

## FOREWORD

*'For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek.'* (Romans 1:16)

*It is of special delight to all of us who are involved in the training of pastors and preachers to congratulate you on your completion of our three Preachers' Help courses - Basic Bible Teaching, the Vital Importance of Gospel Preaching, and Spiritual Principles of Christian Leadership.*

Of all the New Testament books, none is of greater importance than Paul's letter to the Romans. Even as a new believer, I naturally gravitated to this letter, and learnt by heart a number of passages from it. Who can ever forget such verses as 1:16-17; 3:21-26; 5:1-5; 6:22-23; 8:1-4; 8:28-30; 10:9-11; 12:1-2; 12:9-21; 16:25-29? They form a sure foundation for the gospel so loved and preached by the apostle. I recommend that you also learn these passages by heart, not only to edify your own Christian life but to use them whenever you are suddenly called upon to preach.

You will find that the methods of study that have been gradually introduced to you in the second and third courses will now come to full flower in your study of the first eight chapters of Romans. Each study begins with an expository sermon, preached during my pastoral ministry. Read these sermons carefully, for the three following areas of study are based on this sermon. **Part A** goes through every verse of Scripture quoted in the sermon, and asks questions of it. This is to enable you to find out exactly what the Bible verse is saying, and not what you think it is saying. The questions in **Part B** are designed to examine the doctrines in the particular passage in Romans being expounded. **Part C** is the all-important practical application, and is even more essential than the previous two parts. Anyone who cannot fulfil the directions of Part C is not worthy of preaching the gospel.

May God bless you in these studies in Romans 1-8! Even more importantly, may God bless your congregations as they listen to your expositions, thus fulfilling the demands of the Practical sections!

Yours in the loving bonds of the preaching ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ,

Geoffrey Stonier.

# STUDY 1

## AN INTRODUCTION TO

### PAUL'S LETTER TO THE ROMANS

[The English translation of the Bible used in these Studies is that of the Revised Authorised Version (RAV) of 1982, also called the New King James Version (NKJV)]

## EXPOSITION

When I was a young Christian, it was a great joy to discover the Scripture Union daily Bible reading notes, where Dr. Graham Scroggie was commenting helpfully on Paul's Letter to the Romans. He wrote on another occasion that **to know and believe the teaching of this book is to be grounded and settled in the Faith. This book is, by common consent, a masterpiece of argument; and for insight and power, it has no rival.** Martin Luther (1483-1546), the German Reformer of the faith, said of this letter: **Romans is the chief book of the New Testament, and the purest gospel. It can never be read too much or studied; and the more it is handled, the more precious it becomes.** We should expect a comment like this from Dr. Martin Luther, for when he became as an Augustinian monk, he began to read the Scriptures in the privacy of the library. The verses that changed his life – and subsequently the history of the world – are to be found in Paul's Letter to the Romans. Dr. Scroggie calls Romans **a philosophy of salvation.** The letter is thus a great resource for gospel preachers. Paul always set Christ at the centre of the gospel. To remove him from this central position would be to destroy the very essence of the gospel. In contrast with many human solutions, the Lord Jesus Christ is the only hope of salvation. This is the message of Romans.

### The title

First, comes the ancient title – **The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Romans.** Verse 1 continues – **Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated to the gospel of God.** This title explains 3 things to the reader:

#### (1) Who the author is

The letter comes from the hand of Paul the Apostle, and it bears all the marks of a highly trained mind. We are left with the impression that the author is speaking out of the depths of his own experience. Christ revealed himself directly to Paul on the Damascus Road. There, the hating and intolerant Jewish extremist was converted and changed. When he met Christ, he confessed him as his Lord (Acts 9:5). To indicate that there would be a change of direction in Paul's life, Jesus commissioned him as the apostle to the Gentiles (Acts 26:16-18). From this early time, Paul became aware that he would be involved in a fierce spiritual conflict **against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.** (Ephesians 6:12) However, he also declared that **in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.** (Romans 8:37)

In Romans, Paul is not giving his opinions, but is passing on a message from God about his saving purposes. Paul was **called** to be an apostle and a preacher of the gospel. He did not

learn the truths of the gospel from the teachers of the Church, but by a direct revelation from Jesus Christ (Galatians 1:15-17). He was given an apostolic authority at least equal to that of the other apostles (2 Corinthians 11:5). Paul also dealt with a precious truth that is very neglected today – that is, God's choice of those whom he saves and adopts as his children. (Romans 8:15-16) God's choice does not narrow down the scope of salvation, but rather widens it. Long ago, God chose ancient Israel, from whom he saved a remnant (Romans 9:27). Now, salvation is preached to the whole wide world.

Paul, a Christian of the New Covenant, is careful to exclude any observance of the law from the plan of salvation, and any attempt to please God by works. God saves those whom he will (Romans 9:15-16). Yet at the same time he declares that whoever calls upon him will be saved (Romans 10:9-13). God has made it possible for those who have broken his law to be made right with him. Sinners need no longer be terrified of God's condemnation and judgement, for if they believe, they will be accepted through the righteousness of his Son (Romans 3:21-22), and be reconciled through his atoning sacrifice on the Cross (Romans 3:24-25; 5:9-10). All they need to do is believe in Christ (Acts 16:30-31) and they will be made right with God (Romans 4:25; 5:1-2).

Here, then, is a great gospel message of universal appeal, which makes us debtors to the world (Romans 1:13-14), particularly those to whom we must preach clearly and often. A sinner can do nothing to commend himself to God; but, in contrast, **God demonstrates his own love towards us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.** (Romans 5:8) Religious observances, sacrifices, good works — none of these things can make a sinner right with God. The gospel command is plain enough — 'in simple faith, receive Jesus Christ as your Saviour and Lord.' The actual act of salvation is God's work; and this needs to be fully understood by every gospel preacher. In Romans, Paul sets out what he calls **my gospel** (2:16; 16:25). What is this gospel that gripped his heart and changed his life? He explains it carefully in the first 8 chapters of Romans. The commentator Robert Haldane (1764-1842) wrote this about understanding Romans: **In the New Testament, the epistle to the Romans is entitled to peculiar regard. It is the only part of Scripture, which contains a detailed and systematic exhibition of the doctrines of Christianity.** This comment alone ought to make every gospel preacher eager to study the book! He continued, **Human wisdom cannot receive the doctrine in the Letter to the Romans.** However, the Holy Spirit helps preachers to understand the gospel, and sets them on fire with its message.

The former Saul of Tarsus was a Jew and a Pharisee. By the grace of God, he became the greatest gospel preacher of his generation. Through this man who was inspired by the Holy Spirit, there was issued his Letter to the Romans – **the noblest and deepest of all Paul's pronouncements**, according to Robert Haldane.

## (2) The book is in the form of a letter

Consider the nature of Romans – it is a letter. There are many letters in the New Testament; but, outstanding among them is Romans. When we want to understand more of the gospel, it is to Romans that we usually go for help. The Greek word for 'letter' is **EPISTOLE**, **ἐπιστολή**, (pronounced EP-IS-TOE-LAY), from which comes the English word EPISTLE. This letter does not set out the gospel in the form of a difficult theological book that only college professors can understand! It is lively, vivid, and full of imaginative metaphors, which open our minds to the gospel. It is so full of Paul's own experience that it is important to contrast the man that he once was with the gospel preacher he was called to be. In Romans, Paul sets out in order a statement of faith concerning the gospel. He writes to assure the believers at Rome that he is a faithful preacher of the gospel. Their Church was long established, and was fully independent of Paul's missionary work. Yet Paul knew of them.

He writes – **First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world.** (Romans 1:8). The faith of the Christians in Rome equalled his own. When at last he was able to visit them, what a wonderful time of fellowship would take place! (Romans 1:11-13) Paul assumed that they were experienced enough, and wise enough, to receive the great truths of the gospel. As he hoped to visit them soon, this letter is an introduction to his ministry, and indicates his authority as an apostle. Once he travelled the Damascus Road with letters from the High Priest, giving him authority to arrest the Christians in that city (Acts 9:1-2). Now he longs to travel to Rome and benefit the Christians there with his gospel ministry.

### **(3) Why Paul wrote to Rome**

What was special about Rome? Some of the members of the Roman congregation were Jewish by background (Romans 2:1-3; 2:17; 3:1-2), while others were Gentiles (Romans 2:14-16). However, whether they were Jewish, possessing a knowledge of the Holy Scriptures, Gentiles from a pagan background, it made no difference. They all needed to grow in their knowledge of the gospel, and rejoice in its truths. Intellectual or unlearned, noble or lowborn, master or slave, rich or poor – they would all benefit from Paul's teaching. Even more important, Paul wanted them to be gripped by the truths of the gospel, and be transformed by them (Romans 12:1-2).

#### **A brief look at the contents of Romans (chapters 1-8)**

A Puritan preacher, Matthew Henry (1662-1714), possibly the greatest Bible commentator of all time, certainly a preaching commentary to preachers, states that if believers are to render true Christian service, they **must first know Christian doctrine.** Unfortunately, some Christians, when they hear the word 'doctrine', react like this — 'I am not an intellectual, I do not need to understand doctrine; simple faith in Jesus Christ is good enough for me!' Actually, the more believers understand Christian doctrine, the more their spiritual lives improve. Christian experience that is not led and guided by the truths of the gospel turns out in the end to be disappointing and shallow. Doctrine does not limit Christian experience; it enlarges it. That is what Paul's letter to the Romans does.

Romans 1-8 is a detailed and logical presentation of the truths of the gospel. It is a sourcebook for all gospel preachers. We may also turn to this letter to find the cure for the ills of the Christian Church in bad times. We gospel preachers are called upon to deal with these bad things by preaching the gospel.

Dr. James Packer sounded the alarm many years ago:

**There is no doubt that the evangelicalism of today is in a state of confusion and disturbance. In such matters as the practice of evangelism, the teaching of holiness, the building up of local church life, the pastor's dealings with the soul, and the exercise of discipline, there is evidence of widespread dissatisfaction with things as they are ... We find that if we go to the root of the matter, we shall find that this confusion is all due in the end to our having lost our grip on the biblical gospel. Without realising it, we have during the last century bartered that gospel for a substitute product, which though it looks similar enough in point of detail is a decidedly different thing. Hence our troubles, for the substitute product does not answer the ends for which the authentic gospel has in past days proved itself so mighty.**

Paul's gospel, as outlined in Romans, glorifies God in pointing to his provision of salvation in the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul also displays a deep respect for the holiness and perfection

of God. He is deeply thankful for the salvation of sinners, for their holiness of life, and for their security in a God who chooses and adopts his own children.

### (1) The gospel and condemnation

What has God done for sinful mankind? What great saving acts has he performed? First of all, says Paul in chapters 1-3, we begin with the bad news. The whole human race, which has broken God's law, has fallen under God's condemnation – **for all have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God.** (Romans 3:23) None is righteous in God's sight.

Consider Adam, who represented us all at the beginning. He fell away from God into sin. We, his descendants, have no spiritual power to repent and believe the gospel unless God intervenes by his grace. Our hearts have become hardened by unbelief. The faithlessness of the human race today is a striking proof of the extent of Adam's sin. Men and women cannot believe until God himself turns them to Jesus Christ. This is the gospel of **God's** salvation.

### (2) The gospel and justification

The second section, chapters 3-5, is about the doctrine of justification. When Martin Luther came upon Romans 3:28 – **Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law** – after a lifetime seeking to please God, and with many agonies of soul over his sin, he discovered the truth of the gospel at last – that God required nothing more from him than to believe in Christ. This truth can easily be traced back to the Old Testament, and, in particular, to Habakkuk 2:4. It took Luther a long time to make this discovery, which we gospel preachers take for granted: that in simple faith in Christ and his atoning sacrifice on the Cross, a sinner is made right with God. However, it is not our faith that saves us, for then faith could be considered a work of merit by which we could commend ourselves to God. It is God who grants saving faith (Ephesians 2:8-9).

Another truth, but associated with the former, should also be proclaimed by the gospel preacher. It is that Christ died for all who believe in him. **'The good shepherd gives his life for the sheep.** (John 10:11) As stated in John's gospel, Christ's sheep are those who **believe in him** (John 3:16). They are the chosen of God – an uncountable number of the redeemed who, throughout the ages, believe in Christ and receive eternal life. That is why the gospel preacher must appeal to his hearers to repent and believe the gospel. What a relief for the sinner to know that there is nothing to do! He must renounce all his fruitless efforts to please God, and simply believe in Christ.

Now, here is how Paul made his gospel appeal – **But what does it say? The word is near you, even in your mouth, and in your heart (that is, the word of faith that we preach: that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes to righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made to salvation.** (Romans 10:8-10)

### (3) The gospel and sanctification

In chapters 6-8, Christians are challenged with the need for holiness of life. No doubt we ask ourselves from time to time, 'Why does God want me? Of all the thousands around me, why me?' Paul replies: 'Because God justifies whom he will.' We cannot make God save us; but we can throw ourselves on his mercy (Romans 9:15-16). So then, why did God choose to justify us? Paul relies that he predestined us to **be conformed to the image of his Son** (Romans 8:29) – the Son who is holy and sinless. As we go on in the Christian life,

we take stock of ourselves, and the measure of our dedication to Christ. God calls his children to a holy life, setting them apart from sin, and freeing them from the condemnation of his holy law. They no longer live for themselves, but serve him. They now love God's law, and desire to keep it (Romans 7:22). The love of God overtakes them like a great tidal wave, which irresistibly bears them on to a life of holiness.

Paul discerns the pattern of God's sovereign love in the lives of all believers – **And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to his purpose. For whom he foreknew, he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son ... Moreover whom he predestined, these he also called; and whom he called, these he also justified** (Romans 8:28-30). His calling is irresistible to repentant sinners. Just as we are born of our parents, and by nature grow into their image, so God's children grow supernaturally into the holy image of the Saviour. Gospel sanctification is a very exciting and practical teaching.

#### **(4) The gospel and glorification**

Lastly, in Chapter 8, we are introduced to the glorious hope of every Christian – ... **and whom he (God) justified, these he also glorified.** (Romans 8:30) Paul declares triumphantly, **Yet in all these things (sufferings and tribulations) we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.** (Romans 8:37) We may be scarred physically, mentally, or emotionally by the adversities of life, but the fact is, we are going to leave all these things behind. We will outgrow them, moving onward and upward to that perfection which God will make of us when we finally stand before him. There, in the glories of heaven, we will find ourselves by God's grace in perfect conformity with the image of his Son. This is another wonderful truth of the gospel.

#### **Conclusion to this Introduction**

We have examined very briefly the main gospel themes of the first eight chapters of Romans, and we rejoice in them (Romans 5:2). Believers are no longer subject to God's righteous condemnation of sinners, for they are justified by faith in Christ (Romans 5:1; 8:1). We preachers delight in our glorious gospel, and urge others to come to Christ without delay. To be under the condemnation of God is a fearful thing; to be justified and saved and glorified, is wonderful. In the gospel, God promises to make right with him all those who respond in faith, transforming them beyond their wildest hopes. In our preaching of God's salvation to the world, we too testify to a gospel that has changed us, and has made us what we are by God's grace.

Here, then, in Romans, we have a sourcebook for gospel truth that will strengthen and sustain us throughout our earthly ministry. Whenever we are called upon to preach the gospel, we feel like new believers all over again! We declare as Paul did, **For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek.** (Romans 1:16) Paul's desire for the well-being of the gospel Church in Rome is found in 16:25 – **Now to him who is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery which was kept secret since the world began but now has been made manifest, and by the prophetic scriptures has been made known to all nations, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, for obedience to the faith – to God alone wise, be glory through Jesus Christ for ever. Amen.**

## QUESTIONS FOR STUDY 1

### A. QUESTIONS ON THE TEXTS QUOTED IN THE EXPOSITION

**Read Acts 9:5**

1. What special title for Jesus Christ did Saul use at his conversion?

**Read Acts 26:16-18**

2. For what purpose was Saul saved?

**Read Ephesians 6:12**

3. Why did Paul find his gospel ministry a difficult task?

**Read Romans 8:37**

4. What encouraged Paul to continue in his gospel ministry?

**Read Galatians 1:15-17**

5. Did Paul receive gospel truths from tradition and from Christian teachers?

**Read 2 Corinthians 11:5**

6. What does this verse tell us about Paul's authority?

**Read Romans 8:15-16**

7. Which word does Paul use to describe God's relationship with his children?

**Read Romans 9:27**

8. Whom did God save out of the nation of Israel?

**Read Romans 9:15-16**

9. How do these verses show that the good works of men cannot lead to salvation?

**Read Romans 10:9-13**

10. What must sinners do to be saved?

**Read Romans 3:21-22**

11. How can men and women, who are by nature unrighteous, become right with God?

**Read Romans 3:24-25 and 5:9-10**

12. What do these verses tell us about Jesus Christ who was a sacrifice for sinners on the Cross?

**Read Acts 16:30-31**

13. If Christ has done everything necessary for the work of salvation, what then is left for sinners to do?

**Read Romans 4:25 and 5:1-2**

14. What two things does the repentant sinner's response to Christ bring about?

**Read Romans 1:13-14**

15. The gospel message is very wonderful to preach. How did Paul feel about this?

16. Are we gospel preachers in the same situation today?
- Read Romans 5:8**
17. What does this verse say against the belief that sinners can be saved by doing good works?
- Read Romans 2:16 and 16:25**
18. Why does Paul call the gospel he preached 'my gospel'?
- Read Romans 1:8**
18. Write down any indications that the Church in Rome was long established, and well established.
- Read Romans 1:11-13**
20. State the reasons why Paul wanted to visit the Christians in Rome.
- Read Acts 9:1-2**
21. What letters of authority did Paul possess before his conversion to Christ?
- Read Romans 2:1-3 and 2:17 and 3:1-2**
22. Which two groups of people was Paul addressing in the Church at Rome?
- Read Romans 2:14-16**
23. What effect does God's law have on the consciences of the Gentiles?
- Read Romans 12:1-2**
24. What was Paul aiming for in preaching to the Roman Christians?
- Read Romans 3:23**
25. What does this verse tell us about mankind?
- Read Roman 3:28**
26. If good works cannot make sinners right with God, what alone can?
- Read Habakkuk 2:4**
27. Is the truth of this verse found in other parts of the Bible as well?
- Read Ephesians 2:8-9**
28. Where does faith come from?
29. Is it one of our own works?
- Read John 10:11**
30. Who are the **sheep** mentioned in this verse?
- Read John 3:16**
31. When does a sinner know that he is saved?
- Read Romans 10:8-10**
32. What two things will sinners do when they trust in Christ?
- Read Romans 8:29.**
33. What is God's purpose in saving sinners?

- Read Romans 7:22**
34. After being saved, what will replace a love for sin in the sinner's life?
- Read Romans 8:28-30**
35. What gives the Christian great assurance in life?
- Read Romans 8:30**
36. What is the great hope of every Christian?
- Read Romans 8:37**
37. What caused Paul to feel confident in his ministry?
- Read Romans 5:2**
38. What does faith and hope make every Christian do?
- Read Romans 5:1 and 8:1**
39. Which two important things – one positive and one negative — does God grant to every Christian?
- Read Romans 1:16**
40. To whom should we be glad to preach the gospel?
- Read Romans 16:25**
41. By what means is any true church established and maintained?

**NOTE: there are so many questions in Section A, Sections B and C have been combined.**

#### **B & C PRACTICAL APPLICATION**

Read again carefully the long quotation from Dr. James Packer on page 3 of the Exposition:

- (1) Provide some evidence that Dr Packer is correct in the matters that he mentions as causing widespread dissatisfaction'.
- (2) Dr Packer speaks of a 'substitute product' for the biblical gospel:
  - (a) In not more than 100 words, using the first eight chapters of Romans, give a brief outline of the biblical gospel.
  - (b) What 'substitutes' do you find in the world for the points you have made in (a)?

## STUDY 2

### PAUL AND HIS SAVIOUR

#### ROMANS 1:1-4

## EXPOSITION

**First, let us consider the introduction, in verses 1-17.**

This divides into three parts:

- Paul's greeting to the Christians in Rome ..... (Verses 1-7)
- A description of Paul's personal and present situation ... (Verses 8-15)
- Finally, a brief summary of Paul's gospel ..... (Verses 16-17)

*There are some important truths about the gospel and the person of the Lord Jesus Christ to be found in Paul's greetings to the Christians in Rome. Take note of the details as you read this passage. (Verses 1-4)*

### Paul and his Saviour

We notice that Paul says very little about himself, compared with what he says about his Saviour. What a great change came into Paul's life when Christ met him on the Damascus Road! It was natural, then, for Paul to introduce his Saviour at the first opportunity. Handley Carr Glyn Moule (1841-1920), Bishop of Durham, wrote a devotional commentary on Romans in which he declared how inadequate he felt in the task of commenting on such a magnificent letter. He spoke of the awesome task facing any preacher who sets out to explain the gospel truths found in Paul's letter to the Romans. He says that any expositor of Romans

**'... is occupied with an ever-deeper reverence and wonder over the text which he has been permitted to handle, a text so full of a marvellous man, but above all, so full of God.'**

Dr. Donald Guthrie, a careful and helpful writer of books on the New Testament, said this of Romans:

**'(Here is) a document which arose directly from the pulsating experience and matured reflection of a practical man of God ... The epistle, then, takes on something of a spiritual stocktaking in which Paul records for the benefit of a wider group of Christians his deep meditations on the great problem of man's relationship with God.'**

We are therefore bound to raise the age-old question – 'How can anyone be made right with God?' Paul found his answer on the Damascus Road. We note that on that occasion Jesus addressed him by his former name — **'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?'** (Acts 9:4) In the Bible, there is often great significance in a name. Jesus referred to himself as the Good Shepherd who **'calls his own sheep by name'** (John 10:3). If ever there was an unlikely sheep, it was Saul of Tarsus! Paul abandoned his former name quite early in his gospel ministry, preferring to call himself **Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ**. 'Saul' means in Hebrew 'called for' or 'lent to'. 'Paul' was rather a rude name meaning 'little'. He may have

been small in height, but by taking the name of 'Paul' he stands in a long line of men like John the Baptist, who declared, '**He (Jesus) must increase, but I must decrease.**' (John 3:30)

Before his conversion, Paul was one of the most self-centred Jewish leaders of his day. Now, he is content to lower himself in his own self-estimation, and set the interests of Christ before his own. He changed his name in the early stages of his first missionary journey, when he arrived on the island of Cyprus. There, Paul made his first recorded convert for Christ – Sergius Paulus, the Roman proconsul (Acts 13:4-12). It was this man's name that he took (see verse 13).

The reason for the name-change may be seen in Christ's commissioning Saul to be the apostle to the Gentiles (Acts 26:16-17). This former Pharisee, this '**Hebrew of the Hebrews**' (Philippians 3:5), became a Christian missionary with a world-wide vision.

The great Saul of Tarsus, a respected Jewish teacher, the flower of first century Judaism, and persecutor of the Christian Church, now thinks little of himself, but is made mighty in the saving purposes of God. Paul counted it a great honour to be '**a servant of Jesus Christ**'. The Greek word is DOULOS δούλος (pronounced DOO-LOSS), meaning a slave, who was the lowest in any household. Paul became a willing slave in the service of Jesus Christ. At one time, he was an enemy of Christ, and his Church; now he is his slave. Yet, even as a slave, Paul was invested with great authority, dignity, and purpose. He was a minister of Jesus Christ, serving in his household. Those who dealt with Paul had also to deal with his Master. No wonder Paul's name was closely associated with Christ, for he was his ambassador (2 Corinthians 5:20). He went out speaking in his name, and preaching the Cross of Christ (1 Corinthians 1:23; 2:2).

Like his fellow-Pharisees, Paul once loved the honour of being called a Rabbi (teacher) in Israel. Nothing now is left of pride (Galatians 2:20; 6:14), for the old Saul is dead. Men take pride in their academic degrees, and delight in their diplomas, but it is far better to bear the title 'slave of Jesus Christ'. The word 'slave' implies something else — the complete surrender of Paul's personal liberty, that he might devote himself to the service of Christ.

### **The calling of Saul**

Paul believed that Christ had called him for this purpose — '**to be an apostle, separated to the gospel of God**'. On the Damascus Road, Christ addressed him as 'Saul'. As soon as Paul saw the fruit of his new commission, he changed his name. The latter part of this verse is his authority for bringing the gospel to Rome. As an apostle, he was called by Jesus Christ to go out with the gospel. He fulfilled that commission everywhere he went, and the history of the world changed as a result of his obedience (Acts 26:19-20).

Robert Haldane writes in his commentary on Romans:

**'... the term apostle being placed at the beginning of the epistle impresses the stamp of divine authority on all that it contains.'**

The apostles were Christ's spokesmen, delivering their message with authority, spiritual power and conviction. Paul was called to be an apostle because God had chosen him — '**separated to the gospel of God**'. Paul was happy to be 'separated', for had he not dismissed his religious background as so much rubbish, fit only to be thrown on the rubbish heap? All he wanted to do was to serve Christ usefully (Philippians 3:4-7). He was not prepared to take the over-scrupulous morality of Judaism into the world, and call people back to the Ten Commandments. That was not gospel preaching. He was called to be a

preacher of the New Covenant – **‘it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb and called me through his grace, to reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the Gentiles’** (Galatians 1:15). God made him a preacher of the gospel of grace and salvation. The observance of the law formed no part of Paul's gospel. He could not preach good works; only faith in Jesus Christ. Sinners may only enter into the covenant of salvation on God's terms. What does God offer? His own Son Jesus Christ, so that all who believe in him might be saved.

### (1) The gospel is not new (v2)

How old is the gospel? Paul declares that it was **‘promised before through his prophets in the Holy Scriptures’**. God never breaks his promises. In almost every chapter of the Old Testament, we see some aspect of God's promise to save his people and bless them.

Salvation was foreshadowed in the Old Testament in many different ways – in the law, in the ceremonies, in the sacrificial system, and in prophetic passages concerning the coming of the Messiah. The gospel is not new. The Christian faith is not an upstart religion, for it fulfilled all the promises of God in the Old Testament. Peter declared - **‘Of this salvation the prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that would come to you, searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ who was in them was indicating when he testified beforehand of the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow’**. (1 Peter 1:10-11) There shines out of **the Holy Scriptures** (that is, the Old Testament) a flood of light revealing the coming of Christ. This was the reason for the writing of the Scriptures, for they spoke of him (John 5:39).

All faithful gospel preachers soon become aware that they are handling something holy. The gospel highlights the holiness of God and the sinlessness of Christ. We dare not treat the gospel lightly, for it is holy, demanding deep respect. The holy Scriptures, uniquely set apart by God as the final authority on all matters of faith, is what the gospel is firmly rooted in – **‘And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he (Jesus) expounded to them (two of the disciples) in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself’**. (Luke 24:27) This is confirmed at a later time, when Jesus **‘opened their (the apostles’) understanding that they might comprehend the Scriptures. Then he said to them, Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day.’** (Luke 24: 45-46) On this latter occasion, Christ spoke to his apostles of the need for gospel preaching – **‘that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem’** (verse 47). Why is the gospel preached? So that sinners might repent, believe, and be saved.

### (2) The substance of the gospel (3-4)

At the centre of the gospel is the Son of God. That is what Paul preached. When he spoke in the synagogues of Damascus, **‘he preached Christ, that he is the Son of God’**. (Acts 9:20). Paul says here in Romans that he was **‘declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead’**. (Romans 1:4) This is the basis for the Christian faith. If the risen Christ is not proclaimed, the gospel is not being preached. Here, Christ is called both **Son of God** and **Lord**, a reminder of both his eternal status and his earthly mission – **‘For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have everlasting life’**. (John 3:16) The purpose of the divine gift is to save those who are perishing.

The gospel of God is about the Son of God, who is the author and finisher of our faith. If Christ is not uplifted in our preaching, then we are not preaching the gospel. The title **Christ** indicates the work that he came to do. It means ‘the Anointed One’, for he was specially

chosen to fulfil God's purpose in saving for himself a people who had fallen into sin (Matthew 1:21). The name **Jesus** is the same as 'Joshua', meaning 'Jehovah saves'. Like Joshua, Christ is the captain and deliverer of his people. He is **Jesus Christ our Lord**. How can some believe that it is possible to separate out in Christian experience Christ as Saviour from Christ as Lord? Is such a separation found anywhere in the New Testament? Indeed, not! **'Jesus Christ is Lord'**. (Philippians 2:11) When sinners receive Jesus Christ as Saviour, they also receive him as Lord. Paul's first words on the Damascus Road were, **'Who are you, Lord?'** (Acts 9:5)

The person of Christ is the foundation of our Christian faith. He is not only the Son of God, but he is human. That is the extraordinary message of the gospel. He was **'born of the seed of David according to the flesh'**. He came like us – entering into our experience of pain and sorrow and rejection – **'a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief'**. (Isaiah 53:3) He was flesh and blood like us, but without sin (Hebrews 4:15). He was of the seed of David, born **'to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary'**. (Luke 1:27) The phrase **'according to the flesh'** appears to indicate that Mary herself was a descendant of David.

John wrote, **'And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory'** (John 1:14). How else could the glory of God be best displayed in the world, but in human flesh? He was **'declared to be the Son of God with power'** (verse 4) by God on at least three occasions. At the Transfiguration, the Father declared – **'This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased. Hear him!'** (Matthew 17:5) Who else could have performed the miracles that he did? He was invested with power – power to heal, power to raise from the dead, power to save human souls, power to redeem the lost, and power to break the grip of sin over human lives.

His power overcomes the kingdom of Satan – **'...according to the Spirit of holiness'**. The translators of the NAV (NKJV) understood this to be a reference to the Holy Spirit. It may mean even more, being a description of the spirit of holiness in Jesus Christ. Who else could have gone to the cross, but one who was **'holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners'**? (Hebrews 7:26) As God is holy, so is his Son; as God is sinless, so is his Son; as God is pure, so is his Son. Thus a holy and sinless Christ put himself between an offended God and offending sinners, bearing their sins **'in his own body on the tree'** (1 Peter 2:24). On the basis of his finished work on the cross, saved sinners are received by God as his adopted children. Because Christ was holy, hell could not hold him; neither can it hold those whom he saves. Believers in Christ are made righteous through his blood – a theme developed later by Paul.

The resurrection of Christ proved that he was the Son of God. Jesus declared, **'I lay down my life that I may take it again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again'**. (John 10:17-18) He alone could do this, for he was what he claimed to be, the Son of God. In him is our hope of resurrection from the dust of the earth. Death for the Christian has no sting, and is no concession of victory to the devil. (1 Corinthians 15:55-57) By his resurrection from the dead, Christ declared his holiness and sinlessness. Therefore his sacrifice was accepted by the Father, and he is able to secure righteousness for sinners, that they might be justified before a holy God.

## QUESTIONS FOR STUDY 2

### A. VERSES OF SCRIPTURE QUOTED IN THE EXPOSITION

1. **Read Acts 9:4.**  
What does the name **Saul** mean? (Look again at Study 1)
2. **Read John 10:3.**  
How do you think the Good Shepherd knows his sheep?
3. **Read John 3:30.**  
What did the apostle Paul and John the Baptist have in common?  
(Read the exposition again on this point)
4. **Read Acts 13:4-12.**  
Why did he choose the name **Paul**? (Read the Exposition for details)
5. **Read Acts 26:16-17.**  
What advantages do these verses suggest in him taking the name of Paul?
6. **Read Philippians 3:5.**  
What were the old things that Paul had been so proud of, but now means nothing to him?
7. **Read 2 Corinthians 5:20.**  
What parallels can you think of between an earthly ambassador and a Christian ambassador?
8. **Read 1 Corinthians 1:23 and 2:2.**  
Why did Paul make the cross central to his preaching?
9. **Read Galatians 2:20 and 6:14.**  
As indicated in these verses, what effect did the cross have on Paul's life after he was converted?
10. **Read Acts 26:19-20.**  
In what sense was Paul 'faithful' in these verses?
11. **Read Philippians 3:4-7.**  
As a zealous follower of Judaism, what terrible error did Saul fall into?
12. **Read Galatians 1:15.**  
To which Old Testament prophet did God say, '**Before I formed you in the womb I knew you; and I ordained you a prophet to the nations**'?
13. What is strange about Paul being called to **preach** [God's Son] **among the heathen**? (Clue: think of Paul's upbringing)
14. **Read 1 Peter 1:10-11.**  
What was the fervent desire of the Old Testament prophets?  
What two things did they know beforehand?
15. **Read John 5:39.**  
What did Jesus say about the Scriptures?
16. **Read Luke 24:27.**  
What is the meaning of the word 'expounded'?
17. **Read Luke 24:45-46.**  
What should every gospel preacher pray for before preaching, as stated here?
18. What are **repentance** and **remission of sins**? (Only a brief answer is expected)
19. **Read Acts 9:20.**  
What was unusual in Saul preaching the gospel at Damascus?
20. **Read Romans 1:4.**  
Why should Christ's resurrection be included in any gospel preaching?
21. **Read John 3:16.**  
What was the reaction of the Jewish nation to God's gift? (See also John 1:10-12)
22. **Read Matthew 1:21.**  
Compare the objectives of Joshua with those of Jesus Christ. (In no more than 25 words).
23. **Read Philippians 2:11.**  
The phrase 'every tongue' is a strong expression. Write out at least two other verses in the New Testament that declare the lordship of Christ.
24. **Read Acts 9:5.**  
What connection can you make between the conversion of Saul and the title he used for Jesus Christ?
- 25.

26. **Read Isaiah 53:3.**  
What suggests definitely in this verse that the Son of God is truly a man?
27. **Read Hebrews 4:15.**  
Although fully a man in every respect, what marked Christ out from other men?
28. **Read Luke 1:27.**  
How could Joseph not be the father of Jesus?
29. How was Jesus born of the line of David?
30. **Read John 1:14.**  
Make a short list of ways (besides the coming of Jesus Christ) in which the glory of God was revealed in the Old Testament ?
31. **Read Matthew 17:5.**  
On what other occasions did God the Father speak publicly of his Son?
32. **Read Hebrews 7:26-28.**  
In your preaching, how would you contrast the sacrifices of the Old Covenant with that of Jesus Christ on the cross. (Not more than 50 words are required)
33. **Read 1 Peter 2:24.**  
In as few words as possible, explain the importance of the words '**bore our sins in his own body on the tree**'.
34. **Read John 10:17-18.**  
Explain briefly to an imaginary congregation the importance of Christ's involvement in his own resurrection from the dead.
35. **Read 1 Corinthians 15:55-57.**  
What does the resurrection of Christ mean in practical and personal terms for all Christians?

#### B. QUESTIONS ON THE EXPOSITION

Read the first seventeen verses of chapter 1 very carefully. Try to grasp the main ideas that Paul is getting over to his readers.

1. While you were reading verses 1-17, answer in as much detail as you can what you discover about:
  - (a) The author of the letter?
  - (b) Those to whom the letter is addressed?
  - (c) The reasons why Paul wrote this letter?
2. Now read verses 1-7 again. After you have finished reading this greeting from Paul carefully, summarise what it says about Jesus Christ, the One whom Paul loved to put central in his gospel preaching.

#### C. PRACTICAL APPLICATION

**THERE IS NOTHING FURTHER TO WRITE AT THIS TIME.**

**So put you pens down, and read and take note of the following.**

You have already been asked to write something about the following topics in SECTION A:

- |     |  |                       |
|-----|--|-----------------------|
| (1) | Locating a verse in the Old Testament prophets                 | (question 12)         |
| (2) | Describing Biblical exposition                                 | (question 15)         |
| (3) | Giving the status of Christ's resurrection in gospel preaching | (question 18)         |
| (4) | Listing the public utterances of God the Father in the gospels | (question 27)         |
| (5) | Making statements about the Atonement                          | (questions 28 and 29) |

Plus others. Check them at your leisure.

## STUDY 3

### PAUL'S RELATIONSHIP WITH THE CHURCH IN ROME

#### ROMANS 1:5-15

## EXPOSITION

As we consider Paul's introduction in the first chapter of Romans, we notice two things: a description of the church in Rome; and a statement from Paul that he was well aware of their reputation, although he had never paid them a visit. He knew many of the members of the Church, for in the last chapter is an impressive list of those to whom he sends greetings. We also have in verses 5-15 something really special – an insight into the heart of a great pastor. Not many know how a pastor really feels: what he prays about, what burdens his heart, what brings him joy, what makes him sad, what concern he has for other churches, and what he desires for his own church? Here, Paul acts like a pastor-at-large. The longest recorded period he spent personally in building up a church was his two years in Ephesus (Acts 19:10). However, he remained a pastor to all the churches he founded throughout the Roman Empire. Yet he never visited Rome. Here in these verses is revealed the tender heart of Paul. We note his overwhelming desire to meet the Christians there, and have fellowship with them. As ever a pastor, he desired above all to preach to them.

#### Paul's greetings to the Church in Rome (5-7)

'... **through whom we have received grace and apostleship**' (5) – here is Paul's authority to minister to them. Through Christ, Paul had received his life mission, and so was bound eventually to go to Rome. There he would act as Christ's representative, for he was saved to serve. Grace was not finished with him at his conversion; it continued to take him into unexpected avenues of service. It made Paul an apostle – not to his own people, the Jews, whom he loved dearly (Romans 9:1-3), but to the Gentiles. The sign of any true Christian is the desire to serve. The greatest service that he can perform for Christ is to speak for him, and to live or die as his witnesses. Paul was called to be an apostle, and was sent out by Christ as a gospel persuader (2 Corinthians 5:11). We too are called to perform this service. We have the apostolic message – written down in the pages of the New Testament. We also have the power of the Holy Spirit, as the apostles did, in order to witness for Christ. We have the same gospel, '**which is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes**' (Romans 1:16). Why was Paul made an apostle? He states – for obedience to the faith among all nations for his name. In that sense, we too continue the apostolic mission, for we have been called to bring the gospel to all those who are willing to listen, and believe in Jesus Christ. The presence of all nations in the fellowship of the Church was the result of Paul's work. It proves the universal appeal of the gospel to '**every tribe and tongue and people and nation**'. (Revelation 5:9)

Notice **three** further things here:

#### (1) The purpose of Paul's work.

'... **for obedience to the faith among all nations**' (5). We recall the opening command of Jesus' ministry – '**Repent, and believe in the gospel**'. (Mark 1:15) The preaching of the gospel begins with a call for repentance of sin. Every gospel preacher must first convince

his congregation that all are sinners in God's sight. That is why true gospel preaching can never be popular. Paul begins his Letter to the Romans by convicting the world of sin – a true work of the Holy Spirit. (John 16:7-11)

How can sinners repent if they are not convicted of sin? When they do receive the gospel, the result of their sin, which comes from Adam's disobedience, is turned around at last to obedience – which brings great blessing to every believer. Thus the curse is undone in the preaching of the gospel, and with saving faith. What is faith? Robert Haldane wrote that faith is an act of submission or the surrender of ourselves to God that he may possess us and lead us, and make us whatever he pleases. It was the Reformer John Calvin who declared that faith is adorned with the title of obedience. Christians live in conformity with the revealed will of God, and are obedient to him, because they desire to please him.

## **(2) The range of Paul's work.**

'... **for obedience to the faith among all nations**'. The gospel is to be brought to all nations – '**... in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth**'. (Acts 1:8) Sadly, there is a diminishing of missionary zeal in the western churches. Spiritual churches always have their eye to the nations. When Paul and Barnabas were sent out by the church in Antioch, they went to the nations with the gospel. The Holy Spirit said, Now separate for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them. (Acts 13:2). The leaders prayed for them, and commissioned them. Later, what joy they must have felt when Paul reported back to them about his preaching of the gospel to the Gentiles! (Acts 14:26-27) Gospel preachers continue that apostolic mission to this day.

## **(3) The motive for Paul's work**

What was Paul's motive? He says here – '**... for his (Christ's) name**'. He preached for the glory of God, and for the sake of his Saviour. Paul would not go out to the nations in his own name, but in the name of Jesus Christ. Those who rejected his ministry disregarded the name of the King of kings and the Lord of lords. Christians do not become missionaries for Christ later in their Christian experience, but immediately at their conversion. Paul was commissioned at his conversion; and so it is for all Christians who acknowledge the lordship of Christ over their lives. In Acts 9:19-20, it is stated that after his conversion Paul spoke of Jesus Christ in the synagogues of Damascus. He came like a raging bull to Damascus, hating the Christians, and desiring to put them into prison; but now he loves each believer. He is a preacher of the gospel, an apostle to those very Gentiles whom he once despised. And among the Gentiles are the Roman Christians.

Notice how he describes them. They are the called of Jesus Christ (6). The Greek verb is KALEO, καλεω (pronounced KAL-EE-OH), meaning 'to call', similar to EKKALEO, εκκαλεω (pronounced EK-KAL-EE-OH) meaning 'to call out of', and EKKLESIA, εκκλησια (pronounced EK-LAY-SEE-UH) meaning 'the called out ones', that is, 'the Church'. A similar word is EKLEKTOS, εκλεκτος (pronounced EK-LEKT-OS) meaning 'the chosen one' or 'the elect one'. From the sinner's point of view, Christ's calling is the first step in salvation; but, in fact, that is not so. God's choice took place in eternity (Ephesians 1: 4), whereas his calling takes place in time. We discover the same theme in one of Peter's letters — '**Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your calling and election sure, for if you do these things, you will never stumble**'. (2 Peter 1:10) What are the things Peter has in mind here? They are things concerning the normal Christian life, such as virtue, knowledge, moderation, patience, godliness, and love for fellow believers. Christ has chosen us so that we might display these supernatural virtues in our lives.

These things do not arise naturally, but result from the inward working of the Holy Spirit, and are his fruit (Galatians 5:22-23). We belong to Christ, and he ensures that we display his

nature and his characteristics. Jesus declared, **'You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit'** (John 15:16).

Secondly, Paul describes the Roman Christians as beloved of God (7). This is the wonder of the faith! Vile sinners, detested by God, idolaters, living perverted lives, full of hypocrisy, are now called God's beloved. Why are they so greatly loved by God? It is for the sake of his Son. They are beloved because they are accepted in the Beloved (Ephesians 1:6).

Thirdly, they are called to be saints. When the gospel is preached, a great change occurs. That change continues in the work of 'sanctification', a word related to saints – holy men and women of God. We must not forget that the object of salvation is to glorify God in the lives of the saved. How then should we live? It should be in holiness of life. There is great need today for teaching on sanctification and the holy life. Christians are called to the consecrated life to serve God. Just as the vessels of the Temple were set apart for God's service, so too is the Christian. The process of sanctification, which Paul describes later in Romans, is two-fold: first of all, at conversion we are set free to serve God. Once we were slaves to sin; but now we acknowledge the mastery of the Saviour. Secondly, having been separated from our former shameful life, we are set apart to serve God, and to bring glory to him.

### **What is the basis of God's calling? (7)**

It is as Paul says — **'Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ'**. Calling is on the basis of God's grace. Jews greeted one other with a 'Shalom' – a Hebrew word meaning 'peace'. A Christian can never think of 'peace' without adding 'grace'. We will never know peace in our hearts until there has been a work of God's grace first. We preach a gospel of grace that thrills the human heart. Once we were condemned sinners; now we are saved by grace. What is grace? Grace is God's favour to sinners who do not deserve it. The result is peace with God. **'Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ'**. (Romans 5:1) **'For by grace are you saved through faith'** (Ephesians 2:8-9).

### **The situation in which Paul found himself (8-15)**

Here, Paul reveals to the Roman Christians some of his own feelings. He wishes to forge a lasting link with them. Notice how he gives thanks — **'First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world'**. (8) Their work for the Lord was readily acknowledged by the Apostle. He begins by encouraging them. God, in his sovereign power, has done a great work in them. Paul does not say, 'I thank your God', but 'I thank my God'. They may be geographically separated at present, but they serve the same God. The grace that was at work in Paul's life was also at work in the Roman Christians. Salvation is the same, Christ is the same, and the Word of God is the same. Paul knew that what God had done for the Romans he had also done for him. With deep emotion, Paul says, I thank my God for you all. They had never met, but they were friends as Paul's letter shows. Paul was deeply impressed with the Roman Christians for he wrote, Your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world. He thanks God for their profession of faith, their love of the truth, their proclamation of the gospel, and their service for Jesus Christ. Paul had not contributed directly to the work in Rome, and he was not the founder of the Church. Yet he thanked God for them all. The work that God had done by other hands did not provoke Paul to jealousy, even though others were jealous of him.

### **Paul prayed regularly for the work in Rome (9-10)**

For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son, that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers (9). Their gospel was Paul's gospel;

so he prayed for them constantly. Although a fine Church, they still needed something — prayer.

Here is the secret of success for any Church. The Church in Rome needed prayer, so Paul supplied it. This is the ministry of all pastors, who are called upon to be men of prayer. Paul interceded for the church in Rome every time he prayed. God answers such prayers by converting sinners, and building up the Church of his Son.

Then Paul gives the content of his prayers – ‘... **making request if, by some means, now at last I may find a way in the will of God to come to you**’. (10) Paul’s prayers were always subject to the will of God. It is difficult to pray in the will of God if we do not know exactly what that will is. In reading the Holy Scriptures, we can come to understand something of the mind of God. Little did Paul know at that time how God would eventually answer his prayers, and send him to Rome as a prisoner in chains! How Paul longed for fellowship with the Roman Christians! He had no idea how much it would cost him. God answered his prayers, but probably not in the way that he would have liked. The purpose of his visit is stated in verses 11-12 – ‘**For I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift, so that you may be established – that is, that I may be encouraged together with you by the mutual faith both of you and me.**’ The word ‘comfort’ reminds us of the work of the Holy Spirit as a great Comforter and Strengthener (John 15:26, 16:7). Paul longed to visit them, that they might strengthen one another in their mutual faith. Those Christians who commit themselves fully to Christian fellowship grow in their faith, and receive many blessings through the exercise of spiritual gifts in the Church.

### **Paul’s apologies to the Church at Rome (13-15)**

‘**Now I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that I often planned to come to you, (but was hindered until now**’ – see verse 13. He was prevented by at least two things: by his busy missionary work which kept him away from Rome; and secondly, by his involvement in the Council of Jerusalem, which was called to deal with racial problems arising from the bringing in of Gentile converts into the Church.

There is one further reason why Paul wanted to visit Rome – ‘... **that I might have some fruit among you also, just as among the other Gentiles**’. What wonderful experiences Paul had in taking the gospel to the other nations! What great things God had done! How powerfully the hand of God had acted when Paul preached the gospel to the Gentiles! The Jews were forever turning Paul away from their synagogues, so confirming in Paul’s mind his commission to the Gentiles. What fruit he gathered in from the nations! He wanted to see that fruit in Rome also. He had evangelised at every point of the compass in the Roman Empire. Now he wanted to come to the heart of the Empire, to the seat of Caesar himself. Why did Paul believe that he should go to Rome? He writes, ‘**I am a debtor both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to wise and to unwise. So, as much as is in me, I am ready to preach the gospel to you who are in Rome also.**’ (14-15) Paul was a debtor to Christ who had saved him, and prevented him from shedding blood. He was a debtor because the gospel came to him by special revelation. He was a debtor for all that Christ had done for him amid his hardships and labours. More importantly, he was a debtor to take the gospel to all the nations, for the gospel had first been revealed to him. Jesus commanded his apostles to take the gospel to all the nations (Matthew 28: 19-20).

Paul was fulfilling that commission to the best of his ability. To the Greeks, he preached a gospel of wisdom; to the ignorant barbarians, he preached a more basic gospel; to the Jews, he preached the Messiah. He declared, ‘**I have made myself a servant to all that I might win the more.**’ (1 Corinthians 9:19-22) It was not important to Paul that in Rome Christians were mocked and persecuted, or expelled on the Emperor’s orders. It did not trouble him that some had been martyred. He wanted to go to Rome to preach the gospel. He loved his

Saviour, and he was willing to serve him wherever he was sent. Are we gospel preachers just as willing to serve the Saviour like the apostle Paul?

### QUESTIONS FOR STUDY 3

#### A. QUESTIONS ON THE TEXTS QUOTED IN THE EXPOSITION

**Read Acts 19:10.**

1. What was the main reason why Paul remained in Ephesus for 2 years?

**Read Romans 9:1-3.**

2. Why was Paul greatly disturbed about the spiritual condition of his own Jewish nation?

**Read 2 Corinthians 5:11.**

3. Why did Paul as a Christian consider himself a Christian 'persuader'?

**Read Romans 1:16.**

4. Why was Paul not ashamed to preach the gospel?

**Read Revelation 5:9.**

5. Where will all the redeemed in heaven come from?

**Read Mark 1:15.**

6. How could Jesus call for repentance and faith at that time?

**Read John 16:7-11.**

7. For what gospel purpose did the Holy Spirit come into the world?

**Read Acts 1:8.**

8. What did Jesus declare would spread throughout the world?

**Read Acts 13:2.**

9. To what did the Church expect Saul and Barnabas to be separated?

**Read Acts 14:26-27.**

10. What did Paul report to the Church in Antioch?

**Read Acts 9:19-20.**

11. What did Paul preach in the synagogues of Damascus shortly after he was converted?

**Read Ephesians 1:4.**

12. When did God's choice of his saved children take place?

**Read 2 Peter 1:10.**

13. What does Peter mean when he says, make your calling and election sure?

**Read Galatians 5:22-23.**

14. What does Paul mean when he uses the phrase "against such there is no law"?

**Read John 15:16.**

15. What is the connection between God's choosing and the production of spiritual fruit?

**Read Ephesians 1:6.**

16. Who is the 'beloved', and what does he do?

**Read Romans 5:1.**

17. What does it mean to have 'peace with God'?

**Read Ephesians 2:8-9.**

There is some work to do on these verses in the Practical Section at the end of the Question Sheet.

**Read John 15:26.**

18. What ministry does the Holy Spirit exercise in relation to Jesus Christ?

**Read John 16:7.**

19. Why did the Holy Spirit come? (Confine your answer to this verse only)

**Read Matthew 28:19-20.**

20. Christ gave the Church a commission in relation to the world. State the two keywords relating to this mission from these verses.

**Read 1 Corinthians 9:19-22.**

21. What was the strategy of Paul's approach with the gospel to different ethnic groups?

**B. QUESTIONS ON THE EXPOSITION**

Now read carefully verse 5.

What three things did Paul receive from Jesus Christ that made him a preacher of the gospel?

Now read verses 5-7 again.

(a) The Christians mentioned in these verses possessed five qualifications for receiving Paul's ministry. Name them.

(b) Paul desired two gifts from God for their benefit. Name them.

(c) What do you find interesting about the wording of the second gift at the end of verse 7? (Clue: Think of the Trinity)

Finally, read carefully verses 8-15.

Make a list of all possible reasons why Paul was writing to the Roman Christians.

**C. PRACTICAL**

**Read again Ephesians 2:8-9**

**These two verses are often regarded as essential to gospel preaching:**

- (1) Write out a short summary of them in your own words.**
- (2) Preach a sermon on these two verses, and send in an outline or summary of your sermon. Give details of any effect your sermon has had on members of your congregation. (If there are none, ask two or three of your hearers)**

## STUDY 4

### THE GOSPEL AND CONDEMNATION

#### ROMANS 1:16-32

### EXPOSITION

The first eight verses of Romans give us an analysis of the major contents of the gospel. Here in verses 16-17 we have the gospel in miniature. Paul was not ashamed to preach the gospel in Rome – for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. Paul was not only not ashamed of the gospel, but he was positively proud to preach it in Rome, despite the fact that the prevailing spirit of the Roman Empire was opposed to all that the gospel stood for. Christianity could not be added to the other religions tolerated by the Empire. It would not fit. The Emperors were in a position to suppress the spread of the gospel – men like Claudius who proclaimed himself a god, and who, on one occasion, deported the Jews and Christians out of Rome, believing them to be an obstacle to civilisation, and a threat to good government (Acts 18:2). Despite the execution of perfectly innocent Christian citizens, despite persecution and suffering and even martyrdom, despite the savage wit and mockery of the Roman poets, writers, and members of the Senate, the apostle wrote, **‘I am ready to preach the gospel to you who are in Rome also’**. (1:15)

#### (1) Paul’s emphasis on preaching the gospel

Paul saw in the preaching of the gospel the revelation of God. God is the all-powerful creator, and the sovereign who rules in Jacob to the ends of the earth. (Psalm 59:13) Rome boasted of her possessions, her great buildings, and her armies and legions; but this meant nothing to Paul, for he saw that the Lord was over all the affairs of men. Rome in God’s sight was puny. Kingdoms rose and kingdoms fell, but God who raised them up and brought them down is immortal (1 Timothy 6:15-16). The gospel will outlive the Roman Empire, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes. The thoughts of men who oppose the gospel will pass away, and those who hate the gospel will go down to the dust; but the gospel will flourish and triumph.

#### (2) God is the only Saviour

If God is sovereign in his creation, he also has the power to re-create sinners by saving them through his Son. The Creator sent his only Son to save sinners, **born of the seed of David according to the flesh** (3).

The phrase to salvation means ‘with a view to salvation’. God is like a mighty archer, whose arrow is his own Son. He invariably hits his target, which is the saving of souls.

#### (3) The gospel is for the individual

God has dealings with individuals. In the Old Testament we read of God’s relationship with Israel with whom he made a covenant, and for whom he instituted the sacrificial system. In the main, God blessed the nation, rather than the individual. With the coming of the gospel, the emphasis changed to the individual, who needed to repent and believe in Jesus Christ.

It was only then that he could come into a right relationship with God. Notice this emphasis in verse 17 – **The just shall live by faith**. The gospel is for everyone who believes. Business with God is on an individual basis – by faith alone.

Ancient Israel made a great show of its piety and religion, its sacrifices and the shedding of blood, its Passovers and its solemn feasts. The gospel has nothing to do with outward show or good works. It is not based on the keeping of God's law, as under the Old Covenant. The gospel is something different, calling for repentance and faith in Jesus Christ. It is for everyone who believes. A sinner can only be made right with God on the basis of saving faith; and even that faith is not his own, for it is a gracious gift of God (Ephesians 2:8).

#### **(4) Paul could never be ashamed of the gospel.**

The preaching of such a glorious gospel was not done in a corner (Acts 26:26). Neither was it confined to the small race of the Jews. The gospel has a universal appeal for all races – for the Jew first and also for the Greek. Paul's friendship with both Jewish and Gentile believers was immense, as the list of names in the last chapter reveals. Jews and Greeks come by faith to the cross, and are relieved of their burdens in the same way – in Christ. This faith appeared in Abraham long before the Law of Moses, at the beginning of the Hebrew nation. (Genesis 15:6) — And he believed in the LORD, and he accounted it to him for righteousness. His spiritual journey really began at this point. In the early Church, Jews were the first to believe the gospel, but they were soon overwhelmed by the coming in of a flood of Gentiles, to whom Paul, the Apostle to the Gentiles, preached the good news.

#### **(5) The linking of righteousness and faith.**

The gospel speaks of two of the greatest gifts of God – 'For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith (17). 'How can a sinner be right with God?' is a question found in the Old Testament (Job 15:14). The answer is found here in Paul's Letter to the Romans. A sinner is made right with God through faith in Christ, by receiving the righteousness of Christ. It is not faith that makes righteous, but a holy God declaring righteous all those who repent and believe the gospel. We have a picture here of the law-courts, with the prisoner standing in the dock, appearing before the great Judge. On the weight of evidence presented in court, the prisoner is found guilty as charged. It is then the task of the Judge to declare the sinner condemned, and deliver a sentence of punishment justly deserved. However, when he repents and believes, he will discover that Christ has taken the sinner's place, having taken his punishment upon the Cross. Righteousness is then credited to him the moment he believes in Christ, and he is set free. That is the very heart of the gospel message. The process of judgement is called by Paul the wrath of God (verse 18). Notice the present tense in this verse – **For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men**. However, Christians no longer come under the condemnation of God (Romans 8:1). They have been justified by faith, and are at peace with God (Romans 5:1).

#### **(6) The gospel was revealed from of old**

Lastly, Paul is proud to bring the gospel to Rome because he is not bringing a new message, but an old one. The gospel is ancient, its roots going back to the creation (Genesis 3:15). The gospel was fully declared in the Old Testament, and is not an invention of the apostle Paul. It was revealed by God through such a holy prophet as Habakkuk (2:4) — ... **as it is written, The just shall live by faith**'. (Romans 1:17)

## The bad news first

In this brief summary of the gospel, Paul speaks of the condemnation of the Gentile nations. Their behaviour is thoroughly examined, evidence is brought against them, and they hear the sentence by the Judge — **the wrath of God is revealed** (18).

God's wrath is not like human anger; it is sinless, pure, righteous, and just. His wrath is kindled because his holiness is affronted by the deliberate sin of his creatures. He sees the human race no longer desiring to glorify him, but preferring to do what he abominates. God treats mankind as a wife, concerning whom he feels the greatest jealousy when men form adulterous relationships with other gods, and serve them in open idolatry. Paul saw that there are only two types of people in the world — those whom God declares righteous because they believe in his Son, and the unrighteous who continue to refuse to believe, and remain in their sin. This latter group is under the wrath of God. However, God is forbearing, holding back his hand of judgement, so that they might repent and believe the gospel (2 Peter 3:9). Think carefully what it must have been like for Paul to preach to the Gentiles. Imagine a world where there was not the slightest glimmer of the gospel, and men's knowledge of God was very small. Nations were in moral darkness, and in a state of moral decline. It was easy to condemn them, for many witnesses could be called. Paul brings some of them forward in this chapter.

First of all, there is the light of reason; and secondly the light of their own consciences. What did sinners do to these two witnesses whose evidence supported the condemnation of God? Paul charged them with neglecting and abusing them (18-23). God reveals his power and divine nature to men through what he has created — ... **because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it unto them. For since the creation of the world his invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead** (19-20). This truth mankind refuses and suppresses. Why do they act so foolishly? Because they wish to deny the prompting of conscience, which brings them pain. When they consider nature, they see God at work — the God to whom they are answerable. They do not like this, for they have rejected him.

They deny the existence of God in the things that he has made, so they are without excuse. They deny also the light of their own consciences by taking created things and worshipping them — **because although they knew God, they did not glorify him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man — and birds and four-footed beasts and creeping things** (21-24). They have hardened their minds, for they wish to have nothing to do with God. Thus their foolish hearts were darkened. Due to their fallen nature, men became naturally idolatrous. In the Garden of Eden, man had perfect communion with God, but now we witness the sorry sight of men groping about in the darkness of their minds, refusing to admit the existence of God, and denying that they must at the end appear before him to give an account of their deeds. Here are men muttering around a fetish, and worshipping it as though it were God.

What is the result of such foolishness? **Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their own hearts** (24). God abandoned the nations, permitting them to pursue their own stupidity. This resulted in men's unrighteousness; and the picture Paul paints in verses 24-32 is not a pretty one. Preachers would rather make no comment on these verses, for they are horrific. Yet we must consider them, for they are God's evidence for which he condemns them. God gave them up to follow the desires of their own hearts. Their bodies were made by God, which possess certain natural functions. Sinful men have made their bodies their god, and are enslaved to their fallen and homosexual desires. **They dishonour their bodies among themselves** (verse 24). The

result was that **God gave them up vile passions. For even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature. Likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful, and receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due** (verses 24-27).

The glory of Greece and the grandeur of Rome are no more. Their societies became corrupt, marred with unnatural perversions, prostitution and homosexuality. God allowed them to take their sins to their natural conclusion — **And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting** (verse 28).

Further evidence of a sinful and fallen nature is found in verses 29-32. Hearts and minds have become corrupt and dark. Men's lives display the fruit of an unholy spirit. **They have become filled with all unrighteousness** (29). This was Gentile society as Paul observed it. Men were vicious and anti-social:

**... full of sexual immorality, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, evil-mindedness; they are whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, violent, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, undiscerning, untrustworthy, unloving, unforgiving, unmerciful** (29-31).

Paul's view of pagan society is as valid today as it was then. The phrase 'haters of God' is very revealing, and is a key phrase. Having cast off God, men take pleasure in their sins, and refuse to admit any difference between right and wrong. They know the righteous judgement of God, that those who practise such things are worthy of death. But it makes no difference to them, for foolishness ignores the truth.

Let Christians protest against the evils of society! Let them attack the evil spirit that permeates human society as they may! Yet the sad fact remains, that men not only enjoy committing evil acts, but actively promote them in others. They not only do the same, but also approve of those who practise them (32). The Puritan preacher John Trapp (1601-1669) declared, 'They patronise, applaud, and approve ... To hold the bag is as bad as to fill it.'

We have a very different picture of believers in Paul's appeal to the Roman Christians (Romans 12:1-2) – **I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.** The Christian takes hold of the provisions of the gospel, and is delivered from the corruption of the pagan world that would drag him down and taint his life. He is now **conformed to the image of God's Son** (Romans 8:29), for he has a mighty Saviour who sets him free from such evils. Paul was not concerned with reforming society, but with the changing of human hearts through the preaching a **gospel which is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes** (Romans 1:16).

## QUESTIONS FOR STUDY 4

### A. QUESTIONS ON THE BIBLE VERSES QUOTED IN THE EXPOSITION

#### Read Acts 18:2.

1. Who deported the Jews (and Christians) from Rome?

**Read Psalm 59:13.**

2. What lesson was God teaching the Jewish nation in this verse?

**Read 1 Timothy 6:15-16.**

3. Look up Potentate in your dictionary, and say how this definition applies to God in this verse.

4. Why is the word immortal inadequate in describing God?

**Read Ephesians 2:8.**

5. Which word is linked with faith as a means of making a saved sinners acceptable to God?

6. What did Paul consider to be the opposite of this word?

**Read Acts 26:26.**

7. What is the meaning of the phrase not done in a corner?

8. How did that apply to Paul? (See verse 23)

**Read Genesis 15:6.**

9. What did Abraham actually believe?

**Read Job 15:14-16.**

10. What was the opinion of Eliphaz concerning the human race?

11. Did Eliphaz know how a sinner could be made righteous before God?

**Read Romans 5:1 and 8:1.**

12. What truths do these two verses have in common?

13. What does the word justified mean?

14. What does the phrase no condemnation mean for Christians?

**Read Genesis 3:15.**

15. Who is her 'seed'?

16. Why is 'he' used at the end of this verse?

**Read Romans 1:17.**

17. Why do you think that Paul quoted from the Old Testament?

**Read 2 Peter 3:9.**

18. What is God's promise here? (See also verses 7, 10-11)

19. Why does God not bring the world to an end now?

**Read Romans 12:1-2.**

20. What is it natural for Christians to do?

21. In what way is a Christian transformed?

**Read Romans 8:29.**

22. What is happening to Christians all the time?

## **B. QUESTIONS ON THE EXPOSITION**

1. In Romans chapter 1, verses 15-17 are often regarded as the key verses:

(1) Explain why Paul found it necessary to state that he was not ashamed of the gospel.

(2) Make a list of the truths of the gospel that can be learnt from these three verses?

(3) What key word is associated with receiving the gospel and living the Christian life?

2. Now read verses 18-32 again, for they form a complete unit :

(1) What is the main theme of these verses?

(2) Give a short definition of God's wrath?

(3) How can the Gentile world be so severely punished by God?

## **C. PRACTICAL APPLICATION**

**Pick 6 items from Paul's list of sins, and give examples of how you would describe them in a sermon on this passage from your experience of the world today.**

## STUDY 5

### THE JEWS ARE CONDEMNED

#### ROMANS 2:1-16

### EXPOSITION

The first importance point that Paul makes about the gospel concerns the righteousness of God – **For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith.** (Romans 1:17) He recognises that everyone is separated from God, and everyone is unrighteous by nature. As Paul declares later – **There is no one righteous, no, not one** (Romans 3:10). To admit this fact is the first step to accepting the gospel. When we speak of the righteousness and holiness and purity of God, we must contrast these perfections with the state of a world that is estranged from him. Sinners cannot approach God with what they dare to call their own righteousness. However, a door was opened with the coming of the gospel, so **that the just shall live by faith.** (Romans 1:17) Here in the gospel is a way of offering man an escape from his plight. Negatively, the gospel declares that sinners are under condemnation, but positively, that there is a way back to God. You can imagine these words written in large letters over the door to God: ENTER BY FAITH. The promise of John 3:16 holds true – **that whoever believes in him (Christ) should not perish, but have everlasting life.**

### Preaching Condemnation

The first principle of the gospel is the condemnation of sinful mankind – and it is the least liked! In all gospel preaching, this fact is the least spoken about. But it is a necessary part of the gospel, and ought to make our hearers ask, ‘Why does God condemn us?’ Paul’s answer is found in the next three chapters, where he declares that all sinners in the sight of God. This makes an unrighteous person feel that the preacher is being presumptuous, and he exclaims, ‘How dare this preacher condemn me as a sinner!’ This logically leads to the next question – ‘What, then, is sin?’ The answer comes right out of the apostle’s experience, for has he not been a self-righteous Pharisee? — **I would not have known sin except through the law ... For apart from the law sin was dead.** (Romans 7:7-8) The means by which a self-righteous sinner can be made to feel God’s condemnation is through God’s law. He then knows that he has fallen short of what is required of him – **for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God** (Romans 3:23). Sin is the breaking of God’s law. This, in its turn, leads to the next important question — ‘Why was God’s law only given to the Jews?’ Does this not provide the rest of the world with an opportunity to put up some kind of defence in God’s Court. Paul replies that the whole of mankind is aware of God’s law, even if it is not written down; for it is written in the conscience — **who show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and between themselves their thoughts accusing or else excusing them** (Romans 2:15). Paul declares that sinners suppress the pangs of their own consciences — **who suppress the truth in unrighteousness** (Romans 1:18). Therefore they are without excuse, and fall under the wrath of God. Here, then, is the dark background against which all other aspects of the gospel of grace shine so brilliantly. God shows no partiality in his judgement of the human race, whether they have the written law or not. God’s law is found everywhere.

Therefore, sin is universal, whether committed by the religious or the pagan. However, Paul goes on to state this uncomfortable fact, that religious people are under a greater condemnation, for they profess to follow a religious faith that is based on God’s written law.

The Jews prided themselves on possessing the law; but, in breaking it, they came under a greater condemnation. In verses 1-16 of this chapter, Paul was saying that no matter who they are, or where they are, all sinners stand condemned before a holy and sinless God. God passes judgement on sinners on the basis of the guilt that results from their breaking of his law. Shakespeare put these words into Hamlet's mouth — **Thus conscience makes cowards of us all.**

### **The Self-righteousness of the Jews**

At this point, Paul issues special warning to his Jewish readers — **Therefore you are inexcusable, O man, whoever you are who judge, for in whatever you judge another you condemn yourself; for you who judge do the same things.** (Romans 2:1) The Jewish nation was continually passing judgement on other nations, which, in their estimation, were wholly corrupt. Israel believed herself to be the only righteous nation on the earth. Paul accuses the Jews of practising the same sins as the other nations. They were condemning the sins of other nations, but were happy to overlook their own sins. In judging others, they were passing judgement on themselves.

These Jewish critics were practising the very things they were preaching against. Their judgmental attitude towards others was a cover-up for their own sin and failure. The world is full of hypocrisy; and we need look no further than our own hearts to uncover every serious case of self-righteousness. Christians also are not immune to this proud spirit, as Paul indicates — **And you he made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind.** He continues chillingly – ... **and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others.** (Ephesians 2:1-2) The basis of God's judgement is stated in these words – **But we know that the judgement of God is according to truth against those who practise such things.** (Romans 2:2)

Notice the present tense – **the judgement of God is ...** Now, God's judgement continues to be according to truth. What did Paul mean by this phrase according to truth? Sinners certainly know the difference between right and wrong. Paul mentions some things that were very wrong in the Gentile world in the closing verses of chapter 1. Robert Haldane describes them things as the nineteen fruits of an unholy spirit. Here is a continual breaking of the commandments of God; and even the Jews had their part in it. Everyone, whether Jew or Gentile, is guilty, and falls under the condemnation and judgement of God.

The Jews, in judging others, thought to divert God's wrath away from themselves. Paul reminds them in no uncertain terms that no sinner can escape the judgement of God – **And do you think this, O man, you who judge those who do such things, and do the same, that you will escape the judgement of God?** (3). Those who protest their innocence loudest need to be examined most carefully. 'I am better than other people' is a very common excuse. Another tactic is to over-emphasise the love of God. Consider verse 4 – **Or do you despise the riches of his goodness, forbearance, and long-suffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance?**

It is a great temptation for any gospel preacher to stress the mercy and kindness of God at the expense of his just condemnation. God is holding back his judgement in the face of severe provocation. But this will not last forever, for the Day of Judgement will come soon enough and then it will be too late for salvation. Yes; God is kind, for he is giving sinners more time to repent of their sins. They need to see their terrible plight by continuing to resist the claims of the gospel on their lives. The wrath of God will soon fall upon them; there is so little time left to be saved. In this sense, God is not acting according to strict justice. It is

his goodness that causes him to hold back from pronouncing judgement. Why? In order to allow time to repent and escape the wrath to come — **The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some count slackness, but is long-suffering towards us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.** (2 Peter 3:9) Therefore he directs the sinner to the righteousness of his own Son.

### **God's righteous judgement**

Lastly, notice the principle of God's righteous judgement that is stated in verse 5 — But in accordance with your hardness and your impenitent heart you are treasuring for yourself wrath in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgement of God. How sinners need to be awakened to their true condition before God! May they turn in desperation to Jesus Christ! The result of God's judgement is found in verses 6-7 — ... **who will render to each one according to his deeds: eternal life to those who by patient continuance in doing good seek for glory, honour, and immortality.** There is a great difference between those who seek eternal life, and those who find it.

The Pharisees came to Jesus conscious of their great knowledge of the Scriptures; but Jesus reacted with these words — **You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of me.** (John 5:39) They sought an eternal life that was impossible for them to find. Jesus implied that they were unable to discover the prevailing message of the Scriptures — God's salvation through himself. The self-righteous Jews could never receive eternal life, nor glory, honour, and immortality (verse 7) through their own good works. No works from sinners can please God — **As it is written, There is no one righteous, no, not one; there is no one who understands; there is no one who seeks after God.** (3:10-11) Only when sinners turn to Christ do they begin to please him.

We have a fearful description of the results of God's judgement in verse 8-9 — ... **but to those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness — indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, on every soul of man who does evil, of the Jew first and also of the Greek.** Some of the pagan philosophers were good sinners, but they were still sinners in the sight of God. It is on this basis that the Jew first is to be judged. He claimed to be righteous, so he will be the first to be brought to judgement. He is a sinner, but he denies it. He has broken God's law, but he will not admit it. The Jews needed to throw themselves like everyone else upon the mercy of God, and repent, and turn to Christ for salvation. This they refused to do. Verse 10 indicates that a good man will find eternal life. But where can he be found? God's word in the law is this — **Every commandment which I command you today you must be careful to observe, that you may live** (Deuteronomy 8:1). In the keeping of the law, sinners would live and be blessed. But no one could keep the law, for it was an impossible ideal. Sinful man can never ascend this mountain of spiritual endeavour. It is impossible to live the perfect life; yet God commands it.

### **The righteousness of Christ**

There must be another way to be right with God — and indeed there is! That is the message of the gospel. God's indignation over sin leads to his wrath, and his wrath leads to the rejection and judgement of mankind. The result is that great anguish and tribulation comes upon those who consider themselves good enough for God, but are not. Verse 10 also shows that the Day of Judgement will go well for those who are made righteous in Christ. The torment of the law is that no one is good enough to keep it. However, God has shown that his Son is righteous. **Therefore ... if anyone sins, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.** (1 John 2:1) He takes the place of all who repent and turn to him. He is the sinner's substitute, taking his punishment by dying on the Cross —

**who himself bore our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness** (1 Peter 2:24). The Jews will be caught up in God's impartial judgement — **for there is no partiality with God.** (Romans 2:11)

There is one further problem, which verses 12-16 go a long way to answer. How can God judge a world that does not possess his law? Paul asserts that the law is written in human hearts and consciences — **For as many as have sinned without law will also perish without law, and as many as have sinned in the law will be judged by the law** (verse 12). This fact in itself ought to cause a sinner to cry out to God for mercy. In verses 13-15, Paul goes off at a tangent — ... **(for not the hearers of the law are just in the sight of God, but the doers of the law will be justified; for when the Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do the things contained in the law, although not having the law, are a law to themselves, who show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and between themselves their thoughts accusing or else excusing them)**. He is saying here that Gentiles will be judged on the basis of God's law written in their consciences, and not by the written law of the Jews. Verse 15 shows how effectively the law operates in the human reason and conscience. God has imprinted his law indelibly in every man. Thus, preachers can be boldly preach the gospel knowing, like Paul, that the gospel begins with condemnation, for their hearers have broken God's law. The gospel of Paul is as sharp and as accurate as any surgeon's knife, going right to the heart of the matter. On the Day of Judgement, all sins will be exposed and dealt with. In that day, the secret thoughts and deeds of sinners will be brought into the light. There is only one way to escape — through the Lord Jesus Christ — ... **in the day when God will judge the secrets of sinners by Jesus Christ, according to my gospel.** (16) Jesus declared — **And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and sinners loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one practising evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed.** (John 3:19-20)

There will be no avoiding that day, when, as John foresaw, ... **the books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books.** (Revelation 20:12) In that day, all believers will be protected by Christ, for all their sins have been washed away. This is the great message of the gospel that God calls all gospel preachers to take into the world. This darker side of the gospel that Paul outlines in Romans 1-3 should cause sinners to flee to Christ. Perhaps one of the most sobering verses in the Bible that any gospel preacher can take up is this — **And it is appointed for sinners to die once, but after this the judgement.** (Hebrews 9:27) At the same time, the gospel preacher is also conscious that without Jesus Christ, he too should be brought to judgement.

## QUESTIONS FOR STUDY 5

### A. QUESTIONS ON THE TEXTS QUOTED IN THE EXPOSITION

#### **Read Romans 3:10.**

1. How does God see the human race?
2. Does this cover every individual?

#### **Read Romans 1:17.**

3. Who is the just person mentioned here?

**Read John 3:16.**

4. With what negative thing and positive thing does faith have an important connection in this verse?

**Read Romans 7:7-8.**

5. In a few words, explain the condemnatory nature of the law in Paul's experience.

**Read Romans 3:23.**

6. Why do you think this verse is chosen so often for gospel sermons?

**Read Romans 1:18.**

7. Why do sinners suppress vital spiritual truths?

**Read Ephesians 2:1-2.**

8. What do you think was Paul's intention in reminding the believers in Ephesus of their terrible pagan past?

**Read 2 Peter 3:9.**

9. Give 2 reasons stated in this verse why God holds back the Day of Judgement.

**Read John 5:39.**

10. What is the central message of the Holy Scriptures?

11. Why did the Pharisees not see it?

**Read Deuteronomy 8:1.**

12. The law of God contained a great promise. What was it?

13. Why was the law ineffective for the Jews?

**Read 1 John 2:1.**

14. Which office, mentioned in this verse, did Jesus fulfil?

15. What is the meaning of this word?

**Read 1 Peter 2:24.**

16. Which important word may be used here in relation to Christ's sacrifice on the cross? (See the Exposition)

17. What does this word mean?

**Read John 3:19-20.**

18. Why do sinners find it difficult to repent of sin?

**Read Revelation 20:12.**

19. On the basis of what evidence is mankind judged by God?

20. What will happen to believers on that Day?

**Read Hebrews 9:27.**

21. How may it be inferred from this verse that there is no repenting and no salvation for sinners after death?

## **B. QUESTIONS ON THE EXPOSITION**

1. Describe in no more than 50 words how the Jews felt about the Gentiles, and why?
2. How did God show his goodness to the Jewish nation, which should have led the Jews to repentance?
3. On what basis does God condemn Gentile sinners, as they neither possess the law, nor the gospel?

## **C. PRACTICAL APPLICATION**

**Pick 6 items from Paul's list of sins, and give examples of how you would describe them in a sermon on this passage from your experience of the world today.**

## STUDY 6

### A JEWISH PLEA FOR CLEMENCY IS DISMISSED

ROMANS 2:17–3:8

## EXPOSITION

The most astonishing and yet objectionable part of the gospel is the fact that all people, whether with religion or without religion, are born under the condemnation of God because of sin. This section of Romans (2:17-3:8) can be divided into three sections:

- (1) Paul shows how the Jews are condemned, for God judges all men equally;
- (2) The Gentiles world also falls under God's impartial judgement on the same basis as that of the Jews.
- (3) God's law was written down for the Jews in the Torah (the first five books in the Bible), and is essentially the same moral law written by God upon the hearts and minds and consciences of everybody else.

The Jews took severe exception to this last statement, for they regarded themselves as the children of the covenant that God made with their nation. They therefore felt that they had grounds for appealing to God's mercy as a special case.

### What is a Jew?

In these verses, Paul deals with five definitions of a Jew.

#### (1) The origin of the term 'Jew'

Do the Jews have a right to call God to treat them differently from the rest of the world? They look for a special act of mercy from God because of who they are, and their unique history. Look at verse 17 – **Indeed you are called a Jew**. Here, Paul is pointing out why the Jews boast of their superiority. They believe that this special evidence proves that they stand in a unique relationship with God. **You are called a Jew** – but what was a Jew? In the days of the apostle, everyone could trace his ancestry back to Abraham. At the beginning of his letter, Paul speaks of the Jewishness of Christ for he **was born of the seed of David according to the flesh** (Romans 1:3). The name '**Jew**' was derived from 'Judah'. When King Solomon died, his son Rehoboam behaved foolishly and treated the northerners in his kingdom harshly, refusing the wiser counsels of his older advisors (1 Kings 12:6-11). This led to a geographical division of the country, where the north became known as Israel, and the south as Judah. In 722 BC, the north was overrun by Assyria, and most of its inhabitants were deported, never to return. In 586 BC, the southern kingdom of Judah was overrun by Babylon, and many of the leading Jews and their families were sent into exile. When the Jews returned to their land 70 years later, in a kind of second exodus, they discerned the mighty hand of God at work. They were purged of idolatry, and the law became central in their lives.

## (2) The Jews and their God

Deep within the consciousness of every Jew was the sense of God ruling over his people – **Give to the Lord the glory due his name; bring an offering, and come into his courts. Oh, worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness! Tremble before him all the earth. Say among the nations, ‘The Lord reigns; the world also is firmly established, it shall not be moved; he shall judge the peoples righteously.** (Psalm 96:8-10) In the time of Paul, the Jews had long been under the powerful rule of Rome; but this they disregarded. Did they not, they claimed, have a special relationship with God through their forefather Abraham? Did they not possess the very oracles of God given to his faithful servant Moses? Paul continues – ... **and knows his will, and approves the things that are excellent, being instructed out of the law** (Romans 2:18). They relied on the Law of Moses to keep them within their special relationship with God. Take away the law from them, and the nation would be nothing. The law was the source of their authority in all matters relating to being a Jew. They had the Holy Scriptures, so they possessed the law of God.

## (3) A Jewish appeal to God’s power in history.

Pointing to their history and their laws, the Jews felt that God was their special guardian – **you make your boast in God** (17). Why was this? Because God brought Abraham out of Ur and gave him and his heirs the land of promise. Later, the nation was brought out of slavery in Egypt, and settled in their Promised Land. God fought great battles for them, and subdued heathen peoples. All this was evidence that God was with them. In the days of David, the Philistines were heavily defeated, and their threat to national security was removed. This was an act of God for the benefit of his faithful people. Surely God made the Jews what they were, and the people recognised that. Therefore, they boasted in what God had done for them. He was their guardian, their preserver, and their saviour; for history proved it.

## (4) A Jewish claim to knowledge of the mind of God

The Jews claimed that they had come to know the will of God – ... **and know his will, and approve the things that are excellent** (18). They had the prophets, such as Isaiah and Jeremiah and Hosea and Micah – all faithful and godly men, whose ministry made the will of God very plain to the people. The last of their line, John the Baptist, told the nation of the identity of the coming Messiah; but the Jews rejected his message of **the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.** (John 1:29) They believed that they knew the will of God well enough; but the subsequent behaviour of the majority, and their rejection of Jesus Christ, showed that their minds were in darkness, and they knew nothing of God:

**There was a man sent from God whose name was John. This man came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, which all through him might believe. He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light. That was the true Light, which gives light to every man who comes into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made through him, and the world did not know him. He came to his own, and his own did not receive him.** (John 1:6-11)

The Jews as a nation turned away from God. If they had known his will, they would have received Jesus Christ gladly and not rejected him. Instead, the subject of so many prophetic utterances – their promised Messiah – was taken to a Roman cross, where he died.

#### (4) The Jewish boast in the Law

The great claim of the Jewish nation in Paul's day was to their stewardship of the Law – ... **being instructed out of the law** (18). Their instruction came from generations of rabbis (teachers of the Law), among whom Paul emerged as a distinguished student. They taught the Law in their synagogues, and practised it in their homes and businesses. The whole of their lives was governed and regulated by their understanding and interpretations of the Law. They claimed to love and respect their holy Law. All their hope was in the Law of God, for their salvation lay in their keeping of it. Therefore, the Jews felt that, because they were instructed in the Law, they were fit to discern right from wrong, while the inferior and sinful Gentiles were living outside of the Law and the covenant.

##### What the Jews did

###### (1) They acted blindly

In verse 19, Paul is speaking with some sarcasm – ... **you are confident that you yourself are a guide to the blind**. He is implying that the Jews had no grounds for thinking that they were following the right way. If they were able to distinguish right from wrong, were they sure that they had the ability to teach others the right way? Jesus himself declared the Jewish religious leader to be **blind guides**, or else, **fools and blind** (Matthew 23:16, 17). Paul says this of the Jewish establishment – **But their minds were hardened. For until this day the same veil remains unlifted in the reading of the Old Testament, because the veil is taken away in Christ. But even to this day, when Moses is read, a veil lies on their heart.** (2 Corinthians 3:14-15)

###### (2) They lacked the light

The Jews claimed to be the light of God in a very dark world – ... **a light to those who are in darkness** (19). Isaiah spoke of the Messiah who would come as a light into a land of deep darkness – **Nevertheless the gloom will not be upon her who is distressed, as when at first he lightly esteemed the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, and afterwards more heavily oppressed her, by the way of the sea, beyond the Jordan, in Galilee of the Gentiles. The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in the land of the shadow of death, upon them a light has shined.** (Isaiah 9:1-2) Thus old Simeon was to speak of the Lord Jesus as **a light to bring revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of your people Israel.** (Luke 2:32) It was Christ who declared himself to be **the light of the world** (John 8:12).

###### (3) They saw no fault in themselves

The Jews saw themselves as the most morally superior race on the earth. They were small in number, but, nevertheless, they were the custodians of God's law. They loved to teach others the law, and were very proud of their abilities. Yet, like so many who are quick to point out the faults of others, they would not be corrected themselves. They could not believe that there was anything wrong with them. In the following verses, Paul shows how wrong they were.

###### (4) They loved to teach

They believed that they were called upon to instruct their children in the law. Indeed, this was a requirement of the law – ... **the Lord said to me (Moses), 'Gather the people to me, and I will let them hear my words, that they may learn to fear me all the days they live on the earth, and that they may teach their children.** (Deuteronomy 4:10) The

prophets also reinforced this command. A characteristic of Jewish families was the training of the children to respect and love the law of God.

### **(5) They interpreted the law**

They claimed a unique knowledge of the truth – ... **an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of babes, having the form of knowledge and truth in the law.** (20) In the end, their books of interpretation and instruction outweighed in authority the law of Moses itself. That is why Jesus reproved the teachers of his day – **For they bind heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers.** (Matthew 23:4) Such minute interpretations and applications led to absurdities like the ban on peeling an egg or plucking out a grey hair on the Sabbath day! When Jesus went into a synagogue on the Sabbath day, the teachers regarded him as a law-breaker for healing a man with a withered hand (Mark 3:1-6). Jesus rightly declared on another occasion – **But go and learn what this means: I desire mercy and not sacrifice.** (Matthew 9:13, 12:7). God looked not for an exact outward observance of the law, but a heart filled with God's compassion for those in need.

**Paul asks five questions.**

***THIS IS AN IMPORTANT SECTION, SO READ IT CAREFULLY. THERE IS A QUESTION ON IT LATER.***

After setting out the scene in verses 21-24, Paul asks five questions in order to convict the Jews of pride and hypocrisy. He reviews the sins of the Jews, as he had already done with the Gentiles in chapter 1. He shines a spotlight on the blemishes of his fellow-countrymen – **You therefore who teach another, do you not teach yourself? You who preach that a man should not steal, do you steal?** (Romans 2:21) The answer Paul is looking for is an honest 'yes'. The Puritan writer John Trapp directs us to a sermon by Bishop Eusebius in which he declared – **I preach not by my words only, but by my practice.** It was the American evangelist Dwight Lyman Moody (1837-1899) who said that no preacher should preach any higher than his own experience. Gospel preachers can only preach what God has done for **them**. The Jews, however, felt that their teaching made them superior to others; but sadly they did not practise what they preached as, for example, in the matter of stealing. Jesus charged the Scribes with theft – ... **who devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayers** (Mark 12:40). The very sign of Jewish religion – circumcision, in which every Jew felt secure and blessed under the covenant – was now null and void, for they had broken the laws of God – **For circumcision is indeed profitable if you keep the law; but if you are a breaker of the law, your circumcision becomes uncircumcision.** (25)

A new covenant is now in operation; and its sign is not on the body, but in the heart. The true sign of a child of the covenant is a repentant heart, and righteousness before God. Paul says of these very religious people that when they broke the law of God, their circumcision became nothing.

Concerning devout Gentiles, Paul says this – **Therefore, if an uncircumcised man keeps the righteous requirements of the law, will not his uncircumcision be counted for circumcision?** (26) Here is bad news for the Jewish people, for they hated and despised the Gentiles who did not have the law of God. Yet here are Christian Gentiles who, although not circumcised in their bodies, are nevertheless accepted by God under the covenant. How astonished was Peter when he visited the household of Cornelius in Caesarea. This Gentile was not 'unclean' in God's sight; for, although a Roman, his life was more morally blameless than most Jews! God heard his prayers, and sent Peter to preach the gospel to him. (See Acts 10)

It would appear from Romans 2:27 that believing Gentiles are put at a higher level than unbelieving Jews – **And will not the physically uncircumcised, if he fulfils the law, judge you, who, even with your written code and circumcision, are a transgressor of the law?** What a disgrace to these unbelieving religious Jews! Consider the furious reaction of his congregation in the synagogue at Nazareth, when Jesus reminded them how God had sent Elijah to be cared for by a Gentile widow in Sidon, and how God healed a pagan Syrian who was a leper in the days of Elisha (Luke 4:26-29).

Paul argues for a complete reversal of thinking, where uncircumcised Gentiles now act as judges over the circumcised Gentile – **will not the physically uncircumcised ... judge you?** (27) Those who claim possession of the law, and practise circumcision, have transgressed the law, and must therefore be judged. And look who does the judging!

### **Religious people and gospel preaching.**

It is an undoubted fact that the hardest people to reach with the gospel are those who are very religious. They are unwilling to be labelled as sinners, and dismiss the gospel as irrelevant to them. This was certainly true in Paul's day as far as the Jews were concerned. Paul raises this important question – 'What is a true Jew? Is it better to be a believing but uncircumcised Gentile, or an unbelieving circumcised Jew?' – **For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh; but he is a Jew who is one inwardly, and circumcision is that of the heart, in the Spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not from men but from God.** (28-29) Here then, is Paul's final definition of a true Jew: he is not made a Jew by any outward sign, but by a circumcision of the heart by the Spirit of God. This brings praise to God, and none to man. In the parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector, Jesus spoke approvingly of the latter with these words – **And the tax collector, standing afar off, would not so much as raise his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. I tell you, this man went down to his house justified.** (Luke 18:13-14) Gospel preachers should emphasise these words today, for so many religious people think that they are acceptable to God as they are. The Bible makes it abundantly clear that no one is good enough for God; and that repentance and faith in Christ are the only way forward.

### **Four objections by the Jews**

Coming to Romans 3:1-8, we meet what is probably the most difficult part of the letter. We have here four questions from Jewish listeners. Robert Haldane says of these verses that they are **designed to answer and remove some objections to Paul's teaching previously advanced by that apostle.**

#### **(1) What advantage is it to be a Jew?**

**What advantage then has the Jew, or what is the profit of circumcision?** (3:1) If the Gentiles are admitted to God's covenant without circumcision, where does that leave the Jews? Peter refused to circumcise Cornelius and his household, and this matter was taken before the Council of Jerusalem in AD 55, where Peter asked, **Now therefore, why do you test God by putting a yoke on the neck of the disciples which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear?** (Acts 15:10) The Council concluded that Gentile Christians had come under the covenant without bearing the marks of a Jew. The answer of Paul to the question put to him is this —

**Much in every way! Chiefly because to them were committed the oracles of God.'** (Verse 2) The Jews were greatly blessed by God; and their greatest blessing came in being

guardians of the written law. Yet they were unable to discover in the oracles of God the glorious gospel of Christ.

## **(2) Does the unbelief of the Jews effect the purposes of God?**

The majority of the Jews did not believe in Jesus Christ. What advantage, then, was it to be a Jew in claiming God's guiding hand in the history of his nation? **For what if some did not believe? Will their unbelief make the faithfulness of God without effect?** (3) Would an orthodox Jew not feel, after being informed that Christ is at the centre of the Holy Scriptures, that, as he had rejected Christ, the call of God to faith was not effective in his case? Has not Jewish unbelief become a hindrance to the Christian gospel?

Paul could not accept this, and replies very strongly, **Certainly not! Indeed, let every God be true but every man a liar.** (4). Israel's unbelief could never affect God's mighty saving purposes in history, neither could it hinder the spread of the gospel throughout the world. Paul enforces his answer with a quotation from Psalm 51:4 – **As it is written: That you (God) may be justified in your words, and may overcome when you are judged.**

## **(3) God's justice in the world**

The objector next remarks that if Jewish unbelief has brought into focus God's goodness in the salvation of the Gentiles, the Jews must be doing God a favour – **But if our unrighteousness demonstrates the righteousness of God, what shall we say?** (5) Their unbelief has allowed the Gentiles to enter the kingdom of God. So how could God condemn them? **Is God unjust who inflicts wrath? (I speak as a man.)** How could God punish the Jews for doing him a good turn? Notice that Paul objects strongly to these terrible words, and dissociates himself from them – **I speak as a man.** Paul reacts with an implied call to repentance and faith in the light of God's judgement – **Certainly not! For then how will God judge the world?** (6) God judges justly within the framework of his own moral universe, and keeps to his own rules. If the Jews continue to reject the gospel, they will be judged and punished like everyone else who turns away from the way of faith. Otherwise there would be moral chaos in the world!

## **(5) Does God act unjustly in condemning the unbelieving Jews?**

The 'lie' mentioned in verse 7 is related to the strong Jewish feeling that they should not be judged by God on the same basis as the Gentiles – **For if the truth of God has increased through my lie to his glory, why am I also still judged as a sinner?**

Paul replies – **And why not say, Let us do evil good may come – as we are slanderously reported and as some affirm that we say. Their condemnation is just.** This is really the old argument that the end justifies the means. Paul is almost speechless at their impudence, for God acts justly, and any condemnation is rightly deserved. Those who do not believe in Christ are in conflict with God. Whether Jewish or pagan, unbelievers cannot evade the judgement of God.

In conclusion, we see how sinners, by many devious arguments, try to rescue themselves from God's righteous judgement. The Jews of Paul's day, representing religious people, may have rejected the gospel, which they could find plainly written into the law, but they should consider these prophetic words – **the soul who sins will die.** (Ezekiel 18:4) All men will stand before God's judgement seat – whether Jew or Gentile. All who refuse the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, come under the wrath of God.

This is not a popular message to preach, but it is the truth. Kings and presidents and judges and national leaders may have no desire to hear it, and may hinder its propagation. However, the truth remains – it is impossible to hide behind religious observances, thereby hoping to avoid the condemnation of God. Gospel preachers, who have a passion for souls, must proclaim **all** of the Word of God without fear or favour. The gospel necessarily contains a message of condemnation to bring men and women to faith in Christ. We must throw out this gospel lifeline to souls adrift in a troubled sea of guilt, otherwise they will not know that they are perishing.

## QUESTIONS ON STUDY 6

### A. QUESTIONS ON THE TEXTS QUOTED IN THE EXPOSITION

#### **Read Romans 1:3.**

1. Why was Paul anxious to establish Jesus' pedigree?

#### **Read 1 Kings 12:6-11.**

2. Why was Solomon's son Rehoboam a disaster?
3. What happened eventually to the two rival kingdoms?

#### **Read Psalm 96:8-10.**

4. What in these verses is a great spur to worship?
5. What is the meaning of the words 'he shall judge the people righteously'?

#### **Read John 1:29.**

6. What special meaning would the words 'Lamb of God' convey to the Jewish hearers of John the Baptist?

#### **Read John 1:6-11.**

7. What was the reaction of the darkness to God's light?

#### **Read Matthew 23:16-17.**

8. Why did Jesus describe the Jewish religious leaders as 'blind'?

#### **Read 2 Corinthians 3:14-15.**

9. In what way was a veil upon Jewish hearts?

#### **Read Isaiah 9:1-2.**

10. What is the light that shone in 'the land of the shadow of death'?

#### **Read Luke 2:32.**

11. What was Joseph's reaction?
12. What explanation was given to Mary?

#### **Read John 8:12.**

13. What is the 'light' that Jesus Christ brought?

#### **Read Deuteronomy 4:10.**

15. What is another name for Horeb where the Law of Moses was given by God?
16. What should have been two desirable results of the Jews receiving God's law?

**Read Matthew 23:4.**

16. Give an example of a 'heavy burden' upon the people.

**Read Mark 3:1-6.**

17. Why were the religious leaders pleased to see the man in the synagogue?  
18. Under which conditions was Jesus willing to set aside the law?

**Read Matthew 9:13.**

19. Why should the Pharisees **not** avoid contact with 'sinners'?

**Read Matthew 12:7.**

20. What example did Jesus use to show that an act of mercy comes before the observance of the law? (See verses 3-4)

**Read Mark 12:40.**

21. What do you think the phrase **devour widows' houses** means?

**Read Acts 10:9-17.**

21. Describe very briefly how God prepared Peter to preach the gospel to Gentiles.

**Read Luke 4:26-29.**

23. What was the reaction of the Jews to Jesus reminding them of God's gracious dealings with the Gentiles?

**Read Luke 18:13-14.**

24. What does 'justified' mean in the context of this parable?  
25. What did he do in order to be justified?

**Read Acts 15:10.**

26. Why was it wrong to insist that Gentile Christians should be required to live like Jews?

**Read Psalm 51:4.**

27. How is God 'justified' in the sight of sinners?  
28. What is meant here by the death of a soul?

**B. QUESTIONS ON THE EXPOSITION**

**Read carefully Romans 2:17-29** where Paul continues to address the Jews.

- (1) Much can be said concerning the self-righteousness of the Pharisees. Compare what Paul says here with what Christ said about them in Matthew chapters 5, 6, 7, and 23.
- (2) Describe in your own words what Paul says here concerning a true Jew. Explain what he means by the circumcision of the heart (verse 29).

**Now read Romans 3:1-8.** In this passage Paul appears to be speaking out against those of his own Jewish race. Make a list of the Jewish objections against Paul, and write out his answers to their objections.

### C. PRACTICAL

Based upon Paul's question-and-answer method used in Romans 3:1-8, read carefully the three following passages on the sinfulness of mankind, and describe how religious people today raise objections to Biblical teaching on this subject :

Mark 7:14-23; Ephesians 2:1-3; James 3:2-8

- (1) Write an original title for your sermon.
- (2) As briefly as possible, write out an introduction.
- (3) Give a list of your main sermon points in their proper order.
- (4) Write a conclusion, containing a brief gospel appeal
- (5) Preach this sermon at your Church, or at your assigned preaching point, and describe any blessings that resulted from it, or any special reactions that you noticed. If no reactions, then ask for some comments from the elders or deacons, etc.

## STUDY 7

### GOD'S CONDEMNATION OF THE WORLD

#### ROMANS 3:9-20

### EXPOSITION

There is no real understanding of salvation without some knowledge of sin, and there is no true understanding of sin without a knowledge of God's law. Paul began his outline of the gospel with the preaching of the law and the doctrine of the condemnation of sin. In Romans chapter 1:18-32, the Gentiles are singled out for condemnation because of their evil practices. In chapters 2-3, Paul points the finger at the religious world, and, in particular, at his own Jewish countrymen who were boasting in their religious observances and their special relationship with God, but were guilty of not observing God's law. In 3:9, he concludes with a statement that **all** the nations – whether Jew or Gentile – stand equally condemned before God. He declares that God wrote his law into the hearts and minds and consciences of all men. By instinct, men know what is right and wrong. Gospel preaching must begin first with a declaration that the whole world stands condemned before God because it has broken his law. This is sin. No one can be made right with God by trying to observe the law, for every attempt is bound to end in failure. Paul concludes – **For all have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God.** (Romans 3:23) It is the glory of man to have fellowship with God, and obey his commands; it is the shame of man that he falls short of the glory of God through his sin. Those who break God's law fall below God's acceptable standard, and are therefore to be condemned.

### All are sinners

This is the most objectionable part of the gospel. Many preachers soften their message at this point, or even ignore this vital truth. Many contemporary Christian songs and hymns make little or no reference to sin. Gospel preaching always begins with man's sin. The entire opening section of Romans (1:18-3:8) is designed to show that no one is able to stand up in God's lawcourt and declare his innocence – **There is no one who is righteous, no, not one** (3:10). Therefore, **the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men** (1:18). The law of God brings only condemnation upon men, even though they attempt to keep it. The function of the law is to condemn those who break it.

The Jews pleaded to God for mercy. They conclude their special appeal in verse 9 – **What then? Are we better than they?** Paul replies, **'Not at all. For we have previously charged both Jews and Greeks that they are all under sin.** Paul had already declared that the Jews were in a better position than the Gentiles, for they were the preservers of the law. They had the great privilege of possessing the oracles of God. But they should have known that just having the law never put them right with God. When they appear in the judgement, God will say, 'You claim that you have lived your lives according to my law, but you are liars; for you did not keep my law.' Only one person kept the law perfectly, and that was God's own Son in the days of his flesh. Pilate spoke the truth when he said of Jesus – **I find no fault in him.** (John 19:6), for he was indeed **without sin** (Hebrews 4:15).

**Jews and Gentiles are condemned equally before God** (9). **Jews and Greeks ... are all under sin** (3:9). What does Paul mean by the words **under sin**? He is referring to the guilt

and power of sin. Whenever the law is brought to bear upon the behaviour of sinners, they are immediately convicted. Breaking the law is sin; and sin must be punished, for God is a just God. The Puritan writer John Trapp said this – **The whole of sin is in man, and the whole of man is in sin.** Sin lodges in every part of man's nature, extending its influence through the whole. Therefore, it is impossible to keep the law of God perfectly. Robert Haldane writes – **To be under sin is to be opposed to being under grace.** Those who are 'under sin' have not come to Jesus Christ and received him as their Saviour. They are under law, not under grace. To be 'under grace' is to reach out to God, and plead for mercy on the basis of what Christ did on the Cross. It is at that point that God declared their innocence, for their sins were taken away, and their punishment discharged in Jesus Christ. This, then, is the charge against sinners – that of breaking the law of God, and being in a state of sin.

### **The evidence that all are sinners before God (10-18)**

Paul is in no way a judge of the world. Only God can do that. Paul directs men's minds to the Bible, and brings together several verses from the Old Testament as proof that all men are sinners. The Bible is the supreme authority in all matters concerning the truth, and, in particular, the truth about human nature. Paul says this concerning sinners – **As it is written** (10). This phrase is very close in spirit to the Old Testament prophetic declaration – **Thus says the Lord.** Paul's summary of Psalm 14:1-3 (repeated in Psalm 53:1-3) is this – **There is no one who is righteous, no, not one; there is no one who understands; there is no one who seeks after God. They have all gone out of the way; they have together become unprofitable; there is no one who does good, no, not one.** (10-12)

Without this dark background of truth about sin, there cannot be a full appreciation of the light and glory of the gospel. The gospel begins here with a statement that God can find no righteous conduct in the human race unless he personally intervenes in grace and mercy – **There is no one who is righteous, no, not one.** No one can put his hand on his heart and declare, 'I did this without sin.' The mind, also, became depraved through sin – **There is no one who understands.** These statements taken from Psalm 14 are all perfectly plain. Psalm 14 begins with the statement that all men are fools. The word **fool** in Hebrew means 'futile', 'empty of purpose', and 'without wisdom'. The Puritan commentator Matthew Henry declares, **all sinners are fools.** Do you remember Jesus' parable about the farmer who lived only for the possession of material things? The very night he sat down to rest, and declared himself satisfied, God said to him, **You fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided? So is he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich towards God.** (Luke 12:20-21)

Without a right relationship with God, life is futile and empty. The reason for man's existence is to glorify God, and enjoy him forever. Yet **there is no one who seeks after God.** (11) It is beyond the capacity of the nature of sinful man to seek after God, and love him, and serve him. **Can you searching out the deep things of God? Can you find out the limits of the Almighty?** asked Zophar the Naamathite of Job (Job 11:7).

The fact is, it never occurs to sinful man to seek after God. Why is this so? Because his mind has been blinded – **But even if our gospel is veiled, it veiled to those who are perishing, whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them.** (2 Corinthians 4:3-4) Who, then, can find God? Those in whom God does a saving work. God draws them to his Son by his Spirit.

Having made some positive statements about the inability of sinners to make themselves right with God, Paul continues with some positive statements on the same theme. First of all, he states that sinful men have lost their way – **They have all gone out of the way.** Here

is a picture of sheep straying from the shepherd and the flock. Here are **the lost sheep** of Luke 15:3-7, the ones who have wilfully gone their own way – **All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, every one, to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him** (that is, Christ) **the iniquity of us all.** (Isaiah 53:6) When Jesus looked upon the people of Israel, he saw them as sinful, straying sheep – **And Jesus, when he came out, saw a great multitude, and was moved with compassion for them, because they were like sheep not having a shepherd. So he began to teach them many things.** (Mark 6:34)

Paul continues devastatingly – **they have together become unprofitable.** Those who are in a state of sin are the most unprofitable creatures under the sun. It is only when sin is dealt with that men are worthwhile to God. When a sinner comes to Jesus Christ, what great things can then be accomplished for God! He makes him useful in his service. Robert Haldane states – **Everything that is corrupted by sin loses its use.** The word **unprofitable** is used in Hebrew to describe sour milk, when it is fit only to be poured down the drain. In the same way, God sees sinners as spoilt and sour milk, and of no further use. The phrase – **There is no one who does good, no, not one** indicates that when God looks into human behaviour, what does he find? He sees nothing but sin and selfishness. This is true of all men, even those who attempt to keep the requirements of God's law. God looks into the heart, and sees there only self-centred and sinful motives.

The picture of sinful man now worsens in verses 13-18. Paul describes the speech of sinful men – **Their throat is an open tomb; with their tongues they have practised deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips; whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness** (13-14). Robert Haldane comments – **Their mouth is full of filthy conversation.** Why do men's tongues practise deceit? The reason is so that they can get their own way. Their speech is as poisonous to human relationships as snake venom is to the body. They gossip, they mar people's reputations, and they tell lies to the destruction of those round about them – **Death and life are in the power of the tongue** (Proverbs 18:21). That is the way of the world, and that is what God sees – **His mouth is full of cursing and deceit and oppression; under his tongue is trouble and iniquity. He sits in the lurking places of the villages; in the secret places he murders the innocent** (Psalm 10:7-8).

It is interesting to note that when God permits natural disasters to come upon mankind, the natural reaction of men is not to turn to him, but to resort to foul language and bitterness – **Then the fifth angel poured out his bowl on the throne of the beast, and his kingdom became full of darkness; and they gnawed their tongues because of the pain. And they blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, and did not repent of their deeds.** (Revelation 16:10-11)

When disaster strikes, the first reaction of an unbeliever is to blame God. The tongue is a great force for evil – ... **the tongue is a little member and boasts great things. See how great a forest a little fire kindles! And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity. The tongue is so set among our members that it defiles the whole body, and sets on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire by hell. For every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and creature of the sea, is tamed and has been tamed by mankind. But no one can tame the tongue. It is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison.** (James 3:5-8)

This Old Testament picture of the nature of man is not a pleasant one, but it is necessary to look at it closely. The sick do not hesitate to consult a doctor for a diagnosis of their problem. Yet sinners are reluctant to take their souls to God, and then complain when God gives them a true diagnosis of their condition.

Consider the way sinners walk (15-17) – **Their feet are swift to shed blood; destruction and misery are in their ways; and the way of peace they have not known.** Sinners desire only one thing – to get their own way. Paul's feet were murderous when he walked

to Damascus to put the heretical Christians into prison. The advice of Proverbs 1:10-11, 15-16 is sound – **My son, if sinners entice you, do not consent. If they say, Come with us, let us lie in wait to shed blood; let us lurk secretly for the innocent without cause; let us swallow them alive like Sheol ... My son, do not walk in the way with them, keep your foot from their path.** The destruction of human life and happiness is the result of sin – **their feet run to evil, and they make haste to shed innocent blood; their thoughts are thoughts of iniquity; wasting and destruction are in their paths.** (Isaiah 59:7) The Hebrew word ‘**destruction**’ means ‘to fracture’, ‘to break or to dislocate a bone’.

When preaching the gospel, we can hardly refrain from tears when we think of what happened to Jesus on the Cross? Consider the words of a Psalm that prophesied the death of Christ – **I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint** (Psalm 22:14) It is interesting that Jesus quoted this Psalm when he was on the Cross. The writer of the Letter to the Hebrews puts his finger on the cause of such maltreatment of Christ – **For consider him who endured such hostility from sinners against himself** (Hebrews 12:3).

How do sinners think? Look at verse 18 – **There is no fear of God before their eyes.** A sinner has a blinded mind and a hardened heart to the things of God. No matter how many times the gospel is preached, it will make no impression until God’s Spirit awakens the soul to its true condition. The word **fear** means ‘reverence’ – a feeling of great awe in the presence of a holy God. Yet even conscience does not bring a sinner to God – **An oracle within my heart concerning the transgression of the wicked: There is no fear of God before his eyes.** (Psalm 36:1) The conscience becomes, as it were, **seared with a hot iron** (1 Timothy 4:2). As sinners go on in their sinful course, the pangs of conscience become weaker and weaker.

### **The failure of the Law to justify a sinner (19-20)**

Paul goes on to show that, in the light of the depravity of human nature, the law is useless in justifying a sinner. Only God is able to change sinful nature. Trying to keep the law, trying to do the best we can, trying to live a life that is better than our neighbours, is not good enough, for God requires perfection – **Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in his sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin.**

Gospel preachers need first to convince sinners that they have broken God’s law. How can they bring them to faith in Jesus Christ if they are not first convicted of sin. Sinners need to know what they are being saved from. The enormity of sin is seen in the breaking of God’s law. The function of the law is to show that all men are sinners in the sight of God. It is a perfect standard against which all men fall short. The law condemns sinners, and makes them fearful of punishment. The works of the law can neither justify a sinner before God, nor save him. Matthew Henry states – **The argument is very plain, we can never be justified or saved by the law because we have broken it.**

The evidence of God’s Word has been presented. The prisoner has nothing to say, for the proof is overwhelming. Only a ‘guilty’ verdict remains to be brought in, and the prisoner condemned. At this point, the sinner is asked if he has anything to say. He accepts his guilt, but he pleads to the Judge for mercy. But what has the Judge to say? Nothing, for there is no place for mercy in the law. Instead, another way has to be found – **But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed** (21).

The sentence of the law drives the guilty sinner to Christ whose salvation lies outside of the law – **Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith.** (Galatians 3:24). The function of the schoolmaster is not only to teach, but to

punish the wrongdoer. To avoid punishment, we must have someone to defend us, and someone who will intervene and bear the punishment himself. Gospel preachers should never forget that when preaching about the law and sin, they should also point to Jesus Christ, who sets men free from the law and the power of sin. Philip Bliss (1838-1876) wrote many gospel songs. One of his finest hymns, but not widely known today, is about freedom from the condemnation of the law:

1.  
Free from the law, oh happy condition,  
Jesus has bled, and there is remission,  
Cursed by the law and bruised by the fall,  
Grace has redeemed us once for all.

3.  
'Children of God' oh, glorious calling!  
Surely his grace will keep us from falling;  
Passing from death to life at his call,  
Blessèd salvation once for all.

2.  
Now we are free – there's no condemnation,  
Jesus provides a perfect salvation;  
'Come unto me! – oh, hear his sweet call!  
Come, and he saves us once for all.

CHORUS :  
Once for all, oh sinner receive it,  
Once for all, oh brother believe it;  
Cling to the Cross, the burden will fall,  
Christ has redeemed us once for all.

## QUESTIONS FOR STUDY 7

### A. QUESTIONS ON THE TEXTS QUOTED IN THE EXPOSITION

#### Read Romans 3:23

1. Who are the **all**?
2. After reading this transcript, how would you define a **sinner**?

#### Read Romans 3:10

3. Where is this quotation from in the Old Testament?  
(Be careful how you answer, and read again the first paragraph under the heading: '**The evidence that all men are sinners before God**')

#### Read Romans 1:18

4. What is the inevitable result of men's unrighteousness?

#### Read John 19:6

5. On what occasion did Pilate say this?
6. In which previous verse did Pilate come to a verdict of 'not guilty'?

#### Read Hebrews 4:15

7. In what respect was he like all men?
8. In what respect was he unlike all men?

#### Read Luke 12:20-21

9. In what way was the man **not** a fool?
10. In what way was he an utter fool?

#### Read Job 11:7

11. What answers did Zophar expect from Job to his two questions?
12. What four things did Zophar say were necessary for a man to come to God?  
(Verses 13-15)

**Read 2 Corinthians 4:3-4**

13. Who have been blinded?
14. What is their outstanding characteristic? (See verse 4)
15. See Luke 15:3-7. Who does the shepherd represent here?
16. Who does the lost sheep represent?
17. If you have preached on this parable, briefly state how you treated it, and what results did you observe?

**Read Isaiah 53:6**

18. There is a contrast made between the wayward sheep of this verse, and the sacrificed sheep (Jesus Christ) in verse 7. Very briefly, state the contrast.

**Read Mark 6:34**

19. Where did the people come from?
20. How did Jesus feel towards the large crowd?

**Read Proverbs 18:21**

21. Explain this verse briefly.

**Read Psalm 10:7-8**

22. Who is the 'His' and the 'He'?
23. Where would such a one be found?
24. What could he 'murder'?

**Read Revelation 16:10-11**

25. What 3 effects did pain have on proud sinners? (Verses 9-11)

**Read James 3:5-8**

26. From where does the wickedness of the tongue come? (Verse 6)
27. What effect does the tongue have on a person's life?
28. Who is able to control the tongue? (Verse 8)

**Read Proverbs 1:10-12, and 15-16**

29. What is characteristic of those who would damage the innocent? (Verse 11)
30. What do you think is meant by the phrase 'walk not in the way'?

**Read Isaiah 59:7**

31. What do evil people think about?
32. What are two results of this?

**Read Psalm 22:14**

33. Where were the effects described in verses 14-18 fulfilled?
34. Why would his bones be '**out of joint**'?

**Read Hebrews 12:3**

35. What two things did Jesus have to endure? (Verses 2-3)

**Read Psalm 36:1**

36. Of what was the Psalmist convicted?
37. What two things had he left off doing?

**Read 1 Timothy 4:2**

38. Whose consciences are being described here? (Verse 1)

39. What two things tell us that they were very religious?

**Read Galatians 3:24**

40. What was the benefit of having the law?

41. What was the main function of the law?

42. Can the observance of the law ever justify a sinner before God?

**B. QUESTIONS ON THE EXPOSITION**

**In this passage, Paul is addressing both Jews and Gentiles.**

(1) Make a list of the Old Testament references that Paul quotes here to prove that everyone stands guilty before God. **(You may find it helpful to use a Bible with the references in the margin, if you have one)**

(2) What do these verses tell us about the standing of men before God to prove their need to come to Christ?

(3) **Look at the words of the first verse of Philip Bliss's hymn quoted at the end of the exposition.**

Explain what each verse is saying about the relation between the Christian and the condemning Law.

**C. PRACTICAL**

**With any sermon you might preach on this passage, you could easily gain the reputation for being condemnatory and negative.**

**Make a list of positive evangelistic statements that you could include in such a sermon in order to encourage your hearers to believe in Christ.**

## STUDY 8

### JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH

#### ROMANS 3:21-31

### EXPOSITION

#### The impossibility of being saved by good works

Under a covenant of works, God promised that all who kept the law perfectly would receive eternal life – **Every commandment which I command you today you must be careful to observe, that you may live** (Deuteronomy 8:1). The problem with this was that no one could keep the law, and no one could live a perfect life. God gave the Jews a written law in order to convict them of their sin. This law is summarised in the Ten Commandments. To the Gentiles, God gave a moral law written in their hearts. Therefore no one is left with any excuse; for everyone, having the law, knows what is right and wrong. In their wrongdoing, sinners stand condemned; for when they honestly consider their spiritual state before God, the law reveals how sinful they are. All are equally wicked in the sight of God if they break his law. This is a truth that is repeated many times in the Bible, just as Paul said earlier in verse 10 – **there is no one righteous, no, not one.**

Men are inclined to justify themselves, even to themselves. This ceases when they are convicted of sin through the law. The function of the law is such that **every mouth may be stopped**, and the whole world made **guilty before God** (19). We now come to the second part of the gospel, when men are convicted of sin, and admit to their unrighteousness before God. When sinners come to this position, they do not know what to do next. It is then that God does something wonderful. To guilty sinners, Paul goes on to say in verse 21 – **But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed to by the law and the Prophets.** Those who believe that somehow they can make themselves right with God, or can do something to please God, are sadly mistaken. God has brought in a new way, a new covenant, and a new promise, to deliver sinful men from condemnation. The grace of God in salvation is witnessed to by the law, but remains unaffected by it. This theme will be taken up in chapter 7, where Paul explains the part that the law plays in the gospel. How is it possible, then, for sinners to be made right with God? How can the old life, which is so imperfect and so sinful, be wiped out? That must bring us immediately to the appeal of the gospel. Having considered the bad news, Paul now turns to the good news of the gospel. Even **the law and the Prophets** pointed to a better way, which is the only way in which a condemned sinner can be saved. Here are two examples:

#### (1) The case of Abel (Genesis 4:1-15)

The first brothers to be born were Cain and Abel. Cain tried to please God by taking of the fruit of the ground – for he was a great gardener – and pile it up before the Lord as a sacrifice. In contrast, Abel did what pleased God, and took a sheep of his flock, killed it, and offered it up as a blood-sacrifice before the Lord. Cain, who brought an offering of his hands, was rejected. But the one who came in faith, and offered the blood-sacrifice, was accepted. There, right at the beginning of history, God was pleased to receive the sinner who came to him by the way of faith – **By faith Abel offered to God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts** (Hebrews 11:4).

## (2) The example of Abraham.

How was the founder of the Hebrew nation able to become right with God? Abel was accounted righteous by God because he came the way of obedience and sacrifice. Abraham was counted as righteous because he had faith in God – **And he believed in the Lord, and he accounted it to him for righteousness.** (Genesis 15:6) This is a theme Paul takes up at some length in Romans chapter 4.

The fact that righteousness comes from God and not from man is explained many times in the Old Testament. Here are a few examples:

**Deliver me from blood-guiltiness, O God, the God of my salvation: and my tongue shall sing aloud of your righteousness. (Psalm 51:14)**

**I will ascribe righteousness to my Maker. (Job 36:3)**

**Now this is his name by which he will be called: THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS. (Jeremiah 23:6)**

**O Lord, righteousness belongs to you. (Daniel 9:7)**

**O my people, remember now...that you may know the righteousness of the LORD. (Micah 6:5)**

### How is a sinner made right with God? (22)

**... even the righteousness of God which is through faith in Jesus Christ to all and on all who believe. For there is no difference.** No sinner is made right with God until he comes in faith to Jesus Christ. What does this mean? It means coming just as he is; not putting on a show of religion, or drawing up a list of his good works. It means admitting his sins, and coming to God in repentance. It means confessing his desperate need of salvation through Jesus Christ.

Then comes personal faith in Christ and a confession before the world that he now belongs to him – **... that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes to righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made to salvation.** (Romans 10:9-10) Here is the ABC of the gospel – **A**dmit your sin; **B**elieve in Christ for salvation; and **C**onfess him before the world.

The words **righteousness ... to all and on all who believe** indicate that no one is too bad to receive salvation, and that all who call upon the Lord can be sure of salvation – **For whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.** (Romans 10:13) No one who comes in faith to Jesus Christ will be turned away. The words **all** and **whoever** are very important in gospel preaching, for they show that there is to be a general invitation to all to come to the open door of faith. All are invited; and those who come receive the righteousness of God **in Jesus Christ**. The words **there is no difference** destroy any idea that the Jews were superior to the Gentiles. They may have been the guardians of the law, or, in their own estimation, felt themselves to be superior to the polluted Gentiles. But this made no difference.

Every sinner must come the same way – by the Cross of Christ. Each must put his trust in the shed blood of Jesus Christ. Works must be set aside, for nothing he can do is righteous in God's sight, or can contribute to his salvation. Verse 23 is most humbling, for it highlights what is common to all men – ... **for all have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God.** Whoever they are, or whatever they are, or in whatever circumstances they find ourselves, all are equal in God's sight in this respect – they are all sinners. This verse is probably the most levelling in the Bible, for there are no exceptions. Not only have all men sinned, but they fall short of the glory of God. The purpose of the law is to show men how much they have fallen from God's perfect standard through sin.

Verse 24 contrasts the feeble efforts of men with the overwhelming grace of God in salvation – ... **being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.** Salvation is a gift from God – it cannot be earned, for it is a free gift to all who believe. The gift is not deserved; it is received freely by grace, for it is a mark of God's goodness. Wages are earned, but gifts are received freely. In Greek, **to be justified** is the same as **to be made righteous**. It means **to be made right with God**. The implications of this phrase are enormous, for, when the justified believer appears before God in the Judgement, God will not see any of his sins, for the sinner has been made right with God. Robert Haldane writes – **Justification stands opposed both to accusation and condemnation.** This is part of the process that is called in this verse **redemption**. Redemption is the same as **ransom**, indicating that a price has been paid. Jesus Christ was willing to come from heaven to pay the price for sinners who are in themselves worthless. He gave his life on the Cross that he might redeem lost sinners – ... **just as the Son of Man has not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many.** (Matthew 20:28) Paul declares – **For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself a ransom for all** (1 Timothy 2:5-6).

What was it that Christ paid for? He paid the debt of sin – the breaking of God's law – ... **having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And he has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the Cross** (Colossians 2:14). The only way that sinners could discharge their debt is to be punished eternally in hell; and, even then, it would still be an incomplete payment for the breaking of God's law. Jesus Christ came to take upon himself the debt for law-breaking, despite the fact that he never once broke God's law – **For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God** (1 Peter 3:18). He paid the price for men's sins. **The wages of sin is death**, declares Paul in Romans 6:23; but Christ undertook to pay those **wages**, and died on the Cross.

Verse 25 reveals something more about the death of Christ – ... **whom God set forth to be a propitiation by his blood, through faith, to demonstrate his righteousness, because in his forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed.** It was not a private death but a public one, as the words **set forth** show. It was by no means a natural death; it was death by torture and public disgrace. The onlookers mocked him, and despised him. There he was, lifted up to view, with nails fixing him to a wooden cross, treated like a common criminal. Yet he did not respond with angry words or unworthy actions – **Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him; he has put him to grief. When you make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand.** (Isaiah 53:10)

God displayed his Son **as a propitiation**. Matthew Henry writes – **God, the injured party, makes the first overtures toward a reconciliation.** The word **propitiation** (an appeasing sacrifice) indicates that God is angry with sinners. What happened at the Cross showed the extent of God's anger. Deep darkness and doom overshadowed the Cross, a sure indication of God's consideration of those who break his law. The life of sinners is short, and then they face the final judgement of a holy God.

Those who, like the Israelites in Egypt, shelter under the blood of the lamb (Exodus 12:13), are saved from the wrath of God – **Much more then, having now been justified by his blood,**

**we shall be saved from wrath through him.** (Romans 5:9) Propitiation involves a sacrifice. In the Holy Place the priest sprinkled the blood of the sacrifice for the forgiveness of sins. At the cross, the sinner is reconciled with an angry God, and so finds peace with God. On the cross, Christ experienced the full extent of God's anger against sin; so much so, that he cried out – **My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?** (Mark 15:34) What Jesus did was to offer a blood-sacrifice that made all the sacrifices of the Old Covenant redundant. It was only at the Cross that reconciliation between God and sinful men could take place – ... **knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot** 1 Peter 1:18-19).

The phrase **through faith in his blood** shows the effectiveness of Christ's sacrifice for all those who believe in him. God's justice was seen to be done in the death of Christ – ... **to demonstrate at the present time his righteousness, that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.** (26) In the moment Christ died on the cross, God's anger was averted from all who believe in his Son, and the threat of final judgement was removed.

### **The means of justification**

**Where is boasting then?** (27). The same word has occurred twice previously – in 2:17 and 2:23. The Jews regarded themselves as spiritually superior, for they possessed the law of God. They were forever boasting of the works of the law, and of their religious observances. But these things did not make them right with God. John Calvin remarks soberly – **Boasting is excluded without all doubt, since we can produce nothing of our own that merits the commendation of God.** Paul is firm in his answer to the question – **It is excluded.** There is no room for pride when coming to terms with the gospel. Sinners do not find it easy to admit that their lives before God are horrible and wicked and sinful. They do not see their need of the righteousness of Christ.

How, then, is it possible to be right with God? Is there a law or principle at work here? – **By what law?** Paul replies that there is indeed a spiritual principle at work. However, it is not a law **of works**. No one is made right with God by their own efforts. The only thing that God requires of a repentant sinner is faith in his Son – **by the law of faith.** Paul explains further in these words – **Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law.** (28) No one can please God, and be accepted by him, on the basis of good works. There is only one way to God – and this is true for both Jew and Gentile – by the way of faith – **Or is he the God of the Jews only? Is he not also the God of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also** (29). God justifies Jew and Gentile in the same way, and under the same conditions – ... **since there is one God who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith.** (30) Justification by faith is effective both for religious Israel and the pagan world.

One final question indicates the puzzlement of the Jewish mind – **Do we then make void the law through faith?** Does the law of faith nullify the law of God? Did the Jews receive the law, and become guardians of the law, for nothing? Paul replies – **Certainly not! On the contrary, we establish the law.** The law played a very

important part in the bringing in of the gospel, which thought is expanded at some length later – **Therefore, my brethren, you also have become dead to the law through the body of Christ** (Romans 7:4). Sinners must be shown their need to die to works if they are to be saved. This is a formidable task for any gospel preacher. Sinners must receive Jesus Christ as their only Saviour. There is no place for works in salvation, but there is a sure salvation for those who believe in Christ.

## QUESTIONS ON STUDY 8

### A. QUESTIONS ON THE TEXTS QUOTED IN THE EXPOSITION

**Read Deuteronomy 8:1**

1. Compare this verse with **Deuteronomy 30:15-16**, and explain what are the two opposing promises of the law.

**Read Hebrews 11:4**

2. How do we know that Abel had the right kind of faith?
3. Why was Abel declared to be **righteous**?
4. What is Abel's highest commendation in this verse?
5. Abel was not actually commanded by God to offer an animal sacrifice. Upon which example, in Genesis 3, could Abel have probably based his sacrifice?

**Read Genesis 15:6**

6. This verse is quoted 5 times in the New Testament: give the references for 3 of them in Romans.
7. Give **one** further New Testament reference.
8. In no more than 20 words, explain what Genesis 15:6 means.

**Read Psalm 51:4**

9. Of what '**bloodguiltiness**' was David guilty?  
(Hint – read 2 Samuel 11)
10. Which 2 commandments had David broken?
11. In this Psalm, upon what is David's salvation based?

**Read Job 36:3**

12. Who made this statement?
13. Was he right to say this?
14. What 2 further attributes of God are mentioned in this chapter?  
(See verses 5 and 26)
15. Can you find any hint of salvation in this chapter?

**Read Jeremiah 23:6**

16. In this verse, God's righteousness is connected with what?
17. What is special about the words '**THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS**'?

**Read Daniel 9:7**

18. What caused the '**confusion of faces**' of Israel? (See also verse 8)
19. What are the 4 things regarded as sin in verse 5?

**Read Micah 6:5**

20. How did God feel towards his people?
21. What did God do for his people, for which they should have been grateful?  
(See verse 4)
22. How did Israel survive the 'curse' of Balaam? (See verse 5)

**Read Romans 10:9-10**

- 23. What brings a sinner to confess Christ and believe in him? (See verse 8)
- 24. What comes with believing?

**Read Romans 10:13**

- 25. Where would you find this verse in the Old Testament?
- 26. How does God act towards those who call upon him? (See verse 12)
- 27. What begins the process of belief? (See verse 14)

**Read Matthew 20:28**

- 28. What was the chief characteristic of Christ's earthly life?
- 29. What is another word for **ransom**?
- 30. For whom did Jesus pay the ransom?

**Read 1 Timothy 2:5-6**

- 31. What is a **mediator**?
- 32. Why was Christ able to '**give himself as a ransom**'? (See the end of verse 5)

**Read Colossians 2:14**

- 33. What does God's law record against sinners?
- 34. How are they removed?

**Read 1 Peter 3:18**

- 35. What other word describes God as **just**?
- 36. What was the purpose of Christ's suffering?

**Read Isaiah 53:10**

- 37. This chapter is about whom?
- 38. Why should God be **pleased to bruise him**?
- 39. For whose sin was he offered up? (Read this part of the verse very carefully)

**Read Exodus 12:13**

- 40. What special instructions were given to the Israelites? (Read verses 3-10)
- 41. What was special about the sacrifice? (See verse 5)
- 42. How did Christ fulfil the 2 conditions of the 2 questions above?

**Read Romans 5:9**

- 43. What is God's **wrath**?
- 44. What does **justified** mean?
- 45. Then why was the blood of Christ necessary for justification?  
(Answer in no more than 20 words)

**Read Mark 15:34**

- 46. Give the Old Testament reference for this verse.
- 47. Why was it significant for Christ to quote this verse when he did?
- 48. In what way did the Father 'forsake' Christ? (Only answer briefly)

**Read 1 Peter 1:18-19**

- 49. In the light of our present study of Romans 3, what was the '**vain conversation received by tradition**'?
- 50. Why did they need to be redeemed?
- 51. What was the price of their redemption?

**Read Romans 7:4**

- 52. What human illustration does Paul use to show how Christians belong to Christ?
- 53. What does it mean to be **dead to the law**?

**B. QUESTIONS ON THE EXPOSITION**

- (1) Here are some key words from the passage we are studying:

- |   |
|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• the righteousness of God (21-22)</li><li>• justification (24, 26, 28)</li><li>• redemption (24)</li><li>• propitiation (25)</li></ul> |
|---|

As well as you are able (possibly using a Bible dictionary if you have one, or could borrow a copy)

- (a) Give a brief explanation of each of these keywords.
  - (b) Show how important they are in describing the work of salvation.
- (2) What does Paul say about the law and circumcision as they apply to the Jews in verses 27-31?

### **C. PRACTICAL APPLICATION**

**In your own words, and not in the exact words of verses 21-26, write out a summary of Paul's teaching here, as if you were giving a short talk of about 10 minutes to a small group of people who need to hear the gospel and believe in Jesus Christ.**

**THIS IS THE END OF MODULE 1 OF OUR STUDIES IN ROMANS**

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