

## ROMANS : THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO PAUL

ALL HAVE  
SINNED AND  
FALL SHORT OF  
GOD'S GLORY  
ROMANS 3:23

## THE ONE THING WE ALL NEED

### INTRODUCTORY NOTES

The letter is addressed to the Christian fellowship in Rome. Paul wrote the letter during his third missionary journey while he was at Corinth in about 55AD. Paul did not establish the church in Rome.

The church was comprised mostly of gentile Christians, but indications are that there were a significant number of Jewish Christians in the congregation. The church was possibly established through the preaching of Jewish Christians; and that the members were gentiles first converted to Judaism and then to Christianity. This would explain Paul addressing Jewish people in the letter; his many quotations from the Old Testament; and his speaking to the issue of the Jewish race.

The letter is characterised by detailed theological content. The reason for its writing is not to address any particular pastoral or moral issue in the church – after all Paul is not the founder or pastor of this congregation. In Romans 15:15ff, Paul describes his ministry to the gentiles and his plan to visit Spain. Thus he writes to introduce himself and his thinking to the congregation with a view to them catching the vision of God's all embracing grace and helping him with the extension of his ministry. (Guthrie, D et al. The New Bible Dictionary. IVP. 1977. Pp 1012, 1013.)

### WEEK 1: SWIMMING IN THE TOILET

**ICE Breaker:** Who in your life would you say really believed in you, no matter what?

**Prayer:** Be silent for a moment. Be aware of God's presence. Repeat several times in your mind the sentence "God believes in me... God believes in me." Then listen to the song "Your beloved" by Brent Helming. Then say together this prayer: Loving God you made me, you know me, you believe in me, you love me. You always want more for me. Help me to open my life more deeply to your saving power and work. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

**The Word:** Romans 1:16-18; 3:21 – 25.

In this passage, which is really a sample of the broader chapters, Paul puts forward the main themes of his understanding of salvation. This introduction is sensitive to the situation of the time – on the one hand the licentiousness and immorality of pagan life and on the other, the central controversy of the church at that time – namely the place of the Jewish law in Christian faith and whether pagans converting from their lifestyle were obligated to live in compliance with that law.

1. Looking at the passage, what key words or phrases state the various aspects of Paul's message?
2. Why is the real life situation of people (the context) important if we are to communicate Christ effectively?
3. Thinking about your family and friends, what key needs do you think need to be addressed in bringing Christ to them?

There are three key words that Paul uses in his view of salvation. The first is **righteousness**. In the bible translations, the Good News Bible, The Message and the New Living Translation, this term is translated as **being put right with God**. But this should not be understood in terms of a new status – it's a relationship in which we are being changed so that we live lives that reflect God. Being made right is God's gift to us through Jesus Christ. A second important word is **faith**. Paul says faith is how we receive the gift of being made right. Faith is specifically in the person Jesus through whom God makes us right. He mentions that faith involves believing and, I think, hints that faith is about trusting. Large sections of Romans unpack the specifics of faith. A last important word is **everyone (all)**. Paul's vision of salvation is inclusive and universal. It is offered to everyone; and is needed by everyone. NO EXCEPTIONS!

1. What do you find thrilling about Paul's view of salvation?
2. What do you find challenging about Paul's view of salvation?
3. Do you think that salvation necessarily involves a dramatic, definite, "remember the date" experience?

### Living out the Word

- Take time in the week to write a brief account of your personal journey of faith.
- In this prayer by Charles De Foucault, the author assigns the words to Jesus in Gethsemane. They are a profound expression of saving faith:

Father,  
I abandon myself into your hands;  
do with me what you will.  
Whatever you may do, I thank you:  
I am ready for all, I accept all.

Let only your will be done in me  
and in all your creatures—  
I wish no more than this, O Lord.

Into your hands I commend my soul:  
I offer it to you with all the love of my heart,  
for I love you, Lord, and so need to give myself,  
to surrender myself into your hands without reserve,  
and with boundless confidence,  
for you are my Father.

### Going Deeper

In Romans 1:18 Paul speaks of the anger of God. In 3:24 and 25 he speaks of God's grace and his offering Jesus for our salvation. The one is an image of an infuriated deity; the other an image of a loving God giving everything of himself to save us.

1. How do you understand the wrath or anger of God?
2. How do you hold his anger and grace together in his saving work? Or are these actually two mutually exclusive terms?