

ROMANS CH.1

MAJOR THEME: THE GOSPEL: THE RIGHTEOUSNES OF GOD REVEALED

Hymn: #42 Holy, Holy, Holy #458 Rock of Ages

“On May 24, 1738, a discouraged missionary went “very unwillingly” to a religious meeting in London. There a miracle took place. “About a quarter before nine”, he wrote in his journal, “I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust Christ, Christ alone, for salvation; and an assurance was given me that He had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death. That missionary was John Wesley. The message he heard that evening was the preface to Martin Luther’s commentary on Romans. Just a few months before, Wesley wrote in his journal: “I went to America to convert Indians; but Oh! Who shall convert me? That evening in Aldersgate Street, his question was answered. And as a result the great Wesleyan Revival that swept England and transformed the nation.” (*Warren Wiersbe; “Be Right” p. 13*)

“The one scripture above all others that brought Luther out of mere religion, and into the joy of salvation by grace, through faith, was Romans 1:17: “The just shall live by faith.” The Protestant Reformation and the Wesleyan Revival were both the fruit of this wonderful letter...Imagine, you and I can study the same inspired letter that brought life and power to Luther to Wesley! And the same Holy Spirit who taught them can teach us.” (*Warren Wiersbe; “Be Right” p. 14*)

“Martin Luther said of his reading the book of Romans: “It is the true masterpiece of the New Testament, and the very purest Gospel, which is well worthy and deserving that a Christian man should not only learn it by heart, word for word, but also that he should daily deal with it as the daily bread of men’s souls. For it can never be too much or too well read or studied; and the more it is handled the more precious it becomes and the better it tastes.”

Chrysostom, one of the early church fathers, had the epistle read to him twice a week.

Godet, the Swiss commentator called the book Romans “The cathedral of the Christian faith”.” (*J. Vernon McGee; Romans- Note and Outlines*)

In just a few weeks, on October 31st, we will come to the 500th anniversary of Martin Luther nailing his 95 thesis to the gate of the Wittenberg Castle, and thus the 500th anniversary of the Protestant Reformation. Today, you and I have the Bible in our language and the freedom to commune with God by the Holy Spirit through the reading of the Word of God because of that act. We can easily take this for granted and forget that it was not always so. Spiritual darkness, abject biblical ignorance and bondage were the norm for most people prior to the Holy Spirit’s enlightening the eyes and streaming courage into Martin Luther....and that through the Book of Romans. As we undertake this study of Romans, let us do so with gratitude to God and appreciation for the men on whose shoulders we stand today and ask the Holy Spirit to enlighten our eyes and stream courage into us as well.

The apostle Paul wrote the Book of Romans in late 57 AD from Corinth/Cenchrea midway through his third missionary journey. Paul had never visited Rome but was eager to do so for many of his converts over the years, as well as other believers after Pentecost, had migrated to Rome. Of the 35 names mentioned in Ch. 16, 27 of them were dear friends, converts and relatives and they were now living in Rome. Thus, the Church in Rome was “founded” by Paul though he had never been there. Its core was located in the house of Priscilla and Aquila. This Jewish couple, along with the rest of the Jews of Rome, had been driven out of Rome by Claudius. They met Paul in Corinth and travelled as far as Ephesus where they apparently had an effective home ministry with Apollos being one the beneficiaries. They eventually made their way back to Rome and were the first ones addressed in the greetings of Ch.16.

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Paul wrote this letter ahead of his planned visit to them. He anticipated spending time with them and building them up before he went on to Spain. However he first needed to return to Jerusalem and personally deliver the collective financial gift that the Churches throughout Macedonia had raised for the church in famine back in Jerusalem. Paul ended up being arrested and imprisoned for 2 years before finally getting to Rome where he was again imprisoned for two more years. The intention of the letter was to present a complete and detailed statement of the gospel he preached. He wanted them to hear this from him first and before the “Juaizers” arrived and began to cause trouble and pervert and twist Paul’s message as they had doggedly done to him previously.

The letter was carried to Rome by a woman named Phoebe (her name means “light”), a well-respected and hardworking deaconess of the Church in Cenchrea.

The main theme of the Book of Romans is: The Gospel: The Righteousness of God Revealed.

What is this “Righteousness of God”? Some descriptions include:

Cunninghame: “The righteousness of God is that righteousness which God’s righteousness requires Him to require.” Brooks: “That righteousness which the Father requires, the Son became, the Holy Spirit convicts of, and faith secures.” Moorehead: “The sum total of all that God commands, demands, approves, and Himself provides.” (*J. Vernon McGee; Romans- Note and Outlines*)

Because this righteousness is “of God”, meaning that it originates from within God’s Triune being, it is first and foremost about relationality, not laws. It is right standing in relation to another person just as each member of the Trinity is with one another. The Father, Son and Spirit do not inherently relate to one another or maintain their relationship based on a forensic and external legal standard. However, the righteousness of God does take on a forensic (legal) meaning when God introduces a dispensational requirement and man fails to meet it, which happens every time. Nevertheless, it is inherently about love not laws; about persons in communion not statutes. Humanity’s failure from the garden to this day has blinded us so we neither see nor search for this relationship nor are we even conscious of what sin is. God implemented “the law” to show us what sin is and our need for a righteousness that we cannot secure for ourselves. Thus, we shall see that the righteousness of God as revealed in Romans commences this long journey back for fallen sinful men in their broken relationship and transgressed laws of God, to peace and sonship restored. Romans also shows us how God engages this entire plan without violating his own Righteousness in any way.

The letter reveals God’s righteousness in the following major themes:

- 1) His Condemnation of Jew and Gentile (1:18-3:20)
- 2) His Justification (3:21-5:21)
- 3) His Sanctification (Ch. 6-8)
- 4) His Sovereign Dealing with Israel (Ch. 9-11)
- 5) His Transformation of Our Living (Ch. 12-16)

A more detailed outline will accompany each of the lessons as we move forward. While this series will not be theological “deep dive” into each verse of Romans, I trust that the breadth of the outline and the highpoints we touch will provide you a solid foundation to study Romans with greater depth and understanding in the remaining days we have ahead of our individual exodus or corporate rapture.

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1) INTRODUCTION AND THEME (1:1-17)

A) **Apostolic Greeting (1:1-7)**

- i) V. 2 God's promises in the OT are the gospel regarding His Son NOT the Church, which Paul call the "mystery of Christ which was not made known to men in other generations" Eph. 3:1-11.
 - (1) OT passages must first be read in their immediate historical context; secondly in their prophetic context; then they can be read in the context of a personal application.
 - (a) Ex. Jer. 29:11 Historically- Pre- Babylonian Exile; Prophetically- At the end of 70 years God would bring a remnant back; Personally- in light of these elements.
 - (2) Christ was clearly prophesied in the OT
 - (a) Gen 3:15 the seed of the woman who would crush Satan's head
 - (b) Isaiah 7:14 ; 9:2-7 His virgin birth and the "Coming King"
 - (c) Isaiah 53 the "Suffering Servant"
 - (d) Psalm 22 His crucifixion
 - (3) Right at the outset in Romans, a clear statement is made in regards to the distinction between Israel and the Church
- ii) V. 3-4 Christology- Jesus is the "God-Man"
 - (1) His humanity is in the line of David and His deity has been demonstrated by His resurrection
 - (a) Matthew's genealogy demonstrates Jesus' "legal right" to the throne of David through Joseph, "the husband of Mary", NOT the father of Jesus.
 - (b) Luke's genealogy demonstrates Jesus' "blood right" to the throne of David through Mary his mother.
- iii) V.5 and 13 Paul exhibits that he is the "apostle to the Gentiles" Rom.11:13
 - (1) Gal. 2:8 Peter is the apostle to the Jews
- iv) V. 5 "Obedience that comes from faith" , faith precedes obedience
 - (1) Faith precedes repentance as well
 - (a) Legal repentance says: "If you repent then you are forgiven"
 - (b) Evangelical repentance says: "You are forgiven, therefore repent"
 - (i) Even Calvin was clear on this when he said in effect, no man can truly repent until he is sure he is forgiven (Institutes III.3.1-2)

B) **Apostolic Travel Plans (1:8-15)**

- i) V.8 Paul remarks about their faith being reported all over the world and his prayers for them at all times
 - (1) A similar observation as in 1 Thes.1:7
 - (2) V. 10 A significant element of Paul's apostleship was prayer - 1 Thes. 3:10
- ii) V. 10,13 Paul had been hindered because of propitious circumstance elsewhere Rom. 15:20-23
 - (1) Not by God as in Acts 16:6-10
 - (2) Not by Satan as in 1 Thes.2:18
- iii) V.14 Paul was eager to preach to both Greeks/the wise and to non-Greeks/the foolish
 - (1) Non Greeks is Lit. Βαρβάρους- barbarians as perceived by the Greeks; "Boguns" today would be close.
 - (2) He had a universal message of good news all
 - (a) Not intimidated by the sophisticated, educated, philosophical
 - (b) Not disdainful of the barbarian fools

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(c) Read 1 Cor. 1: 18-29

C) **Apostolic Attitude (1:16-17)**

- i) V.16 He is NOT ASHAMED of the Gospel before anyone for it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes.
 - (1) He knows everyone needs salvation
 - (2) He knows only God's power can save anyone
 - (3) He knows he has the only message about how anyone can engage this power and be saved
- ii) This Gospel is "for the Jew first, then for the gentile" repeated in 2:9-10
 - (1) In the Gospels, the 12 were sent "to the lost sheep of Israel" and not the gentiles (Matt. 10:5-6)
 - (2) Everywhere he went, Paul always went to the synagogue first with the Gospel, even though he clearly understood himself to be the apostle of the gentiles.
 - (3) John 4:22 "Salvation is of the Jews"
 - (4) Rom. 15:27 "For if the Gentiles have shared in the Jews' spiritual blessings, they owe it to the Jews to share with them their material blessings"
- iii) V. 17a "For in the gospel a **righteousness from God is revealed**"
 - (1) This is the theme of the entire book of Romans
 - (2) Righteousness is the noun form (used 28 times) of the verb justify (used 15 times)
 - (a) Cunningham: "The righteousness of God is that righteousness which God's righteousness requires Him to require."
 - (b) Brooks: "That righteousness which the Father requires, the Son became, the Holy Spirit convicts of, and faith secures."
 - (c) Moorehead: "The sum total of all that God commands, demands, approves, and Himself provides."
 - (d) Because this righteousness is "of God", meaning that it originates from within God's Triune being, it is first and foremost about relationality, not laws. It is right standing in relation to another person just as each member of the Trinity is with one another. The Father, Son and Spirit do not inherently relate to one another or maintain their relationship based on a forensic and external legal standard. However, the righteousness of God does take on a forensic (legal) meaning when God introduces a dispensational requirement and man fails to meet it, which happens every time. Nevertheless, it is inherently about love not laws; about persons in communion not statutes. Humanity's failure from the garden to this day has blinded us so we neither see nor search for this relationship nor are we even conscious of what sin is. God implemented "the law" to show us what sin is and our need for a righteousness that we cannot secure for ourselves. Thus, we shall see that the righteousness of God as revealed in Romans commences this long journey back for fallen sinful men in their broken relationship and transgressed laws of God, to peace and sonship restored. Romans also shows us how God engages this entire plan without violating his own Righteousness in any way.
 - (3) Righteousness is "imputed", meaning credited to one's account, in justification.
 - (a) A crisis- happens one time
 - (4) Righteousness is "imparted" progressively in regeneration, sanctification and glorification
 - (a) A process- happens over a lifetime

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- (5) To be “justified” is to be declared righteous by God.
- (6) In Ch. 3 we will unpack these and other words in much finer detail
- iv) V. 17b a righteousness that is Lit. ἐκ πίστεως εἰς πίστιν “from faith to faith”
- (1) Meaning **from the faith of Jesus to my faith and back again**
- (a) A Greek construction called the “Genitive ablative of source”- That which is named in the noun modified by the ablative, owes its existence in some way to that which is denoted in the ablative. (*Dana and Mantey “A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament” p. 82*)
- (i) Illustration in Rom.15:4 “For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement **of the Scriptures** (*Gen. Abl. Source*) we might have hope”. Where does encouragement reside? In the Scriptures. Who is the encouragement for? For US.
- (ii) Gal. 2:16 “a man is not justified by observing the law, but by FAITH OF JESUS CHRIST. So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified BY FAITH OF CHRIST and not by observing the law, because by observing the law no one will be justified”
- (iii) Gal. 2:20 “The life I live in the Body I live by FAITH OF THE SON OF GOD who loved me and gave himself for me”;
- (iv) Gal. 3:22 “But Scripture declares that the whole world is a prisoner of sin, so that what was promised, being given through FAITH OF JESUS CHRIST, might be given to those who believe”
- (v) Rom. 3:21-22 “But now a righteousness of God apart from the law has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify, a righteousness of God through FAITH OF JESUS CHRIST TO ALL WHO BELIEVE.
- (vi) Rom 3: 26 “he did it to demonstrate his justice at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have FAITH OF JESUS.
- (b) TF Torrance sums this up: “Jesus stood in our place, taking our cause upon Him. Also, as Believer, as the Obedient One, who was himself justified (**Righteous**) before God as His Beloved Son in whom He was well pleased, He offered to God perfect obedience and trust; a perfect faith which we are unable to offer, and He appropriated all God’s blessings which we are unable to appropriate. Through union with Him we share in His faith, we share in His obedience, we share in His trust, and appropriation of the Father’s blessing, we share in His justification (**Righteous**) before God. Therefore when we are justified by faith, this does not mean that it is our faith that justifies us. It is the faith of Christ alone that justifies us. But we IN FAITH, flee from even our own acts of repentance, of confession, of trust and response, and take refuge in the obedience and faithfulness of Jesus Christ. Lord I believe, help thou my unbelief. This is what it means to be justified (**Righteous**) by faith.” (TF Torrance- Theology in Reconstruction- 1965)
- (c) Faith is a gift (Eph. 2:8-10). Faith originates in Jesus, is gifted to you and me, and once received is placed back IN Him as the sole object of our faith. He is both the source and the object of our faith. But it is HIS faith that has overcome and which we share in. He is our Vicarious Man/Faith.
- v) V.17c “The righteous will live by faith”
- (1) The central theme through the Bible

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- (2) Quoted three times
 - (a) Rom.1:17
 - (b) Gal.3:11
 - (c) Heb.10:38