

Preview of Romans

The Epistle to the Romans is a personal letter, written by Paul to the church in Rome. He wrote this letter at Corinth around AD 56. In this epistle, the Gospel of Jesus Christ is expounded in a manner found nowhere else in the New Testament. This treatise is the antidote for all false gospels in our day, as it also was in Paul's day. It shows that all men stand guilty before God and can be redeemed only by the blood of Christ.

The apostle Paul states the theme of the book in Romans 1:16-17: "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith." The apostle develops this theme through five logical divisions.

The first division of the book (1:18-3:20) proves man's universal need of salvation and righteousness by showing the sin and degradation of both Gentiles and Jews. The heathen immoral idol-worshiping Gentiles (chapter 1) and the proud self-righteous Jews (chapter 2) had all "sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (3:23). "There is none righteous, no, not one" (3:10).

The second division of the book (3:21-5:21) describes God's provision to save hopelessly lost humanity and to account them righteous on the basis of their living faith (chapters 3-4). God's provision is fully sufficient through His grace, which abounds "much more" (3:24; 5: 1-21).

The third division of the book (chapters 6-8) deals with the sanctified life of the believer—a life separated from sin because of the delivering power of God.

The writer answers objections that might come as a result of this doctrine. In 6:1, 15, and 7:7, these objections are stated and then answered in the succeeding verses. The essence of his teaching is that the grace of God makes no room for sin. At the same time, God's grace enables the believer to triumph over sin he follows the leading of the indwelling Spirit.

The fourth division of the book (chapters 9-11) deals with God's mercy and judgments, and answers the question of the relation of the Jews to the Gospel. In chapter 9, the writer shows that God works with men as He sees best. He establishes the fact that the Jewish people had been set aside at that time because of their unbelief (chapters 9-10). A note of hope is seen in chapter 11, where 11:30 shows the sovereignty of God overruling the then-present events for the future glory of both Jew and Gentile in fulfillment of God's promises to Abraham.

The last division of the book (chapters 12-16) deals with practical Christian living. In order to be accepted of God, those who have been justified by grace through faith must live a holy, consecrated life. The study of the lofty message of this book should inspire us to live the transformed life so that we may enjoy its blessings and glorify God.

Special Note:

This lesson should begin by discussing the Preview of Romans. Additional research could also be done. Why was this letter written? When was it written? How long was it from the time of this writing until Paul actually got to Rome? The divisions of the book (discussed in the Preview) should also be noted. Discuss what the word Gospel means. You could also discuss how living under the Gospel differs from living under the Law, the Old Covenant.

Lesson 1 11 August, 2019

The Gospel of Jesus Christ

Lesson Scope: Romans 1:1-17

References in brackets refer to Romans 1 unless stated otherwise.

Lesson Focus

At the time of this writing, Paul had not yet been to Rome. It is not known how the church there began. However, it may have been formed by the Romans who were at Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost and were converted (Acts 2: 10).

Paul was desiring to visit the church at Rome. At this point he was not sure that he would get away alive from Jerusalem (15:31). He did eventually get there, albeit in chains.

This lesson introduces the Book of Romans. Understanding God's plan of salvation lays the foundation for studying the rest of the book. Sinful man is powerless to save himself, nor does he deserve to be saved. It is only because God in His great love initiated a plan to reconcile man to Himself.

The Gospel of Jesus Christ is the only hope for fallen man. All who believe in Christ are saved from sin and empowered to live righteously.

Lesson Aim: To present the fundamentals of the Gospel.

Theme Verse: Romans 1:16. For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.

Lesson Text

The Call of the Gospel

Romans 1:1-7

¹ (KJV) Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called *to be* an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God, ² (Which he had promised afore by his prophets in the holy scriptures,) ³ Concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh; ⁴ And declared *to be* the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead: ⁵ By whom we have received grace and apostleship, for obedience to the faith among all nations, for his name: ⁶ Among whom are ye also the called of Jesus Christ: ⁷ To all that be in Rome, beloved of God,

called *to be* saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Fellowship of the Gospel

Romans 1:8-13

⁸ (KJV) First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world. ⁹ For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son, that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers; ¹⁰ Making request, if by any means now at length I might have a prosperous journey by the will of God to come unto you. ¹¹ For I long to see you, that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift, to the end ye may be established; ¹² That is, that I may be comforted together with you by the mutual faith both of you and me. ¹³ Now I would not have you ignorant, brethren, that oftentimes I purposed to come unto you, (but was let hitherto,) that I might have some fruit among you also, even as among other Gentiles.

The Power of the Gospel

Romans 1:14-17

¹⁴ (KJV) I am debtor both to the Greeks, and to the Barbarians; both to the wise, and to the unwise. ¹⁵ So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also. ¹⁶ For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. ¹⁷ For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.

Questions for Study

The Call of the Gospel

1. What are some Old Testament prophecies of the plan of redemption?
2. Why did Christ need to come to earth to save man?
3. How should the power of the Gospel be evident in our lives?

The Fellowship of the Gospel

4. Explain Paul's great desire to visit the Roman church.
5. How do the lives of faithful saints affect the world?

The Power of the Gospel

6. Explain debtor in verse 14.
7. Why should we not be ashamed of the Gospel?

Analysing the Passage

Verse 1 contains three descriptions of the apostle Paul: servant, apostle, and separated.

Verses 1-7 are all one sentence, containing Paul's greeting and introducing the subject of the "gospel of God" (1:1).

The plan of salvation was foretold in the Old Testament (1:2), and was fulfilled to the detail. Christ came as was prophesied in David's family line, and proved by His resurrection that He is the Son of God (1:3-4).

It is through Christ's resurrection power that man can live above sin and fulfill the responsibilities that God has called him to.

Even though Paul had not been to Rome yet, he had heard about their faith. He was concerned that they would remain faithful, for he prayed much for them (1:9).

Let in verse 13 means "to hinder, forbid, or restrain." Paul had intended to get to Rome before this, but for some reason God had not allowed him to.

In verse 14, Paul called himself a debtor. He was not a debtor to anyone in the sense that he needed to repay them for something. Rather, Paul was indebted to God for all that He had done for him. Therefore, Paul felt obligated to preach the Gospel to others.

"From faith to faith" (1:17) contains the thought that faith has always been necessary to please God. Even in the Old Testament, saints needed faith to believe in God, whom they could not see. The great patriarch, Abraham, was justified by faith. Faith is an essential element in the life of any saint.

Principles and Applications

The Call of the Gospel

1. The Gospel is the fulfillment of the promise of God (1:2). God's plan to redeem sinful man for Himself had been formed before man was created. In Genesis 3:15, after Adam and Eve had sinned, God promised that Jesus would come and bruise Satan's head. Even though many years had elapsed from the time man fell until Christ came to earth, God was not late. In "the fullness of the time" (Galatians 4:4), God's perfect plan came to fruition.

2. The incarnation of Christ is an essential facet of the Gospel (1:3).

The fact that Christ was all God and all man is hard for human minds to comprehend. But unless one believes this fact by faith, he cannot be saved.

See 1 John 4:2—3. Jesus is more than just a good man or a prophet. He was the Son of God, made "a little lower than the angels" Psalm 8:5, veiled in human flesh. What a sacrifice this was, to leave the glories of heaven and come down to this sin-cursed earth!

3. The union of humanity and Deity was essential to Jesus' work (1:3-4). In Old Testament times, the high priest went into the most holy place once a year to atone for the sins of himself and the people. He understood the sins and weaknesses of the people because he too was human.

Under the New Covenant, Jesus is our High Priest. He came to earth and lived as a man. He never sinned, but He faced every sort of temptation that every man faces (Hebrews 4:15). Because of this, Jesus effectively intercedes at the right hand of God so that His children will not be faced with more than they can bear. We as His children can come directly to the throne of grace through Christ, not just once a year, but whenever we're in need.

4. The resurrection is the power of the Gospel (1:4). Christ proved by His resurrection that He was indeed the Son of God. We prove, by holy living, that the resurrection power of Christ effectively changes lives.

5. The Gospel transforms the lives of all who respond to its message (1:5). When we respond to the Gospel, a change of course takes place.

No longer do we focus on pleasing ourselves and satisfying our selfish desires. Our focus is on pleasing God and serving others. Practical obedience to the Scriptures, the Holy Spirit, and the church are evident in the life of the believer. Faith without works is dead. See James 2. Our dress is different from the world, our speech is sanctified, and our vehicles are simple and driven in a conscientious manner. Many say that if the heart is right, that is all that matters. But in reality, if the heart is right, it will be evident on the outside (Matthew 7:16-20).

The Fellowship of the Gospel

6. The lives of the saints testify to the world of the effectiveness of the Gospel (1:8). The lives of the faithful are not a light put under a bushel. We have nothing to be ashamed of! The world may mock and reject us. Such responses are likely a result of the light of Christ shining through us, and the Spirit pricking their troubled consciences.

7. The Gospel unifies the believers in a common faith (1:9-13). Paul had not yet seen the Roman Christians, yet he had a great desire to fellowship with them. We enjoy going to church wide meetings and fellowshiping with those of like precious faith and common goals. This draws us together as brethren and sisters. We need each other. Not one of us has all the right strengths and always makes the right decisions. Our common faith draws us together and behoves us to support and submit to the directives and guidelines the church gives us.

The Power of the Gospel

8. The Gospel lays a debt on all who embrace it (1:14-15). As ones who have experienced the mercy and power of God, we have a message to tell. We should be eager to share the Good News with others, and willing to take time out of our busy schedules to do so. When we choose to serve the Lord, we willingly place ourselves under this obligation.

9. "The power of God unto salvation" is realized through faith in the Gospel (1:16-17). Through faith in God, we have the ability to accomplish things for Him that of ourselves we are unable to do. We can live a life above reproach, unashamedly living a life separated from the world.

Important Teachings

1. The Gospel is the fulfillment of the promise of God (1:2).

2. The incarnation of Christ is an essential facet of the Gospel (1:3).

3. The union of humanity and Deity was essential to Jesus' work (1:3-4).

4. The resurrection is the power of the Gospel (1:4).

5. The Gospel transforms the lives of all who respond to its message (1:5).

6. The lives of the saints testify to the World of the effectiveness of the Gospel (1:8).

7. The Gospel unifies the believers in a common faith (1:9-13).

8. The Gospel lays a debt on all who embrace it (1:14-15).

9. "The power of God unto salvation" is realized through faith in the Gospel (1:16-17).

Answers to Questions

1. What are some Old Testament prophecies of the plan of redemption?

Isaiah 53, Isaiah 61:1-3, Genesis 3:15, Isaiah 63:9, Jeremiah 23:5-8

2. Why did Christ need to come to earth to save man?

God required blood to be shed to remove man's sin. God required the blood of a perfect man, and no other man was perfect. This gives us direct access to the throne of God. We no longer need an earthly high priest as in Old Testament times.

3. How should the power of the Gospel be evident in our lives?

We will not be selfish persons, but rather unselfish, always looking for opportunities to serve others. Our speech should be "seasoned with salt," free of slang expressions and catchy phrases the World freely uses. We will not talk light-heartedly about spiritual matters.

Our vehicles will be simple, serviceable vehicles, free of unnecessary extras. They will not be of the more expensive, high-class models. We should

drive our vehicles in a safe, responsible manner, and obey all traffic laws, including speed limits. Our houses and properties, while neat and kept up, will not be embellished just to make an impression on others. Our dress, even in work clothes, should set us apart from general society.

4. Explain Paul's great desire to visit the Roman church.

Even though Paul had never met the Roman believers, he felt a kinship to them because of the common faith they shared. Also, as a spiritual leader, Paul's father heart yearned to see them remain faithful, and he wanted to encourage and strengthen them to help them to that end. He also desired to be encouraged and edified himself by them.

5. How do the lives of faithful saints affect the world?

Their consciences are pricked. Some yearn for what we have. Others react by mocking and rejecting. Faithful saints are a light and a salt in the earth. The world sees and wonders at the saints. They cannot understand how God's people find joy in serving Him, instead of doing as they please.

6. Explain debtor in verse 14.

Paul did not necessarily owe anything to any person. He was not debtor in that sense. Rather, Paul felt indebted to these people. Because of what God had done for him, he desired to tell them the good news of the Gospel.

7. Why should we not be ashamed of the Gospel?

There is nothing to be ashamed of the Gospel is the best thing that man has ever been given. By it all men can be saved. If we are ashamed of Jesus and His Gospel, He will be ashamed of us in the Day of Judgment.

Summarizing the Lesson

The Gospel is free for all men. Not one of us is righteous of ourselves. God in His love made the first move to redeem man. It is up to us to accept that offer. As we by faith accept His gracious offer, God is glorified and we are justified.

Research Guide

1. Read in Halley's Bible Handbook under "Romans" the pages that pertain to this lesson.
2. Look up verses in Nave's Topical Bible under "Salvation" and "Jesus, the Christ—Prophecies Concerning, Coming of."
3. Read in Unger's Bible Dictionary under "Romans, Epistle to."