



ROMANS

Great News for a Great City

Holy Trinity Church
Community Group Study: Part 1
Fall 2009

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WELCOME TO A COMMUNITY GROUP

Welcome to a Holy Trinity Church community group! You may be asking, “What is a community group?” Well, community groups at Holy Trinity Church help us connect on four levels:

- ***Connect to God:*** All people were designed for relationship with God, and God has always been gathering a people to himself. If our community groups excel at the other three points of connection below, but fail to connect people to the one true and living God, then we’ve failed. Ultimately, the only thing that will matter in this life is if our relationship with God has been restored. Through God’s acts in history, He has provided for our redemption through the person and work of Jesus Christ. No matter where you are on your spiritual journey, the others in your community group will be journeying alongside you by studying God’s Word, and collectively you will be learning how to be re-connected with God.
- ***Connect to the Word:*** We at Holy Trinity Church are confident that God has spoken to humanity through the Bible, and since God has spoken we need to listen! Therefore, the study of God’s Word is paramount in your community group experience. We believe as Jesus said in Luke 24:44-47, that all of God’s Word is fulfilled in Jesus Christ. Through our study of the Word, we will always connect the text back to the larger story of God’s redeeming acts, culminating in Jesus Christ.
- ***Connect to other people:*** Most of us reside in the bustling city of Chicago, but we are often isolated from authentic community. We were made for relationship with each other. Participation in a community group will allow you to connect to other people through our common exploration of the Bible and related times of fellowship.
- ***Connect to the city:*** We believe God has called Holy Trinity Church to be on a mission for his kingdom. This desire comes from what we have experienced through being in communion with God, and the resulting joy and hope in our life. We want to include as many people as possible to experience our community. God cares about each and every Chicagoan! Consequently, we give of our own time and resources to serve others in Chicago so that everyone in Chicago can be part of God’s community. Community Groups will endeavor to develop participant’s hearts with a desire to serve the poor and disenfranchised, including by serving as a group during two Hope For Chicago Service Days.

Community Group gatherings

Community Groups meet weekly in homes from mid-September to early May. Each group may take a slightly different approach, but generally the time (typically 2 hours) is broken down between discussion of a previously assigned Biblical text, prayer, and social interaction over dessert or periodic dinners.

You are most welcome!

FALL 2009 COMMUNITY GROUP CALENDAR

Week of:

Sep 21	Dinner and Introductory Study #1 (welcome, expectations, introduction to Romans)	Romans 1:1-15 <i>personal study/sermons/group discussion</i>
Sep 28	Group Study #2	Romans 1:16-17 <i>personal study/sermon/group discussion</i>
Oct 5	Group Study #3	Acts 5:27-42 <i>personal study/sermon/group discussion</i>
Oct 12	Group Study #4	Romans 1:18-32 <i>personal study/sermon/group discussion</i>
Oct 19	Dinner and Abbreviated Study #5	Romans 2:25-3:20 <i>personal study/sermon /group discussion</i>
Oct 26	Group Study #6	Romans 3:21-5:11 <i>personal study/sermon/group discussion</i>
Nov 2	Group Study #7	Romans 5:12-8:39 <i>personal study/sermon/group discussion</i>
Nov 9	Group Study #8	Romans 9:1-8 <i>personal study/sermon/group discussion</i>
Nov 16	Group Study #9	Romans 11:33-12:2 <i>personal study/sermon/group discussion</i>
Nov 23	No group study due to Thanksgiving	
Nov 30	Group Study #10 – Advent #1	<i>personal study/sermon/group discussion</i>
Dec 7	Group Study #11 - Advent #2	<i>personal study/sermon/group discussion</i>
<i>No group studies until January 11</i>		
Jan 11	Group Study #12	Romans 14:1-23 <i>personal study/sermon/group discussion</i>
Jan 18	Group Study #13	Romans 15:1-7 <i>personal study/sermon/group discussion</i>

Jan 25 Group Study #14

Romans 15:8-16:27

personal study/ sermon/ group discussion

Feb 1 Groups continue through to the week of May 10th

EDITOR'S NOTE:

This study was written by Tom Barrett, Assistant Pastor Holy Trinity Church, with the input from the other members of the Pastoral staff at HTC. Any mistakes are mine.

For God's Glory,

Tom Barrett

Learning Romans together – a 5 month study

Welcome to 2009-2010 Community Groups!

Over the next 5 months we will be studying Paul's Letter to the Romans together. Compared to prior years, we are piloting a new format, but a format we believe will better help us understand the text, God and our ourselves, as well as to help us better apply the text to life.

Objectives of this study guide

Greater growth

We believe that the daily study of God's Word is critical for your spiritual growth. We are providing you with materials to study in an accountable context to foster greater growth in the Gospel.

Greater application

We believe that the opportunity to study the scripture a number of times personally, hear a sermon preached on the text, and to then discuss in your Community Group will allow for a deep richness of understanding and application.

How it works

We are asking you to engage the Biblical text through:

- *Personal study* - Study each passage on your own three times,
- *Sunday study* - Hear a sermon preached on the text, and
- *Community Group study* - Discuss and apply the passage with the others in your community group.

Personal Study

To grow spiritually you need to read God's Word each day. We suggest that you find a regular time and place for 30 minutes each day to learn from the Scriptures. Bring a pen or pencil, your bible, a notebook and study materials. In the following pages, each study suggests three readings for each text, along with a set of questions for each reading, each with a slightly different focus as follows:

- *God*: What does this passage tell you about God?
- *You*: What does this passage tell you about yourself?
- *Your life*: What does this passage tell you about how you should live?

Sunday Study

Typically each Sunday you will hear a sermon based on the same text the Community Group study is based on. The sermon is another supplement to assist us in better understanding and applying the Biblical text we will be studying privately and in our groups. The Sunday sermon will also be available online at www.htcchicago.org for those unable to make the service, or if you would like to listen again.

Community Group Study

Most weeks you will have a chance to study and discuss the text together in your community group (see calendar on next page).

Resources

Resources provided through Holy Trinity Church:

In order to help you grow in God's word, we will provide you with the following resources:

- *The Biblical text* – the attached studies have the applicable Biblical text printed at the beginning of each study. All of our study efforts are primarily a study on the Biblical text.
- *Personal study questions* – the attached studies contain three sets of questions for each study. Please prioritize your time during the week to allow for three separate daily readings of this text, attempting to answer the questions to the best of your ability, and pray over prayer requests that come to mind as you interact with the Biblical text.
- *Study Bible Notes from the ESV Study Bible* – Through the generosity of the publisher (Crossway Books), we can provide you with a copy of the ESV Study Bible notes on Romans. This resource will be available at the Welcome Table at church on Sundays.

Additional optional resources:

If you would like to study Romans at a more in depth level, we recommend the following commentaries:

Less technical commentaries/resources:

Hughes, Kent R., *Romans: Righteousness from Heaven*, Crossway.

Moo, Douglas J., *The NIV Application Commentary – Romans*. Zondervan.

St. Helen's Bishopsgate, *Read/Mark/Learn – Romans*

Technical commentaries:

Moo, Douglas J., *Encountering the Book of Romans: A Theological Survey*.

Moo, Douglas J., *The New International Commentary on the New Testament: The Epistle to the Romans*. Eerdmans.

Morris, Leon, *The Epistle to the Romans*, Eerdmans

Osborne, Grant R., *Romans*. InterVarsity Press.

Schriener, Thomas R., *Romans*, Baker.

Stott, John, *The Message of Romans: God's Good News for the World*. InterVarsity

Study #1: Romans 1:1-15

Week 1 - **Week of September 21st**

Community Group calendar: **Introductory Study #1, Dinner**

Text: **Romans 1:1-15**

Ways in which you will interact with the text:

- Personal study (we recommend three separate readings)
- Listen to sermons preached on September 13th (Romans 1:1-7) and 20th (Romans 1:8-15)
- Introductory Group discussion during week of September 21st

Romans 1:1-15: *English Standard Version (ESV)*

Greeting

1 Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, ² which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy Scriptures, ³ concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh ⁴ and was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord, ⁵ through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of his name among all the nations, ⁶ including you who are called to belong to Jesus Christ,

⁷ To all those in Rome who are loved by God and called to be saints:

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Longing to Go to Rome

⁸ First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because your faith is proclaimed in all the world. ⁹ For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son, that without ceasing I mention you ¹⁰ always in my prayers, asking that somehow by God's will I may now at last succeed in coming to you. ¹¹ For I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to strengthen you— ¹² that is, that we may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith, both yours and mine. ¹³ I want you to know, brothers, that I have often intended to come to you (but thus far have been prevented), in order that I may reap some harvest among you as well as among the rest of the Gentiles. ¹⁴ I am under obligation both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish. ¹⁵ So I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome.

First Reading – *What does this passage tell you about God?*

1. The text describes the Trinitarian God – one God in three persons – Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Write an “F” next to all the references to the Father, write “JC” next to all the references of the Son, and write an “HS” next to all the references of the Holy Spirit.

2. What is the connection between the “Son”, “David” and the “holy Scriptures”? Look up in the Old Testament and write out some of the promises concerning the Son that were fulfilled in Jesus Christ.

3. List out the verses that demonstrate God's concern for all peoples. What would it look like in your life if you developed a greater concern for all peoples?

 4. What do these verses tell us about God's providence (v.2, 6, 7)? (*providence is the doctrine that God is continually involved with all created things*)

 5. Assume for a minute these 15 verses were all you knew about God and his plan for people – summarize what these verses say concerning God's plan of redemption for people. Then, bringing in what you know of the rest of the Bible's redemptive-historic plot line (using categories such as *creation, fall, redemption, restoration*), how do these verses summarize God's plan of redemption (what is similar, what is missing)?
- Write out any prayer requests that come to mind as you read this text and interact with these questions.

Second Reading – *What does this passage tell you about yourself?*

1. We live in a time and place that does not dwell much on the past. A text like this reminds us the Gospel did not originate with us. In light of these statements, and more importantly this text, how would you describe your faith in light of God's work in the world over many centuries.

2. Paul writes to the Romans in v.6 that they are “called” to belong to Jesus Christ. Do you view yourself as having been called by God, or you yourself ‘found’ God? Explain your answer.

3. Paul expresses his longing to see those in Rome (v.11) and to preach the Gospel to all peoples (vv.14-15). For the things we long for, we generally will spend time and effort to obtain. Reflect on your longings by considering where you spend your time and efforts.

4. Paul states the he is obligated “both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to the wise and the foolish” (v.14). Do you feel obligated to share the Gospel? Explain your answer. How can you be mutually encouraged by sharing the Gospel with others?

 5. Bob Dylan famously sang “*You're gonna have to serve somebody. Well, it may be the devil or it may be the Lord. But you're gonna have to serve somebody*”. Who do you serve? Who or where is your identify found?
- Write out any prayer requests that come to mind as you read this text and interact with these questions.

Third Reading – *What does this passage tell you about how you should live?*

1. Paul’s identity was found in Jesus Christ, expressed in his self-description as a “servant of Christ Jesus” (v.1). How can you develop more of a “servant of Christ Jesus” mindset and life? What would it mean for your time, your priorities, and use of your resources? How can your identity be more bound up in Jesus Christ?

2. Paul, the great Apostle and church planter, ‘prayed without ceasing’ for others. What can you learn from such an example regarding your prayer life, and how can you implement those lessons?

3. The doctrine of salvation by grace, through faith alone, reinforces that God calls some (v.6) due to no merit of their own. If you have placed your faith in Jesus Christ as the only basis of your salvation, how can you be part of bringing the Gospel message to those God has called, but as of yet have not heard the Gospel or responded to the message in ever greater ways? Explain your answer.

4. How can your longings for Jesus Christ, and the spread of his Gospel amongst all peoples be ever more real in your life? What would you have to change in your life to fulfill this longing for Jesus and his Gospel?

 5. How can you live out your obligation to share the Gospel with all people? What does, or what would that, look like in your life? How can you mutually encourage others with the Gospel?
- Write out any prayer requests that come to mind as you read this text and interact with these questions.

Summarize the passage:

What is the **theme** of the passage (i.e., a sentence that captures the timeless essence of the passage)?

What is the **aim** of the passage (i.e., how should you respond to this passage in thought and behavior)?

PRAYER REQUESTS

Study #2: Romans 1:16-17

Week 2 - **Week of September 28th**

Community Group calendar: **Study #2**

Text: **Romans 1:16-17**

Ways in which you will interact with the text:

- Personal study
- Listen to sermon preached on September 27th
- Group discussion during week of September 28th

Romans 1:16-17: *English Standard Version (ESV)*

The Righteous Shall Live by Faith

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 for faith, as it is written, “The righteous shall live by faith.”

First Reading – *What does this passage tell you about God?*

1. What does this text say God is the source of?
2. How extensive in terms of people groups, does Paul describe the movement and scope of the Gospel? What does “Jew” and “Greek” represent in this text (see the ESV study notes on 1:16)?
3. Compared to contemporary views of God, how do these two verses differ from what people say about God, and how we can be right before God?
4. Describe the Gospel using these verses, particularly God’s work.
5. The ESV Study Bible says regarding verse 17: “***From faith for faith*** probably means that right standing with God is by faith from start to finish”; and “***shall live by faith***. The life of faith is all-encompassing; it is by faith that one initially receives the gift of salvation (eternal life), but it is also by faith that one lives each day. Cf. Hab. 2:4; Gal. 3:11; Heb. 10:38.” What does this explanation tell us about God’s continuing role in our life?

- Write out any prayer requests that come to mind as you read this text and interact with these questions.

Second Reading – *What does this passage tell you about yourself?*

1. What in Paul’s background may have made him ashamed of proclaiming the Gospel message? What in your background, and in how people view you, may make you feel ashamed about proclaiming the Gospel?
2. Salvation is either obtained by us (works righteousness), or is obtained by what God has done for us (imputed righteousness, by grace through faith). Which option does this text support, and what does that say about our ability to save ourselves?
3. The ESV Study Bible in part describes the phrase “righteousness of God” as having more of the meaning of “righteousness **from** God”. While grammatically, this is a small change in a preposition (which the translation from Greek allows), why is it significant that the Gospel reveals the “righteousness **from** God”?

Put another way, if the Gospel only reveals God’s righteousness (that is, the righteousness that is only God’s), what hope would we have of attaining that perfect standard? How can we attain the “righteousness **from** God”? (see Romans 3:21-26)

4. Describe yourself in light of these verses.
5. Explain why you either agree or disagree with the ESV Study Bible’s explanation of verse 17 (see Question #5 in the First Reading section). Does your explanation increase or decrease your need for the Gospel continually?

- Write out any prayer requests that come to mind as you read this text and interact with these questions.

Third Reading – *What does this passage tell you about how you should live?*

1. Describe any times when you have been made to feel ashamed over your belief in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. How can you boldly and appropriately share the Gospel with others without being ashamed?

 2. What difference should these verses make in your life, compared with if you did not believe in the Gospel?

 3. If in the Gospel the righteousness **from** God is revealed, are there any limits to whom God's righteousness can be given? Explain your answer in terms of honestly reflecting on if there have been times in your life when you have considered certain people to be beyond the grace of God. How does this text help you see other people as God sees them?

 4. Describe how you should view other people in light of these verses.

 5. Given the ESV Study Bible's explanation of verse 17, how can you combine faith and works in living each day? How would you explain to someone who is unfamiliar with the Gospel the appropriate way to view 'faith' and 'works'?
- Write out any prayer requests that come to mind as you read this text and interact with these questions.

Summarize the passage:

What is the **theme** (a sentence that captures the timeless essence) of the passage?

What is the **aim** (how should this passage inform your thoughts and behavior) of the passage?

PRAYER REQUESTS

Study #3: Acts 5:27-42

Week 3 - **Week of October 5th**

Community Group calendar: **Study #3**

Text: **Acts 5:27-42**

Ways in which you will interact with the text:

- Personal study
- Listen to sermon preached on October 4th at the All-Church Worship Service
- Group discussion during week of October 5th

Acts 5:27-42: *English Standard Version (ESV)*

²⁷ And when they had brought them, they set them before the council. And the high priest questioned them, ²⁸ saying, “We strictly charged you not to teach in this name, yet here you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching, and you intend to bring this man’s blood upon us.” ²⁹ But Peter and the apostles answered, “We must obey God rather than men. ³⁰ The God of our fathers raised Jesus, whom you killed by hanging him on a tree. ³¹ God exalted him at his right hand as Leader and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. ³² And we are witnesses to these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey him.”

³³ When they heard this, they were enraged and wanted to kill them. ³⁴ But a Pharisee in the council named Gamaliel, a teacher of the law held in honor by all the people, stood up and gave orders to put the men outside for a little while. ³⁵ And he said to them, “Men of Israel, take care what you are about to do with these men. ³⁶ For before these days Theudas rose up, claiming to be somebody, and a number of men, about four hundred, joined him. He was killed, and all who followed him were dispersed and came to nothing. ³⁷ After him Judas the Galilean rose up in the days of the census and drew away some of the people after him. He too perished, and all who followed him were scattered. ³⁸ So in the present case I tell you, keep away from these men and let them alone, for if this plan or this undertaking is of man, it will fail; ³⁹ but if it is of God, you will not be able to overthrow them. You might even be found opposing God!” So they took his advice, ⁴⁰ and when they had called in the apostles, they beat them and charged them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. ⁴¹ Then they left the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the name. ⁴² And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ.

First Reading – *What does this passage tell you about God?*

1. What does this passage tell us of how God’s views persecution of his followers?

2. List out what this passage tells us about Jesus Christ.

3. List out what this passage tell us about the Holy Spirit.

4. What does this passage tell us about how God wants his Gospel to go forth in the world? Who does God use?

 5. It has been said “the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church.” Write down specific instances where you are aware of persecution of Christians for proclaiming Jesus to a level greater than persecution in the USA (a good resource for this question is an organization called *Voice of the Martyrs* at www.persecution.com)
- Write out any prayer requests that come to mind as you read this text and interact with these questions.

Second Reading – *What does this passage tell you about yourself?*

1. Have you ever endured persecution because of the Gospel? Describe any times this may have occurred in your life.

2. Though we live in a time and a place in which we have not faced the kind of persecution the first generation of Christians faced in the Book of Acts, do you believe that followers of Christ in Chicago today should face at least some level of opposition? Explain your answer.

3. The temptation to please people is ever present. Describe times in your life when you have been tempted, or succumbed, to obeying God rather than people.

4. Describe times in your life when you have ‘suffered dishonor for the name’ of Jesus. What were some of the circumstances that led you to still proclaim Jesus in the midst of opposition?

5. CS Lewis famously wrote that Jesus was either *a liar*, *Lord*, or *a lunatic*, due to the claims he made about himself. Compare the responses of the people in the original context to how people respond today. Describe how you have wrestled with fitting Jesus into one of these three categories.

- Write out any prayer requests that come to mind as you read this text and interact with these questions.

Third Reading – *What does this passage tell you about how you should live?*

1. Who does this passage say we should obey, and we should not obey? Give specific examples in your life of what it would look like to fear God more, and to fear man less.
 2. Describe some of the risks you would run, or the costs you would incur, to live as the Apostles did in vv.41-42? Describe why or why not, those risks and costs are worth it.
 3. Describe why followers of Christ should “suffer dishonor for the name” of Christ? Connect your answer to how Jesus suffered for you.
 4. Describe when it is appropriate to share the Gospel of Christ, and when it may not be appropriate.
 5. What gave Peter and the other Apostles such boldness as displayed in these verses? How can you cultivate more of the boldness they exhibited in these verses?
- Write out any prayer requests that come to mind as you read this text and interact with these questions.

Summarize the passage:

What is the **theme** (a sentence that captures the timeless essence) of the passage?

What is the **aim** (how should this passage inform your thoughts and behavior) of the passage?

PRAYER REQUESTS

Study #4: Romans 1:18-32

Week 4 - **Week of October 12th**

Community Group calendar: **Study #4**

Text: **Romans 1:18-32**

Ways in which you will interact with the text:

- Personal study
- Listen to sermon preached on October 11th
- Group discussion during week of October 12th

Romans 1:18-32: *English Standard Version (ESV)*

¹⁸ For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. ¹⁹ For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. ²⁰ For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. ²¹ For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. ²² Claiming to be wise, they became fools, ²³ and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things.

²⁴ Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves, ²⁵ because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen.

²⁶ For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature; ²⁷ and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in themselves the due penalty for their error.

²⁸ And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done. ²⁹ They were filled with all manner of unrighteousness, evil, covetousness, malice. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, maliciousness. They are gossips, ³⁰ slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, ³¹ foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless. ³² Though they know God's decree that those who practice such things deserve to die, they not only do them but give approval to those who practice them.

First Reading – *What does this passage tell you about God?*

1. What is the wrath of God revealed against?
2. Describe how God views sin from this text.
3. The text describes people as having abandoned worshiping the “immortal God” for what?

4. Describe how does God responds to human sinfulness in this passage.

 5. Given the reality of sin as described in this passage (and many other passages in the Bible) reflect on why Jesus Christ had to suffer for our sins on the Cross. Dwell on how God's justice in punishing sin, and God's mercy in allowing Jesus to bear the penalty we deserved, came together perfectly on the Cross.
- Write out any prayer requests that come to mind as you read this text and interact with these questions.

Second Reading – *What does this passage tell you about yourself?*

1. What does this text say about our ability to know things about God, outside of what he has communicated in his Word? Describe how you have known things about God outside of his Word.

2. What kind of 'excuses' have you given in not following God?

3. The text describes people as having abandoned worshipping the "immortal God" for what? Reflect on aspects of your life where you may be succumbing to this abandonment of God for lesser 'gods'.

4. Describe lies in our culture that are contrary to the "truth about God", and how you would gently and lovingly help someone see they had exchanged the "truth about God" for a lie.

5. Repeatedly in the Bible sin is described in ways in which people have violated God's intended design for us to enjoy life to the fullest extent. Reflect in your own life on how choosing sinful acts have led to self-destruction, guilt, and movement away from God.

- Write out any prayer requests that come to mind as you read this text and interact with these questions.

Third Reading – *What does this passage tell you about how you should live?*

1. Describe how you can have a healthy balance of both fearing the wrath of God, and being sure of his promises in Christ.
 2. Describe how you can dwell on God’s “eternal power and divine nature”. How should that affect the way you live?
 3. How can you be more ‘wise’ and less ‘foolish’ (v.22)?
 4. How can you proclaim the Gospel to people who are more fully caught up in the sin described in this passage? How would you explain to someone how the Gospel overcomes the sins described in this passage?
 5. As you consider verses 24-32, how can you overcome the areas in your life you struggle with? Based on what we have studied in Romans to this point, how can the Gospel help you overcome such struggles?
- Write out any prayer requests that come to mind as you read this text and interact with these questions.

Summarize the passage:

What is the **theme** (a sentence that captures the timeless essence) of the passage?

What is the **aim** (how should this passage inform your thoughts and behavior) of the passage?

PRAYER REQUESTS

Study #5: Romans 2:25-3:20

Week 5 - **Week of October 19th**

Community Group calendar: **Abbreviated Study #5, Dinner**

Text: **Romans 2:25-3:20**

Ways in which you will interact with the text:

- Personal study
- Listen to sermon preached on October 18th
- Abbreviated Group discussion during week of October 19th

Editors Note:

This section deserves a brief explanation prior to studying the text. Romans 2:17 begins what Doug Moo describes as Paul allowing the “Roman Christians ‘overhear’ his challenge to a hypothetical but representative Jew... Possession of the law and the covenant sign of circumcision were perhaps the two most distinguishing marks of being Jewish. Given to Israel by God himself, they signaled the fact that the Jews were a special people, elevated above all other people. In discussing their value in these verses, then, Paul is discussing the ultimate value of being Jewish” (Doug Moo, *Romans - The NIV Application Commentary*, 90-91. Zondervan). But in another sense, Paul also points out that ethnic religious identity is not sufficient (3:9) by itself. Presumably most readers of this study are more removed from the direct force of Paul’s intended audience for this section; however, this section is still highly relevant for us today. As you work through this study, you still need to understand who Paul’s original audience was for these verses (ethnically Jewish people in the first century), but also bridge the original context and audience to your context today. So for instance, when applying this text to yourself, most likely you can think of ‘baptism’ instead of ‘circumcision’; think of ‘reading the Bible’ instead of ‘the law’; think of being raised in a ‘Christian’ home or country, as opposed to being ‘Jewish’. One of the main points of this section is there is no advantage in being ethnically Jewish (at least Paul’s original first century audience), or today ethnically Christian. While this study will end at 3:20, and leave us somewhat hanging for resolution, you can sneak into 3:21-26 (which will be part of next weeks study) if you are struggling to make sense of the hope we have today.

Romans 2:25-3:20 English Standard Version (ESV)

²⁵ For circumcision indeed is of value if you obey the law, but if you break the law, your circumcision becomes uncircumcision. ²⁶ So, if a man who is uncircumcised keeps the precepts of the law, will not his uncircumcision be regarded as circumcision? ²⁷ Then he who is physically uncircumcised but keeps the law will condemn you who have the written code and circumcision but break the law. ²⁸ For no one is a Jew who is merely one outwardly, nor is circumcision outward and physical. ²⁹ But a Jew is one inwardly, and circumcision is a matter of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter. His praise is not from man but from God.

God’s Righteousness Upheld

3 Then what advantage has the Jew? Or what is the value of circumcision? ² Much in every way. To begin with, the Jews were entrusted with the oracles of God. ³ What if some were unfaithful? Does their faithlessness nullify the faithfulness of God? ⁴ By no means! Let God be true though every one were a liar, as it is written,

“That you may be justified in your words,
and prevail when you are judged.”

⁵ But if our unrighteousness serves to show the righteousness of God, what shall we say? That God is unrighteous to inflict wrath on us? (I speak in a human way.) ⁶ By no means! For then how could God judge the world? ⁷ But if through my lie God’s truth abounds to his glory, why am I still being condemned as a sinner? ⁸ And why not do evil that good may come?—as some people slanderously charge us with saying. Their condemnation is just.

No One Is Righteous

⁹ What then? Are we Jews any better off? No, not at all. For we have already charged that all, both Jews and Greeks, are under sin, ¹⁰ as it is written:

“None is righteous, no, not one;
¹¹ no one understands;
no one seeks for God.
¹² All have turned aside; together they have become worthless;
no one does good,
not even one.”
¹³ “Their throat is an open grave;
they use their tongues to deceive.”
“The venom of asps is under their lips.”
¹⁴ “Their mouth is full of curses and bitterness.”
¹⁵ “Their feet are swift to shed blood;
¹⁶ in their paths are ruin and misery,
¹⁷ and the way of peace they have not known.”
¹⁸ “There is no fear of God before their eyes.”

¹⁹ Now we know that whatever the law says it speaks to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be stopped, and the whole world may be held accountable to God. ²⁰ For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin.

First Reading – *What does this passage tell you about God?*

1. How does this text describe people as being able to receive praise from God (2:29)? What does this tell you about God?

2. Beginning with this text, describe how God entrusted his written revelation to one people group. From your knowledge of the rest of the Bible (and from history) describe how God subsequently expanded the reach of his written revelation, and how this new era is similar and different from the older era of God working primarily through one people group.

3. List the various ways this text describes God. List the comparisons of God, to something or someone else.
- Write out any prayer requests that come to mind as you read this text and interact with these questions.

Second Reading – *What does this passage tell you about yourself?*

1. What do 3:9-12 tell you about yourself?

 2. Negatively, Paul says (particularly in 2:25-29) to his original audience that some Jews have essentially missed the point in the advantages they have been bestowed by God. Due to your spiritual ethnicity of being ‘Christian’, reflect on how you may have missed advantages of what God has bestowed on you. Put another way, if you have grown up in a Christian environment, how may you have not taken advantage of what God has bestowed upon you?

 3. Positively, Paul says (particularly in 3:1, 19-20) to his original audience that Jews were given many advantages from God. Reflect on your upbringing, and how you may have been bestowed certain advantages from God – list those out.
- Write out any prayer requests that come to mind as you read this text and interact with these questions.

Third Reading – *What does this passage tell you about how you should live?*

1. How can you better live out the advantages of the religious ethnicity you are a part of?

2. Ultimately, what is more important in your life – religious ethnicity, or continually striving to learn more of, and live out the Gospel of Christ? Explain your answer.

3. Read Romans 3:21-26. How do these verses help you put your religious ethnicity in context? What is more important than your religious ethnicity? Explain your answer.

- Write out any prayer requests that come to mind as you read this text and interact with these questions.

Summarize the passage:

What is the **theme** (a sentence that captures the timeless essence) of the passage?

What is the **aim** (how should this passage inform your thoughts and behavior) of the passage?

PRAYER REQUESTS