

2020 VISION "GOSPEL COURAGE" ROMANS 1:14-17

If you want to read a popular book, you might consult Amazon's list of best sellers, and the first question you will likely ask regarding each is, "What is it about?" It's the first of four basic questions that active readers must ask, according to Mortimer Adler. He writes: "What is the book about as a whole? You must try to discover the leading theme of the book, and how the author develops this theme in an orderly way by subdividing it into its essential subordinate themes or topics" (*How to Read a Book*, 46-47). It's usually a relatively easy question to answer. Once you check the subtitle, consult the table of contents, and skim the introduction, all of which you can do on Amazon, you'll know the answer and whether you want to buy and read the book.

Books are *about something*; they have a subject or theme. Bible books are no different. Books also *convey a message*; that is, each one says something about something. The book of Romans is no different. And while it doesn't have a subtitle or table of contents, it does have an opening that introduces its theme and later identifies its message. The theme is introduced in verses 2-6. In verse 1, Paul refers to himself as one "set apart for the gospel of God," and in verses 2-3, he tells us that this gospel is the same gospel that God "promised beforehand through his prophets in the Holy Scriptures," and furthermore, that it is the gospel "regarding his Son." The book of Romans is clearly about the good news concerning Jesus Christ. It's the theme of the book. The message is indicated in

The gospel has all God's Omnipotence behind it.

– W. Sanday and A. C. Headlam

verses 16-17. In these verses, Paul tells us that the gospel "is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes" and that "in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed," a righteousness that is "by faith from first to last." One commentator rightly observes: "Romans is Paul's summary of the gospel that he preaches" (Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, NICNT, 30).

But why "the gospel" and not "justification by faith" as many suppose? The same commentator writes: "Is, then, justification by faith the theme of the letter? Certainly a good case can be made for it. But I do not finally think that it can stand as the overarching theme . . . There is too much in Romans that cannot, without distortion, be subsumed under the heading of justification: the assurance and hope of the believer (chaps. 5 and 8); freedom from sin and the law (chaps. 6 and 7); God's purpose for Israel (chaps. 9-11); and the life of obedience (chaps 12-15). To be sure, we can relate all of these to justification, as its fruits, or implications, or requirements; and Paul makes this connection at several points (cf. 5:1, 9; 8:33; cf. 9:30-10:8) But he does not do so often enough to make us think that justification, or 'the righteousness of God,' is his constant reference point" (28-29).

Now that you know what the book of Romans is about and you know, at least in part, what it says about what it's about, are you going to read it?

This Week's Core Competency

Giving Away My Faith – I give away my faith to fulfill God's purposes.

Paul links the gospel to salvation in Romans 1:16. He calls the gospel "the power of God for the

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salvation of everyone who believes." Salvation is a two-sided, inclusive idea that actually involves more than "a right relationship with God" per se. Commentators refer to the two sides of salvation in various ways. One claims it entails the "sense of deliverance from peril and restoration to wholeness" (James D. G. Dunn, *Word Biblical Commentary*, vol. 38a, *Romans 1-8*, 39). Similarly, another claims, "It is deliverance from sin and its punishment, and admission into eternal life and blessedness" (Charles Hodge, *Epistle to the Romans*, 28). Still another identifies as its fundamental idea, "the removal of dangers menacing to life and the consequent placing of life in conditions favorable to free and healthy expansion" (William Sanday and Arthur C. Headlam, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 23). A fourth says, "Salvation is a broad concept. It includes the forgiveness of sins, but involves much more, because its basic meaning is soundness or wholeness" (Everett F. Harrison, "Romans," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, 10:19). Perhaps an illustration might help. The fireman who saves a child from a burning building not only removes the child from the house, but also sees to it that he or she receives immediate first aid and any subsequent medical treatment necessary for the child's ongoing health. Salvation is an inclusive idea because it entails not only forgiveness, but also justification, reconciliation, sanctification, redemption, etc. According to Paul, the gospel brings all that is entailed by salvation to all those who believe.

day 1 ENCOUNTER – read God's word to put yourself in touch with him.

Romans 1:14-17

14 I am obligated both to Greeks and non-Greeks, both to the wise and the foolish. 15 That is why I am so eager to preach the gospel also to you who are in Rome.

16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile. 17 For in the gospel the righteousness of God is revealed—a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: "The righteous will live by faith."

Cf., another translation

14 I am a debtor both to the Greeks and to the barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish. 15 Thus I am eager also to preach the gospel to you who are in Rome.

16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is God's power for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. 17 For the righteousness of God is revealed in the gospel from faith to faith, just as it is written, "**The righteous by faith will live.**" (NET)

EXAMINE – what the passage says before you decide what it means.

- * Circle "obligated" in v. 14.
- * Circle "non-Greeks" in v. 14.
- * Bracket "wise and foolish" in v.14.
- * Box "For" in vv. 16, 17.
- * Circle "not ashamed" in v. 16.
- * Box "because" indicating *reason* in v. 16.
- * Bracket "power of God" in v. 16.
- * Circle "first" in v. 16.
- * Bracket "righteousness of God" in v. 17.
- * Bracket "by faith from first to last" in v. 17.
- * Highlight "The righteous will live by faith" in v. 17.

day **2**

EXPLORE – the answer to these questions to better understand what the passage means.

Consult the explanation of the message and the notes to follow if you need help.

1. Paul says he is "obligated" to preach the gospel. How so?
2. Identify to whom he says he is "obligated."
3. Explain why Paul is eager to preach in Rome.
4. Put what "not ashamed" means in your own words.
5. The gospel is powerful. What does Paul tell us about its power?
6. Describe the power of the gospel in your own life.
7. Explain why Paul is not ashamed of the gospel.
8. How is "righteousness from God" received?
9. **Discussion:** Talk about how what Paul says about the gospel strikes you.

In the opening of Paul's letter to the Romans (1:1-17), he introduces his subject or theme, the gospel (1:1-6). Included in his greeting are references to "the gospel of God" (v. 1), "the gospel he promised beforehand" (v.2), and the gospel "regarding his Son" (v. 3), which he then elaborates on in verses 3-5. Following mention of his thanksgiving (v. 8) and prayers for them (vv. 9-10), he expresses his longing to see them—a compulsion fueled by his desire to build them up in the faith (v. 11) and to have a harvest of converts among them (v. 13).

Verses 14-17 comprise the apostle's transition from the opening of his letter to its body. They summarize what he has to say about what his letter is about, i.e., the gospel. One commentator puts Paul's summary in a nutshell. He writes: "These theologically dense verses are made up of four subordinate clauses, each supporting or illuminating the one before it. Paul's pride in the gospel (v. 16a) is the reason why he is so eager to preach the gospel in Rome (v. 15). This pride, in turn, stems from the fact that the gospel contains, or mediates, God's saving power for everyone who believes (v. 16b). Why the gospel brings salvation is explained in v. 17a: it manifest God's righteousness, a righteousness based on faith. Verse 17b, finally, provides scriptural confirmation for this connection between righteousness and faith" (Moo, 63-64).

Our explanation of the passage will proceed from verse to verse. In verses 14-15 Paul explains that he is obligated to preach the gospel to *all people*. His two parallel pairs, "Greek and non-Greeks" and "wise and foolish," indicate as much. The first pair likely refers to all of Gentile humanity divided according to language/culture. Many of Paul's readers would have identified themselves as Greeks, while some foreigners in Rome, especially among the lower classes, would, perhaps, have seen themselves as barbarians. The second pair likely refers to the same group viewed from a different perspective. Paul's obligation is no doubt rooted in his calling to be an apostle to the Gentiles (1:5; 11:13).

Verses 16 and 17 contain the thesis of Paul's argument in the book. In verse 16, Paul explains

why he is eager to preach the gospel in Rome. He is not ashamed of the good news. In other words, he has confidence in it because God exercises his divine power through it to save everyone who believes. The gospel is a force to be reckoned with. "The Greek word translated 'power' is *dunamis*, from which the word 'dynamite' comes. Consequently some interpreters have concluded that Paul was speaking of the explosive, radical way in which the gospel produces change in individual lives and even in history. However, the context shows that the apostle was thinking of its intrinsic ability to effect change" (Thomas L. Constable, "Notes on Romans," 2017 ed., 21, www.soniclight.com). The gospel is a force that brings salvation (an umbrella term that includes all aspects of deliverance: justification, redemption, reconciliation, sanctification, and glorification) especially to Jews, through whom the Savior came, but also to Gentiles.

In verse 17, Paul explains why he is not ashamed of the gospel. "A righteousness from God is revealed" in it. The literal expression "a righteousness of God," "while it has an implied reference to his character, stresses divine provision" (Harrison, 10:19). The expression refers to God's activity of both vindicating and declaring righteous. The reception of God's righteousness is by faith alone, in other words, "by faith from first to last." And this is confirmed by the Old Testament where it is written, "The righteous by faith will live" (NET). In chapter 3, Paul puts it this way: "But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe" (3:21-22).

God's gift of righteousness is revealed in the gospel; therefore we are not ashamed of it. And because we are not ashamed of it, we are eager to share it with everyone. The logic is the same for the apostle and for us.

day **4** **EMBRACE** – how God spoke to you in his word.

The Message of the Passage

Believers have no reason to hesitate sharing the gospel, for it is the power of God unto salvation and the means whereby those who believe receive righteousness from God.

Our desire is to not be merely hearers of the word, but doers of the word as James teaches in James 1:22. Reflect on the message of Romans 1:1-7 and your response to it.

Paul was eager to preach the gospel. Describe how you feel about sharing your faith.

As his ambassadors we try to persuade others to believe (2Co 5:11). Explain what knowing that the gospel is "the power of God" has to do with that?

What do you intend to do in direct response to the message?

notes STUDY – the commentaries to answer the questions.

v. 14 **obligated** Cf., "debtor" (NET). "Paul is deeply conscious of his calling, of his being 'set apart for the gospel' (1:1), and it is this divine obligation to use his gift (Eph 3:8) that motivates Paul—'Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel!' (1 Cor. 9:16b)" (Moo, 61).

v. 14 **non-Greeks** Cf., "barbarians" (NET). "'Barbarian' is an onomatopoeic word (a word that sounds like what it means). Mocking the way 'uncouth' foreign languages would sound to Greek ears. Accordingly, it is widely used in Greek literature of all non-Greek-speaking peoples and, by derivation, often connotes the supposedly inferior culture of such peoples" (62). Greeks considered Jews barbarians, but along with Philo and Josephus, perhaps Paul did not.

v. 14 **wise and foolish** This parallel pair probably refers to the same people in different terms and from a slightly different perspective. "This is a similar way of classifying humankind as a whole. Which the 'Greek' would consider synonymous with the preceding contrast" (Dunn, 33). The parallel pairs are figures of speech called merism that uses two contrasting words are used to refer to an entirety. "Greeks and non-Greeks" and "wise and foolish" are two ways of referring to all people.

vv. 16-17 These verses present the thesis of Paul's argument in the book of Romans—in rhetorical terms the *propositio* (Ben Witherington III, *Paul's Letter to the Romans*, 21).

v. 16 **not ashamed** This is an example of a figure of speech called *litotes*; "not ashamed" means "proud." Cf., "I have complete confidence in the gospel" (TEV).

v. 16 **power of God** The gospel is the tool through which God exerts his power to effect salvation. "For this gospel, whose content is Jesus Christ, 'appointed Son-of-God-in-power' (v. 4), mediates 'the power of God leading to salvation'" (Moo, 66).

v. 16 **first** "The gospel has a special relevance to the Jew. We could translate 'first' (NASB, Gr. *protos*) as 'preeminently' (cf. 2:9-10). This preeminence is due to the fact that God chose the Jews to be the people through whom the gospel would reach the Gentiles (cf. Gen. 12:3). As a people, the Jews have a leading place in God's plans involving salvation for the rest of humanity (cf. chs. 9-11). Their priority is primarily elective, though it was also historical or methodological" (Thomas L. Constable "Notes on Romans," 2017 ed., 22, www.soniclight.com).

v. 17 **righteousness of God** Cf., "righteousness from God" (NIV1984). "With the exception of 2 Corinthians 5:21, Paul used this phrase only in Romans, where it appears eight times (1:17; 3:5, 21, 22, 25, 26; 10:3 [twice]). It could be a moral attribute of God, either His rectitude or His faithfulness. It could be a legal status that God gives to people. It could be both of these things. Or it could be an activity of God, specifically, His saving action" (23). "For Paul, as in the OT, 'righteousness of God' is a relational concept. Bringing together the aspects of activity and status, we can define it as the act by which God brings people into right relationship with himself" (Moo, 74).

v. 17 **by faith from . . .** The meaning of this phrase has been the subject of endless discussion (see Murray, 31-32). "Probably, however, in light of the only clear NT parallel to the construction, the combination is rhetorical and is intended to emphasize that faith and 'nothing but faith' can put us into right relationship with God" (Moo, 76).

v. 17 **the righteous will live by faith** Cf., "the righteous by faith will live" (NET). "The quotation from Hab. 2:4 confirms (cf., 'even as') the truth that righteousness is to be attained only on the basis of faith" (76). "At this point Paul is not concerned with how the justified man lives, but how the sinner can be considered just (righteous) in the sight of God" (Harrison, 20).

Family Talk

Encouragement from one parent's heart to another

Romans 1:16 is one of those verses that I want my kids to have in their memory arsenals. I knew there would be many moments when they would be tempted to be ashamed of or apathetic towards the gospel. I hoped they would, like Paul, recognize that is the power of God for salvation. I prayed they would believe it, cling to it, live it and proclaim it. Greg and I knew that the prerequisite for that was that we had authentically live unashamed of the gospel first. While we haven't done so perfectly, we have tried to make the good news of Jesus real and meaningful in our family. In his book, *It Starts at Home*, Kurt Bruner writes, "As parents it is our job to give our children a framework for living - to equip them with a strong sense of identity that comes from knowing who made them, who they are, and how they fit into the larger drama of life. We must help them understand their story from the Author's perspective, to enjoy the wonder that comes from knowing that with God, everything is sacred, so nothing is meaningless. We want them to grow up with God." Good questions to ask yourself this week are, "Are my kids growing up with God? Do they understand and are they unashamed of the gospel?" Let's train them to walk by faith together!

What Does The Bible Say

Weekly Verse: Read Romans 1:14-17

1. Who does Paul believe the gospel is for?
2. Why is Paul not ashamed of the gospel?
3. "The righteous will live by _____." (v. 17)

What Do You Think

In your own words, write what "gospel" means. Talk to your parents or small group leader about it. What do they think?

What R U Going To Do

Romans 1:16 is our memory verse for the series. Say your memory verse to 3 different people this week and have them initial here:

Bring it to church for 3 extra tokens!

Core Comp

Salvation by Grace - I believe that I become a child of God through faith in Jesus, not because of anything I do.

Memory Verse

Romans 1:16 - *I am not ashamed of the gospel because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes; first for the Jew, then for the Gentile.*

KIDPIX COUPON

I memorized my verse _____, completed *Scrolls* _____, brought Bible _____, brought a friend _____.

Series Discipleship Challenge located in KidPix Store.

Child's name _____ Grade ____ Parent's signature _____

Earn 1 token by completing the PantegoKids Bible study and another token by reciting the memory verse.

Questions: Kids@pantego.org

30 CORE COMPETENCIES

10 CORE BELIEFS

Trinity 2 Corinthians 13:14

I believe the God of the Bible is the only true God - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Salvation By Grace Ephesians 2:8-9

I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.

Authority of the Bible 2 Timothy 3:16-17

I believe the Bible is the Word of God and has the right to command my belief and action.

Personal God Psalm 121:1-2

I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.

Identity in Christ John 1:12

I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God.

Church Ephesians 4:15-16

I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish His purposes on earth today.

Humanity John 3:16

I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Compassion Psalm 82:3-4

I believe God calls all Christians to show compassion to those in need.

Eternity John 14:1-4

I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to judge the earth and to establish His eternal kingdom.

Stewardship 1 Timothy 6:17-19

I believe that everything I am or own belongs to God.

10 CORE PRACTICES

Worship Psalm 95:1-7

I worship God for who He is and what He has done for me.

Prayer Psalm 66:16-20

I pray to God to know Him, to lay my request before Him and to find direction for my daily life.

Bible Study Hebrews 4:12

I read the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for my daily life.

Single-mindedness Matthew 6:33

I focus on God and His priorities for my life.

Spiritual Gifts Romans 12:4-6

I know and use my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.

Biblical Community Acts 2:44-47

I fellowship with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, others' lives, and in the world.

Giving Away My Time Colossians 3:17

I give away my time to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Money

2 Corinthians 8:7

I give away my money to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Faith Ephesians

6:19-20

I give away my faith to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Life Romans 12:1

I give away my life to fulfill God's purposes.

10 CORE VIRTUES

Joy John 15:11

I have inner contentment and purpose in spite of my circumstances.

Peace Philippians 4:6-7

I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, myself, and others.

Faithfulness Proverbs 3:3-4

I have established a good name with God and with others based on my long-term loyalty to those relationships.

Self-Control Titus 2:11-13

I have the power, through Christ, to control myself.

Humility Philippians 2:3, 4

I choose to esteem others above myself.

Love 1 John 4:10-12

I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.

Patience Proverbs 14:29

I take a long time to overheat and endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life.

Kindness/Goodness 1 Thess. 5:15

I choose to do the right things in my relationships with others.

Gentleness Philippians 4:5

I am thoughtful, considerate and calm in dealing with others.

Hope Hebrews 6:19-20

I can cope with the hardships of life and with death because of the hope I have in Jesus Christ.

About the Authors

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Wendy Hollabaugh (B.S.W. University of Texas at Arlington) is the Children's Minister at Pantego Bible Church. Wendy has over ten years of experience in Children's Ministry. She has a passion for leading families to connect with God and each other. She enjoys creating compelling environments where kids fall in love with God and His Truth. Wendy and her husband, Greg, are also involved in their own personal youth ministry as they are training their three teenagers, Hannah, Aaron and Noah.



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The mission of THE SCROLLS is to help you Belong, Become, and go Beyond as follower of Jesus Christ through your own active reading of the Bible. Send any questions or comments you may have about this lesson to Tom Bulick. His e-mail address is tbulick@pantego.org.