

ROMANS

1:1-17

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Taught by Simeon Forder on Sunday morning, 29th January 2023 @ Deal Christian Fellowship

Reading: Romans 1:1-17

Introduction

This morning we are going to begin a fresh verse by verse Bible study through the book of Romans, the third time we've studied this together as a church - having previously studied through it in 2007 and 2014. This book, a letter from the apostle Paul to the Christians in Rome, is dear to my heart - it's the first one I studied personally for the sake of my own Christian walk and learning, and the first I taught through at our mid-week service we used to have. And in many ways this continues to be my favourite book of the Bible, along with whatever else we're studying at that moment in time. And I'm not alone - many others have a great fondness of this book.

Indeed, Romans is considered a literary masterpiece, even by some who are not Christians. It is the definitive statement of Christian doctrine - that is what we believe as Christians - and it is also very practical. And in case you're not already excited about studying this book, let me whet your appetite by reading a few comments on this letter, by others who have studied it over the years.

First, Martin Luther, a German priest born in 1483, and on whom a verse this book quotes had a profound effect, wrote...

This Epistle is really the chief part of the New Testament and the very purest Gospel, and is worthy not only that every Christian should know it word for word, by heart, but occupy himself with it every day, as the daily bread of the soul. It can never be read or pondered too much, and the more it is dealt with the more precious it becomes, and the better it tastes.

Martin Luther

Philip Schaff, a Swiss-born theologian in the 1800's, said:

It is the most remarkable production of the most remarkable man. It is his heart. It contains his theology, theoretical and practical, for which he lived and died. It gives the clearest and fullest exposition of the doctrines of sin and grace and the best possible solution of the universal dominion of sin and death in the universal redemption by the second Adam.

Philip Schaff

Finnis Dake, an American minister in the 1900's wrote in his Bible commentary...

Romans is first in order of the epistles, both doctrinally and in canonical order, and rightly so, for it contains the fundamentals of Christian education. Until its lessons are learned we are ignorant of true Christian principles. It is the very foundation of church teaching, and if we are wrong in understanding here we shall be wrong elsewhere. The great theme is the revelation of God's wrath against sin, and the righteousness through faith as the grounds of justification. Romans makes the whole world guilty before God and in need of salvation through Jesus Christ.

Finnis Dake

And J Vernon McGee, another American minister in the 1900's wrote this:

Let me urge you to do something that will pay you amazing dividends: read the Book of Romans, and read it regularly. This epistle requires all the mental make-up we have, and in addition, it must be bathed in prayer and supplication so that the Holy Spirit can teach us. Yet every Christian should make an effort to know Romans, for this book will ground the believer in the faith.

J Vernon McGee

They are some serious comments to take on board in considering how incredible this book of the Bible is. Many others beyond these men have also commended it to us in their words and actions - John Chrysostom, one of the early church fathers is said to have had the book read to him at least once a week for 18 years. Another pastor said the Bible of a believer should automatically open to it. While in one survey, 75% of Bible teachers said if they could teach from just one book of the Bible, it would be Romans. There is something special about this book, and we'll have the joy of looking at it closely over the next 16 to 18 weeks or so - around a chapter a week.

Where it sits in the Bible

As I noted at the start of our recent study through Paul's letter to Titus, the Bible is comprised of two parts - the Old and New Testaments. And together these consist of 66 books that were written down by 40 different authors, each inspired by the Holy Spirit to write exactly what God would have them say - for our learning, for our obedience, for our comfort. In the New Testament, written following Jesus death and resurrection, we find 27 books made up of the 4 gospels - Matthew, Mark, Luke, & John - that record Jesus earthly ministry, the book of Acts that documents the beginnings of the church, and then 21 letters (or epistles as they are known) written by the apostle Paul, James, Peter, John and Jude - before the final book of the Bible which is Revelation, which specifically is the revelation of Jesus Christ.

Another way of putting that is that we can divide the New Testament into four sections:

The New Testament

- The Gospels (details of the life of Christ)
- Acts (continues Christ's ministry through His apostles)
- Epistles/letters (Christian doctrine and instruction)
- Revelation (our great hope, and the destiny of all mankind)

Focussing on Paul's letters then, which are the first ones we find after Acts, we see that they are all named after who he wrote to - whereas the letters from James, Peter, John and Jude are named after them. In this case, this letter was written to the Christians in Rome, hence the name of the book. While at this point he had not visited the city, he certainly knew people there.

In Acts 18 we read of Aquila and Priscilla who had left their home in Rome after all Jews were told to leave, and they went to Corinth. Later we read that they travelled with Paul to Ephesus, and then here in Romans we see them back in Rome, with Paul sending greetings to them in chapter 16. And with Rome being the seat of power in the Roman empire, there were no doubt others he had witnessed to and taught that had now ended up there in this notable city.

So what's this letter all about? Well, let's start by noting a few details about it, it's purpose, and how it progresses - that is, how the chapters are laid out.

Overview of Romans

As for the basic details, it was written by the apostle Paul to the Christians in Rome, dictated to Tertius while in Corinth. At 16 chapters long it's jointly Paul's longest letter along with 1 Corinthians, though with around 40 verses less in English. And it was written between 57-68 AD, making it one of Paul's earliest letters - written after his letters to the Thessalonians and Galatians, and around the same time as his letters to the Corinthians.

As for the theme, it's not easy to summarise such comprehensive letter, but the major sections can be summarised as Christian doctrine, Israel and practical Christian living.

Overview of Romans

- **Author:** The apostle Paul (penned by Tertius)
- **Location:** Written from Paul in Corinth to the Christians in Rome

- **Length:** 16 chapters, 433 verses, 9,447 words
- **Timing:** 57-58AD
- **Theme:** Christian doctrine, Israel and practical Christian living

And the way we live in light of what Christ has done was very much on his mind. We read this in chapter 15...

Romans 15:14-16

Now I myself am confident concerning you, my brethren, that you also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another. Nevertheless, brethren, I have written more boldly to you on some points, as reminding you, because of the grace given to me by God, that I might be a minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the gospel of God, that the offering of the Gentiles might be acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit.

Paul wasn't aiming to produce theologians out of this letter. He was aiming to produce holiness in the life of every believer. And we should keep that in mind as we study it. Not looking for how it can help you win doctrinal arguments, or change the person next to you (though it might well do that!), but how it will change you.

Chapter overview of Romans

Now as mentioned, the major sections of this book can be summarised as follows:

Chapter overview of Romans

- **Chapters 1-8:** Christian doctrine (Faith) (Doctrinal)
- **Chapters 9-11:** Israel (Hope) (Dispensational)
- **Chapters 12-16:** Practical Christian living (Love) (Duty)

And breaking these chapters down further we can get a glimpse of what we're going to study in the coming weeks:

Chapter overview of Romans

- **Chapters 1-8:** Christian doctrine
 - Sin (1-3), Salvation (4-5), Sanctification (6-8)
- **Chapters 9-11:** Israel
 - Israel - Past (9), Present (10), Future (11)
- **Chapters 12-16:** Practical Christian living
 - Practical Christianity

This morning then, we're going to get into chapter 1 - and we'll get about half way, making it to verse 17...

Overview of chapter one

And breaking those verses down, well see...

Overview of chapter one

- v1-7 Introduction
- v8-15 - Paul's prayers & his intent to visit
- v16-17 - The power, scope and simplicity of gospel

So let's get into chapter one...

Chapter one

And specifically, let's look at the first word...

Romans 1:1a

Paul...

Truly we could spend the morning looking at who Paul was, what he did. We're not going to, but it's good to understand somewhat about him. Paul was a Jew and Roman citizen, originally called Saul, and born in Tarsus in what is now modern day Turkey, not long after Jesus had been born. He had studied under Gamaliel, a Pharisee and one of the most respected leaders in the Sanhedrin, who we also hear of in Acts chapter 5. And we first meet Paul in Acts chapter 7 at the stoning of Stephen, which he consented to, reading that the coats of those who stoned Stephen were laid at his feet.

Consenting to an innocent man's death isn't probably the introduction any of us would want, but it actually gets worse - for we read in Acts 8 and 9 how Paul went on the rampage, throwing Christians into prison, and breathing threats and murder against the early disciples of the Jesus. That wouldn't put Paul in the category of *ideal Christian* in our eyes, right? But therein is an important lesson for us - that God's grace is not based on what we've done, but on what He has done. And Paul will go on this very chapter to say that the gospel of Christ is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes. He knew that. He'd experienced that. He had been transformed by that great and wondrous news.

His conversion then, we read in Acts chapter 9, took place while he was travelling to Damascus in modern day Syria with the intent to take any Christians he found captive back to Jerusalem. While travelling, he was personally confronted by Jesus. And his conversion was nothing short of dramatic. He was blinded by the light from heaven on this road to Damascus, then after a visiting Ananias in Damascus as instructed, we read that he received his sight back. And having spent some days with the disciples in Damascus, he immediately preached the gospel - that Jesus was the Son of God, the Messiah - much to the shock and surprise of those who heard... we read in Acts...

Acts 9:21-22

Then all who heard were amazed, and said, "Is this not he who destroyed those who called on this name in Jerusalem, and has come here for that purpose, so that he might bring them bound to the chief priests?" But Saul increased all the more in strength, and confounded the Jews who dwelt in Damascus, proving that this Jesus is the Christ.

Saul, now Paul, had his life turned upside down. Even the meaning of his name went from "Requested one" to "little". He had been humbled by this experience. And He went from persecuting, to being persecuted. He went from being an opponent of the gospel, to preaching it everywhere he could, leading others to Christ, teaching God's Word thoroughly in many places, and writing to more, that those Christians - and us also - would grow in our walk with Jesus.

And from this time on he considered himself not just indebted to Christ, but His servant. And so we read on in this first chapter of Romans...

Romans 1:1

Paul, a bondservant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated to the gospel of God

This word bondservant is the same used in his introduction in Titus, from the Greek word *doulos*, indicating he was one who was the entirely, voluntarily, the property of another. He was willingly Christ's servant. And that's a choice you and I are wise to make also - because we will always serve something or someone. We each need to choose our master. So choose carefully. The end of this chapter, which we'll get to next week, sets out many other masters. And they are cruel ones. But Jesus burden & yoke are light.

And we read how he was called, specifically as an apostle, and how he was separated to God for the Lord's purposes, not his own purposes. Of course, anyone who is a Christian is called and chosen by God. But we read this of Paul in Acts 13:

Acts 13:2-3

As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, "Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." Then, having fasted and prayed, and laid hands on them, they sent them away.

That is, Saul - now Paul - and Barnabas were specifically separated to a work that God had for them to do. What was that work? To preach the gospel of Jesus Christ everywhere God would lead them. And we should remind ourselves what the word gospel means - which is *good news*. They weren't called to preach good advice. No, no, no. This was good news. The best news!

So motivated was Paul by God's grace, that he was willing to give his life. And indeed he did, eventually being beheaded in Rome a number of years after writing this letter.

We read of Paul's attitude in Acts 20...

Acts 20:24

But none of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.

And that gospel, Paul writes back here in Romans...

Romans 1:2

which He promised before through His prophets in the Holy Scriptures,

That is, way before Jesus was born in Bethlehem, His birth, many details of His life, His death and His resurrection were prophesied. In fact, that began as soon as Genesis chapter 3 where we read of the promised seed that would come. We see Jesus promised in the foreshadowing of models such as Abraham offering Issac on the very spot where Jesus would be crucified. In the bronze serpent that was lifted up in the wilderness. And in detailed passages such as Isaiah 53 which we see led to the saving of the Ethiopian in Acts 8, following Philip's explanation of who it was talking about. And Jesus Himself spoke of how these promises were of Him...

Luke 24:44-45

Then He said to them, "These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me." And He opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures.

You know, we have such a privilege to be living in the time we do. We have the complete Bible, and rather than waiting in hope of the Messiah, we have a Saviour who has paid for our sin once and for all. Can you imagine how excited Moses, Daniel or Isaiah would have been to find out what we know now. It should give us some excitement too - and a desire to study God's Word.

This gospel of God, this good news, which was promised before, Paul continues, was...

Romans 1:3-4

concerning His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh, and declared to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead.

So, here Paul is starting to give us the grand subject of his letter - Jesus Christ. And it's important to note the names and title he uses here. Jesus is the greek of Joshua, which in turn means "Jehovah is salvation". Christ is greek for Messiah, which means "Anointed", and Lord which his title - and shows our relationship to Him, that He is our Master.

And Paul then tells us something that is essential for us to know - Jesus was fully man (the seed of David, as recorded in Matthew chapter 1) and also fully God (declared to be the Son of God by His resurrection - that is, the resurrection did not make Jesus the Son of God; it simply confirmed that He was). We'll look at this more as we move through Romans, as it is foundational to our salvation as Jesus lived a sinless life as a man, but was fully God so that he could bear the sin of all men.

And, we read...

Romans 1:5

Through Him we have received grace and apostleship for obedience to the faith among all nations for His name,

Paul had both received salvation through grace, and his calling to ministry amongst the Gentiles...

Romans 1:6

among whom you also are the called of Jesus Christ;

Now speaking of the Christians in Rome, he says you're called too - you have been invited by Him to repentance and faith, to salvation.

And now he specifies exactly who he is writing to...

Romans 1:7

To all who are in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints:
Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

He's writing to Rome, but specifically the Christians in Rome. Called saints. That is, we are all saints. Not a select few. Not only after death, or having performed a miracle as the Catholic church teaches. But now. A little anecdote that may help here, is that of a little boy who attended a church that had beautiful stained-glass windows depicting St. Paul, St. Peter, and St. John. One day, when asked in his Sunday-school class, "What are saints?" he answered, "They're people who the light shines through." That's the right answer! All those who know Jesus as their Lord and Saviour are saints! Saint meaning a most holy thing.

And to the saints, the Christians in Rome, Paul writes grace and peace - as he does in all his other letters - in that order, for we cannot have peace with God without the grace of God. As I've said before, never forget the source of your peace, nor seek it elsewhere. It's not enough to look for peace. We need peace from God. And that only happens following grace from God.

Having then introduced who this letter is from, who it is to, and most importantly, Who it is about, Paul then begins by writing about his affection for these Christians, and desire to visit them.

We read in verse 8...

Romans 1:8

First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world.

What a great place to start. What a great heart to have. Let me ask you; When was the last time you thanked God for the person next to you? Or the person in the row in front of you, or behind you? This is a serious question. Paul writes, "I thank my God through Jesus Christ for..." 80% of you? No. For you ALL!

And note the example of the Christians in Rome too - we read here that the reason Paul is thanking God for them is that their faith is spoken of throughout the whole world - that their walk matches their talk, and was such a witness that people everywhere were aware of it. So how far is your faith spoken of? How many of your colleagues know you are a Christian? How many of your school friends? How many of your friends or lecturers at uni? How many of your gym buddies? How many of your friends at your hobby clubs? Alan's a good example in this, as was his late friend John - everyone in their biker group knew they were and are Christians.

Let us literally thank God for each other. And let us be such a witness that no-one would be surprised to find out we're a Christian. Paul continues...

Romans 1:9

For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of His Son, that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers,

Paul is serious here - so serious, that he says God knows this to be true - that he is regularly praying for the Christians in Rome which, despite knowing some, he didn't know all.

So let's apply this to our lives, to our church family. How often do you pray for each other? **Look around. Seriously, take a look around here this morning... When was the last time you mentioned each person here in your prayers?** This isn't something that was only fitting for apostles to do. This is something we should each do.

Paul writes "without ceasing". The Greek phrase speaking of a tickle in the throat. Some of you well know how persistent a cough can be. That's how persistent we are to be praying for each other. If for no other reason, it's hard to be angry with someone you're praying for!

And note that Paul lets them know that he's praying for them. And I wonder, how often do we let others know we are praying for them? We certainly should not do this for pride, for gain, or for anything other than to encourage them. And I don't think it's necessary each time you pray - but sometimes it can be a real encouragement. Just a week or so ago I was sitting down for dinner before one of our mid-week meetings, and I received a text from a friend who lives elsewhere in the country - which simply said, "praying for you". And I really was encouraged by that - it had maybe been a week and a half since we last messaged where he'd said that he would pray. And that he had been faithful to do that, and his message that he was doing so was a real encouragement!

We should pray more - that's the first priority. But we should encourage more too. If we say we're going to pray for someone, make sure you do. And if you do, then sometimes you can be a real encouragement to that person by letting them know - even if after the event - "I was praying for you this morning... how did your appointment, interview, etc. go?"

Something we could each do at home is to look through all of Paul's letters, and how often he says he's praying for others. Next, make a note of all their names. And then, consider how much you prayer for others... does the length of your list come close? This isn't to shame you. But I hope it convicts you, as it convicts me, that I, and perhaps you too, need to pray more.

Continuing on, Paul says what he is praying for, in addition to thanking God for them...

Romans 1:10

making request if, by some means, now at last I may find a way in the will of God to come to you.

Paul wanted to spend time with other Christians. Specifically, these Christians in Rome. But that makes me wonder how much we desire Christian fellowship. Do Christian conferences sound the worst thing in the world to us? They shouldn't - they are fabulous times. There's nothing better than being around God's people. So consider the men's and women's conferences this year. Consider the Teach The Word conference in June. Or youth retreats, if you're young enough of course. These things are such wonderful opportunities to be built up in and strengthened in your faith, by fellowshiping with others who love the Lord. Also, look around you here and find the person you know the least. And invite them to dinner. Seriously! There's a reason why you know them the least!

Paul continues...

Romans 1:11

For I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift, so that you may be established—

Paul was not a consumer! He didn't want to go along to meet another group of believers, to another church, to see what he could get out of it. But rather was thinking of what he could give. *"Oh but Paul was called to this"*. Are you not? Are you really saying that? That your only responsibility is to turn up at church and take? That's un-Biblical. Each part should do its share.

Jesus said that others will know we are Christians by our love for one another. And love is not about taking... it's about giving. If you haven't got that sorted then I feel for your spouse or your closest friends. They're probably having a rough time of it!

That said, what joy there is in giving, for when we do, we receive more than we could imagine - especially in God's economy. Reading on...

Romans 1:12

that is, that I may be encouraged together with you by the mutual faith both of you and me.,

There is such joy in true Christian fellowship - I promise you that there is nothing on earth like it - for we read Jesus words:

Matthew 18:20

For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them."

What a promise that is!

Let's continue in verse 13...

Romans 1:13

Now I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that I often planned to come to you (but was hindered until now), that I might have some fruit among you also, just as among the other Gentiles.

Paul's desire is for fruit. Oh, we should have that desire. I can tell you, there are some of that I look at and I so very much want to see that fruit in your lives. I would love to see you on fire for the Lord. To see you growing in Him.

But Paul here had not been able to get to Rome thus far. So even Paul didn't get to do all he wanted, when he wanted. So don't beat yourself up when you can't do everything - especially in ministry! Don't let God's timing, and His plans frustrate you. Keep your motivation to serve Him in the basics, and then see where He leads, and when He leads.

Paul states:

Romans 1:14

I am a debtor both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to wise and to unwise.

When Paul says Barbarians here, he is not talking about raging hoardes of wild men with clubs and a desire to destroy your town or village. It's nothing as sinister as that - he simply means those who did not speak greek. Much like English is the international language of the world today, Greek was the language of that time. And barbarians was simply the name given to those who didn't speak it.

Why is Paul a debtor to them? Is it that he is compelled to share the gospel with them? Well, I believe so - for we also OWE it to others to share the gospel with them. We have life-changing, life-saving, life-giving news. We have the gospel, the good news that can save ANYONE. Let us do something with it. This gospel is not a treasure to be hoarded, but a gift to be shared.

Oswald Chambers wrote:

So long as there is a human being who does not know Jesus Christ, I am his debtor to serve him until he does.

Oswald Chambers

We continue in verse 15...

Romans 1:15

So, as much as is in me, I am ready to preach the gospel to you who are in Rome also.

You too, should always be ready to give a reason of the hope that is in you. So are you ready for school or work tomorrow? Are you ready to share the gospel there?

Paul says "As much as is in me...". He was willing to give his all, for the sake of preaching the gospel. And that makes me wonder if we are prepared to give our all. Are we willing to re-arrange our lives around loving God, loving others in this church, getting to prayer meetings, fellowshiping with each other, meeting together more often than we did last year? Or are you and I only willing to surrender some? "Oh, but it'll cost me!" Yep. But just look at what we have in our hands...

Romans 1:16

For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek.

Paul was not ashamed of the gospel. Specifically, of Jesus Christ. Not the gospel of good works, soup kitchens, of love and hugs. Those things are all good – but it all starts with Christ. For it will all end with Him – He is our blessed hope. It is the power of God to **salvation**.

These weren't just words – they were evidences in Paul's life. Look at how he was stoned in Derbe, and still went back into the city after. Then time and again in the following chapters of Acts he returns not only there, but to other places where he had been thrown out etc. Paul knew salvation was at stake. He wasn't ashamed of the truth. This wasn't a game. The gospel is powerful.

But also note the simplicity of it. He does say *it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who **does good works***. No! It's for everyone who believes, regardless of who they are. You know, there is no-one who is beyond saving if they will only repent and put their faith in Jesus Christ.

In essence this verse states 3 things...

1. The effect of the gospel – salvation
2. The extent of the gospel – it is for all
3. The condition of the gospel – by faith

And on that last point we read our final verse this morning...

Romans 1:17

For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "The just shall live by faith."

It is so easy to skip over this verse. But this is HUGE. Simply put, we are not justified by the things we do, but by what God has done. But there were points in history that this was not so clear to people. Several hundred years before Christ, Socrates said to Plato (both of whom were Greek philosophers) "It may be that deity can forgive sins, but I don't see how."

I think that's incredible perception. How can a perfect, just God forgive sin? And without Christ's sacrificial death on the cross to pay for our sin, there is no way.

Martin Luther was another man who grappled with this question. Born to poor coal miner, the young Martin Luther decided to become a lawyer and in 1501 AD he entered the University of Erfurt. While walking across campus during a severe storm, lightning struck all around him and he fell on his face in fear. And he made a rash covenant with God that if He would save him, he would become a monk.

True to his word, he withdrew from law school and entered an Augustinian monastery and obtained a doctorate of theology. And he became obsessed with how man can find favour with God.

In search of peace, he devoted himself to an extreme lifestyle – long fasts, sleeping outside in freezing weather with no blanket, beating his body until bleeding. He went to confession so often that the abbot said "either go commit a sin worth confessing or stop coming so often!"

In 1509 he made a pilgrimage to Rome in the hope of finding the elusive peace. Crossing the alps on foot he nearly died of exposure, and monks in a monastery at the foot of the mountains nursed him back to health. And at this time a wise monk told him to study the book of Habakkuk.

Habakkuk was also a struggler - "If God is good, why does He allow suffering." "If there really is a devil, why doesn't God just obliterate him?" Luther prayed intensely for answers to those questions and ultimately a phrase from Habakkuk 2:4 caught his attention...

Habakkuk 2:4b

...the just shall live by his faith.

Of course, that's easily recognisable as what Paul is quoting here in Romans 1:17

And this single verse triggered the reformation. Luther returned to the University of Wittenberg and explored the idea of justification by faith - and on October 31, 1517 he nailed his 95 theses to the door of Wittenberg church, and in doing so pointed out the error of the pagan concepts that had overtaken the Roman Catholic church. While Luther's intention was to reform the church, the church leadership were not accepting of his convictions and excommunicated him as a heretic, although his life was spared.

Luther went on to write commentaries on the Bible, hymns and translated the entire Bible into German. And through this spark, the reformation began across Europe - resulting in much of the freedom we have today in our faith, and our country.

Now, this doctrine of justification by faith is so important that Paul doesn't just quote Habakkuk 2:4 here in Romans - but also in Galatians 3:11 and in Hebrews 10:39. In fact these three books form somewhat of a trilogy...

- Romans - The just (who are they?)
- Galatians - shall live (how?)
- Hebrews - by faith!

Now of course, these are not the only places that the Bible, or indeed Paul, speak of this issue. And tonight, as we close, I want to underline some of what the Bible says about justification by faith.

Firstly we read in Galatians 2:16...

Galatians 2:16

knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified.

And then in Galatians 3:24...

Galatians 3:24

Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith.

And finally in Ephesians 2:8-9

Ephesians 2:8-9

For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.

Perhaps we take it for granted that we are saved by faith. That is not by our own efforts.

Conclusion

Over the coming weeks we are going to look at this in more detail starting with the lowest point - sin. If God is perfect, just and holy, how can He forgive sin? He can't ignore it. But what is sin? Do we look at sin in the same way God does? I think that we need approach the coming weeks with an open heart. And it will be tough. Every one of us is affected by what's coming next. There is no human way to escape. And that is exactly the point Paul is going to make.

Next time we are going to finish chapter 1, so I encourage you to read ahead. But also as you go home today, ask yourself some questions based on what we've looked at...

Application questions

- How will you build a habit of thanking God for others?
- How will you build a habit of praying for others in this fellowship?
- Are you ready and willing to share the gospel tomorrow? Are you ready now?

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