

THE POWER OF THE
GOSPEL

STUDIES IN ROMANS 1-4

ZOOM VERSION

This letter is truly the most important piece in the New Testament. It is purest Gospel. It is well worth a Christian's while not only to memorize it word for word but also to occupy himself with it daily, as though it were the daily bread of the soul. It is impossible to read or to meditate on this letter too much or too well. The more one deals with it, the more precious it becomes and the better it tastes.

(Martin Luther)

Romans is a majestic book of the Bible. It's a letter which has changed countless lives. And through them, it has changed the entire history of God's people. This set of studies is the first of three instalments in which we will cover the entire book over the rest of the year. Strap yourself in for some life changing lessons.

In this **Zoom Version** each study is broken up into 3 "Personal Preparation" sections and a final Zoom Time section. The "Zoom Time" section provides a shorter bible study experience so as to help those groups who are finding time constraints more critical over Zoom. The "Personal Preparation" sections are intended to be done throughout the week in readiness for the group discussion of the "Zoom Time" section.

Romans 1:1-17

Personal preparation #1

Read Romans 1:1-6

1) List all the things you learn about Paul - especially note the terms he uses to describe himself. What does each term mean?

2) Make a brief note of everything Paul says about the gospel.

For reflection

Paul's desire is to call Gentiles to "the obedience that comes from faith" (v5). What do you think this means? What stops us from calling people to the *obedience* that comes from our faith?

Personal preparation #2

Read Romans 1:7-15

1) What reasons does Paul give for writing to the church at Rome?

2) According to these verses, who needs to hear the gospel? Why?

For reflection

Paul is keen for he and the Roman church to be "mutually encouraged by each other's faith" (v12). How might we be able to do that during this time of social restrictions?

Personal preparation #3

Read Romans 1:16-17

1) What does the gospel show us about ourselves? What does it show us about God?

2) Try and write Verse 17 in your own words.

For reflection

What does a lifestyle of "living by faith" look like? Try and be specific in your suggestions.

ZOOM TIME

Read Romans 1:1-17

1) Look over the whole passage and list as many reasons as you can for Paul not being ashamed of the gospel.

2) Where do you notice Paul's passion for the gospel in these verses? How can we maintain our passion for the gospel? Try and be as practical as possible.

3) Why might we be tempted to "be ashamed of the gospel"? Have you ever felt this way?

ROMANS 1:18-32

Personal preparation #1

Read Romans 1:18-20

1) What do these people know about God? Why do they know it?

2) What do these people do with their knowledge of God?

For reflection

Do you mainly think of God as being wrathful or loving? Why?

Personal preparation #2

Read Romans 1:21-27

1) What do people do instead of following the true God?

2) What consequences do people face for their actions?

For reflection

Why is it so tempting to serve "created things rather than the Creator"?

Personal preparation #3

Read Romans 1:28-32

1) Lots of different types of evil are listed in these verses. Are there any things listed that surprise you?

2) What consequences do people face for their actions?

For reflection

What picture of the world do these verses give? Do you think it's a realistic one?

ZOOM TIME

Read Romans 1:18-32

1) Using this passage, how would you define "sin"?

2) What do we discover about the nature of God's judgement in this passage? Is this comforting or troubling?

3) "God is love. He doesn't get angry with us." What might you say in response to this comment?

ROMANS 2:1-3:20

Personal preparation #1

Read Romans 2:1-16

1) What sort of people are being addressed in this section?

2) What punishment do they face? Why do they face it?

For reflection

Were there any verses in this section that especially reminded you of Australia today? In what way?

Personal preparation #2

Read Romans 2:17-29

1) How would you summarise the problem of the person described in these verses?

2) Who is a true Jew?

For reflection

This section is clearly aimed at Jews. What relevance does it have to us?

Personal preparation #3

Read Romans 3:1-20

1) Is Paul referring to Jews or Gentiles in this section? What makes you think this?

2) What does Paul conclude about the human condition?

For reflection

"I can't believe that everyone is really as bad as Paul says we are!" What would you say in response to that statement?

ZOOM TIME

Read Romans 2:1-3:20

1) List all the different types of people considered in this section.

2) List all the things we learn about the rightness of God's judgement in this section

3) Why is it important to be clear about how sinful humanity is?

Romans 3:21-31

Personal preparation #1

Read Romans 3:21-24

1) What has God made known about himself? (v21)¹ In what way do you think the Law and the Prophets testified to this?

2) Have a go at writing out v23-24 in your own words. The following definitions might help -

- justified means "declared righteous", or made "right with God."
- grace means "generosity" or "undeserved favour"
- redemption means "buying back", as in redeeming something from a pawnbroker

For reflection

"God helps those who help themselves." How could you use this passage to respond to that statement?

Personal preparation #2

Read Romans 3:25-26

1) How does the death of Jesus demonstrate God's justice?

2) Have a go at writing out v25 in your own words. The following definitions might help -

- atonement means putting right or paying the price for a wrong.
- forbearance simply means patience.
- propitiation (for those with an ESV) means to turn away anger

For reflection

Would there be anything wrong if God just ignored sin altogether?

¹ please note that the 1984 NIV mistakenly has "righteousness from God" instead of "righteousness of God." The new version has corrected this.

Personal preparation #3

Read Romans 3:27-31

- 1) What sort of boasting does Paul have in mind in v27?

- 2) List as many reasons as you can for why such boasting is "excluded"?

For reflection

Reading between the lines a little, what attitudes seem to be dividing the Jews and Gentiles in the church in Rome? Try to imagine the situation that causes Paul to write as he does in verses 27 to 30. Are we faced with similar situations? If so, what is Paul's message for us?

ZOOM TIME

Read Romans 3:21-31

- 1) According to Paul's argument, how does the cross manage to demonstrate both God's mercy and justice?

- 2) Which parts of the section do you find hardest to understand?

- 3) "I've done so many bad things I could never be a Christian." How could you use this passage to respond to that statement?

Romans 4

Personal preparation #1

Read Romans 4:1-8

1) Why do you think Abraham would be a good person on which to base the precedent of how God saves people? (v1)

2) According to these verses, what did NOT save Abraham?

For reflection

When is it hardest to believe what God says?

Personal preparation #2

Read Romans 4:9-15

1) According to v9-12 what did NOT save Abraham?

2) According to v13-15 what did NOT save Abraham?

For reflection

What are some modern examples of things which people think make them right with God?

Personal preparation #3

Read Romans 4:16-25

1) If all the previous things didn't save Abraham (see previous preparations), what did save him!? (v16-17)

2) In v23-24 Paul draws his argument to a close. The example of Abraham has relevance to us all. Just like Abraham trusted God and was considered righteous so are we. However, God hasn't promised us lots of descendants like Abraham. So what *do* we need to trust God about? (v23-25)

For reflection

In what way is verse 21 a good definition of "faith"?

ZOOM TIME

Read Romans 4

1) Paul spends a lot of time arguing that Abraham was saved by faith and NOT what he did. Why is this such an important truth to get straight?

2) If we're saved by what Jesus does and not what we do, why does it matter how we behave?

3) What have you learnt about God's character in this chapter?