

**Armagh Baptist Church – 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2012**  
**Studies in the Book of Romans 1 – What is the Gospel?**  
**(Romans 1:1-17)**

### **Introduction**

“Romans” is a tremendous book. It is the clearest, fullest explanation and presentation of the Gospel you will find in the whole of the Bible. Many people have been saved through reading it, or just hearing it preached.

The following is an excerpt from a Diary:-

*“May 24<sup>th</sup>, 1738.*

*I went very unwillingly to a religious meeting in London (Aldersgate Street). There a miracle took place. About a quarter before nine, I felt my heart strangely warmed within me. I felt I did truly trust in Christ, Christ alone, for 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.”*

He was John Wesley, and he had just been listening to the Introduction to Martin Luther’s Commentary on Romans.

Luther himself had been converted through a great text found in this book:

***“The Just shall live by faith” (ch.1 v.17)***

This was the verse that sparked the Reformation of the 16<sup>th</sup> Century.

It seems strange to us, but John Wesley was already a missionary before this event ever happened. A few months earlier he had written in his diary:

*“I went to America to convert the Indians;  
But Oh! Who shall convert me?”*

That question was answered on May 24<sup>th</sup> 1738 as God himself converted John Wesley, through the book of Romans, and as a result the great Wesleyan Revival swept through England and totally transformed what was a very corrupt nation at that time! Some say we’re due another Revival now!!

God can still use the Book of Romans – His own inspired Word – to convert men and women today, and set them on fire for the Gospel. I wonder what He’ll do in our lives as we study it together, and as we allow God to enthuse us again for what the Gospel is really all about, and what He can still do through it even today!

Religion and Christian endeavour was not good enough for John Wesley – He needed God’s Salvation. We have all kinds of religion and spirituality around today, but many who are searching in all the wrong places, have not truly experienced the touch of God’s grace in their lives for salvation.

So come with me as we begin to study the Book of Romans together.

## 1. Paul's Introductory Remarks (vs.1-7)

### A. What he says about himself, as the author of this book (v.1)

#### (i) **He was 'A servant (bond-slave) of Jesus Christ'**

This speaks of ownership – he was one who belonged to Jesus. One who willingly served Jesus – out of love and gratitude. One who had been bought back by Jesus – He had been redeemed from the slave market of sin. (The language of the slave market would have been very familiar to the Romans).

#### (ii) **He was 'Called to be an Apostle'**

One of the qualifications necessary to be an Apostle was that you had to have personally seen the risen Lord Jesus Christ. (1 Corinthians 9:1-2, Acts 1:22). Paul regarded his vision of Christ on the Road to Damascus as his qualification to be an Apostle (Acts 9). It was the moment of his Salvation – but it was also the moment of his “setting apart”. He was set apart as a special agent of Christ, and for Christ, in the world – An Apostle – “a sent one.” Hence his authority. He had been sent by Jesus Christ, especially, but not exclusively, to the Gentiles.

#### (iii) **He was 'Set apart for the Gospel of God'**

This was to be his life – Communicating the Gospel. What was this Gospel?

1 Corinthians 15:1-3 (It was Historical)

Romans 1:16 (It was Powerful)

Romans 10:12-13 (It was Universal)

N.B. It is “The Gospel of God” - not man!

It's not Man's way of getting to God, but God's way of reaching out and saving men and women, who can't save themselves!

### B. What he says about the Gospel, as the theme of this book. (v.2-4)

#### (i) **He says that the Gospel had been promised beforehand:**

Paul believed it had been promised in the Old Testament: (Not new / novel). There were 332 prophecies about Christ in the OT – Most fulfilled at His first coming. (e.g. Isaiah 1:18, 53 & 55).

#### (ii) **He says that the Gospel was centred on a person:**

“Regarding his Son” (v.3) – God's Son.

God's way of salvation is centred on His only Son, and his work at the cross.

“A descendant of David.” – Son of David, Son of Man in Gospels. (Matt 1:6).

Both Mary and Joseph could trace their descent to King David.  
So Jesus was a Man (a human being), but he was also a King. David's Son.

*He was "Declared with power to be the Son of God!" How?*

2 ways: By His Resurrection, and By the Outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

He always was the Son of God, but these two events proved it to be true.

This was very much part of the Apostolic Gospel – (Acts 2:32-36).

God the Father raised Him: The Holy Spirit testified to it. That's Proof indeed!

So who is this person? – He is "**Jesus Christ our Lord**" (v.4).

Jesus = Saviour. Christ = Messiah. Lord = God.

He was fully man – a descendant of King David via Mary and Joseph.

He was fully God – The Son of God, come in the flesh.

Therefore, He alone can be the only mediator (Go-between) between God and men. (John 14:6, Acts 4:12, 1 Timothy 2:5). This is foundational to the Gospel.

Because nobody else can make this claim, Jesus is the **ONLY** Saviour for sinners. He is unique – all roads do not lead to God!

### **C. What he says about Christians, who have experienced this Gospel (vs.5-7)**

Notice a word that appears 4 or 5 times in this passage: "Called" (vs.1, 5, 6, 7)  
A study of this word is helpful. Paul's purpose in preaching the Gospel was:

- (i) **"To call people from among all the Gentiles."** (v.5)
- (ii) **"To call them to belong to Jesus Christ."** (v.6)
- (iii) **"To call them to the obedience that comes from faith."** (v.5b)
- (iv) **"To call them to be saints." (holy)** (v.7)
- (v) **Just as he had been "called to be an Apostle."** (v.1)

Now, whether we like it or not, or believe it or not, that is what a Christian is, according to Paul, and according to the Bible, God's Word.

Christians are people who are **called out of something** – "*from among all the Gentiles.*" (v.5) That is also the root meaning of the Greek word for "Church" -

"Ex Kaleo" – To call out. The Church is made up of those who have been called out of the general population. The Church is a company of "called out ones" (saved ones). As Baptists we believe in "the gathered church."

As a Christian, God has called you out of the rest of the population.

Why? (v.6)

Because he has **called you to something** – "*To belong to Jesus Christ.*" (v.6) i.e. to be Christ's people, Christ's ones, Christ-ians. This was first given as a nick-name – but it was so true, we adopted it as our own! (Acts 11:26)

A Christian is somebody who belongs to Jesus Christ, who has turned their back on the world, and has committed themselves to Christ alone for salvation. You **belong** to Jesus - as the hymns say:

*"Now I belong to Jesus, Jesus belongs to me..."*

*"Since I know, as now I know: I am His, and He is mine."*

But we are also **called to something else** –

*“To the obedience that comes from faith.” (v.5b)*

According to this, faith comes first (we are saved by faith, not works), but obedience should follow from that faith, and because of that faith.

We are not called as Christians primarily to follow a list of do’s and don’ts – that would be religious bondage. We are called to Faith in the person of Jesus Christ. To believe or trust in Jesus. To love Jesus as our **Saviour**.

But if this is so, then you will want to obey him as your **Lord** as well.

The Christian Life = a life of obedience to Christ. (Acts 17:30, Eph. 2:8-10, Matt.28:19,20). Again as the hymn-writer puts it:

*“Trust **and obey**, for there’s no other way  
to be happy in Jesus, but to trust and obey.”*

Because ultimately we are **called to be saints** (v.7)

(lit) *“By virtue of your calling, **you are saints**.”*

A saint is not a Christian who has been dead a long time, but a Christian who is alive, called by God to lead a holy life, because he has been set apart for God!

**So that’s what a Christian is:-**

Called **from** – the World.

Called **to** – Christ and Obedience.

Called **to be** – Saints – to live holy lives.

Q. So how do you and I measure up to the Biblical view of what a Christian is?

## **2. Paul’s Desire to Visit Rome (vs.8-15)**

Paul had a long-held desire to visit Rome. He had never been there before. He had not founded the church there.

(Probably neither had Peter – more likely it was people who had been saved on the day of Pentecost, when they got back to their home city, the Capital, who formed a little group for fellowship and worship themselves, and the church came into being very naturally in Rome).

But Paul tells us why he wanted to visit Rome so much – It was because he had heard so much about their faith – (v.8).

The news about them was spreading like wild-fire across the Empire. So he long desired to get to Rome as a preacher, but we know from the end of Acts, that he actually got there as a prisoner, because he insisted on his right as a Roman Citizen to be heard by Caesar himself – to stand trial in Rome.

Ultimately Paul was executed there, after several spells in prison and various trials, probably in the mid 60’s AD.

But his life burned for this gospel, because God had called him to preach it. (v.15 sums him up – he was *“so eager to preach the gospel!”*)

So what is this great Gospel?

### 3. Paul's Confidence in the Gospel (vs.16-17)

This is probably the key text of the whole book - the subject of many a sermon, but how true is it really of you and me in our everyday lives?

#### (i) **What is the Gospel and where is it to be found?**

It is not just to be found in the Four Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke or John, and it's not just something you stand up for as it is read in Church!

It is found throughout the Bible from Genesis to Revelation.

(eg. Isaiah 1:18, 55:1, Matt.11:28, Luke 19:10, John 3:16, Acts 4:12, Acts 16:31, Romans, Galatians, Rev.3:20, etc, etc. It's ALL Gospel!)

#### (ii) **For Paul, it was Explosive and Powerful.** (v.16)

- It's *dunamis* – dynamite!

i.e. The Gospel is all about God's power to save men and women from their sin, from judgement, and condemnation, from the Kingdom of Darkness, to make them right with God, and in God's Kingdom, with eternal life in Heaven. (John 5:24).

According to Ephesians 2:8-9 it is God's power that can save us, not anything that we can do ourselves.

#### (iii) **The Gospel lit. means "Good News" – But it also involves "Bad news"**

- The Bad News – Romans 1:18 – The Wrath of God *is being* revealed against wickedness.
- The Good News – Romans 1:17 – The Righteousness of God *has been* revealed.

So how can a man or woman get right with God?

Answer – **By faith** in Jesus and his finished work for us on the cross.

#### (iv) **It's not just knowing the Bible (or the Gospel) that will save us.**

It's *responding* to what we have heard, and know, that will save us.

(John 5:39, 2 Tim 3:5).

#### (v) **Who is the Gospel for?**

(v.16) "*For anyone (and everyone) who believes*" – i.e. who puts their faith or trust in Christ and what He has done for them on the cross to deal with their sin and bring them back to God. It's "*For the Jew and also for the Gentile.*" – i.e. regardless of previous background / religion.

In fact it can even unite former opponents by first uniting each of them to God in Christ (cf. Eph.2:11-18).

## **So why would anybody be ashamed of the Gospel? (v.16)**

- (i) It's not often popular with **religious people** – Jews, or even religious church-goers. They are confronted with the fact that they can't get right with God their own way, or by their own good works, etc.
- (ii) It's not often popular with **intellectual people** – Greeks, the educated classes. They think it's too simple. They think it should be more difficult (cf. 1 Cor.1:18-25).
- (iii) It's not often popular with **good livin' people** – perhaps not church-goers, but up-right, moral people. They are told they are sinners, they're not OK as they are, lost, under judgement, on their way to Hell.
- (iv) And then whenever you do finally accept the Gospel for yourself, you often find that, you are not popular with **your family or friends**. You find they preferred you just the way you were, no matter how much God has improved your life for the better!

### **Question:**

Is there anything within you that at times is ashamed of the Gospel?

Or is it possible that we are not ashamed of the Gospel, but rather of how it is sometimes presented?

We have no reason to be ashamed of the Gospel whatsoever!

So let's study it in the Book of Romans together in coming weeks.

...Let's believe it with all our hearts...

And then let's share it with all the energy He gives us, so that many more might be saved, and made right with God, while there is still time. Amen!