

Romans the Gospel of God

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 03 March 2019

Preacher: Daniel Ralph

[0 : 00] So, if you'd like to turn into your Bibles to the next book that we're doing in the series, which is Romans.

Romans, I'm going to be reading from two parts of Romans.

The first is Romans 1, just a couple of verses there, and then Romans 12 and a couple of verses there. So, Romans 1, verse 16.

Now hear God's word. 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. And then in Romans 12, verses 1 and 2, again hear God's word.

[1 : 12] I appeal to you, therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God. And if just to help you in your reading, when Paul says, there I appeal to you, therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, he's speaking of the gospel that he's referring to back in chapter 1.

The mercies of God is the gospel that brings about your salvation. So, in light of the gospel that made you saved, you are to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.

Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

Well, may God bless both of his parts of his word to us, all of his word to us, and we'll come back to that in its message form after this next hymn.

Come. Tianha. Thank you.

[2 : 23] Amen. Romans is often been said to be the best explanation and application in its thoroughness of the gospel.

Galatians is often referred to as like a mini-Romans, but Galatians has a lot more to say all on its own without it simply being sort of a summary version of Romans.

But Romans is one of those books that is known well, but it's not known well enough not to need your Bible in making your way through it. But it is the gospel simply explained.

Romans is the gospel simply explained and applied to the readers of the book of Romans. But Romans is both simple and deep, and it's both clear and detailed.

And this is because Romans is thorough, but it's thorough in the way that it can be understood by people at their different levels of understanding.

[3 : 57] Now, of course, when you read a book like Romans, you're always going to learn more because that's what learning means. It means that you read it once and you understand a few things, you read it again, you understand a few more, and you keep studying it, and then your understanding of it grows because you're going deeper and deeper down.

But I want to point out that what you're going deeper and deeper down into is the same thing at its surface level. To illustrate this, imagine a child standing on the seashore, and they're up to their knees in water.

Now, the child who's standing on the seashore up to their knees in water understands that the deep-sea diver way out there is getting wet by the same water.

Now, he may be getting wet at a completely different depth, but it's exactly the same water. And that's how the gospel is. It has its depths, but it's the same gospel.

A child can understand it at a child's level, hence why we believe that children, well, because we believe that salvation is by grace. We believe that a child can be saved at any age, right, because it's by grace.

[5 : 10] But one of the things when it comes to understanding that a child is not going to understand it at the same level as someone much older who's been studying it for a length of years.

And that's how Romans works. My first ever book, in terms of big commentaries, was bought for me when I was studying. My wife bought it for me.

This is when we were still courting, okay, not dating. Don't ever encourage your children to date, okay, courtship. Only go out with the girl you plan to marry, the boy.

It doesn't always work out like that, but at least aim for it. And I said, oh, I'd very much like this book. Now, at the time, I had no idea how much it would cost. I just knew that this guy called Douglas Moo had written this exceptional commentary on the book of Romans, and it was big enough to stand on to get something off the top shelf.

Okay, it was that type of book. And I thought, well, this is probably going to be a little bit pricey, but I didn't think. So, I found out how much it was in the end, and I thought, boy, she must love me a lot.

[6 : 19] So, the point is, is Douglas Moo is a very clever man, much smarter than me. But he's smarter because he studied it for longer. He sat down. He was actually paid to study it, okay.

He didn't have the cares or concerns of a church. He was a professor, and so his whole job was to simply sit down, read, and understand, and pass it on. And so, but what he's studying is the same thing that I'm studying, but at just different levels.

And this is really important when it comes to the gospel. Because while you're experiencing the same thing, there's more to experience by the same thing.

And that's what Paul was saying here in Romans. Okay, look, I have much more to say to you.

Now, I want you to move on to greater depths, okay. Not onto something different, but to a greater depth of the same thing.

And that's how the book of Romans works. Just move on into the gospel and enjoy it. But simply put, the gospel is the power of God unto salvation for everyone who believes.

[7 : 25] Period. Okay. The gospel is the power of God unto salvation for everyone who believes.

And don't you ever be ashamed of it. And don't allow those who want you to be ashamed of it make you feel ashamed of it.

Because it is the power of gospel to save those. Okay. The person who wants you to be ashamed of the gospel needs to understand that the gospel has the power to save them.

Okay. The gospel has the power to save anyone. So never be ashamed of its power. Never be ashamed of how God has decided to save people.

So the person you love, the power of the gospel is the power for salvation for them. The person who you don't love, the gospel is the power of God unto salvation for them. And the person who wants to make you feel ashamed for believing the gospel, the power, the gospel is the power of God unto salvation even for them.

No one, no one can get away from the power of God which is in the gospel. Because we believe that salvation is by grace.

[8 : 32] Okay. Now I know that I've said this before. And this got me in a little bit of trouble because of the implications. But salvation is by grace alone. And someone was going to say, well, sure you can't mean that that person's saved because he doesn't believe what we believe.

Well, we're not saved by believing in salvation by grace alone. We are saved by grace alone. Do you understand the difference? We are not saved by believing in salvation by grace alone.

We are saved by salvation by grace alone. And there's a big difference between the two. So, we like to put these benchmarks, especially on children in the church as they grow up, they don't know enough.

They can't explain. Well, if we're arguing that salvation is by grace alone, how can we then turn around and say they don't meet our standards? It's by grace, people. It's by grace.

The grace of God through faith. Now, of course, there are signs of grace that turn up that indicate people are saved. But we must be absolutely clear that salvation is by grace alone.

[9 : 43] Okay. I'm not saved because I was smart enough to figure out what it meant. And neither are any of you. It's purely by the gift of God. So, here's the summary of how the book unfolds.

We're not able to go through it chapter by chapter and understand all its detail. But what we can do this morning is look down upon it from above. And one of the beautiful pictures that you see is this.

That in the world you have people who are devoted to things that are not God. This is called idolatry. Anything that you fill your life with as an ultimate affection that is not God is an idol.

Anything that you're devoted to, committed to, that is not God is an idol. And if you want to figure out what your idol is, the best way to do it is to ask yourself one simple question.

What is the one thing that if you lost it this very moment, you wouldn't want to live the rest of your life? What is that one thing that if it was taken away from you right now, that you wouldn't want to live tomorrow or the next day?

[10:46] And whatever that thing is, that's your God. So, the question is, did you think Jesus? If not, then you're engaged at this very moment in idolatry.

And that is something which right at this very moment, you're going to have to repent of right now. And people say, well, it takes time. No, that's how God designed forgiveness for it not to take any time at all.

To forgive and to ask for forgiveness and to repent takes exactly the same amount of time as it does to sin. Okay, I want you to realize that. That when you're in relationships with one another and you sin, okay, to forgive takes exactly the same amount of time as it did to commit that sin in the first place.

Okay, that's how quickly it is. That's how quickly it can be done. If you sinned against your person by saying something wrong, you ought to repent and ask for forgiveness straight away after.

So, we so quickly forget that salvation is by grace alone that we end up putting these arbitrary measures on for our own personal weaknesses.

[11:56] Well, it takes me longer than it takes you. Okay? No. No. Salvation is by grace. And the means of grace. And the means of grace. And all of these things are as quick as that.

They're as quick as that. So, as you look down upon on the gospel, what you see is God transforming a person who worships idols through the power of the gospel, the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and then turns them into a true worshiper of God, Romans 12.

So, Romans 1, the world is full of false worshipers, worshiping idols. Okay? Romans 5, 6, through the power of the gospel, they become saved by grace through faith.

And Romans 12, they are transformed, as they consider the mercies of God in the gospel, into true worshipers. They present themselves to God as a living sacrifice, and that is their spiritual act of worship.

So, as a summary, Romans is about the transformation of a false worshiper of idols to a true worshiper of the true God through the power of the gospel.

[13:06] That's what Romans is essentially about. When Christians meet together, and we meet together on a day like this, and we're engaged in worshiping God in the way that we do, we need to understand that God doesn't need any of that worship, but we do.

Because that is the means of transforming us to make us like Jesus. I need to sing praises to God, and I need to sing praises to God that are true. And thankfully, we have someone like Ian who's able to direct us with the type of songs that we have that achieve that very purpose.

When we pray prayer, they need to be God-ordained and God-centered. When we read our Bible, it needs to be the Bible. And we need all of this because they are the means that God has chosen to transform saved people.

That's worship. But the transformation is not to be limited to in here. It has to take over all of our life. So, if I'm a businessman, I have to be transformed in my worship of God in every business deal I do.

Okay? If I work in a hospital, then I have to be transformed by the power of God in worship of God so that every duty of care that I do, I do it and it's God-centered.

[14:22] Okay? That's what it means to think and live like a Christian. In fact, that's what it means to be a Christian. And so, whenever we're not worshiping God, that's when the accusations of hypocrisy creep in.

Okay? Because suddenly, there's a big distance between what the Bible says is the case and what our neighbor's noticing. Okay?

Our neighbor knows enough of the Bible to know when we're not being Christians. And you think, where did they learn that? Okay? But it's true. Our neighbors know enough of the Bible to know when we're not being Christians.

And so, as an act of worship, we need to make... As an act of witness, we need to make sure that our worship of God is absolutely fundamental to our Christian faith.

Because that's the reason God saved us. He saved us to worship him. Why? Because through worship, we become transformed to become like Jesus.

[15 : 25] Why? Because we will always become like the thing that we love the most. We will always become like the thing that we love the most. This is why I find those programs hilariously funny on the TV that owners that look like their dogs.

And you've seen those programs as well. Okay. Okay? That's a scary thought. Okay? But if it's true that God has designed a world that we become like what we worship, then I guess owners can become to look like their dogs.

God forgive us, we pray. In short then, we are saved by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone, and that alone transforms us into being like Christ.

Transforms us into worship God properly. If this isn't happening, then we're not being transformed. Worship is at the very center of the application or the implication of the gospel.

The whole point of the gospel is to turn you people and to me into a true worshiper of the true God from being a worshiper of other things.

[16 : 50] Because we can't help. People just cannot help but to make something in their life the very chief idol of their affection and devotion.

Everybody's got to have something. And as Thomas Chalmers once put it, that those things, if it's not Jesus, can chop and change over the years.

So a man's love of gambling can give way for his love of fine food. A man's love of fine food can give way for a love of fine wine.

And so what you begin to see happening in the world is that people's affections change because a new affection always replaces an old affection. Okay, my brother, and I've mentioned this before, but it's a classic example, who had several girlfriends growing up, you know, would always say, wrongly but rightly, he was explaining a biblical truth without even realizing it, that there's nothing like a new one to get you over the old one.

Okay? Now, yeah, you think shock, horror, but it's true. Okay, new affections help us to get over the old affections. Okay?

[18 : 03] And that's just the way that it works. The trouble is, is that is a continuous cycle until you get Jesus. Until you get Jesus, you are always replacing the old affections with new affections.

Until you get to the ultimate affection that cannot be replaced. And that's Jesus. Jesus cannot be replaced by anything in the world. Okay?

Anything in the world is never better than Jesus. Okay? I'd rather have Jesus in silver or gold. Okay? Would you? Would you?

I mean, we sing it. We sing it. The point here is to realize that grace that leads us to Jesus leads us to the very best. Okay? That cannot be beaten.

It cannot be bettered. Jesus is everything. And worshiping Jesus will make you the very person that you are meant to be. You, when you worship God, God is doing a great work in you.

[19 : 03] But the moment you take your eyes off Jesus, then everything just seems to go wrong. So, I only have two points as we lead into the exhortation.

So, here's the first of them. Dealing with separation. Dealing with separation. The gospel deals with separation. Now, why is this important? Well, because in life, death is not the problem.

Sin is the problem. Okay? Sin is the problem, not death. And here's why. Because when we think about death, we often think about cessation. That everything ends. That when a person dies, that's it.

Everything ends. But you'll know, if you've read the Bible, that God never describes death as cessation. Ever. Death is never described in the Bible as a cessation.

As everything ending. Death is always described in his word as separation. Death separates us from the living God. And so, what happens when death separates us from the living God is that we become separated from God in our physical life on earth.

[20 : 11] And if we remain separated from God in our physical life on earth, we will remain separated from God in our existence after death.

Because death is not cessation. It doesn't end. Death is about separation. It's not about everything coming to an end. And that's why death is so horrible.

Because it opens your eyes to the reality that a person can be not only separated from God in this life, this physical life, but they can be separated from God in the life that they have after death.

Okay? In the existence after death. Whatever that existence is, it is still a separation from God. Because death separates us, sin separates us from God.

And that's the death that was spoken of in the Garden of Eden. Now, of course, it eventually led to Adam's physical death. And it will eventually lead to everybody else's physical death.

[21 : 12] But first and foremost, it is a separation from the life-giving God. And if you've been separated from the God who gives life, then you've been separated from life.

It makes natural, it's a natural follow-on. God is the giver of life. So, what does life mean then if it's opposite to death?

Well, life is an abundant life. But it's an abundant life that's described in Scripture as relationship with God through Jesus Christ.

Jesus said, I am the way, the truth, and the life. And life, therefore, is a person who has relationship with God who's no longer separated. Okay?

So, how do I know that I have life? Well, do I have relationship with God? Yes. Well, then I have life. And that means if I have life with God now, I have life with God after my death.

[22 : 11] Okay? I have life with God after my death. Now, that sounds strange. How can you have life after death? Well, because life is relationship with the life-giving God. So, death separates and life gives.

And Jesus came to give life to bring us back into relationship with God. Life never consists of the abundance of things.

Okay? Life never consists of the abundance of things. You can fill your physical life with all of these things. But life, if it's understood biblically, is relationship with God.

And death, if understood biblically, is not cessation where everything comes to an end. It's simply separation. Separation from God now. Separation from God now. And separation from God in our existence after death.

So, what we have in the gospel is the power to change all of that. The gospel transforms the dead person, that is, the person who is separated from God, making them alive in Christ Jesus.

[23 : 15] That is, in relationship with God. That's the power of the gospel. And so, the reason why death is so horrible is because you have been woken up to the idea that when a person dies, they do not cease to be.

They continue to be separated from God. Think how awful that is. That's why death is so horrible. Because a person continues to be separated from God.

They don't cease. They just continue in that separation. Now, because God says, by grace alone through faith alone, we come to understand that Jesus Christ is the only way that can take us from death to life.

In other words, take us from separation to reconciliation. To take us from not belonging to God to belonging to God. And the way that he does that is through his life, through his death, and through his resurrection.

Which you can read in Romans 5 and read in Romans 6. So, let me state this, just in case, to wake you up a little bit if you're not already. Jesus did not die to give you life.

[24 : 29] Jesus died so that you could die. So that you could die to your old sinful ways, Romans 6. And Jesus lives so that you can live with him in newness of life.

Because it's a non-negotiable. All sinners must die. All that sin must come to an end. And the way God brings it to an end is in the death of Jesus.

And when Jesus dies, you die in him because he dies for you. But here's the good news. Or that's part of it. Here's the other part. That when Jesus lives, when he's raised from the dead, the reason why you can look forward to a resurrection is because you've already seen one happen.

Okay? How do I know I'm going to rise from the dead when I die? Well, because I've seen it happen in Christ Jesus. There's my assurance. There's my hope. Okay? Because I believe it already happened.

Okay? I now know that it's going to happen to me because I belong. Okay? And I know this by grace through faith. Okay? It's a complete gift of God.

[25 : 35] Okay, here's the second thing. Considering the mercy then. If you've received this mercy, what does it mean? Well, one of the things that it means is this. That as you consider that mercy of God, you are then transformed from one degree of glory to the next.

That you are being made into the image of Christ through worship. By the renewing of your mind, by presenting your bodies to God in Christ Jesus. That as you consider what God has done for you, what is your response to God's mercy?

How should you respond to a God who died for you? What are you meant to do when God has done all of that for you? What is my response meant to be? Now, it cannot be just thank you.

Okay? If someone picks a parcel up from me or picks something up from me and drops it around at the house and goes, here, I'll pick this up for you on my way back from work. You think, oh, thank you. But thank you would do in a situation like that.

Okay? But if it's something bigger, then perhaps a little gift in return. But if it's the cross of Christ Jesus, what can I give? Well, God says, well, you belong.

[26 : 47] Your whole life now is mine. You give your whole life in an act of worship. Why? Because God is saying, I'm not finished with you. Okay? Salvation is never the end point.

It's the beginning point. When a person is saved, it is the beginning of their new life, not the completion of their life. And their new life, therefore, must now go through a transformation which God calls worship because we become like what we worship.

God spells this out in the Old Testament about those who worship idols that have no ears, that have no eyes.

Okay? Well, they do. They have ears, but they cannot hear because they're made of wood or metal. They have eyes, but they cannot see because they're made of wood or metal. Okay? They have bodies.

They have hearts, but they're all made of wood or metal. And those who worship those kind of physical idols become like them, which means that they become deaf and blind to the things of God.

[28 : 02] That their ears, because they worship something that is not a God, as God, their ears then become deaf to the things of the true God. Their eyes become blind to the things of the true God.

So, it's not surprising to Christians when people in the world can't see what I'm talking about. Well, of course you can. How could you?

Because idol worship makes everyone deaf and blind and cold to the things of God. The moment you give your life over to something that is not God, you become like that very thing.

And if that thing is incapable of giving you any kind of hearing ability, seeing ability to the things of God, you remain like it. So, what do you do in a situation when, like Isaiah, has to go out and speak to a group of people who are engaged in idol worship, and God tells Isaiah they're not going to listen because they can't.

They're not going to hear you because they can't. They're not going to see anything that you're saying. Their heart, they're completely engaged in idol worship. But I want you to go and tell them anyway. Now, if I was Isaiah, I'd be like, can we not just talk about this first?

[29 : 19] I mean, what's the point, right? And here's the point. The gospel is the power of God unto salvation. The gospel is all about grace.

And Paul says in Romans 10 that the word of God brings forth faith. How does a person who has none of the qualities they need to believe in God get those qualities?

Through the gospel. Okay? It is absolutely imperative that we tell other people the gospel in order for them to know the gospel.

Because that's the only thing that can wake them up to this truth. And the reason you are to present yourself to God as a living sacrifice is so that you are transformed by the gospel and not conformed back into the world's shape.

The world wants you to make you like them. And God doesn't want you to be like the world. God wants you to be like Jesus.

[30 : 19] And the way that he'll get you to be like Jesus is by worshiping God in spirit and in truth. That's how it happens. So here's the final thing as we conclude.

Paul's ultimate reason then is found in Romans 15 where he says this. That he considers himself as a priest of the gospel. And a priest does one thing.

A priest offers to God sacrifices. And so from verse 14 onwards, Paul says that I'm a priest in the priestly service of the gospel.

And what is my offering? Well, he goes out into the world. He proclaims the gospel. And every time a man, woman, boy, and girl becomes saved, he offers those new believers to God in the service of the gospel.

What does that mean? Now, if any of you find it difficult to share the gospel or find it difficult to have any kind of motivation to share the gospel.

[31 : 20] In other words, the difficulty here isn't, I just don't know what to say. Or the difficulty here is not, I just don't want to say it to those people. But the difficulty is, I just don't want to do it.

I just don't want to. Now, we can all be corrupted by that kind of thinking and that kind of behavior. Here's Paul's solution.

He puts it this way, and I'll just read to you very, very quickly, verse 16 of chapter 15. He says, What does that mean?

Well, it means this. That the reason Paul goes out and shares the gospel is not because he looks at a group of people that need to be saved, but he looks at a group of people that need to worship God.

Paul's motivation for sharing the gospel to a group of unbelievers out there in the world that are all throwing stones and rocks at him is not that they need to be saved from their sins and they don't need to go to hell.

[32 : 56] Paul's motivation is God-centered, not man-centered. When Paul goes out to proclaim the gospel and he looks at all these people wandering up and down the streets, he's thinking, they're not worshipping God, but they should.

They ought to be a holy offering to God. They ought to be a holy offering to God, and they're not. But too often, the way gospel is proclaimed is, would you not care about whether or not someone goes to hell?

Do you not care whether or not they're going to go to hell? And okay, that's a fair enough motivation, but understand that that's a man-centered motivation. And you are sinful enough to look at some people and go, I don't care if they go to hell.

Right? Because we're that sinful, we can bypass people thinking, I've given up on you. Right? And it's easy to give up on people who perhaps have really hurt us.

How can I continue to share the gospel with a person who's like that? Well, the reason you can is if your gospel is God-centered rather than man-centered, the way that you view that person is no longer as a person who's going to hell, because you might just think that that's the best place for them, because you're sinful enough to think that.

[34 : 17] But rather, you look at them from the point of view of, they're not worshipping God, and God deserves to be worshipped by them. That's the motivation. The reason the gospel is so central, and the reason we share the gospel, is not because of what man needs.

It's actually because of what God deserves. And God deserves to be worshipped by every man, woman, boy, and girl, without exception.

Now, because of that, God gives what man needs, which is restoration, reconciliation, salvation. Okay? In other words, by putting God first, man is put first. By addressing what God deserves, man's needs are addressed perfectly.

But when you get it the other way around, everything goes skew-width. It is absolutely imperative to understand what God deserves, if you really, really desire what is best for people.

[35 : 26] Why? Because people are transformed, and they become like what they worship. If we want to see people changed, if we want to see people to have what they really need, okay, then they need the gospel to have their needs addressed.

If we really love people, then we can only demonstrate that by really loving God, and looking at those people, and deciding whether or not they're worshipping God. Why? Because we all become like what we worship.

And if they are to become like the people God wants them to be, then their worship of God is paramount. Absolutely paramount. The reason you can love the person and share the gospel with a person who wants you to be ashamed of the gospel is not because they're going to hell.

It's not because they're facing the judgment of God. All of that is true. But it's actually because God, even by them, deserves to be worshipped. And they, in order to have what they truly need, can only get it by becoming like what they worship.

God. And if we don't have a God-centered gospel, then we don't change the way God wants us to change, and we're unable to really love others as God wants us to love them.

[36 : 55] Here's the exhortation, then, as we close. The one thing that should be passing through your heart and mind as you sit here this morning, as you turn up, is, am I considering God's mercy?

Am I sat here this morning considering what God has done for me in Christ Jesus? Am I sat here this morning thinking about what God has done for me? Or am I sat here for other reasons?

And the reason why that's so crucial is because that is the only thing that's going to keep your mind being renewed instead of your whole life being conformed back into the shape of the world.

God wants you to become like what you worship, and so he gives himself to you to worship. God wants you to transform in all of the best ways possible, and the only way to do that is to have the one who is the best of all.

God gives you himself, not because he needs your worship, but because you need to worship him. Does that make sense? God gives you himself, not because he needs to be worshipped by you, but because you need to worship him, and be transformed by him.

[38 : 10] Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen.