

CONCERNING THE WAY

August 3, 2010

LESSON 107: PAUL'S LETTER TO THE ROMANS



Welcome to our new study on the book of Romans! We'll start with a little introduction. First of all, I'll give you my primary sources for the material I will present, that will help me unpack all the wonderful truths in Romans. I'll be using William Newell's Romans Verse by Verse, written many years ago but still considered probably the best commentary on Romans ever written. I'll quote Newell frequently. I'll also be using teaching by Dr. Mal Couch, a great Bible scholar who has translated Romans himself from the original Greek many times. Other sources include Dr. John Walvoord, Woodrow Kroll (of the Back to the Bible radio show), Charles Ryrie (of the Ryrie Study Bible), and others as I have time. I'll be using the NET Bible (New English Translation), unless otherwise noted.

Romans has always been considered one of the most profound and revered books of the New Testament. It is called the hallmark, the spine, the foundation of the NT. But in these times it seems to have even more relevance. As you read it seems to rise up out of the pages and hit you between the eyes. And if you want to understand what is happening to our world, our country today, with the slide into depravity and immorality, all you have to do is read the opening chapters of Romans. It is not only packed full of doctrine, but of practical principles to live by. It contains one of the most important sections about the Jewish people (chapters 9-11) – what God still has planned for them.

It has been said that when the apostle Paul wrote this letter to the Romans, it was a time when the Greco-Roman world was decaying and beginning to fall apart. This decay was also happening to the Jewish culture and religion. Paul mentions this in the opening chapters of the book. While the Roman pagan religion would continue for another 300 years, it was already growing stale in many people's minds. So there was a hunger in men's hearts for something that was real, something true. God used this decay, this time period, to introduce the gospel into that vacuum.

The book's author is undisputed. Paul wrote it from Corinth during his 3rd missionary journey, between 57 and 58 A.D, a little while after he wrote the letters to the Corinthians. When Paul wrote this letter, he mentioned that Timothy, Sosipater, Gaius, and Erastus were with him. Acts 20:4 mentions that three of those men were with him in Corinth during his three month visit, so this tells us where he wrote the book.

The founders of the church in Rome were mostly Jewish Christians. Around 45 A.D. the Roman emperors announced an edict to expel all Jews from Rome, leaving only Gentiles in the church there. When the edict was repealed when Emperor Claudius died, many of the Jews returned to the city. When they came back, they had kind of a culture shock. The Gentile Christians had very little regard for many of the traditions and beliefs that were important to the Jewish Christians. So there was tension in the church between Jews and Gentiles, and that's one reason Paul felt it necessary to write them this letter.

All of this we know. But who really started the church in Rome? Catholics all over the world venerate Peter as the first pope, founder of the Roman church. Some evangelicals lean toward Paul as the one who planted the church. Actually, we can't know for sure who started it, but we can be pretty sure that neither Peter nor Paul started the church.

It's clear that Paul didn't establish the church there, because he mentions several times in this letter to the church in Rome that he had never been there (Romans 1:10-11, 13, 15).

The Catholic Church's belief in Peter's founding of Rome is based on a statement of Eusebius in his *Ecclesiastical History*. Today, though, it is believed that Eusebius's statement is inaccurate. He says Peter was in Rome in 42 A.D., but in that year Peter was still in Jerusalem, not Rome. What does the Bible say? The Bible calls him a pillar in the church in Jerusalem (Galatians 2:9), but never in Rome. Acts 9 shows he was active in Jerusalem, but it never mentions him being in Rome. And we know he was in Jerusalem at least up until the Council of Jerusalem in Acts 15, which we can date at 49 A.D.

Also, in the last chapter of Romans, Paul greets 27 people living in Rome by name. But Peter is not mentioned. If Peter were the bishop of Rome by that time, don't you think Paul would have included his name in his greetings? I don't think Paul would have made that mistake.

Another good point is Luke. Luke is considered the best historian of the New Testament. He accurately wrote about important events of Jesus' life in the gospel of Luke and about the early church in the book of Acts, even including several important events about Peter in Acts, such as Pentecost and visiting the gentile Cornelius and his household. Yet Luke never mentions anything about Peter going to Rome and founding a church there. That seems pretty odd unless it really didn't happen.

The simple and most likely answer is that the church in Rome was started by people who accepted Christ either in Jerusalem at Pentecost or in another church that Paul founded and then migrated west to Rome. It is accepted that by the time Paul wrote this letter, the church was of substantial size.

The importance of the book of Romans cannot be overstated. Millions have come to saving faith in Jesus Christ by reading or hearing this book, among them Martin Luther and John Wesley.

"The Epistle to the Romans is the true masterpiece of the New Testament and the very purest Gospel, which is well worth and deserving that a Christian should not only learn it by heart, word for word, but also that he should daily deal with it as the daily bread of men's souls. It can never be too much or too well read and studied, and the more it is handled the more precious it becomes, and the better it tastes." Martin Luther

Outline of Romans

Romans 1-8 – Foundational Doctrines

1. Romans 1:16 – The gospel is the only solution for mankind
2. Romans 1:18 – The anger of God is being revealed against ungodliness
3. Romans 1:28 – God has given men over to the depravity of their minds
4. Romans 2:24 – The name of God is blasphemed because of the Jews
5. Romans 3:9-23 – The culpability of the entire human race
6. Romans 3:24-28 – God's solution to the problem - Justification by faith alone apart from the Law
7. Romans 4:2-3 – God imputes Christ's righteousness to us by His grace
8. Romans 5:1 – Because of this, we have peace with God through Jesus Christ
9. Romans 6:3-4 – Spiritual baptism
10. Romans 7:6 – We are released from the Law, having died to it
11. Romans 8:15 – We have now been adopted as true children of God

Romans 9 -11 – The doctrine of Israelology

1. Romans 9:32 – The Jews pursued salvation by works, not by faith, and tripped over Christ
2. Romans 10:21 – God waits for Israel's repentance
3. Romans 11:28-29 – God is not through with Israel

Romans 12-16 – The doctrine of Christian Living

1. Romans 12:2 – Do not be conformed to this culture, but let your mind be transformed by the scriptures
2. Romans 13:14 – Live by Christ, not by the flesh
3. Romans 14:23 – Doubtful things - Whatever is not from faith is sin
4. Romans 15:1 – Be concerned for others over concern for yourself
5. Romans 16:17 – Be discerning and look out for troublemakers

In Paul's day the Roman Empire stretched from England to the Middle East, from Germany to North Africa, and the empire was centered in Rome. It was a true saying that all roads led to Rome. The empire eventually dwindled away in power, but it was never really considered to be gone. Even as late as the time of World War 1 there were kings claiming to be the Roman Emperor and attempting to control the empire. The words czar and Kaiser came from the word Caesar. This was the desire of Adolph Hitler and Benito Mussolini, to revive the Roman Empire, and conquer the barbarians of Russia to use them as slaves

At the time the gospel was going out from the Holy Land into other parts of the Roman Empire, the main religion was paganism, where people worshipped gods like Zeus, Apollo, Athena, and many others. However, it was a time where people were growing dissatisfied with paganism. The educated elite people of the Roman Empire were repudiating belief in the gods. So there was a spiritual vacuum. People were hungry for spiritual truth. It was a perfect time for the gospel of Jesus Christ to be introduced to the Empire, and one reason why it spread so quickly.

If you remember, at the end of the book of Acts, Paul arrives in Rome under house arrest. But we know from history that he was finally released from Roman custody and resumed his missionary travels. It is believed that many of the Roman Christians were educated and literate. This explains the somewhat complex nature of the book of Romans.

Romans 1:1 From Paul, a slave of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God.

Paul's Greek name was Paulus, and his Hebrew name was Saul, which means "to be asked for". If you remember from our study in Acts, before his conversion Saul was influential among the Jewish community. He was a respected rabbi and intellect who had studied under Gamaliel, the outstanding legal/rabbinical scholar of his day. He had been raised in the Greek world, though, so he well understood Gentile ways and could relate to them.

This translation of "slave" is probably the best rendering of the Greek word in today's language. In older translations it may read bond-servant, and in newer translations it may say simply "servant". The word bond-servant isn't used anymore, so it doesn't mean anything to us today, and the word servant doesn't really carry the strength of the meaning of the Greek word. It means an indentured slave, one who has bound himself to a master. Paul had freely committed himself to Christ to be used for His glory. We also have this choice. As Christians, we're not forced to make this kind of commitment to Jesus. We don't have to do it. But **we can make the choice to serve our Savior fully, completely give our lives to Him.** And it doesn't necessarily mean full-time ministry.

“Paul was bondservant before he was apostle. Saul of Tarsus’ first words, as he lay in the dust in the Damascus road, blinded by the glory of Christ’s presence, were, “Who art thou, Lord?” And when there came the voice, “I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom thou persecutest,” his next words were, “What shall I do, Lord?”—instant, utter surrender! It is deeply instructive to mark that although our Lord said, “No longer do I call you bondservants, but friends”; yet, successively, Paul, James, Peter, Jude and John (Re 1:1), name themselves bondservants (Greek; douloi),—and that with great delight! It is the “service of perfect freedom”—deepest of all devotions, that of realized redemption and perfected love.”

William Newell

Paul was called to be an apostle. “Called” is an adjective, not a verb. Some translations use the word like a verb. He wasn’t just called an apostle, he was a called apostle, called by Jesus Christ Himself.

Then he says he is set apart for the gospel, the good news of Jesus Christ. God set Paul apart, marked long before he was born, to be used of God to spread the gospel of Christ. God orchestrated events of Paul’s life to bring him to the point of being set apart. It was no accident, and it was a process. Paul calls himself the least of all the apostles, but in revealing the heavenly character, calling, and destiny of the Church as the Body and Bride of Christ, and as God’s House, Paul stands alone. As you read through the New Testament you see that **Paul speaks with an authority from Jesus Christ as no other apostle**. That was truly sovereign grace. God chose his greatest enemy to be his greatest apostle.

We who have been Christians all of our lives sometimes take this good news for granted. **We should be looking in the mirror every morning and thanking God for the assurance of salvation through Christ**. You’re saved for eternity! You’re going to be with God forever in heaven! We should never take this for granted. You can even find elements of this good news in the Old Testament. Look at Isaiah 40:9-10. That’s a prophetic passage of the 2nd coming of Christ. Do you see the gospel in those verses? Do you see the good news?

So, of these three descriptions he is giving of himself, he did one, and God sovereignly did the other two. Paul chose to be a slave to Christ, but God did the calling and setting apart.

Romans 1:2-4 This gospel he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy scriptures, (3) concerning his Son who was a descendant of David with reference to the flesh, (4) who was appointed the Son-of-God-in-power according to the Holy Spirit by the resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Paul begins with a brief, but very complete, description of who Jesus was. In his human flesh he was of the line of King David. Jesus fulfills the Davidic Covenant that the Messiah would be a descendant of David (2 Samuel 7:16, Luke 1:26-37). We see both Jesus’s humanness and his divinity in these verses.

What is the gospel? It is that Jesus died for our sins and we have eternal life through Him. The best statement about the gospel is probably in 1 Corinthians 15:3-5. But Paul says that this gospel was in the holy scriptures. At that time, what was the holy scriptures? There was no New Testament yet. Paul is speaking of the Old Testament. Where in the O.T. did God promise this? Read Isaiah 53, and see all the statements about Jesus. Here are verses 5, 11, and 12, which are the essence of the gospel:

Isaiah 53:5 He was wounded because of our rebellious deeds, crushed because of our sins;

he endured punishment that made us well; because of his wounds we have been healed.

Isaiah 53:11-12 Having suffered, he will reflect on his work, he will be satisfied when he understands what he has done. "My servant will acquit many, for he carried their sins. (12) So I will assign him a portion with the multitudes, he will divide the spoils of victory with the powerful, because he willingly submitted to death and was numbered with the rebels, when he lifted up the sin of many and intervened on behalf of the rebels."

You see the doctrine of justification and substitution in these verses. The idea of Isaiah 53 is that the Messiah would be the lamb, the substitute that endures the wrath of God for me. God saw His son on the cross, hanging there for my sins, and He was satisfied. **The penalty for my rebellion is paid; we are legally acquitted (justification) in God's eyes.** These are some of the verses Paul used to preach the gospel. Jesus is all over the Old Testament!

"who was appointed the Son-of-God-in-power" – this does not mean that he became, or was born the son of God – **He always was the Son**, the 2nd member of the Trinity (Psalm 2). But read on in that verse and you see that His resurrection started something new about the Son. After His resurrection Jesus came to His disciples and said this:

Matthew 28:18 Then Jesus came up and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.

Jesus was born in the weakness of the flesh but was raised in power. The resurrection proved His incredible power. He has all authority. This means you and I will be resurrected. Jesus has the power to share that resurrection with us.

"according to the Holy Spirit". A better translation of this verse is given by the ISV:

Romans 1:4 and was declared by the resurrection from the dead to be the powerful Son of God according to the spirit of holiness — Jesus the Messiah, our Lord.

Paul probably did not mean The Holy Spirit, but Christ's own inner spirit, which was holy (Psalm 16:10). You'll find good scholars on both sides of that issue. I believe the original King James got this right also, but the New King James translators decided to change it, and you'll see Spirit capitalized in it and most new versions. It wasn't the Holy Spirit that made Jesus holy, **He was holy in Himself and that's why the grave could not hold Him**, and why we are guaranteed resurrection also, because Christ's holiness is imputed to us who have trusted Him for salvation.

We're only four verses into the book and you can see the great doctrines being presented! You don't find ANYTHING like this in any other religion.

Romans 1:5 Through him we received grace and a commission as an apostle to bring about faithful obedience among all the gentiles for the sake of his name.

We receive grace through the sacrifice of Jesus, and that is the subject that Paul taught about more than any other. You can see the concept of grace throughout all of his letters. "Faithful obedience", or the obedience of faith, as it says in some versions, is simply belief in Jesus as Messiah by gentiles. **To obey God's good news, is simply to believe it.** This was Paul's mission, to bring about that belief among the gentiles that Jesus was Messiah.

“Throughout church history, to depart from Paul has been heresy. To receive Paul’s gospel and hold it fast, is salvation,—“By which (gospel) ye are saved, if ye hold fast the very word I preached unto you” (1 Cor. 15:1, 2)”. William Newell

“for the sake of His name” – we usually think of the gospel as something that was brought about for our sake. And it was, but **we must never forget that it was first of all for the glory of Jesus Christ** (1 John 2:12). Everything we do once we have come to know Him should be for the sake of His name.

Romans 1:6 You also are among them, called to belong to Jesus Christ.

Again, “called” here is not a verb, but an adjective. It’s the same meaning as “elected”, or “chosen”. Those of us who have believed on Christ are called – not by anything we have done, but totally as a sovereign act of God. We belong to Him, and nothing can separate us from Him ever again (Romans 8:39).

Romans 1:7 To: Everyone in Rome, loved by God and called to be holy. May grace and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus, the Messiah, be yours! (ISV)

The church at Rome was made up of both Jews and Gentiles, so this book is for all of us saints! Don’t miss the significance of the word “loved” here. A better word would be “beloved”. God “loved” the whole world, but the saints are “beloved by God”. **We should love our neighbors, but our spouses and children are beloved.**

Most translations use the word “saints” here instead of “holy”. It is the Greek word *hagios*, which means: *sacred* (physically *pure*, morally *blameless*, ceremonially *consecrated*): - (most) holy (one, thing), saint.

We are called today, like the Christians in Rome, to be saints, not apostles. Only Paul and the original men who had walked with Jesus were apostles. Both apostles and saints are “set apart”, “sanctified”, “holy”.

Many people misunderstand the phrase “called to be holy”. Again, “called” is an adjective. Keep in mind that Paul is still talking about our position here – this is not about our behavior. **It is not something we attain to, it is something that God declares we ARE.** We are holy, or saints, because of Christ’s holiness, not because of anything we have done. We are blameless because of Jesus, that is our position, and that can never change. We are also called to be holy in our daily walk. But that is our behavior, and that is not always holy, is it? That is not our position in Christ, though.

Notice that Paul is saying that grace and peace comes from both God the Father, and the Lord Jesus, the Messiah.

Romans 1:8 First of all, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because your faith is proclaimed throughout the whole world.

Paul never mentions a second point, so he’s actually saying, “I want to begin by telling you...”. Paul is saying that the church in Rome is being talked about throughout the rest of the empire as being a church of great faith. That’s pretty impressive! These people had turned from believing in pagan gods

to believing the gospel. Wherever people are travelling up and down the Roman roads, they are talking about the church in Rome - that they really truly believe in Jesus Christ as Messiah. It's not hard to see how that could happen, because Rome was the center of the world then. News about what happened there spread quickly.

Romans 1:9-10 For God, whom I serve in my spirit by preaching the gospel of his Son, is my witness that I continually remember you (10) and I always ask in my prayers, if perhaps now at last I may succeed in visiting you according to the will of God.

What does Paul mean by serving God "in his spirit"? He also served him in his physical body, didn't he? Of course he did. Paul is simply saying that he serves God in his very essence or being – we might say from the top of his head to the tips of his toes, he gave it all he had. That's how he preached the gospel. Worshipping and serving God also has to start in our spirit (see Romans 12:1).

Paul's service to God was in his spirit, and therefore in the Holy Spirit, and never "soulical" (not psychikos, but pneumatikos— I Cor. 2:14; Jude 19, Jas. 3:15. Paul did not depend on music, or architecture, or oratory, or rhetoric. He did not hold "inspirational" meetings to arouse the emotions to mystic resolves. He served God directly, in his spirit. Newell

Paul constantly thought of the church in Rome and continually prayed that he would get to see them. He said as God is my witness I do – I really mean it, I'm not just saying that I pray for you! That prayer was answered when he was brought to Rome under house arrest. People from the church were then able to come visit him, along with many of the Jewish leaders (Acts 28:16-31).

Notice "according to the will of God". Paul accepted the will of God in everything. He prayed about many things, but knew that it was all according to the will of God. The answers to some prayers were yes, and "no" to others. Paul trusted that God's plans were always best, and we should, too.

One of the signs of a deep relationship with Christ is a desire to pray - and not prayers on the run, but deep, thoughtful prayer – in your bedroom, in your study, or with a few close friends. **It is a privilege we should take advantage of daily** (Ephesians 6:18). Paul, being a devout Jew, probably spent several hours a day in prayer. How do you suppose that would transform your life and others if you did that?

Prayer is something we learn, just like speaking. It is how we communicate with God. Jesus, our high priest and mediator, hears the prayers of all believers and delivers them to the Father. The Father always considers our requests and answers them according to His will. The Holy Spirit empowers our prayer life. He speaks for us when we don't have the words (Romans 8:26). One thing you can use if you're not sure what to pray is the book of Psalms. **It is like God's tutorial to us on prayer.**

From verse 8-12 we learn seven characteristics about Paul's prayers that we should also make sure is true of our prayers:

1. Prayer should be thankful (verse 8)
2. Prayer should be personal (verse 9)
3. Prayer should be continual (verse 9)
4. Prayer should be sincere (verse 9)
5. Prayer should be flexible (verse 10)
6. Prayer should be submissive (verse 10)
7. Prayer should be specific (verse 11-12)

Romans 1:11-12 For I am longing to see you so that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to make you strong, (12) that is, that we may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith, both yours and mine. (ISV)

Some versions use the word “establish you” here instead of “make you strong”, but this is what is meant. The Greek word is where we get the word “steroids”! **Paul wanted to “pump up” their faith.** As great in faith as the Roman church was, Paul saw the need for more strengthening, something they lacked that could be improved. It is generally agreed that this spiritual gift mentioned here is not necessarily one of the spiritual gifts mentioned in 1 Corinthians 12, but a general description of what Paul wanted to do for them. How did that work? Paul would come and teach them scripture, and through that the church would grow in strength – not necessarily in numbers, but in their faith. That was his spiritual gift to them.

And Paul says that he in turn will be comforted by their faith. They will reinforce each other. That's how it works! When I teach someone the Bible and I can see their growth in the faith, that also encourages me and reinforces my faith as well. Isn't that something? Thank you, Lord, for that! **It is God's will that we encourage each other with our faith.**

Here, then, is the apostle who knew the great secret, the heavenly calling of the Church, writing to the saints at Rome, who, though they were of Christ's Body, and were, therefore, heavenly,—in creation, calling, and character, did not fully know these facts,—longing to see them that he might impart unto them “some spiritual gift, for their establishing”; and, at the end of the Epistle, announcing that God is able to establish them,—but, “according to the revelation of the mystery, which had been kept in silence through aionian times, but was now manifested.” (See 16:25-27.)

The burden of Paul's heart, therefore, is to make known to them this heavenly secret: that they were not connected with the earthly, the Jewish calling; but were in the Risen, Heavenly Christ; that, having died to the first Adam with his responsibilities, they were in the Second Man, the Last Adam, by divine creation; and were, therefore, heavenly. True, this heavenly truth is not fully developed in Romans, yet it was according to it that they were to be “established.” Newell

Romans 1:13 I do not want you to be unaware, brothers and sisters, that I often intended to come to you (and was prevented until now), so that I may have some fruit even among you, just as I already have among the rest of the Gentiles.

Paul wanted to help the Roman church grow, just as he had so many other churches.

Romans 1:14-15 I am a debtor both to the Greeks and to the barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish. (15) Thus I am eager also to preach the gospel to you who are in Rome.

Greeks were those that spoke the Greek language and had the Greek culture, which had covered Alexander's world-wide empire; and was the culture that the Romans themselves embraced. “Barbarians” were simply those not knowing Greek, and so were considered “uncivilized.” Paul is just including all people here, from the top to the lowest rungs of society. A few hundred years later it was the “barbarians” who sacked Rome and took over all of Europe. **“Foolish” means a person who doesn't think about spiritual things.**

Paul is saying he owes all these Gentiles something. What does he mean? He means he is duty-bound. It was his commission. He knew he was specifically chosen by God to bear the indescribably

wonderful news, of infinite importance, from heaven, from the throne of God Himself, that by His grace they can now be reconciled to God and have eternal life. He felt the responsibility of spreading that news to all the Gentiles that he could reach.

Now was Paul a “debtor” in a different sense than we are? After all, we are all Christ’s witnesses. Well, there is no doubt that Paul was given a higher calling than any of us. However, we do have a responsibility to share the gospel with people, and so in a sense **we are also debtors to people that we know to share the message that Christ has given us.**

Notice how excited Paul was to preach to the Romans! Totally weak in himself, with his “thorn in his flesh”, and knowing that he would face opposition and possibly persecution from the pagans in Rome and the Jews, he still couldn’t wait to get there. He was ready to go!

“Talk of your brave men, your great men, O world! Where in all history can you find one like Paul? Alexander, Caesar, Napoleon, marched with the protection of their armies to enforce their will upon men. Paul was eager to march with Christ alone to the center of this world’s greatness entrenched under Satan, with “the Word of the cross,” which he himself says is “to Jews, an offence; and to Gentiles, foolishness.”

“Yes, and when he does go to Rome, it is as a shipwrecked (though Divinely delivered) prisoner. Oh, what a story! There, “for two whole years” in his own “hired dwelling” he receives “all that go in unto him” (for he cannot go to them); and the message goes on and on, throughout the Roman Empire, and even into Caesar’s household!” Newell

Next are two of the key verses in Romans:

Romans 1:16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is God’s power for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.

This is why Paul was so bold in preaching the gospel. It wasn’t for fortune or fame, but because he KNEW it was the power of God. He had experienced it himself in a dramatic way. It is not the personal magnetism, the speaking skill, or the sincerity of the preacher, but the message of Jesus Christ crucified, dead, buried, and risen, that is the power of God (1 Corinthians 1:18).

“The gospel “is the power of God unto salvation.” God does not say, unto reformation, education, progress, nor development; nor “fanning an innate flame.” Salvation is a word for a lost man, and for none other. Men are involved either in salvation, or in its opposite, perdition (Philippians 1:28).” Newell

“to the Jew first and also to the Greek” – Paul is not saying that we must first preach the gospel to the Jews here. There is no precedence of Jews over Gentiles in this statement, only the order in which it was presented. The gospel was presented to the Jews first. The church started with the Jews, and then the gospel was presented to the Gentiles. If you remember from Acts, even though his mission was to preach to the Gentiles, where did he go first in every town he visited? Did he go to the local pagan temple? No he always went to the local synagogue first.

By the way, what is salvation, anyway? Well, Paul will explain this more in the next section, but, briefly, mankind has a huge problem. All humans are separated from God and dead spiritually because of Adam’s sin and the fact that all of us have sinned (rebelled against God) as well. All of us are headed for destruction by God because He is Holy and His very nature cannot allow sin to

continue. Salvation is what God has provided by His love and grace to us so we can avoid that destruction. It is what Jesus has done by dying for us, taking the wrath of God against sin in our place, and giving us eternal life instead of eternal death, which is what we deserve. We receive this salvation when we believe and trust in what Christ has done for us.

“Salvation has three facets: past salvation from the penalties of sin (Luke 7:50; Eph. 2:8); present salvation from the power of sin in the daily life (Rom. 5:10); and future salvation from the actual presence of sin (in heaven; 1 Cor. 3:15; 5:5). This salvation comes to everyone who believes. We receive and experience it through faith, which is both assent to the truths of the gospel and genuine confidence in the Savior Himself”. Charles Ryrie

Romans 1:17 For the righteousness of God is revealed in the gospel from faith to faith, just as it is written, "The righteous by faith will live."

Again, we see here that the gospel is not just good news for us; it's about the glory of God. God's righteousness is revealed in the gospel. He could have just simply wiped us all out with one word, which would also have been righteous for Him to do. But instead He acted in righteousness to save us, completely by the atoning work of Christ on the cross, in a way which completely satisfied His holy nature. He did it. **All we have to do is believe in it, and rest in it; apart from any works we could do whatsoever.** In response to faith this righteousness is imputed by God in justification (we are declared righteous) and increasing over time in sanctification, ending in glorification when our standing (spiritual position) and (physical) state become the same. We grow in faith more and more, becoming more and more righteous in our lives.

“faith to faith” – we are saved by faith and we should continue to live by faith. Paul quotes Habakkuk 2:4 here, confirming that one can only be right with God through faith. This does not say that we are saved by living righteously! We receive righteousness by our faith in Jesus Christ, and then righteousness is revealed in us by faithful living. We don't live righteously by following a set of rules, but by “walking in the Holy Spirit”, trusting that He will guide us in living according to God's will.

This is sometimes a struggle! We are always tempted to live to please ourselves and commit sin, and on the other hand we're tempted to try to live righteously by depending on our ability to keep a set of commands. Both are relying on our flesh to please God! That will never please God. The key is to live your life by faith in Christ the same way you trust Christ in faith for salvation.

“Our journey into eternal life started with saving faith, it continues with sanctifying faith, and one day it will be complete in glorifying faith.” Woodrow Kroll

These two verses are the essence of Paul's theology. This was the truth that excited Martin Luther and started the Protestant Reformation! Thank you, Lord, for your amazing grace and incredible plan for us!

In the next section of the chapter, which we'll continue next lesson, we'll see Paul explain why humankind is in so much terrible trouble and in need of salvation in the first place.