

# Romans 1

## The Gospel of God

We will read Romans 1, and even though it is going to take from my time, I would like to read the entire chapter. Reading the Word out loud is a worthy thing to do, and I encourage you to do it. There is something special when you read the Word out loud. Since my retirement Linda and I started this year reading more together and reading out loud. Now she finds every mistake I make, and I make many, but nevertheless just reading the Word out loud is a precious thing. So if you do not understand what I am saying about chapter 1 of Romans, at least we will have read it out loud.

Romans 1:1-32

**1** Paul, bondman of Jesus Christ, [a] called apostle, separated to God's glad tidings,  
**2** (which he had before promised by his prophets in holy writings,)  
**3** concerning his Son (come of David's seed according to flesh,  
**4** marked out Son of God in power, according to [the] Spirit of holiness, by resurrection of [the] dead) Jesus Christ our Lord;  
**5** by whom we have received grace and apostleship in behalf of his name, for obedience of faith among all the nations,  
**6** among whom are \*ye\* also [the] called of Jesus Christ:  
**7** to all that are in Rome, beloved of God, called saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and [our] Lord Jesus Christ.  
**8** First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is proclaimed in the whole world.  
**9** For God is my witness, whom I serve in my spirit in the glad tidings of his Son, how unceasingly I make mention of you,  
**10** always beseeching at my prayers, if any way now at least I may be prospered by the will of God to come to you.  
**11** For I greatly desire to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to establish you;  
**12** that is, to have mutual comfort among you, each by the faith [which is] in the other, both yours and mine.  
**13** But I do not wish you to be ignorant, brethren, that I often proposed to come to you, (and have been hindered until the present time,) that I might have some fruit among you too, even as among the other nations also.  
**14** I am a debtor both to Greeks and barbarians, both to wise and unintelligent:  
**15** so, as far as depends on me, am I ready to announce the glad tidings to you also who [are] in Rome.  
**16** For I am not ashamed of the glad tidings; for it is God's power to salvation, to every one that believes, both to Jew first and to Greek:  
**17** for righteousness of God is revealed therein, on the principle of faith, to faith: according as it is written, But the just shall live by faith.

**18** For there is revealed wrath of God from heaven upon all impiety, and unrighteousness of men holding the truth in unrighteousness.

**19** Because what is known of God is manifest among them, for God has manifested [it] to them,

**20** —for from [the] world's creation the invisible things of him are perceived, being apprehended by the mind through the things that are made, both his eternal power and divinity,—so as to render them inexcusable.

**21** Because, knowing God, they glorified [him] not as God, neither were thankful; but fell into folly in their thoughts, and their heart without understanding was darkened:

**22** professing themselves to be wise, they became fools,

**23** and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into [the] likeness of an image of corruptible man and of birds and quadrupeds and reptiles.

**24** Wherefore God gave them up [also] in the lusts of their hearts to uncleanness, to dishonour their bodies between themselves:

**25** who changed the truth of God into falsehood, and honoured and served the creature more than him who had created [it], who is blessed for ever. Amen.

**26** For this reason God gave them up to vile lusts; for both their females changed the natural use into that contrary to nature;

**27** and in like manner the males also, leaving the natural use of the female, were inflamed in their lust towards one another; males with males working shame, and receiving in themselves the recompense of their error which was fit.

**28** And according as they did not think good to have God in [their] knowledge, God gave them up to a reprobate mind to practise unseemly things;

**29** being filled with all unrighteousness, wickedness, covetousness, malice; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, evil dispositions; whisperers,

**30** back-biters, hateful to God, insolent, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents,

**31** void of understanding, faithless, without natural affection, unmerciful;

**32** who knowing the righteous judgment of God, that they who do such things are worthy of death, not only practise them, but have fellow delight in those who do [them].

*Lord, we just come to You in the name of Jesus and commit Your Word to You because we are unable to communicate what is written in Your Word in our natural understanding. We know You alone have the words of eternal life, and we come to You that You today would open Your words to us by the Holy Spirit, that we could hear what the Spirit is saying to the churches, and we could not only hear it, but it would enter into our hearts, and change us. It would transform us, and it would conform us to the image of the Lord Jesus. Lord, if You do these things, then something of value will come out of our time. May You be exalted, may You be lifted up, may You breathe upon this time that Your Word will run and be glorified. In Jesus' name. Amen.*

### **The Book of Romans is About Christ**

We are obviously looking at Romans 1, and I will give you a little background. A few months ago, Maury came to the brothers and said, "I have a burden that we consider Romans." And I thought that was a very good idea. You have to understand Romans, if you are going to be a

Christian, and you have to live in the reality of Romans, if you are going to know what the true Christian life is. And that is my emphasis, the true Christian life. Now his burden was all about the whole of the book being about Christ, and I could not Amen that more. It is about Christ, but it includes us. Thank God it includes us, but it is altogether about Christ, and that was Paul's passion and his burden. So if you do not understand that Son-centric perspective of the book of Romans, you will never understand Romans. It will always be just about you, and what you get. This morning as our brother came to the table, he exhorted us to come just because of who Christ is, and not to forget to worship Him for all that we have in Him, all that He has done. So Maury's burden was received by the brothers, and we thought we should take it up. He has already given us an introduction, and I think it was helpful to us.

Now going forward we are not so sure where we will go. We think there will be other brothers who will share on this book of Romans, but we need to concentrate upon this book.

One of the reasons that I am up here, by the way, as a parallel track to Maury bringing this burden was our sharing with the saints in Pakistan. They asked me last year if I would teach them the book of Romans, and I hesitated and put them off. I even ignored them a little bit because I did not know if I should do that. So they said, "Would you teach us the book of Romans?" I could not get away with it because when we were young brothers here, and all of you young brothers ought to take this advice by the way, and young sisters and old sisters and old brothers. Brother Kaung said to us, "Pick a book of the Bible and read that book. You cannot ask me any questions until you have read that book fifty times." Like a fool that I am, I picked Romans. I should have picked III John; it would have been much easier, but I never bragged about being smart. When they asked me, "Would you share with us about Romans," I could not forget it. So that parallel track is why we are here today sharing about the book of Romans. Today we will do Romans 1; we will cover as much of it as we can and go on from there.

You need to understand that the New Testament is the full revelation of God, (I do not want to go into all of the Old Testament) but it is twenty-seven books. However, you need to understand that the Apostle Paul wrote thirteen of the twenty-seven books. Now if my math is correct, and that is one thing I still can do, it is almost half of the New Testament that the Apostle Paul wrote. Pretty amazing, don't you think? And twenty-one of those twenty-seven books are letters, which are called epistles. That is a lovely, antiquated word for letters. I think they are love letters from God Himself to the people of God. Just think of the way God has communicated to us. He sent us these letters so that we would know all that is in His blessed Son for the people of God.

I remember coming upon a quote by Brother Graham Scroggie which said, "The deepest and the highest arguments of our religion are conveyed to us in the most familiar form of writing known to us, for letters are the most personal form of literature." In these letters God has revealed to us His heart, and Romans happens to be the first letter after the book of Acts. Now that puzzled me for a long time because the book of Romans was not the first book written by the Apostle Paul. As a matter of fact, it was the sixth book in order of his thirteen books or letters or epistles that was written by the Apostle Paul. Yet when we open our Bibles to the Epistles after the Gospels and the book of Acts, we discover it is the first in order in our Bible. Now I think that is brilliant. That is divinely brilliant because the book of Romans is a masterpiece, a spiritual masterpiece; nothing in the Bible can hardly compare to what is in the Epistle to the Romans. It

is marvelous. Nothing in human writing—of course it is not human writing; it is divine inspiration. Nothing man has ever conceived or made or written can hardly compare to the book of Romans. And I believe that is the reason why Paul put together this glorious book for us. It was the first of the Epistles because it lays out what the whole of the Christian life is all about. You cannot know the Christian life without knowing the book of Romans. You cannot enter into the reality of the Christian life without knowing the book of Romans. This is the reason we need to study it. This is a very important thing. I would encourage you to start reading it because you are going to hear it from others, and you may have to put up with hearing it from me again. But you will be hearing more about the book of Romans, and we will continue sharing with those in Pakistan.

Romans can be roughly divided beginning with chapters 1-8 which is the whole Gospel, the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. The second division of Romans is 9-11; it speaks of the mystery of election. Then you can go from chapter 12 to chapter 15, and you can see the expression of the life of Christ in a people, what it is to look like. And he tells us exactly what it is to look like. Then chapter 16 is that long closing of the Apostle Paul in which he brings up all those names. How wonderful it is that we have all those names. It is a reality of real people who manifested the life of the Lord Jesus. The church manifests the life of the Lord Jesus, and that is the book of Romans. That is the whole explanation.

So we will begin with chapter 1, and the first part of this chapter is Paul's greeting in verses 1-7. I do not want you to think that this is just some warm feeling that you can pass over. You know, when we read our Bibles, we like to pass over all those difficult names. We think how difficult they are. We like to pass over the greetings and the conclusions, and we like to say, "Let's get to the meat of the subject." This is the meat of the subject. Paul was not just saying some warm words, not just greeting them in a nice way and saying, "Hello; good to write to you." That was not what he was doing at all. This is the inspired Word of God. All those seven verses are inspired, and they have a message to us as believers. When you read them, you begin to understand.

### **Paul, A Slave of Jesus Christ**

The first thing he said is, "Paul, bondman of Jesus Christ." He admitted to that Roman Church and to the world and to all of us that he was a slave of the Lord Jesus Christ. That is a unique thing. If it were me I would have said first, "Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ." But he said, "Paul, bondman of Jesus Christ."

Brothers and sisters, this was not lost on us with Pakistan because we were dealing with real slavery over there. This assembly and some of the brothers and sisters in the assembly have freed eighteen people, eighteen slaves from being slaves in the brick factory. I know we are all over ourselves in the U.S. about slavery, but there is real slavery in Pakistan. They have kids barefoot making bricks, molding bricks under the overlords, the Muslim overlords, most of the slaves are Christians. And this assembly was able to make a difference to some of those who were indebted to generational slavery whose children at the youngest age had nothing to do but to make bricks. They are free; they sent us a wonderful banner, and you can see it on the bulletin board in the hall: "We are free." How wonderful! So when we talked about Paul, bondman of Jesus Christ, it

was not lost on them. They understood slavery, and Paul wanted us first to know that we are slaves of Jesus Christ.

Now this is not how the world thinks of slavery. Men, government or dictators put people into slavery and hold them there. This is not the same. This is a love slave, and it takes us back to Deuteronomy, chapter 15:16-17 where it talks about a Hebrew who has, by the way a Hebrew slave, one of his brothers. Think about that! Brothers putting brothers into slavery. Maybe it was a kinder slavery because you could only keep them in slavery for six years, and at the end of that six years they had to set that Hebrew slave free.

Something happened in those two verses that I mentioned. This slave said to his master, “I do not want to be free. I do not want to go away free; I want to be your love slave.” He loved the master, and it says, “He loved the household of the master, and he refused his liberty.” Can you imagine! Who of us would do that? That is what we are called to. No person in this world is a free man. No one is a free man. No one is a free woman. Every one of us is in bondage to slavery, and the only way to break that cycle of bondage and set us free is for the Lord to set us free with His glorious Gospel. That is the whole message of Romans.

Then you can see what that one who was set free does. He is constrained, it says in Corinthians, by the love of God to give himself or to give herself to this benevolent master and say, “Do not set me free; take me to the door, put an awl through my ear.” Those of us who tinker with construction know what an awl is. It is a very sharp device with a pointed end, and if it falls on your toe you may end up in the emergency room. “But take an awl and put it through my ear. Then put it to the door so that everyone knows that I am a bondman of Jesus Christ, a love slave forever.” This is the start. Do you think these are just warm words, insignificant words, words that do not have any meaning? It is the whole of the Gospel. To me this is a marvelous thing.

He goes on to say that he was called as an apostle. Now you may think this is all about Paul, but it is not all about Paul; he was called as an apostle. Let me make a little adjustment for those of us who are Christians. We often think about calling as to our service. You may have a special calling in service and work to the Lord. Jerry mentioned the apostles, who were the called ones, sent ones. But Paul goes on to say, “Not only am I the called of Jesus Christ, you also are the called of Jesus Christ.” Called apostle” in verse 1.

### **Called Saints, Beloved of God**

Verse 6-7: “Among whom are you also the called of Jesus Christ: to all that are in Rome, beloved of God, called saints.”

That is who we are, saints by calling. Brothers and sisters, that is what the Gospel does; it calls us to the Lord. And we are not only saints (I know that drives some people crazy, especially if there are any Catholics in this room. “You did not have your prescribed two miracles verified by the Vatican, so how could you call us a saint?”) But Paul said of those Roman believers, “You are called saints.” Even in the beginning of your calling, you are already a saint.

He went on further and said, “Beloved of God.” isn’t that amazing? This is what the Gospel is about. He calls us to Himself, and He makes us His beloved. Now if you know anything about the

Scriptures, that term “beloved” is particularly reserved for the only Son: “This is My beloved Son.” Remember, when God the Father shouted from the heavens in what I often call the divine announcement, and He spoke out at the Lord’s baptism. When the Lord came up out of the water Jordan after being baptized by John, and the dove came down upon Him, the Holy Spirit fell upon the Lord. God could not resist Himself. You may think that God should have more control, but He could not resist Himself. He shattered the heavens and with a voice He said, “This is My Beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.”

It did not just happen once; it happened in Matthew 17 at the Mount of Transfiguration. Peter was so crafty that he thought it was a good idea to build three tabernacles, one to Elias, one to Moses, and of course the biggest one for the Lord Jesus. It made perfectly good sense in his mind, but God could not stand it. *He could not stand it.* He said again, rending the heavens, and that divine voice went out, and He said, “This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.” Do you understand what He is doing here? Beloved, called saints, you are being lifted up by the grace of God, by the mercy of God, that you are called beloved of God. Now He did not just save us and put us in a back room, far back on the seat of the bus, and say, “Stay there; you know your place.” He said, “Beloved of God, called saints.” Isn’t that amazing? I think that is precious. This was Paul’s greeting. That is what we are as the church, the Greek name of the church is “Ecclesia,” the assembly, who are the called-out-ones gathered together. That is who we are. That is what we are. Besides that, we are God’s beloved. How merciful our God is! I think this is wonderful when you look at it.

In verse 4 he gets into what his calling was to. His calling was not to a doctrine; His calling was not to a system; His calling was not to a belief; his calling was not to a faith, but he was called unto His Beloved Son. That is who he was called to.

This Gospel is about “concerning His Son” (see verse 3). Now I know you think it is concerning us, and we are included. But it is actually concerning His Son.

When Paul wrote these first four verses, it seems to me that he included two elaborate, parenthetical expressions. Now in my simple mind when I read it, it sort of muddies the water because there are a lot of words. And Darby was kind enough to take these elaborate, parenthetical and glorious expressions and put them into parentheses. It helps. So when you leave those two out, you get to the heart of what the Gospel is. Let me read it without those expressions.

V. 1a: “Paul, bondman of Jesus Christ; a called a called apostle, separated to God’s glad tidings, (V. 3a): concerning His Son.” That whole part in verse 1 and 2 is parenthetical. “Paul, bondman of Jesus Christ, called apostle, separated to God’s glad tidings, concerning His Son.” Then you go to the end of verse 4, “Jesus Christ our Lord.” That’s it! That is the heart of Romans. Of course, the rest of it is important.

Verse 2: “...(which he had before promised by his prophets in the holy writings,)” parenthetical. He is the promised One.

Verse 3-4: (“come of David’s seed according to the flesh, marked out Son of God in power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection of the dead.”) That is proof. But the

substance is concerning His Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord. This is what Romans is about. This good news is not about a religion. This good news is not about a system of belief. This good news is about a Person, the Lord Jesus. And this good news is that this Person takes us as His own, His called ones. The Holy Spirit begins to work on us and conform us and transform us into the very image of the Lord Jesus. How precious!

### **Called According to Purpose**

When you get to chapter 8, you see the purpose. What is the purpose? We are called according to purpose. It is being conformed to the image of His Son. It is not to improve you. I think we use the word, "We have a virus." And the virus is sin. It is not to make you better and dress you up. You know, sometimes when I am not in my dirty shop clothes and working around the house, I can dress up. And even this morning Linda said, "You look pretty good today." What she really means is you do not normally look pretty good. We can dress up the flesh; we can think we are something; we can go into these self-improvement kind of modes, but God has no such idea when it comes to the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is not an improvement plan for your life. As a matter of fact, I hate to tell you this; it is a funeral for you. (I will get into this a little further on.) Because He loves His Son and saved us and put us in His beloved Son; we are beloved of God. This is the glad tidings.

### **A Living Testimony of Christ**

Now the next section is Paul's desire. It is from verses 8-15, and I think a lot of people that read and study the Bible think Paul just wanted to go to them to preach. Preachers preach! "Let me come and give you a word. I have a word for you." I will never forget old Brother Thornton Stearns, a urological surgeon, if I remember correctly, said, "Surgeons love to surge." You remember Doctor Pepper; when you get there, he is just waiting to get that scalpel. Preachers love to preach, but it was not Paul's desire. When you read all of verses 8-15, you begin to understand that his desire is the perfecting of the testimony of Jesus, in this case in Rome. You begin to understand that his desire is a desire for fellowship. You begin to understand that it is a desire of the mutual sharing of Christ. This is what fellowship is. This is what it literally means.

Listen to what he says in verse 8. Paul had only heard the reports of them in Rome, but he had never met with them. And I told those brothers in Pakistan that we had only heard of them. It was just the end of last year, that we had heard of them, and we only wanted to participate at that time, at least for us, in helping to free a slave family if it were possible. And thank God, it was possible, and they are free indeed. They are growing in the Lord and ministering to others in like circumstances.

But Paul wanted to see this testimony of Jesus strengthened in Rome. That was all that was on his heart. Even though he had not seen them, he longed to be with them. That was his desire.

Verse 8: First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is proclaimed in the whole world."

Isn't that quite marvelous? Can't you imagine, this little place that only God started? Who knows how it started in Rome with Gentiles and Jews, bondmen and freemen altogether, that the

Lord started. It was such a testimony that their faith went out as a report to the whole world. That is pretty amazing! That is nothing more than the testimony of Jesus. I hope you know that this is not just Paul's desire; this is God's desire for His people. Don't think it is just Paul's desire when you read, "I have to write something. Let me write something to those rascals in Rome. What can I write to them?" God gave him what to write. God is saying through the Apostle Paul, "I want a living testimony of Myself, an expression of Christ in Rome. And I want the whole world to see it and know it is Me." That is the book of Romans.

What a testimony they were! This is God's desire for the church, that we would be a living testimony to the world. They were a living epistle. I am saying that on purpose, if you can stay with me. I know I tend to take bends and corners and sidetracks, and cul-de-sacs, and all of that, but stay with me. This is an epistle from God, a letter from God to us personally. It says in II Corinthians 3:2-3 of the people of God in Corinth:

"You are our letter, written in our hearts, known and read by all men, being manifest to be Christ's epistles ministered by us, written, not with ink, but the Spirit of the living God; not on stone tablets, but on fleshy tables of the heart."

This is what we are to be. This was Paul's desire. This is God's desire for us, that the life of Christ would come into us in such a manner that we would be so transformed that we would be open epistles to the world. They would see us and they would say, "What is it that you have? What is it that you believe?" That is a living testimony. That was Paul's desire. Paul prayed with great earnestness in verses 9-10: "How unceasingly I make mention of you, always beseeching at my prayers."

### **Called Into the Fellowship of Christ**

Brothers and sisters, it seems to me, maybe the most important prayer we can pray on Wednesday night is that God's people would become a living and transformed testimony so that the fulness of the Lord Jesus is manifested to a dying world. That is the only answer, that is the only hope. There is no other hope. We can pray about other things; I am not saying we shouldn't, but number one I think this was Paul's prayer, and I think more than that, this was God's desire and this is how we should be praying for one another. All over the world this is His testimony; He had a desire for fellowship.

In verses 10-11, it says, "If anyway now at least I may be prospered by the will of God to come to you. For I greatly desire to see you."

That was his desire. Now you think it was for him to come and just teach them and have another notch on his belt that he taught an assembly in Rome whom he had never been with before and only heard about? No, it is nothing like that. God's desire and Paul's desire was for fellowship. It is the mutual sharing of Christ. We are not here to form anything. We are here so that we may together know the importance of the fellowship of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul wrote to the Corinthians in I Corinthians 1:9: "God is faithful, by whom you are called into the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord." That is Paul's desire. That is God's desire that

the Gospel would bring about, a mutual building up, a sharing of Christ. Do we have that desire for fellowship, brothers and sisters? Do we have that desire?

I remember that wonderful story, which I have told before, Brother Nee went to England in the thirties to visit George Cutting. You may not know who George Cutting is, but he was an old, dear Brethren brother, a dear man of God, and he was dying. He was on his death bed. If Kepper had been there he would have taken his pulse, thinking, "What is he doing?" He was on his death bed, and he was in and out of consciousness. George Cutting, by the way, wrote, "Safety, Security, and Enjoyment," a very famous Gospel track. You can still google it and read it, and we have some here on the table. It relates this Gospel track as a train; it is all about trains, being on that right train. Which train are you in? Where are you in the train?

George Cutting, this dear man in and out of consciousness, woke up and said, "I cannot live without the Lord, and He cannot live without me." Do you know that is the book of Romans? Did you know that? Why did he bother? Why was Romans written? Because God is saying, "I cannot live without you." That amazes me, but that is the story of Romans. And he kept saying it. Brother Nee returned to China, and he saw something more with greater revelation. He said, "I cannot live without the Lord, and He cannot live without me." That is fellowship. But he said something else, also wonderful, "I cannot live without my brothers and sisters, and they cannot live without me." Is that your understanding of fellowship? Can you dispense with the brothers and sisters and say, "All I need is the Lord; I do not need anything else." The Lord did not say that. He called us into this most heavenly, this highest, this most sacred fellowship. God cannot live without us. Can you live without your brothers and sisters? How often I see people who by their own behavior and character and presence are making it clearly known, "I can live without my brothers and sisters."

Oh dear saints, this desire for fellowship, manifested in the first chapter of Romans clearly tells us God's desire, written as if it was just Paul's desire. I cannot live without my Lord, and He cannot live without me. Could that be anymore wonderful? I cannot live without my brothers and sisters, and they cannot live without me. You may want to, but it is not God's heart. This is the second part.

Then Paul said that he wanted to come and be with them. It says in verse 15: "So, as far as it depends on me, am I ready to announce the glad tidings to you also who are in Rome."

Earlier he said, "I would not have you ignorant, brethren, that I have been hindered in coming to you." He wanted to be there; he wanted to have this fellowship, but he had been hindered, and he made it known to them. But, you know, God answered his desire. It is amazing. God always answers our prayers. God may not answer them the way you hoped or the way you envisioned, but Paul got his desire to go and be with Rome. In the last two verses of Acts 28, Paul is saying how God answered his prayer. We must read those.

Acts 28:30-31: "And he remained two whole years in his own hired lodging, and received all who came to him, preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching the things concerning the Lord Jesus Christ, with all freedom," and notice that last word "unhinderedly."

Now this is about his imprisonment in Rome. He did not get to go and visit as an apostle. He went to Rome as a prisoner, and this was his first imprisonment. Yet in that state of being a prisoner in Rome, he was able to receive all the brothers and sisters in Rome even though he was chained to a Roman guard. Oh, I want to talk to that Roman guard in eternity: “What did you hear? What happened to that man?” I would love to know. Yet Paul was able to receive them in his own hired lodging and share with those in Rome unhinderedly about the Lord Jesus. Isn’t that a marvelous answer to prayer? Have you ever heard anything like that? God answers in marvelous ways, and He does marvelous things. There Paul shared with them all that was in his heart. He could receive them. They could come and go. This was his desire.

### **God’s Power to Salvation**

The next section is very short, and it is verses 16-17. This is the heart of it. Don’t think for a moment the brevity is any indication of unimportance.

“For I am not ashamed of the glad tidings; for it is God’s power to salvation, to everyone that believes, both to Jew first and to Greek: for righteousness of God is revealed therein, on the principle of faith, to faith: according as it is written. But the just shall live by faith.”

These are the most important two verses in the book of Romans. It was all about this glorious Gospel, and as we have already learned, this glorious Gospel is all about God’s Son. And he said that he was not ashamed of it, and he even went on to define this glorious Gospel of God. He said, “It is God’s power to salvation.” You need to underline that in your Bible that it is God’s power to salvation, it is not man’s power; it is not our strength; it is not our willing; it is not our choosing even. We choose only after He chooses us. That is the secret of the Gospel. It is God’s power to salvation. Now can there be a greater power than God’s power to salvation?

He did not leave us to our own devices and say, “Clean up your life; fix those broken things, and come back to Me, and then I will receive you.” It is nothing of the kind. The glorious Gospel of Jesus Christ is, “I will put in you and give you God’s power to salvation.” Can you imagine! Could He have done any more? He put inside of us the Holy Spirit, God the Holy Spirit to indwell us, and even the Holy Spirit upon us to anoint us for service. Within us is God’s power! I do not want you to miss that. If you miss that, you will never understand the book of Romans. This is the whole thing he wanted to describe. It is God’s power to salvation. Do you understand that without God’s power to salvation, salvation and the Christian life and righteousness and holiness, would be absolutely impossible? Do you understand that? It is not that you can take path B; it is not that you can come to the fork in the road and you can go this way or you can choose that way, or other options. Like when you go to the car dealership and I will take option package B. Brothers and sisters, there is one path. It is a straight path but a narrow path. It is a path that leads to life. It is a path that is one door, and that one door is through God’s power to salvation. This is the heart of his message.

You remember the story of the rich young ruler. When the rich young ruler came with such zeal, he said, “What shall I do, good teacher? What shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?” And the Lord, of course, told him about the commandments. I cannot think of a more self-deceived person. He said, “I have done all of those things since my youth.” I do not know what you think of

him. He was a good fellow, I am sure, but how deceived he was! You might say the Lord was playing with him, but the Lord was not playing with him. The Lord was trying to bring him to the end. And the first chapter of Romans tries to bring us to an end so that we do not have the mistaken idea that there is any hope in us to do what He calls us to. It is impossible. And the Lord turned to that man, knowing he was a rich young ruler, and said, "One thing you lack; go sell all that you have and give it to the poor, and come follow Me." Now some people try to take that as the Lord's Word to everybody. It is not. It was the Lord's Word to this one because he believed he could do everything else. But there was one thing he could not do. Peter and the apostles were so shaken up, that they said, "How then can anyone be saved?" The Lord said those famous words in verse 26; "It is impossible for man, but it is possible because of God." Do you understand? That is the power of God. How we need to rejoice that He did not give us a book and say, "Do this, and do that." He gave us instead God's power. That is the story that is so powerful.

### **The Righteousness of God is Revealed**

Another thing is revealed here in this. It says, "The righteousness of God is revealed in the Gospel." Aren't you glad it did not say, "The righteousness of Kenny or the righteousness of Jerry who has more than I have, or the righteousness of Linda, who certainly has more than I have?" "The righteousness of God is revealed therein." There is no righteousness expected of you. Our expectations of ourselves are so off base. God does not expect it of us, but we expect it of ourselves. He never thought you had righteousness that would reach the bar.

Paul went on to say, "Let me tell you what else is revealed in the Gospel, and it is the righteousness of God which is given to us." That is what is imputed to us. It is an imputed righteousness that is granted to us. It is not our righteousness; it is the righteousness of Christ. And when we have God's power and the righteousness of God, what do we lack? That is the book of Romans chapter 1. That is the Gospel. That is the good news.

### **The Principle of Faith to Faith**

Romans 1:17b: "It is revealed on the principle of faith to faith: according as it is written. But the just shall live by faith."

There is only one thing to do, only believe. That is what you do; only believe. If you have a problem of believing, remember the story of the man who had a demon possessed boy, and he said, "I believe, help Thou my unbelief." That is the way we walk; that is the way this becomes reality. He quotes that famous section, "and the just shall live by faith." That is in the book of Habakkuk 2:2-4; it is the secret of the New Testament, "The just shall live by faith."

Let me tell you another secret; it is not even your faith. When you look at Galatians 2:20 it says, "I no longer live but Christ lives in me, and the life that I now live in this flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who is in me and gave Himself for me." How marvelous!

How marvelous this Gospel, "only believe." The just shall live by faith is the secret of the New Testament. It is quoted here in Romans 1:17. It is quoted in Galatians 3. It is quoted in Hebrews 10 because throughout the New Testament, that is the only secret.

## Man's Condition

This last part which is about man's condition, I am going to speed up. Don't read this as if you have to hurry through it and get to the justification in chapter 3. Paul spent almost three chapters covering man's condition from verse 18-32, all of chapter 2, and all the way to chapter 3:20. He had to be so surgically precise that he touched every button so that these human beings he was dealing with never would again think that there is any hope in me fulfilling what God wanted out of me. The only hope comes from Him. So he surgically and precisely deals with every aspect of man, and He exposes man to such a degree that at the end they are completely guilty and cast upon the mercy of the Lord. This reveals man's ruined condition. This reveals the impossibility of us pleasing God. This reveals the absolute need of Christ our life.

V. 18: "For there is revealed the wrath of God from heaven upon all impiety and unrighteousness of men holding the truth in unrighteousness."

Remember, the righteousness of God was revealed in the Gospel. There is a second thing, which is the wrath of God. Now I know it is not fashionable to talk about the wrath of God; it is politically incorrect. Roger, I applaud you that you spoke about the holiness of God. I applaud you that you were bold enough to speak about the wrath of God. I applaud you that you were bold enough to speak about the judgment of God because that is precisely what Paul is speaking about. Unless we see His absolute and thorough judgment upon the whole of mankind we will never understand how glorious the Gospel is. That is the message of Romans 1.

There are a couple of words you need to underline, a word and a phrase because it is a good word that occurs twice in verse 19:

"Because what is known of God is manifest among them, for God manifested it to them."

Verse 20: God goes out of His way to manifest it. It talks about His eternal power and divinity that He manifested through the things that are made. It was not as if He hid who He was.

Not only that, later on in Romans we discover there is a natural law embedded in man's heart. It is called the law of conscience. If they obey their conscience they can know the ways of the living God.

Verse 21: Because, knowing God, they glorified Him not as God, neither were thankful; but fell into folly in their thoughts, and their heart without understanding was darkened."

That is a darkened mind. Jerry, I applaud the fact that you gave that ministry on Romans 1. This is current events news. You read the things that men were involved in, the things men thought were normal, the things that women thought were normal. You read it and you see Romans 1. How graphic those words are; you might not even be able to read them in mixed company. But how graphic indeed! It is an interesting thing about Romans. God never turned against man; man turned against God. They did not even think it was good to keep God in their knowledge. They made idols of birds and quadrupeds and creeping things and worshipped the creation rather than the Creator who is blessed forever. Amen. How darkened they became!

Finally, we read of God's reaction. Three times, in verses 24, 26, 28 there is this phrase, "God gave them up." Underline that in your Bible. God gave them up. After they gave up God, God gave them up.

Verse 24: "Wherefore God gave them up also in the lusts of their hearts to uncleanness."

Verse 26: "For this reason God gave them up to vile lusts."

Verse 28: "And according as they did not think it was good to have God in their knowledge, God gave them up to a reprobate mind to practice unseemly things."

Then there is this phrase: "Being filled with all unrighteousness." That is the condition of man. Do you see it? How clear it is. God is righteous; He is just in doing what He did. I think today's struggle and most of the world's attack on us is, "How could a loving God do this?" A loving God did not do it. Man thought, "I do not want God in my knowledge. I want to be free for my new self to be expressed. I want to be done with God, wash my hands of God. This is what man's unrighteousness is. What an exhaustive list it is.

Then you come to the last verse in verse 32: "Who knowing the righteous judgment of God, that they who do such things are worthy of death, not only practice them, but have fellow delight in those who do them."

Think of that! You know what we are worthy of? The death sentence. You may think that is cruel. How could a loving God, a caring God, a creating God impose upon us the death sentence? He never did. We chose it because we did not think it good to have God in our knowledge.

Brothers and sisters, this is Romans chapter 1. Now if you can understand Romans chapter 1:18-32, Romans chapter 2 and most of Romans chapter 3, you are going to have to understand the setting. This is the divine courtroom where the just Judge is judging unrighteousness. It is a divine courtroom, and He ends up saying, the mankind that He has created, who have turned from Him, are inexcusable.

Verse 20: "So as to render them inexcusable."

Chapter 2:1: "Therefore thou are inexcusable, O man, everyone who judges."

We are rendered inexcusable. This is what we are. This is what we have chosen. This is how we are driven to a God who will give us His power, call us His beloved, give us His righteousness and remake us in His own image. This is the only secret of the Gospel. This is what He is after.

So we come to this ending in verse 32. The verdict and the sentence are spoken by the divine Judge, and he says, "Inexcusable, O man. Guilty!" How guilty? "Guilty of death."

You may think that is strong; it is not too strong. This is the only way you will come to the saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus. This is Romans 1. May the Lord open our eyes.

*Lord, we commit to You these things. We ask You, Lord, would You open our eyes to behold the glory of Your Gospel and our own condition. Without seeing the glory of Your Gospel there is no hope. Without seeing our true condition there is no sensing that we need to worry about it. We will live as we have always lived, but when the conviction and the power of the Holy Spirit*

*come upon us and reveals the righteousness of God and the power of God, then we gladly bow the knee and say, Lord, Your verdict is right. It is true. It is righteous. Lord, have mercy on us. Oh God, this is what I believe is in this first chapter. May you open our eyes. Give us eyes to see and ears to hear, and then we believe You will be able to change us into what You want us to be. This we ask in the name of the Lord Jesus. Amen.*