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Sermon Notes

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The Gospel of God’s Glory and of Our Glorification

Romans 1-16

I. Series introduction

A. Paul: A Trophy of God’s Sovereign Grace

Romans 1:1 “Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle and set apart for the gospel of God...”

1. Not “Who was Paul” but “Whose was Paul?”

- a. Post-modern man in constant angst over self-identity
- b. Don’t ask “Who am I” but “Whose am I?”
- c. All three titles beg the question: who is behind this??

2. **Bondslave**

- a. shocking title... slaves seen to be lowest rung of society
- b. Paul delights in that title
- c. Three aspects

i) purchased with a price

1 Corinthians 7:23 “You were bought at a price, do not become slaves of men.”

ii) not your own

1 Corinthians 6:19-20 “You are not your own, you were bought at a price.”

iii) living for the pleasure of the Master

Galatians 1:10 “Am I now trying to win the approval of men or of God? Or am I trying to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a servant of Christ.”

Illus. Ayn Rand, *Atlas Shrugged*... despised what she called “second-handers”, people who constantly lived for the pleasure of other people, concerned “What will he say?” “What will she think?”

Paul: “I don’t care one bit what you think of me... I will not change a word of what God has told me to say.”

Some of Romans may well rub you the wrong way! There is meat in here to challenge the most mature Christian among you... how much more someone who’s never been saved!

This is still God’s word to First Baptist Church

3. Apostle of Christ Jesus

- a. 1st requirement: see the resurrected Christ with own eyes
- b. 2nd requirement: commissioned by Christ to testify, preach and teach
- c. “Foundation” of the church

Ephesians 2:20 “...built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets”

NOW: we interact with the foundation through Scripture!!! Romans is the foundation of First Baptist Church

4. Set apart for the Gospel of God

- a. Set apart from what? The world, its worldly ways and pursuits
- b. Set apart when? From his mother’s womb

Galatians 1:15 “But when God, who set me apart from birth and called me by his grace was pleased to reveal His Son in me so that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, I did not consult any man...”

What happened? How did Paul become a terrible hater of Christ, persecutor of His church? How? The grace of God!!! Paul’s rebellion was as much grace from God as was His conversion

1 Timothy 1: 16 “...I was shown mercy so that in me, the worst of sinners, Christ Jesus might display his unlimited patience as an example for those who would believe on him and receive eternal life.”

c. Set apart for what? The Gospel of God

i) Paul himself a trophy of God’s grace in His gospel

ii) Romans is centrally about God’s sovereign grace

Leon Morris: “God is the central theme of the book of Romans... mentioned 160 times in 16 chapters, about 10 times per chapter...” XXXXXXXXXXXX Get Piper quote

B. Central theme of Romans: The Gospel of God’s Grace

Romans 1:16-17 “I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes, first for the Jew, then for the Gentile.”

Romans answers one major question: **How can a sinful human being escape the just consequences of his/her sins and come into an eternal relationship with a holy God?** The Bible has one word for this: **justification**... Romans was written to explain justification, and even more to show the GRACE OF GOD by which sinners are justified

Romans 1:5 “Through [Christ] and for His name’s sake we received grace and apostleship to call people from among all the Gentiles to the obedience that comes from faith.”

C. Nine major divisions, nine major questions

1. Why do we need justification? **THE UNIVERSAL PROBLEM OF SIN** [Romans 1-3]
2. How was justification made possible? **CHRIST’S ATONEMENT** [Romans 3]
3. How does one receive justification? **JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH** [Romans 3-4]
4. How does justification guarantee final salvation? **ASSURANCE OF SALVATION** [Romans 5]
5. How should a justified person wrestle with the ongoing problem of sin? **SANCTIFICATION BY THE SPIRIT:** [Romans 6-8]
6. Why are so few of the Jews justified? **GOD’S CHOSEN PEOPLE** [Romans 9-11]

7. How should a justified person live daily life in this world? **LIVING SACRIFICES**
[Romans 12-13]
8. How should a justified person live with other weak believers? **FREEDOM TEMPERED BY LOVE** [Romans 14-15]
9. How should a justified person follow Paul in service to Christ? **THE GOSPEL FOR THE GENTILES** [Romans 15]

II. Overview outline

A. **THE UNIVERSAL PROBLEM OF SIN:** Why do we need justification? [Romans 1-3]

1. Paul's introduction: Romans 1:1-7
 - a. Paul's apostleship (1:1)
 - b. Paul's gospel: predicted by the prophets, revealed in history: Jesus Christ (1:2-4)
 - c. Paul's ministry: calling Gentiles to the "obedience that comes from faith"... Romans included (1:5-7)
 - d. Paul's greeting: "Grace and peace to you..." (vs. 7)
2. Paul's desire to visit Rome: Romans 1:8-17
 - a. Joy over the faith of the Roman church
 - b. Commitment to use his spiritual gifts to bless the church & to receive a harvest (1:11-13)
 - c. The compulsion of the Gospel (1:14-17)

Romans 1:16-17 "I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes, first for the Jew, then for the Gentile. For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: 'The righteous will live by faith.'"

Gospel's twin revelation: righteousness from God OR wrath from God... everyone on earth will receive one or the other!! Gospel reveals both

3. God's wrath against sinful humanity (1:18-32) [characteristically Gentile sins]

Key verse: Romans 1:18 "The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness..."

- a. God's holy anger: urgency in the gospel ministry
- b. Suppression of the knowledge of God
- c. Descent into grotesque idolatry
- d. Descent into gross immorality
- e. End result: total depravity, deserving of death but continuing anyway!!

4. God's righteous judgment against sinful humanity (2:1-16)

Key verse: Romans 2:5 *"But because of your stubbornness and your unrepentant heart you are storing up wrath against yourself for the day of God's wrath when his righteous judgment will be revealed."*

- a. Self-righteous judging futile: all are under sin
- b. God's patience for repentance
- c. BUT God's righteous judgment is coming... all the wrath the sinners store up will be revealed and poured out
- d. Gentiles will perish apart from the Law
- e. Jews will perish under the Law

5. The Law accuses the Jews (2:17-29)

Key verse: Romans 2:28-29 *"A man is not a Jew if he is only one outwardly, nor is circumcision merely outward and physical. No, a man is a Jew if he is one inwardly, and circumcision is circumcision of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the written code."*

- a. Jews felt superior; bragged about their relationship to God
- b. BUT not one of them truly kept the Law
- c. The Law stood over them and accused them of hypocrisy

6. The Universality of Sin: Romans 3:1-20

Key verse: Romans 3:9-10 *"We have already made the charge that Jews and Gentiles alike are all under sin. As it is written, 'There is no one righteous, not even one.'"*

- a. Being Jewish DID have some advantages, but salvation for the faithless was not one of them

- b. God will be proved righteous on Judgment Day... even if the whole world ends up condemned
- c. Scripture clearly testifies that not a single person deserves heaven...

Romans 3:10 “There is no one righteous, not even one.”

- d. On Judgment Day, the whole world will be silenced before God, and everyone will be accountable to Him
- e. The Law made not one Jew righteous, but only makes us conscious of sin

Overall lessons of this first section: Every single person on earth, whether Jew or Gentile is a sinner deserving the wrath of God, and is daily storing up that wrath for Judgment Day. So, ...

Why do we need justification? **THE UNIVERSAL PROBLEM OF SIN**

B. CHRIST’S ATONEMENT: How was justification made possible? [Romans 3]

Romans 3:23-25 “...for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement through faith in his blood.”

1. A perfect God, filled with wrath against every sin... how can He be appeased?
2. Christ’s death on the cross absorbed the wrath of God for all who have faith in Christ
3. God poured out his wrath on His own Son, so that all who trust in Christ might be justified... made righteous in His sight

These verses comprise the glowing hot center of the entire story of the Bible

4. The cross of Christ demonstrates God’s justice in allowing sinners into heaven
5. All people on the face of the earth, both Jews and Gentiles, can only be justified in this one way... through faith in Christ

C. JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH: How does one receive justification? [Romans 3-4]

Key verse *Romans 3:21 “But now a righteousness from God apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. This righteousness from God comes through faith in Christ Jesus to all who believe...”*

1. Righteousness from God apart from law comes to all who believe

2. The Law was never given to justify anyone
3. Faith alone justifies, as Abraham discovered long ago
4. Abraham was justified by faith when he heard a promise from God and believed it
5. LATER, after he was already justified, Abraham received the covenant sign of circumcision
6. Being a Jew physically saves no one from their sins
7. All people for all time saved through faith alone apart from works of the Law

D. **ASSURANCE OF SALVATION:** How does justification guarantee final salvation? [Romans 5]

Key verses *Romans 5:1,2* “Therefore, since we have been justified through faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand.”

1. Access by faith into grace in which we stand... that standing gives us total assurance & confidence of our final salvation
2. Argument from the greater to the lesser: If while we were God’s enemies He reconciled us through the death of His Son, how much more shall we be saved through His life?
3. Total assurance is ours in Christ! One man, Adam, brought death... now also one man, Christ, brings life

E. **SANCTIFICATION BY THE SPIRIT:** How should a justified person wrestle with the ongoing problem of sin? [Romans 6-8]

1. Justification removes the penalty for sin... but what about the daily presence of sin, the practice of sin, the power of sin?
2. All justified persons immediately begin a warfare with temptation and sin that will last a lifetime
3. Romans 6: our status a persons DEAD TO SIN, but ALIVE TO GOD
4. Sin has no authority over us, it has no power to compel us to obey it... we never have to sin ever again!!
5. BUT we have to obey God, and present the members of our bodies to Him in service to His will... not in service to sin
6. Consistent obedience in this matter leads to ever-increasing experience of righteousness in everyday life

7. Romans 7: However, sin is so strong that we are constantly reminded of our wickedness... our hearts are so wicked that they even use the holy Law of God as a stimulation for sin

Romans 7:24-25 “What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!”

8. Romans 8: Ultimate power over sin in everyday life comes from the indwelling Holy Spirit... the Spirit leads us moment by moment to put sin to death
9. By the power of the Spirit alone, we can and we will triumph over sin day by day
10. The Spirit also guarantees that someday, we will be glorified in the very presence of God

Romans 8:16-17 “The Spirit himself testifies with our spirits that we are God’s children. Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in His sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.

11. So certain is our final glorification that there is no power on earth that can stop it

F. GOD’S CHOSEN PEOPLE: Why are so few of the Jews justified? [Romans 9-11]

1. Paul is “Apostle to the Gentiles”... but he is also a Jew who understands better than anyone what kind of struggle it is for a Jew to believe in Christ
2. He sees that very few of his countrymen are believers... and Romans 9-11 seeks to ask the question “Why?”
3. Paul’s answer centers on God’s sovereign right to choose... the Jewish nation was sovereignly appointed to be “God’s chosen people”... BUT many of those Jews have rejected Christ
4. YET within the nation is a remnant chosen by God’s grace... they are Jews AND also believers in Christ
5. Paul himself is one such Jewish believer, and there are others
6. The remnant chosen by grace cannot boast about it, for they deserved the wrath of God as much as those who were not in the remnant
7. Those who were not in the remnant cannot claim that God is being unfair, for they are only getting the wrath they rightfully deserved for their sins
8. Some of those chosen and called are also from the Gentiles, and the Old Testament said openly it would happen... the time of Israel being alone the “people of God” is over

9. Paul himself is deeply distressed about his people, the Israelites... even willing to give up his own salvation so they can be saved!
10. In the middle of Romans 10, he says again that salvation is a simple thing... you don't have to go up to heaven to get it or down into the depths of the sea

Romans 10:13 “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”

11. Israel heard that simple message, and most of them have rejected it
12. YET, though they now reject, there will come a day when God will turn again toward Israel and work within their hearts for salvation... in the last days, many Jews will turn to Christ for salvation, and so

Romans 11:27 “All Israel will be saved, as it is written; ‘The deliverer will come from Zion; he will turn godlessness away from Jacob.’”

G. LIVING SACRIFICES: How should a justified person live daily life in this world? [Romans 12-13]

1. Now that we've seen the full scope of God's saving plan, how should we then respond?
2. We should lay down our lives in daily living sacrifice to God
3. That life of sacrifice is a life of service to the Church, and God has equipped each person to do his or her special part by giving each one spiritual gifts to build the Body
4. We must therefore present ourselves to God to serve, then use our gifts daily to build the Church
5. We should also love one another, and zealously work for the Kingdom of God
6. We should even love our enemies, feeding them and caring for them, no matter how badly they treat us
7. We should submit to the secular government over us, since God put it there to keep order in the world while the Gospel is advancing
8. Above all, we must be holy, blameless, and pure... every day brings us closer to judgment Day, to seeing Christ face to face
9. Therefore, we should clothe ourselves with Christ Jesus and make no provision for the flesh to satisfy its lusts (Romans 13:14)

H. FREEDOM TEMPERED BY LOVE: How should a justified person live with other weak believers? [Romans 14-15]

1. Our faith has set us free from the Law of Moses, but not from the Law of love
2. Gentile believers, therefore, should be very careful not to cause Jewish believers to stumble by eating food sacrificed to idols
3. Meanwhile, Jewish believers must not judge Gentile believers who feel free to eat and drink anything they want to

Key verse *Romans 14:19* “Let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification.”

4. Everything should be done to build up the Body of Christ... our freedoms should be tempered by our love for others
- I. **THE GOSPEL FOR THE GENTILES:** How should a justified person follow Paul in service to Christ? [Romans 15]
1. Paul reminds the Roman Christians that his call to be Apostle to the Gentiles will carry him to the ends of the earth
 2. Paul will be relentless in pursuing unbelieving Gentiles, to win a harvest for Christ among them
 3. He also desires to challenge them to take part in God’s plan to advance the Kingdom

Romans in Church History

A long, long time ago, when the Roman empire was still in power, there sat in a walled garden in the city of Milan a professor of rhetoric and philosophy, weeping and in anguish. He had a godly mother who had prayed for years for his salvation, but instead he had spent his strength in immorality and debauchery, fathering a child out of wedlock and living for lustful pleasures still. Yet he felt within his soul the burning of God's just sentence against him, yet he also still felt the burn of his own uncontrolled lusts, and he cried out against his own wretchedness... he knew fully that he was a slave to sin and could not rescue himself, for he had tried time and time again to be free from ungodly lusts.

So, he cried out to God, saying "How long, O Lord, how long? Will it be tomorrow and always tomorrow? Why does my uncleanness not end this very moment?" In this manner he tore at his own soul, but could find no relief from his guilt and bondage to sin. For a moment, however, he grew still, for he heard the delicate sound of a child's voice wafting over the fence from the next yard. The child was chanting a rhyme in Latin... *"Tolle, lege. Tolle, lege. Tolle, lege!"* "Take up, and read! Take up, and read! Take up, and read!" For some strange reason, he felt a flicker of hope in his heart... he looked over to another place in the garden and there was a manuscript he had been reading earlier. He decided he would pick by random a place in the manuscript and see if it would help him... his finger came accidentally to a place in Romans, 13:14 "Not in reveling and drunkenness, not in debauchery and licentiousness, not in quarreling and jealousy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh to satisfy its lusts." At that moment, Augustine, for that was his name, was reborn into a personal faith in Christ. By one line from the Book of Romans was born perhaps the greatest theologian of the church since the Apostle Paul himself. He was baptized the next spring, on Easter Sunday in the year 387.

Move ahead in history now over one thousand years later. In a cold, damp, dark monastery cloister room, an Augustinian monk named Martin Luther suffered from a different form of bondage from Augustine's slavery to immorality. However, their basic fear was the same. Desperately afraid of the wrath of God, the young monk Luther sought to deliver himself by religious deeds... long nights of prayer, fasting and physical torment. But nothing could erase the sentence of a just and righteous God in his heart, for he was a sinner and he knew it! In torment of soul, he turned to Romans 1:16-17, in which Paul had written "I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes, for the Jew first, and also for the Gentile. For in the gospel the righteousness of God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written, 'The righteous man shall live by his faith.'" At first Luther had dreaded and even hated the phrase "the righteousness of God" revealed in the gospel. But then came a flash of insight, the light of which is still seen around the world... the righteousness of God in Romans 1:16-17 is that which actually produces salvation for the person of faith... so it must be righteousness FROM God, a righteousness which God gives to everyone who believes the gospel... The REFORMATION was born that day in the heart of one who simply read the words of Paul in Romans

- Over two hundred years later, a confused and discouraged young minister of the Church of England came very unwillingly to a meeting on Aldersgate Street in London. His name was John Wesley... like Luther, Wesley was bound in a system of legalism which his fellow students at Cambridge had derided as "Methodism" because he reduced Christianity to a series of methods, or do's and don'ts... the legalism had bound his heart and crushed his soul. But that night, at that society meeting on Aldersgate Street, they were reading the words of Luther's Preface to Romans. Wesley later wrote: **"About a quarter before**

nine, while he was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, in Christ alone, for my salvation; and an assurance was given me that He had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death.”

- In 1919, a young Swiss theologian finished a commentary which would rock the world. World war I had just ended, and Europe was still reeling from the carnage of that holocaust. Liberal Christianity, with all its optimism about the fatherhood of God and the universal brotherhood of man, had seemed so right. But now, its emptiness was being revealed. Karl Barth published his commentary on Romans, and rocked the universities all over Europe. In that commentary, he re-established the primacy of the word of God over the vain philosophies of men... some say that it was as if he slipped on the steps leading up to chapel belfrey, and as he fell he grabbed the bell rope to save himself... the resounding clanging awoke the entire village.

Romans at work throughout history:

- Freeing unbeliever Augustine from the bondage of his lusts
- Freeing troubled seeker Luther from the bondage of religious legalism
- Freeing troubled believer Wesley from doubts into a solid assurance of salvation
- Freeing troubled theologian Barth from the emptiness of the false doctrine of liberalism

Romans is the greatest letter ever written, and it is strong meat for the soul

“It will strip you naked, then clothe you in royal elegance.”

It will trouble you deeply, then resolve those troubles with unshakable confidence

It has been the start of more religious revivals and the content of more gospel tracts than any other portion of Scripture

It is so significant that Donald Grey Barnhouse broadcast eleven years of weekly messages on Romans alone!