

**GRACE,  
FAITH & THE  
POWER OF  
THE GOSPEL**

**ROMANS 1-5.**



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Our mission is to build a community of grace  
committed to making disciples of Jesus.

Our vision is to be a faithful, adventurous and compassionate  
church with an expanding influence on communities, cities  
and nations with the hope and love of God.

## WELCOME TO 2019

As I was contemplating the changes we are experiencing in our culture and society, and pondering what word of God would be best to launch us in 2019 and beyond, it did not take me long to settle on the book of Romans; a word that would equip us and remind us of the power of the gospel of Jesus Christ

Most consider this book **is not only the most profound book in the Bible, but some go so far as to say it could be the most profound book in existence.**

It has been appropriately termed the "*Cathedral of the Christian faith.*" Many theologians describe it as the most important document ever written. It is the most complete explanation of what the gospel is in the entire Bible. It gives, by far, the clearest and fullest exposition of the doctrines of sin and grace.

For the past 2,000 years, God has used this book alone to change the lives of millions of people around the world. Of course there are some well-known cases.

This is the book that lit the fire in **Martin Luther's** heart and brought about the Protestant Reformation, changing the history of Europe, as well as the world. This is the book that struck home as **John Wesley** sat in a little chapel in London listening to Luther's Prelude

to the Epistle to the Romans. Wesley said his heart was strangely warmed as he heard the truths of Romans set forth. There followed through him, the great evangelical awakening that saved England from the fate of France, and arrested the decay of English life, completely altering the history of the world again.

As we journey into the first 5 chapters, it is my hope and prayer that you too will see that Romans is a revolutionary book that can change your life, as it has changed the lives of millions. Its impact on the Christian faith and those who have come to faith through it, is simply astounding.

**Romans Chapters 1 to 5 will allow us as the people of God at FAC, to be re-established in the foundations of the gospel and its power, and the power of the cross. For us, it will take us deeper into the heart of God and the heart of man. Romans has been the very letter that has shaped the lives of many, and it is my hope that in 2019, it does the same at FAC.**

Blessings,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ian Barnett".

Ian Barnett  
Senior Minister

# THE SOURCE OF POWER

## ROMANS 1:1-15

It is important to remember that ancient letters typically begin with a simple identification of the sender, the recipients and a greeting. New Testament (NT) letters follow this pattern. However, in no other NT letter does the author elaborate as much as Paul did in Romans. For example, he spends six verses identifying himself. This could be because he had never visited the church, although he does want to visit them and be encouraged by them as we see in vs 11-12.

As he starts his introduction, we are clear that the power of the gospel is already on his mind, as he connects God's saving grace and his own apostolic calling. Grace is God loving us so much in Jesus Christ, that He has accepted us as we are. But it is also God loving us too much to leave us just the way we are. Keep in mind that grace is connected with obedience. Paul's passion to visit the Romans was motivated by a deep desire for all people to encounter the gospel. *The key idea is that Paul wants all people everyone to hear of the saving power of the gospel.*

### Read verses 1-7.

1. What was Paul like? How would you describe him? Look at vs 1 & 5. What do the words mean (servant, called, set apart) that Paul used to describe himself? To what extent could you use this description for yourself? Do you share any of Paul's passions?
2. Would you use vs 2-4 to describe the gospel to someone? What would you leave out or add to make it clearer?
3. What do you think Paul means by "the obedience that comes from faith"? (vs 5) See Romans 16:26 where the same phrase is used, but it is a little clearer.

4. Paul says in vs 6 we are "called to belong". What does Paul mean? What is the significance for us? Do you feel that you belong?

5. In vs 7, we are also described as being "loved by God" and "called to be saints". If these **are** descriptions of our relationship with God, how should we be different?

### Read verses 8-15.

6. What does Paul's prayer (vs 8-10) reveal about (a) himself and (b) God?
7. In vs 14, Paul is under an obligation. What was the nature of this obligation? See also 1 Corinthians 4:1 & 9:16-17. Was that obligation peculiar to Paul or should we share it?
8. Paul was under obligation but he was also "eager". (vs 15) The word suggests being single minded. What is Paul single minded about? To what degree do you share that single mindedness?

### Response:

Encourage someone you are praying for, by telling them you are praying for them.

# THE POWER OF THE GOSPEL

## ROMANS 1:16-17

Paul's summary of the gospel is found in these two verses and without a doubt, they are one of the most concise and profound in all of scripture and worthy of reflection of their own. These verses transformed the life of the great reformer Martin Luther (1483-1546). Our righteousness is a gift from God in Jesus Christ through faith, not something we can create or establish through our own merit.

The gospel isn't just true ideas, but life transforming power. This transformation is rooted in the truth that our lives are made acceptable to God because of

Jesus Christ, not because of our own performance or accomplishments. This was and still is staggering news in our performance driven and evaluating society. It is worth noting that when Paul describes the gospel as being God's power for salvation to the Jew first and also the Gentile (vs16), he is reflecting the important role Israel had in God's plan of salvation. God's plan is not meant to be a secret. It was not just for them or just for us. We all need to feel the weight of being saved by grace through faith. *The key idea is that we are saved by grace through faith alone. Thank you Jesus.*

1. There are three "I am's" (vs 14, 15, 16). How do the first two lead into the third?

2. Look at vs 16 phrase by phrase. What does it tell us about the gospel?

3. From vs 16 what is the nature of the gospel? Does this give us increased confidence?

4. From the same verse, how might we describe the purpose of the gospel? What are we saved from? See 1 Thessalonians 1:10.

5. The scope of the gospel reach is described. Who is the salvation of God designed for? What does it mean to "believe"? When did you first believe? How far can the gospel reach?

6. It was vs 17 (as mentioned in the Introduction above) that Martin Luther said "turned his life upside down". What in this verse would have caused this effect? Has God turned your life upside down?

7. Verse 17 has been described as the "heart" of the gospel. Why do you think that is so?

8. Imagine you have a friend who doesn't understand or like religious words. How might you explain vs 17 to him/her?

**Response:** Pray for God to lead you to someone He is calling out, so you can share His gospel with them.

# THE POWER THAT AWAKENS

## ROMANS 1:18-32

Last week we heard how the gospel is the power to save. So verse 18 comes as a shock. "The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all..." We have just heard clearly about saving grace, but it now feels like Paul has made a 180 degree turn to some dire and tough news about God's wrath against sin. However, what we too easily forget is that forgiveness and grace imply judgment.

In 2019 I doubt many want to hear this! By implication we can only forgive something that is wrong. What follows in these verses is Paul's clarification on why the revelation of God's righteousness was necessary. He

insists that God's wrath falls on people who suppress the truth. Let us not underestimate what these passages are saying to us. Remember that the wrath of a Holy God is very different from human anger. God's wrath is in response to the corruption and distortion of His good creation because of sin.

Even in 2019 there are people who either see God as remote and distant or who see Him as harmless; as someone who accepts all people regardless of their beliefs and behaviour. *The key idea is that the Gospel saves sinners from God's wrath and anger. We are lost without the cross of Christ.*

1. What comes to mind when you read of the "wrath of God" in vs 18? Who is the wrath of God directed towards? See Psalm 106:20 and Jeremiah 2:11.
2. Is God's wrath compatible with His character? How would we explain this to other people?
3. How do we see God's wrath at work today? See vs 24, 26, 28 and Acts 7:42. Why don't we see God's wrath now, as in Acts 5:1-11?

4. How has God made His character known from the beginning of creation? See Psalm 19 and Genesis 1:1-5.

5. According to vs 18, what is the primary act of wickedness that has been committed against God?

6. Why does Paul say in vs 20 "that people are without excuse"? What does he mean? What does God's creation reveal to you about God?

7. How is homosexual practice to be understood according to Paul?

8. What is dangerous about knowing God, but not acting on that knowledge? (vs 21-23)

**Response:** Pray for those you know who have heard the gospel but have "exchanged" it for other ways to live. Pray that they might come back to Jesus.

## THE POWER THAT JUDGES

## ROMANS 2:1-16

*"You, therefore have no excuse..."* What a start! The Apostle was all-inclusive in his proclamation of human guilt. No one escapes, neither Gentiles who never knew God's law nor Jews who presumed to hold a place of religious superiority as God's "chosen" people. The Jews possession of the law gave them no advantage. It's doing, not having the law that counts, and when judged in terms of living according to God's law, everyone is guilty.

Remember, no one except Jesus has ever lived the way God created His people to live. For the Jewish readers, Paul's condemnation of the wicked in the second half of Chapter 1 would have

received hearty endorsement...rightly, so God's judgment falls on the wicked... yes the Gentiles. You can only imagine what the Jewish readers thought when Paul included them in God's judgment. Paul argues that the righteous are found among the Jews and the Gentiles. Just as the wicked are found among the Jews and the Gentiles.

We should never take God's grace for granted. This is just as relevant for Christians in 2019. It is a level playing field. Deep down inside, we all know what is right (v15). Let's keep in mind two things: the righteous will live by faith (Habakkuk 2:4) and, God will judge all impartially

1. God is going to judge. What do these verses teach us about the principles that determine how God judges? (See vs 2, 6-11 & 12-15)
  
2. How would you describe a "self-righteous" person? What terrible predicament do self-righteous people find themselves in? (vs 1 & 2)
  
3. Look closely at vs 4 again. What were the dangers of presuming upon God's grace in Paul's day? Is the same danger there for us today?

4. How does God's kindness lead to repentance? Can you imagine who Paul might have been thinking about? Can you think of an example from your life?

5. Vs 12-16 addresses the question: "What about the Gentiles (all non Jews)?" What does it say about them regarding judgement? What is the general principle? (vs 12-13) How will this work out on judgement day? (vs 14-15)

6. How do you understand vs 13, when the New Testament indicates that it is only by God's grace we are saved? See Ephesians 2:8-9.

7. In vs 15, Paul writes that the "requirements of the law are written on their hearts..." Are you aware of that for yourself? How does that work out for you? What influences have shaped your conscience?

8. This passage speaks of "the day of God's wrath" (vs 5) How would you advise someone to prepare for that day?

**Response:** We make terrible judges. Thank God that He loves everyone equally, and pray for His blessing on all His children.

# THE POWER OF A CHANGED HEART

## ROMANS 2:17-29

In criticising his fellow Jews, Paul levelled an attack on all "nominal faith". That is, people who call themselves believers but don't live according to faith. They dishonour God and cause unbelievers to "blaspheme his name" (vs23-24). Yes, Paul is attacking his fellow Jews who boast of their faith relationship with God and continue to dishonour Him by breaking His law.

I am sure we can quickly place Christians in this category as well. We say one thing and do another. A true

believer is determined not by birthright, church attendance or any other method, but by inner commitment to God and outer conformity to His will. We need to keep in mind that this is not an attack on all Jews but only those who are disobedient to God. In regards to circumcision, its value is not so much the outward sign but the inner reality to which it points. This reality exists in both Jews and Gentiles, under both old and new covenants. We must be people who have been inwardly transformed by the gospel.

1. How would you summarise the problem of the person described in vs 17-24?

2. What is the antidote to the particular malady of vs 17-24?

3. In vs 24 we see that God's name was being "blasphemed" because of the behaviour in vs 17-24. How is God being blasphemed in the world today?

4. What had circumcision become for the Jew (read Paul's response in vs 25-29)? How does Paul deal with the issue? Are there any practices today that people engage in, thinking they are necessary for salvation?

5. What does the phrase "circumcision of the heart" mean to you? (vs 29) See Deuteronomy 10:16; 30:6; Leviticus 26:41; Jeremiah 4:4; 9:25; Ezekiel 44:7-9; Acts 7:51.

6. How does a person become "circumcised in heart"? What important element does vs 29 bring into the process?

7. Are you aware of the Spirit at work in your heart? How?

8. Do you still try to do things to gain God's favour?

**Response:** "Lord, please, continually remind me that however I appear outwardly, it is the state of my heart that interests you."

## THE POWER OF FAITH

## ROMANS 3:1-8

As this chapter begins, it would seem Paul was aware that his strong arguments in Chapter 2 might suggest to the Jews that their privileges had been revoked. No doubt his own knowledge of human nature told him that some Gentile Christians would have been happy for him to come to such a conclusion. This being the case, he quickly challenged this line of thinking.

The Jews special rights gave them no advantage over Gentiles in the judgment, but that didn't mean they had no privileges. They were not

immune from judgement. It is important to wrestle with the simple reality that the blessing of knowing God's word is a double-edged sword. God promises blessing for obedience and judgement for disobedience. However, what He shows us is that the Jewish heritage is a marvellous gift. For starters, God revealed His word to the Jews. The benefit that flows from this will only impact those who keep faith with God. It is important for us to never presume upon the grace of God. We are called to make every effort to live in loving obedience to Christ.

1. Look back at where we have come from through the first 2 chapters. Who does Paul say that God's judgment will fall upon? See 1:18-32; 2:1-16; 2:17-19.
2. What does Paul see as the advantage in being a Jew? (vs 1-2) What advantage is there for us as believers?
3. In vs 2, Paul describes the Jews as having been "entrusted with the very words of God." Were they faithful with this responsibility? As believers today, how can we be faithful with all that God has entrusted to us?

4. What do you think Paul understood by the phrase "God's faithfulness"? What do you think the Jews of the 1st Century would have understood by the phrase?
5. Look at the context of Paul's quote of Psalm 51:4. What does this say about God's faithfulness? In what ways have you experienced God's faithfulness?
6. In vs 5-8 we see that another advantage (along with having the very words of God and having a God who is faithful) believers have, is to be in relationship with a righteous God. What does "God's righteousness" (vs 5) mean?
7. What is wrong with the argument that says, "since God saves sinners, the more we sin, the more we magnify God's grace"? See Romans 6:1-4.
8. Paul opened this letter to the Romans with three and a half chapters on the topic of sin. Has reading this helped you see yourself or God differently? How?

**Response:**

Ask God to strengthen you so that you might glorify Him in the way you live.



# THE POWER OF SIN

## ROMANS 3:9-20

*"What shall we conclude then?"* Are we (Jews) any better off? Hmm. The real reason Paul qualifies his answer is that simply being a Jew doesn't give you an advantage. But being a Jew who trusts God and responds with the obedience of faith does. If there is no faith response, then the Jew is just like the wicked, of which none are righteous - no not one! Paul has continued to argue that the law cannot bring man into a relationship with God. What it does do is make us conscious of sin. It helps us see how far off we are in pleasing God. It points to our failures on a daily basis. All of us are under sin, in the sense of being under slavery to sin. It is not that from time to time we commit sin! We are prisoners of sin unable to free ourselves from its grip and we need to remember that the blood of bulls and goats do not take away sin. (Hebrews 10:4)

1. What are you learning from these studies? What changes in your thinking and lifestyle are you making? Share these with the group.
2. Look up the original Old Testament quotations Paul cites in vs 10-18. What do they mean in their original contexts? See Psalms 14:1-3; Isaiah 59:7-8; Psalm 36:1
3. What does vs 9-12 say about humanity's (Jew and Gentile) character? Is that right? We might understand that "no one is righteous", but do we still think we are a little better than everyone else? Does it show in any way?

4. Do you agree with the assessment of vs 13-18 regarding people's conduct? Why or why not?
5. Why do you think speech is mentioned so prominently in vs 13 & 14? See Matthew 12:34 and James 3:6.
6. Vs 19 & 20 are thought to be the conclusion of Paul's argument which started in Chapter 1 and vs 18. How does Paul summarise his argument here? What is the main point? How does it impinge on your life?
7. If it's not possible for us by our own efforts to escape God's condemnation, what hope do we have?

### **Response:**

It might be appropriate to ask God for forgiveness for the overwhelming pride we carry around and to thank and praise God for the gift of His undeserved mercy.

# THE POWER OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

## ROMANS 3:21-31

The Protestant reformer Martin Luther identified vs 21-26 as *“the chief point, and the very central place of the Epistle, and of the whole Bible.”* In these few verses, Paul brings together many important theological ideas. God’s righteousness, justification, the shift in salvation history, faith, sin, redemption, grace, atonement, forgiveness and God’s justice. Wow!

Paul explains why Christ’s coming means Good News for everyone. We are all needy, sinful people. Here we see how God remains righteous while keeping His promises to save. God does

deal rightly and justly with all who sin and those who believe. Let us be clear about this. God’s integrity is upheld while at the same time His mercy is clearly revealed in saving His people.

At this point in Romans, we experience what can only be considered a key turning point in history. The revelation of God’s righteousness in Christ. This action inaugurates a new age in which a restored relationship with God, through Christ and with one another, is available to all. Isn’t that great?

1. What do you understand by the term “a righteousness from God...has been made known”? (vs 21; 1:17; 3:5) What is the significance of this righteousness being apart from the law?
2. Look up the words justification, redemption and atonement in a dictionary. Can you think of some everyday examples to illustrate each word? What do these concepts have to do with the way to be right with God?

3. What does it mean that “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God”? (vs 23) Who does this apply to?
4. If we are all sinners AND if God doesn’t set us right with Himself through what we do and how good we are, then on what basis can we be friends with the Holy God? (vs 24-25)
5. What does the cross of Jesus tell us about God? (vs 24-25)
6. When did the message of God’s grace become real to you? What impact is grace having on your life right now?
7. Is Martin Luther correct in his understanding of the place this passage has in the whole of Scripture? (see Introduction above) What is he getting at and why is it important?
8. Summarise what these verses (21-31) teach us about (a) God, (b) Jesus Christ, (c) how we come to salvation, and (d) how we don’t come to salvation.

**Response:** Ask God for His forgiveness for our overwhelming pride, and praise Him for our undeserved gift of mercy.

## THE POWER OF HOPE

## ROMANS 4:1-25

The story of God's promises to Abraham, first issued when God called him to leave his home, was familiar to Roman Jews and Christians. Even before Abraham and Sarah had children, God had spoken of the many nations that would come from this couple as though they already existed. Paul argued that Abraham's faith in response to God's promise (Gen 17:5) was the basis for his righteousness. Law had nothing to do with it.

As Paul explains the gospel in Romans, faith is the heart of that matter. Faith is distinct from the law (an openness to

receive, not an instruction to do). Hope has power because of the One in whom we place our trust. Faith is based on God's word not on our senses. (See James 1:22-25 for clarity about what faith is).

Paul's presentation of the gospel of God's grace, comes to its climax in the story of Abraham and its application for us. Abraham believed God from afar. We now believe, having seen God's promises fulfilled in Christ. It is by grace Abraham was saved through faith and this is the same for us. (Eph. 2:8)

1. Let's spend a couple of minutes to review. Look at Romans 3:27-31. How would you feel about those words (a) if you were a Jew or, (b) if you were a Gentile?
  
2. There is a lot in this passage today about Abraham and David. Read Genesis 15:1-6. What promises does Abraham receive? How does he respond?
  
3. How does Abraham's example support what Paul is saying in vs 1-5?

4. How does David see righteousness being credited to him? (vs 6-8) How does this back up what Paul is saying?

5. On what basis did David (a circumcised Hebrew living under the law) receive forgiveness? What does Paul say about that in vs 9-12?

6. Where are you being stretched in trusting God's promises? What can you learn from Abraham's example to encourage you?

7. Look at vs 24 & 25. It is clear Jesus died because of our sinfulness, and we need to be forgiven. But in what sense was Jesus raised from death to life for our justification?

8. Are you sometimes tempted to try and earn God's approval by doing some particular thing? Is there something that you are secretly proud of before God? If so, what can you do to repair the situation?

**Response:** Let your heart sing about the amazing love of God, that our King Jesus would die for us.

# THE POWER OF LOVE

## ROMANS 5:1-11

Paul once again mentions many topics in these verses. But without a doubt there is a one focal point. Hope for final salvation. Suffering, instead of being a threat to hope, actually spurs it on. Hope is certain not just because it is based on God's work but because it is rooted in *His LOVE*.

The peace of God gives us an inner sense of security and serenity that wells up in our hearts as we appreciate the blessings enjoyed in Christ. (See Phil

4:7) The "*peace with God*" we enjoy is because God has reconciled us to Himself. (See Ephesians 2:14) The peace spoken about is the Hebrew word "*shalom*", which means harmony with God, within ourselves and with others. We need to recall that we will not find peace until we have found peace with God. It is the lack of such peace that is our basic human situation. Until that time, sinful humanity remains in hostility with God.

1. Put into your own words what it means to be "justified through faith" (vs 1) What are the benefits that come to us as a result of being justified? How do they work out in your life?
  
2. At the end of vs 2 Paul says, "... we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God." What comes to mind when you think about sharing in the glory of God? What is the hope that you are rejoicing in?
  
3. How are suffering, hope and God's love interrelated? What kind of sufferings do we experience today? How do we usually react to suffering? Paul speaks of rejoicing in suffering. Is that possible? How?

4. In this passage we have three very good descriptions of what we used to be. (vs 6, 8 & 10) How true is that of your old life (before Christ)? How does the death of Christ change what we were?

5. What is the difference between being "justified" and being "saved"? (vs 9)
  
6. What do you understand by the term "reconciliation"? What difference does our reconciliation make to our daily lives?
  
7. When we look at God loving us in this passage, how is it the same as or different from human love? How do we know God loves us? Loves you?
  
8. What result is God's love having in your life?

**Response:** Thank God for the cross of Christ and the forgiveness it brings - all coming from the love of God.

## THE POWER OF LOVE

## ROMANS 5:12-21

As this series draws to an end, we are reminded in these verses that Adam in his sin had sealed the fate of mankind. Now Christ, the "second Adam", enables people to escape that fate and draw near to God. Paul's argument is that the law brought no relief from the curse of sin and death. Yes, sin has increased but God's grace had increased more.

It is possible that for us in 2019, this doctrine of original sin (Adam sinned and therefore all mankind are under

judgment) seems for many, to be irrational or at worst unjust. However, when one looks around at the world, and we think of the crimes against humanity, the only explanation is that we all have truly sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. (Rom 3:23) We need to keep in mind that because Adam represented all mankind (and he sinned), we are condemned. But, because of Christ we can all be justified. Thank you Jesus. *The power of the gospel is a power that truly transforms.*

1. Try writing out vs 12-14 in your own words. What is the connection between sin, law and death?
2. What does Paul mean when he speaks of "death"? Does he mean more than physical death? See Genesis 2:17; 3:19-24; Romans 2:5, 2:8; 4:17. How can a breathing, living person be "dead"?
3. Read through vs 15-17 to get a handle on what "the gift" is. What is this gift?

4. List the comparisons and contrasts between Adam and Jesus in vs 15-19. Why is Christ's accomplishment so much greater than Adam's?

5. In vs 18 & 19, Paul talks about condemnation and justification. How does Paul show that the way we are condemned, parallels how we are justified?

6. If we are justified through Christ, what is the purpose of the law? (vs 20-21)

7. As a summary, from vs 1-21, what do you see God has done (through Christ) for you? How does this help you understand the meaning of God's grace? (vs 1, 15, 17, 20, 21)

8. Should God's grace be changing you? In what way?

**Response:** Reflect on the words, "Amazing grace that saved a wretch like me. I once was blind but now I see..."



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