

Take-Home 1: The Obedience of Faith

Romans 1:1-17 · Keep this sheet; bring it back each week

What We Found

Paul introduced himself to a church he had never met with the only credential he cares about: he belongs to Jesus Christ, servant, called, set apart (1:1). The gospel he carries is not a new idea but an old oath kept: God promised David an offspring with an everlasting throne (2 Sam 7:12-16), and the resurrection is that Son's public enthronement, "designated Son of God in power" (1:4).

Paul's purpose for everyone, everywhere, is "the obedience of faith" (1:5): faith that hands God the intellect and the will together, faith that obeys. And his thesis for the whole letter is that the gospel "is the power of God for salvation to every one who has faith" (1:16), a thesis he anchors in a prophet's crisis: Habakkuk, demanding answers about injustice, was told that "the righteous shall live by his faith" (Hab 2:4). What Paul means by "the righteousness of God" (1:17) is a question the letter will keep answering. Keep it open.

Voices of the Church

VOICE OF THE CHURCH: ST. AUGUSTINE OF HIPPO

Romans is the book God used to break Augustine's last resistance. In a garden in Milan, in torment over his inability to change, he heard a child chanting "take and read." He opened Paul's letters to Romans 13:13-14, "put on the Lord Jesus Christ," and wrote that he needed to read no further: "it was as though the light of confidence flooded into my heart and all the darkness of doubt was dispelled" (Confessions VIII.12). "The power of God for salvation" is not an abstraction; it is what happened to Augustine.

VOICE OF THE CHURCH: ST. JOHN CHRYSOSTOM

St. John Chrysostom, who preached a celebrated series of homilies on Romans, teaches in substance that the proof of the gospel's power is what it actually did: a message about a crucified man, carried by fishermen and tentmakers without armies or wealth, overturned the settled religion of the Mediterranean world. Paul's "I am not ashamed" is the boldness of a man who has watched weakness conquer strength.

VOICE OF THE CHURCH: ST. THOMAS AQUINAS

St. Thomas Aquinas, in the opening of his commentary on Romans, teaches in substance that among all Paul's letters this is the one that studies the grace of Christ in itself, at the root, where others study grace at work in the sacraments or the Church. When the question is the deepest one, how anyone is saved, the Church reaches for Romans first.

Live It This Week

- Read Romans 1:16-17 aloud once a day, and each time ask in prayer: Lord, where am I ashamed of you?

- Name one concrete area where faith is asking for your obedience this week, one specific act, and do it.
- Tell one person one piece of genuinely good news about God this week, in your own words.
- Fill in the My Guess box below, then fold this sheet closed or seal the box with tape. No one reads it, including you, until it opens in Session 8.

My Guess (sealed until Session 8)

In one sentence: what must a person do to be saved?

Write your honest answer today, before the study shapes it. Your first answer is part of the study.

Memory Verse

"For I am not ashamed of the gospel: it is the power of God for salvation to every one who has faith, to the Jew first and also to the Greek."

Romans 1:16 (RSV2CE)

Before Next Session

Read Romans 1:18-32 once, slowly. Catechism references for this session: CCC 143-144, 2087.

Take-Home 2: Without Excuse

Romans 1:18-32 · Keep this sheet; bring it back each week

What We Found

Creation is not silent. God's "eternal power and deity" are perceived in the things he has made, "so they are without excuse" (1:20), and Paul learned that argument from a Catholic page: Wisdom 13, where the Maker is known "from the greatness and beauty of created things" (Wis 13:5). The fall into idolatry began with a refusal of honor and thanks, with no honor and no thanks (1:21), and became an exchange: the glory of the immortal God traded for images (1:23), described in almost the very words of the Greek psalter's golden-calf verse, "they exchanged the glory of God for the image of an ox that eats grass" (Ps 106:20).

And the judgment? Three times, quietly: "God gave them up" (1:24, 26, 28), handed over to what was chosen. Being handed over to further sin is judgment on persistent refusal. The chapter's closing list runs all the way down to envy, gossip, boasting, and disobedience to parents (1:29-31), which reaches into every ordinary life and lets the whole argument close over everyone in chapter 2. Sit with that this week.

Voices of the Church

VOICE OF THE CHURCH: ST. AUGUSTINE OF HIPPO

"Question the beauty of the earth, question the beauty of the sea... question all these realities. All respond: 'See, we are beautiful.' Their beauty is a profession. These beauties are subject to change. Who made them if not the Beautiful One who is not subject to change?" (Sermon 241, quoted in CCC 32). The world testifies; the honest questioner hears it.

VOICE OF THE CHURCH: ST. ATHANASIUS

St. Athanasius, in his work *Against the Pagans*, teaches in substance that idolatry is a fall in stages: the soul made to contemplate God turned to itself and the things of sense, and having lost sight of God began to deify what it could see. Worship never disappears; it migrates: the study's shorthand for his teaching.

VOICE OF THE CHURCH: ST. BONAVENTURE

St. Bonaventure teaches, in substance, that creation is like a book in which its Maker can be read: every creature a word, the whole world a text leading the attentive reader upward to the One who wrote it. Romans 1 says we shut the book; St. Bonaventure teaches us to read it again.

Live It This Week

- Each day, thank God out loud for three specific created things, and let each one point past itself to its Maker (Wis 13:5).

- Identify your strongest modern idol: a created good treated as ultimate, whose claim outranks God's in practice (your time, money, or anxiety may point to it). Fast from it once this week and give the hour to prayer.
- Reread Romans 1:29-31 once, prayerfully, and let it read you. Bring what it finds to Confession if it has been a while.

Memory Verse

"Ever since the creation of the world his invisible nature, namely, his eternal power and deity, has been clearly perceived in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse."

Romans 1:20 (RSV2CE)

Before Next Session

Read Romans 2:1-3:8 once, slowly. Catechism references for this session: CCC 31-32, 2113. Keep your sealed My Guess sheet safe; it opens in Session 8.

Take-Home 3: God Shows No Partiality

Romans 2:1-3:8 · Keep this sheet; bring it back each week

What We Found

The trap sprang on us. "In passing judgment upon him you condemn yourself, because you, the judge, are doing the very same things" (2:1). God's kindness is not indulgence; it "is meant to lead you to repentance" (2:4), and his judgment is impartial and real: "he will render to every man according to his works" (2:6), a line Paul quotes from Israel's own prayer book, "thou dost requite a man according to his work" (Ps 62:12).

Every human being carries the law's core "written on their hearts," with conscience as its witness (2:15), and God will judge even "the secrets of men" (2:16). Bearing God's name raises the stakes of dishonoring it (2:24). And the heart-circumcision Paul preaches (2:29) turned out to be Moses' own promise: "the Lord your God will circumcise your heart... so that you will love the Lord your God with all your heart" (Deut 30:6): the inward thing God demands is the inward thing God will supply.

Voices of the Church

VOICE OF THE CHURCH: ST. MOSES THE BLACK

When the elders summoned Abba Moses to judge a sinning brother, he came carrying a leaking jug filled with water: my sins run out behind me where I cannot see them, and today I come to judge the errors of another. The brothers said nothing more, and forgave (Sayings of the Desert Fathers, Abba Moses 2). Romans 2:1, performed.

VOICE OF THE CHURCH: ST. JOHN HENRY NEWMAN

St. John Henry Newman called conscience "the aboriginal Vicar of Christ, a prophet in its informations, a monarch in its peremptoriness, a priest in its blessings and anathemas" (Letter to the Duke of Norfolk, section 5). God stationed a representative inside every human being; and, as the Church teaches of conscience (CCC 1783-1785), a vicar can be malformed or shouted down, which is why conscience must be formed, not merely consulted.

VOICE OF THE CHURCH: ST. JEROME

St. Jerome, in his commentary on Ezekiel, speaks of a spark of conscience not extinguished even in Cain: a remnant witness by which the soul knows it sins even while sinning. The witness on the heart can be suppressed, but it does not go out.

Live It This Week

- Once this week, when you catch yourself judging someone, stop and name silently one of your own sins that runs out behind you unseen, and pray for the person instead.

- Pray Deuteronomy 30:6 for yourself each day: Lord, circumcise my heart so that I love you with all of it.
- Do one hidden act of good this week that no one will ever know about, remembering that God judges even secrets (2:16), the good ones included.

Memory Verse

"Or do you presume upon the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience? Do you not know that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance?"

Romans 2:4 (RSV2CE)

Before Next Session

Read Romans 3:9-31 once, slowly; next session is the heart of the letter. Catechism references for this session: CCC 678, 682, 1776-1777, 1783-1785, 1954-1956. Keep your sealed My Guess sheet safe; it opens in Session 8.

Take-Home 4: Justified by His Grace

Romans 3:9-31 · Keep this sheet; bring it back each week

What We Found

The verdict came first: "all men, both Jews and Greeks, are under the power of sin" (3:9), sealed with the Psalter's own words, "none that does good, no, not one" (Ps 14:3), so that "every mouth may be stopped" (3:19). The law is a diagnosis, not a cure: "through the law comes knowledge of sin" (3:20). Then the two words that turn the letter: "But now" (3:21). The righteousness of God has stepped out of promise into history: all who believe are "justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus" (3:24).

And we found what "expiation" (3:25) means. Paul's word *hilasterion* is the Greek Old Testament's name for the mercy seat: the golden cover of the ark where God said "There I will meet with you" (Ex 25:22) and where atoning blood was sprinkled each year (Lev 16:14-15). Christ crucified is that meeting place, put forward publicly for all who believe. Boasting is excluded (3:27); the gift leaves nothing to brag about; and the faith that receives it, Scripture insists, is never alone in the person it saves (Jas 2:24, 26): it works, which is where this study began: the obedience of faith (1:5).

Voices of the Church

VOICE OF THE CHURCH: ST. CLEMENT OF ROME

Writing about AD 96, St. Clement says we "are not justified by ourselves, nor by our own wisdom or understanding or godliness, or works which we have wrought in holiness of heart, but by that faith through which Almighty God has justified all men from the beginning" (1 Clement 32), and immediately adds: shall we then grow slack in doing good? "May the Master never allow this to happen" (1 Clement 33). Justified by faith, therefore eager in works: Rome's teaching in the first century.

VOICE OF THE CHURCH: ST. AUGUSTINE OF HIPPO

God who "created us without us" did not will to "save us without us" (Sermon 169, cited at CCC 1847). Justification is entirely gift, and it is given to persons: it awakens the freedom it saves, producing consent, repentance, and love rather than replacing them.

VOICE OF THE CHURCH: ST. ANSELM OF CANTERBURY

St. Anselm, in *Why God Became Man*, teaches in substance that sin is a debt only humanity owes and only God can pay; so the one who saves must be both. His meditation shows why it was supremely fitting that the mercy seat be a person and the blood upon it his own: this study's biblical application of his argument.

Live It This Week

- Once this week, kneel before a crucifix for five silent minutes with Exodus 25:22 in mind: "There I will meet with you."
- Practice receiving: let someone do something for you without repaying or deflecting, and let it teach you about grace.
- Write out Romans 3:23-24 by hand, put it where you will see it daily, and say it as a prayer of thanks each morning.

Memory Verse

"Since all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, they are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus."

Romans 3:23-24 (RSV2CE)

Before Next Session

Read Romans 4 once, slowly; Abraham takes the stand. Catechism references for this session: CCC 1992, 1996, 1847. Keep your sealed My Guess sheet safe; it opens in Session 8.

Take-Home 5: Abraham Believed God

Romans 4 · Keep this sheet; bring it back each week

What We Found

We built Abraham's timeline with our own Bibles. The reckoning came at night under the stars: "he believed the Lord; and he reckoned it to him as righteousness" (Gen 15:6), when Abraham had been uncircumcised, centuries before the law, and the arithmetic proved it: eighty-six at Ishmael's birth (Gen 16:16), ninety-nine at circumcision (Gen 17:24). Circumcision was "a sign or seal of the righteousness which he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised" (4:11), which makes Abraham father of all who believe.

And the faith God reckoned was alive the whole way: it set out when called (Heb 11:8), "in hope... believed against hope" (4:18), "grew strong... as he gave glory to God" (4:20), and was "completed by works" at Moriah, where James says Genesis 15:6 "was fulfilled" (Jas 2:22-23). Paul dates the free beginning; James dates the living fulfillment; Scripture holds one faith, obedient from the first step. Written "for ours also": righteousness "will be reckoned to us who believe in him that raised from the dead Jesus our Lord, who was put to death for our trespasses and raised for our justification" (4:24-25).

Voices of the Church

VOICE OF THE CHURCH: ST. CLEMENT OF ROME

The first-century Roman church held up "Abraham, who was called 'the friend,'" as one "found faithful in that he rendered obedience unto the words of God," who "through obedience went forth from his land" (1 Clement 10); and asked why Abraham was blessed, Clement answers: was it not because he wrought righteousness and truth through faith? (1 Clement 31). Obedience, righteousness, faith, in one breath.

VOICE OF THE CHURCH: ST. IRENAEUS OF LYONS

St. Irenaeus teaches in substance, in *Against Heresies*, that Abraham was the Word's follower before the Word was made flesh: faith as a setting out after God at his command, which is why all who follow Christ in faith are Abraham's true children.

VOICE OF THE CHURCH: ST. THÉRÈSE OF LISIEUX

St. Thérèse teaches, in substance, that nothing so honors God as bold confidence in him (her emphasis, not a ranking): expecting everything from God as a child from its father. Her little way is Romans 4:20-21 lived: no distrust, full conviction, glory given to God by daring to expect much from him.

Live It This Week

- One clear night this week, go outside, look up, and pray Genesis 15 from the inside: thank God, by name, for a promise of his given in Scripture that you are still waiting to see fulfilled.

- Do one prudent act of obedience this week that leans on God's promises being true, and note what it does to your faith.
- Pray daily: Lord, I believe you are able to do what you have promised (4:21); help my unbelief.

Memory Verse

"No distrust made him waver concerning the promise of God, but he grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God, fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised."

Romans 4:20-21 (RSV2CE)

Before Next Session

Read Romans 5 once, slowly. Catechism references for this session: CCC 144-146, 2572. Keep your sealed My Guess sheet safe; it opens in Session 8.

Take-Home 6: Peace with God

Romans 5 · Keep this sheet; bring it back each week

What We Found

Justification opens onto peace: not a feeling but a fact, "peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (5:1), and a grace we now stand in (5:2). From there Paul forged the chain: suffering, endurance, character, hope, "and hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts" (5:5), a love proven in public: "while we were yet sinners Christ died for us" (5:8). If God reconciled us as enemies, "much more" will he save us as friends (5:10).

Then the widest lens: through one man sin entered, death came through sin, and death spread to all (5:12); Genesis had already tied death to the disobedience (Gen 2:17, 3:19), and the Church teaches the transmission of the sin itself (Rom 5:12; CCC 404): for Adam's descendants a condition contracted, not a crime committed. And through one man's obedience "many will be made righteous" (5:19), the very "many" Isaiah's Servant would justify by bearing their iniquities (Isa 53:11). Made righteous, really; and unequally: "the free gift is not like the trespass" (5:15); "where sin increased, grace abounded all the more" (5:20).

Voices of the Church

VOICE OF THE CHURCH: ST. IRENAEUS OF LYONS

Christ "did, through His transcendent love, become what we are, that He might bring us to be even what He is Himself" (Against Heresies, Book V, preface). St. Irenaeus called Paul's Adam-and-Christ logic recapitulation: the Son retraces the human story, in this study's summary of his teaching, saying yes at every station where Adam said no, obedience unwinding disobedience until the race has a new head.

VOICE OF THE CHURCH: ST. TERESA OF ÁVILA

By tradition found in her breviary after her death: "Let nothing disturb you, let nothing frighten you. All things are passing away; God never changes. Patience obtains all things. Whoever has God lacks nothing; God alone suffices." The hope of Romans 5:3-5, compressed into a prayer.

VOICE OF THE CHURCH: THE CHURCH'S EASTER PROCLAMATION

In the dark of the Easter Vigil the Church sings: "O happy fault that earned so great, so glorious a Redeemer!" (the Exsultet, Roman Missal). The liturgy dares it because "where sin increased, grace abounded all the more" (5:20): what God gave in answer to the fall exceeds what the fall destroyed.

Live It This Week

- Memorize 5:8 and pray it once each morning, putting your own name in it: while I was yet a sinner, Christ died for me.

- Write down one suffering, past or present, and ask God to show you what he has built or is building through it. If the answer is not visible yet, tell him that too.
- Once this week, offer a specific small hardship in union with Christ's obedience, out loud or in writing.

Memory Verse

"But God shows his love for us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us."

Romans 5:8 (RSV2CE)

Before Next Session

Read Romans 6 once, slowly. Catechism references for this session: CCC 402-404, 411, 1817. Keep your sealed My Guess sheet safe; it opens in Session 8.

Take-Home 7: Buried with Him in Baptism

Romans 6 · Keep this sheet; bring it back each week

What We Found

Continue in sin so grace may abound? "By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it?" (6:2). The death has a place and a means: "buried therefore with him by baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life" (6:4). Ezekiel saw the font coming: clean water, a new heart, God's Spirit put within, and the walking that follows (Ezek 36:25-27).

And a five-week promise closed tonight: the heart-circumcision God promised in Deuteronomy 30:6 and Paul preached in Romans 2:29 has an address: "circumcised with a circumcision made without hands... buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the working of God" (Col 2:11-12). The order of chapter 6 is the order of the gospel: what God has done, then what we must do: consider yourselves dead to sin (6:11), let sin not reign (6:12), yield to God (6:13). "For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (6:23).

Voices of the Church

VOICE OF THE CHURCH: ST. CYRIL OF JERUSALEM

Catechizing the newly baptized beside the empty tomb, St. Cyril told them: in the same moment you were dying and being born, and that saving water was at once your grave and your mother, in image the dying and in truth the salvation (Mystagogical Catecheses 2). Not a picture of a death: a death, with an exit.

VOICE OF THE CHURCH: ST. GREGORY NAZIANZEN

"Baptism is God's most beautiful and magnificent gift... We call it gift, grace, anointing, enlightenment, garment of immortality, bath of rebirth, seal, and most precious gift" (Oration 40, quoted at CCC 1216). Each name is a real effect. Find the date of yours and keep it like a birthday; by this chapter's logic, it is one.

VOICE OF THE CHURCH: ST. AMBROSE OF MILAN

St. Ambrose, instructing the newly baptized of Milan (the catecheses handed down as *On the Sacraments* and *On the Mysteries*), teaches in substance that what the eyes saw at the font was the least of what happened there: the visible washing was the instrument of an invisible work of the whole Trinity. The water has no power of itself; that was never where the power lay.

Live It This Week

- Find the date of your Baptism this week (ask family or call the parish of record). Write it down, and plan to mark it yearly.

- Each time you bless yourself with holy water this week, pause two seconds and say: I am baptized; I died and rose with Christ.
- Take one concrete step of yielding (6:13) in the place sin still reigns strongest: remove the occasion, tell a trusted friend, or bring it to Confession.
- BRING YOUR SEALED MY GUESS SHEET NEXT WEEK. It opens at the start of Session 8.

Memory Verse

"We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life."

Romans 6:4 (RSV2CE)

Before Next Session

Read Romans 7 once, slowly, and do not be alarmed by it. Catechism references for this session: CCC 1214, 1227, 1265.

Take-Home 8: The Law Is Holy

Romans 7 · Keep this sheet; bring it back each week

What We Found

The sealed guesses opened. Measured against seven weeks of text, the study's answer so far: salvation begins in grace, free and unearned (3:24; Gen 15:6); it is received through faith in Christ crucified and risen (3:25; 4:25); that faith is met and sealed by God's own act in Baptism, the sacrament of faith, where the heart is circumcised without hands (6:3-4; Col 2:11-12); and the faith that receives it is living: the obedience of faith (1:5), completed by works (Jas 2:22). We asked what we must do; half the answer was receive.

Then chapter 7 named what is still missing. The law is holy, just, and good (7:12): it exposes even desire ("You shall not covet," Ex 20:17) but cannot cure what it exposes. So the honest heart finds itself at war: "I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I do" (7:19), Eden's deception replayed in every one of us (7:11; Gen 3:13). The chapter ends in a cry and its answer: "Who will deliver me from this body of death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!" (7:24-25). Deliverance is a Person. What his Spirit does in us is next week.

My Answer, Revisited

In one sentence, dated today: what must a person do to be saved? Write your Session 8 answer below and keep it with your original to the end of the study.

Voices of the Church

VOICE OF THE CHURCH: ST. AUGUSTINE OF HIPPO

On the edge of conversion St. Augustine caught himself praying, "Give me chastity and continence, but not yet" (Confessions VIII.7): one man, two wills. And in his *Retractations* he tells us he first read the "I" of Romans 7 as man without grace, and later heard in it the spiritual man still at war. Both readings have continued within Catholic interpretation; the chapter is a mirror.

VOICE OF THE CHURCH: ST. JOHN CHRYSOSTOM

St. John Chrysostom, in his homilies on Romans, teaches in substance that the wretched "I" is humanity under the law without grace, dramatized in the present tense so that the rescue of chapter 8 lands with full force: a before picture, painted by a man who remembers.

VOICE OF THE CHURCH: ST. FRANCIS DE SALES

St. Francis de Sales, counseling gentleness toward ourselves in the *Introduction to the Devout Life* (III.9), teaches in substance that the soul that falls should be lifted quietly and set back on the road: bitterness at

our own weakness is pride in disguise. Lose without despair; rise without delay.

Live It This Week

- Each time the war of 7:19 flares this week, pray the chapter's own prayer, all of it: Who will deliver me? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord.
- If a recurring fall has been carrying shame, take it to Confession this week, and receive the sacrament as God acting.
- Remember: temptation and inclination are the war, not the defeat; they "cannot harm those who do not consent but manfully resist it by the grace of Jesus Christ" (CCC 1264).

Memory Verse

"Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!"

Romans 7:24-25 (RSV2CE)

Before Next Session

Read Romans 8 once, slowly; many call it the greatest chapter in the Bible. Catechism references for this session: CCC 1963, 1264, 405.

Take-Home 9: No Condemnation

Romans 8 · Keep this sheet; bring it back each week

What We Found

Chapter 7's cry got its answer: "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set me free from the law of sin and death" (8:2), and the law's just requirement is now "fulfilled in us" who walk by the Spirit (8:4): the Spirit empowers what the law commanded but could not itself supply. The Spirit makes us sons who cry "Abba! Father!" (8:15), echoing the sonship Israel first bore, "my first-born son" (Ex 4:22), now voiced from inside us, and heirs with Christ, "provided we suffer with him" (8:17).

Where words fail, "the Spirit himself intercedes for us with sighs too deep for words" (8:26); in everything God works for good with those who love him (8:28); and the chain holds: foreknew, predestined, called, justified, glorified (8:29-30), a plan that "includes in it each person's free response to his grace" (CCC 600). On Moriah God spared Abraham's son; at Calvary "he did not spare his own Son" (8:32; Gen 22:12). So the confidence is real and the charge is real, in one chapter: nothing in all creation can separate us from the love of God (8:38-39), and "if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body you will live" (8:13). Hope walks between despair and presumption, sure of God and watchful of self.

Voices of the Church

VOICE OF THE CHURCH: ST. BASIL THE GREAT

St. Basil, in his treatise On the Holy Spirit, teaches that through the Spirit comes our restoration to paradise, our ascent to the kingdom, our return to the adoption of sons, and our confidence to call God Father. Only God can give a share in God; what Romans 8 shows the Spirit doing from within is work no creature could do in that divine mode.

VOICE OF THE CHURCH: ST. ELIZABETH OF THE TRINITY

St. Elizabeth of the Trinity wrote in her letters that she had found her heaven on earth, since heaven is God, and God was dwelling in her soul. Romans 8:9-11 taken with complete seriousness: the interior life as hospitality to the Guest already in residence.

VOICE OF THE CHURCH: ST. JOHN CHRYSOSTOM

St. John Chrysostom, preaching on 8:38-39, teaches in substance that Paul's list is a lover's defiance: every terror named and dismissed, not because the terrors are small but because Christ's love holds. Its confidence is Paul-shaped: about God's grip, never our own; hope, not presumption.

Live It This Week

- Pray one Our Father each day slowly, stopping at the first word: let the Spirit's Abba be the whole prayer if it needs to be.

- Name the one deed of the body most needing death right now, and each day ask the Spirit explicitly for the power of 8:13, taking one concrete step alongside the asking.
- Write Romans 8:38-39 somewhere you will meet it on a hard day, and give a copy to one person who needs it this week.

Memory Verse

"For I am sure that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Romans 8:38-39 (RSV2CE)

Before Next Session

Read Romans 9 once, slowly, and bring your hardest questions; next session does not dodge them.

Catechism references for this session: CCC 1997, 2777, 600, 2091-2092.

Take-Home 10: Vessels of Mercy

Romans 9 · Keep this sheet; bring it back each week

What We Found

The hardest chapter opened with tears: Paul in "unceasing anguish," wishing himself "accursed and cut off from Christ" for his kinsmen (9:2-3). His argument: God's word has not failed (9:6); election was always God's free call, before birth, before works (9:11), "not upon man's will or exertion, but upon God's mercy" (9:16), which every Catholic confesses: grace is first, and no one's story with God begins with a resume.

And we traced the hard images to their sources. Exodus shows Pharaoh hardening his own heart twice (Ex 8:15, 32) before God's hardening confirms it (Ex 9:12): judgment ratifying a chosen refusal, as in 1:24. The potter's house God chose for his image (Jer 18:1-11) is Scripture's proof that the clay's turning changes the outcome: "if that nation... turns from its evil, I will repent of the evil" (Jer 18:8). And 9:22-23, read closely: wrath-vessels endured "with much patience" (the patience that leads to repentance, 2:4), mercy-vessels "prepared beforehand" by God himself. The Church's walls hold: Christ suffered for every human being without exception (CCC 605), and "God predestines no one to go to hell" (CCC 1037). The chapter ends at a stone in Zion: stumbling block or sanctuary (Isa 8:14), and "he who believes in him will not be put to shame" (9:33).

Voices of the Church

VOICE OF THE CHURCH: ST. JOHN CHRYSOSTOM

St. John Chrysostom teaches in substance that this chapter must be read from its tears: Paul weeps before he argues, and the argument defends God's wise mercy, not caprice. Pharaoh was not made wicked by God but, persisting, was confirmed in the path he chose.

VOICE OF THE CHURCH: ST. THOMAS AQUINAS

St. Thomas teaches in substance that God's love creates the goodness it chooses: whatever good is in Jacob, or in anyone, God's choice put there. Glory traces to God as its cause; sin traces wholly to the creature, and condemnation is God's just judgment upon it. Predestination is real, gratuitous, and never a predestination to evil.

VOICE OF THE CHURCH: ST. FRANCIS DE SALES

As a student, his early biographers recount, St. Francis de Sales spent weeks in the grip of the conviction that he was damned; the fear broke when he knelt, prayed the Memorare, and surrendered the question to God. He became a Doctor of the Church who taught God's universal saving will with special force: the practical answer to the abyss of predestination is not calculation but trust.

Live It This Week

- Choose one person far from God and pray for them by name every day this week, with something of Paul's 9:3 seriousness; consider fasting once for them.
- If predestination or scrupulosity ever troubles you, do what St. Francis did: pray the Memorare and hand the question to Our Lady.
- Reread Jeremiah 18:1-11 once, and answer the potter's question in writing: what is God currently reworking in you, and are you turning?

Memory Verse

"Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone that will make men stumble, a rock that will make them fall; and he who believes in him will not be put to shame."

Romans 9:33 (RSV2CE)

Before Next Session

Read Romans 10 and 11 once; the argument you started tonight finishes there, and it ends better than you think. Catechism references for this session: CCC 605, 1037, 600.

Take-Home 11: The Olive Tree

Romans 10-11 · Keep this sheet; bring it back each week

What We Found

Salvation is near: "if you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved" (10:9), for "every one who calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved" (10:13), a promise Paul quotes from Joel 2:32, where the name is God's own: the divinity of Jesus, resting quietly inside a quotation. And the promise travels by a chain: calling, believing, hearing, preaching, sending (10:14-15); "faith comes from what is heard" (10:17), and someone was sent so that you could hear.

God has not rejected his people (11:1): when Elijah counted one faithful Israelite, God counted seven thousand (1 Kgs 19:18), and the remnant is "chosen by grace" (11:5). The olive tree holds the whole gospel: natural branches broken "because of their unbelief," wild shoots grafted in who "stand fast only through faith": "do not become proud, but stand in awe... God's kindness to you, provided you continue in his kindness; otherwise you too will be cut off" (11:20-22), and the broken "will be grafted in" if they do not persist in unbelief (11:23). Confidence and vigilance, one tree. "The gifts and the call of God are irrevocable" (11:29), and the argument ends in the letter's largest sentence: "that he may have mercy upon all" (11:32).

Voices of the Church

VOICE OF THE CHURCH: ST. JOHN PAUL II

At the Great Synagogue of Rome in 1986, St. John Paul II told the Jewish community: "You are our dearly beloved brothers and, in a certain way, it could be said that you are our elder brothers." Romans 11 spoken aloud: the root carries the branches (11:18), and the gifts and call of God are irrevocable (11:29).

VOICE OF THE CHURCH: ST. BERNARD OF CLAIRVAUX

When twelfth-century crusade fervor turned murderous toward Jewish communities, St. Bernard wrote and rode against it, insisting in his letters that the Jews are not to be persecuted or killed: their preservation belongs to God's plan. He stood in the road where Romans 11 points.

VOICE OF THE CHURCH: ST. FRANCIS XAVIER

From India in 1544, in the letter the Church reads on his feast, St. Francis Xavier wrote that multitudes fail to become Christians only because there is no one to make them Christians, and confessed the urge to go through Europe's universities crying out like a madman for laborers. Romans 10:14-15, on fire: how are they to hear without a preacher?

Live It This Week

- Thank, in person or in writing, one living link in your chain of hearing: the person who handed the faith to you.

- Pray daily for the Jewish people, the natural branches, with Paul's own words: that they may be saved (10:1).
- Take one deliberate step of continuing in his kindness (11:22) this week: return to Confession, restart a dropped prayer habit, or reconcile with someone.

Memory Verse

"Because, if you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved."

Romans 10:9 (RSV2CE)

Before Next Session

Read Romans 12 once, slowly; the letter turns from what God has done to how we live. Catechism references for this session: CCC 839, 674, 162.

Take-Home 12: Living Sacrifice

Romans 12 · Keep this sheet; bring it back each week

What We Found

The letter turned on one word: "I appeal to you therefore... by the mercies of God" (12:1). Eleven chapters of mercy become five chapters of life: nothing ahead earns anything behind. The command is worship extended into the whole of embodied life: "present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship" (12:1), the sacrifice Israel's prophets always said God wanted: "to obey is better than sacrifice" (1 Sam 15:22); the obedient self-offering, never ritual detached from obedience; and ours is united to the one sacrifice of Christ, priest and victim. And the offerers have a name: "a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices" (1 Pet 2:5), the priesthood of all the baptized.

The mold or the metamorphosis: "Do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewal of your mind" (12:2), until discernment becomes habitual through grace and practice. The offering is corporate: one body, many members, differing gifts meant for use (12:4-8), mercy done "with cheerfulness." And love made genuine fights the only way that wins: "Bless those who persecute you" (12:14); "Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good" (12:21).

Voices of the Church

VOICE OF THE CHURCH: ST. AUGUSTINE OF HIPPO

"This is the sacrifice of Christians: we, being many, are one body in Christ. And this also is the sacrifice which the Church continually celebrates in the sacrament of the altar... in which she teaches that she herself is offered in the offering she makes to God" (City of God, Book X, chapter 6). At every Mass, the Church does Romans 12:1 corporately.

VOICE OF THE CHURCH: ST. TERESA OF CALCUTTA

St. Teresa of Calcutta spoke, in her letters and addresses, of serving Christ in his "distressing disguise," the poorest of the poor; this study's application: the Lord received on the altar in the morning is touched in broken bodies by afternoon. Her life was 12:1 unromanticized: a body presented daily in small mercies, with cheerfulness.

VOICE OF THE CHURCH: ST. IGNATIUS OF LOYOLA

St. Ignatius, in the Spiritual Exercises, teaches in substance that discerning God's will requires the renovation of 12:2: a mind freed from disordered attachments, able to recognize God's will when it appears. His Suscipe, handing over liberty, memory, understanding, and will, is the living sacrifice in the first person.

Live It This Week

- Each morning, pray a one-sentence 12:1: Lord, here is my body and this day; a living sacrifice. Renew it when you catch yourself crawling off the altar.
- At Mass this Sunday, at the offertory, deliberately place your week, its work, suffering, and people, on the altar with the bread and wine.
- Use the gift the group named in you once this week for someone in the body; and do one act of mercy with cheerfulness, the cheerfulness on purpose.

Memory Verse

"Do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may prove what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect."

Romans 12:2 (RSV2CE)

Before Next Session

Read Romans 13 once, slowly. Catechism references for this session: CCC 2031, 1368, 1268.

Take-Home 13: Put On the Lord Jesus Christ

Romans 13 · Keep this sheet; bring it back each week

What We Found

Written under Nero: authority is "from God," and the ruler is "God's servant for your good" (13:1, 4), derived, diaconal, directed, and audited: "your dominion was given you from the Lord... who will search out your works" (Wis 6:3). So the duty is real (taxes, respect, honor, 13:7) and the limit is real: the apostles set it in a courtroom, "We must obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29), and paid for it. Refusal of the evil command, willingness to bear the cost, with lawful challenge open and CCC 2243's strict conditions acknowledged: St. Thomas More's seven words hold both.

One debt never retires: "Owe no one anything, except to love one another" (13:8). "Love your neighbor as yourself" turned out to be Moses (Lev 19:18), and love "is the fulfilling of the law" (13:10): the commandments are love's job description, not its rival. And the hour is late in the best way: "salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed" (13:11); cast off darkness, wear the armor of light, and the chapter ends in the passage (13:13-14) that ended St. Augustine's long struggle, met on our study's first night and arriving now in course: "put on the Lord Jesus Christ" (13:14).

Voices of the Church

VOICE OF THE CHURCH: ST. JUSTIN MARTYR

Writing to the emperor around AD 155, St. Justin explained: we more readily than all men pay the taxes to those you appoint, as Jesus taught; we render worship to God alone, but in all other things we gladly serve you (First Apology 17). Taxes gladly, worship never, written openly to the emperor by a man Rome would behead.

VOICE OF THE CHURCH: ST. THOMAS MORE

On the scaffold in 1535, St. Thomas More declared, as the earliest report records it, that he died "the King's good servant, and God's first." Romans 13 in seven words: real loyalty, real limit; no rebellion, no surrender of conscience; the cost accepted, the king blessed from the block.

VOICE OF THE CHURCH: ST. JOHN OF THE CROSS

"At the evening of life, we shall be judged on our love" (St. John of the Cross, quoted at CCC 1022). Since love is the fulfilling of the law (13:10), the final audit and the law's whole demand are one question, and it is not the easy exam; it is the total one.

Live It This Week

- Pay one debt of honor deliberately this week: genuine respect to someone in rightful authority over you, in word or writing (13:7; the principle extends past civil rulers by analogy).

- Identify one provision for the flesh and remove it: the app, the stash, the bookmark, the route past the occasion (13:14).
- Each night, pray one sentence before sleep: Lord, the night is far gone; clothe me in Christ for the day at hand.

Memory Verse

"But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires."

Romans 13:14 (RSV2CE)

Before Next Session

Read Romans 14:1-15:13 once, slowly. Catechism references for this session: CCC 1899-1900, 2242, 1022.

Take-Home 14: Welcome One Another

Romans 14:1-15:13 · Keep this sheet; bring it back next week

What We Found

Rome's churches were quarreling over food and days, the weak and the strong at one table. Paul sides doctrinally with the free, "nothing is unclean in itself" (14:14), on the Lord's own authority ("Thus he declared all foods clean," Mk 7:19), and then binds them hardest: do not despise, do not let your liberty "cause the ruin of one for whom Christ died" (14:15). Each side has its sin (14:3): the strong despise, the weak pass judgment; and each of us "shall give account of himself to God" (14:12), of himself.

The proportions: "the kingdom of God is not food and drink but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit" (14:17), which relativizes menus and never morals. A certain judgment of conscience binds, even when erroneous: "whatever does not proceed from faith is sin" (14:23; CCC 1790, with 1783-1785 on formation), so consciences are formed over time, never violated tonight. The model is Calvary: "Christ did not please himself" (15:3; Ps 69:9). And the command that opened the chapter closes it with its warrant: "Welcome one another, therefore, as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God" (15:7). In essentials, unity; in doubtful matters, liberty; in all things, charity.

Voices of the Church

VOICE OF THE CHURCH: ST. JOHN XXIII

In his first encyclical, *Ad Petri Cathedram*, St. John XXIII commended the old axiom, of uncertain authorship and beloved anyway: in essentials, unity; in doubtful matters, liberty; in all things, charity. a fitting charter for Romans 14's whole terrain.

VOICE OF THE CHURCH: ST. IGNATIUS OF ANTIOCH

On the road to martyrdom around AD 107, St. Ignatius urged the churches: be careful to observe one Eucharist; one flesh of our Lord, one cup, one altar, one bishop (Letter to the Philadelphians 4). He guards the one Eucharist; and a community that will not share its daily tables is rehearsing division at the altar.

VOICE OF THE CHURCH: ST. PHILIP NERI

St. Philip Neri, apostle of Rome, teaches in substance, by the life his early biographers recount, that souls are won with gentleness and joy or usually not at all: he corrected with humor and refused to crush tender consciences. The kingdom is righteousness, peace, and joy (14:17); most disputes need the temperature lowered and the joy raised.

Live It This Week

- Identify one in-house preference you have treated as an essential, and pray daily for the Catholics on the other side of it.

- Do one concrete act of welcome toward a Christian whose style or scruples grate on you: a meal, a message, a seat saved.
- Pray 15:13 over your parish each day: God of hope, fill them with all joy and peace in believing.
- FIND BOTH OF YOUR WRITTEN ANSWERS, the Session 1 sealed guess and the Session 8 revision, AND BRING THEM NEXT WEEK. The final session needs them.

Memory Verse

"Welcome one another, therefore, as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God."

Romans 15:7 (RSV2CE)

Before Next Session

Read Romans 15:14-16:27 once, all the way through the names; do not skip the names. Catechism references for this session: CCC 1790, 1783-1785, 2284-2285, 814, 817.

Take-Home 15: To the Only Wise God

Romans 15:14-16:27 · The final sheet; keep all fifteen

What We Found

Paul's ministry is "the priestly service of the gospel" (15:16), aimed by principle at unreached ground, "not where Christ has already been named" (15:20), and by plan at Spain (15:24, 28), by way of Jerusalem with the collection: Gentile churches repaying spiritual blessings with material ones (15:27), communion made visible. His travel prayers, read with providence's hindsight, were answered sideways and greater: he reached Rome in chains, and Rome kept him forever. The letter very likely traveled in the care of Phoebe, our sister and deaconess of Cenchreae, helper of many (16:1-2), to a church of more than two dozen named believers, house churches, neck-riskers, and hard workers: doctrine landing in named people.

The Bible's first promise of redemption stands at the letter's door: "the God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet" (16:20), Eden's protoevangelium (Gen 3:15) with the Body sharing the Head's victory. And the last discovery was the letter's frame: the mystery is made known to all nations "to bring about the obedience of faith" (16:26), the very phrase of the very first sentence (1:5). The letter's last thought is its first, and the study's question, what must a person do to be saved, became its answer: receive everything, grace, Christ, Baptism, the Spirit, by a living faith that hands God everything, works through love, and perseveres, all supplied, sustained, and crowned by God himself. "To the only wise God be glory for evermore through Jesus Christ! Amen" (16:27).

My Final Answer

In one sentence, dated today: what must a person do to be saved? Write your third and final answer below, and keep it with your Session 1 and Session 8 answers.

Voices of the Church

VOICE OF THE CHURCH: ST. JOHN CHRYSOSTOM

Preaching through Romans 16, St. John Chrysostom lingered over the names as over relics, marveling at 16:7: "Oh how great is the devotion of this woman, that she should be even counted worthy of the appellation of apostle!" (Homilies on Romans 31). And in his final homily he confessed he loved Rome above all because Paul wrote to her in life and rests in her in death. The greatest preacher of the ancient Church ends the letter with an emotionally charged meditation on Paul and Rome's people.

VOICE OF THE CHURCH: ST. LAWRENCE

The tradition recounted by St. Ambrose (On the Duties of the Clergy, Book II): ordered in 258 to surrender the Church's treasures, the deacon St. Lawrence gathered Rome's poor and presented them: these are the treasures of the Church. Paul's collection theology (15:26-27) in a single scene: the wealth the churches carry is Christ in his members.

VOICE OF THE CHURCH: ST. IRENAEUS OF LYONS

"The knot of Eve's disobedience was untied by Mary's obedience" (Against Heresies, Book III, quoted at CCC 494). And the Catechism finishes our title thread in one sentence: "The Virgin Mary most perfectly embodies the obedience of faith" (CCC 148). The phrase that frames the letter has a face, a name, and a yes.

Live It From Here

- Keep all three answers together, dated, and reread them yearly.
- Take one first concrete step toward your Spain within seven days, and tell one person from this group what it was.
- Read Romans again, alone, one chapter a day for sixteen days, and watch how much of it now reads you.
- Entrust it all to the one who most perfectly embodies the obedience of faith: one Memorare or one decade, for this group.

Memory Verse

"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."

Romans 1:5 (RSV2CE)

The Benediction

"May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope."

Romans 15:13 (RSV2CE)