



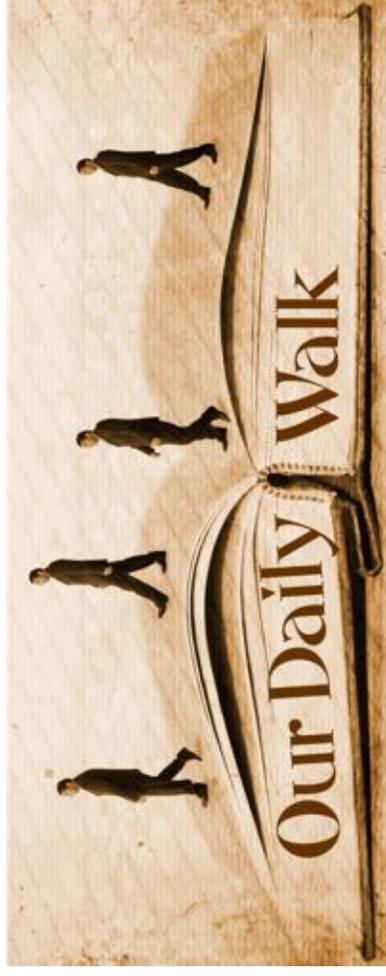
Friday, June 17 — Romans 3

Chapter Summary: Paul's final conclusion about the state of man is that "all have sinned" (3:23). Since no one has lived up to God's righteous standard, everyone is dependent upon God's grace that justifies us freely. This prevents all men from feeling superior to anyone else and boasting about their status before God. The fact that we are all sinners in need of grace unites us across all other lines of separation.

Devotional: Sin separates us from God. It is impossible for us to get back to God on our own once we have sinned. Oddly enough, Paul says, it is this separation from God that also unites all men. Just as we must accept our identity as sinners, so we must acknowledge that we are no better than anyone else. What sins do you need God's help in overcoming? How does your status as a forgiven sinner change your outlook on others who are still lost in sin? How does grace keep us from pride?

Questions for more thought/discussion: Because there is no way that we can do anything to make ourselves right before God, we are dependent upon Him to save us. If we truly depend on Him, then what is our role in salvation? Does it just happen to us or do we have a part to play? How would you explain to someone the roles of man's faith and God's grace in salvation?

Join us all year as we read through the entire New Testament as a congregation. You can find each devotional guide online as well at www.hcofoc.com.



For the week of June 12



Monday, June 13 — Acts 27

Chapter Summary: As Paul starts his voyage to Rome, he warns the captain that it is not the right time to leave, but his warning is ignored. When the ship gets caught in a storm, Paul receives assurance from the Lord that everyone will be safe and encourages the sailors and soldiers. The ship is lost along with all the cargo, but Paul and everyone else on board is saved and lands on the island of Malta.

Devotional: God had promised Paul that he would testify in Rome about the gospel. As the storm raged, the men began to give up hope. Paul encouraged them to remain hopeful because he himself had been encouraged by an angel to remember God's promise. What are some promises God has made to us? How can we remember them and be hopeful even in bad situations? How can we use the hope we receive from our knowledge of the Word of God to encourage others when they go through difficult times of stress and heartache in their life?

Questions for more thought/discussion: Why do you think the captain of the ship was more persuaded by the helmsman and the owner of the ship than by Paul? What happened to cause him to listen to Paul as the journey went on? How can we be sensitive to others and make sure that we are listening to the Lord and His Word more than we listen to other voices in the world? Who are some godly voices in your life?

Tuesday, June 14 — Acts 28



Chapter Summary: Paul is warmly received on Malta. He is bitten by a viper but suffers no harm. Paul continues on to Rome and is allowed to live by himself with a guard. He explains to the Jews there why he is in chains and preaches Christ. For two years Paul is a prisoner but is permitted to preach and teach freely from his rented house.

Devotional: Just as he had done elsewhere, Paul told the Jews in Rome about Jesus and the good news about the gospel. Some of them believed him while others did not. God wants us to tell others about Jesus. Sometimes, we may get discouraged when they do not obey the Gospel, but we can look to the example of Paul and see that even if we are faithful, not everyone will accept Christ as their Savior. We can also be encouraged to stay faithful!

Questions for more thought/discussion: Christianity is called a “sect...spoken against everywhere.” Is that the way we are viewed today? Why or why not? What advantages are there to being looked at with skepticism by the community? What problems can we face when we are accepted in our communities?



Wednesday, June 15 — Romans 1

Chapter Summary: Romans is a letter from Paul to all the Christians in Rome. He hopes to come and see them soon. He writes to tell them all that is going on in the church around the world and to tell them about the gospel. He says the gospel is God’s power for salvation. He makes it clear that faith and righteous living are requirements for the godly life. God will judge those who do not accept the gospel.

Devotional: Paul introduces himself in these verses. He is a bondservant and an apostle. What do these things mean? What do you call yourself religiously? Sometimes the names and titles we use are very important. What does the Bible say about our identity in Christ? How does how we view ourselves affect our evangelism? If God loves us and sees us as His children, how does that change the way we look at other people? If you were to introduce yourself to a church that didn’t know you, what would you say?

Questions for more thought/discussion: Why is Paul a debtor (v. 14)? How is the gospel God’s power for salvation for all people? What does Paul say happens to people who refuse to hear the gospel? How does it change their life today as well as set their course for eternity? As Christians, if we know the consequences of sin, what should we do in our community and our nation to be an advocate for righteousness?



Thursday, June 16 — Romans 2

Chapter Summary: Paul turns from talking about pagans and their unbelief to chastising believers who continue in sin while passing judgment on others. He shows conclusively that Jews do not get any advantage before God when it comes to personal righteousness. Paul introduces the idea that a “true” Jew or an inward one is one who truly keeps God’s law, not just one who has all the outward signs.

Devotional: Paul makes it clear in this passage that sinners cannot stand in judgment of other sinners. Only God can truly judge. Talk about what sin really is. Is there a difference between judging another person and standing for righteousness? How can we as a family of God’s people embrace the fact that we are all saved by the grace of God from our own sinfulness? How can that help us reach out to others who are hurting? In so doing, is there a way to “love the sinner” while still “hating the sin”?

Questions for more thought/discussion: How do you think a Jew would have read Romans chapter 2? What would make a Jew feel superior to Gentiles? How are Christians tempted to feel superior to those outside the faith today? Isn’t it better to be saved than to be lost? How does that NOT lead us to feel superior?

What is the difference between an outward Jew and inward one?

