

Romans Review 1-8 (Pt 1)

PREVIOUS

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ROMANS ROAD to RIGHTEOUSNESS				
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Modified from Irving L. Jensen's excellent work " Jensen's Survey of the NT "				

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Romans

Review of Chapters 1-8

What Have You Learned?

by Dr. Wayne A. Barber

We are not here just to teach the Word so people can have a better understanding of scripture. That is just part of it. We are here to teach the Word so that people might have a better understanding, then that they might take that understanding and act upon it as they face the various trials of their life. As we apply the Word in our life, that is the key. If I am still the same, even though I may have understood a lot of truth, if it has not changed me, it has not yet accomplished its purpose in my life.

You can break Romans up into four different parts. That is what we have been doing. Somebody asked once, "How do you eat an elephant?" Well, one bite at a time. Romans is a big elephant. We are eating it in four bites. The first bite is chapters 1-5. We are going to go back and look through those again. Chapters 1-5 tell us that we are justified by faith alone in Christ alone. As a result of that, He removes the penalty of our sin. The second division would be chapters 6-8. They tell us the marvelous teaching that we are no longer under law, we are no longer responsible to do it in the energy of our flesh. Now we are under grace and being under grace, we are free, not just from the penalty of sin, but from the power of sin. Chapters 9-11 would be the third part and that is what we are about to enter into. That talks about the sovereign power of God in light of our salvation. Then in chapters 12-16 we learn the practical instruction of how to take everything we have learned from 1-11 and put it to use in our life. That is the book of Romans. We have taken the first two bites out of it. We have gone from chapter 1 through chapter 8.

Now remember, to understand it does not necessarily mean that you have learned it yet. You learn it by living it, by putting it to use

in light of your every day circumstances. And if we are not living in it, then we have deluded ourselves. We think we know it, but we really don't. We haven't yet seen that it is to change and transform our lives. So the first thing I want us to look at is bite number one, chapters 1-5.

First of all, we learned the good news of God involves being set free from the penalty of sin. Let's go back to Romans 1:1. Paul sets the whole basis for the book right here in his attitude. Verse 1 says, "Paul, a bond-servant of Christ Jesus, called as an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God." The word "gospel" comes from two words, good and news, the good news of God.

We see in that verse that he was surrendered. The word "bond-servant" is the key. It is the word "slave" (*doulos*). Actually, "bond-servant", as the New American Standard translates it, gives a better picture. A person who has received the good news of God is a person who does what he does not because he has to, but because he gets to. It is a privilege. He loves God and he chooses to obey because it brings great joy in obeying the One in whom he serves. He is set apart. He is sent.

That begins to frame who is writing the book to the church there in Rome. In chapter 1 Paul shows how necessary the good news is, not just for the lost, but also for the saved. We are not in that performance mode anymore. Now we are in business with Him. He does in and through us what we can't do ourselves. That is good news!

Not only do the lost need to hear this, but the saved need to hear it. Romans 1:14 says, "I am under obligation both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish." The word "barbarians" simply means you don't have the Greek culture. So he is under obligation to the lost to tell them the good news. They can't save themselves. Jesus did for man what man could not do for himself. Salvation is through Jesus Christ. That is the good news to the lost.

However, there is also good news to the saved. Paul says in verse 15, "Thus, for my part, I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome." He is writing to the church. He said, "I can't wait to get there to preach the good news of God to you. You need to hear it just as much as the lost people need to hear it." So we begin to get the emphasis here. This good news is not what man can do for God. It is what God can do for, in and through a man. You see, what you can do for God is religion. That is man's good news. But it is bad in the sight of God. What God can do through you is a relationship and that is truly good news. Christianity is not what we can do for God. Christianity is what God can do through us.

Well, we come down to verse 16 of chapter 1 and Paul says, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel [the good news], for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek." It's the power of God, not the power of man, for everyone to be saved. The word "saved" means rescued, delivered. We have been saved, and we are being saved. It's the power of God to do what man could not do.

But the key verse, I believe, to the whole book of Romans is found in verse 17 of chapter 1: "For in it [the gospel, the good news of what God can do] the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith." Now righteousness is what God requires of every man. Righteousness is right conduct, the kind of character that God requires. As a matter of fact, when Moses was on the scene, God gave a law that required a righteous character that man could not live up to. How then can righteousness ever be revealed? Well, Paul goes on and says, "as it is written, 'But the righteous man shall live by faith.'" He quotes out of Habakkuk, and he is telling us something here. It is not me doing righteousness for God, it is God doing righteousness in and through me, by my cooperation, by my willingness to surrender to Him. So that right living, that right character, the very characteristic of God Himself comes only when I am willing to walk by faith.

In Romans 5:2, Paul says when you walk by faith you access grace and when you access grace, grace is the transforming power that God has in our life. This is the good news that Paul wants to take to man. Paul shows how desperate man is to get it in chapter 1:19 through chapter 3:20. Let go back to verse 18 as he gets into that. He wants to show you how bad the situation has gotten. He says, "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness."

Now I don't know if you have seen it or not, but from verse 19 all the way through 3:20, there are two ways to suppress the truth of who God is and the truth of what God requires. Man cannot produce what God requires. God has to be living in a man before that can ever be produced. How do people suppress truth? First of all, the word "suppress" is *katecho*. It is the word that means to hold down, to squash or to suppress.

Back when I played ball we had something called "Tough Skin". "Tough Skin" was something you sprayed on a rash that put a skin-like coating over it. You still have the hurt, but now when you try to scratch, you can't get to it because of that layer that is there. They would keep on spraying layer over layer over layer over layer. After a while the hurt is there, but you have no way of getting to it because you have suppressed something. You have covered it over. You have put it to a point that nobody can get to it.

Over the years the generations and nations have suppressed truth. There are two ways to suppress truth. One is through open rebellion, to present a lifestyle that tells people they don't need the truth of what God is, they don't need God at all in their life. As a

matter of fact, they profess themselves to be wise.

But there is another way to suppress truth. In chapter 2:1 through chapter 3:20 we see it is through religion. I call it obnoxious religion: that religion, that form, that denies the power thereof. There are people today who don't want to hear the message of grace in Romans. They don't want to hear the fact that they can't make themselves holy, that they only cooperate and choose, but God has to produce that holiness in man. They would rather see themselves as separating themselves, rather than God doing that separating work in their life. So religion becomes a form. It is something we do and not something that we are being made into, that we are becoming.

You see, religion is a way to suppress truth of what God requires. The truth is that every deed done in the body is going to be judged one day, and it is not going to be what I have done for God, it is going to be what God has done through me as I have been willing to obey Him. I am going to tell you something; they are going to draw a line between those who are believers and those who are simply religious. Religion suppresses truth just like open, outright rebellion suppresses truth. It is a pitiful society that we live in, but we have not yet learned why it is that way. Paul is going to tell us in just a moment. He shows the desperate condition of man for the good news of God. Not only can God save a man, but God sanctifies a man. The man cooperates, he receives, he obeys, yes, but God takes the load on Himself. God is the one who does that in and through man.

Paul shows not only the two ways that man can suppress truth, but in 3:21 he begins to talk about justification by faith alone in Christ alone. He begins to talk about the good news. If you will remember, when we were studying through this, we raced through chapter 3 and verse 20 and started slowing down in verse 21. The bad news is bad enough. Let's talk about the good news. He starts off in verse 21 by saying, "But now apart from the Law." Automatically your focus shifts from what I can do for God to evidently what God must have done for me apart from the law. Then in chapter 4 he shows you that Abraham himself had to be justified. He shows you that Abraham believed in the same Christ we believe in. Abraham looked forward to the day that Christ would come and die for our sins. We look back to the event that He has already come and died for our sins. But it is the same Christ who saved them in the Old Testament, who saves us in the New Testament. Abraham believed and it was accounted to him as righteousness.

Then in chapter 5, after showing us how Abraham had to believe and talking about justification, our acquittal, our being declared righteous was only by what Jesus did for us on the cross and only by putting our faith into Him, he starts talking about the results of that. He talks about having peace with God, standing eternally in the grace of God. Then he comes down into verse 6 and shows us the helpless condition that we were in when Jesus came to die for us.

I sat next to a precious lady one day on a plane. She told me, "I grew up in a religious family, but I grew up in a legalistic background. I just turned off on church. I tried to be good. I tried going to church. I tried being this. I tried being that. But I just couldn't live up to my parents' standards and I couldn't live up to the church's standards, so I just quit going." She said, "It doesn't work for me. I just can't be good enough."

I was sitting there with my lap-top computer, so I said, "Can I show you something?" She said, "Absolutely." So I turned on my computer. I said, "Now how good do you think you have to be in order to get saved?" She said, "A lot better than I am." I said, "Well, go on and tell me. Just give me a level. Give me something to go by." She tried to tell me a few things that she thought she had to do that she couldn't do to be saved.

I took her over to Romans 5 and I showed her these verses. I had them highlighted. I said, "Look here. In verse 6 of Romans 5, look at what we were. He says, 'For while we were still helpless.' Do you understand what that word means? It is like paralyzed from the neck down. Can't do a thing for ourselves." I said, "It is amazing to me. How good can I be if I am helpless? Then it goes on to say, 'For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly.'" I said, "Now wait a minute now. Do you mean He died for people who weren't good? Do you know what ungodly means?" I explained the word to her. As a matter of fact, I showed her in the dictionary what the word meant. She said, "Wow." Then I took her down to verse 8: "'But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.' Now how good do you think people are? What were they doing that you are not doing?"

I took her down to verse 10: "'For if while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.'" I said, "Look here. 'Helpless,' 'ungodly,' 'sinners' and 'enemies of God'. Now how good do you think you ought to be?" She just sat there with a look on her face that said, "I don't think I have ever heard this before." I asked her, "Do you understand what grace is?" For almost two hours, I showed her what grace is. She came out of a strict religious church. She came out of a church that required a lot of commitment. She finally looked at me when I finished and with tears in her eyes she said, "I have never heard that before."

That is good news, folks, that is good news. You can't be good enough for God. Have you tried to do that? You can't be good enough for God. If you could be good enough, then why did He have to die? He had to die because we can't be good enough for

Him. Then He comes to live in us to enable us to do that which has been required all along.

You see, back when you were lost, the law hung over you. Everything you tried to do, the law condemned. You couldn't do it. Oh, but under grace, Jesus died for you and Jesus lives in you. As we learn to obey Him and choose to walk in harmony with Him, then He accesses that grace in us and He does through us what we could never do for ourselves.

Well, what caused us to be that way? That was the question she had. In other words, if it is this bad, what caused the whole thing to be this way? I took her to Romans 5:12 and kept right on going. Verse 12 says, "Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned." I said, "Do you realize because of one man's sin, you are born into sin?" Do you know, she caught this. I said, "Listen, it is not what a man does that sends him to hell, it is what he is. He is either in Adam or he is in Christ. If he is born once, he is in Adam. If he has been born twice, he is in Christ. That is what Jesus said to Nicodemus. He said, 'Son, you need to be born again.' You have to be taken out of Adam and put into Christ and that is what salvation is. It is not what you do, it is what you are. That is why religion won't cut it."

I said, "Let me ask you a question. What if you and I go down on the edge of Cape Town in South Africa. Antarctica is the next place down. Let's just say we are going to try to jump to see who can get to Antarctica from the southernmost tip of South Africa. Let's just say that you take off and you jump 25 feet out in the water. That is good. Here I come, and I trip and fall, so about three feet of me is laying in the water. You beat me by 20 something feet. You jumped further than I did. But remember, it is about 900 more miles to get to your destination. It doesn't matter how far you can jump. You can't touch the distance it is to get there. You can be as good as you want to be, but you can't span the gap of what God requires. No man can get there through religion. It is by what Christ has done for you and by putting your faith into Him."

I showed her in chapter 5 and verse 20 it says, "And the Law came in that the transgression might increase, but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more." In other words, God did more than was necessary. It was necessary for Him to die in order for us to be free from the penalty of sin, but He went on beyond that. He not only freed us from the penalty, He freed us from the power and one day He is going to free us from the presence of sin. He went way beyond what was required that caused us to be penalized to eternal hell. He went way beyond. Grace abounded all the more.

So when you think of chapters 1-5, you think of justification by faith in Christ and Christ alone. Then you think about the fact that it frees me from the penalty of sin. What He did for me on the cross, I could have never done myself. When Adam sinned, it was accounted to me. When I put my faith in Jesus, what He did is not accounted to me, it is put to my account. His Spirit comes to live in me which houses His life and His righteousness and now I am righteous. Now I have the life of God in me, not because of what I did but because of what Jesus, the God-man, did for me on the cross. That is chapters 1-5, the good news of God.