

Back on the Road to Romans

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- [0 : 0 0] Good morning, everyone. Please turn in your Bibles to Romans chapter 1, Romans chapter 2.! If you are new or visiting, welcome. My name is B.K. Smith, and I have the joy of serving here as one of our pastors here at Squamish Baptist.
- This morning, as you've noticed, we are back into the Book of Romans. We've actually been away from the Book of Romans a year less a day, actually.
- Just when we began the merger discussion with Grace Church of 99, we decided to pull back so when we got together, we could walk together through this most incredible gospel presentation that we find in all of Scripture.
- So I have two goals for us this morning. The first goal is I want to provide for you a short, clear introduction or reintroduction to the Book of Romans and walk you through five major questions that Paul answers in this epistle.
- These questions and the answers form the outline of the entire book. And the second goal that I have is to bring those who are new or who are with Grace Church on the 9 up to speed on where we are.
- [1 : 2 3] So the good thing is if you missed a year's worth of preaching, you can say, yeah, I got it in one sermon. All right, so that doesn't mean I'm going to talk really fast. We're still going to go through the major points, and I hope that it will ring true to you.
- So just as an introduction, the Book of Romans stands as one of the most important writings in all of Scripture. Theologians, reformers, preachers, and everyday believers have testified to its transforming power.
- In fact, more revivals have been attached to an understanding of the Book of Romans than any other book in all of Scripture. Martin Luther is known to have said, he goes, I greatly long to understand Paul's epistle to the Romans.
- I grasp the truth that the righteousness of God is that righteousness whereby, through grace and sheer mercy, God justifies us by faith.
- Thereupon, he said, I felt myself to be reborn and to have gone through open doors into paradise. John Calvin succinctly said, When anyone gains a knowledge of this epistle, he has an entrance open to him to all the hidden treasures of God or Scripture.
- [2 : 5 7] It has been said that Romans will delight the greatest logician and captivate the mind of the consummate genius.
- Yet it will bring tears to the humblest soul and refreshment to the simplest mind. Romans will knock you down and it will lift you up. It will strip you naked and then clothe you with eternal elegance.
- It is a theological symphony, a gospel manifesto, a divine courtroom drama, and a pastoral letter all rolled into one.
- It has the power to expose the soul and heal the heart. And it is as relevant now as it was when Paul wrote it to believers in Rome almost 2,000 years ago.

So before I get into the five big questions that Romans answered, which will give us the roadmap and provide for us the logic of Paul's argument, I want to just open us up or continue in prayer this morning.

[4 : 07] Dear most holy heavenly Father, Lord, I first pray for clarity in my words that those who hear these words can grasp the immense importance of this book.

That it so wonderfully teaches your righteousness, your mercy, your holiness, your justice. And I pray that we can relate to some of these questions, if not all of these questions.

Because if we do, then we're going to want to hear these answers. We're going to want to hear what you have to say, how you speak into our lives, that these brothers and sisters who walked on this earth 2,000 years ago struggled with the answers to these same questions.

I pray that it helps us connect to the universal church. The church beyond our age, but the church of history past, of how so similar they are to us, even 2,000 years ago.

But more importantly, I pray that it delights the soul. That it lifts our love for you, O God.

[5 : 37] That we come to understand that it's not information that we seek, but we seek your transformative power. That this knowledge that we are so blessed to be able to learn, would transform itself into a practical means by which we live.

How we love, how we connect with not just one another in this church, but even in greater society. I pray that it enhances our evangelism.

So these are the things that I ask you this morning, O God. We pray, and I ask that your spirit would be upon me as I share these words. In your most holy and precious name, Amen.

So as I just said in the prayer, I want you to think a little bit, but as I give you these questions, I want you to ask yourself, do these questions, are they the same ones that you have wrestled with, or will wrestle with, or are wrestling with?

And then I want you to see how Paul's answers shape your life. So the first question that Paul is going to answer, and it's found between Romans 1, verse 18 to chapter 3, 20, and the question is, what's wrong with the world?

[7 : 09] What's wrong with the world? And more importantly, what's wrong with me? What's wrong with me? Think if anybody is ever honest with themselves, there's times that it's easy to ask ourselves, what's wrong with the world?

But if we're really honest, and we're humble, we keep track of our day-to-day life, that we simply ask the questions, what's wrong with me?

Why do I yearn for the things that are clearly not of the Lord? Why do I yearn for things that are actually destructive, that I know will bring division, that will not lift up God?

Why? In this first question, or the first section of this outline, Paul will clearly answer the question that the answer is sin.

That humanity is under God's wrath because of sin. He will not tell us it's because of our brokenness, or it's because of our family history, or it's because of some great, horrible thing that's happened to you, or about your mistakes.

[8 : 28] No, he's going to clearly communicate, it is sin. And if you are unsure what that word means, it means that sin is essentially rebellion against God's rightful rule.

That sin is rebellion against God's rightful rule. Romans 3, 10 and 23 will remind us that there is no one righteous falls short of the glory of God.

And what's interesting in this text, in this outline that we're going to learn, is Paul is not simply pointing fingers at pagans or secular people, but he indicts everyone, both the immoral person, the moralist, and the religious hypocrite.

And he plainly tells us we're all spiritually bankrupt. And our biggest problem is not out there.

Our biggest problem is in here. My heart. The world is messed up because people are messed up.

[9 : 44] And guess what? We're messed up people. And we're part of that world. So that is the first question that is going to form the first outline.

And just so you know, that is the section we are presently in. We'll come back to that. The second question that will be the part two of our outline is what naturally flows from the first question is, how can I be made right with God?

How can I be made right with God? In Romans 3, starting at verse 21 to chapter 5, 21 is where this question will be answered.

And this is called a question of justification. Justification. What that means is, justification is the legal act by which God declares a sinner, a messed up person, to be righteous.

Not based on our own righteousness, but on the righteousness of Jesus Christ, which is received by faith.

[10 : 55] My friends, this is the heart of the gospel. We will read in Romans 5, 1, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

That is the blessed best news that we can hear. In this section, we will learn that salvation is by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone.

that Paul will use Abraham and David as examples to show that salvation has always been by faith, even in the Old Testament.

The key to this section is, we do not earn righteousness. God freely gives it through the cross of Christ in which God remains just and the one who justifies.

The third section of our outline, which will be between Romans 6, chapter 6 and 8, is answering the other question is, can I really change? Can I really change?

[12 : 10] And not only that, is what does a changed life look like? Because let's be honest, we understand that we've been messed up from the first question, the sin that resides in me.

We know that we can be made right with God, but now how do I change? And this is a question of what theologians call sanctification. And what it basically means is how believers grow in holiness.

How we grow into mature people of the faith. Sanctification is the ongoing process by which the Holy Spirit transforms us into the image of Christ.

Notice, it doesn't say sanctification is the ongoing process by which I transform myself into the image of Christ. It is by which the Holy Spirit transforms us into the image of Christ.

It's not about perfect performance, but it's about spirit-led progress. Paul tells us that because we are united with Christ, sin no longer has dominion over us.

[13 : 25] What that means is sin does not rule over us. We are not dead, we are alive. Romans 7 will ask, even though we struggle, we now live under the power of the Spirit in Romans 8.

Romans 8 too says, the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ, Jesus from the law of sin and death. I'm going to read that again and feel free to add an amen to the end of that.

The law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ, Jesus from the law of sin and death. And there we go. The big idea from this section is that real change is possible.

Let's be honest, we all struggle with that. We know the truth of the gospel. We understand what it is to be justified, but we still struggle to practice this godliness, to walk in holiness.

But Paul tells us that real change is possible, not because we try harder, but because God is at work in us through His Spirit. And nothing, and I mean nothing, can separate us from His love.

[14 : 43] The fourth question, and this one is particularly relevant if you've been here through our series on the Old Testament. And that question is, has God failed His promises to Israel?

Has God failed His promises to Israel? You know where I stand on that, and that is absolutely no. This is the question of God's faithfulness.

Some may ask, if Israel was God's chosen people and most of them rejected Jesus, doesn't mean that God's promises failed? As I stated, Paul's answer is an emphatic no.

God's promises have not failed. God's sovereign plan is unfolding perfectly as He made it. Romans 9.6, it says, it is not as though the Word of God has failed.

Paul explains that salvation has always been based on God's mercy. It's never been based on ancestry, ethnicity, or effort.

[15 : 55] And that we as Gentiles, those who are non-Jews, have been grafted in by faith, and God still has a plan for Israel.

The big idea from this section is, and it's a marvelous one, is God keeps His Word. God keeps His Word.

His ways may be mysterious, but they are never mistaken. And the fifth question I hope to ask and answer in this wonderful study, it's how do I live, or how should I live in light of the Gospel.

If I have understood and understood these things and believed in them, what is the practical application? And this is called the issue or the question of transformation.

Romans 12.2 simply says, Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind. And what Paul does, he moves from theology to ethics, from doctrine to duty.

[17 : 06] He shows us how the Gospel reshapes our lives, our worship, our relationships, our humility, our unity, even our submission to authorities.

And my friends, this is an ongoing issue right now in some theological discussions. And it essentially is, the Gospel just doesn't save your soul, it transforms your life.

Amen? It's bigger than John 3.16. It affects everything, your habits, your mind, your community, your purpose.

And if we grasp that, we're really on to something. So my friends, that's the outline of the book of Romans that we are going to do.

So that is my first goal this morning for you. My second goal is I want to review Romans up to Romans 2.16 by way of introduction and to get us into an understanding of where we are.

[18 : 10] So let's take a look at your text. I'm switching channels a little bit on you. Romans 1.1 simply says that Paul, an apostle, that Paul is the author of this book.

It's a formal introduction. He identifies himself as a servant and an apostle set apart for the Gospel. We believe that Paul wrote this probably around 56 to 57 A.D.

We believe he did it from the city of Corinth. And what I believe is more important than understanding the year that he wrote it, and I think this carries a lot of weight, is he writes it after three missionary journeys.

He's now been ministering 13 to 20 years. He's planted churches. He's evangelized. He's taught. He's installed elders.

He's worked through many different church situations. Let's be honest. He's a pro. When it comes to wanting someone to give you advice in the church, this is the guy.

[19 : 26] Even if he were not an apostle, just his vast experience in all these different churches, he's got something to say.

He's seen patterns. And what's the biggest issue that he concentrates on after being in the ministry for all those years on those massive missionary journeys?

It's salvation. It's salvation. Like this is the one. If there's one aspect, if these people can understand. So Paul's not writing it just to the people in Rome.

He knows that this is going to go far and wide. That this letter will address salvation and the implications of one's salvation and how and where they live.

Verse 7 answers us. The question is, who is this letter written to? It says, to all those in Rome who are loved by God and called to be saints.

[20 : 33] And just to remind you, this whole entire sermon series up to this point is online. I actually preached a whole sermon on what it means to be a saint.

And it's been effectual. And I want you to understand in Scripture, God never calls a believer in Christ a sinner. Do you know that? We're never referred to as sinners.

We're referred to as saints. That is where our position resides with God. And this is important because a lot of times we still think our position is that of sinner when it's not.

We are saints who sin. We are not sinners. There's deep theological implications for that by which I preach on that. So if you want to hear more about that.

But now it's this church in Rome. And the church in Rome is quite interesting. There's actually no evidence that any apostle had ever visited Rome before Paul had written this letter. We actually believe, and I say we, that's probably not true.

[21 : 35] I'd say scholars believe. But that it likely began with Jewish pilgrims who first came to Christ when Peter taught after the ascension of Jesus Christ in Jerusalem.

If you look at Acts 2, Acts 2, I'll bring it up here on the screen. It says, When the day of Pentecost arrived, so Jesus had ascended, they were all together in one place, and suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting.

And divided tongues as fire, as a fire appeared to them and rested on each of them, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance.

Verse 5, Now there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men from every nation under heaven. At the sound, the multitude came together, and they were bewildered, because each one was hearing them speak in his own language.

And they were amazed and astonished. And they said, Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? And how is it that we hear each of us in our own native language?

[22 : 50] Now notice, it says, Parthians and Medes and Alamites and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea, Cappadocia, Pontus, Asia, Phrygia, Pamphylia, Egypt, and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome.

So what we know is that there were devout Jews from Rome in Jerusalem at this moment.

Now notice it says, from Rome, both Jews and proselytes. In case you do not know what a proselyte is, it is one who is not ethnically Jewish, but through their evangelist methods becomes religiously Jewish, who is there.

And notice it says, and we hear them telling in our own tongues the mighty works of God. I have checked with my sources that apparently it was Italian. Not sure, but it was Italian at that time.

But they would have heard this language. So what they did is, they went back to Rome. At that time, we believe there's between 20,000 and 50,000 Jews in Rome at that time, mostly through dealing as merchants or slaves.

[24 : 06] And historians say there was probably 10 to 13 different synagogues. So if you know the New Testament strategy, when they went out to preach the gospel, they always returned.

Jews would primarily go to the synagogues, open up the Old Testament and go through the promises that point to Jesus Christ. So obviously, the church that begins in Rome becomes very Jewish.

Now what's interesting, in around AD 49, Emperor Claudius expels the Jews from Rome. So what's left is a Gentiles who were saved, and now the church in Rome takes on a Gentile flavor.

And now when they're able to come back, there's this tension between Jew and Gentile that exists in the church. And if you're familiar with any of Paul's writings, this happens everywhere.

In fact, it still happens today. If you are at all familiar with any of the Messianic ministries, many of the questions that people who come from a Jewish religion, I'm not just speaking ethnically, but if they were involved in the Jewish faith, and now they come to Christ, there's a struggle that goes on.

[25 : 29] How much of my Jewish faith do I bring to my new Christian faith? You with me on that? If you know anybody from that background, they will tell you there's a tension.

Some leave it behind, some try to graft in some of the Jewish belief, and there's this ongoing debate that goes on. So for 2,000 years this has been a battle that's been happening.

But it was really battling then. So this would be an issue that Paul is going to deal with. If you look at verse 16 and 17, Paul is going to give us the entire, the theme for the entire book of Romans.

Now before we get to that verse, we need to understand something. Paul is brilliant. Absolutely brilliant. Like a skilled physician.

We have some physicians, doctors here. And I know some of them have had to have tough conversations. I remember being with my mother when the doctor had to explain to her that she had cancer.

[26 : 41] And sometimes they just kind of drop this bomb. And I remember he could tell he was emotional about it, but he didn't know how to say it, and he just had to come out and say it. And I would have said it wasn't really the best way to go about doing it, but that's the way he did it.

Paul here is almost like a doctor, but instead of beginning with a terminal diagnosis that would usually lead to despair and a robbery of hope, he begins with hope and he says before he gets the disease, he's going to tell him about the cure.

Are you with me on that? I'm going to start with the cure. I'm going to tell you everything that's great about God. So before I tell you how sick you are, I want to tell you how powerful this medicine that I have is.

I'm going to tell you that this medicine that I have, it's 100% successful. It is wonderful. If someone told you that before you went in for a cancer diagnosis, you'd feel okay, right?

You'd have this confidence and that's what Paul does. So notice what he says in verses 1 chapter verse 16. He says, for I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes.

[27 : 56] Just so you don't know who everyone is, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith as it is written, the righteous shall live by faith.

What Paul is communicating here is I want you to understand this medicine that I'm offering you is not theoretical. It's not head knowledge. this gospel is power.

This gospel, this power of God has the power to save broken people. It has the power to save people that are so deep in sin.

If you looked at their lives, you'd say, no way that person would ever believe in Jesus Christ. Guess what? It's that good. That rebel over there, it's good enough and it's powerful enough to save him.

So it doesn't even matter how far gone your disease is. This gospel, this medicine is pure power. And what's interesting about this power, it's not about what we do for God, it's about what God has done for us in Jesus Christ.

[29 : 12] You know with me? So you don't even have to do anything to enact this power. God's done it all. Notice when Paul says, I am not ashamed of the gospel.

He's not being defensive. He's rejoicing. He's boasting. He's simply saying, I glory in the gospel.

So what makes this gospel so powerful? This is what blew Martin Luther over. This is what changed his life. It reveals the righteousness of God.

The righteousness of God. Not just God's holy character, but the gift of righteousness that he gives to sinners. The question is, how is it received?

We don't receive it by earning it, by doing rituals, by birthright, but by faith. And what's really amazing, it's faith alone. And this is the spiritual medicine for our deepest spiritual sickness.

[30 : 21] You can't buy it. You can't earn it. You can't inherit it. You simply receive it by trusting in Jesus Christ.

That's why he quotes Habakkuk 2.4, the righteous shall live by faith. What Paul tells us here by this quote of Habakkuk, it's not just a throwback verse, but it's a theological anchor.

And what he's anchoring it is into the character of God that has always existed since you've always known him. That this faith, this message of salvation by faith is not new.

It's always been that way. From Abraham to Habakkuk to now, God has always saved people through faith in his promise. So if you're wondering who this gospel is for, Paul does not want you to have any doubt.

It's for everyone. It's for the Jew, the Gentile. It's for the rich, the poor. It's for the religious. It's for the rebellious. What's interesting is the gospel doesn't play favorites.

[31 : 41] It saves sinners. Amen? And Paul is saying, this is my message. This is why I'm writing it. And this gospel, and I'm going to explain it to you.

That's why we're in the book of Romans. We're going to explain it to you. I'm going to defend it to you. We're going to celebrate it. And I'm going to show you how this changes everything.

sin. Because what follows in Romans is not a panicked reaction to sin. It's the unveiling of God's eternal, unstoppable, glorious plan.

And here it starts with a very, very simple verse. verse. For I am not ashamed of the gospel.

For it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith as it is written, the righteous shall live by faith.

[32 : 51] That's the good news. Now, comes the bad news. Verse 18 says, For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth.

For what can be known about God is plain to them because God has shown it to them for his invisible attributes, namely his eternal power and divine nature.

He has clearly perceived ever since the creation of the world and the things that have been made so they are without excuse. Do you know what stops people from taking the most perfect medicine in the world?

Is the rejection that they're actually sick. so that question that I ask what's wrong with me? The person who doesn't want the medicine is the one who says nothing.

But if you were to ask their spouse, their children, their parents, their co-workers, guess what? So the person who doesn't want the medicine is the one who is spiritually blind.

[34 : 09] They do not understand. Why? Because by nature we have been suppressing the truth about God.

That's what Paul says here. We don't just ignore God. That word suppress means we push it down. We cover it up.

We don't want to acknowledge it's there. But you can't. You still it's going to come up. It's like the way I do house cleaning. I just put everything under the rug.

And then when my wife trips over it and she says you really haven't been doing the cleaning have you? Well it's kind of hidden under the rug. Right? But we do that with our own lives.

We just put it under the rug. Not expecting anybody else to see it. Why do we do this? Because we want self justification.

[35 : 07] We want to be prideful sometimes we even want to be rebellious. Here's the thing when we do so we become spiritually sick.

Now notice the order Paul gives. He says ungodliness and unrighteousness. There is a order a progression. The rejection of God that's what we begin with.

We deny God and then we define what's right. You get that? Once you quote unquote killed God everything is permissible which is the lie of the world.

And that's where true rebellion happens. See ungodliness is the vertical rebellion which is turning our back from the creator.

Unrighteousness as one author says is the horizontal chaos. You like that? I like that. That the vertical rebellion ungodliness is vertical rebellion which is turning our back on God.

[36 : 15] Unrighteousness is horizontal chaos which is living in ways that dishonor others and ourselves. It means to live in an unloving way. But here's the thing someone's going to yell but I didn't know.

I've never seen God. I've never heard his voice. Paul responds here don't say you don't know who God is. He made himself known.

How? Through creation. His fingerprints are on everything. Whether it be the mountains or how wonderful our bodies function. Through our conscience.

every civilization knows deep down there is a right and a wrong. Through design and order and wonder God has shouted his existence into this world.

Paul says here that it's so obvious that no one is without excuse. No one. Now if you remember when I preached this before I called it the law and order edition the heavenly courtroom edition.

[37 : 37] If you can picture the scene for a moment the judge who oversees this courtroom is none other than Lord God Almighty Elohim the creator the lawgiver the sustainer of all things.

In fact James 4 2 says there is only one lawgiver and judge and he who is able to save and to destroy. So he is in this courtroom and he is the judge and there is this prosecutor and that prosecutor is the apostle Paul who is inspired by the Holy Spirit and the accused it is us it is us it is humanity you me all of us and the charge is suppressing the truth about God and replacing it with unrighteousness living in our own way and the sentence is the wrath of God but the defense attorney rises up and he speaks on behalf of the Gentiles and he says objection your honor my client pleads ignorance and if you're wondering what verses 19 to 32 is this is the scene he says unlike the

Jews your honor my people the Gentiles who I represent they never received the law they had no burning bush they had no red sea they had no cloud by day or fire by night they never had a Moses they never had a prophet there was no covenant fathers like Abraham Isaac and Jacob they were never given a stone with the Ten!

commandments! written! In fact they had no Isaiah there was no Jeremiah no Samuel they didn't even get a warning from an angel surely God the judge you can't hold them accountable in the same way and this is what Paul addresses here they may not have had Moses but they had mountains they may not have had prophets but they had power and beauty and order of creation all around them they did not have tablets but they had a conscience within them that tells them not to murder steal and lie and yet they still rejected God they exchanged the glory of God for man made images they followed the lust of their hearts they gave themselves over to dishonorable passions they embraced a debased mind that can no longer discern right from wrong and if you turn with me to

Romans 1 verse 32 God's ultimate judgment here though they know God's righteous decree that those who practice such things deserve to die they not only do them but give approval to those who practice them so almost even worse than the doing is the clapping of those who do my friends this isn't passive ignorance it's active rebellion and Paul through the power of the spirit gives the verdict for the judge they are without excuse so by the time we turn to chapter two there's excitement in the courtroom the Jews ha we told you we told you you were guilty you guys are horrible and wicked and that's when

[41 : 38] Paul says now it's your turn to step up to this stand but before he gets in there there's this section from verse one to sixteen where Paul explains who this judge is we know he's God but there's three characteristics of this God that we need to understand verse one of chapter through it says therefore you have no excuse oh man every one of you who judges for in passing judgment on one another you condemn yourself because you the judge practice the very same things the first characteristic of this judge this God this Elohim on the bench is that God's judgment is inescapable it is inescapable there's no one here who can hide no one who can skirt it no one can hide under the table and hopefully the judge isn't going to find him

Paul it's almost as if he's turning to the Jews oh you think you're exempt you think your moralism or religion makes you safe think again!

God sees it all and he judges us all the question we need to ask is does that scare you and it should but here's the thing that I want you to understand it shouldn't scare you because God will judge unfairly rather because God will judge truthfully you with me on that how many times have we ever been before a judge and a lot of us haven't been in a real judge but you have a job performance evaluation right who hasn't been there you want the person who's going to be truthful with you you don't want someone who's going to be dishonest who's got an axe to grind or maybe a manager who's never really there and he's listening to three other people about your work and you're saying

I want that person to know about my work you see the thing about God is his verdict is always right he cannot be bribed he cannot be deceived and he cannot overlook sin so that is the first characteristic the second characteristic is that God's judgment is righteous God judgment is righteous Romans 2 verses 5 to 11 tells us that God's judgment is grounded in his character because his justice is perfect his he is perfect he is holy he is patient he demonstrates divine mercy and uncompromising truth and here's the thing God never measures you by someone else he doesn't compare your good deeds against your bad deeds the standard is himself it's his holiness so if you're saying hey

I'm better than my brother I'm better than that drunk who lives down the road who beats his kids or better yet I'm better than that person who ignores his kids no God judges us by his standard which is himself his holiness his purity his glory and unlike earthly judges God is not accountable to a law outside of himself he is the standard and he bends to no one this is what makes him righteous this God doesn't have good days and bad days God doesn't waver in consistency his judgment is always right why because he never changes he never miscalculates he never errs and the third characteristic of this judge that we're going to know verse 12

[46 : 36] God's judgment is impartial verse 12 of chapter 2 reads all who have sinned without the law will also perish without the law and all who have sinned under the law will be judged by the law what God is saying is there is no favoritism in my courtroom your lineage won't help you your nationality won't protect you your church attendance your religious background or your theological vocabulary will not impress me God is not swayed by where you were born or how many sermons you've heard whether you've cracked open a Bible or you've memorized entire chapters if you're relying on anything other than Jesus Christ you are standing on sinking sand so

Paul declares nobody is above the law Jew Gentile religious irreligious everyone stands accountable to this judge and we will read learning like a later like a bombshell in Romans 3 9 he says what then are the Jews any better off no not at all for we have already charged that all both Jews and Greeks are under sin there's no free pass all are guilty none are righteous but here's the thing Paul doesn't stop with a list of charges he pauses to remind us what kind of judge we're dealing with this is a judge who is holy and just but he's also good and merciful he's not just righteous in judgment he is rich in kindness and if that were true none of us could stand and here's the thing my friends as we get into this book

I need to tell you that something will change everything about your understanding here and that is if you have placed your faith in Jesus Christ if you have thrown yourself on his mercy you have absolutely and I mean absolutely nothing to fear God because the judge in that courtroom he's also your savior the one who judges the secrets of men is the same who took your judgment on the cross he absorbed!

the wrath that was meant for you he bore! the guilt that you could never shake he paid the penalty that you could never afford and he gave you his righteousness as a perfect gift you see this is the gospel this is why we don't fear judgment this is why we rest in grace the judgment of God doesn't push us away from Christ it drives us to him amen as I've been known to say don't run from the truth run to the cross so I have three points in my conclusion that I believe you are to take away from this introduction or reintroduction the first is the gospel is not just information it's power it's not simply information it's power if this is the only thing you take away from our time together here this morning it's to understand that it's the power to save the power to change the power to unify

Jew and Gentile the power to unify religious and rebellious skeptics and saints it's the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes that's that's that's the first takeaway!

[51 : 02] God's diagnosis of your condition that sinful wretched condition is not cruelty it's actually mercifully honesty or mercifully honest how do you write yourself if you don't know you're wrong why would you take a medicine by which you don't even know you're sick God shows us the depth of our sin not to shame us but to drive us to grace he holds up the law like a mirror not to crush us but to lead us to the cross in a conversation with a friend from our church this week he made the point that when we understand these things we understand how scandalous grace really is the third point that I want you to understand from this introduction or reintroduction is that

Romans is for all of us whether you're new to this Christian faith or you've been walking with Jesus for decades you're new to this church and perhaps you've been somewhere else this book is God's truth for his people and it tells us what's wrong with the world and what only Christ can make right amen the book truly is the answer to we all know the Sunday school answer right Jesus is the answer to every question kind of fits in the Romans very well but what's interesting Paul is going to aim his words directly at those who trust in their religion instead of their redeemer so if you leave here and you are feeling convicted the issue that you need to bother with are are you religious or are you saved because there's a difference my promise to you is that it will be challenging but it will be good because what the

Bible is so good at is that it exposes false righteousness but in its goodness it offers us true righteousness the gospel message invites us to stop pretending and start resting in Jesus Christ let me pray dear holy heavenly father there was a lot of words today father but I pray that they were clear enough for us to understand that a lot has happened in this first chapter there's more that's going to happen in the preceding 15 chapters of Romans but if anything it's going to answer the deepest questions that we have about life the deepest questions we ask about ourselves why am I so messed up and how do I change can I change father through this introduction

I pray creates in us a hunger to to know more and to even to start being honest with ourselves not because we fear you but because we love you that we want to be made right with you how horrible it is to be religious and to think that our religious in the best parts of our mind will save us but yet in the end it will condemn us what a horrible place to be so I pray that these words ring true over these next lessons from this incredible book may you give us open humble hearts that bow the knee to you and all these things in your name we pray amen amen