

ROMANS

STUDY MATERIAL

GRACE
TO
YOU

thornleigh
community
CHURCH OF CHRIST

Introduction:

If you are painfully aware of your own sin/if you feel distant from God because of your past or present failures/if after a painful moral or ethical lapse you feel unworthy or unable to stand before God/if you've ever wondered how a holy, righteous, and perfect God can love and accept you a broken, flakey and fallen human/if you're heaped up and burdened by guilt and you feel worthless... YOU NEED TO READ ROMANS

Believe it or not one of the most famous Christians of all time felt like this. Martin Luther, although being a diligent, morally upstanding and hard working monk, was painfully aware of his own sinfulness, to the point at which the thought of a righteous and holy God terrified him. He knew that if God were to be truly righteous he'd be punished for his sin. He came to resent the idea that God was righteous because of what that meant for him. After reading and meditating on Romans this is what he learnt.

'I labored diligently and anxiously as to how to understand Paul's word in Romans 1:17... 'a righteousness of God is revealed in the gospel'... I took it to mean that righteousness whereby God is righteous and deals righteously in punishing the unrighteous. My situation was that although an impeccable monk I stood before God as a sinner troubled in conscience... therefore I did not love a righteous and angry God but rather hated and murmured against him.... Then I grasped that the righteousness of God is that righteousness by which through grace and sheer mercy God justifies us by faith. Thereupon I felt myself to be reborn and have gone through open doors into paradise.' Luther (Commentary on the epistle to the Romans pg 16)

In short Romans helped Luther understand 'the gospel'. It helped Luther see that he need not fixate on the depths of his sinfulness because he is saved by grace through faith not by his own goodness or rightness.

You may be thinking I don't feel burdened by my own sinfulness at all so maybe Ill give church a miss for the first term. Let me continue.

If you're a pretty good person/if you work hard, pay your taxes and try not to cheat anyone/if you consider your self an upstanding member of society/if you take pride in your achievements, your status your righteousness, your self-discipline, your outstanding moral character/if you have a flawless church attendance record, are diligent with your quiet times, pray often and read your bible a lot/if you think of yourself as a great example/If you've never come face to face with your own unworthiness and sin... YOU NEED TO READ ROMANS. Because you are in danger of consciously or unconsciously believing your righteousness or goodness contributes to your salvation. You're in danger of believing the lie that you are good enough for God.

In Romans Paul teaches that even at our best humans fall painfully short of the life God intended for us to live. As Isaiah put it *'our righteous acts are like filthy rags'* before a holy and just God.

So whether in the course of our study of Romans you are lifted up out of the depths of sin and self loathing by the message of grace or whether you are brought to your knees by the message that everyone, regardless of how 'good you feel' NEEDS GRACE our journey through Romans will change you.

Some more helpful info:

Paul probably wrote Romans whilst he was in Corinth to a group of mainly gentile Christians living in Rome. Romans, like most books in the NT, is a letter sent to a particular group of people at a particular time in a particular place. Whilst throughout the letter we get hints of the problems that the church in Rome was facing Romans is far more general in content than many of Paul's other letters. To put it another way unlike most books in the NT Paul seems less concerned with the 'issues' that the church in Rome is

facing and more concerned with reminding that church of the timeless importance of the gospel of Jesus. Douglas Moo says *'Paul's focus is on the gospel and its meaning rather than on the Romans and their needs'*

The book of Romans is literally all about the gospel of grace. It is designed to help you understand the gospel, experience the gospel and live in light of the gospel. Like many of Paul's letters the first half of the book is mostly theology and theological reflection. Paul answers the questions what is the gospel? Who needs the gospel? How does the gospel work? The next half of the book is more practical and is dedicated to exploring what changes happen in peoples lives when they truly understand the gospel of grace.

Breakdown:

- 1. Romans 1:1-17 The gospel of grace**
- 2. Romans 1:18-32 'The pagans need grace'**
- 3. Romans 3:1-31 'Everyone needs grace'**
- 4. Romans 4:1-25 Abraham saved by grace through faith**
- 5. Romans 5:1-11 Grace brings peace**
- 6. Romans 6:1-7:6 Grace and why we should obey God**
- 7. Romans 7:7-25 The war within**
- 8. Romans 8 nothing can separate you from Gods love and grace The gospel of Grace**

The gospel of grace

Romans 1:1-17

Before you start-

- (a) Read the passage-** what stands out to you, what do you not understand, what encourages you, what questions do you have?
- (b) Reflect on the sermon-** what challenged you, what encouraged you, what rebuked you, what did you learn?

Introduction:

How would you sum up the gospel in just a couple of sentences?

1. The gospel- what is it?

The gospel is one of those buzz words that Christians use all the time but many Christians don't even know what it means. So lets take a minute to think about the gospel as Paul explains it here in Romans 1. The word gospel- *evangeloi*- literally means 'good herald'. Ancient kings used to send messengers back to share the 'gospel' of a great victory they had won in a far off land. So the gospel is first and foremost NEWS... it is good news that is to be shared amongst people. It is not a set of rules to follow, a handbook to life. It is news to be shared.

What is this 'news'? Paul sums up this 'news' in Romans 1:17

Put simply Paul is saying there is a new way to be right with God. Every other religion teaches that in order to be right with God you must live a perfect and sinless life. Which we know instinctively and by trail and error is impossible. The gospel says there is a new way to be right with God. It is through grace by faith. You are right with God not because of what you have done but because of what Jesus has done for you. That's what Paul means when he says 'a

righteousness from God'. Your righteousness is not from you or by your efforts. It is from God and because of his efforts.

Questions:

- How does this 'gospel' compare to the teaching of every other religion?
- What might be the indicators that we've truly understood God's grace?
- What might be some indicators that we still 'believe' in a works based righteousness?
- How does this 'good news' protect us against legalism and license?

2. The gospel- its effect on Paul?

'Obedience and obligation' there are two words that stand out in this passage that help unpack the effect the 'gospel' has had on Paul and therefore the effect it should have on us.

Obedience-

- Why will faith and a true understanding of the gospel always lead to obedience?
- What does it say about the quality of your faith in Jesus if your life is characterized by disobedience?
- In what area of your life do you struggle to trust and obey God the most?
- How can you develop the kind of faith that leads to obedience?

Obligation:

The word obligated in v14-15 can also mean indebted. Paul is saying here that he has a debt to pay to the gentiles. The natural question that arises is what debt does he owe? There are 2 ways to be in debt to someone. The first way is if someone gives you \$20. You then owe them \$20. The second way to be in debt is if someone gives you \$20 to give to someone else. Paul, and every Christian, is indebted in the second way. We've been given a gift, the gospel, that is for everyone to share, and we are obligated to share that gift.

- Do you share Paul's passion for telling people about the gospel?
- What does people's passion for sharing the gospel reveal about their faith?
- What might be the indicators that we are ashamed of the gospel?
- How might we encourage each other to share the gospel boldly with our friends?

To finish:

Spend some time thanking God for his goodness and his grace. Pray, Sing a song, meditate... whatever you like but DO SOMETHING He deserves it.

The pagans (aka Australians) need Grace

Romans 1:18-32

Before you start-

(c) Read the passage- what stands out to you? what do you not understand? what encourages you? what questions do you have?

(d) Reflect on the sermon- what challenged you? what encouraged you? what rebuked you? what did you learn?

Introduction:

- What things in this world indicate to you that there is God? What do these things say about what this God is like?

Why the Pagans need the gospel?

After giving us an insight into the Gospel and its effects on himself, Paul now begins to convince us of our need for grace and the gospel. He starts by looking at the pagans. The pagans in the 1st century are simply people who are of non-Jewish heritage. For the following study lets say the pagans are the non-religious. People who don't read the bible, or claim to be of no religious background.

- What does Paul mean when he says that humans have neither glorified God nor given thanks to him?
- What do you think Paul means when he says '*God gave them over*'?
- Read the vice list in v29-31. Give modern examples of these 'vices'.
- Given what we've seen in Romans and what you see in the world is it right for God wrath to be revealed against humans? (v18-20) Why? Why not?

- What about people who have never heard about Jesus. Is it right for God's wrath to be revealed on them? Why, why not?

Idolatry is the root of all sin/ All sin is idolatry

v22-23 Paul makes the point that all sin has its root in idolatry. In fact, if the definition of idolatry is loving something more than you love God, then all sin IS a form of idolatry.

- Take a look at the vices in 29-31. How do each of these evidence idolatry in peoples lives?
- What are some common idols in the 21st century? What sins normally attach themselves to these idolatries?
- How can we break free from these idols?
- How does this passage make you thankful for 'the new kind of righteousness' spoken about in v17?

The religious need the gospel

Romans 2:1-3:8

Introduction

If you asked a non-religious person 'what is wrong with the world?' What would they say? If you asked a religious person 'what is wrong with the world?' What would they say? How do they compare?

Before you start-

(e) Read the passage- what stands out to you? what do you not understand? what encourages you? what questions do you have?

(f) Reflect on the sermon- what challenged you? what encouraged you? what rebuked you? what did you learn?

At this point in Romans the Jewish/religious people reading Paul's harsh words about the pagans would be cheering Paul on thinking to themselves '*yea, you get em Paul. Those dirty pagans with their shameful lusts. We always knew they were dirty sinners*'. Indeed many religious people in our day and age would probably do the same. So Paul now turns his attention from the pagans to the religious, the pious, the Jews. And his conclusion is that it's not only the pagans who need the gospel of grace but the religious too! The religious and pagans answer to the question what is wrong with the world should be the same... '*I am*'!

A word to the pious who 'pass judgment'

To '*pass judgment*' on someone is to believe they are worthy of Gods judgment while you are not.

- Who is in most danger of 'passing judgment' on others?
- Why according to Paul is it wrong for the religious to pass judgment on the pagans?
- How might we stop it?

The religious do the same things (v1)

Paul is not saying that religious people are guilty of exactly the same sins as the pagans (although they might be) he is saying that no one truly lives up to their own standards. If religious people search their hearts as well as their actions they will see they are filled with bitterness, rage, malice and slander just like the pagans. They know the law but fail to live by the law. He is making the point that religious people have idols too. Tim Keller writes-

'Though religious obedience looks godly. It is in fact a form of idolatry. The religious person may have rejected all the current external idols... worships statues, or casual sex or career... but they have idols in their heart. They find their self worth in their morality; they find salvation in rule keeping. They worship their goodness.... Relying on Gods rules is as much self-reliance and God-rejection as ignoring Gods rules' (Keller, Romans p43)

- What might be the indicators that you find your self worth and salvation in your morality and goodness?
- Why is this as worthy of Gods wrath as the 'sins' of the pagans?
- In verse 16 Paul makes the point that God will judge the *secret things*? What 'things' is he talking about?
- How would you explain to a religious person that they need the gospel of grace as much as an irreligious person?

Hearing and obeying

In verse 12-13 Paul makes the point that hearing the law is not enough... only those who obey the law will be declared righteous.

- How does this fit with the statement in 1:17 about righteousness being from God?
- If we are 'repaid each according to what we have done' who will be saved?
- What might the indicators that we truly trust in God grace for our righteousness and not our own goodness or morality?

Keller directs his reader to answer three questions to find out if they truly trust in the righteousness God gives them.

1. Do you feel like you are a hopeless sinner who deserves God's judgment?
2. Do you look down your nose and judge in your heart the way those outside the church live or do you say in your heart 'my heart is by nature like theirs.'
3. Do you know that when you stand before God your own values will condemn you?

Reflect on these questions together. How are they helpful in determining your position before God?

Pray that God will reveal your hidden idols and comfort you with the message of his love and grace.

Being saved by grace

Romans 3:20-31

Before you start-

(g) Read the passage- what stands out to you, what do you not understand, what encourages you, what questions do you have?

(h) Reflect on the sermon- what challenged you, what encouraged you, what rebuked you, what did you learn?

Introduction:

Paul has been preaching his little heart out and working tirelessly to make the point that EVERYONE religious and irreligious, Jew and non-Jew, the 'good' and the 'bad' people in this world NEED the gospel of grace. He states his point most clearly in chapter 3 v9 and 20

(v9) what shall we conclude then? Do we (the religious) have any advantage? Not at all...Jews and gentiles alike are under the power of sin.

(v20) no one will be declared righteous in Gods sight by works of the law; rather through the law we become conscious of our sin

The obvious conclusion is that we are all stuffed. No one is good enough to saved.

This is exactly what Paul hopes you will feel after the first 3 chapters of Romans. He wants you to feel hopeless and in some ways worthless. Because its only when you know how hopeless your situation is that you can truly appreciate what God has done for you?

All have sinned

- How do you see the 'power of sin' at work in our world?

- What images and metaphors for sin have you found helpful?

Francis Spufford says that sin is 'the human propensity to *stuff* things up. To put it in other words sin is taking something precious and unspoiled and tainting it or spoiling it or breaking it.

- Is this definition of sin helpful? Why or why not?
- How would you explain the universality of sin to a non-Christian?

If we are all at our core sinful and separated from God how can we be saved? Paul goes on to explain?

We are justified, redeemed by the atoning sacrifice of Jesus

- How do the following words/phrases help us to understand what God has done for us in the gospel?
 - o Justified
 - o Redeemed
 - o Atoning sacrifice (Read Lev 16:1-17 to help you understand this metaphor for salvation)

God is just to justify

- Why is it just for God to justify sinners?

In light of what we have learnt so far in this study how might your respond to the following questions?

'the God of the bible is angry and harsh?'

'why cant God just look past all our wrong and love us anyway?'

'why did Jesus have to die?'

- How does believing in 'the gospel':

- Humble us
- Allow us to be honest about who we are
- Free us from anxiety
- Stop us from fearing failure and death

Grace and Abraham

Romans 4:1-25

Before you start-

- (i) **Read the passage-** what stands out to you, what do you not understand, what encourages you, what questions do you have?
- (j) **Reflect on the sermon-** what challenged you, what encouraged you, what rebuked you, what did you learn?

Introduction:

When some people look at the bible they think the Old Testament was all about law and the new testament all about grace. They give the impression that in the old testament God expected people to be good enough to be saved... and finally after hundreds of years of people failing God thought to be himself *'well this isn't working... maybe I better try something else, GRACE.'*

In the following chapter Paul explains that God has always dealt with people according to grace. IN fact the great father of Jewish nation, Abraham, was not saved by works but by grace through faith. This idea has huge implications for the Christian.

- Think tank together a definition of FAITH?

Abraham saved by grace though faith (v1-11)

Paul makes a big deal out of the idea of 'credit' in this passage. Credit means to give to someone something that is not inheritably theirs. So when Paul says that 'Abraham believed God and it was credited to him righteousness' he means Abraham was not in himself righteous, or blameless or perfect BUT God treated him as if he was.

- What does this passage tell us about the way God has acted throughout history?

- What is Paul trying to say in v4-5?
- Why does Paul make a big deal of the fact that Abraham was credited righteousness BEFORE circumcision?
- Do you think modern Christians reverse the order and place good deeds before grace? Explain?

What is faith? (v18-25)

IN the following verses Paul gives us a case study in faith by unpacking the faith of Abraham.

- What connection does Paul draw between faith and the promises of God?
- What does Abrahams example teach us about saving faith?
- Check out Hebrew 11. What does this passage teach us about faith?
- Can you think of times in your life that you've exhibited this kind of faith?
- Why might faith like Abrahams result in?
 - o **No boasting**
 - o **No cowering**
 - o **A great identity**
 - o **Complete assurance**
 - o **Hope when hope is gone**
- Which of these do you find most encouraging/challenging?

Pray

Grace and peace

Romans 5:1-11

Before you start-

(k) Read the passage- what stands out to you, what do you not understand, what encourages you, what questions do you have?

(l) Reflect on the sermon- what challenged you, what encouraged you, what rebuked you, what did you learn?

Introduction:

I was always told that when you see the word therefore in the bible you need to ask what is the therefore there for? On this occasion it seems obvious that Paul is saying the following passage is a result of or because of Justification by faith. The following study we are going to explore the benefits of grace!

- If someone was to ask you what's the best thing about being a Christian what would you say?

The benefits of grace (v1-2)

Verses 1-2 shares the past, present and future benefits of the gospel. What are they? What do they mean? And why are they so amazing?

- **Past**
- **Present**
- **Future**

Grace and sufferings (v3-5)

Contrast the following phrases. Rejoice about our sufferings/rejoice beyond our sufferings/rejoice despite our sufferings/rejoice in your sufferings?

- Why is rejoicing in your suffering superior to the other options?
- Why can Christians rejoice in suffering?

Perseverance can also be translated single mindedness or focus/character conveys the idea of testedness or a confidence that comes from having experienced something/hope is a certainty about the future.

- Have you experienced this progression or seen it in others? Explain?

Grace based assurance (v6-11)

- according to Paul why can we have confidence that on the day of judgment we will be ok?
- How does the message of the cross assure you of God's love?

How might you use Romans 5 to encourage or challenge

- A Christian who is unsure they are really loved by God?
- A Christian who is weighed down by sin and guilt?
- A Christian who is suffering greatly?
- A non-believer who is worried about dying?
- A non-believer who says 'I'm ok? Because I'm not a bad person??

Pray

Grace and sin

Grace and temptation

Grace promises