

Romans 1

January 12, 2012

Why study Romans? Let me quote to you from Martin Luther "The epistle to the Romans is the true masterpiece of the New Testament and the very purest gospel, which is well worth and deserving that a Christian should not only learn it by heart, word for word but also daily deal with it as the daily bread of his soul."

One of the early church fathers, Chrysostom, had it read to him twice a week.

Donald Gray Barnhouse, who taught Romans for years, word for word, in his church in Philadelphia said of Romans:" The ministry which will teach the truths of man's complete ruin in sin and God's perfect remedy in Christ, can best reach the heart of the need of the human race and bring the only remedy that can heal the heart, which God has declared to be humanly incurable".

Paul wrote this letter to the church at Rome, while he was residing in Corinth. Rome was the largest and most important city in the world with an estimated population of 1 to 4 million people. Nero had just begun his reign. There was a large Jewish population. Paul said he was sending this letter to the "saints" in Rome, a mixed group of Jews and Gentiles. These believers were surrounded by false religions, idol worship, materialism and immorality. Paul wanted to make sure they understood the truth about the gospel, and the person of the gospel, our LORD and Savior Jesus Christ. Doesn't this sound like us in America? We are a group of believers surrounded by false religion and materialism. The teachings in the book of Romans are for us. The theme of Romans is salvation by faith in Christ, 1:16-17 and Paul tells us who needs this salvation and why.

Let's begin with Romans 1, my title for this chapter is THE GOSPEL, THE POWER OF GOD FOR

SALVATION

Romans 1:1

We just learned 3 things about Paul from his own mouth. What can we discover about the heart of this man from his self-description? He said he is first of all a bond slave and we talked about that before because he referred to himself this way in the book of Colossians, in fact in most of the epistles Paul uses these words to describe himself. What is a bond slave? This is a special group of slaves. According to the law, a slave served 7 years and then was to be freed however he could decide to stay. He was then a slave by choice and that is the thing I want you to remember. Paul chose to be the slave of Jesus Christ. By the way, this person who decided to be a bond slave would go to the temple or some public place, he would stand near a pillar and an awl would be put through his ear lobe, making it clear to all that he was a bond slave. This is a declaration by Paul of complete submission to Christ. It was unthinkable for a Roman citizen to call himself a slave and so this statement emphasized to the Roman recipients the depth of Paul's devotion to Jesus.

Secondly Paul said he was called to be an apostle, which means he was a special messenger. Who would have called him? The LORD Jesus Christ personally called him. In Acts 26:16-18 when he was on trial, Paul told King Agrippa the exact words Jesus used when he was called "Get up, stand on your feet", Jesus said, "for this purpose I have appeared to you, to appoint you a minister and a witness not

only to the things which you have seen, but also to the things in which I will appear to you; rescuing you from the Jewish people and from the Gentiles to whom I am sending you, to open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the dominion of Satan to God that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in Me". Paul told us too that Jesus said all this in Hebrew. Paul received this personal call from Jesus Himself, so we know that it was God's will for Paul to preach the gospel and look what Jesus told him would be the result. Paul would need to be rescued from the Jews and the Gentiles to whom he was preaching. Do you have it in your mind that being in the will of God give you an easy and prosperous life? That is not the biblical view at all. Paul's life was difficult to the extreme, and he was finally murdered for preaching the gospel, tradition says he was beheaded. The only people who reap material prosperity from the gospel are the televangelists to whom deceived people send money. God's desire for you is your holiness, not your happiness. No doubt a believer who is abiding in the Vine has joy, but prosperity is not promised anywhere.

An apostle had the authority to found churches supervise and discipline them; it was a position of authority. But it also means someone sent on a mission as an ambassador. He is an ambassador to evangelize the world.

Now we know that Paul was a bond slave, an apostle especially called by Jesus and in addition he was set apart for the gospel of God. The words holy and saint indicate a person who is set apart. This is a statement of his life purpose; his heart was to share the good news of Jesus Christ, that is God's gospel. In fact, in verse 14 he said he is under obligation to all and in verse 16 he said he was not ashamed of the gospel.

Here is the great apostle sharing his heart and his life work with us. What is your heart, what is your life work? Do you feel any obligation to share the God's good news or are you ashamed?

Romans 1:2

God's good news that Paul is telling, the truth about Jesus and the gift of salvation was foretold by the prophets from the book of Genesis forward, more and more being revealed as you go through the bible, it is a progressive revelation.

So it was God's truth promised not some new religion Paul just made up. Both the Jews and the Gentiles in Rome needed to be reminded that the gospel is the continuing story of the bible, following in perfect sequence, flowing from the Old Testament to the New Testament. They needed to be reminded they were not turning their back on their former belief but the gospel was the fulfillment of all they had been taught previously.

Romans 1:3-5

Here is a summary of the good news about Jesus Christ, Who is the central focus of the gospel message. Jesus was born into the human race, that incarnation is what we celebrate at Christmas. We know Jesus' mother, Mary, was a descendent of David and so was his stepfather Joseph. The Messiah was prophesied to be born in Bethlehem to a virgin, and to come from the tribe of Judah, from King David's line. 2 Samuel 7:13-16 is the promise to David that his kingdom would never end. Jesus is the fulfillment of that promise.

In His humanity Jesus lived a perfect life according to the law making it possible for Him to impute His righteousness to us. In the divinity of Jesus we understand He was worthy and able to suffer God's wrath against sin, a punishment that was actually yours and actually mine. While we separate Jesus humanity and Divinity for discussion it really cannot be separated because He is completely man and completely God. He will always be the God-man our Savior and LORD. Jesus entire life from His conception to His resurrection was planned, promised and fulfilled? Paul told us here that the resurrection of Jesus proved He was the Son of God.

Paul says too that by the power of the Holy Spirit he and the apostles received the grace of God, the free gift of salvation and the authority to share the message of God's forgiveness. The grace of God is literally "undeserved favor". An acrostic you may have heard GRACE-God's Riches At Christ's Expense. In the Old Testament grace could have been understood to be mercy or loving kindness

The free gift is available to all; Jews and Gentiles, whosoever will may come. The desired response to the sharing of the good news is that people would believe and obey and thus glorify Jesus forever and ever.

To review we have learned that Paul was called to take the good news to the world and he was given authority to found churches, to teach. What is the obedience of faith? You might say, "Trust grounded obedience". It is not talking about the obedience of faith in believing the good news but the aftermath of faith in Jesus from which flow good works. Right deeds are the consequences of truly trusting God, His Word and His Messiah.

Paul's states here the truth of his mission to the Gentiles or all the non-Jews in Rome. The message of Romans is to the Gentile and the Jew in terms of salvation but at times he is specifically speaking to Gentiles, then there are also specific references for the Jews, remember, he was the messenger to the Gentiles.

Romans 1:6-7

Paul states that he is a messenger to the Gentile, all ethnic people, pagans and non Jews and this includes everyone in Rome. And notice these believers were loved and then they were called.

Grace again means God's unmerited favor and peace, shalom. Shalom is so much more than just peace. Shalom includes the idea of tranquility, safety, well-being, welfare, health, contentment, success, comfort, wholeness and integrity.

Paul has introduced himself to the believers at Rome and now he wants to tell them why he is writing. After all they have never met and perhaps they would have objections to him sending them instructions.

Romans 1:8

Paul begins by complimenting them on their bold witness, which was apparently well known throughout the empire. Just think, these believers living within this corrupt culture, functioning, as a thriving church serving their community would be noticed and a subject of discussion. The Roman believer's lives were telling their witness, their purity and Christian virtue was noticed and talked about

far and wide. There is no better testimony than this that you walk your talk. And this is the acid test as well, if there is no changed life, there probably is no conversion.

Romans 1:9-10

Just as he prayed for the believers at Colossae, Paul faithfully prayed for the believers at Rome. He is calling God as his witness to how much he prayed for them. How is your prayer life? Are you interceding for people you have never met, even for those outside your family?

Paul wanted to visit the believers in Rome; in fact in one place he mentions visiting them on his way to Spain. The trip to Spain did not happen but he did go to Rome eventually as a prisoner. Paul prayed to be able to visit the believers in Rome, he wanted to see them but notice, only if it was God's will.

Romans 1:11-12

Paul knew that believers who spend time together can encourage each other and He knew he could help them grow even stronger than they were.

As the bond slave of Christ and God's missionary he knew he could help them understand more about the gospel. Also he expected to gain encouragement from them, isn't that the life of believers, we encourage each other and grow together?

Romans 1:13

Paul wanted to go to Rome, he was prevented. Who prevented Paul from going to Rome? God had the plan for Paul's life, Paul was submitted to God, and Paul would go to Rome when God allowed it. This is the test of faith. Wanting something to happen, knowing in your heart it was not God's time for it to happen and being content to wait on God to give permission.

Romans 1:14-15

Now we learn to whom Paul was to preach the gospel, it looks like everyone. All cultures, all races, no ethnic or economic barriers. This certainly helps understand that God wills that all will come to salvation. Churches that preach that salvation is limited to a certain few, well it isn't true because Paul clearly states there were no barriers.

With these verses we have finished Paul's introduction. We have learned that Paul had never met the people to whom he was writing but he had a desire to go there. The recipients of this letter we learn are people of great faith whose pure lives made an impression from far away, they were well known for their faith.

Now Paul is writing the key verse of this letter and also summarizes the book of Romans.

Romans 1:16

We learn here that to tell the good news has power of its own. Lets review that good news and the truth it contains; first, Christ died for our sin according to the Scriptures, 2) He was buried and 3) He rose again.

Have you ever been ashamed to share the gospel with someone who you knew would scoff for some reason or another. Does fear of opposition or rejection or being thought foolish hold you back? Here is the encouragement you should consider. You have Good News for people if you just have the courage to tell the good news about Jesus and that being the gospel has a power of its own and lives can be changed.

The word power in the Greek is "dunamis", you can see it is the base of the word dynamite and dynamic. The Good News can be like spiritual dynamite, it can destroy worldviews and traditions that stand in the way of truth and make way for new life. It has the power to blast open a stone hard heart resistant to God.

The gospel is life changing for anyone who keeps on trusting in it, if your bible uses the word believe you need to understand that it is not a once for all action, to believe, but the idea here is that you keep on believing and trusting.

What does Paul mean by salvation? It is deliverance from eternal death or separation from God. It implies escape, preservation deliverance from the consequences of sin, which is death. In early times it referred to the health of the body but later came to mean the health of the soul and spirit. Salvation begins with the soul's relationship to God Who created us. Before salvation there must be a conviction of sin and the realization we are lost and hopeless. In the next lesson we will read about the soul who is lost from God and the terrible conditions this brings.

Let me ask you now about your soul. Here I quote Donald Barnhouse. "God comes to you today, just as you are, you have His attention. You do not have to "clean up your act", He comes in the midst of your lostness and tells you that you are in a desperate position without His help. You might be healthy and happy, have plenty of money and figure these are signs of God being pleased with you. The fact is you are in lying in the embrace of death, so to speak, and you don't even know it. God says you are overboard in a sea of sin; no swim stroke or emotion can get you to shore. You must recognize your lost condition and submit to His plan of life saving. God commands men everywhere to repent, this is not an emotional state of being sorry for your sin but it is a military term for "about face". You have been facing yourself, trusting in your own ability while Christ has been behind you, despised and rejected by you. You must about face. You must despise and reject your own efforts and realize that God has done all the work through the Savior that He requires you to put your trust in Him."

Who is to receive this good news: Paul said its for the Jew first and then the Gentile. The plan of salvation, the good news is equally for Jews and Gentiles, there is no plan B, the Jews do not have a different plan.

The Jew first, what does this mean? The Jews were the first to be offered salvation by God when He chose Abraham. Also Jesus, being Jewish, began with the Jews, all the Disciples were Jews. So the Jews were given the first opportunity to know the Messiah during His earthly ministry. If the word "first" is translated "especially" there is further understanding that we are under obligation to share the good news of Jesus with Jewish people. Even though Paul was commissioned to take the good news to the Gentiles you can see in the book of Acts that his habit when he entered a town was to go first to the local synagogue and preach.

If you are burdened for Jewish people to know their Messiah prays for them and look at the many Internet websites that offer ideas for Jewish evangelism.