

Study 2 – The epistle to the Romans by Neville Clark, 2016

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Reading - Romans 1

Tonight, we come to the opening sections of the book of Romans, and I say sections, because there are more than one. We have an introduction as you can see there in the first 15 verses, followed by a very small section, Chapters 16 and 17, followed by the first large section of Romans from the rest of Ch 1 through almost to the end of Chapter 3. Our goal this evening is to consider the whole of Chapter 1. What that means of course is that we are going to finish the chapter in the middle of one of the major sections. Chapter 1 certainly is a section break, a sub-section break, but you will appreciate that we can't consider the whole of the large section, Chapter 1 to 3, as well as giving the first part of Chapter 1. So that is our goal, to at least do Chapter 1 this evening.

Before we begin, let's just refresh our minds on the context of why this epistle came to be written. The Apostle Paul wrote the epistle to the Romans in 57 AD in the third missionary journey as he abode for three months at Corinth in Acts 20:3, and you will remember we made the point in our last class that we could pinpoint precisely in which verse of Acts, the Apostle wrote this epistle, because of the identifying features in Acts and in Romans Ch 15 and 16. So it was Acts 20:3 that saw the writing of the book of Romans. He had never been to Rome before, he did not form this Ecclesia, in fact, as we said in our last class, it is most probable that the first converts of the Roman Ecclesia came about in Acts Ch 2 by the work of Peter and the Apostles on the day of Pentecost when some 3,000 were baptised, and if you look at the list of attendees from around the world at Pentecost you will find those of Rome were there. So that would be our speculation. But despite never having been to this Ecclesia as we have found, the Apostle was drawn to them. He was drawn to them because of their love of the Truth, and you will remember v 8 of Chapter 1, he says, "I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world." So their reputation preceded them. "I long to see you," he says in Ch 1:11. "I have tried to come," Ch 1:13, "but circumstances prohibited me." You can see the Apostle through these verses 8 through 15, is desperate to get to Rome, but God wouldn't let him, there were other works that he had to do. Brethren and Sisters, you just think about the calibre of the character of this Ecclesia in v 8 and onwards. There have been very few ecclesias like this in the history of the ecclesial world. I mean, would TTG for example, be an Ecclesia that the Apostle says, "Your faith is spoken of internationally, I'm desperate to come and see you," v. 10, "I'm making this request to God that I might come and visit you, but He says 'no,' he says 'no.'" Think about, therefore, just what sort of an Ecclesia this was, unbelievable! He loved them, and what he loved about them, you see, was their zeal in the Truth, because it was exactly the same zeal in the Truth he had himself, and therefore there was a fellow-feeling between him and them as we explained in our last class, even though he had never been there.

At the time he wrote this letter as we found, he was also running a collection, collecting money for the poor saints, he tells us, in Jerusalem. There had been a famine there, and therefore the Jewish brothers sisters in Jerusalem had material hardship. But the purpose of that collection wasn't just to alleviate their material needs, but in doing so, he would unite Jew and Gentile, because you remember that famous verse in Ch 15:27 of Romans, If the Gentiles have benefited from the Jews Spiritual things it is only right that the Jews should benefit from the Gentiles material things. It is the least we can do, he says to the Ecclesia to contribute to this collection when your brethren are in need, especially because they are Jewish, brethren. So the Apostle's taking up a collection but he is not doing that collection just to teach a lesson in Rome, there is a certain degree of friction between Jews and Gentiles the world over, because, of course, the Gentiles, well the were "the new kid on the block," really weren't they? They were the second flock that was coming into the Truth. Nevertheless, as he writes this epistle, he's still very aware of the recent civil conflict that there had been in Rome and that this Ecclesia was being tested on that very issue, that is the Jew/Gentile issue, and there were two groups in this Ecclesia, Jews and Gentiles, and they were at odds over just how a man or a woman could be righteous before God. The Jews thought, for example, that there was some credit in being a blood descendant of Abraham, that there was something special about that and that keeping the Law of Moses was essential. The Gentiles knew that they didn't have to keep the Law of Moses, but because the Jews never understood that the Gentiles looked down their nose at the Jews and wondered whether God's purpose with the nation of Israel had finished, and neither group, neither group, had any problem telling the other one how they felt. And to make matters worse, in 49 AD there were riots in the city of Rome, so serious, in the days of Claudius, that Claudius expelled all Jews from Rome, that is all natural Jews, whether they were brethren or sisters or not, out of Rome, and they were gone for 6 years until

the decree lapsed after the death of Claudius. The effect of that, however, was that for a period of 6 years between about 49 AD and 53 AD, the Ecclesia in Rome was 100% Gentile, and that served only to reinforce the rift between Jews and Gentiles, because when the Jewish brethren and sisters returned, and return they did, things could never be the same as they were before. Now here was an Ecclesia, therefore, that was famous throughout the Ecclesia world for its commitment and diligence for the things of the Truth, but at the same time with an undercurrent of dissatisfaction between two major ethnic groups of people in relation to God's method of salvation for man. And from Corinth in Acts Ch 20, the Apostle knew that, and that, among other things but predominantly, that is was what caused this epistle to be written. And this, as you can see on the screen, is how the Apostle dealt with the problem.

We have an introduction, and we have a conclusion, and we have got six major sections in between, each dealing in one way or another, with the righteousness of God. Ch 1:16-17, man's got a problem, recorded here, the righteousness of God in the gospels, man has a problem, and the problem is sin, and the problem is so serious, it is going to kill him. God explains, or the Apostle Paul explains in the section, how God would enter into the arena of human affairs, show man the character of God and how man therefore might attain righteousness and be saved. That is what the gospel of God was all about, and it is a very small section, but in fact, it is a critical section to understand and we are going to spend a moment on it this evening, because, of course, that section is the theme of the whole epistle. The phrase, "the righteousness of God," for example, appears in Ch 1:17, and subsequently, all the way through the epistle to the Romans. This is the first appearance of the phrase, "the righteousness of God," in Ch 1:17, but it occurs all the way through the rest of the book, that's the theme of the epistle of Romans.

Well, the last half of Ch 1, through to almost the end of Ch 3 - Ch 1:18 through to Ch 3:20, tells us just how much that doctrine was needed because we have the universal failure of mankind to attain righteousness, that is to say, the Gentiles, Romans 1, never attained righteousness. The Jews, Romans 2, never attained righteousness. All mankind, Romans Ch 3, has abysmally failed in that pursuit and therefore there had to be another way, and that way, in the next section, from Ch 3:21, was through Jesus Christ. The righteousness of God was revealed in God's son, that's how he did it. That's how God showed man the process by which he could be saved, and the point you see the Apostle makes in this is, that that process doesn't just apply to Jew or Gentile, it applies to all mankind because all mankind has the same human condition.

Well, Ch 6-8, if the question arises, if God has designed a method of salvation through Christ, doesn't that mean that we can please ourselves, and let Christ do everything? Not at all, says the apostle, not at all, there's got to be a development, we've got to become like Christ. Ch 9-11, Well then, where does that leave the Jew? If this plan of salvation is for all mankind, that means the Jew aren't special any more above any other man, since righteousness has been revealed to all men, does God still have a further purpose with natural Israel? A fair enough question. The answer, of course is, absolutely he does, in fact so much so, that the saints will not receive immortality unless and until national Israel is saved, both things happen together, at the return of Christ. In the last three chapters, 12-15 he says, and he explains all of that, there are some obligations upon us, we've got personal responsibilities in Rom 12. We've got civil responsibilities in Romans 13, we've got ecclesial responsibilities in Romans 15. That's the practical application, you see, of righteousness in our life, it's the practical section of the book.

And then, of course, the conclusion, much of which we considered in our last class. But if we were to confine our view, brothers and sisters and young people, just to chapter 1 this evening, those black rows there are the section headings from the previous slide and the blue lines, I've broken down those sections into, if you like, bite-sizes. From v 1-7 of the 1st Chapter, the first thing the Apostle does is to set before us the basis of God's righteousness. That God, as I have said, would enter into the arena of human affairs in order to save men. The name he gives to that intervention is, in the last line of v1, The gospel of God. The gospel of God is the method, the good news, that God will enter into the arena of human affairs and make a way, or a process by which man might be saved, that's what that says. V 8-15 as we have already seen, Paul's evident desire to get to Rome. V 16-17 of Ch 1, the first major section, The righteousness of God in the Gospels, this is an explanation of the Gospel of God from v 1. And while you are here, you might make the observation in v 16, the Apostle says, "I'm not ashamed of the gospel of Christ," you need to delete the words "of Christ," the gospel spoken about in Rom 1:16 is in fact, the gospel of God, of v 1. The words "of Christ," are not there in the original. It ought to be the Gospel of God in v 16, as it is in v 1. And then from v 18-32, the start of the second major section, man's failure to attain righteousness, this is from Ch 1 v 18 onwards is the complete and unmitigated failure of the Gentile world. Ch 2, the failure of the Jewish world, Ch 3 the universal failure of all humanity, and as I say, we are going to stop at the end of Ch 1, this evening. You will appreciate that's what the Apostle is about to do, he's going to teach this Ecclesia about the gospel of God, the means by

which men might be saved, and he's going to show how that applies to every ethnic division of this Ecclesia.

Well, in the first verse of Chapter 1, Paul introduces himself as the "servant of Jesus Christ." "Paul," he says, "a servant of Jesus, called to be an Apostle, separated unto the Gospel of God." That's extremely interesting, firstly because, as far as the Roman Empire is concerned, Paul was anything BUT a servant. "Servant" here is the Greek word "doulos," and means "slave." He wasn't a slave, he was a free-born Roman, and on at least two occasions in the book of Acts, Acts 16:37 and Acts 22:25, he quotes the fact that he is a free-born Roman in order to advance the gospel, but he introduces himself here as the exact opposite a "slave," you will appreciate, not a slave to Rome, not a slave to any man, but a slave to Jesus Christ. But he chooses his words extremely carefully in this verse, there are three key words here, he's the servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an Apostle, separated to the gospel of God. He's separated, he's called, he's a servant, he says, and I will show you why those words are important. Come with me to Galatians 1. And Galatians is interesting, you know, it is like the miniature version of Romans. It is not to the same group of people, it's of course to the ecclesias of Galatia, but it is much the same argument, in many ways, as the book of Romans. In Galatians 1:15 Paul makes a similar point to what he makes in Romans Ch 1. He's a servant who was separated and called, look at this, in Galatians 1:15, "but when it pleased God who separated, separated, me from my mother's womb and called me by his grace." And there he is, "separated" and "called." If you want to find out where he's a servant, you'll find that precise language in Ch 1:10 of Galatians. So Galatians 1, introduces him as a separated, called servant of God between vs 10-15, but here's the important point. Gal 1:15 is a quotation from Isaiah 49. On the screen to save us some time I've put Isaiah 49, just the first three verses, and this is what it says, "Listen O isles," so it is a chapter written to the Gentiles, "The isles" is a phrase of the Gentiles. Israel of course, wasn't an Isle was it? "Listen O isles unto me and hearken Ye people from afar, Yahweh has called me from the womb, from the bowels of my mother has he made mention of my name." Well, there's the reference in Gal 1:15. "And he's made my mouth like a sharp sword and in the shadow of his hand has he hid me, and made me a polished shaft in his quiver hath he hid me. And he said to me, thou art my servant O Israel in whom I will be glorified." Now it says "Israel" there in Isa 49:3 and in fact it is a reference to the Messiah.

I'm not going to turn up Isaiah to show you but there is a contrast being made all the way through these servant songs between natural Israel and God's son. Israel, of course was Yahweh's firstborn and the Lord Jesus Christ was Yahweh's firstborn, and there is a contrast made between, if you like, the faithful servant in his son and the unfaithful servant in the nation. And the son therefore, by way of contrast with the nation of Israel is also called "Israel," In Isa 49:3. But the point is this, the Apostle Paul quotes Isa 49:1 in Gal 1:15 of himself. He appropriates the call of the Messiah to preach the truth to the Gentiles to himself, remarkable, I mean, this is the magnitude of the Apostle's calling here. He begins this epistle in apparently a benign manner saying he's been called from the womb, separated as a servant to preach the gospel, in fact, when he explains that he says, "I am the fulfilment of Isaiah 49: 1, a messianic prophecy. You'll appreciate, Christ never really went to the Gentiles. Oh, yes, he went up to the north to Syrophonecia, he spoke to the woman of Samaria, but the major proclamation work to the Gentiles was in the Apostle Paul, and he appropriates a messianic prophecy from the prophecy of Isaiah to justify his apostleship. You've actually got in v 8 of Gal Ch 2 a contrast made between the Apostle Paul and the Apostle Peter. "God," it says in Gal 2:8, "wrought effectually in Peter to the apostleship of the circumcision, the same was mighty in me toward the Gentiles," so as Peter was the Apostle to the Jews, Paul says, I was the Apostle to the Gentiles. "O isles, hearken to me," says Paul, "I'm the Messiah to the Gentiles," unbelievable! And that's how he commences, you see, back to Romans, that's how he commences Romans Ch 1. "Separated, from the womb to teach the gospel of God." Well, what was the Gospel of God, brothers and sisters and young people, what was it? Well, you've got the clue in verse 2, Romans 1:2. "The gospel which God had promised afore by his prophets in the Holy Scriptures concerning His son," that's what the Gospel was, it was the good news in the prophets concerning the Lord Jesus Christ. Which prophets? Which prophets? Well, you might say everything from Gen 3:15 forward is going to speak of the Messiah. Yes, that's true, but certain prophets particularly spoke about the fact that God would act for man through the agency of the Lord Jesus Christ. And here's a classic, Isaiah 59:16. "When God saw that there was no man and wondered that there was no intercessor, therefore his arm brought forth salvation unto him and his righteousness it sustained him."

So God's arm brought salvation and no man, no man, in the entire epoch of human history could do anything to save his fellow. Now what was the "arm of God," that wrought salvation? Well, the answer of course, is in Isaiah 53:1. "Who hath believed our report and to whom is the arm of Yahweh revealed?" well that arm shall grow up before God as a tender plant as a root out of a dry ground, he will have no form or comeliness and when we see it, there is no beauty that we should desire it," the "arm of Yahweh" was in fact the Lord Jesus Christ, the extension of God's arm, fulfilling God's will with the world. When you talk about God promising

beforetime in the prophets the gospel of God you could do no better than to quote Isaiah 59 and Isaiah 53 to demonstrate the prophetic mandate for Romans Ch 1:2. But look again, look again at just how amply Isaiah 59 fulfills the whole dilemma of Romans 1-3. What's Romans 1, at least from v 18? the unmitigated failure of the Gentile world. Rom 2, the unmitigated failure of the Jewish world, Rom 3, the complete collapse of all of humanity, "he saw there was no man," so he had to, if you like, out of the doom of humanity orchestrate a method by which he would and his son save man. No-one alive remotely was able to approach the righteousness of God, or the righteous character of God. By the same token, neither could God look upon sin, so what was to be done? How would we solve the problem? Well, God would have to act himself, wouldn't he? Man couldn't do it, man couldn't do anything, there was no man so God would act, you see, and to solve that problem a son, that son would be both the son of God and the son of man, he would represent God's righteousness to man and by conquering sin in its own domain, that is, in a human body, he would pave the way for man to be reconciled back to God.

And that is exactly what the Apostle says, look at Rom 1:3. The prophet spoke concerning his son. Now just delete the words, "Jesus Christ our Lord," it is not there in the original either, the RSV omits it completely. "concerning his son, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh, and to be declared to be the son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness by the resurrection from the dead." Now, just look carefully at those couple of verses, the prophets are speaking concerning the son." It doesn't harm, if you look carefully at Rom 1: 3, it doesn't do any violence to the verse to have "his son, Jesus Christ our Lord," the reason I say "delete it," is it distracts us from the point. I mean, It's not there, that's one thing, it's not doctrinally incorrect, however, it distracts us from the point; the point is, the prophets spoke of a son, which would be the son of man and the son of God. Yes, it is true, he is our Lord Jesus Christ, but the pivotal point of v 3 is that he is "son of God and son of man." That is what will be required, you see, to bring a solution to the problem. That would be how God would deal with sin in a body of sin. Now pause and consider that for a moment. We are talking about the prophets in Rom 1:2, and we have quoted the prophet Isaiah, we are now quoting another prophet in Rom 1:3, which one? the prophet Nathan, 2 Sam Ch 7, the promises to David, aren't we. Now think about those promises, now think about them like this, 2 Sam 7:14, "I will be his father he will be my son," has it ever occurred to you that that verse says the same thing twice? "I will be his father, he will be my son," isn't it evident, brothers and sisters, that if God's his father he MUST be God's son? No, that's not evident. Was everyone who was a descendant of Abraham a son of Abraham? They weren't were they? "I will be his father," that was God's choice, it was a fact that the Holy Spirit overshadowed Mary, no question about it. "He will be my son," whose choice was that? That was the Lord's own choice, wasn't it? He could have decided against that. As I say, just because you are of the seed of Abraham doesn't make Abraham your spiritual father. No different with God's son, and that son had a choice, and he made the choice. "Not my will but thine be done." He was the son of God by his own choice, in that sense, and that's the point of Rom 1:4. No question he was the seed of David, Rom 1:3, but he was also "declared to be the son of God" by three means, by his power, by the Spirit of Holiness, and by his resurrection from the dead.

You see there are three points being made there, which declared the Lord to be the son of God. His power, that is, the miracles he did. John 3:24 says, "that he had the Holy Spirit without measure," that was his power. His holiness? that is his disposition or his manner of life, John 7:46, "Never man spake like this man." His compassion, his consistency, his resolute determination, praying for his murderers on the cross, even, that was the way of life that he demonstrated. And finally, by his resurrection from the dead, because he was raised to immortality, never to see sin again. Those three things demonstrate that he was the son of God, that he had made the choice to be the Son of God. I understand that he was naturally the son of God, but he made a conscious moral choice, and became the son of God with power, didn't he? And concerning Christ, Paul says in Rom 1:5, concerning Christ, "by Christ we have received grace, and apostleship, for obedience to the faith among all nations for his name." "He received," he says, "he received, grace, and apostleship." When did he receive that? When did he receive grace and apostleship? Well, on the Damascus road, didn't he? Acts 9:15, "He was a chosen vessel unto me to bear my name before the Gentiles," but here's the question. Who was it that told him that? Who was the fellow who met the Apostle Paul and told him that he was a chosen vessel to God, what was his name? Ananias, "the grace of God," wasn't he? And so a man called "the grace of God," announced to the Apostle while he was blinded on that road for three days that he would be the chosen vessel unto God. Grace and apostleship bestowed upon him and thus commences his ministry. As a consequence of that, "my job," he says, "my job, is to teach obedience to the nations, obedience to the nations." John Carter, you know, in his book on Romans, makes an interesting translation of these couple of lines. Bro Carter says, well, you see here in the AV it says, by Christ, Paul received grace and Apostleship for "obedience to the faith among the nations," Bro Carter says, "For the obedience that springs from faith to the nations, and that obedience," that is an obedient way of life, "that comes from your

faith," and in that phrase, you know, we've got an answer to one of the great rules of scripture, something that puzzles a lot of people a lot of the time, particularly when we are young, and that's the triumph of faith over law.

You see, this is all really a question of motivation, isn't it? Why is it brothers and sisters, if we are not looking always to do the bare minimum in the truth, why is that, why is it we don't insist on our rights in ecclesial life, the one against the other? Why is it we look to extend biblical principles rather than minimise them even at personal cost, why is that? Well, because our obedience comes from faith and not from law. If it was simply a matter of keeping the laws to be saved, we'd minimise what we do just to..we'd look at 51%, because any pass is a pass. It's not true, however, when obedience springs from faith, is it. We don't obey God because we are told to obey him, in that sense, but because if we don't obey him he will hold us accountable and reject us from immortality, we obey him because we love him, and we've come to understand it, and as soon as we understand the enormous gulf there is between man's ability to save himself and the character of God, and the hopelessness therefore of our situation, and what he has done to solve that problem, there is an enormous motivation created in us to do what God says even at personal cost, to the greatest level of our spiritual understanding. It causes a reaction, doesn't it, an obligation in us, that obedience to the truth becomes like second nature in us. Like second nature, like in your children it's like second nature, obedience of faith springs out of your mature belief as a consequence of what God has done for you when you realise what needed to be done for you. And it was that motive, you see, that sent the Apostle Paul throughout the Roman world as he says at the end of the verse, "I'm going to go among all nations for his name." And that motivation wasn't just limited to Jews, all men can understand that, all men can do that. And that is the point of Rom 1:6, you see, "among whom," that is "among all the nations" of Rom 1:5, "among whom are ye Romans also the called of Jesus Christ," that's a calling into a relationship, independent of nation and race. Rom 1:7, "to all that be in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints, grace to you and peace from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ."

Now do you see how Rom 1:2 is in brackets? Just go back up to the top of the page, you see the translators have put v 2 in brackets, in fact, you could put those brackets between Rom 1:2 and Rom 1:6. because the key word throughout this verse is the word "call," you will find it in v 1, in v 6, and in v 7, and if you were to put vs 1:2-6 in brackets, and just read from v 1 straight to v 7 of course you have the entire context of the introduction to the epistle and you find that v 2-6 simply elaborates on Paul's apostleship. So let's look at it again, Rom 1:1. "Paul," he says, "a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God v 7, to all that be in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints, grace to you and so forth. So you see the point the Apostle makes at a very high level is , "I've been called, v 1, you've been called, v 7. I'm called, you're called, grace to you and peace from God, there's the opening greeting to the ecclesia, but in the midst of that greeting, v 2 and 6, he's explained how the Gospel of God is going to work, that gospel of God that you read of in the last line of v 1, he's explained how that's going to work and now he's set himself up and propelled himself into the rest of the chapter.

Well, between v 8 and 15, he now tells them about his desire to visit them, and we've considered the sentiments of these verses already, so I'm not going to spend long on them, v 8, as you found, speaks of the ecclesia's international reputation. V 9 and 10, that he's constantly prayed for the opportunity to visit them. V 11, that he wants to impart some spiritual gift, in fact he wants to impart the Holy Spirit gifts, and to have fellowship with them. V 12, That he's looking forward to sharing fellowship, for his benefit, and for their benefit, and of course, by this stage the question would immediately arise amongst the readers of this epistle, Well, Paul, if you wanted so desperately to come and see us why has it taken so long. If you love us like you are telling us, what's the hold up?" And the answer is of course, v 13, God stopped me. I haven't been able to get there because God wouldn't let me. You see in the middle of v 13, "I was let hitherto." The word "let" is an old English word which means "hindered." I was hindered, hitherto. But you know how the Holy Spirit operated in the Apostle Paul's life, guiding him through the ecclesial world. An example would be Acts 16:6 he was forbidden by the Holy Spirit to preach the gospel in Asia. V 7 of Acts 16, the Spirit suffered them not to go to Bithynia. He sees a vision of a man from Macedonia, v 9 of Acts 16, and he goes to Macedonia in v 10, understanding that the Lord had called me. So everywhere that he went was mapped out before him. So you can see, in a very real way, in v 13 of this chapter, how he was "hindered hitherto from coming to Rome." V 14, he goes on "I'm under obligation," he says, "I'm a debtor," means he's got an obligation, I've got a debt, I'm under obligation to Greeks and barbarians - that means to civilised and uncivilised. That is to say, I've got an obligation to preach the gospel of God to all men. Why? Well because, v 1, this gospel of God was so powerful, it could save "all men." If it could saved one man, it could save a million men, you see, as a consequence of that, and my desire to preach the gospel to all men, v 15, sooner or later, sooner or later, I must get to Rome. And in the context of that, then you have v 16 and 17, the theme

as we described of the entire epistle.

So back to our structure, here we are now, the first major section, it is only a 2-verse section, but it is a major section because so much is contained in these verses which sets us up for what has to follow afterwards. I'm going to spend some time now just looking at v 16-17 so that we will have a good grasp of them. They are not very complicated, but if you read them, uncritically, like I did I suppose the first half a dozen times, ten times, or twenty times, you come away thinking "what, really, is that talking about?" Well look carefully at v 16, "I am not ashamed of the gospel," delete "of Christ," "I am not ashamed of the gospel because it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believes, to the Jew first, and also to the Greek." The gospel of v 16 of course, is the "gospel of God" of v 1. "I am not ashamed of that," says the Apostle Paul. Well, that's interesting, you know, because he might not have been ashamed of it but there were many quarters in the world where it engendered an awful amount of shame. 1 Cor 1:23 says, "the preaching of the cross was a stumbling block to the Jews foolishness to the Greeks," two major ethnic groups in the world were bitterly ashamed of the gospel, extremely ashamed. "I'm not ashamed," he says, "I'm not ashamed," why? Because of the power of that gospel. It solves man's mortal problem. It is the solution to man's problem, it is solution to sin, it's so powerful, in fact, he says, it can save both Jew and Greek. Jew first, v 16 and also to the Greek, that's how powerful it is, it transcends national boundaries. "To everyone that believes." It is not for all humanity, I mean, it is offered to all humanity, but it is not accepted by all humanity, "to every one that believes." Now that means, of course, more than simply believing in Christ's power to save. In v 5 we read of the "obedience that springs from faith," and the word "faith" you will appreciate in v 5 is the same word as the word "belief" in v 16, so believing the gospel requires obedience. It requires a manifestation of that belief, an application of that belief called the "obedience that springs from belief," in v 5. So the point is the "belief" of v 16 can't just be superficial, it's got to be a part of your character. It's got to be, if you like, second-nature like loving your children. Well, that's not very complicated, v 16, that's quite simple, the problem is v 17, this is a little more complicated. "For therein," where? In the gospel of God v 16, "therein," in that gospel, "is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith, as it is written, the just shall live by faith."

Did you understand that? In the gospel of God is the righteousness of God revealed," let's just start with that, what does that mean? What is the "righteousness of God," exactly? Well, you might look at it at first blush and say, "Well, the righteousness of God I suppose is the godliness of God's character." Well, of course, that's not wrong, there are some quotations in the book of Romans where it means directly that, but it doesn't mean that here. Now just come across one page - I'll try and keep this very simple, and I'm going to give you two quotations to illustrate the point. Come across to Romans 3:5. I'm going to show you two quotations where "the righteousness of God" occurs, and you will see the point, Romans 3:5. "But if our unrighteousness commend the righteousness of God, what shall we say, is God unrighteous who takes vengeance?" Now we've broken into the midst of a section, and what do you suppose the "righteousness of God," in v 5 of Ch 3 is talking about? Well, it is evidently talking about the character of God, because it is compared with the unrighteousness character of man, you see. So clearly we've got, in Rom 3:5 the phrase "the righteousness of God" obviously means "God's righteous character." Now come across to Ch 3:26 because here it is different. "Christ came," in v25, "to declare at this time God's righteousness," the righteousness of God, "that God might be just and the justifier of him that believes in Jesus." Now that needs a bit of help, that verse, the first thing you've got to understand is the word "righteous" and the word "just" and the word "justifier" are all the same Greek word. If you are "just," you are "righteous." If you are justified, you are "made righteous," or "declared righteous." So, he says here that Christ came, "I say, to declare, at this time, God's righteousness and that God might be righteous and the one that makes righteous him which believes in Jesus." That's what that verse says.

Can you see that the righteousness of God of v 26 is a little more now than just "God's righteousness character," it is the process by which God might retain his righteousness whilst making man righteous." You see that? In v 26? It is a critical verse actually. The whole of the argument of Romans turns on this point. How can a righteous God take an unrighteous man, declare him righteous whilst not compromising his own righteousness? I mean, the unrighteous man sins, God is a righteous God devoid of sin, how can a righteous God take an unrighteous man, brand him as righteous, without compromising his own character? That is the process of the righteousness of God. That is how God is going to work in man's life, intervene in human affairs, through his son, to make man righteous, even though he doesn't deserve it. Even though he is not intrinsically righteous. You will appreciate therefore in Ch 3:26 we are talking about a "process," rather than a "state" of righteousness. You might say in Ch 3:5 "the righteousness of God" is simply the state of God's character, it is a "state of righteousness," when you come to v 26, it is a "process of righteousness," because the righteousness of God is the process by which God might be righteous while making unrighteous men righteous, that's a process of righteousness. Which one Therefore v 5 or v 26? The "state of

righteousness" or the "process of righteousness?" Which one applies when you come back to Ch 1;17? What is the righteousness of God revealed in Ch 1:17, "the state" of God's character or a "process" by which man is saved? Well, evidently, a process. How do we know? Well, because, as a consequence of the righteousness of God being revealed man develops from "faith to faith," that's a process, isn't it? Man develops from "faith to faith," there's a development of faith involved here, so what does that mean? What does it mean to go "from faith to faith?" Well, in simple terms, it means to go from a small faith to a big faith, from an immature faith, to a mature faith. Similarly we might say, "from strength to strength," your faith will go from strength to strength, that's what he is talking about.

Now how does faith do that? Well, faith, initially, comes by hearing, it tells in Rom 10:17. But if that faith is genuine, it will go from a simple belief to a commitment demonstrated by works, your conduct will testify to your faith. After all James 2:17 says, that, "faith without works is dead." So the faith that you begin with in the truth, which is a simple belief because of what you have heard, what makes sense to you, at some point in your life must be translated into action, that's from a little faith to a big faith, from an immature faith to a mature faith, and what are those "works of faith" that translates faith into action? Well, of course, they are works of obedience ch 1:5, that "spring" from faith. You see, it is really not that complicated at all. What's the point, the point is, at the end of the verse, "the just shall live by faith," that is, those that are pronounced righteous will be saved because of their belief, because of the fact that their belief has been translated into actions of obedience.

So let's paraphrase v 17 at the risk of making it too simple, I'm just going to tell you what I think this verse means. In the gospel of God there is the process of making man righteous, exhibited when a simple faith becomes a mature faith, for as it is written, "the just shall live by faith." You see? the gospel of God explains the process of making man righteous when a simple faith becomes a mature faith, because it is written "the just shall live by faith," that's what v 17 is saying. But here's another point for you, just compare v 16 and 17. You will see in v 16 we have the reference to "salvation," and in v 17 we have reference to "live by faith, the just shall live by faith," it's the same thing isn't it? When it says "the just shall live by faith," in v17 that means they will be saved. Similarly, you have in v 16 "everyone that believes," and in v 17, the word "faith," but the word "faith" and the word "believe" are the same word. So clearly you can see that the same Greek words are being used in both places but they are being translated often as different English words. So let's put that on the screen and just read it consistently, you might say. V 16, "I'm not ashamed of the gospel because it is the power of God to salvation to everyone that believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek, for therein, that is, in that gospel, is the righteousness of God revealed from a simple belief to a mature belief, as it is written the just, those that are pronounced righteous, shall have salvation by their belief," you see that? That is all he is saying in those couple of verses. But here's the question, when it says "the just shall live by faith," at the end of v 17, which faith? There are two faiths. But since you see v 17 you go from "faith 1" to "faith 2." "The Just shall live by faith," is it "faith 1" or is it "faith 2?" It's "faith 2" isn't it? The just shall live by faith, which is translated into action, a mature faith. Obedience, that springs from faith, or a faith that generates obedience, that's what will save the just, you see? There's got to be a reaction. You won't be saved simply by believing Jesus Christ can save you, but you will be saved by making that, inculcating that, into your life, and living consistently with that, as a demonstration of your belief. If you've never heard that before, it might sound like a bit of a mouthful, but it's really not very complicated and I will recap it again next week as we introduce Ch 2.

The rest of the chapter however, is very plain-sailing, that was the most complicated thing I am going to tell you all night, ch 1:17. The rest of the chapter is well, literally downhill, but metaphorically as well, really not very complicated to understand. Here's our structure, Man's failure to attain righteousness. V 8 of course, begins the next major section of the book of Romans. And Romans 1 is talking all about the failure of the Gentiles. Here's the problem, when you come to Romans Ch 1:18 it doesn't appear to be talking about Gentiles at all, because if you look at the end of v 18 it says who these people are who are debouching themselves in the remainder of this chapter, it says that, "they hold the truth in unrighteousness." It says in v 21 that they "knew God but that they glorified him not as God," so they "hold the truth in unrighteousness" and at least, at one point, "they knew God." And then, from v 25, "they changed the truth into a lie." And in v 32, "they know the judgment of God," you see, and the question has been raised, "Well, this sounds like believers?" This doesn't sound just like ignorant Gentiles, because, look what they are walking away from. They understand what they are doing. Well, how do we answer that problem? I'll show you. Come across to Ch 3:9, Now you will appreciate that the rest of Ch 1, 2 and the bulk of Ch 3 are talking about man's universal failure to attain righteousness, man has miserably failed to live anything like a righteous life, and in Ch 3:9 it says this, "What then are we better than they? No, in no wise," he says, "for we have proved both Jews and Gentiles that they are all under sin." So the point is, by the time you get to Ch 3:9, the Apostle has

proven the Gentiles are under sin, and the Jews are under sin. He's proven that by Ch 3:9. He proves that the Gentiles have fallen under sin in Ch 2. Now look at Ch 2:17, just across the column, "Behold, thou art called a Jew and rest in the Law," so you see Ch 2 is all about the Jews.

The question then becomes, "Well, when does he consign the Gentiles to the realm of sin? The Anwar is, clearly, in Ch 1, so Ch 1 must be speaking about the Gentiles. What that means, brothers and sisters and young people, is that the truth of v 18 is not the Truth, capital T, like we understand it, but a simple understanding of the existence of God. When we read about the "knowledge of God," in v 21, it is the simple knowledge of God's power and design in creation, not an intimate knowledge of his character. It is not a knowledge of God like believers would have, it is simply the knowledge of the existence of God like the Gentiles would have. So what we are talking about, you see, in Ch 1, is a general revelation of God and not a specific revelation of God, and therefore you've got to understand words like "the truth," or "knowledge" as you read them in Ch 1 in that context. When you come to look at Ch 1 and 2 together, therefore, there are great parallels and there are great contrasts between them, because, of course, the Jews and the Gentiles have both fallen into sin. The Gentiles however receive as I have said, a general revelation of God, the Jews, a specific revelation of God, and irrespective of their respective revelations, both have fallen into sin in these chapters.

All right, so what's the argument? Well, immediately, you see, you've got a contrast between v 17 and v 18, and look at it, "Therein," v 17, "is the righteousness of God revealed." V 18, "For the wrath of God is revealed," now look at that, you've got the righteousness of God revealed in v 17, you've got the wrath of God revealed in v 18. The righteousness of God was a process by God for men to have faith in him, but if men failed to respond to righteousness of God then God sends another message in v 18, his wrath, so that if men won't respond to God's goodness, he will respond to their wickedness. It goes deeper than that, because, if you look carefully at v 18, you've just got to make one change of a word, one note against a word. It says in v 18, that "the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who hold the truth in unrighteousness." And this word "hold" means "to suppress," men "suppress" the truth of their wickedness," How do they do that? Well, they do it in two ways, and you will see the word "because," in v 19 and you will see the word "because" in v 21. There are two ways in which men "suppress" the truth. Vs 19-20 they ignore God's existence in creation and v 21, they are unthankful and they change God into an animal. And the structure of the rest of Ch 1 goes like this, v 18, you have people who suppress the truth, vs 19-20, What they do, what they do to suppress the truth. Vs 21-31, How they do it, their actions, their conduct in suppressing the truth. And v 32, a verse that really concludes v 18, The conclusion. And in fact, you could put v 19-31 all in brackets, and read directly v 18 followed by v 32, and make perfect sense of this chapter. "The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, they not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them." That's the story of Ch 1, v 19-20 is What they do, and v 21-31 is How they do it, you see? Well, where did it go wrong? Well, v 19-20, creation testifies," he says, "to the existence of God." How does creation "testify to the existence of God?" Well, here's the example, Psa 19:1, "The heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament shows his handiwork. Day unto day utters speech, night unto night utters knowledge, but there is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard." The point is, creation is a silent witness to the existence of God, it is not an audible witness, it just stands there, for thousands of years and testifies to the existence of God, and what is the message of nature? It is obviously not an audible message, you don't hear anything, I mean, you hear the birds chirp you don't hear the message of nature, what is the silent message of nature? Answer: Intelligent design, isn't it? Intelligent design! That's the inaudible, silent, message of nature, and man has ignored it. He's sought another meaning for how things occur and why things happen. Well, that's the first mistake, and here's the second mistake, v 21, "and because that when they knew God they glorified him not as God, and neither were thankful, but they became vain in their imagination and their heart was darkened and" off it goes, they descend into the morass of iniquity. "Unthankful," you see, "selfish," and off it goes into the abyss of the rest of Romans Ch 1, and what was the consequence?

Now I'm not going to go through all these verses, you know what they are about, but here's the consequence, v 23. "They changed the glory of God, v 25 they changed the truth of God, halfway through v 26, they changed the natural use of human kind. So they changed God v 23, they changed their worship, v 25, they changed their lifestyles v 26 - can you see a progression there? And v 18 Paul says, that God's wrath was revealed, how? Well in three ways, in v 24 you read the opening of the line, "God gave them up, v 26, "God gave them up," v 28 half way through, "God gave them over to a reprobate mind," a mind, as it were, devoid of judgment. He cast them adrift, think about that. You see the point that the Apostle's making

here, God did not punish man for his sin in Rom Ch 1, he abandoned him to sin, he punished him by his sin, you see? If God was to punish us for our sins, it may be that we would correct them, if he punishes us by our sins, it means he has given up on us, doesn't it. He has given up on us! "He is not a son who the Father chaste so not" says Heb 12, and can see that God gave them up - they wanted quails, he gave them quails till they came out of their nostrils, that's what he has done to the world, he's just cut them adrift and let them follow their own wicked way. Here's the progression, this is how Rom 1 is structured to the end of the chapter. Just look down the columns, there is just a progression of thought, followed by conduct, followed by a result. Stage 1: They knew God but their foolish heart was darkened, v 21. And so they made images of God, v 23, And the result was uncleanness and dishonour in v 24. Stage 2: They now turned God into a lie v 25. They worshipped the creation, that is, animals, v 25, And unnatural affection was the result, v 26. Stage 3: They forgot about God entirely, v 28. All unrighteousness prevailed v 29, followed by a reprobate mind, a mind devoid of judgment, 28-31, you see, that was the progression. And here's the city of Rome, historians tell us, that underneath Rome's showy power and magnificence was a sink of rottenness, two men out of every three who walked the streets of Rome were slaves, and two women out of every three, and two girls out of every three, were subject to every whim of their masters, to every suggestion of passion or lust. The slaves were wretched, the best of them crowded into Christianity when it came, the worst of them debauched Rome. They brought in new and unnatural vices, they corrupted the masters, the corrupted the children, the Roman boys grew old and jaded and rotten with vice before they were out of their teens. This is what has happened, Romans Ch 1 is a description of the Roman Gentile world, no worse than it was, even in the city of Rome itself. Unbelievable! Unbelievable! Now that's all I'm going to say about all the events of that Chapter, you know what they were speaking about, but let me just make one very 21st century observation about what was evidently here, a 1st century issue. Not just a 1st century issue, but an issue that directly affected the 1st century ecclesia.

Where did the problem begin? The problem began in v 19 by man ignoring his creator, and in our ecclesias, of course, we have the very same problem creeping in, by the name of theistic evolution. What does theistic evolution say? Well, what do theistic evolutionists say? Well theistic evolutionists clearly admit that God is the creator, that's the "theistic" part of "evolution." What they don't admit is that the Bible means all it says, but more than that, what they do is to elevate science, so called, above scripture. Let me ask you this, what does science, I mean, prevailing scientific opinion, what does science say about the various forms of debauched conduct we read of in Romans Ch 1? It says, "We are born like that." If you are a man and you want to be a woman, "it's genetic," it's not your fault, it's just nature, that's what science says. Can you see, therefore, the moment you elevate science above Scripture where this argument will take you. It's not your fault any more, God could no more judge you for your moral conduct than he can judge you for your skin colour, it's what you are, he's made you like it. You can see, therefore, the minute you elevate science above Scripture you leave yourself wide open for any discussion on whether other forms of conduct should be admitted into ecclesial life, because the prevailing scientific thoughts is, "it is not wrong," it is just "different." And after all, if science can prove it, then the Bible has to take second place and that is exactly the position the churches have found themselves in. They celebrate alternative life-styles in their congregation. And if ecclesias don't stand firm against this sort of humanism, well then, it is going to happen to us too, isn't it. It is only logical that it does, it must do, because admitting this sort of thing into the ecclesia is the axiomatic consequence of elevating science above Scripture, because science does not condemn this sort of lifestyle, you see. But in spite of the wickedness of man, and in the wickedness of this chapter, there is an exhortation for us, even in this, it might not appear so, but there is, why? Because every one of us appears in this chapter, in these sordid verses, every one of us appears. I don't mean to say by that, brothers and sisters that you or I or any one of our number might fall prey to some of the more perverse sins in this chapter, but that's not all that is mentioned, because, look at v 29, "being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness, envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignancy, whispering, back-biting, hating God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, without understanding, covenant-breakers and so on." If you can't see yourself in the sins of v 24 onwards, perhaps you can see yourself in the sins of v 29, 30 and 31? It isn't just the grosser sins, you see, that appear in Romans ch 1, is it? This is human nature in all its iniquity, not just confined to the lewder sins of the earlier verses, and the only thing, the only thing, that makes us un-like these verses, is this book. It is only a knowledge of the truth that makes these things unnatural to us.

Not every one of them, you understand, not every one of us would fall prey to every one of these, but somewhere or other in those verses, there's a word that has got our name pre-eminently upon it, and it is only this book, you see, that's rescued us from that. Where did the problem of Romans 1 begin? v 18, "a suppression of the truth," men stopped reading their Bibles. God was re-designed to appeal to human lust, and the glorious process of the righteousness of God was diluted down to a superficial, sentimental form of

humanism or discarded altogether. Whichever path it took, the consequence of that was that man became unthankful in v 21. They turned God into a beast, they became beasts themselves, and what followed was inculcated every form of wickedness, and when you see it like that brothers, sisters, young people, we thank God, not because we're not like those other Gentiles are, because we are, we thank God that we've had this book revealed in our lives, because this is exactly what we are like, in Romans Ch 1. We are identical to those words of Romans Ch 1, but despite that, God has seen fit to reach into the sump of humanity, and pull us out. What's your response to that? What's your response to that? It can only be Ch 1:5 "the obedience of faith." Isn't it true? the development of a relationship with God which increases from immature to mature as your understanding of that Father changes from "faith to faith," from strength to strength, living the principles of the truth to the greatest level of your spiritual ability that God might be glorified in us.

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