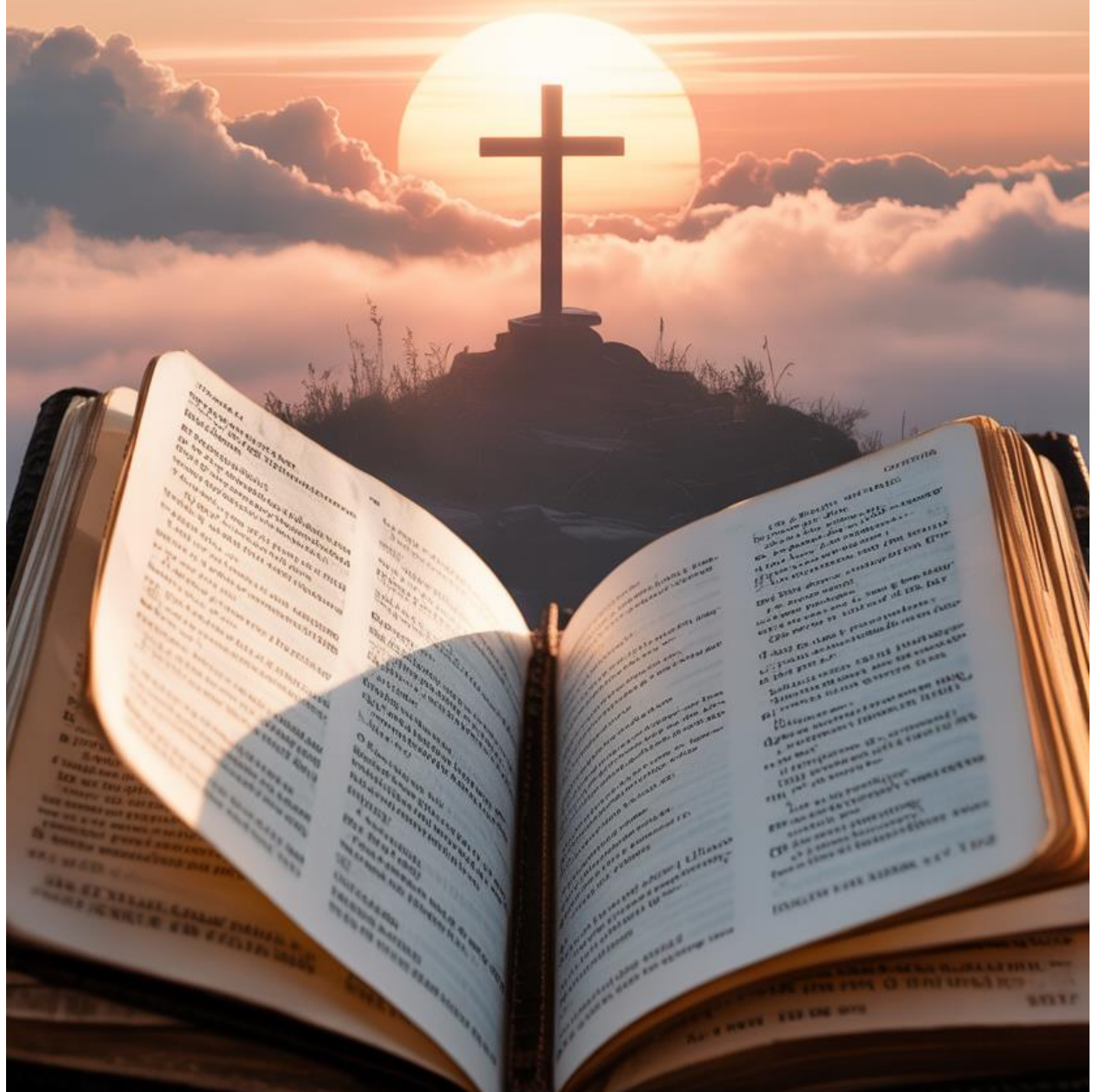


BOB LENDERMAN

Romans: Sermon



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Bob Lenderman

ROMANS: SERMON

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Sermon: ROMANS

Have you ever felt lost, searching for truth, for a foundation that won't crumble when life's storms rage? Have you ever questioned your purpose, or wondered if there's more to this spiritual journey than you currently experience? If so, you are in good company. And today, I want to invite you on a journey – a journey into one of the most profound, most powerful, and most transformative books ever written: The Book of Romans.

Before we dive in, let's just take a moment to quiet our hearts and ask for God's wisdom.

Lord, we thank You for Your Word, a lamp to our feet and a light to our path. Open our minds and hearts today to receive the truth of Romans. May it not just inform us but transform us. Speak to us, Lord, for we are listening. Amen.

The Book of Romans is not just another letter in the Bible. It is often called the "Magna Carta of Christian liberty," the "Constitution of our faith," or even "Paul's theological masterpiece." And for good reasons! It lays out, in breathtaking detail, the very heart of the Gospel – the good news of Jesus Christ – explaining not just *what* we believe, but *why* we believe it, and *how* it should change every single aspect of our lives.

Imagine, for a moment, the apostle Paul, a brilliant, passionate man, once a zealous persecutor of Christians, now utterly transformed by an encounter with the Risen

Christ. From that moment on, his life's mission was to spread this glorious truth to the ends of the earth. He writes this letter to the church in Rome, a diverse mix of Jewish and Gentile believers, in the very heart of the Roman Empire. He hadn't met many of them, but his desire was to strengthen their faith, correct any misunderstandings, and prepare them for his eventual visit. He knew this young church needed a solid, unshakeable foundation. And what a foundation he gave them!

Paul begins his letter by answering the most fundamental question facing humanity: How can broke people like us stand before a holy and righteous God? And his answer starts, surprisingly, with the bad news. Not to discourage, but to prepare us for the magnificent, good news that follows.

I. The Problem: Humanity's Universal Need (Romans 1-3)

Paul spends the first three chapters meticulously, almost relentlessly, demonstrating that *everyone* – Jew and Gentile, religious and irreligious, moral and immoral – has fallen short of God's perfect standard. He paints a picture of humanity, turning away from God, rejecting His clear revelation in creation and conscience, and plunging into self-worship and sin. It's a sobering reality check.

He culminates this argument with a truth that echoes through the ages, a verse many of us know by heart: **Romans 3:23 – "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."**

Let that sink in for a moment. "All have sinned." Not just some, not just the "really bad" people, but *all*. This isn't about comparing us to others and feeling relatively good. This is about comparing ourselves to God's absolute perfection, His glory. And in that comparison, we all inevitably fall short. We are like runners in a race, and the finishing line is God's glory, but not one of us can reach it on our own. This leaves us with a crushing weight of guilt, a sense of separation from the very source of life. This is humanity's universal need.

But Paul doesn't leave us in despair for long. Just as the darkness of night makes the dawn all the more beautiful, the depth of our sin makes God's solution all the more glorious.

II. The Solution: God's Radical Grace (Romans 3-5)

Right after declaring our universal sinfulness, Paul pivots with those two glorious words: "**But now...**" (Romans 3:21). "But now, apart from the Law, the righteousness of God has been made known..."

This is where the heart of the Gospel truly shines. God, in His infinite love and mercy, provided a way for us to be made right with Him. Not by our works, not by our efforts to be "good enough," but purely by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.

Romans 3:28 declares, "For we maintain that a person is justified by faith apart from the works of the law." And then, the beautiful result: **Romans 5:1 – "Therefore, since**

we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."

Think about that word, "justified." It means to be declared righteous, to be acquitted, as if you'd never sinned. It's like standing before a judge, guilty as charged, but then a spotless, perfect advocate steps forward, pays your penalty in full, and the judge declares you "not guilty" – not because you weren't, but because the price has been paid by someone else, on your behalf. That advocate is Jesus Christ. He lived the perfect life we couldn't live, and died the death we deserved, so that we could be declared righteous in God's eyes. This is a gift, freely given, and received by faith. It's radical grace!

This means we no longer have to strive, to earn, to perform for God's love or acceptance. We simply receive it. We have peace with God. No more striving. No more fear. Just overwhelming peace.

III. The New Life: Living in Freedom (Romans 6-8)

Now, if we are saved by grace, and not by our good work, does that mean we can just live however we want? Can we just keep on sinning, knowing that God's grace will cover it? Paul anticipates this question and answers with a resounding: "By no means!" (Romans 6:1).

Grace doesn't just forgive our past; it transforms our present and future. **Romans 6:23 reminds us: "For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."** Sin's power is broken!

And then, one of the most liberating verses in all of Scripture: **Romans 8:1 – "Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus."**

No condemnation! Imagine walking through life completely free from the weight of judgment, knowing that you are fully accepted, fully loved, fully forgiven. This is possible because the Holy Spirit, whom God gives to every believer, now lives within us. He empowers us to live a new life, a life of freedom from sin's dominion. We are no longer slaves to sin, but children of God, led by His Spirit. Imagine moving from a dark, cramped prison cell into a spacious, light-filled home. The prison might still be there, but you don't live in it anymore. You are *free*.

IV. God's Unfolding Plan and Our Practical Response (Romans 9-15)

After establishing these foundational truths, Paul takes a few chapters (Romans 9-11) to address God's faithfulness to Israel and His inclusion of the Gentiles. It's a powerful testament to God's unwavering promises and His vast, inclusive love for all humanity.

But then, in chapter 12, Romans shifts from profound theology to powerful practicality. It's as if Paul says, "Okay, now that you understand this incredible truth of grace, justification, and new life in the Spirit, what does it mean for how you live today?" This section is crucial because it connects our beliefs to our behavior.

Romans 12:1-2 is a cornerstone for Christian living: "Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. Do not conform to the pattern of this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind."

This isn't about burning an offering on an altar, but about dedicating our entire lives – our thoughts, our words, our actions, our relationships – as an act of worship. It's a daily, conscious choice to live for God, allowing Him to transform us from the inside out, rather than letting the world dictate who we are.

What does this "living sacrifice" look like? Paul gives us clear, practical examples:

- **Romans 12:9-10:** "Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves."
- He speaks of using our spiritual gifts, serving with diligence, being joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer.
- He encourages us to bless those who persecute us, to live in harmony, to not be conceited, to leave room for God's wrath, and to overcome evil with good.

This isn't a new set of rules to earn God's favor; it's the natural, Spirit-empowered outflow of a heart transformed by God's grace. It's how we reflect the love and righteousness

of God to a world desperately in need of it. It's the practical application of our freedom in Christ.

V. Call to Action: Live Romans!

So, as we conclude our brief journey through this magnificent book, what do Romans mean for *us* today?

1. **Embrace God's Glorious Grace:** If you have been striving, if you have been trying to earn God's love or forgiveness, today is the day to rest in the finished work of Christ. You are justified by faith! Embrace that peace. There is no condemnation for you in Christ Jesus.
2. **Walk in the Freedom of the Holy Spirit:** Don't let sin hold you captive. You have been set free! Lean into the power of the Holy Spirit living within you to guide you, empower you, and help you live the new life God has called you to.
3. **Live Out Romans 12 Daily:** Let your life be a "living sacrifice" of worship. Allow God to transform your mind. Let His love flow through you to others. Be devoted, honor others, share with those in need, practice hospitality. Let your faith have "feet" and make a tangible difference in the world around you.

Romans isn't just an ancient letter; it's a living, breathing word that can profoundly redefine your existence. It offers hope for the hopeless, purpose for the wandering, and an unshakeable foundation for every storm of life. It calls us to a deeper, more authentic walk with God, and a more courageous, loving witness to the world.

My challenge to you this week is simply this: Read the Book of Romans. Take it chapter by chapter, or even verse by verse. Let it sink into your heart and mind. Ask God to illuminate its truths for you. Don't just *know* Romans; *live* Romans.

May the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus now and always. Amen.

Prayer:

Heavenly Father, we thank You for the profound truths found in Your Word, especially in the Book of Romans. Thank You for revealing our need, and for providing the perfect solution in Jesus Christ, our Savior. Thank You for Your radical grace, for justifying us by faith, and for empowering us through Your Holy Spirit. Help us, Lord, to live as transformed people, offering our lives as living sacrifices, reflecting Your love and truth in every step we take. May Your name be glorified in and through us, today and always. Amen.