

# The Greatest Letter Ever Written

## An Expository Journey Through the **Epistle of Romans**

### **Romans 1:16&17**

#### 5-The Gospel of Jesus Christ

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February 5, 2023

#### **Romans 1:16&17**

**16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.**

**17 For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "BUT THE RIGHTEOUS man SHALL LIVE BY FAITH."**

Now to properly examine these two verses will require that we answer these seven Questions:

1. What is the "Gospel"?
2. What being "ashamed of the Gospel" looks like
3. How is Salvation brought about through the Gospel?
4. What place do "Faith" and "Belief" play in Salvation?
5. Why did Paul say, "**to the Jew first and also to the Greek**"
6. What did Paul mean by the phrase, "**For in it [the Gospel] the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith**"?
7. What did Paul mean when he said, "**BUT THE RIGHTEOUS man SHALL LIVE BY FAITH.**"?

#### **1. What is the "Gospel"?**

##### **Etymology of the word, "Gospel"**

The English word, "*Gospel*" originally came from a combination of two other Koine Greek words, "*eu*" (Good) and "*angelion*" (Message) to form a noun, "*euangelion*" and a verb, "*euangelizo*" (To bring or to announce Good News/Telling). In 382AD- the Greek noun, "*euangelion*" was translated into the Latin Vulgate to form, "*evangelium*". And when this word was taken from the Latin into the first *complete* English Bible by Miles Coverdale in 1535- the Latin noun, "*evangelium*" became the Anglo-Saxon word, "*God-spell*" (Good News; Glad Tidings)- which later evolved into the modern English rendition of "*Gospel*".

Also, the English words associated with the Gospel- like, "*Evangelist*"; "*Evangelism*"; and "*Evangelical*"- all come from the ancient Greek. The Apostles Matthew and John along with Peter's scribe, John Mark<sup>1</sup> and the Gentile Dr. Luke are known as the original four "*Evangelists*" because what they wrote about the Birth; Life; Ministry; Death; and Resurrection of Jesus the Christ became known as the four "*Gospels*".

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<sup>1</sup> "*John*" was a common Jewish name. "*Mark*" was a Latin Roman name. So, it is possible that the writer of the **Gospel according to Mark** was a Jew named "*John*" (Hebrew: *Yohanan*; Greek: *Giannis*), who was called "*Mark*" by the occupying Romans.

**Romans** was written by the Apostle Paul in approximately 56AD- which makes it probably the ninth New Testament Book written. The other eight are:

- **James** (AD 44-49)
- **Galatians** (AD 49-50)
- **Matthew** (AD 50-60)
- **Mark** (AD50-60)
- **1Thessalonians** (AD 51)
- **2Thessalonians** (AD 51-52)
- **1Corinthians** (AD 55)
- **2Corinthians** (AD 55-56)

... so, by the time that the Apostle Paul wrote **Romans** (around 56AD)- Christians already had two written Records about the Life and Ministry of Jesus (**Matthew** and **Mark**); and six other Epistles. And the *global* Issues; or Topics; or the *universal* Truths that these six Epistles dealt with are:

**James:** The practical Ways in which the Gospel is lived out in the Lives of Believers

**Galatians:** The ancient Promises (Covenant) made to Abraham are fulfilled in Christ to the Believer

**1Thessalonians:** Jesus' Work delivers Believers from the coming Wrath of God in the "*Day of the Lord*".

**2Thessalonians:** Believers must hold fast to the sovereign Grace that rescued them in the finished Work of Jesus Christ

**1Corinthians:** The Gospel of Jesus Christ is relevant to every Dimension of Church Life

**2Corinthians:** There is Strength to the Believer in times of Weakness so we may persevere.

... so, in **Romans**- the Apostle defines just what the Gospel (that these other Books describe) is; what it does; and how it is to be administered.

So, just what *is* the "*Gospel*"? In a nutshell, the Gospel is:

The Good News that Jesus' sinless Life *fulfilled* the Requirement of the Law for absolute Obedience and moral Perfection. And Jesus' Death on the Cross *satisfied* God's Requirement for Divine Justice against all our Sins. The literal and physical Resurrection of Jesus from the Dead was the unmistakable Proof that those two Acts were in accord with God's Will and earned God's absolute Approval.

So, by trusting; hoping; embracing; or believing in Jesus- *personally*; and in His finished Work- and through "*turning from*" Sin (Repentance)- wicked rebels are forgiven of all Sin; and are made instantly Righteous and "*fit for Heaven*"- through the imputation of Christ's spotless Righteousness- by the Agency of Faith alone (Justified).

... which is what people mean when they use the word, "*Saved*".

Now in Reality, the "*Process of Salvation*" actually began back in "*Eternity Past*" with the single "*Decree of God*"- and will continue into "*Eternity Future*"- as the justified soul is *united* with a glorified body- to worship God forever in exquisite Joy!

So, the Gospel is the “Vehicle”; the “Means”; the “Catalyst”; or the “Tool” that God uses to save; rescue; heal; or deliver His people from the Penalty of their own individual Sins (as well as the Original Sin of Adam)- which is His unquenchable, just Wrath. And there are at least five Characteristics or Attributes of this biblical Gospel:

- A. The Gospel MUST be defined
- B. The Gospel MUST be preached to everyone
- C. The Gospel MUST be heard and understood
- D. The Gospel MUST be believed
- E. The Gospel MUST be obeyed

... or not a single Sin will be forgiven and not a single soul will be saved.

#### **A. The Gospel MUST be defined**

##### **Galatians 1:6-9**

**6 I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ, for a different gospel;**

**7 which is really not another; only there are some who are disturbing you and want to distort the gospel of Christ.**

**8 But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you, he is to be accursed!**

**9 As we have said before, so I say again now, if any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to what you received, he is to be accursed!**

If it is true that we are justified by what we “believe in”; what we “trust and hope in”; what we “embrace”; and what we “confess”; and NOT by what we “DO”- then What we believe in- matters. If it is true that lost Sinners are saved “BY” the Grace of God- alone; and if they are saved “THROUGH” the Gift of Faith- alone; and NOT by any good or religious Works that they might perform- then what they have Faith *in*- matters.

In other words- since God Himself set up Salvation in such a Way that unworthy Sinners are NOT forgiven and made Righteous by ANYTHING they can do for themselves- but lost Sinners are saved solely “BY” Grace and “THROUGH” Faith- then the “Object” of that Faith- is paramount. So, what is the Object of Faith in Salvation- as articulated by the Gospel?

#### **The Person of Jesus Christ AND His finished Work**

##### **Hebrews 11:6b**

**... he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him.**

##### **Romans 10:9&10**

**9 that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved;**

**10 for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation.**

But because we live in a fallen World; and because there are so many, who seek to *pervert* the Gospel- by either “*adding to*” or “*taking away from*”- what the Apostles received directly from God- the Gospel MUST be defined. Today, there are many Teachings that all lay claim to be the Gospel of Jesus Christ. For example, there is,

- The “Social Gospel”
- The “Universal Gospel”
- The “Pragmatic Gospel”
- The “Oppressed/Justice Gospel”
- The “Prosperity Gospel”
- The “Kingdom/Dominion Gospel”

... for example, those deceived by what Joseph Smith taught- call the *Book of Mormon*- “*another Gospel of Jesus Christ*”.

In **Galatians 1:6**- Paul said there was, on the earth at that time- a “**different gospel**” that people were embracing. And that “different gospel” was causing all, who believed in it, to actually “**desert**” or “leave” or “abandon” the God Who was able to save them.

**I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ, for a different gospel;<sup>2</sup>**

... but then Paul was quick to say that, since it is true that there is only one single Gospel- that this “different gospel” wasn’t really “Good News” about Salvation in Jesus at all- but a *distortion* of the real Gospel and something that would *disturb* them greatly.

**which is really not another; only there are some who are disturbing you and want to distort the gospel of Christ.**

So, back in the mid to late 1<sup>st</sup> Century- there were people, who held themselves out as being Christians- who were either “adding to” or “taking away from” the Gospel that the Apostles had already given to the Church.

But it is important to understand that what those Additions or Subtractions did- was NOT to *improve* or *correct* the already received and articulated Gospel- but rather to simply create a brand- new Religion- that was NOT Christianity- a “Man-made” fabricated Religion- that could not forgive a single Sin or save a single Soul. And by preaching this “other gospel”- saved souls became confused and lost souls remained Lost.

And then in verses 8&9- the Apostle gives what is one of the most frightening Condemnations found anywhere in the Bible when he said,

**8 But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you, he is to be accursed!**

**9 As we have said before, so I say again now, if any man is preaching to you a gospel**

<sup>2</sup> It’s important to note here that Paul was NOT teaching that genuinely saved people can lose their Salvation. The people to whom the **Epistle to the Galatians** was written were already IN the Church- holding themselves out as being saved. And as they were deceived by “another gospel” that Paul talks about here- their Response to that false gospel was to “**desert**” or abandon Jesus Christ. However, those who were genuinely saved eventually repented and returned- while those who were never truly saved- may have become saved at some later point or remained deceived.

**contrary to what you received, he is to be accursed!**

Now the English word, “**accursed**” comes from a Greek word (*anathema*; Strong’s # 331); which means: *an indissoluble Vow by God to punish and destroy*. So, this is a Damnation by God of which there is NO Forgiveness or Resolution! So, what was it that was so terrible; so evil; so offensive to God that He will damn those guilty of it- without pardoning them?

**... if we [the Apostles], or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you ...**

... in other words, if ANYONE- even an Apostle or an Angel from Heaven- preaches; proclaims; teaches; or heralds a “gospel” that is “**contrary**” (opposed; incompatible; conflicting) to the one single genuine Gospel that the Apostles “have” (ALREADY) preached to you...

**... he is to be accursed!**

... and then to show how serious this really is- in verse 9- Paul *repeats* this powerful and frightening Warning. And that tells us at least two things:

1. The Gospel is so important to God- that it carries one of the strongest Penalties for perverting it found anywhere in the Bible.
2. The Gospel had already been defined

So, by the time that the **Epistle to the Galatians** was written (AD 49-50)- the Gospel had ALREADY been received by the Apostles from Heaven; written down; published; articulated, studied, and discussed; and had already been preached in the Region of the Galatian Churches (the central area of modern- day Turkey)- to the degree that people knew what it was.

Approximately 10-30 years after the **Epistle to the Galatians** was written- the half-brother of Jesus (*Judah/Judas/Jude*) was “moved” by God the Holy Spirit to write the Epistle that bears his name. And in verse 3- Jude gives the Church of Jesus a solemn Charge as to their *primary* Duty as a sovereign Creation of Jesus Christ:

**Jude 3b**

**... contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints.**

Now the “**Faith**” in view here is NOT the Ability that each individually saved person has- to believe and hope in Jesus. Jude is talking about *THE* Faith- the *Christian* Faith; or the orthodox Truths given to the Christian Church.

So, according to this “*Divine Charge*”- the Church has the ongoing Duty; the constant Obligation; and the unspeakable Joy; to teach; preach; believe; defend; and support; the Teachings of the Christian Faith- to such an extent- that what we have; what we believe and trust in; and what we hold dear- is the VERY SAME “*Body of Teaching*” that was “**once for all handed down to the saints**” by the Apostles of the 1<sup>st</sup> Century.<sup>3</sup>

This is the ongoing Search and Preservation of genuine “*Orthodoxy*” (Right/Correct Belief). It is also called, “*being Biblical*”.

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<sup>3</sup> This is genuine “*Apostolic Succession*”

But the Gospel goes on to say...

... now that a person has experienced the Miracle of the New Birth; been forgiven and made Righteous; and has been adopted into the Family of God- he now loves God and he loves the **“Things of the Spirit of God” (1Corinthians 2:14)**. He has become a true spiritual Jew; is a child of Abraham; and an Heir of all the Promises of God- *including* eternal Life.

The Good News declares that this now “justified saint” has both the Power and the Desire to please God; and to live his Life in such a way that God Alone is glorified- regardless of what living that Life may do to him personally.

So, the Gospel involves the adopted Believer in the “every-day” manner in which he lives. And the Gospel declares that the Life of a genuine Believer is typified by his Worship of God. And this Worship is defined as:

**“The ongoing Struggle (by the Power of the Holy Spirit) to be found humbly and joyfully submitted to the Authority of Scripture in his daily Life- all to the Glory of God”.**

... so, the Gospel” is NOT limited as being merely the “*Vehicle*” that allows Lost people to be saved. But rather the “*Means of Grace*” that facilitates the Lost to be “Found”; as well as the “*Means*” by which the “saved” are *ongoingly* and *progressively* sanctified (made Holy)- all the Way to Glory!

## **B. The Gospel MUST be “Preached” to Everybody**

Since the Gospel is the Good News that, through Jesus, Sins can be forgiven and unrighteous rebels can be “made fit for Heaven”- that Good News must be heard and understood by people. And the WAY that God has determined that people hear and understand the Gospel- is through the Act of “Preaching”.

### **Isaiah 61:1-3**

**1 The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, Because the Lord has anointed me To bring good news to the afflicted; He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, To proclaim liberty to captives And freedom to prisoners;**

**2 To proclaim the favorable year of the Lord And the day of vengeance of our God; To comfort all who mourn,**

**3 To grant those who mourn in Zion, Giving them a garland instead of ashes, The oil of gladness instead of mourning, The mantle of praise instead of a spirit of fainting. So they will be called oaks of righteousness, The planting of the Lord, that He may be glorified.**

### **Matthew 11:2-6**

**2 Now when John, while imprisoned, heard of the works of Christ, he sent word by his disciples**

**3 and said to Him, "Are You the Expected One, or shall we look for someone else?"**

**4 Jesus answered and said to them, "Go and report to John what you hear and see:**

**5 the BLIND RECEIVE SIGHT and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the POOR HAVE THE GOSPEL PREACHED TO THEM.**

**6 "And blessed is he who does not take offense at Me."**

**Matthew 24:14**

**This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all the nations, and then the end will come.**

**Mark 1:14-15**

**14 Now after John had been taken into custody, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God,**

**15 and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel."**

**Mark 16:15**

**And He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation.**

**Luke 3:16-18**

**16 John answered and said to them all, "As for me, I baptize you with water; but One is coming who is mightier than I, and I am not fit to untie the thong of His sandals; He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.**

**17 "His winnowing fork is in His hand to thoroughly clear His threshing floor, and to gather the wheat into His barn; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire."**

**18 So with many other exhortations he preached the gospel to the people.**

**Luke 20:1&2**

**1 On one of the days while He was teaching the people in the temple and preaching the gospel, the chief priests and the scribes with the elders confronted Him,**

**2 and they spoke, saying to Him, "Tell us by what authority You are doing these things, or who is the one who gave You this authority?"**

**The Acts 8:25**

**So, when they had solemnly testified and spoken the word of the Lord, they started back to Jerusalem, and were preaching the gospel to many villages of the Samaritans.**

**The Acts 8:40**

**But Philip found himself at Azotus, and as he passed through he kept preaching the gospel to all the cities until he came to Caesarea.**

**The Acts 14:5-7**

**5 And when an attempt was made by both the Gentiles and the Jews with their rulers, to mistreat and to stone them,**

**6 they became aware of it and fled to the cities of Lycaonia, Lystra and Derbe, and the surrounding region;**

**7 and there they continued to preach the gospel.**

**The Acts 14:21&22**

**21** After they had preached the gospel to that city and had made many disciples, they returned to Lystra and to Iconium and to Antioch,  
**22** strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying, "Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God."

**The Acts 16:9&10**

**9** A vision appeared to Paul in the night: a man of Macedonia was standing and appealing to him, and saying, "Come over to Macedonia and help us."  
**10** When he had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go into Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them.

**Romans 1:9&10**

**9** For God, whom I serve in my spirit in the preaching of the gospel of His Son, is my witness as to how unceasingly I make mention of you,  
**10** always in my prayers making request, if perhaps now at last by the will of God I may succeed in coming to you.

**Romans 1:15**

So, for my part, I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome.

**Romans 15:18-21**

**18** For I will not presume to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me, resulting in the obedience of the Gentiles by word and deed,  
**19** in the power of signs and wonders, in the power of the Spirit; so that from Jerusalem and round about as far as Illyricum I have fully preached the gospel of Christ.  
**20** And thus I aspired to preach the gospel, not where Christ was already named, so that I would not build on another man's foundation;  
**21** but as it is written, "THEY WHO HAD NO NEWS OF HIM SHALL SEE, AND THEY WHO HAVE NOT HEARD SHALL UNDERSTAND."

**1Corinthians 1:21**

For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not come to know God, God was well-pleased through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe.

**1Corinthians 9:14**

So also the Lord directed those who proclaim the gospel to get their living from the gospel.

**1 Corinthians 15:1-8**

**1** Now I make known to you, brethren, the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, in which also you stand,  
**2** by which also you are saved, if you hold fast the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain.  
**3** For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures,

**4 and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures,**

**5 and that He appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve.**

**6 After that He appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time, most of whom remain until now, but some have fallen asleep;**

**7 then He appeared to James, then to all the apostles;**

**8 and last of all, as to one untimely born, He appeared to me also.**

**2Corinthians 11:7b**

**... did I commit a sin in humbling myself so that you might be exalted, because I preached the gospel of God to you without charge?**

**2Corinthians 10:14-17**

**14 For we are not overextending ourselves, as if we did not reach to you, for we were the first to come even as far as you in the gospel of Christ;**

**15 not boasting beyond our measure, that is, in other men's labors, but with the hope that as your faith grows, we will be, within our sphere, enlarged even more by you,**

**16 so as to preach the gospel even to the regions beyond you, and not to boast in what has been accomplished in the sphere of another.**

**17 But HE WHO BOASTS IS TO BOAST IN THE LORD.**

**Galatians 3:8&9**

**8 The Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, "ALL THE NATIONS WILL BE BLESSED IN YOU."**

**9 So then those who are of faith are blessed with Abraham, the believer.**

**Hebrews 4:2**

**For indeed we have had good news preached to us, just as they also; but the word they heard did not profit them, because it was not united by faith in those who heard.**

**Philippians 4:15&16**

**15 You yourselves also know, Philippians, that at the first preaching of the gospel, after I left Macedonia, no church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving but you alone;**

**16 for even in Thessalonica you sent a gift more than once for my needs.**

**1Thessalonians 2:9**

**For you recall, brethren, our labor and hardship, how working night and day so as not to be a burden to any of you, we proclaimed to you the gospel of God.**

**1Peter 1:12**

**It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves, but you, in these things which now have been announced to you through those who preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven — things into which angels long to look.**

**... to be continued**