

Session Two: The Gospel of Jesus Christ (Rom. 1:16-17)

Unless otherwise noted, all scripture references are from the New King James Version.

16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. 17 For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "The just shall live by faith." (Ro 1:16-17)

I. A PASSIONATE GOSPEL - ROM. 1:16-17

A. Paul introduces his gospel of God's free acceptance (righteousness) available to everyone who is under the wrath of God. Romans 1:16-17 forms the theological foundation of the whole book; it is his central thesis statement; the rest of the book develops the implications of this incredible truth. The theme of Romans is *passion*, and the ideas Paul presents here must produce deep passion, gratitude, urgency, and abandonment within our soul if it is to have its full effect – fire for God.

1. We must be grounded in the true gospel. We must be on guard from a humanistic gospel, where God is reigning in heaven for the happiness of man. Humanism expresses itself in two primary ways within Christianity: through either legalism or licentiousness.
2. ***Licentiousness*** implies a gospel that allows a man to live in compromise covered by grace. ***Legalism*** implies that we can *earn God's acceptance and power*, by which we try to accomplish the demands of righteousness *without God's power*.
3. ***Repentance and receptivity*** give us access to the grace of God. Repentance means stating and believing with our will that we reject the manner of life we live without Christ. We choose to accept his leadership in our lives in all aspects who he is. We turn from living life in our own way, under our own leadership and turn to Christ to lead and guide.

30 Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent, 31 because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead." Acts 17:30-31

38 Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. Acts 2: 38

19 Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, 20 and that He may send Jesus Christ, who was preached to you before, 21 whom heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things, which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began. Acts 3: 19

- B. Contained within the book of Romans is God’s answer for three of man’s greatest needs: **need for acceptance without earning it** (security); **power to overcome deficiencies in their character** (wholeness); and **desire to impact people and circumstances** (significance). These are the fundamental issues of every human being. The issue of free acceptance in love is that it meets the human need for it from God *and* one another (grace-oriented acceptance). We cannot be helpful or useful without healthy relationships from a small group of godly friends that love me freely without striving to earn it. The absence of free acceptance – from God and other believers – leaves us fundamentally broken on the inside and incapable of relating in a healthy way with others.
1. Security in grace and union with Jesus is the only way to fully walk in the Spirit. When the revelation of the free acceptance of God produces security in the depths of our hearts, we allow Jesus to come as close as He wants to and can be truly filled with the Spirit. Freely receiving His love, followed by freely loving Him, empowers us to freely love others who are inherently “unlovable” and thus fully participate in God’s plan of reconciliation and partnership. We become fearless in love – and thus trusting, voluntary bond-slaves who will follow Jesus wherever He leads.
 2. Attempting to get someone to be committed as a servant of God before they are secure in love almost always produces some form of external holiness. True holiness flows out of passion which comes from the free acceptance of the love of God.
 3. Passionate holiness (a red-hot heart with fiery gratitude) has life, joy and compassion versus religious holiness which has fear, judgment, criticism, insecurity and condemnation with no passion or joy as one tries to conform outwardly to principles. We want to connect authentically with the book of Romans by connecting to the heart of God as we *feel* it – “I want You God because You want me: we only love God because He first loved us” (1 John 4:19).
- C. This **free gift** of how to stand in God’s presence in righteousness had now been revealed to him! The quality of righteousness that God Himself possesses is ours to receive! It’s as absolutely perfect as God Himself! The blazing fire, burning around His throne in *perfect purity*, blameless *without flaw* is the **same righteousness** that has now been freely offered to all mankind – and given freely to us.
1. This righteousness given to us as a gift is in full agreement with God, therefore, it saves us **freely, fully, and finally** – forever and ever. It fully satisfies all the divine requirements in justice because of its potency and power – it is completely and totally of the quality of righteousness that God Himself possesses!

2. It cannot be improved upon, it cannot be added to *at all* – it is the God quality that belongs to God Himself. There is no accusation the enemy can bring to God that is stronger than the quality of righteousness freely given to us by God Himself. It is of a quality and potency that is far beyond our sin.
 3. The work of the cross (blood of Jesus and the cross of Christ) is God’s ultimate statement of His pursuing love after us; there is no more powerful statement in all of history of God’s love for us; as we stand before Him there can be no more hindrance or obstacle to enjoying His presence, love, and joy over our lives. Everything that hinders love is removed forcefully by the definitive statement of God’s approval, acceptance, and delight in us spoken thunderously at the cross.
 - a. Exchange the word “righteousness” with the free gift of “acceptance” and “affirmation” and we understand practically what it means to stand before God with no hindrance at all. In the gospel the good news of God’s victory to bring us into His presence is revealed, and we are able to enjoy the benefit of it, receiving what we could not prior to the work of the cross: **Divine Approval**; **Divine Acceptance**; **Divine Affirmation**.
- D. In 2 Cor. 5:19 Paul states that God *does not count our transgressions against us* – **this revelation is fundamental to a life of holy passion**. The revelation of God’s free acceptance awakens holy passion, and then eventually leads to mature obedience. Why? The power of God’s acceptance touches the deepest desires, needs, and emotions of our heart. He cannot accept you any more than the day that you were born again. This truth causes a deep fountain of passion and gratitude for the Lord to be awakened within the one who truly understands this revelation of free, final, and full (complete and total) acceptance from God.
- 19...that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation. (2 Cor. 5:19)***
- 47 "Therefore I say to you, her sins, which [are] many, are forgiven, for she loved much. But to whom little is forgiven, [the same] loves little." (Luke 7:47)***
1. The “Lk. 7:47 principle” is a powerful insight into how the human heart works when loved well. When loved well, we cannot help but love in return. To the measure that we receive love, we will love back. Jesus understands the depths of human nature and the manner in which we need free acceptance to be empowered to run after Him. Therefore, He loves us fully and perfectly *first* to awaken and empower us to love Him back. He continues to help us experience His love as we reach for Him to know Him; this releases power in our inner man to know Him, resist sin, and pursue more of His love and power (Rom. 6:1-14).

2. If a human being understands the revelation of free acceptance they will be abandoned without any restraints whatsoever, fearless in holy love in the depths of our heart; the unveiling and uncovering of free acceptance that makes us unwaveringly loyal to Him – the love of God.
- E. **“In it the righteousness of God is revealed...”** Paul is speaking of *imputed* righteousness – righteousness that is placed into our “account”. The free acceptance of God in love establishes in His legal record, or accounting of our lives, a canceling of our debt accrued through gross sin, wickedness, and rebellion. It also established the imputation, or reception, of His righteousness to our lives. This is the very righteousness of God Himself given to us as a free gift – it as if we were given the gift of the life of Jesus as if we lived it; and the choices of Jesus as if we made them. This is how the Father now relates to us!
- F. This transfers upon us the ability to stand in His awesome presence without fear, condemnation, inferiority, accusation, shame, and rejection. We can now stand before Him by faith in boldness, blamelessness, and fearlessness, confident in love. His righteousness and His victory was put to our account instantaneously the day we become born again (2 Cor. 5:19).
1. It is also *imparted* Righteousness – inspires, energizes, and ignites a new quality of life from the inside out; *the legal position **and** our living condition* – the goal of sanctification is to bring our living condition into agreement with our legal position; that we might become righteous on the inside as well as on the outside.
- G. Later, in Romans 3, Paul will explain more about this free gift - this chapter is the masterpiece of scripture on the free acceptance of God; In Romans 9 Paul will explain that the freeness of the gift is the stumbling block to the religious man who wants to contribute something. Specifically, Paul talks about the Jews who could not stand and simply receive a free gift. They wanted desperately to add something to the gift to motivate God to like them! God, however, is fully motivated by His own deity and eternal love – there is no motivation or initiative from us that causes Him to move on our behalf. Any initiative on our part comes *in response to His free gift of grace and mercy*.

II. PAUL “GLORYING” IN THE GOSPEL - ROM. 1:16

- A. The **gospel** is the announcement/proclamation of ***what God has done*** (vs. the religious achievement of men). It is ***not*** good advice on how to live, what to do, and how to behave. It is an announcement of something that God has accomplished for His glory and man’s great need. ***Paul is saying that he is not ashamed of the fact that he could not motivate God to take an interest in him.*** The gospel is the statement that the only hope for man is that God has provided a way of salvation.

1. Mankind was in a desperate situation and God broke in with a glorious solution to deliver men from the darkness, despair, and desperation of sin and brokenness; in that hour came the most awesome proclamation in all of history via the angelic proclamation of joy and glad tidings in Bethlehem!
 2. It was the greatest pronouncement in all of history, astounding and awesome above every other dramatic moment of liberation, freedom, and peace in all of human history. All the offenses are gone! The righteousness of God has arrived as a free gift for all mankind! Unto us a child was born, a Son was given – and the government would rest upon the shoulders of the One who *dies* that we might live!
 3. Paul heralds that he is not ashamed of being unable to bring Himself into a right relationship with God. He is **not ashamed** of only being able to receive something freely that he was unable to produce or add to. ***“I am not ashamed that all of my goodness/acceptance had to be provided for me as a free gift!”***
- B. The gospel is a demonstration of the **power of God**. It is not just a description of God’s power in history (the resurrection of Jesus) but a present-tense experience of it now in us (Eph. 3:16; Heb. 7:16; Rom 8). It is not that the gospel is “about” the power of God, it “is” the power of God. The gospel includes God’s **past** accomplishments (cross) and God’s **present** intervention in power (grace): the **present** power of God expressed in healing, deliverance, revelation, protection, direction, and the fullness of life in the Spirit. It takes the power of God to preserve us to the end; therefore the Lord releases the continual experience of power that works on our behalf.
- C. A **comprehensive salvation** was accomplished by God’s power. We are **saved from** the ***penalty*** (guilt/death/rejection; Justification), ***power*** (inability to change/powerless; Sanctification), and ***presence*** of sin and death (the working of sin and death within our bodies; Glorification). We are **saved for *intimacy*** (restored as sons of God and bride of Christ) and ***dominion*** (releasing the works of God and stopping the works of Satan). All of these benefits are fruits of our being united to Jesus. Our salvation is not something that happened to us, but a Person that we have been joined to.
1. “It” **is** the good news regarding comprehensive salvation. It saves us **from** irrelevance and vanity, eternal wrath, and Satan’s dominion. It saves **into** relevance, purpose and meaning, eternal bliss, and Christ’s dominion. Three tenses of salvation: (1) **Justification** (spirit) – past, *have been saved*; (2) **Sanctification** (soul) – present, *am being saved* (3) **Glorification** (body) – future, *will be saved*.
- D. The gospel is for **everyone** because it is based on God’s accomplishment (power) instead of man’s achievement. *The pagan, the moral man, and the religious man* all need the righteousness of God without exception; Paul is going to prove that it is **for** everyone; all can receive life, joy, and freedom from God in fearless love with a burning heart of gratitude experiencing the comprehensive salvation announced from heaven for each one.

- E. The “**righteousness of God is revealed**” - here is the content of the gospel. The glory of the gospel is **how** it makes a man righteous through God’s provision of His own righteousness apart from works. *The righteousness of God is both what God is (He is right, He is righteous) and is what God does (He gives it freely, unmerited). God puts other people in the right by HIS power and grace (not our own efforts).* It is a word that means “to be in the right.” We have “rightness;” to be in the right both **legally** and **morally**. This is how powerful this salvation is, putting people in the right with God by His very own righteousness.
- F. **Revealed from ‘faith to faith’:** God’s righteousness (who He is and what He does) is made available through faith (believing, trusting, looking to another, etc.). **“Faith is the contradiction of all that is meritorious in man...it pushes all sense of worthiness and entitlement away”** (Martyn-Lloyd Jones, 1985).
1. It was *announced and made clear* – it was and is revealed in a **personal** way by the Holy Spirit by a God in hot pursuit of His people. The revelation of His love and leadership came because God opened the eyes of the heart; no man can come unless he is drawn by the Holy Spirit – we caught God’s attention and He *wanted* us, *pursued* us hotly, and *captured* us with power and the revealing of His desire for us.
 2. The righteousness of God which is imputed to us when we are united with Christ at the new birth and progressively pervades the whole of our lives through a living faith. In other words, we progress from a weak faith to a mature faith (experiences of the outworking of the righteousness of God in our lives).
- G. We **shall live** by faith: we experience God’s life by a greater dependence upon Him and His word by the power of the Holy Spirit (Matt 4:4; Hab. 2:4). This “life” is both quantitative & qualitative. This is in direct contrast to the deserved penalty of death because of sin. **The gospel, or the good news, includes the problem of the wrath of God in 1:18.** The wrath of God has been revealed against all unrighteousness and ungodliness – yet we have been spared, and saved from it – through receiving by faith the free gift of His righteousness given freely, fully, and finally to us through the power of the Holy Spirit. We shall **live**, and not die – because of faith! We believed (without seeing) that God gave us something incredible, for free, that changes our standing with Him and spares us from His anger.

III. ALIVE IN CHRIST BY THE POWER OF HIS GRACE:

- A. **Three Basic Needs for All Human Beings:** Need for Acceptance (God-given) - relationship with God and people. Many believers are not secure in grace without fear of judgment; Ability to Change (power to change our lives) - ability to overcome sin and weakness. Every single person desires the ability to improve oneself in the fallen world; Need for Significance (power to change others lives) - ability to make a relevant contribution through impacting others.

1. All three of these realities are the result of man's falling from glory. Man was created for the glory of God. We were all born with these desires – they were given to us by God, and we cannot repent of them. Man was created to have full access to God and to exercise dominion (Gen 1-2).
 2. In Gen. 2:17 man came under the penalty and the power of sin and lost his way in to God's glory. When Paul declares that "all have sinned" he means that all mankind has this need/craving to return to having access to the glory of God.
 3. A God-created man, with a God-conscience, with an inward craving for glory will never be satisfied with the pleasures of the 5 senses. The book of Romans gives us a clear picture of God's love providing a way back to glory (intimacy and authority) while setting us free from the penalty and power of sin.
- B. **Three Basic Problems of All Human Beings:** Rejected - condemned by God and others. Isolation, loneliness, and rejection are extremely painful and damaging to our soul.; Powerless - bondage to sinful habits and Satanic strongholds.; Irrelevant - inability to make lasting impact (eternal). Unbelievers discover their lives as irrelevancy, aimlessness, oftentimes indicated (but not limited to) boredom. Unbelievers have nothing to die for therefore nothing to live for. This is vanity of vanities (Ecc. 1:2).
- C. **God's Solution:** Provision of God's Own Righteousness through being joined to Jesus. There are two primary ways this union is expressed in apostolic doctrine which are essentially two dimensions of one reality. The one reality being 'joined to Jesus.'
1. We are in Christ - traditionally referred to as 'our *legal position* in Christ.' However, it is more accurate to say that it is "our *relationship* to Christ." Inanimate objects may be positioned next to one another, but they by no means have relationship.
 2. Christ in us - traditionally referred to as 'our *living condition* or experience in Christ.' This is the actual degree in which we live our lives out in spiritual victory or carnal defeat. This concept describes our level of maturity and actual conduct before God.
- D. **Three Basic Provisions** of the Gift of Righteousness (as fruit of being in relationship with Christ)
1. **Father's love** (God's **heart**) - Meets our need for: Acceptance - freely loved, desired, approved by God; Affection - God's pleasure, delight, affirmation and enjoyment of us; Access - to God's heart and home.
 2. **Indwelling Spirit** (God's **life**) - Grants us the ability to change: Spiritual insight - guidance in life and illumination of the Word; Power over indwelling sin - God's powerful life dwells in us; Communion with God - the ability to experience intimacy with God through fellowship with the Holy Spirit.

¹⁷ But he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit with Him. (1 Co 6:17)

⁹ Whoever has been born of God does not sin, for His seed remains in him; and he cannot sin, because he has been born of God. (1 Jn 3:9)

²⁰ But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and you know all things. (1 Jn 2:20)

3. **Entrusted Authority** (God's throne) - the authority of the believer; the ability to make a relevant impact on others: Releasing the works of God - healing, prosperity, miracles, angels, intercession; Stopping the works of Satan - warfare, sickness, oppression; Responsibility over the purpose of God - varying spheres of authority granted by grace (home, job, money, people, and ministries).

⁸ Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out demons. Freely you have received, freely give. (Mt 10:8)

²³ For assuredly, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, 'Be removed and be cast into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that those things he says will be done, he will have whatever he says. (Mk 11:23)

¹⁹ Behold, I give you the authority...over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you. (Lk 10:19)

⁷ Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. (Jas 4:7)