

TRANSFORMING TRUTHS OF THE GOSPEL
ROMANS 1-11

“The world is broken.” That is what Raye Jeanne said to me Wednesday evening as we sat on our porch and recounted our day and the people we had interacted with and the world circumstances we’d observed.



I’m not talking about COVID, though that is one example of its brokenness. I’m talking about the personal situations that give us heartache — grief and sorrow that keeps us longing for Heaven. The world is broken:

- **Marriages** are broken: in every marital union there are challenges from day one until year 60 or 70 (or however long God gives) — there are struggles and conflicts over competing desires and finances and jobs and headship and parenting and sex and expectations (both spoken and unspoken).
- **Relationships** are broken: Relationships between children and parents, parents and children, co-workers, extended family members, neighbors, churches and ministries...
- **Ethnic relationships** are broken: there is one common race called mankind in which all people are created in the image and likeness of God, designed to glorify Him. There is no superiority of gender or ethnicity or nationality. But still ethnic biases and favoritism and prejudice exists.
- **Political processes** are broken: the government is given as a gift of common grace to the world, but even in the best of governments there are abuses and injustice and various kinds of folly.
- **Sex and sexual identity** is broken: the incidence of sexual abuse is alarming and horrific (if you’ve been sinned against in that way, there is hope for you — call us so we can help you); sexual sin is alarming and produces a devastation that is unimagined when sinners enter into it; questions of gender the blessing of homosexual unions indicates that the world is deeply confused and perverse.
- **Finances** are broken: economies are broken, but so are personal finances, and the skewed attitudes that individuals have towards money. Jobs are lost and paychecks and retirement funds decrease.
- **??????** — many other things are broken — health, car and house repairs, and pets dying... What is broken in your world and what have you seen to be broken?

The world is broken. The world seems to be broken irrevocably and irretrievably. Where is any hope? The hope for the world, the hope for Granbury, the hope for our church, the hope for you, and the hope for me is all the same. It’s the gospel of Jesus Christ. There is nothing else that will save or fix us.

The book of Romans is Paul’s letter to the church in Rome in which he asks them to consider being his sending church on his missionary venture to Spain (15:23-24, 28-29). And since he has not previously visited this church, this letter is a “letter of introduction” to them in which he establishes his orthodoxy.

He lays out his understanding of some theological basics to establish credibility with the Roman church so that they will support him as he takes the gospel to Spain.

His goal is to demonstrate that he believes the truth and that his beliefs are consistent with what God has always said, which is one reason he quotes from the OT more than any other NT writer.

This morning, we are about to enter a new section in the book of Romans (chapter 12) — I want to spend the morning reminding us where we have been in this great letter. These doctrines are tied to Paul's imperatives in chapters 12-15 (note the connection with the word *therefore* in 12:1). This morning we will not just be reminded of the doctrines that Paul has taught, but also focus on the reality that these truths (which are all centered around the gospel) are transformative — they will change us. That's the theme of the morning:

THE GOSPEL OF GOD IS A SANCTIFYING GOSPEL FOR SINNERS.

How will the gospel change us? Let's consider **four realities** about God's gospel, as Paul has unfolded them in Romans 1-11:

1. The Gospel of God is a Sanctifying Gospel **FOR SINNERS** (1:18 – 3:20)
2. The Gospel of God is a Sanctifying **GOSPEL** for Sinners (3:21 – 4:25)
3. The Gospel of God is a **SANCTIFYING** Gospel for Sinners (5:1 – 8:39)
4. The **GOSPEL OF GOD** is a Sanctifying Gospel for Sinners (9:1 – 11:36)

THE GOSPEL OF GOD IS A SANCTIFYING GOSPEL FOR SINNERS.

- In **Romans 1:1-17**, Paul introduces the letter and the gospel. He introduces it as God's gospel (**v. 1**). It is a gospel received by faith alone (**v. 17**), It is a sanctifying gospel (**v. 8**). And it is for sinners of all kinds (**vv. 15-16**), which leads us to the first part of the book and the first reality of the gospel...

1. The Gospel of God is a Sanctifying Gospel *FOR SINNERS* (1:18 - 3:20)

- The gospel is for sinners (and Paul explains at length the sinfulness of sinners) —
 - ✓ **The gospel is for Gentile sinners** (ch. 1). People in the world need the gospel because they are sinners.
 - The entire world has experienced the general revelation of God, not just Jews (**1:19-20; 2:14-15**). There is no one that will be able to say to God, "I didn't know; I'm not culpable."
 - Man's problem is not lack of revelation; the problem for the Gentiles is that they have suppressed the truth (**1:18**). They have rejected God despite clear attestation of Him (**1:20**). They did not glorify Him or give thanks to Him.
 - Their rebellion against God is willful; they would rather worship anything else than Him (**1:23**). They worshipped the created rather than the Creator and it led them to all kinds of sin (**1:28-32**). Worse, their sin has led to God's judgment against them — and it's already begun (**1:24, 26, 28**).
 - ✓ **The gospel is for Jewish sinners** (ch. 2). An Israelite might say at the end of ch. 1 — "that's right, Paul..." But Paul then demonstrates that Jews are also sinners by nature:
 - Israelites have no excuse when they sin (**2:1**), because they have been given the Scriptures (**3:1-2**)
 - Israelites will be judged by God in the same way that Gentiles are when they rebel (**2:3, 5**)
 - Both Jews and Gentiles will be judged for their sin (**2:11-12**)
 - The Law cannot save sinners because the Law cannot make men righteous; to be saved one needs to be transformed inwardly, not superficially changed outwardly (**2:29**).
 - ✓ **The gospel is for all sinners** because all sinners are under God's wrath (**3:9**)
 - Sin is universal; God's wrath is merited by all: notice all the all-inclusive words in **3:10-12**.
 - From the top of their heads to the bottom of their feet (the totality of their lives), all men are completely depraved (incapable of saving themselves, **3:13-18**).
 - No one can save himself, and no attempt to fulfill the Law will be successful (**3:20**).
- Let's consider two implications of this —
 - ✓ *Grieve and lament over the horror of sin.* When you look at your news feed, listen to the laments of your disciples or neighbors, watch the ungodliness of the political drama, and consider the rage against many injustices and the folly of many activities, don't be anxious and angry. Let your heart cry out over the pain of people ensnared by sin. They are trapped by sin and the consequences of sin and their blind hearts don't know where to turn for help.

- ✓ That's why John Piper has said, "Let the pain and misery of your body, and that of the people around you, remind you of the exceeding moral horror and spiritual ugliness of sin."
- ✓ The gospel is for and available to all people. But there is also a limitation to that sentence. The gospel is only for those who acknowledge they are sinners. This is a bad news and good news situation — the bad news is that you are a sinner and God is unafraid to pour out His wrath on you (2:9; 3:9, 19).
- ✓ The good news is that you are a sinner and God is pleased to offer the gospel to you.

"To deny sin is bad news, indeed. The only good news is sin itself. Sin is the best news there is, the best news there could be in our predicament.

"Because with sin, there's a way out. There's a possibility of repentance. You can't repent of confusion or psychological flaws inflicted by your parents — you're stuck with them. But you can repent of sin. Sin and repentance are the only grounds for hope and joy. The grounds for reconciled, joyful relationships. You can be born again." [John Alexander]

- ✓ If you are here this morning and you have never trusted Christ for salvation, you are in a desperate place. If something doesn't change, you are destined to spend eternity enduring God's relentless wrath, being utterly incapable of escaping it. But God also has provided you a pathway to escape — He has sent the gospel in the person of Jesus Christ so that when you believe Him, you will be saved both *from* God (from His wrath) and *to* God (to His presence).
- ✓ In fact, that is the very next point Paul makes in the letter —

2. The Gospel of God is a Sanctifying GOSPEL for Sinners (3:21 - 4:25)

- The gospel is God's declaration that you are righteous when you are not

- ✓ Justification is not God *making* us righteous (that's what Catholicism teaches), but God *declaring* us righteous when we are not yet righteous. He imputes (accounts) Christ's righteousness to us and treats us as if we had done everything Christ did in fulfilling the Law.
- ✓ Let's define it: Justification is God's imputation of a righteousness which meets His standard to sinners who cannot meet that standard. It is the way He satisfies His wrath against sin (3: 18) by judging Christ for our sins and imputing Christ's righteousness to us to put us in right relationship with Him.
- ✓ Justification is demonstrated in the words, "the righteousness of God," which is a common theme in Romans (cf. 1:17; 3:21). It is those very words that were at first a struggle, and then a joy for Luther:

“I greatly longed to understand Paul’s Epistle to the Romans and nothing stood in my way but that one expression, ‘the justice (righteousness) of God,’ because I took it to mean that justice whereby God is just and deals justly in punishing the unjust. My situation was that, although an impeccable monk, I stood before God as a sinner troubled in conscience, and I had no confidence that my merit would assuage him. Therefore I did not love a just and angry God, but rather hated and murmured against him. Yet I clung to the dear Paul and had a great yearning to know what he meant.

“Night and day I pondered until I saw the connection between the justice of God and the statement that ‘the just shall live by his faith.’ Then I grasped that the justice of God is that righteousness by which through grace and sheer mercy God justifies us through faith. Thereupon I felt myself to be reborn and to have gone through open doors into paradise. The whole of Scripture took on a new meaning, and whereas before ‘the justice of God’ had filled me with hate, now it became to me inexpressibly sweet in greater love. This passage of Paul became to me a gate of heaven.”

- ✓ To declare sinners righteous is not God “overlooking” your sin; it’s God’s grace to give you what you cannot obtain by your own efforts.
- ✓ Justification is not only gracious, but also just since it is based on Christ’s substitutionary death (3:26b)

• The only way to receive this gospel is through faith (ch. 4)

- ✓ The gospel excludes works. If one gets something by work, he only is receiving something that he deserves. Because men are sinners (no matter how highly they think of themselves, they are sinners), they only deserve, merit, and earn one thing: eternal wrath (3:23).
- ✓ The only way to get salvation is by faith — a simple acknowledgement that, we can’t save ourselves and that if we will be saved, then God alone must do it. It is to say, “I can’t, God; You must.”
- ✓ So faith is not a work either (as some allege). Faith is resting in God to do everything for you.
- ✓ This is the way Abraham was saved (4:3, 9-10, 16). Did you note especially v. 16? If it is not by faith that we receive salvation, then our salvation cannot be by grace. Grace and faith are gospel partners. They are the left and right wing of the airplane of salvation. They are the “husband and wife” in the marriage of salvation. They are linked in ways that cannot be dissolved.
- ✓ This is the way David was saved (4:6-8).
- ✓ This is why Christ died (4:23-25).

3. The Gospel of God is a SANCTIFYING Gospel for Sinners (5:1 – 8:39)

- The word “sanctify” simply means to “make holy” or “make clean;” it is used to indicate things that are “set apart” for particular uses. So a believer in Christ is set apart to be made holy, in imitation of Christ.
- Sanctification is the working out of our salvation — the process of progressively being made more and more like the character and person of our Savior, Jesus. Sanctification doesn’t save; it evidences salvation.

- ✓ Sanctification is the working out of the reality of our move from Adam to Christ (5:17)
 - ✓ Sanctification is the working out of the reality of our move from enslavement to sin to enslavement to righteousness (6:10-11, 22)
 - ✓ Sanctification is the working out of the reality of our move from Law to grace (7:5-6)
 - ✓ Sanctification is the working out of the reality of our move from living by the flesh to living by the Spirit (8:12-13)
 - ✓ Sanctification is making us increasingly like Christ, our Savior (8:29). And Christ our Savior (and His Spirit) are constantly working and praying for us in this process (8:27, 34).
 - ✓ In sanctification, we are “Men Made New,” as John Stott said.
- Key: As it sanctifies us, the gospel gives us an ability to do what we could not do before — obey God and do things that are righteous and pleasing to God (6:20, 22).
 - ✓ The sanctification process is the process of putting off sin and putting on righteousness. We stop sin and we start righteousness in a synergistic work with the Spirit of God.
 - ✓ Salvation (justification) is monergistic — it is solely the work of God and His grace.
 - ✓ Sanctification is synergistic — it is saved man cooperating with and submitting to the Spirit’s work in their lives so that they are changed.
 - ✓ But even as I say that, know that when you are working and laboring in sanctification, the only reason you can work and do anything righteous is because of the empowerment of the Spirit of God in you (8:13-14). You can work only because you have been saved.
 - ✓ If you aren’t working towards righteousness, it is an indication that you are living in the power of the flesh and not in submission to Christ; and it may indicate that you are not yet saved.

4. The GOSPEL OF GOD is a Sanctifying Gospel for Sinners (9:1 – 11:36)

- To say that the gospel is God’s gospel means that salvation emanates from Him alone. He designs and produces salvation; God is sovereign to choose whom He will save (and He does choose):
 - ✓ He chose Israel to be His corporate people (9:7, 11; 11:2).
 - ✓ He chose individual Israelites to be saved (9:12-13; 11:5).
 - ✓ He chose individual Gentiles to be saved (9:24-26, 30; 11:11b, 24a; cf. also 8:29-30).
 - ✓ Only those whom He elects will be saved. It is solely about His mercy and whom He chooses to extend His kindness towards (9:18).
 - ✓ Only those whom He elects will be saved. *But* all that He elects *will* be saved — including rebellious Israel (11:2, 26, 28-29). Our confidence is that once elected, one will be saved. So a friend of mine used to say when asked when he was saved, “I was saved before the foundation of the earth!”

- When we say that the gospel is God’s gospel, we mean that everything about the gospel is His — it is **from Him, through Him, and to Him** (11:36a). It is so that God is made glorious — revealed to be all that He is in the fullness of His nature (11:36b).
 - ✓ That the gospel belongs to God means that He is the One who produces the gospel and salvation.
 - ✓ God’s gospel means that God saves sinners for His glory.
 - ✓ God’s gospel means that God saves sinners to bring sinners to Him.
 - ✓ God’s gospel means that God saves sinners to bring sinners to Him so that they might mutually enjoy God’s glory forever.
 - ✓ God’s gospel means the entire process, ultimately, is all about Him.

Romans: The Gospel of God							
The Gospel Introduced	The Gospel and the Unbeliever	The Gospel and Justification	The Gospel and Sanctification	The Gospel, Israel, and the Church	The Gospel and Ministry: Christian Duties	The Gospel and Ministry: Personal Liberties	The Gospel and Ministry: Ministry Joys
1:1 – 1:17	1:18 – 3:20	3:21 – 5:21	6:1 – 8:39	9:1 – 11:36	12:1 – 13:14	14:1 – 15:13	15:14 – 16:27
SIN		SALVATION	SANCTIFICATION	SOVEREIGNTY	SERVICE		
Purpose: Romans is an introduction of Paul as an apostle. He clearly set forth the gospel he preached and taught, so that believers in Rome would have complete confidence in his authority as he carried the gospel westward in a new missionary endeavor.							
Theme: The gospel is the power of God for salvation (and sanctification) to all (Jew <i>and</i> Gentile) who believe (1:16).							

Author: Paul
Date: ca. 58

Key words: God, wrath, justification, sin, faith, hope, gospel
Key verses: 1:16-17

CONCLUSION/Lessons Learned:

- **Every broken part of the world can be traced to sin.** Everything broken is either directly related to sin, or like the fallen creation, it is a by-product of sin. We need to think of the troubles of the world that way.
- **Remember: the only answer for sin is a Savior.** I need to stop being anxious and angry at the world and my circumstances (every sinner is someone trapped by sin and all the suffering is a consequence of sin). I need to start being more evangelistic with my words (10:14). If I don’t speak, who will?
- **Learn the gospel: grace, man God, Christ, faith, hope.** The gospel must be heard by sinners and declared by believers. In its simplest form, the gospel can be spoken in six words: grace, man, God, Christ, faith, and hope. You can even put it in one sentence: By faith we believe our sin is imputed to Christ and Christ’s righteousness is imputed to us so that we can serve and enjoy God forever. However you articulate it, learn the gospel well enough to speak it to sinners who need its hope in a moment’s notice (and pray for opportunities).

- **The goal of the gospel is sanctification and change: what is changing in my life?** God doesn't save us so that we stay in our sins. When we are saved, there *will* be change. We are not saved *by* sanctification, but we are saved *for* sanctification. So am I giving evidence of change?
 - ✓ Where am I changing? Give thanks for God's work to bring about that change.
 - ✓ Where am I not changing? Why not? Ignorance? (then, learn) Rebellion? (then, repent) Laziness? (then, endure and persevere and work).
 - ✓ Have I not given any discernable evidence of change? Then trust Christ — "I have sinned greatly; I cannot do anything to keep from your wrath. Would you be merciful to me and free me from Your wrath and my sin so that I can enjoy You and live for You eternally?"
- **What is the hope** for this broken world? The cross and **the gospel of God** — only. One day (soon?!), God will save Israel as a nation (11:26), along with all His chosen Gentiles, and Christ will come and rule and reign for all eternity (**Rom. 8:23-25; Rev. 22:12-15**).



BENEDICTION: **Romans 11:33-36**