

# *THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST*

SPREADING THE SOUL-SAVING MESSAGE OF JESUS

## ROMANS LESSON 2 (Chapters 3-4)

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

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

“All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3:23). Welcome to our study of the Book of Romans. In Romans 3 and 4 we learn that all men are in sin and desperately need the Gospel of Christ in order to be saved. This is the theme of the Book of Romans. Romans 1:16 says that the Gospel is God’s “power unto salvation.” In Romans 3:9 Paul said that he had charged both Jews and Greeks as being “under sin.” Now he is going to highlight this idea by discussing the universal nature of sin. But before he does that he realizes that the Jews whom he had condemned in chapter 2 have a serious question. They wanted to know what advantage there was to being a Jew if the Jews were just as lost as the Gentiles. Paul said in Romans 3:2 that the Jews had “the oracles of God.” The Jews’ advantage was that it was an awesome privilege (and responsibility) to have the Word of God. The greatest gift that anyone in any society could ever have is the Word of God. Jeremiah said, “Your words were found, and I ate them, and Your word was to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart” (Jer. 15:16). Like Jeremiah, we need to realize that God’s Word is precious. In Proverbs 23:23 the writer said, “Buy the truth, and sell it not.” The truth is more valuable than anything in the whole world. Whatever it costs us, we need to pay the price. In Romans 1:16 we are told that the Gospel is God’s “power unto salvation.” Hebrews 4:12 tells us that the Word of God is “living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.” The first question the Jews asked was, “What advantage do we have as Jews?” Paul said, “You have the Word of God.”

The Jews’ second question was, “What if someone who is not of Jewish heritage does not obey the Gospel and does not live faithfully? Is that a reflection on the faithfulness of God?” Paul said, “Absolutely not.” If a man does not obey the Gospel and live according to God’s will, he will be unfaithful, but God will still be faithful to His Word. In Hebrews 6:18 we learn that God cannot lie. Notice specifically what Paul says in Romans 3:3-4 about this very point. Paul makes the point that our unfaithfulness is not a reflection on the character of God.

“What if some did not believe? Will their unbelief make the faithfulness of God without effect? Certainly not! Indeed, let God be true but every man a liar. As it is written, ‘That You may be justified in Your words, and may overcome when You are judged.’”

The point that Paul is trying to drive home is, “Let God be true.” Regardless of whether or not man is true to God, God will be found true, and every man a liar. God is a God Who cannot lie, as Hebrews 6:18-19 points out when it says, “This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast...that it is impossible for God to lie.” Malachi 3:6 tells us, “I am the Lord; I do not change.” God does not lie. He does not change. Titus 1:2 says that we live “in hope of eternal life which God, who cannot lie, promised before time began.” It is against the nature of God to lie. Not only will He not lie, but the fact that He is omniscient and omnipotent means that it is impossible for God to lie. Hebrews 13:8 says that

Jesus Christ is “the same yesterday, today, and forever.” The Jews had the law of God. But if they did not obey it, it was no reflection on God. God still would be true. Their disobedience would be a reflection on them.

Then, in Romans 3:10,23, Paul illustrates how all people have sinned. “As it is written, ‘There is none righteous, no, not one...,’ for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” We must realize today that there is not a person now living, or a person who has ever lived (other than Jesus Christ), who lived a perfect, sinless life. All people—generic and universal—have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. This is not the first time such a statement has been made in Scripture. The first occurrence of such a statement is found in 1 Kings 8:46. As sort of a parenthetical statement, David said, “There is none who does not sin”). Ecclesiastes 7:20 tells us, “There is not a just man on earth who does good and does not sin.” How do we know that all people have sinned? Hebrews 2:9 says that Jesus “tasted of death for **every** man.” Not just for some. Not just for a few. But for **every** man. God wants all men to be saved. If all men need to be saved, that implies that they are lost. Romans 14:12 says that we shall “all appear before the judgment seat of Christ.” Jesus died for every man. God wants all people to be saved. But one day we will all give account. Thus, all people are under the condemnation of sin. We must realize that no matter how good a life we may have lived, we have at one time or another succumbed to sin. We have all fallen short of the glory of God. So, in Romans 3:10-23 there is a long section that addresses the universal nature of sin.

But Paul does not want to stay on that subject. Thus, he turns his attention to how, if all people have sinned, they can all be saved by obedience to the good news about Jesus Christ. Notice the encouraging words in verses 24-26.

“Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God set forth as a propitiation [substitutionary sacrifice] by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed, to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.”

This passage eloquently teaches us that it is through the Gospel and Christ that all those who have sinned can be saved through the grace and mercy of a kind and loving God. In Ephesians 2:8-9 we are told, “By grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.” The fact that salvation is available is a sign of God’s grace. Titus 2:11-13 says that the grace of God that brings salvation “has appeared to all men.” In John 1:17, when Jesus is introduced to us in the Gospel of John, John says that “the law came by Moses, but grace and truth are in Jesus Christ.” It is God’s grace and Christian’s sacrifice that makes salvation available, but it is Christ’s blood through which we contact salvation. Romans 3:25 teaches that it is Christ’s blood that makes atoning grace and salvation possible. Hebrews 2:9 says that Jesus tasted death “for every man.” He died on the cross so that we do not have to die in sin. He is the one-time sacrifice for our sins. Hebrews 10:12 says, “But this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God.” As Paul thought about the sacrifice of Jesus in God’s overall scheme of redemption, he said “He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him” (2 Cor. 5:21). As John saw Jesus approached, he said, “Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!” (Jn. 1:29). God’s grace, with the sacrifice and blood of Jesus, offers us salvation.

But man’s faith plays an important part in salvation. Ephesians 2:8-9 teaches us that ““by grace you have been saved **through faith**, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.” We must have faith. God has done His part by

making salvation available. That salvation is accessible through man's faith. Faith that does not do anything, but simply "believes," is not biblical faith. James said in James 2:14ff. that such a faith is a dead faith and a demonic faith that will not save anyone. True faith is always obedient to the will of God. In Luke 6:46 Jesus said, "Why do you call Me 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do the things which I say?" The people were looking up to Heaven and saying, "Lord, Lord!" But Jesus said, "That won't do it. You need to **do** the will of the Father" (Mt. 7:21). Our faith means that we recognize Jesus as the Son of God and that we believe in (and are willing to trust) Him. But we also must be willing to do what He has said in order to contact His blood. Revelation 1:5 says that Christians are "washed in the blood of the Lamb." If it is Jesus' blood that saves us, at what point do we contact His blood? The answer is that we contact His blood at whatever point our sins are forgiven. Romans 6:1-4, Acts 22:16, and Acts 2:38 all teach us that it is at the point of baptism that we contact the soul-saving blood of Jesus. Saul was told in Acts 9:4-6 to go into Damascus, where he would learn what he needed to do. In Acts 22:16 Ananias came to Saul and said, "Why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord." It is the blood of Jesus that washes away our sins. At what point do we contact the blood of Christ? "Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins." Yes, we are saved by God's grace. Yes, we are saved by the blood of Jesus. But true faith—the type of obedient faith (Rom. 1:5; 16:26) of which the Book of Romans speaks—is a type of faith that does exactly what God says to do to be saved.

In Romans 3 Paul illustrates to the Jews a very important point. He wants the Jews to realize—in a crystal clear way—that God is not saving people today by the Law of Moses. People today are justified by the Gospel of Christ, not the Law of Moses. No one living now can be saved by the Ten Commandments or the Levitical priesthood system. Notice Romans 3:28 as Paul offers a nutshell summary of this argument. "Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith **apart** from the deeds of the law." Paul makes it clear that Jesus is the only way of salvation, and that we can be viewed by God just as if we had never sinned by faith in Christ apart from deeds of the law. There are people in the religious world today who still think that we are living under the Law of Moses, that we need to keep the Ten Commandments, that we need to keep the Sabbath, and that we need to live as people did under the Old Law. But the Bible is so clear that this is not the case. In Ephesians 2:14-15 and in Colossians 2:14-15 we see how Jesus nailed the Old Law ("the handwriting of requirements") to the cross so that it is no more. One of the strongest passages about the Old Law having been taken away is found in the Old Law itself. Did you know that the Old Testament prophesied that it would one day be replaced? In Jeremiah 31:31-33 Jeremiah said,

"Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah—not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, though I was a husband to them, says the Lord. But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people."

The very fact that God, under the Old Law, said that He would make a new covenant, teaches us that the first is old and is not for us today. That is what Hebrews 8:13 says—"In that He says, "A new covenant," He has made the first obsolete. Now what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away." At what point did the Old Law vanish away? Hebrews 9:15-17 teaches us that a law goes into effect after men are dead. Jesus is the Mediator of a new covenant. When He died on the cross, from that time on men were living under the New Law. People cannot be saved by the Law of Moses. That is not how God deals with people today who are in a covenant relationship with Him.

As Paul brings us into Romans 4, he is going to show that God has always been pleased by people of faith. This is not people who base their faith on some meritorious system of works, because we cannot do enough good works, or keep enough codes of the law, or bring enough sacrifices to inherit salvation. From Genesis through Revelation, God has always been pleased with people of faith, not people of meritorious works. That is part of what Romans 4 discusses. Paul illustrates this by asking if Abraham was justified by faith in God without the Law of Moses. Abraham lived in the time period of Genesis 15ff. The Law of Moses did not arrive until the time represented by Exodus 20. Abraham, this great hero of faith, was not even under the Law of Moses. Yet some were trying to say that people **had** to be justified under the Law of Moses. Was Abraham justified by his faith in God, before (and without) circumcision? Genesis 15:6 says, "And he believed in the Lord, and He accounted it to him for righteousness." This was **before** Abraham was circumcised, and **before** circumcision was even commanded. Abraham was righteous in God's sight before circumcision was even required. Paul's point, then, is that a man today can be justified by faith in the Gospel of Christ without Moses, without circumcision, and without meritorious works that people might strive to do in order to earn their salvation.

As Paul discusses this in Romans 4, we will see that there is not one shred of difference between true faith and obedience to God. In Romans 4:1-3 we read,

"What then shall we say that Abraham our father has found according to the flesh? For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. For what does the Scripture say? 'Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.'"

Abraham couldn't say, "I was circumcised," or "I kept the Ten Commandments," or "I offered all these sacrifices." His faith was an obedient type of faith, but it was not the kind of faith where he could say, "I have earned my salvation." There are different types of works in the Bible. There are meritorious works, which the Jews thought they could do, and thereby (because they were children of Abraham who had kept the Law) automatically go to Heaven. But meritorious works will never save anybody. We cannot do enough good deeds to be righteous in God's sight apart from the Gospel. There also are conditional works, which are required in order to be right with God. Jesus said, "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" (Mt. 7:21). Here, then, is the question. What kind of faith did Abraham have? Abraham had a faith that trusted God and that absolutely kept the conditions of God. How do we know that? Genesis 26:5 illustrates this point so clearly. "Abraham obeyed My voice and kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes, and My laws." That is why God referred to Abraham as a man of faith. It was not because Abraham said, "Well, God said it. And even though I don't have any evidence, I believe Him." That is not what this is talking about. Abraham kept God's commandments and kept God's laws. Abraham trusted God fully. He was convicted of the fact that there was a God, and he was going to follow Him. His faith was such that when God said it, Abraham was willing to go out and do it.

That is the type of faith we are talking about. As Martin Luther studied Romans 4 and 5, he came away with the idea that "faith only" is all a person needs, and that to be right with God, all a person had to do was "accept Jesus." But you can see that is not what is being taught here. That is not the way Abraham acted or felt. In John 3:36 we can see that faith and obedience are synonyms. "He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him." Notice the parallel. He who believes in the Son has everlasting life. But he who does not believe the Son shall not see life. Thus, belief and obedience are used synonymously because true faith is not a dead faith, but is instead a faith that gets out and does what God says.

In Romans 4:5-8 Paul mentions a passage from David in the Psalms to show that the taking away of sin was not based on the law, but was instead based on men being right in God's sight through faith. You cannot say enough "Hail Mary's" or pay enough money to have your sins taken away. Sins are not forgiven on the basis of meritorious works. They are forgiven on the basis of man obeying the will of God and putting faith in Him.

In Romans 4:13-25 the apostle Paul spends a great deal of time showing that Abraham received a promise "through faith." If we are going to receive the promise of eternal life, we also have to receive it "through faith." In Romans 4:13 we find a sort of summary statement about this: "The promise that he would be the heir of the world was not to Abraham or to his seed through the law, but through the righteousness of faith." Remember Genesis 26:5, which says, "Abraham obeyed My voice and kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes, and My laws." That is the type of faith Paul is talking about. It was not because people kept codes of the law that they were saved. Did they have to obey God's will? Absolutely! But those meritorious deeds did not earn them salvation. Rather, their obedient trust provided salvation for them. They heard the Word of God, accepted it, and were willing to get out and do what God said. That is how they received the promise. And that is exactly how people will receive the promise of salvation today. What is a true type of faith with which God is pleased? The Bible teaches that a true faith is one that hears the Word of God. Romans 10:17 says, "Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." We recognize that God's voice is the only one that matters on issues pertaining to salvation. Peter was told in Matthew 17:5, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!" Hearing the Word of God is the only way we can be saved. Then, we must be willing to believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and Savior of the world. In John 8:24 Jesus said, "If you do not believe that I am He, you will die in your sins." The Ethiopian nobleman was traveling down the road. Philip was preaching to him, and evidently taught him about Jesus and baptism. When they approached some water, the nobleman said, "Here is water. What hinders me from being baptized?" (Acts 8:36). Philip said, "If you believe with all your heart, you may." So, true faith believes in Jesus.

But it does not stop there. James 2:24 says, "You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only." A person also must be willing to repent. Luke 13:3 says, "Unless you repent you will all likewise perish." Peter preached in Acts 3:19, "Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out." That is what repentance is. Repentance is a change of will that leads to a changed way of life. We listen to the Word of God, and decide to do what it says. We then change our will, and true faith follows up on that by doing what God wants us to do. But then we must be willing to confess Jesus as God's Son. Romans 10:10 says, "With the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." We must make the same good confession that the Ethiopian nobleman did in Acts 8:37 when he said, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God." We, too, must make that confession, which is essential. Jesus said in Matthew 10:32-33, "Whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven. But whoever denies Me before men, him I will also deny before My Father who is in heaven."

True faith demands, too, that we obey God in baptism. Not only must we hear God's Word, believe in Jesus, repent, and confess Christ as Savior, but we almost must obey God in baptism in order to have biblical faith. A person cannot be a Christian without being immersed for the remission of sins. The Bible says in Acts 2:37-38 that when the Jews cried out, "'Men and brethren, what shall we do,' 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.'" In Acts 22:16 Saul was told, "Arise and be baptized,

and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord.” What is the purpose of baptism? It is for the remission of sins, and it is to wash away sins. Jesus said in Mark 16:16, “He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned.” Baptism is for salvation. In fact, 1 Peter 3:21 uses that exact language when it says, “Baptism does also now save us.” Baptism is what puts us into the kingdom of God. In John 3:5 Jesus said, “Unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.” Baptism is essential for salvation. The modern religious world says that all a person has to do to be saved is “accept Jesus.” But is that real faith? Can Jesus command you to do something that is essential to salvation—like baptism (Mk. 16:16)—and you not do that, or not do it for the right reason, and you be considered a person of faith? Of course not! The Bible teaches that true people of faith are people who follow up their beliefs with actions by doing what God said.

In Romans 3 and 4 we are clearly taught that all people have sinned. That means me, you, and anyone else other than Jesus who has ever lived. If you have never obeyed the Gospel, I want you to know today (because I am concerned about your soul) that you are in sin. If you do not become a child of God, you will be lost. I do not want that, and God does not want that. God wants all men to “be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth” (1 Tim. 2:4). But you can be saved from your sin by obeying the Gospel as you have heard it presented today. Just as Abraham believed God and did what He said so that it was accounted unto him as righteousness, so you, too, can believe God and do exactly what He says. Then you, too, can be sure that you are right in the sight of God. The Bible says in Romans 6:23 that “the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.” Won’t you obey the Gospel today? We love you, and want you to go to Heaven. God loves you, and wants you to be saved. Do not spurn the Gospel. Obey the Gospel of Christ before it is too late.

**Narrator accompanied by a cappella singing:**

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## STUDY QUESTIONS FOR ROMANS LESSON 2 (CHAPTERS 3-4)

1. What important point do we learn from Romans 3:23?
2. What important point do we learn from 1 Kings 8:46?
3. What important point do we learn from Ecclesiastes 7:20?
4. What important point do we learn from Romans 6:23?
5. When, in Romans 3:1, the Jews wondered what advantage there was to being a Jew if the Jews were just as lost as the Gentiles, how did Paul answer them in verse 2?
6. What important point about God's nature is contained in Romans 3:3-4?
7. In Romans 3:25, what does the word "propitiation" mean?
8. According to Romans 3:25, what part of Christ's sacrifice saves us from our sins?
9. How, according to Romans 6:4, do we contact Christ's blood?
10. In Romans 3:28, what did Paul have to say about the Law of Moses as it relates to how people must obey God under the New Covenant?
11. What did Jeremiah 31:31 prophesy would one day come?
12. What point was Paul making in Romans 4:1-3 by mentioning Abraham, Abraham's faith, circumcision, etc.?
13. According to Ephesians 2:14-15 and Colossians 2:14-15, what happened to the Old Law?
14. According to Genesis 26:5, what made Abraham righteous in God's sight?
15. According to Romans 1:5 and Romans 16:26, what makes us righteous in God's sight?
16. What important point did Paul make in Romans 4:13?
17. Whence, according to Romans 10:17, does faith come?
18. According to John 8:24, how important is faith?
19. What, according to Romans 10:10, must a person do once he or she has developed a true faith?
20. What else, according to Luke 13:3, must a person do once he or she has developed a true faith?
21. According to Acts 22:16, how does a person receive forgiveness for his or her sins?