

## SERMON NOTES

SERIES: Romans: God's Power Salvation

TITLE: The Power of the Gospel

SCRIPTURE: **Romans 1:16-17**

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The book of Romans is a masterfully written exposition of the gospel of God. Without a doubt, it is the foundation of authentic Christianity and the most articulate, systematic understanding of our faith found in the Bible. Countless lives have been changed by the truth found in this ancient letter, and it continues to change lives today. Interestingly enough, Romans was written to Christians. So, while the good news found in Romans can certainly bring people to faith in Jesus, the actual focus is on how the gospel helps Christians think rightly about God, life, faith, and Christian community. If you want to grow to know God more personal and intimate way, this letter is for you!

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When you read old letters, you only have one side of the conversation. But, the more you learn about the context and the backstory of the correspondence, the better you'll understand what's being discussed. And, that becomes very important when you read a New Testament letter like the book of Romans. If you read Romans through a 21<sup>st</sup> century lens, if you bring your cultural understanding to the text, if you bring your own meanings to certain words and phrases, you could miss what God wants to say to you in his Word. Don't get me wrong, there's a lot you can understand just by picking up the Bible and reading it. But the more you can learn about the context and backstory of a book like Romans, the better you'll be able to understand and apply what God wants to say to your like today.

***The Backstory to Romans (review)*** — The church in Rome started as a purely Jewish Christian church. As the church grew, Gentiles (non-Jewish) people also joined the church. Where there had previously been division between Jews and Gentiles, in Christ, there was now unity. However, in 49AD all Jews were ordered to leave Rome and they were not able to return for 5 years. When they came back, they found that "their" church was now led by Gentiles, who were not holding to the Jewish roots of their faith—laws, customs, traditions, rituals. As a result a division arose in the church, each group thinking itself superior to the other. One of the main reasons the apostle Paul writes to this church is to try to heal the division in the church. Paul knew that to heal this church, they had to dig deep into the theology of the Gospel. He knew that most of our problems, at their root, are theological problems. Theology, what we believe about God and the Gospel, shapes all of life. In fact, the Gospel—the good news about who Jesus is and what Jesus has done for us through his death and resurrection—is the climax of the "big story" of the Bible—the fulfillment of "all God promised beforehand in the Holy Scriptures" (1:2).

***Setting the Gospel in the Backstory of the Bible*** — Simply put, God's promises to Abraham and all the prophets was a from-one-nation-all-nations-will-be-blessed, (put back into right relationship with God and each other)-savings-plan. It was a single nation savings plan and Israel was the nation through which the Messiah would come to set the world right again. But Israel had failed. Israel became like the idolatrous nations that thumbed their noses at God. So the question was: How will God set the world right again

when his own chosen people are incapable of doing what God had called them to do? How would the “promises” made beforehand by the prophets in Holy Scripture be fulfilled? Here’s Paul’s big idea in Romans; God has demonstrated himself to be a “righteous” God by keeping his promise to Israel to rescue all nations from his wrath through the faithfulness of Jesus. All who put their faith in Christ, are put back into right relationship with God and each other and they become God’s one new people.

**Romans 1:16-17 — The Big Idea: God’s Gospel is God’s power for salvation.**

*The Gospel is powerful because:*

1. It’s the fulfillment of all God promised he would do in the Old Testament to bring salvation to the world. (1:2)
2. The Gospel is powerful because when it is announced, heard, and believed it changes lives (1:16).
3. The Gospel is powerful because it reveals the righteousness of God (1:17). The power of the Gospel is revealed in how God is right to make you right through faith alone in Christ alone (cf Romans 3:25-26).

Habakkuk 2:4 —The righteous will live by his faith. Backstory—In view of God’s coming judgment and wrath, coming from evil, ruthless, godless Babylonians, God tells the prophet that, after their exile, God will save his people Israel. In the meantime he says, “Trust me to keep my promise though you don’t completely understand my plan.” He says, people made righteous by faith in me and my promises will live by faith in me and my promises.

4. The Gospel is powerful because it is God’s “faith-way” of salvation, start to finish (1:17).

Do you see why Paul is so eager to preach the Gospel in Rome? Do you see why Paul isn’t ashamed of the Gospel? How could he be? How could we be? My goodness, the Gospel is God’s power to save—it’s God’s power to transform—it’s God’s power to unite all people into one new people. Always remember...

The Gospel is GOOD NEWS not good advice. The Gospel is good news because it’s not about do, do, do. It’s good news because it’s about what God has already done for you in Jesus.

*For Discussion ...*

1. Why is understanding the context and backstory of what you read in the Bible, especially here in the book of Romans, so important?
2. What “ahas” did you have as a result of this teaching?
3. What difference do those “ahas” have in how you think about God, life, and faith? How might you apply what you’ve learned tomorrow, next week?
4. What do you still need further clarification on? Talk with the group about questions you might have from this teaching?
5. Who do you know that you could begin praying and asking God to give you an opportunity to share the great good news of the Gospel? Who could you invite to come with you to Fellowship Greenville?