

## *Preview of Romans*

The apostle Paul states the theme of the Book of Romans in 1:16, 17: "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone 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 (Romans 1:18-3:20) proves the universal need of salvation. The heathen, immoral, idol-worshipping Gentiles (chapter 1) and the proud, self-righteous Jews (chapter 2) had all "sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). "There is none righteous, no, not one" (3:10). By thus describing the unrighteousness of all mankind, Paul declared that all men need God's righteousness.

The second division (Romans 3:21-5:21) describes God's provision for saving hopelessly lost humanity and accounting them righteous on the basis of their faith. This righteousness becomes the possession of the believer as he exercises living faith (chapter 4). God's provision is fully sufficient through His grace, which abounds "much more" (chapter 5).

The third division (chapters 6-8) emphasizes that justification from the guilt of sin always involves sanctification from the power of sin. The apostle answers three questions that might arise as a result of the doctrine of justification by faith. To the first question, "Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?" (Romans 6:1), Paul emphatically declared that the proof of obtaining grace is refusing to continue in sin. To the second question, "Shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace?" (Romans 6:15), Paul emphatically declared that grace is not the freedom to sin even occasionally; it is the freedom to live above sin. To the third question, "Is the law sin?" (Romans 7:7), Paul emphatically declared that the holy purpose of the Law was to explain the curse and the course of sin. Victory over sin is now possible through Christ and His indwelling Holy Spirit.

The fourth division (chapters 9-11) explains God's mercy and judgment. Although digressing a little, Paul here answered the question of the relationship of the Jew to the Gospel. This was a burning issue of that day and a serious problem to many sincere persons. In chapter 9, the apostle explained God's freedom to work with men as He sees best. He established the fact that the Jewish people had been set aside at that time because of their unbelief (chapters 9, 10). In chapter 11, Paul sounded a note of hope, showing God's sovereignty overruling events for the future glory of both Jew and Gentile in fulfillment of God's promises to Abraham.

The fifth and final division (chapters 12-16) describes the practical life of the person who has experienced salvation. The righteousness that God imputes to the believer in justification must find expression in a life of daily sanctification. 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.

## Lesson 1 – 5 May 2013

### The Gospel of Jesus Christ

#### Lesson Scope: [Romans 1:1-17](#)

#### Lesson Focus

"All roads lead to Rome" was a byword and a proverb in Paul's day. Rome was the capital of the vast Roman Empire. From the city, great arterial highways flung their tentacles to faraway lands. Rome attracted people from all over the world. It was populated by a mixture of Jews and Gentiles. But it was also a center of debauchery. Rome needed the Gospel!

Although the Apostle Paul had never been to the church in Rome, he had heard of their faithfulness and was genuinely interested in their spiritual welfare. He looked forward to meeting them for the purpose of mutual sharing and spiritual encouragement.

This lesson is the prologue to the Book of Romans. The theme of the book is found in the very first verse—"the gospel of God." It sets forth at the very beginning the person of Jesus Christ, who is the very essence and center of the Gospel.

The Gospel of Jesus Christ is God's provision for fallen man. Those who believe in Jesus possess its "power ... unto salvation" and exemplify the righteousness it reveals.

The study of this lesson should exalt Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour. (In contrast, we are bond slaves and debtors.) It emphasizes His humanity and His deity. The Incarnation is a marvelous aspect of the Gospel. Christ's resurrection gave proof that He is the Son of God with power. The disciples had lost their hope when Jesus was buried. But they were "begotten ... again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead" (1 Peter 1:3).

Another highlight is found in verses 16 and 17. The "righteousness of God" stands in contrast to self-righteousness or works of righteousness. We can be made righteous only through faith. Righteous living is the outworking of that faith. This phrase does not refer to righteousness as an attribute of God.

We have no reason to be ashamed of the Gospel.

**Lesson Aim:** To present foundational truths about the Gospel.

**Theme Verse:** [1 Thessalonians 1:5](#). For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance; as ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sake.

## Lesson Text

### Separated Unto the Gospel

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

### Serving in the Gospel

[Romans 1:8-13](#) <sup>8</sup> First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world. <sup>9</sup> 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; <sup>10</sup> Making request, if by any means now at length I might have a prosperous journey by the will of God to come unto you. <sup>11</sup> For I long to see you, that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift, to the end ye may be established; <sup>12</sup> That is, that I may be comforted together with you by the mutual faith both of you and me. <sup>13</sup> 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.

### Standing for the Gospel

[Romans 1:14-17](#) <sup>14</sup> I am debtor both to the Greeks, and to the Barbarians; both to the wise, and to the unwise. <sup>15</sup> So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also. <sup>16</sup> 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.  
<sup>17</sup> 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**

### **Separated Unto the Gospel**

1. What does it mean to be a servant of Jesus Christ?
2. How does Paul define the Gospel of God?
3. What is involved in being separated unto the Gospel?
4. What are some practical applications of the Gospel that set God's people apart from the world?

### **Serving in the Gospel**

5. To what blessings of Christian brotherhood does this passage allude?

### **Standing for the Gospel**

6. What is meant by the phrase "the righteousness of God"?
7. In what sense are we debtors to the lost about us?
8. Why might we be tempted to be ashamed of the Gospel?

## **Analyzing the Passage**

The Greek word translated servant (Romans 1:1) denoted one who was a "bond slave." It designated one who was born as a slave and who served his master to the disregard of his own interests. How fitting!

In verses 2-4 the apostle defines what he means by "the gospel of God." The parenthesis connects the Gospel with the Scriptures of the Old Testament. He further makes reference to the humanity and deity of Jesus Christ, who is both Saviour and Lord.

The word let (Romans 1:13) is archaic English for hinder or prevent. Evidently Paul had never ministered at Rome, because all of his plans to go there had been hindered or prevented for some reason (see Romans 15:22).

The word debtor (Romans 1:14) conveys Paul's sense of moral obligation, as a recipient of the Gospel, to share it with others. This obligation went beyond his Jewish nation to all men regardless of race or creed. The Gospel does not give room for prejudice of any sort.

Verses 16 and 17 are theme verses. Gospel synergism and progressive sanctification are expressly taught in the phrases "to everyone that be-

lieveth" and "from faith to faith."

## **Principles and Applications Separated Unto the Gospel**

1. The Gospel is God's provision for the redemption of fallen man (Romans 1:1-2).

In working out this plan, He made no detours; nor did He accommodate any afterthoughts. With perfect foreknowledge, God moved purposefully forward. He has faithfully revealed His plan and made promises to His people through the prophetic Scriptures. It is heartwarming to trace the scarlet thread of redemption through the Old Testament and into the future.

2. Jesus Christ is at the very heart of the Gospel message (Romans 1:3-4).

Through Him the plan of salvation became a reality. As a man, Jesus gave His life for man's sin. But it was His resurrection that gained victory over death, bringing life and immortality to repentant sinners (2 Timothy 1:10).

3. The Gospel calls men into a special relationship with God (1:5-7).

God made the first move in calling us to Himself. We respond in faith, confessing our sins and committing ourselves to a walk of obedience. The result is a love relationship in which we are the "beloved of God" and the "bride" of Christ. The Greek word for church in the New Testament is ekklesia (an assembly of called-out ones). The individual members are saints (consecrated to God).

## **Serving in the Gospel**

4. Those whose lives have been touched by the Gospel are noticeably different (Romans 1:8).

The godliness that follows conversion will be evident to others. We should strive to live consistently so that our testimony for God is not marred. "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (2 Corinthians 5:17).

5. The Gospel unifies believers in a common faith (Romans 1:8-13).

The bond of faith is strengthened when we pray for each other. We desire to be together for edification and encouragement. The varied gifts of the saints are complementary and needful, uniting and building

brotherhood relationships. The Gospel makes us all of one heart and mind, striving together for the same goals.

### **Standing for the Gospel**

6. Every believer should sense an obligation to share the Gospel with others (Romans 1:14-15).

Even though salvation is a gift, an indebtedness constrains us. Paul said it this way: "For necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!" (1 Corinthians 9:16). Since we can never repay our debt, our only reasonable response is to serve the Lord.

7. The power of the Gospel is effective for all who believe (Romans 1:16).

We certainly have no reason to be ashamed of the Gospel. It saves the soul and enriches the life. God's grace is sufficient, and His power is unlimited. The burden of proof rests with man's faith and his faithfulness.

8. The Gospel reveals the righteousness that God ascribes to man when he lives by faith (Romans 1:17).

"The righteousness of God" does not refer to righteousness as an attribute of God, as in 3:5, but to our personal righteousness made possible through the Gospel. Living by faith is nothing new. Faith was also the criterion for justification in the Old Testament. It is portrayed here as a faith that is vital and growing. Living by faith is a matter of humility, trust, and obedience.

### **Important Teachings**

1. The Gospel is God's provision for the redemption of fallen man (Romans 1:1-2).

2. Jesus Christ is at the very heart of the Gospel message (Romans 1:3-4).

3. The Gospel calls men into a special relationship with God (Romans 1:5-7).

4. Those whose lives have been touched by the Gospel are noticeably different (Romans 1:8).

5. The Gospel unifies believers in a common faith (Romans 1:8-13).

6. Every believer should sense an obligation to share the Gospel with others (Romans 1:14-15).

7. The power of the Gospel is effective for all who believe (Romans 1:16).
8. The Gospel reveals the righteousness that God ascribes to man when he lives by faith (Romans 1:17).

## **Answers to Questions**

### *1. What does it mean to be a servant of Jesus Christ?*

The Greek word for servant is *doulos*. "It designates one who was born as a slave, one who was bound to his master in cords so strong that only death could break them, one who served his master to the disregard of his own interest, one whose will was swallowed up in the will of his master" (Quest's Word Studies in the Greek New Testament). This quote amplifies the meaning of bond slave. Living for God calls for full surrender and total commitment.

### *2. How does Paul define the Gospel of God?*

The "gospel of God" concerns the person and work of Jesus Christ our Lord. Paul significantly includes the lordship of Jesus. The angel told Joseph to "call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins." The prophet stated, "They shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us" (Matthew 1:21-23). Christ's humanity and His deity were both essential to His work. Jesus lived a sinless life, and the grave could not retain Him. Through Him, man is given grace to live an obedient life of service. Power is present to save "whosoever will."

### *3. What is involved in being separated unto the Gospel?*

Being separated unto the Gospel involves identity; we become sons of God. It involves sainthood; we are called to a life of righteousness. It involves obedience; we live by the Scriptures. It involves brotherhood; we share life with other Christians. It involves service; we have a message to share with those who are yet in sin.

### *4. What are some practical applications of the Gospel that set God's people apart from the world?*

Because God's people understand the separation of church and state, they do not participate in politics and carnal warfare. They practice strict honesty and refuse the judicial oath. They affirm the importance of faithful marriages, the blessing of having children, and the effectiveness of Biblical methods of disciplining children. They keep the Lord's

Day holy. They share with one another in brotherhood assistance.

5. To what blessings of Christian brotherhood does this passage allude? Mutual prayers are very special in times of adversity, but they are a blessing in all of life's experiences. We benefit from each other's spiritual gifts. We enjoy the fellowship of the saints through public assembly and home visitation.

6. *What is meant by the phrase "the righteousness of God"?*

This phrase refers to the righteousness that God ascribes to man when he embraces the Gospel by faith. It stands in contrast to man's efforts to be righteous through good works. We are made righteous by the grace of God, through the cleansing of Christ's shed blood. We are justified by faith, and we live by faith.

7. *In what sense are we debtors to the lost about us?*

The Greek word translated debtor means "one held by some obligation, bound by some duty." It refers to a personal moral obligation. As recipients of the Gospel, we are duty bound to share the Gospel with others. This is our moral obligation.

8. *Why might we be tempted to be ashamed of the Gospel?*

We might be tempted to be ashamed because of ridicule or suffering that identity with Christ brings. Paul suffered much at the hands of his own countrymen. He was held in prison by the Romans. He was at times held in contempt by other Christians. Human nature recoils at standing out as different or odd. We are inclined to avoid conflict and confrontation.

### **Summarizing the Lesson**

"For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God.... But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness; but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God" (I Corinthians 1:18, 23-24).

### **Research Guide**

1. It is interesting and helpful to read a dictionary definition of the words debtor and slave.
2. The Amplified New Testament makes it very clear that verse 17 does not refer to righteousness as an attribute of God.