

Who's Your One?

Romans 1:16-17

Romans #1

Weekend of February 1-2, 2020



Introduction

So, why Romans? Well, for one thing, the greatest Christian leaders for the last 2000 years have maintained that Romans is the most important theological book ever written. **Augustine said that “in Romans “all the shadows of (his) doubt were dispelled.” John Calvin spoke of Romans as “his “entrance ... to all the most hidden treasures of Scripture.” Martin Luther said it was “the most important piece of the NT” and that it was**

“impossible to read, study, ponder, or meditate on it too much.” He called its central premise of Romans, justification by faith alone, “the doctrine on which the church rises or falls.”

In Romans, Paul works through the most important and most pressing questions ever considered by the human race with meticulous logic—showing us that the gospel is the only answer to our questions and only real solution to our problems.

His logic is so meticulous that for the first 100-or-so years of the Harvard Law School, 1st year students were required to work their way through Romans because of the careful way Paul in which builds his argument. He starts with things most of us have observed and then explains why the gospel is the best explanation for them, along the way anticipating objections and answering them sometimes before we have a chance to raise them.

Paul's central subject in this book is the gospel. He tells us that in the first chapter and explains in the them passage of Romans why he is going to spend a whole book talking about it. Let's dive in...

Bible Study

“So I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome. 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. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, “The righteous shall live by faith.” Romans 1:15-17

Notice: the gospel is the power of God. Not “contains the power of God,” or “channels the power of God,” but is itself the power of God.

Interesting factoid: When dynamite was invented in the 18th century, its name was derived from the Greek word here for power.

Paul didn't know anything about dynamite, of course, but I think it's still a good image to use when thinking of the gospel. The gospel is God's power to create; to redeem; to heal; to bring back from the dead. The gospel is not about a new strategy or a new way to live. It's about new life.

The gospel doesn't give you instructions on how to change: it is itself the power to change. The gospel you see, is like a well. You get the best water not by widening the circumference of the well, but by doing deeper into it.

I'm a Batman fan. In 2005, Christopher Nolan made the movie, Batman Begins. In it, young Bruce Wayne falls down an old well that had been covered up for years. After his parents die, he discovers this vast, seemingly endless underground cave with all the secrets to become the Batman.

The point: There was so much more to Wayne Manor than what could be found above ground. And to experience the full splendor of the Wayne family estate, one needed to go deeper. This is how we must treat the gospel.

It's why Luther said, **"To progress in the Christian life is to begin again."** It's not new facts... but growing intimately familiar with these truths. The way we grow in Christ is the same way we began in Christ. The gospel is not just your initial burst of power, it's the power all the way through the Christian life.

Look at verse 17... **"For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith...: Romans 1:17** How did you first experience the power of Christ? You came to Jesus believing you couldn't save yourself and that God had to do it. Faith in Christ is what first connected you to God's power: renewed faith in Christ is what keeps you connected to God's power.

You see, whatever is broken in your spiritual life, the first step of remedy is to believe the gospel—to believe that Jesus paid your sin debt in full, and you couldn't be any more acceptable to God than you are right now in Christ, and ultimately that it's his power and his power alone that can save you. When you believe that, you experience the renewed power of the gospel.

It's why we say: The gospel is not the diving board off of which we jump into the pool of Christianity (what most of us think; just the entry rite...; the gospel is the pool itself.

Most of us think that we change spiritually by getting busy. The godliest people were the busiest. We admire those always striving to reach the next rung. The result was I was exhausted. The more I tried to force myself to obey Jesus, the less my heart seemed to cooperate.

As we look at the Book of Romans in the coming year, here are a few of the ideas that we will explore...

- **Who God is and what his original plan was for us;**
- **Where sin comes from and why it has such a hold on our hearts;**
- **Why religion, education and technological advancement is useless to address it;**
- **And then, what God has done and is doing about it—**
- **And how that reshapes how we think about trials and transforms how we approach any and every relationship**

Jesus said that this gospel was so powerful that not even the gates of hell would be able to resist its advance—either in your heart or in the world.

Let's make a few observations regarding what Jesus says about the gospel...

What Is The Gospel?

“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.” Romans 1:16

The word in Greek literally means “good news.” In the 1st century, if an emperor won a great battle which secured peace and established his rule, he would send heralds with a “gospel” to declare victory, peace, and authority. The gospel meant victory.

The gospel is the announcement that Jesus has overcome sin and death. This is not an invitation for you to come and help fight; but news about a battle that has already been won. “In it,” Paul said, “the righteousness of God is revealed...”

What does Paul mean by “the righteousness of God?” I think there are several concepts we need to explore...

Gift-Righteousness: Not righteousness you earn but righteousness given to you. Think about it this way...

Imagine you're sitting in physics class and the teacher says your final exam, which is going to count for 80% of your final grade, is to write an essay on the 3 different kinds of isotopes and their electromagnetic properties. But you didn't study, and you don't have the foggiest idea what those words even mean. So you stare at your paper... after 3 hours your paper is still blank. You walk up to turn it in... But then. Something happens. A classmate that you have never met reaches out, grabs your quiz, marks out your name, puts their name, and writes your name on their quiz. You pass. They fail. You are not being awarded for what was inside of you, but for their knowledge.

That's what Jesus did. He took the exam of my life and wrote his name on it and took his perfect life and wrote my name on it. Gift-righteousness. Here is a second concept...

“Simultaneously righteous and a sinner.” The concept of God's righteousness scares us because it feels to us a standard we'll be judged by, or one that causes us to feel excluded or condemned. But when you come to see that it is a righteousness God gives by faith, everything changes.

You see that God is the Father we've always searched for; in him is the security and acceptance we've always craved. Your life becomes a grateful response, not a fearful, duty-bound drudgery to try and stay on God's good side. Here is a third concept...

In the gospel, the righteousness of God is revealed: We need to understand that the gospel is not just about receiving forgiveness but obtaining righteousness.

John Stott described it like “being a prisoner on death row who not only receives a pardon, the Judge hangs around this prisoner's neck the Congressional Medal of Honor and awarded him a graduate degree with honors from the most prestigious university. Everywhere this prisoner goes he is greeted and welcomed as a hero who has accomplished great things rather than a prisoner who has done shameless deeds.”

People ask me why I know I'm going to heaven—I have the righteousness of Christ. I am as sure of heaven as Christ himself. My only hope is in his righteousness alone. People ask me why I'm not discouraged over my struggles— because in me I have in me the resurrection

power of Christ. And one day I'm going to see him and in that moment, he tells me, I'm going to be like him! He will present me faultless...

Lastly, the gospel is to “everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.” Salvation was offered first to the Jews, but then through them to the Gentiles. Jews had a hard time understanding how Gentiles could be saved. They were so bad. Oppressors. Perverse sexual practices. No concept of family. Took up 2 spaces at the mall. Fished with dynamite.

“Everyone” is a big word but it means that there is nobody here in any circumstances alienated from the power of God. You say, “I am really messed up.” Jesus created the world in 6 days out of nothing. He brought Jesus’ decaying body back from the dead. He can handle your mess.

When you have experienced that kind of power, you just can't be quiet about it. It was the great preacher **Charles Spurgeon** who said that if you had truly experienced the power of the gospel, **“You will not be able to keep your good news to yourself. You will be whispering it into your child's ear; you will be telling it to your husband; you will be earnestly imparting it to your friend; without the charms of eloquence you will be more than eloquent; your heart will speak, and your eyes will flash as you talk of his sweet and great love.”**

What Does The Gospel Mean For This Church?

The gospel will always be paramount in our message and our mission. As someone who regularly preaches here, I want us to stay focused on the gospel because that is where the power is. There are always things that distract from that primary mission...

We'll get distracted by good agendas that aren't gospel agendas... In John 6, you have a jolting story. Jesus feeds the 5000. They want to make him king because he could solve world hunger. Jesus retreats because they have gotten off focus. What could be more important than solving world hunger? He came back preaching the gospel. Nothing, not even world hunger, is important than sharing the gospel.

We don't want cultural preferences to get in the way of the gospel. We are not supposed to be a community of one kind of person of only one ethnicity, from one cultural heritage, and from one socio-economic class. We were supposed to reach all kinds of people which means each of us has to be willing to go along with things here that may not be our preferences. **The definition of a multi-cultural church is that at some point you feel uncomfortable**

Application

What Does The Gospel Mean For You In 2020? I think there are two things I would love to see happen for every person in this church. Here's the first...

Grow Deeper: Allow the gospel to permeate your soul. Spend time in the word. Let the gospel shape everything you do. Read, study, meditate, and collaborate over the Word of God together.

Grow Wider: I want to introduce something to you that we'll talk more about next week, but we're calling it WHO'S YOUR ONE? Identify at least one person this year you can build a relationship with, share the gospel with... Who's your one forces us to ask the personal question, **“Am I as eager to share the gospel and invite someone into this spiritual journey as Paul was?”**