

A PROBLEM

ROMANS 1 - 3

HOW TO USE THIS BOOKLET

1. Personal Reading

- Use this guide to help you read your Bible every day.
- Scribble down your thoughts and questions each day.
- The 5 daily studies for each week are *in preparation* for the upcoming sermon on Sunday.
- Although some days you will be focussing on just a couple of verses, it is always great to read the whole chapter again to help put what you are reading into context.
- Each devotion should take approximately 10 minutes - if you would like to dive deeper: ask more questions, read back over yesterday's points, or read the surrounding text. If you can make and take more time, go for it!
- By spending weeks studying this book, the goal is that you will have read it many times and have studied it in depth.
- Take your time and enjoy God's word.

2. Prayer

- In some places, prayer ideas are given as a suggestion. In other places, the prayer has been left blank. This is for you to complete with your own requests, confessions and thanks. At times your prayers may be prompted by the passage, but there is room to pray for whatever is happening in your life each day.

3. Church

- Keep this guide with your Bible and bring it with you to church.
- Scribble down sermon notes in the space provided after each week.

Sermons and digital booklet available at:

www.narweebaptist.org.au

THE MOMENTOUS BOOK OF ROMANS

Romans is commonly regarded as one of the greatest Christian writings. Time and time again the power of this epistle has become most present at key points in the history of the Christian church. Many of the churches most influential theologians were converted through this text or developed the depths of their understanding as they read and grappled with the contents. Augustine, Luther, Wesley and Karl Barth to name just a few.

But this book is not simply for theologians of old or the great minds of today. All of us can glean from; receive inspiration and direction from these powerful words. FF Bruce begins his commentary on the book of Romans with these preparatory remarks:

‘There is no telling what may happen when people begin to study the Epistle to the Romans. What happened to Augustine, Luther, Wesley and Barth launched great spiritual movements, which have left their mark in world history... So, let those who have read thus far be prepared for the consequences of reading further: you have been warned!’

FF Bruce, *Romans An Introduction and Commentary*, Tyndale, p.60

WHO? AUTHOR AND RECIPIENTS

The Apostle Paul is ‘claimed’ as the author of this letter, by the letter (v.1). There has been no serious challenge to this claim. As we will see in the first set of studies Paul introduces himself as *a servant of Christ Jesus called to be an apostle for the Gospel of God*. This is how Paul defines himself, elsewhere we learn he regards himself as the apostle to the Gentiles for that is what he was called and sent out to be. (Gal. 2.8; Acts 22.21, Paul is sent by God to the Gentiles; Eph. 3.1, *for the sake of you Gentiles*). Paul was a Pharisee (Phil 3.5; Acts 23.6 & 26.5) some believe more than others that his Jewish and Pharisaic background is an integral part to this letter. Paul’s Jewish heritage is important for there is an ‘advantage’, as 3.1-8

reflect and 9-11 detail further. His Pharisaic understandings are revealed throughout the letter's intricate interactions with respect to the Law, Wisdom and Prophets, what we call the Old Testament as well as other Jewish literature.

The letter also claims the recipients from which we have given the letter its 'name,' Romans. *To all in Rome, who are loved by God and called to be saints.* Paul writes to the church at Rome (1.7, 15). Some suggest that Romans was a general letter to be circulated, with many recipients in mind. Despite the debate the personal references and the particular subjects in chapters 13-16 direct us to regard this is letter as being written to a particular church.

What was this 'church' like? The letter itself gives little away, we don't know how, when or by whom the church was established. However, the contents do point toward a mixed grouping of various house churches of Jews and Gentiles with Gentiles in the majority. It is believed Paul wrote Romans most likely between AD 53 and AD 55 while in Corinth. The persecution of Jews in Rome also gives weight to the idea of a mixed congregation with Gentile majority. This is a church that Paul neither founded nor visited and so this letter has a different feel to it given the nature of the recipients. More is revealed as we consider *why* Paul wrote and *what* he wrote about.

WHY AND WHAT ABOUT? PURPOSE AND THEME

It seems as many as there are experts on Romans there are answers to the *why*. With such divide, as a number of scholars suggest, it is plain that there is no one direction or purpose. In the letter Paul explains his own circumstances in wishing to visit as well as referring to problems within the Roman church and at the centre of these, and the various other purposes, is Paul's missionary situation. While not wanting to force a single 'theme' on the letter, the thematic statement in 1.16-17 can direct our thoughts for the remainder of the letter. Paul is

preparing the people for his visit and is detailing his understanding of the gospel with specific reference to the Christians in Rome. Here is the gospel as he understood it and proclaimed it. Maybe this is why this text is so rich, Paul's last letter with a 'systematic feel' but written to a specific church he has yet to visit. This is why so many of our essentials and the great themes are what this book offers, even if they aren't exactly what this book is about. Paul unpacks the truths at the very heart of our Christian faith.

A PROBLEM - ROMANS 1.1 - 3.20 WHY FOR US??

After thinking about the *why* and *what*, why not!? Though more specifically for us, why? Earlier this year we looked at Genesis 1-11 and saw the stage for redemption history was set. Romans starts in a similar way and is heavily grounded in the Old Testament. Tyndale commends this Epistles as an introduction, not to the New Testament, but to the Old. For it is so indispensable as a guide to the Christian in understanding the books of the old covenant.

Romans 1-3 places us firmly on the stage that has been set in Genesis 1-11. After introducing himself and his Powerful, Practical and Promised Gospel Paul presents a meticulous argument that shows Gentiles and Jews, all people are sinners, they have a problem and so face the judgement of God, for *no one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law* (3.20). Paul will go on to reveal in Christ a righteousness from God has been revealed apart from the law, but to understand our need we must acknowledge that we all have a problem. The stage that was set, the inclinations of all our hearts are still infested with a problem.

WEEK ONE ROMANS 1.1 - 7

THE POWERFUL, PRACTICAL AND PROMISED GOSPEL

MONDAY

If you haven't already, take some time to read the overview today and get a handle on the who, what, and why of Romans. This week the goal is to memorize 'the gospel of God' that Paul unpacks in his introduction. You can use an app called *Bible Memory* to help you.

Read Romans 1-3.20

- I. What are some of your initial questions that arise from the first three chapters of Romans? You may have read this many times, what particularly stood out on this occasion?
- II. Take a few moments to scan each chapter again and write at least two questions you have about the text itself.

Memorize

Tomorrow we will start looking closely at v.1-7 but the memory challenge starts today. As we look at these verses we will be introduced to Paul, the recipients but also to what Paul calls 'the gospel of God,' his gospel, that which Paul believes and proclaims. We will see by memorizing the first five verses we can hold a scripturally grounded summary of the powerful, practical and promised gospel.

Pray that God might write his words upon your heart, that you may never lose sight of the power of the gospel we get to proclaim.

TUESDAY**Read Mark 1.1-7**

Most ancient letters begin with a salutation, who is sending the letter, who they are sending it to and a short greeting. You may have noticed that this forms the general skeleton for most of the openings to the New Testament Epistles. Paul uses this practice but expands upon it, Romans begins with an expanded and theologically driven salutation that teaches us. Today we will look at the sender.

- I. Who is Paul? If v.1-5 were the only information we possessed about Paul, describe all that you would know about him.

To help, consider these questions:

- v.1: How does Paul introduce himself?
What does Paul say he is set apart for?
- v.5: Who is it through that Paul has received grace?
What else has he received?
From who, and to what is Paul calling people?

- II. However, this isn't ALL the information we possess about Paul, what other things do you know about Paul that might be important as we approach this letter?

Briefly look at the following and explain what they reveal about Paul. Acts 7.59-8.1; Acts 26.1-5; Acts 9.1-22

Don't forget to memorize!

Thank God for the way that he transformed the life of Saul and so many others through Paul's missionary work. Ask that we might be able to introduce ourselves similarly, as servants of the Lord.

WEDNESDAY

Continuing on from yesterday we are investigating the salutation, Paul's opening to the letter for the Romans. Having established who Paul was, we now need to ask who was he writing to? As the overview suggested there is a great deal of debate about the specifics, we will skim a few passages today to get a feel for what the letter appears to be presenting.

Read Romans 1.1-7

- I. Who is Paul writing to and what characterizes the recipients?

- II. We learn very little about the church in Rome from both this letter and the remainder of the New Testament. Take some time to look at the following passages, what insight does this give you?

Acts 2.10 – hearing the message at Pentecost

Referring to Jews – Romans 16.7, 11; 2.17ff (skim)

Also note that Romans 9-11 is specifically addressed to 'Israel'

Referring to Gentiles – Romans 11.13; 14.14-29 (skim)

Spend some good time memorizing today, tomorrow we start looking at 'the gospel' that Paul details.

Thank God that we too are loved by God and called to be saints, God's holy people in this world. Ask that we might live to our calling.

THURSDAY**Read Romans 1.1-7**

- I. What do we learn of the gospel from Paul's introduction?

John Stott helpfully details a 6-point analysis of the gospel according to Romans 1:

1. *The origin of the gospel is God*
2. *The attestation of the gospel is Scripture*
3. *The substance of the gospel is Jesus Christ*
4. *The scope of the gospel is all the nations*
5. *The purpose of the gospel is the obedience of faith*
6. *The goal of the gospel is the honour of Christ's name¹*

*Simply put: '...the good news is the gospel **of** God, **about** Christ, **according** to Scripture, **for** the nations, **unto** the obedience of faith, and **for the sake of** the Name.'²*

- II. Paul has never been to meet with the 'Roman church' before. Why do you think he chose to introduce the gospel the way that he did? Look again at the overview for help.
- III. Is this introduction a sufficient 'gospel summary'? Explain why/why not
- IV. By removing one or two of the '6-points' explain what happens to the gospel? What aspects are you or others tempted to remove?

Don't forget to memorize!

¹ John Stott, *The Message of Romans: God's Good News for the World* (InterVarsity Press, 2001), 48–54.

² Stott, *The Message of Romans*, 55.

Thank God for his gospel about Christ Jesus, that it is practical, powerful and was promised in the Scriptures. Ask God that we can be well grounded in the gospel, his gospel, for his names sake.

FRIDAY

Read Romans 1.1-7

- i. Paul expresses his intent and his goal in a more extensive way in v.8-15. Even so, it is present in v.5-6. How did Paul regard his calling and what appears to be the ‘goal’ of Paul’s mission? How is our calling and mission different but the same?
- ii. ‘The obedience that comes from faith’ (NIV) is an important phrase for this letter. Paul both begins and ends the letter with this phrase (Rom. 16.26). What might this phrase mean?
- iii. In v.6-7 Paul writes with confidence about his recipients. Can we have a similar confidence? How could the understanding of the gospel as detailed in Romans 1.1-7 help?

Hopefully you’ve gained an appreciation of the powerful statement these opening words are and you’re inspired to memorize them if you haven’t already! Next week when you meet in Home Groups share what you have memorized and what you’ve found most helpful.

Thank God for the confidence we can have when we belong to Christ Jesus. Ask God that we might continue to approach this book with the confidence this brings as we work through difficult and deep truths.

Sermon notes

ROMANS 1.1 - 7 MIKE FROST

THE POWERFUL, PRACTICAL AND PROMISED GOSPEL

WEEK TWO ROMANS 1.8 - 17

REVEALED TO BE UNASHAMED

MONDAY

Read Romans 1:8-17

- I. Write down your first impression of this passage

- II. Are there any verses which stand out to you?

- III. Which parts of this passage don't make sense to you?

*Pray that God would overturn any distractions in your life at the moment,
and that his word may sink into your heart this week.*

TUESDAY**Read Romans 1:8-10**

Paul is eager to see the faithful believers in the Roman church (1:10-11), but he is even more eager to thank God for their faithfulness. It was customary to render thankfulness to the gods for one's good health following the obligatory greetings. Paul, although following general protocol, breaks with tradition and offers thanks not for the Romans' physical health, but their spiritual health.

- I. Why do you think Paul is grateful to God for the faithfulness of the Roman church?

- II. Paul begins the thanksgiving with the word *first*. What do you think Paul means by his use of this word?

- III. Why do you think Paul says such kind things about the church in verses 8-10?

- IV. What do we have to be grateful for in our own church? How is our spiritual health? What would Paul say about us?

Pray a prayer of thanksgiving to God. Remember that faith is a gift from God - he is the one who is to be praised (Heb 12:2).

WEDNESDAY

Read Romans 1:11-12

Paul, having thanked God for the faith of the Roman church, doesn't continue his list of items (see verse 8). He seems to have become distracted by his own thankfulness and desire to encourage 'all who are loved by God' in Rome.

- I. What is Paul eager to do? Who shall benefit from his desire?
- II. What is one thing Paul hopes to achieve through his visit?
- III. It is common for Paul to speak about gifts as being *spiritual*, Or of *the Holy Spirit*. In this instance, Paul is probably talking about a general blessing brought by the Holy Spirit through his presence. Why do you think he uses the words '*some spiritual gift*' in verse 11? Keep in mind that Paul had not met them before.
- IV. What do you think Paul means by 'keep you strong'? Take a glance at verse 12.
- V. What is your motivation for seeing other Christians? What do you hope to gain, and what do you hope to give?

Pray that your interactions with other believers will be mutually beneficial - a blessing going both ways.

THURSDAY**Read Romans 1:13-15**

Paul is eager to assure the believers in Rome that he had, on multiple occasions, intended to visit them. However, he was not able to see them.

Today we look at Paul's motive for wanting to visit them.

- I. Why do you think Paul wanted them to know he was keen to visit?
- II. Why does Paul feel compelled to visit the church in Rome?
- III. What is Paul's obligation? What is he to do?
- IV. What do you think Paul means when he says he is 'obligated' to both the Jews and the Greeks? Consider Romans 1:1.
- V. Have you ever thought of yourself as a *servant* of Jesus Christ? What does this look like for you?

Pray that you might be faithful to God's calling in your life and reflect on your 'obligation' as a servant of the Lord.

FRIDAY

Read Romans 1:16-17

We now come to the central argument or theme of the whole letter:

For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile. For in the gospel the righteousness of God is revealed—a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: “The righteous will live by faith.”

This passage is Paul's chief proposition. Given the importance of this passage, there are a few extra questions today.

- I. Why would Paul use the phrase 'not ashamed'?
- II. What do you think Paul means when he says, 'it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes'? Make a short list of the concepts presented in this sentence.

In our studies of Genesis 12:1-3 we saw that God chose Abram's offspring to be a special people set aside for him. Consider also Jesus' words in Matthew 15:24 that he had come for the 'lost sheep of Israel'. Finally, take a quick look at Paul's questioning in Romans 3:1, leading us to see that there is great advantage to being Jewish.

- III. Having considered these three passages what do you think Paul means when he says 'first to the Jew, then to the Gentile'?
- IV. Although there seemed to be a process by which God's salvation was brought to the world, Paul makes it clear that salvation goes beyond race and is for those who believe. How does this balance with the concepts raised in Question III?
- V. How is the righteousness of God revealed in the Gospel? Why does mankind need this righteousness? Consider Romans 1:18-32.

Righteousness is a key word in Romans and an important concept for the Christian to understand. In Romans righteousness is characteristically linked with faith, the two appear inseparable. We will think about this deeply each Sunday as we preach through this book. Simply put, righteousness means to be 'in the right' with God. How have you understood it? Think about this as Sunday we will unpack the word and its meaning.

- VI. Consider how you have benefitted from the righteousness of God. Paul lived in light of this - unashamedly. How do you live by it?

Reflect on the corruption of the world outlined in Romans 1:18-32. Give praise to God that despite your depravity; God has revealed his righteousness toward you in the Gospel.

ROMANS 1 - 3 A PROBLEM

Sermon notes

ROMANS 1.8 - 17 BRETT

REVEALED TO BE UNASHAMED

WEEK THREE ROMANS 1.18 - 32

A PATTERN OF SHAMEFUL PRACTICE

MONDAY

Read Romans 1:18-32

- I. Write down your first impression of this passage

- II. Are there any verses which stand out to you?

- III. Which parts of this passage don't make sense to you?

*Pray that God would overturn any distractions in your life at the moment,
and that his word may sink into your heart this week.*

TUESDAY

Paul now begins to expand on his main argument (vv16-17). Paul, having proclaimed the righteousness of God revealed through the Gospel, Paul now paints a depiction of a broken humanity. God is revealing his anger toward the sinfulness of humanity.

Before we take a look at this passage it's important to understand some key concepts, read and then attempt to write your own definition:

- A) Wrath of God - God's justified anger towards those who have rebelled against him.

- B) General revelation - information about God that has been revealed to *everybody*.

- C) Special revelation - information about God that has been revealed to *some people*.

Now that Paul has declared he is not ashamed of the power of the Gospel which reveals God's righteousness, he begins to paint a picture of a corrupt humanity.

Read Romans 1:18-20

- I. What *truth* has been suppressed? See v21.
- II. Who is Paul talking about primarily, Jews or Gentiles? Consider 1:23 and 2:1.

Verses 19 and 20 contain Paul's message about general revelation. God has revealed himself in his creation - thus, there is no excuse for those who face God's judgement.

- III. The evolutionary biologist Richard Dawkins, when asked what he would say if he ever met God, answered, "I would say, 'Not enough evidence, God! Not enough evidence'". What would Paul have to say about this response?
- IV. According to Paul, God's power and divinity are *clearly* perceived in creation. What do you think is the proper response to general revelation? Consider Psalm 19.

Pray a prayer to God: The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands. Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they reveal knowledge. They have no speech, they use no words; no sound is heard from them. Yet their voice goes out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world. Amen

WEDNESDAY

Read Romans 1:18-25

Paul has argued that righteousness is attained only by faith (1:17). He now spends some time demonstrating that we can not be righteous without faith in Christ's work. It cannot come by our own effort. Paul outlines this by painting a grim but accurate image of humanity. We are simply too corrupt to save ourselves!

- I. According to Paul, God reveals himself in his creation. Is this general revelation enough to save us? Consider Paul's main argument (1:16-17).

When Paul tells us that humanity is without excuse, he means that we have no defense against God's judgement.

- II. What has humanity done with its knowledge of God (vv21-23).
- III. Seeing humanity's desire to ignore him and to create its own god(s), God gave it over to its sinful desires. What image of humanity does this create?
- IV. Is idolatry a problem today? Do people make their own gods? If you think so, make a list of them.

Paul writes to the Romans about the foolish thinking and evil worship practices of the Gentiles to remind them that they are not much better (see 2:1). Although he's really talking about the idolatry of Gentiles, Israel was guilty of the same sin (Psalm 106:20).

Look at the list you drew up in Question 14. and deeply consider your own worship practices.

God of creation I worship you as the only God. I am saved by the son Jesus who was sent by the Father, and the Holy Spirit dwells within me. Keep me from idolatry and help me every day to put you first in my life. Amen.

THURSDAY

Read Romans 1:26-27

Paul continues the indictment against humanity, focussing now on their sexual practices.

1. Ignoring God leads not only to making your own gods, but to live a life of sin. What is the connection between the two (consider v28)?

- II. Why would Paul use the phrase, ‘*even* the women’? What do you think he is trying to draw out here? Consider Paul’s teachings about women in the church: 1 Timothy 2:9-10..

- III. In this passage, Paul uses words such as ‘unnatural’, ‘lust’, ‘shameful’, ‘error’ etc. What would the Gentiles have thought about these practices back then? What does the world say about these practices today?

- IV. Would Paul paint a different picture for the sexual lifestyle of today’s world? What do you think today’s sexual sins are?

The due penalty for the shameful acts described in vv26-27 is that men and women were handed over to a lifestyle of sin. Praise God that he has set you apart for his good purposes. Pray that you may remain pure and be restrained from sexual sin.

Lord I pray that you will lead me away from temptation. Help me to be pure for you in an impure world. Amen.

FRIDAY**Read Romans 1:28-32**

Paul completes this part of the indictment against humanity, focussing on their futile thinking.

- I. Why do you think Paul first describes the thought life of these people *before* describing their actions? Take a look at Mark 7:20-23.
- II. What happens to people's thinking when they are without God?
- III. Take a look at the list Paul draws up in verses 29-31, are there any sins in this list that hit home for you?
- IV. Can you think of any instances in our culture today where such behaviour today is celebrated?

Paul is trying to show how corrupt humanity is. Not only does it engage in awful practices, it celebrates it! All the while, it knows that such behaviour is wrong. However, Paul is making a broader point; by showing the darkness of humanity, God's righteousness shines all the more in the Gospel. This Gospel is the power of salvation for everyone who believes!

Pray a prayer acknowledging the fallen state of humanity. Thank God for the Gospel and its power to save.

ROMANS 1 - 3 A PROBLEM

Sermon notes

*ROMANS 1.18 - 32 BRETT
REVEALED TO BE UNASHAMED*

WEEK FOUR ROMANS READING

THE BOOK OF ROMANS!

This week and another later this term we won't be preaching on Romans so there is no specific questions or texts. However, this is a great opportunity to read through the whole book of Romans! This may seem like lots but just set aside 10-15 minutes a day and read. We spend lots of time in the details, this is a chance to look over the whole of the letter. We start with the 'first half.'

MONDAY

Read Romans 1-2

TUESDAY

Read Romans 3-4

WEDNESDAY

Read Romans 5-6

THURSDAY

Read Romans 7

FRIDAY

Read Romans 8

ROMANS 1 - 3 A PROBLEM

Sermon notes

YOUTH SERVICE ANGE

GOD'S PERFECT JUDGEMENT

PART 1 = NO ESCAPE

MONDAY

In Romans 1 Paul tore into immoral Gentiles (non-Jews) for their sinful lives. In the first half of Romans 2, he addresses a hypothetical person who would have been nodding in agreement throughout chapter 1.

Read Romans 2:1--16

- III. What are your initial impressions of this passage? What are the key words Paul uses?

- IV. Verse 16 has the truth that underlies this whole passage: a day is coming when God will judge the world. What role does Jesus play here?

- V. What else do we learn about the final judgement in this passage?

In this passage Paul teaches us how our knowledge of the final judgement should shape our lives now. We will explore this over this week. But for today, we will praise God for his coming judgement.

Dear Father, we praise you because you raised Jesus from the dead. He will judge all the world on your behalf on the last day. You always judge with justice and fairness. Remind us that the last day is coming. Teach us to live rightly as we wait. Amen.

TUESDAY

Read Romans 2:1

- I. Paul says his hypothetical conversation partner is without excuse. What for?

- II. He points out an irony: it is not Paul passing this judgement, but the person he addresses passes judgement on themselves. What does that tell you about this kind of person?

- III. Yesterday we saw that God will judge the world through Jesus. What is the result if we try and take that judgement into our own hands?³

*Pray: What things do you often judge in others? Do you do them yourself?
Confess these sins to God, and confess your hypocrisy too.*

³ Paul also says there are places where someone can rightly judge others, see Romans 13:1–7 and 1 Cor 5–6.

WEDNESDAY**Read Romans 2:2–5**

- I. Verse 1 talks about someone who practices sin, but judges people for doing those sins. What warning does Paul give them in verses 2–3?

- II. The Bible says many times God is slow to anger (e.g. Exodus 34:6, Psalm 86:15, Joel 2:13). According to verse 4, how do some people respond to this? And how should they respond?

- III. In verse 5, Paul talks about ‘storing up’. The image is like putting deposits in a bank account. What are people storing, and when for? How does Paul describe such people’s hearts?

Pray: At the heart of hypocrisy is self-delusion that thinks ‘we can get away with what others cannot’. Take an honest look at your heart. Is it delusional, hard, or unrepentant? Have you shown contempt to God’s kindness? Respond rightly to his kindness instead: repent! Thank him for his rich kindness.

THURSDAY

Read Romans 2:6–11

Verses 5 ended with God's righteous judgement, and now Paul gives more detail. These verses describe the judgement day in a 'mirror' pattern: in verses 6–8 we see God's justice, the good person, then the bad person, then in verses 9–11 we see in reverse the bad person, the good person, and God's justice.

- I. What is God looking for as he judges?
- II. In what ways does Paul show that God's judgement is fair?
- III. Why do you think Paul comments that God will judge the Jews first, and then the Gentiles?⁴

Romans 1:16–17 stated the gospel saves, and 'the righteous will live by faith'. This passage seems to question that, but we haven't got to the end of Paul's argument yet. But at the very least it should challenge us: it asks if we walk the walk as well as talking the talk. When God looks at our lives, rather than just our inwardly held morals, what does he see?

Pray: Praise God for his fairness in judging. Pray that God will help you live a life that matches your convictions, that by patience in doing right seeks glory, honour and immortality.

⁴ Some Bible versions translate this word very literally as 'Greek', but Paul means 'Gentile'

FRIDAY**Read Romans 2:12–16**

In this section Paul comments on the place of the Law (the Old Testament teaching about what God requires) in the final judgement.

- I. What is the result of sinful living? What difference does knowing the Law make?
- II. What does this conclusion, and verse 13a, mean for the hypothetical person Paul introduced in verse 1?
- III. John Stott explains Paul's explanation of why people who have never heard the Law still obey it sometimes: 'their own human being is their law'.⁵ There is something about being human that means we understand the right way to live. How does what we learned in Genesis earlier in the year help us understand this?
- IV. Verse 13 suggests that someone who fully obeyed the law would be declared right before God. Given what you have read in Romans so far, does such a person exist? Why or why not?

Dear Father, thank you that you have given all people some understanding of how to live. But everywhere, people are perishing, either with or without your Law. Help us to proclaim your coming judgement, and the way to be saved. Through Jesus Christ, Amen.

⁵ John Stott, *The Message of Romans*, page 86.

ROMANS 1 - 3 A PROBLEM

Sermon notes

ROMANS 2.1 - 16 JAMES

GOD'S PERFECT JUDGEMENT: PART 1 = NO ESCAPE

GOD'S PERFECT JUDGEMENT PART 2 = NO PARTIALITY

MONDAY

Have you ever listened to a sermon at church and thought, 'I really hope *she* is paying attention to this, he's talking to her!' Well, Paul, having addressed the wickedness of the world (by focussing on the not-so-good life and times of the Gentiles), now turns his attention specifically to the Jews. If there was any group who could escape Paul's intense assessment, it would be the Jews, right? Right?

Read Romans 2:17-29

- I. Write down your first impression of this passage

- II. Are there any verses which stand out to you?

- III. Which parts of this passage don't make sense to you?

Pray that God would overturn any distractions in your life at the moment, and that his word may sink into your heart this week.

TUESDAY

Read Romans 2:17-22

Paul addresses the 'typical Jew' - obedient and good, honourable and respectable. Or are they? Paul shines a light on the personal life of the one who has all the appearance of being righteous, but really isn't.

- I. Make a list of the characteristics listed in verses 17-20. Start with 'being called a Jew'.
- II. Is there anything really *wrong* with these characteristics? Why do you think Paul is listing these? Where is he going with this list?
- III. What do all of these characteristics have in common? (Hint, check out verse 29).
- IV. What would be in your list? Perhaps it would start with 'attending Bible study'. What else would be on the list?
- V. What is the danger of identifying as a Christian simply because of *what you do*?

Pray a prayer reaffirming your heart-felt devotion to God - it's not about behaving like a Christian - doing 'Christian things'. It's about having a heart-felt love for God which is demonstrated by obedience to him.

WEDNESDAY**Read Romans 2:21-23**

Paul now addresses the question of hypocrisy head-on. He draws attention to the advantage of being Jewish: They have the very law of God (see 3:1). However, what have they done with this great gift?

- I. Paul acknowledges that the Jews had an advantage in that they possessed the Law of God. How was this advantage abused? Consider v21.
- II. What is the expectation for Jews who had the Law?
- III. How had they failed this expectation?
- IV. Paul argues that the Jews were resting on their mere possession and knowledge of the Law. What are some religious activities that we can put our trust in?
- V. What do you think Paul may say to you?

Pray that God's law will live in your heart and not just your mind. Pray that you will have a genuine desire to live in loving obedience to our loving God - making the most of the blessing it is to have his law written on our hearts.

THURSDAY

Read Romans 2:24-27

Paul now delivers what would have been perceived as a strong blow to 'religious' Jews. Quoting a Hebrew Scripture he likens the present Roman domination of the Jews to that of the Babylonian domination of years ago. In other words, 'your sin gives God a bad name!'

- I. Why do you think Paul uses the quote in v24?
- II. Why would circumcision have value if you obeyed the Law? Consider the use of the word *sign* in Genesis 17:11.
- III. Take a look at v26. How can someone who is not circumcised 'be regarded as though they were'? What do you think Paul means by this? (Hint, see v29).
- IV. What is the point behind Paul's stinging attack in v27? What is the significance that the circumcised person 'has the Law'? Take another look at v23).

Attending church, doing Bible studies, praying and spending time with Christians has value. But if there is no change in your heart, these activities become valueless.

Pray that God will sustain a genuine change of heart in our own Christian life.

*Israel's sin had caused her to be overthrown and captured by foreign powers. This oppression was due to their disobedience to the Law.

FRIDAY**Read Romans 2:28-29**

Paul now sums up his argument. Being a Jew is not about just 'having the Law', or 'being circumcised'. Being a Jew is about having the Spirit change your heart to cause you to have a desire for God. Because this can't be seen by people, we won't be praised by them - our praise is from God.

- I. Paul is not arguing that all Jews were hypocrites. Instead, he's making the point that no Jew can argue for their superiority for simply 'being a Jew'. What does Paul mean by being a Jew *outwardly* (v28)?
- II. What does Paul mean by being a Jew *inwardly* (v29)?
- III. What is the difference between the two?
- IV. What is the difference between being an *inward* Christian and an *outward* Christian?
- V. What may cause you to seek praise from others?

Paul takes the wind out of the sails of anyone who thinks that they have God's favour because they possess the Law, or because they are circumcised. For us, this may mean that we should be careful not to consider our Christian activities the source of our righteousness. God has *given* us righteousness, thus we live by faith - not works (1:17).

Reflect on your own spiritual life. Do you place too much emphasis on your Christian activities - forgetting that your righteousness is given to you by god? Spend some time meditating on God's gift of righteousness (Rom 5:17).

ROMANS 1 - 3 A PROBLEM

Sermon notes

ROMANS 2.17 - 29 BRETT

GOD'S PERFECT JUDGEMENT: PART 2 = NO PARTIALITY

WEEK SEVEN ROMANS READING

THE BOOK OF ROMANS!

This week is CAROLS, and so we won't be preaching on Romans, there are no specific questions or texts. However, this is a great opportunity to finish the whole book of Romans! This may seem like lots but just set aside 10-15 minutes a day and read. We spend lots of time in the details, this is a chance to look over the whole of the letter.

MONDAY**Read Romans 9**TUESDAY**Read Romans 10-11**WEDNESDAY**Read Romans 12**THURSDAY**Read Romans 13-14**FRIDAY**Read Romans 15-16**

A PROBLEM FOR ALL...

MONDAY

Paul has spent the last two chapters addressing the wickedness of the world, focussing on the Gentiles and then a hypothetical moralist and finally more directly with a Jewish representative. It appears all share in this problem of rebellion with or without the law of God. Paul now brings his argument to a climactic end. There is a problem for all.

Read Romans 3.1-20

- I. What are your initial impressions of this passage? What are the key words Paul uses?
- II. How would you describe the language being used? What is Paul trying to do in this final section of his initial argument?
- III. Is there a natural division in this text? Can you see what sections we might be able to focus on?

As we approach this passage ask God to give you an honest heart and mind. Take some time to repent of your sins knowing forgiveness is offered through Jesus Christ. This week we will be struck again by our depravity and so we need to prepare ourselves as we approach God's word.

TUESDAY**Read Romans 3.1-8 (focus/reread v.1-4)**

Paul sets up a dialogical sequence of questions and responses focusing on Jews. It is as though Paul is arguing with his Pre-Christian-self, Paul the Pharisee. He poses questions Jews may have levelled with implicit criticisms of Paul's argument. This draws God's character into question, something Paul will strongly support.

- I. God called the Jew's his people, his first-born son; he drew them out of Egypt and made them his own. With Paul's argument so far what response would we expect to 'Paul's' question in 3.1?

- II. Paul says 'Much in every way!' followed by a 'first of all.' It appears he is going to list a number. What does he list and is the number surprising? ⁶

- III. Having identified what Paul is referring to, what sort of 'value' have the Jews been given?

- IV. Paul has answered the criticism by reminding the 'questioner' of the responsibility given to them, they were given God's words, his very promises that revealed his character. How do we as those who have received Christ, *the Word*, take our responsibility for granted?

⁶ Paul gives a very brief explanation here but further details the 'much' in chapters 9-11

The Jews were unfaithful; they didn't value or live up to their responsibility. It is with that in mind that the second question could arise. Paul contrasts faithfulness and faithlessness in v.3-4

- V. Who is shown to be faithful and who is faithless? How does v.4a add weight to this contrast?

- VI. Paul uses Psalm 51.4 to confirm that God is always true, even if all men were liars. Read Psalm 51, King David's moving confession of his sin with Bathsheba. How does this Psalm confirm Paul's point?

Thank God that he is true and trustworthy. Thank him that his character never changes. Ask that we might also be thankful for the history of Israel through which our Lord worded his purposes and as shown his faithfulness to his promises.

WEDNESDAY**Read Romans 3.1-8 (focus/reread v.5-8)**

Today the questioning continues.

- I. How do the questions in v.5 suggest that God is being unjust in punishing Jewish sin?

- II. Paul gives his embarrassment away with such a statement at the end of v.5. He then goes on to adamantly deny and offer a counter question. What does this counter question imply? Read Gen 18.25 for help.

- III. For the final question or criticism Paul impersonates the objector to draw out the absurd and impossible consequences of v.5. As people saved by faith, apart from works how might we construct a similar response as the 'objector' in v.7-8?

- IV. Paul's lack of response is telling and v.8 gives away what he thinks of these comments. How does his description of 'those reported as saying...' reveal his disapproval?

- V. How do you find ways to justify your evil behaviour? What do the final words of these verses remind us evil brings?

Ask God that you might be able to deny evil, not looking for 'loop holes' but being aware of the condemnation that evil brings seek instead to honour God as you trust Jesus with your life.

THURSDAY

Today Paul paints a dark picture of all humanity. As we did at the start of the week we are going to start with prayer. These words shouldn't be easy to hear but are important for us to understand.

Ask that you might come to the same conclusion as Paul but also be reminded of the gospel that Paul will soon reveal in all its grace and glory.

Read Romans 3.9-18

- I. How does Paul bring the last 3 chapters all together in v.9?
Recap what he has said so far

- II. Look back at how this chapter started, in v.1 and identify the contrast here in v.9. It looks like a contradiction, how can Paul say both things?

- III. In v.10 Paul uses a formula that introduces scripture. Given what Paul has said about God's faithfulness, his truthfulness and that the words that follow are God's very words, how should we approach v.10-18?

- IV. Paul draws together seven Old Testament quotations the first is most likely from Ecclesiastes, one from Isaiah and the rest from the Psalms. What characterises the biblical picture of sin?

- V. In v.13-17 there is a deliberate listing of different body parts showing the extent of our depravity, every part of humanity is tainted. Do these quotations also show the universality of sin? How?
- VI. We finish where we started. Do you come to the same conclusion as Paul?

Having looked closely at today passage, read 3.21-26 and thank God for sending Christ as the solution to our problem.

FRIDAY**Read Romans 3:19–20**

Paul concludes by insuring that no-one can escape the reality that what the Scriptures have just said about humanities state is true for all.

- I. In v.10 Paul writes as though a defendant is standing in waiting to give their defence, but when given the opportunity to speak is completely speechless. Where does that leave the ‘defendant’?
- II. How does the second half of v.19 reflect the court like language? What does it communicate about all people’s actions, thoughts and deed?
- III. There is a key phrase for the book of Romans in v.20, *the works of the law, or observing the law*. What does Paul say these ‘works’ achieve?

The works of the law are those works that seek to gain merit. But we cannot keep the law and so are condemned. Paul explains that no one will be declared right in God’s sight, the law doesn’t justify, instead it condemns. The law reveals to us we cannot save ourselves that we have a problem, a problem we cannot overcome.

- IV. How might Paul’s argument sit with those outside the church and how they believe they are ‘saved’ or make themselves ‘good enough’ for heaven? What of that attitude seeps into your life?

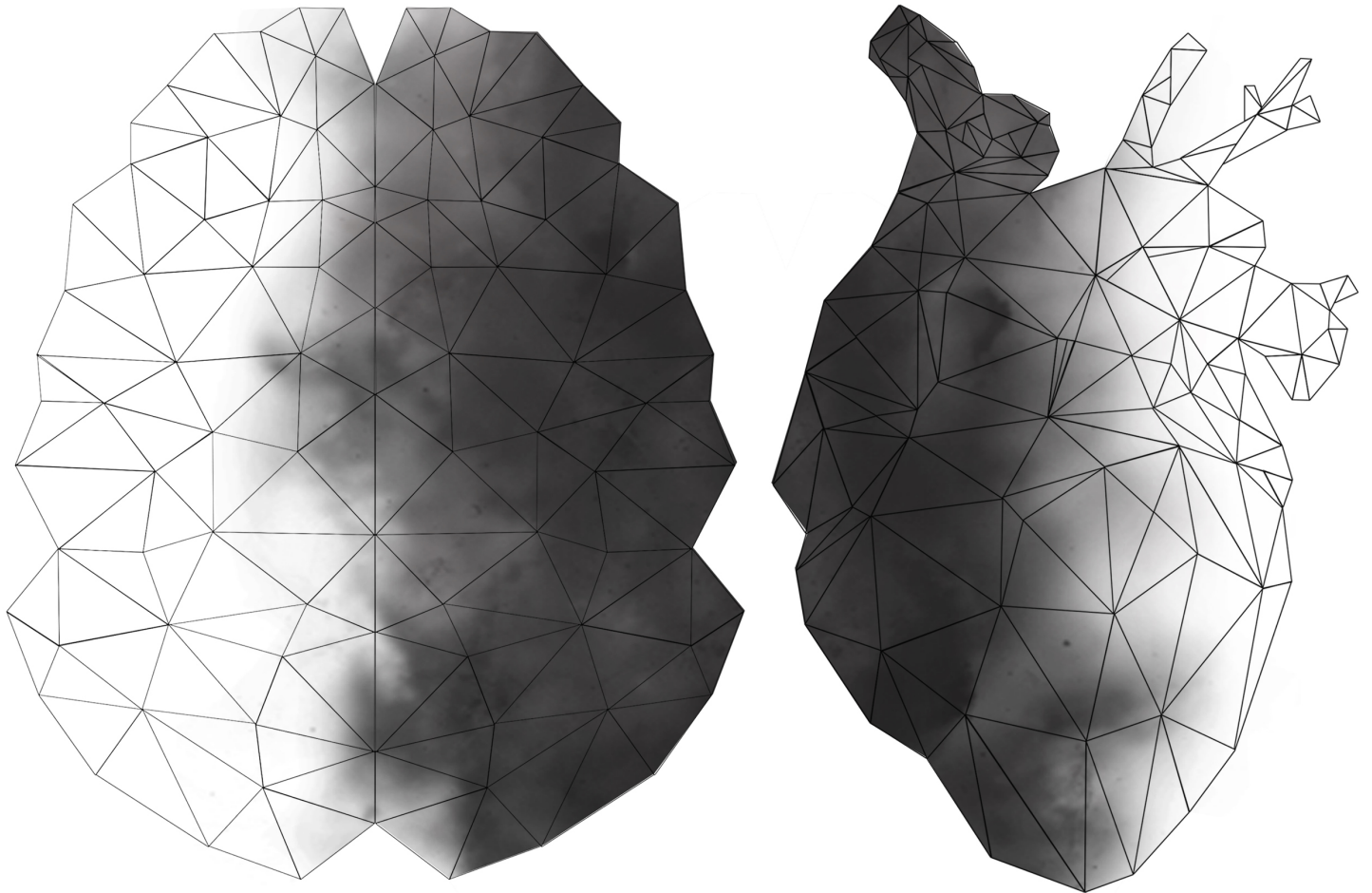
Pray that you might take responsibility for your conduct and know we stand guilty and without a word we can say for ourselves. Thank God that, by acknowledging our problem we are ready to hear the very next words in Romans and accept Christ as our salvation.

Sermon notes

ROMANS 3.1 - 20 BRETT
A PROBLEM FOR ALL...

NOTES...

NOTES...



A PROBLEM

ROMANS 1 - 3