



**Part 1**  
**7 Studies in Romans**

## **Introduction**

Paul's letter to the Christian Community in Rome is one of the most important theological documents ever written. Its influence on the church has been enormous. Romans has decisively shaped the teachings of Augustine, Calvin, Luther and Wesley, to mention a few. Romans is not a systematic theology but a letter written in specific historical circumstances.

## **General Circumstances**

### **1. The Apostle Paul**

Paul provides us with some details of his circumstances in Romans 15:14-29: He is on his way to Jerusalem, where he plans to hand over to the Jewish Church the money that he has collected from the Gentile mission churches. From Jerusalem, Paul intends to travel to Spain in order to do some evangelistic work there. On his way to Spain, Paul plans to stop in Rome. Comparing these plans with Luke's records in the book of Acts, we can conclude that Paul wrote Romans at the end of his third missionary journey, probably during his three-month stay in Greece (Acts 20:3-6). Paul spent most of his time in Corinth (see 2 Corinthians 13:1, 10). It is likely that Paul wrote Romans whilst in Corinth because of Paul's commendation of Phoebe, who was from Cenchrea, the seaport adjacent to Corinth (Romans 16:1-2).

### **2. The Church in Rome**

Some early traditions make the Apostle Peter the founder of the Roman Church, but this is unlikely. Probably Jewish pilgrims from Rome, converted through the preaching of Peter on the Day of Pentecost, planted the gospel among the large Jewish population in Rome. (Luke tells us in Acts 2:10 that Jews from Rome were present on that day!) As in so many other cities, the Jews of Rome did not all embrace this Messianic teaching. The historian Suetonius noted that the Roman Emperor Claudius expelled all Jews from Rome 'because they were constantly rioting at the instigation of Chrestus' (a corruption of 'Christ'). This expulsion of Jews, then, would have included Jewish Christians, as Luke himself implies when he mentions that it was because of this edict of Claudius that Priscilla and Aquila had come to Corinth (Acts 18:2). The expulsion (possibly AD 49) would have a significant effect on the make-up of the Christian community in Rome: Gentiles, who up to this point had been a minority of the believers in Rome; were now left as the only Christians in the city. By the time Paul wrote Romans, Jews had been allowed to return to Rome - for example Priscilla and Aquila had returned (Romans 16:3-4) – Gentiles were still in the majority in the Church in Rome; and had come to dominate both its leadership and theological tone.

## Purpose

The book of Romans is a treatise (a written work dealing formally and systematically with a subject) setting out clearly the **Gospel of our Lord Jesus**. Although the letter is written specifically to the Roman Church; it doesn't directly address the Roman Christians or suggest the issues Paul is talking about have been raised by them.

Paul says little about his purpose in writing the letter; it must be deduced from the contents of the letter and falls into two categories:

### 1. A focus on Paul's circumstances

Paul's circumstances include:

- a. Paul is introducing himself to the Romans and explaining what it is he believes with the purpose of gaining support from them for his mission to Spain.
- b. Knowing he would be visiting Rome soon; Paul may have taken this opportunity to put down in writing his own doctrinal conclusions. After all, Paul had just emerged from a difficult, theological and pastoral struggle with the Corinthian Church. What better time to reflect on, and solidify in writing his own theological convictions?
- c. Another possibility is that Paul took the opportunity in this letter to the Romans to rehearse what he would say when he returned to the church in Jerusalem with the collection. The visit to Jerusalem was very much on his mind (see Romans 15:25-33) and the tensions, in Jerusalem, between Jewish and Gentile Christians that he hoped to heal by means of that collection could well explain why Romans focuses so much on issues relating to Israel and the Law.

Each of these factors played some role in Paul's purpose in writing. But only the first explains why the letter was sent specifically to Rome and should be given special attention.

### 2. A focus on problems in the Roman Church

Like any letter addressed to a specific person or group; there is always a focus on what that person or group is dealing with.

- a. Paul's admonitions to the 'strong' and the 'weak' (Romans 14:1-15:13) suggest Paul was writing to heal a division within the Roman Church. The division was specifically between Gentile Christians (the 'strong') and Jewish Christians (the 'weak'); which is why he spends so much time in his letter carefully setting out his theology as it relates to the two groups.
- b. Because of the debate between Gentile Christians and Jewish Christians and the place of the Mosaic Law and because of false rumours about what Paul had preached (Romans 3:8) and the reputation Paul had earned in the Church of being

anti-law and anti-Jewish; Paul sought to show that this was not the case (1:16; 7:7-12; and chapters 9-11) and at the same time spelt out in detail in what sense he was critical of the Jews and the Mosaic Law (2:17-3:20; and chapter 7).

- c. As a result of this debate; Paul details the nature of the continuity between God's old covenant arrangement and God's new covenant arrangement; and also, the relationship between the Law and the Gospel, the relationship between the Jewish believer and the Gentile believer; and the relationship between Israel and the Church! This gives the book of Romans its special universal character that can be applied to all churches and all generations!

## **Themes of Romans**

Some of the main themes include:

### **Righteousness and Justification by Faith:**

1. Emphasizes that righteousness is not achieved through human efforts but is received by faith in Jesus Christ.
2. Explores the concept of justification, explaining how God declares believers righteous based on their faith.

### **Sin and Redemption:**

- Discusses the universality of sin and the need for redemption through Christ.
- Explores the consequences of sin and the transformative power of Christ's sacrifice.

### **Faith and Works:**

- Clarifies the relationship between faith and works, emphasizing that salvation is a result of faith in Christ rather than adherence to the law.

### **Inclusion of Gentiles:**

- Addresses the inclusion of Gentiles in God's plan of salvation, emphasizing that faith in Christ is for everyone, not limited to the Jews.

### **God's Sovereignty:**

- Discusses God's sovereignty and His plan for both Israel and the Gentiles, highlighting His mercy and wisdom.

### **Living by the Spirit:**

- Encourages believers to live according to the guidance of the Holy Spirit, leading to a transformed and righteous life.

### **Unity and Love within the Church:**

- Advocates for unity and love within the Christian community, emphasizing the importance of mutual acceptance and support.

These themes collectively contribute to a comprehensive exploration of Christian doctrine and practice in the context of the early Christian community.

### **Outline of Romans**

#### **1:1-17**

#### **The letter opening**

- 1:1-7 Preamble
- 1:8-15 Thanksgiving and Paul's longing for Rome
- 1:16-17 Theme of the letter: The Gospel

#### **1:18-4:25**

#### **The Gospel and the righteousness of God by faith**

- 1:18-32 God's wrath on the Gentiles
- 2:1-3:8 God's wrath on the Jews
- 3:9-20 The guilt of all humankind – no one is righteous
- 3:21-26 The righteousness of God
- 3:27-4:25 By faith alone – the example of Abraham

#### **5:1-8:39**

#### **The Gospel and the power of God for salvation**

- 5:1-11 The hope of glory
- 5:12-21 The reign of grace and life
- 6:1-23 Freedom from the bondage of sin
- 7:1-25 Freedom from the bondage to the law
- 8:1-30 Assurance of eternal life in the Spirit
- 8:31-39 Celebration of the believer's security

#### **9:1-11:36**

#### **The Gospel and Israel**

- 9:1-6a The issue: Paul's anguish over Israel
- 9:6b-29 Israel's past: God's sovereign election
- 9:30-10:21 Israel's present: disobedience
- 11:1-10 Israel's present: 'a remnant of grace'
- 11:11-32 Israel's future: salvation
- 11:33-36 The awesome purpose and plan of God

#### **12:1-15:13**

#### **The Gospel and the transformation of life**

- 12:1-2 The heart of the matter: a renewed mind

12:3-8	Humility and gifts
12:9-21	Love
13:1-7	The Christian's responsibility to government
13:8-10	Love and law
13:11-14	Recognizing the times
14:1-15:13	The Weak and the Strong: appeals for unity

**15:14-16:27      The letter closing**

15:14-33	Paul's ministry and plans
16:1-16	Commendation and greetings
16:17-20	Warning about false teachers
16:21-27	Final greetings and doxology

**Please Note the following:**

1. It is not necessary to look up all the Bible cross references listed in a particular question; your Growth Group Leader will summarize these Bible cross references for you.
2. Just a reminder that sometimes in our Growth Groups, people feel comfortable sharing very personal and sensitive things about their lives. This information **MUST BE CONFIDENTIAL and NEVER LEAVE THE GROUP.**

## Study 1 – Introducing the Gospel

Romans 1:1-17

*(Sermon on 4-Feb-2024)*

**Before we begin:** How would you define the ‘**Gospel**’?

*The word “Gospel” in the Greek – comes from the word “euangelion” which literally means “good message” or “good news”.*

*Good news implies there is bad news.*

*The **bad news** is that because of Adam and Eve’s original sin in the Garden Eden – two problems have come into the world – **sin and death**.*

*We are unable to fix the problem of sin and death ourselves.*

*We’re keeping sinning and we’re going to die one day.*

*So, the Gospel – “**Good News**” is that God sent His Son, Jesus, to fix the problem of sin – by dying on the cross for sins to be forgiven; and God raised His Son after 3 days to defeat death and offer eternal life in Heaven.*

*There really isn’t any better news than this good news.*

*And so, the Apostle Paul, wants the Romans and us – to know this good news so we are saved for Heaven – and to share this good news.*

### Read Romans 1:1-7

1. How does Paul describe himself in verse 1? Why is this significant? How did Paul know he was an Apostle?

*Paul describes himself as:*

- A **servant** of Christ Jesus
- A called **Apostle**
- **Set apart** for the Gospel

*Paul sees himself as a “**servant**” of Jesus – literally a slave to Jesus who is his master – Paul’s life is not about Paul; his life is now all about serving Jesus and promoting the Gospel (Good News).*

*The word “**apostle**” means “sent out one”.*

*Paul knows he is an Apostle – because he was “**called and sent out**” personally by Jesus (Acts 9:1-19). Paul has direct authority from Jesus to teach.*

*Why did Jesus call Paul to be His apostle?*

*So that Paul would be “**set apart**” (**separated for a purpose**) to be moved away from doing anything else but teach and proclaim the Gospel.*

2. **Ponder:** In verse 2, Paul says the Gospel was promised beforehand through God's prophets in the Holy Scriptures? List some Old Testament Bible passages where the Gospel is promised? (**Hint:** Genesis 3:15; Genesis 12:3; Isaiah 7:14; Isaiah 9:6-7; Isaiah 53; Micah 5:2; Psalm 22; Psalm 110; Jeremiah 31:31-34; **Ezekiel 34:1-16**; Ezekiel 36:26-27; Zechariah 9:9; Malachi 3:1)

Genesis 3:15 – *God promises Eve that one of her offspring (Jesus) will crush Satan's head and Satan will bruise her offspring's (Jesus) heel.*

Genesis 12:3 – *God promises through Abraham's offspring (Jesus) all people on the Earth will be blessed – see Genesis 22:18.*

Isaiah 7:14 – *God promises a sign: a virgin (Mary) will give birth to a son (Jesus) who will be known as Immanuel ("God with us")*

Isaiah 9:6-7 – *Describes what the child/son will be like. It's a description of who Jesus is and what He will do!*

Isaiah 52:13-53:12 – *Isaiah describes a suffering servant (Jesus). As you read the description of this suffering; it describes Jesus' suffering and crucifixion.*

Micah 5:2 – *God promises where the Messiah (God's chosen anointed one, to save people) will be born; in Bethlehem, which is where Jesus was born some 700 years after Micah's prophecy!*

Psalm 22 – *As you read this Psalm from King David – yes, it describes how David felt when he thought God had forsaken him – but it more clearly describes how Jesus felt on the cross – when the sin of the world was heaped on Him. This psalm is often called the "Psalm of the Cross" and the Psalm's opening words are exactly what Jesus said from the cross: "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"*

Psalm 110 – *In this Psalm, King David speaks of a future King ("my lord") who sits at the right hand of God and comes in judgment (King Jesus) to judge the nations.*

Jeremiah 31:31-34 – *God promises through Jeremiah; a new covenant with His people where He will put His law in their minds and write it in their hearts – and He*

*will offer forgiveness and remember their sins no more. Jesus Himself talks about ushering in this new covenant at the Last Supper (Luke 22:20) and the writer of Hebrews in chapter 10 says that Jesus is the fulfilment of this new covenant that God promises.*

*Ezekiel 34:1-16 – God through His prophet Ezekiel reprimands the “spiritual” shepherds of Israel for not taking care of their flock, “Israel”. So, God promises in v15-16 – that He Himself will tend His sheep (Israel); He Himself will search for the lost and bring them back. Jesus describes Himself as the Good Shepherd (John 10:11) and says that He came to seek and save the lost (Luke 19:10). So, Jesus fulfils this prophecy from Jesus.*

*Ezekiel 36:26-27 – God promises to give us a new heart and a new spirit. Jesus tells Nicodemus, the teacher of Israel, that to be saved you must be born from above, born again, born of the Spirit (John 3)*

*Zechariah 9:9 – The prophet Zechariah prophesies that a King will come riding into Jerusalem on a donkey! This was fulfilled by King Jesus, on that first Palm Sunday (Matthew 21:5; John 12:15)*

*Malachi 3:1 – God, through the prophet Malachi, promises a “messenger” (John the Baptist) will come to prepare the way before the Lord Himself comes (see also, Matthew 3:3; 11:10; Mark 1:2) and then the Lord Himself (Jesus) will come – and He, the Lord, is the messenger of the (new) covenant. This prophecy was 400 years before Jesus came!*

*There are many other prophecies about Jesus – like 2 Samuel 7 – where God promises King David there will be a forever King on David’s throne – and Jesus is that forever King and a descendant of David.*

*Notwithstanding of these passages – many of the Old Testament characters are a “type of Christ” – a saviour figure – Noah, Moses, Joshua, Samson, Gideon, David, Elijah etc.*

*We should be able to find Jesus – and hence the Gospel – every time we read an Old Testament passage; especially if we pray for God’s enlightenment as we read His Word.*

3. How is Jesus' described in verse 3? Why is that significant?

*Jesus is an **earthly descendant of King David**.*

*This is significant for two reasons:*

- a. King David is a "**type of Christ**" – David saved his people from the giant Goliath; David was a physical shepherd and Jesus is a spiritual shepherd – David was a saviour King for his people*
- b. God made a promise to David that one of his descendants would reign on David's throne forever (2 Samuel 7). That promise was fulfilled by Jesus.*

4. What significant part does the Holy Spirit take in verse 4? In what way is that key to the Gospel message?

*It's the **Holy Spirit** – promised by Jesus before He ascended into Heaven, that plays the role of **equipping Christians** – when they are born again; born of the Spirit; born from above (John 3). The Holy Spirit equips Christians to understand the power of Jesus' death and resurrection.*

*One of the Holy spirit's jobs is to **teach us all things and remind us of everything Jesus said** (John 14:26)*

5. What did Paul receive in verse 5? To whom is his calling? And what is the required response?

*Paul received **grace**. God's undeserved favour.*

*Paul also received **apostleship**; Jesus called and sent Paul.*

*Paul was called and sent to the Gentiles – i.e., non-Jews.*

*The Gentiles were to be **called to obedience** – obedience to God. This obedience is a response to having faith in Jesus' death and resurrection. In other words, the response is to have faith in the Gospel (the Good News about Jesus' death and resurrection). And by having faith in the Gospel, to then **follow Jesus in obedience** as a sign of gratitude and for Christ's name's sake.*

*As the great reformer, Martin Luther says: "We are saved by faith alone, but the faith that saves is never alone" – it brings about grateful, joyful, trusting obedience.*

6. Who is the intended audience for Paul's letter in verses 6 & 7?

*Specifically, Paul writes to the **Gentile Christians in the city of Rome**.*

7. How does Paul describe the Roman Church's relationship with God in verse 7?  
How is that further described in his greeting?

*The Roman church is loved by God and called to be God's "holy ones"; literally "saints" (Greek – hagios – which means pure ones, morally blameless or set apart ones)*

*Paul sends the customary greeting of "grace and peace" from God the Father and His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.*

### **Read Romans 1:8-17**

8. What is Paul thankful for in verse 8?

*Paul is thankful for the "holy ones" (saints) in Rome; because their faith is being reported over the known world.*

9. What specific things does Paul thank God for in his prayers for the Romans? (vv8-15)

- *Their faith which is being reported all over the world (v8)*
- *He expresses his gratitude that God is a witness to Paul's service (vv9-10)*
- *He is thankful for his desire to visit Rome*

10. How does Paul express his desire to visit the Roman Christians, and what purpose does he state for this visit? (vv8-15)

- *Paul prays that now at last he may be able to come to Rome (v10)*
- *So that he may impart spiritual gifts that will make the Romans stronger (v11) – and so he and the Romans can be mutually encouraged by each other's faith (v12) – notice the obedience in Paul wanting to "serve the Romans" and "be served by the Romans"*
- *He desires a harvest among the Romans – just like the other Gentile places Paul has shared the Gospel (v13)*
- *He sees it's equally important to share the Gospel with both Greeks and Non-Greeks; both foolish and wise. In other words, the Gospel is for EVERYONE! (vv14-15)*
- *He wants to share the Gospel because it's the Gospel that brings salvation to everyone who believes it (v16)*

11. Who does Paul say he is obligated to in verse 14?

*Greeks and non-Greeks; wise and foolish.*

*A way of saying, he is **obligated to EVERYONE**. The Gospel is for EVERYONE -it's not some exclusive club! And because, Paul, has been called and sent by Jesus, he is obligated to Jesus to take the Gospel to everyone!*

12. What is the central theme of verses 16 & 17?

*The central theme is the **GOSPEL** (Good News of Jesus' death and resurrection)*

- a. It's the Gospel that brings salvation to everyone who believes*
- b. It's the Gospel that reveals the righteousness of God – something we can **ONLY** get through **FAITH** in the Gospel (faith in Jesus' death and resurrection)*

13. In what situations do you find yourself being ashamed of the Gospel? How could verses 16 & 17 help in those situations?

- a. **Fear of Rejection or Ridicule:** Some people may be ashamed of the gospel due to a fear of being rejected or ridiculed by others. They might worry that others will take offence because a) the Gospel is free and undeserved and can't be earned; or b) The Gospel is insulting because it's saying people need their sins fixed by Jesus and some might get offended at being labelled a sinner; c) The Gospel says Jesus accomplishes our salvation and calls us to follow and deny ourselves – which impacts their easy life and autonomy. Some people may worry about how their faith will be perceived or the social consequences of openly identifying as a Christian.*
- b. **Desire for Acceptance:** The desire for acceptance by a particular group or community might lead someone to downplay or conceal their Christian beliefs. They may prioritize fitting in over expressing their convictions.*
- c. **Lack of Confidence or Knowledge:** Individuals who feel inadequately informed or lack confidence in articulating their faith may be hesitant to share the gospel. A lack of understanding or knowledge about the message of Christianity can contribute to a sense of shame.*
- d. **Pressure to Conform to Worldly Values:** The values promoted by the world may sometimes be at odds with the teachings of the gospel. Individuals may feel tempted to conform to worldly values and compromise their Christian principles or neglect their faith.*

*What can help us with these doubts/situations is the fact that the Gospel is God's righteousness revealed – we can have confidence that it has God's power behind it – and so we can live by faith as v17 says.*

14. How does Paul describe the power of the gospel, and what does it mean for believers in verses 16 & 17?

*The promotion of the **Gospel** (the Good News of Jesus) **has God's power behind it** – because His Word always goes out and achieves His purposes (Isaiah 55:11) – and because it is accompanied by the Spirit of God.*

*For the believer: The Gospel brings **salvation** (forgiveness and eternal life) to everyone who believes.*

*For the believer: The Gospel **reveals God's righteousness** and this righteousness is received by our faith in Jesus and NOT by what we do!*

15. How would you define “**righteousness**”?

*Right with God (i.e., forgiven of our sins) and approved by God (as though we were sinless like Jesus)*

16. What does Paul mean by the phrase “**the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith**”? What does it suggest about the nature of salvation?

*The righteousness of God refers to the moral perfection and justice of God. Paul is saying here how God makes people right or just in His eyes - is through faith in Jesus.*

*“From faith to faith” means God's righteousness is made known and received by faith in Jesus. It's a continuous process that starts with faith in Jesus and progresses through a continuous unfolding of God's righteousness as individual's grow in their faith.*

17. How can the principles discussed in Romans 1:1-17 apply to our lives today?

- a. Our **identity is in Christ**. We are Christians first and foremost (v1)*
- b. As Christians, **we are servants** – we are to serve – not be served (v1)*
- c. We too are “**set apart**” for the **Gospel** – we're not an apostle like Paul – but in the Great Commission – Jesus gives us the task to go and make disciples by **sharing the Gospel** - and that should be our focus (v1)*
- d. We are to be thankful for the faith of other Christians (v8)*
- e. We are to remember **to pray for fellow Christians** – in our church – and in other churches (v10)*
- f. Like Paul – we are **to mutually encourage each other** – with whatever gifts **God has bestowed on us!** (vv11-12)*

- g. We have a “field” or “garden” to **cultivate and harvest** – we sow the seed of the Gospel – and reap what’s sowed. Sometimes we sow and others reap afterwards. Sometimes we reap what someone else sowed. Nevertheless, the harvest is plentiful and the workers are few; therefore, we need to pray for the Lord of the Harvest to send out workers (v13 and Matthew 9:37)
  - h. The Gospel is for everyone (v14)
  - i. Pray that **we wouldn’t be ashamed of the Gospel**; and that we would be bold and brave in sharing it – pleasing God first and not pleasing human beings first (vv15-16)
  - j. Remember that the **Gospel reveals God’s righteousness** – and that being right for God and approved by God – is only possible through FAITH (In Jesus) and NOT through WORKS (v17)
  - k. We need to **cultivate a lifestyle of faith**. Understand that faith is not just an initial step but an ongoing journey. Continually growing in faith, trusting in God’s righteousness, and allowing it to shape every aspect of your life.
18. In what ways can we **actively** live out the message of the gospel in our **daily** walk with Christ?
- a. Daily prayers for fellow believers – pray in thanks to God for them and pray for their needs
  - b. Daily prayers for Gospel opportunities
  - c. Read God’s word daily and meditate on it – take it into our hearts and apply to our lives – so people can see we’re living out our faith.
  - d. Make time to encourage fellow believers
  - e. Be bold and courageous in sharing the Gospel each day; recognizing there is a huge harvest and Jesus wants us to be His workers in the harvesting of new believers.
  - f. Live daily by faith in Jesus, shining the light of Jesus and living not by what we see but by faith. Our faith in Jesus may attract others to follow Jesus too.

What’s the **BIG IDEA** of **Romans 1:1-17**?

*The GOSPEL is powerful and it comes to us through FAITH*



What **light globe moment** did you have in this study?

*Some light globe moments people might have:*

- *Salvation is by FAITH ALONE – not by OUR WORKS*

- The Gospel gives freedom from LEGALISM – we don't have to earn God's favour through adherence to rules and regulations – He gives us GRACE in JESUS
- The concept of living by faith is not a new idea from Paul – it's mentioned in the Old Testament (see v17 – quotes Habakkuk 2:4)
- Knowing that it is through the Gospel that the righteousness of God is revealed and that salvation is made available to all – should show us the urgency there is to reach those lost from God – before it's too late!

What **questions** do you have about the passages in this study?

*Some people might struggle with the following question:*

**Question:** What does Paul mean by “**the righteousness of God**”

**Answer: Moral perfection:** The righteousness of God reflects His absolute moral perfection. God's character is entirely without fault, sin, or moral flaw. It is the standard of moral excellence against which all human conduct is measured.

**Justice and Fairness:** God's righteousness is closely tied to His justice. God always acts in perfect accordance with what is right and fair. His judgments are impartial and consistent with His righteous character.

**Faithfulness and Consistency:** The righteousness of God signifies His faithfulness to His promises and His consistency in adhering to His moral standards. God is unwavering in His commitment to what is just and right.

**Salvation and Justification:** In the context of **salvation** (saving us for Heaven), the righteousness of God involves the way in which He **justifies** (finds us not guilty of our sins) and makes righteous those who believe in Him. Through faith in Jesus Christ, believers receive the **imputed** (passed on) righteousness of Christ, and they are declared **righteous** (right with God and approved by God) before God.

**God's Standard for Humanity:** The righteousness of God serves as the **standard to which humanity is called to conform**. It highlights the moral gap between God's perfection and human fallenness, emphasizing the need for reconciliation through faith in Christ.

**Holiness and Purity:** The righteousness of God is inseparable from His holiness and purity. God's righteousness is not tainted by sin, and He cannot tolerate or overlook unrighteousness. His holiness sets the standard for what is pure and right.

*Because of our faith in what Jesus has done; when God looks at us; He sees the righteousness of Jesus standing in front of us!*

**Share the verse** that had a special meaning to you in this study?

*V17 - For in the gospel the righteousness of God is revealed—a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: "The righteous will live by faith."*

**Finish in prayer:** Give thanks to God for the indescribable gift of salvation through Jesus. Ask God to help us live according to His Holy Word and that the Gospel message might shine brightly through us.

## Study 2 – What’s wrong with humanity?

Romans 1:18-32

*(Sermon on 11-Feb-2024)*

**Before we begin:** Remind yourself what Paul said in verses 16 and 17 of Romans chapter 1.

*Paul said he was not ashamed of the Gospel because:*

1. The Gospel is **God’s power for salvation**. In other words, it’s only the Gospel of Jesus (the good news that Jesus’ death and resurrection gives us forgiveness and eternal life) that can save us from sin and death and save us for Heaven! We shouldn’t be ashamed of something that saves us!
2. The Gospel **reveals God’s righteousness and gives us His righteousness**, so that we are right with God and approved by God!
3. We can’t be saved by what we do – **we are made righteous because of Jesus and must live by FAITH!**

This raises the question: “Why must the righteous live by faith? Why is **received righteousness** the only way to be in a right standing with God? Paul will spend from 1:18 to 3:20 showing us why we need God to give us righteousness – why we cannot earn, deserve or attain it ourselves. It will present us with a dark picture of humanity...

### Read Romans 1:18-23

1. According to verse 18, why is the wrath of God being revealed? What does this reveal about God’s response to human behaviour?

*God’s wrath is being revealed because of the **godlessness and wickedness of people**, who suppress the truth by their wickedness.*

*Because God is pure and holy and blameless; He cannot tolerate sinful human behaviour; it must be punished; just as God told Adam and Eve in Genesis 2:17 – “for in the day that you eat of it [forbidden fruit] you shall surely die”*

*God responds this way to godlessness and wickedness because “God’s eyes are too pure to look on evil; He cannot tolerate wrongdoing” (Habakkuk 1:13); and the “wages of sin is death” (Romans 3:23) and as Psalm 145:20 says: “The Lord preserves all who love Him; but all the wicked He will destroy!”*

2. According to Paul, what can be known about God from creation in verses 19 and 20?

*Just by looking around at Creation; God's eternal power and divine nature is obvious. Even though we can't see God, we see the evidence of His existence! This is sometimes known as General Revelation – God reveals some of who He is by His power in creating and sustaining everything – but General Revelation doesn't give us enough to save us – we need Special Revelation from His Word and the Holy Spirit – to understand how Jesus saves us.*

### 3. Why are humans without excuse (v20)?

*As we look at planets; stars; mountains; landscapes; oceans; creatures and humans; we can see God's power in creation and His power in sustaining the universe. It would be very foolish to look at all of that and conclude that it all happened by "accident" or by "chance"; and it would be very foolish to conclude 'there is no God'; rather than seeing all this as evidence of a sovereign creator God! As Paul concludes in verse 20, "people are without excuse!"*

### 4. What are humans guilty of in verses 21 to 23? What is the primary sin in verses 21 to 23? How can this be seen in the world today?

*So, even though people knew in their hearts, from what was around them, that there is a God; they didn't worship Him – they didn't give Him any glory or any thanks for all He has made and provided. Instead, people's thinking became futile and their hearts became dark! People thought they were being smart, thinking they knew better than God and could do without Him, when in fact they were being foolish.*

***Their primary sin was idolatry.** They exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images of humans or creatures. They worshipped man-made images and idols as though they were God; rather than worshipping the one true God!*

*Today, people are prepared to **worship anything other than God**; even self!*

### Read Romans 1:24-32

### 5. What did God decide to do in verse 24? Why?

*God in effect said "If that's what you want (rather than Me), then that's what you get". He "**gave them over**" to their own sinful desires and their hearts were sexually impure and they degraded their bodies with one another.*

*In His righteous wrath and judgment, God gives humans up to the sin our evil heart's desire, allowing us to experience the self-destructive result of sin. This*

phrase “***gave them over***” is so important Paul repeats it three times in this passage in verses 24, 26 and 28.

6. Verse 25 talks about people exchanging the truth about God for a lie. In what ways do people today exchange the truth about God for falsehood?

*What Paul is talking about here in verse 25 when he says ‘people have exchanged the truth about God for a lie’ is they have exchanged the true worship of the Creator God for the ‘lie of idolatry’. So today, people will worship ANYTHING but GOD!*

*Examples today might include the worship of:*

- ***idols*** like money, fame, sport and power
- ***prioritizing material possessions***, wealth and success ahead of God;
- ***self-worship*** where people become excessively focused on their own desires, achievements or ambitions, placing themselves at the centre of their lives rather than God
- ***Outright rejection of God!***
- ***Worshipping nature/creation*** (although they are important) itself to the exclusion of the Creator
- ***Following other religions or philosophies*** and abandoning the one true God
- ***Pleasure and hedonism*** – pursuing pleasure, sensual and sexual gratification at the expense of moral and spiritual values
- ***Embracing belief systems and false teachings which are contrary to the true understanding of God and the teachings of Christianity.***

7. What sexual chaos is described in verses 26 and 27? How is this different to God’s design for human relationships?

*Sexual chaos is described as people acting on their shameful lusts, which results in women having sexual relationships with women; and men having sexual relationships with other men. This is different to God’s design for human relationships where God made male and female – and made marriage and sexual union between a man and a woman; and that relationship was meant to be an exclusive life-long never to be broken relationship (Genesis 2:24 and Mark 10:7-9) And note there is a “penalty” in going against God’s planned order for sexual relationships, at the end of verse 27: In His righteous wrath and judgment, God ‘gives people over’ to the sin their evil heart’s desire, allowing them to experience*

*the self-destructive result of sin. This ‘penalty’ could be disease for violating God’s order or relationship/family problems or spiritual emptiness from turning away from God’s plan for humans.*

8. Verse 28 mentions that people did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God. How does this attitude manifest in contemporary society? *Because people did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God; God “gave them over” to a depraved mind.*

*As a society we don’t just rebel against God in our behaviour but also in our thinking. So, God again says “If that’s what you want, then that’s what you get” and he gives them over to depraved (evil, corrupt, immoral, wicked) thinking. If we think about it, we are “spiritually insane” in rebelling against God!*

*This manifests itself in contemporary society in the following ways:*

- **Moral decay:** rise in crime, dishonesty, lack of empathy and compassion
- **Secularism:** The belief that religion and religious considerations should be ignored; so, God is pushed out of our governments; schools; homes; workplace and society in general; which leads to moral decline
- **Atheism:** denial of the existence of God
- **Individualism and Hedonism:** Social trends toward individualism and hedonism, where personal pleasure and satisfaction are prioritized over moral or ethical considerations, so people’s mindset is not to consider the knowledge of God
- **Disregard for Traditional Values:** The rejection or neglect of traditional Christian and moral values in favor of a more liberal or progressive worldview. This is shown in the current “cancel culture” movement which says that controversial speech or behaviour must be punished through public shaming, silencing, boycotting, firing/sacking, bankrupting, deplatforming. The result is that the “offender’s” influence, presence, and/or reputation is “cancelled out”. In Christian terms, the cancel culture will try to silence the Bible when it seems to them to be politically incorrect or controversial. For example, the Bible’s claims on marriage or sexuality are deemed to be politically incorrect and must be shamed or cancelled. Bible believing Christians are deemed to be bigots and intolerant. So, then there’s a movement to bring laws to silence religious freedom – and attempt to stop things like Scripture in schools and prayers in parliament.

9. What have humans become like in verses 29 to 31? How do the sins listed reflect a society that has turned away from God?

*Humans have become wicked, evil, greedy and depraved. People are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malice, gossiping, slander, hating God, insolence, arrogant and boastful; disobeying parents; no understanding; no fidelity; no love; and no mercy.*

*This is reflected in our society as follows:*

***Wickedness and evil and depraved:*** *Implies a departure from moral goodness and an embrace of immoral or corrupt actions.*

***Greed:*** *Excessive desire for material wealth or possessions is considered a departure from the values of contentment and generosity taught in the Bible.*

***Envy:*** *Envy involves resenting others' success or possessions, indicating a lack of gratitude and contentment with one's own circumstances.*

***Murder, Strife, and Deceit:*** *These actions represent violence, conflict, and dishonesty, which are contrary to Christian values of love, peace, and truthfulness.*

***Gossip and Slander:*** *Engaging in gossip and slander goes against principles of kindness, empathy, and speaking truthfully about others.*

***God-haters:*** *The direct rejection of God or hostility towards divine principles is a significant sign of turning away from the foundations of God's Word.*

***Disobedience to Parents:*** *This reflects a breakdown in family values and social order.*

***Lack of Understanding, Fidelity, Love, and Mercy:*** *These qualities indicate a general moral and ethical decline, where empathy, faithfulness, love, and mercy are lacking in interpersonal and social relationships. We see this particularly on social media with keyboard warriors happy to say anything, no matter how hurtful and harmful, no matter whether true or false; which are all easy to say, when hidden behind a computer screen and keyboard.*

10. What summary is given of human behaviour in verse 32?

*This verse suggests that despite the awareness of God's righteous standards and the consequences of sinful actions, people not only engage in such behaviors but also approve of others who do the same. It emphasizes a **willful persistence** in disobedience to God's moral laws and a **disregard for the divine consequences associated with such actions**.*

11. In light of this passage, how can believers respond to the prevailing godlessness in the world? How can they maintain a faithful and obedient relationship with God?

*To combat this, believers could respond as follows:*

- *Strengthen our faith through prayer and studying, meditating and applying God's Word to our lives*
- *Commit to a daily relationship with God – always seeking His strength, wisdom and guidance – in the face of worldly challenges*
- *Strive to live according to the moral and ethical standards set by God's Word; and modelling that to the community*
- *Gather with Church Family for worship and fellowship in order to gain mutual encouragement*
- *Share our faith with others – both in our words and in our actions by modelling godly behaviour*
- *Pray for our world – asking God to intervene. Intercede on behalf of individuals and societies that are distant from God, asking for revival and transformation*

12. How does **Genesis 6:5-13** relate to Romans 1:18-32?

*The people of Noah's day are described as wicked and every inclination of the thoughts of their hearts was evil all the time. This description is similar to Paul's description of humanity in Romans 1:18-32.*

*God could no longer tolerate the sin of the people in Noah's day because God cannot look at sin as we said earlier (Hab 1:13) and so God has to punish sin. He sent a flood to wipe out wicked humanity. Paul says similar in Romans 1:32 when he says people who practice such sins as he lists, **deserve to die!***

13. How does **Genesis 19:1-29** relate to Romans 1:18-32?

*The men of Sodom had descended to sexual immorality similar to the description Paul gave of men having sexual relations with other men.*

*Because of this blatant sin and rebellion against God's Word; God planned to destroy the city of Sodom completely, because again, God cannot abide sin and it must be punished. In His grace and mercy; God preserved Lot's family before God rained down burning sulfur on Sodom and Gomorrah*

14. How does **Psalms 19:1-6** relate to Romans 1:18-32?

*This Psalm describes the glory and majesty of God's creation and it's like God's creation speaks for itself (without having to use words) about the glory and power and majesty of God. This is what Paul refers to in Romans 1:19-20 – how God's invisible qualities – His eternal power and divine nature – have been revealed through His creation; so that people are left without excuse, as to who God really is!*

15. How does **Jeremiah 2:5 and 17:9** relate to Romans 1:18-32?

*Jeremiah 2:5 speaks of people following worthless idols and becoming worthless themselves; which is similar to what Paul is saying about people exchanging the truth of God for a lie, and worshipping false idols/gods instead of the one true God. Jeremiah 17:9 describes the state of people's hearts: deceitful above all things and beyond cure. That echoes Paul's description of humanity.*

16. How does **Deuteronomy 4:15-18** relate to Romans 1:18-32?

*Deuteronomy 4:16-17 describes the danger of making an idol – an image of a man or woman, or animal or bird; because it will lead to worship. This is the same as what Paul says in Romans 1:23 – where people made idols of humans, animals and birds and reptiles.*

17. How does **Psalms 106:20 and Jeremiah 2:11** relate to Romans 1:18-32?

*Psalms 106:20 says people exchanged their glorious God for an image of a bull, which eat grass – like the Israelites did in Exodus 32 when they made and worshipped a golden calf and likewise in Jeroboam's day when they worshipped two golden calves! (1 Kings 12)*

*Jeremiah 2:11 – repeats the sin mentioned in Psalms 106:20.*

18. How does **Leviticus 18:22-23 and 20:13** relate to Romans 1:18-32?

*Leviticus 18:22-23 warns against unnatural sexual relationships: a man with a man; a woman with a woman; and a man or woman with an animal. This echoes Paul's accusations of people having unnatural sexual relationships in Romans 1:26-27.*

*Leviticus 20:13 warns against a man having sexual relationship with a man; as punishable by death.*

19. **Ponder:** What conclusions can we draw about humans from these Old Testament readings and Romans 1:18-32?

*Humans have the capacity towards righteousness and obedience to God's commands – for example individuals like Abraham, Moses and Joshua.*

*However, humans have the tendency/inclination towards sin and rebellion as described in those Old Testament readings and by Paul in Romans 1:18-32.*

*We can see that humans cannot stop sinning completely.*

*We can also see the consequences of this sin and rebellion; and the consequences of this idolatry and rejection of God. God "gives people over to their sin". God cannot let sin go unpunished.*

*Yet God's desire is for humans to be loving and faithful to Him.*

*And praise God, in His grace and love and mercy; He gives a way out for humankind through the Gospel.*

*So, Romans 1:1-17 – presents the Gospel Good News and Romans 1:18-32 presents the reason WHY we need this Gospel Good News – and it's because of the Bad News of the condition or state of humanity!*

What's the **BIG IDEA** of **Romans 1:18-32**?

***The description of what is wrong with humanity***



What **light globe moment** did you have in this study?

*In Paul's description of what is wrong with humanity – there are allusions to the Creation and Fall from Genesis 1-3. For example, exchanging the image of God (as humans are made in) for images of humans, birds and animals and reptiles (v23), reminds us of Creation; and exchanging the truth about God for a lie, reminds of how Adam and Eve were deceived by a lie from Satan!*

What **questions** do you have about the passages in this study?

*Questions that came up today?*

1. *What about people in the Old Testament before Jesus came, how were they saved? Answer: through faith – e.g. Abraham believed the Lord and he counted it to him as righteousness (Gen 15:6; James 2:23)*
2. *What about people who only have general revelation of God through God's creation and have never heard of Jesus? Answer: The Bible states clearly that only through the Gospel (John 3:16; 14:16; Acts 4:12). Therefore, people are left to the mercy of God (I will have mercy upon whom I will have mercy – Exodus 33:19 and Romans 9:15). Therefore, it means we are obligated to share the Gospel to those places who have never heard of the Gospel (Matthew 28:16-20; Acts 1:8 and Romans 10:14)*

**Share the verse** that had a special meaning to you in this study?

***V25b - ... rather than the Creator—who is forever praised. Amen***

**Finish in prayer:** Ask God to forgive us for the times we have exchanged God's truth for a lie. Ask God to help us live a life that honours Him and reflects His love. Thank God for His unfailing love and salvation found in Jesus alone!

### Study 3 – God’s Righteous Judgment and Impartiality Revealed Romans 2:1-16 (Sermon on 18-Feb-2024)

**Before we begin:** Remind yourself of the problem with humanity from Romans 1:18-32?

*From last week, in Romans 1:18-32, Paul said that God’s wrath (righteous anger) was being revealed from Heaven because of peoples’ **godlessness and wickedness** (1:18). Paul said this had occurred because people had exchanged the glory of God and worshipping Him; for the worship of images of humans, birds, animals and reptiles (1:23).*

*We said that **the way God expressed his wrath** in the here and now was to:*

- a. Give them over to **sinful hearts to sexual impurity***
- b. Give them over to **shameful lusts***
- c. Give them over to a **depraved mind***

*In other words, God says “if that’s what you want to do – even though you know it’s sinful – then go ahead, and reap the consequences; I won’t get in your way”.*

*Paul then listed **21 sins that humanity is guilty of**: filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed and depravity; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit and malice. They are gossips, slanderers, God-haters, insolent, arrogant and boastful; they invent ways of doing evil; they disobey their parents; and they have no understanding, no fidelity, no love, no mercy (vv29-31)*

*This is all **Bad News**; and we said last week that the **ONLY answer to this Bad News**; is the **Good News of our Lord Jesus**, which is the Gospel – which Paul has been called and set apart to proclaim (1:1-17)*

Now Paul tackles those who are on the **moral high-ground (moralists)**. Let’s see...

#### **Read Romans 2:1-4**

1. What’s the problem with people judging others’ behaviour in verse 1? How does this compare with Matthew 7:1-5?

*Paul says people are passing judgment on others for doing exactly the same thing they are doing themselves!*

*It’s like Paul is addressing people – who think they are nothing like the people described in Romans 1:18-32. It’s like these people are saying “thank goodness I’m not like them!”*

*Jesus gave an example of this in Luke 18:11 when the Pharisee prayed – “God, I thank you that I am not like other people—robbers, evildoers, adulterers—or even like this tax collector”.*

*In Matthew 7:1-7 – Jesus warns people about judging others and that if we do judge other’s behaviour; then we must be prepared to be judged on our behaviour, by the very same standards as we judge others. Ultimately, God is the judge of everyone! Jesus goes onto say – that basically we need to look in the mirror at ourselves before we judge others; and we need to remove the plank in our own eye before pointing out the speck of sawdust in someone else’s eye!*

*Note: Paul is not condemning people for judging but for practicing the very same things that they judge others for!*

*To pass judgment without looking at ourselves, is to say ‘others are worthy of God’s judgment but we are not!’*

2. What is God’s judgment based on in verse 2?

*God’s judgment is based on the truth! God will judge based on the actual facts! God is scrupulously fair in His judgment!*

3. What’s the outcome for those who judge others in verse 3?

*They won’t escape judgment; they will face God’s judgment just like the people they are judging and accusing!*

4. What are the moralists doing with God’s kindness, forbearance and patience in verse 4? What’s the purpose of God’s kindness in verse 4?

*The moralist is showing contempt for the riches of God’s kindness, forbearance and patience.*

*The moralist or self-righteous person acknowledges the existence of God and His common grace – “He causes the sun to rise on the evil and the good and sends rain on the righteous and unrighteous” (Matt 5:45) – but treats God with contempt because He sees no need for Him. They are doing well enough themselves. They are their own saviour. This is the attitude of someone who welcomes God’s wrath on others, but thinks they themselves are entirely exempt! They see no need for repentance and have no realization that God is holding back His judgment in order*

*to give them an opportunity to turn to Him in humility and repent and ask for God's mercy. Paul says this is showing contempt for God's kindness!*

*Romans 1 and 2 are like the 2 sons in the parable of the Lost Son in Luke 15:11-32. Romans 1 is about the lost (prodigal) son – lost in his sin; and Romans 2 is about the elder son – who thinks he's okay and that his father (God) owes him because he's better; but when we see the elder son's reaction to the return of his brother; we see he has the attitude Paul is describing here – where he judges his younger brother's sin – but doesn't see he is full of resentment to his father for "slaving for him"; he doesn't go looking for his younger brother; and he's jealous when his father welcomes his younger brother home with open arms. We need to look in the mirror – before we look at others!*

### **Read Romans 2:5-11**

5. What's the problem for people in verse 5? Why?

*They are storing up God's wrath for themselves until the day of God's wrath – Judgment Day, when God's righteous judgment is revealed.*

*The people Paul is referring to can't see the sin in their lives because they are stubborn and refuse to see the sin; and because of their unrepentant heart (the Greek word is where we get arterial sclerosis – hardening of the arteries). How can they repent, when they can only see everyone else's sins and not their own!*

6. Verses 6 to 11 discuss God's impartial judgment. What does it mean for God to be impartial, and how should this impact our view of justice?

*God is impartial in His judgment – which means God treats everyone equally when it comes to judging and punishing sin!*

- *God will repay everyone according to what they have done (v6) – not according to who they are! God is not biased in any way!*
- *Those who persist in doing good – and seek glory, honour and immortality; God will grant them eternal life (v7)*
- *Those who are self-seeking – and reject God's truth and follow evil – there will be God's wrath and anger (v8)*
- *Those who do evil – will receive trouble and stress (v9) – and it doesn't matter whether they are Jew or Gentile'.*
- *Those who do good – will receive glory, honour and peace (v10) - and again, it doesn't matter whether they are Jew or Gentile'.*

- God doesn't have favourites (v11)

*How should this impact our view of justice:*

**Equality:** Just as God does not show partiality, our justice systems should strive to treat all individuals equally before the law, regardless of their social status, wealth, race, or any other factor. Similarly, we should view all individuals equal when wanting justice – regardless of the person's social status, wealth, race etc.

**Fairness:** Ensure that judgments are made based on evidence and the law, rather than personal biases or prejudices.

**Accountability:** If God is impartial, then everyone is accountable for their actions. This implies that individuals should be held responsible for their deeds and should face appropriate consequences for their actions, whether positive or negative.

**Compassion:** While impartiality involves fair judgment, it also encompasses compassion. Just as God's impartiality is accompanied by His mercy and grace, our justice systems, and we ourselves, should strive to incorporate compassion and rehabilitation alongside punishment.

**Deterrence and Rehabilitation:** Justice should aim not only to punish wrongdoing but also to deter future offenses and rehabilitate offenders. Impartiality in judgment can help foster trust in the justice system, which in turn can contribute to deterrence and successful rehabilitation efforts.

### **Read Romans 2:12-16**

7. What two positions are there in verse 12?

a) Those who sin apart from the law and b) those who sin under the law

In this verse Paul is explaining how God's judgment works and how it applies both to Jews who have the law (referring to the Mosaic law given to the Israelites) and to Gentiles [non-Jews] who do not have the law and haven't heard of it. Paul is **establishing the principle that both Jews and Gentiles are accountable to God for their actions.**

8. What contrast is made in verse 13?

It's not just a matter of **hearing** God's law but a matter of **obeying** God's law that matters! **Obedience is evidence of our faith**; as Jesus puts it: *"If you love me, keep my commands"* (John 14:15)

9. What does Paul say about Gentiles and the law in verses 14 and 15? How does this relate to the idea of a moral conscience, and what implications does it have for evangelism?

*Paul's saying even though Gentiles were given God's law because it was only given to the Jews initially; they still have a moral conscience, because as Paul says "the requirements of the law are written on their hearts" and so their consciences are bearing witness and so sometimes their thoughts accuse them and sometimes defend them. This means as we evangelize, the words we say from the Bible work with their conscience and what's written on their hearts, and can convict them and enable them to commit to following Jesus.*

10. What day is Paul talking about in verse 16? What happens then?

*Paul is talking about Judgment Day; God has appointed a day when Jesus will return to judge the living and the dead and judge people's secrets. (Acts 4:12; 17:31; John 5:22; 2 Corinthians 5:10)*

*Notice Paul says: "'My gospel.' Does not this show his courage? As much as to say, 'I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God onto salvation to every one that believeth.' He says, 'my gospel,' as a soldier speaks of 'my colors,' or of 'my king.' He resolves to bear this banner to victory, and to serve this royal truth even to the death." (Spurgeon)*

11. **Ponder:** How can Christians balance the concept of salvation by faith with the importance of living out the commands of God?

*In v13 – Paul is not suggesting we are saved by obeying the law because He has already said in chapter 1 that we can only be saved by faith in Jesus alone and not by anything we do! Ephesians 2:8-9 says the same thing. While salvation is not earned through good works, genuine faith naturally produces a transformed life characterized by obedience to God's commands. James 2:17 emphasizes this, stating, "faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead."*

*Christians are called to live out God's commands not as a means of earning salvation, but as a **response** to God's grace and out of love for Him. Jesus summarized the commandments as loving God and loving others (Matthew 22:37-40), and He said, "If you love me, keep my commands" (John 14:15).*

*The balance between faith and works can be understood as a **dynamic relationship. Faith leads to works, and works are evidence of faith.** It's not a*

*matter of either/or but rather both/and. Good works are the fruit of genuine faith, not the root of salvation.*

*Christians rely on God's grace to empower them to live obedient lives. Philippians 2:13 says, "for it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose." It's not our own strength but God's grace that enables us to obey Him.*

12. **Ponder:** Are you a hopeless sinner, whom God would have a perfect right to cast off because of the state of your life and your heart?

*Yes! As Paul says in Romans 7:19: "for I do not do the good I want to do, but the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing".*

*It's like there is a battle going on inside us – where there's a good dog and a bad dog fighting – and the dog that wins is the one we feed!*

13. **Ponder:** When you consider how those outside your church live, do you shake your **head** and judge them in your heart or do you think: "My heart is by nature just the same"

*I see people outside the church are lost sinners just like me; the only difference is I am a saved sinner, because of Jesus!*

14. **Ponder:** The number one criticism of Christians is hypocrisy. What are the sins in your life that you are tempted to excuse in yourself while condemning in others?

*This maybe a personal question that you don't want to share with others; but it will be a useful exercise to examine the sin in our lives and see whether we condemn others for the same sin whilst doing nothing about that sin in our own lives.*

*As a minister, I have to be mindful of what James 3:1 says: "Not many of you should become teachers, my fellow believers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly." I am also mindful of that I will be under a microscope and people will judge whether "I practice what I preach"*

*In general terms; sometimes I might be guilty of "not doing what I tell others to do in my sermons!"*

15. **Read Deuteronomy 10:17-19.** How does this passage relate to Romans 2:1-16?

Both passages emphasize that **God shows no partiality**. Deuteronomy 10:17-19 asserts that God is impartial in His judgment, and Romans 2:1-16 affirms this by stating that God judges everyone fairly, regardless of their ethnicity or background. Deuteronomy 10:17-19 highlights **God's expectation for His people to demonstrate righteousness by showing love and compassion to others**, including foreigners. Romans 2:1-16 expands on this idea by explaining that God's judgment is based on people's actions and whether they have lived according to His moral standards.

Both passages call believers **to love and show compassion to others**. Deuteronomy emphasizes caring for the vulnerable in society, such as widows, orphans, and foreigners. Romans extends this principle by emphasizing the importance of loving others and treating them justly.

Both passages warn about **the consequences of one's actions**. Deuteronomy teaches that God will judge those who mistreat others or fail to show compassion. Romans expands on this by explaining that God's judgment is based on the deeds of individuals, whether they have obeyed God's commands or not.

16. **Read Psalm 62:11-12.** How does this passage relate to Romans 2:1-16?

Psalm 62:11-12 **acknowledges God's power and emphasizes that He is the ultimate authority** who will reward each person according to their deeds. Similarly, Romans 2:1-16 discusses God's judgment, highlighting His sovereignty in repaying individuals based on their actions.

Psalm 62:11-12 also mentions **God's unfailing love**, which is a consistent theme throughout Scripture. Romans 2:1-16 complements this by emphasizing **God's impartiality in judgment**, showing that **His love does not exempt individuals from accountability for their actions**.

Both passages **affirm the principle of divine justice**, wherein individuals are rewarded or judged according to their deeds. Psalm 62:12 mentions God's reward based on what people have done, and Romans 2:6 similarly states that God will repay each person according to their actions.

Both passages encourage believers to **rely on God's wisdom and trust in His judgment**.

17. **Read Exodus 23:1-9.** How does this passage relate to Romans 2:1-16?

Both passages emphasize **the importance of impartiality and fairness in judgment**. Exodus instructs the Israelites not to pervert justice or show favoritism, while Romans highlights God's impartial judgment on all humanity.

Exodus instructs the Israelites to show compassion and mercy to foreigners, reflecting God's concern for the marginalized. Romans also emphasizes that **God's judgment takes into account how individuals treat others**.

Both passages emphasize **the importance of living according to God's standards of righteousness**. Exodus provides specific instructions for justice and compassion within the Israelite community, while Romans emphasizes that all people will be judged according to their deeds, whether they have followed God's law or their conscience.

What's the **BIG IDEA** of Romans 2:1-16?

*Condemnation of hypocrisy*

*OR God's righteous judgment*

*OR God's impartial judgment*



What **light globe moment** did you have in this study?

*How closely Romans 1 and 2 align to the two sons in the parable of the Lost Son in Luke 15!*

What **questions** do you have about the passages in this study?

*Some people might think that Paul is saying in v13 – that if we obey the law, we will be righteous (right with God and approved by God) and that this is contradicting Romans 1:17 where Paul says people are declared righteous by faith in our Lord Jesus!*

*We have to accept the truth of 1:17 – and read 2:13 in the light of the fact that we all sin and fall short of God's glory and so cannot obey God's law perfectly (Romans 3:23) and that obedience is evidence of our faith (Galatians 5:6; James 2:14-16) and as Christians we should want to obey God to show we love Him (Exodus 19:5; John 14:15; 1 John 5:2-4)*

Share the verse that had a special meaning to you in this study?

*"For God does not show favoritism." (Romans 2:11, NIV)*

**Finish in prayer:** Ask God to forgive us for the times we have neglected the plank in our own eyes while focusing on the specks in others. Ask God to grant us the wisdom to see ourselves through His eyes and the grace to extend to others the mercy that God have lavished upon us.

## Study 4 – The Jews and the Law

Romans 2:17-3:8

*(Sermon on 25-Feb-2024)*

### Before we begin:

Remind yourself who Paul was talking to in verses 1 to 16 from the last study?

*In Romans 1:18-32 – Paul describes **Gentile society** in its **idolatry, immorality and anti-social behaviour** – and really, he’s describing **all of humanity**; not just Gentiles.*

*In Romans 2:1-16 – Paul describes **critical moralizers** (which we labelled as those on the moral high-ground) whether Jews or Gentiles, **who profess high ethical standard and apply them to everybody except themselves**; and we said, they **need to look in the mirror**.*

*And now in this study, Paul turns to **self-confident Jews**, who **boast of their knowledge of God’s law**, but do not obey it.*

Remind yourself why Jewish men were circumcised in the Old Testament (cf. **Genesis 17:1-14**). What was the purpose of circumcision?

*In this passage Abram is rewarded for his faith in God. God promised Abram if he walked faithfully and blamelessly (as it is humanly possible to do so); then God would make a covenant with Abram and increase Abram’s family (17:1-2).*

*Abram was rewarded with **a name-change** to Abraham which means “father of many nations”. And God established an **everlasting covenant** with Abraham. Abraham was promised **many descendants** and **a new land** – called Canaan – the **Promised Land**.*

***As a sign or seal of this covenant agreement.** All male descendants of Abraham when they were 8 days old were to be circumcised.*

*Circumcision was a visual sign of the penalty for breaking covenant. What God was saying to Abraham was: ‘if you want to be in a relationship with me, you need to be circumcised as a sign to you and everyone that, if you break covenant, you will be “cut-off” completely. Cut off from life, cut off from me; you really will be circumcised! [Tim Keller – Romans 1-7, page 63]*

*Because this covenant was made with the literal, genetic descendants of Abraham through the promise of God, it was appropriate that this sign of the covenant be given to those born into the covenant and was associated with the reproductive part of their body.*

*God chose this sign of circumcision for the following important reasons.*

*i. Circumcision was not unknown in the world at that time. It was a ritual practiced among various peoples.*

*ii. There were undoubtedly hygienic reasons, especially making sense in the ancient world. “There is some medical evidence that this practice has indeed contributed to the long-lasting vigor of the Jewish race.” (Morris) McMillen, in *None of These Diseases*, noted studies in 1949 and 1954 that showed a remarkably low rate of cervical cancer for Jewish women, because they mostly have husbands who are circumcised.*

*iii. But more importantly, circumcision is a cutting away of the flesh and an appropriate sign of the covenant for those who should put no trust in the flesh – but their trust in the Lord God! And as we said, the “cutting off” is a sign of what would happen, if the covenant was broken!*

*iv. Also, because circumcision deals with the organ of procreation, it was a reminder of the special seed of Abraham, which would ultimately bring the Messiah; our Lord Jesus.*

*v. Since the covenant descendants of Abraham are born into that covenant by their natural birth, it logically followed that the sign of the covenant should be given to them in their infancy. Therefore, circumcision was performed at 8 days old.*

*God probably commanded the circumcision of children to take place on the eighth day because this is the day when an infant’s immune system is at the optimum level for such a procedure. Christian author and teacher, Matt McMillen also notes newborn children have a peculiar susceptibility to bleeding between the second and fifth days of life. It seems an important blood-clotting agent, vitamin K, is not formed in the normal amount until the fifth to seventh day of life. Another blood-*

*clotting agent, prothrombin, is at its highest levels in infants on precisely the eighth day of life, making the eighth day the safest, earliest day to circumcise an infant.*

*So, circumcision is a sign/seal symbolizing Abraham and his descendants as God's chosen people and their obedience to His commands. It was also seen as a mark of purification and dedication to God.*

*It's worth asking the question: "what about females, since they cannot be circumcised; how are they included?" Answer: since females were part of the nation; they were counted as bearing the covenant sign through the representation of the circumcised males. Just like, priests represented the whole nation and men who attended the annual festivals represented the whole nation (Deuteronomy 16:16)*

Now Paul is talking to a Jewish person...

### **Read Romans 2:17-24**

1. In what ways does Paul accuse the Jews of hypocrisy in verses 17 to 24?

*Paul points out that the Jews take great pride in: being a Jew; in having God's law and boasting in their relationship with God through the law –and they take great pride in the sign/seal of that relationship, namely circumcision - BUT*

- *Paul accuses them of **teaching others [a guide to the blind; a light for those who are in the dark; an instructor to the foolish; a teacher of little children] but failing to teach themselves** – highlighting the inconsistency between their words and actions (v21)*
- *Paul condemns them for **breaking the law by stealing**, which contradicts their claim to uphold the law of not stealing (v21)*
- *Paul accuses them of **committing adultery** – this can be both physically in sexual relations with someone other than their spouse and spiritually by cheating on God with idols (v22)*
- *Paul points that while **they preach against idolatry, they commit acts that are akin to idolatry by robbing from pagan temples – for example stealing idols and selling them**. Paul could also be talking figuratively and saying anything in their life that they make into an idol (wealth, sex, entertainment etc.) is in a sense "robbing a temple" (v22)*
- *Paul accuses them of **boasting in the law of God but they break the law** (v23)*

- Paul says: all this hypocrisy **has the effect of “blasphemy** (actions or speech which are sacrilege/disrespect) against God. And so, Paul says because of this behaviour from the Jews – ‘God’s name is blasphemed among the Gentiles’ (Isaiah 52:5; Ezekiel 36:22). This basically amounts to **a very poor witness by the Jews to the Gentiles**. Just as a military defeat discredits a nation; our moral defeat discredits the name of God! For example, when people see us sin, they say: “Call yourself a Christian!” and that brings discredit to Christ’s name.

2. **Ponder:** Are there areas in your life where you don’t practice what you preach? How will you change?

*Some areas of people’s lives where they don’t practice what they preach:*

**Ethics and Morality:** People might espouse high ethical standards or moral values but fail to consistently uphold them in their daily actions. For example, someone might advocate for honesty but engage in deceitful behavior or tell lies themselves!

**Spirituality:** People might preach about love, compassion, forgiveness, and other virtues but struggle to embody these values consistently in their own lives. People might advocate reading and studying God’s Word, but don’t apply the teachings from God’s Word to their lives! People might tell others to pray; but their prayer life is non-existent or inconsistent. People might tell others to have faith when they themselves are full of doubt and unbelief!

**Health and Wellness:** Individuals might promote healthy habits such as regular exercise, balanced nutrition, and sufficient sleep, yet struggle to maintain these habits in their own lives.

**Relationships:** People may give advice on building healthy relationships, communication skills, or conflict resolution but struggle to apply these principles in their own relationships, leading to hypocrisy.

**Work and Career:** Someone might preach about the importance of hard work, professionalism, or integrity in the workplace but fail to demonstrate these qualities consistently in their own job performance.

**Financial Responsibility:** People might advocate for wise financial management, such as saving money, avoiding debt, and living within one's means, but struggle with impulsive spending or poor financial planning themselves.

**Environmental Conservation:** Individuals might speak out about the importance of environmental sustainability and conservation efforts but fail to make environmentally friendly choices in their own consumption and lifestyle habits.

*How will we change? Examine our hearts – repent and believe in Jesus – and commit to following His way.*

3. How does Paul argue against the false confidence of the Jews in their possession of the law?

*Paul acknowledges that the Jews have been **entrusted with the law of God and take pride in their relationship with God through it** (verse 17-20). He acknowledges the value of having the law but **emphasizes that mere possession of the law is not sufficient for righteousness**.*

4. What responsibility do those who possess the law have? How does this relate to the concept of accountability before God?

*Possession of the law is not enough; there must be obedience and practice of the law! God has entrusted them with the law and there is an expectation of following it and obeying it; otherwise, they are accountable to God!*

### **Read Romans 2:25-29**

5. What does Paul say about the significance of circumcision? How does he challenge traditional views on the physical act of circumcision?

*Paul says circumcision, the surgical ritual that marks you as a Jew, is great if you live in accordance with God's law. But if you don't, it's like you're not even circumcised. Circumcision is not some magical good luck charm!*

*Paul says, on the other hand, if an uncircumcised person obeys the law; it's like they are circumcised.*

*Paul gives 2 formulae:*

*Circumcision – obedience = uncircumcision*

*Uncircumcision + obedience = circumcision*

***This is not salvation by obedience but obedience is evidence of salvation!***

***Circumcision is meant to be a sign/seal of faith and obedience.***

*It's a matter of the heart!*

6. According to Paul, who is a true Jew? How does he define a true Jew in terms of inward reality?

*A Jew is someone who is internally a Jew; not outwardly a Jew.*

*The outward sign/symbol of circumcision means nothing if it's not backed up with a circumcision of the heart, by the Spirit.*

*As the MSG puts it: It's not the cut of a knife that makes a Jew. You become a Jew by **who** you are. It's the **mark of God on your heart**, not of a knife on your skin, that makes a Jew.*

7. According to Paul, what is the difference between external circumcision and true circumcision of the heart? And what is "circumcision of the heart" anyway?

*External circumcision is just a physical mark – a cutting of the flesh. Whereas **true circumcision of the heart involves God's Spirit changing a person's heart** - changing our hearts from hearts of stone to hearts of flesh. In Colossians 2:11 and Philippians 3:3 – Paul says we are circumcised by Christ when we receive the Holy Spirit. The circumcision of the heart means there is an **inner transformation** brought about by the **Holy Spirit** when we are born again (John 3). This inner transformation leads to an authentic life of worship and obedience, pleasing God.*

8. **Ponder:** How can we ensure that our faith is not merely an outward observance but a genuine internal transformation?

*Here are some suggestions:*

- **Personal Relationship with God:** Cultivate a personal relationship with God through prayer, meditation, and regular study of scripture. Spend time in conversation with God, seeking His guidance, wisdom, and presence in your life.
- **Heart Examination:** Regularly examine our heart and motives, seeking to align them with God's will. Be honest with ourselves about our thoughts, desires, and actions, and invite God to transform areas of our life that are not in line with His character.

- **Authentic Worship:** Engage in worship and spiritual practices with sincerity and authenticity, offering your whole self to God in worship, rather than just going through the motions. Worship should flow from a genuine desire to honor and glorify God.
- **Practice of Virtues:** Seek to embody the virtues and values taught by Jesus, such as love, compassion, forgiveness, humility, and generosity, in your daily life. Let these virtues shape our interactions with others and our attitudes toward the world around us.
- **Community and Accountability:** Surround yourself with a supportive community of fellow believers who can encourage, challenge, and hold us accountable in our faith journey. Participate in small groups, Bible studies, or fellowship opportunities where we can share and grow together in faith.
- **Service and Outreach:** Live out our faith through acts of service and outreach to others, especially those in need. Look for opportunities to demonstrate God's love and compassion in practical ways, both within our community and beyond.
- **Continual Growth:** Commit to lifelong learning and growth in our faith, seeking to deepen our understanding of God's word and His ways. Be open to new insights and experiences that can deepen our relationship with God and strengthen our faith.

9. How do verses 25 to 29 challenge or affirm your understanding of faith and religious practices? What steps can you take to ensure that your faith is characterized by internal transformation rather than mere external practices? (this is sometimes referred to as the danger of “**dead orthodoxy**”)

**Dead orthodoxy** refers to a situation where someone adheres strictly to the doctrines, rituals, and practices of a religious tradition without experiencing a genuine personal relationship with God or allowing those beliefs to transform their life. In other words, it's a form of religious adherence that lacks vitality, sincerity, and spiritual depth.

Some examples of dead orthodoxy:

- **Ritualistic Observance:** The person may faithfully attend religious services, perform rituals, and adhere to religious rules and regulations, but these actions are done out of habit or obligation rather than genuine devotion or love for God.

- **Lack of Spiritual Growth:** There is little to no personal growth in faith or understanding of spiritual truths. The individual may have a superficial knowledge of religious doctrines but lacks a deeper understanding or application of these truths in their life.
- **Legalism:** Dead orthodoxy often leads to a legalistic mindset, where adherence to religious laws and traditions becomes more important than matters of the heart or the true intentions behind one's actions. Legalism can also lead to forcing “man-made” rules and demands on others!
- **Hypocrisy:** Despite outward displays of religious devotion, there may be a disconnect between the person's public persona and their private life. They may exhibit moral failings or engage in behaviors that contradict their professed beliefs.
- **Lack of Love and Compassion:** Dead orthodoxy can lead to a lack of genuine love, compassion, and empathy toward others. Religious practices may be performed mechanically, without true concern for the well-being of others or a desire to serve them.

Steps we can take to ensure that our faith is characterized by internal transformation rather than mere external practices are:

**Avoid the above:** ritualistic observance; lack of spiritual growth; legalism; hypocrisy; and lack of love and compassion.

**Prioritize Relationship Over Ritual:** Focus on cultivating a personal relationship with God through prayer, meditation, and regular study of scripture. Seek to know God intimately and to experience His presence in our life.

**Examine Our Heart:** Regularly examine our heart and motives, seeking to align them with God's will. Be honest with ourselves about our thoughts, desires, and actions, and invite God to transform areas of our life that are not in line with His character.

10. **Ponder:** In what way have Christians been circumcised? (cf. Colossians 2:9-12)

Paul says in Colossians 2:11-12: “In Jesus you were also circumcised with a circumcision not performed by human hands. **Your whole self ruled by the flesh was put off when you were circumcised by Christ, having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through your faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead.**”

*In His death, Jesus was “cut-off” from the Father (Mark 15:34) and “cut-off” from the land of the living (Isaiah 53:8). He was truly circumcised. He bore the curse of covenant breaking. He suffered the curse that law-breakers, whether religious or unreligious deserve. In Him, we also are circumcised!*

*So, in the same way, as we are joined to Christ, our old self is cut-off and buried with Him and we are raised to new life, through faith in Him.*

*Here, Paul emphasizes that through faith in Christ, **believers experience a spiritual circumcision**, which is not a physical act performed by human hands but a **transformation of the heart and soul**. This spiritual circumcision involves:*

***Putting off the old self:** Paul describes this circumcision as the putting off of the "old self," which is ruled by the flesh and characterized by sinful desires and actions. Through their union with Christ, believers are freed from the power of sin and are no longer bound by their old way of life.*

***Identification with Christ:** Believers are spiritually circumcised through their identification with Christ in His death and resurrection. Paul uses the imagery of baptism to illustrate this point, emphasizing that **believers are buried with Christ in baptism, symbolizing their death to sin, and raised with Him through faith in the power of God, symbolizing their new life in Christ.***

***Renewal and Transformation:** The spiritual circumcision experienced by believers results in **a renewal and transformation of the heart and soul**. They are no longer enslaved to sin but are empowered by the Holy Spirit to live a life characterized by righteousness, holiness, and obedience to God. According to v29b – **a person who has undergone this transformation, gets recognition from God; not from other people!***

### **Read Romans 3:1-8**

11. According to verses 1 and 2, what advantages are there in being a Jew?  
*They have been circumcised.*

*They have been entrusted with the very words of God! God gave them the huge privilege of receiving His Words and they wrote them down in His Holy Scriptures*

12. What conclusions does Paul make in verses 3 and 4 about the Jews' unfaithfulness and God's faithfulness.

*Even if some Jews are unfaithful to God; that doesn't nullify God being faithful – He always keeps His promises.*

*Even if the whole world is lying through its teeth, God is faithful and keeps His Word.*

13. What objection does Paul make in verse 5 regarding the unrighteousness of people and the righteousness of God?

*Paul says people's unrighteousness (sin against God) brings out God's righteousness more and more. So, should we see God as being unjust in bringing His wrath against people?*

*If people's wrongdoing only underlines and confirms God's right doing, and brings out God's righteousness more and more. Isn't it wrong of God to back people against the wall and be angry with people; if God can simply answer people's sin with more and more goodness?*

14. How does Paul defeat the objection of verse 5, with verses 6 to 8?

**Note:** This is a writing technique Paul uses a lot: he invents a “**straw man**” raising an objection; and then knocks the “**straw man**” down by defeating the objection!  
*The answer to the objection in verse 5 that God is unjust, is an emphatic No!*  
*V6 – How could God judge the world, if He was unjust.*

*As the MSG version says in vv7-8 - It's simply perverse to say, "If my lies serve to show off God's truth all the more gloriously, why blame me? I'm doing God a favor." Some people are actually trying to put such words in our mouths, claiming that we go around saying, "The more evil we do, the more good God does, so let's just do it!" That's pure slander, as I'm sure you'll agree.*

*In other words, Paul's saying people might argue – they can just keep on sinning and doing evil because God just keeps doing good. But that's an invalid argument; because remember God cannot abide sin and can't look at it; so, He doesn't want anyone to sin in the first place, let alone sin more and more! Sin and evil can never promote the glory of God!*

15. How do the following Old Testament passages relate to Romans 2:17-3:8:

**Deuteronomy 30:5-6**

*As God brings the people into the Promised Land; He promises them that He will make them prosperous and numerous. God also promises to circumcise their hearts and their descendants' hearts – so that they will love Him with all their heart and soul and live! Both Deuteronomy 30:5-6 and Romans 2:17-3:8 emphasize the importance of a circumcised heart towards God!*

### **Psalm 147:19-20**

*Both passages emphasize the privilege Jews have been given in their possession of God's Words and His Law. Both passages address the relationship between God's law and human responsibility or accountability. **They emphasize the significance of living in obedience to God's laws, rather than simply possessing knowledge of them, and highlight the need for genuine faith and transformation of the heart.***

### **Jeremiah 4:1-4**

*Jeremiah, like Paul, mentions the sin of idols and idolatry.*

*Jeremiah, like Paul, emphasizes the great need for our hearts to be circumcised; otherwise, God's wrath awaits!*

### **Ezekiel 36:24-32 (especially verse 26)**

*Both passages speak of the promise of transformation in the lives of God's people. In Ezekiel 36:24-32, God promises to give the Israelites a new heart and put His Spirit within them, enabling them to obey His laws. Similarly, in Romans 2:17-3:8, Paul addresses the need for internal transformation and emphasizes the importance of a circumcised heart, rather than just external adherence to the law.*

*While God promises transformation and renewal in Ezekiel 36, there is also an expectation of human responsibility. The Israelites are called to repentance and obedience, responding to God's grace and initiative in their lives. Similarly, in Romans 2:17-3:8, Paul emphasizes the accountability of the Jews who possess the law but fail to obey it, highlighting the importance of genuine faith and obedience.*

16. **Ponder:** If we can't keep God's Law fully, what's the point of God's Law and how can we be saved?

Even though we can't fully keep God's Law – the purpose of God's Law is multifaceted:

- God's Law serves **to reveal the standard of righteousness and expose human sinfulness**. It shows us our need for redemption and points us to God's grace and mercy (Romans 3:20)
- Although humans cannot perfectly keep the law, it still **provides moral guidelines for living in accordance with God's will**. It teaches us how to **love God and love others** (Matthew 22:37-40).
- The law provided **a framework for social order and justice** in ancient Israel. While some of its specific provisions may not apply directly today, its underlying **principles of justice and compassion** remain relevant today!
- The law foreshadowed the need for someone [**a Saviour**] to fix people's sin and the coming of Jesus Christ, **who fulfilled the law and brought about a new covenant of grace** (Matthew 5:17). Jesus' sacrificial death on the cross reconciled humanity with God, offering salvation to all who believe in Him (John 3:16).

We are saved by the ONE who can keep the law perfectly; namely Jesus!

What's the **BIG IDEA** of Romans 2:17-3:8?

*Universal accountability for sin*

*Hypocrisy of Jews*

*Circumcision of the Heart*

*Human sinfulness and God's faithfulness*



What **light globe moment** did you have in this study?

What **questions** do you have about the passages in this study?

*How females fitted into the covenant symbolized by the sign/seal of circumcision in the Old Testament!*

Share the verse that had a special meaning to you in this study?

**Romans 2:29:** *No, a person is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is **circumcision of the heart**, by the Spirit, not by the written code. Such a person's praise is not from other people, but from God.*

**Finish in prayer:** Thank God for the mercy and grace offered through Jesus. Ask God to teach us to be people of authentic faith; not just hearers of His Word but doers too! Ask God to “circumcise” our hearts through His Word and His Spirit.

## Study 5 – The Whole Human Race is...

Romans 3:9-26

*(Sermon on 03-Mar-2024)*

### Before we begin:

Remind yourself what the problem is for Jews and Gentiles from chapter 2?

*In Chapter 2:1-16, the Apostle Paul tackles those people who are sitting on the moral high-ground who point the finger at everyone else and their behaviour, but don't look at the mirror and have a look at their own behaviour. They won't escape God's judgment (2:3)*

*In Chapter 2:17-29, the Apostle Paul tackles the Jews who are self-confident and thinking mere possession of God's Law and Circumcision is enough, without actually being faithful to God! Paul concludes they and us, need to have a spiritual circumcision; a circumcision of the heart.*

What is righteousness and unrighteousness?

*Righteousness simply is: Being in a right relationship with God and approved by God.*

*Unrighteousness means the opposite: Not being in a right relationship with God and not being approved by God.*

*The problem is: we can't be right with God or approved by God – by anything we do ourselves – because as Paul will point out in this chapter – no-one is fully right with God – no-one can completely keep God's Law – and everyone falls short of God's perfect standards.*

*When we think we can make ourselves right with God and approved by God – we are actually being "self-righteous". Paul has already told us back in chapter 1 – that it's only through the Good News Gospel of Jesus – that we can be right with God – and we receive God's righteousness through faith in Jesus (Romans 1:17)*

### Read Romans 3:9-18

1. What conclusion does Paul make about Jews and Gentiles alike in verse 9?

*Jews don't have any advantage over Gentiles – when it comes to sin and rebellion against God. Even those the Jews were given God's Law and Circumcision – they still sin just like Gentiles. And so, Paul's conclusion is that Jews and Gentiles alike – are under the power of sin!*

## 2. List the seven effects of sin from verses 10 to 18?

v10 – *There is no-one righteous – not even one (quoting from Psalm 14:3). This is our **legal standing** before God. Remember we are born into sin because of Adam!*

v11a – *There is no one who understands! Here Paul is talking about our **minds**. Our core nature is corrupted by sin, so we can't fully understand God's truth. Paul's saying our thinking, because it's corrupted, can be blind to many truths.*

v11b – *There is no one who seeks God! Paul is addressing our **motives** here! People might complain that this is not true or fair what Paul is saying! And they might say they sought God when they first came to have faith in Jesus. But when we think about it; why did we come looking – was it our idea – or did God plant the idea in our head – that we were lost and we came looking? So, in fact, God came seeking us first! As Ephesians 2:8 says: For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—**and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God***

*Paul is not saying: No one seeks God for spiritual blessings or that no one seeks God to answer prayers or no one seeks to have spiritual power or peace or experiences. What Paul is saying is: No one, prompted by their own decision and acting in their own ability, **wants to find God and really know Him and be known by Him.***

v12 – *All have turned away – they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one! Paul is addressing our **will**! This has echoes of Isaiah 53:6: “We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned our own way” [baa baa doo baa baa!]. We have a propensity to want to go our own way, not God's way.*

vv13-14 – *Their throats are open graves, their tongues practice deceit. The poison of vipers is on our lips. Paul is addressing our **tongues**! The image is that of a grave with rotting bodies in it. Sinful words are signs of decay. We use our tongues to lie to protect our own interests, and to damage the*

*interests of others. As James says: “Likewise, the tongue is a small part of the body, but it makes great boasts. Consider what a great forest is set on fire by a small spark. The tongue also is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole body, sets the whole course of one’s life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell”*

*vv15-17 – Their feet are swift to shed blood; ruin and misery mark their ways, and the way of peace they do not know. Paul is addressing our **relationships**. This is how sin affects our relationships: we are after each other’s blood – sometimes literally, more often in seeking to push down those who get in our way. Why do we become so angry with people? Because they have blocked us from access to an idol – they have compromised our comfort, or are enjoying a relationship we feel we need. When we do not live enjoying God’s approval in the Gospel, we do not know peace ourselves, nor can we live in peace with others.*

*v18 – There is no fear of God before their eyes. Paul is addressing our **relationship to God**. If we think about it, if we genuinely feared God; we wouldn’t sin the way we do!*

*The fear of God is a central theme in the Bible. Psalm 111:10 – the fear of God is the beginning of wisdom.*

*Psalm 130:3-4 says:” If you, Lord, kept a record of sins, Lord, who could stand? But with you there is forgiveness, so that we can, with reverence, serve you”. The psalmist fears God because He forgives sins! So, the fear of God is not a servile, cringing fear of punishment but an inner attitude of awe, respect and sober, trembling joy before the greatness of God. Another way to look at it is Psalm 16:8 – “I keep my eyes always on God”. The Psalmist is saying “my secret is that I live my life keeping the greatness of God always before me; I always think of His glory, love and power and I live in light of Him!”*

*So, the fear of God is the antidote to everything in Paul’s catalogue of sin. So, when Paul says “no-one seeks God” – we must realize that sin has us running from God or sin makes us forget God and makes him unreal to us – and is the opposite to fearing Him. And when Paul says “our throats are like open graves” – it is only way God’s glory is unreal to us – that we can lie and harm with our tongue, or that we can fight with people!*

3. Do you agree with this catalogue of sin as a valid description of you?

*It's easy to argue the list; especially two surprising claims and the striking conclusion. Paul claims "no-one seeks God" and that "no-one does good" and concludes "There is no fear of God".*

*But as I think about each sin in the list; yes, it's me!*

*The next section explores those two claims.*

4. What do you make of verse 11: "**there is no one who seeks God**". Do you agree with this statement? (cf. John 6:37, 44, 65)

*In John 6:37 – Jesus says: All those the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never drive away.*

*In John 6:44 - Jesus says: No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws them, and I will raise them up at the last day.*

*In John 6:65 - Jesus says: This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless the Father has enabled them.*

*This means that anyone who is truly seeking God has been sought by God.*

*When we consider our own path to God, we need to realize that we did not seek Him out; He drew us to Him. We decided to put our faith in Him, only because He had decided to give us faith.*

5. What do you make of Paul's statement in verse 12: "**there is no one who does good, not even one**"? After all, many people (Christians and non-Christians) do many good things, using their talents and wealth in ways which are kind and generous and which make the world a better place. And the Lord Jesus Himself commanded us to do good works (Matthew 5:16). So, what do you think Paul means by this statement? Perhaps 1 Corinthians 10:31 – gives us a clue?

*1 Corinthians 10:31 says: "So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God".*

*The question we need to ask, is what was the motivation for doing good? For our own glory; or God's glory?*

*Charles Spurgeon tells this story:*

*A gardener grew a huge carrot. He decided to give it to his Prince because he loved his sovereign. As the gardener turned to leave, the Prince said "Here, my son, I want to give you some of my land so that you can produce and even greater crop. It is yours!"*

*A Nobleman heard about this incident and thought: “If that’s what the Prince gives the gardener for a carrot; what will he give me for one of my fine horses”. So, the nobleman came and gave the Prince a fine horse. The Prince said: “You expect me to give you as I did the gardener. I will not! You and the gardener are different; the gardener gave me the carrot; but you are giving yourself the horse!”*

*If you know God loves you because He sent Jesus; and you know there is nothing you can do or need to do but accept perfect righteousness from Jesus; then you can feed the hungry, visit the sick, and clothe the naked, and all of it will be done as a gift to God. But if you think you are going to get or keep your salvation by doing these good deeds; it is really yourself you are feeding; yourself you are clothing and yourself you are visiting. It is who we are serving in our hearts that matters, not how we are serving with our hands! Without faith in Christ, good deeds are not truly done for God, but for ourselves – and thus are not truly good.*

*This is why any goodness we have becomes sour. If we do good to gain God’s favour, blessing and salvation, and do well, we will become smug, superior and complacent; if we do badly, we will become anxious, self-pitying, and angry. The “good deeds” done outside trusting the Gospel will make a soul go sour. All of us have to understand this to be saved Christians rather than unsaved-but-religious people. The main difference between a Christian and a religious person is not so much their attitudes to their sins, but their attitude towards “good deeds”*

### **Read Romans 3:19-20**

3. What’s Paul’s conclusion about the law, our works of the law and our righteousness, in verses 19-20?

*Our works will never make us righteous in God’s eyes.*

*The law simply makes us aware (conscious) of our sin – and the need for a Saviour!*

Having talked about every one being unrighteous; Paul now tells us how we can become righteous; praise God for the “**But**” at the beginning of verse 21!

### **Read Romans 3:21-26**

4. Something new has turned up in verse 21; what is it?

*The righteousness of God – apart from the Law – has turned up!*

5. According to verse 22, how is righteousness given to us?

*This righteousness is given through FAITH in JESUS to all who believe in Him.*

6. What conclusion does Paul give about the whole human race in verses 22b and 23?

*We are all on the same level playing field – Jews and Gentiles – we all have sinned and fall short of God’s glory.*

7. If v23 is bad news; what’s the good news in verse 24? What does “**justified**” mean? What does “**redemption**” mean?

*The good news is Jesus justifies us and redeems us.*

*Justified means we are “declared not guilty of our sins” – justified – ‘just as if’ we never sinned – because Jesus has taken away our sins and forgiven us completely. Redeems means “to buy us back”. If you put something in a pawn shop – to get it back you have to “redeem” it – buy it back. Jesus pays the price (on the Cross) to buy us back to God – and make us right with God and approved by God.*

8. What “transaction” does Paul describe in verse 25? What does “**atonement**” mean?

*The transaction is: God presented Jesus (Christ) as a sacrifice for atonement.*

*Atonement means: making amends for a wrong.*

*Jesus makes amends for our wrong – by taking the death punishment we deserve of us and putting that death punishment on Himself. He is our SUBSTITUTE.*

*This atonement appeases (pacifies, placates) God’s wrath for sin.*

*You can think of atonement as act of Jesus making us – AT-ONE- with God again because Jesus has made peace between us and God!*

9. What reason is given in verse 26 for God allowing His Son to be the sacrifice for sin?

*God’s reason for doing this is to show that He is truly righteous. He ALWAYS does the right thing. He loves us but He cannot let sin go unpunished – but because He loves us so much – He allowed Jesus to be the substitutionary atonement for our sin – and in doing so balance His justice and mercy perfectly!*

10. **Ponder:** If you had a minute in a lift/elevator to explain to someone how we can be right with God, what would you say?

*A minute is roughly 100 written words:*

*‘The first people God created – Adam and Eve – sinned against God. That sin brought two things into the World – sin and death. We all sin (and can’t stop) and*

*we all die. As a result, we are separated from God. We can put that relationship right ourselves. So, God sent His Son Jesus – to defeat those two things. He got rid of the punishment for sin – by His death on a cross – so we are. And He got rid of death by rising again – so we can have eternal life in Heaven. Believe this and we’re right with God!’ [99 words]*

11. How do the following Old Testament passages relate to Romans 3:9-26?

**Psalm 14:1-3**

*Both passages emphasize the universal condition of sinfulness among humanity and the need for divine intervention for redemption. Romans 3:9-26 builds upon this by presenting Jesus Christ as the solution to the problem of sin, offering salvation to all who believe in him.*

**Psalm 53:1-3**

*Both passages speak to the concept of a righteous individual suffering for the sins of others. Isaiah 53:1-3 prophesies about a suffering servant, while Romans 3:9-26 presents Jesus Christ as the fulfillment of that prophecy of a suffering servant, whose sacrifice brings redemption to all who believe.*

**Ecclesiastes 7:20**

*Ecclesiastes 7:20 echoes Paul’s statement that there is no-one righteous on the Earth, and that there is no-one who does right and never sins. Which is why we need Jesus – who is sinless!*

**Genesis 15:6**

*Abraham believed God – and it was credited to Him as righteousness. In the same way, when we believe Jesus made atonement for us; we are credited with His righteousness.*

**Exodus 34:6-7**

*The connection between these passages lies in the tension between God's justice and mercy. Exodus 34:6-7 reveals God's mercy and forgiveness, but also His commitment to justice. Romans 3:9-26 elaborates on this tension, showing how God's righteousness and justice are satisfied through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, who atones for the sins of humanity.*

### **Isaiah 53:4-6**

*The connection between these passages lies in the concept of substitutionary atonement. Isaiah 53:4-6 speaks of the suffering servant taking upon himself the punishment for the sins of others, while Romans 3:9-26 elaborates on how Jesus Christ fulfills this role, becoming the sacrificial Lamb whose death reconciles humanity to God.*

### **Leviticus 16:1-16**

*The connection between Leviticus 16:1-16 and Romans 3:9-26 lies in the theme of atonement and sacrifice for sin. In Leviticus, the high priest makes atonement for the sins of the people through the sacrifices prescribed by God's law. These sacrifices serve as a temporary covering for sin, anticipating the ultimate atonement to be provided by Jesus Christ.*

*In Romans, Paul explains how Jesus Christ fulfills and surpasses the sacrificial system of the Old Testament. Jesus becomes the ultimate and perfect sacrifice, offering Himself once and for all for the sins of humanity. Through His death and resurrection, Jesus provides complete atonement and reconciliation with God for all who believe in Him.*

*Therefore, Leviticus 16:1-16 foreshadows the atonement provided by Jesus Christ, while Romans 3:9-26 elaborates on how Jesus fulfills and completes the sacrificial system, offering redemption and forgiveness to all who trust in Him.*

### **What's the ***BIG IDEA*** of Romans 3:9-26?**

*Overall, the big idea of Romans 3:9-26 is the **universal problem of sin and the solution of sin** - in salvation through faith in Jesus Christ. Paul emphasizes that no one is exempt from sin, but through faith in Jesus, all can receive the gift of righteousness and be reconciled to God.*



What ***light globe moment*** did you have in this study?

What ***questions*** do you have about the passages in this study?

**Share the verse** that had a special meaning to you in this study?

*V22 - This righteousness is given through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe.*

**Finish in prayer:** Ask God to forgive us for our shortcomings and trespasses. Thank God for the gift of His righteousness through faith in Jesus. Give thanks and praise for the beauty of God's perfect plan, where the sacrifice of Jesus satisfies both God's justice and mercy.

## Study 6 – By faith alone – the example of Abraham

Romans 3:27-4:25

*(Sermon on 10-Mar-2024)*

### Before we begin:

What is faith?

*Faith is trusting in God's character, belief in God's Word; having confidence in God's promises; and showing loyalty and obedience to God.*

*Hebrews 11:1 defines faith as: **faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see.***

*So, faith is believing without necessarily seeing or having proof/evidence.*

### Read Romans 3:27-31

1. Why is there no room for boasting? What's required in verse 27?

*Boasting in Greek comes from the battlefield where a soldier gets the confidence to advance into battle against the enemy – by saying in your heart or shouting at the enemy – 'we're stronger than you – we have more weapons – we have a bigger army than you!' That's what Goliath did in 1 Samuel 17:8-11*

*Paul talks about how he boasted before he was a Christian in Philippians 3:5-11 – he said – he was a Hebrew of Hebrews – a Pharisee – full of zeal'. But then he says he considered all that rubbish (Phil 3:8) because He gained Christ.*

*That's why there's no room for boasting because there is nothing WE can do to be saved. Only Jesus can save us!*

*What is required is FAITH in Him.*

2. What does it mean to be "**justified by faith**" in verse 28?

*Justified means being 'declared not guilty' or 'proven right'*

*So, we are declared not guilty of our sins and proven right with God – NOT by any works we do – or boasting in ourselves – but BY FAITH in JESUS.*

3. Why does Paul emphasize '**justification by faith**' apart from works of the law?

*Because works cannot get us to Heaven.*

*Works simply accompany faith as a response – which says thank you to Jesus.*

*Besides we cannot complete keep the LAW – so our works can't save us.*

*Paul also says “apart from works of the law” because the law wasn’t given to the Gentiles and he’s going to make the point next, that Jews and Gentiles are equal.*

4. According to verses 29 & 30, is God the God of Jews only or also of Gentiles?  
*There is only ONE God – and He is the God of the Jews AND the Gentiles.*

5. What equality do we discover in verse 30?

*Whether they are circumcised Jews or uncircumcised Gentiles – they are BOTH saved and justified in the same way – **through faith in Jesus** – not works.*

*Paul’s uses this argument at the Jewish Council – in Acts 15 – because some Jews were saying new Gentile Christians had to be circumcised!*

6. Does faith cancel out the need for the law? (verse 31)

*Not at all! We need the Law – so that we are conscious of our sin (3:19) and to show we can’t save ourselves because we can fully obey it – and to show we need Jesus to save us from our sins.*

*The Law must be kept – and in Jesus – it is kept!*

*2 Corinthians 5:21 – God made Him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God*

*People might argue – isn’t the Law null and void – if Jesus simply gives us His righteousness – through our faith?*

*But that’s not the case.*

*If we look at the law – outside of our faith in Jesus.*

*We see the Law is a picture of the perfect person. We see someone who forgives freely, blesses the enemy, is unfailingly generous, pure in thought as well as deeds etc. It’s a beautiful picture of what humanity could and should be. But it is also a terrifying standard, because every day in every way we fail to meet it.*

*So, if we are obeying the law to be saved, we must do one of two things:*

*EITEHR, change the law and make its requirements easier – so instead of ‘love your neighbour as yourself’ – we might have ‘don’t drink’ or ‘you must go to church’*

OR – we are crushed by the law, because we know we can't meet its requirements. We will either hate ourselves for failing or as Martin Luther did, we will come to hate God because we're incapable of meeting His standards!

Whichever we do, we will nullify the Law! Only the Gospel allows us to recognize and uphold the perfect standards of the Law, because we know the Law matters enough to God to bring death; but we also know it no longer means our death. We don't need to ignore the law we cannot keep or be crushed by the law we cannot keep. We are free to have a right respect for moral absolutes and to care deeply about justice. We can be secure in ourselves, non-judgmental of others, forgiving to those who wrong us, and not crushed by our own flaws and failings. The Gospel frees us to uphold the law!

### Read Romans 4:1-3

7. How is Abraham described in verse 1? Why?

*Our forefather according to the flesh.*

8. According to verse 2, what would be the implication if Abraham were justified by works?

*If Abraham was justified by his works – he would be able to boast. But he wasn't justified by his works – so he has nothing to boast about before God!*

9. In verse 3, Paul quotes from the Old Testament (Genesis 15:6). What does the quote "**Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness**" mean? How does this Old Testament quotation support Paul's argument about justification by faith?

*The word "counted" in Greek is an accounting term. To credit something is to confer a status that wasn't there before. Like putting a figure in the "credit" column in the accounting ledger.*

*So, when Abraham believed in God – "counted to him as righteousness" – means God treated Abraham as though he was living a righteous life. Abraham's faith was not righteousness; but God counted it as if it were. So, in other words, Abraham was not in himself righteous, perfect and blameless (no human is that!) – but God treated Abraham as though he were. Martin Luther put it this way: that Christians are simul Justus et peccator – at the same time both righteous and sinful!*

### Read Romans 4:4-8

10. What comparison does Paul make in verses 4 and 5?

*When someone works for an employer – their wages are NOT a gift – their employer is obligated to pay them.*

*Whereas salvation is a gift and not “worked for” for wages.*

*If salvation is not a gift, then God is “obliged” to save us; just as an employer is obliged to pay us. And that runs against the whole tenor of the Bible – see Genesis 15:6 – ‘Abraham believed God and he credited it to him in righteousness’*

11. Who does Paul quote in verses 6 to 8 to backup his point about righteousness apart from works? (cf. Psalm 32:1-2)

*Paul quotes King David and Psalm 32:1-2.*

*“Blessed are those whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. Blessed is the one whose sin the Lord will never count against them.”*

### Read Romans 4:9-12

12. According to verse 9, is the blessing of faith and righteousness only for the circumcised or also for the uncircumcised?

*This blessing of faith and righteousness is for both the circumcised (Jews) and the uncircumcised (Gentiles)*

13. In verse 10, Paul discusses the timing of Abraham's faith and circumcision.

Why is this timing significant in the context of the argument?

*The timing of Abraham's faith and the credit of righteousness was BEFORE (Genesis 15) he was circumcised (in Genesis 17). This is important because at that point Abraham was just like the Gentiles; and uncircumcised. And yet Abraham, is the father of the Israel nation – from Abraham – came Isaac – and then Jacob (who was renamed Israel) – and Jacob's 12 sons were the tribes of Israel.*

14. According to verse 11, what was the purpose of Abraham receiving the sign of circumcision?

*Circumcision was a “seal” of the righteousness that he had by faith before he was circumcised. His circumcision was an “outward” sign of his “internal” faith.*

15. In verse 11 & 12, why does Paul describe Abraham as the father of all who believe, both circumcised and uncircumcised?

*Because Abraham was saved by faith without circumcision, then uncircumcised non-Jewish people will also be saved by that faith, without circumcision. The chronology of Abraham's life is the proof that God is the God of the Jew and Gentile and justifies both groups on the same grounds – through that same faith. So, Abraham is like the **spiritual father** of all believers! Because God promised in Genesis 22:18 - that one of Abraham's offspring would bless ALL nations (Jews and Gentiles) – and that offspring of course is Jesus! So, both Jews and Gentiles have faith in that same Jesus – whose great great great... grandfather is Abraham.*

### **Read Romans 4:13-15**

16. According to verse 13, how did Abraham receive God's promise?

*Abraham received God's promise through the righteousness that comes by faith. Abraham did not receive God's promise through the Law. Remember, the Law was given until Moses' time (Exodus 20)*

17. In verse 14, Paul discusses the relationship between faith and inheritance. How does he argue that if the law is the basis for inheritance, faith becomes null and the promise void?

*His argument is the Law cannot be the route to being saved. If we live by the works of the Law, then we are relying on our wages rather than receiving God's gift. If God's promise relies on any kind of law-keeping, it is "worthless" because no-one keeps the law perfectly – as Paul has shown at great lengths in chapters 2 and 3. The Law can only show us where we fall short.*

18. According to verse 15, what role does the law play in the context of God's promises?

*The Law shows us God's standard – and because no-one can keep it fully – it ultimately has to bring God's wrath at the sin that breaks the Law. Of course, if there was no Law – then there would not be any transgressions (sin). For example – as on the German autobahns, there is no speed limit – so you can't break the speed limit!*

### **Read Romans 4:16-25**

19. According to verse 16 how does the promise come? What clarification is given on the "types" of Abraham's offspring?

*The Promise can only come by faith – so that it may be by grace – which is God’s free gift and undeserved favour. The clarification on types of Abraham’s offspring is both those of the Law (Jews from Moses’ time onwards) and those who simply have faith (Gentiles without the Law)*

20. How is Abraham described in verse 17? Where does this description originate? (cf. Genesis 17:5)

*Abraham was originally called Abram. But God changed his name to Abraham which means “Father of many nations”. Good kids’ song “Father Abraham had many sons, many sons had Father Abraham”*

21. According to verses 18 to 22, how did Abraham demonstrate faith in seemingly impossible circumstances?

*Abraham left his homeland at 75 years of age and went to the land God sent him. At 100 years of age – Abraham believed God’s promise that his wife, Sarah (90 years old) would have a son. Abraham showed great faith in waiting many years for God to fulfil this promise!*

22. What can we learn from Abraham’s example of unwavering faith?

*To trust in God’s timing. To not doubt. God always keeps His promises – even if these promises seem unlikely – even impossible or inexplicable to us!*

23. How does Paul explain that Abraham being “credited as righteousness” also applies to us?

*The expression it is “credited as righteousness” can also apply to us – because we believe in something even more unlikely/impossible than Sarah having a child at 90 years of age. We have faith in Jesus’ resurrection and that is “credited to us as righteousness”. Praise God!*

24. How does the resurrection of Jesus contribute to our justification?

*Jesus died for our sins to be forgiven. In Jesus’ death we were justified – proven right with God because of Jesus. In Jesus’ resurrection, Jesus also tackles the other problem we face – which is death. By Jesus defeating death, we are made right for God to the extent we now have the promise of eternal life in Heaven – and when we face God we are justified – just as if we had never sinned.*

25. **Ponder:** How can we be like Abraham today?

*In Romans 4, Paul uses Abraham as an example of faith and justification by faith rather than works. He emphasizes that Abraham was justified by faith before he was circumcised or had performed any works of the law. Here are some ways we can emulate Abraham's faith today:*

**Believe in God's promises:** Like Abraham, we can believe in God's promises even when circumstances seem impossible. Abraham believed God's promise of a son despite his and Sarah's old age (Romans 4:18-21).

**Trust in God's character:** Abraham's faith was rooted in his trust in God's character. He believed that God was faithful and able to fulfill what He had promised (Romans 4:21). Similarly, we can trust in God's faithfulness, goodness, and sovereignty in our lives.

**Obey God's commands:** Abraham demonstrated his faith through obedience. When God called him to leave his homeland and go to a land that God would show him, Abraham obeyed (Hebrews 11:8). Likewise, we can obey God's commands and follow His guidance in our lives, even when it requires stepping out in faith.

**Rely on God's provision:** Abraham trusted in God's provision and intervention in his life. He believed that God would provide a sacrifice when he was called to offer his son Isaac (Genesis 22:8). We can also rely on God's provision and trust that He will meet our needs according to His will.

**Persist in faith:** Abraham's faith was tested throughout his life, but he persisted in trusting God. Despite setbacks and failures, Abraham continued to believe in God's promises (Romans 4:20). Similarly, we can persevere in faith, trusting God's promises even in the midst of challenges and uncertainties.

Overall, we can be like Abraham today by **having faith in God's promises, trusting in His character, obeying His commands, relying on His provision, and persisting in faith even in difficult times. Through faith, we can experience the same justification and blessings that Abraham received.**

### Read **Genesis 15:1-6**

26. How does Genesis 15:1-6 relate to Romans 3:27-4:25?

*Genesis 15:1-6 and Romans 3:27-4:25 both emphasize the **central role of faith in God's promise of righteousness through faith**. Abraham's example serves as a foundational illustration of **justification by faith**, which Paul expounds upon in his letter to the Romans, emphasizing that **righteousness comes through faith in God's promises rather than through works of the law**.*

What's the **BIG IDEA** of Romans 3:27-4:25?

**Salvation by faith alone (sola fide)**



What **light globe moment** did you have in this study?

What **questions** do you have about the passages in this study?

Share the verse that had a special meaning to you in this study?

***Romans 4:3 - What does Scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness."***

**Finish in prayer:** Thank God that our justification is not based on our own merits but on the righteousness that comes through faith in Jesus. Thank God for the assurance that this promise is for all God's children, Jew and Gentile alike, as we follow in the footsteps of Abraham, our father in faith.

## Study 7 – What Justification Brings - The Hope of Glory

Romans 5:1-11

*(Sermon on 17-Mar-2024)*

**Before we begin:** Remind yourself what “**justification**” is.

*Dictionary definition: The action of showing something to be right or reasonable.*

*In Theology: The action of declaring or making someone righteous (right with God and approved by God)*

*Justification = “just as if I’d never sinned”*

*Because of what Jesus has done by dying on the cross for our sins to be forgiven; when we put faith in His death on the cross; we are declared right before God and declared not-guilty of our sins and do not face punishment for our sins either – Jesus has done it all!*

### Read Romans 5:1-5

1. What does being “**justified through faith**” give us in verse 1?

*Our faith in what Jesus has done on the cross, means we are right with God and it gives us “peace with God”*

2. What does it mean to have “**peace with God**”?

*This is NOT peace OF God – that surpasses all understanding (Philippians 4:7) – this is peace WITH God.*

*“Peace with God” means that the broken relationship we have with God because of our sins – which deserves God’s wrath (righteous anger) - has been fixed and we are now reconciled with God into a right relationship with Him. This reconciliation occurs because of what Jesus did on the cross and was not brought about by anything we did!*

3. What does being “**justified through faith**” give us in verse 2?

*It gives us access to this grace in which we now stand. And we can boast in the hope of the glory of God.*

4. What have we “**gained access**” to?

*The grace of our Lord Jesus in which we stand. It's like because of Jesus' death and resurrection, which came about because of God's grace (free gift) in sending Him as a Saviour; we can stand before God justified – as though we hadn't sinned. A good image of this is the curtain in the temple being torn in two (Matthew 25:51; Mark 15:38 and Luke 23:45), at Jesus' death. This was symbolic in saying – those temple animal sacrifices made to God on behalf of people for their sin, are no longer necessary – Jesus' sacrifice is sufficient for sin – and the way or access to God is now open to all who believe in Jesus.*

*Because we have gained access to God's grace and can stand before Him justified – Paul says – we can boast in the hope of the glory of God.*

*The glory of God encompasses all of the following:*

- *God's radiant splendour which we see now but will in the end be fully displayed*
- *God's glory continually revealed in all we see in Creation in the Heavens and the Earth*
- *God's glory already uniquely revealed in the incarnation of His Son - the Word made flesh – and in Jesus' death and resurrection*
- *And one day God's glory will be fully disclosed – first, when Jesus returns and appears 'with great power and glory' (Mark 13:26; Titus 2:13); second, we will not only see His glory but be changed into it (1 John 3:2; Col 3:4) and so that He will 'be glorified in His holy people' (2 Thes 1:10)*
- *Then as redeemed people, who were created to be 'the image and glory of God' (1 Cor 11:7; Gen 1:26ff; 9:6; James 3:9) but now through sin 'fall short of God's glory (Rom 3:23) will again and in full measure share in His glory (Romans 8:16).*
- *And of course, we will experience the full glory of God in Heaven*

5. What surprising thing do we “**glory**” in, in verse 3?

*In our sufferings!*

*This does not necessarily mean the trials and tribulations of life – like aches and pains, fears and frustrations, deprivations or disappointments but the Greek word (thlipseis) literally means pressures and refers to the opposition and persecutions received from a hostile world because we are Christians. The same word is used in John 16:33 -when Jesus warns His disciples that 'in this world' they would 'have trouble'. Jesus says: “I have told you these things, so that in me you may have*

*peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."*

*What attitude are Christians to have in these sufferings?*

*Far from being stoic – we are to rejoice.*

*This is not masochism – the sickness of finding pleasure in pain.*

*It is rather the recognition that there is a divine rationale behind suffering.*

*First, suffering is the one and only path to glory. It was for Jesus; and so, it is for Christians. Paul will tell us later on in Romans 8:17 – we share in Jesus' suffering in order that we may also share in His glory.*

*Secondly, suffering leads to glory in the end; in the meantime, it leads to maturity. Suffering can be productive, if we respond to it positively; and not with anger or bitterness. We know this from the experience of God's people in every generation.*

6. What does our suffering produce in verses 3 & 4?

*Suffering produces **perseverance** [the characteristic of a person who is not swayed from their deliberate purpose and their loyalty to faith and piety by even the greatest persecutions and sufferings] – other words that could be used are: endurance; steadfastness and constancy*

*Perseverance leads to **character** – the Greek word for character here means the quality of someone who has been tried and tested and passed the test. It shows they have a mature character – like a veteran soldier rather than a raw recruit!*

*Character leads to **hope** – the Greek word here means an expectation of good.*

*Unlike our use of hope in everyday language – this hope is a certain hope – and so for a Christian – hope is the 'joyful and confident expectation of eternal salvation'.*

7. What's unique about the "**hope**" we have in verse 5?

*This type of hope is different to our everyday language hope – because it comes with God's love wrapped around it – and poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, when we believe in Jesus! And remember, God's love never fails – so we can never be disappointed in this hope that Paul talks about.*

**Read Romans 5:6-11**

8. What does Paul say about God's timing in sending Jesus?

*Paul expands on why Christian hope is a certain hope.*

*Because God sent Jesus to die for us – when we were powerless (unable to save ourselves!) – and He died for ungodly people!*

*Also, God's timing was after He had sent prophets and even angels to foretell the coming of a Saviour Messiah; and then He sent His only Son to die for us.*

9. What's incredible about Jesus' death for people in verses 6 & 7?

*Jesus died for the "ungodly".*

*Paul argues that very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person (probably referring to somebody whose uprightness is rather cold, clinical and unattractive), though for a good person (whose goodness is warm, generous and appealing) someone might possibly dare to die. But Jesus died for all ungodly people to have the chance to be saved and forgiven their sins; even the people who killed Him, still can repent and be saved!*

10. How did God demonstrate his love for us in verse 8?

*But whilst we were still sinners; neither righteous or good but ungodly, enemies and powerless, Christ died for us!*

11. What are we saved from in verse 9? Why?

*We are saved from God's wrath (righteous anger); which Paul mention way back in Romans 1:18-32. We only saved because of Jesus – because Jesus' blood has justified us – that is - made us right with God and approved by God*

*We have already been saved from God's wrath now because of the Cross of Jesus but we are also at the end of history, when there is the Day of Judgment and God's wrath is poured out on those who have rejected Jesus; we will be saved from that wrath too!*

*As John 5:24 puts it: "Very truly I tell you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be judged but has crossed over from death to life."*

12. Verse 10 says we were reconciled to Jesus through His death; what do we gain through Jesus' resurrection? (cf. Romans 8:34; Hebrews 7:25)

*Romans 8:34 – We are not condemned – and because Jesus rose – He sits at God's right hand and intercedes for us all the time*

*Hebrews 7:25 -Because Jesus is alive and active; He saves us completely and is able to intercede for all who believe.*

*Because we are reconciled with God through Jesus and because Jesus is alive; Jesus is in constant communication with the Father – earnestly and humbly asking on behalf.*

12. Why and through whom, are we able/allowed to boast in verse 11?

*The word for boast here in verse 11 also means to rejoice!*

*Even though Paul has condemned the Jews in 2:17 for boasting about their relationship with God; here Paul says we are allowed to boast in God; not because of anything special about us but through the fact that Jesus has reconciled us back to God – we can boast that we are saved and justified sinners all because of Jesus! What joy there is in being on Jesus' team!*

13. **Case Study:** Consider a specific difficulty or trial you have experienced as a Christian (it may be something you are experiencing right now). Ask yourself the following questions

a. Did it lead you to focus and to single-mindedness? Did it help you sift out the unimportant from the important? Did it help you focus your attention more on prayer and on what God has done for you?

*Yes, I was able to refocus and see a) what a privilege it is to be a Christian and be on Team Jesus; and b) what an honour it is to be a Minister of our church family and c) I was able to commit to praying for God's wisdom and strength so that suffering could produce perseverance and then character and then hope of the glory of God to come.*

b. Did it lead to maturity and confidence having been through so much? Are you a less jittery person; a less fearful person?

*Yes, it did lead to maturity (I think) and confidence. Jitters and fears and doubts are still there; but in time, I pray, I will become more confident being on Team Jesus!*

c. Did it lead to a deeper experience of God's presence and love? Did you find a greater closeness?

*Yes, as I draw near to God, I feel his presence and love in my life; and a greater closeness and dependency on Him!*

d. If your suffering did not lead to this

- i. Was it a failure of your will? Do you simply fail to spend time with God in worship and reflection? Did you disobey God in some way to escape the difficult situation?

N/A

- ii. Was it a failure to understand the Gospel? Did the suffering make you doubt God's love? Did you see the suffering as a punishment from God, instead of God working to bring you closer?

N/A

14. **Ponder:** Does anything make you doubt you will reach glory? How do these verses from Romans 5:1-11 encourage you?

*It's clear from this passage that the hope of the glory of God is a "certain" or "sure" hope – not a "uncertain" or "unsure" hope.*

15. **Ponder:** The Greek word used for "**boast**" in verse 11 is better translated as "**rejoice**". As a Christian what things cause you to rejoice in the Lord?

- *Salvation – through the gift of grace in Jesus' death and resurrection*
- *God's love*
- *Forgiveness*
- *God's Word to read, study, meditate upon and apply to our lives*
- *Certain hope of Heaven and eternal life*
- *Fellowship with our church family and fellow believers*
- *Prayer*
- *Spiritual gifts received*
- *Transformation of our lives through Jesus*
- *God's Creation and creatures*
- *Teaching adults and children from God's Word*
- *Mission partnership – so we can share the incredibly Good News of Jesus*

## Read **Isaiah 52:13-53:12**

16. How does Isaiah 52:13-53:12 relate to Romans 5:1-11?

*In Isaiah 52:13-53:12, often referred to as the "**Suffering Servant**" passage, the prophet Isaiah foretells the **suffering** and atoning **sacrifice** of the Messiah. It describes how the Servant of the Lord would bear the sins of many, be despised and rejected, and ultimately bring salvation through His sacrificial death. This passage emphasizes the substitutionary nature of the Servant's suffering, highlighting how His death would bring redemption and healing to humanity.*

*In Romans 5:1-11, the apostle Paul explains the significance of Jesus' death and resurrection for believers. Paul begins by affirming the believer's justification by faith, emphasizing that through faith in Jesus Christ, believers have peace with God and access to His grace. He then explains that this peace and reconciliation with God were made possible through the death of Jesus Christ, who died for the ungodly. Paul emphasizes the love of God demonstrated in Christ's sacrifice, highlighting that while humanity was still sinners, Christ died for them, reconciling them to God.*

*The connection between these passages lies in their **shared emphasis on the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins and the reconciliation of humanity with God**. Both passages highlight the substitutionary nature of Christ's death, emphasizing that He bore the sins of many and **suffered on behalf of humanity to bring about salvation and reconciliation**. They underscore the depth of God's love and grace toward humanity, demonstrated in Christ's sacrificial death, which brings peace, forgiveness, and reconciliation to all who believe. Also, as Jesus suffered to give us salvation, we must suffer to – not to gain salvation – but as a means to identify with Jesus' suffering and share in His work (see Romans 8:17 and Philippians 3:10) – and as a means to grow in faith, perseverance, character and hope.*

*Suffering can also serve as a catalyst for spiritual growth and maturity. Through trials and hardships, Christians may develop virtues such as perseverance, faith, humility, and compassion. Suffering can deepen one's reliance on God and lead to a greater understanding of His grace and sufficiency.*

*Suffering is also a way of bearing witness to our faith in Jesus and may encourage believers to persevere and for non-believers to belief.*

What's the **BIG IDEA** of **Romans 5:1-11**?

*What justification by faith in Jesus brings*

*Or*

*The result of Justification*



What **light globe moment** did you have in this study?

What **questions** do you have about the passages in this study?

**Share the verse** that had a special meaning to you in this study?

***Romans 5:8** - But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*

**Finish in prayer:** Give thanks to God for the hope of God's glory and that we can stand in the grace that comes through our Lord Jesus Christ. Ask God to help us to find endurance in moments of suffering, knowing that it produces character and, ultimately, a hope that does not disappoint. Ask God to help us to grow strong in our faith.

## Appendix 1

### Approximate Dates of Paul's Letters

Letter	Date
1 Thessalonians	52 AD
2 Thessalonians	52 AD
Galatians	55-57 AD
1 Corinthians	57 AD
2 Corinthians	57 AD
<b>Romans</b>	<b>57-58AD</b>
Ephesians	62 AD
Philippians	62 AD
Colossians	62 AD
Philemon	63 AD
Titus	64-65 AD
1 Timothy	64-65 AD
2 Timothy	66-67 AD

**Studies prepared by Paul O'Rourke**  
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**Resources:**

The MacArthur Study Bible

New Bible Commentary (Carson, France, Moyter & Wenham)

Romans 1 to 7 for you (Timothy Keller)

The Message of Romans (John Stott)

Romans (Geoffrey B. Wilson)

Romans 1 to 8 (William Hendrikson)

The Epistle to Romans (Floyd E. Hamilton]

**Notes/Prayer Points**