

# **Romans 1-6 Bible Studies**

## ***St Andrews, Roseville (2024)***

Welcome to the book of Romans! Our series goals are (1) To grow in our appreciation of God's gracious gospel solution to our biggest problem, (2) To respond in joyful trust and obedience, and (3) To be freshly convicted of the need to share the good news of Jesus with the people around us. You'll find a **Glossary of terms** on the last page.

### **STUDY 1: Romans 1:1-17**

#### **For Starters**

- When and in what sense are you tempted to be ashamed of the gospel?
- When you think about the gospel, or share it with others, what sorts of things do you emphasise and what sorts of things do you not emphasise?

#### **Read 1:1-4**

- List as many things as you can about the gospel.

#### **Explore**

- What is the promise about this future son, and when is it fulfilled?
  - o 2 Samuel 7:12-14
  - o Psalm 2:6-12
  - o Acts 2:29-36
  - o Acts 13:32-34 (Rom1:1-4)
- As we explain the gospel, we should not only say that 'Jesus died for your sins', but also that 'Jesus is your rightful King'. Do you agree? Why?

#### **Read 1:5-6**

- What are the world-wide implications of the gospel and why? (Also 16:26)
- Could you describe your faith as 'the obedience of faith'?

#### **Read 1:7-13**

- Why does Paul want a face-to-face visit with them?
- How often do you sense the need for face-to-face fellowship? What frequency do you think is optimal?

#### **Read 1:14-17**

- Why is Paul not ashamed? Where is his confidence?

**Apply**

- With this truth in mind, how would you counsel someone who said,
  - “Our strategy, systems, and structures must be world class if we are going to reach the people of the North Shore with the gospel!”
  - “I don’t like sharing the gospel because people often don’t want to hear it”
  - “I don’t feel that I’m a good enough Christian to talk about Jesus with people, I’ll leave it to the godly people”
- What is one step you can take towards sharing the gospel with someone?
- Start (or continue) praying for at least 1 (perhaps 2 or 3) non-Christian persons in your life. Pray that God would give you an opportunity to point to Jesus in some way. Pray that God would have mercy on them. Pray that God would help you not to be ashamed of the gospel, and give you love and boldness.

## STUDY 2: Romans 1:18-32

### For Starters

- What would you say to someone who denied that they were sinful?

### Read 1:16-18

- How does v18 fit with what has just been said (v16-17)?

### Read 1:18-23

- What is the flow of thought in these verses? What point (or points) is Paul trying to establish?
- With this passage in mind, what would you say to the question, “What about those who have never heard?”

### Read 1:22-28

- How does God’s wrath express itself in the present? (v18 ‘is being revealed’). Can you discern a repeated pattern (something we do and something God does in response)?
- What might it mean that God ‘gave them over’ to various sins?

★ On the question of homosexual expression, please see <https://www.livingout.org>. This is a resource put together by Christians who experience same sex attraction. Another local resource worth consulting is <https://www.livingfaith.online>

### Read 1:28-32

- Have you observed or experienced sins inbuilt negative consequences? How does each of the following sins over-promise and under-deliver?
  - Greed
  - Gossip
  - Anger
  - Lying
- In what sense is acknowledging one’s sinfulness liberating?
- Pray together, confessing our need for God’s mercy! (Among other things). Pray that we would sense the great peril many people are facing without Christ.

## STUDY 3 – Romans 2:1-16

### For Starters

- In what ways/areas do you tend to judge/disapprove of others? (Be honest)
- Give an example of an area in which you are critical of others and yet you occasionally fall short yourself ...

### Read 2:1-3

- Why does Paul suddenly change from the third person plural ('they', 'them') in ch1 to the first-person singular ('you') in 2:1? What is its effect on the reader?
- Whose standards are we failing when we judge others?

### Read 2:4-5

- Instead of self-righteously looking down at others, what does God desire?
- How is God's kindness expressed in these verses, and what are the implications for evangelism? (Cf. 2Pt3:9)

### Read 2:6-11

- V6 and V11 basically make the same point. What categories do we use to favour/esteem people?
- On what basis will God judge humanity? On what basis does he NOT judge humanity?
- How does this make you feel?
- "We can spend a lot of time judgy judgy and not enough time doey doey." – Ness Hughes. What do you think?

### Read 2:12-16

- What is surprising about Gentiles who don't have a copy of the OT law?

★ 2:6-11 sounds like its undermining justification by faith alone (as does 2:13). There are 2 basic scholarly opinions on this matter. **(1)** Some (e.g. Douglas Moo) think Paul is describing a principle which no one upholds and so highlights their need for Christ. Paul is building to the conclusion, 'all are under sin' (3:10) and 'no one will be justified by works' (3:20). This is a good and biblical option. **(2)** Another view (which I'm currently leaning towards, but you make your own mind up), argued by other scholars (e.g. Tom

Schreiner, David Peterson), is that God does reward people who do good, but these are people who have trusted in Jesus and received his spirit who enables good works. In 2:15 the expression '*written on their hearts*', is a strong allusion to the new covenant promise of Jeremiah 31:31-32, where God says he'll one day write the law on people's hearts by his Spirit (Ezk36:26). Paul then develops this notion throughout Romans (2:29, 7:6, 8:4, 8:13-14, 14:17, 15:13, 15:16). So, people are not justified on the basis of their works, but on the basis of Christ's work. And yet, their good works are *evidence* that they are justified by faith and have the spirit of God (leading to 'the obedience of faith' 1:5, 16:26). Saying that Gentiles without a copy of the law can do the law, would have raised self-righteous & exclusivist Jewish eyebrows. Having grabbed their attention Paul will now go on to show how the wonder of the gospel is that God has acted in Christ and by his spirit so that anyone, Jew or Gentile, together have the same access to the same blessings on the same basis.

- What would you say to a friend who said, "If there is a judgment day I'll be ok, because while not perfect, I haven't murdered anyone and have basically been a good person"
- How can we prepare for the day of judgment (v16)? (v4-5)
- "Christians are no better than anyone else, but they are better off" Discuss
- Pray for one or more Non-Christian friends/family, that God would give you an opportunity to point to Jesus, and that he'd extend his kindness and patience towards them in the gospel.

## STUDY 4 – Romans 2:17-29

### For Starters

- What do you think are markers of a genuine person of God?
- What church/spiritual based rituals/traditions or activities have given you (or give you) (a) Comfort before God? (b) A slight sense of superiority to other people? (be honest)

★ Paul has shown the wider world to be guilty and condemned (1:18-32). He then showed that exactly the same is true of the religious or secular moralist who thinks they are superior/better than others (for they don't even uphold their own standards, let alone Gods, 2:1-5). The only glimmer of hope was to take advantage of God's kind patience and repent before judgment day (2:4-5). Paul hinted that even non-religious people, such as Gentiles can do this, and so find favour with God. And now he turns explicitly to his Jewish readers and shows that they too join the mass of humanity in being guilty of rejecting God and earning his justice.

### Read 2:17-24

- Why are these Jewish believers confident?
- What is the problem?
- What is the effect?
- In what subtle (or overt) ways can we be giving people around us the wrong impression about God?

★ In the west (Sydney) we are spiritually privileged in the sense that we have many healthy bible-based churches, Christian books stalls, Bible colleges, Christian conferences, Christian schools, a plethora of para-church organisations, missionary agencies, online resources etc ... We are richly resourced and so privileged. However, is possession of this privilege enough? Does it replace actual relationship with God? Paul shows it's not what you have but what you do with what you have. We have, but do we do? Israel had a similar problem ... they viewed themselves as 'safe' because they were members of God's chosen people, had his law & many customs (circumcision, food laws etc). This gave them a sense of moral/spiritual superiority, and a false sense of security before God. The result was they judged others as unworthy and themselves as worthy. Paul is trying to persuade them (and us) that NO ONE is worthy.

- What are some differences between a full-blown hypocrite and a genuine believer who is imperfect?
- Self-reflect: Who notices your hypocrisy? Where do hypocrites find/place their confidence before God?

**Read 2:25-29**

- In what sense was circumcision a mark of assurance? In what sense is it irrelevant as an indicator of spiritual health?

★ Circumcision was given as a mark of God's gracious promise to bless Abraham's offspring and the world through them (Gen17). It became a mark of entitlement. 'God owes us because we are marked out as his special people'. In Deuteronomy 10:16 Moses recognises that the Israelites need an internal heart circumcision rather than a mere external form. And in Deuteronomy 30:6 God promises to one day circumcise their hard hearts. Thus, the real circumcision required is one that softens and changes the heart, which is the work of the Spirit (2:28-29). Paul is anticipating what he'll explore later in Romans.

- If God cares more about our heart than our going through the external motions of religion then what are the implications for our church rhythms, traditions, liturgies etc?

★ One gets the distinct impression that God wants us to take him and his word seriously. He doesn't like being ignored. He doesn't like it when we replace relational hearing and heeding, with external rituals symbolising this relationship without engaging him properly through those rituals. Thus, God looks to the inside (v28) rather than our outward performance of religiosity. Paul is undermining Jewish self-confidence based on the possession of the Mosaic law (v17-24) and circumcision (v25-29). Possessing these things (and our equivalents) is irrelevant if one doesn't have an active faith that issues in action ('the obedience of faith' 1:5, 16:26) by the Spirit (2:29) in response to grace (6:1-2, 7:6, 8:8-13). But Romans hasn't said all this yet ...

- For the Jew, being one of God's chosen tribe and having many God given traditions and rituals (circumcision, the law etc) contributed to their sense of superiority and spiritual security. What sorts of attitudes, practices, & church culture could lull us into a subtle sense of spiritual superiority and false sense of security?

- With our spiritual heritage and churchy resources in mind, finish the sentence, “*We may possess \_\_\_\_\_ but we lack \_\_\_\_\_*”
- What religious or moral attitudes/actions can replace actual relationship with God? What do you need to work at?
- Pray for our witness to the watching world and opportunities to demonstrate real relationship rather than hypocritical religion.



## STUDY 5 – Romans 3:9-20

### For Starters

- ‘The Christian doctrine of sin is not good for people’s self-esteem’. Assess.

### Read 3:9-18

- What might Paul mean in v9 when he says both Jew and Gentile are ‘*Under Sin*’? The following scriptures may help:
  - o Romans 6:6, 7:14
  - o 2 Peter 2:19
  - o John 8:34
- In v10-18, how does the Old Testament support this idea that we are ‘under sin’? (Conveniently inserted below along with OT cross references. 😊)

#### Romans 3:10-18 (NIV)

<sup>10</sup> As it is written:

“There is no one righteous, not even one;

<sup>11</sup> there is no one who understands; there is no one who seeks God.

<sup>12</sup> All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one.” [Ps14:1-3, 53:1-3]

<sup>13</sup> “Their throats are open graves; [Ps5:9, Jer5:16] their tongues practice deceit.”

“The poison of vipers is on their lips.” [Ps140:3]

<sup>14</sup> “Their mouths are full of cursing and bitterness.” [Ps10:7]

<sup>15</sup> “Their feet are swift to shed blood; [Prov1:16, Is59:7-8]

<sup>16</sup> ruin and misery mark their ways,

<sup>17</sup> and the way of peace they do not know.”

<sup>18</sup> “There is no fear of God before their eyes.” [Ps36:1]

- How does Paul describe sin? Does this match your observation of the world around you? Your own experience? Why or why not?
- Which of the following do you think is more fundamental to the nature of sin? And why does it matter?
  - o Sin is a cultural construct to bring some semblance of moral order
  - o Sin is being immoral by breaking rules
  - o Sin is rejecting a person (God)

★ Paul presents sin as both universal (every one's problem) and all pervasive (each aspect of our personhood is impacted). Notice how sin is expressed through different aspects of our body (mouths, feet, eyes 3:10-18). The doctrine of 'total depravity' (an expression coined by Augustine) is often misunderstood. It IS about how sin has infected each facet (the totality) of our being (mind, body, soul, will etc), NOT about being as depraved or evil as possible. It is about extent not degree. J. I. Packer says, 'no one is as bad as he or she might be, yet no action of ours is as good as it should be.' Unfortunately, this state of being 'under sin' renders us unable to rescue ourselves. However, soon Paul will explain how through the work of Christ for us, and his Spirit in us, we can be transferred to a new master (Jesus) and offer the various parts of our human personhood in service to God rather than ourselves (6:12-13, 12:1, 9-21).

### **Read 3:19-20**

- Why doesn't having and seeking to obey the law lead to justification in God's sight?
  
- Why do you think Paul has laboured in detail for three heavy chapters to prove his point that everyone is guilty and deserving of God's judgment? It's so negative. Is it really necessary?
  
- How would you try to explain the idea of sin and judgment to your unbelieving friends. What would you emphasise? What would you NOT say? Why?
  
- In what sense is it liberating to admit our human sinfulness?

### **Meditate Prayerfully**

- Lament the condition of the world, the state of our own soul, and sense the desperate need for rescue.
- Use Psalm 51:1-12 as a guide to your prayer
  
- Hang in there guys, next week the good news comes flooding in!!!

## STUDY 6 – Romans 3:21-31

### For Starters

- Let's chat about boasting. When do you (or others) boast, what do you (or others) boast about/in, how do you do it (subtly or overtly?) and why do you (or others) do it?

### Read 3:20-22

- What is the significance of the 'but' in 3:21?
- How does 'God's righteousness' NOT come to people, and how DOES it come to people? (see Glossary of Terms at the end)

★ Jargon Busting ... In this passage Paul piles up many rich and meaningful theological terms. Righteousness, justify, faith, grace, redemption, sacrifice of atonement, law etc ... See the **Glossary of Terms** at the end for help.

### Read 3:21-25

- No pressure but some have deemed this to be the most important paragraph in the bible ... Read over it carefully and try to sum up Paul's flow of thought (logic) in 3 to 5 points ...
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- How does the work of Christ enable a right standing with God? What is at the heart of it? V24-25

### Read 3:25-26

- How does this help us to understand Romans 1:17?

- In what sense does the death of Jesus demonstrate God's justice? Why would he need to demonstrate it? (Remember 'righteousness' and 'justice' mean the same thing. Yay English!)
- A friend says, "If God is committed to bringing justice, where is he?" How can 3:21-26 help you respond?

**Read 3:27-28**

- Why is boasting overturned? How does 'not boasting' follow from what Paul has just written?

**Read 3:29-31**

- What are the implications for non-Jews? And why?
- What is the relationship between boasting before God (the vertical), and boasting before one another (the horizontal)? Can you think of examples?
- Finish the sentence: "If God's righteousness is revealed through the cross, and received by faith then I should ..."
- Rejoice in the fact that God has done what we could not do. He has rescued lost sinners who deserve his judgment at his own expense. How does this make you feel about God?

## STUDY 7 – Romans 4:1-15

### For Starters

- What do we have to do to gain a good standing in our society?

### Read 3:31-4:1-8

- How does 4:1-8 address the issue raised in 3:31?
- Paul uses two Old Testament 'heroes' to illustrate his point. What is his point and how does he establish it?
  - o Abraham (4:1-5)
  - o David (4:6-8)

★ Paul has shown that two famous Jews were justified by faith and not works. Great! What about Non-Jews (Gentiles)? Do these OT legends teach us anything about them? Great question ...

### Read 4:9-15

- When was Abraham justified by faith? What is the implication of this for non-Jews?
- How does anyone in the world become a child of Abraham, an inheritor of the promised blessings?
- Why does 'faith' rather than 'law' make God's gospel blessings universally accessible?

★ I love this bit in Paul's letter. He is trying to persuade his readers (especially those who thought it important to keep Jewish customs such as circumcision), that God receives and fully blesses all people (both Jew and Non-Jew) simply on the basis of faith in Jesus (not law keeping). And for this reason, no one can boast of their moral/spiritual superiority before God or people. So, he turns to the Jewish scriptures, and rolls out perhaps the most celebrated figure of them all. 'Father' Abraham. And get this, he uses Abraham to prove that Gentiles get in by faith also. How? He shows that Abraham was justified when he was an ungodly, uncircumcised, gentile, simply by trusting. Mic drop! Thus, Abraham is not just the 'father' of the Jews, but of Gentiles also! Mic drop two! Abraham simply trusted in God's promise, and God received him and blessed him (Gen15:6). Thus, he shows how ALL/ANY people can enter into fellowship with

God and receive his generous blessings. There was no need for Jewish distinctives (law observance), only the transcultural relational reflex of looking away from self to God (faith). Indeed, the law of Moses that came later was never intended to be the means by which one gained a right standing with God but was designed to highlight sin and the need for trusting in God's merciful promise. The law was supposed to drive one back to faith and grace! (Rom4:13-15, Gal3:21-22).

- We live in a meritocracy, where our validation and approval are based on various qualities, behaviours, and achievements. The better we perform, the more we are rewarded. For the smug activist this brings a sense of self assurance, and for the insecure struggler it brings crushing self-doubt. This ingrained way of thinking easily seeps into our perception of God. What does 'justification by faith alone' do for the person who privately thinks:
  - "I'm quite an accomplished person".
  - "I'm not good enough to be a Christian".
- A non-Christian friend asks you, "Hey, what do you mean when you say 'all you have to do is trust in Jesus to be ok with God?' What exactly does it mean to 'trust in Jesus?' How do I do that?"
- In 4:11 Paul writes, "*So then, he is the father of all who believe but have not been circumcised, in order that righteousness might be credited to them.*" Clearly God wants to offer the whole world the blessing of right standing through faith in Jesus.
  - According to Romans 10:8-13 how are people saved/justified?
  - According to Romans 10:14-17 what is our role?
- How is St Andrews contributing to God's global mission? In what sense does it start with us as individuals here and now? What stops us from crossing cultural boundaries, crossing the road, crossing the office? In terms of making progress, what's our (your) next step?
- As mostly Gentiles, we need to pause and marvel at the blessings God has promised to those of us who have entrusted ourselves to him ...

## STUDY 8 – Romans 4:16-25

### For Starters

- What are some common understandings/misunderstandings of 'faith' in society?
- What does 'faith' mean to you?

★ Recapping the basics ...

Romans 1:18-3:20. Everyone in the world has the same problem (sinners facing judgment)

Romans 3:21-31. Everyone needs the same solution (Jesus' death & rez takes away our wrong and makes us right)

Romans 4:1-15. Everyone receives that solution (right standing) *by faith!*

### Read 4:13-18

- What comes by faith? (v16). Refer back to 4:13-15.
- Why is v17 critical to the nature of faith? Remember that Abraham and Sarah were well beyond the child-bearing season.

### Read 4:19-21

- What kept Abraham trusting despite the ludicrous nature of the situation?
- Why is v21 a great definition of faith? Can you restate it in your own words?
- "Your faith is as strong as the object it is placed in" Discuss.
- Give some everyday examples of objects or people you place your faith in (trust in/rely on). Is there any difference between that kind of faith and the faith we have in Jesus? If so, in what sense? What is similar and what is different?

- “Faith is belief without evidence” Discuss.
- How is Abraham a model of faith/trust?

★ Abraham’s faith wasn’t perfect. When you read the story in Genesis there are moments that we would describe as ‘doubt’ rather than ‘faith’. For example, both Abraham and Sarah laugh when they hear that a 99-year-old man and a 90-year-old woman are going to produce a child (Gen17:17, 18:11). However, there is a distinction between doubt that stops trusting, and doubt that continues to trust. Though he and Sarah had moments of doubt, their overall settled disposition was to trust what God said. Abraham thought ‘this is crazy, and we can’t do this, but somehow God can’. That’s faith.

- How can we grow stronger in our faith and give glory to God (v20)?

**Read 4:21-25**

- According to 4:24-25 what is the significance of all this for us? How can we benefit?
- Do you think God counts you as righteous? Why/why not?
- How would you encourage someone who said ...
  - “Faith for me is about belonging to the church community and participating in its activities”.
  - “I’m happy that you have a faith. Some people have faith, and some people don’t. You do, and I don’t”.
  - “I don’t have a strong faith”.
- Give thanks that our right standing with God is entirely based on the work of Jesus received by faith and not works.



## GLOSSARY OF TERMS

- **Faith/Belief:** Faith and believe are exactly the same word in the original language. Faith is the noun form and believe the verb form. English is complicated. Anyway, it means ‘to trust in a trustworthy person or object’. It does not mean ‘belief without evidence’. Further, this trust is about entrusting your whole life with allegiance (and so faith in Jesus leads to obedience).
- **Righteous:** In the right, in line with a standard, just, viewed as right by/with God. Fun fact, the Greek word for ‘righteous’ can also be translated as ‘justice’. So, righteousness and justification are the same (see ‘Justice’).
- **The righteousness of God:** This can refer to (1) God’s character as ‘righteous’, (2) His actions as ‘righteous’, or (3) A combo of both with the result of being given a righteous status by him (i.e. Because God is righteous, he acts righteously to be able to righteously deal with sin and declare sinners in the right! So 3:21-26).
- **Justice:** Righteous. Yep, exactly the same word that comes into English differently as a noun or verb. To justify is to ‘righteousify’ but that sounds clunky.
- **Justify:** Declare innocent or righteous in God’s eyes. Vindicated. In a law court a judge justifies the innocent and condemns the guilty.
- **The law:** The ‘Torah’ (‘instruction’) given through Moses. The first 5 books of the OT (Gen, Ex, Lev, Num, Dt) in which there are laws (e.g. 10 commandments) but also narrative which teaches. It’s not about ‘the law’ of any land.
- **Messiah/Christ:** Literally ‘Anointed One’. In Hebrew it’s the word ‘Messiah’ and in Greek it is ‘Christ’. It was the King who was anointed and so it means ‘King’.
- **Gentiles:** Comes from the Greek word ‘ethnos’ (ethnics), which meant ‘nations’, and so meant ‘everyone else in the world apart from the Jews’.
- **Circumcision:** A slightly weird sign chosen to remind people of God’s promise to bless many nations through Abraham (Gen 17).
- **Sin:** Rejecting God and his ways and living our own selfishly distorted way.
- **Wrath:** God’s just and measured opposition to real evil.
- **Grace:** God’s extravagant generosity in giving people what they don’t deserve (unmerited favour).
- **Redeem/Redemption:** To set free or be set free, often at a price (a ransom). To Jewish readers they would’ve thought of the Exodus as the great example. To the Gentile readers, they would’ve thought about slaves been ‘ransomed’ or set free at a price in the slave market.
- **Sacrifice of Atonement / Propitiation:** A sacrifice which turns away God’s just anger. In the OT temple on the day of atonement (Lev 16) the priest laid his hands on an animal, confessed the sins of the people (symbolically transferring their guilt onto the animal), and then it was killed as a substitute for the people and some of the blood was then spilt on the cover of the Ark of the covenant (called ‘the mercy seat’). So, God accepted that blood as a substitutionary sacrifice which (1) Took away peoples guilt, and (2) Absorbed his wrath. Atonement had been made (at-one-ment – whereby people were now ‘at-one’ with God).