

Lessons from Romans 1 – 8

Chapter 1

1. The Power of the Gospel

Paul declares that he is "not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation" (Romans 1:16, KJV). The core message is the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, offering rescue and transformation to all who believe.

2. The Universality of Sin

Paul establishes that all of humanity is accountable to God. The chapter focuses heavily on the Gentile (non-Jewish) world, but the overarching principle sets the stage for the rest of the letter: everyone has fallen short and requires rescue from sin.

3. The Danger of Rejecting God

When people deliberately push the knowledge of the Creator out of their lives, the result is idolatry and the worship of "the creature more than the Creator" (Romans 1:25, KJV). This rejection of truth leads to a darkened mind, futile thinking, and moral decay.

4. The Principle of "Giving Over"

Paul uses the phrase "God also gave them up" (Romans 1:24, KJV) multiple times. This is not a malicious act by God, but rather a "severe mercy" where God respects human free will, allowing individuals and societies to experience the natural, self-destructive consequences of their own sinful choices.

5. "The Just Shall Live by Faith"

The foundational thesis of the Book of Romans is found in verse 17: *The just shall live by faith*. This highlights that righteousness is a free gift from God to be received by faith, not something a person can earn.

Chapter 2

1. Impartiality and Truth in Judgment

- **Equal Accountability:** Paul makes it clear that God shows **no favouritism** (KJV: "respect of persons" in Romans 2:11). Whether you are a Jew with the written law or a Gentile guided by conscience, everyone is accountable to God.
- **Judgment According to Works:** Romans 2:6 states God will render to every man "according to his deeds". Adventists understand this to mean our lives and choices give evidence of the reality of our faith. However, good works are the *fruit* of salvation, not the *root*—we are justified by faith, but judged by our works as evidence of our character.

2. The Danger of Hypocrisy

- **Self-Condernation:** Paul strongly rebukes those who judge others for sins they themselves commit (Romans 2:1-3).
- **Damaging God's Witness:** In Romans 2:21-24, Paul calls out the Jews who taught the law but broke it. Adventists emphasize that holding the "truth" or possessing the full scriptural knowledge brings greater responsibility. Hypocrisy causes the name of God to be "blasphemed among the Gentiles" (Romans 2:24).

3. God's Kindness and Repentance

- **Motivation for Change:** Romans 2:4 teaches that "the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance". Instead of operating out of a fear of an angry deity, SDA teachings emphasize that God's patience, forbearance, and unconditional love are what draw sinners to confess and forsake their sins.

4. The Law and the Conscience

- **The Law Written in the Heart:** Paul notes in Romans 2:14-15 that even Gentiles who do not have the written law show "the work of the law written in their hearts". This affirms the Adventist belief in the universal existence of the moral law (the Ten Commandments) and the function of the conscience, which is a vital part of the gospel message.
- **Hearers vs. Doers:** Romans 2:13 KJV says "not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified." Mere knowledge of doctrine or scripture does not save; active obedience through Christ's enabling power is essential.

5. True Circumcision

- **Inward Transformation:** In Romans 2:25-29, Paul shifts the focus away from physical circumcision to circumcision of the heart. Adventists interpret this as a call to spiritual rebirth. It teaches that outward religious practices, rituals, or membership in the church (the remnant) are meaningless without the inward, transforming work of the Holy Spirit.

Chapter 3

1. The Universality of Sin and Helplessness

Paul explicitly states in the King James Version (KJV): *"For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God"* (Romans 3:23).

- **The Lesson:** Neither religious heritage (being a Jew) nor human effort can make anyone righteous. Sin is a universal condition, and we are completely powerless to save ourselves by our own merits.

2. The True Purpose of the Law

Paul declares: *"Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin"* (Romans 3:20).

- **The Lesson:** The moral law (including the Ten Commandments) was never intended to be a checklist for earning salvation. In SDA doctrine, the law acts as a "mirror." It reveals our sinfulness and our need for a Savior, but it does not have the power to wash away sins or justify the sinner.

3. Justification by Faith Alone

Paul writes that believers are *"justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus"* (Romans 3:24).

- **The Lesson:** Justification—the legal declaration that a sinner is forgiven and counted as righteous—is a **gift**. Seventh-day Adventists emphasize that this

righteousness is *imputed* (credited) to the believer the moment they accept Christ's sacrifice. It excludes all human boasting and pride.

4. God's Justice and Mercy are in Perfect Harmony

Paul asks how God can both punish sin and forgive the sinner, concluding that God remains *"just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus"* (Romans 3:26).

- **The Lesson:** At the cross of Calvary, God demonstrated that He takes sin seriously (maintaining His justice) while simultaneously providing a way for humanity to be saved (acting as the justifier). Christ's blood satisfied the demands of the law, allowing God to forgive us without compromising His perfect justice.

5. Upholding the Law

Paul concludes the chapter by asking: *"Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law"* (Romans 3:31).

- **The Lesson:** Justification by faith does not abolish the law. In SDA theology, faith in Christ's righteousness actually *establishes* the law. When a believer accepts Christ, the Holy Spirit writes the law into their heart, empowering them to live a life of obedience as the "fruits" of their faith.

Chapter 4

1. Justification by Faith, Not Works (vv. 1–8)

- **The Example of Abraham:** Paul anticipates Jewish boasting in lineage and works, but points out that Abraham's righteousness came simply from believing God's promise.
- **Grace vs. Wages:** Paul explains the difference between a wage and a gift. If someone earns salvation through good works, God owes them a wage. But because we are all sinners, we cannot earn it; we must accept it as an unmerited gift.
- **The Blessedness of Forgiveness:** Quoting King David from Psalm 32, Paul highlights the joy of those whose sins are covered and not held against them. This Blessed is the Man to whom the Lord Will Not Impute Sin illustrates that God forgives completely and clears the record of repentant sinners.

2. Faith Predates the Law and Rituals (vv. 9–15)

- **Abraham was Uncircumcised when Declared Righteous:** To combat the Jewish idea that physical rituals like circumcision are required for salvation, Paul notes that Abraham was counted righteous *before* he was circumcised (Genesis 15 vs. Genesis 17).
- **The Purpose of Circumcision:** The What Romans 4 Teaches About the Necessity of Faith article from The Gospel Coalition explains that circumcision was an outward sign and seal of the inward faith Abraham already possessed.
- **The Law Brings Wrath:** Paul clarifies that the inheritance of the world was promised through faith, not the law. If salvation were based on the law, faith would

be useless, because humanity inevitably fails to keep the law perfectly, which brings wrath.

3. Adventist Perspective on Romans 4

Seventh-day Adventists (SDA) emphasize the sanctuary message and the everlasting nature of God's covenants, viewing Romans 4 as a clear demonstration of the "plan of salvation":

- **Righteousness by Faith:** Adventists teach that righteousness by faith is the core of the Three Angels' Messages. It means Jesus' perfect life is credited to the believer, covering all past sins.
- **The Law remains a transcript of God's character:** While the moral law cannot save anyone, Adventists believe it reveals sin and points people to their need for Jesus. Romans 4 emphasizes that God's grace establishes the law rather than nullifying it.
- **Unwavering Faith in God's Promises:** As The Faith of Abraham SDA Sabbath School materials highlight, believers today are called to have the same steadfast trust in God's power and promises as Abraham did, looking forward to Christ's soon return

Chapter 5

1. Justification and Peace with God

- **Justified by Faith:** Paul emphasizes that believers are declared righteous ("justified") purely through faith in Jesus Christ, not by their own works or obedience to the law.
- **Peace and Grace:** This justification ends the "war" with God, bringing permanent peace. It grants believers access to God's continuous, unmerited grace.
- **The "How-To" of Hope:** For a detailed breakdown of how Paul maps justification to eternal peace, see the Enduring Word Romans 5 Commentary.

2. The Purpose of Suffering (Tribulation)

- **Character Development:** Rather than a sign of God's displeasure, suffering is framed as an active tool for spiritual growth.
- **The Faith Pathway:** Paul provides a sequential chain of spiritual development in Romans 5:3-4:
- **God's Love:** Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) teaching aligns with mainstream evangelical views here: trials are allowed to reveal our character, and this hope does not disappoint because the Holy Spirit continually pours God's love into our hearts.

3. Christ's Sacrifice for the Ungodly

- **Unearned Love:** Paul highlights the sheer magnitude of Christ's sacrifice by noting that humans were helpless and ungodly ("sinners") when Christ died for them.

- **Assurance of Salvation:** If Christ died for humanity while they were enemies, His resurrected life guarantees ultimate salvation from the wrath of God.

4. The Two Adams: Condemnation vs. Grace

- **Adam's Disobedience:** Through the literal sin of one man, Adam, sin, condemnation, and death entered the world and passed to all humanity. SDA theology highly values a literal Adam, as it underpins the entire biblical framework of the origin of sin and the necessity of the Cross.
- **Christ's Obedience:** Jesus acts as the "second Adam". Just as one man's actions brought death, one man's righteous act—His obedience—brings justification, abundant grace, and eternal life.
- **Grace Reigns:** Where sin increased, God's grace abounded "much more".

Chapter 6

1. Dead to Sin and Alive in Christ

- **The Spiritual Fact:** Paul addresses an objection in Romans 6:1-2: because we are saved by grace, should we keep sinning to get more of it? He answers with a firm "God forbid." When we accept Christ, we are "dead to sin."
- **Baptismal Symbolism:** Romans 6:3-4 explains that water baptism is a symbol of this transformation. Going under the water represents dying and being buried with Christ, while coming up represents rising to "newness of life."
- **SDA Explanation:** In Seventh-day Adventist theology, baptism is a public profession of faith that your old, sinful lifestyle has ended and a new life centered on Jesus has begun. The "old man" (sinful nature) is crucified, ensuring sin no longer has to rule your life.

2. Reckoning Yourself Dead

- **Mindset Shift:** Romans 6:11 tells believers to "reckon" (calculate or consider) themselves dead to sin but alive to God.
- **SDA Explanation:** Seventh-day Adventists teach that this "reckoning" is not just wishful thinking, but an active claiming of Christ's victory. You must continually focus your mind on Jesus to empower righteous living, rather than continually focusing on fighting the sin itself.

3. Slaves of Righteousness

- **The Choice of Master:** Romans 6:16 establishes that you are a slave to whatever you choose to obey. Yielding to sin leads to death; yielding to obedience leads to righteousness.
- **Grace Over Legalism:** Romans 6:14 is a pivotal verse: *"For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace."*
- **SDA Explanation:** Adventists understand "under the law" as being under its condemnation and penalty. When you are "under grace," the penalty of the law is removed, and the Holy Spirit empowers you to keep God's law. Grace is not a license to break the law, but the very power that enables obedience and victory.

4. The Final Fruit

- **Sanctification:** Paul contrasts the shameful outcome of sin with the ultimate result of serving God in Romans 6:22-23. The "wages of sin is death," but the "gift of God is eternal life."
- **SDA Explanation:** Sanctification is viewed as a lifelong process of growth. By cooperating with the Holy Spirit and yielding your body to God's service, you bear "fruit unto holiness", growing daily in the character of Christ.

Chapter 7

1. **The Law Is Holy, But It Cannot Save:** The Apostle Paul affirms that God's law—including the Ten Commandments—is *"holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good"* (Romans 7:12, KJV). However, Seventh-day Adventist theology emphasizes that while the law points out sin (acting like a spiritual mirror or X-ray), it lacks the power to grant salvation. It exposes our need for a Savior.
2. **The Marriage Analogy & Release:** In Romans 7:1-6, Paul illustrates spiritual freedom using the law of marriage. Just as a woman is bound to her husband by law until he dies, believers were once bound to sin and the condemnation of the law. Through the death of Christ, believers *"are delivered from the law"* (Romans 7:6, KJV) so they can be united with Him to bear spiritual fruit.
3. **The Human Struggle Against the Flesh:** In verses 14-25, Paul details a profound personal conflict: *"For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I"* (Romans 7:15, KJV). Adventists view this not as an excuse to continue sinning, but as the universal experience of an enlightened, honest believer who relies on their own strength rather than the Holy Spirit. The law convicts, but it is powerless to change human nature.
4. **The Call to the Spirit:** True obedience cannot be achieved through strict legalism or rigid adherence to "the oldness of the letter". The key lesson is that believers must surrender entirely to Christ, enabling them to *"serve in newness of spirit"* (Romans 7:6).
5. **The Assurance of Deliverance:** Though chapter 7 ends with a cry of despair over human weakness (*"O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"* - Romans 7:24, KJV), it sets the stage for the glorious victory in Romans 8:1. It reminds believers that our righteousness is found in Christ's covering, not in our own failed attempts to keep the law.

Chapter 8

1. Freedom from Condemnation (v. 1)

- **The Lesson:** "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus".
- **SDA Perspective:** Salvation rests completely in Christ's righteousness, not human effort. God judged sin at the cross, freeing believers from the guilt of past failures and the power of the "law of sin and death".

2. The Power of the Indwelling Spirit (v. 9-11)

- **The Lesson:** The Holy Spirit dwells in believers, transforming their minds.
- **SDA Perspective:** By beholding and yielding to the Spirit, Christians experience "life and peace". The Spirit empowers believers to "put to death the deeds of the body" (v. 13) and live victoriously, shifting focus from personal fleshly failures to Christ's victory.

3. The Spirit of Adoption (v. 14-17)

- **The Lesson:** Believers are adopted as sons and daughters, making them joint-heirs with Christ.
- **SDA Perspective:** This establishes the assurance of salvation. Instead of living as slaves to fear, believers approach God affectionately, calling Him "Abba, Father". It also reminds believers that faithful living involves sharing in Christ's present sufferings in anticipation of future glory.

4. The Intercession of the Spirit (v. 26-27)

- **The Lesson:** The Holy Spirit helps human weakness, interceding with "groanings which cannot be uttered".
- **SDA Perspective:** This is a comforting truth that God understands our deepest unspoken struggles. The Spirit translates our imperfect prayers according to God's will.

5. Assurance of God's Unfailing Love (v. 31-39)

- **The Lesson:** "If God be for us, who can be against us?"
- **SDA Perspective:** Nothing in the universe can sever the believer from the love of God. This ultimate assurance anchors the believer in Christ's righteousness, especially when facing tribulation or cosmic trials.