

Book of Romans

Chapter 1

(1-17)

Introduction:

This is the church in Rome. It wasn't started by Paul; it was started by someone else in AD 89. He wrote from Corinth in about 56-57 AD to the church in Rome, to prepare them. He gave them a long treatise on what the gospel is and also to elicit their help because he wants to go do missions in Spain, so he could get their help on the way to Spain. So that was the reason behind his writing.

Martin Luther, the person who started the reformation to which all the evangelical protestant churches are now in existence because of what this man did describes as the most important piece of New Testament, It is a purest gospel.

John Piper describes it as the greatest letter ever written.

If we look into the life of Jesus, we look at the Gospel of Mark. We look at the theology of Jesus, how he describes he is the Messiah, how you need to believe in him for eternal life, discipleship and then He died and rose again from the dead. You look at his theology; it is actually a little bit different from Paul. You do not have this sinner's prayer, you find it in Roman but you do not find it in the gospel. You do not find righteous being talked about, we do not find how you just struggle with prayer. Jesus just tells you and although you do not take up your cross and follow me, it is finished for you. I mean take up a cross, very easy to do, it is very hard, but Paul tells you how you actually take up the cross, how you actually struggle. So therefore the theology of Paul is very important because it flashes out minute detail of how the gospel actually impacts your life. The gospel is more than Jesus Christ coming and dying for you and me, who does not know that and then you walk away. If the gospel really is what it is it will drill deep into your soul and it will transform your life. So these 15 chapters of Romans are extremely important in conveying that. So this is gospel theology by Paul. It is going to tell you exactly how you will be saved and how your Christian life is going to work out. From wretchedness to righteousness we talk about rough very simple scheme. The first four chapters are God's righteous. Why we need it, how to get it? Chapter 5 to 8, how it changes me from the inside, chapter 9 to 11 is about Israel and then how it changes on the outside.

God's Righteousness through the Gospel:

When you actually write a letter usually it is me Tom to you Jane, finish. This letter is a little bit different. It has got a prescript that means there is a long introduction of about seven to eight verses. It is about the longest prescript ever and there are three things he talks about that we must catch when we read. Paul is famous for long complicated sentences, so if we go to long

complicated sentences by the time you finish the end of sentence the first part of sentence I forgot already. So basically we will look at the subjects. Subjects are threefold in this first prescript. It is Paul, the gospel and the Son of God.

Verse 1

I Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle and set apart for the gospel of God.

If we look here there are three things:

- a. he is a servant of Christ,
- b. he is called to be an apostle,
- c. he is set apart for the gospel of God.

So he is a servant of Christ. The word servant here in the Greek is called “Doulos”. “Doulos” here is basically a slave taken to work for other people in an involuntary manner, so lowest of all slaves. So he calls himself the lowest of all slaves and yet he is also called to be an apostle on the other hand because of what Christ has done for him he is an apostle, one of the 12 who is a witness to the resurrected Christ who laid the foundations of the church. Not only is that he set apart for the gospel of God. So what was Paul’s main aim in life? The gospel of God. So here we actually have Paul decides his credentials. Why does he have to spell out all his credentials? Because nobody knows him, the Roman church was not founded by him, and he does not really know them.

Subject:

Set apart for the gospel of God.

2. **which He promised beforehand through His prophets in the holy Scriptures,**
3. **concerning His Son, who was born of a descendant of David according to the flesh,**

There are three things about Paul here and two things about the gospel of God. It is very important. Not anybody’s gospel is gospel of God that means good news about God. The Greek word for gospel is “euangelion”. It is basically a momentous announcement like I say the king’s birthday, it has ramifications for everybody. So it is a good news. It is not only news it is also as well an event. It is not a cognitive message. It is like 911. When 911 comes to our mind the incident happened on that day come to our mind. So it is not only news that it happened but it is actually event. So we think about gospel is not a good news that Jesus came last time but actually it is an event in which God came to the world to save the world. It is both news and an event together.

Couple of things promised beforehand through his prophets in Holy Scripture. So this is not something which he did suddenly, this is plan all around and if we look at the Old Testament the whole Old Testament is basically a bunch of prophecies foretelling the time when God sends his

prophets in anticipation of the final prophet who is Jesus Christ. In Hebrew chapter 1 He spoke through the prophets and in the final days he spoke through his son who is the final one. So the gospel of God is prophesied in Holy Scriptures and the gospel of God is about his son. So therefore there he jumps off into basically the next subject which is basically His son. So therefore the five things we talk about the son.

3. Descendant from David according to the flesh.
4. Declared to be son of God in power according to the spirit of holiness by his resurrection from dead, Jesus Christ our Lord
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 including you who are the called to belong to Jesus Christ.

So what is the gospel about? The gospel has been predicted beforehand. For prophecy the gospel is about the son. Things about the son in gospel is very important. Let's look at the son. First of all son who was descendant from David according to the flesh. Imagine in 1927 a man was born and lived very long ago and he said, "In the year 2016 the American president will actually go down to Cuba", who are absolute enemies of the United States. This happened just yesterday and they actually reconciled. If you could do that what are the odds of that happening. Extremely low. That is how prophecy works in the Old Testament. The prophecy works the odds. Let us see 2-Samuel 7

12. When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom.

13. He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.

16. And your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me. Your throne shall be established forever.

This is a Davidic King. This is a prophecy that when God sends his Messiah it will come from David. This is in Isaiah chapter 11:

A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse;
from his roots a Branch will bear fruit.
The Spirit of the Lord will rest on him—

Jeremiah 23:5 says:

"Behold, the days are coming," declares the LORD, "When I will raise up for David a righteous Branch; And He will reign as king and act wisely And do justice and righteousness in the land.

There are lots of prophecies that talk about this. In medicine first approved that something is not by chance you have to prove that the result that you get is probably going to be less in 1 in 1000.

If you can prove the result that you get is actually chance of it happening by chance less than 1000 means it is actually the correct treatment. Now imagine if I pulled up somebody like random person. I get him to come up here and then I say, can you just wave your hands and say Jesus is Lord. Imagine six years ago before we started this church, somebody, a prophet predicted this man would come up, "an old man in a purple shirt would come up in the month of March and he would stand up there and say Jesus is Lord". What are the chances of that happening? Suppose there are 900 worshippers so therefore we must multiply by 1 in 900. There are seven days in a week and then there are 1044 minutes in a day. So the chances of this man coming up and being predicted six years ago is actually 1 in 18 million, conservatively putting. So if you have predicted about this man will come up here and say that, it cannot be by chance, it has to be true. That is what prophecy is about and if we look at the prophecies, you know Genesis, he is going to come from the God of Shem, all the families in Genesis 12, 3, Abraham's family will be blessed 1 in 60,000, Abraham had two sons, Isaac had two sons, you got out of the 12 from Isaac one of them will be the Messiah will come from that, you choose David out of the tribe of Judah, is 1 in 200,000 people, choose Solomon is 1 in 19. Then you go up to the prophecy of Messiah comes from Noah, Shem, descendant of Abraham and David is about 1 in 13 trillion. It is not likely to be mistake, it is not likely to be random, it is impossible. Then we got Micah prophecy, "old Bethlehem you are too little to come among the clans of Judah, from you shall come for me one who is the ruler of Israel, who is coming from ancient of days, a prediction that Bethlehem will be the place where he is born, so that is about 1 in 1300 trillion. Odds of getting all 48 prophecies about Jesus correct is 1 out of 10^{157} . It cannot be random. Prophecy tells you, it is planned. God plans it, it is not a mistake. This is read by Yitzchak Kaduri, recognized by the Jews and this guy was a very famous Rabi and he actually was a prophet. He use to prophesize some of the world events and he use to get visions towards the end of his life and he vision was that saw the Messiah and he actually wrote down the little note to be read one year after he died. One year after his death in 2004 they took out this note and they read, it is actually "Yehoshua" and this is Jesus. So Jesus is the Messiah that is very important because he is the son of David and he will be a representative of us. He will be David's greater son.

The second one is that he was declared to be son of God in power. When He came into the world He was son on God, no power, he left his glory, so therefore he was pushed around, he was hungry, he had no power but the resurrection is the one when he showed that he got glory and he took back his power according to the spirit of holiness.

The next one about the gospel is that Jesus Christ our Lord. We will talk about God's cosmic majesty and He is also the master of believer. Now if you look at all of this together and we look at the gospel like an airline, so we call this the Gospel Airline, so if ever want to remember what the gospel is about. Thus imagine the Gospel Airline is there and it has got two wings. On one wing Messiah descendant from David, you cannot miss that out. You want to talk about the gospel:

- 1) you cannot miss he is a Messiah descendant from David.
- 2) you cannot miss out He is son of God resurrected in power.
- 3) where is it heading? It is heading only in one direction. Jesus Christ is Lord.

That is the aim of the gospel. It has got two wings, Jesus Christ is the lord, is the destination, He is the Messiah and He is the son of God in power. Anybody if you look in your case histories afterwards, if you want to whack the airplane that you cannot fly without wing. So you whack either wing, you either say he is not fully man or you say he is not fully God, son of God, he never rose from dead. If you whack either of these wings, if you compromise either of these two wings then you will not be a Christian and what people are doing nowadays, they are also compromising the direction. You know about the direction, destination is Jesus Christ is Lord. That is what they do not want, they want Jesus Christ as your friend and all sorts of things but he is not your Lord. So these three things are very easy to remember, Gospel Airline.

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

So the purpose of the gospel is to bring people into the obedience of faith which is basically Jesus Christ is Lord. Obedience of faith is a little bit of a complicated word. There is obedience and there is faith. There are two things that happen in obedience:

1. Initial decisive step of faith where you do the sinner's prayer.
2. Continuing relationship which is reflected by obedience because of the faith and obedience which is the result of the faith.

It has to come together. A lot of churches miss the point. What happens is that they count how many people did this. There is no continuing faith relationship, there is no obedience. In First Baptist Church, our focus is this, so we stopped counting how many people signed cards after Alpha, we do not care. We care how many people from Alpha came and sit in Gamma and usually are the 50 people there, we only wind up like 12. Those are the disciples that we can work with continuing obedience of faith. That is what does matter. It does not matter how big your church is, they only come and they believe I am a Christian because of that, no you actually have a lifelong obedience and you cannot have lifelong obedience unless you interact with God's word and God's people. There are two things that will change you, God's word and God's people. Now what about the motif for gospel ministry? Gospel of God is about as predicted through scripture, is about the son, the son is descendant from David, risen from the dead to show that he is in power, Jesus Christ is lord for the purpose of obedience and faith and Paul motif, he talks about in the next few verses (8-14) basically tells you what he wants to do. He wants to come and be encouraged. He wants to be mutually encouraged, share with them if they can share with him, to see their faith to grow. Verse 14 says

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 in Rome.

Whenever you do that you have having too extremes, in the bible we call is merism which means low and high, hot and cold, which means you cover both ends, which means is the whole spectrum. So he wants to share the gospel, is obligated to every single one. Everyone in the world, whether wise or foolish, Greeks or barbarians, across all social classes. The question now is why he is so eager to share this gospel and this is the important gist of what Romans is going to be about.

There are five subordinate clauses related to the reason why he is eager to share the gospel. They are all take off from each other. I am obligated, I am eager to share the gospel, why? Because I am not ashamed,

16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile.

17 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.”

18 The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of people, who suppress the truth by their wickedness,

There are five subordinate clauses, each supporting illuminating the one before.

1. For I am not ashamed of the gospel:

A lot of us start of in life and I certainly am the first one to confess. When I first became a Christian I am awfully ashamed of the gospel. I dare not bring it up. You know why I dare not bring it up because I was not very sure about it and everybody I will bring it up will surely laugh at me. I remember being a young intern trying to impress my surgical registrar in New South Wales, Prince of Wales Hospital in Sydney and the moment he found about that I am a Christian, and even when operating half way he tells to everyone that this guy is a holy man, call me Billy Graham, it made me feel like, so I do not often bring it up, because the moment you bring it up they call you like Christian Taliban or something like that. So we often find it so difficult to share the gospel because we are ashamed. We are ashamed because if you are Greek you have philosophy. Greek says, “Why do you believe in a God who gets killed, how stupid can you get? So to the world what we actually share is actually very-very stupid but he is not ashamed. There is a reason why he is not ashamed. He is not ashamed because gospel which is euangelion, the good news that Jesus Christ died for us is the power of God for salvation. It does not mean the gospel has the power, it does not mean the gospel bring use the power, it says the gospel is the power. There is a very-very slight difference there. The gospel is the power. Let me illustrate this. This is the gospel; it has two things inside it. It has words, it has power. It is the same power as God says, “let there be light”. Now when God says let there be light, nobody runs and then switch on. When God words comes out then light starts to come in. So the gospel of God is

like that. It is God's word in power. It is the power of God in verbal and cognitive form. You are not saying, I know some religions have verbal power. Some of the Muslims believe, "this one is fantastic verse, you use this verse and things will happen". It is verbal and cognitive, it means you got to actually process it in your mind. So basically you got the gospel, it goes in, you articulate, you reflect and then there is personal transformation. If you have the gospel and you do not articulate and reflect inside your own life, it cannot change you, it cannot bring salvation to you.

D.L. Moody describes the gospel, "When you actually hear the gospel you are actually transported into the presence of God" and D.L. Moody was one of the best preachers in the United States and he said the gospel is like a caged lion. You know what the preacher has to do, open the gates and get out of the way. All you have to do is open the cage and get out of the way because all of us in our sinfulness and horrible habits and poor reflection of Christ we actually block the lion. When you share the gospel of Jesus Christ, there are only two things you need to share. He is fully man, descendant from David, promised by God to save the world and he rose from the dead. Two things very hard to argue again, it is all that you need then the rest you let the lion come and eat them up. That is how powerful the gospel is and that is why he is not ashamed, that is why he died for the gospel. All he has to do no matter what just open the door and get out of the way. The gospel is absolute power. I am not ashamed of the gospel for it is the power of God for salvation for everyone who believes. So to release this power is faith. Faith in putting full trust, it is an act to will. It is not work, it is not merit, it is something that not faith is something people ask you when you die do you think what will happen? You say I do not know, I do not have much faith. In my younger days I got more faith now I am older and got less faith. As if faith will save you? As if the measure of your faith is merit, so therefore God's look at it. Faith is a kind of vessel with which we come empty with a mouth of our soul opened to seek God's grace. I mean this is faith. Faith is just a method, a way of receiving what God has given us. There is no merit involved. So it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, so salvation is deliverance from judgment, restored to share in God's glory. Now, why I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for salvation but why does it have this power, why it is like a lion. It is a very-very important thing to understand and the rest of the Romans will tell you about the power of God. The righteous of God is revealed from faith to faith as it is written the righteous shall live by faith. This is a very important concept to understand, the righteousness of God. If you look at the universe there are certain laws in place, the law of gravity, the law of vibration, law of thermodynamics, constants like pi, law of cause and effect, law of perpetual transmutation of energy, the speed of light. If we say that tomorrow the speed of light changes from 186 to 100 miles per second to 184. Do you think the constant pi changes ever, it never changes. One of the most wonderful evidences that there is a God that holds this universe because of all of these laws, they cannot change, you do not wake up tomorrow at one minute and the sun does not rise up. Things flow from hot to cold. Imagine you wake up tomorrow cold to hot, it is impossible, why there is a law of the universe. Now you are made in the image of God and so therefore God, if you want to be made in the image of God, so God acts in a certain way. I mean we can look like him, talk like him, laugh like him, it is like a father and mother. It means you have a child obviously come up must look at something like you. They do not look like you, at least talk like you, act like you, something to prove. But once you are born of God you made in the image of God then there is a moral code the way He acts is actually hardwired into the way you act. That is called righteousness but if you look at the

Garden of Eden, what is the moral code there? The one knowledge of good and evil cannot wall up. So later on you have got Israel, Ten Commandments, gentiles, they have got conscious. It is all hardwired inside here. So therefore this is not optional. God's law are immutable whether there are laws of physics or laws of righteousness, they cannot change. The speed of light 186000 miles per second does not change, God righteous cannot change the lie, a lie is a lie, a sin is a sin, it does not change. So therefore if you look what is man's righteous. Man's righteousness is confirmatory to God standard with an ethical aspect with your behavior and a legal aspect of how you stand before him and God's righteousness is simply him acting like himself from within uninfluenced by anything that is not himself is morally perfect. God's righteousness stems from his holiness. It is because He is holy He acts right. So basically He is acting like himself. God's righteousness is an expression of his holiness, his characters are standard for all just behavior and His actions to us are consistent with his nature. This is God's righteous, His right action. Now unrighteousness is not acting like what God acts. So therefore you have shame, you run away and hide. So now the whole problem is imagine you step off the cliff. If any accident happens, the first thing is that they blame God. You see this guy is blaming God for what, the law of gravity. They think that if God really loved me He will stop me from falling down. Suppose a Christian got cancer, they say God I hate you because you suppose to look after me. It is like the same guy walking off the cliff and the law of gravity supposed to stop. Now in the same way you have got righteousness. Righteousness is a standard of behavior that applies like the law of gravity across the entire universe, you cannot run, it is the most important aspect of God. When Jesus Christ came, this is Hebrews 1 verse 8-9, the son he says:

8 But about the Son he says,
“Your throne, O God, will last for ever and ever;
a scepter of justice will be the scepter of your kingdom.
9 You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness;

So therefore Jesus Christ, his son, his scepter is the power of righteousness is the power of your kingdom. Righteousness, right behavior is what Jesus is all about. Martin Luther became a Christian at very young age and he went to work as a lawyer and one day he had a terrible storm somewhere in Stotternheim, Germany and he nearly died during that storm, it was horrific and the lightening nearly hit him. When the lightening just missed him he said God if you save me I will become Christian today, I will become a monk. So he became a monk after that and he tried to live a very righteous life, prayer, fasting, ascetic practices, going without sleep and during bone chilling cold without a blanket and flagellating. So he was trying to gain righteousness, “I hated the word righteousness of God by which I have been taught according to the custom and the use of teachers that God is righteous and punishes the unrighteous sinners”. No matter how he tried he felt that the righteousness of God put him so far away that no matter what he did he could not approach God and then who after all could live by faith but those who are already righteous he believe that only those who are already righteous can live by faith. He struggled with this, even got his Ph.D. and he still struggle with this and then lastly this is his testimony, “at least meditating day and night by the mercy of God I began to understand that the righteous of God is that through which the righteous lives by a gift of God namely by faith, here I felt as if was entirely born again and have entered paradise itself through the gates that have been flung open”. His breakthrough was not it was not him like the rest of religion trying to gain righteous, the righteousness is actually revealed in the gospel of God, it is given to him and another way of

illustrating this is John Bunyan. John Bunyan wrote a book “A Pilgrim’s Progress” and he describes this in other way. “One day I was passing through the field and suddenly I thought of a sentence, your righteous is in heaven and with eyes of faith I saw Christ Jesus sitting at the God’s right hand and certainly I realized there is my righteousness”. Is that profound? Wherever I was? Whatever I was doing, God could not say where is your righteous, because it was right before him. Have you actually wonder when you walk around and you are feeling so far from God and you got all this horrible sin and devil uses question, “Where is your righteousness?” John Bunyan turns and say, “there in front of you God, because the son is at the right hand side of the father”. So where is your righteousness, at the right hand side of father every single day. So no one can actually point a finger and tell you where is your righteousness, my righteousness is next to God and that is why the gospel is power of God to salvation, why, because it has he righteousness of God. It contains the righteousness of God. So you have got righteousness of God is revealed. It is an ongoing process; it brings righteousness of God into the existence in our life. This is given to us or imputed to us. This is promised. Old Testament actually promises that God will give us his righteousness. You actually do not have to gain it.

This is Isaiah 46

12 “Listen to me, you stubborn of heart,
you who are far from righteousness:
13 I bring near my righteousness; it is not far off,
and my salvation will not delay;
I will put salvation in Zion,

Which means God promises he will bring his righteousness. It means that you do not have to try on your own. This is Micah 7

7 But as for me, I will look to the Lord;
I will wait for the God of my salvation;
my God will hear me.

8 Rejoice not over me, O my enemy;
when I fall, I shall rise;
when I sit in darkness,
the Lord will be a light to me.

9 I will bear the indignation of the Lord
because I have sinned against him,
until he pleads my cause
and executes judgment for me.
He will bring me out to the light;
shall look upon his vindication.

The word here is vindication and then there is I got sin, I mean he recognizes ethically he has sinned. He has got no righteousness but God will vindicate. How do you vindicate someone who sinned? If you are innocent and you went to court and the fellow said, this 2.6 is a donation and then you went to court and the court cleared you that mean that you are vindicated but here we are actually guilty. Guilty people get vindicated. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith. See the gospel is God's power to salvation because it has God's righteousness through Christ given to you not because of your efforts but given to you based on faith. That is why it is so powerful. You talk to any religion in the world, there is not a single one that gives you God's righteousness as immutable as the laws of physics which you all have broken and he gives it to you. Every other religion you have to work for it and this is so astounding that for our human nature, you see we will be brought up to live by works, how our parents always say "Johnny good, got reward". "Johnny bad, punishment". So we always please our parent. So everything is by works. If I tell you are Christian, most of you still living by works. Most of you feel afraid to see Jesus Christ again, you know why because they are still living by works. If I did not do this, so therefore I cannot look at Jesus. If I say Jesus is coming tonight, most of you will be down on the floor, praying oh my God which sin I did not confess and then all of you would not want to meet God, you know why because you believe your righteousness is based on works. You can say it is from Christ but actually practically it is from works and the transferring of your salvation comes through understanding the gospel. The gospel is not just four spiritual laws you did when you were in a high school and that was it. The gospel is a force like a lion that actually changes, the more you understand the gospel, the more it draws you in the power and then releases into your life. The power is in the gospel. If you are feeling dry in your Christian life, you are feeling far away in your Christian life which means you have not grabbed the gospel, you have not swallowed the gospel, you have not articulated the gospel, and you go back to the basics because gospel will change your life. Because it is the power of God salvation and it is revealed from faith to faith and is written in Habakkuk 2 verse 4, the righteous shall live by faith. This is the one that hit Martin Luther. The context of Habakkuk is God's judgment to the people of Israel, I am raising Chaldean to come to march through but the man behold his soul is puffed up; it is not upright with him. A man would have no righteousness in him but the righteous shall live by his faith. The faith in God who will save this nation. So Habakkuk proves to you that when judgment come what will save you, God through your faith. How can wrath explains salvation.

Well you look at here,

17 For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith,^e as it is written, "The righteous shall live by faith."

18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth.

You can see the parallel here, it looks the same. The wrath of God revealed from heaven and the revelation of God's wrath explains revelation of God saving righteousness. The two coins have got two sides, on one side is salvation and on the other side is judgment. Because we live under an immutable God, the God that does not change. It is like the law of gravity. Sin cannot escape. So somehow all of us come under judgment, so therefore Paul says for the wrath of God

is a real bill revealed from heaven against all man who are in their unrighteous suppress the truth. On the other hand how come you get salvation because the same righteousness of God will not get sin go. This God said I will be your God and you will be my people, so question is how are you going to be my God and save me when I am a bad guy, I should be judged. So the same immutable character of God that ensures absolute punishment for everyone is a same characteristics that will actually save me because when He says I will be your God and you will be my people He will never let you go and so therefore the only way these two can actually happen together is what the righteousness that comes from God as a gift. That is the beauty of the gospel.