Paul's converts in Asia Minor, Macedonia, and Achaia thought when they received the news of Paul's imprisonment and how and why it happened?
53. At the end of the book of Romans, there is a doxology. (Romans 16:25-27) Some ancient manuscripts have this doxology both in Romans 16:25-27 and after Romans 14:23. Other ancient documents have these verses only in Romans 14:23. One has it after Romans 15:33. Is that a problem? How did these verses end up in three different locations? Did that happen under inspiration?
54. How could Paul have known so many people in Rome if he had never been there?
55. Wasn't Paul the one who wrote this letter? How do we explain Romans 16:22 which says: "I, Tertius, the writer of this letter, send you Christian greetings."

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