

The Letter Of Paul To The Romans

Intro: This morning we begin a study of Paul's Letter to the Christians in Rome. As the opening words of the letter indicate, the apostle Paul wrote this book. Paul was anxious to minister to the believers in Rome, so he wrote this letter to prepare the way for his coming visit (15:14-17). It was written from Corinth, in A.D. 57. Having completed his work in the eastern part of the Roman Empire, Paul intended to travel to Rome, and then on to Spain; but first he needed to travel to Jerusalem to deliver the money he had collected for the poor saints there (Rom. 15:19-32; cf., Acts 19:21). Phoebe, who resided in Cenchreae, the sea port to the east of Corinth, is believed to have delivered the letter to Rome (16:1-2). We are not sure how or who actually founded the church in Rome. Most scholars believe that Jewish pilgrims, who had traveled to Jerusalem for Passover and Pentecost, experienced conversion on the Day of Pentecost and carried the *good news* of salvation available through faith in Jesus Christ back to Rome.

Romans is all about Good News. Many biblical scholars are of the opinion that Romans is without a doubt the greatest presentation of the Christian Gospel to be found anywhere. Of all the Pauline epistles, Romans has exerted the most influence on Christian thought! Martin Luther said of Romans: "It is the chief book of the New Testament." Godet called it "A virtual cathedral of Christian doctrine." B. H. Carroll stated: "It is the most fundamental, vital, logical, profound, and systematic discussion of the whole plan of salvation in all the literature of the world"

The theme of Romans is the Gospel or Good News (1:16-17)

Romans 1:16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. **17** For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "BUT THE RIGHTEOUS man SHALL LIVE BY FAITH."

More specifically, the Gospel is a revelation of God's righteousness, which is understood and appropriated by faith in God's Son Jesus Christ. Paul explains that this "righteousness from God" is first the righteousness that God Himself possesses and manifests in all His actions; and second, it is the righteousness that God gives to human beings by grace through faith. God's imputed righteousness provides a salvation not based on human works or merit, but one based solely on what God has done in providing justification by grace through faith in His Son, Jesus Christ.

Perhaps the great contribution of Paul's letter to the Romans is his reasoned explanation of how God's righteousness can become man's possession.

Look with me this morning at Paul's opening section in chapter 1, verses 1-17

I. The Righteousness Of God Revealed In The Gospel (1:1-17)

A. Salutation: The gospel concerning God's Son (vv. 1-7)

B. Thanksgiving: For the Roman Believers' Faith (vv. 8-15)

C. Theme: The gospel of the righteousness of God (vv. 16-17)

A. Salutation: The gospel concerning God's Son (vv. 1-7)

In this first main section, Paul follows the customary formula for letters in ancient times: he names and identifies himself as the author (vv. 1-6), names and identifies the recipients as the Romans (v. 7a), and issues a warm greeting (v. 7b). Paul followed the normal conventions of the day, in spite of a rather lengthy digression concerning the gospel or good news he was about to share with them in this letter.

1. Paul's call and commission (v. 1)

Paul explains that he was called to be an apostle, and set apart to share the gospel by God.

v. 1—Paul, a bond-servant of Christ Jesus, called as an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God

Paul identified himself as a bond-servant of Christ Jesus. He was a *doulos* or slave, one who had sworn total allegiance to his Master, Jesus Christ. He also identified himself as an apostle—one called by and sent out with the delegated authority of Jesus Christ. The apostles were specially chosen by Christ, and had to have seen the risen Lord (Acts 9:22; Gal. 1:1). They served as the foundation of the New Testament Church (Eph. 2:20). Christ was the Chief Cornerstone!

Paul says he was set apart for the gospel of God. Specifically, he was appointed to serve as the apostle to the Gentiles (v. 5; Acts 9:15). Paul was appointed to share the good news that God had provided salvation through His Son Jesus Christ. The death of Christ provided the full payment for the penalty of sin, and anyone who believes in the resurrected Christ is forgiven and has eternal life.

2. Paul's explanation of the good news he shared (vv. 2-7)

a. It was promised in the Old Testament (v. 2)

Paul explains in verse 2 that God promised this good news beforehand through His prophets in the holy Scriptures. The Old Testament scriptures anticipated the coming of God's Son, Jesus Christ. God had promised to send His Son to deal with the problem of man's sin, and to establish His righteous rule and peace on earth. The Old Testament prophets predicted His coming, the Old Testament sacrifices, offerings, and ceremonies all looked forward to Him. Faithful men and women all through the ages longed for His coming. As the Old Testament closed He still hadn't come.

However, as the New Testament dawns, an angel appears to some shepherds who were tending their flocks on a hillside just outside Bethlehem. The angel's message to the shepherds was this, "Behold I bring you good news of great joy which shall be for all the people; For today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord" (Luke 2:7-14). **This is good news friends. The Savior had finally come.**

The One who had been anticipated since the day Adam and Eve sinned, had finally come. He had come to provide eternal salvation from sin for all those who would put their faith in Him. This is the good news Paul wants to talk about. God had sent forth His son born of woman, to be the Savior of the world. This good news was predicted and looked forward to for thousands of years. And now it has come to pass. Paul was committed to sharing this good news.

Not only was the good news Paul shared promised in the Old Testament, it centers on the Person of God's Son, Jesus Christ, verses 3-4

b. It centers on the Person of God's Son, Jesus Christ (vv. 3-4)

v. 3—The good news concerns God's Son, who was born of a descendant of David according to the flesh.

Paul explains that the gospel centers on God's Son, Jesus Christ, who was both human and divine. God's eternal Son became a man through the

virgin conception. This is important because only a human being could take the place of other human beings. Jesus Christ, Paul says, “Was born of a descendant of David according to the flesh.” He was a man.

But that’s not all. Jesus not only became a man, but His resurrection from the dead validated His claims to be the eternal Son of God, v. 4,

v. 4—He was declared to be the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead, according to the Spirit of holiness, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Now, as we all know, Jesus Christ always was the divine Son of God. He is the Son of God from all eternity, but the Father declared Him to be the Son by resurrecting Him. Paul’s point however is that on that first Sunday morning Jesus Christ emerged from a garden tomb near Jerusalem, after having been dead three days, and was declared to be the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead, according to the Spirit of holiness.

As the eternal Son of God, Jesus had power and authority even over death. His resurrection from the dead validated His claims to deity and His predictions that He would rise from the dead (John 2:18-22; Matt. 16:21). Jesus’ resurrection from the dead validated His claims to be God. As the Son of God He is an eternal being.

The fact that Jesus rose victorious over death is good news. His death paid the penalty for sin. Only an eternal being could pay the infinite price our sin demanded.

Not only was the good news Paul shared promised in the OT, centered in the Person of God’s Son, Jesus Christ, it is available to all men, vv. 5-7,

c. It is available to all men (vv. 5-7)

v. 5—through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith among all the Gentiles, for His name’s sake,

Paul wants these Roman Christians to know that he had received the special grace (gift) of being appointed the apostle to the Gentiles. The gospel he preached as an apostle was able to bring all people, not just

Jews, to faith in Christ. The purpose of Paul's apostleship was not merely to bring people to conversion in Christ, but also to bring about transformed lives that were consistently obedient to God.

Paul informs his readers that they too were responsible to share the good news about God's forgiveness and life available through Jesus Christ v. 6

v. 6—among whom you also are the called of Jesus Christ; 7 to all who are beloved of God in Rome, called as saints.

As the called of Jesus Christ, the believers in Rome were saints, those set apart by God to live out and to share the good news about Jesus Christ. As one writer suggests, "God's call is not an invitation but a powerful and effective reaching out to claim individuals for himself" (Robert H. Mounce, *Romans*, 63).

By way of application, each of us are responsible to share the good news of God's love and forgiveness with the lost in our sphere of influence.

Paul concludes his introductory greeting in verse 7

v. 7—"Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ."

Verse 7 actually continues the thought Paul began in verse 1, verses 2-6 record a parenthetical digression on the good news Paul preached. "Grace" and "peace" were common greetings in Greek and Jewish letters in Paul's day. God's grace is both His unmerited favor and His divine enablement. It is the basis for any true human peace. The Hebrew concept of peace (*shalom*) referred to the peace believers enjoy with God through faith in God's Son, Jesus Christ.

Paul moves from his greeting in verses 1-7 to express Thanksgiving for these Roman Believers' faith, vv. 8-15

B. Thanksgiving: For the Roman Believers' Faith (vv. 8-15)

v. 8—First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, because your faith is being proclaimed throughout the whole world.

Paul thanks God for establishing the gospel of Jesus Christ in Rome, the capital of the Roman Empire. He is especially thankful that the faith of these Roman believers was being proclaimed throughout the whole Roman world.

In verses 9-10 Paul called on God as his witness to validate his claim to have unceasingly prayed for these Roman Christians, particularly that he might be permitted to visit them, vv. 9-10

9 For God, whom I serve in my spirit in the preaching of the gospel of His Son, is my witness as to how unceasingly I make mention of you, **10** always in my prayers making request, if perhaps now at last by the will of God I may succeed in coming to you. **Paul longed to meet these Roman Christians.**

He longed to see them in order that he might impart some spiritual blessings to them, v. 11

11 For I long to see you in order that I may impart some spiritual gift to you, that you may be established;

Paul's primary concern was to render spiritual stability to these believers. He desired to fellowship with them around the Person of Jesus Christ. He hoped that his presence among them would spur them on to even greater spiritual growth. Not only did Paul hope to minister to these Roman believers, he looked forward to being personally ministered to by them, v. 12

12 that is, that I may be encouraged together with you while among you, each of us by the other's faith, both yours and mine.

13 Being the seasoned missionary that he was, Paul wanted them to know how long he had wanted to come to them. He was desirous of obtaining some fruit among them, just as he had among the rest of the Gentiles. Having received the grace of God himself he recognized that this placed him in debt to everyone else. Paul reveals his pastoral heart here. Since he had received the grace of God, he felt obligated to share this good news with all men, v. 14

14 I am under obligation both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish. **15** Thus, for my part, I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome. Every Christian is indebted to every non-Christian because we have and can give what can impart life to those who are dead in sin, namely, the gospel concerning Jesus Christ.

Paul concludes his epistolary introduction by stating his theme, vv. 16-17

C. Theme: The gospel of the righteousness of God (vv. 16-17)

v. 16—For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.

Paul was not ashamed to proclaim the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.

As Dwight L. Moody used to say, “The gospel is like a lion. All the preacher has to do is to open the door of the cage and get out of the way!”

The good news that God has provided the means for sinful men to receive His righteousness provides a life-giving message to a dying world. God’s righteousness is not obtained by human efforts, but is a gift of His marvelous grace. In response to faith in Christ, who died in our place, God imputes His Son’s righteousness to our account by declaring us righteous.

The basic outcome of salvation is soundness or wholeness. Salvation restores people to what they cannot experience because of sin. Salvation is an umbrella term that covers all aspects of deliverance from sin. The terms justification, redemption, reconciliation, sanctification, and glorification describe different aspects of salvation.

Paul’s concluding words in 1:17, the righteous will live by faith, are taken from Habakkuk 2:4. The righteousness God provides in salvation is founded on faith from beginning to end. God’s gift of righteousness provided through faith His Son Jesus Christ restores right relations between man and God. The righteous man comes to God by faith and lives for God by faith.

Applications:

1. Have you come to truly appreciate what God has done for you by sending His Son to die in your place? Have you experienced the POWER inherent in the Gospel of Jesus Christ? Have you received the Son as your Savior?
2. Do you pray for opportunities to share the Good News about the salvation God has provided for man through His Son, Jesus Christ?
3. Do you thank God and pray for fellow believers who faithfully share Christ w/lost?