

SERMON NOTES

SERIES: Romans: God's Power Salvation

TITLE: Good News for a Divided World

SCRIPTURE: Romans 1:1-15

DATE: August 27, 2017

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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!

This morning we begin our study in the New Testament book of Romans, which is actually a letter, the apostle Paul, wrote to Christians living in Rome. Scholars agree that Paul wrote this letter at the end of his third missionary journey, from Corinth, around 57 A.D. Here are some things you need to know about Romans to get the most out of our study.

(1) *What Romans is not.* Romans is not a textbook of systematic theology. It is the most articulate, systematic explanation of Christianity/the gospel in all the Bible. And unquestionably, it is full of deep theological truth. Nevertheless, it is not a book written for the sole purpose of setting forth everything Paul understood about New Testament Bible doctrine.

(2) *What Romans is.* Romans is a letter—as is clear from all the personal comments Paul makes at the beginning and end of the letter—see 1:1-15 and 15:14-16:27.

(3) *Why Paul wrote Romans.* Paul wrote this letter to address a very serious problem in the church. He wrote to help unite a deeply divided church. Jewish Christians were offended that Gentile Christians were not holding on to Jewish laws and traditions. Gentile Christians looked at Jewish Christians as trying to force Jewish customs and law-keeping on them which was out of keeping with faith in Christ. Paul writes to try to bring peace among Jewish and Gentile Christians. This theme builds to the exhortation found in 15:5-7. See it? Romans is a letter written to heal a very serious racial and ethnic divide in the church. And to address that division, Paul argues for peace and reconciliation using gospel doctrine as his rationale.

READ 1:1-15

The Big Idea: The gospel that _____ us _____ us.

In this greeting, we see the idea of gospel life-change in how Paul talks about himself and in how he talks about the church in Rome.

- How the gospel changed Paul's life.
- How the gospel changed Jews and Gentiles in Rome.

Okay, so the gospel changes us, but how does it unite us? Paul shows the Gentile Christians that the Gospel they believe is thoroughly rooted in the Jewish scriptures. The Old Testament is full of gospel promises not yet fulfilled. The gospel is the good news that God is saving and calling to himself a people made up of all peoples through faith in Jesus—who, as to his earthly life was a descendent of David. As the son of God, he lived in the weakness of a human body. But he was shown to be the son of God in power when God raised him from the dead.

Martin Luther called the book of Romans “the chief part of the New Testament and the very purest gospel—[he said, Romans]—is worthy not only that every Christian should know it word for word, by heart, but occupy himself with it every day, as the daily bread of the soul. It can never be read or pondered too much, and the more it is dealt with the more precious it becomes, and the better it tastes.

For Discussion —

1. What excites you about our upcoming study in Romans?
2. When you think about the book of Romans, what kinds of things come to mind? The Roman's road, life in the Spirit, election and free will... talk about what you hope to take away from our study in Romans.
3. What did God promise in the OT (v.2) and how do verses 3 and 4 clarify this (cf 4:13)?
4. Where do you see the “obedience that comes from faith” in your own life?
5. Talk about the quote from Martin Luther above, how can you (and your small group?) allow Romans to be sweet tasting daily bread over the next year or so. How can you encourage one another to feed on its life-changing truth?