

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

WEEK 1

THE ONE THING WE ALL NEED



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WEEK 1 – The One Thing We All Need

Romans 1: 16-18 and 3: 20-25

I'm not ashamed of the gospel: it is God's own power for salvation to all who have faith in God, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. God's righteousness is being revealed in the gospel, from faithfulness for faith, as it is written, the righteous person will live by faith.

²⁰*God's wrath is being revealed from heaven against all the ungodly behaviour and the injustice of human beings who silence the truth with injustice...But now God's righteousness has been revealed apart from the Law, which is confirmed by the Law and the Prophets. God's righteousness comes through the faithfulness of Jesus Christ for all who have faith in him. There's no distinction. **All have sinned and fall short of God's glory**, but all are treated as righteous freely by his grace because of a ransom that was paid by Christ Jesus. Through his faithfulness, God displayed Jesus as the place of sacrifice where mercy is found by means of his blood.*

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Kansas City, for the use of their material.**

MONDAY – Paul “met” a church who didn’t know him



Romans 3: 25 *Through his faithfulness, God displayed Jesus as the place of sacrifice where mercy is found by means of His blood.*

In Paul’s day, Rome (capital of the Roman Empire) had an estimated population of one million residents; of these, many were slaves and many others were noncitizen immigrants from the provinces, including an estimated 40,000 to 50,000 Jewish residents.” * A Christian presence in Rome mattered a lot.

The apostle Paul wrote Romans to introduce himself to Christians in Rome, a city he had never visited. Travel in the Roman Empire was common, so Paul knew quite a few Christians in Rome. (We’ll see this in chapter 16 at the letter’s end). From the very start, he aimed to focus especially on the good news about “Jesus Christ our Lord.”

It was bold to write to Rome about “the gospel.” “Rome...home of the most powerful man in the world,

Caesar, whose official titles included ‘son of god,’ whose birthday was hailed as ‘good news’, and who claimed the...loyalty, of the greatest empire the world had ever seen! Paul knowsJesus is the true king, the world’s rightful Lord, and it is vital that the Christians in Rome itself know this and live by it.” **

Reflection:

Who/what rivals Jesus as “rightful Lord of the world” today?

Paul matter-of-factly said the fact that Jesus was God in the flesh was the reality transforming early believers’ lives.

Reflection:

In what ways has knowing and serving Jesus changed your life for the better?



Prayer: Lord Jesus, Rome was a big deal—but Paul trusted that however things looked to human eyes, You were a bigger deal. Help me keep learning to trust You above all the seemingly bigger deals in my world. AMEN

* *NIV, Cultural Backgrounds Study Bible*, eBook (Kindle Locations 253863-253865). Zondervan. Kindle Edition. ** Wright, N.T., *Paul for Everyone, Romans Part One: Chapters 1-8* (p. 3). Westminster John Knox Press. Kindle Edition.

TUESDAY – Big trouble for the pagan Greco/Roman world



Romans 1: 15-31

Romans 1: 16 *I'm not ashamed of the gospel: it is God's own power for salvation to all who have faith in God, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.*

The Greco-Roman actions Paul mentioned in Romans 1: 26-27 were NOT what we discuss today. "...Until late marriages, men often had intercourse with slaves, prostitutes and other males.... few people in antiquity considered the possibility of same-sex marriage, except occasionally in ridicule." *

In Romans 1: 29 Paul listed "gossip" as just as bad as any sensual practices he cited. "In these verses Paul...sets up any Jewish critics to recognize their own need for forgiveness. Jewish people viewed idolatry (verses 18–23) and sexual sin (verses 24–27), as reprehensible and almost uniquely characteristic of Gentiles." **

Why would Paul feel he needed to say he was "not ashamed" of the gospel? "The pagan Romans ...didn't care for the Jews. They sneered at them and distrusted

them. From the Roman point of view, Christianity was bound to be seen as doubly strange and unwelcome: a kind of Jewish religion that made other Jews angry!" ***

What factors today can make you feel ashamed of the gospel, eager to hide your faith from those who don't share it?

In Paul's day, most people divided the world into two groups: Jews (God's people) and Greeks (all others). But his central thesis was that the gospel was for "all who have faith in God," not for any one favoured group.

Reflection:

Who have you tended to see as exceptionally favoured by God? What inner comfort levels do you need to stretch to trust and act on Paul's gospel message?



Prayer: Creator God, You came to save every member of Your human family who is willing to trust You. Give me a heart willing to include everyone You yearn to redeem. AMEN

* NIV, *Cultural Backgrounds Study Bible*, eBook (Kindle Locations 255378-255388). Zondervan. Kindle Edition. ** NIV, *Cultural Backgrounds Study Bible*, eBook (Kindle Locations 255354-255357). Zondervan. Kindle Edition. *** Wright, N.T., *Paul for Everyone, Romans Part One: Chapters 1-8* (p. 8). Westminster John Knox Press. Kindle Edition.

WEDNESDAY – Hope for those “outside the law”



Romans 2: 1-16

Romans 2: 1 & 2 *You, therefore, have no excuse, you who pass judgement on someone else, for at whatever point you judge another, you are condemning yourself, because you who pass judgement do the same things. Now we know that God’s judgement against those who do such things is based on truth.*

Many Hebrew Christians likely nodded in agreement with the last part of Romans 1: “Amen—that awful pagan world needs a saviour.” But Paul wasn’t trying to make “religious” people feel superior. Chapter 2 shifted the focus, with “a stinging critique of hypocrites who judge others while taking God’s favour and grace toward themselves for granted.” *

After years working mainly with Gentiles, Paul wrote about people outside the “right” faith who “instinctively do what the Law requires,” who “show the proof of the Law written on their hearts” (verses 14 & 15).

He had seen that there were honest people outside the

Judeo-Christian faith who love and respond to God.

Paul spoke of judgment. “Some Christians have imagined that Paul’s doctrine of ‘justification by faith’...means the abolition of a final judgment according to works, but Paul never says that....God will judge all human secrets through the Messiah, Jesus. That is good news for a world in which true justice is still hard to find.” **

Reflection:

Are you able, without giving up your faith in Jesus, to believe that God is also at work in those ALL peoples’ lives?

Do you resent or welcome the truth that God wants the good news to change your life for the better?



Prayer: Lord Jesus, when someone has wronged me, I want justice. When I’ve wronged someone (or You), I want mercy. It’s hard for me to understand how You can offer both, but I’m thankful You do. AMEN

* Michael J. Gorman, study note on Romans 2:1-5 in *The CEB Study Bible*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2013, p. 279 NT. ** Wright, N.T., *Paul for Everyone, Romans Part One: Chapters 1-8* (p. 31, 35). Westminster John Knox Press. Kindle Edition.

THURSDAY – Big trouble for those trusting in law-keeping



Romans 2: 17-29

Romans 2: 21-23...you, then, who teach others, do you not teach yourself? You who preach against stealing, do you steal? You who say that people should not commit adultery, do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols, do you rob temples? You who boast in the law, do you dishonour God by breaking the law?

Paul introduced the idea that **spiritual** descent from Abraham matters more than **physical** descent. “urged them to circumcise their hearts (Deuteronomy 10:16), and...promised that God would someday circumcise their hearts (Deuteronomy 30:6). For Paul, experiencing the new heart promised in the new covenant, by the Spirit (Jeremiah 31:33), counted more than the mere external sign of the older covenant.”*

Why would Paul ask, “If you preach, ‘No stealing,’ do you steal?” Stealing was not just picking a pocket or taking jewels. Jesus named one example (Mark 12:38-40). “Widows often had debt and normally lacked influential advocates; people of status could thus seize their property more readily, often through legal means.

Scripture demanded special consideration for the defenceless.**

Reflection:

When have you seen (or even done) things that are “legal” but not right?

Paul valued his Jewish heritage. Yet he wrote in his letter to the Galatians (4 to 6 years before Romans) that “There is neither Jew nor Greek...if you belong to Christ, then indeed you are Abraham’s descendants, heirs according to the promise” (Galatians 3:28-29). This letter relied on that idea.

Reflection:

Whatever your ethnic and religious heritage, are you grateful to be one of “Abraham’s descendants, heirs according to the promise”?



Prayer: King Jesus, Paul’s challenge speaks to me. If I call myself a Christian, if I brag about my relationship with You, help me not to ignore what that claim means in my day-to-day living. AMEN

* *NIV, Cultural Backgrounds Study Bible*, eBook (Kindle Locations 255490-255495). Zondervan. Kindle Edition. ** *NIV, Cultural Backgrounds Study Bible*, eBook (Kindle Locations 227045-227050). Zondervan. Kindle Edition (emphasis supplied).

FRIDAY – “Jews and Greeks are all under the power of sin”



Romans 3: 1-20

Romans 3: 20 *Therefore no one will be declared righteous in God's sight by the works of the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of our sin.*

Paul used his familiarity with the Hebrew Scriptures to show the Romans that it was not a new idea that **all** people, Jewish or Gentile, needed a saviour. The prophetic, poetic faith he'd always believed about the Messiah led to that conclusion.

Paul used six Scriptures (Psalm 51:4, Psalm 14:1-3, Psalm 5:9, Psalm 10:7, Isaiah 59:7-8, and Psalm 36:1) to show that no one, from the most immoral Gentile to the most careful Pharisee, kept God's law fully.

Reflection:

Is that bad news? Or can it draw us into a community of people who all share the need to live by

trusting in God's gracious faithfulness to forgive?

Paul's summary of this section stung for who hoped pious deeds would set them right with God. "Anyone who imagines that they can stand before God and appeal to 'works of the law' as a reason for final justification, that is, for a favourable verdict at the last judgment, is barking up the wrong tree."* The darker the night, the more clearly we see the stars' beauty.

Reflection:

How does Paul's view of the darkness we face without God help you to see God's grace shining its light more clearly?



Prayer: Lord God, my ego would like You to "owe" me salvation because of my own goodness. But down deep, I know that's backward. I offer You my gratitude and praise for the gift of salvation based on Jesus' goodness and grace, not mine. AMEN



MEMORY VERSE: Romans 3: 23 ...for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

* Wright, N.T., *Paul for Everyone, Romans Part One: Chapters 1-8* (pp. 50-51). Westminster John Knox Press. Kindle Edition.