

The Gift of Righteousness

Lesson One: Romans 1 & 2 in Review and Romans 3

OVERVIEW OF ROMANS 1

1. The letter to the Romans was written to Christians in Rome, both Jews and Gentiles. Paul had heard of their world-renown faith and longed to visit them.

Vs. 11-12 For I long to see you so that I may impart some spiritual gift to you, that you may be established; ¹²that is, that I may be encouraged together with you while among you, each of us by the other's faith, both yours and mine.¹

2. We tend to view “preaching the gospel” as something only for those who are lost, but Paul saw it as one message which was preached also to the saved (parenthesis mine).

Romans 1:15-16 So, for my part, I am eager to preach the gospel to you (he is writing to believers) also who are in Rome. ¹⁶For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes (both initially and afterwards), to the Jew first and also to the Greek.

- a. “Gospel” comes from an Anglo-Saxon Word, “godspel”, or “good story”. In the Greek the word is “euaggelion”. Originally it referred to a gift for one bringing good news. Eventually, “gospel” came to mean the “good news” itself.
- b. The gospel is referred to in several ways, but they are the same message. In every instance, “gospel” means “good news” and implies that the news is so good as to be amazingly good. There is ONE gospel.

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|---------------|---|-------------|-----------------------------------|
| Rom. 1:16 | The gospel | Rom. 2:16 | My gospel (Paul’s) |
| Matthew 24:14 | Gospel of the Kingdom | 1 Tim. 1:11 | Gospel of the blessed God |
| 2 Thess. 1:8 | Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ | Rom. 15:16 | Gospel of God |
| Rom. 1:9 | Gospel of His Son | Acts 20:24 | Gospel of the <u>grace</u> of God |
| Rom. 1:16 | Gospel of Christ | Rom. 10:15 | Gospel of <u>peace</u> |
| Mark 1:1 | Gospel of Jesus Christ | Eph. 1:13 | Gospel of your salvation |
| 2 Cor. 4:4 | Gospel of the glory of Christ | Rev. 14:16 | Everlasting gospel |
| 2 Cor. 4:3 | Our gospel (the one Paul and the others taught) | | |

- c. The gospel is the power (dunamis) of God for all who believe. The word “believe” in the Greek is “one-believing”. This is someone who is believing. The gospel is not just for the lost, but for those who are believing in Jesus. **THE GOSPEL IS MINISTRY TO BOTH THE SINNER AND THOSE WHO BELIEVE.**
- d. The gospel is for the Jew and the Gentile.
- e. The good news includes everything accomplished at the cross and resurrection of Jesus. Paul was not ashamed to preach it because he knew it was the power (dunamis) of God to salvation to all who believe.
- f. The Gospel is defined in 1 Corinthians 15:1-4 as follows,
“Moreover, brethren, I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received and in which you stand, ² by which also you are saved, if you hold fast that word

¹ Unless otherwise stated all scripture is from the New American Standard Bible NASB Copyright © 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1995 by The Lockman Foundation

which I preached to you—unless you believed in vain. ³ For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, ⁴ and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures.”

1) The gospel must be preached-heard.

Romans 10:14²

How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? ¹⁵ And how shall they preach unless they are sent? As it is written:

*“How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace,
Who bring glad tidings of good things!”^[i]*

2) The gospel must be received by the hearer.

John 1:12-13

But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: ¹³ who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

3) We stand in the gospel.

Romans 5:1-2

Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have^[u] peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, ² through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

4) We are saved by the gospel.

The more accurate translation of “are saved” is actually “are being saved”³. The gospel puts us in the constant state of being saved. It is not initial only, but continual.

5) Jesus died for our sins. We are forgiven of all sins: past, present, and future.

6) Our continued salvation is NOT based on obeying law, but on continued faith.

7) Christ died, was buried and bodily rose again. We died, were buried with Him, and live a resurrected life in Him.

3. In Romans 1:18-22, Paul declares that all men⁴ are guilty before God because God has manifested Himself to all men through what He has created, and they choose to reject Him and to worship creation rather than the Creator.

Romans 1:18-20 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, ¹⁹because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them. ²⁰For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse.

Psalm 19:1-4

The heavens declare the glory of God;

And the firmament shows His handiwork.

² *Day unto day utters speech,*

And night unto night reveals knowledge.

³ *There is no speech nor language*

Where their voice is not heard.

²Unless otherwise noted supporting Scripture is taken from the New King James Version (NKJV) Copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. or the NASB.

³ <http://www.scripture4all.org/OnlineInterlinear/NTpdf/1co15.pdf>

⁴ He is referring to all of mankind and specifically to the Gentiles.

*⁴ Their sound has gone out through all the earth,
And their words to the end of the world.*

4. Romans 1:24-32 gives a clear picture of the downward spiral of mankind upon rejecting the truth revealed to them by God through what He has created.

OVERVIEW OF ROMANS 2

5. It is important to recognize in trying to interpret Chapter 2 that it is within the context of everything Paul is going to declare; principally, that all men are justified before God by faith alone. Often this chapter is taught as if addressing Christian believers today. This is an inaccurate application. Paul was addressing the Jews who looked down upon and judged the Gentiles. In Chapter 1, Paul declares that all unrighteous people (specifically the Gentiles) are without excuse before God because of creation. In Chapter 2 he turns his attention specifically to the Jews who were without excuse because of the Law.

- a. *He lets them know that God is not impartial. He will judge all men equally. The Jew will not be treated better than the Gentile just because he has the Law. In fact, the fact that he has the law, placing him under greater condemnation.*
- b. *God's goodness is what leads all men to repentance (a change of mind and direction). The Jews had circumcision and felt proud and superior to the Gentiles, but Paul tells them that a true Jew and true circumcision is of the heart and declares that all are equally guilty before God.*

1) This was undoubtedly shocking and offensive to non-believing Jews or to those who had embraced Christ and then returned to the law for righteousness. (See Galatians.)

6. Some struggle with vs. 6-7 which reads:

Who "will render to each one according to his deeds": ⁷ eternal life to those who by patient continuance in doing good seek for glory, honor, and immortality.

- a. *The verse seems to be saying that eternal life is based on our works. I found these commentaries helpful.*

"According to this verse, it seems that eternal life can be gained by doing good. But Romans clearly teaches justification by faith (3:22). But Paul does not contradict himself. The subject of this verse is judgment, not justification. Believers who continue in good works will receive rewards in the life to come. Whenever the New Testament speaks of eternal life as a present possession, it is a gift received by faith (John 3:16), but whenever it refers to eternal life as something to be received in the future by those who are already believers, it refers to eternal rewards (Rom 5:21, Gal. 6:8, 1 Tim. 6:17-19; Titus 1:2; 1 Pet. 1:7). Rewards will be based on works accomplished here on earth."-Nelson Study Bible

From the context, we see that Paul is preaching that Jews and Gentiles alike have all sinned and come short of the glory of God (Ro 3:23). Therefore, no one can be saved by his actions (Ro 3:20). The only way to be saved is through faith in Jesus and what He did for us (Ro 3:24-28). Therefore, these verses cannot be contradicting everything else that Paul is saying by proclaiming that acceptance by God is based on performance.

No, the action that will be rewarded with eternal life is the action of faith (Joh 3:16). Faith alone saves, but saving faith is never alone. True faith has actions (Jas 2:17-20). The Greek word that is translated "do not obey" in verse 8 means "to disbelieve (willfully and perversely): not believe; unbelieving." So it is faith that is the issue even though actions are being spoken of. Therefore, to those whose faith is causing them to patiently continue in well doing (v. 7), they will receive eternal life. But to those whose rejection of God's mercy causes them to disobey (disbelieve) the truth, they will receive indignation and wrath; tribulation and anguish (vv. 8-9).-Andrew Wommack's Living Commentary.

ROMANS 3⁵

In the first two chapters and now continuing in chapter 3 Paul lays the foundation for what he wants to say, that all men, being equally guilty, can be equally saved by God's grace through faith in Jesus.

*1 Then what advantage has the Jew? Or what is the benefit of circumcision? 2 Great in every respect. First of all, that they were entrusted with the oracles of God. 3 What then? If some did not believe, their unbelief will not nullify the faithfulness of God, will it? 4 May it never be! Rather, let God be found true, though every man be found a liar, as it is written,
"THAT YOU MAY BE JUSTIFIED IN YOUR WORDS,
AND PREVAIL WHEN YOU ARE JUDGED."*

1. Paul asks the obvious question, "Were the Jews at an advantage over the Gentiles?"
2. His answer is yes, the main reason being they had the written word of God. (See also Romans 9.)
3. Paul asks, "If some Jews chose not to believe would this change God's faithfulness?"
4. The answer is clear: Of course not! God is faithful no matter what man does.

⁵ But if our unrighteousness demonstrates the righteousness of God, what shall we say? The God who inflicts wrath is not unrighteous, is He? (I am speaking in human terms.) ⁶ May it never be! For otherwise, how will God judge the world? ⁷ But if through my lie the truth of God abounded to His glory, why am I also still being judged as a sinner? ⁸ And why not say (as we are slanderously reported and as some claim that we say), "Let us do evil that good may come"? Their condemnation is just.

5. Paul is asking this question rhetorically and "as a man" meaning it was a ridiculous question. If our unrighteousness reveals His righteousness, then why should he judge us? Aren't we actually helping reveal his righteousness by being unrighteous?
6. Paul puts down this question as soon as he asks it. If our righteousness was a good thing then how could God judge the world?
7. Similar to verse five, now Paul asks why should we be judged if our sin actually serves to magnify His truth? (He is still speaking "as a man".)

⁵ From this point on in the lesson, the number of the point references the verse number.

8. In verse 8 it becomes clear that it had been reported that Paul was making such claims. These lies had been “slanderosly reported”. He will address this sort of propaganda in Romans 6 as well.

- a. *If you preach that righteousness is a gift, you WILL BE PERSECUTED. People will lie about what you are teaching as they did with Paul. They will claim that you teach that sinning is actually a good thing because it causes grace to abound. Expect it. Refute it. Then rejoice.*

Matthew 5:10-12

Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. ¹¹ “Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. ¹² Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

9 What then? Are we better than they? Not at all; for we have already charged that both Jews and Greeks are all under sin;

10 as it is written,

“THERE IS NONE RIGHTEOUS, NOT EVEN ONE;

11 THERE IS NONE WHO UNDERSTANDS,
THERE IS NONE WHO SEEKS FOR GOD;

12 ALL HAVE TURNED ASIDE, TOGETHER THEY HAVE BECOME USELESS;
THERE IS NONE WHO DOES GOOD,

THERE IS NOT EVEN ONE.”

13 “THEIR THROAT IS AN OPEN GRAVE,
WITH THEIR TONGUES THEY KEEP DECEIVING,”

“THE POISON OF ASPS IS UNDER THEIR LIPS”;

14 “WHOSE MOUTH IS FULL OF CURSING AND BITTERNESS”;

15 “THEIR FEET ARE SWIFT TO SHED BLOOD,

16 DESTRUCTION AND MISERY ARE IN THEIR PATHS,

17 AND THE PATH OF PEACE THEY HAVE NOT KNOWN.”

18 “THERE IS NO FEAR OF GOD BEFORE THEIR EYES.”

9. Paul, still addressing the Jews, asks this question. Since we have the oracles of God, are we better than the Gentiles? He is saying that both Jew and Gentile are guilty before God.

- a. *Many teach that “we” refers to Christians, and “they” refers to non-Christians. However, “we” refers to the Jews. “They” refers to the Gentiles. This verse is not saying that Christians are unrighteous. It is referring to the state of man BEFORE he comes to Jesus.*

- b. *Paul’s point in quoting verses from the Old Testament is to show that not one person on the entire earth is inherently righteous. Both Jew and Gentile stand unrighteous before God prior to salvation.*

10. No one is righteous before God. No one.

11. No one understands or seeks after God.

12. All are evil deceivers.

13. No one does good.

14. All are full of cursing and bitterness.

15. All are murderous.

16. Their ways are destruction and misery.

17. No one is really seeking paths of peace.
18. No one has the fear of God before their eyes.

¹⁹ Now we know that whatever the Law says, it speaks to those who are under the Law, so that every mouth may be closed and all the world may become accountable to God; ²⁰ because by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight; for through the Law comes the knowledge of sin.

19. The law was given so that all would become accountable to God. No mouth can say they are righteous. All must be silent before God. No one will stand before Him and have anything to say in his own defense.
20. “The law was given to kill (2 Cor. 3:7) and condemn (2 Cor. 3:9). The law strengthened sin (1 Cor. 15:56) and made sin come alive (Rom. 7:9). The law gave sin an occasion against us to deceive us and work all manner of lust in us (Rom 7:8, 11). In short, the law strengthened our enemy, sin, not us.”⁶

2 Corinthians 3:8-9

But if the ministry of death, written and engraved on stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not look steadily at the face of Moses because of the glory of his countenance, which glory was passing away; how will the ministry of the Spirit not be more glorious? ⁹ For if the ministry of condemnation had glory, the ministry of righteousness exceeds much more in glory. (For more proof that “the law” is also referring to the Ten Commandments see Romans 7:7.)

1 Corinthians 15:56

The sting of death is sin, and the strength (dunamis) of sin is the law.

- a. *The works of the Law, that is to say, obeying the Ten Commandments (Romans 7:7; 2 Corinthians 3:7), performing religious ceremonies, and observing Sabbaths and holidays, will NEVER justify anyone (make anyone righteous). The Law only accuses, condemns, and slays us. This is the beginning of understanding Romans 7.*
- b. *Today’s “laws” would include: formula living, spiritual disciplines, food and exercise laws, ecological standards; anything that we think makes us better than someone else or righteous before God...NONE of it does, only faith in Jesus.*

²¹ But now apart from the Law the righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, ²² even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe; for there is no distinction; ²³ for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴ being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus;

21. The Law of Moses and the Old Testament prophets foretold of the righteousness apart from the law.
 - a. Jesus taught about Himself using the Law and the Prophets.
Luke 24:27
And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.

⁶ Andrew Wommack's Living Commentary

22. The righteousness of God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to those who BELIEVE, not to those who follow the law. He is still making clear to the Jews, that the law will not make them righteous. "There is not distinction between the Jews and Gentiles because...
23. ALL (Jew and Gentile) have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. The Pharisees did not consider themselves "sinners". They considered themselves righteous because they obeyed the law. Those who did not were considered "sinners". Certainly, their view of Gentiles would fall into the category of "sinners".
24. This verse is not usually memorized with verse 23. The focus is on the fact that we are all sinners. The idea usually conveyed is that we remain sinners even after we receive Jesus. This comes from misunderstanding who the "we" and "they" are in the preceding verses. See point 9a above.
- We are MADE RIGHTEOUS as a GIFT only by HIS GRACE.
 - This gift of righteousness that we receive by His grace was brought to us THROUGH THE REDEMPTION which is in Christ. When He purchased us back, He graced upon us HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS.
1 Corinthians 1:30
But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption.
2 Corinthians 5:21
He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

²⁵ whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith. This was to demonstrate His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed; ²⁶ for the demonstration, I say, of His righteousness at the present time, so that He would be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

25. Jesus is our Propitiation.
- Propitiation:** *hilasterion; an atoning victim, or (specifically) the lid of the Ark (in the Temple): mercyseat, propitiation.*
Exodus 25:17-22 "You shall make a mercy seat of pure gold, two and a half cubits long and one and a half cubits wide. ¹⁸"You shall make two cherubim of gold, make them of hammered work at the two ends of the mercy seat. ¹⁹"Make one cherub at one end and one cherub at the other end; you shall make the cherubim of one piece with the mercy seat at its two ends: ²⁰"The cherubim shall have their wings spread upward, covering the mercy seat with their wings and facing one another; the faces of the cherubim are to be turned toward the mercy seat. ²¹"You shall put the mercy seat on top of the ark, and in the ark you shall put the testimony which I will give to you. ²²"There I will meet with you; and from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubim which are upon the ark of the testimony, I will speak to you about all that I will give you in commandment for the sons of Israel.
John 20:11-12 *But Mary was standing outside the tomb weeping; and so, as she wept, she stooped and looked into the tomb; ¹²and she saw two angels in white sitting, one at the head and one at the feet, where the body of Jesus had been lying.*
 - God is righteous in making us righteous AS A GIFT by our faith in Jesus!

26. God is just. He declares all guilty. Then in His justice He justifies (makes righteous) all who believe in Jesus. This is the GIFT OF RIGHTEOUSNESS ONLY AVAILABLE BY FAITH AND COMPLETELY APART FROM THE LAW.

²⁷ Where then is boasting? It is excluded. By what kind of law? Of works? No, but by a law of faith. ²⁸ For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from works of the Law. ²⁹ Or is God the God of Jews only? Is He not the God of Gentiles also? Yes, of Gentiles also, ³⁰ since indeed God who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith is one.

27. The law of faith excludes boasting in works.

Ephesians 2:8-9

For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, ⁹ not of works, lest anyone should boast.

28. Paul states it clearly: We are made right before God by faith APART from the works of the Law. Following laws has NOTHING to do with our righteousness.

AMPLIFIED *Then what becomes of [our] pride and [our] boasting? It is excluded (banished, ruled out entirely). On what principle? [On the principle] of doing good deeds? No, but on the principle of faith. ²⁸ For we hold that a man is justified and made upright by faith independent of and distinctly apart from good deeds (works of the Law). [The observance of the Law has nothing to do with justification.] We are justified, made righteous, and made upright before God.*

29. God is the God of both the Jews and the Gentiles.

30. There is one God and He is the One who justifies both the Jew and the Gentile.

³¹ Do we then nullify (the) law through faith? May it never be! On the contrary, we establish the Law.

31. Some use verse 31 to “prove” that we are still under the Law. This is not what Paul is saying.

- a. Under the Gospel which reveals His righteousness, we confirm, establish and uphold the law because it still serves a purpose, but not for us (the righteous).

1 Timothy 1:8-11

But we know that the law is good if one uses it lawfully, ⁹ knowing this: that the law is not made for a righteous person, but for the lawless and insubordinate, for the ungodly and for sinners, for the unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, ¹⁰ for fornicators, for sodomites, for kidnappers, for liars, for perjurers, and if there is any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine, ¹¹ according to the glorious gospel of the blessed God which was committed to my trust.

- b. We establish the law and its intent through His grace. The Law says, “Don’t kill.” Jesus said, “If you hate your brother you have committed murder in your heart.” Grace changes the heart to where we actually stop hating and love instead. The law says, “Don’t steal,” grace teaches us to give. Christians do not need the Law to guide them, for God has written His law of love in our hearts.

Here is what commentators say about Romans 3:31.

Be Right Warren Wiersbe, page 49

Because of the Jewish readers Paul wanted to say more about the relationship of the gospel to the Law. The doctrine of justification by faith is not against the Law, because it establishes the Law. God obeyed His own law in working out the plan of salvation. **Jesus in His life and death completely fulfilled the demands of the law.** God does not have two ways of salvation, one for the Jews and one for the Gentiles, for He is one God. He is consistent with His own nature and His own law. If salvation is through the law then men can boast, but the principle of faith makes it impossible for men to boast. The swimmer, when he is saved from drowning, does not brag because he trusted the lifeguard. What else could he do? When a believing sinner is justified by faith, he cannot boast of his faith, but He can boast in a wonderful Savior.

The Nelson Study Bible

Note at Romans 3:31

Law can have three different meanings in this passage, and the gospel fulfills all of those meanings. If law here refers to the Law of Moses, the Pentateuch, then the passage is referring to the way Jesus completely fulfilled the requirements of the law. If law is the entire Old Testament, then the gospel fulfills the promises of the coming of Christ and of the forgiveness of sins. If law is the moral law, then the gospel fulfills it because it is through Christ that people are empowered by the Holy Spirit to live in a way that pleases God.

Andrew Wommack Living Commentary

Note 14 at Romans 3:31

Paul had just systematically taken away the Jews' trust in the law for the purpose of justification. This led to the question, "Is the law then useless?" Paul emphatically answers, "God forbid."

The real purpose of the law was established by the gospel. The problem with the Jews was that they were using the law for something that God never intended. The law was useless to produce justification. God didn't give the law so that we could keep it and thereby earn justification. The law was given to reveal to us that we could never live up to such a holy standard and thereby drive us to God to call out for mercy (Galatians 3:22-24).

The true purpose of the law is still functional today. As 1 Timothy 1:8-10 says, "But we know that the law is good, if a man uses it lawfully; knowing this, **that the law is not made for a righteous man...**" The law is God's way of revealing to man his need. It is powerless to make provision for that need. It's the gospel that provides the power to produce salvation.

In Classic Christianity Illustrated by Bob George, the law is compared to a mirror in front of an armless man. The mirror reveals that the man is dirty, but the man has no arms to wash himself. In the same way the law shows us our unrighteousness, but provides no means of becoming righteous and holy before God. Righteousness and holiness can only be gained by faith in Jesus.