

## **Romans**

### **The Book of Romans**

#### Introduction

#### **What We Should Learn from the Book of Romans?**

##### **Simply put, the Gospel.**

This is the introduction to an expositional study of the Book of Romans. Beginning on April 1, 2001 I preached a series of 100 sermons on Romans.

This introduction was prepared **after** I preached the series of sermons and I decided that if I ever taught Romans again that this summary ought to come first. This follows the teaching method of: 1) Tell them what you are going to tell them; 2) Tell them; and, 3) Tell them what you told them.

We learn and remember things by repetition.

Also, the format for a Bible study is different from a preaching service, at least in our culture. In the days of Peter and Paul and yes, Jesus too, it was common for someone to interrupt the speaker and ask him to elaborate on what he had just said. Although I have had someone interrupt me while I was preaching, it is a rare event in most Baptist churches in our day.

The style of Paul's letter to the church at Rome allows him to anticipate a question and then answer the question. E.g. "You will say to me, why then does He yet find fault, for who has resisted His will?" Romans 9:19

Every pastor/teacher must strive to be teachable. When a man who attempts to teach or preach believes that he has it all figured out he becomes worthless as a teacher. My sad experience in the past with three preachers, whose names I will not divulge, who were so insecure in their positions that they resented any questions, in fact they became angry at times.

That said, in a Bible study like this one, you are encouraged to ask questions and offer comments, even to challenge the speaker on a point of doctrine. Just be nice.

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In this summary I intend to review what I consider to be certain absolutely crucial truths to be learned from this great letter. As we move through the study we will go into as much detail as may be necessary to establish the doctrinal truths.

One hundred sermons from a single book of the Bible may seem like a lot but I can assure you that neither I nor anyone else has ever plumbed the depths of this greatest of all letters.

One time in Nashville in a home Bible study a visitor who was also a preacher asked me how long we had been in the study on the Gospel of John. I told him that we were in our third year and we were only about half way through the book. He was amazed and said, “How can you spend that much time in one book?” Not to be cruel but he was a shallow man who could only preach topical sermons that he probably borrowed from a “sermon outlines” book.

About thirty years ago I heard a preacher ask a man in the congregation what he was going to when he got to heaven. The man’s answer means much more to me now than it did then. He said that he would; of course, worship Christ, and then he said that he wanted to hear Paul preach the Book of Romans for a few hundred years.

Donald Gray Barnhouse preached Romans for ten years. And my favorite expositor, Martyn Lloyd-Jones, preached Romans for thirteen years and he didn’t get beyond Chapter 14. At least his published expositions stop at Chapter 14.

Over the past thirty-five or so years I have taught through Romans at least five times. However, each time I believe the Holy Spirit shows me more depth. And still I make no claim that I have figured it all out; may the Lord keep teaching me as I attempt to teach you.

While I personally have learned much in my studies of Romans I can honestly say that my basic doctrinal position has not changed in the 40 plus years since the Lord saved me. Rather my theology has been affirmed and strengthened through these studies in Romans. That is not to say that I haven’t learned anything new.

During my study preparations I made fairly comprehensive notes and if there is a section of Romans that you need some help on I can give you a copy of my notes on that particular text.

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Although I have read Romans many times, in order to get ready for this study I did something that I highly commend to you.

Yesterday, August 1<sup>st</sup>, I woke up early, even for me, so at 3:30 am I decided to read straight through Romans. It took me an hour and ten minutes but it brought many things back to my mind in the proper context of the entire letter.

What I plan to do now is to go over some truths that the Book of Romans teaches and that I believe are **crucial truths** if we are to understand how God saves sinners. I plan to tell you what I am going to tell you.

About 18 years ago in this church, Dr. Tom Nettles, now professor of Church History at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, said that the issue for our day is not the inerrancy of the Scriptures but rather,  
**“What is the gospel?”**

**The Southern Baptists had recently had the battle over the inerrancy of the Scriptures where those who championed inerrancy won out.**

But I learned later that a belief in the inerrancy of the Scriptures does not translate into a belief in the sovereignty of God in election. Two of the leaders of the inerrancy movement preached mean-spirited sermons against the doctrine of election even though it is clearly taught in Romans.

We have in Romans the clearest presentation of the Gospel to be found in the pages of Scripture. I will no doubt repeat myself, but Martin Luther said Romans is Paul’s commentary on Galatians.

On July 23, 1997 Dr. Drew Garner preached from Romans 1:16-17 and asked what was the theme of the Book of Romans? Since no one else would answer I said, “The righteousness of God in Jesus Christ.” Brother Garner said, “We have a theologian in our midst.”

**If what you hear preached by me or any other preacher does not conform to the doctrines presented in The Book of Romans it is not the Gospel no matter how much it tickles your ears!**

Paul closed this letter with a warning to that effect.

**Romans 16:17-19**

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**Now I urge you, brethren, note those who cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and avoid them. 18 For those who are such do not serve our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly, and by smooth words and flattering speech deceive the hearts of the simple.**

So let's begin this scan of Romans and I will only mention what I believe are some essential truths. I will not try to prove the points since we will have plenty of time in the weeks and months to come.

**The very first thing**, it seems to me, is to answer the question asked by Tom Nettles: "**What is the gospel?**"

### **TRUTH:**

1:1-4, 9      "What is the Gospel?"  
The gospel of God; the gospel of His Son;  
Based on the OT Scriptures.  
The answer is at 3:21-25.

1:16-17      **The theme of the Book of Romans is 1:16-17.**

"For I am not ashamed of **the gospel of Christ**, for it is the **power** of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. For in it the **righteousness of God** is **revealed** from faith to faith; as it is written, 'The just shall live by faith.' "

The Gospel is the righteousness of God in Christ Jesus and it is a **revealed** Gospel. You may rightly wonder how it is that so many religious people are on the "broad way that leads to destruction," and the answer is that the Gospel is **revealed** truth.

### **Faith alone; Christ alone; Scriptures alone.**

Now I am not suggesting some kind of Gnosticism. Gnosticism taught that only certain people could know the truth, some elite group that had special knowledge.

What I am saying is that "our common salvation" that Jude writes about is regeneration by the Holy Spirit, being born again, circumcised in the heart.

Yesterday I heard a street preacher shouting "You must be born again!" Well that is true but that is not the Gospel. You cannot get yourself born again even though a

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famous evangelist wrote a book “How to be Born Again.” His proposition was based on “decisionism.”

Only those who have been born again can understand the things of the Spirit of God because they are spiritually discerned. 1 Corinthians 2:14

### **TRUTH: The Wrath of God:**

1:18 The **Wrath of God** underlies the Gospel. Preachers who avoid preaching the wrath of God are ashamed of the truth and have some notion that the approval of man is more important than the glory of God.

Such preachers have an unbalanced understanding of the love of God that causes them to shun the truth of the wrath of God. They preach that the love of God means that God purposed that every human would be saved if they will only make a “decision” to allow God to save them.

But the first three chapters of Romans establishes the condemnation of all men and women. A missing truth in much of the preaching today is that man is a sinner and that he is justly condemned.

If you start where the Bible starts with the fall of the entire human race in Adam, being born under just condemnation and headed for eternal damnation, then until and unless God takes the initiative no one can be justified or saved.

The Gospel stands on the **truth** of the wrath of God and the condemnation of all men, which demands the **alien** righteousness of Christ Jesus!

2:2           **TRUTH:** God judges according to truth.

2:11-12       There is no partiality with God. A man is condemned by the law. That law is either “natural law” or the written law.

2:28-29       **TRUTH:** Who is a Jew?

3:1           The Jew after the flesh has no excuse.

3:20       **TRUTH:** What the law cannot do!

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What the law does!

3:21-25     TRUTH: The purist statement of the Gospel is the Bible.

3:31    TRUTH: The moral law embodied in the Ten Commandments has not been abrogated or replaced by commandments in the NT?

Paul not only declares that the law is not void but he quotes specific commandments in 7:7 and 13:9.

You must not miss the purpose of the law as stated in the Ten Commandments. The law was never meant as a way to be justified before God. The purpose of the law is to give the knowledge of sin and to condemn.

In grace and mercy the Holy Spirit uses the law to convict us of sin and to lead us to Christ. That's all the law is for and if you try to use it for any other purpose you will deny the Gospel. Without the knowledge of sin and condemnation through the law why would a person need a Substitute? Justification by grace through faith alone establishes the law.

4:1-8    TRUTH: Justification by faith is established by using Abraham who was justified by faith 430 years before the law was given in written form to Moses [Galatians 3:17].

4:5    TRUTH: God justifies the ungodly!

4:16    TRUTH: The promise of justification by faith is to all the seed of Abraham and not to the Jews only.

5:1-2    TRUTH: Peace with God: We were justified;

5:3-5    TRUTH: We are being Sanctified;

5:6-11    TRUTH: We will be glorified.

5:12-21    TRUTH: This passage, according to Martyn Lloyd-Jones, is the most important section in the entire Bible because to miss what it teaches will cause you to misunderstand the Gospel message.

**TRUTH: Representation!**

God deals with two men in history: Adam and Christ.

You are either represented in Adam and are condemned because of the one sin of Adam or you are represented in Christ having been given to Christ before the foundation of the world and called by the Gospel in time.

5:20-21 **TRUTH:** The reign of sin and the reign of grace.  
Grace superabounds over the reign of sin!

6:1-2 **TRUTH:** the believer is dead to sin and can no longer continue in sin.

6:3-4 **TRUTH:** This baptism is of the Holy Spirit and is not water baptism.

6:11-14 **TRUTH:** Dead to sin but alive to God.

6:23 **TRUTH:** The best trade ever.

7:1-6 **TRUTH:** The law of the husband.  
Dead to the law and married to Christ.

7:7 **TRUTH:** Paul's defense of the purpose of the law.

7:7-25 **TRUTH:** The majority of writers miss the meaning of this passage. Many commentaries say that this is the picture of a man in the highest spiritual condition, utterly defeated by the power of sin.

Martyn Lloyd-Jones convinced me that this is a picture of a man who tries to use the law for sanctification and is utterly frustrated. The law is no more for sanctification than it is for justification. The purpose of the law is to give the knowledge of sin.

8:1-4 **TRUTH:** The best thing that you can know for sure.

8:5-8 **TRUTH:** The definition of an unbeliever and a Christian.  
Simple test: Are you being led by the sinful nature or the Holy Spirit?

8:15 **TRUTH:** Adoption: Abba Father!

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8:16 **TRUTH:** Assurance.

8:18-26 **TRUTH:** The whole creation groans, we ourselves groan, and the Holy Spirit groans in anticipation of the revealing of the sons of God in the new creation.

8:28-30 **TRUTH:** The order of salvation: Those whom He foreknew, He predestined, He called, He justified, and these He also glorified.

When I preached this passage I emphasized that these are five things that God does.

8:31-39 **TRUTH:** Absolute assurance based on what God does.

**TRUTH:** Chapters 9, 10, and 11 must be taken as a unit or you will miss the conclusion as to who is “all Israel”.

A warning; if you stay in Chapter 9 you may become a hyper-Calvinist. If you stay in Chapter 10 you may become an Arminian. If you focus on Chapter 11 without the context of 9 & 10 you will never understand who “All Israel” is.

### **Chapter 9 is God’s free choice in election.**

9:6-8 **TRUTH:** They are not, that is, every Jew, are not Israel.

9:24ff **TRUTH:** The Gentiles have always been included in God’s people and Paul and the rest of the Jews had missed this truth.

### **Chapter 10 is the free offer of the Gospel**

10:13 **TRUTH:** Whoever calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved.

Read on and see how anyone will ever come to call on the Lord.

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### **Chapter 11 is the Israel of God.**

God has not cast away His people but most people haven't a clue as to who God's people are.

**11:16-24 TRUTH:** The parable of the **single olive tree** is the most convincing argument for the make up of the church and this explains the **mystery of the ages**: Gentiles and Jews together in one body, the church!

**11:26** All Israel will be saved and all Israel has been clearly defined in Chapters 9, 10, and 11 as the elect Gentiles of all nations, tribes, and tongues, and the elect remnant of the Jews who together make up "all Israel." And in this manner "all Israel will be saved.

When we come to Chapter 12 Paul does what is his usual style; he has presented the doctrine in 1 to 11 and now the application, or as someone said, the "so-what."

Chapter 12 forward teaches us the perfect will of God and what constitutes true worship. We worship God when we meet in the church but if that is all you think worship involves I am afraid you are not truly worshiping God.

- 12:1-2      **TRUTH:** The perfect will of God for true worship.
- 12:3-8      The will of God as we exercise spiritual gifts in the church.
- 12:9-21     The will of God for true worship away from the assembly.
- 13:1-7      The will of God for true worship in society under the authority that God has placed over us.
- 13:8-14     The will of God for true worship as we relate to our neighbors.
  
- 14:1-13     The will of God for weak and strong believers and how to respect each others scruples.
- 14:14-23    The will of God in matters of conscience.
- 15:1-13     Follow the example of Christ who did not please himself.  
Racial harmony: Gentiles and Jews.

Paul's amazement was that even he did not understand the mystery of the ages: that Gentiles and Jews together make up the church!

**15:14-16:27** Paul's plans and Paul's friends.

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**16:17 TRUTH:** Paul's warning to avoid those who teach any doctrine contrary to what he has written in this letter.

Will you bear with me and listen to the theme of this letter?

### **The Theme of the Letter: Romans 1:16-17**

"For I am not ashamed of **the gospel of Christ**, for it is the **power** of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. For in it the **righteousness of God** is **revealed** from faith to faith; as it is written, 'The just shall live by faith.' "