

Romans

Ger de Koning

When I wrote this book for you, I tried to put myself in your shoes. I thought of you as one who wants to become better acquainted with the Savior who died for you and gave you life.

The Lord Jesus loves to become more important to us. Having the hunger to know Him better will help you discover the enormous riches you have in the Bible. The more you read it, the more you find your love for the Lord Jesus increasing. It doesn't matter how old or young you are. What matters is the development of your feelings towards the Lord Jesus and what He can be to you.

I have divided this book into sixty sections. You can read one section, with its verses, in about 15 minutes a day. In just two months, you will gain insight into one of the most important letters of the Bible.



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by M. G. de Koning

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Foreword

Dear Friend,

I wrote this book for you. When I wrote it, I tried to put myself in your shoes. I thought of you as one who wants to become better acquainted with the Savior who died for you and gave you life. Until recently, you may not have been interested in getting to know Him better. I once had this attitude, but a tremendous change occurred. I know the change pleased the Lord Jesus because He loves to become more important to us. He also will reward such an attitude change. Having the desire to know Him better will help you discover the enormous riches you have in your hands – the Bible. The more you read it, the more you will find your love for the Lord Jesus increasing. It doesn't matter how old or young you are. What matters is the change in your feelings towards the Lord Jesus and what He has become to you. This is why you now want to start reading the Bible. With this book, I want to help you read and study the Bible. Here are a few practical tips that might help you:

1. Provide yourself with a good translation of the Bible. Some good translations are the *New American Standard Bible*® (NASB), the *New King James Version* (NKJV), the *New Translation* by J.N. Darby (JND) and the *King James Version* (KJV). I will be using the NKJV (with permission) when referencing and quoting Scripture unless I note otherwise.

2. I tried to write this book in a way that encourages you to use the Bible. At the beginning and end of each section, I have listed the Bible verses pertaining to that section. I encourage you to read those verses before and after reading the section. It would be a good idea to keep your Bible open to those verses so you can easily refer to them.

3. Self-discipline is very important. You have to be willing to discipline yourself to take time to understand the Bible better. You need to read the Bible at a set time that's best for you. To help you with this, I have divided this book into sixty sections. You can read one section, with its verses, every day in about 15 minutes. You take more time eating each day and certainly *spiritual food* is as important as physical food. If you can be self-disciplined in this, then after only two months, you will have gained a little more insight into one of the most splendid letters of the Bible. The whole Bible is a splendid book and it's my prayer that you'll get this impression in an increasing way.

Middelburg, Netherlands
2003

1 The Gospel of God

Romans 1:1-7

Romans is the first epistle [or letter] of the New Testament. If you've just started your journey to read through the Bible with *Romans*, you have made a good choice. In it you'll discover how God saw you while you were unsaved and how He sees you now that you know Him as your Savior. This knowledge will give you assurance of having made the right choice. You will still have to learn how to walk on the Christian pathway, but at least you will know the pathway itself is correct.

Paul (as inspired by the Holy Spirit) was chosen by God to speak to you about this pathway in this letter. In verse 1 he tells us what he is going to talk about – the gospel of God. The gospel you accepted was not devised by man, but it went out from God. It is *His* gospel. In the past God spoke of this gospel through His prophets. You can read about it in the Old Testament, called “the Holy Scripture” in verse 2. During the time of the Old Testament, God tested people repeatedly to see if they would serve Him, but they failed each time. Finally, God made it known that He Himself would act. This happened when He sent His Son. The contents of the gospel of God are centered in the Son of God. It is the gospel of God “concerning His Son.”^a This gospel is not a religion, but rather about a Person with whom you now have a living relationship through faith.

a. Rom.1:3

Much can be found regarding the Son of God in the Bible. You can only begin to grasp the real meaning of any portion of Scripture if you are able to see what it has to say about the Lord Jesus. Verses 3 and 4 mention two things regarding Him that are important to be able to understand the contents of this letter. First, He was “born of the seed of David.” As the seed [or descendant] of David, He was entitled to the throne of Israel in Jerusalem. Since Israel has rejected Him, His ascent to the throne has been delayed. In Romans 9-11 you will see how God will fulfill all the promises He made to David.

Second, what is spoken of the Lord Jesus comes from the rejection of Him by His people, Israel. The Holy Spirit who led the Lord to die as a Man by crucifixion, has made it clear, has *declared*, that He also is the Son of God when He rose from the dead. His resurrection from among the dead (since everyone else has remained dead) was “according to the Spirit of holiness.” This is important: everything the Lord Jesus did during His life was in total agreement with the Holy Spirit. Since all was in harmony with the will of God, we know He committed no evil in His life, but in the three hours of darkness He certainly did come into contact with evil. He was *made sin* and *bore our sins* in His body. Therefore God judged Him for our sins and gave Him the wages of sin, which is death. When He rose from the dead, the “Spirit of holiness” could unify Himself completely with Him since all sin and wrong deeds were completely judged by Him.

If you can now see who the Lord Jesus is and what He has done, it will not be difficult to acknowledge Him as the Lord of your life. Paul was so impressed by this Person that he wanted to go out to all nations to bring people into obedience by faith in Him. ^a I hope something will radiate from your life and mine, both in our words and deeds, so others will come to obedience by faith in the Lord Jesus.

a. Rom.1:5

Now read Romans 1:1-7 again.

Reflection: *Tell God in your words who the Lord Jesus is and what He has done for you.*

25 If the Spirit Dwells in You

Romans 8:8-14

For someone who is in the flesh, it is impossible to please God. Being in the flesh means having yourself, your abilities, your labors, your plans and intentions as a center. Even if someone in the flesh would try to please God by keeping the law, this would be unacceptable to God. The starting point is wrong. God has dealt with the flesh, the nature of man corrupted by sin, once and for all. So how then could He accept anything from it?

There is a definitive separation between God and the sinful flesh. He who has received God's Spirit is no longer in the flesh, but in the Spirit. It is the Spirit of God who lives inside you. The Spirit of God doesn't make you important, but Christ does. You are connected with Christ and you belong to Him through the Spirit of God. If someone doesn't have the Spirit of Christ, he doesn't belong to Him.

Why do these verses suddenly speak of the Spirit of Christ? I think it is to show you that the Spirit you have received is the same Spirit by which Christ was led during His life on earth. When you read the Gospels, you can see this all the time. For example, take the Lord's temptation by Satan in the desert in Luke 4:1. There you read how, filled with the Holy Spirit, He returned from Jordan to the desert. Then when He was in the desert, He in His perfect holiness was led by the Spirit. His holy nature was not tempted by outside temptation: there was no failure with Him. He was God-centered. With you, the Spirit wants to do the same. The Spirit of God is living in you because Christ is in you. The Spirit of God can only connect Himself with something of Christ. This implies that the body, as used by sin for evil practices, is dead. Otherwise God's Spirit couldn't enter it to live there. But now, Christ being in you, it is completely right for the Spirit to live in you and to have authority over the life you now lead, just as it was with Christ.

Another important thing is connected with the indwelling of God's Spirit within you. This has to do with the resurrection of

your mortal body. Your body is still subject to the consequences of sin. It can become sick and it can die, but look at what God has done with the Lord Jesus. God raised the Lord Jesus from the dead. So, what do you do with yourself now? Your body is still mortal. Is this consistent with the Spirit of God living in you, who has everything to do with life? The answer is that God will raise your mortal body as He has done with the Lord Jesus because His Spirit is living in you. Other verses, like Philippians 3:21, tell us this will take place at the return of the Lord Jesus for His own, commonly called the *Rapture*.

All of this puts you under a certain obligation. You have become a debtor to live according to the position God has given you. He has provided you with all it takes to live a godly life – the new life and the Holy Spirit. You no longer have any obligation towards the flesh. It has no claim on you because you died as to your former life. You still have the flesh in you, but you shouldn't give it an opportunity to manifest itself. If you live according to the flesh, you will die. This must be the case. God's judgment over the flesh never changes, but now you have the responsibility to deprive the flesh of any possibility to regain authority in your life.

By the power the Holy Spirit gives, you have the ability to stop sinning in your body. Though you will never reach a state of sinless perfection here on earth, yet moment by moment you are responsible and able to not sin. Then you will live life with God as God meant it to be. Everyone who is led by the Spirit of God looks like the Son of God, the Lord Jesus. Sons of God are people in whom God recognizes the Son. In Him God found His joy and His pleasure. If you will be led by the Spirit, God will be pleased by it.

Now read Romans 8:8-14 again.

Reflection: How can you kill the workings of the body?

26 Heir of God

Romans 8:15-21

Being led by the Spirit is quite different from planning your life according to some law. If your rule of life is a law, then you're nothing but a slave to it. A slave doesn't have a tender and intimate relationship with his master. He must simply do what he is told. In the back of the mind, there is always the fear of doing something wrong. The Spirit, that is, the new life you have received, has nothing to do with slavery and fear. The Spirit you have received is a Spirit of *adoption*. There's the difference! Through this you can address God as Father. You say, "Abba Father." This indicates a trusting and friendly relationship. You know the Father as someone who is very close to you and to whom you have been brought very close. He loves you and you trust Him completely. You have been brought into a family relationship with Him. You have become His child.

The Holy Spirit living in you witnesses with your spirit, that is, the new life you have received, that you are a child of God. You are a child of your parents because you have been born out of them. This is a completed, irreversible fact. Nothing can change this. Similarly, you're a child of God because you have been born of God. Nothing can change this either. Hence it can be said that once a child of God, always a child of God.

In a child the features of the parents are visible. Likewise, God's characteristics find their expression in a child of God. In Philippians 2:14-16 you can read about this, but there it addresses more your responsibility. Here in Romans 8, it speaks more of your privileges. This chapter is full of them. If you're a child, then you're an heir as well. An heir is someone who receives property from someone else. God is the owner of all creation. He will give His property to you when you are

glorified with Christ. Christ is the heir and you are a joint heir with Him. Whatever you receive, it is always in connection with Him. This includes suffering.

If you suffer with Him, it proves you possess the new life. Here it is the kind of suffering our Lord Jesus knew when on earth. He suffered in this creation when He saw what sin had done and how it was doing its devastating work. You will suffer in the same way if you see the consequences of sin around you. What misuse man makes of what God has created! He uses everything for his own glory and satisfaction.

Don't you long for the moment when the inheritance, the creation, will again be in the hands of its rightful owner? Paul did. He was looking forward to the future glory he was going to see. The suffering he had to bear was nothing compared with the future glory. For us, this is an encouraging lesson. The more this glorious future becomes a reality to you, the more you will be able to bear the unpleasant things you experience as a believer.

What does the "revealing of the sons of God" mean in verse 19? This means a moment is coming when all the sons of God, all the believers, will *visibly* appear in this creation to reign over it together with the Lord Jesus. As a result of man's mismanagement, creation fails to yield as much as God intended. Despite all the attempts of man to reach a fair distribution of creation's riches, the chaos is steadily increasing. Man trusts in his abilities, but forgets he is fallen in sin. He has dragged creation along with him in his fall. So, creation has been made subject to vanity, not of its will, but by the conscious sin of man. And yet, there is hope for creation. She will be set free.

Currently the curse rests on creation like a slave's yoke. You can tell this by the corruption that attaches itself to everything. The corruption of the creation means that creation has been pulled downward to a lower state. She no longer has the glorious state of Eden. This pulling down is because of the corruption that entered creation along with sin. But the moment is close when the children of God will be in glory. When the Lord Jesus takes them away, they will really be free and out of the reach of the corruption in creation. And soon afterwards, the creation itself will be set free. Do you also look forward to this?

Now read Romans 8:15-21 again.

Reflection: *Can you say what Paul says in verse 18?*

Don't Be a Stumbling Block to Your Brother

Romans 14:15-23

53

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If I were to ask if you wanted to make a brother sad, you would say, "No!" And yet you can cause your brother to be sad by something you do when you are not walking according to love, even though you may be perfectly right in what you're doing. As to yourself, you see no trouble at all. With regard to the Lord, everything is all right, but this is not the whole story. You must also consider your brother or sister. And if they are saddened by something you do, you're not being led by love. "Love does no harm to a neighbor."^a You can even spiritually *destroy* someone (damage his spiritual well-being) for whom Christ has died with your eating (that is, making use of your liberty). This would be a very undesirable effect from the use of the liberty you now have.

a. Rom.13:10

To make things clear as to what your attitude should be regarding your brothers, Paul speaks about the kingdom of God. You and your brother were part of God's kingdom when you accepted the Lord Jesus. In the kingdom of God it's not eating and drinking that count. What counts is "righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit." Just as with the kingdoms of this world, you find a King and His subjects in the kingdom of God. Only the kingdom of God is not a visible kingdom with a visible king, but today, a hidden kingdom with a hidden King. The Lord Jesus is the King.

The Lord's name expresses the authority He exercises over His subjects. The Lord Jesus exercises this authority. His government is from heaven where He now is. In your life you can show He has authority over you by letting the Holy Spirit work in you. If you do this you'll be righteous in your interactions with others. You won't want to disturb the peace by pursuing your interests regardless of the conscience of others. If you deal in such a way with your brother, your fellow-subject in the same kingdom, then there will be joy in your heart. This

is really serving Christ. This is pleasing to God, and people around you will notice you are guided by different rules than the ones common to them and to the world around them.

You're exhorted to "pursue the things which make for peace and the things by which one may edify another." You must work at this. It will not happen automatically. Peace and godly instruction are more important than food. Physical needs aren't wrong. God wants to supply those needs, but they're subject to His work. They should not cause you to do things that make your brother stumble.

For example, I know a brother from an African country. In that country eating eggs is connected with idolatry. He is not yet free of this thought in connection with eggs. Now, suppose I usually eat an egg every day. Nothing wrong with that! But if this brother is having breakfast with me and I offer him an egg, this could cause him to fall. Or I might try to convince him there's nothing wrong in eating an egg. But if I urge him to do so, this could bring him into a serious problem with his conscience. If I am aware of this, it would be far better not to eat an egg at that moment. This may be applied in all kinds of ways.

Your faith in God and in the work of the Lord Jesus is a personal faith. It's not said you shouldn't witness of it. That faith has freed you from all kinds of traditions and habits that have nothing to do with serving God. You're even called *blessed* if you enjoy this freedom in Christ without constraint and without subjecting yourself to all sorts of rules that men may make. It doesn't matter if they're so-called Christian rules or if they're rules that people in the world adhere to. What is important is that in everyday practical life you are led by your faith and not by your feelings.

Faith is centered in God and in His Word. If you have doubts about something, don't do it. Live by your faith. Faith is not an expression of uncertainty, which is how the word is often used. People say, "I don't believe it's wrong." They mean, "I don't *think* it's wrong, but I'm not sure." But God has revealed His will to us. *Everything we do, without having asked for His will, is sin!* This is a strong statement of God's Word, isn't it?

Now read Romans 14:15-23 again.

Reflection: *What does the kingdom of God mean to you?*

Be Wise as to That Which is Good

Romans 16:17-24

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In Romans 14 you've seen that the brothers and sisters in the assembly in Rome didn't think the same about everything. This was about observing certain days and eating or not eating certain foods. In Rome there were brothers and sisters who were not yet completely free of the influences of Judaism. They had to learn to live with these differences and to bear with one another regarding them. But now Paul tells them something about people whom they shouldn't bear with. Tolerance is a fine characteristic in dealing with *weaknesses*, but tolerance is definitely wrong in dealing with wrong, sinful, unscriptural things. You cannot tolerate these things.

If there are people among the believers who generate division and offenses *contrary* to the doctrine that has been taught you, you *must* turn away from them. The devil is always trying to cause divisions and quarrels among believers. He often follows the same approach as the one he followed with Eve at the fall in the Garden of Eden at the beginning of the Bible. He comes with the crafty question, "Has God indeed said?"^a This is how he sowed doubt in Eve's heart about the things God had clearly said.

a. *Gen.3:1*

In the same way Satan tries to sow doubt among the believers about the doctrine. Doctrine is not a dull theory, but the living teaching of the Word of God. Yet there are always people who want to make you believe it's not really meant as said in the Bible and as you have learned it. You must "turn away from"^b these people. You hear these people speak more about themselves than about the Lord Jesus. They know exactly how to say or write things to mislead unsuspecting believers. These people don't serve our Lord Jesus, but their belly. It's only about themselves.

b. *Rom.16:17,*
JND

I hope it can be said of your obedience that it has "become known to all" and that other brothers and sisters have taken

notice of it. Then you won't fall prey to those who sow division. To protect yourself from these people you need to be wise as to what is good, but simple concerning evil. Therefore, occupy yourself with good things and not with evil. Occupy yourself with the Word of God and with the Lord Jesus. You don't have to inquire into the evil practices of this world to know how evil it all is. Rather, keep yourself far away from it. You shouldn't try out evil. If you do, it will bring you down.

A number of young people have played with occult games out of curiosity and have become entangled in the occult step by step. Some started with gambling only once and ended up as addicts. Others smoked one cigarette, with or without marijuana, to be tough, and ended up addicted in the drug scene. Don't try out sin! Take warning. The world you live in is now in Satan's hands. Maybe you know from bitter experience how corrupt the world is. If you've only recently been converted, you will abhor evil. Then you will keep yourself clear from it. Still, temptations will soon come to get you to join in again. Therefore, take care to be wise as to what is good. Keep on going with God!

Satan may hold sway in this world now; very soon he will be bruised under our feet. Do you know by whom? By the God of peace. What Satan wants is to bring discord. The God of peace will put an end to it. When you keep this before your eyes, you will keep peace in your heart. In this way the God of peace will remain your aim and Satan won't have an opportunity to occupy you with evil. To make this true in your life, you are wished "the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ."

Some more greetings follow from individual believers to the assembly in Rome. Tertius is among them. He wrote down what Paul dictated to him. This was how Paul usually wrote. As

a kind of signature he sometimes added a personal greeting at the end, as in 1 Corinthians 16:21. In an exceptional case he would write the letter himself. The situation in the assemblies in Galatia was so serious that Paul took pen in hand to write them about it.^a Whether or not Paul made use of a writer doesn't diminish the authority of what is written. He, as an apostle, was the author and sender.

a. Gal.6:11

God wants you to know everything written down in this letter to the Romans. Your justification before God was the main concern. But with this, not everything has been said that God has to say to you. In the last verses of this letter you'll read some more things that are in God's heart to make known to you.

Now read Romans 16:17-24 again.

Reflection: *How can you be wise as to what is good?*

60 A Doxology
Romans 16:25-27

Here, Paul arrives at praise to God. God is before him. God fills his whole vision. God is so great to him, that in these last verses he says things about God that go beyond the theme of the letter. Having talked about God and His gospel in such a way, his heart is too full to restrain himself (so to speak) from saying something about the “revelation of the mystery.”

The word *mystery* (used often in the New Testament) means that which was hidden in the Old Testament or was unknown, but has been made known in the New Testament. Paul doesn't dwell on this, but by mentioning it, he lets you know there is more than what you have discovered in this letter. This doesn't mean this letter is not as important. Without having studied this letter, you can forget about understanding anything of the mysteries. Paul's teachings in his other letters, especially in the ones to Colosse and Ephesus, are closely related to his letter to the Romans.

I would like to give you some good advice. Read the letter to the Romans regularly. Then you will remain in direct contact with the *basis* of your faith-life. On this basis you can build further studies in the Bible. God is mighty to establish you in what you have learned in this letter. Isn't the Lord Jesus everything to you? When the Word was preached, you came to know Him. He stands at the center of God's plans and thoughts. By accepting Him as Savior and Lord you're connected with Him.

The Lord Jesus is not on earth but in heaven. This means you're connected with the Lord in heaven, and because heaven is the dwelling-place of God and the Lord Jesus, you belong there also. You may ask, “Is that so special?” Yes, it is. Man was created to live on earth. The Old Testament shows this. The highest blessing the Old Testament believers knew was a life on

earth under the Messiah's reign. The Lord Jesus in His future millennial reign will be the central point of the earth. Every blessing will go out from Him over the whole earth and the whole earth will honor Him. The Old Testament believers longed for this time and they were looking forward to it. It will be a wonderful time.

But in the New Testament we have blessings that exceed this by far. In the time of the Old Testament, this could not be spoken of because it was hidden. But now it has been revealed! God has given the commandment to make known that people would be with the Lord Jesus in heaven. They are people who believe in the Lord Jesus since He has gone back to heaven. The Lord Jesus has then sent the Holy Spirit to earth to bring these people together. In other letters these people who are brought together are called the *Church* or *Assembly*. In those other letters you will discover what a huge privilege it is to belong to the Assembly.

In God's plan and heart, the Assembly existed before the world existed. To form the Assembly, God's commandment has gone out to preach Jesus Christ among the nations. Whoever submits himself to Him in faith will form part of the Assembly. Throughout eternity the Assembly will be in heaven in the Father's house. Throughout eternity, the Assembly will give glory and honor to Him who, in His great grace and love for man, has given such an all-surpassing position to men, though being sinners.

The only wise God was the only One who could devise this plan. His Son Jesus Christ was the only One who could execute it. Who would have formed the idea to elevate tiny human beings, murderers of God's Son, to the height of the Father's house? Who else but God could do this in a way that will bring

us to eternal admiration and adoration? He sent His Son to the world while knowing what men were going to do with Him! And at the same place where people murdered the Lord Jesus, the same people could receive all the blessings that God had on His heart to give. Through Jesus Christ and His work at the cross, God will forever be given the glory that only He is worthy of.

Now read Romans 16:25-27 again.

Reflection: Give God honor for all He has shown you of Himself and of His Son.

Ger de Koning
2004