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More Than Conquerors Studies in Romans 8 Study 1 - The Romans Road

"...In all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us."

These are most encouraging words for every person who seeks to follow Jesus Christ. In the face of trials, temptations, and even our own sin and failure believers are assured they have victory through Jesus Christ. This is joined by other wonderful promises:

"Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus."

"And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose."

"If God is for us, who is against us?"

All these great promises are found in Romans chapter 8. Paul's letter to the Romans is one of the most important books of the Bible for every follower of Christ to know and understand. Chapter 8 is the high point of that book. Here we find the wonderful results we experience in our lives through faith in Jesus Christ. This great chapter will be the focus of our studies during the regular session. Contemplating the promises of this great chapter as well as understanding how they fit in with the rest of Paul's letter to the Romans can be a great encouragement to you as serve in these upcoming challenging days.

The building and maintenance of West Virginia's roads has been a BIG issue in recent legislative sessions. Such infrastructure is considered vital to our economy and to the well-being of our citizens. Determining how to fund the work on our roads has been the source of much discussion and controversy.

In his letter to the Romans, Paul lays out for us the "roads" – the "infrastructure" of the Christian faith. It is his systematic presentation of the essential truths of the gospel. This is his theme as he shares in chapter 1:

15 So, for my part, I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome. 16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. 17 For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "BUT THE RIGHTEOUS man SHALL LIVE BY FAITH."

If you grew up in some church circles, you likely heard a method of sharing the gospel with others called "The Romans Road". It is a list of verses from Paul's letter to the Romans that present God's plan of salvation for sinful people. These verses clearly present the sinfulness of all people, as well as the condemnation and judgement each of us face because of that sin:

"...For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God..." (Romans 3:23)

"For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Romans 6:23)

Paul explains how God provided salvation for us through the life, suffering, and death of His Son, Jesus Christ. Paul then shares that we only gain salvation by our faith in Christ:

For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. For one will hardly die for a righteous man; though perhaps for the good man someone would dare even to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. (Romans 5:6-8)

Paul makes it clear that our salvation and forgiveness of sin gained only through our faith in Jesus Christ:

"...If you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation. (Rom. 10:9-10)

"...For "WHOEVER WILL CALL ON THE NAME OF THE LORD WILL BE SAVED." (Romans 10:13)

While this "Romans Road" can be helpful in sharing the Good News with others, taking these verses out of their context can cause us to miss the real force and impact of Paul's letter. Paul indeed shares the "roads" – the vital infrastructure of the Christian faith. He proclaims the things we MUST know and believe if we are to have our sins forgiven, be right with God, and live a victorious

Christian life. In this letter, Paul presents to us the road to salvation, and the road to sanctification.

The Road to Salvation

After some introductory comments regarding his ministry and his desire to visit the believers in Rome to minister to them, Paul lays out the road to salvation. In 1:18-3:20 Paul gives us the bad news – the starting location of every single person – lost in sin and under God’s judgement. He shows how every person who has ever lived is guilty in God’s sight. The wretched sinner as well as the “religious” rule keeper and the moral humanitarian are condemned. Paul doesn’t want to make us feel bad – he wants to make us desperate to answer the question, “How can I as a sinful person be right with a Holy God?”

Paul answers this question as he points out the only road for sinful people to be right with our Holy God. He sums it up in what are perhaps three of the most important verses in the Bible:

21 But now apart from the Law the righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, 22 even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe; for there is no distinction; 23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24 being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus... (Romans 3:21-24)

Here we learn that we are forgiven and gain God’s righteousness by simply believing in Christ and what He has done for us. Our salvation is by faith alone in Christ alone. He explains that we are justified (made righteous or right with God) because of the gift of God’s grace. He uses the picture of redemption – Jesus paid our ransom and freed us from our sin. Notice the terms Paul uses that form the infrastructure – the foundation of our Christian faith: righteousness, faith, justification, redemption.

Paul goes on to share many more details and implications of these truths, but the focus is on FAITH. His emphasis is that we are only saved from sin through faith in Christ.

Our salvation is only the starting place. In chapter 6 Paul begins to describe the results that take place in our lives because of our faith in Christ. He lays out for us the road to sanctification.

The Road to Sanctification

When we repent and trust Christ, we are saved, we are justified, we are made right with God. Some would accuse Paul of teaching then that believers could do anything they want – could live anyway they want if indeed their sins are forgiven once and for all. Paul’s response to this – “MAY IT NEVER BE!” (6:2) He explains how when we trust Christ we given a new life and we begin the process of becoming more like Christ in our thoughts, attitudes, and actions. This is called **sanctification** – the process by which a believer lays aside sin and becomes more like Christ. Those who have truly trusted Christ will not live in sin. They will strive rid themselves of sin and live pleasing to God. Beginning in chapter 12 Paul shares very practical ways this should take place in the believer’s life.

In chapter 8, the focus of our studies this session, Paul describes for us the result in our lives of understanding what God has done for us through Christ. He shares the assurance we gain when we know that we are no longer condemned (8:1) and the peace we can have when we know we cannot be separated from Him (8:39).

The Importance of Understanding Romans

In our introduction we considered how most agree that West Virginia’s roads and infrastructure are vital to our economy and the well-being of our citizens. In his letter to the Romans Paul lays out the road – the infrastructure of the Christian faith. These are the things we must know and understand if we are to find salvation and be right with God. Some examples from history may help grasp how important is to know and understand this book.

Augustine was a professor in Milan who lived a wicked and profligate life. Exposed to gospel preaching he began to fall under conviction regarding his sinful lifestyle. One day while sitting in a garden contemplating his wicked ways, he heard a child singing in Latin, “Take up and read, Take up and read”. He had a scroll of Romans with him and the passage that caught his eye was an exhortation to lay aside sin and lust. Upon reading this he trusted Christ and became one of the greatest leaders and theologians of the early church.

Martin Luther was a dedicated monk and professor of theology in Wittenberg, Germany. As he was studying and teaching through Romans he became more and more convinced that salvation was only through faith in Christ alone. He trusted Christ alone for his salvation and began a movement which would spread around the world.

John Wesley was an ordained minister in the Church of England, but he was confused by the gospel and was searching for a genuine salvation experience. He went to a meeting where he heard a message from Romans. He later shared that as he heard there how God changes the heart through faith in Christ, he genuinely trusted Christ and gained the assurance that God had taken away his sins. Wesley would go on to found the Methodist church which has had great impact around the world.

Understanding Romans had a profound impact upon these men. Understanding the “Romans Road” – the infrastructure of our faith will have a profound impact upon us as well.

- **Let us consider whether we have truly trusted Christ alone as the only road to our salvation.**
- **Let us strive to grasp the assurance and peace we can have as we understand all that God has done for us through Christ.**

CAPITOL BIBLE STUDIES

Tuesday, January 18

8:00 AM House Government Org. Conference Room (East Wing)
12:00 Noon Senate Finance Committee Room (451 M)