

Right in God's Sight

Studies from the Book of Romans

Lesson 1

Romans 1:1–17

You are about to embark on a twenty week lesson series based upon the Book of Romans. Your success will depend upon the seriousness of your commitment! Understand that the Bible is the single greatest, most important book ever written and, as such, it commands our respect and deserves our attention. It is God Himself speaking His instructions to mankind, putting forth His answers for people of all ages in all walks of life. It has never been more desperately needed than it is today! In the *hands* of believers, the Bible is a weapon to wield in spiritual warfare. In the *hearts* of believers, it is a mirror that reflects God's holiness, reveals man's sinfulness, and transforms individuals into God's likeness.

The purpose of God's Word is that we might know Him and do His will here on earth, as revealed through the person and work of His Son, Jesus Christ. He is the One promised and prophesied about in the Old Testament and who is beautifully depicted in all His truth throughout the New Testament. The goal of personal Bible study is to learn to hear the Lord's voice in order that you may know how to do the Lord's will. Emphasis is placed on reading, meditating, memorizing, and applying your learning to daily life. Since "*all Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness*" (2 Timothy 3:16), God desires that you become not just a *hearer*, but also a *doer* of the word (James 1:22).

Please keep the following helpful hints in mind . . .

- ✚ Discipline yourself to a regular daily time and place to be alone with God.
- ✚ Ask Him to help you be diligent in your commitment.
- ✚ Begin each day's study with a word of prayer for God to open your eyes to see and your ears to hear what He has for you.
- ✚ Start slowly and pace yourself, allowing sufficient time each day (approximately 20–30 min.) to complete a portion of your lesson. Don't rush this process. If you wait to do your lesson until the day or night before meeting with your group, you will miss out on opportunities for God to speak with you.
- ✚ Practice your scripture memorization each day.
- ✚ The Bible is its own best commentator and the Holy Spirit is the best interpreter. For study purposes, avoid using written commentaries for your answers.
- ✚ Use this time to be still in the Lord's presence. *Listen—learn—live—*what He speaks to your heart. This is communion the way God intends for it to be!

Overview of Romans

“Our calling is not primarily to be holy men and women, but to be proclaimers of the gospel of God . . . Paul was not conscious of himself. He was recklessly abandoned, totally surrendered, and separated for one purpose—to proclaim the gospel of God.”

Oswald Chambers

Date: The Apostle Paul wrote the letter while in Corinth, toward the end of his third missionary journey in A.D. 57.

Theme: Called Paul’s greatest work, Romans is one of thirteen epistles in the New Testament. In it God offers His gift of righteousness to everyone who comes to Jesus Christ by faith.

Purpose: Paul’s purpose was three-fold: (1) to prepare the congregation for his long-awaited visit to Rome; (2) to build up the believers in their faith; (3) to encourage this mixed group of Jews and Gentiles to work together in harmony.

Key words: Three words appear repeatedly—faith (62 times), righteousness (66 times), and law (78 times).

Key chapters: 6–8, which answer key questions such as how to be delivered from sin, how to understand grace, and how to live victoriously in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Key verses: *“For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, ‘The just shall live by faith.’”* (1:16–17)

“But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe. For there is no difference; for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed, to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.” (3:21–26)

Key to understanding: An in-depth look reveals crucial fundamentals of salvation and sanctification: the believer is saved from the *past penalty* of sin, the *present power* of sin, and the *future presence* of sin. By faith, he/she is brought into a new position, taking on the righteousness of Christ. This righteousness becomes manifested through a change in the believer’s relationship with God and with others.

The Book of Romans is so foundational to the Christian faith that it has been called the “Constitution of Christianity.” The extensive theology contained in the book is balanced by the exhortation that not only is the Good News of Jesus Christ to *be believed*, it is also to *be lived!*

Romans 1:1–7

Paul's Salutations

Verses 1–17 of chapter one are an introduction to the book and can be separated into three divisions: Paul's introduction of himself and greeting to the church (1–7); Paul's desire to come for a visit (8–15); and the main theme of Paul's letter (16–17).

Read Romans 1:1–17.

1. From your initial reading of the passage, record your first impressions.
 - a. What can you determine about Paul's calling?

 - b. What does Paul know about the believers in Rome?

 - c. What do you learn about the message Paul has been called to share?

Look Closer . . .

Paul declares himself to be a *bondservant* of Christ. In other words, his life was no longer his own. Take a closer look at a few of Paul's writings that give you greater insight into how Paul viewed his position. Briefly note your findings.

- *His personal perspective* – 1 Corinthians 6:20; Galatians 2:20

- *His ministry perspective* – 1 Corinthians 9:19–23; 2 Corinthians 4:5

The apostle writes as one who is passionate about his role in proclaiming the amazing Good News of salvation.

2. Who does Paul say first proclaimed this news? vv. 2–4
 - a. Who is prophesied as the essence of "the Good News of God?"

 - b. In His humanity, through whose family line did Jesus descend?

(For a better understanding of this Old Testament prophecy, read God's promise given to David through the prophet Nathan in 2 Samuel 7:12–14a.) Jesus has always been God's Son; however, following His death and resurrection, He was shown to be the "Son of God with power" according to the Holy Spirit (v. 4).

Paul states in verse 5 that he is writing to the believers in Rome who are *called to be*

saints—those who were willing to “believe and obey” (see also 16:26). One of the repeated themes in Romans is that true faith will always be expressed in obedience—the sincere determination to live it out! The Roman Christians were among those who believed and obeyed the Good News about Jesus Christ. Paul wanted to claim them along with the other Gentiles to whom God had called him to minister.

3. Personal: If you were to size up your efforts at this point in your Christian walk, how serious have you been to live it out? (Circle one; please explain.)

No effort at all

Halfhearted

Wholehearted

Memory Verse:

“This Good News tells us how God makes us right in His sight. This is accomplished from start to finish by faith. As the Scriptures say, ‘It is through faith that a righteous person has life.’” Romans 1:17 NLT

Word Wealth:

Using the resources you have on hand (i.e., additional Bible translations, dictionary, Bible dictionary, concordance, etc.), write a definition for the words below.

bondservant (1:1) _____

apostle (1:1) _____

gospel (1:1, 9, 16) _____

saints (1:7) _____

Romans 1:8–15

Paul's Desire to Visit Rome

Paul continues his letter by expressing his thanks for the Roman believers and stating his desire to come in person for a visit. Paul's writing reflects his appreciation for what God has done and his realization that the call of God is accompanied by a great responsibility.

Read Romans 1:8–15.

1. What do you learn about the frequency of Paul's prayers for the believers in Rome? What does this reveal about Paul's heart? v. 9
 - a. What condition must be met if he is to come? v. 10
 - b. These Christians were not attempting to hide their faith. In fact, how far had word of this news spread? v. 8

For Group Discussion . . .

- ❖ Do you belong to a church that is known for its faith? What traits would be in evidence that would set this church apart from others today? Share an example.
 - ❖ What have you learned about *your* calling and responsibility as a believer?
2. What does Paul long to do when he finally gets to Rome? vv. 11–12
 - a. How does Paul emphasize the kind of fellowship they will have together once he gets there?

Paul's humility is expressed in his eagerness to receive as well as to give; to be himself encouraged as well as to encourage others. He longs to go to Rome to reap the same kind of spiritual fruit he has harvested among Gentiles in other areas (v. 13).

As if to further clarify his zeal to preach in Rome, Paul summarizes in verses 14–15 his motive to preach to all men—Greeks and barbarians; wise and unwise—as based upon his sense of profound indebtedness to Jesus Christ. Simply put, Paul never got over the price God was willing to pay for his sins! Have you taken time lately to reflect on the price God was willing to pay for *your* sins?

Romans 1:16–17

Not Ashamed of the Gospel

Verses 16–17 are a summary of Paul’s letter to the Romans and contain the reason he feels passionate about the Good News. For study purposes these verses are broken into stanzas in order to examine them more closely.

“For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ . . .”

The gospel message is the revelation to mankind of how to be made right with God—by putting faith in Jesus Christ. Many in the world are offended by the claim that salvation is found in Christ alone. To find out what the Bible has to say, look up the following references and briefly state them in your own words.

John 14:6 _____

Romans 10:9 _____

Acts 4:12 _____

1 John 5:11–12 _____

“For it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek,”

Paul alludes to the fact that the Jews had a prior claim as God’s chosen people; but considering Paul’s own calling to preach to the Gentile world, he stresses the universal nature of the Good News—that it is for everyone!

Whenever we are ashamed of the gospel it is because we do not fully understand the awesome power contained in God’s message. Christians are nothing more than the mouthpiece—the vessel through which God himself works to unleash His power to save. It is not the vessel that is important; in fact, God often chooses the weakest vessel to reveal His power. Once again, note your findings below.

1 Corinthians 1:18–25 _____

1 Corinthians 2:1–5 _____

2 Corinthians 4:7 _____

2 Corinthians 12:8–9 _____

“For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, ‘The just shall live by faith.’”

The revelation of God’s righteousness can only be experienced by faith—from first to last. It involves humbling oneself at the feet of Christ and trusting Him to do for you what you cannot do for yourself!

The Bible says that all our righteousness is as filthy rags; hence, there are no conditions we could ever meet to satisfy a holy God. We are cast upon Christ and His sacrificial death for our sins to save us. When we put our faith in Christ, God accepts us because of His righteousness.

Reflect on Romans 3:21–26 and summarize it in your own words.

For Group Discussion . . .

- ❖ Have you ever been ashamed of the gospel? What are some of the reasons Christians hold back from sharing their faith?

- ❖ What must take place for Christians to gain confidence in the power of God—the gospel—to be willing to step out and share their faith?

My Romans Road

Listen . . . Learn . . . Live . . . God's Truth!

Take a look back at this week's lesson. Briefly recap what you learned this week and how you intend to live it out.

1. What lesson in your study became real to you this week?

2. How do you intend to apply this lesson to your daily life?

Memory Verse:

Write down what you learned about God from this week's memory verse.

Write out the verse from memory.

Prayer Request:

Write out your most earnest prayer request and lift it to the Lord.
