

# *THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST*

SPREADING THE SOUL-SAVING MESSAGE OF JESUS

## ROMANS LESSON 1 (Chapters 1-2)

### **Introduction by narrator accompanied by a cappella singing:**

*THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST.* Spreading the soul-saving message of Jesus. And now, Ben Bailey.

“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. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, ‘The just shall live by faith’” (Rom. 1: 16-17). Welcome to our study of the Book of Romans. Romans is one of the most-encouraging and most-challenging books in the Bible. It has one major theme—the Gospel of Jesus Christ, which presents the story of Christ coming to Earth and dying for sinful man. That’s what the Book of Romans is all about. The good news about Jesus is God’s power to save people today. If people are going to be saved, Romans proclaims that it will only be by the Gospel of Jesus Christ. One of the major, recurring themes throughout the Book of Romans is the idea of faith. There has been much confusion over this in the religious world. But if we let the Book of Romans tell us what **kind** of faith it is talking about, it will be so much clearer to us. We learn at the very beginning, and again at the very end, of the Book of Romans that Paul is talking about “the **obedience** of faith” (Rom. 1:5; 16:26). This is what he discusses at the beginning, at the end, and everywhere in between. When Paul discusses faith, it is always an obedient trust in God. When he talks about Abraham and David, we learn that these men were right in the sight of God because of their obedient trust. They were so convinced of Who He was and of the legitimacy of His commands that they naturally obeyed His will. Thus, biblical faith is always an obedient faith.

As you look throughout the Bible, faith is always an obedient trust. Let me give you an example from Joshua 6 and Hebrews 11:30. The Bible says that the walls of Jericho fell by faith **after** the Israelites had encircled the city the number of time that God had commanded. The walls fell “by faith” **after** the people had done God’s will. Faith was not merely a mental assent. Rather, it was an obedient trust in God. That is what faith is in the Scriptures. In Proverbs 3:5-6 the Bible says, “Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths.” Faith is an obedient trust in God. Hebrews 11:1 teaches us that faith is not a “leap into the dark.” Rather, true faith is based on substance, as well as evidence of Who God is. Thus, we obtain faith today not by some mystical or magical feeling, but by studying the Word of God. If we let the Book of Romans tell us what faith is, we also can let the Book of Romans tell us how to gain this faith. In Romans 10:17 the Bible says, “Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” If a person is going to have faith, it will come in only one way—by reading, studying, and understanding God and His nature, and by trusting in the Bible (which means taking God at His Word). The Bible says in Romans 14:23 that “whatever is not from faith is sin.” The only way to gain faith is for each individual person to study the Bible for himself. This is why Paul told Timothy to “be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth” (2 Tim. 2:15). We must get out our Bibles, study them, learn about God, and see how God dealt with people throughout history. We must learn to trust and obey Him if we want to develop the true faith that is depicted within Scripture.

We also need to understand that when we are talking about the kind of faith that the Bible discusses, it is never a mere mental assent or acceptance alone. In fact, the Bible says that that is not pleasing to God. The only time the words “faith” and “alone” occur in the Bible, God uses those words to say the exact opposite of what many in our religious world today are saying. In James 2:26, James writes about true faith—not a dead faith that refuses to get out and do anything. Rather, he discusses true faith, and says that “faith without works is dead.” In verse 24 James also says, “You see then that a man is justified by works, and **not by faith only.**” Faith is not mere acceptance alone. That is not the type of faith of which the Bible speaks. True faith is always combined with obedience. The value of faith cannot be underestimated. The Bible says in 1 John 4:4, “You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.” In 1 John 5:4 we are told, “This is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith.” It is essential, in order to understand the Book of Romans, for us to understand the type of faith about which Paul is speaking. The faith of which Paul speaks is always an obedient trust in God.

In Romans 1, Paul discusses from the outset the major theme of the book: the Gospel is God’s power unto salvation. In Romans 1:16-17 Paul wrote, “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. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, ‘The just shall live by faith.’” This is the heart and core of the message of the Book of Romans, as well as the message of the Bible. In Acts 2:36 (one of the key verses in Scripture) Peter said, “Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.” If people are going to be saved, it will be only by obedience to the Gospel, which is the good news about Jesus. The good news is that Jesus came to this Earth and died for sinful humans so that we could have the hope of salvation. In Matthew 1:21 the Bible says, “You shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins.” His name was to be “Immanuel,” which is translated, “God with us.” He was to save His people from their sins. In Luke 19:10 the Bible says that Jesus came “to seek and save that which was lost.” Think about what Jesus did for us. The good news is that Jesus was willing to die on the cross for us. He was beaten, laughed at, mocked, spit upon, and suffered horribly for us. He was crucified on the cruel cross of Calvary. He died in pain and agony because He loved us so much. That—Jesus’ death upon the cross—is the heart and core of God’s plan of salvation. The Bible teaches that the only way people can be saved is by obeying the Gospel. In Matthew 7:21 the Bible says, “Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven.” Obedience to the Gospel is a necessity. Jesus said in Luke 6:46, “Why do you call Me ‘Lord, Lord,’ and do not do the things which I say?” It is the hope of the Gospel that is God’s power to save. In 1 Peter 2:24 we read of Jesus, “who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness—by whose stripes we are healed.” The hope is that Jesus died for us so that we do not have to live in sin. We do not have to go to a sinner’s Hell. That is the good news that saves mankind. It is the Gospel by which we are born again. In Romans 6:1-4 we see how that, through the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus, we also die to sin. We bury our old man, rise up from the watery grave of baptism, and begin living a new life, free and clean in God’s sight. Thus, Paul tells us very clearly that the Gospel is God’s power unto salvation.

Chapter 1 tells us that the Gentiles are in need of this Gospel. Chapter 2 is going to tell us that the Jews (who probably were standing back and cheering Paul on as he rebuked the Gentiles) were in just as desperate a need of the Gospel as the Gentiles are. So, both Jew and Gentile are in need of the Gospel. We learn in Romans 1:18 that the need for the

Gospel is seen in the fact that God's wrath is against sinful man. The Bible says that "the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them." Why did the Gentiles need the Gospel? They needed it because God's wrath is one day going to be released against sinful men. Because God does not want sinful people to go to Hell, the Gentiles desperately needed the Gospel. I am pleading with you today to obey the Gospel because I want you to go to Heaven so that you do not have to suffer the wrath of God. In Psalm 7:11 we are told that God is angry with the wicked. God gets upset when people live in sin. In Hebrews 10:31 we learn that it is "a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." In Hebrews 12:29 we read how God is "a consuming fire." In Nahum 1:3 we learn that when God's justice finally arrives, He will "not acquit the wicked." The wicked will not escape the wrath of God. Jesus said that the unrighteous will depart "into everlasting fire," which Mark 9:44 describes as a place "where their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched." Man is in need of the Gospel because God, although a loving God, is also a God Who gets angry at sin and promises to punish those who live in sin.

Notice Romans 1:19-20, where we learn that another reason that the Gentiles desperately needed the Gospel is because they were without excuse. There was no excuse for these people not to obey the Gospel. God had made Himself known, and the Gentiles needed to be looking to obey the Gospel. Turn your attention to verses 19 and 20 where the Bible says that "what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse." There is no excuse for anyone today not to know God and obey the Gospel because "His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made." We cannot help but be impressed with the words of Psalm 19:1—"The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows His handiwork." You can go out at night, look at the stars and view nature around you, and you will not understand everything you need to know to obey the Gospel, but you can know that there is a God and that you need to search for Him (Acts 17:20ff.). I am reminded of Paul's statements in Acts 14:17—"Nevertheless He did not leave Himself without witness, in that He did good, gave us rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness." Look at the way the world works. Look at the way that trees bear fruit. The cycle of life and nature proves that there is a God. Genesis 1:1 tells us that "in the beginning God created." It was not evolution or the Big Bang theory. We did not evolve from apes. You can know by common sense that there is a God. Scripture says, "The fool says in his heart, 'There is no God'" (Ps. 14:1). Man is in desperate need of the Gospel, and stands "without excuse." God has given us ample information to know He exists.

But the Gentiles also were in need of the Gospel because, although God will allow men to live in sin, there will be a heavy price for that lifestyle. As you look in Romans 1:23ff., you see Paul dealing with the sins of the Gentiles. These were heinous sins, and heinous crimes against God. The Gentiles were inventors of evil things, backbiters, and people who did not respect their parents. One of these that especially stands out today as a sin for which God will punish people is the sin of homosexuality. Turn your attention to the words of God in Romans 1:26-27. As you read these verses, ask yourself, "How does God feel about homosexuality?"

"For this reason God gave them up to vile passions. For even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature. Likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful, and receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due."

God is going to punish these people. Yes, He will allow them to live in their sin. He will not stop them from doing that. But it is unnatural. It is vile in God's sight. It is something that God hates and abhors. And someday those men and women who live in homosexual relationships will be punished eternally because of that. Leviticus 18:22—going all the way back to the Old Law—says that it is an abomination for a man to lie with a man. How much of an abomination is it? How much does God hate it? Leviticus 20:13 says that if men lie with men, or women with women, they were to be stoned to death. That is how serious God viewed this sin. In 1 Corinthians 6:9-10 we learn that homosexuality among men or women was something that would keep people out of the kingdom of God.

Think for just a moment about Romans 2, also. Romans 3:9 is a sort of summary statement of chapters 1 and 2. Paul said, "We have previously charged both Jews and Greeks that they are all under sin." Chapter 2, therefore, is now going to deal with the Jews. They were standing back as they read chapter 1, applauding Paul for really getting after the Gentiles. But now the tables are going to be turned. Paul said to the Jews, "You are without excuse, too." These Jews had been religious hypocrites, and God said that they were not going to escape His judgment either. Who were the Jews to judge someone else? They were condemning the Gentiles, but were practicing the same things. Thus, they were without excuse. So, just because someone has a religious background or is a child of God, that does not mean that he or she will escape God's judgment. We need to make sure every day that we are living right. One thing that Jesus and God both hate is religious hypocrites. In Matthew 6 Jesus condemned those who stood on the street corner, prayed long prayers, wore religious garb, and appeared to others as if they were the religious elite—when in reality they were going halfway around the world to make a proselyte, only to make him twice as much a son of Hell as they were. Jesus said in Matthew 15:7-9,

"Well did Isaiah prophesy about you, saying, 'These people draw near to Me with their mouth, and honor Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me. And in vain they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.'"

One day, all men—religious and unreligious—are going to stand before God in judgment to give an account of the way they have lived. Romans 14:12 says that we must all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. We learn from Revelation 20:12-14 that people stood before the throne of God, books were opened, and the Book of Life was opened so that we could each be judged according to our deeds. In 2 Corinthians 5:10 we are told that we will all give an account for the way we have lived in this life. In Acts 17:31 God said, "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." Just because we claim to have an affiliation with Jesus or claim to be a child of God does not mean necessarily that we will escape God's judgment. We need to make sure that we are living right.

Yet, in the midst of this strong rebuke, Paul offers the key to repentance. In Romans 2:4 he said, "The goodness of God leads you to repentance." The Jews had seen the works of God for a long time. They had seen the goodness of God, and knew that He is a good and loving God. Yet they still went on to sin. Paul needed to say something to challenge them and motivate them to return to God. He thus commented on "the goodness of God." Look at His love for mankind. While we still without sin, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. God demonstrates His own love for us in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Look at His mercy. Lamentations 3:20-22 says that it is through the Lord's mercy that we are not consumed. Look at the grace of God. We know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for our sakes He became poor. God sent His Son to this world to save us because He is a gracious God. Look at the blessings we receive

as Christians. All spiritual blessings are ours “in Christ Jesus” (Eph. 1:3). Look at how good God is. His Son came and died a horrible death for us. Look at the joy that Christianity brings to our lives. Philippians 4:4 says, “Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice!” It is the goodness of God that ought to motivate people, when they are not living right nor doing right, to return to God, repent, and make it right.

In Romans 2, Paul also wants the Jews to know that God does not play favorites. In Romans 2:11, as he speaks to the people who were lauding the fact that God was angry with the Gentiles, Paul said, “There is no partiality with God.” The God of the Bible is a fair and just God. Romans 3:26-28 says that God is both just and a Justifier of mankind. Galatians 2:6 states that God shows no partiality. Acts 10:34 explains that God does not show partiality to any nation, but that the ones who obey Him are the ones who are pleasing in His sight. What do we learn from these things? We learn that if God is not a partial God, then if we serve Him we can know for sure that we are going to be saved. In 1 John 2:25 we are told that God has promised us eternal life. Since God is not partial, and since He has made that promise, then if we serve Him we can rest assured that God is not going to play favorites. If we have done His will, we will be right in His sight. We also can know that if a person is a hypocrite, he will be lost.

In Romans 2, Paul deals specifically with the Jews, and teaches them that all men are under the Gospel of Christ. There is no one who is **not** under the Gospel of Jesus Christ. As a result, since all are under the Gospel of Christ, then the Jews are as much in sin as the Gentiles. In Romans 2:17-24 Paul says in essence, “You Jews boast that you have the Law, you are the teachers of babes, and you have done all these things that make you think you are right. But when you teach someone not to commit adultery, do you commit adultery? When you teach someone not to steal, do you steal?” These Jews had been teaching people not to do these sinful things, such as “don’t worship idols,” or “don’t rob temples,” yet they had been doing some of those very things. The Jews were under sin, too, because they also had fallen short of God’s will. Romans 3:23 says, “All have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God.” Ecclesiastes 7:20 says, “There is not a just man on earth who does good and does not sin.” Romans 3:10 tells us that “there is none righteous; no, not one.” Because of man’s sin (Is. 59:1-2), man is separated from God. Ezekiel 18:24 says, “The soul who sins shall surely die.” Paul then drives home two additional points for the Jews to consider—points that are very, very important. Paul teaches the Jews in Romans 2:25-27 that they cannot claim circumcision as their wild car or “get out of jail free” card. Listen to Paul’s words.

“Circumcision is indeed profitable if you keep the law; but if you are a breaker of the law, your circumcision has become uncircumcision. Therefore, if an uncircumcised man keeps the righteous requirements of the law, will not his uncircumcision be counted as circumcision? And will not the physically uncircumcised, if he fulfills the law, judge you who, even with your written code and circumcision, are a transgressor of the law?”

What he wants these Jews to see is that the fact that they had been circumcised did not give them an automatic right to go to Heaven regardless of how they lived. Paul wanted them to understand that, although circumcision was a command of God, it was not something that automatically put them in Heaven. Just because someone may have obeyed the Gospel and become a child of God does not mean that he cannot be lost. In Galatians 5:4 Paul said that certain Christians had, in fact, fallen from grace. Circumcision is not what the law is about. Was it a command? Sure it was. But God wanted the Jews to get their hearts right. He essentially said to them, “If an uncircumcised person, who does not have the written code that you have, is better than you, then shame on you because that person brings you to shame since you have not lived right.”

One more point that Paul drives home concerning the Jews, which is really the heart of the Book of Romans, is found in Romans 2:28-29. In these verses, Paul talks about who is a real Jew.

“He is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh; but he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the Spirit, not in the letter; whose praise is not from men but from God.”

These Jews prided themselves on their heritage, on their circumcision, and on which family they were a part of. Yet Paul said, “That is not what God considers a Jew. A person is not a Jew outwardly, but inwardly.” Circumcision is not to be merely something of the flesh, but of the heart. What was Paul trying to get the Jews to see? His point was that just because a person was of one of the twelve tribes did not mean that that person was automatically going to inherit that which God promised to Abraham. There is a very practical lesson here. God is first concerned with what is on the inside. In Joel 2:13 God said, “Rend your hearts, not your garments.” The people had a habit of throwing dust in the air, pulling hairs out of their beards, and tearing their clothes. But God told them that He did not want merely outward signs. Instead, He wanted the people to change on the inside in order to be right before Him.

I want you to know today that God loves you and wants you to go to Heaven. Jesus brought the Gospel so that all men could be saved. Be sure that if you are not a Christian, you are in sin. But the good news is that you do not have to remain in sin. You can obey the Gospel today and become a New Testament Christian. You can do this by believing that Jesus is the Son of God, by repenting of your past sins (Lk. 13:3), by confessing that Jesus is your Savior (Acts 8:37), and by being baptized for the remission of sins. Jesus said, “He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned” (Mk. 16:16). I want you to go to Heaven. Will you today leave a life of sin, and obey the Gospel of Christ?

**Narrator accompanied by a cappella singing:**

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## STUDY QUESTIONS FOR ROMANS LESSON 1 (CHAPTERS 1-2)

1. In Romans 1:16, what did Paul say was “the power of God unto salvation”?
2. According to Romans 1:16, to whom is the Gospel available?
3. What type of faith did the apostle Paul discuss in Romans 1:5 and Romans 16:26?
4. What does Proverbs 3:5-6 admonish a person **not** to do, and **to** do?
5. According to Romans 10:17, what is the source of faith?
6. According to the material presented in this lesson, what is the main theme of the Book of Romans?
7. What information is contained in Acts 2:36 that pertains to the main theme of the Book of Romans?
8. What information is contained in 1 Peter 2:24 that pertains to the main theme of the Book of Romans?
9. Chapter 1 of the Book of Romans discusses how a particular group of people needed the Gospel. Who were those people?
10. Chapter 2 of the Book of Romans discusses how a particular group of people needed the Gospel. Who were those people?
11. What important piece of information is contained in Romans 1:18 concerning God and His relationship to humankind?
12. What information did Paul present in Romans 1:19-20 to show that the Gentiles were “without excuse” when it came to disobeying God?
13. What did Paul discuss in Romans 1:23ff.?
14. What important piece of information did Paul present in Romans 2:11?
15. What question did Paul ask the Jews in Romans 2:3?
16. In Romans 2:4, what did Paul tell the Jews would lead them to repentance?
17. According to Romans 2:6, what will God one day do?
18. According to Romans 2:13, what group of people will **not** be saved, and what group of people **will** be saved?
19. What point was Paul making to the Jews in Romans 2:28-29?
20. What did God mean when He said, “Rend your hearts, not your garments” (Joel 2:13)?