

Truth for Today

The Bible Explained

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The Epistle to the Romans: Prologue: It is all about God (Romans 1:1-18)

Introduction

Last week, in the first talk of this series, it was emphasised that Paul's letter to the Roman Christians gives us the very foundation of Christian **teaching**. It is not so much the preaching of the Gospel to the sinner as the **teaching** of the Gospel to the Christian believer.

Today, we begin to study the **Doctrine** of Christianity, which occupies Romans 1:1-8:39. Above all, what do we know about the God who commissioned the Book, and the message He sent to the Roman Christians through the Apostle Paul?

The First Book in the Bible is The Book of Genesis, that is, The Book of Beginnings. How does it begin? "*In the beginning God...*" (Genesis 1:1). It begins with God. We should not be surprised that in this New Testament Book of fundamental **teaching**, Paul is guided to begin in the same way. He begins with God. So, the most obvious thing about Romans 1 is that it is all about God. Everything is of Him.

Romans 1:1-32: It is all about God

1. Romans 1:1: The **Gospel** of God;
2. Romans 1:4: The **Son** of God (God's gospel **concerns** His Son);
3. Romans 1:10: The **Will** of God;
4. Romans 1:16: The **Power** of God;
5. Romans 1:17: The **Righteousness** of God;
6. Romans 1:18: The **Wrath** of God;
7. Romans 1:23: The **Glory** of God;
8. Romans 1:25: The **Truth** of God;
9. Romans 1:32: The **Judgment** of God.

Let us look at these phrases in the order in which they are given. I think we shall see that the order given is more or less fairly progressive.

1. Romans 1:1: The Gospel of God

The **doctrine** the apostle Paul had for the Roman Christians was indeed **Good News**, as the word **Gospel** signifies. The term itself is not used in the Old Testament, but about one hundred times in the New Testament. There are instances in the Old Testament of people bearing or receiving **good news**. But, it is not until the New Testament that we get The **Good News** of God that "*Jesus our Lord ...was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification*", (Romans 4:24-25) and that "*whosoever will may come*" (see Revelation 22:17).

However, the first piece of **good news**, illustrated in the first instance of the term "**gospel**" being used in the New Testament, is given in Matthew 4:23: "*And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the **gospel** of the kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people.*"

The **Good News** begins with God, and with the reminder that the nation of Israel had been visited by their long promised Messiah. He brought blessing from their God to their nation that was suffering under the Romans who had invaded and occupied their land, The Holy Land of Israel.

Blessing surely flowed as recorded in the four Gospels, but sadly it was **not** long before the **good news** was rejected by the leaders of the Jews. They rejected the One who brought the **good news** with Him. He came into the world as a babe at Bethlehem, and presented His **good news** to the nation when He began his public ministry at the age of about thirty years old.

Happily, the rejection of the **good news** and the One Who brought it would open the door of salvation to whosoever will believe on the one Whom God would identify as His Son, and as sent by Him.

2. Romans 1:4: The Son of God

Putting together the opening statements in the letter, Paul identifies the **Son of God** as the Person in Whom, **by** Whom and **through** Whom the Gospel has been accomplished and fulfilled.

Romans 1:1, Romans 1:3, Romans 4:25, and Romans 5:1 say, collectively, *“the gospel of God ... concerning ... **the Son of God** ... who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification. Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”*

The term **“Son of God”** highlights the holy dignity of the Lord Jesus in manhood here in this world. It confirms the fact that the One Who is **God the Son** has lost nothing in holiness or dignity in becoming man. Hence the statement that Paul gives in Romans 1:4, *“declared to be the **Son of God** with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead.”*

The result for us is stated in Romans 5:10: *“When we were enemies, we were reconciled to **God** by the death of **his Son**.”* Romans 8:3 is emphatic: *“What the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending **his own Son** in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh.”*

3. Romans 1:10: The Will of God

I think I cannot do better than read the four occasions in Paul's letter to the Roman Christians when he takes up this matter of living and acting in line with the revealed **will of God**:

- a. Romans 1:10: *“Making request, if by any means now at length I might have a prosperous journey by **the will of God** to come unto you”;*
- b. Romans 8:27: *“And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to **the will of God**”;*
- c. Romans 12:2: *“And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, **will of God**”;* and
- d. Romans 15:32: *“That I may come unto you with joy by **the will of God**, and may with you be refreshed.”*

The mood is caught up and reinforced by what we read in Ephesians 5:17, *“Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what **the will of the Lord** is.”*

We do well to follow the pattern so expressed, revealed to those who have been brought to God by the Gospel of God, and desire to do what is right according to the **Will of God**, revealed in the Word of God.

4. Romans 1:16: The Power of God

Power involves the ability and strength to carry out the wishes and decisions of the appropriate authority. It also requires the possession of sufficient resources to do so. This was first demonstrated in the creation of the universe, then the bringing in of the animal creation; then, as the topstone of creation, the creation of Adam, subsequently Eve and all mankind.

- Romans 1:4: *“And ... declared to be the Son of God with **power**, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead”;*
- Romans 1:16: *“For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is **the power of God** unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek”;*
- Romans 13:1: *“Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no **power** but of **God**: the **powers** that be are ordained of **God**”;* and
- Romans 15:19: *“Through mighty signs and wonders, by **the power of the Spirit of God** ... I have fully preached the gospel of Christ.”*

These verses, taken together, confirm what the Scriptures consistently make plain, that the will of God is carried out by the Son of God, **in the power of the Spirit of God**.

Of course, what we must never forget is the Lord's own statement, after He had died and risen again, and was about to go back to heaven, as recorded in Matthew 28:18. *“All **power** is given unto me in heaven and in earth.”*

5. Romans 1:17: The Righteousness of God

Any consideration of God and the Gospel of the grace of God must accept that all He has ever done or will do is according to His own absolute standards and application of **righteousness**. He is absolutely consistent with His own **righteous** standards in everything He has ever done or will do. He does what is **right**.

Any relationship with God must therefore of necessity be in accordance with God's absolute, total **righteousness**.

Relief from the wrath of God upon the guilty sinner and the enjoyment of the blessings of The Gospel of God bestowed upon the Christian believer are based upon the value to God of the completed work of the Son of God in taking upon Himself what we deserve because of our sins.

These important matters are emphasised in the ten references to the **righteousness of God** in this letter. They are absolutely basic and crucial to the Christian faith. Listen to some of them.

- Romans 3:21-23: "*But now **the righteousness of God** without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; Even **the righteousness of God** which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference: For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God*"; and in
- Romans 3:25: "*Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare **his righteousness** for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God*"; then in
- Romans 14:17: "*For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but **righteousness**, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.*"

6. Romans 1:18: The Wrath of God

As a concept, **the wrath of God** is diametrically opposed to the Grace of God and the Gospel of God. Grace bestows on the recipient what he does not and never could deserve. **The wrath of God** will inflict upon the recipient what he does deserve because of his own thoughts, words actions, and deeds. The only alternative to enjoying the grace of God is to endure **the wrath of God**.

As we read in John 3:36, "*He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but **the wrath of God** abideth on him.*"

We can see how this follows on what we have considered as to the spiritual blessings available in The Gospel of God because of the love of God for the sinner and the value to God of the work of The Son of God.

In this introductory first chapter, which lays down the basic concepts that we need to consider in our relationship with God, Romans 1:18 says, "***the wrath of God** is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness.*"

In Romans 2:5 we are reminded, "*thy hardness and impenitent heart treasureth up unto thyself **wrath** against the day of **wrath** and revelation of the righteous judgment of God.*" There could be no other righteous alternative.

7. Romans 1:23 The Glory of God

The glory of God is the revelation and manifestation of all that He is and all that is in Him. Glory really belongs to God. He is the God of glory.

In God, the divine attributes shine in infinite perfection. It is in the acknowledgement of this and that **from** Him come all our blessings, that we Christians joyfully ascribe to Him praise, honour, **glory**, power for ever and ever.

The first acknowledgement of **the glory of God** is given in Deuteronomy 5:24: "*Behold, the LORD our **God** hath shewed us his **glory** and his greatness, and we have heard his voice out of the midst of the fire.*"

Then again Acts 7:2 tells us of an early display: "*And [Stephen] said, Men, brethren, and fathers, hearken; **The God of glory** appeared unto our father Abraham, when he was in Mesopotamia.*"

And in this letter to the Romans, Paul emphasises this specific attribute of God:

- Romans 11:36: "*For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be **glory** for ever. Amen.*"
- Romans 16:27: "*To God only wise, be **glory** through Jesus Christ for ever. Amen.*"

2 Corinthians 4:6: *“For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of **the glory of God** in the face of Jesus Christ.”*

So, we cannot fail to see that the Lord Jesus Himself is the channel through whom this **glory** is displayed:

8. Romans 1:25: The Truth of God

Following on from what we have said earlier about the **righteousness** of God, we turn now to consideration of **the truth of God**.

We cannot get a better start than to hear the words of Romans 3:4: *“Let **God be true, but every man a liar.**”* This is not to say that everyone we know is a deliberate liar all the time. What it is saying is that if there were only one Person who tells the truth, absolutely, consistently and righteously, in every way, about everything, that Person is God (see Titus 1:2) Remember, when we started today’s talk we took account of the fact that Romans 1:1-32 is all about God. So, now that we are considering the detail of Romans 1:1-32, we must keep reminding ourselves that the revelation of God that the chapter gives is progressive and each step is to some extent built on the previous one.

The mind of God, the will of God, and the revelation of the love of God, are all revealed in **the truth of God** which is the word of God, the Bible in our hands.

The range covered by the Word of God is so vast that we could not possibly appreciate **the truth** of it without the guidance of the Holy Spirit who has been implanted within us when we trusted the Lord Jesus as our Saviour.

9. Romans 1:32: The Judgment of God

In general, right **judgment** involves the discernment to understand and assess any necessary action. In the **judicial** sphere, it involves the wisdom, experience and discernment to distinguish between right and wrong, in particular. Clearly, none other than God Himself is able to carry out such activity to perfection.

This leads us on to consider some very serious questions. Will there, indeed, be a final day of **judgment**? Who will be **judged** at such a tribune? On what basis will that **judgment** be made? Who will be the **judge**? Romans 14:12 is quite clear: *“Every one of us shall give account of himself to God.”* Can we approach such a day with calm confidence? Indeed we can. Romans 4:25-5:1 assures us: *“Christ was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification. Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”*

There can be no doubt that God is satisfied with the value to Him of the work of Christ upon the Cross. Christ was once (once only, once and for all) offered to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself (Hebrews 9:26). And was God satisfied with the sacrifice Christ made? Oh, yes indeed! The proof? *“God ... raised him up from the dead, and gave him **glory**”* (1 Peter 1:21). And what is the position of Christian believers? We, here upon earth, are as clear of the **judgment** of God as Christ Himself, in heaven, at the right hand of God, is. How do we know that? Listen to what the Apostle John says in 1 John 4:17: *“as He is, so are we in this world.”* Wonderful truth.

Final comment

One thing is sure. Anyone who is well grounded in the teaching given in the Apostle Paul’s letter to the Romans, and has put it into practice in their own soul and life, needs have no fear at all of any day of **judgment**. For them, or can I rightly say for us, it is a settled matter, once and for all. If this series of talks is a help to giving any of our listeners the full assurance of faith in respect of their eternal destiny, and the desire to be true to our blessed Lord until He comes again, we shall be very thankful to the Lord for that. In the meantime, have a nice day.

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