

THE GOOD NEWS OF
ROMANS
A STUDY THROUGH THE BOOK OF ROMANS

Series Title: Romans: Good News for You

Kevin Berry | February 24, 2019 - Turned Upside Down

Romans has been called the most powerful summary of the Christian message in the entire New Testament. In it you'll find the implications of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus for you.

The Good News about Jesus impacts you today, right now, right where you are!

It may seem that salvation is for some other day, to be experienced in the future, after death. But think about this:

Taste and see that the Lord is good. Oh, the joys of those who take refuge in him! (Ps. 34:8)

Right now, today, taste and see for yourself, God is good... oh, the joys! As a follower of Jesus, joy should be your predominant disposition! Let's expect transformation as we study Romans together.

Have you ever felt trapped or like everything normal got turned upside down?

Is there a way off this ride?

When my daughter was young, we went on a carnival ride that we couldn't get off. How did that happen? I yelled to get off and the carnival guy just laughed and made the ride go faster... yikes!

Paraphrasing what Paul wrote to the Romans, "I'm obligated to go to everyone and tell them the good news... there's a way off the ride!"

If life is spinning out of control, if it feels like everything got turned upside down, there is hope! Paul lays out the heart of the message of Romans:

For I am not ashamed of this Good News about Christ. It is the power of God at work, saving everyone who believes—the Jew first and also the Gentile. This Good News tells us how God makes us right in his sight. This is accomplished from start to finish by faith. As the Scriptures say, "It is through faith that a righteous person has life." (Romans 1:16-17 NLT)

The Gospel is the Power of God at Work: SAVING!

The power of God – what does that look like? God spoke and there was light; God spoke and nothing became something; God took some dust and breathed on it... and here we are.

God takes what is no more, what is broken beyond repair, and He redeems, restores. He takes what is without life and gives it life.

Salvation in Greek means to rescue, heal, save.

How? Start in faith and finish with faith – explore this throughout Romans.

Let's go back to that word: "SAVED." Saved from what? Rescued from what? That takes us to:

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. (Romans 1:18)

The wrath of God is probably not up in the top ten most popular topics. But the wrath of God is as much a part of who God is as His love, kindness, mercy, and grace. The wrath of God against human corruption is also the revelation of God. Paul's goal is not to just proclaim good news, but to show the absolute *need* for good news.

Consider: If you don't know the bad news, then the good news is just news.

Nobody cares much about the news that they have a life jacket, until they are drowning. My brother-in-law pulled a dad and his three sons from the bottom of a lake. Sadly, only the dad and one son survived. I'm guessing before their outing, before two brothers perished, they may have had a conversation about life jackets, but perhaps it didn't seem like a big deal. But when they were shouting in the water and yelling for help, a life jacket would have been GOOD NEWS.

The self-righteous person who thinks they don't need anything does the same. It's not until you are willing to admit your need to be saved that you can be saved.

The word of our day is "tolerance." Our culture has a problem with words like "sin" and "judgment." So, the idea of a loving God actually judging people is just intolerable. However, you can't pick and choose what parts of God you want to believe in... or what parts of the Bible you want to believe in and discard the rest.

What is the wrath of God?

When we hear wrath, we go to an emotional response that is harsh, irrational, or even cruel. God's wrath doesn't mean He is flying off the handle. **God's wrath is His attitude toward sin, His personal emotion toward sin and His active opposition to evil.**

The heart of the problem, the "why" of God's wrath is right here: Some suppress the truth. They reject any truth that goes against their choices, their lifestyle, and they reject that God has the final word. They ignore Him!

...when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might, when he comes on that day to be glorified in his saints, and to be marveled at among all who have believed, because our testimony to you was believed. (2 Thess. 1:7-10)

It would not be loving toward you to avoid talking about the wrath of God and a very real, literal hell, and to ignore judgment. If you don't know the bad news, the good news is just news.

Although God made humanity free to refuse Him, He did not make us free from the consequences of such a choice.

Paul, like a great lawyer, is building his case that nobody is righteous; everybody has sinned—from the immoral Gentile, the self-righteous moral person, to the Jews, to the entire human race—until he lands on Romans 3:23 which tells us that everybody has sinned and needs a savior.

For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. (Rom. 1:19-20 ESV)

They “knew” God; in Greek that is not just knowledge about something, but knowledge of it by experience! So Paul was saying every person has experienced God... and could experience Him more! His fingerprints are all over creation!

The heavens proclaim the glory of God. The skies display his craftsmanship. Day after day they continue to speak; night after night they make him known. They speak without a sound or word; their voice is never heard. Yet their message has gone throughout the earth, and their words to all the world. (Ps. 19:1-4)

Have you ever slowed down enough to look at creation and stand in awe of the Creator? Think of the most beautiful sunset... and then also realize YOU are His creation!

For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Claiming to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things. (Rom. 1:21-23 ESV)

They knew God... but did not honor Him or thank Him. *WHAT?*

God should have received the highest seat of honor in their lives. They became fools, or literally, they became stupid, insane! They exchanged the glory of God for images. *They did what?*

Our culture tends to want to make everyone the victim, place blame on anyone other than the one at fault. Yet Paul showed something different – that humanity has had an active role in their tragic downward spiral.

When a person demotes God, and promotes self, everything gets turned upside down.

What is good is called bad, and what is bad is called good.

Once a person refuses to acknowledge God... they enter a downward spiral.

They were saying, “I don’t want your input; I don’t want to hear from you; I don’t care.”

What happens when life gets turned upside down? This is first seen in worship.

They worshiped the created, not the Creator. (Life is upside down.)

You were created to worship – to know God and make Him known, to taste and see...

Instead of accepting themselves as made in God’s image (Gen. 1:26-27), they tried to reverse the order of creation and make God in their own image. This willful denial of God has left people shipwrecked, with a life that is totally centered on themselves.

Yes, they knew God, but they did not worship him as God or even give him thanks. And they began to think up foolish ideas of what God was like. The result was their minds became dark and confused. (Rom. 1:21 NLT)

They exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen. (Rom. 1:25)

What is Idolatry? When we make our life about something other than God.

Worship is more than a song. What do you worship? What’s the one thing that is wildly important to you? If it’s not God, it’s an idol. What is it that you have to have to make life worth living? What do you live for?

This turning upside down continues... this downward spiral...

Therefore, God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves, because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen. For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature; and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in themselves the due penalty for their error. (Romans 1: 24-27)

First, they invented what they wanted God to be like, to fit their lifestyle. Now here is the consequence: **God gave them up.** This is not a passive God leaving people to their own choices, rather an active role of God's judgment. **This is God's judgement not out in the future, but right now!** The first distortion of God's created order was worship. The second was that:

Sexual relationships became unnatural. (Sex is turned upside down.)

They dishonor God... and now are given up to dishonorable passions. This is a very clear biblical reference about homosexuality. However, Paul brings this up, not so much to make a statement about homosexuality, but to show what happens to a person when they reject God: things get turned upside down. Life gets twisted. God is the Creator of sex; it was His idea. Sex, as God intends it to be, is the marriage relationship of a husband and a wife. A man and a woman is an upgrade for your life, but sin twists it and perverts it. John Lindell said, "When you reverse the Creator's purpose, sex no longer upgrades your life, it degrades you."

In his teaching on homosexuality, Paul was swimming against the moral current of much of his audience. Rome was filled with homosexual lifestyles. Pause here and remember this same Paul, when speaking to the church, had said, "Such were some of you."

Remember, Jesus came for people that were sick and in need of a doctor. Jesus came and loved people that were doing bad things, and told them to go and sin no more.

You don't lecture people into the kingdom... you love people into the kingdom.

Dishonoring of God results in the dishonoring of human life.

And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done. They were filled with all manner of unrighteousness, evil, covetousness, malice. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, maliciousness. They are gossips, slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless. (Romans 1:28-31)

There it is again: God gave them up – an act of judgment. They thought God was worthless; they became worthless. God's wrath is often found in God giving people what they wanted – people saying, "I don't want you. I don't want you telling me what to do, how to live. I don't want to worship you."

"The sin of omitting that which is good leads to the sin of committing that which is positively evil." – Luther

We tend to categorize sins, because then we feel better about the sin we practice. "At least I'm not killing somebody." God makes no distinction. Any sin, no matter how big or how little you think it is, puts humanity in the path of God's righteous judgment.

When a person demotes God and promotes self, everything gets turned upside down, and now we see...

They hated those they should have loved. (Relationships go upside down.)

When I hear a child who is mad at parents say, "I HATE YOU," it's shocking. The actions I see today, the way one person treats another with such hate, is shocking. Where there should be love, there is hate. Have you noticed the amount of hate around you? Do you hear it in the news?

The power of love... what could happen if we simply loved more?

Some of you have heard words of hate; some have said those words. God wants to heal your heart today.

Though they know God's righteous decree that those who practice such things deserve to die, they not only do them but give approval to those who practice them. (Romans 1:32)

Conclusion: Think back to that carnival ride... It was too late to change my mind about getting on that ride, and I could not get off that ride! The good news about Jesus is that He gives us a gift called repentance. It was the first message of Jesus – He came, and through His death and resurrection, paid for the penalty of our sin. We are not stuck on the ride of life that we find ourselves on; we can change our mind!

REPENTANCE – not just a one-time thing... we get to constantly change our mind!

Clear the stage of your life and make space for the one who deserves it!

Paul's point: When we were utterly helpless, Jesus came! (Rom. 5:6)

Song: Clear the Stage by Jimmy Needham – Spotify

We have to clear the stage and make some space for the one who deserves.

Anything I put before my God is an idol
Anything I want with all my heart is an idol
Anything I can't stop thinking of is an idol
Anything that I give all my love is an idol

Cause I can sing all I want to
I can sing all I want to
We can sing all we want to and still get it wrong
Worship is more than a song