



## **ROMANS: WEEK 1**

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## ROMANS – SMALL GROUP SERIES

### WEEK 1: THE GOSPEL OF JESUS

**Bible:** *For I am not ashamed of this Good News about Christ. It is the power of God at work, saving everyone who believes—the Jew first and also the Gentile.*

**Romans 1:16 (NLT)**

**Bottom Line:** The heart of the Gospel is: Our loving God sent His Son to provide a way to restore our relationship with Him.

#### Introduction to Romans

Bible scholars attribute fourteen of the twenty-seven books in the New Testament to the Apostle Paul.

Paul wrote the Epistle, or letter, to the Romans during the height of his missionary travels between 50 and 58 A.D.

Romans is one of the earliest surviving Christian documents, other than the Gospel of Mark.

Scholars note that the tone of Romans is different than some of Paul's other letters.

It is more solemn and less impassioned than his letters to the Church in Corinth, where he had served as the founding pastor.

When it was written, Paul had never visited Rome, although he had many friends there.

He was essentially writing to strangers, that attended a church he had never visited.

Romans is full of practical application for every believer to live out their faith.

#### TEACH

Because he isn't personally familiar with the Roman church, Paul begins the Epistle to the Romans by introducing himself and giving his qualifications as an apostle and a missionary.

Next, he sends a message to the Romans, expressing that he hopes to visit them someday.

Then, he sets the stage for the theme of the entire letter - *The heart of the Gospel is: Our loving God sent His Son to provide a way to restore our relationship with Him.*

Throughout Romans, Paul demonstrates the opposition between faith and the Law.

The Jews had failed to follow the Law and were under the power of sin.

The Gentiles had worshipped idols and were not devoted to God.

Jesus' death and resurrection provided grace to an undeserving humanity.

Paul explores the importance of faith in the life of a believer and the transformative power of salvation.

- Why do you think Paul wrote with a different tone when he wasn't familiar with the people within the church?
- Explain the difference between following the Law and accepting salvation.
- What do you already know about Romans? Are there any verses you have memorized?

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

*<sup>1</sup> This letter is from Paul, a slave of Christ Jesus, chosen by God to be an apostle and sent out to preach his Good News.*

*<sup>2</sup> God promised this Good News long ago through his prophets in the holy Scriptures.*

*<sup>3</sup> The Good News is about his Son. In his earthly life he was born into King David's family line, <sup>4</sup> and he was shown to be the Son of God when he was raised from the dead by the power of the Holy Spirit. He is Jesus Christ our Lord.*

*<sup>5</sup> Through Christ, God has given us the privilege and authority as apostles to tell Gentiles everywhere what God has done for them, so that they will believe and obey him, bringing glory to his name.*

*<sup>6</sup> And you are included among those Gentiles who have been called to belong to Jesus Christ.*

*<sup>7</sup> I am writing to all of you in Rome who are loved by God and are called to be his own holy people. May God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ give you grace and peace.*

*<sup>8</sup> Let me say first that I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because your faith in him is being talked about all over the world.*

*<sup>9</sup> God knows how often I pray for you. Day and night I bring you and your needs in prayer to God, whom I serve with all my heart by spreading the Good News about his Son.*

*10 One of the things I always pray for is the opportunity, God willing, to come at last to see you.*

*11 For I long to visit you so I can bring you some spiritual gift that will help you grow strong in the Lord.*

*12 When we get together, I want to encourage you in your faith, but I also want to be encouraged by yours.*

*13 I want you to know, dear brothers and sisters, that I planned many times to visit you, but I was prevented until now. I want to work among you and see spiritual fruit, just as I have seen among other Gentiles.*

*14 For I have a great sense of obligation to people in both the civilized world and the rest of the world, to the educated and uneducated alike.*

*15 So I am eager to come to you in Rome, too, to preach the Good News.*

*16 For I am not ashamed of this Good News about Christ. It is the power of God at work, saving everyone who believes—the Jew first and also the Gentile.*

*17 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.”*

### **The Gospel is the power of God for salvation for anyone who believes.**

In Romans Chapter 1, Paul presents the Gospel, or Good News, to the Roman church.

He begins by telling Roman Christians that although he hasn't already, he wants to visit them.

But, for now, he prays for them “day and night” – demonstrating that he genuinely cares for the Romans.

In Romans 1:16-17, he makes two important points:

- Paul is not ashamed of the Gospel. It was common for followers of Jesus to be persecuted for their faith. Paul is expressing that he doesn't care who knows or how it may affect him, he is not ashamed of the Good News of Jesus.
- The *only* way to be made righteous by God, starts and ends with faith in Jesus.

Our sin separates us from having a restored relationship with God, but His desire is to make us righteous by our faith in Him.

- In Romans 1:5, Paul says that God has given him the “*the privilege and authority*” to spread the Gospel. Why is sharing the Good News a privilege?

- When you come together with other believers, how are you encouraged in your faith? How do you encourage others? (**Romans 1:12**)
- Paul was not ashamed of the Gospel. How do you show courage in sharing your faith with others?

**Read Romans 1:18-3:20.**

*<sup>18</sup> But God shows his anger from heaven against all sinful, wicked people who suppress the truth by their wickedness.*

*<sup>19</sup> They know the truth about God because he has made it obvious to them.*

*<sup>20</sup> For ever since the world was created, people have seen the earth and sky. Through everything God made, they can clearly see his invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature. So they have no excuse for not knowing God.*

*<sup>21</sup> Yes, they knew God, but they wouldn't worship him as God or even give him thanks. And they began to think up foolish ideas of what God was like. As a result, their minds became dark and confused.*

*<sup>22</sup> Claiming to be wise, they instead became utter fools. <sup>23</sup> And instead of worshiping the glorious, ever-living God, they worshiped idols made to look like mere people and birds and animals and reptiles.*

*<sup>24</sup> So God abandoned them to do whatever shameful things their hearts desired. As a result, they did vile and degrading things with each other's bodies.*

*<sup>25</sup> They traded the truth about God for a lie. So they worshiped and served the things God created instead of the Creator himself, who is worthy of eternal praise! Amen.*

*<sup>26</sup> That is why God abandoned them to their shameful desires. Even the women turned against the natural way to have sex and instead indulged in sex with each other.*

*<sup>27</sup> And the men, instead of having normal sexual relations with women, burned with lust for each other. Men did shameful things with other men, and as a result of this sin, they suffered within themselves the penalty they deserved.*

*<sup>28</sup> Since they thought it foolish to acknowledge God, he abandoned them to their foolish thinking and let them do things that should never be done.*

*<sup>29</sup> Their lives became full of every kind of wickedness, sin, greed, hate, envy, murder, quarreling, deception, malicious behavior, and gossip.*

*<sup>30</sup> They are backstabbers, haters of God, insolent, proud, and boastful. They invent new ways of sinning, and they disobey their parents.*

*<sup>31</sup> They refuse to understand, break their promises, are heartless, and have no mercy.*

*<sup>32</sup> They know God's justice requires that those who do these things deserve to die, yet they do them anyway. Worse yet, they encourage others to do them, too.*

***2** You may think you can condemn such people, but you are just as bad, and you have no excuse! When you say they are wicked and should be punished, you are condemning yourself, for you who judge others do these very same things.*

*<sup>2</sup> And we know that God, in his justice, will punish anyone who does such things.*

*<sup>3</sup> Since you judge others for doing these things, why do you think you can avoid God's judgment when you do the same things?*

*<sup>4</sup> Don't you see how wonderfully kind, tolerant, and patient God is with you? Does this mean nothing to you? Can't you see that his kindness is intended to turn you from your sin?*

*<sup>5</sup> But because you are stubborn and refuse to turn from your sin, you are storing up terrible punishment for yourself. For a day of anger is coming, when God's righteous judgment will be revealed.*

*<sup>6</sup> He will judge everyone according to what they have done.*

*<sup>7</sup> He will give eternal life to those who keep on doing good, seeking after the glory and honor and immortality that God offers.*

*<sup>8</sup> But he will pour out his anger and wrath on those who live for themselves, who refuse to obey the truth and instead live lives of wickedness.*

*<sup>9</sup> There will be trouble and calamity for everyone who keeps on doing what is evil—for the Jew first and also for the Gentile.*

*<sup>10</sup> But there will be glory and honor and peace from God for all who do good—for the Jew first and also for the Gentile.*

*<sup>11</sup> For God does not show favoritism.*

*<sup>12</sup> When the Gentiles sin, they will be destroyed, even though they never had God's written Law. And the Jews, who do have God's Law, will be judged by that Law when they fail to obey it.*

*<sup>13</sup> For merely listening to the Law doesn't make us right with God. It is obeying the Law that makes us right in his sight.*

- 14 Even Gentiles, who do not have God's written Law, show that they know his Law when they instinctively obey it, even without having heard it.*
- 15 They demonstrate that God's Law is written in their hearts, for their own conscience and thoughts either accuse them or tell them they are doing right.*
- 16 And this is the message I proclaim—that the day is coming when God, through Christ Jesus, will judge everyone's secret life.*
- 17 You who call yourselves Jews are relying on God's Law, and you boast about your special relationship with him.*
- 18 You know what he wants; you know what is right because you have been taught his Law.*
- 19 You are convinced that you are a guide for the blind and a light for people who are lost in darkness.*
- 20 You think you can instruct the ignorant and teach children the ways of God. For you are certain that God's Law gives you complete knowledge and truth.*
- 21 Well then, if you teach others, why don't you teach yourself? You tell others not to steal, but do you steal?*
- 22 You say it is wrong to commit adultery, but do you commit adultery? You condemn idolatry, but do you use items stolen from pagan temples?*
- 23 You are so proud of knowing the Law, but you dishonor God by breaking it.*
- 24 No wonder the Scriptures say, "The Gentiles blaspheme the name of God because of you."*
- 25 The Jewish ceremony of circumcision has value only if you obey God's Law. But if you don't obey God's Law, you are no better off than an uncircumcised Gentile.*
- 26 And if the Gentiles obey God's Law, won't God declare them to be his own people?*
- 27 In fact, uncircumcised Gentiles who keep God's Law will condemn you Jews who are circumcised and possess God's Law but don't obey it.*
- 28 For you are not a true Jew just because you were born of Jewish parents or because you have gone through the ceremony of circumcision.*
- 29 No, a true Jew is one whose heart is right with God. And true circumcision is not merely obeying the letter of the Law; rather, it is a change of heart produced by the Spirit. And a person with a changed heart seeks praise from God, not from people.*

**3** Then what's the advantage of being a Jew? Is there any value in the ceremony of circumcision? **2** Yes, there are great benefits! First of all, the Jews were entrusted with the whole revelation of God.

**3** True, some of them were unfaithful; but just because they were unfaithful, does that mean God will be unfaithful?

**4** Of course not! Even if everyone else is a liar, God is true. As the Scriptures say about him,

*"You will be proved right in what you say, and you will win your case in court."*

**5** "But," some might say, "our sinfulness serves a good purpose, for it helps people see how righteous God is. Isn't it unfair, then, for him to punish us?"

*(This is merely a human point of view.)*

**6** Of course not! If God were not entirely fair, how would he be qualified to judge the world? **7** "But," someone might still argue, "how can God condemn me as a sinner if my dishonesty highlights his truthfulness and brings him more glory?" **8** And some people even slander us by claiming that we say, "The more we sin, the better it is!" Those who say such things deserve to be condemned.

### **All People Are Sinners**

**9** Well then, should we conclude that we Jews are better than others? No, not at all, for we have already shown that all people, whether Jews or Gentiles, are under the power of sin. **10** As the Scriptures say,

*"No one is righteous—not even one.*

**11** *No one is truly wise; no one is seeking God.*

**12** *All have turned away; all have become useless. No one does good, not a single one."*

**13** *"Their talk is foul, like the stench from an open grave. Their tongues are filled with lies." "Snake venom drips from their lips."*

**14** *"Their mouths are full of cursing and bitterness."*

**15** *"They rush to commit murder.*

**16** *Destruction and misery always follow them.*

**17** *They don't know where to find peace."*

<sup>18</sup> *“They have no fear of God at all.”*

<sup>19</sup> *Obviously, the Law applies to those to whom it was given, for its purpose is to keep people from having excuses, and to show that the entire world is guilty before God.*

<sup>20</sup> *For no one can ever be made right with God by doing what the Law commands. The Law simply shows us how sinful we are.*

**In the passage of Scripture we just read, we see that God’s kindness is meant to lead you to repentance.**

God extends this kindness to everyone because he doesn’t show favoritism.

Let’s take a look at Romans 2:11.

In most areas of life, we strive to be the best we can be – in school, sports, music, at home.

However, there is nothing we can do that would make God love us more than someone else – God doesn’t have favorites.

Look around at the other people in our group... you have different talents and abilities that have been given to you by God.

He allows you to nurture those talents, develop them and use them to honor God.

When you choose to honor God with everything He has given you, He is pleased.

However, the person who is more skilled is not loved by God more than the person who has less skills.

This goes against our culture and what we believe about how to become successful.

But, as you study the Book of Romans, you will find that God’s ways are almost always opposite from the world.

This takes the pressure off of you to earn God’s love because it’s always available to you no matter what you do.

**In Romans 2, Paul stresses to the Jews that living by the Law, rules, and regulations, they will never be righteous in God’s eyes.**

For Jews who have studied the Law for their entire lives, it was quite a shock for someone to suggest, that in the end, they will still fall short of what God requires.

None of us can earn God’s grace. It is received by faith in Jesus.

- Have you ever felt like God loves you based on the things you say and do? How does it make you feel to know that God's love is unconditional and unmerited (you can't earn it)?
- What are the differences in being good and doing good? Why are each of those actions important?
- How can someone gain peace and become right with God?