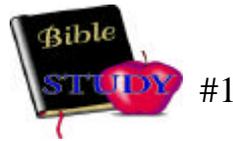


New Life Evangelistic Center



Experiencing the Good News of Romans 1-3

My dear friends,

We live in a world that seems to have so much bad news. War, rape, murder, divorce, government cutbacks in social service programs, the bad news seems to keep going on and on. How we long for good news like that shared with us in the book of Romans. This dynamic book lays out the good news in such a way that those who are slaves of sin are told how they can be freed and saved. New believers discover in Romans their identity in Christ and the victory they can have through the power of the Holy Spirit. There is so much good news in the Book of Romans that even those who have been Christians for years can discover liberating truths that can empower them for greater service.

I want to invite you to join me during the next five weeks in experiencing the good news shared in this wonderful Book of Romans. By reading Romans 1:1-17 we see the introduction to this good news which shows how we can be led and transformed by the resurrected Christ. Romans 1:18-3:20 shares with us the universal need for this good news. Then in Romans 3:21-31 we discover the basis for this good news that we are “justified freely by His grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.” (Romans 3:24)

The Book of Romans has been commonly referred to as one of the most influential books in the Bible. In 380 AD, Augustine was converted through the reading of Romans 13:13 and 14. After Martin Luther came to understand the meaning of God’s righteousness and that “the just shall live by faith” in 1517 the Protestant Reformation began. Now you have the opportunity to experience “this power of God” which is so wonderfully described in the marvelous Book of Romans. That is not all. There is also the grace and peace mentioned in Romans 1:7 awaiting you. This grace equips us for service while the peace of God strengthens and sustains us daily.

In Romans 1:1-17 we see some very important things about this good news called the gospel. First we see in verse 1 that God is the source of this good news

which Paul calls the “gospel of God”. Second we see that the Old Testament prophets promised this good news. (Verse 2) Third we see that this good news involves the resurrection of God’s Son, the Lord Jesus Christ (verses 3,4). In Romans 1:16, 17 Paul describes this good news called “the gospel” in this way, “I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile. For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: ‘The righteous will live by faith.’” (Romans 1:16,17) In these 2 dynamic verses we see why we like Paul should not be ashamed of this good news of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. This good news is the power of God for everyone who believes in it the righteousness of God is revealed. What does all this mean to us at this time? It means that in spite of the circumstances and the problems we can be more than conquerors both now and for all eternity by putting our faith in Jesus Christ.

The question is why is it so hard to believe the good news when the evidence is so clear. Wicked people may try to suppress the truth about God but the evidence of His love and reality is all around us. “Forever since the creation of the world His invisible nature and attributes, that is, His eternal power and divinity, have been made intelligible and clearly discernible in and through the things that have been made (His handiwork).” So men are without excuse (altogether without any defense or justification) Romans 1:20 (Amplified Bible). According to Romans 1:21-32 what happens to those who know God as a result of all the evidence of creation around them, but don’t glorify Him as God or give thanks to Him?

Paul lays it out straight when it comes to those who would trade the good news of hope and life in Christ for a life style of idolatry and immorality. Those who refuse to see their need for Christ do not receive Him and the good news He gives. As a result they “become filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed and depravity. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit and malice.” (Romans 1:29)

In Romans 2:1-16 Paul confronts the critical moralizers who profess high ethical standards and apply them to everybody except themselves. There is also a promise given to those who faithfully do the work of God. “To those who by persistence in doing good seek glory, honor and immortality, He will give eternal life. But for those who are self-seeking and who reject the truth and follow evil, there will be wrath and anger.” (Romans 2:7,8)

Paul turns to the self-confident, who boast of their knowledge of God's law, but do not obey it in Romans 2:17-3:8. "If you are convinced that you are a guide for the blind, a light for those who are in the dark, an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of infants, because you have in the law the embodiment of knowledge and truth--you, then, who teach others, do you not teach yourself? You, who preach against stealing, do you steal? You who say that people should not commit adultery, do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols, do you rob temples?" (Romans 2:19-22) Paul is telling each and everyone that you can't really experience the good news until you start putting it into practice in your own life.

In Romans 3:9-31 we see Paul addressing the whole human race and concludes that we are all guilty and without excuse before God. Our only hope is through Jesus Christ our Risen Lord as verses 21-24 of Romans Chapter 3 points out. "But now a righteousness from God, apart from the law, has been made known, to which the law and the Prophets testify. This righteous from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God and are justified freely by His grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus."

This good news cannot be equaled in this sin stricken world. We now have hope because of Jesus Christ who died for our sins and rose from the dead. As we put our faith in Jesus we can experience the righteousness of God. Yes we have sinned and fallen short but thanks be to God. Because of His mercy and grace we have been justified freely by God's grace provided through the redemption of our Lord Jesus Christ.

In order to experience this free gift of salvation faith is absolutely essential. This faith in order to be effective has to be much more than mental assent. True faith means total reliance on the Living Lord Jesus Christ as ones only Savior from sin and the hope for heaven. The hymn by Pastor J. H. Sammis entitled "Trust and Obey" illustrates this point when it proclaims; "But we never can prove The delights of His love, Until all on the altar we lay, For the favor He shows, And the joy He bestows Are for them who will trust and obey. Trust and obey, for there is no other way To be happy in Jesus, but to trust and obey." True faith involves obedience to God and His word. It is not an attempt to earn the free gift of salvation but an acceptance of this gift in such a way it revolutionizes our lives.

Such an acceptance will not take place until one first recognizes the need. As we have already read, Paul clearly presents this need by declaring, "for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." If you are going to help others

experience this free gift of eternal life you are going to have to take them to passages like Romans 3:23 and help them understand that sin has infected the whole human race. The cure for the sickness of sin is shared in verse 24, 25 where it says we “are justified freely by His grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. God presented Him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in His blood.” Now that is good news. It means we do not have to die in our sins. We can accept by faith that we are justified freely by His (God’s) grace made available to us through the redemption that came through Jesus’ death on the cross and His resurrection from the dead.

The free gift which Paul calls the gospel is not just a bunch of theological mumble jumble. Remember “it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes.” In order to experience this power in your life and work you must first discover the power of unloading those personal burdens including the demands of other people into the hands of God. In Hebrews 12:1 we read, “let us lay aside every weight and the sin, which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us.” That means if we are going to experience the gift of the power of God for salvation in every area of our lives we must be willing to lay down our sins and focus on Jesus our Savior.

Jesus said in John 10:10, “The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.” Its good news to know that while Satan wants to wear us out, steal our joy and peace, and finally kill us; Jesus has come to give us life to the fullest.

In order to experience this fullness of life we must surrender those problems to Jesus. Yes, it’s hard to unload a problem and give it to God when it seems totally out of control. It often seems easier to do anything but wait and surrender yet Is. 40:31 says, “Those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength.” That means living by faith in the reality that we have been “justified freely by His grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.” (Romans 3:24) This gift doesn’t relate to salvation just after we die but means you and I have the “peace and grace” of God to live in the here and now. (Romans 1:7) We can’t continue to let the wounds of the past fester in the life of the present. The free gift Paul writes of in Romans has given you and me the power of forgiveness. Once we accept the fact we are forgiven we discover the freedom to forgive others. In the next lesson we will look deeper at this as Paul declares, “Blessed are they whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. Blessed is the one whose sin the Lord will never count against him.”(Romans 4:7,8) When we accept the good

news that God has forgiven us we are free to forgive circumstances, other people and ourselves.

Remember “this righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe.” (Romans 3:22) “All of us have become like-one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags.” (Isaiah 64:6) God doesn’t want any dirty laundry. He makes it possible for us to be free, clean and righteous through Jesus Christ.” God made Him (Jesus) who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God.” (2 Cor. 5:21) This is possible “through faith in His blood.” (Romans 3:25)

1. The good news is that there is power in the blood of Jesus Christ. “The blood of Jesus, God’s Son, cleanses us from all sin.” (1 John 1:7)
2. It is the blood that causes judgement and death to pass over us. As we through faith apply the blood of Jesus to the “door post” of our hearts we can claim the promise of Exodus 12:13, “When I see the blood, I will pass over you.”
3. Through the shed blood of Jesus Christ we have peace, grace and access to the Father. (Eph. 2:17,18)
4. The blood of Jesus and the power of His resurrection give us the boldness to enter the Holy of Holies of God’s presence. (Heb. 10:19)
5. We are redeemed as a result of the blood of Jesus Christ (1 Peter 1:18-19) and now we have the power to overcome the devil through the blood of the Lamb and the word of our testimony. (Rev. 12:11)

Paul declares in Romans 1:16, “I am not ashamed of the gospel (the good news), because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes.” This salvation is a free gift that cannot be earned but only received by faith. “One is justified by faith apart from observing the law.” (Romans 3:28) Real faith involves trusting in the Living God no matter what the circumstances may bring. It means laying our burdens before the cross and then unashamedly sharing the good news in word and deed with a hurting world. This involves feeding the hungry, sheltering the homeless and sharing hope with the hopeless and direct help with the helpless. This is only possible as we “fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider Him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.” (Hebrews 12:2,3)

The good news shared in Romans is that we do not have to grow weary and lose heart. There is hope for Christ is risen. Let us continue to explore the dimensions of this good news by studying Romans 4-6. In these upcoming chapters we will see the practical benefits of this good news, more on Christ's triumphal work over sin, and how this gospel (good news) is the way to Holy Living.

Yours in Christ,

Larry Rice