

## Romans 1, Condemnation or the Universal need of righteousness part 1

### Read: Romans 1: 18-20

Romans was written about A.D. 56-58, when Paul was in the Greek city of Corinth on his third missionary journey. As you read this letter, you can catch glimpses of conditions in Corinth. Outside Rome, it was one of the most wicked cities in the Roman Empire.

Romans was written only about thirty years after the crucifixion and resurrection of the Lord Jesus. The memory of these events was still sharply etched in the minds of Christians all over the empire. The letter was sent to teach and instruct them, to remind them of these events that so startled and amazed men in the first century.

At the heart of Paul's letter is the central figure, **Jesus Christ our Lord**. The Lordship of Christ is the theme of Romans, as is the theme of all Paul's writings. Our union with Christ as Lord is the central truth God wants us to see, as Paul himself wrote in the letter to the Colossians: **1 Col. 1:27**, *God [in His eternal plan] chose to make known to them how great for the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, **which is Christ in and among you**, the hope and guarantee of [realizing the] glory.*

### The Promised One

The gospel was predicted long before Jesus came; God foretold it all in the Old Testament. On the road to Emmaeus, Jesus told two of His followers all things concerning Himself, beginning with Moses and all the prophets. He clearly saw himself in the OT.

To read the OT, we could also be gripped by a sense of expectation that someone is coming! That is why, the OT is very important for us to gain a deeper understanding of the NT.

Then the NT tells us that angels appeared to shepherds near Bethlehem and sang a great song of hope to them. **Luke 2:10-11**, *"Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. <sup>11</sup> Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord.*

The Promised One appeared at last on the scene.

### The Deity of Jesus

There were three things that marked the deity of Jesus:

1. Power. This refers to the miracles. These were a sign that he was a man of God, a man fully indwelt and possessed by God.

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2. The Spirit of holiness. When Jesus came, he was a whole person, a complete person. He demonstrated what humanity as it was intended to be. The good news is that we too could be whole and complete in God's eyes.
3. He resurrected from the dead and on this our faith rests.

### Called out

The saints in Rome were called by God, V6&7.

*And **you** also are among those Gentiles **who are called to belong to Jesus Christ.***

*<sup>7</sup> To **all in Rome who are loved by God and called to be his holy people:***

*Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ.*

This is true for every Christian. God sought us! We really did not seek Him, we thought we did, but He sought us. This why Jesus said to His disciples, *“All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never drive away”, John 6:37.* And thus we came – called by God, sought by God.

Paul may have to speak sharply to the saints, but he will 6 & 7 always start by reminding them that they are loved by God.

### The Gospel

In V 16 & 17, Paul is not ashamed of the gospel. *For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is **the power of God** that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile.<sup>17</sup> For in the gospel the righteousness of God is revealed—a righteousness that is by faith from first to last,<sup>[a]</sup> just as it is written: **“The righteous will live by faith.”<sup>[b]</sup>***

### The gospel is the power of God

Especially to the Romans is Paul unashamed of the gospel, for the gospel is the power of God.

During that time, the Romans were a very powerful nation. They could conquer countries as much as they liked and the countries were too weak to defend their territories. Especially the Mediterranean basin. They could just do anything. They invented war machines. Perhaps you could say they were the “Americans” of that time.

They were good in art as well as laws and the Romans were also very religious in their idolatry. They built impressive temples, buildings, arenas, roads, harbors, fortresses, aqua ducts ... You name it.

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They were also a fearful people. Why do you think there are no more forests in the UK, Spain and Palestine? Their generals ordered their forests to be cut to deny their enemies shelter.

However, the Romans were also powerless when it comes to eliminating slavery – half of the empire’s population were slaves. They could not eliminate violence and corruption – the Roman world was full of it. They were powerless to change the stubborn, hostile, hateful hearts of men and women. Hmmm, sounds familiar, isn’t it? I believe we are still in the same situation right now.

Paul knew that the gospel could do it all, that is why he was not ashamed of the gospel. First, it was the power of God.

Second, in it a righteousness from God is revealed. We can’t earn it and we certainly don’t deserve it. God accepts us because of what His son Jesus Christ has done.

Thirdly, this righteousness is received by faith. By faith His righteousness is freely available to all who believe.

### Human dilemma

From Romans 1:18-23, Paul tells us why we need the gospel.

**18-20, *The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of people, who suppress the truth by their wickedness,*** <sup>19</sup> *since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them.* <sup>20</sup> *For since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse.*

People think that the wrath of God is still to come, during the tribulation period or something that follows death – the judgment of God. It is true that hell and all that may follow are expressions of God’s wrath. Others may think that sudden calamities coming upon sinners are expressions of His wrath, these are true. But this is not what is meant here.

God’s wrath is something that is present now, it “is being revealed from heaven”. It means that it is everywhere present. It comes from invisible forces at work in our lives. It is inescapable. Everyone is confronted with and suffers from the

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wrath of God, without exception. His wrath is everywhere present, and it shows itself in the invisible resistance of God to the evil of men.

Moses expressed it very well in Psalm 90:9-10, *All our days pass away under your wrath; we finish our years with a moan.<sup>10</sup> Our days may come to seventy years or eighty, if our strength endures; yet the best of them are but trouble and sorrow, for they quickly pass, and we fly away.*

Do we still wonder? I have been in the Lord for many years, but I am struggling in life. Perhaps my health is failing me, perhaps things are not going well in my job or maybe my situation at home with my wife or husband is not so happy or my children are sick or I am just lonely or...? Sorrow and grief seem to be more prevailing in my life.

There are times that I can experience His joy and there are times that I am so far from it. Why is this?

This is because of the wrath of God. God is resisting human godlessness and evil.

### Trigger

God's wrath is triggered by all godlessness and people "who **suppress the truth by their wickedness**".

Godlessness is acting as though God doesn't exist. It is disregarding God, not considering Him, not expecting Him to be active. This attitude is widespread today.

### Examples

Suppressing truth seems to start so innocently. Amsterdam has decided to make their addresses genderless just like the NS. This seems to be a service to the people, but in fact it is denying that God has created man and woman! Many people like this and some even say this is good marketing practice. Actually, it is just godlessness.

No more prayers in school, children can't be taught to pray in school. However, when children are going to a musk for excursion they have to join the prayers there.

### Truth suppressed

What truth is suppressed? **V19-20, since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them.**<sup>20</sup> *For since the creation of the*

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*world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse.*

The truth that men are continuously suppressing is in fact God's greatness, that He is the God of eternal power and majesty.

Job 9: 4-10 expresses it so well what God's greatness is.

*His wisdom is profound, his power is vast.*

*Who has resisted him and come out unscathed?*

<sup>5</sup> *He moves mountains without their knowing it  
and overturns them in his anger.*

<sup>6</sup> *He shakes the earth from its place  
and makes its pillars tremble.*

<sup>7</sup> *He speaks to the sun and it does not shine;  
he seals off the light of the stars.*

<sup>8</sup> *He alone stretches out the heavens  
and treads on the waves of the sea.*

<sup>9</sup> *He is the Maker of the Bear<sup>[a]</sup> and Orion,  
the Pleiades and the constellations of the south.*

<sup>10</sup> *He performs wonders that cannot be fathomed,  
miracles that cannot be counted.*

**God is great!**