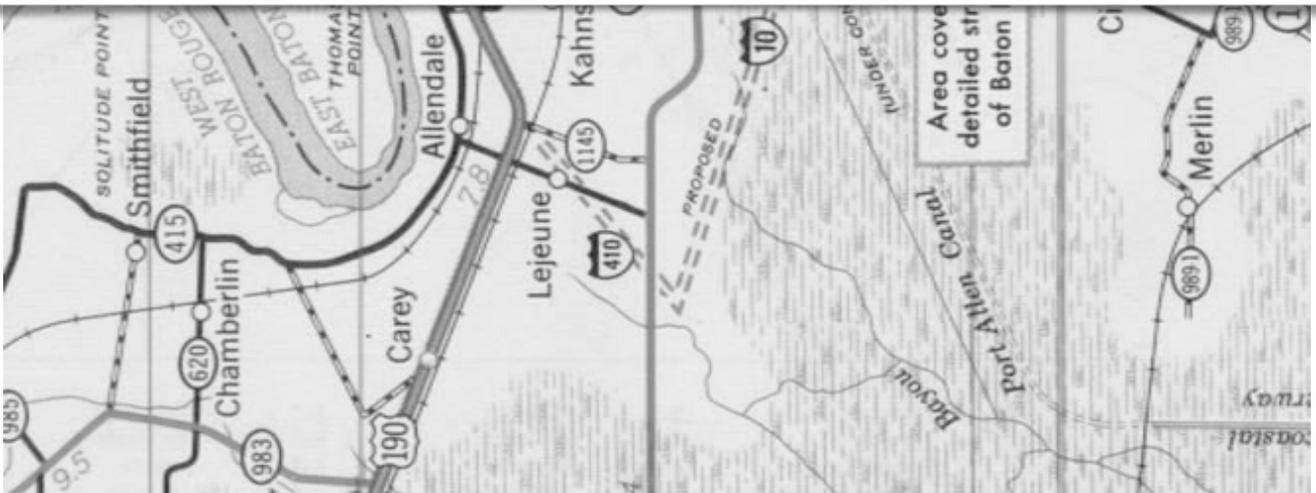
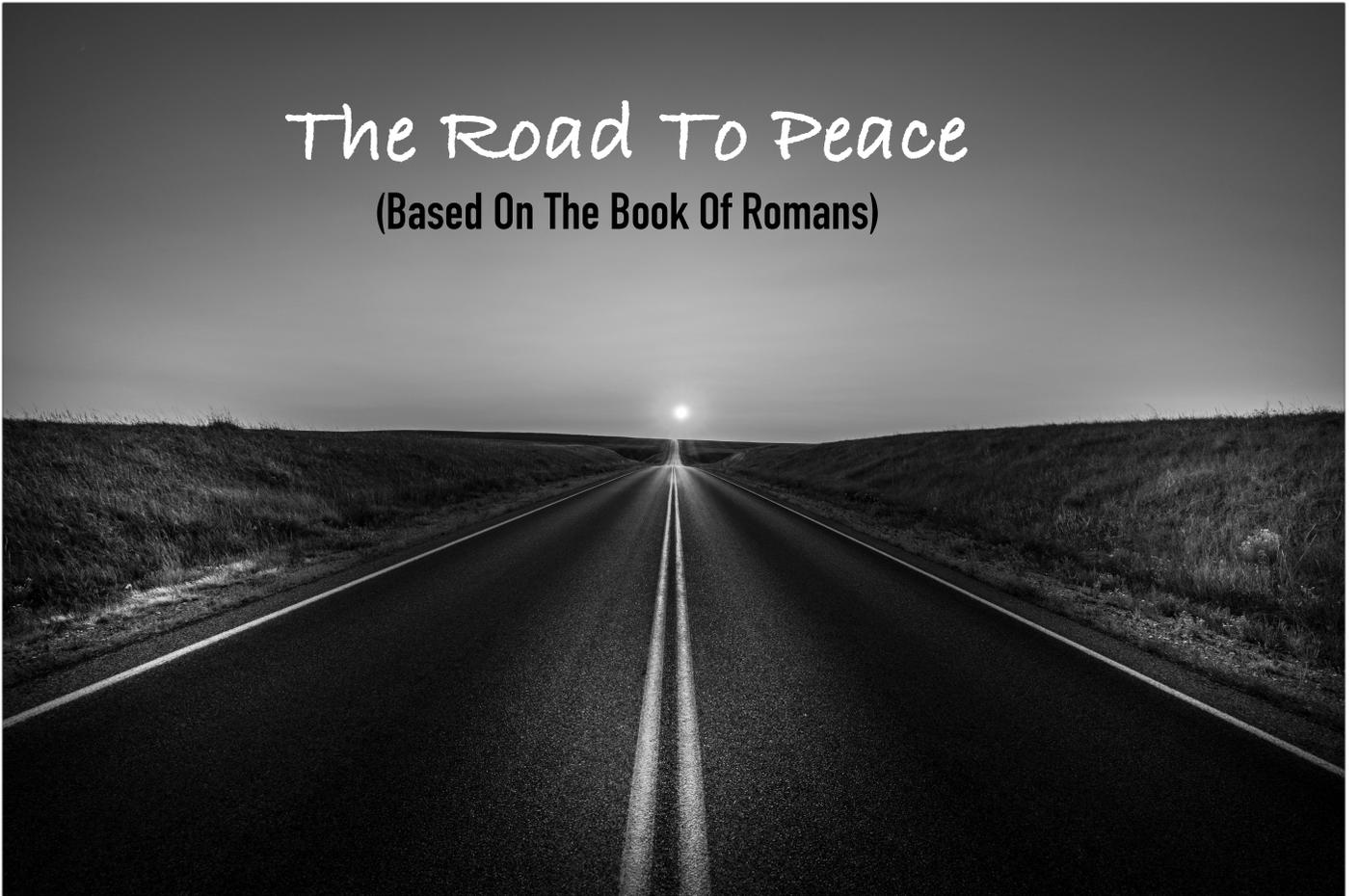


# The Road To Peace

(Based On The Book Of Romans)



## **THE ROAD TO PEACE (Based on the Book of Romans)**

In the book of Romans, the Apostle Paul lays out a map of sorts that shows us how to go from where we are - sinful and separated from God for all eternity - to where we were made to be and where we really want and need to be - forgiven and cleansed of all our sins and our relationship with our Creator restored for all eternity. That there is such an opportunity is the good news for all mankind. Let's follow Paul's directions and take a trip together down the Romans Road.

**FIRST STOP: Romans 3:23 “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” (For a brutally honest assessment of our sinful condition read Romans 1:18-32)**

The Good News actually begins with some really bad news...you and I are sinners and because of our sin we are absolutely and completely unable to please God. There is nothing we can do in our own strength and power to help ourselves in this situation. No thoughts OR actions can save us. Paul describes our sin as “falling short of the glory of God.” What we were made to do was glorify God - our Maker - with our lives. We were created to have a personal and life-giving relationship with our Creator and to bring Him glory through our affection for and obedience to Him, but from the beginning of time (and the beginning of our own lives on this earth) that is not what we have done. Instead we have chosen to reject His will and authority and bring glory to ourselves. We are self-seeking, self-centered, self-glorifying creatures from the beginning of our lives to the end and this living for ourselves is the very essence of sin because ALL sins flow from human pride:

**Psalm 10:4 “In his pride the wicked man does not seek him; in all his thoughts there is no room for God.”**

**Proverbs 16:5 “The Lord detests all the proud of heart. Be sure of this: They will not go unpunished.”**

**Proverbs 16:18 “Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall.”**

**Proverbs 26:12 “Do you see a person wise in their own eyes? There is more hope for a fool than for them.”**

Due to pride, people have a hard time admitting they are sinners. It also helps that people compare themselves to really bad people to make themselves look good in their own eyes. Right? People say, well I'm basically a good person because I've never robbed a bank or killed someone! But they're comparing themselves to the wrong standard. God's standard is perfect holiness. He's the one we need to compare ourselves to.

There are basically 3 kinds of sins that we all have committed. The first is easiest to understand. Sins of action. God gave us many commands to obey, but the most famous and most encompassing are the 10 commandments (**Exodus 20**). According to the 10 commandments, if you have ever stolen anything or told a lie, you are a sinner. These sins are the easiest to detect because they involve observable action. However, we're good at hiding these actions which is why they are easy to commit, but God knows everything we've done, thought or felt (**Hebrews 4:13**). Which brings us to the next two kinds of sins. Sins of the heart involve desires and feelings. Have you ever wanted something that belonged to someone else? Have you ever hated someone else? Have you ever lusted over a person's physical features or appearance? These are all sins of the heart. The last category I call sins of the mind which involve thoughts and belief. A person says, "I think there are many ways to heaven. There are many religions and they basically all lead to the same ending. In fact, my family worships many gods." Well, in the very first commandment God says, "You shall have no other Gods before me." And the second one continues, "Do not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. You shall not bow down to them or worship them."

Or a person says, “I don’t believe in any God. I’m an atheist!” God simply calls that person a FOOL (**Psalm 14:1**). An atheist is the ultimate example of human PRIDE at work because every person knows it is impossible to prove God DOESN’T exist. All you can do is BELIEVE He’s not there, you absolutely cannot prove it. In fact, it takes more FAITH to believe there is no God than to believe He exists.

The fact of the matter is, people don’t want to think about their sinfulness or about having to answer to a higher power so they choose not to believe in God so they don’t have to think about obeying Him. But be warned, God says He will not be mocked and that all people reap what they sow (**Galatians 6:7**). If you sow seeds of pride and rebellion and unbelief during your life on earth then from these seeds you will reap an eternity separated from God.

So this is our first stop on the Romans Road. We are all sinners. You and I have offended God, our Creator, with our self-centered, self-glory seeking lives and this offense is great because God is completely sinless and perfectly Holy and as our Creator, He deserves our absolute worship. We’ve chosen rebellion and He’s allowed us to have it, but as a result, our relationship with Him has been broken. Our sin has separated us from God and this separation will last forever. Not a good situation at all. Very BAD news indeed! But there is HOPE!

Consider this initial news like going to the doctor and learning for the first time that you have a life-threatening disease in your body. You didn’t know you had the disease so you were happy in your ignorance, but the reality is you are about to die. But now that you know you are sick, the doctor tells you about potential cures and treatment options to fight and possibly beat the disease and live a long full life. The initial shock of learning you are dying, is balanced with the hope of learning you still have a chance. What’s important is that now you know the truth! The bad news is crucial for the possibility of a good outcome!

## **NEXT STOP: Roman 6:23 (PART 1) “For the wages of sin is death...”**

I'm afraid it gets worse before it gets better. If God is our Creator then He is the Life Giver. All life emanates from Him. The reality is God holds our every breath, our every heart beat, our very pulse in His hands. (**Job 12:10**). If God's presence is life, then to be separated from God is to be dead. And make no mistake about it, we are spiritually dead in our sin. Now this is another difficult reality for us to understand because we choose to believe only in what we see which is very strange considering almost everyone believes in LOVE at one time or another and you cannot SEE love. You can feel love and you can see the results of love, but you cannot see love. Love is an idea, a feeling, a belief, but for the person head over heels in love with someone else, there is no doubt that love is real. You see, as humans we are most aware of our physical selves. We can SEE our reflection in the mirror. We SMELL and TASTE the food we put into our mouths. We TOUCH the things around us and HEAR the birds singing and so we are always AWARE of the fact that we are physical creatures in a physical world, but the Bible says that God is spirit. Now if God, the immeasurable God who spoke galaxies into existence is spiritual then there must be a spiritual realm greater and more vast and complex and beautiful and mind-blowing than the physical realm we now inhabit. But the Bible doesn't just say God is spirit, the Bible says we are spiritual creatures as well (**1 Thessalonians 5:23**). Inhabiting our physical shells is a soul. This soul is really our truest self. This soul came from the spirit realm God inhabits and all souls will return to that realm after physical death on earth. This is where the bad news REALLY gets bad. When a person physically dies, his or her soul returns to the spirit world, which is an ETERNAL world with no end. God says that the soul of a person who rejects and rebels against Him on earth, will spend eternity in a place called Hell. A place described as a lake of fire. A place that is most frightening not because of what is there, but because of what is not there: the love, goodness and presence of God. This eternal existence in Hell is called spiritual death and this is the death Paul is talking about at the beginning of Romans 6:23. The wages of sin is a spiritual death, separated from God for all eternity in Hell. Wages are

something earned. We EARN hell for our sin against God. You might not THINK you deserve that kind of punishment, but you didn't create all things in existence so you don't get to determine how this all plays out. Sorry.

Thankfully there is still more to Romans 6:23. Now for the start of some GOOD NEWS!

## **Roman 6:23 (PART 2) “...but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”**

As sinners we've earned Hell, but as God's beloved creation (Whom He never forgot about or abandoned), we are offered the opportunity to completely and forever change our situation and destination. And it's gift. A free and underserved gift. The gift is to swap our eternal death for eternal life. Again, Paul is talking about spiritual life, the destination of our soul for all eternity AFTER passing from this physical and temporary earth. This eternal life is found ONLY in Jesus Christ, but it is available to ALL.

We love gifts. They don't cost us a thing. They don't require any work on our part. Gifts surprise us. They make us feel loved and meaningful and special. They are very simple to deal with...all you gotta do is receive it. You take it and it is yours. BUT YOU HAVE TO TAKE IT! God has offered the gift of eternal life to everyone, but not everyone wants to take it. Please take it! Eternity is too long!

## **NEXT STOP: Roman 5:8 “But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”**

The gift God offers costs us nothing, but it cost Him much. It cost Him the death of His only Son, Jesus Christ. We need to park for a moment here at Romans 5:8 and unpack some basic, but fundamental truths about what Jesus actually accomplished on the cross over 2000 years ago.

Most people understand justice. Even criminals understand justice. We all know that when a crime is committed, the offender should pay a penalty. We understand that peace and stability in any society requires that those who do bad things, DESERVE and should receive punishment and those who are victims deserve and should receive JUSTICE.

So what about our sin and offense against God? As our Creator, God is also Judge, Jury and Executioner. In fact, the story of Noah shows God in all three of these roles. Sorry that He had made man “because everything mankind did was only evil all the time”, God destroys all living things on the earth with a flood, but saves Noah and his family and 3 pairs of males and females of every living creature on a large boat called an ark.

What God did on the earth with a flood and a boat, he will do again in the spiritual realm of eternity with hell and heaven. Sinners will be found guilty and sentenced to Hell. But aren't we all sinners? So how can anyone get to heaven? Glad you asked. Remember that free gift God offers? The gift is salvation. The gift is heaven for eternity instead of Hell. The gift is Jesus.

Jesus is the most important historical person to ever live because He was God's own son, sent to sinful earth to rescue sinful people from hell and here's how he did it.

Remember JUSTICE? Our sins deserve punishment. In fact, if God DOES NOT punish sin then He cannot be holy and just. If God is per-

fectly good and just, He MUST punish sin. He must punish us. But God loves us and so He and His Son worked out THEIR plan on earth to save us from our sins. The plan involved Jesus leaving heaven to be born on earth and grow up as a completely and fully human being just like us. To fully embrace the human experience and in so doing, to fully embrace us. He came to teach people about God's holiness and love, to demonstrate God's holiness and love, and to call people to walk in God's holiness and love, but that was just a precursor to why He really came. What He really came to do was die on the cross. God sent His own son Jesus, to die on the cross and in doing so to be punished for you and me. On the cross, the full wrath of God's justice against the sins of the whole world (every person) was poured out on Jesus. The cross was God's way to show His holiness, fulfill the requirements of His justice and demonstrate the fullness of His love for us sinners. Jesus physically died for us so we can now spiritually live for Him. There's no greater news than this!

**FINAL STOP: Romans 10:9-10** “If you declare with your mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved.”

At this point you might be asking, “Okay, so I understand that I am a sinner and that Jesus came to save me from my sins, but HOW does it all work? How do I go from being spiritually dead to spiritually alive?”

There’s an interesting (and somewhat comical) conversation that Jesus has about this very question with a respected Jewish religious scholar and elder, named Nicodemus:

**(John 3:1-7, 16-18)** Now there was a Pharisee, a man named Nicodemus who was a member of the Jewish ruling council. He came to Jesus at night and said, “Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the signs you are doing if God were not with him.”

*Jesus replied, “Very truly I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again.”*

*“How can someone be born when they are old?” Nicodemus asked. “Surely they cannot enter a second time into their mother’s womb to be born!”*

*Jesus answered, “Very truly I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the Spirit. Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. You should not be surprised at my saying, ‘You must be born again.’”*

*“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but*

*whoever does not believe stands condemned already because they have not believed in the name of God's one and only Son."*

Here again we learn about our spiritual condition. Since we are spiritually dead in our sins, we must be spiritually reborn! We need a new living spirit and the spirit we receive is none other than the Spirit of God Himself (**Romans 8:9-11**)!

Now back to the question of HOW? What does Jesus tell Nicodemus to do? Believe! What does Paul write in Romans 10:9-10? Believe in your heart and confess with your mouth that Jesus is the Son of God.

You might be thinking, "That's it?! That seems too easy!!!" But remember, this is a free gift from God with no strings attached. Jesus already DID IT ALL for you. All you have to do is BELIEVE He did it. If you truly believe, you will spend the rest of your life loving and serving Him for what He did for you and telling others all about it!

**Ephesians 2:8-9 "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God — not by works, so that no one can boast."**

**DEAR FRIEND:** Thank you for traveling with me down the Romans Road. I hope and trust you learned something new and important today. I pray the eyes of your soul were opened to the reality of your spiritual condition. I pray your heart was moved by God's unbelievable gift.

The Bible says (**Philippians 2:9-11**) one day EVERY KNEE WILL BOW and EVERY TONGUE CONFESS that Jesus Christ is Lord. For now, as long as you have breath in your lungs and are still alive on earth, you have the choice to believe in and follow Jesus. After passing from here into eternity, you will no longer have that choice, but you will be compelled in the presence of the God of all creation to worship His Son because reality will leave you with no other choice.

Why waste another second of your life living for yourself, spiritually dead and separated from your Maker? Choose Christ today! Confess with your mouth and believe in your heart that Jesus is the Son of God and that He died on the cross and rose from the grave to buy your freedom from sin and open heaven's door for you. Repent of your sins and place your whole life - your heart, mind and soul - into His hands. Become a Jesus follower and finally discover what you were truly created for! Finally discover a peace, joy, hope and satisfaction that this world can never give nor take away!

**GOD'S SALVATION IN JESUS CHRIST IS A GIFT. TAKE IT!!!**

**Romans 10:13 "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."**