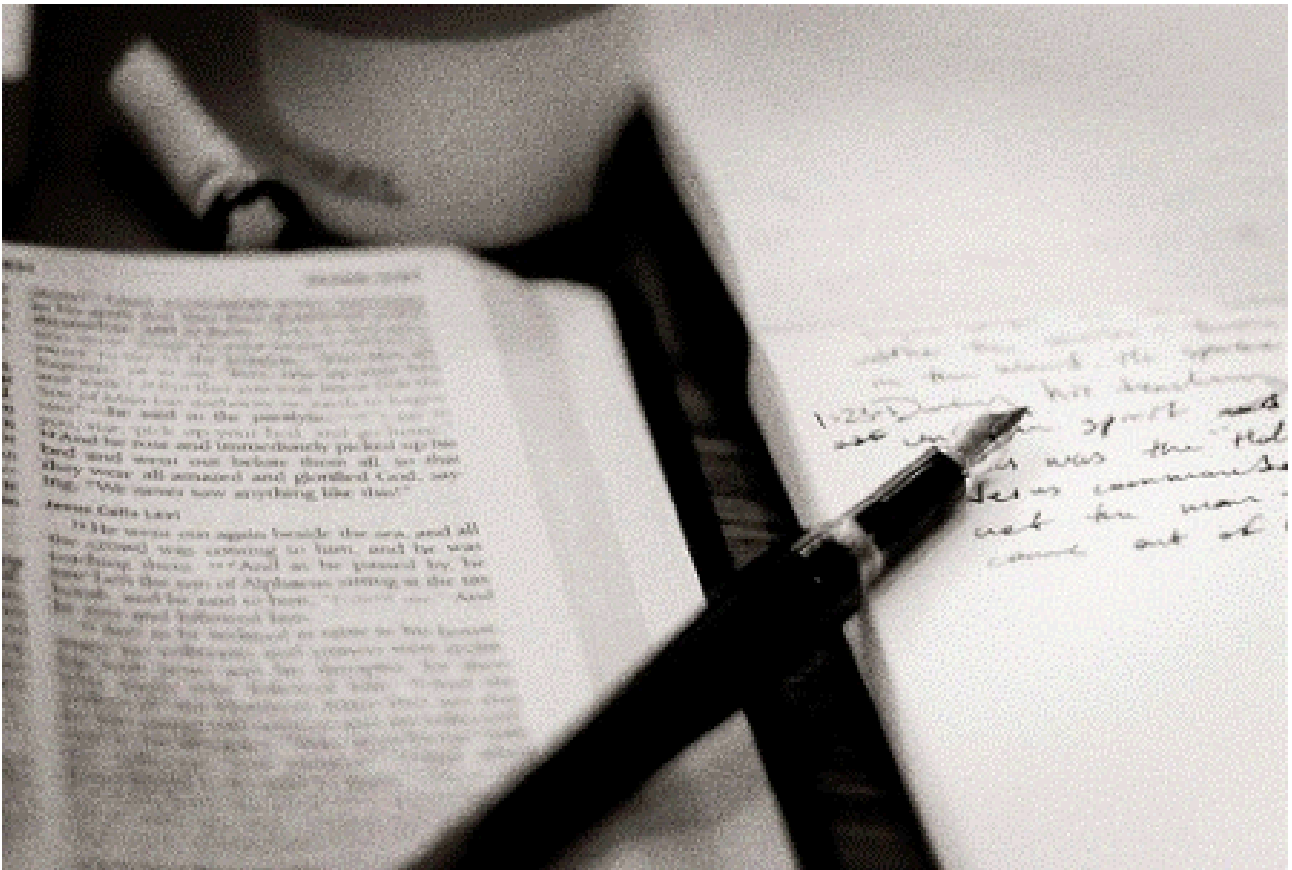


Romans 1-3



9am & 10.30am Gatherings, Holy Trinity City
2013

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Over the next few years the plan, God willing, is to preach through the whole book of Romans at Trinity City's morning gatherings.

John Calvin wrote that 'if a man understands Romans, he has a sure road opened to him to the understanding of the whole Scripture.' Martin Luther wrote that Romans is 'the chief part of the New Testament and the very purest gospel, and 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.'

Augustine, Luther and Wesley were all converted through the book of Romans, and together they shaped history. Quite simply, Romans has changed the world.

Background:

Paul wrote this letter close to the end of his third missionary journey (probably in AD 57), most probably from Corinth, en route to Jerusalem, then Rome, and then to Spain (which he never managed to get to).

The main reason that the Apostle Paul wrote the letter to the church in Rome was to set out the gospel to those he had not yet met.

Having said that, Paul had many warm and personal relationships with individuals in the Roman church (see chapter 16), and he also wrote with secondary goals in mind, such as securing financial support for his planned mission trip to Spain; and to settle issues of division between Jews and Gentiles in the church.

Study	Passage	The Relevance of Christmas	Date of Sunday Sermon
1	1:1-17	News Divine	December 1
2	1: 18-32	Facing Facts	December 8
3	2: 1 — 3: 20	Why we need a Saviour	December 15
4	3: 21-31	But now!	December 22

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Optional Introductory Study: The overall context

Romans begins and ends with greetings to the church and reasons for writing. The 'meat' of the letter is placed in a double 'sandwich':

1:1-7	Greetings
1:8-15	Plans and purposes / reasons for writing
1:16-15:13	The letter itself
15: 14-33	Plans and purposes / reasons for writing
16: 1-27	Greetings

For this introductory study, read Romans 1:1-15, and 15:14-16:27

1. Who wrote Romans? (there is more than one answer!)
2. List all the information you can find about who Paul is writing to.

Does this give us any clues about what the letter is (or is not) about?

3. To get an idea of when Paul wrote, use all the information Paul gives in Romans about his past travels and his future plans to write an imaginary diary for him (don't worry about dates!).

News Divine

Romans 1: 1-20

1. Introduction

If you had to look somewhere, where would you look to see the power of God?

Read Romans 1: 16

Explain what you think Paul means, and how this could be so.

- Is this the way most Christians think?

Romans 1: 16 changed the world. It was meditating on verses 16 and 17 when lecturing on Romans that caused a young Martin Luther to discover the gospel of God's grace, and of Christ's imputed righteousness, and become saved. This kick started the Protestant Reformation in the early 1500's, and our world was forever changed as people finally began to grasp that salvation was through faith alone in Christ alone by God's grace alone. A few centuries later, the Anglican clergyman John Wesley was converted in much the same way, by going and hearing someone read out Luther's reflections on these verses. God then used John Wesley across England as a powerful evangelist, who instigated a discipleship process in small groups (called 'Methodism'). Again, our world was changed, and this Bible Study group is a legacy of God's work in Wesley's life through Romans 1.

PRAY that God would speak to you and convince you of the world-changing truths found here.

2. Investigate

Read Romans 1: 1-6, and 1: 14-20

- (a) According to Paul, what can people know about God? How do they find out about him (see verses 19-20)?

What can't you find out about God from creation?

- (b) In verse 1, Paul mentions the gospel (or message of good news). How has the God of the bible communicated this message to us?

- (c) Write out in one sentence what you understand to be the gospel:

- (d) Now look closely at verses 2-5.

- Whose gospel is it? (What's the implication?)
- Who is it about? (Can you therefore share the gospel without mentioning the subject?)
- What twin truths are announced about Jesus? Paraphrase them.
- Is this what you wrote in your answer to (c)? Why do you think Paul includes these two truths? (cf also 2 Timothy 2:8)

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- What would we miss if either one of these truths were forgotten?
- What are the central themes of this message from God? (verses 2-5, 16-17)
- What effect does God's message have on people's lives (verse 5, 16)? Have you seen this?

3. Think about it

What does God want us to know now?

Where do we find this message?

4. Getting Personal

In what ways might I need to change my view of the Bible?

And of Jesus?

5. Investigate

What did Paul do with the message of God? Why (verses 14-16)?

What do people do with the truth of God? Why (verse 18)?

6. Think about it

In what ways do people today 'suppress the truth' about God?

7. Getting Personal

In what ways am I a 'suppressor of the truth' about God?

What do I need to do in order to be a hearer of the truth about God?

8. Explore more

Read Hebrews 1:1-3

What do these opening sentences have in common with what we have learned so far from Romans chapter 1?

What else can we learn from these verses?

Facing Facts

Romans 1: 18-32

1. Talkabout

Why is it that sex, scandal and crime always sell books and magazines, and attract the highest viewing rates on television?

2. Investigate

Read Romans 1: 18 — 2: 1

- (a) What do we learn about the behaviour and characteristics described here?

Is this what the world is like?

- (b) According to Paul, who decides what is right and wrong?

- (c) What does God do about these people? (verse 18)

- Can you plot God's reaction to the human descent into depravity? (verse 18, 24, 26)

- What is surprising about all this?

(d) Can anyone plead ignorance about God? Why or why not?

3. Facing Facts

(a) Do we really need saving?

(b) If so, from what? Where do you fit into all of this?

(c) How would you respond to the following statements:

- 'Most problems in our world can be solved through the abolition of poverty'
- 'Education is the answer'
- 'The heart of the human problem is the problem of the human heart'

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- 'God is unfair in causing suffering'
- 'God is not good'
- 'People are inherently good'

(d) If you had to design a Saviour, what would they need to do to save us?

4. Getting Personal

Why do you personally need a saving?

What is your contribution?

How deeply do you hold this conviction?

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Why We Need A Saviour

Romans 2: 1 — 3: 20

1. Talkabout

- Do you agree that people should be held responsible and accountable for their actions?

- What would the world be like if people were not held accountable in any way?

Imagine yourself to be one of the original readers of Paul's letter. One very important fact about you would be whether you had been born a Jew, or a Gentile. If you were a Jew, you'd have grown up believing that Israel alone knew and understood the one God of heaven and earth. By contrast, you'd have believed that all other ethnic groups were pagan, worshipping many gods by means of man-made idols. Jews believed that by following the law of Moses and the traditions of their elders, they lived in a way that pleased God, and would be rewarded by God; everyone else, however, was cursed by him. It was not fitting for Jews even to eat with Gentiles, who were considered as worthless as dogs.

A major problem for the Christian church in its early years was that these attitudes sometimes persisted between Christians from Jewish and non-Jewish backgrounds. In chapter 1.18-32, Paul was describing the how the Gentiles had rebelled against God. We can imagine the Jewish hearers nodding their heads in agreement. But in chapter 2, Paul now directs the spotlight at them.

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2. Investigate

Read Romans 2:1-16

- (a) In chapter 2 verse 1, who is Paul addressing? In what way are these people different from those in chapter 1? In what way are they the same?
- (b) We already know from chapter 1 that God is already judging the world. But what will God do in the future?
- (c) How will God judge?
- What will he consider?
 - Who will do the judging?
 - How will he show fairness both to the knowledgeable (the Jews) and the ignorant (the Gentiles)?

3. Think about it

- Why do you think God judges? Why is he angry about sinfulness?
- Why is this teaching about God's judgment so unpopular today?
- Can God show justice without judgment? Why or why not?

4. Getting Personal

- What does this say about me?
- What follows about my standing with God?

6. Think about it

- What religious badges do people rely on in our culture for assurance in our standing with God? Where have you seen this?

- Do you rely on such badges?

7. Investigate.

Read Romans 3: 1-20

- (a) What opinions about God does Paul address in verses 3-8?

- (b) Read verses 1-2 and verse 9. Is there a contradiction?

- (c) In what sense are Jews and Gentiles the same?

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(d) What is the purpose of the law?

8. Getting Personal

(a) If you died tonight, would you be sure of going to heaven?

(b) If you did die, and Jesus asked you why he should let you into heaven, what would you say to him?

(c) When God looks at the 'movie' of your life, what will be his conclusion?

(d) Do you believe you need a Saviour?

4**But now!****Romans 3: 21-31****1. Talkabout**

Imagine that you unexpectedly receive a very generous and much needed gift, given purely out of love and kindness. How do you feel towards the giver? In what way is this different from receiving a payment, right or reward? Can you think of reasons why people sometimes dislike receiving gifts?

2. Investigate

- (a) Who will be declared righteous in God's sight, according to Paul (look at Romans 3: 9, 10, 20)?

If you were a Jew reading Paul's letter, you would probably be feeling quite confused by the end of chapter 2. After all, for hundreds of years God had sent prophets to the nation of Israel to remind them that they were his specially chosen people with unique privileges. But, as we've already seen, Paul writes that when it comes to God's judgment, there is no difference between a Jew and a Gentile.

So what's the advantage in being a Jew? This is the question that Paul answers in chapter 3, verses 1-8. But then he still comes to the same conclusion - Jews and Gentiles alike are all under sin (verses 9-18) and the law can't help anyone, not even Jews, to become good enough for God (verses 19-20). If even God's people, the Jews, with God's law, cannot be declared righteous and cannot escape his wrath of the Day of Judgment, what hope is there for anyone?

No hope! We have reached the point where we must realise that there is nothing we can do to save ourselves. But the night seems darkest just before dawn. Finally, we are ready to hear the good news.

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Read Romans 3: 21-31

Based on verses 21-26, write out in your own words how someone can become right with God. (To help you, think about the following questions).

- Verses 21-22 What do people need to be reconciled to God? Where does it come from and where does it not come from? How do we get this?
- Verses 24. Look at the word 'justified'. What does God think of people who have faith in Jesus Christ?
- Verses 24 Look at the words 'freely by his grace', Do we have a right to expect that God must do this? Do we earn it or pay for it?
- Verse 24 Look at the word 'redemption'. What 'price' did Jesus Christ pay? What 'slavery' does this free us from?

- Verse 25 Look at the words 'sacrifice of atonement'. What was the significance of Jesus' death.

- Verse 25 What do we need to trust in to get right with God?

3. Think about it

- (a) How can Jesus' death pay for our sin?

- (b) How can the crucifixion of Jesus demonstrate God's justice (verse 25)?

- (c) How can God be both merciful and just at the same time?

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- (d) Is there any other way in which God can show that he is both just and merciful?

- (e) How does the good news of Jesus Christ fit with today's popular belief that there are many ways to God?

4. Investigate

- (a) Is this gift of righteousness from God deserved?

- (b) Who receives the gift, and how do they receive it?

- (c) Does a Christian (someone who has been made right with God through Jesus Christ) have any reason for boasting (verses 17-18)? Or for being judgmental?

5. Think about it

- (a) Is anyone too sinful for God to forgive them? Why or why not?

PRAY with thankfulness about God's mercy to you in Christ Jesus.



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