**TIME ALONE WITH GOD**

Ingredients:

* Half an hour, every day.
* Quiet, so you focus on yourself and on God;
* Prayer, worship, thanksgiving, as your response to God
* Word, so you can ponder His truth
* Life, people and events, so you are aware of Him in these situations

Method:

* Time – a fixed time when you are unlikely to be interrupted is best but more important is to actually start having such a time with God.
* Quiet – A simple method is to be quiet until you are aware you are in God’s presence before you start to respond to Him.
* Word – Read and be familiar with what is said. Meditate on the Word: “What does it say?” “What does it mean?” “How should I respond?” You may use the questions to help you or set them aside.
* Life – Use the time to also be aware of the things that are happening, inside you and around you. Bring these before God and speak to Him.

# Monday and Tuesday

[**ROMANS 2:1-29**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Romans%202&version=NIV)

Remember this is your time alone with God. It is a time to tell God what is on your mind (thinking back over the past day), listen to him speak to you (reading and meditating on a bible passage), and finally, to respond to him (prayer). The questions are there to help you do this. Ignore them if they do not help. If your time is limited, I suggest that you don’t do everything in one go but spread them over the two days.

1. Take time to be quiet so you can focus on your time alone with God. Recall and briefly write down any significant things that happened or occupied you the past day. Share with God what you thought or felt. Pray also for those he has laid on your heart.
2. Read [ROMANS 2:1-29](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Romans%202&version=NIV). Write down what you think the passage is about and what it says to you. Feel free to use the questions in “Further Thoughts” to help you think over the text.
3. What is God saying to you? Write down a prayer in response.

**Further Thoughts**

In Romans 1, Paul speaks of Jews and Gentiles and makes clear that the Gospel is for both groups and that its basis is not on heritage and ancestry but on righteousness received in faith. Some of the theological arguments that Paul made are not easy to dissect and some of the questions I asked may not be easy to answer. If you have problems in understanding, the reflection I wrote at the back may help but it may also be useful to ask these questions of someone whom you know would be able to answer you.

1. *“You, therefore, have no excuse, you who pass judgment on someone else, for at whatever point you judge another, you are condemning yourself, because you who pass judgment do the same things.”* In the previous verses in Chapter 1, Paul described the fall of man into depravity because they rejected God and embraced their own manufactured gods. The “you” here likely is directed to the Jews who think that Paul was accurately describing the immoral Gentiles. Why does Paul say that the Jews have no excuse?
2. *“So when you, a mere human being, pass judgment on them and yet do the same things, do you think you will escape God’s judgment? Or do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, forbearance and patience, not realizing that God’s kindness is intended to lead you to repentance?”* Paul points out that the only difference for the Jews is that they enjoy God’s kindness, forbearance and patience, NOT a different standard of judgement (see vv5-16). This is also true of Christians. What does it mean that God judges us the same as everyone else but for us he chooses to extend kindness, forbearance and patience because of Christ? How should this truth impact the way we look at ourselves and others around us?
3. *“Now you, if you call yourself a Jew; if you rely on the law and boast in God; if you know his will and approve of what is superior because you are instructed by the law; if you are convinced that you are a guide for the blind, a light for those who are in the dark, an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of little children, because you have in the law the embodiment of knowledge and truth— you, then, who teach others, do you not teach yourself?”* Once again, this can be easily applied to Christians, in that we are in a better position to obey God and yet we also stumble and in doing so bring shame to God’s name. Would you say that we are liable to greater judgement, as we know God better and we even have the Holy Spirit in us? Once again, how should this truth impact the way we look at ourselves and others around us?
4. *“A person is not a Jew who is one only outwardly, nor is circumcision merely outward and physical. No, a person is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is circumcision of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the written code. Such a person’s praise is not from other people, but from God.”* Paul makes it clear that it is righteousness of the heart that God cares about, not outward symbols, activities and rituals such as attendance in church, baptism, communion, bible study, etc. All these have their value but only insofar as they broaden and deepen the righteousness of the heart (see vv25-27). What do you think?

# Wednesday and Thursday

[**ROMANS 3:1-20**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Romans%203&version=NIV)

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1. Take time to be quiet so you can focus on your time alone with God. Recall and briefly write down any significant things that happened or occupied you the past day. Share with God what you thought or felt. Pray also for those he has laid on your heart.
2. Read [ROMANS 3:1-20](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Romans%203&version=NIV). Write down what you think the passage is about and what it says to you. Feel free to use the questions in “Further Thoughts” to help you think over the text.
3. What is God saying to you? Write down a prayer in response.

**Further Thoughts**

1. *“What advantage, then, is there in being a Jew, or what value is there in circumcision? Much in every way!”* If it is “righteousness of the heart that God cares about and not outward symbols”, what value is there in being a Jew?
2. *“What if some were unfaithful? Will their unfaithfulness nullify God’s faithfulness? Not at all! Let God be true, and every human being a liar.”* If the Jew is unfaithful in his heart would God then abandon them? And if not then surely Jews don’t have to care about being righteous at all. How did Paul respond to these arguments?
3. *“What shall we conclude then? Do we have any advantage? Not at all! For we have already made the charge that Jews and Gentiles alike are all under the power of sin.”* Is there any advantage to being a Jew? Ultimately, in terms of sin and its penalty, none. God does not discriminate. What about Christians? In all of these perspectives how do Christians stand before God? Is there any advantage to being a Christian? And is there any advantage to striving to be a good Christian?

# Friday and Saturday

[**ROMANS 3:21-31**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Romans%203&version=NIV)

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1. Take time to be quiet so you can focus on your time alone with God. Recall and briefly write down any significant things that happened or occupied you the past day. Share with God what you thought or felt. Pray also for those he has laid on your heart.
2. Read [ROMANS 3:21-31](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Romans%203&version=NIV). Write down what you think the passage is about and what it says to you. Feel free to use the questions in “Further Thoughts” to help you think over the text.
3. What is God saying to you? Write down a prayer in response.

**Further Thoughts**

1. *“But now apart from the law the righteousness of God has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. This righteousness is given through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference between Jew and Gentile, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.”* Paul makes it clear that God’s plan to gift righteousness through Christ is both biblical and yet not related to the Law, meaning that it is not related to any requirement to conform to a given set of rules and it is freely available to Jew and Gentile. How would you explain “justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Jesus Christ” and the theological truth discussed earlier that the sinfulness of man will be met by the wrath of God? How does this resolve the problem that God will exercise his judgement and wrath on all who sin, regardless of Jew or Gentile (see Romans 2:8-11)? Is God now compromising on his own standard of righteousness?
2. *“God presented Christ as a sacrifice of atonement, through the shedding of his blood—to be received by faith. He did this to demonstrate his righteousness, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished—he did it to demonstrate his righteousness at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus.”* How is this a demonstration of God’s righteousness?
3. *“Do we, then, nullify the law by this faith? Not at all! Rather, we uphold the law.”* How does God’s plan of salvation uphold the law?
4. *“Where, then, is boasting? It is excluded. Because of what law? The law that requires works? No, because of the law that requires faith. For we maintain that a person is justified by faith apart from the works of the law.”* Why is it so important to discount “works” in God’s plan of salvation? Why is this “for we maintain that a person is justified by faith apart from the works of the law” better?

# Sunday

##### THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD

*“All who sin apart from the law will also perish apart from the law, and all who sin under the law will be judged by the law. For it is not those who hear the law who are righteous in God’s sight, but it is those who obey the law who will be declared righteous.”*

It is interesting that in the complex arguments that Paul raises in these two chapters, it is the righteousness of God that he seeks to establish and defend.

God is righteous and he does not discriminate. You may think you are better than another person and so you think God condemns him but not you. But you are also sinful, just in different ways, and so you too will face God’s judgement.

God is righteous and he does not discriminate. You may think that you have a special place in his heart, or that you are serving him in some ways, or you have good intentions, or you are trying hard but God’s judgement boils down to a simple truth: God “will repay each person according to what they have done.”

“To those who by persistence in doing good seek glory, honor and immortality, he will give eternal life. But for those who are self-seeking and who reject the truth and follow evil, there will be wrath and anger. There will be trouble and distress for every human being who does evil: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile; but glory, honor and peace for everyone who does good: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile. None of us will be judged to deserve eternal life.”

God is righteous and he does not discriminate. You are in the right camp because you are a Jew. You are circumcised. You bear his name. All these outward things don’t mean anything if you are sinful in heart. Similarly for those of us who think God is happy to see us wearing the right clothes, speaking the right language, and socialising with the right people. He looks at our life, our actions, our motivations, our obedience.

And so “All who sin apart from the law will also perish apart from the law, and all who sin under the law will be judged by the law.”

But if God is righteous and does not discriminate, how can man ever survive? In our minds, either God wipes all of us out, or he decides to be less righteous and discriminate for those whom he chooses.

Instead, and surely only God could have come up with this solution, God chose to take upon himself the consequence of our judgement, and suffer the wrath that is our due. Essentially what would have wiped us all out he directed towards his Son. The benefit of this sacrifice is then offered to all who would choose to follow Christ. Paul describes this as “the righteousness of God” for that is truly what it is.

*“God presented Christ as a sacrifice of atonement, through the shedding of his blood—to be received by faith. He did this to demonstrate his righteousness, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished—he did it to demonstrate his righteousness at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus.”*

1. Review the answers/thoughts you wrote down in the past week. Read the short sharing above. Does it add anything to your own thoughts?
2. What is God saying to you? Write down a prayer in response.