

ROMANS

From Wretchedness to Righteousness

Study 1

The Gospel of Jesus Christ (Romans 1:1-17)

Calling of the Gospel (Romans 1:1-2)

Verse 1-2

Rom 1:1-2

Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, 2 which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy Scriptures,

1) Objective question, choose the answer(s), can be more than one. In verse 1 , Paul is 'called' to be:

- A. An apostle
- B. A servant
- C. A slave
- D. A prophet

Background information

Paul's calling can be read in Acts 9:15-16

15 But the Lord said to Ananias, "Go! This man is my chosen instrument to proclaim my name to the Gentiles and their kings and to the people of Israel. 16 I will show him how much he must suffer for my name."

Nature of the Gospel (Romans 1:3-15)

Verse 3-4

Rom 1:3-4

3 concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh 4 and was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord,

2) a) Objective question, choose the answer(s), can be more than one. According to verse 3, the Gospel is:

- A. about the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ
- B. about the philosophy and way of life of Jesus
- C. about learning to do right and wrong
- D. about Jesus being a descendant of King David
- E. about the principles of passive and peaceful resistance
- F. about joining the cause of Christian religion

b) Objective question, choose the answer(s), can be more than one. In verse 3-4, Jesus being a descendant of David is important because:

- A. Jesus fulfilled many prophecies related to the lineage of King David symbolising the connection to the kingly and shepherd-y leadership.
- B. this showed that Jesus is human in nature but yet he conquered death, authenticating that he is the Chosen one/ Son of God
- C. Jesus needs to know what it is like to sin and what it is like to be forgiven.
- D. it was prophesied about 730 years before Jesus came, there is a historical context and Jesus didn't appear from nowhere

Quick Verse Reference

Isaiah 53:5

But he was pierced for our transgressions,
he was crushed for our iniquities,
the punishment that brought us peace was on him,
and by his wounds we are healed.

Ezekiel 37:24

My servant David will be king over them, and they will all have one shepherd. They will follow my laws and be careful to keep my decrees.

Ezekiel 37:24

My dwelling place will be with them; I will be their God, and they will be my people.

Verse 5-6

Rom 1:5-6

5 through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of his name among all the nations, 6 including you who are called to belong to Jesus Christ,

3) Verse 5 mentions obedience and faith. Can a person have one without the other?

Verse 7-15

Rom 1:7-15

7 To all those in Rome who are loved by God and called to be saints:

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

8 First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because your faith is proclaimed in

all the world. 9 For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son, that without ceasing I mention you 10 always in my prayers, asking that somehow by God's will I may now at last succeed in coming to you. 11 For I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to strengthen you— 12 that is, that we may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith, both yours and mine. 13 I do not want you to be unaware, brothers, that I have often intended to come to you (but thus far have been prevented), in order that I may reap some harvest among you as well as among the rest of the Gentiles. 14 I am under obligation both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish. 15 So I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome.

4) a) Objective question, choose the most appropriate answer. Who does the 'you' in the passage refer to?

- A. Paul's lover in Romans (Romans 1:11)
- B. Paul's personal disciples in Romans (Romans 1:13)
- C. Christians in Romans (Romans 1:7-8)
- D. Priscilla and Aquila (Romans 16:3)
- E. Those in Rome who haven't heard of the gospel (Romans 1:15)
- F. Jewish Christians in Romans (Romans 1:13)

b) Objective question, choose the answer(s), can be more than one. According to verse 8-15, which of the following is true about the apostle Paul?

- A. He really wants to visit the church in Romans
- B. He wants the church to be aware that he doesn't want to preach to the foolish and the barbarians.
- C. He wants to impart some spiritual gifts to the Roman church
- D. He feels encouraged by the faith displayed by the Roman Christians
- E. He always prayed for the Roman church
- F. He is both obligated and eager to preach the gospel

Background information

Just as a Jews call non-Jews as Gentiles, Greeks call non-Greeks as barbarians.

Power of the Gospel (Romans 1:16-17)

Verse 16-17

The Righteous Shall Live by Faith

16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. 17 For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, "The righteous shall live by faith."

5) a) Objective question, choose the most appropriate answer. Verse 16 and 17 states that the gospel is powerful. This is because:

- A. No one can be ashamed of it
- B. it can heal physical sickness
- C. it can grant wishes of those who have faith
- D. it can transform people on its own

b) Objective question, choose the answer(s), can be more than one. The 'Righteousness of God' can refer to:

- A. Conformity to a good standard of behaviour
- B. An attribute of God
- C. God's justice
- D. Status given by God
- E. An act of God on behalf of His people under the covenant

c) Reflection question. Which definition of 'Righteousness of God' is referred to in verse 17?

d) Reflection question. "Righteousness of God" had made Martin Luther angry and hateful of God. How does the "Righteousness of God" make you feel?

Background information

Martin Luther explains how he came to know it the first time:

I labored and 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, because I took it to mean that righteousness whereby God is righteous and deals righteously in punishing the unrighteous. My situation was that, although an impeccable monk, I stood before God as a sinner troubled in conscience, and I had no confidence that my merit would assuage him. Therefore I did not love a righteous and angry God, but rather hated and murmured against him. Yet I clung to the dear Paul and had a great yearning to know what he meant.

...Then I grasped that the righteousness of God is that righteousness by which through grace and sheer mercy God justifies us by faith. Thereupon I felt myself to be reborn and to have gone through open doors into paradise... When I saw the difference, that law is one thing and gospel another, I broke through. And 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's became to me in very truth a gate of paradise.

...If you have a true faith that Christ is your Saviour, then at once you have a gracious God for faith leads you I and opens up God's heart and will that you should see pure grace and overflowing love. This it is to behold God in faith that you should look upon his fatherly friendly heart, in which there is no anger nor ungraciousness. He who sees God as angry does not see him rightly but only looks upon a curtain, as if a dark cloud had been drawn across his face.

Case Studies

Case 1

Kerry was always fearful of sharing the gospel to her school mates as is the experience of many of us.

6) a) Open discussion: What are some of the reasons we are ashamed of the gospel?

Case 1.1

Kerry attended a new church in the neighborhood and was blown away by their exciting teachings. She had always had trouble with sharing the gospel with her friends in school as it made her ashamed but ever since she understood this new gospel her perspective changed and she was much better received by her friends and she led quite a number of people to the church to be baptized.

Below is an excerpt about some of the beliefs of her new church

Jesus of the New Testament was merely a demonstration of a humanity full of God's life, love, and being. There are others like Buddha and Mohammad that are like this too.

Jesus was a "servant called upon to absorb the world's anger and return it as love and wholeness."

"Jesus does not die for your sins in this gospel; he dies to make you whole," "As evolving creatures, the problem is not that we have fallen, but that we are not yet fully human." "We are not sinners, the church got that wrong, we are rather incomplete human beings," .

"John's gospel is about living life to fullness – not moral perfection or overcoming sin," Jesus did not die to save you from your sins. He died to free you – to empower you – to be all that you can be."

b) What do you think about this new gospel? Why is it attractive?

c) What is wrong with this gospel when you compare it with Romans 1?

Case 1.2

In her new church they also studied Romans 1 and their pastor was really emphasizing on the power of the gospel. The pastor told her: *“You should not be ashamed of the gospel, it is God’s power which will be realised in your life.”* You just have to have faith in God and He will heal your diseases and grant success and victory in every areas of your life”

d) Is this the proper understanding of the gospel being the power of God?

e) How is the power released into our lives?

Case 2

Harold is a Syrian refugee and in Islam he believes that God will judge each individual with a set of just balances. Each person's fate will be decided when his good deeds are weighed on the balances against his bad deeds, thus determining whether he is sent to everlasting paradise or eternal hell. However his Quran teachess sin is more powerful than man and that it is impossible for men to conquer sin, it is therefore vital that the devout Muslim do a great number of good works to counterbalance all his sins. The Hadith says “If you do an evil deed, do also beside it a good deed, and it will be blotted out.”

Sam is a Christian who believes that the gospel is the power of God for salvation .

7) a) How can you help Sam explain to Harold how the gospel saves?

b) Is there a difference between forgiveness of sin and being justified or made righteous? Please explain.

c) How the different beliefs impact the behaviour of Harold and Sam?

Case 3

In Kong Beng’s new church they often run Alpha courses and the highlight is the Holy Spirit weekend where people make decisions to believe in Jesus. After this they attend church

regularly but over time many of them fall away from the faith when trouble comes or they are distracted by the pressures of life.

8) Take a look at the purpose of the gospel in Romans 1:5. Can you explain why this is happening in her church?

Quick Verse Reference

Rom 1:5-6

through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of his name among all the nations, including you who are called to belong to Jesus Christ,