

**A LOOK AT THE BOOK
ROMANS
THE JUST SHALL LIVE BY FAITH**

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What is the Gospel?
How can a person please God and obtain eternal life?

No question in all of our lives is more important, since the answer to that question determines our eternal destiny.

However, even such an important question, and one that is clearly answered in God's Word, is answered many different ways, even among evangelical Christians.

It is at the same time the most important question we will ever answer and that which produces greatest confusion.

When you ask a group of believers "What do you have to do to be saved?" you get many different answers, all apparently Biblical, and yet contradictory to one another.

Many respond, in agreement with the popular opinion of the world which says we have to do good works, or at least do something for ourselves to please God and thus earn our way to salvation.

Paul's letter to the Romans is important because this belief has become so popular, even among God's people.

This book has been used by God throughout history to transform the lives of many who have decided to trust Christ.

Among others, some of the names that stand out are Augustine, Luther and Wesley, along with many other multitudes of people who have found salvation in Christ as a result of it's message.

Romans is the only book of the Bible that has as its central purpose to explain the message of the gospel.

It contains the essence of the doctrine which Paul taught and the gospel which he preached.

It demonstrates the critical elements which the message of the church ought to include.

Romans is of primary importance because it explains how everyone who has ever enjoyed communion with God, from the beginning of the world, has been able to obtain it.

AUTHOR

That Paul the apostle wrote the epistle to the Romans is not disputed.

Almost all modern critics admit that Paul wrote it.

Romans is the standard used by many to determine which books he did write.

Paul's background is significant to the content of this letter.

He says he was "set apart" to a life of ministering the Gospel (1:1).

The Gospel presents salvation by trusting Christ, apart from works of the law.

Paul's own life was a contrast between the attempt at salvation by works and salvation by faith.

- He lived as a strict Pharisee (Acts 26:5)
- He became the main persecutor of the church (26:9-11)
- As a Jew he was zealous for the law (22:3; 23:4-5; Phil. 3:4-6)
He understood the character of the religion he now characterizes as one of sin and death (2 Cor. 3:7; Rom. 8:2; 3:20)
- He had a life-changing experience with God. His doctrine was corrected and the object of his zeal changed (Acts 9:3-6; 26:12-18)
- He became zealous for the Gospel.
He knew both ways, but chose the way of faith (Rom. 1:16-17)

Paul writes about the condition of Israel with understanding and compassion. He has been there and wants them to find what he has found.

Paul writes as the apostle to the Gentiles (1:13; 11:13, 15; 15-16), to the church at Rome, made up mainly of Gentiles also.

He has long desired to go to Rome and now writes to minister to them and to assure them of this desire.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Romans was written on Paul's third missionary journey during his long stay at Ephesus.

He had decided to go to Rome to visit and preach there (1:8-15; 15:18-24).

He was about to go to Jerusalem and from there on to Rome.

On the trip to Jerusalem, Paul was warned by prophets of impending persecution and arrest (Acts 20:17-21:14).

He was driven on by the Spirit to Jerusalem (20:22-24; 21:13-14).

In Jerusalem He was arrested and eventually sent to Rome for trial.

The government picked up his travel expenses.

He ministered there for about 2 years (28:16-31).

Then he was released to continue his work.

PURPOSE

Paul wanted to travel to Rome.

In order to prepare the way he wrote a letter to be carried ahead so that everyone there could get to know him.

His purpose seems to have been two-fold:

1. To inform them of his planned visit
2. To give them a summary of the Gospel he proclaimed

THEME

Romans 1:16-17 -- The Gospel: The power of God for salvation

ORGANIZATION--Summary

Like most New Testament letters, Romans divides into two main parts:

DOCTRINAL presentation 1-11

PRACTICAL conclusions that result from that doctrine 12-16

Paul begins by introducing himself (1:1-7) and expressing his concern for the church at Rome (1:8-15).

After this prelude, he states the theme of the letter: the Gospel is God's means for accomplishing man's salvation (1:16-17)

After the personal introduction (1:1-17), the doctrinal definition of the content of the gospel divides into three main parts:

- 1) The **NEED** for the gospel 1:18-3:20

All, without exception, are guilty before God.

- 2) The **PROVISION** of the gospel 3:21-8:39

God has made His righteousness available for all who will trust Him rather than themselves.

The premise is stated 3:21-31

Then illustrated from the Old Testament 4

The benefits of this kind of salvation are described 5

This section concludes with a presentation of the truth that this kind of salvation results in a life of holiness. 6-8

Before this we had *no power* to fulfill God's demands.

Now, through Christ, God supplies the power.

He answers the objection of some that *if salvation is by faith alone, then we can live as we please.*

- 3) The **RELATIONSHIP OF ISRAEL** to the Gospel 9-11

Israel, as a nation, has forgotten her inability to live a holy life.

She has tried to establish her own holiness before God and thereby rejected the holiness God has offered to give her if she will quit trying to do it herself.

Because of this, God has caused temporary blindness.

This blindness will eventually be removed, and Israel, too, will receive God's righteousness which comes by faith in Christ.

Paul then summarizes the responsibilities that this kind of salvation imposes on those who trust Christ 12-15:13

What are our primary responsibilities in the light of the salvation God has given us by faith in Christ alone?

We ought to offer our lives for God's service 12

We ought to submit to the authority God has established in government 13:1-7

We ought to act as ideal members of society 13:8-14

Paul then describes proper conduct when we're confronted with questionable practices that Christians don't agree on 14-15:13

Paul concludes his letter with some personal greetings to his friends in Rome 15:14-16:27

PERSONAL INTRODUCTION 1:1-17

Paul begins by introducing himself and his concern for the church at Rome.

Explanation of the letter

HIS GREETING 1:1-7

His typical greeting includes a statement concerning the gospel.

Paul thus indicates to the reader that the subject bears an important relationship to his theme.

Writer 1:1-6

Receivers 1:7a

Greeting 1:7b

HIS CONCERN 1:8-15

Following his greeting, Paul expresses his interest in their church.

Gratitude 1:8

Their reputation causes him to thank God for them.

Prayer for them 1:9-12

He prays for them all the time and prays particularly that God will permit him to go there and meet them.

Desire to visit 1:13-15

He has tried to go several times but has been prevented from doing so.

HIS THEME 1:16-17

Paul wants to share the gospel with them because it is the power of God which makes salvation possible.

The gospel reveals the righteousness of God which is received by faith.

Gospel introduced 1:16

Gospel summarized 1:17

CONTENT OF THE GOSPEL 1:18-11:36

Paul devotes the majority of the book to the systematic presentation of the gospel.

NECESSITY OF THE GOSPEL 1:18-3:20

First he describes our need for the gospel.

Man needs the good news of salvation by faith because he is guilty before God.

While the basis of condemnation varies, all are condemned because all have failed to measure up to God's standard.

Condition of man 1:18-32

The state of the race in general is first described.

Summary 1:18

The subject is introduced by a summary statement, then explained in greater detail.

Truth revealed 1:19-20

God's anger is revealed against ungodly men because His truth has been revealed to men,

Truth suppressed 1:21-23

Even though they have known the truth, they have tried to suppress it.

Result of suppression 1:24-32

Because of their attempt to suppress the truth, God has let men have their own way.

He has let them experience the natural consequences of their choice.

They have become characterized by sinful desires, shameful lusts, and depraved minds that enjoy all kinds of evil acts.

Sinful desires 24-25

Shameful lusts 26-27

Depraved minds 28-32

Criteria for judgment 2:1-16

God's judgment of the world is not based on human criteria.

His judgment is always just.

Conscience 2:1-5

He judges on the basis of the individual's own understanding of right and wrong.

When we judge others, we condemn ourselves.

The standards we use to criticize others are sufficient to condemn us.

We don't even live up to our own standards, much less to God's standards.

Deeds 2:6-11

The second criteria God uses for judgment is the acts a person does.

Those who do good by God's standards will receive eternal life.

Those who follow evil will receive God's judgment.

There is no preferential treatment.

God knows what each one deserves.

The point Paul wants to make is that when an impartial judge evaluates, there are none who do good.

We all deserve condemnation.

Light 2:12-16

Finally, God's judgment is based on the light received.

Those who know God's law and disobey it deserve greater condemnation than those who sin in ignorance.

Nevertheless, all have sufficient light to condemn them.

God has written enough of the law on the hearts of men for them to realize when they are doing wrong.

That light alone would be sufficient to condemn us.

Condemnation of the Jew 2:17-3:8

Even the Jews cannot satisfy God's requirements to stand as righteous before Him.

Cause 2:17-29 External conformity without internal transformation

Position of the Jews 17-20

The Jews had a privileged position as God's chosen people.

Guilt of the Jews 21-29

Their privilege became the source of condemnation because it did not affect their lives.

Advantage of the Jews 3:1-4

The Jews did have a real advantage.

They were entrusted with the Word of God.

Their failure to be faithful could not be blamed on God.

Inadequate Excuse 3:5-8

Nor could they claim that since God's righteousness was demonstrated by their failure, they should not be condemned.

Condemnation of all mankind 3:9-20

The conclusion of Paul's evaluation of our condition is that all people are guilty and deserve to die.

Summary declaration 9

The verdict is first summarized.

Scriptural support 10-18

That verdict is then supported from the Old Testament.

God declares that man's character is rebellious, his conduct is evil, and his attitude shows no respect for God.

Man's character 10-12

Man's conduct 13-17

Cause of man's sin 18

Function of law 19-20

Therefore, the law cannot help us.

All laws can do is condemn us.

The law stops our mouths, makes us accountable, and reveals sin.

Law can never justify people.

PROVISION OF THE GOSPEL 3:21-8:39

Having demonstrated the nature of our problem with sin, Paul then reveals the solution.

Since we were lost and helpless, God provided a means of salvation: justification by faith.

Basis of the Gospel 3:21-4:25

Since no one can be justified by the law, God has revealed another basis for salvation: faith, without the works of the law.

The principle is first stated and explained doctrinally.

Principle stated 3:21-31

God's righteousness is revealed apart from the law, although the law and the prophets did point forward to it. 21

His righteousness is received by faith, not by works. 22

Since all have sinned, no one deserves salvation but God has given it as a gift to all who believe. 22-24

It has been fully paid for by the death of Christ. 24-25

God has allowed the covering over of sin in the Old Testament on the basis of this payment.

In this way God remained just, while able to justify sinners. 25-26

Since our salvation is undeserved, we have no basis to boast about it. 27-28

The same God justifies both the circumcised and the uncircumcised on the basis of faith.
29-30

Rather than make the law ineffective, this salvation by faith, paid for by Christ, makes it more secure than ever. 31

Its demands have been met by Christ.

Principle illustrated 4:1-25

This way of salvation was not new.

It was true in the Old Testament also.

Paul uses Abraham and David to demonstrate that salvation has always been by faith.
1-8

Abraham was declared righteous before he was circumcised.

Thus circumcision cannot be a prerequisite for salvation. 9-12

The promise given to Abraham was based on faith also, not on the law. 13-17

Law and faith are mutually exclusive.

Abraham's act of faith is described as an example of the way God saves. 18-22

Just as Abraham was saved by faith, so we too are reckoned righteous by faith in Christ. 23-25

Benefits of the Gospel 5:1-11

Since our salvation has come by faith, rather than by our own works, we enjoy certain benefits as the logical results.

Peace with God 5:1-2a

First, we enjoy peace with God.

When we tried by ourselves, we had wrath.

The way to peace with God is through Christ, not through self or through law.

Joy 5:2b-11

The second benefit we receive is joy, or glory.

We can glory in the hope of possessing the glory of God.

In Christ we attain the glory we could not otherwise attain. 2b

Not only can we rejoice in the good things we receive but we can also rejoice in affliction, because we have security and hope. 3-10

We rejoice in affliction because of the process it develops in our life.

Affliction produces perseverance.

Perseverance produces proven character.

Proven character produces hope.

This hope we receive does not disappoint because it is supported by the love of God with which the Holy Spirit has permeated our lives.

Finally, we can glory in God Himself. 11

Before He was our Judge.

Now He has become the One in whom we can rejoice because we are in Christ.

Principle behind the Gospel 5:12-21

After presenting the benefits which we enjoy because our salvation is by faith, Paul explains the principle by which such a salvation is made possible.

It is possible in the same way that all men received death through Adam.

The righteousness of God has been imputed to our account.

Effect of the Gospel 6-8

The doctrinal teaching concerning God's provision of justification by faith concludes with the truth that salvation by faith produces a holy life.

Without salvation by faith in Christ, no one has the power to fulfill God's demands.

Now, through Christ, God supplies the power.

Paul uses this discussion to answer the objection of some that salvation is by faith alone, then we can live however we please.

Three objections 6-7

Several objections could be raised to counter Paul's doctrine of salvation by faith alone.

Paul raises and answers three such objections.

Objection concerning the grace of God 6:1-14

First Paul suggests that since salvation is by faith and not by works, then God is glorified by the grace He has shown.

Why then should they not keep on sinning so that God's grace may be demonstrated further.

Paul answers that the doctrine of salvation by faith teaches that we have died to sin.

Therefore, we cannot go on living in sin.

We were identified with Him in His death and in His resurrection.

In Him we have a new kind of life.

We ought not let sin reign in our bodies, rather, we should live for God.

Objection concerning liberty to sin 6:15-7:6

The second objection is based on the fact that salvation is by faith and not by the law.

If this is true, are we not free to break the law without losing our salvation.

Paul answers the objection arguing that faith in Christ does not give us liberty to sin, but rather, the power to be free from sin.

The imagery of slavery demonstrates that formerly we were servants of sin.

Now we should serve righteousness. 6:15-23

When we served sin, righteousness had no claim on us.

Now that we serve God, we should develop a manner of life which is increasingly holy and free from lawlessness.

While the life of faith is free from the law, it results in conduct which pleases God.

The imagery of marriage teaches that the law has authority over a person as long as he lives. 7:1-6

Like marriage, its authority ends when he dies.

We died with Christ.

Therefore, we are free from the law's authority.

We are now free to unite with the risen Christ in a new kind of life.

Objection concerning the law 7:7-25

The third objection arises from several facts already presented.

Salvation is by faith, not by law.

The law only serves to reveal sin.

You must be dead to the law to live a holy life.

Therefore, it appears that the law must be sin.

Paul answers this objection by stating that the law is good when used as God intended for it to be used.

The law was intended to reveal sin, not to relieve from sin. 7-13

The problem is not the law.

The problem is the rebellion in the heart of sinful people.

The law has no power to produce obedience. 14-24

Only Christ can give us the power to live holy lives. 25

Basis of holy living 8

In contrast to the law which could not provide the power to live a holy life, the gospel does provide power for holy living.

Power for holy living 8:1-11

This power comes through the Holy Spirit.

Paul first introduces the two kinds of life. 1-4

He then describes the way of life of those who walk according to their own efforts.
5-9

They cannot please God that way.

In contrast to those who walk in the flesh, the Spirit enables those who are in Christ to walk differently. 9-11

They have a new life.

Obligation to holy living 8:12-17

People who are God's children and heirs have an obligation to live like Him.

Therefore, our life should be holy.

Suffering and holy living 8:18-30

In the midst of the affliction suffered by the early church, Paul explains the relationship between suffering and holy living.

We ought to be patient in the midst of suffering because the glory we shall receive in the future far surpasses the temporary suffering of the present age. 18-25

We should be patient in the midst of affliction because we are receiving help from the Holy Spirit. 26-27

Finally, we should be patient in our affliction because we understand the loving purpose of God. 28-30

In God's plan for us, He has foreknown us, predestined us to be conformed to the image of His Son, called us to Himself, justified us, and, finally, He will also glorify us together with Christ.

Hymn of praise and assurance 8:31-39

The consideration of God's great love and plan for His people causes Paul to praise God.

He presents a hymn of praise which expresses the assurance he and all God's children enjoy.

Because we are in Christ, we need never fear that we will lack what we need.
31-32

We need never fear condemnation (33-34) nor separation from Him (35-39).

RELATION OF ISRAEL TO THE GOSPEL 9-11

Paul concludes the doctrinal argument by demonstrating the relationship of Israel to the gospel.

Israel as a nation has forgotten her inability to live a holy life and thereby satisfy God.

Israel's past relationship to God's plan 9

They have tried to earn their own way.

As a result, in spite of their privileged position, they have fallen, and are under God's judgment.

Paul observes, concerning their fall, that it was not total; some did believe.

From God's perspective they were set aside because of His choice.

From a human perspective, it was because of their unbelief.

Paul's sorrow for Israel 1-5

Israel's rejection and God's promise 6-13

Israel's rejection and God's justice 14-29

Israel's search after righteousness 30-33

Israel's present relationship to God's plan 10

In the present also, as in the past, Israel is still trying to establish her own righteousness before God.

Therefore she rejects the righteousness God has offered to give her if she will quit trying to do it herself and depend on His ability to do it for her.

In spite of Israel's rebellion, God continues to show mercy and call her to come back to Him.

Israel's unbelief 1- 13

Israel's need to hear 14-15

Israel's continuing rejection 16-18

God's continuing mercy 19-21

Israel's future relationship to God's plan 11

Paul then describes God's plan for Israel in the future.

Preservation of a remnant 1-6

Because of their attempt to earn their own righteousness before God, He has caused temporary blindness.

Their fall is not total; a faithful remnant still exists.

Hardening of the majority 7-10

God has allowed the hardening of the mass of Israel.

Salvation of the Gentiles 11-22

That temporary hardening has made possible the salvation of the Gentiles.

Restoration of the nation 23-32

However, the fall of Israel is only temporary.

When they trust God again, they will be restored.

Prayer of praise 33-36

The greatness of God's wonderful plan causes Paul to praise God.

No human genius could have imagined such a great plan!

APPLICATION OF THE GOSPEL 12-15:13

Personal Implications of the Gospel

Paul summarizes the practical responsibilities that salvation by faith in Christ imposes on those who have trusted Him.

RESPONSIBILITY TO THE CHURCH 12

Dedication 12:1-2

Most important, God's gracious provision demands that we offer our lives in His service.

This service will be especially evident in the church. 3-21

Divine Perspective 12:3-8

The child of God who recognizes the significance of the salvation God has given to us, will want to serve Him.

Our life will be different than that of others around us.

We will want to know the role God would have us to fulfill, and will dedicate ourselves to accomplishing that goal in a way that will glorify Him.

Love 12:9-21

Paul proceeds to list specific characteristics that ought to be evident in the life of every believer.

In general, they emphasize the importance of love for one another.

RESPONSIBILITY TO GOVERNMENT 13:1-7

The child of God will also recognize that God has established the government as a means of maintaining order in society.

Aware of God's control over that government, we submit to their authority.

RESPONSIBILITY TO SOCIETY 13:8-14

As a member of a local community, we will try to glorify God in that community by our relationships with others.

To love your neighbor 8-10

We will demonstrate our love for our neighbor.

To be ideal citizens 11-14

We will seek to live as an ideal member of the society ought to live.

RESPONSIBILITY IN QUESTIONABLE ACTIVITIES 14-15:13

As questionable issues arise, such as the problem of unclean meat which affected the brethren at Rome, we will try to avoid offense to others.

Keeping liberty in perspective 14:1-13a

We ought not to judge one another since God alone is our brother's Lord.

Not offending others 14:13b-21

Instead of judging others, we ought to determine to avoid anything that would offend another.

Keeping a clear conscience 14:22-23

We should be sure our own conscience is clear before God.

Doing everything for God's glory 15:1-6

We should do everything in such a way that Christ will be glorified through our life.

Following Christ's example 15:7-13

In short, we ought to imitate Christ's example, and give up our rights for the good of our brothers and sisters in Christ.

CONCLUSION 15:14-16:27

Personal Notes

The conclusion of the letter reviews Paul's reasons for writing and his plans to visit them.
15:22-33

He then includes various personal notes and greetings to the church and to his friends there.
16:1-27

REASONS FOR WRITING 15:14-21

PERSONAL PLANS 15:22-23

COMMENDATION OF PHOEBE 16:1-2

GREETINGS TO THE ROMANS 16:3-16

WARNING AGAINST FALSE TEACHERS 16:17-20

GREETINGS FROM HIS COMPANIONS 16:21-24

FINAL BENEDICTION 16:25-27

WHAT IMPORTANT LESSONS DO WE LEARN FROM THE STUDY OF ROMANS?

WHAT DIFFERENCE SHOULD THE BOOK MAKE IN OUR LIVES?

ANY OTHER SPECIAL IMPRESSIONS, FAVORITE PORTIONS, OR LESSONS TO BE LEARNED, THAT HAVE IMPRESSED YOU IN ROMANS?