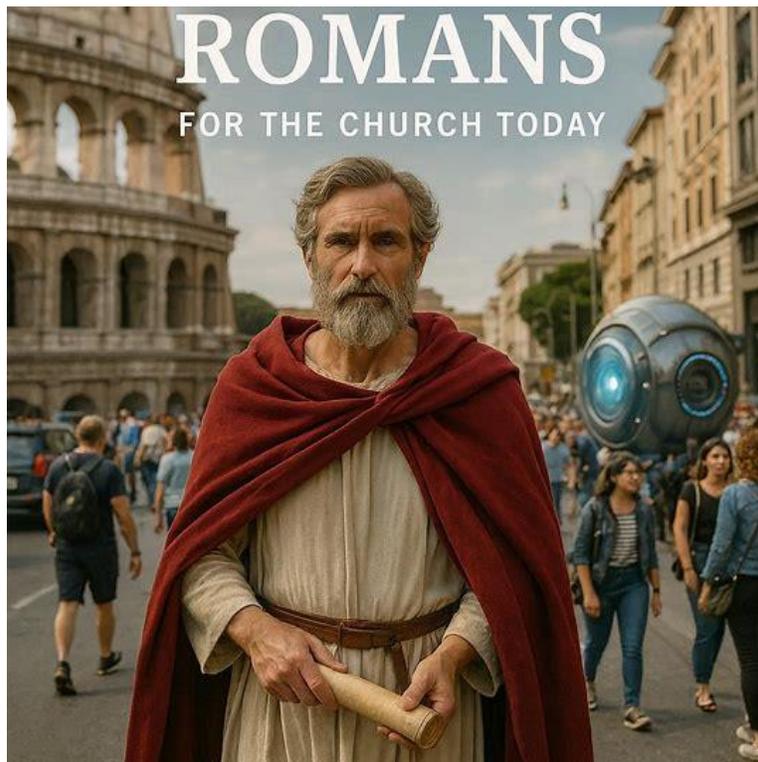


"Greetings members of the First Baptist Church. I wish I could be there, but my time machine only allows me to return to the last place I was. So, I am sending my message to Pastor for him to read for me. May God's grace and peace be with you all".



Narrative Monologue Introduction To Romans

Brothers and sisters of FBC Broussard, grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

I am Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God—yes, that same gospel I wrote about to the believers in Rome all those centuries ago. You’ve read my letter; now hear my heart. I wrote to Rome because I wanted the church alive and growing in the very heart of an empire that thought it had all the power. Rome had armies and roads; I had a letter and a message about a crucified and risen Galilean. They had Caesar; I had Christ. They had marble and monuments; I had prisons and scars. But I tell you the truth: the gospel I carried was—and is—the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes.

You here in the twenty-first century have your own “Rome”—superhighways of information, vast marketplaces of ideas, cultural empires that command attention with spectacle and speed. You’re tempted to be clever, to soft-pedal the cross, to market the church as though I wrote, “I am not ashamed of our branding strategy.” No. Hear me: ***I am not ashamed of the gospel.*** It is still God’s power. Not your creativity. Not your budget. Not your lighting and stage set. THE GOSPEL. As I have heard one of your awesome pastors say... “Keep the Main Thing the Main Thing”!

Let me be plain, the way I was in that first part of my Letter to the Roman believers.

- Before the good news makes you sing, the bad news must make you sober.
- Before grace can heal your heart, truth has to break your pride.

- You won't cherish the cure until you know you're sick.
- The cross won't sound like good news until sin sounds like bad news.
- The dawn is sweetest after we've walked through the night.
- You don't celebrate the rescue if you don't think you're drowning.
 - You won't shout over redemption till you've wept over sin.

Well, I guess you get the point, right?

In my day I said humanity suppresses the truth by unrighteousness. Today you have a variety of ways to do that. Let me take a lead from your Pastor and go into Preacher/Teacher Mode for a moment.

In my letter (what you know as **1:18**) I wrote... *"For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth."* (ESV)

The Greek word I used for "suppress" is **κατέχω (katEchō)**, which means: To hold down, to restrain, to hinder or prevent from being known. What This Means:

Then: People used idols, rituals, and philosophies to avoid God.

Now: You use phones, screens, social media, streaming, and constant connectivity to:

Distract yourselves from spiritual reality

Numb your consciences

Create a version of truth that suits you

Avoid silence, reflection, and dealing with conviction

The Mechanism is the Same:

We know God exists (Rom 1:19-20)

We know right from wrong (Rom 2:14-15—the law written on hearts)

But we actively push down that knowledge, WHY? Because:

It's uncomfortable.
 It demands change.
 It threatens our autonomy.
 It exposes our sin.

In talking with your pastor we came up with one of their **beloved charts**...

Examples of Suppressing Truth Today

The Truth We Know	How We Suppress It
God exists and deserves worship	Scroll through social media instead of praying
We are accountable to Him	Binge-watch shows to avoid conviction
Sexual sin is wrong	Consume pornography and rationalize it
We should love our neighbor	Engage in online outrage and division
Life has eternal significance	Live for comfort, entertainment, and self
The gospel is true	Stay silent about Jesus to avoid awkwardness

We made gods of wood and stone; It appears that YOU make them of fame, power, pleasure, and self. I see and feel your discomfort; I warned Rome the same way. The wrath of God is revealed—not because He is petty, but because He is holy and good.

When people trade the glory of the Creator for creation, the soul caves in, and so does society. That was true on the Roman streets; it's true on your social feeds.

But I did not write to scold pagans only. I turned to the religious, too. Some of you were born in church basements and raised on casserole theology. You look down your nose at “those people”—the addicts, the doubters, the outsiders. But when you judge them and do the same things secretly, you condemn yourselves. God shows no partiality. In Rome, the synagogue crowd needed salvation as urgently as the street crowd. In your cities, the baptized moralist needs Christ as surely as the brazen rebel. The law—God's commands—shines light on our sin. It's a faithful mirror, but it's not a bath. It shows the dirt; it cannot wash you clean.

Do you see? That is why, when tongues were silenced and excuses exhausted, I thundered two words that should make every heart leap: “**But now.**” But now the righteousness of God has been revealed apart from the law—though the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it. God puts sinners right with Himself not by tallying your good deeds and weighing them against the bad (what nonsense!), but by crediting to your account the righteousness of Another—Jesus the Christ—received by faith.

Some of you turn faith into an achievement, as if trusting Jesus were one more work you do. No. Faith is an empty hand. I reached for the story of Abraham for a reason. He believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness—before circumcision, before the law. So, in your terms: before church attendance, before the offering plate, before baptism—though baptism is a precious ordinance of your obedience—it was faith.

Do not misunderstand me; obedience matters greatly. But obedience is the fruit on the tree, not the root in the soil. The root is grace received by faith in Christ's finished work.

And do not trip over that phrase—“*finished work*.” I chose my words about the cross carefully. God put Christ forward as a propitiation by His blood. Yes, I know “propitiation” doesn't trend very well and is not something you discuss on the golf course, Starbucks or grocery store lines. But don't you think it really SHOULD? Propitiation means the holy God, without ceasing to be just, has satisfied His righteous wrath against your sin by punishing it in His Son. He did not look away from sin; He looked straight at His Son on the cross and said, “Paid in full.” Justice met mercy and kissed on a hill outside Jerusalem. If you preach the cross without wrath satisfied, you preach a sentimental sappy life coach, not a SAVIOR.

Now, I will pause to make this practical—and perhaps a bit humorous—because I know some of you wonder: “Paul, why do you always get so worked up? Can we just get a nice, encouraging word?” Beloved, if you saw me the night Eutychus fell asleep and fell out of the window during one of my long sermons—you would know: I can drone like anyone. But I did not travel the Mediterranean to bore people. I was beaten, stoned, shipwrecked, and mocked because this news, this doctrine, this Christ, changes everything. Including your Monday mornings, your marriages, your money, and your mission.

Let me ask your Worship Leader to come up and lead us in one of **responsive readings** that I have heard he leads here occasionally.

Leader: For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. (Romans 1:18)

People: For what can be known about God is plain, because God has shown it. His eternal power and divine nature have been clearly perceived—so we are without excuse. (Romans 1:19–20)

Leader: Though we knew God, we did not honor Him as God or give thanks; we exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images. (Romans 1:21–23)

People: As it is written: “None is righteous, no, not one; no one understands; no one seeks for God... all have turned aside.” (Romans 3:10–12)

Leader: Now we know that whatever the law says it speaks to those under the law, so that every mouth may be stopped, and the whole world held accountable to God. (Romans 3:19)

People: For by works of the law no human being will be justified in His sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin. (Romans 3:20)

Leader: But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law—although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it— (Romans 3:21)

People: The righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction: all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God— (Romans 3:22–23)

Leader: And are justified by His grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by His blood, to be received by faith. (Romans 3:24–25a)

People: This was to show God’s righteousness—so that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus. (Romans 3:25b–26)

Everyone: Thanks be to God for the righteousness revealed in Jesus Christ our Lord. We believe, and we rejoice in His saving grace. Amen.

Thank you all. I must admit, it brings joy to my heart that my words are still are being used by people to worship and bring glory to God.

But it is just as vital that we understand the words have a vital role in helping us develop solid, God honoring doctrine. I want you to know that Doctrine is important and practical for your life today. If doctrine does not preach, you have not understood it.

Justification—God’s declaration that you are righteous in Christ—means you stop living like spiritual orphans. Peace with God is not a theory; it is a room you enter and live in. You wake there. You eat there. You weep there. You sing there. Through Jesus, you have obtained access by faith into this grace in which you stand. Stand up, then. Some of you shuffle into God’s presence as if you have stumbled into somewhere, you might not should be and are worried if you may be escorted out at any minute. No condemnation means the bouncer is gone and the Father is on the front porch, arms open, lights on.

Now, you ask rightly, “Paul, if we are so forgiven, what stops us from sinning freely?” I anticipated that. *Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? By no means!* When you trusted Christ, something more than legal paperwork happened. You were united with Him. You died with Him. You rose with Him. Sin may knock at your door, but it no longer holds the deed to your house. Present your members—your mind, your mouth, your eyes, your hands—as instruments of righteousness. Yes, there’s a fight. I was painfully honest about that in what you call chapter seven. If you have ever cried, “*Why do I do what I don’t want to do?*”—welcome to the club of the redeemed in progress. The law spotlights sin; but the truth is only the Spirit slays it.

And that is why I wrote, well, in what you call chapter 8:1,2, a powerful, life-changing statement that some of you have simply just turned into a refrigerator magnet. Please, it is more than that.. **Read it with me** slowly. *Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. ² For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death.* In Christ Jesus—no condemnation—now. Not after a year of good behavior. Now. And the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you. The same Spirit who hovered over the waters at creation hovers over your frustrated soul and says, “**Let there be life.**” He testifies you are God’s child. He helps you in your weakness. He intercedes when your prayers collapse into sighs. He sets your mind on life and peace. Your sufferings are real; so is the weight of glory coming. And if God did not spare His own Son but gave Him up for us all, do not accuse Him of stinginess.

With Him, He will graciously give you all things necessary to conform you to Christ. *What shall we say to these things? If God is for us—truly for us—who can be against us?*

Now. Let me digress to what I said about Israel for a moment—you ask ‘what about Israel’? Do God’s promises still apply? I struggled and prayed long and hard over that question. The issues of harmony, unity and brotherhood may not be exactly like our Jew–Gentile tension, but you have your own lines: race, class, politics, preferences. Hear me. God has not rejected His people Israel. He keeps promises. His plan is bigger than your tribe or your decade. That should make you humble and hopeful. You Gentiles are grafted into an olive tree you did not plant. Do not be arrogant toward the natural branches. And you who trace your heritage to Abraham—do not presume upon grace. We all come in the same narrow way: Christ alone, grace alone, faith alone. Let your disputes collapse before worship. *Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God!* I like what one of your writers has written, “When you cannot trace His hand, trust His heart”. I wish I would have thought of that. Oh well,

Which brings me to the key point of the letter and the application to your life today. You will recognize it as **Chapter 12:1**...**Read it with me** *Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship.* Do not wait for the next conference or the next spiritual high. Lay yourself on the altar before breakfast. Renew your mind not with the fevered news of the age but with God’s Word. Discern His will not by polling your feelings but by testing all things against His mercies and His Word. Then serve.

Do not despise your gift because it doesn't hold a microphone. If you lead, lead with zeal. If you show mercy, do it cheerfully. Yes, I said cheerfully. Grim duty does not smell like grace.

Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good. Bless those who persecute you. Rejoice with those who rejoice and weep with those who weep. As for your enemies, feed them. The cross has killed vengeance. Never avenge yourselves. That includes your comment sections.

Now let's address a hot topic in your world today... Concerning your civic life: I told the Roman believers to be subject to governing authorities because there is no authority except from God. You are citizens of heaven who vote down here. Render to all what is owed—taxes, respect, honor. This does not mean you worship the state; it means you fear God and live honorably. And remember, love is the fulfilling of the law. The night is far gone; the day is at hand. Wake up. Put on the Lord Jesus Christ and make no provision for the flesh.

I know what your thinking... "*Paul, are you ever funny?*" I tried humor, though you may call it dark and sarcastic on a Galatian once; it didn't go well. I thought it was a least a little bit humorous?? Just to refresh your memory, in my letter to the Galatians in what you call Chapter 5, I was more than a little heated when dealing with those blasted Judaizers who were trying to force circumcision on everyone as if it was a badge or religious superiority and even necessary for salvation. I guess I thought I was 'trying' to insert a little humor relief when I "innocently" said, "***I wish those who unsettle you would emasculate themselves!***"

Don't you agree with me that is so very funny?? Well, maybe I should have, as you say today, "Count to 10". Oops!

Just like sometimes things we say don't always come out right, sometimes our best-laid plans don't work out either. Have you ever said to God, this is what I think should happen just to get the final Word from God that is not what you expected? I was in Corinth when I wrote this letter with big plans to go to Jerusalem and then to come visit the Church in Rome. But when I said to the Romans, "*I long to come to you,*" I was picturing a nice stay, perhaps sleeping on something just a little softer than a prison floor. Instead of entering with a joyful freedom, I was hauled in with chains. Take note of this, God has a way of answering prayers with unexpected accommodations. So, when you plan a perfectly curated church calendar, just remember: the Lord of the harvest sometimes changes your itinerary. Hold your plans loosely and your mission tightly.

Speaking of mission: I wrote Romans partly because I wanted the church to help send me to Spain. Frontier places burn in God's heart. They should burn in yours. Do not make the gospel a cul-de-sac; make your church an on ramp. Pray. Give. Go. Raise up those who will preach Christ where He is not known. And for those who stay, live sent. What I mean by "**Live sent**" is even if you don't relocate to a mission field, you still live every day as someone Jesus has sent on mission where you are—home, work, school, neighborhood. Remember, you do not need a passport to cross your street.

Before I close, let me speak to a few matters dear to your evangelical, Southern Baptist convictions—convictions I gladly affirm. You hold to Scripture as God-breathed and fully trustworthy. Good.

So did I. The gospel I preached was promised beforehand in the Scriptures. You preach that salvation is by grace through faith in Christ alone. Yes. Guard that truth with your songs, your sermons, your seminars, and your souls. You teach that baptism is a believer's public confession and that the Lord's Supper is a continuing proclamation of the Lord's death until He comes. Keep it so: ordinances that display the gospel, not sacraments that dispense it. You champion the priesthood of all believers. Then act like it: equip your people to pray, read, witness, and serve. You comfort the saints with the security of the believer. Good. But do not turn "**no condemnation**" into "**no consecration**." The grace that saves you trains you to renounce ungodliness. And you hold the Great Commission as a sacred trust. Then be a Romans 15 church: striving together in prayer, generous in support, bold in ambition.

Now I will speak to the tired mom who thinks Romans is for the seminary and not for the living room. **My dear sister, when you feel like a failure because your plans fell apart by 9 a.m., remember "no condemnation."** Pray the Spirit's help; He understands sighs. Teach your children grace with the same patience God shows you. To the brother in the breakroom who keeps quiet about Jesus because he fears awkwardness—my friend, awkwardness is not death. The gospel is power. Speak. To the older saint who wonders if the church still needs your gift—yes. It does. If you can pray, you can shake kingdoms. If you can encourage, you can mend your soul. To the teenager who thinks righteousness is for their thirties—no. Present your body now. The mercies of God are for you today.

And if you, dear listener, do not belong to Christ—if you are still living under self-rule, self-atonement, self-condemnation—lay down your arms.

Stop suppressing the truth. Believe. Confess with your mouth Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, and you will be saved. I wrote it to Rome; I say it to you.

I will end as I often did, with greetings and a warning. Greet those who labor among you, known and unknown—the preschool volunteer, the parking lot saint in the rain, the tech who makes sure people at home can sing with you. And watch out for those who cause divisions contrary to the doctrine you have been taught. Smooth talk and flattery still deceive naïve hearts.

Take note of this: Let me say it a few different ways to be clear.. Sort of an Amplified Bible style:

Mark them, not to mock them, but to protect the flock.

Identify them to protect the flock, not to parade their faults.

Note them for warning, not for wounding.

Call them out to guard the gospel, not to score points.

Know this: The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

Join with me and let's read my last sentence to the Church in Rome and believe me it is for you here in Broussard just the same.

Romans 16:27... *May the glory be to God, Who alone is wise!
May the glory be to Him through Jesus Christ forever! Amen.*