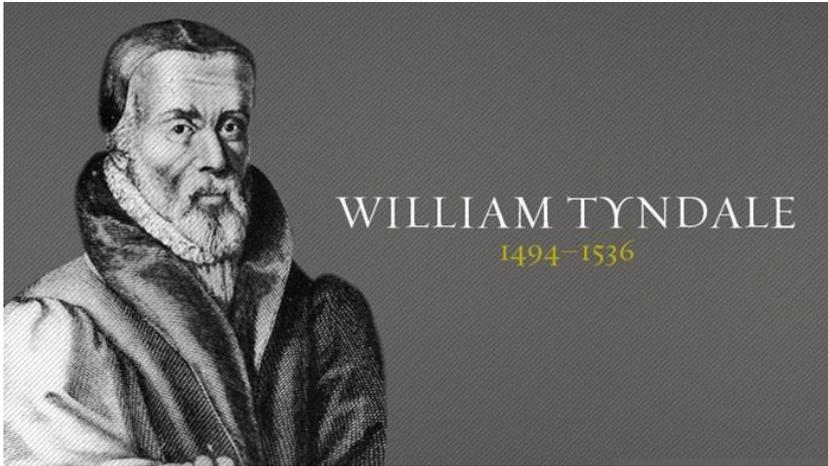


“Romans: Great News from Rome to the Ends of the Earth”

ZGC Bible Week – 4 February 2019 – Pastor Mark Blair

Romans 1.1 – 3.20 - Day 1



Romans is “the principal and most excellent part of the New Testament... a light and a way unto the whole Scripture...the more it is studied, the easier it is; the more it is chewed, the pleasanter it is”

William Tyndale, 1534

Basic Conviction

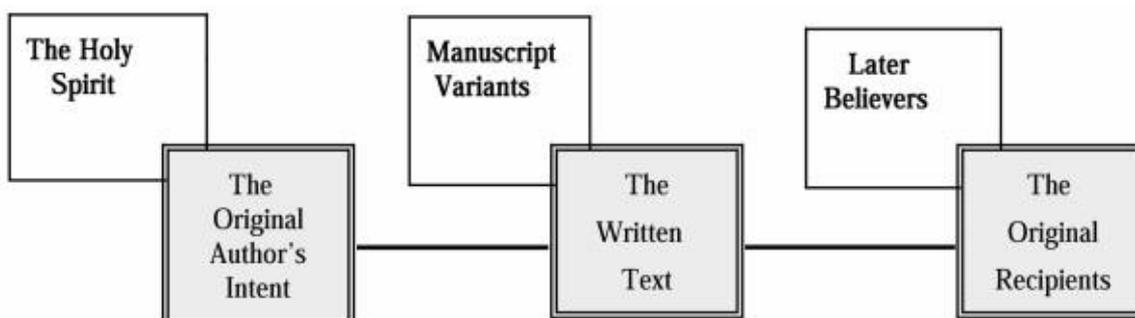
1. I believe the Bible is the sole inspired self-revelation of the one true God. Therefore, it must be interpreted in light of the intent of the original divine author through a human writer in a specific historical setting.
2. I believe the Bible was written for the common person—for all people! God spoke clearly within a historical and cultural context. God does not hide truth—He wants us to understand! Therefore, it must be interpreted in light of its day, not ours. The Bible should not mean to us what it never meant to those who first read or heard it.
3. I believe the Bible has a unified message and purpose. It does not contradict itself, though it does contain difficult and paradoxical passages. The best interpreter of the Bible is the Bible itself.
4. I believe that every passage (excluding prophecies) has one and only one meaning based on the intent of the original, inspired author. Although we can never be absolutely certain we know the original author’s intent, many indicators point in its direction:
 - a. the genre (literary type) chosen to express the message
 - b. the historical setting and/or specific occasion that elicited the writing
 - c. the literary context of the entire book as well as each literary unit
 - d. the textual design (outline) of the literary units as they relate to the whole message
 - e. the specific grammatical features employed to communicate the message
 - f. the words chosen to present the message

Presuppositions of Bob Utley

At least three related components may be found in all written human communication:



To affirm the unique inspiration of the Bible, a modified diagram is more appropriate:



The Spiritual Aspect of Interpretation

1. Pray for the Spirit's help (cf. I Cor. 1:26-2:16).
2. Pray for personal forgiveness and cleansing from known sin (cf. I John 1:9).
3. Pray for a greater desire to know God (cf. Ps. 19:7-14; 42:1ff.; 119:1ff).
4. Apply any new insight immediately to your own life.
5. Remain humble and teachable.

"There is no guru class in biblical Christianity, no illuminati, no people through whom all proper interpretation must come. And so, while the Holy Spirit gives special gifts of wisdom, knowledge and spiritual discernment, He does not assign these gifted Christians to be the only authoritative interpreters of His Word. It is up to each of His people to learn, to judge and to discern...the Bible is God's true revelation to all humanity, that it is our ultimate authority on all matters about which it speaks and can be adequately understood by ordinary people in every culture."

James W. Sire, "Scripture Twisting", pp. 17-18

Understanding the Gospel (chapters 1–8)

the gospel message (1:1-17),

why we need to embrace the gospel (1:18–4:25)

the benefits of embracing the gospel (5:1–8:39)

Gospel Implications for Israel (9:1–11:36)

Gospel Applications in Everyday Life (12:1–15:13)

Theme: Righteousness from God (1:16–17)

The Unrighteousness of All People (1:18—3:20)

Righteousness Imputed: Justification (3:21—5:21)

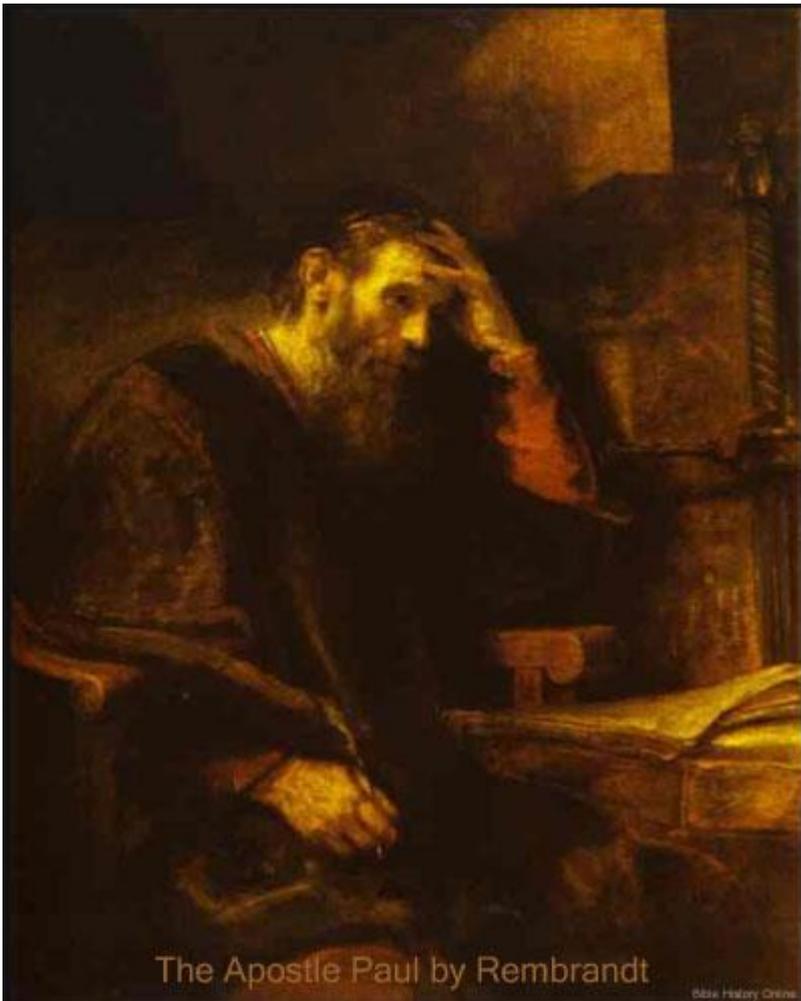
Righteousness Imparted: Sanctification (chs. 6–8)

God's Righteousness Vindicated: The Justice of His Way with Israel (chs. 9–11)

Righteousness Practiced (12:1—15:13)



The purpose of Romans: Paul wishes to have his readers first understand and then experience the gospel, to know its glorious release.
Tim Keller



1:1-7 forms the introduction to the letter. It is the longest introduction of any of Paul's letters. He introduces himself and his theology to a church who did not know him personally and may have heard negative information about him.

v.1 Lowest servant “slave” /
holds highest office “apostle”

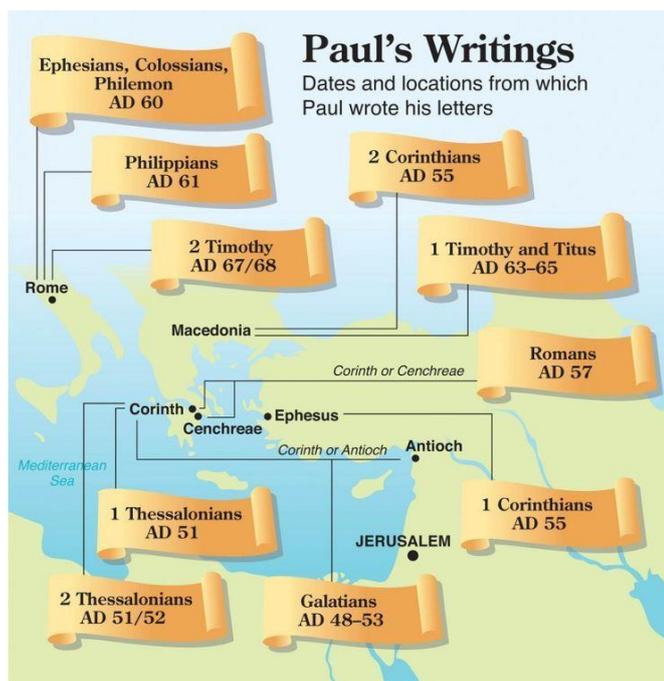
6 Truths about the Gospel:

- v. 1 Its origin: the gospel of God
- v. 2 Its attestation: Old Testament Scriptures
- v. 3 Its substance: Jesus Christ, David's seed and God's Son
- v. 5 Its scope: all the nations
- v. 5 Its purpose: the obedience of faith
- v. 6 Its goal: the glory of Christ's name

v. 7 To all those in Rome who are loved by God and called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

We do not know who founded the church at Rome.

1. It may have been some of the people who were visiting Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost and were converted and returned home to start a church (cf. Acts 2:10).
2. It could have been disciples who fled the persecution in Jerusalem after the death of Stephen (cf. Acts 8:4).
3. It could have been converts from Paul's missionary journeys who traveled to Rome.
4. It was neither Peter nor Paul.



Paul's Concern for those in Rome:

- a. he thanks God for them (verse 8)
- b. he prays for them (verses 9, 10)
- c. he longs to see them (verses 11, 12)
- d. he has often planned to visit them (verse 13)

Paul and Evangelism (verses 14 - 17)

Verse 14: I am under obligation (two ways of getting into debt)

Verse 15: I am eager

Verse 16: I am not ashamed

Romans 1.1 – 3.20

Characteristics of the gospel

v.16a The gospel destroys shame (its effect)

v.16b The gospel is a living force (its power)

v.16c The gospel can save anyone at all (its scope)

v.16d The gospel saves only those believing (its condition)

v.16d The gospel came to the Jew first, then the Gentile (its history)

The gospel is offered to everyone. // It is for everyone who believes.

In the gospel, words and power come together. But the very message of the gospel is what God has done and will do for us...The gospel message is actually the power of God in verbal, cognitive form....When it is articulated or reflected upon, the power is released.

Tim Keller



“A pepper outwardly seems cold to the senses, but the person who crunches it between his teeth experiences the sensation of burning fire.” Theodoret (393-458)

For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds. We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ

2 Corinthians 10.4-5

Content of the gospel

v.17a God provides a perfect righteousness and record for us.

v.17b It is received by faith permanently and exclusively

v.17c The result of reception is a new way of life.



“I labored diligently and anxiously as to how to understand Paul’s word [in Romans 1:17], where he says that the righteousness of God is revealed in the gospel. I sought long and knocked anxiously for the expression “the righteousness of God” blocked the way,

because I took it to mean that righteousness whereby God is righteous and deals righteously in punishing the unrighteous. 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 righteous 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.

...Then I grasped that the righteousness of God is that righteousness by which through grace and sheer mercy God justifies us by faith. Thereupon I felt myself to be reborn and to have gone through open doors into paradise... When I saw the difference, that law is one thing and gospel another, I broke through. And as I had formerly hated the expression “the righteousness of God”, I now began to regard it as my dearest and most comforting word. So that this expression of Paul’s became to me in very truth a gate of paradise.

Martin Luther, 1545

DISCUSSION: In what ways can the Gospel offend or be despised?

- a) by telling us that our salvation is free and not earned, is really insulting.
- b) by telling us Jesus died for us, is also really insulting.
- c) by telling us that “trying to be good and spiritual isn’t enough”
- d) by Jesus’ suffering and serving (not conquering and destroying), and that following him means to suffer and serve with him.

v.17 Righteous God makes us right righteously

How is being made righteous different from merely being forgiven?

“righteousness” English word: It is positional, no debts or liabilities, nothing against you

More is being promised here than mere forgiveness.

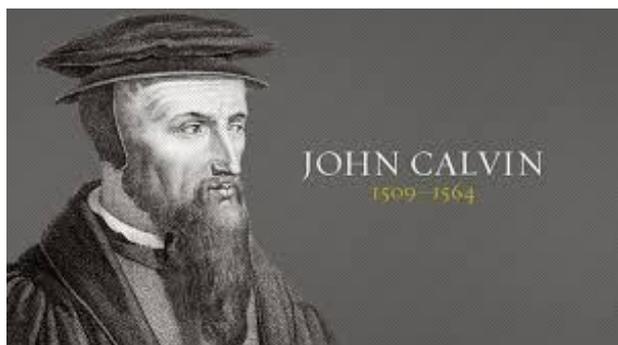
1. Our sins were laid on Jesus, and when we believe in him, we are pardoned. But that “wiped clean” slate is only half of Christian salvation.

2. We are declared “not guilty” AND “perfectly righteous.”

SHORT DEFINITIONS OF THE GOSPEL

“Through faith in Christ, therefore, Christ’s righteousness becomes our righteousness and all that he has becomes ours.”

Martin Luther



“...a man will be justified by faith when, excluded from righteousness of works, he by faith lays hold of the righteousness of Christ, and clothed in it appears in the sight of God not as a sinner, but as righteous.”

John Calvin

Other religions are about being saved through giving to God a righteousness. Christianity is about being saved through receiving from God a righteousness.

Tim Keller

Heidelberg Catechism Q. 60: How are you right with God?

A. Only by true faith in Jesus Christ. Even though my conscience accuses me of having grievously sinned against all God’s commandments and of never having kept any of them, and even though I am still inclined toward all evil, nevertheless, without my deserving it at all, out of sheer grace, God grants and credits to me the perfect satisfaction, righteousness, and holiness of Christ, as if I had never sinned nor been a sinner, as if I had been as perfectly obedient as Christ was obedient for me. All I need to do is to accept this gift of God with a believing heart.

Q. 61: Why do you say that by faith alone you are right with God?

A. It is not because of any value my faith has that God is pleased with me. Only Christ's satisfaction, righteousness, and holiness make me right with God. And I can receive this righteousness and make it mine in no other way than by faith alone.

Q. 62: Why can't the good we do make us right with God, or at least help make us right with him?

A. Because the righteousness which can pass God's scrutiny must be entirely perfect and must in every way measure up to divine law. Even the very best we do in this life is imperfect and stained with sin.

Q. 64: But doesn't this teaching make people indifferent and wicked?

A. No. It is impossible for those grafted into Christ by true faith not to produce fruits of gratitude.

Just as our Lord was crucified between two thieves...the gospel keeps two truths together,

1. God is holy so our sins require that we be punished.

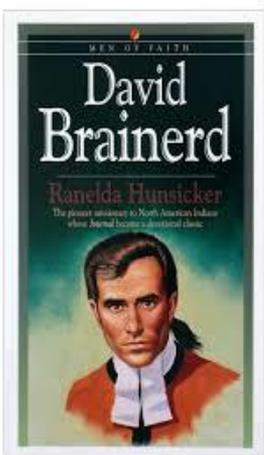
The gospel tells us: "You are more sinful than you ever dared believe."

To forget this leads to license, permissiveness.

2. God is gracious so in Christ are sins are dealt with

The gospel tells us: "You are more accepted in Christ than you ever dared hope."

To forget this leads to legalism, moralism.



EXPERIENCES OF THE GOSPEL

When I was about twenty years of age I was engaged more than ever in the duties of religion. I became strict, and watchful over my thoughts, words, and actions; and thought I must be very seriously religious, because I considered entering the ministry. I spent much time every day reading my Bible and praying, and I gave great attention to Sunday sermons. In short, I had a very good outside, and trusted entirely in my religious duties, though I was not then aware of what I was doing wrong.

Though I often confessed to God that I, of course, deserved nothing, yet still I harbored a secret hope of recommending myself to God by all these duties and all this morality. When I prayed affectionately, and felt some melting of my heart in love to him, I hoped God would thereby be moved to care for me. So, I thought that through my repenting and praising him and seeking him, I could make good steps toward heaven. When my heart seemed full of love and faith, I felt that God would be affected by that, and would hear my prayers for their sincerity. In other words, I healed myself with my duties. I told myself, “God must accept you, because look at how whole-heartedly you serve and seek him.”

Now here was the problem. The more I tried to love God with all my soul, the more I saw how little I really loved him. The more I sought a soft heart, the more I felt how hard my heart was, and I supposed it must be softened before Christ would accept me. One night I remember in particular, when I was walking alone, and I had opened such a view of my sin that I feared the ground would cleave asunder under my feet and become my grave. I saw it was impossible for me, after the utmost pains, to answer the demands of God’s law. I saw it condemned me for selfish and angry and fearful and envious and lustful thoughts, which I could not possibly prevent.

Then, after a considerable time spent in such distresses, one morning I was alone and I saw that all my contrivances and projects to effect or procure salvation were utterly in vain. I had thought many times that the difficulties were very great, but now I saw them in a different light — that it was totally impossible to do anything toward delivering myself. The tumult that had been in my mind now quieted. I saw that all my prayers and repentances and feelings and obediences had not laid the least obligation upon God to bestow his salvation on me.

Then I realized why they were of no avail. When I had been fasting, praying, obeying, I thought I was aiming at the glory of God, but I was doing it all for my own glory — to feel I was worthy. As long as I was doing all this to earn my salvation, I was doing nothing for God, all for me! I realized that all my struggling to become worthy was an exercise in self-worship. I was actually trying to avoid God as saviour, and to be my own saviour. i.e. I was not worshipping him, but using him.

Then, at that time, the true way of salvation opened to my mind. I saw so much of its wisdom and suitableness and excellence that I wondered how I ever was blind to it. I wondered why everyone did not see this way of salvation — not by my own contrivances, but entirely by the righteousness of Christ. I felt myself in a new world, and everything about me appeared with a different aspect from before. David Brainerd’s Diary (1718-1747)



Every little touch would hurt my tender conscience. But one day, as I was passing through a field, suddenly I thought of a sentence, “your righteousness is in heaven,” and with the eyes of faith, I saw Christ sitting at God’s right hand. And I suddenly realized —

THERE is my righteousness. Wherever I was or whatever I was doing, God could not say, “where is your righteousness?” for it was right before him. I saw that my good frame of heart could not make my righteousness better nor a bad frame of heart make my righteousness worse, for my righteousness was Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today and forever.

Now my chains fell off indeed! I felt delivered from slavery to guilt and fears. I went home rejoicing for the love and grace of God. Now I could look from myself to him, and I realized that all those weak character qualities in my heart were like the pennies that rich men carry in their pocket, when their gold is safe under lock and key. Christ is my treasure, my righteousness. Now Christ was my wisdom, righteousness, holiness, and salvation.”

John Bunyan, from “Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners” (paraphrased and abridged)

1:18-32 God’s Wrath Revealed and Deserved

Revealed: Presence of God’s wrath in the world now

Deserved: We know the truth but suppress it so we can live as we wish

God’s Existence	Creation
God’s Love	Care
God’s Justice	Condemnation

Rebellious Man refuses to Believe (vs. 18---23)

1. Suppresses God’s Revealed Truth (v. 18)
2. Ignores the Testimony of Nature (v. 19,20)
3. Ungrateful and Foolish (v. 21---22)
4. Exchange the Truth for Idolatry (v. 23)

Romans 1.1 – 3.20

Wrath of God: His righteous reaction to evil (v.18)

1. A loving God is also a wrathful God.
2. Working here and now - the present tense “is revealed”
3. Against “godlessness” - to disregard God’s rights - and “wickedness” - to disregard of human rights. Willful rebellion of those who reject the truth they know.
4. Deserved, every person “down deep” knows there is a God to whom they owe allegiance.
5. Revealed in moral and social degeneration. (vs 24, 26, 28 'God gave them over')
6. Reason we need the gospel - “for” connects v.18 with vv.16-17



Anger isn't the opposite of love. Hate is, and the final form of hate is indifference... How can a good God forgive bad people without compromising himself? 'Oh, never mind... Try telling that to a survivor of the Cambodian 'killing fields' or to someone who lost an entire family in the Holocaust. No. To be truly good one has to be outraged by evil and implacably hostile to injustice.

Rebecca Pippert, “Hope Has its Reasons”

“God gave them over”

To the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity v. 24

To shameful lusts, exchanging natural desires for unnatural v. 26

To self-justifying mind, approve of those who practice them vs. 28-32

Humanity constructs a counterfeit worship and glory

vv.22-23 Counterfeit religions and ideologies all worship something created

v.24 Counterfeit worship leads to bondage and addiction (“gave them up”)

v.25a Counterfeit worship based on believing a particular set of lies

v.25b Sum: if we won't worship the Creator we will worship something created

All science proceeds on the assumption that inorganic life cannot produce organic life. Yet, if there is no personal creator, then life must have happened “by chance.” One scientist (not a Christian) said that organic life happening by accident is “as ridiculous and improbable as the proposition that a tornado blowing through a junkyard would assemble a Boeing 747” (Sir Fred Hoyle, *The Intelligent Universe*). He calculated that the chances of organic life happening are one in ten to the power of 40,000. (For organic life to spring from inorganic, 2,000 enzyme molecules would have to have formed simultaneously from 20 component amino acids on a single occasion... Yet many or most scientists or intellectuals base all their thinking (and their eternal destiny) on this slim chance. Now think. Do rational people operate this way? Would you take all your earthly goods and possessions and bet them on a horse with 1 in 1,000 chance? Would you even bet \$1,000? But why would you do something in thinking about God that you wouldn't do with \$1,000? Tim Keller

The fool says in his heart, “There is no God.” They are corrupt, they do abominable deeds; there is none who does good. The Lord looks down from heaven on the children of man, to see if there are any who understand, who seek after God. They have all turned aside; together they have become corrupt; there is none who does good, not even one. Psalm 14.1-3



“Imagine a person who comes in here tonight and argues ‘no air exists’ but continues to breathe air while he argues. Now intellectually, atheists continue to breathe — they continue to use reason and draw scientific conclusions [which assumes an orderly universe], to make moral judgments [which assumes absolute values] — but the atheistic view of things would in theory make such ‘breathing’ impossible. They are breathing God’s air all the time they are arguing against him.”

Greg Bahnsen, “Does God Exist: A Debate”

2:1-16 The Critical Religious Moralists

Paul turns from the immoral to moralizers. But his argument is the same. Both groups contradict their knowledge and are without excuse.

Our hypocrisy (vs 1-3), in condemning others, we condemn ourselves

Our impenitence (vs 4, 5), difference between faith and presumption

Our works (vs 6-16), God justifies us by faith, and he will judge our works

2:1-3 What are the consequences of condemning and judging others?

1. No one lives up to his or her own standards. v.1 “At whatever point you judge the other... you do the same things.”
2. Standards we use on others will be the standards by which we are judged.
3. It is a “writing off,” a happy pronouncement of doom — “you are lost and I’m glad”
4. It is a belief that you are superior, others are worthy of judgment, but you are not.

2:4-5 The Patience of God

1. No one will get what we deserve. God the judge never judges on time. He never executes as quickly as he has a right to (v.4a).
2. The most patient and loving thing he can do is to bring us to repentance (v.4b).
3. The more God gives us truth and good things, the greater our responsibility and the more serious our judgment will be if we don’t repent (v.5) “storing up wrath for the day of wrath”
4. Judgment is delayed and the world goes on by mercy. It is kind of him to simply give us more time.
5. Sometimes the irritations and disappointments and even tragedies of our lives may be actual kindnesses, because they lead us to see the truth about our need and condition and lead us to repentance.
6. Good things we receive in life ought to lead us to repentance. Undeserved mercy should soften us and move us toward God and a grateful spirit.

2:6-8 A Heart Right with God, or Not?

1. “Persistence in doing good” - doing good and living good regularly
2. “Seek glory, honor, and immortality” - qualities that come from life with God
3. “Self-seeking” - a spirit of self-will, or self- glorification
4. “Reject the truth and follow evil” - lack of teachability, refusal to submit to truth

2:9-11 – We are not judged according to our pedigree

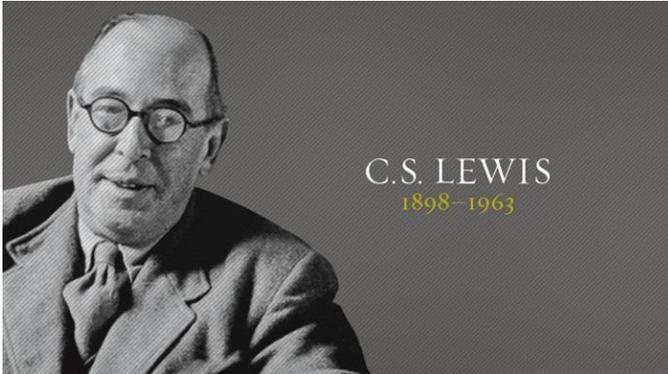
v.9 Trouble to self-seekers regardless of background

v.10 Honor to glory-seekers regardless of background

v.11 God is an impartial judge

2.12-16 - No “Written” Law does Not Exempt from Judgment

1. Those who sin will still perish (12,13), shared problem of disobedience
2. The Gentiles DO have a law (14,15), conscience, natural revelation
3. Jesus Christ will judge accordingly (16) – perfect justice



Everyone has heard people quarreling... they say things like this: ‘How’d you like it if anyone did the same thing to you?’ ‘Why should you shove in first?’ ‘Give me a bit of your orange, I gave you a bit of mine’... Now what interests me about all these remarks is that the man who makes them is not merely saying that the other man’s behavior does not happen to please him.

He is appealing to some standard of behavior which he expects the other person to know about [intuitively]... What is the sense in saying the enemy is in the wrong unless Right is a real thing which the Nazis at bottom knew as well as we did and ought to have practiced?

C.S.Lewis, “Mere Christianity”

What practical daily difference could it make to you that there is a judgment day coming?

1. It makes the present crucial - our works and actions will be evaluated.
2. It makes us very aware of the responsibility of learning God’s Word.
3. It helps us overcome bitterness and a condemning spirit.
4. Only God deserves to be the judge, because only he is righteous.
5. Only God deserves to be the judge, because only he is wise.
6. We don’t have to make the world a just place - God is doing that

The root of all sin is unbelief and rejection of the gospel. Both the moral and immoral reject the gospel when they try to be their own savior.

1. Immoral people reject religion and God, their rebellion is really a refusal to believe the gospel — that they are so sinful only Jesus can be their savior.
2. Moralistic people pick up religion and morality and become either anxious (because they are aware they can never live up to standards) or proud (because they think they have), their anxiety and/or pride is really a refusal to believe the gospel — that they are so sinful only Jesus can be their savior.

2:17-3:8 Self-righteous Jews – also Liable to God's judgment

1. by their Knowledge of the Law (2:17-24)
2. by their Circumcision (2:25-29)
3. by their Presumption of Innocence (3:1-8)

2:17-24. The Jews of Paul's day were proud of:

1. Nationality — their being Jews (you call yourself a Jew)
2. Law of God (you rely on the law),
3. Relationship to God as a people (you brag of your relationship to God).
4. Ethical knowledge and ability to make correct ethical decisions (you know his will and approve of what is superior).
5. Knowledge and Education in the law (you are instructed in the law), they mastered it.
6. Spreading knowledge of God's law to others (a light for those who are in the dark).

All this boils down, basically, to a pride in their moral decency and virtue.

2:25-29 The failure of religion

v.25 Outward observance without the inward reality is empty

v.26 The inward is what counts

vv.27-29 Sum: religion can't change the heart, which is true spirituality

3:1-8 Answers to objections

v.1 Q: "Paul, are you saying there is no advantage to Biblical religion?"

v.2 A: No, there is great value in having and knowing the Word ("oracles") of God

v.3a Q: "But then the Word failed, for so many of the Jews haven't believed the gospel."

v. 3b-4 A: No — despite their failure to believe, God's promises to save advance. Our faithlessness only reveals how true he is!

v.5 Q: "But if he is faithful in response to our faithlessness, how could he judge anyone?"

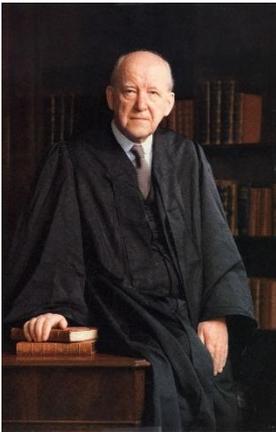
vv.6-7 A: He will judge unbelief — that is being faithful in response to our faithlessness.

v.8 Anyone who says (I don't) that you can sin so God will love you is worthy of that judgment

Romans 1.1 – 3.20

1. “Legalistic churches” - codes of conduct and doctrine - more holy and accurate
2. “Power churches” - need miracles and spectacular – emotional, feelings, dramatic
3. “Sacerdotal churches” - rituals and tradition – ceremony, beauty, grandeur, mystery

Theological accuracy, moral conscientiousness, praying in faith, and beautiful worship are all fine! But not if they become “dead works,” replacements for reliance on the righteousness of Christ.



People today are saying, ‘Look at those Christians!... They can talk marvelously when the sun is shining and when the business is going well, and when there is no trouble in the family, but the moment anything goes wrong they are even worse than many who are not Christians.’ Is that Christianity? — That’s a perfectly logical, perfectly fair deduction for them to make.” Martyn Lloyd-Jones

3:9-20 The Whole Human Race: No one, neither Jew nor Greek, is righteous before God

1. Despite advantages, Jews like Greeks are under sin (9)
2. Biblical proof (10---18)
3. Application and conclusion (19---20)
 - a. The Law condemns all, especially to whom it was given (19)
 - b. Law cannot justify, but only reveal the knowledge of sin (20)

3:10-18 Effects of Sin on Us

1. On our legal standing - we are guilty and condemned. v.10
2. On our minds - we don’t understand God’s truth v.11a
3. On our motives - “No one seeks for God” v.11b
4. On our will - “turned away... no one who does good” v.12a
5. On our tongues - “Their throats are open graves.” vv.13-14
6. On our relationships - “...shed blood... peace they do not know” vv.15-17
7. On our relationship to God - “No fear of God” v.18

3:11 “No one seeks for God”

Paul does not say, “No one seeks for spiritual blessings,” or “No one seeks for God to answer prayers,” or “No one seeks for spiritual power and experience and peace”... many people do that. But Paul is saying — that no one, in his or her natural self and ability wants to find God... any human being seeking God must have already had some change go on inside them by the Holy Spirit.

Tim Keller

“No one seeks after God. That is true both of those that do not at all care for God and of those... who imagine themselves to seek after God. They do not seek after God as He desires to be sought and found... The inward desire or seeking after God is true love of God...”

Martin Luther

“Seeking [God] is much more active than asking [God] for things.’ The moment you realize this content to the word ‘seek,’ you begin to see that the Apostle’s statement is quite right... Prayers do not mean that we are seeking God. Seeking God means you are trying to find God, and to get into His presence... To seek God means to desire God above everything and everybody, to seek His glory, to be anxious to promote his glory. To seek God in the biblical sense means that God is the center of our thinking.”

Martyn Lloyd-Jones

Jesus “No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him” John 6.44

The Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome but kind to everyone, able to teach, patiently enduring evil, correcting his opponents with gentleness. *God may perhaps grant them repentance* leading to a knowledge of the truth, and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, after being captured by him to do his will.

2 Timothy 2.24-26

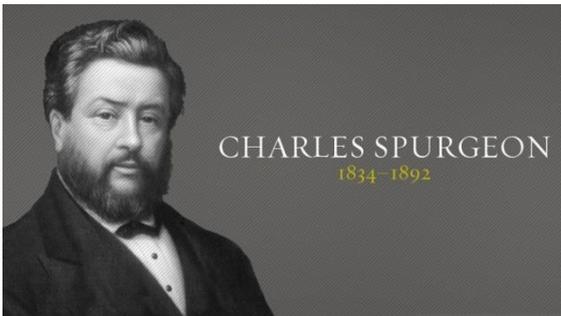
3:12 “No one does good”...our deeds are “worthless”

Paul is talking about our relationship to God and whether our good deeds can rectify that relationship. And he is showing us that in the ultimate sense, our good deeds cannot at all get us saved. The Bible sees a “good” deed as being both good in form AND in motive...If you know God loves you in Christ, that there is nothing you can do but accept his perfect righteousness, then you can feed the hungry and visit the sick and clothe the naked, and all for God!

Tim Keller

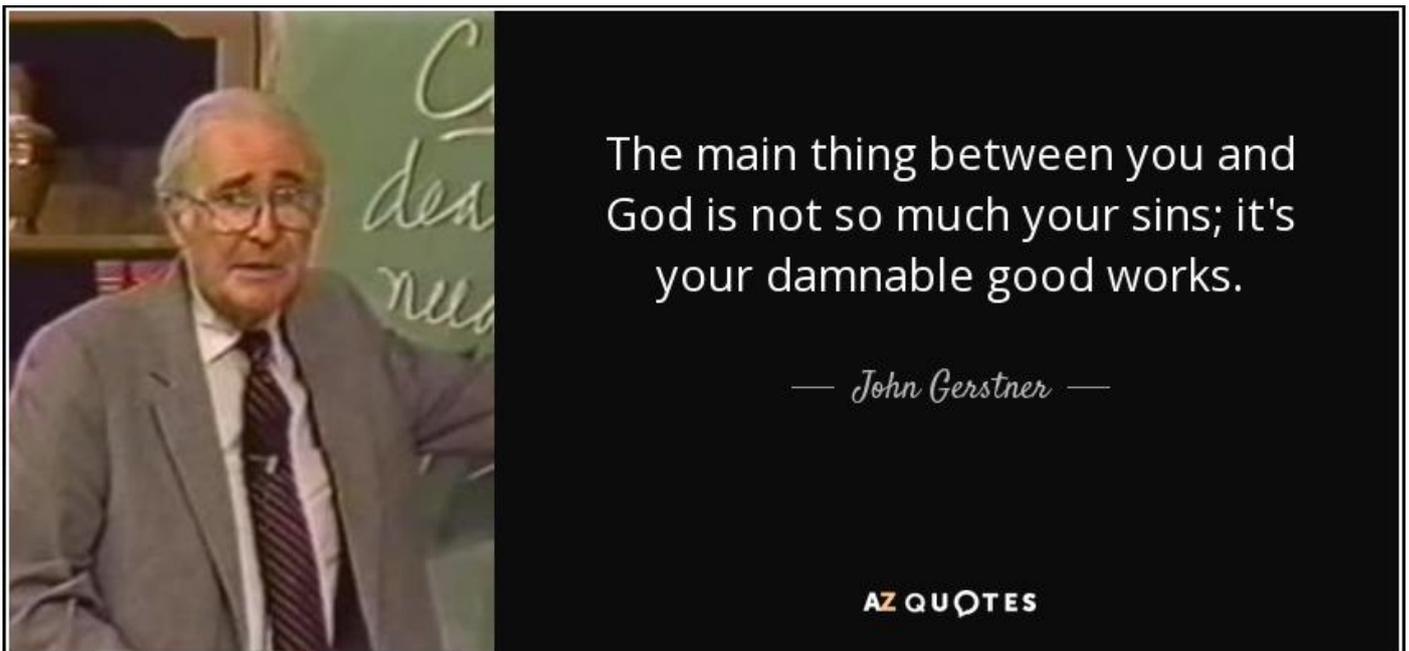
Romans 1.1 – 3.20

“All our righteousness are as filthy rags.” Isaiah 64.6



Once in a kingdom long ago, a gardener grew a huge carrot, and decided to give it to his prince, because he loved his sovereign. When he gave it, the prince discerned his love and devotion, and that he expected nothing in return. So as the gardener turned to leave, he said, “Here, my son, I want to give you some of my land so you can produce an even greater crop.

It is yours.” And the gardener went home rejoicing. A nobleman heard of this incident and thought, “If that is what the prince gives in response to the gift of a carrot, what would he give to me if I gave him a fine horse?” So the nobleman came and presented the prince with a fine steed as a gift. But the prince discerned his heart and said, “You expect me to give to you as I did to the gardener. I will not. You are very different. The gardener gave ME the carrot. But you were giving yourself the horse.” - from a sermon by Charles Spurgeon



The way to God is wide open. There is nothing standing between the sinner and his God. He has immediate and unimpeded access to the Savior...Nothing now stands between the sinner and God but the sinner’s “good works.” Nothing can keep him from Christ but his delusion... alas, sinners cannot part with their “virtues.” They have none that are not imaginary, but they are real to them. So, grace becomes unreal...Their eyes fixed on a mirage, they will not drink real water. They die of thirst with water all about them.

John Gerstner

3:19-20 Everyone's under the guilt of sin

v.19 There is universal accountability

v.20a There is universal condemnation

v.20b The law cannot save us, but only show us our condemnation

In other words, we must always think of ourselves not primarily in terms of addictions or of any particular things that are true about us; it is our whole condition that matters... Let me use an analogy. If you visited a foreign country, the first thing they would want to know about you is not the color of your hair or eyes or your bank balance or whether you are a nice person — the first thing they would want to know is what country you belong to. Are you a citizen of this country or a foreigner? They would want to know the realm to which you belong.

Martyn Lloyd-Jones

Final Reflections: The Truth and the Trouble with Sin

Westminster Shorter Catechism Q: What is sin?

A: Sin is any want (lack) of conformity unto, or transgression of, the law of God. (I John 3:4)

“Sin is the dare of God’s justice, the rape of his mercy, the jeer of his patience, the slight of his power, the contempt of his love.”

John Bunyan

“All natural inclinations are either without God or against him; therefore none are good... No hero undertakes great enterprises for the common good, but out of ambition, for which he is justly condemned: hence it must needs follow, that such original, natural desires and inclinations are wicked.”

Martin Luther



“The phrase “total depravity”...signifies a corruption of our moral and spiritual nature that is total not in degree (for no one is as bad as he or she might be) but in extent. It declares that no part of us is untouched by sin, and therefore no action of ours is as good as it should be, and consequently... we cannot earn God’s favor, no matter what we do; unless grace saves us, we are lost.”

J.I.Packer

“What is the basic human disorder? According to Brazilian psychiatrist Keppe, it is “the disease of theomania — the desire to be god... the desire to be the playwright instead of the actor in the drama.”

Rebecca Pippert

The religious persons may be better morally, but neither they nor the pagans come close to a righteous heart. So they are all lost, all condemned to perish. Perishing is perishing, condemnation is condemnation. Not that every person is as sinful as every other person; our legal condition is all the same — we are all lost, and there are no degrees of lostness.

Tim Keller



“A young and intelligent priest remarked to me the other day that he thought one of the greatest sources of strength in Christianity today lay in the profoundly pessimistic view it took of human nature. There is a great deal in what he says. The people who are most discouraged and made despondent by the barbarity and stupidity of human behavior are those who...

cling to an optimistic belief in the civilizing influence of progress and enlightenment. To them, the appalling outbursts of bestial ferocity in the totalitarian states, and the obstinate selfishness and stupid greed of capitalist society, are not merely shocking and alarming. For them, these things are the utter negation of everything in which they have believed. It is though the bottom had dropped out of their universe... Now for the Christian, this is not so. He is as deeply shocked and grieved as anyone else, but he is not astonished. He has been accustomed to the idea that there is a deep interior dislocation in the very center of human personality... The delusion of the mechanical perfectibility of mankind through a combined process of scientific knowledge and unconscious evolution has been responsible for a great deal of heartbreak. It is, at bottom, far more pessimistic than Christian pessimism because, if science and progress break down, there is nothing to fall back upon. Humanism is self-contained — it provides for man no resources outside himself.” Dorothy Sayers

A friend came over the other day very enthusiastic about a New Age seminar she had attended. She said, “I’ve finally realized... God is in everything. Therefore, I am God and God is me. I must only think positive thoughts, and not let anything negative get in me or get me down. I don’t say anything is wrong anymore, I just say, ‘It doesn’t work for me.’” “You are the mother of teenagers,” I responded. “How does your philosophy work out in raising children? Are they permitted to follow the same logic when you tell them to be in at midnight — ‘Sorry Mom, that just doesn’t work for me.’ She hadn’t thought of that.”

Tim Keller

Heidelberg Catechism Q: Did God create a people so wicked and perverse?

A: No. God created them good and in his own image, that is, in true righteousness and holiness, so that they might truly know God their creator, love him with all their heart, and live with him in eternal happiness for his praise and glory.

Q: Then where does this corrupt human nature come from?

A: From the fall and disobedience of our first parents, Adam and Eve, in paradise. This fall has so poisoned our nature that we are born sinners — corrupt from conception on.

Q: But doesn't God do us an injustice by requiring in his law what we are unable to do?

A: No, God created humans with the ability to keep the law. They, however, tempted by the devil, in reckless disobedience, robbed themselves and their descendants of these gifts.

“Original sin” meaning sin derived from our origin... means not that sin belongs to human nature as God made it, nor that sin is involved in the processes of reproduction and birth, but that a) sinfulness marks everyone from birth, and is there in the form of a motivationally twisted heart, prior to any actual sins; b) this inner sinfulness is the root and source of all actual sins; c) it derives to us in a real but mysterious way from Adam, our first representative toward God... we are not sinners because we sin, but rather we sin because we are sinners...”

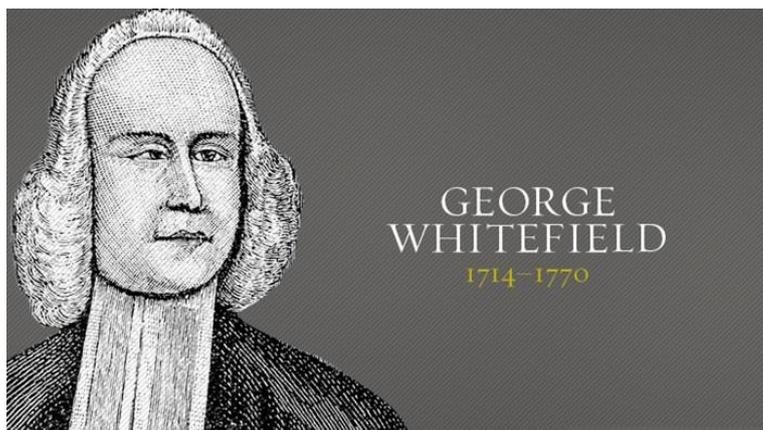
J.I.Packer



“The Bible teaches that every man comes into the world a sinner, with a corruption of nature out of which all individual transgressions proceed. That is the doctrine of original sin. It is against that doctrine... that the chief attack has been made. The attack has come to be connected with the name of a British monk who lived in the latter 4th and early 5th century. His name was Pelagius...”

there are millions of Pelagians living today, and most of them never knew that such a person as Pelagius ever lived. [He said] that every man begins life practically where Adam began it, perfectly able to choose good or evil... Sin [he said] is just a matter of individual acts; it appears only in those cases where a man... as a matter of fact chooses evil rather than good... According to the Augustinian [Biblical] view of sin, on the other hand, individual wrong choices do most emphatically come from the underlying state of the person who engages in them. Jesus said: “If the tree is good, the fruit is good, or make the tree corrupt, and its fruit is corrupt... how can ye, being evil, speak good things?” (Matthew 12:33-35)

J. Gresham Machen



“I cannot pray without sin — I cannot preach without sin — I can do nothing without sin; and as one expresses it: my repentance needs to be repented of, and my very tears to be washed in the precious blood of my dear Redeemer. Our best duties are as so many splendid sins. Before you can know you are at peace with God, you must not only be

made sick of your original and actual sin, but you must be sick of your righteousness, of all your duties and performances. There must be a deep conviction before you can be brought out of your self-righteousness; it is the last idol taken out of your heart. The pride of our heart will not let us submit to the righteousness of Jesus Christ. But if you never felt that you had no righteousness of your own, if you never felt the deficiency of your own righteousness, you cannot come to Jesus Christ. There are a great many now who may say, “well we believe all this,” but there is a great difference between talking and feeling. Did you ever feel the need of a dear Redeemer? Did you ever feel the want of Jesus Christ, upon the account of the deficiency of your own righteousness? And can you now say from your heart, “Lord, thou mayst justly damn me for the best duties that ever I did perform?” If you are not thus brought out of yourself, you may say to your heart “Peace! Peace!” but there is no peace.”

George Whitefield



“As there is no sin so small, but it deserves damnation, so there is no sin so great, that it can bring damnation on those who truly repent.” Westminster Confession (Chapter 15:4)
