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## Summary of Romans

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Paul begins his letter to the Romans as he begins most of his epistles: with the identification of his own person and of his calling as an apostle. In the first chapter the apostle discusses at length the concept of general revelation. This is the background to the announcement of the gospel, the fact that all men, everywhere, have a knowledge of God which is revealed to them in nature. What this knowledge does is to render every human being inexcusable before the judgment seat of God. However, all men distort and corrupt this revelation that God gives of himself, and exchange the truth of God for a lie, giving themselves over to idolatry.

In the second chapter, Paul goes on to indicate that not only do pagans and Gentiles distort the general revelation of God, but that the Jews who had the privilege of possessing the very oracles of God, the Scriptures, have gone astray. Paul summarizes and says there is no partiality with God, for there will be tribulation and distress for every soul of man who does evil, the Jew first and also the Greek. Important also to the second chapter of Romans is Paul's declaration that not only is God revealed externally through nature, but also there is an





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inward knowledge of God that we all have, insofar as God has written his law upon the heart of every human being.

In the third chapter of Romans, Paul pulls it together and shows that both Jew and Gentile are under the judgment of God. It is here he gives his statement that there is none righteous, no not one. And then comes the conclusion that all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. The aim of the first three chapters is to bring every human being before the tribunal of God and show that every human being, if judged by his works, would fall short of what God requires. Therefore, the only hope that anybody has for salvation is to be justified by faith. And Paul introduces that concept at the end of Romans 3, where he says in verse 28: 'for we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from observing the law.'

Chapter 4 contains an extended illustration of the principle of justification by faith, in which Paul points to the Old Testament patriarch, Abraham, and shows that Abraham was justified by faith. He indicates that Abraham was justified before he ever did any works. He was justified, according to Genesis 15, when he believed the promise that God made to him, and it was counted to him as righteousness.

In chapter 5, Paul spells out for us in brief, the great fruits of justification. He points out that being justified by faith we have peace with God, we have access to God and we have a hope of the glory of God which makes it possible for us to endure tribulations and trials. And then, in referring to the free gift of Christ and his willingness to die for us while we were still sinners, he grounds our need for a redeemer in the fall of Adam. He makes a comparison between Adam and Christ and points out that death entered the world through Adam, but that life comes through Christ.





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In chapter 6, Paul moves from justification to sanctification. Sanctification calls believers to a new kind of living, for the old man is to be put to death and the new man is to be fed, nurtured and brought into conformity to Jesus Christ. The fact that our salvation is gratuitous, based upon the mercy of God and the merit of Christ alone, does not give us a licence for sin.

Chapter 7 outlines the continued struggle that a Christian has as he seeks to grow in grace. Paul speaks of his own struggle between those things that he didn't want to do yet does, and the things that he wants to do that he leaves undone. He explains that the Christian still struggles with sin even though he has been freed from the curse and the bondage to the law. He is to live in the power of Christ, who sets us free from the bondage of our fallen nature.

In chapter 8, Paul continues his discussion of the warfare that goes on in the Christian life between the old nature and the new nature that has been made alive through Christ. He calls attention to the fact that the outcome of this warfare between the Spirit and the flesh is not in doubt in the life of a true Christian. For God has promised the final victory. Even the whole creation looks forward to the consummation of God's plan of salvation. Until then, the Holy Spirit is within believers helping them with their weaknesses, with their prayer life, searching their hearts, teaching them the good will of God.

In the latter part of Romans 8, Paul introduces the grand concept of the gracious election of God. He explains that God is for his people from before the beginning of time, going back to God's eternal decrees. No one can undo the election that God has brought to pass in the life of the believer. The Christian's assurance of perseverance is based on the promise of the God who has made their salvation gracious from beginning to end.





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In chapters 9-11, Paul speaks about his burden for the Jews, his kinsmen according to the flesh. He shows how today in his plan of salvation, God has retained for himself a portion of the Jewish people, through his sovereign election. Paul makes the analogy in chapter 9 between Jacob and Esau, in which Jacob receives the blessing of election. Jacob is chosen and Esau is passed over. Paul explains that there is no injustice in God in this redemptive plan, and reminds his readers that God always reserves the right to have mercy upon whom he will have mercy.

In chapter 10, although he continues the expression of his burden and desire for the salvation of his race, he refers to the call to preach the gospel, and points out that anyone who believes in Christ will be saved. But no one can believe who has not heard, and no one can hear without a preacher, and he talks about how beautiful it is to have those committed to the cause of evangelism. Chapter 10 describes the way in which God brings his elect people to himself; the means of salvation comes through the preaching of the gospel.

Then in chapter 11, he raises the difficult question of the future status of the Jewish people. His comments have resulted in much controversy concerning the question, Does God have more in store for Israel? Paul describes the Gentiles as wild olive branches that are grafted onto the root and the tree which is Israel. His basic thesis is that if God was pleased to be merciful to the Gentiles, who are the wild olive branches, how much more merciful will he be to the original tree. So there will be a time when the deliverance of Israel will take place, with great blessing to the rest of the world. In the meantime God will continue, for Abraham's sake, to work in the lives of people who are descendants of Abraham. Paul ends chapter 11 with a magnificent doxology.





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So the first eleven chapters give an exposition of the way of salvation, the doctrines of grace, beginning with an exposition of our radical sinfulness and corruption which make it impossible for a man to justify himself through his own efforts. Then Paul spells out the doctrine of justification by faith alone, through Christ who alone has the ability and the merit necessary to justify those who are unjust. From justification, Paul moves to sanctification, the process of our working out salvation, of growing in grace, of putting to death the old man, and strengthening the inward man within us. He explains the fruit of justification that is seen in the new relationship of adoption as sons into the family of God, with its attendant blessings. Finally, Paul gives an exposition of God's sovereign election and of his work in history, using the Jewish nation, and reaching out to the Gentiles, and the promise for future actions with the Jewish people.

In chapter 12, there is a decided shift from theological exposition to practical application, in which Paul tells his readers that the appropriate response to so great a salvation is to present themselves as living sacrifices to God. They are to be transformed people, and that transformation comes through renewed minds.

Then, Paul speaks about the diversity that is found within the body of Christ. It is one body with many members and each one is called to a different service, each has different gifts according to the grace given to him. Each person is to exercise that gift which God has given him, and in exercising their individual gifts, Christians are called to live together in love and cheerfulness. They are to be devoted to one another. Paul gives us a series of virtues that believers are to practice: diligence, fervency in spirit, contributing to the needs of the saints, hospitality, rejoicing with those who rejoice and weep-





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ing with those who weep. He gives his indictment against pride and haughtiness and shows how destructive those characteristics are. Lastly, he forbids Christians from seeking vengeance.

In chapter 13, Paul spells out the responsibilities of Christians to obey the civil magistrates. He gives us the most thorough statements about his view of the existence of governments and of the state, and shows that government has been established by God. Government is a means of grace to keep unbridled spirits in check, to restrain evil, and Christians ought to keep a good conscience with respect to government, doing their duty as it is understood under God. And then he spells out what love means in the life of the Christian.

In chapter 14, Paul explains Christian liberty and the responsibility that goes with it. Though we have been freed from moralistic rules that are not a part of the real law of God, we are to exercise that freedom with a spirit of charity and consideration for weaker brothers who may not have the same understanding of the things of God that the more mature Christian does.

In chapter 15, he continues along these lines, explaining to us that we are to bear the weaknesses of those who differ from us, and that we are to be people who are people of peace, people of patience and people of hope. Towards the end of chapter 15 Paul reveals his intention to come personally to visit his friends in Rome and of his desire to go on to Spain.

Finally, in the last chapter, there is a long list of greetings and commendations to men and women who had served with Paul in his missionary journeys and in his ministries in the local churches, which give an insight into Paul as a person, a pastor, and a friend.

