

**Review #1: Rom 1-3**  
**Rom 1:1-3:20**  
**ABC 1/28/18**

Open your Bible to Rom 1:1. I can see some of you thinking, *Oh no! I thought we were finally done with Romans!* Not quite. We're going to take a few weeks to review it. Why? 2 reasons. The 2<sup>nd</sup> one 1<sup>st</sup>: Joel would like me to teach the book of Romans to pastors in developing countries at some point & do it in 3-5 sessions. That's a challenge. But the main reason is because it's good to get an overview, a 35,000 ft view of what we've seen in the past 132 sermons down at ground level. As we've seen, the letter to the Romans stands as the clearest & most systematic presentation of Christian doctrine in all Scriptures. Romans quotes the OT more than any other NT book, some 57 times. The most common words in this letter are *God* (150+), *Christ & Jesus* combined (100+), *law* (74), *sin* (48), *die* or *death* (45), *Lord* (44), & *faith* (40). This book is about God, Jesus, & the Holy Spirit (30), sin & death, our Lord, faith, & all the ramifications of those terms. Paul began by discussing what is easily observable in all mankind, our sinfulness. All people have been condemned due to our rebellion against God. However, God in His grace offers us justification by faith in His Son, Jesus. When we are justified by God, we receive redemption, or salvation, because Christ's blood covers our sin. But Paul made it clear that the believer's relationship with God doesn't stop with salvation; it continues as each of us is sanctified, made holy, as we continue to follow Him. Paul's treatment of these issues offers a logical & complete presentation of how a person can be saved from the penalty & power of sin. PRAY

Let's start by reading Paul's introduction of himself & his reason for writing. Follow along as I read Rom **1:1-7**.

In Rom 1:1, Paul states he wrote this letter & his main topic is the **gospel of God**. In vs 5 Paul tells us the goal of his apostleship which is **to bring about the obedience of faith among all the Gentiles for His name's sake**. That's why Paul preaches. That's why he's planning on going to Spain. That's why he writes this letter, to bring about faith in Jesus & the obedience that comes from it, among all nations. Paul is all about reaching people of the world who don't yet believe on Jesus.

He explains a bit about that gospel in these vss. Then in vss 8-15, we read of Paul's personal reasons for writing & wanting to visit this church. **1:8-15**

The church at Rome hadn't had any apostle there to teach them & Paul longed to root & ground them in gospel truth. So he stated the theme of his letter in vss 16-17 as relating to the power & righteousness of God in the gospel. **1:16-17**

The theme of Romans is the gospel of Jesus Christ, the good news that God declares sinners to be righteous when they put their faith in the sacrifice of Jesus on their behalf. This involves both the imputed righteousness of justification (Rom 3-5) & the imparted righteousness of sanctification (Rom 6-8). This gospel is for people from every tribe & tongue & people & nation. Paul says that his message, the gospel, is **the power of God for salvation**. & this salvation is through faith alone in Christ alone by God's grace alone. He explains why the gospel has this power in vs 17. **For in it the righteousness of God is revealed**. The gospel has the power to save those who trust Jesus because it reveals the righteousness of God. What does that mean? Before he tells us what it means, he shows us why we all need to be saved. That's a quick look at the theme & introduction. Paul now begins his doctrinal portion beginning with the bad news.

**1. Immoral People Are Unrighteous** They don't have the holy perfection that it takes to get to God. In the context of Paul's times, it would have been stated that Gentiles or those without God's law lack righteousness. Vs 18 explains that humans lack that righteousness because we naturally do not respond to His truth rightly. **18-20**

People naturally suppress truth of God that everyone knows. We owe God obedience & thanks & trust, but we fail & so we try to get away from God's truth & yet we **are without excuse**. We don't give thanks for every good thing that comes from God & don't honor God by giving Him His rightful place. Instead of letting God be God, we make up our own ideas about what God should be like or what we want Him to be like. When God allows people to go their own way like that, vs 18 says that is God's wrath. It's God abandoning people to destruction away from His goodness. Repeatedly the following vss express that by saying God gave them over after people had further abandoned God. **21-25**

God is not who you or I think He is. He is who He says He is. So it doesn't work to make up ideas of God because what matters is who He really is & what He says about Himself. & even people without a Bible are responsible to see God in what He's made & turn to Him & seek Him. But they don't. Instead they pursue their own ways & end up in all kinds of immorality & ungodliness.

### **1:26-28**

This sounds like our day & age, doesn't it? Mankind hasn't changed much; we're still sinful & in rebellion against God. Instead of enjoying life as God designed it, people rage against God & enslave themselves to all kinds of sin. We find the end of that downward spiral in vss **29-32**.

That's not a list of things that bring about a peaceful, utopian society. All of that supposed freedom to sin actually creates a slavery to sin & is absent of true love & filled with disharmony. Rather than promoting peace, throwing off God & doing what is right in our own eyes brings more turmoil. If sin is running out of control & wreaking havoc with violence & theft & deceit & abuse & further sins, people become gripped by fear. When viewing the list of wrongdoings of Rom 1, it's easy to see Paul's point that immoral people lack righteousness. People without a Bible sin against the knowledge of God that is hardwired within them & thus they are unrighteous in God's eyes. They don't have any righteousness to offer to God to enter His presence of perfect holiness & justice. It's clear here that all people know their sins are wrong. We recognize how we've been greedy or gossiped or been deceitful or proud or immoral or disobedient to parents. All such sins are worthy of not only physical death but also eternal punishment. But on hearing this, someone might be tempted to think, *I'm glad I'm not as bad as that list. I'm a good, moral person.* You might be tempted to think, *I'm not like all those rebellious sinners that I see in today's world.* You may think you've kept yourself pure & stayed away from trouble & obeyed the law & not hurt others. So you might believe God will look favorably on you because you have some goodness or righteousness of your own. You may agree that immoral people lack righteousness, but you may think you've done enough good to outweigh the bad things you've done. But Paul says ...

### **2. Moral People Are Unrighteous 2:1-4**

Notice the shift in the line of reasoning here. Paul was talking about immoral people & how right it is for God to punish them & then he turns the blame elsewhere. His point in chpt 2 for the Jews of his day is the 2<sup>nd</sup> point to apply in our day & that is that moral people lack righteousness. This chpt is pointing out moral people, to people who are nice & upright & often church-going. It's easy to judge immoral people, but Paul explains we condemn ourselves when we agree that sin should be punished. If you look at law-breakers & agree they should be punished, you're condemning yourself because you're a law-breaker also. We're all condemned by our own internal sense of right & wrong no matter how moral we think we may be. Each of us has committed the same kinds of sins as others even if we haven't gone as far as those whose sins we can more easily judge. You & I may not have sinned to the same extent, but we all have sinned in the same quality of ways (3). Maybe you've kept yourself from sexual immorality, but you've sinned in the same quality of way by lusting. Often when talking about God's law, people will say they aren't as bad as others because they've never murdered anyone. But Jesus said in Mt 5:22 that whoever is angry or speaks mean words to a person is guilty enough for hell. Similarly, you may not have stolen, but you've done the same quality of sin when you've coveted or desired or were jealous of other people's stuff. & we've all stolen glory from God by not thanking Him as the source of every good thing. We could examine all kinds of other sins, things we all agree are wrong, & see how we do the same kinds of things in other ways. & since we don't live up to God's law perfectly in all things, we are not righteous. & God will judge each person using whatever amount of revelation of His law we have in our conscience or from Scripture. **2:5-16**

No person left to himself or herself will come out of this evaluation with grades that pass the test of perfection. Every person's conscience will have enough to accuse them. & those who have God's Word, like the Jews in Paul's time, will face greater judgment for their pride & hypocrisy. Because we are not righteous we all deserve God's wrath & fury (2:8). When we hear this, we need to let that sink in. These are terrible words. Nothing worse can be imagined or experienced than when the omnipotent God has wrath & fury against us. The east coast recently experienced

a “bomb cyclone” of a storm which caused extensive damage to areas with flooding, power outages, & snow & ice. But the forces of that, or any other, storm are as nothing compared to the fury of the wrath of God. There’s nothing more terrorizing than the prospect of everlasting, never-ending, omnipotent, & righteous divine wrath. & that’s the consequence of our sin. That’s what we all deserve. Unless we get this clear in our heads, God’s love & grace is reduced to sentimentalism or to a mere help for our self-improvement & recovery plans. We won’t see God & His love as the infinitely precious treasure that He really is. We see this in **2:17-22**.

We don’t have time to go into all the details but the gist of these vss is the Jews of Paul’s time, & often the outwardly moral church people of our times, haven’t helped the cause of truth & righteousness. They’ve been a hindrance that got in the way rather than a light to show people the way. & God doesn’t show partiality based on birthright. So we see our 2<sup>nd</sup> point & Paul’s point in chpt 2 that the moral person lacks righteousness. Even if you’ve grown up in church & lived a good life & feel good about yourself, you still lack your own righteousness. You may feel like your family is better than others & the choices & ways you do things are God’s ways & different from others. But you still lack the righteousness to reach God on your own. No one has what it takes to measure up to God’s standard. As Paul taught that, it raised a question that needed answering. So chpt 3 begins explaining why it’s a privilege to have God’s law. If knowing God’s truth doesn’t automatically get me right with God, then why boast of having it & why bother reading it? Paul answered that by explaining that despite the Jews’ failure to obey, they were still blessed by God to have His Word. **3:1-8**

People had misunderstood Paul & wrongly accused him of not caring about God’s law & so he makes it clear that he did confirm the blessings of his kinsmen the Jews. He knew that having God’s law has a purpose with blessings in it. But those blessings need to be understood & responded to rightly or people will miss God’s purpose for His law. Chpt 3 continues the main argument by showing a main purpose of God’s law in the OT & NT. That purpose is to prove that we are all sinners & do not have the righteousness we need. Paul sums this up in Rom **3:9-18**.

No one is better by natural birth or family status or place of privilege. No matter where we come from or what we've done or not done, we all lack the righteousness required to reach God. & that's the point of this section that goes to 3:20 & it's our 3<sup>rd</sup> point this morning.

**3. All People Are Unrighteous** We've already said #1, that immoral people lack righteousness & #2, that moral people lack righteousness. Now this sums up those 1<sup>st</sup> 2 points in the flow of how Paul was walking through a complete presentation of the gospel. No one has enough righteousness or goodness to get us to God. A main point of the Bible is to help us to see that God is holy & perfect & that we are not. Rom 3:9-20 tells us that all people lack righteousness. Both Greeks & Jews, those without God's Word & those with God's Word, lack righteousness. By birth & by nature & by thought & by action, we are all sinners against God & we all deserve punishment & nothing we can do on our own will fix that. We don't have the holy perfection that it takes to get to God. Paul restates this in **3:19-20**.

Clearly, no one will be declared right with God by the good things they've done or by keeping of the law. No one has enough good to outweigh their bad. Every mouth is closed & all the world is accountable to God. We are all sinners. We all deserve punishment & nothing we do can fix that. We are all under God's wrath (1:18). We have no righteousness that could commend us to Him. 3:20 makes it clear that we can never save or justify ourselves: **By the works of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight.** You can't be acquitted by the law & you can't be transformed by the law. God's law cannot justify you & neither can it sanctify you. We are all sinners. We are all under God's just & holy wrath. & none of us can save or justify ourselves by our works. I trust you realize that you can't be good enough to be right with God. That's the bad news, but it's bad news we must understand in order to understand the good news that's the theme of the Bible & of Romans. We are all sinners & we all lack righteousness. What makes sin sin isn't that it hurts us or others, but that it blasphemes God. This is the ultimate evil & sin in the universe.

The glory of God is not honored.  
 The holiness of God is not revered.  
 The greatness of God is not admired.  
 The power of God is not praised.  
 The truth of God is not sought.  
 The wisdom of God is not esteemed.

The beauty of God is not treasured.  
 The goodness of God is not savored.  
 The faithfulness of God is not trusted.  
 The promises of God are not relied upon.  
 The commandments of God are not obeyed.  
 The justice of God is not respected.  
 The wrath of God is not feared.  
 The grace of God is not cherished.  
 The presence of God is not prized.

The infinite, all-glorious Creator of the universe, by whom & for whom all things exist (Rom 11:36), who holds every person's life at every moment (Acts 17:25), is disregarded, disbelieved, disobeyed, & dishonored by everybody in the world. Don't believe me? **3:23**

We are all sinners deserving of God's wrath. That's part of the gospel that needs to be told whether people like to hear it or not. We must speak & hear that bad news because only that prepares us rightly for the good news. Only a proper perspective on how bad we all are can open us up to how good God truly is when He provides everything we need in Jesus. But sharing the bad news must not be all we say or hear. Many people stop listening & never hear the rest of the story. They realize they've failed God's standards & so they want to throw off God's standards & make up their own rules. But Christianity isn't about being good enough to get God to like us. If we're honest about ourselves & about the world around us, we admit that no human effort can fix the mess we're in. No imaginary superhero or alien invasion or evolutionary dream can achieve goals high enough to bring us to God. Only God can fix our sin problem. & the good news is that He has a way to fix it all by His grace. Since the main problem of every human being is that we lack righteousness, then God meets that need with His own solution. God's solution is to provide righteousness to those who abandon their self-reliance & trust only in Jesus. In contrast to our problem of having no righteousness, God has displayed perfect righteousness in Jesus & He offers it to everyone who will receive it by faith.

**4. God Provides Christ's Righteousness by Faith** Paul, in 3:21-31, returns to his main point of 1:16-17 & explains what it means that the gospel is the power of God to save believers because it reveals the righteousness of God by faith. God sent His Son into the world to be born as a man, to live & die & rise again to be our justification & the power of our sanctification. If anyone

anywhere in the world is going to get right with God, it will be through Jesus Christ alone. The righteousness that God provides for those who believe is the righteousness of Jesus as shown in His sinless, perfectly righteous life on earth. & since Jesus is God, His life displayed & achieved God's righteousness & that gives what is needed. Jesus lived & modeled complete sinlessness & righteousness so that He can give it to all who trust Him. Those who admit that they don't have the righteousness required can turn by faith in Jesus & receive His righteousness instead. That's the glorious good news of God's righteousness in the gospel. God provides righteousness to those who abandon all self-trust & self-reliance & entrust themselves to Jesus Christ. Jesus lived perfect righteousness & God will credit that to everyone who will receive it by faith. Faith is believing in & relying on who Jesus is & what He has done. We see this promise in **3:21-22**.

The righteousness that God provides for believers is the righteousness of Jesus Christ as shown in His perfect life. Since Jesus is God, He displayed & achieved God's righteousness & He can provide all that is needed. Those who admit that they don't have the righteousness required to get to God can turn to faith in Christ instead & receive His righteousness. That's the good news of God's righteousness in the gospel. & more than that, God also provided payment of sin's punishment in Jesus for those who believe. That's why Jesus' death on the cross matters. Jesus' death is the only sufficient sacrifice that satisfies God's justice against sin & it's the only payment that can remove others' guilt. We see that in **3:24-26**.

Jesus' death was the propitiation of God's wrath, which means it satisfied the demands of God's wrath & just punishment. God showed He was righteous in forgiving the sins of many believers in the past because Jesus' death paid for their sins. & God is still just today when He forgives sinners who trust Christ because Jesus' death paid all that was owed. God provides all that freely to those who trust Jesus. So God provides righteousness by faith. That's the priceless good news from our saving & forgiving God. Justification by faith in Jesus is the mighty & merciful global message we have for all the nations & all the people groups & all the people we'll ever meet. There is one Savior, one cross, one resurrection, & one way to be right with the one God: having His righteousness imputed to us by faith in Christ, not by works. God is marvelously gracious to



give all that is needed to save souls. But He only forgives the sins of those who trust what His Son has done & no longer trust what they've done or can do. He only gives His righteousness to those who give up on earning their own righteousness & bank everything on Jesus. That's the good news of God's righteousness that is the theme of this great letter to the Rom. & it's all freely given by God's grace alone, not earned by any works we could ever do to win His favor. So all the boasting belongs to God, not to us who receive it. Chpt 3 ends by pointing that out. **3:27-**

### **31**

We can't boast because this salvation from God is all of His grace, not by any of our works to earn it. As Sinclair Ferguson puts it, *Everything lacking in us is given to us by Christ, everything sinful in us is imputed to Christ, and all condemnation merited by us is borne by Christ.*<sup>1</sup>

So, what does all this mean? It means that no one is too bad for God to save & use. Salvation is an act of God's grace that initiates change within a person's heart to draw them to Himself & He is powerful enough & good enough to work His grace in anyone. No one is too bad for God to save. Nothing you are or have done is so bad that God cannot forgive & save you. The gospel is all about grace, which is God giving us the opposite of what we deserve. God can give grace because He took the punishment that we deserve in Jesus' death on the cross. That way, God's justice is satisfied by paying the penalty for sinners like us. That's grace, favor from God that we don't deserve, forgiveness from God based only on what Jesus did for us. We also know that no one is too bad for God to save because in God's sight none of us are good. None of us measure up to God's standard. Which brings us to the fact that no one is too good for God to save. No one is so good that they don't need God to save them. No one is good enough to get to God on their own. Since we're all sinners, we need God to grant us His gracious gift of righteousness because we don't have any of our own. Growing up in godly families & attending church doesn't mean God accepts that as righteousness. God won't accept you based on how good you are or your parents are or your kids are. The only righteousness good enough to get anyone into heaven is the perfect righteousness Jesus lived & that He offers us to receive by faith. No one's life, not

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<sup>1</sup> From his book, *Some Pastors & Teachers*

even Paul, could measure up. No one is too good for God to save because no one is good enough to be right with God on their own. We all need God to save us by His grace. We all need God to provide us with His righteousness. The gospel that Paul received & preached & writes about in Romans is that the righteousness we need can only be found through faith in Jesus. **He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him** (2 Cor 5:21). That's good news both to people who think they're really bad & to people who think they're really good. You probably think you're somewhere in between. But wherever you are, know this: You aren't so good that you don't need a Savior. If you think your good deeds will outweigh your bad & that God will think you're OK, you're terribly & tragically wrong. But if you confess that you are bad, that you've sinned against God & need His forgiveness & His grace, then He welcomes you to trust Jesus' life, death, & resurrection as what you need. The good news is that no matter how much you've sinned & how bad you've been & still are, God will welcome you if you trust in Jesus alone. So turn from your sin & place your faith in Jesus today. If you've never had a right relationship with God, if you don't know His grace through Christ, then please start here & let us help you. & if you do have a right relationship with God through Christ, then let me urge you to thank Him continuously for His grace.

The gospel truths that are central through the entire Bible are these themes of man's sin & God's promises of grace in Jesus Christ. We live out of those same truths every day & so we can be continually ready to share them with others. Remember, the problem is that 1) immoral people lack righteousness & 2) moral people lack righteousness & so 3) all people lack righteousness. But praise God that in His grace, 4) He provides righteousness by faith. That righteousness is what robes believers with all we need for acceptance with God now & forever. Those truths rescue & redeem us & renew & ready us forever. They beautifully shape us & motivate us through whatever we face. If those truths have changed your life, never let them grow dull or dim or out of date. Meditate upon them & rejoice in them & remember Jesus as He is so worthy of honor this morning & forevermore. PRAY

Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel & the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery which has been kept secret for long ages past, but now is manifested, & by the Scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the eternal God, has been made known to all the nations, leading to obedience of faith; to the only wise God, through Jesus Christ, be the glory forever. Amen (16:25-27).