

# The “Romans Road” Without Detours, Bypasses, and Dead-End Streets

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**A** family friend was travelling with his motor home in another state. Night came upon him, and he stopped in a town along the way to ask a local person if they knew of a quiet, secure place close by where he might park and sleep for the night. “Sure,” replied the helpful man, and proceeded to give him some simple directions to a place not too far away.

Faithfully following the details, our friend made the correct turns and finally dead-ended ... right in the local cemetery! He never found out how hard the man giving the directions had laughed after he had pulled away.

Have you ever followed directions, only to end up where you didn't want to be? Or found out later that your map or GPS deceived you, taking you the “the long way around,” or perhaps to the wrong destination? It wasn't that you didn't follow the directions well; the map or GPS was simply wrong!

I appreciate bypasses. Most of them anyways, like when I am in a hurry to get to the other side of town. But a recent discovery has led me to realize that a well-known map used by many travelers is in error, and is leading men and women down streets and into a final end where they were never intended to end up at. This map is so well known and highly valued, that it seems no one even questions its authority. It is the so-called “Romans Road to Salvation.” This map is advertised with the following words: “If you walk down this road you will end up understanding how to be saved.”

The problem with the maps I have seen is that they have several bypasses in them, detours that take men onto a route that ends up on a dead-end street. Well, let me rephrase those words “dead-end street.” It would be more proper to call it “a street that ends up among the dead.” Just like my friend ended up in a graveyard, men who follow the typical Romans Road maps will end up among the dead.

Yes, that's right! Those popular Romans Road maps totally bypass some very important truths in Paul's letter to

the Romans. Let's take a look at Romans again, carefully, and look at a few points the popular road maps have detoured around. Unfortunately, a short article does not provide enough space to make a full commentary on Paul's letter to the Romans, so this short article is not intended to be a complete package in and of itself. It is written with the simple goal of alerting the reader of some missing aspects of the typical “Romans Road” map.

## Before we begin ...

I want the reader of this article to note two things before he/she continues reading:

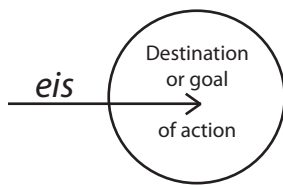
1. I will be referencing the Greek text in this article. No one needs to feel pressured, feel stupid, or feel like knowing Greek is essential to understanding the Bible. There is nothing wrong with the English wording; I refer to the Greek to give us synonyms (which often get our minds out of theological ruts) and to help guide us in the meaning of the English prepositions, which can vary greatly in meaning. The definition we apply to the preposition can entirely change our perspective. Which brings us to point two ...
2. As will be seen, those little prepositions (words like “for,” “by,” “of,” “through,” etc.) can change the whole meaning of a sentence, depending upon the definition applied to them. We tend to never look up their meanings in the dictionary, because we all know what “by” (for example) means, right? If this article does nothing else, it will challenge us to carefully consider the major influence of the definition that we place on prepositions. I encourage us all to not pass over the prepositions lightly.

## The purpose of grace—*eis* obedience

Paul begins his letter with a lengthy salutation, and quickly brings in the topic of Jesus the Anointed. He declares Jesus to be both human (v. 3) and divine (v. 4). His divinity was proved by the authority that He manifested over death. Paul then immediately makes clear that it was by means of Jesus that “we have received grace and apostleship.”

Stop for a moment at the next word in verse 5: “for.” Don’t bypass that little word. Its significance is important.

Readers of the last issue of *The Heartbeat of the Remnant* may remember that same word expounded upon in 1 Corinthians 11:15 and remember that “for” has many meanings—27 are listed in my unabridged dictionary.



## The Greek pronoun “eis” (into) points to the goal of the action. Grace is to take us “eis” obedience!

But don’t jump your guns! This time around the Greek word is not “*anti*,” but a different preposition: “*eis*.” While “*anti*” means “right in front of,” “*eis*” indicates an “entering into.” Picture a circle with an arrow going from the exterior “into” the interior. That is “*eis*.” “*Eis*” is used to focus on destination, where something is to end up at, the goal.

So here we are, looking at “grace and apostleship,” and wondering just where that is to take us next. Very simple ... into (*eis*) obedience to the faith among all nations!

Let’s take a brief look at Ephesians 2:10. I know this is outside of Romans, but the teaching is so similar that we can reinforce it with this verse: “For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.” Why were we created in Christ Jesus? “Unto good works!” Although the preposition used here is *epi* and not *eis*, the meaning is so similar in this case that *eis* could have easily been used. Look! The purpose of our creation in Christ Jesus was so that we could move into good works!

Back to Romans 1:5. The sentence doesn’t stop at “unto obedience to the faith among all nations.” We find another “for” following the word “nations.” And we find yet another Greek preposition translated as English “for.” (“For” is truly a flexible word!) This time the Greek word “*uper*” is used. This preposition is transliterated as “hyper,” which we see a

lot in modern English, such as *hyperactive*, or if someone is *hyped up*. Reduced to a one-word translation, “over” is the best we can do in English. But the idea is that of being “over and beyond, more than.”

Back to our text, we saw that grace was given to take us into obedience, then, “and over and beyond (*uper*) that, to glorify His name.”

The summary of Romans 5:1 is this: The reason grace was given to us is so that we could enter into obedience, so that His name would be glorified.

A very fundamental aspect that your typical Romans Road map detours around is the fact that God ultimately saves men for His glory, not for man’s good. God is saving you so that He gets glorified, not so you can feel happy in eternity! This is such a shocking new way to look at salvation, and the “why” of it all, that you will—if you are like me—need many days and weeks and months to ponder the whole thing before it will sink in enough to radically affect how you view Christianity. I urge you to ponder it well. I urge you to meditate on the fact that the ultimate reason why God sent grace into this world is NOT to make men happy and get them to heaven, BUT TO BRING GLORY TO HIS NAME!

Before parting this theme, let’s turn to Ezekiel 36. For the sake of space, the text is omitted here. But you need to read the whole chapter. And please do read it, right now, if you are not familiar with it.

In this chapter, God is promising to do marvelous things for His people. Promise after promise after glorious promise! Now, let’s focus on verse 22 and see *why* God is doing this. Was He doing it for their sake? NO! “I do this not for your sakes, O house of Israel, but for my holy name’s sake ...”

Then come more promises, including the giving of a new heart (v. 26), the sending of the Holy Spirit (v. 27), deliverance from uncleanness (v. 29), and glorious fruitfulness.

Then God drops the bombshell on us again as to *why* He will do these things.

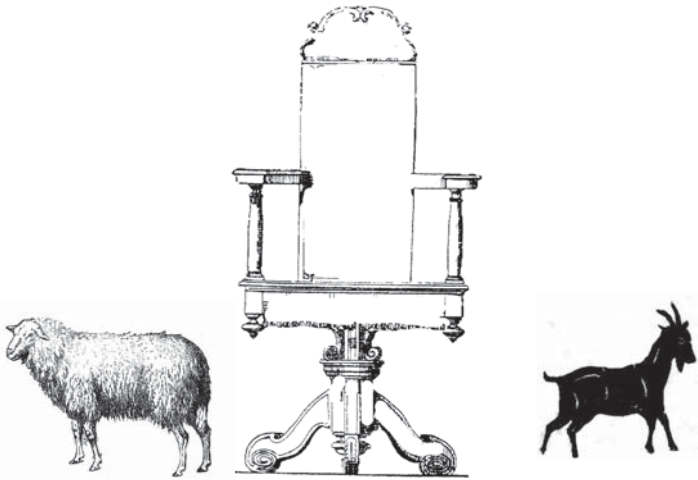
For our sake? NO! If you don’t believe me, then read verse 32: “Not for your sakes do I this, saith the Lord God ...” Does it shock you that God did not plan our salvation for our sake, but for His sake? It did me!

When we think of the Romans Road to salvation, we need to make sure that we do not bypass this fundamental truth.

**Did you know?**  
The main reason  
God saves  
man is for His  
glory, not man’s  
happiness?  
Ezekiel 36

## What will determine our entrance into heaven?

The next detour on the typical Romans Road map that we want to examine is the detour around Romans 2:5-16. The topic of these verses is the final judgment. Paul is explaining to the Romans what it is that will determine their eternal destiny, the criteria that God will judge them by. Verse 6 is really pretty plain: “Who will render to every man according to his deeds.” That is pretty clear, but we could make it plainer yet, perhaps, by using the two synonyms. The first is replacing “render” with “give,” and the second is to replace “deeds” with the word “works.” And before we do that, it should be made clear that the word “deeds” is from the same Greek word that “works” is translated from: *ergon*. They are completely interchangeable words, with practically no difference in their meaning. So, we end up with, “Who will give to every man according to his works.”



**Before the great white throne, our works will determine if we are a sheep or a goat.**

We really do not need to explain what this verse does NOT say, but just for clarification, let's list a few things that this verse does NOT say:

- Who will give to every man according to his hopes.
- Who will give to every man according to his doctrines.
- Who will give to every man according to his beliefs.
- Who will give to every man according to his faith.

Paul goes on to give us the two options at the final judgment. Verse 7 is option one, in which those who patiently persist in doing good works, seeking glory and honor and immortality, will be given eternal life. Verses 8-9 show us option two, in which the reward of those who disobey God is revealed. These will receive tribulation and anguish. Then Paul switches back (v. 10) to those who do good, and adds glory, honor, and peace to their reward.

Perhaps some may quibble about my phrase in the preceding paragraph about “patiently persist in doing good works.” My choice of words was deliberate. The word “doing” in verse 7 comes from the same word as “deeds” in verse 6, *ergon*; and in Acts 9:36, Romans 13:3, Ephesians 2:10, and other verses, the very same Greek words used in Romans 2:7 (doing good) are translated as “good works.” It is not a mistranslation to translate that verse like this: “To those who—seeking for glory, honor, and deathlessness—persist in good works, eternal life [will be given].”

Does that mess up your Romans Road map? If it does, you would do well to revise your map. That fact that we will all be judged by our works is reaffirmed by every—and I mean *every*—judgment scene presented to us from Matthew to Revelation. I know that is another shocking revelation to those of us who have been told—time after time after time—by the marketers of the typical Romans Road maps that good works have nothing to do with our salvation. But it is an indisputable fact that our works will determine our final destiny. Our beliefs will not be figured in the decision on that last great day.

## The source of being made righteous—**Ex** faith

Our next look at the Romans Road is not really about a detour, but rather what could possibly be called a misreading of the road signs, a misinterpretation. I am referring to another little pronoun, “by.”

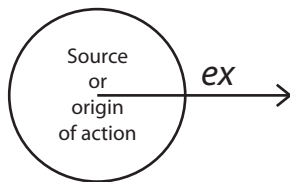
In particular, I am looking at this word “by” in connection with the word “faith.” Eight times the phrase “by faith” is used by Paul in his letter to the Roman brothers and sisters. The first occurrence is in chapter 1, verse 17, where Paul quotes from one of the prophets, saying, “The just shall live by faith.”

What does that little word “by” mean? Like “for,” “by” is quite a bendable little word, but with only 14 different entries for it in my unabridged dictionary instead of 27. Looking at the original language for some guidance as to what the intention is, we see the Greek preposition “*ex*,” sometimes spelled “*ek*.”

Ah! “*Ex*,” we all know what that is, right? *Ex*-Catholic, *ex*-miner, *ex*-president, *ex*-druggie ... “*Ex*” tells us the exact opposite of “*eis*.” Remember “*eis*”? We found that “*eis*” starts on the outside and goes into, indicating the destination, or the final goal. Well, turn that arrow around and start it on the inside and make it go out of the circle, and you have “*ex*.” You know what an *exit* is, don't you? You go out of something when you *exit*; out the door, out of the interstate highway system, out of the airplane.

Before proceeding any further, let's meditate a moment on someone who *exits* a building. If I say, “John went out the exit,” you know where he originated from, but you have

no idea whatsoever where John ended up. You only know where he started from. In the same way, if I say “John is an *ex*-Buddhist,” you know where John came from, but can you tell me what religion he now is? Can you tell me what all he went through on his way to get to his present religion? No!



## The Greek pronoun “*ex*” (of) reveals the source of the action. Uprightness of character is “*ex*” (of, from) faith!

*Ex* only indicates origin or source. So if we say that “the just shall live *ex* (by) faith,” the only thing we can learn from that is that faith is the origin of life. That tells us nothing whatsoever where that life will take the just man. There is no indication where or what the final destination shall be of “the just.” All we know is that righteousness starts *ex* (from) faith.

Now let’s apply the same to Romans 5:23, where Paul states a conclusion: “a man is justified *ex* (by) faith, without the deeds of the law.”

The only thing we really learn from Paul’s statement is the source—the foundation—of the process that turns an unrighteous man into a righteous man. Paul’s conclusion really does not state what all else might be involved in the process, nor the final steps. In fact, we do not know if this is the only step, or if there are three other steps in the process, or 13 steps in the process. All we are told is the origin, the source, the beginning. All Paul has concluded here is that becoming righteous does not begin with doing the works of the Mosaic law. Becoming righteous does not start with sabbath days and circumcision. It starts in faith, “outside the territory of”<sup>1</sup> new moons, animal sacrifices, and other Mosaic ceremonies.

Remember how we talked about knowing nothing about where John went if all we know is that he exited the building? Or what religion he now professed if all we know is that he is an *ex*-Buddhist? In the same way, we do not know everything about justification from the simple phrase “*ex* faith.”

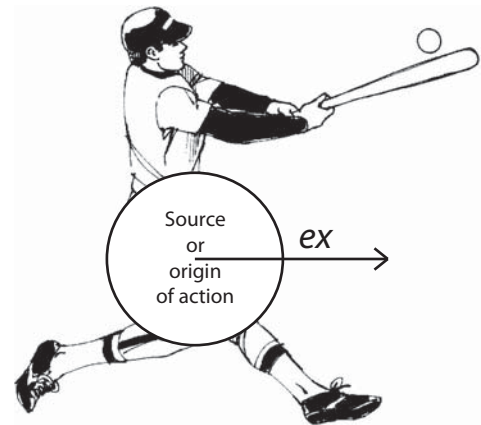
Do you get the point? The phrase “a man is justified *ex* (by) faith” is not saying that faith is the only thing involved in becoming righteous. It only tells us the beginning, or the source.

<sup>1</sup> Different way of saying the Greek word “*choris*,” which the KJV translates as “apart from.”

Perhaps a little analogy would help. I assume everyone reading this is familiar with the basic rules of baseball. The batter hits the ball, and then tries to run around all the bases without getting tagged. If he hits the ball hard enough, he may well be able to run around all the bases and get back home without having to stop at one of the bases. If he does make it all the way safely back home without stopping, it is called “hitting a home run.”

Now, let’s make a conclusion about hitting a home run, using our Greek preposition “*ex*” translated into English “by.” We can say that a home run is “*ex*” (by) hitting the ball. What does that tell us? It tells us that the home run came, started, or originated from that solid smack of the ball to the uttermost corner of the field. Does that mean there is no running of the bases involved? No, of course not. All it means is that the home run’s origin was the good hit. The batter must then run to first base, then to second, then to third, and finally back to home base to complete his home run. If he hits the ball clear over the fence and then refuses to run the bases, would his team get a “run” scored on their side. No!

And yet we can truthfully say that a home run is by (*ex*) hitting the ball. And Paul could truthfully say that justifi-



## A home run is “*ex*” (by) hitting the ball.

cation is by (*ex*) faith. Was he saying that justification involves only faith? NO!!! All we can safely conclude is that becoming righteous has its source in faith. Paul then goes on to clarify that justification also begins “outside the territory of” doing the works prescribed by the Mosaic law. There may or may not be more than faith involved in justification. Romans 5:23 does not tell us if there are bases to run or not. It only concludes that a home run (justification) has its beginnings in a good smack of the ball (faith).

My whole point in this section concerning the phrase “by faith” is this: theologians have misinterpreted this phrase to mean that justification is totally accomplished by faith all by itself, when in fact it only indicates that justification originates or has its source in faith.

Check your Romans Road maps well, my friends! Make sure the road signs have not been misinterpreted!

## Grace kingdomizing

What!?!? Kingdomizing? Let me explain ...

Turn your Bibles to Romans 5:21, to another very powerful verse that the typical Romans Road maps bypass. Here we read, “so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.”

Let’s dissect this verse into smaller pieces for easier digestion. First, the words “grace reign.”

“Grace” is the noun, the subject. And it is doing something. Grace is kingdomizing!

Taking a look at the Greek text again, we see “*basileuse*.” The interesting thing about this word is that it is a verb, from the same root as the Greek word for “kingdom.” In our English language, “reign” is a good translation, perhaps the best official English translation available. “Kingdomize” is not an official English word, but it gives us a good word picture. Or, perhaps an even better word picture is to phrase it, “*grace makes kingdom happen through righteousness.*”

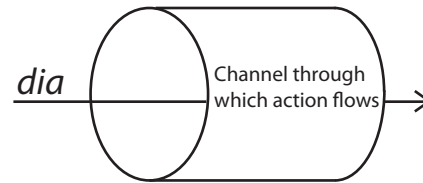
The purpose of Christ’s coming was to set up a kingdom, that is, to organize an “alternative society” that reigns over sin, self, Satan, death, and hell. And, Paul gives us a beautiful picture of grace “kingdomizing.” In previous times, our verse tells us, sin used to be king, bringing us to death. But now, grace abounds (v. 20) so that grace may kingdomize us *eis* (into—remember that preposition *eis*, with its reference to *goal or destination?*) eternal life.

Let’s look now at the phrase “through righteousness.” “Through” is another preposition, but with only eight definitions in my dictionary. Looking at the Greek for some guidance, we see *dia*. *Dia* is pretty simple to get the idea of, since we have so many English words that are prefixed with *dia*:- Diagram, diameter, diarrhea, etc.

The Greek preposition *dia* is used to indicate the channel by which something is accomplished. *Dia* is the pipe, so to speak, that is used to carry out the action of the verb. That is why it is translated “through.” At the gas station, you put gas in your car *dia* (through) the nozzle and hose that comes from the gas pump. In the same way, grace kingdomizes a person into eternal life *dia* (through, or by means of) righteous living.

Paul ends the verse by telling us that the whole operation is *dia* Jesus Christ our Lord. Here, the KJV uses “by,” in the sense of “by means of.” This last phrase sort of sums up the channel through which the whole operation flows—Jesus!

We end up with Paul telling us that in the same way that sin used to extend its kingdom in us, taking us into death, now grace would kingdomize in us, and by means of upright living would take us into eternal life—all through the “channel” of Jesus!



**The Greek preposition “dia” indicates the channel through which the action flows. Paul tells us that grace would “make kingdom happen” in us “dia” Jesus!**

## The dead-end street

Remember the family friend I mentioned at the beginning, the one who ended up on a dead-end street in a cemetery? Well, your typical Romans Road map has a dead-end street in it, and unfortunately, most of them end up leading you there. Can you imagine!?

You see, most of the Romans Road maps that I have seen end up saying essentially that the road to heaven is called “Faith-Alone Avenue.” This well-known route is travelled by many pilgrims in search of eternal life. But it always dead-ends—just like my friend—among the dead.

The only place in the KJV where the words “faith” and “alone” are in the same verse is in a verse that also contains the word “dead”: “Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone.” Ja. 2:17

Dear reader, “Faith-Alone Avenue” is a dead-end street!

## Conclusion

Putting some of the above points together, suddenly a different picture begins to emerge than what the typical Romans Road map gives. We see faith in God as a source from which springs the opportunity to experience a grace that will reign in us, leading us into obedience, righteous living, and eternal life. We then have no fear of the judgment day, in which our works will determine our destiny. This is because faith and grace have kingdomized us into a fruitful life of good works. God has performed the whole operation for one cause—for His name’s sake, for His glory! And all this was channeled through Jesus!

My friends, I sincerely suggest that you wad your old Romans Road map up and toss it *eis* (into) the trash can. Then, get out a fresh sheet of paper *ex* (out of) your drawer and carefully begin a new map, going through the Bible verse by verse, slowly and carefully. And, please, please do not use the few points in this short article as a complete “Romans Road” map. What I have written here is incomplete, a few points chosen out of many, just to highlight a couple of missing points. I reiterate: This article is NOT a complete Romans Road map.

And to you, dear young brother or sister who is just starting on your journey to heaven, I have some sincere advice. The book of Romans is filled with some of the deeper intricacies of Christian theology. Even the apostle Peter wrote that Paul's letters contain "some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction." 2 Pe. 3:16 You would do well, young reader, to begin your Christian life with a focus on Jesus' teachings. Focus first on the example and commands of Christ, and then let Paul's letter to the Romans reinforce what Jesus taught. Too many people have "wrested" Paul's writings—separating them from Jesus' life and teachings—and then come up with what is supposed to be a simple "Romans Road Map to Heaven." But as we have seen, there are too many bypasses, detours, and dead-end streets in their maps.

Do you know that I have never, ever—not one single time—seen a Romans Road map that included Jesus' simple and clear statement that one cannot be His disciple if he does not take up the cross and follow Him? Taking up your cross is an absolute must, yet not one single Romans Road map has ever included that important step. I know that this teaching is not in Paul's letter to the Romans, but that just shows the folly of trying to make a roadmap to heaven out of one part of the New Testament. When you begin redrawing your roadmap to heaven, start with Jesus' teachings and life, and include the whole of the New Testament.

Fare ye well, fellow pilgrims! May grace abound in you and kingdomize you *eis* obedience. You will then have no fear of the coming Judgment Day! ~