



THE EPISTLE TO
THE ROMANS
THE RIGHTEOUS WILL LIVE BY FAITH

CHAPTERS 1-4

The Epistle to the Romans: The Righteous Will Live by Faith

Chapters 1-4

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The Epistle to the Romans: The Righteous Will Live by Faith
Chapters 1-4

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FOREWORD

Romans, A Love Letter?

Many people say that Paul's Epistle to the Romans is too difficult to comprehend. Although it looks difficult, as we deeply meditate upon it, we come to realize that Romans is chiefly a love letter.

I had the privilege of attending Dr. David Jang's Bible studies on this very Epistle. As the study went on, the profound love of God mysteriously illuminated me. The realization of this love was so powerful that my heart grew heated and tears were shed, touched by the light of the Holy Spirit, like the passion of the Sun that melts the snow on the mountains.

After this amazing experience, the Epistle to the Romans became refreshing as I could see Paul's heart-trembling confessions of love at the letter's core. Romans is Paul's love letter to both God and to the Romans. Paul confessed his love to God, and to all those who are in Rome, through this masterpiece that testifies the very essence of the Gospel. Paul's passion for the Lord, and the continuing spreading of the Gospel, surely bubbled and boiled out like a volcano through this Epistle.

Yet in all this the main thing has not been mentioned. In this letter of Paul to the Romans, God Himself wants to speak to us. The Pauline teaching is the means through which God Himself wants to teach us; Paul's Epistle to the Romans is a letter from God to us, and to mankind today.¹

Therefore, Paul's Epistle to the Romans is not just a Pauline love letter but it is most essentially God's love letter to us all who read His letter today.

This book is not a technical verse-by-verse commentary on Romans. It is not intended to be a critical or doctrinal treatment, but rather a devotional exposition. Our goal should be to discover the truths in this amazing document that can transform our lives today.

In this Epistle Paul argues about his faith, but his main purpose is to kindle in others that fire of devotion that burns in his own heart.²

I pray that as we study the Epistle to the Romans, our hearts will burn like Paul's with the firm conviction of salvation. Consequently, we will understand the Gospel in its purest form.

"How can a young man keep his way pure? By living according to your word." (Psalms 119:9)

"Open my eyes that I may see wonderful things in your law." (Psalms 119:18)

August, 2011
San Francisco

¹ Emil Brunner, *The Letter to the Romans: A Commentary*, trans. H. A. Kennedy (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1956), 12.

² E. F. Scott, *Paul's Epistle to the Romans* (London: S.C.M. Press Ltd, 1947), 13-14.

STUDY 1

Introduction I: Romans And The Key Figures

What Has Been Said Of Romans?

“This letter is the principal part of the New Testament and the purest Gospel, which surely deserves the honor that a Christian man should not merely know it off by heart word for word, but that he should be occupied with it daily as the daily bread of the soul. For it can never be read too often and too well. And the more it is used the more delicious it becomes and the better it tastes ...”

With these words, Martin Luther in the year 1522 began his introduction to the Letter to the Romans in the first edition of the New Testament newly translated by him.³

“At every significant juncture in the life of the Christian community this letter has stood, and for every giant of faith ever raised up to effect some change in that community, it has furnished the fire. And, for all the souls who have carried the embers which some great event or person has later fanned into flame, this last will and testament of Paul of Tarsus has spelled warmth and light.”⁴

“If Holy Scripture was a ring, and the Epistle to the Romans a precious stone, chapter 8 would be the sparkling point of the jewel.”⁵

“Certain it is that no book has had a greater influence on the theology of the Protestant Church, and no book contains more of the quintessence of the mind of Paul.”⁶

The Epistle to the Romans was the bedrock, the foundation on which the faith of the church was held and established and enabled to continue.

Highlights Of Conversions By Romans

This Epistle is so powerful that it has affected transformation in the lives of countless Christian men and women. The list of those who have experienced transformation may be endless, including those who are being added to this list daily, but I will pick out a few of the outstanding highlights.

St. Augustine

Augustine of Hippo was a brilliant professor and a profound philosopher and yet, he was living an immoral and dissolute life. Troubled and agonized in his soul, he was seated in a garden one afternoon: “I heard the voice of a boy or a girl ... chanting over and over again, ‘Pick it up, read it; pick it up, read it’ ... I quickly returned to the bench ... for there I had put down the apostle’s book ... I snatched it up, opened it, and in silence read the paragraph on which my eyes first fell: ‘Not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying, but put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh to fulfill the lusts

³Brunner, *The Letter to the Romans: A Commentary*, 9.

⁴Roy A. Harrisville, *Romans: Augsburg Commentary on the New Testament* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1980), 11.

⁵Philipp Jakob Spener (1635-1705)

⁶William Barclay, *The Daily Study Bible: The Letter to the Romans*, 2nd ed. (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1957), ix.

thereof.' I wanted to read no further, there was infused in my heart something like the light of full certainty and all the gloom of doubt vanished away."⁷

The famous verses that converted him were Romans 13:13-14.

Martin Luther

In 1515, while he was still a Roman Catholic, Martin Luther, who was at the time a teacher of theology, decided to give lectures to his students on the Epistle to the Romans. And it was as he was studying this very Epistle that the truth of justification by faith and by faith alone dawned upon his mind and his heart and his whole being. This led to that tremendous change in his life that was the catalyst of the Protestant Reformation. This great doctrine, mentioned in the first chapter of this Epistle and also in the Epistle to the Galatians, was the source of that total turnaround in Luther's life.⁸

Shortly before his death, the greatest Reformer of them all described the decisive change that had occurred in him: "It is true; I had been seized by an uncommon desire to understand Paul in the Epistle to the Romans. And thus far it was not cold blood around the heart that hindered me, but on single word ... "in it the righteousness of God is revealed." For I hated that word "righteousness of God" which ... I was taught to construe philosophically as a formal or active righteousness (as they call it), by which God is just and punishes sinners and the unjust. ... So I raged furiously and with a confused conscience. Still, I hammered persistently away at the passage in Paul, afire with eagerness to know what he means. Then, thanks to God's mercy and meditating on it day and night, I paid attention to the context. ... I began to understand God's righteousness as something by which the merciful God justifies us through faith, as it is written: "The just lives by faith." Right then I sensed I had been wholly reborn, and had entered by open doors to very paradise."

That man was Luther, and the passage Romans 1:17 (WA 54, 185, 14-186, 9, author's transl.).⁹

John Wesley

Perhaps best-known of all is the account of the conversion of John Wesley on May 24, 1738, in Aldersgate Street in London. The Spirit of God had been working in him; the Moravian Brethren had been teaching him about this doctrine of justification by faith without works, and though he understood it with his mind, he had to say, 'I have not felt it'. It was in a state of great agitation of soul and of mind and of heart that he went in weariness to a meeting in Aldersgate Street. It so happened that there in that meeting somebody – one of the Christian brethren – was reading the Preface and Introduction to Martin Luther's Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans, and Wesley sat there listening to it. And as he sat and listened he found that his heart was 'strangely warmed' and he knew that God had forgiven his sins – 'even mine', he says. And then, he was given the certain assurance that turned him, from being a preacher who was an abject failure, into a great and mighty evangelist.¹⁰

⁷*The Confession*, Book Eight, The Library of Christian Classics, trans. Albert C. Outler(Philadelphia: Westminster, 1955), 175-176.

⁸ D. M. Lloyd-Jones, *Romans: An Exposition of Chapter I: The Gospel of God* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1985), 4.

⁹ Harrisville, *Romans: Augsburg Commentary on the New Testament*, 9-10.

¹⁰ Lloyd-Jones, *Romans: An Exposition of Chapter I: The Gospel of God*, 5.

Have I Realized The Value Of Romans Yet?

Looking back at these epoch-making conversions in the history of Christianity, as Martyn Lloyd-Jones challenges us, we should be examining ourselves and asking this question: "Have I realized all this about the Epistle to the Romans? As I have gone through my Bible have I stopped at this book? Have I paused at it and given my time to it? Have I realized its profundity?"¹¹

PAUL: Who Is He?

"Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle and set apart for the Gospel of God" (1:1)

We find that the first word in this Epistle is PAUL; it is an Epistle written by a man called Paul. The Epistle cannot be understood apart from the man.¹² Likewise, only when we understand an artist can we comprehend his work easier and fuller, therefore let us take time to study about this man.

Apostle Paul—who is he?

He is, at once, an amazing person. He authored more than a half of the New Testament and pioneered numerous churches throughout Asia Minor and Europe. When he was moving from one city to another, he sent letters to teach and encourage the young Christians in the matters of faith in his pioneered churches. And his letters were so powerful and profound that his words have come to occupy the universal history, and forming a core of the Holy Scripture.

Some say that without him, Christianity, in the context of world religion, would have been just a small sect in Palestine and that today's worldwide church would not exist.

Unmarried his whole life, Paul fully devoted himself to the spreading of the Gospel of God with unwavering faith and a fiery passion.

Greatest Persecutor To His Church, Called By Christ

However, do you know that Paul was initially one of the greatest persecutors of Christianity?

Paul kindly introduces himself in Acts: "I am a Jew, born in Tarsus¹³ of Cilicia, but brought up in this city. Under Gamaliel¹⁴ I was thoroughly trained in the law of our fathers and was just as zealous for God as any of you are today. I persecuted the followers of this Way to their death, arresting both men and women and throwing them into prison, as also the high priest and all the Council can testify. I even obtained letters from them to their brothers in Damascus, and went there to bring these people as prisoners to Jerusalem to be punished. (Acts 22:3-5)

Let us backtrack and examine Paul , a.k.a. Saul¹⁵ of Tarsus, prior to his conversion in a little more detail.

¹¹ Lloyd-Jones, *Romans: An Exposition of Chapter I: The Gospel of God*, 7.

¹² Scott, *Paul's Epistle to the Romans*, 15.

¹³Tarsus was one of the three main centers of Greek culture; the other two were Athens and Alexandria in Egypt.

¹⁴Gamaliel was said to be the greatest rabbi amongst the Pharisees at the time of Paul.

¹⁵Paul was given the name Saul at birth, and he is called that until his conflict with Bar-Jesus at Paphos. At that time Luke wrote, "Then Saul, who also is called Paul" (Acts 13:9). From then on, he was called Paul in Acts. Bruce B. Barton, David R. Veerma, Neil Wilson, *Romans: Life Application Bible Commentary* (Wheaton: Tyndale House Publishers, 1992), 1.

"Meanwhile, Saul was still breathing out murderous threats against the Lord's disciples. He went to the high priest and asked him for letters to the synagogues in Damascus, so that if he found any there who belonged to the Way, whether men or women, he might take them as prisoners to Jerusalem." (Acts 9:1-2)

Here was this man, an unyielding, rabid, nationalistic Jew, hating the Lord Jesus Christ and everything related to Him, regarding Him as a blasphemer;¹⁶ Saul tried to destroy the Christian church, going to Damascus breathing out words of threat and slaughter in order that he might exterminate the little church there.

He was once Saul of Tarsus, but when he became the Apostle of Christ, his temperament did not change. When he became an Apostle, he was not transformed into a submissive preacher. He preached with all the intensity of his zealous and righteous character. He weeps, he tells us, and at times confronted fears within, and at other times was cast down. The man's temperament is exactly what it was; the zeal with which he persecuted is the same zeal with which he now preaches. The temperament remains a constant.¹⁷

Greatest Sufferer For The Sake Of The Gospel

As he neared Damascus on his journey, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?""Who are you, Lord?" Saul asked. "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting," He replied. (Acts 9:3-5)

God surely works in the most mysterious and profound way that humans oftentimes fail to fathom. At the time that the Christian Church should expand its boundary to the Gentile world outside Jerusalem, the path of the pioneering missionary was destined to be thorny and rugged. "I will show him how much he must suffer for my name." (Acts 9:16)

For this very ministry, God chose Saul of Tarsus, a man stubborn, violent, and bloodthirsty, who persecuted and was responsible for many deaths of God's very own Christians.

Paul's life would be filled with of adversaries and suffering. Paul himself revealed about the great distresses he had to face in multiple instances throughout the New Testament.

"Rather, as servants of God we commend ourselves in every way: in great endurance; in troubles, hardships and distresses; in beatings, imprisonments and riots; in hard work, sleepless nights and hunger." (2 Corinthians 6:4-5)

"Are they servants of Christ? (I am out of my mind to talk like this.) I am more. I have worked much harder, been in prison more frequently, been flogged more severely, and been exposed to death again and again. Five times I received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, I spent a night and a day in the open sea, I have been constantly on the move. I have been in danger from rivers, in danger from bandits, in danger from my own countrymen, in danger from Gentiles; in danger in the city, in danger in the country, in danger at sea; and in danger from false brothers. I have labored and toiled and have often gone without sleep; I have known hunger and thirst and have often gone without food; I have been cold and naked. Besides everything else, I face daily the pressure of my concern for all the churches." (2 Corinthians 11:23-27)

"We are fools for Christ, but you are so wise in Christ! We are weak, but you are strong! You are honored, we are dishonored! To this very hour we go hungry and thirsty, we are in rags, we are brutally treated,

¹⁶ Lloyd-Jones, *Romans: An Exposition of Chapter I: The Gospel of God*, 7.

¹⁷ D. M. Lloyd-Jones, *The Christian Warfare: Ephesians 6:10-13* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1977), 212-13.

we are homeless. We work hard with our own hands. When we are cursed, we bless; when we are persecuted, we endure it; when we are slandered, we answer kindly. Up to this moment we have become the scum of the earth, the refuse of the world." (1 Corinthians 4:10-13)

"Then some Jews came from Antioch and Iconium and won the crowd over. They stoned Paul and dragged him outside the city, thinking he was dead." (Acts 14:19)

These records vividly depict the life of Paul. He lived the life of real suffering and yet, he endured and never gave up on his commission of being an apostle of the Lord.

Why Saul Of Tarsus? ‘Because Of Love,’ Says The Lord

Still, why did God have to choose Saul?

Because when you are forgiven more, greater love is revealed. Paul himself testified to this mysterious grace.

"Where sin increased, grace increased all the more." (5:20b) Where there is much sin, the greater grace of God is uncovered.

When a sinful woman poured perfume of an alabaster jar on his feet, the Lord taught his disciples: "Therefore, I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven—for she loved much. But he who has been forgiven little loves little." (Luke 7:47)

The Lord knew so well that the only power that can overcome these indescribable trials and persecutions was love, the love of God. The Lord knew so well that only the one who is perfectly reborn by the love of God, who breathes and speaks in His love, can overcome all things.

Paul, Loyalist To God’s Love

"As he neared Damascus on his journey, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" "Who are you, Lord?" Saul asked. "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting," he replied." (Acts 9:3-5)

The risen Lord came to him with the most unexpected, shocking, love. Something impossible, unimaginable, and incomprehensible, within the boundary of law that he so adhered to, had just happened to him.

"Saul got up from the ground, but when he opened his eyes he could see nothing. So they led him by the hand into Damascus. For three days he was blind, and did not eat or drink anything." (Acts 9:8-9)

After the Lord called Saul, he could not see for three days, a period he spent in prayer and fasting. He must have sought an answer to this mysterious incident: 'Lord, why do you hold on to *me*? Why did you come to *me*, who you must abhor most, who deserves to be cursed, the worst of all sinners? Why do you call this persecutor and forgive and love *me*?'

The law he abided by said: "eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burn for burn, wound for wound, bruise for bruise." (Exodus 21:24-25) Apart from the law, something different, completely different came to him. It was *unconditional love* poured down on Saul, and it shattered his whole world.

The most sublime of love is forgiveness. When he was unconditionally forgiven by the Lord, he did not take this love for granted.

Fully meditating on this electrifying, heart-trembling love, he laid down all his past, never making light of this surprising love; not even once did he forsake this love, through the last moment of his life. Since this conversion, he, as a faithful, loyal servant of the Lord, preached the love of God until he returned back to Him.

This man undoubtedly was one of the great intellectual minds, not only of the church but also of the world.¹⁸ Unmistakable is Paul's tremendous reasoning power, his logic, his arguments, and the way in which he marshals evidence and facts, and then presents them.¹⁹

To be sure, Paul is a theological teacher and thinker, who deeply understood the riches of this new world of truth. But he was not satisfied with these internal abundances and enlightenment. More importantly, he lived the life, the life of the Gospel. He practiced the word of the Gospel. His words that testify to the love and redemption of Christ, therefore, are testimonies of his life, so shining and powerful as his own life. He is one whom we cannot follow without having our whole lives set in motion.²⁰

Paul's background represented the height of intellectual, political, and religious standards of the time. He was immersed in the richness of Greek culture, held citizenship in the Empire of Rome, and was a Jew by birth. He was a Hebrew of the Hebrews, of the tribe of Benjamin, and a Pharisee of the Pharisees, an expert in the Jewish understanding and interpretation of the law of God.

How did this proud, highly intellectual, precise, and perfectly lawful person end up preaching the love of God?

It was God's love itself that transformed Saul. Because of God's love, Saul of Tarsus became Paul, an apostle to the Gentiles.

Questions

1. Share your reflection on the Epistle to the Romans based on today's study.
2. How would you describe Paul based on today's study.
3. Today's study includes amazing life-transforming stories of a few eminent figures in the history of Christianity. After their conversions, the power of Holy Spirit was surely present with them in their mighty work of God. However, it is vital to know that the Holy Spirit does not work undistinguishing in the same way to all men; He does not dictate to all men. "What the Holy Spirit does is to take these men with all their gifts and power and use them and employ them. ... The Holy Spirit takes the men who have surrendered themselves to Him and He uses all the gifts with which they are endowed. It was God who gave them these gifts. It was God who saw to it that Paul was born in Tarsus. It was God's way of preparing him. He had a task for him. And so you see the glory of God shining out in all this."²¹ Reflect on your personality and discuss how your gifts can be used for God's purpose.

¹⁸ Lloyd-Jones, *Romans: An Exposition of Chapter I: The Gospel of God*, 8.

¹⁹Ibid.

²⁰ Brunner, *The Letter to the Romans: A Commentary*, 12.

²¹Lloyd-Jones, *Romans: An Exposition of Chapter I: The Gospel of God*, 14.

Prayer

Thank you for leading us to this Bible study on the Epistle to the Romans. We have realized that this Epistle had power to sustain the history of Christian Church and has furnished the fire to the weary souls and transformed them to be mighty warriors of Christ.

Lord, we thank you for letting us study your great minister, Apostle Paul. You used Paul and his talents so preciously and tremendously once he surrendered to your unconditional love. Surely your glory was shining out in Paul's life.

We, too, wish to know your love and therefore surrender to you. May you take control of our lives and use our gifts that you endowed in creating us. As no two flowers are alike, no two birds are identical, we too in our own way wish to display your glory.

As we embark on this journey of discovering your Gospel through this study, open our eyes that we may see wonderful things in your word. In Jesus' name, Amen.

STUDY 2

Introduction II: Study Of Romans

Time, Place, And Circumstances Of Writing

Paul wrote this letter about a quarter of a century after the crucifixion of Christ—the year 58 A. D.²² At the time he was the house guest of a man named Gaius, a wealthy citizen of the Grecian city of Corinth.²³ Thanks to Gaius, Paul was freed from material necessity, for a brief period, during this period of writing.

The actual circumstances of the writing of the Epistle are described in 15:22-32: Paul has now completed his work in Asia and Greece (15:23), and is planning to mount a mission to Spain and, on the way, to visit Rome. But first he must ‘back-track’ to Jerusalem, to deliver a relief fund preciously raised by Macedonia and Achaia for the ‘saints’ there (the impoverished Jewish Christian community in the Holy City).²⁴

All the roads branched off from the great capital of Rome. Paul’s eyes had long been fixed on this city.

“I do not want you to be unaware, brothers, that I planned many times to come to you (but have been prevented from doing so until now)...” (1:13)

Paul experienced no sudden impulse, but rather it was his long-growing desire, crystallized into conviction by the power of the Spirit, that ‘he must see Rome.’²⁵

After all this had happened, Paul decided to go to Jerusalem, passing through Macedonia and Achaia. “After I have been there,” he said, “I must visit Rome also.” (Acts 19:21)

Though he longed to go to Rome, and furthermore Spain, even a day earlier, he is now compelled to go back to Jerusalem, the mother church. “Now, however, I am on my way to Jerusalem in the service of the saints there.” (15:25)

When he was retreating back to Jerusalem, he was not unaware of the fact that there were a number of perils and enemies threatening his life there; he would not probably move along with his mission routes.²⁶ Consequently, Paul was compelled to write this letter. If he could not have preached in Rome, the Roman Christians would nevertheless hear his Gospel read to them from his own living word.

Romans was written as if it were Paul’s last will and testament. Last will—is this too heavy a sentiment? This is somebody’s very last expression of words before greeting death. Paul may have thought: ‘God has let me experience and feel so many inexpressible things. He has opened up His profound truth to this one undeserving person. As I set out for Jerusalem, this may be the last of all my journeys, therefore I should not leave obscured the mystery of God.’

Besides, there were many heretical teachings, with various faith-related conflicts, with clashes between Jewish Christians, Gentile Christians, and confused young believers in Rome.

²²According to James Denney (Expos. Gr. Text, Introd. to Romans), Paul was on his last visit in Corinth in the winter of 57-58 A. D. or possibly in the spring of 58 A. D. when he wrote this greatest of his epistles, though some think it might have been a year later.

²³ Roy L. Laurin, *Romans: Where Life Begins* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1988), 9.

²⁴ Matthew Black, *Romans: The New Century Bible Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1981), 19.

²⁵J. W. Shepard, *The Life and Letters of St. Paul: An Exegetical Study* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1950), 365.

²⁶ Black, *Romans: The New Century Bible Commentary*, 20.

Therefore, Paul poured out all his passion into this Epistle, testifying the saving power of God, the truth, the Gospel, the essence of Christianity.

How To Study Romans, The Letter Of The Holy Spirit And Love

When we read Paul's letters, we are not reading things which were meant to be academic exercises theological treatises, but things which are human documents written by a friend to his friends.²⁷

Paul did not pen the letter Romans himself; he dictated to a secretary who transcribed for him: "I, Tertius, who wrote down this letter, greet you in the Lord." (16:22)

We can see the generosity of Paul here. "Tertius, my secretary, please record your own name here." The name of this scribe is historically included in this great Epistle.

What does it mean that a scribe wrote down the dictated letter to the Romans?

It means Paul did not sit quietly at a desk, carefully polishing each sentence as he wrote. We must think of him as striding up and down in a little room, pouring forth a torrent of words, while his secretary raced to record them down. When Paul composed his letters, he had his mind set upon those to whom he was writing, and he was opening his heart to them with words that poured out one over another, each carrying Paul's desire and eagerness to instruct. Paul's letters are not precise, academic documents written in the seclusion of a scholar's study; they are living, vital, torrents of words poured straight from his heart to the heart of friends far away for whom he wrote.²⁸

Therefore, Romans is a letter of the Holy Spirit in which Paul testified the truth of the Gospel that he witnessed, that he felt in his heart, and realized, as the Spirit inspired him. This letter is Paul's confession and fiery testimony of his faith and his passion for the mission.

As William Barclay puts it, "[In Romans] he opened his mind and heart to the folk he loved so much; and in them, to this day, we can see that great mind grappling with the problems of the Early Church, and we can feel that great heart throbbing with love for men, even when they were misguided and mistaken."²⁹

To sum it up, when we study Romans, we should not try to academically analyze it word by word, but simply follow this passionate, burning heart of Paul; his heart was burning with the love of God and of the people in Rome. Then, this letter of Holy Spirit will also ignite our hearts with the fire of love and grace.

The Framework Of Romans

Romans is at once a very complicated and a very carefully constructed letter. It will therefore help us to find our way through it if we have in our minds an idea of the scheme and frame-work round which it is written. It falls into four definite divisions.

- (i) Chapters 1-8, which deal with the problem of righteousness.
- (ii) Chapters 9-11, which deal with the problem of the Jews, the Chosen People.
- (iii) Chapters 12-15, which deal with practical questions of life and living.
- (iv) Chapter 16, which is a letter of introduction for Phoebe, and a list of final personal greetings.³⁰

²⁷Barclay, *The Daily Study Bible: The Letter to the Romans*, xviii.

²⁸Ibid., xix-xx.

²⁹Ibid., xv.

Paul has supplied the material and pointed the way forward for the whole of Christian theology and Christian thought with these sixteen chapters. Paul expresses these words in a way that no one before could express it, and that no one after him would. There is probably no document of the human spiritual history in which passion of feeling, power of thought, and inexorableness of will permeate so fully as this one here. Everything surges out red-hot from the depths of the divine mystery of love, with the lesser contrast between life and doctrine, theology and piety, passing away.³¹

The Righteous Will Live By Faith

One of the paramount phrases in the Book of Romans is: "The righteous will live by faith." Faith is the key to reach righteousness. What is faith? This is a difficult theme that opens up a difficult word. We will be studying this in depth as we continue our study of Romans. But briefly, in its essence, this faith is accepting the love and grace of God, knowing that He received me, though I am a sinner. Therefore, faith is the passageway through which grace is received. Salvation by faith is, in other words, salvation by grace. It is a *surprising gift*. It is an unimaginable world that is opening up from the Jewish world of lawful values in which sinners must be punished.

This surprising gift of God, this love, was what Paul testified on this Epistle and sacrificed his very life to proclaim. '*Receive this amazing love. Then you will receive salvation!*'; we gain salvation by nothing else but this love of God.

"Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God." (Ephesians 3:17-19)

Secret Of Successful Bible Study

Not Their Story of Old and Then, But My Story of Now and Here!

We must always remember that just because something is written to address a specific situation, it is not necessarily transient, and there is no reason a deeper truth cannot be equally relevant today. All the great love songs of the world were written not to us, but still we are moved by them. The human need and the human situation still remains, and the way that God speaks to us through Paul's words has not changed either.³²

Stories in the Bible should not be regarded as stories that once happened to somebody else a long time ago. But we should find its relevance to our lives today and apply the lessons to our everyday lives. Their story of old and then must be linked to my story of now and here!

³⁰ Barclay, *The Daily Study Bible: The Letter to the Romans*, xxv.

³¹ Brunner, *The Letter to the Romans: A Commentary*, 11.

³² Barclay, *The Daily Study Bible: The Letter to the Romans*, xix.

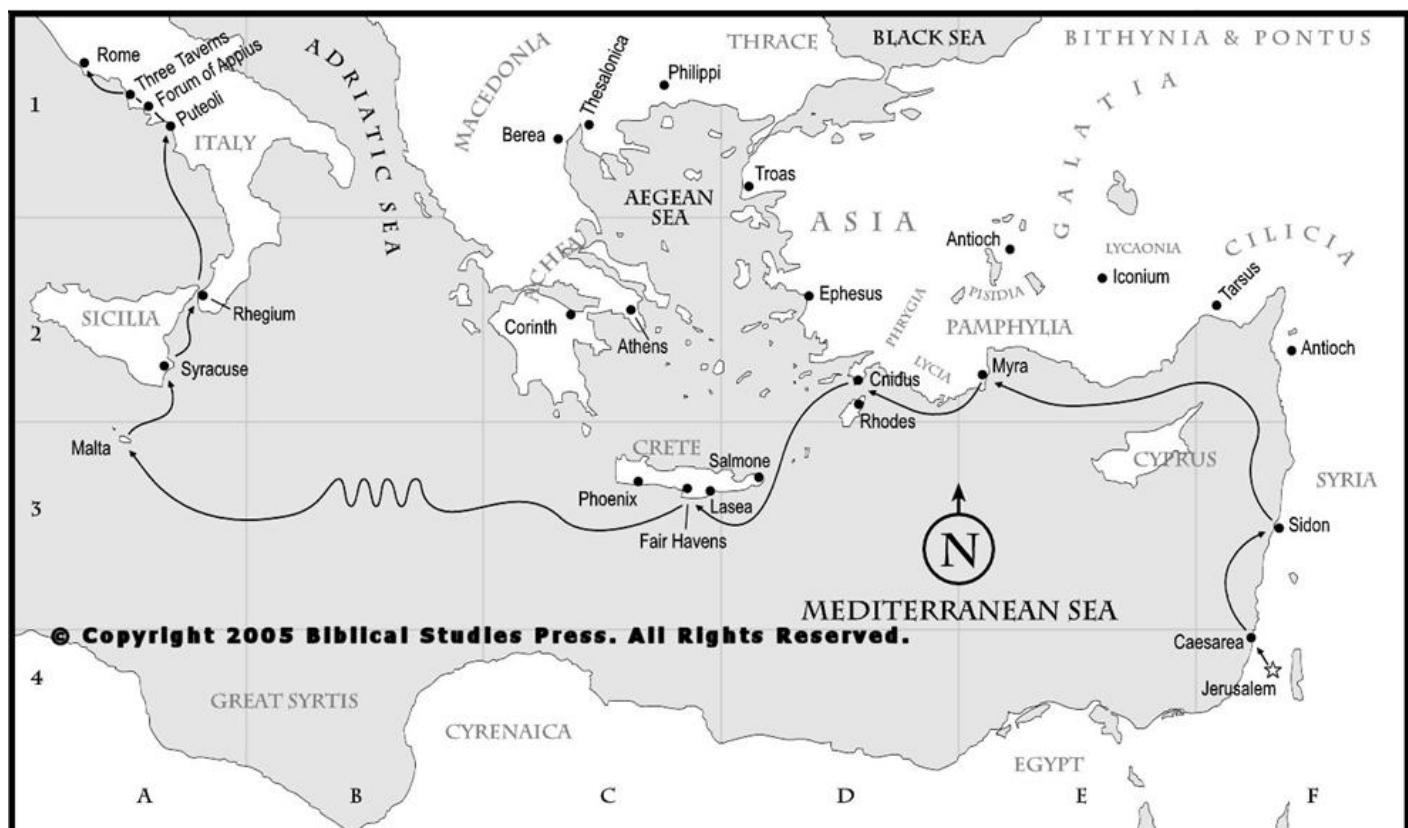
Holy Spirit

In order to make the Bible stories come to life, in our humility, we should sincerely ask for the Holy Spirit to illuminate our mind.

We know from experience that He suddenly comes upon us – He illuminates the mind and moves the heart – and I believe that any man who expounds the Scripture should always be open to the influences of the Holy Ghost.³³

Seeking the Spirit's help, let us now explore this tremendous book, during which time we will live with Paul. Throughout each moment of every study, let God speak to us through Paul's words.

Paul's Journey To Rome



Paul arrives in Jerusalem around late spring of 58 A.D. (Acts 21:17) but as was expected, the Jews caused a riot (Acts 21:27-30).

Roman troops take Paul to Felix and Felix decides to keep him Praetorium of Herod (Acts 23:35). From early Summer 58 A.D. to early Autumn 60 A.D. Paul is a Roman prisoner in Caesarea.

In Caesarea, Paul, as a Roman citizen, requests that his case be heard by Caesar. King Agrippa agrees to send Paul to Rome (Acts 26:32).

³³ Lloyd-Jones, *Romans: An Exposition of Chapter I: The Gospel of God*, 2.

In the Autumn of 60 A.D. Paul, along with other prisoners, boards a boat for Rome. Paul's travel to Rome is considered by many to be his final or last missionary journey.

Paul finally arrives in Rome as a prisoner. While in Rome Paul is allowed to live by himself guarded only by a soldier and is able to receive visitors and continue his preaching of the Gospel (Acts 28:16-31).

Questions

1. Describe Paul's circumstances when he was writing the Epistle to the Romans.
2. What should be the right approach in studying the Epistle to the Romans according to today's study?
3. Share your reflection on the introduction to Romans so far before we move onto Chapter 1 of the book.
4. What can you expect to learn from future studies from this book? Share your study plans with your Bible study guide.

Prayer

Thank you for leading us to this Romans Bible study. Moved and inspired by the Holy Spirit, the great Apostle Paul poured out his heart and mind into this Epistle. Romans is profound. It is the living word of God. As Martin Luther said, truly, Romans can never be read too often and too well and the more it is used the more delicious it becomes and the better it tastes. It is the treasure chest for all believers for it tells us the core of the Gospel of God.

As many perils awaited him on his way to Jerusalem, the Apostle on this Epistle had to impart the gems in his life—the truth of the Gospel that transformed his life and fiery testimony of his faith. As if he was telling his last will before the shadow of death, he was writing this letter.

As we move on to our Bible study, may we follow the sincere heart of Paul and discover the amazing treasure hidden in this Epistle. May we accept this study as God's word spoken to *us today*. May we never fall into intellectual arrogance but in complete humility seek the Holy Spirit to completely guide us through all our Bible studies so that we may be brought to God ever more closely. In Jesus' name, Amen.

STUDY 3

Paul And The Gospel

[Romans 1:1-7]

¹ Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle and set apart for the gospel of God—² the gospel he promised beforehand through his prophets in the Holy Scriptures ³ regarding his Son, who as to his human nature was a descendant of David, ⁴ and who through the Spirit of was declared with power to be the Son of God by his resurrection from the dead: Jesus Christ our Lord. ⁵ Through him and for his name's sake, we received grace and apostleship to call people from among all the Gentiles to the obedience that comes from faith. ⁶ And you also are among those who are called to belong to Jesus Christ.

⁷To all in Rome who are loved by God and called to be saints: Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ.

According to the custom of the ancient-letter style,³⁴ Paul opens his letter with an introduction. How does he describe himself?

PAUL: WHO & WHAT Am I?

I Am A ‘Servant’ Of ‘Christ Jesus’

First and foremost, Paul identifies himself a servant; a servant of Christ Jesus. The word that he chooses out of all the words available to him is that of “servant.” To him, there was nothing more important than to be a servant.

The correct translation of the word “servant” as used here is ‘slave (*doulos*)’, a ‘bond-slave’; ‘the bond-slave of Jesus Christ’.³⁵ This is the self-attribution of the author.

And Paul dearly called Jesus LORD (*kurios*). In Greek the word *kurios* describes someone who has undisputed possession of a person or a thing. It means *master* or *owner*, in the most definite and absolute sense.³⁶

Paul thought of himself as the slave of Jesus Christ, his Master and his Lord. Jesus loved him and gave Himself up for him, and therefore Paul was sure that he no longer belonged to himself, but entirely to Jesus. In this way, this word *slave* describes the utter obligation of love.³⁷

Kurios and *doulos*, that is the LORD and me, says Paul.

I am His slave, he says, His willing slave.³⁸ I do not want anybody else to be my Master. Jesus is my Lord. He had bought me out with his precious blood; He had loved me and given Himself for me. By this love I became who and what I am today. I am not my own. There is nothing in me that can be claimed as mine but my

³⁴Ancient letters all began according to a set pattern; first the name of the writer, then the name of the person addressed, then a word of salutation. “Cicero to Brutus, greeting.” (Scott, *Paul’s Epistle to The Romans*, 28.)

³⁵Lloyd-Jones, *Romans: An Exposition of Chapter I: The Gospel of God*, 34.

³⁶Barclay, *The Daily Study Bible: The Letter to the Romans*, 1-2.

³⁷Ibid.

³⁸Lloyd-Jones, *Romans: An Exposition of Chapter I: The Gospel of God*, 35.

everything is because of my dear Lord and Master, Jesus Christ. Therefore, I no longer belong to myself, but entirely to Jesus. I have been completely captivated and carried away by Him.'

Paul was a *doulos*, not of men, but of Jesus Christ. He was a *bond-man*, and hence not free. He owned not himself, nor controlled his own acts. He was bound by the will of another. But this bondage did not degrade him, it ennobled. It is true that Paul was fettered, but he was fastened by the will of Christ, which paradoxically leads to the finest form of freedom, freedom to do right, freedom from sin, and freedom from the fear of death. Such bondage is not vassalage, but the very perfection of freedom.³⁹

Kurios and *doulos*, master and slave, that is the beautiful confession of Paul.

'Jesus had given me the most priceless love and that was giving his life for me. Because of this love, I was transformed and became who I am. I do not want anything else. His love is sufficient for me.'

In the face of this great love, Paul, a zealous and rabid persecutor, breathing out murderous threats trying to exterminate the Christian church, broke down. All his pre-Christian passion and his past were completely emptied out after knowing His love.

Then he realized that he was just a slave, and that Paul was really such a small one. Paul is of Latin origin, and the meaning of which is 'small.' Paul is such a Gospel-centric name. He came to realize that when he is weak, then he is strong (2 Corinthians 12:10). Now he knew that what mattered was not what he could do, but what God had done. It has been put this way, "The law lays down what a man must do; the gospel lays down what God has done." Paul now saw that salvation depended not on what man's effort can do, but on what God's love has already done. Given to us is grace, free and undeserved.⁴⁰ This is the core of faith that Paul wanted to testify.

To Paul, Jesus Christ is always in the forefront, in the center. He cannot begin writing without at once introducing us to Jesus Christ. To Paul, Christ was the beginning and the end, the all-in-all. He was nothing apart from Him. You will find that in this introduction⁴¹ the Apostle mentions Christ at least five times.⁴² It is remarkable that in the first fourteen verses of the Epistle to the Ephesians he mentions Christ no fewer than fifteen times.

I Am A 'Called' 'Apostle'

There was a word that Paul did not neglect in his letters. "Apostle" – this was the noblest grace that he wanted to boast of the most. Therefore, he placed this title in the first verse of the first chapter of his letters, not only in Romans, but in 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians and Colossians. 'I am Paul, Apostle of Jesus Christ!'

"And in the church God has appointed first of all apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then workers of miracles, also those having gifts of healing, those able to help others, those with gifts of administration, and those speaking in different kinds of tongues." (1 Corinthians 12:28)

There are various ministries of God: apostles, prophets, teachers, and workers of miracles. But the first is apostles. They are the center and essence of God's church, and the church was opened by apostles.

³⁹ Moses E. Lard, *Commentary on Paul's Letter to Romans: With a Revised Greek Text, Compiled from the Best Recent Authors and a New Translation* (Des Moines: Christian Board of Publication, 1914), 14.

⁴⁰ Barclay, *The Daily Study Bible: The Letter to the Romans*, 3.

⁴¹ Jesus Christ appears five times in Romans 1:1-8.

⁴² Lloyd-Jones, *Romans: An Exposition of Chapter I: The Gospel of God*, 33.

Paul wants to tell us here that he is not a servant of Jesus Christ in a general sense only; he is a particular kind of servant; in fact he is an apostle.⁴³

What is an apostle?

An apostle is a ‘sent one,’ a delegate, a messenger sent on a mission. The apostleship was not granted recklessly. “One of those days Jesus went out to a mountainside to pray, and spent the night praying to God. When morning came, he called his disciples to him and chose twelve of them, whom he also designated apostles.” (Luke 6:12-13) The Lord deliberately chose twelve, the greater body, out of a large number of disciples. He named them, and them only, apostles. This is a designation indicating a very special and particular office.⁴⁴

An apostle is one chosen and sent with a special mission as the fully authorized representative of the sender,⁴⁵ and the sender is none other but God!

Therefore, the apostles spoke with authority from God as Christ’s representatives. Divine authority and power were given to them. People must then listen to them, not as men but, but as those who are speaking from God.⁴⁶

Paul always claimed that he had this exceptional authority that the Lord Himself alone can give—and that he was not merely preaching, he was preaching as the chosen vessel of the Lord Jesus Christ.⁴⁷

How did he become this apostle? Most essentially, Paul was “called.” It is one of the most important facts about Paul, and that is why he introduces it.

Listen to what he says in the first verse of the first chapter of Galatians: “Paul, an apostle—sent not from men nor by man, but by Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised him from the dead.” (Galatians 1:1)

‘Paul an apostle—yes’, he says, ‘don’t make any mistake about it – I am not self-appointed. ‘Not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ’. ‘Called.’ A chosen man, chosen by the sovereign act of the Lord Jesus Christ. ‘Yes, says Paul, ‘I am as much an apostle as were the twelve. I have been called in the same way exactly as they have been called. I have the same authority, I am equal with them. I am an apostle, a called apostle.’⁴⁸

Jesus said to His men, “You have not chosen me, but I have chosen you.” (John 15:16) Paul did not think of life in terms of what he wanted to do, but in terms of what God meant him to do.⁴⁹

We must not forget that the Lord chose Paul who had been His chief enemy, who tried to destroy His church. It is one of the most amazing accounts in history. ‘Though I am such, He has loved me and He commissioned me,’ says Paul. ‘I am a called apostle; I am an apostle not because of me but because of His calling.’ Paul had such a firm self-identity about the office of apostle. We too ought to understand our identity that it is not we who choose our way but it is He who chooses and calls us. It is not I but He and only His grace that lead us to our commission.

⁴³ Lloyd-Jones, *Romans: An Exposition of Chapter I: The Gospel of God*, 36.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 38.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 40.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 41.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 42.

⁴⁹ Barclay, *The Daily Study Bible: The Letter to the Romans*, 2.

I Am ‘Set Apart’ For ‘the Gospel Of God’

Paul had been a Pharisee (Philippians 3:5). The very word *Pharisee* in Hebrew means ‘*a separated one*’, one set apart. He had felt himself separated in such a way as to have nothing but contempt for all ordinary men.⁵⁰

But after opening his eyes to the love of God, he is yet again separated, set apart by God Himself. The false separation, and the true separation! Man’s separation, God’s separation!⁵¹

“Why was I separated? Why did He call me in the first place?”

For “the Gospel of God,” answers Paul in the utmost conviction, without a second thought.

He is separated not for privilege, or self-glory, or pride. Now he is set apart for service, and humility, and love for all men, that is, in one word, to preach the Gospel of God. It was not the gospel of Paul, or of the disciples. It was “the Gospel of God.”⁵²

In other words, it is what God has done for man, and about his salvation. And that is why, of course, it is quite unique and new. I am not going to write to you, says the Apostle, about human philosophy. I am not going to give you my own ideas about how life should be lived. I am not going to tell you what man has got to do. I am going to tell you what God *has done*. That’s it! The good news from God!⁵³

The gospel (*evangelium*) means, as the young Christian learns, the ‘good news.’ It is an account regarding God’s Son. It is ‘news of victory’, His victory over the powers of sin that all men are liberated from the bondage of sin.

This gospel was prophesied in the Holy Scriptures. The prophets in the Old Testament had issued promises regarding Jesus. And the gospel was personified in Jesus Christ. The promise became a person. The prophecy became a personality. The scripture became a character.

The world is asking anew in these crucial days, what is Christianity? Scholars try to define it but Scripture says “ecce Homo”—“behold the man”—for Christianity is Christ, a person.⁵⁴

Paul testifies that Jesus was resurrected from the dead. He died and lived again. Therefore, He became the Christ. Simply speaking, His death is the Cross and His living again is resurrection. The Cross and the resurrection, love and life—this is the Gospel in essence. His sacrifice, His love gave birth to life. That is the message of the Gospel. We gain life by His Cross, the greatest sacrifice and love that mankind has ever seen.

Jesus Christ is not in the past tense. All other people are put in the past tense when they die, but not Christ.⁵⁵ He still breathes life into us. The Gospel is of this loving Jesus Christ for us.

“When God, who set me apart from birth and called me by his grace, was pleased to reveal his Son in me so that I might preach him among the Gentiles.” (Galatians 1:15-16)

Paul is a preacher, and when he asks himself why he preaches, the answer is: ‘The love of Christ constrained me’.⁵⁶ “Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel!” (1 Corinthians 9:16) He must preach because ‘I am bound to.’

⁵⁰ Barclay, *The Daily Study Bible: The Letter to the Romans*, 3.

⁵¹ Lloyd-Jones, *Romans: An Exposition of Chapter I: The Gospel of God*, 51.

⁵² Laurin, *Romans: Where Life Begins*, 16.

⁵³ Lloyd-Jones, *Romans: An Exposition of Chapter I: The Gospel of God*, 59.

⁵⁴ Laurin, *Romans: Where Life Begins*, 17.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 18.

⁵⁶ Lloyd-Jones, *Romans: An Exposition of Chapter I: The Gospel of God*, 35.

Grace And Peace

To all in Rome who are loved by God and called to be saints, Paul now gives a salute, “Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ.” (1:7)

Surely, grace comes first in all things. Grace is the fount and the source that leads to this ocean of peace.⁵⁷ Only by the grace of God can we rest in peace.

Questions

1. We can say that Romans 1:1 is one of the most beautiful confessions of Paul’s faith, testifying to the love of Jesus Christ. Paul testified that he, as his bond-slave, was totally captivated and lost in Jesus. Before this confession, Martyn Lloyd-Jones challenges us to answer these questions: “Has He captivated us like that, my friends? Do we know something of this love? Is He the Master of our lives, of our thinking, of all our activities?”⁵⁸ How do you answer this?
2. For Paul, every Christian is a slave of Christ.⁵⁹ Based on today’s message share your reflection on the following Bible verses: “For he who was a slave when he was called by the Lord is the Lord’s freedman; similarly, he who was a free man when he was called is Christ’s slave. You were bought at a price; do not become slaves of men. Brothers, each man, as responsible to God, should remain in the situation God called him to.”(2 Corinthians 7:22-24)
3. In ancient Israel to call a man ‘God’s slave’ was to accord him a title of honor. The title was used of Moses, Joshua, David and the prophets.⁶⁰ Paul was proud of identifying himself as a slave of Jesus Christ. How would you relate yourself to being a slave of Jesus?
4. Suppose you are writing a letter to a group of important people who are deeply relevant to your future prospects but the majority of them do not know you. How would you introduce yourself?
5. Martyn Lloyd-Jones shares: “The gospel! Oh! How easily we use this term! How glibly we repeat it! I am as guilty as anybody else. It ought to be impossible for us to use the word ‘gospel’ without bursting forth, as it were, into a hymn of praise and thanksgiving. Good news from God, that is the gospel. And that brings me to the most important thing of all – it is the gospel of God.”⁶¹ Share your reflection on the gospel, based on today’s study.
6. Share your reflection on this statement based on today’s study: “If you establish the character of the person (Jesus), you have established the character of Christianity.”⁶²

⁵⁷Lloyd-Jones, *Romans: An Exposition of Chapter I: The Gospel of God*, 172.

⁵⁸Ibid., 36.

⁵⁹C. E. B. Cranfield, *Romans: A Shorter Commentary* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1985), 2.

⁶⁰Ibid.

⁶¹Lloyd-Jones, *Romans: An Exposition of Chapter I: The Gospel of God*, 59.

⁶²Laurin, *Romans: Where Life Begins*, 9.

Prayer

Lord, we have realized that each word that Paul uttered out was truly the word of the Holy Spirit. Each word bears such profound and life-breathing messages to our souls. We discover life in this letter, and it revives our slumbering souls. We wish to know more of the truths testified in this tremendous letter.

Paul says the Lord Himself called him, and chose him, and authorized him to be His apostle. Though he was a persecuting, blaspheming Pharisee, who was going to slaughter your people, you still called him and set him up as an apostle, with your full authority, to be your mouth, to preach the Gospel to the whole world. We see ever more clearly that Paul is devoted to Christ!

This great apostle opens this letter with such a mighty testimony of his faith. Paul is servant of Christ Jesus; Paul is called apostle. Paul is set apart for the gospel of God. It is such a deep and beautiful confession that deeply touches our hearts. His faith is already shining out through the opening of this letter. Just as a precious pearl is formed after a long struggle in the shell of an oyster, Paul formed this precious gem. His powerful testimony was birthed out of his long lasted trials and hardships. Lord, we too wish to resemble Paul and give this kind of beautiful testimony of faith. In Jesus' name, Amen.

STUDY 4
The Righteous Will Live By Faith
[Romans 1:8-17]

⁸ First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because your faith is being reported all over the world.

⁹ God, whom I serve with my whole heart in preaching the gospel of his Son, is my witness how constantly I remember you¹⁰ in my prayers at all times; and I pray that now at last by God's will the way may be opened for me to come to you. ¹¹ I long to see you so that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to make you strong— ¹² that is, that you and I may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith. ¹³ I do not want you to be unaware, brothers and sisters, that I planned many times to come to you (but have been prevented from doing so until now) in order that I might have a harvest among you, just as I have had among the other Gentiles.

¹⁴ I am obligated both to Greeks and non-Greeks, both to the wise and the foolish. ¹⁵ That is why I am so eager to preach the gospel also to you who are at Rome.

¹⁶ I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile.¹⁷ For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: "The righteous will live by faith."

Paul's Burning Desire For Roman Churches In The Grace of God

As you read this letter, especially through today's passage, do you feel the glowing love that binds Paul in heart with the Christians in Rome?

After almost nineteen hundred years, the warm affection of this passage still breathes through it, and we can feel Paul's great heart throbbing with love for the Church that he had never seen.⁶³

Paul now begins with a commendation to the Christians in Rome. It was easy to have faith from Jerusalem, where Jesus was present and teaching, but it was a different matter to have faith in Rome where Caesar was seeking Christian victims for his Christian spectacles.⁶⁴ Paul, in wisdom and love, began with a compliment. A man of faith will always see all things at their best, whether in situations or people, and they also receive the best from them. It is none other than the power of faith that enables you to see the future in advance. And the power of faith births out the trust from love. Surely, this trust is from conviction in the love of God. Just as Jesus trusted God and His disciples with absolute faith and love, we too must go forward with the same confident trust in God and in men. If we believe in God and in men, we will never be pessimists, because with these two centers secured, the possibilities for the future are infinite.⁶⁵

Paul had been continually praying for those in Rome with the burning desire and longing to come to them. Once he gets there, he has a spiritual gift to give to them and to make them strong; that is in other words, to 'establish' and 'strengthen' them. Blessed are you when you have something or anything to give to others.

⁶³ Barclay, *The Daily Study Bible: The Letter to the Romans*, 5.

⁶⁴ Laurin, *Romans: Where Life Begins*, 22.

⁶⁵ William Barclay, *The Daily Study Bible: The Gospel of John*, vol. 1. 2nd ed. (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1956), 249.

Indeed, Paul had something special in him that never ran dry, even after giving it out again and again. What did Paul have in him? He had the grace of God, and this grace never ran short. Rich and genuine grace was inexhaustibly overflowing from within him. He always rejoiced and lived in the grace of the Lord. With this, he imparted the vision, dream, and joy of the Lord unto those whom he encountered.

A Debtor Of Love And Grace Of God To All Men

Paul identified himself as a debtor, and this debt is not of financial things, but a debt of love and grace. He knew where he came from and never forgot how he was called. He confessed that he was the worst of all sinners. “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners—of whom I am the worst.” (1 Timothy 1:15) Nonetheless, through Jesus Christ, God approached him and lavished upon him a surprising love, regardless of his past actions.

Being loved so much, he felt the burden of reciprocation: ‘I am a debtor both to the Greeks, and to the non-Greeks; both to the wise, and to the foolish. I am under an obligation. I am obligated to all of you and am ready to preach the gospel to the whole world!’

Now let us ask this question once again: What was it that Paul had within in him? He had the ‘gospel’ – the gospel that he cannot keep within himself but was bound to give and impart to everyone he sees.

‘For Christ's love compels us’ (2 Corinthians 5:14), says Paul. What is pressing upon the Apostle? The love of Christ! This amazing thing! This gospel of reconciliation! This love of God! This love of God that sends His only Son, and even makes Him to bear in for us! Paul has seen it, and he wants everybody else to see it and to rejoice in it, and to participate in it.⁶⁶ The wonderful, glorious character of the gospel itself had made him confess: “Though I am free and belong to no one, I have made myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible. To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law. To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from God’s law but am under Christ’s law), so as to win those not having the law. To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all people so that by all possible means I might save some. I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings.” (1 Corinthians 9:19-23)

Who Is A Christian?

A Christian, says Paul, is the man who has received something, and he can thus give it to another. He has received knowledge. He understands. He can speak to the soul in such a way as to give rest and peace.⁶⁷ This knowledge that Christians have is the knowledge of the Lord, the knowledge of the gospel.

Remember, Apostle Peter said: “Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have.” (1 Peter 3:15) What Paul and all Christians have is the gospel. Do you know this gospel, and are you prepared to give an answer for the hope that is in you? Do you truly know whom you have believed and what you have believed? Do you have this knowledge to impart to others? It is ‘the gospel of His Son’— justification by faith.⁶⁸

⁶⁶ Lloyd-Jones, *Romans: An Exposition of Chapter I: The Gospel of God*, 255.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 246.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 247.

The Gospel, The Righteousness Of God

"For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: "The righteous will live by faith."'" (1:17) – Oh! What a mighty statement, what a precious gem it is!

In the gospel, the righteousness of God is revealed. Now, this word 'revealed' is a very important one; it is one of the basic, and in a sense, one of the most important words of the Christian faith. There is no Christianity apart from revelation.⁶⁹

The gospel is not something that invites us to join in a great search or a great quest. It is an announcement, a proclamation. It is a revelation, an unfolding, an unveiling of something.⁷⁰ And the Apostle says the unveiling of the righteousness of God is made manifest, plain and clear in the gospel.

The gospel is the 'content' of the revelation. And what is this content? It is the 'righteousness of God'.⁷¹ The gospel of Jesus Christ is the revelation of God's way of righteousness, though this was not wholly unprecedented. He quotes from Habakkuk 2:4: "The righteous will live by his faith."

""For in the gospel the righteousness of God is revealed—a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: "The righteous will live by faith."'" The key to understanding Paul's whole argument, not just in this Epistle but also in his other epistles, is understanding this very verse. It is, in a sense, a key to the Christian faith and the Christian message. And we cannot deal with this without reminding ourselves that only when Martin Luther came to understand this verse did he truly become a Christian. It was the understanding of this phrase that started the Protestant Reformation. So as a qualifier, we could say that if we as Protestants do not truly understand the 17th verse of this 1st chapter of this Epistle, we are unworthy of the name of Protestant. Without understanding this verse, perhaps it is doubtful whether we are Christian at all. There is no more vital verse in the whole of Scripture than this 17th verse.⁷²

Righteousness, the ever recurring word in this Epistle, has a meaning much broader than what we commonly ascribe to it. If we do not comprehend the meaning of the righteousness of God, we will be forever in misery, just as Luther experienced agony of soul while he misinterpreted its meaning. Listen to his own words: 'I labored diligently and anxiously as to how to understand Paul's word in Romans 1:17, where he says that "the righteousness of God is revealed" in the gospel. I sought long and knocked anxiously, for the expression "the righteousness of God" blocked the way'.⁷³ Is the failure to capture the meaning of 'the righteousness of God' blocking the way to our salvation as well? Luther went further and said: 'As often as I read that declaration I wished always that God had not made the gospel known.'⁷⁴

But what Paul says here is that he rejoices in the gospel because God's righteousness for man has been revealed. God's righteousness is not something that blocks the way to salvation but it is the way to liberate us and the only way to give us salvation. It is neither we nor our efforts that lead us to this righteousness. When Paul says 'For in the gospel the righteousness of God is revealed,' this righteousness is what God has prepared, and gives us through Christ; God brings us to the righteousness of Jesus Christ.

⁶⁹ Lloyd-Jones, *Romans: An Exposition of Chapter I: The Gospel of God*, 295.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Ibid., 298.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Ibid., 299.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

The Gospel, Justification By Faith

The ultimate end and objective of the Christian gospel is to answer the question that was proposed by Job centuries ago: ‘How shall a man be just with God?’⁷⁵ That is what it comes down to. The purpose of the gospel is to make us righteous in the eyes of God, to make us acceptable before God, to enable us to stand in the presence of God.⁷⁶ This is the central purpose of the gospel. Do I know God? Does my salvation bring me into the presence of God? That is the object of the Christian salvation. It is intensely concerned about righteousness.⁷⁷

How can a man be just with God? If we keep the law, can we be called righteous before God? The more we know of the law and try to abide by the law, the more we will be condemned by the curse of the law. The law cannot lead us to righteousness. This is a human problem that we cannot ever resolve with our abilities.

What is revealed in the gospel, he says, is God’s way of solving that problem. And God’s way of solving it is that God Himself provides us with the very righteousness that He demands. And that is the gospel! The gospel tells us of a righteousness from God, a righteousness provided by God, in and through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.⁷⁸

Now if God justifies the sinner, it does not mean that He finds reasons to prove that the sinner was right—far from it. It does not mean that, at this point, He even makes the sinner a good man. What it does mean is that God *treats the sinner as if he had not been a sinner at all*. Instead of treating the sinner as a criminal to be obliterated, God treats him as a child to be loved. That is what justification means. It means He looks on us not as law-breakers to be punished, but as men and women only to be loved. That is very essence of the gospel.⁷⁹

The Gospel, Salvation

Listen to Paul’s confession soon after he realized the essence of the gospel: ‘Circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; in regard to the law, a Pharisee; as for zeal, persecuting the church; as for legalistic righteousness, faultless. But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ--the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith. (Philippians 3:5-9)

The perfectly legalistic Paul completely and totally transformed and became a preacher of the gospel of God – not from his own righteousness, but after coming to know that the way of salvation is only through the righteousness of God. This righteousness comes through the faith of Christ. This refers not to the righteousness of God as an attribute, but of righteousness that is of or from God that is given to us by faith –the righteousness of Christ that we have by faith.⁸⁰

⁷⁵ The question can be found in Job 25:4: How then can a man be righteous before God?

⁷⁶ Lloyd-Jones, *Romans: An Exposition of Chapter I: The Gospel of God*, 300.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 301.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Barclay, *The Daily Study Bible: The Letter to the Romans*, 13-14.

⁸⁰ Lloyd-Jones, *Romans: An Exposition of Chapter I: The Gospel of God*, 303.

Rome was the greatest city of the era, just as New York or Londontoday form world metropolises. Paul is saying that he, the Jewish itinerant preacher, would conquer Rome for Christ. But by what means? By the message of a Galilean who was executed as a criminal! In the face of the wisdom and might of Rome, by the message of the “foolishness of the Cross”, this glorification of the powerless one!⁸¹ And this message is none other than the gospel.

The gospel is the announcement of God’s way of salvation—that is what has been revealed – that this righteousness that God Himself gives to us is the way whereby we are made righteous in the presence of God. That is salvation. That is the heart of salvation. That is the center of salvation. Not your feeling or mine, or this and that experience, but this tremendous thing that God Himself does and gives to us freely for nothing, without money and without price.⁸²

What Is Faith?

‘A righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: “The righteous will live by faith.”’ What is faith? What does Paul mean by faith? We cannot understand the Epistle unless we are clear about faith, about exactly what it means.⁸³

Faith is not a simple word. It is a rich word that it can be described in many ways, but in its most characteristic Pauline definition, faith means *total acceptance* and *absolute trust*. Faith begins with *receptivity*.⁸⁴

To help you understand faith easier, consider this simple analogy: It is a freezing day, and yet there is warm sunlight shining. You are cold and have two options to choose from: one, turning your body toward the Sun and have your stiff body become warm, or two, curling up your body, distancing yourself from the Sun, and remaining cold. In the words of Paul, the first is called ‘faith’, and the latter, ‘unfaith.’ God does not give sunlight to only the select people, but His sunlight reaches anyone, anywhere, and anytime. It is I who choose to turn not towards the warm Sun, but to turn away from it. The sunlight is the love of God. Not turning away from the love of God that is always being rained down on me, but rather accepting it, that is faith. Therefore, faith is in other words ‘grace’. It is in other words ‘love.’ In this rotting world, it is the power that has already entered in me. It is what God has already bestowed on me unilaterally. It is a gift of God. Though priceless, it is a free gift. Christians ought to live by this free gift, the faith!

“The righteous will live by faith.” Do you want to be a righteous person? Who are the righteous? They are those who live by the grace and love of God.

Christ forces no one. This Lord can only become Lord in the free obedience of faith. If there is one thing that cannot be forced, it is trust. To believe means to receive.⁸⁵ Faith means receiving the love of God and He cannot force us to receive His love. We need only to trust His love and receive it in our hearts.

Faith is always the opposite of everything that is legalistic, though not the opposite of the law⁸⁶. Take what Paul says about himself in Philippians 3- he says he thought he was, as regarded by the demands of the law,

⁸¹Brunner, *The Letter to the Romans: A Commentary*, 15.

⁸²Lloyd-Jones, *Romans: An Exposition of Chapter I: The Gospel of God*, 303.

⁸³Ibid., 304.

⁸⁴Barclay, *The Daily Study Bible: The Letter to the Romans*, 12.

⁸⁵Brunner, *The Letter to the Romans: A Commentary*, 16.

⁸⁶We must be aware that the gospel does not nullify the law but it establishes the law. We will study about the law and gospel in more details in the future studies.

perfect and righteous. That is the legalistic outcome: a man thinks that he has made himself righteous by his keeping of the law. Now faith is the exact opposite of that. Faith is the contradiction of everything that is meritorious in man. Faith is the contradiction and the negation of every tendency in man to say that his merit is enough.⁸⁷

Faith is simply the instrument through which we receive righteousness. If you then say our faith justifies us, at once you are contradicting Romans 1:17. Our faith does not justify us. It is the righteousness of Jesus Christ that justifies – and nothing else!⁸⁸ It is Christ who is my justification! It is His righteousness that puts me right, but it comes to me through faith. Faith is merely the instrument or the channel whereby the righteousness of God comes to us, and we are enabled to receive this righteousness.⁸⁹

What God Has Done

Justification (*dikaiosunē*) is the right relationship between God and man. The man who is just (*dikaios*) is the man who is in this right relationship, and—here is the supreme point—he is not in this right relationship because of anything that he has done, but because of what God has done. He is not in this right relationship because he has meticulously performed the works of the law. He is in it because of the utter faith that allows him to grasp the amazing mercy and love of God.⁹⁰ “For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith--and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast.” (Ephesians 2:8-9)

‘Just as it is written: “The righteous will live by faith.”’ Oh, what an important statement! This is the very phrase that liberated Martin Luther, as he recalls to us. That expression, ‘the righteousness of God’, was his stumbling block. He called that the ‘abstract conception of the righteousness of God’, and he could not get past it; but then he suddenly saw this phrase, ‘The just shall live by faith’. ‘Oh’, he said, ‘There is such a thing, after all, as a just person, a righteous person! There is the abstract righteousness, but here is the concrete righteousness’.

He suddenly saw that this is the whole difference between the law and faith. The righteousness of God is not an attribute of God—it is righteousness that God gives, and that God ascribes to faith. Luther’s whole life was revolutionized. This is how he puts it: ‘When I saw the difference, that law is one thing and gospel another, I broke through! As I had formerly hated the expression “the righteousness of God” I now began to regard it as my dearest and most comforting word, so that this expression of Paul became to me truly a Gate to Paradise’. What a revelation! What a transformation! It came to him through understanding Romans 1:17. The abstract righteousness, and the concrete righteousness.

There is no more vital statement than this :“The righteous by faith, or the just by faith, shall live’.

“*For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: "The righteous will live by faith."*” (1:17)

“*Clearly no one is justified before God by the law, because, "The righteous will live by faith."*”” (Galatians 3:11)

“*But my righteous one will live by faith. And if he shrinks back, I will not be pleased with him.*” (Hebrews 10:38)

⁸⁷ Lloyd-Jones, *Romans: An Exposition of Chapter I: The Gospel of God*, 306.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 307.

⁹⁰ Barclay, *The Daily Study Bible: The Letter to the Romans*, 14.

Do we now understand that why the gospel of God is the good news for us?

Questions

1. Share your reflection on the following statement based on today's message: "No one can ever even begin to save men unless he first believes in men. A man is a hell-deserving sinner, but he has also a sleeping hero in his soul, and often a word of praise will awaken that sleeping heroism when criticism and condemnation will only drive to resentment and to despair."⁹¹
2. Share your reflection on the following statement based on today's message: "Debtor! Something to pass on; something to give. My friends, we must have this knowledge. And I cannot see that you need some special training in order to talk about it. If you are a Christian yourself – well, you must talk about it. You could not be a Christian without this knowledge. Therefore you have it in your possession, and you can pass it on. It implies, it postulates, this knowledge."⁹²
3. "The opposite of works is not faith. No! it is the righteousness of Christ that is the opposite of works, and it is righteousness which comes to us through faith." Define faith in your own words.
4. William Barclay puts it this way: "In the Authorised Version we read the highly compressed phrase, *The just shall live by faith*, but now we can see that this phrase in Paul's mind meant this—It is the man who is in a right relationship with God, not because of the works of his hands, but because of his utter faith in what the love of God has done, who really knows what life is like in time and in eternity."⁹³ How would you interpret "*The righteous will live by faith*" (NIV) in your own words?
5. Why is the gospel good news?
6. So far in the opening of this Epistle we have studied the significant seventeen verses, in which Paul foreshadows the whole purport of the Epistle that follows.⁹⁴ Why do you think Paul wrote the Epistle to the Romans?

Prayer

Lord, we confess that Paul is such an amazing person of the Holy Spirit. Truly, each word he spoke was inspired by the Holy Spirit. The Epistle to the Romans is the letter of the Holy Spirit.

"I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes," declares Paul. It is an amazing thing to think of the context of that statement. Paul had been imprisoned in Philippi, chased out of Thessalonica, smuggled out of Berea, laughed at in Athens. He had

⁹¹ Barclay, *The Daily Study Bible: The Letter to the Romans*, 6.

⁹² Lloyd-Jones, *Romans: An Exposition of Chapter I: The Gospel of God*, 246.

⁹³ Barclay, *The Daily Study Bible: The Letter to the Romans*, 14.

⁹⁴ Scott, *Paul's Epistle to The Romans*, 28.

preached in Corinth where his message was foolishness compared to that background, yet Paul declared that he was proud of the gospel. There was something in the gospel that made Paul triumphantly victorious over all that men could do to him.⁹⁵ The gospel is the power, the power to bring salvation. Paul knew that everyone needed salvation, no matter where they came from, what they were, and who they were.

Paul was not ashamed of the gospel but he was immensely proud and grateful for the gospel. He was compelled to preach the gospel. He was ready to preach the gospel anywhere, at any time, to any individual. Paul wrote this Epistle to tell us what the gospel is.

Lord, we pose this question to ourselves: Do we also acknowledge the power of salvation? May we know more of your gospel as we further study this letter.

Today we have learned the most important truth in Christianity. We learned the meaning of “The righteous will live by faith.” Faith does not set a condition to salvation. Rather, faith is accepting God’s love, what God has already done for us. Faith is looking at amazing mercy and grace of God and accepting His love into our hearts. Therefore, faith cannot be a condition to our salvation. Faith does not justify us but faith is a channel to receive your unending love. May you preserve us from turning faith into works, and of trying to justify ourselves by our work.

Lord, we now learned that the righteous are the ones who live by grace and the love of God. May we be the righteous of this era and preach this heart-trembling grace and love all over the world. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

⁹⁵Barclay, *The Daily Study Bible: The Letter to the Romans*, 9.

STUDY 5
The Wrath of God
[Romans 1:18-32]

¹⁸ The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness,¹⁹ since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them.²⁰ For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse.

Understand The Wrath Of God to Understand His Gospel

In the previous study, we looked at the great proclamation of the gospel – ‘The righteous by faith shall live,’ and this is the theme of the this Epistle to the Romans; it says that God in His infinite wisdom, and in His infinite love, mercy and compassion, has found a way to save the unrighteous and to make them righteous. The way that He gives to us to achieve this is from the righteousness of His own Son, our blessed Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Now that is the heart of the gospel – that we have a righteousness from God, with the righteousness of His own Son given to us. And that is wonderful and blessed good news.⁹⁶

Why is Paul so proud of this gospel? Why is he so pleased with the fact that he has been called to be a herald and announcer of this righteousness by faith, and of the fact that it is only the righteous by faith that shall live?

It is because something else has also been revealed, and that revelation is that nobody else shall live! Oh yes, the righteous shall live, says verse eighteen, but nobody else shall live.⁹⁷ That is why the gospel is so vital and so important, so unique and so glorious – it is the only way.⁹⁸

Here, we come to a new section of scripture, which runs from 1:18 to 3:20 of the Epistle. This section can be well described as ‘darkness.’ Here we see a complete darkness and despair that we may not want to look at in detail. However, we cannot understand the gospel without understanding it. This is the section that shows us the absolute necessity of the gospel.⁹⁹ If you understand this, you will not only understand the gospel but you will embrace it immediately, and thank God for it for the rest of your life. How essential, therefore, is this tremendous section!¹⁰⁰

This whole Epistle is nothing but an exposition of what the Apostle is telling us here in verses sixteen, seventeen, and eighteen.¹⁰¹

⁹⁶ Lloyd-Jones, *Romans: An Exposition of Chapter I: The Gospel of God*, 311.

⁹⁷ Other translations (such as KJV and NAS) of v 18 reads: “For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness” ‘For’ is the key that connect the link between the preceding argument in v 17 and v 18.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 319.

⁹⁹ Ibid., 315.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 344.

Why Does Paul Start With The Wrath Of God?

Paul says to all men, whether Gentiles or Jews, that the wrath of God has been revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and wickedness. Paul does not begin with dulcet words to encourage and comfort the young believers in Rome. He is not interested in attracting people and entralling them by using the words of emotional appeal, but instead he confronts them with the wrath of God from the very beginning. In other words, the gospel that was preached by the Apostle Paul was never human-centric. It was always and invariably God-centered.¹⁰² Paul, without even a fleeting thought, never worried that the Romans would not want to further read his Letter.

The tragedy is that we do not believe in the power of the Holy Ghost as the Apostle Paul did. Paul did not stop to ask, "Will the Romans like this doctrine? I wonder whether, when they see that this is my message, that they will stay away?" Paul knew that everything depends upon the power of the Holy Ghost. He would warn men and it is the gospel that provides this power.¹⁰³

Therefore, Paul begins with something fundamental, something staggering - the wrath of God! Wrath here means God's hatred of sin.¹⁰⁴ God hates sin, God despises sin. All that is opposed to God is hateful to God. All that belongs to the realm of darkness, of sin, and of Satan is abhorrent to God. The wrath of God means that from God's view of sin, God's hatred of sin, and God in His justice and His righteousness dealing with sin, will unequivocally punish sin.¹⁰⁵

Why does he start with sin? Because only after we realize that we are sinners before God, will we know the necessity of salvation. Salvation is salvation from sin. Jesus said that it is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. (Matthew 9:12; Mark 2:17; Luke 5:31) We must first know that we are sinners and have fallen sick, and only afterward will we ask God to bring us healing and salvation.

If church does not examine one's sin, he will corrupt. When sin is not prosecuted but covered up, society will stink and its people will have only the verisimilitude of peace. They will never have true joy. You can feel perfectly happy and yet still be damned. There are such things as false joy, false peace, and false thrills in life.¹⁰⁶

So Paul begins with the wrath of God against sinful humanity. He shows no mercy in pointing out human's sin starting from 1:18 to all the way to 3:20. As we study this section, we, in our humility, should be completely broken down and totally shattered. We must be torn to rags. We must realize that we are actually dying because of our sins. Then we will want to seek a different way to live. In other words, our Bible study should be spiritual and not mechanical. How easy it is to come to this passage and to intellectualize it and say, 'Yes, the wrath of God' – and then pass on quickly. No! We cannot afford to do that.¹⁰⁷ Our hearts should be moist and humble to receive the Word.

¹⁰²Lloyd-Jones, *Romans: An Exposition of Chapter I: The Gospel of God*, 325.

¹⁰³Ibid., 330.

¹⁰⁴Ibid., 340.

¹⁰⁵Ibid.

¹⁰⁶Ibid., 326.

¹⁰⁷Ibid., 325.

Men's Relationship With God -'Godlessness' And 'Wickedness'

The Apostle is interested, from the foremost, in men's relationship to God, in their standing in the sight of God, in their eternal destiny to come face to face with God.¹⁰⁸ He knows the essence of all human predicaments. Irrelevant are our position, status, or standing, but in the presence of God—that is what matters.

He proclaims that the wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the *godlessness* and *wickedness* of people, who suppress the truth by their wickedness. Here, we spot two key words of sin: '*godlessness*' and '*wickedness*' (NIV); '*ungodliness*' and '*unrighteousness*' (KJV). *Ungodliness* means lack of reverence for God, even rebellion against him; *unrighteousness* refers to unjust actions between people.¹⁰⁹ As always, the human predicament has both a vertical and horizontal aspect. Once humans have abandoned God, it will not take long for the effects to be felt in their relationships with each other.¹¹⁰ Once the vertical relationship with God has broken, the breaking of human relationship follows. Simply speaking, godlessness is a refusal to have God in one's heart while wickedness lead to multitudes of horizontal sins caused as a result of godlessness.

God's Creation Tells Of His Presence

One may refute this saying, 'I have never seen or heard God. Why should I bother to acknowledge Him and even have a relationship with Him?' Paul is saying to look at the world. See how it is constructed. Creation is revelation.¹¹¹ They have seen what God is like from God's world. God's *invisible qualities* are *clearly seen*. God created the world with natural processes, with cause and effect. In the same way that observing a painting leads a person to conclude that there is an artist, so to observe the tremendous creation is to conclude that there is a supreme Creator, one with eternal power and divinity.¹¹²

God has given humans the power of reasoning, which distinguishes humans from animals, and through which humans can think and analyze. Design implies a designer. Can there be any building built by itself? "For every house is built by someone, but God is the builder of everything." (Hebrews 3:4)

Psalm 19:1-4 says: "The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands. Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they display knowledge. There is no speech or language where their voice is not heard. Their voice goes out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world. In the heavens he has pitched a tent for the sun." God's creation cannot speak but they do have voice, they proclaim the work of His hands. Their voice goes out into all the world. The creation's testimony reveals its amazing beauty, intricate detail, order, and power. 'How great, mysterious, and beautiful is God's creation!' They tell us that God exists. They show us God's eternal power and his divine nature.

¹⁰⁸ Lloyd-Jones, *Romans: An Exposition of Chapter I: The Gospel of God*, 325.

¹⁰⁹ Moses E. Lard provided his interpretation with the terms impiety and injustice for ungodliness and unrighteousness, and provided his interpretation in the same line: Impiety, *asebeian*, means a failure in our duties to God; injustice, *adikian*, a failure in our duties to men. (Lard, *Commentary on Paul's Letter to Romans: With a Revised Greek Text, Compiled from the Best Recent Authors and a New Translation*, 48.)

¹¹⁰ Barton, David R. Veerma, Neil Wilson, *Romans: Life Application Bible Commentary*, 24.

¹¹¹ James M. Stifler, *The Epistle to the Romans: A Commentary Logical and Historical* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1960), 30.

¹¹² Barton, David R. Veerma, Neil Wilson, *Romans: Life Application Bible Commentary*, 26.

Tertullian, the great early Christian Father, says much about his conviction that God can be seen in this world. "Nature," he said, "is the teacher; the soul is the pupil." In the world we can see God. It is Paul's argument – which is quickly validated – that if we look at the world *suffering follows sin*. Break the laws of agriculture—the harvest fails. Break the laws of architectural engineering—your building collapses. Break the law of health—your body suffers.¹¹³ God made this world in such a way that we break His laws at our peril.¹¹⁴

Does anyone have an excuse for not believing in God? The Bible answers with an emphatic *no*. God has revealed his existence (or divine nature) in his creation. The fact that this creation revelation is not fully effective in convincing humans of a designer's hand does not mean it is not there. The argument that design implies a designer is not an argument people *can't* accept, it is an argument people *refuse* to accept. Every person, therefore, either recognizes or rejects God. Does anyone have an excuse for his or her action? Again the Bible answers *no*.¹¹⁵ God has shown His invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—to the heart of man. Sin, therefore, is willful opposition to the revealed truth about God that is from God.¹¹⁶

²¹ For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened.

Man's Spirit Seeks God

Furthermore, Paul claims that although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him. How bold is Paul! They knew God – that is the premise.

Man is not of flesh only but of the spirit as well. Our soul always yearns for God as the deer pants for streams of water. (Psalm 42:1) We have spiritual desire that our spirit wants to know more about the truth of God- our spirit wants to pray, our spirit calls for God, and our spirit always longs for eternity. Though we may be full with physical food, there is an insatiable abyss within our spirit which can be filled only by God Himself. Our spirit desires primarily to know God.

Humans cannot possibly ignore God, ignoring not only creation design, but dismissing also our intuition and innate nature planted in us, says Paul.

Even a man who does not believe in God seeks God in face of a great crisis. Suppose a man is being drowned. During the fleeting moments while his body is sinking into the water, he would see every evil deed that he has ever committed, and therefore repents and prays to God to give him a second chance to live.

After living a dissatisfied life, Saint Augustine, Bishop of Hippo, finally received the Lord and confessed in his famous book, *Confessions*: "Our hearts are restless till they find rest in Thee. Where do I call Thee to, since Thou art in me?"

Our essence of being is looking for God. We cannot understand a sunflower without comprehending the sun. The word, father, implies son in it. These are great analogies to describe the unbreakable relationship between God and us. Only when a sunflower is pointed toward the sun, and only when the son meets the father, in other words, when I become the 'true self', our thirst and emptiness can be filled. Believing in Jesus and knowing God—what does it mean? Simply speaking, it is recovering the 'lost self.' My spiritual quest can be

¹¹³ Barclay, *The Daily Study Bible: The Letter to the Romans*, 19.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 18.

¹¹⁵ Barton, David R. Veerma, Neil Wilson, *Romans: Life Application Bible Commentary*, 27.

¹¹⁶ Stifler, *The Epistle to the Romans: A Commentary Logical and Historical*, 30.

quenched only when I restore the original image of God's creation, and for the heart that longs for this, there is no condition set or impediment against. When the prodigal son returned back to father, the father did not have any conditions in accepting him. It is only when the prodigal son returned back to God, he found true rest. (Luke 15:11-24)

The fall is not that God has deserted us, but that we unilaterally left God. Because we have left God, anxiety and other feelings of emptiness envelop us. Though I have a home to return to, I do not know how I can get there. I do not know who I am. Though I have friends and family, I am still lonely.

Though I try out all things, seeking out after pleasure, even forbidden ones, and making myself busy with piles of works, I still feel empty and bored. Whatever we try to do, if it is not God's way but of humans, the problems will still persist.

Loneliness and boredom come to man because of the deficiency of love, love besides the true love of God. It can be resolved only by the love of God, when we restore the loving relationship with God. When we accept His love and give our love to God, our agony will be vanished. Truthfully, God, the infinite being, wants only one thing from us, the finite being—that is exchanging love with us, in the loving relationship with Him. All human predicaments such as anxiety, loneliness, and boredom take place when we sever the inseparable relationship with God. The relationship that was meant to exist since the creation of the world, this inseparable relationship with God has been severed. Consequently the problems of the world were introduced.

"Our spirit knows all of these," says Paul. "For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God."(1:21) Furthermore, we do not give thanks to God but our thinking became futile. As we avoid the light and not accept it, the light of truth in people's heart went out.¹¹⁷

²² Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools ²³ and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles.

Banish God, Idolatry Follows

And we became fools. The Psalmist says that the fool says in his heart, "There is no God." They are corrupt, their deeds are vile. (Psalm 14:1)

Paul now continues on to the next step of sin that follows in verse 23. When humans distance themselves from God, that is in other words, banishing God away from the center of our lives, we substitute God's lost position in us with idols. We try to fill the 'lost God' with something else. Therefore, the first and second commandments in the Ten Commandments say: "You shall have no other gods before me. You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below." (Exodus 20:4-5) How precise is God! Idolatry brings forth the loss of God in our lives and we are held in bondage to the idols that we choose to worship. However, idols can never liberate us but only make us exceedingly miserable.

Again, our longing, our spiritual thirst can be filled by none other than God. No matter how much money, fame, or popularity we gain, as long as God is not at our center, we will continue to make idols, to worship them, and to depend on them. No matter what idols we worship, we will still feel hungry and thirsty. Then we will end up looking for more thrilling, sensational, and stronger idols. In this passage, we come face to face with the fact

¹¹⁷ Barton, David R. Veerma, Neil Wilson, *Romans: Life Application Bible Commentary*, 27.

that the very essence and basis of sin is to put self in the place of God. Sin is when a man worships himself instead of God.¹¹⁸

As we replace God's central position with idols, what happens next?

²⁴ Therefore God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another. ²⁵ They exchanged the truth about God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator—who is forever praised. Amen.

Next Is Sexual Corruption

This is the next long step downward. From idolatry sprang sensuality.¹¹⁹ When we exchangethe glory of the immortal God for images made to look like a mortal human being and birds and animals and reptiles, we become slaves of lusts. Our body that God does not reside in cannot be called the house of God. Then instead it becomes the instrument of sinful desire, rather than the instrument of righteousness. After idolatry comes moral, ethical, and sexual corruption. After idolatry, humans are driven by lusts and live after sexual desires. The route of sin is very clear that idols lead us to sexual corruption and sexual sin. It is because humans innately have longing for love, but they desire to fill it not with God's love, but *Eros*- sexual drive, *libido*-which then precedes sexual sin.

Many people delude themselves into thinking that they live by their own will. However, what actually happens is that they are being driven by their idols. If we do not serve God in His worthy place, we remove him from the very center of our hearts. If we banish God from our hearts, Satan will lead our lives and make us completely dependent on idols. In our hearts we should always keep God, who created us. When we worship instead His creation, we become slaves of lusts and eventually we will perish. We ought to see this spiritual law. Only when we place God in His rightful position, can we truly be liberated from the bondage of sin.

²⁴ Therefore God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another. ²⁵ They exchanged the truth about God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator—who is forever praised. Amen.²⁶ Because of this, God gave them over to shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural ones.

Given Over to the Lusts, Man Punishes Himself

In verses 24 and 26, Paul announces the most startling punishment of God against sinners: "God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts (NIV); God gave them over to shameful lusts (NIV); God gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts (KJV); God abandoned them to their shameful desires (NLT)" We must be aware that God's wrath leaves sinners the way they are. If we reject God and become slaves of lusts, sin piles up. After having sinned, we should acknowledge our sin and repent. Then God will forgive our sin with his infinite love. But if we do not repent, but rather continue sinning, what would God do? Frightfully, God leaves us alone. God gives us over to our sinful lusts. God turns away His face.

¹¹⁸ Barclay, *The Daily Study Bible: The Letter to the Romans*, 20.

¹¹⁹ Stifler, *The Epistle to the Romans: A Commentary Logical and Historical*, 33.

Why would He leave us the way we are? There is a deep sorrow of God in this. The closer He gets to you, the further you get away from Him. The more He loves you, the further you resist His love. Love can never be forced. Almighty God cannot force anyone to love Him. He is the God of love and He gave us free will to choose love or to reject Him. He cannot make anyone love Him, but lets them be. This is the sorrow and agony of God.

When Paul speaks of God *abandoning* men to uncleanness, that word abandon has no twinge of angry irritation in it. Indeed, its main tone is not even condemnation and judgment. God's abandonment is connoted with a wistful, sorrowful regret, as that of a lover who has trod every path, attempted every overture, yet must be resigned to the inevitability of rejection. It describes exactly the feeling of the father when he saw his son turn his back on his home and go out to the far country. There is far more sorrow than anger in a man's heart who sees his son's back in this way.¹²⁰ It is just like a loving mother scolding her child. But the more the mother scolds, the more the child rebels. The mother then cannot help but to leave him alone.

We must note that it is not God who is punishing the man. It is that he is bringing punishment upon himself.¹²¹ In actuality, it is not God who leads man to be abandoned but it is man who becomes self-abandoned by following the wrong way.

Paul says that when God leaves because we reject Him, that is where wrath begins. We must never forget that the root of all problems ultimately come from this—taking God away from His due position, driving Him away from our hearts, and separating Him from our lives. When we return to God and become one with Him, all things will be restored.

²⁷ In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed indecent acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their perversion.

Homosexuality is Sin

Paul describes yet another sinful image of man. At the height of moral corruption lies homosexuality. Paul was not the only one who rebuked this sin, but it was also sharply condemned in the Old Testament: "If a man lies with a man as one lies with a woman, both of them have done what is detestable. They must be put to death; their blood will be on their own heads." (Leviticus 20:13)

Sexual corruption may very well be the essence of sin. The root of sin is arrogance, but when man distances himself from God, sexual corruption immediately follows. The strongest temptation of Satan is the temptation of love. The false love of the world is such an ugly thing. Man becomes the slave of sexual immorality, adultery, lusts - and at its extreme, this corruption even results in homosexuality.

When Paul was addressing wrath in this Epistle, things in Rome were utterly out of control. Propertius, the poet, wrote: "I see Rome, proud Rome, perishing, the victim of her own prosperity."¹²² It was an age of unparalleled luxury and of immorality. Society from top to bottom was riddled with unnatural vice. Fourteen out of the first fifteen Roman Emperors were homosexuals.¹²³

¹²⁰ Barclay, *The Daily Study Bible: The Letter to the Romans*, 21-22.

¹²¹ Ibid., 22.

¹²² Ibid., 23-24.

¹²³ Ibid., 25.

It was in this very place, Rome, where Paul was eager to preach the gospel, and it was there that he was not ashamed of the gospel of God. ‘Rome, you must be saved! You need nothing else but salvation.’

²⁸ Furthermore, since they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, he gave them over to a depraved mind, to do what ought not to be done.

No God, Sin Abounds

Here, Paul penetrates down to the essence of sin. According to Paul’s argument found in this verse, sin is *not thinking it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God*. It is in one word, *arrogance*. It is sunflower rejecting the sun, or the son leaving his father. It is cutting off a relationship that cannot be cut off. It is rejecting God. From this, all sins spring out. Sin emerges because man despises God in his heart.

When we lose God, a void remains in our hearts. That pressing emptiness constantly drives us to fill in the hole. Because grace disappears with the absence of God, sin fills the hole and we are filled with relativism and confusion. We must be alarmed in knowing that the place where God is lost will soon be filled with sin. Sin crouches at the door of our hearts. It will immediately enter the heart as soon as God is lost. Where there is no God, sin abounds and triumphs.

²⁹ They have become filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed and depravity. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit and malice. They are gossips,³⁰ slanderers, God-haters, insolent, arrogant and boastful; they invent ways of doing evil; they disobey their parents;³¹ they are senseless, faithless, heartless, ruthless.³² Although they know God’s righteous decree that those who do such things deserve death, they not only continue to do these very things but also approve of those who practice them.

The List of Sin

This is the list of sin that we must always meditate on to make sure not to fall into them. Paul closes this dreadful catalog with the darkest stroke in this whole picture, the final and deadliest phase of utter social corruption. Not only were all those vices practiced but the public conscience was dead, and evil would exhibit itself as if it were good.¹²⁴ We should never let the light of God’s word become extinguished, but we should always illuminate our hearts with this light. Sin then will not find its domain in us.

Parallel of the Righteousness and Wrath of God

The righteousness of God and the wrath of God are in exact parallel. If you accept the statement of verse seventeen, you must, to be logical and consistent, accept the statement of verse eighteen also.¹²⁵ These two verses go together. To say that you believe the gospel does not mean only accepting these words with blind faith. The heart must be involved, there must be a love for these things. And, above all, there must be evidence in the life - it must have led to action, to a movement, to a change, to a confession, not only with lips but also with our

¹²⁴ Scott, *Paul’s Epistle to the Romans*, 32.

¹²⁵ Lloyd-Jones, *Romans: An Exposition of Chapter I: The Gospel of God*, 341.

lives. Now to summarize all that is put to us clearly by the Apostle here in this seventeenth verse, this quote from Habakkuk, especially completes it.¹²⁶

"For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: "The righteous will live by faith.""(1:17)

Questions

1. Martin Lloyd-Jones argues that the history of the human race is found in Romans 1:18-3:20: "There are all sorts and kinds of theories and ideas about human history; here is God's own explanation of it, given through His apostle, Paul....There is nothing more important for us than to grasp the full view of salvation – God's great plan and purpose – and here it is, set out in terms of the entire history of the human race from the beginning until this very hour."¹²⁷ Why does he say the given section is the account of the human history?
2. Martin Luther inspires us to wholeheartedly worship God, not just being content with mere knowledge of His presence: "As a person would be foolish to look for money only to look at it, without trying to get it into his possession, so the heathen, though they knew God, were satisfied with and gloried in the mere knowledge of him. They left out of mind his worship, in particular, the inward dedication to God, whom they knew."¹²⁸ Discuss how we can bring about the inward dedication to God in our lives.
3. Read the following two statements and share your reflection and answer the question: "He starts not with the things which were worrying them, not with that sin which gets them down, which they cannot overcome, nor with their unhappiness, and so on. Not at all! He does not mention these things. Instead, he speaks of the wrath of God!"¹²⁹ "I confess freely, I cannot understand a jocular evangelist. I cannot understand anyone who believes this doctrine¹³⁰, for any reason or for any motive, being light, or considering the feelings of men, rather than truth and the power of the Holy Ghost to apply it. Go back and read the lives of the men whom God has used in the mightiest manner, and you will invariably find that they were serious men, sober men; men with the fear of the Lord in them; 'knowing the terror of the Lord', they all said with the Apostle Paul. They were not afraid of the people or what they might think of the message; they were only afraid of what God might think of it, and so they started with it and proclaimed it, and God used it."¹³¹ Do you think Paul's preaching method is effective today too?
4. The clues to God's existence and character have traditionally been called general revelation, with which He chose to reveal himself through nature. Then why do we need missionaries if people can know about God through nature (the creation)?¹³²

¹²⁶ Lloyd-Jones, *Romans: An Exposition of Chapter I: The Gospel of God*, 314.

¹²⁷ Ibid., 316.

¹²⁸ Barton, David R. Veerma, Neil Wilson, *Romans: Life Application Bible Commentary*, 27.

¹²⁹ Lloyd-Jones, *Romans: An Exposition of Chapter I: The Gospel of God*, 326.

¹³⁰ It refers to the doctrine of wrath found in Romans 1:18.

¹³¹ Ibid., 338.

¹³² Barton, David R. Veerma, Neil Wilson, *Romans: Life Application Bible Commentary*, 26.

5. According to today's message, how can you define sin?
6. The righteousness of God and the wrath of God, found in verses 17 and 18 in the first chapter of Romans, are in an exact parallel. "The two revelations referred to in these two verses are then really two aspects of the same process. The preaching of the gospel is at the same time both the revelation of a status of righteousness before God for men and also the revelation of God's wrath against their sin. With regard to the wrath of God, its reality is only truly known when it is seen in its revelation in Gethsemane and on Golgotha."¹³³ Explain the righteousness of God and the wrath of God in your own words.

Prayer

The wrath of God—Paul started this great Epistle to the Romans with this message. It is the mighty, tremendous, and awe-inspiring truth. Lord, we thank you for letting us hear this amazing outpouring of the Holy Spirit's word. Thank you for giving us this amazing truth. Through Paul, Lord, you have told us everything that humans need to know. You have revealed who we are, what we are, how we are before God, and conversely how we are without God. Without God we are nothing. However, our foolishness and vice constantly banish you from our lives. We now know that sin is not letting God be in His position, in us. When God is not in His due position, we cannot find our position either. Just like a child who lost his mother, we will be left drifting and Satan will immediately take possession of us and take us anywhere he wants. He will tempt us to worship idols. Let us look into ourselves to see if it is God or idols who command us in our lives. We know that sin, at the end of this road, lies destruction. We will perish without you.

Lord, from the beginning of this world, your creation tells us that it is God who made all things. You have made everything beautiful and you have also set eternity in the hearts of men. (Eccl. 3:11) From the beginning of this world, you were already within us, in our very hearts. We were created so beautifully and designed mysteriously so that we cannot help but long for you. Let us not cover up our innate spiritual desire, but come before you trusting your love. You are a loving God who does not reject those who come to you knowing your existence by your creation. You then nurture us further and let us know who you are. May we know you more and more as we study Romans.

Lord, thank you for your revelation. Thank you for your gospel that brings us salvation. We confess that it is the only way for us to live. To live by faith, to live by your love that was revealed through the Cross – that is the only way for us to live. Let us fully accept your love and live by your love so that we will be called righteous.

¹³³Cranfield, *Romans: A Shorter Commentary*, 30.

STUDY 6

Not Just Hearing But Doing

[Romans 2:1-16]

¹ You, therefore, have no excuse, you who pass judgment on someone else, for at whatever point you judge the other, you are condemning yourself, because you who pass judgment do the same things. ² Now we know that God's judgment against those who do such things is based on truth. ³ So when you, a mere man, pass judgment on them and yet do the same things, do you think you will escape God's judgment? ⁴ Or do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, tolerance and patience, not realizing that God's kindness leads you toward repentance?

In the first chapter Paul mainly addressed the sin of Gentiles, who are non-believers. In the second chapter, he directs his attention—especially, yet not exclusively—to the Jews, or those with the knowledge of God. A parallel audience in today's era would be Christians.

In short, Paul's message is being directed towards those who claim to know a bit of God's Word and who believe that they are on the correct path of understanding. This message was never meant to be given to the Jews of Paul's time only, but the Christians of today are also stung with his fiery words.

Who Are the Jews?

Why did Paul specifically point out the sin of the Jews ('believers'), apart from the sin of Gentiles ('non-believers')?

There are many good reasons why he did this. In order to have a clearer picture, we must first understand how the Jews thought about themselves in relation to the rest of the world. The Jews always considered themselves to be in a specially privileged position with God. "God," they said, "loves Israel alone apart from all the nations of the earth." "Abraham sits beside the gates of hell and does not allow any Israelite, no matter how wicked, to go through." When Justin Martyr was arguing with the Jews about their spiritual position in the *Dialogue with Trypho*, the Jews said, "They who are the seed of Abraham according to the flesh shall in any case, even if they be sinners and unbelieving and disobedient towards God, share in the eternal Kingdom."¹³⁴

Condemnation Without Love

Paul begins this discourse with the sin of condemnation. He describes the Jew who believes that everyone else is destined for judgment except himself and who freely passes judgment on others without realizing his own sin. Judging others recklessly, condemning others—this is the sin that Paul speaks about.

Are we also condemning our brothers? Condemnation is not love, but hatred. Are we judging brothers with hatred?

Here, Paul is following the teachings of Jesus. Jesus warned of the sin of condemnation on the Sermon

¹³⁴ Barclay, *The Daily Study Bible: The Letter to the Romans*, 35.

on the Mount: "Do not judge, or you too will be judged. For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you. Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? How can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' when all the time there is a plank in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye."

(Matthew 7:1-5)

When believers see the speck of sawdust in another's eye, we must be reminded that we have a plank in our own eye. Therefore, we should first take the plank out of our own eye before considering the sin of others.

Christians should never judge others with a heart of hatred. Paul is saying, "You who judge others, are you perfect?" Apostle John, who had a deep understanding of God's love, proclaimed that "anyone who hates his brother is a murderer" (1 John 3:15). Hatred in our hearts is sin; banishing love in our hearts is sin. "You fail to see the hatred in your heart while you condemn the shortcomings of your brother," says Paul. Condemnation with a motive of hatred will not change anyone but only breaks relationships. Only with love, given because of love, will people change.

God Is Fair

No one can escape from God's judgment for His judgment is based on truth. God is fair to everyone and Paul makes this point clearly in this Epistle: God does not show favoritism (2:11); Is God unjust? Not at all! (9:14)

What is the love of God like? God's love is like the sun that He shines on both the evil and the good. (Matthew 5:45) Whether believers or non-believers, each of us is the same distance from God.

Do You Show Contempt For The Forgiveness And Love of God?

To the ones who regard themselves as more righteous than others and pass judgment thinking that they won't receive it, Paul ultimately asks: do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, forbearance and patience?

God is a God who is rich in kindness, tolerance and patience. These attributes can also be described as "forgiveness" and "love." Do you show contempt for the beauty of God? Do you ignore God's forgiveness and love? Paul asks his fellow Jews. Though being forgiven, those who sin again ignore and misuse God's love.

Those who sin when they know that God will forgive, not just seven times, but up to seventy times seven, are especially guilty. These "believers" sin like Gentiles with the only difference being that the Gentiles do not know that they will be forgiven. In this way, there is no fundamental difference between believers and Gentiles.

So Paul is saying, in effect, "You Jews are simply taking advantage of the great kindness of God."¹³⁵ God is a merciful God. If He punished us every time we sinned with the punishment that we deserved, none of us will be left on Earth. The fact that we are kept from this punishment proves that He has given us another chance.

God even forgives the sin that we commit with our thoughts. Though no one in this world knows what is on our mind, God knows all things yet has still forgiven. The very fact that we can breathe and live today tells us that God has forgiven us and given us a second chance.

¹³⁵ Barclay, *The Daily Study Bible: The Letter to the Romans*, 36.

Yet many Jews took advantage of this forgiveness as a *carte blanche* to sin. Paul is saying that God is rather giving them and us today the opportunity to repent and to amend our ways.¹³⁶

The crisis of faith follows when we lose the fear of the Lord. The fear of the Lord must first be laid as the foundation of our faith. We praise God's love but receiving that love without holiness is not beautiful. The more intimate our relationship is with God, the more fearful we should be before Him, just as the believers in the early church had. "Fear came upon every soul (KJV); Everyone was filled with awe (NIV)" (Acts 2:43) This fear is different from horror but it is reverence for God's great love. God is different from us; He knows all our heart; He knows things that we do not know; He remembers things we forget. We may forget after sinning, but He knows all and sees all. God is in a different dimension than we are in. We must not lose fear of this great God.

The apostle Peter says that "He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance." (2 Peter 3:9)

Why is God slow in his judgment? It is not meant to give us another chance to sin but it is a chance to repent so that even one more may be saved. God is giving us a chance to be saved.

Leave The Life of Sin

If we take advantage of God's kindness and mercy and continue sin, we do not really understand God's heart. True repentance means that today we reflect on our sin and tomorrow we turn from it.

Regarding the proper Christian attitude in waging war with daily sin, John, in the eighth chapter of his Gospel, illustrated the teaching of Jesus through the common incident of an adulterous woman caught in her crime. Though the Pharisees called for the woman to be stoned according to the law, Jesus declared a new law of forgiveness instead. Rather than condemn us the Lord carries our sin and exhorts us to live the life worthy of being forgiven. "'Then neither do I condemn you,' Jesus declared. 'Go now and leave your life of sin.'" (John 8:11)

⁵ But because of your stubbornness and your unrepentant heart, you are storing up wrath against yourself for the day of God's wrath, when his righteous judgment will be revealed. ⁶ God "will give to each person according to what he has done."⁷ To those who by persistence in doing good seek glory, honor and immortality, he will give eternal life. ⁸ But for those who are self-seeking and who reject the truth and follow evil, there will be wrath and anger. ⁹ There will be trouble and distress for every human being who does evil: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile; ¹⁰ but glory, honor and peace for everyone who does good: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile. ¹¹ For God does not show favoritism.

Being Stubborn

"But because of your stubbornness and your unrepentant heart, you are storing up wrath against yourself for the day of God's wrath, when his righteous judgment will be revealed," says Paul. Being stubborn is the problem of believers. Although believers are living a life of mercy and grace, they do not stop sinning because they don't see their sin but only the sin of their brothers. It is often the case that while hearing a word preached about sin that we regard it as someone else's but not mine. Instead of looking at others, first we must acknowledge the sin inside ourselves.

¹³⁶ Barclay, *The Daily Study Bible: The Letter to the Romans*, 36.

Furthermore, even if we may be aware of the existence of our own problems, often we do not try hard to fix them. This is the mark of sinful stubbornness and an unrepentant heart.

“Why should I bother to do something about my sin? God is a God of forgiveness”—This is showing contempt for God’s mercy and love. It is cunning wickedness not to fix our sin because we know of God’s forgiveness.

Generally speaking, there are two responses to forgiveness: we can either continue in our sin or we can be filled with gratitude for this free gift and try to live a life worthy of it. It is one of the most shameful things in the world to use mercy and love’s forgiveness as an excuse to go on sinning. Yet that is what many Jews in Paul’s time were doing and what many Christians today still do. The mercy of God, the love of God, is not meant to make us feel that we can sin and get away with it; it is meant so to break our hearts in love that we will seek never to sin again.¹³⁷

God Asks Not for Knowledge But for Action

God “will give to each person according to what he has done.” (1:6)—this verse tells us of a God who is precise and accurate. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart. (1 Samuel 16:7) Those who have received the great love of God must repent and cleanse their hearts. Whether a believer or not, God will judge each person according to their actions.

Having knowledge of what is good is not good in itself, Paul explains. God never asks about knowledge, but He asks for action. Just as Christ himself and his life itself are the truth, what we know about the truth should be practiced into action in our lives. When we say we know the Gospel, it should not mean that we possess only mere knowledge, but it must yield fruit in our lives. As Martyn Lloyd-Jones puts it, if the Gospel is not bearing fruit in you, then you are outside Christ and you are not ready to die and face God in the judgment.¹³⁸

Paul is teaching us the secrets of a healthy and sound faith. If we want to have a beautiful relationship with God, we should be balanced in appreciating both His love and wrath.

Faith And Works

“God,” said Paul, “will settle with each man according to his deeds.” To Paul, a faith that is not revealed in deeds is a travesty and a parody of true faith. In fact, it would not be a faith at all. Paul’s reasoning is that the only way to see a man’s faith is by his deeds. One of the most dangerous religious tendencies is to consider faith and works as entirely different and separate things. There is no such thing as faith that does not reveal itself in works, and there are no works that are not the product of faith. Works and faith are inextricably bound together. As we saw in the last analysis, how can God judge a man any other way than by his deeds? We cannot comfortably say, “I have faith,” and leave it at that. Our faith must have deeds, for it is by our deeds we are accepted or condemned.¹³⁹

¹³⁷Barclay, *The Daily Study Bible: The Letter to the Romans*, 37.

¹³⁸D. M. Lloyd-Jones, *Love So Amazing: Expositions of Colossians I* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1995), 96.

¹³⁹Barclay, *The Daily Study Bible: The Letter to the Romans*, 38.

Going a step further, our actions should follow our hearts. "Now a man came up to Jesus and asked, 'Teacher, what good thing must I do to get eternal life?' 'Why do you ask me about what is good?' Jesus replied. 'There is only One who is good. If you want to enter life, obey the commandments.' 'Which ones?' the man inquired. Jesus replied, 'Do not murder, do not commit adultery, do not steal, do not give false testimony, honor your father and mother,' and 'love your neighbor as yourself.' All these I have kept,' the young man said. 'What do I still lack?' Jesus answered, 'If you want to be perfect, go, sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.' When the young man heard this, he went away sad, because he had great wealth." (Matthew 19:16-30)

Jesus teaches us when we practice the life of love, our life will remain eternal. Selling what I have and giving it to those in need, this is the practice and life of love. Jesus says that participating in the life of love rather than keeping formalities will bring eternal life.

Love And Action

If we are going to attribute our sentimental, loose, unjust and unrighteous notions of love to the everlasting Godhead, then we place ourselves in a most precarious position.¹⁴⁰ The love we're looking at is not the love of the fallen world but it is love in its purest form: the love of God which mankind should strive to resemble. The love of God is seen in its fullest in Christ's death.¹⁴¹ Love is not just a notion but it is action. The one who loves will be responsible for his love. Just like a loving mother will do all her child's chores, love never closes her eyes before her beloved. Love requires sacrifice. The greatest sacrifice of God was shedding the blood of His Son for sinners who could not even comprehend such an event. Love that God has shown us is action, it is sacrifice.

¹² All who sin apart from the law will also perish apart from the law, and all who sin under the law will be judged by the law. ¹³ For it is not those who hear the law who are righteous in God's sight, but it is those who obey the law who will be declared righteous. ¹⁴ (Indeed, when Gentiles, who do not have the law, do by nature things required by the law, they are a law for themselves, even though they do not have the law. ¹⁵ since they show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts now accusing, now even defending them.)¹⁶ This will take place on the day when God will judge men's secrets through Jesus Christ, as my gospel declares.

Written Law Vs. Unwritten Law

A man will be judged by his fidelity to the highest law that it was possible for him to know.¹⁴² Paul is saying that God gave everyone a law: a written law to the Jews and an unwritten law to the Gentiles. Although only the Jews had their Law written down, the rest of the world was given God-implanted, instinctive knowledge of right and wrong. That is in other words, a conscience.

There is a law written on the heart. For Gentiles, in their God-created natural disposition, they are a law unto themselves.¹⁴³ Everyone knows something of right and wrong, good and evil.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴⁰ D. M. Lloyd-Jones, *Great Doctrines of the Bible* Vol. 1 (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 2003), 333.

¹⁴¹ D. M. Lloyd-Jones, *Romans: Assurance (Romans 5)* (London: Banner of Truth Trust, 1971), 111.

¹⁴² Barclay, *The Daily Study Bible: The Letter to the Romans*, 40.

¹⁴³ Brunner, *The Letter to the Romans: A Commentary*, 21.

No one can claim exemption from the judgment of God. The Jew cannot claim exemption because he has a special place in God's plan. The Gentile cannot claim exemption because he never received the written Law. The Jew would be judged as one who had known the Law; the Gentile would be judged as one who, though he had no written law, had a God-given conscience. God will judge each man according to what he knows and has the chance to know.¹⁴⁵

Even The Secrets Of Our Hearts

"This will take place on the day when God will judge men's secrets through Jesus Christ, as my gospel declares."
(2:16)

Paul is now talking about the world of the gospel where people's secrets will be judged. Through the gospel all the hidden things of men's hearts and all the inner-most recesses of their souls will be exposed. All things are laid naked and bare before God's eyes. (Hebrews 4:13) God will judge our secrets, the sin in our hearts. Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. No one can avoid His gaze, which is a part of His love towards us.

Suppose a man loves a woman dearly. Because he loves her so dearly, he does not want her to be defiled with even the smallest blemish. In the same way God loves us so much that He does not want the darkness of sin to enter to our heart. We should realize this earnest heart of God for us. He wants both the external things and the invisible things as well. He wants our inner-most thoughts and motives to be fundamentally resolved. With this love, we should sincerely repent of the deep sin in our hearts and live following His light of truth.

Questions

1. Based on today's message reflect on this statement: "Paul is, in effect, saying to the Jews: 'Do not think that the fact that God does not punish you is a sign that God cannot punish you. The fact that God's punishment does not immediately follow sin is not a proof of the powerlessness of God; it is a proof of the patience of God. You owe your lives to the patience of God.'"¹⁴⁶
2. Based on the teaching from today's message answer this question: "What is to happen to the people who lived in the world before Jesus came and who had no opportunity to hear the Christian message?"¹⁴⁷
3. "*For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: "The righteous will live by faith."*" (1:17)
"God will repay each person according to what they have done." (2:6)
"Jesus answered, "If you want to be perfect, go, sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me."" (Matthew 19:21)

¹⁴⁴ Brunner, *The Letter to the Romans: A Commentary*, 21.

¹⁴⁵ Barclay, *The Daily Study Bible: The Letter to the Romans*, 41.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., 36.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., 40.

Jesus straightened up and asked her, "Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?" "No one, sir," she said. "Then neither do I condemn you," Jesus declared. "Go now and leave your life of sin."''' (John 8:10-11)

"But the LORD said to Samuel, "Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The LORD does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart."''' (1 Samuel 16:7)

Explain the meaning of the following key phrases based on what we have learned so far in connection with the above Bible verses: '*faith and works*'; '*love and action*'; '*the Gospel and the heart of man*'.

4. Share an occasion that you commit any of the sin which Paul pointed in today's passage, if any. What are the lessons you learned today not to repeat the same sin?

Prayer

Through God's word we've come to know of God's love. Let us who have realized your love look into the sin inside of us and repent, so that we may bear the fruit of righteousness. We do not want to show contempt for your love and forgiveness, but give thanks for your love that knows even my deepest secrets.

As we have studied the Gospel, we have learned that it is the love of God at its fullest and that we should not take advantage of or show contempt for it.

We have learned that you will repay each person according to what they have done. On the day of divine judgment actions are decisive. This doesn't mean that grace and faith are nullified, but rather this means that we ought to truly know the Gospel and live out the Gospel in our lives. The life worthy of your grace—this is the kind of life we must live and this is where you have led us to.

God's love shines everyday into our hearts. It is like the Sun that shines on both the evil and the good. You are a just and fair God. Let us be not only the hearers of your word but also the doers. May we be called righteous as we accept your unconditional love for us and may our actions be fruits of our love for you. In Jesus' name, Amen.

STUDY 7

The True Jew And True Circumcision

[Romans 2:17-3:8]

¹⁷ Now you, if you call yourself a Jew; if you rely on the law and brag about your relationship to God; ¹⁸ if you know his will and approve of what is superior because you are instructed by the law; ¹⁹ if you are convinced that you are a guide for the blind, a light for those who are in the dark, ²⁰ an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of infants, because you have in the law the embodiment of knowledge and truth— ²¹ you, then, who teach others, do you not teach yourself? You who preach against stealing, do you steal? ²² You who say that people should not commit adultery, do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols, do you rob temples? ²³ You who brag about the law, do you dishonor God by breaking the law?²⁴ As it is written: “God’s name is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you.”

The Jew’s Sin: Our Sin and My Sin

One key to make this Bible study a success is to accept that it designed for me. The Jews in Paul’s letter may be viewed as the Christians of today who know the Word of God, or the ones who have followed along with the Bible study so far and are attracted to knowing more of His truth. Whenever we are taught the Bible we should accept what is taught as something as given for us, and ultimately, for me. As pointed out in the introduction of this study, all stories in the Bible should not be regarded as stories that once happened to somebody a long time ago, but in humility I should open my heart and let the Holy Spirit work within me so that the story of back there and then will be linked to my story of here and now. Only then will the power of the Word be manifested in my life.

Therefore, Paul is now speaking to us, and more importantly, to *me*.

Do I Steal? A True Meaning Of Tithes

When you consider you superior to others, therefore, teachers of others, because you know the Bible, do you not teach yourself? You who preach against stealing, do you steal? Paul reminds us of God’s word spoken through Malachi: “Will a man rob God? Yet you rob me. ‘But you ask, ‘How do we rob you?’ ”In tithes and offerings.” (Malachi 3:8) God says that not rendering tithes and offerings is stealing. Tithe means giving God a tenth of all things on Earth. For Gentiles, stealing means only when you take away from others. For Christians, stealing occurs in the withholding of tithes and offerings.

What is the biblical meaning of tithe? Tithe is a beautiful confession of faith that I have gained fruit because of God’s grace and help. The Psalmist said that “Unless the LORD builds the house, its builders labor in vain. Unless the LORD watches over the city, the watchmen stand guard in vain.” (Psalm 127:1) No matter how hard a farmer may try to plow the field and fertilize, and no matter how perfect the timing of his sowing is, if God does not give the sunlight and rain, he may harvest no fruit. Fruit we reap from any work is because God enables and supports it, not because of our efforts only. Though invisible, we should acknowledge and give thanks to God who works for us. Though we should give all things back to Him, we give a tenth of what we earn as a token of gratitude with praises. Furthermore, we should not only give our materials but also our lives and time holy and

distinguished, not stealing from Him. Paul is sharply pointing out this sin of not acknowledging God as the center of our lives.

Do I Commit Adultery? Be Careful With The Eye And The Hand

"You who say that people should not commit adultery, do you commit adultery?" Paul now moves on to the sin of adultery. As Jesus taught, adultery is not just something external but internal. "You have heard that it was said, 'Do not commit adultery.' But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart." (Matthew 5:27-28) Jesus penetrates into the secretive sin inside man's heart. Sin committed outside the body isn't only sin but sin inside the heart is actually the origin of that outer sin and is something that God looks at as well. Lust in the heart is indeed the sin of adultery.

Today there are many problems related to adultery. Even if the body is not defiled, the eye is contaminated. Jesus gave us precise warnings of the passageway of sin which starts from eye and leads to hand: "If your right eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to go into hell." (Matthew 5:29-30) We lose our heart when our eye is lost to ungodly things. Eyes are the window of heart. We ought to be careful not to lose our eyes as a first defense against sin.

The sin of adultery is related to love. Paul does not overlook sexual sin in this Epistle because it is a matter of love. The foundation of all things is love. Where does a life come from? It comes from love. However, love is clearly double-sided. It can be the most beautiful thing and yet the most filthy as well. Clean love will give birth to a clean life. Filthy love will give birth a filthy life. The sin of love is the greatest sin because it is directly related to life. We ought to keep our eyes and hands clean to protect our heart and remain pure in our love towards God.

Believers Blaspheme God's Name Among Gentiles

As Paul said in 2 Corinthians, believers ought to be the aroma of Christ in the world: "For we are to God the aroma of Christ among those who are being saved and those who are perishing." (2 Corinthians 2:15) Instead of being the aroma of Christ, many believers hinder people from coming to Christ. Many people say that they believe in Jesus but not in His Church and in Christians.

It is those who know only how to talk about God, but don't know how to live out His commands, who make His name hateful among men. Their lives darken the picture of God and turn it into a caricature. The Lord is judged by non-believers through the lives of his servants, especially those who more zealously pursue God.¹⁴⁸ Because of false and hypocritical lives of believers, God's name is blasphemed among the Gentiles.

Real religion is a thing of the open heart and the open door. Judaism in the time of Jesus was a religion of the closed heart and the closed door.¹⁴⁹ A Roman Poet Juvenal declared that if a Jew was asked the way to any place he would not give out any information except to another Jew, and that if anyone was looking for a well from which to drink, they would not lead him to it unless he was circumcised.¹⁵⁰ A Jew can be likened to a person who knew the Law and not the Law Giver. He has a parallel in the New Testament in the man who tries to live the

¹⁴⁸ Brunner, *The Letter to the Romans: A Commentary*, 23.

¹⁴⁹ Barclay, *The Daily Study Bible: The Letter to the Romans*, 45-46.

¹⁵⁰ Barclay, *The Daily Study Bible: The Letter to the Romans*, 45.

Sermon on the Mount but does not know its deliverer.¹⁵¹ Not knowing the creator of the Law but being preoccupied with the Law itself, the Jews shut themselves into a rigid community from which all others were shut out. With an air of superiority, the basic Jewish attitude to God was pride and to other men was contempt.

All mere orthodoxy, all mere knowledge concerning God's will, is not only nothing to God but less than nothing. The more knowledge, the more obligation each person has.¹⁵² Rather, the essential thing is for us to accept in our hearts the Son whom God chose to reveal Himself through and strive to live according to His will. Then the testimonies of our lives will be able to influence the lives of others as well. "Wherever God's Word may be preached, his precepts remain a letter and dead words so long as they are not received by men with a pure heart; only where they pierce to the soul do they become, so to speak, changed into Spirit" (Calvin).¹⁵³

²⁵ Circumcision has value if you observe the law, but if you break the law, you have become as though you had not been circumcised. ²⁶ If those who are not circumcised keep the law's requirements, will they not be regarded as though they were circumcised? ²⁷ The one who is not circumcised physically and yet obeys the law will condemn you who, even though you have the written code and circumcision, are a lawbreaker.

²⁸ A man is not a Jew if he is only one outwardly, nor is circumcision merely outward and physical.²⁹ No, a man is a Jew if he is one inwardly; and circumcision is circumcision of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the written code. Such a man's praise is not from men, but from God.

Who Is A REAL Jew?

In the Old Testament, circumcision was a command of God and a proud sign of membership in Abraham's family, the chosen people. However, as God spoke through Moses, true circumcision was one of the heart rather than just the flesh: Deuteronomy 10:16: "Circumcise your hearts, therefore, and do not be stiff-necked any longer." Deuteronomy 30:6: "The LORD your God will circumcise your hearts and the hearts of your descendants, so that you may love him with all your heart and with all your soul, and live." (cf: Jeremiah 4:4; 9:26; Ezekiel 44:7) How well did Paul remember the true meaning of circumcision! From verse seventeen in the first Chapter to the end of the second Chapter, the Apostle proves beyond any doubt or any reply that the mere possession of the law does not save you, and the mere fact that you are circumcised is not a source of salvation. It is circumcision of the heart, not of the flesh, that matters.¹⁵⁴

To be a real "Jew," according to Paul is not a matter of pedigree but it is a matter of character. Thus it could be that a non-ethnic "Jew" could be more of Jew in God's sight than an ethnic one. One is not a real "Jew", someone truly belonging to God, because of the external marks as such, but by the spiritual reality.¹⁵⁵ People will not be judged by God by our profession, ideas, or anything else, but by our total living and our total relationship with relationship with God.¹⁵⁶

Paul summarizes: "A man is not a Jew if he is only one outwardly, nor is circumcision merely outward

¹⁵¹ Laurin, *Romans: Where Life Begins*, 91.

¹⁵² Brunner, *The Letter to the Romans: A Commentary*, 22.

¹⁵³ Ibid., 23.

¹⁵⁴ Lloyd-Jones, *Romans: An Exposition of Chapter I: The Gospel of God*, 321.

¹⁵⁵ Brunner, *The Letter to the Romans: A Commentary*, 23.

¹⁵⁶ Lloyd-Jones, *Romans: An Exposition of Chapter I: The Gospel of God*, 321.

and physical. No, a man is a Jew if he is one inwardly; and circumcision is circumcision of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the written code." (2:28-29)

'Inward believer and circumcision of the heart, by the Spirit'—that is what matters and that is what a true believer means. A true believer is the one who lives according to "true religion" in which his overflow of the heart, from and in the Word of God, results in a right relationship with God. True religion is not formalities but it is life itself. It is life in the Holy Spirit. A true believer is the one who live this life. Where this happens, then everything is well with him and his relationship to God, just as God wants it to be.¹⁵⁷

The circumcision of the flesh, keeping formalities and customs of religion do not make us righteous nor true believers before God. Accepting God in our hearts, receiving His love, giving thanks for His grace, and trusting Him in our hearts—that is what is important to God and that is what make us true believers. Having a form of godliness but denying its power (2 Timothy 3:5), from such temptation we must turn away. How important is it that we do not fall into hypocrisy! We ought to reflect on ourselves in light of these fiery words of the Apostle.

What is it that saves us? What eventually saves us? Notkeeping the Law or man-made legalities. But *Sola Gratia*, only by grace. Because of God's love, I can become the true me that God wants me to be. It is only by the grace of the Father that I am saved. When Paul says that we gain salvation by faith, it is having an understanding of the grace God has bestowed on me. It is not a determination of believing, but faith is accepting the unfathomable, unconditional love of God that never changes and never asks of my sin though I am a sinner. The faith that doesn't reject but accepts God's love in my heart, it is this faith, the greatest treasure of his life, that Paul wanted to testify about.

Seek Praise From God, Not Men

"Such a man's praise is not from men, but from God." The Greek word for praise is *epainos*. Now when we turn back to the Old Testament (Genesis 29:35; 49:8), we find that the original and traditional meaning of the word Judah is praise (*epainos*).¹⁵⁸ The word "Jew" (in Hebrew, "Yehudi") is derived from the name Judah. The Jews, the believers should be the praise to be the worthy of the name.

How meaningless would it be if we do not gain any praise from God but only from men? We should remember what Jesus said about this issue :"Be careful not to do your 'acts of righteousness' before men, to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven. (Matthew 6:1) By our sincere life and relationship with God, we should desire to receive praise from God not from men. "Well done, good and faithful servant, enter into the joy of your master." What a glorious praise from God!

Understand God's Heart: Special Choosing Comes With Special Duties

¹⁵⁷ Brunner, *The Letter to the Romans: A Commentary*, 23-24.

¹⁵⁸ Barclay, *The Daily Study Bible: The Letter to the Romans*, 42.

¹ What advantage, then, is there in being a Jew, or what value is there in circumcision? ² Much in every way! First of all, the Jews have been entrusted with the very words of God.

Israel had the Torah: a fountain of revelation from God. It was said that whoever drank of its contents would be healed.¹⁵⁹ Paul says that it was a huge advantage for the Jews to have such a glorious revelation from God directly. It is true that the Law is not enough to save, but it is still a very wonderful thing to have. We can parallel the situation to one where a child is born today into a Christian family. Although that child is not saved because of his or her parent's faith, but it is still a very good thing and an advantage for the child's faith to be born of sincere Christian parents.

³ What if some did not have faith? Will their lack of faith nullify God's faithfulness? ⁴ Not at all! Let God be true, and every man a liar. As it is written: "So that you may be proved right when you speak and prevail when you judge."⁵ But if our unrighteousness brings out God's righteousness more clearly, what shall we say? That God is unjust in bringing his wrath on us? (I am using a human argument.)

To help us comprehend Paul's argument more easily, let us look at the passage in the New Living Translation: "True, some of them were unfaithful, but just because they broke their promises to God, does that mean God will break his promises? Of course not! Though everyone else in the world is a liar, God is not. Do you remember what the book of Psalms says about this? That God's words will always prove true and right, no matter who questions them. "But," some say, "our breaking faith with God is good, our sins serve a good purpose, for people will notice how good God is when they see how bad we are. Is it fair, then, for him to punish us when our sins are helping him?" (That is the way some people talk.)"

Man in his wicked and twisted mind may ask if his sins will serve the good purpose of displaying God's goodness more clearly. To this question, Paul clearly answers:

⁶ Certainly not! If that were so, how could God judge the world? ⁷ Someone might argue, "If my falsehood enhances God's truthfulness and so increases his glory, why am I still condemned as a sinner?" ⁸ Why not say—as we are being slanderously reported as saying and as some claim that we say—"Let us do evil that good may result"? Their condemnation is deserved.

One might as well argue that it is a good thing to break a person's heart, because it gives that person a chance to show how much he or she loves you. It is the argument that only a callously insensitive man would ever use. When a man does sin, the need is not for ingenuity to justify the sin, but for humility to confess it in penitence and in shame.¹⁶⁰ A person who truly loves and knows that he is being loved will have fear that his sin may hurt his loved one rather than taking advantage of that love.

Paul always revered the Jews and the special position they had in front of God. The difference between Paul's reverence and the pride that many other Jews had, however, was that Paul understood that special position to also be one of special *responsibility*. Some Jews believed themselves to be in a position of special *privilege*, while what God entrusted to the Jews was *commandments*, not privileges. He said to them, "You are

¹⁵⁹ Brunner, *The Letter to the Romans: A Commentary*, 24.

¹⁶⁰ Barclay, *The Daily Study Bible: The Letter to the Romans*, 49-50.

a special people; therefore you must live a special life." He did *not* say, "You are a special people; therefore you can do what you like." He did say, "You are a special people; therefore *you must do what I like*." This special choosing of God brought special duty, not special exemption from duty.¹⁶¹ It is vital to understand that God's special choice is one of special duty.

Questions

1. Based on today's message share your reflection on this statement: "Man cannot hide himself from God's demand either behind his theological and biblical knowledge or his Church membership and his participation in its sacraments."¹⁶²
2. Jesus warned of the great sin of causing another believer's fall: "But if anyone causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a large millstone hung around his neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea." (Matthew 18:6) Share your experience of being tempted because of another believer's influence or if you've been a poor influence yourself.
3. Share your reflection on this statement which sums up Chapter 1:18 to Chapter 2: "Are you saying, 'I don't like the idea of wrath; I believe that God is good and loving and kind and forgiving'? 'If you believe that, says Paul, has it led you to repentance? It is no use saying, 'I believe that God is love'—what effect has it had upon you? Has it made you turn to God and live entirely to His glory and to His praise? To say these things is of no value, it does not help you at all. And he works it out in still greater detail by showing quite clearly that whether we are Jews or Gentiles, whether we are under the law or outside the law, we all have these ideas and we have all got consciences; and they condemn every one of us. We shall be judged not by our professions, our ideas, or anything else, but by our total living and our total relationship to God."¹⁶³
4. Define a true meaning of a Jew and circumcision.

Prayer

Dear Lord, may we never forget that we are saved only because of your unfathomable love and grace that accepted us even though we are sinners. We confess that manytimes we forget your love. Many times we cover your grace with man-made formalities. Help us to deeply reflect on our sin of failing to give thanks for your love.

Lord you have lavished your love on us. Whether we are sinners or righteous, Jews or Gentiles, Greeks or barbarians in high or low positions, your love is the shining on all of us just like the sunlight. The distance between you and each of us is the same.

¹⁶¹ Barclay, *The Daily Study Bible: The Letter to the Romans*, 48.

¹⁶² Brunner, *The Letter to the Romans: A Commentary*, 24.

¹⁶³ Lloyd-Jones, *Romans: An Exposition of Chapter I: The Gospel of God*, 321.

Let us heed Paul's warning not fall into spiritual hypocrisy but connect with You deeply, heart to heart, and look at Your great love. Let us strive to first have a right relationship with you, a relationship of faith and love, and help us to touch the lives of others with this love for the glory of your name. In Jesus' name, Amen.

STUDY 8

Justified Freely By His Grace Through The Redemption In Jesus Christ [Romans 3:9-3:26]

⁹ What shall we conclude then? Are we any better? Not at all! We have already made the charge that Jews and Gentiles alike are all under sin. ¹⁰ As it is written:

“There is no one righteous, not even one;

¹¹ there is no one who understands,

no one who seeks God.

¹² All have turned away,

they have together become worthless;

there is no one who does good,

not even one.”

¹³ “Their throats are open graves;

their tongues practice deceit.”

“The poison of vipers is on their lips.”

¹⁴ “Their mouths are full of cursing and bitterness.”

¹⁵ “Their feet are swift to shed blood;

¹⁶ ruin and misery mark their ways,

¹⁷ and the way of peace they do not know.”

¹⁸ “There is no fear of God before their eyes.”

No One Is Righteous

Can you summarize human nature? Paul gives his answer to this question in this passage. When humans are separated from God, they are full of sin without exception. They are in one word, the lump of sin.

In the beginning, God created humans in His own image. (Genesis 1:27; 5:1; James 3:9) They are precious to God and cannot be exchanged with anything else. But at the same time humans are sinful beings. The Bible tells us about the two contrasting sides very clearly.

“There is no one righteous, not even one.”(3:10) Paul pointed out the evil human nature ever so sharply. For him, however, the evil of human nature was not a reason to despair, but it was a challenge to have hope.¹⁶⁴ Despite the greatness of man’s sins, Jesus Christ is a great Savior. He was confident that what Christ had done for him He could do for any man.¹⁶⁵ Therefore, Paul was never cynical about human nature, but in the latter part of the Chapter three from verse 21, he introduces a way to overcome that nature:, a bright light in Christ Jesus.

¹⁶⁴ Barclay, *The Daily Study Bible: The Letter to the Romans*, 51.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., 52.

Law Makes Man Aware Of Sin

¹⁹ Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be silenced and the whole world held accountable to God. ²⁰ Therefore no one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of sin.

Till now Paul has argued that humans, whether Jews or Gentiles, are sinners. How then, can we become righteous before God? The Jews said it could be done by keeping the law given by God, but Paul refutes this. Paul, a Pharisee of Pharisees who was completely dedicated to keeping the law now confessed that if anyone says that he has kept all the law, he is a hypocrite. His very experience tells him that it is impossible to stand perfectly flawless before God in keeping the law. It is his honest confession. Man has to carry his huge load of sin to carry but with the addition of the law added an extra burden. In Galatians 3:13, Paul even refers to the law as a curse.

What then is the use of the law? The use of the law is to make man aware of sin. It is only when man knows what he ought to do that he can realize he is not doing it. It is only when a man knows the law and tries to satisfy it that he realizes he can never satisfy it.¹⁶⁶ The law is designed to show a man his own sinful nature, and that is its merit and the reason why God gave it to man. But the law has a fatal limit that it can never liberate man from his sin. It neither saves him, nor makes him righteous.

The New Law of Faith and of Love: The Gospel Of Grace

Is there no way, then, for a man to stand before God? With man it is impossible. But with God, in His love and mercy, a man can be made righteous though he is a sinner. In this Epistle Paul tells us the way that we can be made righteous even though we are sinners. We gain salvation by grace through faith. By believing in God's grace, we are saved! The way to God is not the way of law, but it is the way of grace. It is not the way of works, it is the way of faith.¹⁶⁷ This is the new law; the law of faith and of love.

Man's groaning in sin can be a depressing sight, but without understanding it, we could not fully appreciate the bright light of the good news, the gospel of grace.

It is through this gospel that we can be liberated from our sin, and this is what Paul proclaims to us from verse 21. Romans 3:21-30 gives us the us essential teachings about the gospel.

²¹ But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify.²² This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference,²³ for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,²⁴ and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.

¹⁶⁶ Barclay, *The Daily Study Bible: The Letter to the Romans*, 53.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

Righteousness Through Faith

“But now”— Paul begins this passage with this phrase, marking a critical turning point in his discourse, one of glad tidings, and a sign of mighty hope given to men. To all men hopelessly destined for the wrath of God a door to life has been opened, and the brightest of lights have appeared in the darkness. This is the righteousness of God; it is the gospel, the great gospel of grace!

The gospel was not something created by Paul or even something new from God but it was the fulfillment of the Law and the Prophets that the Jews knew so much about. It had been part of God’s plan all along and it had finally been made known through Christ’s death and resurrection.

In His mercy God came to us. He lowered Himself, endlessly loves us, and gives all He created for us. But men deserted this God. The first man, Adam, who was ungrateful for all that God had given, left God and the fall of man followed. The fall is abandoning the love of God that was given to man freely. Despite this wickedness, God does not leave sinful man alone and does not ask for their sin but accepts it and covers it with grace. This grace is not something conditional. Believing in this grace and accepting it is the faith that Paul wanted to testify.

“Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with that person, and they with me.” (Revelation 3:20) The Lord is knocking on the door of my heart, and all I need to do is open up that door and invite Him into my life.

In His Love

“Acquitting the guilty and condemning the innocent—the LORD detests them both.” (Proverbs 17:15); “Have nothing to do with a false charge and do not put an innocent or honest person to death, for I will not acquit the guilty.” (Exodus 23:7) God’s word says very clearly that God does not justify the wicked but Paul says that that is precisely what God does. Here we see a God whose love is even greater than His justice.

But how can I know that God is like that? I can know because Jesus said so. Jesus came to tell us that God loves us, despite how bad we are. He came to tell us that although we are sinners, we are still dear to God. When we discover and believe that, it changes our whole relationship with God. We are conscious of our sin, but we are no longer in terror. We are no longer estranged, but instead penitent and broken hearted we come to God, like a sorry child coming to his mother, and when God receives us, we know that He is God who is Himself love. That is the meaning of justification by faith in Jesus Christ. It means that we are in a right relationship with God, because we believe with all our hearts that what Jesus told us about God is true. We are no longer strangers terrorized by an angry God. We are children, although erring children, but trusting in their Father’s love and forgiveness. We could never have known this if Jesus had not come to tell us so.¹⁶⁸

What Is Grace?; The Story Of Matthew And How Love Embraced A Sinner

The righteousness of God comes to us as grace. It is the gospel of grace!

Grace essentially means unmerited, undeserved favor. Favor you receive but to which you have no right or title to, of which you are entirely unworthy of. We may refer to it as descending love—love coming down from above.

¹⁶⁸Barclay, *The Daily Study Bible: The Letter to the Romans*, 54.

Jesus said "I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners." (Matthew 9:13) This is the grace Matthew testifies in his gospel.

Matthew was a tax collector, which in his time was regarded as being as evil as a murderer or robber. In the Bible there are two representative sinners: one who is defiled by money and the other by love. They are the tax collectors and prostitutes of Jesus' time. Thus, we know that Matthew was outcast in his world, an abomination to everyone he met.

But Jesus pitied him and came to him when he was sitting at the tax collector's booth. "As Jesus went on from there, he saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax collector's booth. "Follow me," he told him, and Matthew got up and followed him.'" (Matthew 9:9) Here Matthew records his own story. What does his word say to us? 'No one wanted to be my friend. Everyone despised and hated me but the Lord came to me and called me. He did not look at my occupation. He did not care about what I had done but he just came to me. And he came to me first.'

Because of this surprising love, Matthew changed and followed Jesus. With the same persistence and accuracy that he would have used in collecting debts, Matthew recorded the gems of Jesus' word one by one in an era where they could have easily been left to oral tradition and perhaps forgotten. He became the great Apostle Matthew whom all Christians remember and thank for his wonderful authorship in the New Testament.

Where did this amazing history start from? It started from an ocean of grace and love poured out by the Lord. By grace, He embraced Matthew and made the one who was hated by everyone into His Apostle.

When the Pharisees saw that Jesus was eating with tax collectors, they condemned them. The Pharisees criticized that Matthew was a sinner because he was a tax collector. (Matthew 9:10-11)

But to Jesus who were the real sinners?

The Pharisees were spiritual tax collectors. To a tax collector, everyone is a debtor while he is the creditor. Thus he always has a right to request and take from others. This was exactly how the Pharisees were because to them, even God was a debtor. Counting each of their own righteous acts, they regarded themselves righteous and as people who have things to receive from God. With this attitude it was evident that they could never taste grace. When we claim our own righteousness, God's love cannot reach us.

What Is Grace?; The Story of the Prodigal Son And Unconditional Love and Forgiveness

If the law can be characterized as *sin and punishment*, then the Gospel can be seen as *sin and forgiveness*.

Forgiveness is the highest form of love. When you truly love, then you can truly forgive. Unconditional love—it is the righteousness of God revealed to us by Jesus Christ. It was something very striking and shocking to the Jews, and to us as well. But Jesus came to tell us about this striking love of God. He told us about this love of God ever so clearly in the Parable of the Prodigal Son, recorded in Luke 15.

"Jesus continued: "There was a man who had two sons. The younger one said to his father, 'Father, give me my share of the estate.' So he divided his property between them. "Not long after that, the younger son got together all he had, set off for a distant country and there squandered his wealth in wild living." (Luke 15:11-13)

The story begins like this. Originally the father and the son were one but the son left the father. It is the story of how Adam fell as he left God. The gospel comes to us and makes us see that by living a life apart from

God and apart from Christ we are going against the original position that God intended for us to be in. Man is meant to be a living soul in communion with God, and the gospel makes us see that.¹⁶⁹

The prodigal son suffered much after losing the protection and loving care of his father. He squandered his wealth in wild living and tended pigs to survive.

“When he came to his senses, he said, ‘How many of my father’s hired men have food to spare, and here I am starving to death! I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired men.’”
(Luke 15:17-19)

Only after experiencing extreme misery and destruction, did he finally realize his sin.

But how does the father receive this sinful son of his?

“So he got up and went to his father. “But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him.” (Luke 15:20)

Though the son deserved to be punished, the loving father runs to his son from a long way off, throws his arms around him and kisses him. The father does not look at the sinner as a sinner. He does not repay his sin with punishment but covers his mistakes with his love. Knowing the guilt in the son, the father is filled with compassion, and runs to him and rejoices! This is the heart of God. This father is the God we serve. And this is the kind of father Jesus wanted to introduce us to: Father who calls the sinners before the “righteous” and who embraces their guilt.

Paul Was Driven by Grace

The same story is shared by Apostle Paul. The Lord came to him first even while he was persecuting Christians and the church of God. The Lord did not ask Paul of his sin but embraced him with surprising and unexpected love. In front of this love, Paul completely broke down. It was a righteousness that he never experienced or known of.

This grace that made Paul a preacher is the same grace that drove him across seas and continents. It made him preach day and night with tears and prayer. It was the most vital force in Paul’s life. This was the thing that ‘constrained’ him, and made him say, ‘Woe is me if I preach not the gospel!’ He was driven by the riches of God’s grace and the ignorance of men and women concerning them.¹⁷⁰

²⁴and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. ²⁵ God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood. He did this to demonstrate his justice, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished— 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 in Jesus.

Three Metaphors About The Redemption Of Jesus Christ

Now Paul tells us of “redemption,” a new way that has been open by Christ Jesus to all sinful men. To show what

¹⁶⁹ D. M. Lloyd-Jones, *Old Testament Evangelistic Sermons* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1995), 29.

¹⁷⁰ D. M. Lloyd-Jones, *God’s Ultimate Purpose (Ephesians 1)* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1978), 174.

he means he uses three metaphors:

1. Metaphor of a Court of Law

First, Paul uses a metaphor from *a court of law*. That is the metaphor we call *justification*.¹⁷¹ It means that God treats an utterly guilty man, convicted of sin, as if he were someone innocent and good man in His courts of mercy.

This defies logic, which instead would say: "God is just, and, therefore, condemns the sinner as a criminal." But here, somehow, in that incredible and miraculous grace that Jesus came to bring to me, He accepts the sinner, not as a criminal, but as a son whom He still loves.¹⁷²

2. Metaphor of Sacrifice

Paul also uses the metaphor of Jewish ritual *sacrifice*.¹⁷³

Leviticus 16 records the sin offering rituals that the Israelite community practiced. On the day of atonement, the Jews would impute their sin on a scapegoat and send it into the desert where ferocious wild animals await to devour it. The scapegoat would shed its blood for them and this way they could make atonement for themselves and their households.

According to Paul, such a ritual can be equated to the death of Jesus in both its form and effect. "And so Jesus also suffered outside the city gate to make the people holy through his own blood." (Hebrew 13:12) He took our iniquity and suffered outside the city gate shedding his precious blood, which atoned for the entirety of man's sin, in the past and in the days to come. His death was the death of redemption. John the Baptist said of Jesus: "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29)

In fact, Jesus not only carried the atoning cross of sacrifice at Golgotha but during his entire life. Jesus lived the life of the scapegoat, carrying the world's sin and redeeming them.

In summary, Paul is saying: "Jesus Christ, by His life of obedience and His death of love, made the one sacrifice to God that atones for sin once and for all." Paul insists that the event of the cross opened the door to the right relationship with God, a door which every other sacrifice was and is powerless to open.¹⁷⁴

We ought to remember: God presented Christ as a sacrifice of atonement, through the shedding of his blood—to be received by faith.

3. Metaphor of an Emancipated Slave

Paul continues his discourse using a metaphor from the world of *slavery*, which was common in his time. He speaks of a *deliverance* brought about through the saving grace of Jesus Christ.¹⁷⁵

¹⁷¹ Barclay, *The Daily Study Bible: The Letter to the Romans*, 53. The Greek word which is translated to *justify* is *diakoun*. (Barclay, *The Daily Study Bible: The Letter to the Romans*, 54.)

¹⁷² Ibid., 56.

¹⁷³ Ibid., 55. The word that Paul uses to describe Jesus is the Greek word *hilastērion*. This word comes from a Greek verb which means *to propitiate*. (Barclay, *The Daily Study Bible: The Letter to the Romans*, 55.)

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.

"Deliverance" was a commercial term. It is a term used when freeing a slave after paying ransom for his life. Paul says that Jesus became that ransom and shed His blood in order to free us who were slaves to sin. In Acts, Paul referred to the church of God as one that was "bought with Jesus' own blood." (Acts 20:28) Christians are those liberated by the price of Jesus' blood and who have gained new life by his sacrifice. "You were bought at a price; do not become slaves of men." (1 Corinthians 7:23)

Aren't we, as God' ransomed children, so precious then? I was bought at a price—the priceless blood of Jesus. Though he was rich, Jesus became poor so that we might become rich through his poverty. (2 Corinthians 8:9)

Though the Cross of Jesus Christ, the way to righteousness has opened. When we believe in what the Cross of Christ has done for us, and receive the love manifested on the Cross, then we can receive this righteousness.

Salvation Eternal

"Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God." (John 1:12) Once we truly receive Jesus, we become the children of God, and this is a status that cannot be changed. As if wine cannot turn back to water once water has turned into wine, God's calling is irrevocable. Once we have received salvation, it is salvation eternal.

You cannot go in and out of grace; you cannot be saved one day and not be saved the next, and go back and forth. You are either under the dominion of sin and Satan, or you are under the dominion of grace and of God.¹⁷⁶

When God declares: You are righteous in my sight, you are my beloved son in whom I am well pleased, then man believing this is no longer the same man as he was before, but he becomes a new creation.

The Cross: The Cost of Grace

God justifies the unrighteous and He grants to them His unconditional love. He receives sinners into His fellowship. He says to them you are righteous in my sight. On what basis? Purely in the form of a gift, on the basis of His grace.

Does God therefore treat sin simply as if it were nothing, simply passing it over? Quite the contrary. This grace, which cost man nothing to receive, costs God His one and only Son to give. God allowed Jesus to die as a proof of his righteousness, so that forgiveness would not be misunderstood as a passing-over of guilt.¹⁷⁷

To men, unrighteous and evil, who were groaning under the bondage of sin, instead of punishing them, what alternative did God take instead? Grace! The priceless grace that cost His own Son. The heart-trembling grace that shed the precious blood of His only Son on the Cross. Grace is the only power that is big enough to take the field against sin.¹⁷⁸ God knows there is nothing that can withstand the power of the reign of grace.¹⁷⁹ We therefore ought to be the ones who are worthy to be reigned by the awesome grace of God.

¹⁷⁵ Barclay, *The Daily Study Bible: The Letter to the Romans*, 55. The word is *apolutrōsis*. It means a ransoming, a redeeming, a liberating. (Barclay, *The Daily Study Bible: The Letter to the Romans*, 55.)

¹⁷⁶ D. M. Lloyd-Jones, *Romans: The New Man (Romans 6)* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1979), 143.

¹⁷⁷ Brunner, *The Letter to the Romans: A Commentary*, 30.

¹⁷⁸ Lloyd-Jones, *Romans: Assurance (Romans 5)*, 316.

What God Has Done For Me

So what is the essence of all of this? We can understand the core of the gospel by contrasting God's grace to the character of the law: a man concerned with obeying the law is concerned about what he can do for himself, whereas the way of grace is concerned about what God can do and has done for man. Paul insists that nothing we can ever do can win us the forgiveness of God. This can only come from God Himself as an act of mercy. Therefore, the way to a right relationship with God lies not in a frenzied, desperate, and doomed attempt to win acquittal by our performance, but in humble, penitent acceptance of the love and grace which God offers us in Jesus Christ.¹⁸⁰

"Come and listen, all you who fear God; let me tell you what he has done for me." (Psalm 66:16)

Questions

1. What do you think of this verse? "There is no one righteous, not even one." (3:10)
2. Through the parable of the Pharisees and the tax collector, Jesus warns us of a fatal sin that can prevent us from receiving the love of God. Read the parable and share your thoughts on the character of the Pharisees and the tax collector based on today's message and discuss how you can avoid the sin of the Pharisee: "To some who were confident of their own righteousness and looked down on everybody else, Jesus told this parable: "Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood up and prayed about himself: 'God, I thank you that I am not like other men--robbers, evildoers, adulterers--or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.' "But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, 'God, have mercy on me, a sinner.' "I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted." (Luke 18:9-14)
3. "But now" in Romans 3:21 marks that a turning-point in the world's history has come. Paul must have trembled with excitement when he uttered the phrase—"but now" on this Epistle. After doing this Bible study, what is your reaction towards this phrase?
4. Based on today's message, share your reflection on this statement: "Paul's ministry exemplified the wonderful truth Jesus claimed when he said, "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them" (Matthew 5:17). Until Jesus came, the law provided a strict measurement of God's just and righteous character. With the coming of Christ, God's mercy was also demonstrated. The law expressed the righteous requirements of God; Christ provided a way that we might be declared righteous. God's mercy had always been present; in Christ it becomes

¹⁷⁹Lloyd-Jones, *Romans: Assurance (Romans 5)*, 339.

¹⁸⁰Barclay, *The Daily Study Bible: The Letter to the Romans*, 56.

evident.”¹⁸¹

5. Based on today’s message, share your reflection on this Bible verse: “Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: “Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree.” (Galatians 3:13)
6. Based on today’s message, share your reflection on this statement: “If we fail to realize that the gospel and all it professes is primarily an activity on the part of God, and not on the part of man, we have entirely failed to understand it.”¹⁸²
7. The following statement is the summary of Paul’s argument in Romans 1:18-3:20: “You see how tremendous it is; how it spans the whole of time, takes within its ambit the whole story of man, deals with Jew and Gentile, the whole world, and establishes that the greatest and the best good news that has ever come into the world is the news that ‘the just by faith shall live’, because no one else shall live; because all others are under the wrath of God and are guilty before Him. Oh! It is not difficult when you look at it like this to see why Paul said, ‘I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ ...’ Emperors and kings, consuls and proconsuls, prelates, senators, military men and captains – the whole world is guilty before God. He has the only message that can save anybody. It is the message about the righteousness that God Himself provides in Jesus Christ, and which is offered to Jew and Gentile alike.”¹⁸³ What is your reflection on this important section we have studied so far?

Prayer

We have learned that all men fall short of God’s glory and no matter how hard we try, we can never reach righteousness, but doomed to remain in darkness. But a most wonderful thing, a most amazing news has been given to us today: that we are saved by the love of God through Christ Jesus. The love of the Cross, the love of redemption—through the blood of Jesus we are justified and declared righteous. The Lord emptied Himself, and lowered Himself to the point of death. In this kind of love, the Lord came to Matthew and to the prodigal son, and to me.

Your grace does not ask of our sin but accepts us. We have learned that receiving this love is faith. Faith is a passageway to receive grace. “Receive this surprising love then you will be saved in His grace,” proclaims Paul. Lord, we have been liberated by your love and grace. May we never forget this love and grace and preach the message of Paul to the whole world. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

¹⁸¹ Barton, David R. Veerma, Neil Wilson, *Romans: Life Application Bible Commentary*, 71.

¹⁸² Lloyd-Jones, *Old Testament Evangelistic Sermons*, 243.

¹⁸³ Lloyd-Jones, *Romans: An Exposition of Chapter I: The Gospel of God*, 322-323.

STUDY 9
Grace And Faith
[Romans 3:27-4:25]

²⁷Where, then, is boasting? It is excluded. On what principle? On that of observing the law? No, but on that of faith. ²⁸For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from observing the law.²⁹ Is God the God of Jews only? Is he not the God of Gentiles too? Yes, of Gentiles too,³⁰ since there is only one God, who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through that same faith.³¹ Do we, then, nullify the law by this faith? Not at all! Rather, we uphold the law.

Justified By Faith Not By The Works Of The Law

We hope that by this point you have an understanding that the righteousness of God is not something that is gained, but it is bestowed. In Romans 4, Paul once more contrasts these two kinds of righteousness: righteousness through the Law by works, which is not true righteousness at all, and righteousness by faith. In the Law, man is the producer of his own righteousness. In the world of faith, however, righteousness is based purely on receptivity, with man being the recipient of a divine gift. This man is one who is justified before God - , the one who is righteous in the true sense of the word.

Man's true existence is not independence but dependence upon God. Therefore all boasting by men, of men is excluded; so long as man is intent on his own glory he is still living in the sinful misunderstanding of himself.¹⁸⁴

The Law Vs. The Gospel

But does it mean that faith can nullify the law? "Never!" says Paul. We remember the teaching of Jesus: "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished." (Matthew 5:17-18)

The law and the gospel are two different gifts from God intended to lead men towards salvation. Because we know the gospel now, does it mean the Ten Commandments can be banished? Not at all. All of God's law and the Ten Commandments are still valid and must be kept. The gospel is meant to fulfill the law rather than abolish it.

Paul touches on this once again in the thirteenth Chapter of this Epistle: "Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for he who loves his fellowman has fulfilled the law. The commandments, "Do not commit adultery," "Do not murder," "Do not steal," "Do not covet," and whatever other commandment there may be, are summed up in this one rule: "Love your neighbor as yourself." Love does no harm to its neighbor. Therefore love is the fulfillment of the law." (Romans 13:8-10)

Love is the fulfillment of the law. If you love your neighbor, all the other commandments regarding the well-being of your neighbor will be eventually kept and you will fulfill the law.

¹⁸⁴Brunner, *The Letter to the Romans: A Commentary*, 31.

If the law were a circle, the gospel would be a bigger circle surrounding the smaller one. The smaller circle is included in the bigger circle. The one great premise of all this is that this gospel is the fulfillment of the promise of God presented through His prophets and Word long ago. (Romans 1:2) Therefore, the law and the gospel are not contradictory but complementary to each other, perfecting each other. We ought to comprehend this point clearly before moving on to the next Chapter.

What does the fulfillment of the law mean? It does not mean that man will keep the law perfectly, but his motive has changed. Now a man must try to be good, and keep God's law not because he fears punishment, but because he loves God. He works hard because he feels that somehow, with his last drop of energy, he must return as much of the amazing love of God as he can, though it is minuscule in comparison to what was given. He knows now that sin is not so much breaking God's law as it is breaking God's heart, which actually makes sin doubly terrible. Take a human analogy. Many a man is tempted to do a wrong thing, and does not do it. Why does he not do it? It is not so much that he fears the law. He would not greatly care if he were fined, or even imprisoned. What keeps him right is the simple fact that he could not meet the sorrow in the eyes of the one who loves him if he shipwrecked life.¹⁸⁵

For the believer, it is no longer the law of fear but the law of love which keeps him right—this is the mark of the true believer. We are rid forever of the terror of God, but we use that freedom to follow God more closely, not to follow our sinful nature. . And the grip of true love is much stronger than that of fear.

¹What then shall we say that Abraham, our forefather, discovered in this matter?² If, in fact, Abraham was justified by works, he had something to boast about—but not before God.³ What does Scripture say? “Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.”

Abraham Justified by Faith

Paul then goes on to prove that the principle of justification by faith was even present in the times of the Jewish ancestors, including Abraham and David.

“What then shall we say that Abraham, our forefather, discovered in this matter?” (4:1); “David says the same thing when he speaks of the blessedness of the man to whom God credits righteousness apart from works” (4:6)

Abraham and David—the two most important figureheads for the Jews. Just as Matthew picked these two great men in the first verse of the first Chapter of his gospel to give the genealogical proof that Jesus was a direct descendant of Abraham and David, Paul pointed to these two men to give powerful examples of how the justification works. Paul knew the Old Testament and had profound Jewish historical understanding. The first one he chose was Abraham, who is an ancestor of faith. The Jews regarded Abraham as the great founder of the race, and the pattern of all that a man should be.¹⁸⁶ They always found pride in being descendants of father Abraham. The second figure is David. King David marked the heyday of Israel's history. The Jews always hope to have another King just like David. He is the king of kings and foreshadows Christ.

¹⁸⁵Barclay, *The Daily Study Bible: The Letter to the Romans*, 58.

¹⁸⁶Ibid., 59.

"What then shall we say that Abraham, our forefather, discovered in this matter?" (4:1) As this verse is read in different translations: "What shall we say then that Abraham our father, as pertaining to the flesh, hath found?" (KJV); "What then shall we say that Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh, has found?" (NASB), it may be read more precisely: "What then shall we say that Abraham, our forefather '*according to the flesh*', discovered in this matter?"

According to Paul, Abraham's righteousness was not something that he could boast about *in the flesh*. The flesh is a unique term that Paul often uses in his epistles, and is a broad term, covering the seen world and matters such as bloodline(pedigree), possessions, position, merits, etc.

Was Abraham saved because a work done in the flesh? If we examine Abraham's family background, his father was Terah who worshiped "other gods." (Joshua 24:2) Moreover, Terah manufactured idols for a living. Abraham was the son of an idol seller—a pedigree that certainly didn't afford righteousness

Did God call him and set him up as an ancestor of faith because of his flesh? No, says Paul. According to Genesis chapter 12, God summoned Abraham to leave his home, friends, kindred, and livelihood, and said to him, "If you make this great venture of faith, you will become the father of a great nation and a great people."

What did Abraham do when this Word of God fell on him? He did not hesitate and argue but completely and without question trusted God and took Him at His word. Then he set out a journey not knowing where he was going . "By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going." (Hebrews 11:8)

It was not the fact that Abraham had meticulously performed the demands of the law that put him into this special relationship with God; it was his complete trust in God, his complete acceptance of God's command, and his complete willingness to abandon his life for God. That for Paul was faith, and it was that faith of Abraham that made God regard Abraham as a good man.¹⁸⁷ Abraham was set up as an ancestor of faith not because of his flesh but because of his faith and faith only. "What does Scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.'" (4:3) Though he was unworthy according to the flesh, God, in His amazing love, considered Abraham's faith as righteousness. It is not because Abraham's background or any type of superiority found in him but because he believed in the love of God and in His promise

Receive God's Free Gift, Grace

⁴Now when a man works, his wages are not credited to him as a gift, but as an obligation.⁵ However, to the man who does not work but trusts God who justifies the wicked, his faith is credited as righteousness.

This passage points the attitude of those who are under the law. Just like hired workers, they request God pay them their due wages. God is obligated to pay them for what they work for. Therefore, instead of giving thanks to God, they drive God to be the debtor and place themselves in the position of creditor.

But God gives His grace to the ones who do not work but who trust in Him. It reminds us of the Parable of the Workers in the Vineyard in Matthew 20. Workers were hired to work in a vineyard at different times from early in the morning to late in the afternoon. Those who joined the labor "at the eleventh hour" barely worked at all, but when the day was over, the landowner said to his foreman, "Call the workers and pay them their wages, beginning with the last ones hired and going on to the first." (Matthew 20:8) "The workers who were

¹⁸⁷Barclay, *The Daily Study Bible: The Letter to the Romans*, 60.

hired about the eleventh hour came and each received a denarius. So when those came who were hired first, they expected to receive more. But each one of them also received a denarius."(Matthew 20:9-10) As expected, complaints against the landowner followed. "These men who were hired last worked only one hour,' they said, 'and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the work and the heat of the day.'" (Matthew 20:12)

What was happening in this vineyard? Why does God give us this bizarre story?

He is explaining to us the character of grace. The landowner bestowed grace and was merciful to those who did not work.

A similar story is told in Genesis with Jacob and his son Joseph. Jacob clothed Joseph, the eleventh son, in a richly ornamented robe. (Genesis 37:3) The robe was provided for Joseph not because of Joseph's good acts but because of his father's mercy. When grace falls on us, instead of complaining or analyzing it, we should accept it by faith. Then God will justify us. This is very simple but in our arrogance and anxiety many of us reject this free gift of God.

The ultimate test of our spirituality is the measure of our amazement at the grace of God.¹⁸⁸ Now the question is how much do we appreciate the grace of God?

⁶ David says the same thing when he speaks of the blessedness of the one to whom God credits righteousness apart from works:

⁷ "Blessed are those
whose transgressions are forgiven,
whose sins are covered.

⁸ Blessed is the one
whose sin the Lord will never count against them."

David's Story of Blessedness

How did David become a king of Israel? Was it because of his flesh? No, it was also because of his faith in God.

When Saul the king of Israel and all the Israelites were terrified and fled in great fear of the Philistine giant Goliath, David courageously volunteered to fight against him. When Saul said that, "You are not able to go out against this Philistine and fight him; you are only a boy, and he has been a fighting man from his youth," David replied, "The LORD who delivered me from the paw of the lion and the paw of the bear will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine." (1Samuel 17:33; 17:37) When David approached Goliath with staff in his hand, chose five smooth stones from the stream, and his sling in his hand, the Philistine despised the small boy. (1Samuel 17:45) David said to the Philistine, "You come against me with sword and spear and javelin, but I come against you in the name of the LORD Almighty. All those gathered here will know that it is not by sword or spear that the LORD saves; for the battle is the LORD'S, and he will give all of you into our hands." (1Samuel 17:45; 17:47)

David triumphed over Goliath with a sling and a stone; without a sword—in other words, he struck down Goliath with his faith, trusting that the battle was not his but the Lord's. With this kind of faith, David became the king of Israel.

¹⁸⁸Banner of Truth, Issue 275, August/September 1986.

Paul quotes David's Psalm 32:1-2. Works are deeds done by merit, but how blessed are those to whom God credits righteousness without any deeds or merit. Blessed are those who are forgiven, whose sins are covered, and who are not condemned.

My Debt of Sin Was Paid For By Christ

Paul wrote a letter to Philemon telling of a slave named Onesimus who ran away after stealing money from his master Philemon. Onesimus, however, was later saved by the gospel preached by Paul, and in an effort to return Onesimus to his original master, Paul urges Philemon: "If he has done you any wrong or owes you anything, charge it to me. I, Paul, am writing this with my own hand. I will pay it back--not to mention that you owe me your very self." (Philemon 1:18-19) Philemon, charge whatever Onesimus owes to me, says Paul. When Paul carries his sin instead of him, Onesimus is not a thief anymore and freed from his debts.

This is the same experience that all true believers have had. Jesus transferred all our debts to his account and liberated us from that burden.

Transformed by the love of the Lord, Paul not only said beautiful word but he also lived the word. As Jesus Christ carried debts of his sin, Paul also carried the burden of Onesimus. The book of Philemon is the living proof of his life.

⁹ Is this blessedness only for the circumcised, or also for the uncircumcised? We have been saying that Abraham's faith was credited to him as righteousness. ¹⁰ Under what circumstances was it credited? Was it after he was circumcised, or before? It was not after, but before! ¹¹ And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised. So then, he is the father of all who believe but have not been circumcised, in order that righteousness might be credited to them. ¹² And he is also the father of the circumcised who not only are circumcised but who also walk in the footsteps of the faith that our father Abraham had before he was circumcised.

Abraham First Justified, Later Circumcised

Paul again goes back to Abraham to speak about the matter of circumcision, which was a huge topic of interest to the Jews in the early church. Was Abraham blessed after he was circumcised, or before? "It was *not after, but before!*" says Paul. To the Jews, this must have been an earth-shaking declaration, because for them, a man who was not circumcised was quite literally not a Jew, no matter what his parentage was.¹⁸⁹

But Paul debunks this belief by showing that Abraham was called and set up as an ancestor of faith by the sheer grace of God. Only after then was he circumcised. God credited Abraham's faith to him as righteousness in Genesis 15:6, and after fourteen years had passed, God gave the covenant of circumcision in Genesis 17:9-12.

Fourteen years stands between Chapter 14 and 17 of Genesis. Now Paul points to two key moments of Abraham's life journey. Wasn't Abraham declared righteous here in Chapter 15 and only after then was he circumcised in Chapter 17? Abraham first became an ancestor and then he was circumcised.

Circumcision was not the gateway to the right relationship with God; it was only the sign and the seal

¹⁸⁹Barclay, *The Daily Study Bible: The Letter to the Romans*, 63.

that a man had already entered into that relationship.¹⁹⁰

What about the law? When did God first pronounce the law? The law did not even exist at the time of Abraham. The law was proclaimed through Moses in Exodus, not in Genesis. After 430 years following Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph, did the law come into existence.

“What I mean is this: The law, introduced 430 years later, does not set aside the covenant previously established by God and thus do away with the promise. For if the inheritance depends on the law, then it no longer depends on a promise; but God in his grace gave it to Abraham through a promise.” (Galatians 3:17-18)

How did Abraham who was born before Moses become an ancestor of faith? Was he declared righteous and become an ancestor because somehow he knew and kept the law that was yet to be given? While he was still uncircumcised and before the existence of the law, he was blessed because of his faith. Therefore, Abraham is not the father of the circumcised but he is the father of every man who in every age takes God at His word as he did.¹⁹¹

¹³ It was not through the law that Abraham and his offspring received the promise that he would be heir of the world, but through the righteousness that comes by faith. ¹⁴ For if those who live by law are heirs, faith has no value and the promise is worthless,¹⁵ because law brings wrath. And where there is no law there is no transgression. ¹⁶ Therefore, the promise comes by faith, so that it may be by grace and may be guaranteed to all Abraham’s offspring—not only to those who are of the law but also to those who have the faith of Abraham. He is the father of us all.

The Promise Comes By Faith, Grace

The promise of God given to Abraham, as Paul saw it, was dependent on two things and two things only—the free grace of God and the perfect faith of Abraham.¹⁹² It is such a great hope to us as well. No matter how evil a father we may have, we too have received the promise to be heirs of God. And the way to be an heir has nothing to do with where we came from or what we did but it is only by grace and faith. The true people of God are ancestors of the faith of Abraham. As Paul affirms: “For if those who depend on the law are heirs, faith means nothing and the promise is worthless” (4:14)

So Paul sets before the Romans the two ways. The one is a way in which a man seeks a right relationship with God through his own efforts. It is a way which is doomed to failure. The other is the way in which a man, in absolute faith, enters into a relationship with God—an opportunity given only by grace.

¹⁷ As it is written: "I have made you a father of many nations." He is our father in the sight of God, in whom he believed—the God who gives life to the dead and calls things that are not as though they were.¹⁸ Against all hope, Abraham in hope believed and so became the father of many nations, just as it had been said to him, "So shall your offspring be."¹⁹ Without weakening in his faith, he faced the fact that his body was as good as dead—since he was about a hundred years old—and that Sarah’s womb was also dead.²⁰ Yet he did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God,²¹ being fully

¹⁹⁰Ibid.

¹⁹¹Barclay, *The Daily Study Bible: The Letter to the Romans*, 64.

¹⁹²Ibid., 65.

persuaded that God had power to do what he had promised.²² This is why “it was credited to him as righteousness.”²³ The words “it was credited to him” were written not for him alone,²⁴ but also for us, to whom God will credit righteousness—for us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead.²⁵ He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification.

Abraham's Faith, Impossible Possibility

When Abraham was one hundred years old, and when Sarah was ninety years old (Genesis 17:17), there came the promise that a son would be born to them. It seemed to be a promise that was beyond all possibility for fulfillment, since both Abraham and Sarah were well past the age of being able to have children. And yet, once again, Abraham took God at His word, and believed that God's promises were true and that God would do what He said He would do.¹⁹³

Weren't the bodies of Abraham and Sarah as good as dead? Yet God gave life to the dead and called things that are not as though they were. Here Paul talks about the story of how God gave Isaac to Abraham through Sarah.

God promised Abraham in the fifteenth chapter of Genesis: "He took him outside and said, "Look up at the heavens and count the stars—if indeed you can count them." Then he said to him, "So shall your offspring be."¹⁹⁴ (Genesis 15:5) But the promise was not granted until time elapsed throughout Chapter 16. Abraham must have been discouraged.

After some more time had passed, now in Chapter 17, Abraham was again given the promise that he will be a father of many nations: "No longer will you be called Abram; your name will be Abraham, for I have made you a father of many nations. I will make you very fruitful; I will make nations of you, and kings will come from you." (Genesis 17:5-6); "I will bless her and will surely give you a son by her. I will bless her so that she will be the mother of nations; kings of peoples will come from her. Abraham fell facedown; he laughed and said to himself, "Will a son be born to a man a hundred years old? Will Sarah bear a child at the age of ninety?" (Genesis 17:16-17)

"By faith Abraham, even though he was past age—and Sarah herself was barren—was enabled to become a father because he considered him faithful who had made the promise. And so from this one man, and he as good as dead, came descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as countless as the sand on the seashore." (Hebrews 11:11-12)

Not only was Sarah well passed child bearing age, but she was also barren, but what was impossible became possible through faith.

Who was the greatest carrier and proclaimer of this faith that makes impossible possible? It is Jesus. Though He died, He opened the history of life through His resurrection.

Was the resurrection a simple event? When Jesus was praying in Gethsemane, his prayer was one of tears and blood. (Luke 22:44; Matthew 26:38; Hebrew 5:7) If we were to witness Jesus when he was offering up these prayers with loud cries and tears, we probably wouldn't have expected a resurrection but would have thought his end would simply be death just like it was for many others.

However, Jesus was a man of faith. Though he wasn't yet resurrected, He lived following faith. After his prayer and with the Cross directly before Him, he said: "Rise, let us go!" (Matthew 26:46a) An unwavering faith

¹⁹³Barclay, *The Daily Study Bible: The Letter to the Romans*, 68.

and determination was firmly settled in Jesus. Though I die, I will live again He must have reasoned. The faith of the resurrection was in Jesus, and this faith opened a new world of life.

What is the way to become a true descendant of Abraham and an heir of Jesus Christ? Only with this faith, the faith of seeing resurrection beyond death, will a man become a true son of God.

God has given us so many precious stories of people of faith through His word. We ought to listen to their stories and today record the history of faith following their faith.

There might be a big gap between our reality and the life following God we wish to aspire to. But just as the ancestors of faith filled the gap with faith in God, not their works, we too must trust in the word of God and never let go of His promise. Your offspring will be like the countless stars in heavens, God tells us. If we hold onto faith and nurture it every day the promises of God will surely be fulfilled in our lives.

The justification of Abraham was not for him alone but for us who are the descendants of faith and believe in the God who raises the dead to life

Amazing Substitution

Our Lord Jesus Christ was delivered over to death for our sins and was resurrected. By doing so he justified us. This is an act is called substitution. The Lord took our sins and gave his life in place of ours. But isn't substitution normally done between two things of equal value? What kind of absurd substitution was this, that the Son of God was punished in place of us? But again, here we see the great grace of God. He took away our prisoner's uniform and dressed us with the robe of righteousness. What unimaginable and incomprehensible grace!

The Essence of Christian Faith

We ought to never forget that it is not our works but only by God's grace that we are declared righteous. This is the essence of Christian faith, the core of Soteriology. We are what we are, not because of our goodness, not because of the way we live ourlives, not because of *anything* in us-- rather it all comes from the love of God-- that everlasting, and incredible love.¹⁹⁴

For those who are justified, it is an irrevocable gift that no one can take away. By grace and through faith, it happens to us.

How can we satisfy God? It is never by our works but it is when we receive His love given to us, Then God will be content with us. It is such a refreshing and simple message, yet a critical one that is often missed. If we get sway from this truth then our faith will run dry and our lives will be frustrated.

Therefore, let us not keep ourselves from God's love, but fling the doors of our hearts wide open to receive it. However, there are so many who open the door slightly but who close it again. Opening our heart just a little bit, we may think that we have received God's grace and know His word and love. But if we haven't opened our hearts fully and rejected God's love, actually, we are sinning.

May we not be these kind of people, but rather, those who listen to the loving call of Christ and those who open the door completely for Him to come inside. And may we be people filled with praise from the joy of salvation.

¹⁹⁴ Lloyd-Jones, *Romans: An Exposition of Chapter I: The Gospel of God*, 167.

"Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with that person, and they with me." (Revelation 3:20)

Questions

1. Based on today's message, share your reflection on this statement: "It is the supreme discover of the Christian life that we do not need to torture ourselves with a losing battle to earn God's love, that what we need to do is to accept in perfect trust the love which God offers to us. True, after that any man of honor is under the life-long obligation to see to be worthy of that love. But he is no longer a criminal seeking to obey an impossible law; he is a lover offering his all to one who loved him when he never deserved it."¹⁹⁵
2. Thinking about the meaning of grace that we learned through the Parable of the Workers in the Vineyard in Matthew 20, share your reflection on the response of the landowner to the complaint of the workers who were hired early in the day: "But he answered one of them, 'Friend, I am not being unfair to you. Didn't you agree to work for a denarius?'" (Matthew 20:13)
3. Based on today's study, share your reflection on Paul's confession in this Bible passage: "Circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; in regard to the law, a Pharisee; as for zeal, persecuting the church; as for legalistic righteousness, faultless. But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ--the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith." (Philippians 3:5-9)
4. Based on today's message, share your reflection on this statement: "Paul has laid down the great principle that the way to God is not through membership of any nation, not through any ordinance which makes a mark upon a man's body; the only way to God is by the faith which takes God at His word, which makes everything dependent, not on man's achievement or record, but solely upon God's grace."¹⁹⁶
5. Based on Bible studies so far, define 'justification by faith' in your own words.

Prayer

Lord, we thank you for your word given in this Epistle to the Romans. We have learned about the important message of justification. Not by our works or merits, nor rules and rituals but only by faith that accepts your love and grace preciously and gratefully can this world of righteousness open. All we need to do is receive it. May we

¹⁹⁵Barclay, *The Daily Study Bible: The Letter to the Romans*, 61-62.

¹⁹⁶Ibid., 64.

never be people that close our hearts and reject your love.

If we have already received your love, may we never stumble with confusion that it could be taken back again. May we always hold onto faith in your grace and never fall into the sin of arrogance but always remember your love that was and is lavished on us each day.

We have learned that true heirs are made by faith. Like Abraham and like Jesus, by faith, we will inherit all things. May we trust in God who gives life to the dead. May the absolute faith of the power of the resurrection grow inside of us day by day. In Jesus name, Amen.

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