

Introduction:

1. When Peter said Paul had written some things that are hard to understand (2 Peter 3:16), I am sure he had the book of Romans in mind. It contains some things that are difficult.
 - a. It is often the case that the difficult things in a book are lifted out of context by false teachers and used to teach doctrines that actually conflict with the rest of the Bible.
 - b. We need to understand those difficult texts for two reasons: First, so we can understand God's plan for our lives. Second, so we can be on guard against false teachers.
2. In this study we will address four verses from the book of Romans in their contexts. There may be other hard verses beyond these, but these are four that seem most difficult.

The Lesson:

I. Romans 5:12.

- A. This is a verse that is abused by Calvinists—those who believe all men are born in sin.
 1. It is claimed that when Adam sinned, that his sin was automatically passed to all men.
 2. Thus, everyone born of Adam's race is born a sinner—the doctrine of original sin.
- B. What does Romans 5:12 teach in its context?
 1. The chapter is about salvation—reconciliation to God--through Christ, Romans 5:1, 11.
 2. Christ came into the world to undo what Adam had done. Adam introduced sin into the world; Jesus came to address man's sin problem. Adam is introduced in verse 12.
 3. Verse 12 speaks of spiritual death. When Adam sinned, he died spiritually; that is, he was separated from God (see Romans 6:23). Spiritual death passed to all men. Why? Because all sinned—we followed Adam! Spiritual death came to us because you and I both sinned. Our death came because of our sin. We are guilty of our own sin, not Adam's.
 4. Verses 13-14: Sin was in the world from Adam to Moses, even though men did not commit the same sin as Adam. They committed their own sins. They violated God's laws.
 5. Verses 15-17: Adam, as a type of Christ (v. 14), became the head of a long line of sinners, just as Christ became the head of a long line of righteous men. There are similarities between Adam and Christ. One man brought sin; another brought righteousness.
 6. Verses 18-19: In the same way that many are made sinners by Adam, even so, many are made righteous by Christ. How are many made righteous by Christ? In this way: He set the example of obedience; we follow Him and are made righteous. In just this same way, men are made sinners by Adam's disobedience; Adam sinned and we follow his example.
- C. Romans 5:12 does not help the Calvinist. The question to ask is not whether we are made sinners by Adam's disobedience, but whether it is unconditional. Does Christ make all men righteous unconditionally? However it happens with Christ, it happens the same with Adam. You and I became sinners by following Adam's example; we are saved by following Christ.

II. Romans 7:17.

- A. This verse is also abused by Calvinists and is perplexing to many Christians.
 1. Calvinists claim that man is not responsible for his own sin. "It is not I who do it."
 2. Christians are troubled by this text because it seems to say Christians continue in sin.
- B. What does Romans 7:17 teach in its context?
 1. Chapter seven must be paired with chapter eight. In seven, the apostle portrays himself as a man under Moses' Law. In eight, he describes himself as one under the gospel.
 2. Note the terms used to describe the man in chapter seven: carnal (14), sold under sin {a slave, bondage} (14), captivity (23), wretched (24), death (24), sin dwells in him (17).
 3. Contrast the terms in chapter seven with those found in chapter eight: spiritual (6), adopted son (15) free (1), peace (6), life (6), God's Spirit dwells in him (9).
 4. These two chapters constitute a "before and after" picture. Chapter seven discusses the frustration of a man who tries to be justified by a law keeping system. Chapter eight shows the glorious liberty and life that belong to the man whose sins are forgiven.
- C. "Sin dwells" in Romans 7:17 is a way of saying he was under the control of sin. This is about a man before he became a Christian, not about a man walking by the gospel. How do you walk?

III. Romans 9:15.

- A. This is another verse that is abused by the Calvinists.
 - 1. They argue that God decides who is going to receive mercy and who will go to heaven—which is true—but they argue from this that it is all up to God and man has no part in it!
 - 2. Christians look at this and think “Maybe the Calvinist has a point.” That’s a mistake!
- B. What does Romans 9:15 teach in its context?
 - 1. Chapters 9-11 go together as a unit in Romans. They address the salvation of the Jewish people. While the Jews had rejected Jesus, God still offered salvation to them.
 - 2. The Jews were very happy with God’s decisions in the past, but they were not happy with His present decision to save Gentiles. His past decisions involved blessing Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (9:6-13). He had also blessed the Jewish people by freeing them from Egypt. Israel could boast about the wisdom of God and His great decisions in the past.
 - 3. They were not happy with His present decision to only save those who are in Christ. They were especially unhappy at His choice to include Gentiles in His salvation.
 - 4. Romans 9:15 is a text that addresses God’s decisions about salvation. This statement was first made to Moses in Exodus 33:19 when God was about to be merciful to Moses by revealing Himself to him. Moses was familiar with this concept because he had seen it when Pharaoh refused to let the captive Israelites go free. God said, “I am going to be merciful and compassionate on Israel; I will free them from captivity.” Pharaoh said, “No you won’t. I will not let them go.” Did Pharaoh’s stubborn heart prevent God from being merciful to His people? It did not! God did what He wanted. The Jews said, “Praise God!”
 - 5. Now, in the time of the gospel, God offers salvation to the Gentiles (as well as the Jews). He is going to be merciful to all the nations. The Jews (just like Pharaoh did) protest, and try to tell God that He cannot do that! But God will do as He pleases and will not allow the stubborn Jews to hinder Him (9:24-25).
- C. Romans 9:15 does not teach Calvinistic predestination, or that man has no part in salvation. It rather teaches that God will determine and carry out His own plan and that no man—neither Pharaoh, nor the Jews, nor anyone—can prevent God from doing His own will! This means you (a Gentile) can be saved, even though the Jews of Paul’s day would protest greatly!

IV. Romans 11:26.

- A. This verse is abused by premillennialists (and others) who think Israel is God’s people today.
 - 1. They argue that every Jewish person will be saved just because he is of Israel.
 - 2. Christians may be perplexed at this verse because that’s how it appears at first glance.
- B. What does Romans 11:26 teach in its context?
 - 1. Remember that this chapter is part of that unit that addresses the salvation of the Jews.
 - 2. In context, we can automatically eliminate the fallacy that all Jews will be saved. See Romans 9:27; 10:1; 11:5; 11:14. These verses are shocking to people who believe every Israelite will be saved. But, people need to learn that there has never been a time when everyone in the nation of Israel was right with God! Never! It was always just the remnant.
 - 3. In Romans 11:26 the apostle is talking about how Israel would be saved. In verse 17, the Jews (some of the branches of the olive tree) were broken off and Gentiles were grafted in. The Jews were broken off because of their unbelief toward Christ. But, what if they changed? What if they did not continue in their unbelief? Could they be saved? See verse 23. This is how the Jews (who were broken off from God’s people) could be saved.
 - 4. They would be saved by the Deliverer—Jesus. They would be saved when they accepted the New Covenant. “*And so all Israel will be saved,*” that is, *in this way* or *in this manner*.
 - 5. Verse 26 is not a promise that every Jew would be saved, but that all would be saved in this way. “But what about the word *all*?” Compare John 6:45 and 1 Timothy 4:10. “All” in these verses does not indicate everyone is saved, but that provision is made for all.
- C. In context, Romans 11:26 is the worst place to go to try to prove every Jew will be saved.

Conclusion:

- 1. Ultimately, all these verses (and all of Romans) teach that all men are saved in the same way. We all became sinners in the same way—by disobedience. We all are saved by obedient faith.
- 2. The big picture in Romans: God offers salvation to all men. Are you a partaker of His salvation?