

R & R BIBLE STUDY 2019-20



breath-taking grace

THE BOOK OF ROMANS

THE BOOK OF ROMANS: Lesson 2

We have an exciting week ahead, ladies. I hope our “fly-over” of the Book of Romans last week helped give you an idea of Paul’s intent as he wrote this letter, one of his thirteen epistles. (Many believe Paul also wrote Hebrews, which would make his total 14!) As we move now from chapter to chapter, one of the first things we want to look for is the central theme and purpose of the chapter and text. Why did the Holy Spirit direct Paul to write it? It’s also important to know a bit about the people the letter was written to and what was happening in their lives. This helps us understand some of the “why” and “what” questions we may have. I love what Christopher Ash wrote about this. He said, “What do we hope to achieve by teaching and preaching Romans? We should hope to achieve in our teaching what Paul sought to achieve by his writings. That is, we trust that the reasons why Paul wrote Romans are the reasons why God wants us to teach Romans. That when God carried Paul along by His Holy Spirit to write Romans (1 Peter 1:21) the purpose in the mind of Paul was and is the purpose in the mind and heart of God, and ought therefore to be the purpose in the mind and heart of the teacher today. So to answer the question of why we should teach/study Romans is to ask ‘Why did Paul write Romans?’” Get it? 😊 (Although we know Paul was the author, we also know that he dictated to a scribe named Tertius (Romans 16:22) who was allowed to add his own greeting.) All authors wrote their letters for a reason; to say something and accomplish something. Paul seemed to have a few reasons, such as establishing right doctrine, wanting them to become mission partners in the spreading of the Gospel (15:14-33), and to encourage them to live in unity with one another. Paul is very concerned with the harmony between the Jews and Gentiles in the church. He wanted them to see how the Gospel unites Jews and Gentiles in Christ. This issue runs throughout the entire letter. How can the church live together in love? When we boil down his purpose to that, we can understand that the Holy Spirit is saying the same to us today. How can the church live together in love? How can the church cross cultural and generational barriers with the life-changing message of Christ? Without having separate churches, how can we live together in harmony and peace, as well as share the

3. Why do you think Paul chose to use the phrase “slave of Jesus Christ” to describe himself?
4. Paul says he was “called” to be an apostle. Did Paul choose this role for himself?
5. What was he “separated” or “set apart” for?

The word “apostle” literally means “one who is sent.” But according to R. C. Sproul, “Its usual sense in Scripture is not so generic. It refers to an eyewitness of the Resurrection (Acts 1:22; 1 Cor. 15:8) who had been personally appointed by Christ (Matthew 10:1-7; Acts 1:24-26; Galatians 1:1) to govern the early church (1 Thess. 4:8; 2 Thess 3:6, 14), and to teach or write with authority (1 Cor 14:37; 1 Thess 2:13; 4:15; 2 Peter 3:15,16). The term is used as a title of the twelve apostles and Paul.” Paul did not seek the office of an apostle, nor did he see his ministry as a product of his own ambitions. As Swindoll wrote, “He, by God’s grace, fits into God’s plan. Not visa versa.” (Paul first met Jesus as the risen and ascended Lord from Heaven on the Damascus Road in Acts 9:1-6.)

Paul was set apart by God for a special purpose. He not only was called to minister to the Gentiles, but also to take the truths about the Messiah from the Old Testament and explain them in the light of Calvary. You and I have also been “set apart” by God for HIS purpose; to fit into HIS plan. Paul saw himself as a humble participant whom God had graciously included in His grand purposes. We know that we are all called to participate in the Great Commission, and that calling will look different for each individual. We often get tripped up when we try to pinpoint God’s EXACT calling in our everyday life. We can’t doubt, or misunderstand, or feel frustrated when we think it’s not clearly revealed. I love what Mother Teresa said, “God has not called me to be successful. He called me to be faithful.”

Following our “calling” will be achieved as we prayerfully follow His leading, day by day, being obedient to whatever He calls us to do. Nicole Unice wrote, “The word ‘calling’ is defined as ‘a strong urge toward a particular way of life or career.’ Calling goes far beyond anything we find on the other side of ‘just.’ And because of that, the path to our ‘calling’ is never just around the next corner. Rather, calling is about becoming a life-long explorer, and refusing to believe that we are defined by one job, one relationship, or one season of life. Because of that, finding the shape of our call takes time, work, trial, and error. You have a calling. God is actively, certainly calling you to something. He calls in many ways. He called Moses with a burning bush. He called Miriam through her family and her gifts for song and speech. He called Hannah through the waiting, and He called Mary through an angel. He called Paul through a blinding light and Nicodemus through a conversation in the dark. He is not limited in His creativity and He’s not nervous about your timeline. He’s looking for humble hearts that are fully devoted to

Him and willing to do anything to move His kingdom forward. He equips us for the work He wants us to do, not the work we think we want to do. And He uses all of our lives—our waiting places, our frustrations, our experiences, and our gifts, to shape us into the women who will be strong enough for the call He will place on our lives.”

6. Write your thoughts on the paragraph above. Are you a woman with a humble heart, fully devoted to Him and willing to do anything to move the Kingdom forward, whatever that means? Do you feel that your calling is clear? Are you faithful?

7. Now Paul moves to a definition of his message. According to verse 2, was the Gospel message a new thought? What did Paul mean?

8. Verses 3-4 are loaded with important theology! What was the center of the Gospel message, according to verses 3-4?

The Gospel was promised in the Old Testament, beginning in Genesis 3:15, and continued through the prophets. The Old Testament is only understood as fulfilled in Jesus Christ. Christ doesn't change the meaning of the Old Testament; rather He is the key to understanding what the Old Testament really means. Paul presents Jesus as a man, a Jew, and the Son of God, born of a virgin into the family of David. The “spirit of holiness” suggests that Jesus lived a life of victory over the power of sin, and His life was perfectly holy (Hebrews 7:26). He died for the sins of the world and was raised from the dead. The expression “by the resurrection from the dead” suggest His victory over the penalty of sin! This is the Gospel that Paul is preaching. You can't have the Gospel without Christ; the Gospel is Christ! Chris Ash calls it the “Everyone Gospel.”

See you tomorrow, ladies!

Memory Verse of the Week: “For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith, as it is written, ‘The just shall live by faith.’” Romans 1:17

Second Day

Review your memory verse.

1. Read Romans 1:1-7 again. How many times is the word “called” used? Discuss the variations of the meanings.
2. How many times is the word “all” used? What is the significance of that word in context?
3. Compare the words in verse 5 with Romans 16:26. How did Paul’s whole life seem to revolve around these words?

I love what John Phillips wrote in his book, Exploring Romans about these verses. He said, “Our *attitude* must be ‘obedience to the faith’; our *assignment* is ‘all nations’; our *authority* is ‘His Name.’ Paul keeps before us the pressing need for world evangelism.”

4. Read Romans 1:7-17. Again, Paul is writing to all the believers in Rome, both Jew and Gentile, expressing a longing to see them. List some words or phrases that express his desires and emotions.
5. Why is he so eager to see them?
6. How does he continue his theme of “all” in these verses?

7. I love how Paul says their faith is “spoken of throughout the whole world.” What do you think that means? And of course, I must ask, how is your “faith” spoken of throughout your family, your church, your work, and your world?

8. Paul prays “without ceasing” for these believers whom he doesn’t even know. Paul’s heart was burdened for the souls of lost men. We spend time praying for our friends and family, but do we pray “without ceasing” for those in cities and countries whose faces we have never seen? How burdened are you for the souls of men? (Hopefully, this will lead to a good, heart-searching conversation with the Lord.)

In verses 11-12, the term “spiritual gift” is most likely not referring to the specific gifts of the Spirit that we receive when we are saved, because those are given by the Spirit Himself. Paul is probably talking about using his own gifts to build up the believers in their faith, and visa versa.

9. Paul wants to see them to both encourage and be encouraged. (This was very convicting.) What’s your goal when you meet with people? To encourage or just to be encouraged? Are you selfish and just suck people dry or are you eager to encourage and build up their faith?

10. List some ways you can use your spiritual gifts to encourage others in their faith. (Can you think of someone who needs it right now?)

That’s it for today. Spend some time praying for the lost souls that you know, as well as the ones around the world. How about praying for the Hani people and the Rohingya?

Third Day

Review your memory verse.

1. Read Romans 1:1-17 again. In verse 14, the word “debtor” means “one under obligation.” Why did Paul feel like he was under obligation? Why did he owe it to preach both to the educated and uneducated, wise and foolish? Do you feel his sense of urgency?
2. Why is Paul “not ashamed” to preach the Gospel?
3. Do you ever feel ashamed or hesitant to share the Gospel? What kinds of emotions, fears, or situations can make us feel that way?

Paul had a burden to preach to any man whether he was cultured or crude, rich or poor, smart or foolish. He would preach Christ with the same passion to a runaway slave like Onesimus or to a proud king like Agrippa. Paul felt the treasure of the Gospel should be shared with all men, and he was under obligation to do it! Paul had a passion, a burden, and an amazing boldness. Paul’s confidence in the Gospel was based on its sufficiency, its supremacy, and its simplicity.

4. Some call verses 16-17 the most important verses in the Bible. Why?
5. “The just shall live by faith” is a quote from Habakkuk 2:4. See Galatians 3:11 and Hebrews 10:38 where the expression is also used. Can you explain this truth in your own words?

We ended our lesson yesterday by looking at the wonderful truth that the power of God rescues and saves us! Paul was not ashamed of preaching the Gospel because the Gospel is not weak. God is the only one who can rescue mankind, and it's accomplished 100% by grace, and received 100% by faith. He didn't just "start" rescuing people when Jesus came, for He was rescuing man during the Old Testament. I love what Augustine said, "What the Gospel did was to show clearly why and how He does it. The Old Testament is like a fully-furnished darkened room. All the 'furniture' of God's rescue is present, but it is only perceived dimly and in shadow. The Gospel turns the light on so that we say, 'Ah, now I can see what God has been doing and how He has been doing it!'" Whenever the Gospel is preached, a light is shone on God's work of rescue. Remember that God rescues all who believe in Him, but He only rescues those who believe, and no one else.

Read Romans 1:1-23, focusing on verses 18-23. (Verse 18 is tied to 17 by the word "for.") What follows is the proof of verse 17. Paul begins to explain that there is no other way except by faith and that all people are guilty by their nature. Paul attempts to show his readers their desperate need for God before they can truly grasp the Good News of the Gospel. He first paints a clear picture of the universal depravity of man. Without Christ ALL men stand condemned before God as a sinner. (Romans 3:10) Beginning in verse 18, he explains why we need a righteousness from God; because our sinful nature separates us from Him. These verses reveal the darkness of our soul apart from Christ. Let me quote Swindoll first to help get a better understanding of the verses and chapters ahead. "Paul's inspired portrait of sinful humanity begins in 1:18 and ends in 3:20. Many scholars subdivide this section into condemnation of the Gentiles (1:18-32), condemnation of the Jews (2:1-3:8), and the universal condition of all people (3:9-20). This is a helpful way to approach this section, although Paul is clearer in some verses than in others as to whom he is describing. There seems to be some overlap between subsections as to the sins characterized by Gentiles and Jews, but it's clear that Gentiles would've been characterized by idolatry and sexual perversion (1:18-32) and Jews to "a holier than thou" attitude and the Law (2:1-3:8). The most important truth to remember from the whole section is that without Christ, we all stand equally condemned before God (3:9-20)."

1. Why do you think Paul felt compelled to talk about the "Bad News" of human sin before he presented the "Good News" of the Gospel?

2. Why is God's wrath revealed?

3. How is "truth suppressed" when we act contrary to the knowledge God has given us about Himself?

9. Are you worshipping God alone, or do you tend to worship people, relationships, success, or even yourself? What have you allowed to become an idol in your life? Think on this ...

The Gentiles tended to worship multiple gods that were represented by idols, but the Jews were just as guilty. Hadn't the Law become theirs? It's been said that a person's refusal to acknowledge God as Sovereign Lord makes idolatry inevitable. Hmmm ...

10. According to verse 21-22, when we reject the knowledge of God, we think we're wise, but we're really fools. How does this stem from pride and arrogance?

11. The appropriate response to the knowledge of God is to glorify Him and give Him thanks, recognizing that we owe Him everything. Is your life characterized by gratitude and thankfulness or do you need to repent of having a grumbling heart and unthankful spirit?

I pray that today you spend time giving the Lord thanks for rescuing you. We all deserve hell; yet because of His great love and mercy, He saved us. Thank you, Jesus! See you tomorrow, my friend.

Fifth Day

Write out your verse from memory.

Let's begin right where we left off, shall we? Read Romans 1, focusing on verses 18-32. Paul believes that nature reveals God's eternal power and truth of His Godhood. I love what David said in Psalm 19:1, "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows His

handiwork.” I also love what Abraham Lincoln once said, “I can see how it might be possible for a man to look down upon the earth and be an atheist, but I cannot conceive how he could look up into the heavens and say there is no God.”

1. What has nature revealed to YOU about our God?
2. It’s been said that once the idol is conceived by man, it is not long before man is deceived by the idol. What does that mean practically? Can you give a modern-day example?
3. Verse 23 talks about making idols out of animals, which was common in the ancient world. How do some people make idols out of animals today? (And no, I’m not talking about owning a dog ...)

Remember that in verses 24-32, Paul is trying to paint a picture of the depravity of man for his readers. He deals with the “sins of the Gentiles” in chapter one, then zeroes in on the Jews and those who were judging the Gentiles in the next chapter. Paul is working us towards the truth of 3:23 that “All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” His goal wasn’t to point out specific sins to categorize them, but to show us the heart of man apart from God and our need for a Savior.

4. How did God deal with man’s rebellion?
5. The phrase “God gave them over” is used three times. What do you think that means?

Paul shows us three downward steps into rebellion: willful blindness, which is a deliberate rejection of the truth. This is followed by wicked beliefs coming from rationalization or false religions, which then leads to rebellious behavior. Everett F. Harrison wrote, “God simply took His hands off and let willful rejection of Himself produce its ugly results in human life.” One way, then, that God judges, is to let sinners have their way. He allows sin to take its natural course and reap the consequences. People are always free to accept or reject God’s Word, but there will always be consequences.

We are going to pick this back up next week because of the importance of it, but I wanted you to at least read it through. Last question ...

6. What specifically spoke to your heart in this week's lesson?