

# THE ROAD OF THE RIGHTEOUS

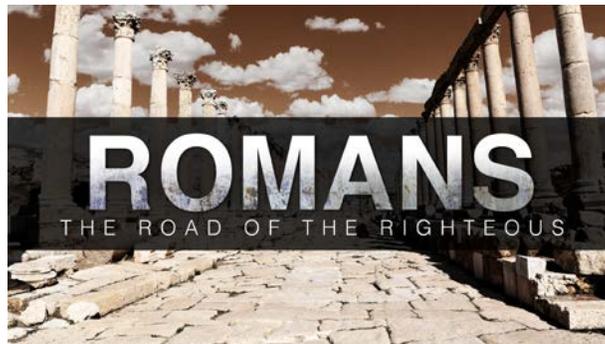
## Expositional Study Of Romans

Romans 1:16

Written By

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As the only Christian on my High School baseball team, as far as I could tell, I talked to many of my friends about the gospel of Jesus Christ. After four years of trying to reach them for Christ, I had no spiritual fruit. One friend, our first baseman, Hubert, always had good spiritual questions when we hung out, but those conversations never came to a decision point concerning the person and work of Jesus.

When I graduated in June of 1976, we all went our separate ways. I traveled four hours northwest from El Centro to Los Angeles to attend Azusa Pacific University, while Hubert joined the U. S. Navy and was stationed in San Diego after bootcamp. We talked a couple of times during the fall of 1976, and he relayed how his roommate on the base was a devout Satanist. Not knowing how to process this guy's belief system, Hubie, which is what we called him, had many questions for me. Once again, I entertained the questions and talked about the message and mission of the true God, Jesus, the Christ. Once again, those answers met with no desire to embrace the Savior, so I did not push.

Later on during that fall semester, I became so wrapped up in my studies I basically forgot about Hubie. Wanting to intellectually unwind one weekend, I borrowed my sister, Marla's, car (she was a junior at APU), and drove four hours home to see my parents. That Friday evening, my mother informed me it was homecoming weekend, and she encouraged me to go and see if I could hook up with some old friends. I wasted no time going to the game, but I must say it felt a little funny walking in as a graduate instead of a student. I also felt a little funny walking in front of

the stands looking for a place to sit when I did not recognize too many people. I didn't walk far, however, before Hubie called my name from the stands.

Believe me, I enjoyed every minute of that game. After it was over, Hubie asked me if I could give him a ride home since I had wheels (a brand new Datsun B210 four door with a partial off-white vinyl top . . . a real race car). As we had done many times before, we drove to his parents apartment complex in Imperial, CA. We sat in th car and talked until the windows fogged up. As usual, we talked about spiritual things because Hubie brought them up, but not as usual he prayed to trust Christ as His Savior that night. I never saw him again, but we both knew God had sovereignly brought us together for one more pivotal conversation about the gospel of Christ. We have talked twice over the last forty-one years, and I learned he served as a deacon and spiritual leader in his local church, and was heavily involved, along with his wife, in doing God's work. For me, there is no greater news.

Allow me to get personal with a question. Thanks. Who is your Hubie? Here's another timely follow-up question you need to know the answer to as you seek to reach your buddy, "Why do you desire your Hubie to embrace the gospel of Jesus by faith?" Yes, "Why is this so utterly important?"

For the Apostle Paul, the Roman church he desired to bring the gospel to (Romans 1:13-15) was his Hubie. Why was he so excited, so motivated, and so passionate about helping them understand the simplicity and complexity, the shallow and deep end of this good news? Because he implicitly understood the gospel's powerful purposes when unleashed, by faith, in the life of a Hubie. As we seek to build a bridge to our Hubie, we, to, must understand those gospel purposes. Fortunately, for us, Paul gives them to us in verses 16 through 17 of Romans one, as he talks about the reasons he's excited to come to Rome with the gospel. He more fully develops those reasons and purposes as he teaches in the ensuing chapters. To cognitively graspe Paul's teaching on this significant subject, it is most pedagogically helpful to ask and answer a key hermeneutical question.

## What Are The Reasons To Be Motivated To Share The Gospel? (Romans 1:16)

Effortlessly and seamlessly, Paul tranistions from telling the Romans he is excited to come and share, as an Apostle, the gospel of Jesus with them, to diving right into the various reasons for his excitement. Grammatically, he employs three causal clauses (really four if your include verse 18, *Αποκαλύπτεται γὰρ . . .*, For it [God's wrath] is revealed . . . ), denoted by the coordinating conjunction *gar* (γὰρ), to validate his evangelistic excitement.

<sup>16</sup> For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek <sup>17</sup> For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "But the righteous man shall live by faith" (Romans 1).

<sup>16</sup> Οὐ γὰρ ἐπαισχύνομαι τὸ εὐαγγέλιον, δύναμις γὰρ θεοῦ ἐστὶν εἰς σωτηρίαν παντὶ τῷ πιστεύοντι, Ἰουδαίῳ τε πρῶτον καὶ Ἑλλήνι. <sup>17</sup> δικαιοσύνη γὰρ θεοῦ ἐν αὐτῷ ἀποκαλύπτεται ἐκ πίστεως εἰς πίστιν, καθὼς γέγραπται· ὁ δὲ δίκαιος ἐκ πίστεως ζήσεται. (Romans 1).

Three reasons we, too, should be motivated to share the gospel with our Rome and our Hubie are detailed in verse 16. Since there is so much data here, we will limit our analysis to this one verse, and circle back in our next study to further develop Paul's teaching.

### Reason #1: The Gospel Is Pre-eminent (Romans 1:16a)

Paul's opening reason for gospel excitement is introduced emphatically by placing a negative, *ou* (ὸὐ), at the head of the sentence. He typically uses this technique by wedding it to the causal coordinating conjunction, *gar* (γὰρ), when he wants to speak definitively and boldly about inexorable, unchangeable, and timeless spiritual truth:

<sup>11</sup> For there is no partiality with God (Romans 2).

<sup>11</sup> οὐ γὰρ ἐστὶν προσωποληψία παρὰ τῷ θεῷ.

When it comes to divine judgment, God does not and, and will not care, who you are, how much you're worth, where you worked, what your position was or wasn't, what kind of home you lived in, what type of car you drove, where you went to grad school, and so forth. His judgment is perfect and is not swayed by anyone or anything. That's a radical statement for Paul to make to Jews in Rome, but he made it because it is true.

<sup>28</sup> For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly; neither is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh (Romans 2).

<sup>28</sup> οὐ γὰρ ὁ ἐν τῷ φανερῷ Ἰουδαῖός ἐστιν οὐδὲ ἡ ἐν τῷ φανερῷ ἐν σαρκὶ περιτομή,

Wow. Here, Paul uses this emphatic grammatical construction to put the Jews on notice that their hereditary linkage back to Abraham did not, *ipso facto*, mean they were saved. True Jews, according to Paul, have a faith relationship with the messiah, Jesus. Again, the easily identifiable grammatical construction served to teach God's truth in a powerful, line-in-the-sand fashion. Paul does this throughout the book if you want to research further examples (Romans 2:13, 3:22; 4:13; 6:14; 7:15, 19; 8:15; 9:6; 10:12; 11:25; 13:1, 4; 14:17; 15:18).

Where the gospel of concerned, Paul makes an equally definitive, highly exclusive statement.

<sup>16</sup> For I am not ashamed of the gospel, . . . (Romans 1)

Note what he didn't say, "For I am not ashamed of a [indefinite] gospel." There is an article "the" (τὸ ) before the accusative noun, gospel (εὐαγγέλιον). As I've said before, this is either grammatically classified as the monadic or the par excellence use of the article. If the latter grammatical option is selected, it underscores the fact this is the one and only gospel, or good news from God, meaning there are no other gospels. If the former is chosen, it underscores there is no other religious gospel on the planet which even comes close to this gospel. To study Paul's writings is to quickly learn this is always how he speaks about God's good redemptive news for sinful mankind. He leaves absolutely no room for other gospels by employing the use of the article (cf. Romans 1:16; 2:16; 11:28; 15:16, 19; 16:25; 1 Corinthians 9:14, 18, 23; 15:1; 2 Corinthians 2:12; 4:3; 9:13). This is why he is not ashamed to speak up and out about this gospel because it is THE gospel of how sinners become saints before the holy, living God. Should it be "a" gospel, there would be room to be ashamed about it because it would be imperfect, by definition. There is, conversely, no room to be embarrassed about this gospel because it is perfect and pre-eminent period . . . end of story.

Just exactly what is the content of this gospel Paul speaks about? He answers this query in 1 Corinthians 15, which he wrote in 57 A.D. Prior to his letter to the Romans.

<sup>1</sup> Now I make known to you, brethren, the gospel (τὸ εὐαγγέλιον) which I preached to you, which also you received, in which also you stand, <sup>2</sup> by which also you are saved, if you hold fast the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain. <sup>3</sup> For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, <sup>4</sup> and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, <sup>5</sup> and that He appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. <sup>6</sup> After that He appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time, most of whom remain until now, but some have fallen asleep; <sup>7</sup> then He appeared to James, then to all the apostles; <sup>8</sup> and last of all, as it were to one untimely born, He appeared to me also. <sup>9</sup> For I am the least of the apostles, who am not fit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.  
(1 Corinthians 15).

In verse 3, Paul tells the Corinthians this gospel he received was first given to him. Christ died on Friday, April 3, 33 A.D. Paul was saved not long thereafter. In Galatians 1, Paul says that after his conversion he spent three years in private study and spiritual preparation in the arid region of Arabia before he went and met with Peter and other saints (Galatians 1:15-24). Scholars believe during this time is when Paul received this historically precise gospel creed of the Church in Jerusalem. Think about this, almost immediately after the death and resurrection of Jesus, believers devised this creed Paul quotes to the Corinthians, which means it was devised sometime before 36 A.D. when Paul visited Jerusalem. Certainly, three years was not enough time for a myth about Jesus to develop. This creed, designed to be memorized by believers, stated the historical and theological nature of God's gospel.

What is God's gospel? Four verbs in 1 Corinthians 15 describe it as it relates to the work of Jesus: *died, buried, raised, and appeared*. This the gospel. It is about the perfect Son of God, Jesus, who left heaven to die as your sin-substitute, who was historically and publically buried in a rich man's tomb, and who victoriously reversed necrosis by rising, as He said He would, on the third day. This gospel is the gospel because it is the only one divinely designed to enable sinners to find forgiveness for their inherited sinful status (Romans 5:12-21) by coming to Jesus in faith that He is, in fact, THE Savior. How could you be ashamed about this gospel? Paul wasn't.

- Jealous Jews verally opposed Paul's preaching about the risen Savior on his first missionary journey in Antioch (Acts 13:45) . . . *but he was not ashamed of the gospel.*
- Angry Jews had Paul stoned in Lystra for the gospel, he a former Pharisee, proclaimed (Acts 14:19-20) . . . *but he was not ashamed of the gospel and he kept preaching.*
- In Philippi, men angry over the fact Paul and Silas cut into their divination profits by delivering their key demonically possessed slave girl from her demon, had them locked up (Acts 16:16-25) . . . *but he was not ashamed of the gospel and he kept preaching.*
- In Athens, intellectually arrogant philosophers mocked his resurrection message on Mars Hill (Acts 17) . . . *but he was not ashamed of the gospel and he kept preaching.*
- In Jerusalem, an angry Jewish mob wanted to tear him limb for being a false teacher (Acts 21:15ff) . . . *but he was not ashamed of the gospel and he kept preaching.*

Why did he keep preaching and proclaiming the gospel? Because there was, and is, no other gospel by which sinners can secure salvation (Acts 4:12). And this is also why he was motivated to bring that same gospel to Rome. Regardless of how many gods the Romans claimed to have (Vulcan, Mars, Dionysus, Neptune, Apollo, Pluto, Cupid, Saturn, Janus, Liber, Quirinus, Orcus, Dis Pater, Faunus, Sol, Virtus, Sol Invictus, Summanus, Viduus, Soranus, Tibernius, Volturnus, ect.), no matter what the Romans taught about how a person should live to please the gods and one day enter into their presence, Paul would not flinch when it came to THE gospel. It was the very message those caught up in a false gospel needed to hear . . . and there are false gospels (Galatians 1; 1 John 4:1-3).

Paul also probably added these words because he had heard that some Roman saints were, in fact, ashamed of the gospel. Why would a Christsian be ashamed? Let's count some of the reasons.

- I certainly don't want anyone to think I am intolerant of other religious views.
- I don't want to come across as unloving and uncaring.
- I don't want people to think I'm arrogant because I think there is only one way to God.

- I don't want to come across at work as being narrow-minded and exclusive.
- I don't want to say something which might result in my friends not wanting to hang out with me anymore.
- I don't want to look or sound, well, weird.
- I definitely don't want to be ridiculed or criticized for the restrictive nature of the gospel.

If you are ashamed of Christ's gospel, the gospel he died to give you, then two things are true: one, it is quite possible that you do not know the God of the gospel because you are ashamed of His salvific plan, or two, you are a baby or carnal Christian and you need to grow up and ask God to make you brave with His only plan of salvation for sinners. Which is it? If the former, you need to come to Jesus in faith believing He will redeem you. If the latter, you need to start getting bold in small ways, and this, in turn, will lead to boldness in big ways.

Why was I excited about giving the gospel to Hubie? I think you know the answer to this question. Excitement filled my heart and soul because I knew I had THE gospel. Why was Paul excited about sharing the gospel in Rome, the seat of world power? The answer is the same. He knew there was no other gospel for sinners, regardless of who they were.

A second reason arises from Paul's next statement in verse 16:

## Reason #2: The Gospel Is Powerful (Romans 1:16b)

The best way to appreciate this second point is to read the phrase in question:

For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek (Romans 1).

Οὐ γὰρ ἐπαισχύνομαι τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τοῦ χριστοῦ· δύναμις γὰρ θεοῦ ἐστὶν εἰς σωτηρίαν παντὶ τῷ πιστεύοντι, Ἰουδαίῳ τε πρῶτον καὶ Ἑλληνι.

The second "for," or *gar* (γὰρ), introduces us to the unlimited and supernatural power of God's gospel. The Greek word here for power is *dunamis* (δύναμις). Unfortunately, many preachers, teachers, and writers of Bible commentaries incorrectly relate this word to the English word for dynamite. For example, John MacArthur writes:

First of all, Paul declares, the gospel is the power of God. *Dunamis* (power) is the Greek term from which our word dynamite is derived.<sup>1</sup>

He merely echoes the observation made by Donald Barnhouse in 1952 when he wrote in his commentary on Romans,

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<sup>1</sup> John MacArthur, *Romans*, vol. 1 (Chicago: Moody Press, 1991) 51.

The Greek language has eight different words, all translated by the English word “power”... But here in our text we have a word that is silver strength. It is *dunamis*, the word that the scientists have adopted in our terms dynamo, dynamite and dynamic. It is this that is the power of the gospel.<sup>2</sup>

This is a nice idea but has nothing to do the lexical meaning of the word in question. To equate *dunamis* with dynamite is to be lexically guilty of what is called reverse etymology. In lay terms, this means you are reading a present-day meaning into a word which never carried this connotation. Paul could not have been thinking of dynamite because his world did not know what dynamite was. Further, Paul would not have equated *dunamis* with dynamite anyway because dynamite blows things up, shreds them, and destroys. Certainly, the gospel is not this kind of power.

What kind of power is Paul speaking about? D. A. Carson, the world renowned Greek grammarian and linguist, gives us some much needed insight:

The power of God concerning which Paul speaks he often identifies with the power that raised Jesus from the dead (e.g. Eph. 1:18-20); and it operates in us, its goal is ‘unto salvation,’ Rom. 1:16, KJV, aiming for the wholeness and perfection implicit in the consummation of our salvation. Quite apart from the semantic anachronism, therefore, dynamite appears inadequate as a means of raising Jesus from the dead or as a means of conforming us to the likeness of Christ. Of course, what preachers are trying to do when they talk about dynamite is give some indication of the greatness of the power involved. Even so, Paul’s measure is not dynamite, but the empty tomb.<sup>3</sup>

Gospel power is indicative of the divine creative and restorative power which enabled Jesus, post-crucifixion to break the bonds of death itself on the third day. Likewise, just as Jesus unleashed His divine power to cause His resurrection from death, He stands ready to utilize the same power to raise a dead sinner to life at the moment of faith. Nothing else and no one else in this whole world has this kind of power where the sinner is concerned. This is why Paul adds, “it is the power of God for salvation...”

Salvation, *soteria* (σωτηρίαν), basically means to deliver someone from a threatening situation.<sup>4</sup> Applied to God and His gospel, it means He and He alone has the power to save a sinner from His coming wrath against sin and sinners. Paul addresses this concept of divine wrath in Romans 2:

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<sup>2</sup> Donald Grey Barnhouse, Romans, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids: Eermans, 1952), 162-163.

<sup>3</sup> D. A. Carson, Exegetical Fallacies (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1984), 33.

<sup>4</sup> William Arndt, Frederick W. Danker, Walter Bauer, and F. Wilbur Gingrich, A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 985-986.

<sup>5</sup> But because of your stubbornness and unrepentant heart you are storing up wrath for yourself in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, <sup>6</sup> who will render to every man according to his deeds: <sup>7</sup>to those who by perseverance in doing good seek for glory and honor and immortality, eternal life; <sup>8</sup>but to those who are selfishly ambitious and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, wrath and indignation (Romans 2).

The day of judgment is coming to all those who fail to make the right decision in favor Jesus Christ. The judgment need not fall on you because salvation and deliverance is available through the gospel of God. God wants you to use this powerful gospel, as He articulates in various biblical writings:

‘Do I have any pleasure in the death of the wicked,’ declares the LORD God, rather that he should turn from his ways and live? (Ezekiel 18:23).

The answer to the rhetorical question here is no doubt a resounding “No!” The Lord doesn’t want the lost to be judged for their sin (Matthew 5:22, 29; 10:28; 22:32-33; Luke 12:6; Revelation 20:15ff); however, if they reject His gospel, which is all about the redemptive work of His Son, Jesus, He will be left with no choice in eternity.

All of this of course makes you ask some personal questions: Have I received this gospel for myself? Or have I historically rejected it? Who is the gospel available for? *Everyone*, as Paul states in the last part of verse 16. You can’t say that there was no room at the door of the empty tomb for you. Finally, it makes you ask the logical question: How do I go about making sure I have made this gospel my gospel? Paul tells you this gospel becomes yours at the moment of belief in its historicity and truth for your life.

Let’s dig into this a little deeper, this whole concept of belief. What does it mean to believe in the gospel of Jesus? It means you consider the evidence available to ascertain whether Jesus was, in fact, God in the flesh. It means you readily understand that you are a person born with a sin nature, spiritually cut off from God. It means you believe that He died for your sins, was buried in a tomb, and rose from the grave three days later. Belief is not blind faith coupled with no facts. On the contrary, it is firm faith in firm facts. You consider what God has revealed, you evaluate it, the Spirit of God speaks to you and draws you to the Father, and, hopefully, at some point, you change your mind about Jesus and believe in His person and work (Romans 10:9-10). At that precise moment you experience the magnificence of power of God unto salvation. Yes, at that precise moment God gives eternal life to your soul which has been dead.

Forty-one years ago while sitting in a fogged up Datsun B210 in a parking lot full of potholes, the spiritual hole in Hubie’s heart was filled with eternal forgiveness and life from the good hand of Jesus, the risen Savior. Yes, in the cold of that little car a young man discovered why his best friend kept telling him about the gospel. The good news is the pre-imminent news of all spiritual news, and, more importantly, that good news unleashes the power of all powers on the

sinner's hard heart. No wonder I wanted to share it. And who taught me why I should have this life focus? I merely studied Paul's life.

If you are Hubie today, realize God loves you and wants to save you, but you must place your faith in the redemptive work of Jesus. What is holding you back? Believe me, whatever or whoever is keeping you from making this decision, it or they will not be worth it in eternity.

If you are a believer today, I just have to ask you one more time: Who is your Hubie?