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# THE HOLY BIBLE **NKJV** REFERENCE GUIDE

**NEW TESTAMENT**

**BOOK 45**

**ROMANS**



**Saint Paul Writing His Epistles**

## SUMMARY

Paul promised the church members at Corinth that he would visit them again as soon as he had the opportunity, and it was not long after sending his last letter to them that the opportunity came and he was able to spend several months with them.

During this time, probably the latter part of the year 57 A.D., he wrote a letter to the church at Rome, the most ambitious of all his letters and the only one in which he presents a systematic account of his understanding of the gospel.

Because he had not visited the church at Rome and was unfamiliar with their local problems, the letter is not written in the form that he used in his earlier correspondence with the other churches.

Instead, it is a carefully prepared statement of what he regarded as the essential elements of the Christian religion. Paul wanted the gospel proclaimed throughout the then-known world, and it seemed most appropriate that he should not only visit the church at Rome but gain its full support for the missionary program that he envisioned.

We do not know how the church at Rome was started, but it existed during Paul's life, and there were good reasons for believing that it would soon become one of the leading Christian churches of the world.

Paul wanted the Roman church to have a firsthand knowledge of the gospel that he preached, but unable personally to visit its members in the immediate future, he set forth his convictions in a letter addressed to the Romans.

Parts of the sixteen chapters in the Epistle to the Romans are so detailed that a full explanation of Paul's meaning would require a large volume of Analysis. The main substance of the letter can be summarized briefly by stating the answers given to a number of pertinent questions:

What is the gospel? Who needs it? Why is it needed? What is the nature of salvation? How is it achieved? What difference does salvation make in an individual's life? What difference does it make with reference to society as a whole? Many other points are discussed in Romans, but these questions are sufficient to indicate the letter's general character.

The gospel, we are told, is the power of God unto salvation, for in it the righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith. Man is a sinful creature who follows his own heart's desires and is powerless to change these desires by himself alone.

Only through the power of God, working in cooperation with the human spirit, can these desires be changed and brought into harmony with the divine will. Jesus' life illustrates the way in which the power of God can work in and through a human life, thus enabling a person to overcome evil temptations, which are always present in the world.

The same power that enabled Jesus to overcome temptations is also available to all those who have faith in him.

## SUMMARY Continued

The faith by which God's righteousness is revealed involves beliefs but also includes something that grips the entire personality and finds expression not only in what one thinks but in feelings, attitudes, and actions.

The salvation of which Paul writes is salvation from the power of evil that entices man to sin against himself and God. Salvation means a transformation of one's nature so that what one wants to do will coincide with what ought to be done.

This salvation is needed by everyone, for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. Salvation is just as necessary for the Jew as it is for the Gentile, and necessary even for those people who feel that they do not need it, for they may be the ones who need it most.

How well people think of themselves is determined by the standard that they use in judging themselves. Anyone who measures himself by the righteousness of God will know that he falls short and is in need of improvement.

The salvation of which Paul speaks is not something that will automatically make a person's character equal to the righteousness of God, but it will move the person in that direction and keep bringing him ever nearer to that goal.

But, again, it is important to know that this salvation is available only to those who recognize their need for it and who are receptive to the divine power that is constantly being offered to them.

In his discussion of the way in which salvation is to be achieved, Paul presents the same arguments that he used in his Epistle to the Galatians. He emphasizes that salvation is not brought about by efforts on the part of the individual to observe the requirements of the Law.

It makes no difference so far as this point is concerned whether the laws are human or divine in their origin. Laws of any kind are powerless to make people good, evidence of which can be seen in the state of society as it existed in Rome during Paul's life.

The Romans boasted of the superior quality of their system of laws. Although their laws were among the best that the nations of the world had known up to that time, Roman society had become notoriously corrupt. The state of this corruption is indicated in the closing verses of the first chapter of Paul's Epistle to the Romans.

Concerning corruption, Paul argues that Jews are not better off than the Romans. The Romans have had their human laws, and Jews have had divine laws, but in neither case have the laws changed the desires of humans or transformed their natures from that which is evil into that which is good.

Only by faith can a transformation of this kind occur. In this connection, Paul writes about justification by faith. Having pointed out that no one will be justified in [God's] sight by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of sin.

He goes on to say that everyone is justified freely by [God's] grace through the redemption that came by Jesus Christ.

## SUMMARY Continued

And again, he says, For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from observing the law. People are in need of justification because they are estranged from God. They are not living in harmony with their own best interests, which is equivalent to saying that they are not in harmony with the divine will.

Justification is that which overcomes the estrangement and puts people on the right track, a process that happens when the Spirit of God takes possession of one's heart and life. A person's desires are changed, and a new creature emerges, which is what Paul means by salvation.

Having developed his argument concerning the means of salvation, Paul supports his position by referring to Abraham, as he did in his letter to the Galatians. Abraham's faith was credited to him as righteousness; by faith, those who are his spiritual descendants can be saved.

Jesus is the supreme example of faith in that he was a human being in whom the Spirit of God was manifested more completely than in any other person. In this respect, Paul thinks of Jesus as the ideal man in the same way that Adam was regarded as the symbol of the human race.

Just as in Adam we all died, so in Christ are we all made alive. Adam's disobedience illustrates what happens in the lives of all human beings, and Jesus' triumph over the forces of evil illustrates what can happen when the Spirit takes possession of a person's entire nature.

This point, Paul insists, is the true meaning of Christian baptism and symbolizes the death and burial of one's sinful nature and a resurrection into a new quality of living.

Paul's own experience with the Law when he was studying to become a rabbi is described at some length to demonstrate again the impotence of the Law in contrast with the power of faith to transform one's nature.

Trying to achieve salvation through obedience to the Law was indeed a miserable type of existence, comparable to having a dead person strapped to one's own body.

In this state of affairs, a person is a slave to sin, as Paul notes: I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. And again, Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it.

Under these conditions, Paul cries out in the name of humanity, What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? The answer is that deliverance comes through faith in Jesus Christ:

Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death.

The effects of salvation will be manifest first in the changed life of the individual and then, as this salvation takes place in increasing numbers, in society.

## SUMMARY Continued

The life of the Spirit that frees one from bondage to the Law does not give one the license to sin, nor can laws legitimately be violated just because they conflict with one's immediate desires.

The Christian will be a law-abiding citizen whose freedom consists in the fact that he no longer wants to act contrary to laws. He will do what is right because he desires to act that way, not because he does it from a pure sense of duty or as a means of gaining a reward.

With reference to the future of the Jewish people, Paul expresses the hope that they, too, will be included with those who are saved through the gospel. Since the gospel is of divine origin and the great heroes of Israel achieved righteousness through faith, that the Jews would reject the gospel seems strange.

When they refused to accept it, the opportunity was extended to the Gentiles. But Paul does not envision a complete break between Judaism and Christianity. He believes that the Jews eventually will come to accept the gospel since God is not willing that any person should perish but that all might be saved.

The closing part of Paul's Epistle to the Romans contains instruction in the manner of living. Paul tells the Christians in Rome to have respect for the civil government: The authorities that exist have been established by God.

He does not mean that Christians should obey the civil laws when these laws conflict with the laws of God but rather that Christians should not attempt to hide their conduct from the rulers nor escape the punishment that the state inflicts.

Earthly governments are not perfect, and some laws are bound to be unjust. Nevertheless, laws preserve order in society, and Christians should abide by them. As in the other letters to different churches, Paul asks the Christians at Rome to contribute to the fund that he is gathering for the relief of the poor in Jerusalem.

In no portion of the New Testament is the dynamic and universal character of Christianity set forth more clearly than in Paul's Epistle to the Romans, evidence of which can be seen in the fact that so many of the revival and reform movements in the course of Christian history have been started and promulgated by a restudy of this portion of the New Testament.

Paul's letter to the church in Rome is without question one of the great documents in Christian literature. It has furnished the inspiration and guidance for many of the important developments that have taken place in the life of the church during the past and in all likely hood will continue to do so in the future.

The dynamic character of the gospel as Paul understands it is illustrated in the introductory portions of his letter, where Paul refers to the gospel as something that is powerful:

The power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes. The gospel is more than the acceptance of a set of speculative ideas, even though these are not necessarily excluded; it is the righteousness of God, an active force operating in the lives of people who are ready and willing to receive it.



## SUMMARY Continued

Available to all those who recognize their need for it regardless of their religious backgrounds, the gospel does for those persons who are willing to accept it something that they are wholly unable to do for themselves: produce within them a changed nature so that the desires of their hearts will coincide with what they ought to do.

The universality of the gospel is exemplified in the way in which it completely transcends all distinctions between Jew and Gentile. Among the early Christians, as well as in other communities, certain people believed that salvation was only for the Jews.

Paul's letter to the Romans addresses a church whose membership is composed of people from both Jewish and Gentile backgrounds, and he wants to set forth the meaning of the gospel in terms that will be intelligible to all of them.

Because he is familiar with both Judaism and Hellenistic culture, he uses concepts drawn from each of these sources to communicate his version of Christianity.

Thus we find him using the terminology of Jewish eschatology and apocalypticism, as well as the language of the mystery cults and other forms of Gentile religion, to explain his conception of the real significance of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus.

His use of terms drawn from such different sources was not without its dangers: His readers might very well interpret these terms in a manner that was other than he intended.

He did not want to convey the idea that the use of these terms in connection with the Christian religion was exactly like what either the Jews or the Gentiles had been taught. Rather, he used them to distinguish similarities that would aid in their proper understanding.

Salvation, as this term was used by the Jews of Paul's day, primarily refers to a future event when the kingdoms of this earth will be brought to an end and the new age identified as the kingdom of God will be established.

The saved will be those who are not destroyed at that time but who will be permitted to live under the new order of things. Although Paul does not reject this view entirely, he couples with it the idea that salvation is something to be achieved here and now, as well as in the future.

Being saved from yielding to evil temptations is achieved not by conformity or obedience to laws but by faith in the righteousness of God, manifested in the life of Jesus the Christ. In support of this conviction, Paul quotes the Old Testament prophet Habakkuk, who said that the righteous will live by his faith.

Paul's use of the word faith is somewhat different from that of the ancient prophet, for Habakkuk was speaking about his belief concerning the future that was in store for those who lived in obedience to the Law, or commands, of God; Paul is discussing a salvation that is apart from the Law.

Thus we see how Paul uses a familiar Hebrew term to communicate to his readers a concept that was in some respects new to them.

## SUMMARY Continued

In his discussion of the need for salvation, Paul implies what has often been called the doctrine of original sin. The Adam of the Genesis story is generally interpreted as a reference to all humanity.

The same tendency toward evil present in Adam is also present in every human being. Yielding to these temptations brings about an estrangement between an individual and God.

To explain the way in which this estrangement can be overcome, Paul draws analogies from customary court procedures and from concepts used in the mystery cults. He shows how all humans are guilty before God, and in this connection he speaks of justification and redemption.

When the sinner acknowledges his guilt, he is accepted by God, and past sins are no longer held against him. Justified in the sense that the estrangement has been overcome, the former sinner is now in accord with the divine will, which does not mean that he will never sin again, but he will continually be aware of his need for improvement and will seek divine aid for its accomplishment.

To explain the change that takes place in life when a person experiences justification and possesses the same spirit present in Jesus, Paul uses the language of the mystery cults.

Just as the heroic redeemer of these cults experienced a death, burial, and resurrection, so Christian baptism means a death of one's old nature, a burial, and a resurrection in which one walks in a newness of life.

## NKJV SELECTED SCRIPTURE

- 1:16** For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek.
- 1:17** For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, The just shall live by faith.
- 1:26** For this reason God gave them up to vile passions. For even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature.
- 1:27** Likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful, and receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due.
- 1:28** And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting;
- 1:29** being filled with all unrighteousness, sexual immorality, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, evil-mindedness; they are whisperers,
- 1:30** backbiters, haters of God, violent, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents,
- 1:31** undiscerning, untrustworthy, unloving, unforgiving, unmerciful;
- 1:32** who, knowing the righteous judgment of God, that those who practice such things are deserving of death, not only do the same but also approve of those who practice them.

## NKJV SCRIPTURE Continued

- 2:7** eternal life to those who by patient continuance in doing good seek for glory, honor, and immortality;
- 2:8** but to those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness--indignation and wrath,
- 2:9** tribulation and anguish, on every soul of man who does evil, of the Jew first and also of the Greek;
- 2:10** but glory, honor, and peace to everyone who works what is good, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.
- 2:11** For there is no partiality with God.
- 4:20** He did not waver at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strengthened in faith, giving glory to God,
- 4:21** and being fully convinced that what He had promised He was also able to perform.
- 4:22** And therefore it was accounted to him for righteousness.
- 5:1** Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,
- 5:2** through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.
- 5:3** And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance;
- 5:4** and perseverance, character; and character, hope.
- 5:5** Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us.
- 6:11** Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord.
- 6:12** Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts.
- 6:13** And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God.
- 6:14** For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace.
- 7:5** For when we were in the flesh, the sinful passions which were aroused by the law were at work in our members to bear fruit to death.
- 7:6** But now we have been delivered from the law, having died to what we were held by, so that we should serve in the newness of the Spirit and not in the oldness of the letter.
- 8:1** There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.
- 8:2** For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death.
- 8:6** For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.
- 8:9** But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His.
- 8:14** For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.
- 8:26** Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.



**NKJV SCRIPTURE Continued**

- 8:27** Now He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God.
- 8:31** What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?
- 9:30** What shall we say then? That Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness of faith;
- 9:31** but Israel, pursuing the law of righteousness, has not attained to the law of righteousness.
- 9:32** Why? Because they did not seek it by faith, but as it were, by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumbling stone.
- 9:33** As it is written: Behold, I lay in Zion a stumbling stone and rock of offense, And whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame.
- 10:4** For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.
- 10:8** But what does it say? The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart (that is, the word of faith which we preach):
- 10:9** that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.
- 10:10** For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.
- 10:17** So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.
- 10:33** Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out!
- 10:36** For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things, to whom be glory forever. Amen.
- 12:1** I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.
- 12:2** And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.
- 12:6** Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, let us prophesy in proportion to our faith;
- 12:7** or ministry, let us use it in our ministering; he who teaches, in teaching;
- 12:8** he who exhorts, in exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.
- 12:9** Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil. Cling to what is good.
- 12:10** Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another;
- 12:11** not lagging in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord;
- 12:12** rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing steadfastly in prayer;
- 12:13** distributing to the needs of the saints, given to hospitality.
- 12:17** Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men.
- 12:18** If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men.
- 12:19** Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, Vengeance is Mine, I will repay, says the Lord.
- 13:8** Owe no one anything except to love one another, for he who loves another has fulfilled the law.

## NKJV SCRIPTURE Continued

- 13:9** For the commandments, You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You shall not steal, You shall not bear false witness, You shall not covet, and if there is any other commandment, are all summed up in this saying, namely, You shall love your neighbor as yourself.
- 13:10** Love does no harm to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.
- 13:13** Let us walk properly, as in the day, not in revelry and drunkenness, not in lewdness and lust, not in strife and envy.
- 13:14** But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts.
- 14:8** For if we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord. Therefore, whether we live or die, we are the Lord's.
- 14:9** For to this end Christ died and rose and lived again, that He might be Lord of both the dead and the living.
- 14:17** for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.
- 14:18** For he who serves Christ in these things is acceptable to God and approved by men.
- 15:4** For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.
- 15:13** Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.
- 16:20** And the God of peace will crush Satan under your feet shortly. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen.
- 16:25** Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery kept secret since the world began
- 16:26** but now has been made manifest, and by the prophetic Scriptures has been made known to all nations, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, for obedience to the faith--
- 16:27** to God, alone wise, be glory through Jesus Christ forever. Amen.

## BIBLE TIMELINE

57 AD

Paul Writes to the Romans

Romans 1 - 16

## CHARACTER Definitions

**APOSTLE PAUL** - As with all Paul's epistles to the churches, his purpose in writing was to proclaim the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ by teaching doctrine and edify and encourage the believers who would receive his letter. Of particular concern to Paul were those to whom this letter was written—those in Rome who were loved by God and called to be saints.

Because he himself was a Roman citizen, he had a unique passion for those in the assembly of believers in Rome. Since he had not, to this point, visited the church in Rome, this letter also served as his introduction to them.

## CHARACTERS Continued

Paul was excited about being able to minister at last in this church, and everyone was well aware of that fact. The letter to the Romans was written from Corinth just prior to Paul's trip to Jerusalem to deliver the alms that had been given for the poor there.

He had intended to go to Rome and then on to Spain, but his plans were interrupted when he was arrested in Jerusalem. He would eventually go to Rome as a prisoner. Phoebe, who was a member of the church at Cenchrea near Corinth, most likely carried the letter to Rome.

The Book of Romans is primarily a work of doctrine and can be divided into four sections: righteousness needed, 1:18–3:20; righteousness provided, 3:21–8:39; righteousness vindicated, 9:1–11:36; righteousness practiced, 12:1–15:13.

The main theme of this letter is obvious of course—righteousness. Guided by the Holy Spirit, Paul first condemns all men of their sinfulness. He expresses his desire to preach the truth of God's Word to those in Rome.

It was his hope to have assurance they were staying on the right path. He strongly points out that he is not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power by which everyone is saved.

The Book of Romans tells us about God, who He is and what He has done. It tells us of Jesus Christ, what His death accomplished. It tells us about ourselves, what we were like without Christ and who we are after trusting in Christ.

Paul points out that God did not demand men have their lives straightened out before coming to Christ. While we were still sinners Christ died on a cross for our sins.

Paul uses several Old Testament people and events as illustrations of the glorious truths in the Book of Romans. Abraham believed and righteousness was imputed to him by his faith, not by his works.

In Romans 4:6-9, Paul refers to David who reiterated the same truth: Blessed are they whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man whose sin the Lord will never count against him.

Paul uses Adam to explain to the Romans the doctrine of inherited sin, and he uses the story of Sarah and Isaac, the child of promise, to illustrate the principle of Christians being the children of the promise of the divine grace of God through Christ.

In chapters 9–11, Paul recounts the history of the nation of Israel and declares that God has not completely and finally rejected Israel but has allowed them to stumble only until the full number of the Gentiles will be brought to salvation.

The Book of Romans makes it clear that there is nothing we can do to save ourselves. Every good deed we have ever done is as a filthy rag before God. So dead in our trespasses and sins are we that only the grace and mercy of God can save us.

God expressed that grace and mercy by sending His Son, Jesus Christ, to die on the cross in our place. When we turn our lives over to Christ, we are no longer controlled by our sin nature, but we are controlled by the Spirit.

## CHARACTERS Continued

If we make confession that Jesus is Lord, and believe that He is raised from the dead, we are saved, born again. We need to live our lives offered to God as a living sacrifice to Him. Worship of the God who saved us should be our highest desire.

Perhaps the best application of Romans would be to apply Romans 1:16 and not be ashamed of the gospel. Instead, let us all be faithful in proclaiming it!

## MAP REFERENCES

### APOSTLE PAUL'S THIRD MISSIONARY JOURNEY 53 - 58 AD

