

How many of you watch the news? Whether that is on T.V., or on your phone, some people get their news from social media. I have found social media to sometimes have the most up to date reports... but it is also someone's opinion. Making it not such a great place to get the facts. No matter where you get your news from, what articles do you read first? The funny pages, or the help wanted ads, maybe the obituaries. I'll bet it is the stories about bad news, the ones with the cliff hanger headlines. Have you ever realized how many of the of the stories reported by the news outlets are negative reports, stories with bad news.

Greeneville Sun - 7 of 8 negative news

Tri Cities News Channel - 11 4 of 6 bad news

Knoxville News Sentinel - 6 of 6 bad news

Fox 5 Atlanta - 4 of 8 bad news

Georgia - 6 of 8 bad news

Why does the news report more bad news? A study showed that bad news was more likely to catch casual readers' attention than good news. They have known this for years, if they run a headline with a title that digs up something dirty or exposes someone for something filthy more people will take the time to read it. Even if the report is a positive story, sometimes the journalist will take a bad part and drag it to the top as a headline, just to get more readers interested.

A news outlet decided to change it up for one day. They would only run positive headlines, positive stories, encouraging articles, basically no negativity for one day. They reported losing 2/3rds of their normal reading for that day. Why? We love bad news, we love to hear a story about how someone was done wrong, or about a crime that was committed. How many of you watch the old crime shows, NCIS, True crimes, Web of lies, my favorite was Criminal Minds? Although most of them ended well, that was not what kept us watching. Disney shows always end well too but unless you have small kids, we don't sit around watching Pinocchio and Bambi.

Today we are going to be starting in the book of Romans, Paul's letter to the Roman church. This book is considered to be one of the most powerful books of all the New Testament. So many old-time scholars have reported that it was the reading of this book that made the biggest impact on their lives personally, and many times leading to the life changing decision of accepting Jesus as their savior.

Paul tells us that God has good news, that we will find great news through Jesus. This can be summed up in one word, that word is Gospel, which literally means GOOD NEWS. The Greek word for that is **Euaggelion**, this is where we get the word evangelism, the good news. Paul uses the term "gospel" 60 times in the book of Romans, this is how he begins the book, with good news.

In ancient times, the Emperors of Rome would send out messengers to proclaim a gospel. They sent someone out to tell of good news. Something like “attention, I bring good news, the emperor’s wife is due to have a child”, or “the emperor’s son is of age to prepare to take the throne.” They would always bring favorable news about the emperor.

The word Gospel derives from Godspell, and it means good story. Gods story is a good story! Now we have all heard this, Gospel means good news and that sounds great, we all know that God is good. But if this doesn’t fire you up it may be because you do not realize how bad the bad news really is. See Romans is full of both good and bad news, but it is not until we truly understand the bad news that the good news actually means something!

The bad news that we will get to later in this study are things like, *ALL sin and fall short of the glory of God, or for the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all unrighteousness and ungodliness*. So, what does this mean for you and me? We are all guilty in God’s eyes, and we will pay the price for that. That price is an eternity in hell; a lake of fire bring torment but the worse part about it will be being separated from God. But wait here is where the good news comes in, if you don’t like option number one, then option two is somebody else can pay that price for you. God says “GOOD NEWS” I have sent my son to pay the price for your sins so you can be saved!

We will see both examples of bad news and good news throughout Romans, but there is one main theme to this book. We will see how God, through Jesus, sets people free from the bondage of sin and slavery to self, to become servants of Christ. You may be thinking, out of one slavery into another, how does that help me. I’m glad you asked, slavery to our flesh or ourselves has only one outcome, something so bad, something we cannot imagine, and that is an eternity separated from God. At judgement all you will hear is depart from me for I never knew you.

To be servant of Jesus also only has one outcome, but it is much brighter. Life after death in a place so beautiful that we also cannot even imagine, worshipping God. Romans is all the right steps for how we can be made right with a righteous God.

No one is really sure how the church in Rome started. There are some Roman Catholics who claim that the church was established by the Apostle Peter, and that he was in fact Rome’s first Pope. There are no actual historical records to confirm this claim, and while Peter may have indeed visited Rome at some time, he most certainly was not the “first pope” of the Roman Catholic Church.

The fact that Paul desperately longed to go to Rome suggests that this relatively new church had not been started by any of the other apostles. Paul had a firm standing not to try and have any substantial interference with churches that had been founded by other apostles:

In Romans 15:20-21 it says “**My aim is to preach the gospel where Christ has not been named, so that I will not build on someone else’s foundation, but as it is written, Those who were not told about Him will see, and those who have not heard will understand.**”

So, you see, it is highly unlikely that Paul would have wanted so desperately to go to Rome had that church been established by any one of the other Apostles. Paul wanted to make

sure that the doctrine they had been given was sound, that is why every ounce of Christian teaching that he could possibly explain to them can be found in this letter we now know as “Romans”. Had the church of Rome been established by any of the recognized apostles, Paul would not have been concerned regarding their doctrine.

As we go through the book of Romans we will see a central theme, and that is as simplest form as I can make it, how to get right with God. It is split into four separate sections; we will not cover them all today. These sections are 1. The Wrath of God, 2. The Grace of God, 3. The Plan of God, and 4. The Will of God. All of this is covered under this good news of God.

Romans 1:1-7

By Who, From Who, To Who

By Who

Vs 1. We know a lot about the life and ministry of Paul, we can find information in Acts, Galatians, and 2 Corinthians.

Paul began his story as Saul, a man who persecuted, tortured, arrested and killed anyone he came across who believed in Jesus... Jesus got ahold of him. Jesus got ahold of me one day and I like Saul was changed! I was no murderer, but Saul is not my measuring stick, Jesus is. I don't know about you but could never measure up to His standard.

It is mostly agreed that Paul wrote Romans while he was in Corinth on his third missionary journey. This was likely somewhere around 53–58 A.D. By this time Paul had been a preacher for around 20 years. During this time frame he had some time in Corinth with nothing much to do while waiting to move on to Jerusalem. So, he figures he would get a head start on what he felt so strongly to explain to them.

As Paul is writing he is also very excited to go to Rome, he has never been, he has heard how pretty it is in the summertime. Paul is looking for a good place to kick back and relax for a little while. This is not the reason for Paul's excitement to go to Rome, Paul is a diehard follower of Jesus, and he is determined to do all he can to help the church in Rome succeed in reaching other gentiles in the name of the Lord.

Paul is head down full-on prepping to head to Rome directly after his upcoming trip, but the Holy Spirit warns him of the trouble waiting for him when he arrives in Jerusalem. Now Paul is worried; what if he doesn't make it to Rome? Then he must write them a letter so comprehensive that the Christians in Rome had the gospel Paul preached, even if Paul himself were not able to visit them.

How does Paul start this very important letter to the Roman church? Letters of old were written in a different order than we write ours today. Usually, they would start by indicating who the author is, then moving on to the reason or why they are writing the letter, next would be who it was addressed to and then it was customary to include a short prayer. I kinda wish we still did it like this. Do any of you still get handwritten letters? If I do, I read about a sentence, then skip to the end to see who wrote it then back to the beginning to start all over.

Paul writes his exactly like this. So, in his introduction he introduces himself, and how was that? First as a servant of God, the actual word is “doulos” and it means bondservant, complete and utter devotion, not the doing it because you have to which was the normal reason a slave did as he was told. The second identifier is as an apostle, a special messenger. Paul is an ambassador; remember earlier we talked about ancient rulers using messengers to bring good news about themselves? What news is Paul bringing, is it trivial information, is it something he has made up? No, it is Gods good news.

In Paul’s time there was estimated to be as many as 60 million slaves in the Roman Empire. These slaves had no rights, they were purchased as property and owned until death. Paul is referring to a different type of slave. Romes idea and Hebrew slavery where two totally different things. What Paul is talking about here is more commonly known as “voluntary slavery”, who would ever voluntarily put themselves in slavery? Glad you asked, if a Jew owed a debt that he could not repay, then he could be forced into slavery to repay that debt. But after 6 years of working for the man you owed, the law required that you be set free. If, after that time the slave decided that he had grown to love his master and realized that he would actually be better off by staying there. He could pledge himself as a “servant for life” This is found in Deuteronomy 15.

If this was the slave’s choice he would be taken to the doorpost of the house and their ear would be pierced, and they would become part of the house. As Christians this is what happens to us, if you surrender your will to Jesus, allowing Him to become Lord of your life. You are giving up your rights, because you realize how much better your life is with Him and you love Jesus.

So, for Paul to use the word that he does is perfect to explain to us Christians that we have a choice to make. Do you choose to enter yourself into voluntary slavery for a debt that you cannot repay? Who was Paul writing this letter to again? The Romans, who are not Jews right, so this message is for gentiles. This is an amazing part of the gospel message, it is written in such a way that it reaches those who may have otherwise been seen as less than, unfit, unworthy.

Does this mean that we are something special, that we deserve more? No, but don’t forget, who are the one’s God normally uses, the humble, the lowly. Remember who Paul was before he became Paul. He thought of himself as one who had everything figured out. Following the law, and enforcing it on everyone, especially Jesus followers.

Remember Paul’s factory name? Saul, it actually means “desired”, just like the world today he chased his desires. After being humbled through his encounter with Christ he became Paul, which means “little, or insignificant”. When we realize how much we need Jesus to be Lord of our lives we go from thinking through our desires and realize how small we really are. Unfortunately, it is not just the world who thinks highly of themselves, the church is often littered with folks who still are guided by their desires instead of fully submitting to the will of God.

V2-4 By Who, From Who

Paul is making sure that the church in Rome understands who is writing this letter but more importantly, who it is from. He is explaining first the lineage that Jesus comes from, Jesus came from a royal bloodline, through the family of David, just as the bible predicted. More importantly it is shown that Jesus is the Son of God, which speaks to His eternal existence.

Jesus human birth is evidence of His humanity and relationship to the earthly throne, what happened 3 days after He was crucified proved beyond a shadow of a doubt that Jesus was indeed The Promised One that The Old Testament prophets had been talking about. He is the One Who was promised Beforehand.

This gospel is not new, and it is not a clever invention of man. Paul's world was much like ours; people like to be wowed with "new" teachings and doctrines. But Paul didn't bring something new, on the contrary something very old in the plan of God.

The bible, from the beginning to the end is all about Jesus, and this is the center of Paul's gospel, we know that everything in our solar system revolves around the sun. As Christians we all have something we revolve around as well. The center of Christianity though is not a teaching or a moral system, it is a Person: a person named **Jesus Christ**.

In the end of verse 4 Paul refers to Jesus as "our Lord", this could be Paul being polite, but I think it is way more than that. I think this is Paul's way of saying; this is the only one worthy of our worship. I explain to the youth often that we often times have things that we make idols, things that we worship. These things can be really about anything, money, fame, a title, stuff. It can be something even more innocent like our husband or wife, even our kids. What ever it is that takes your focus off God could be an idol or something you worship.

V5 As I mentioned earlier, Paul's gospel impacts lives on a personal level, but what it is about Romans that does this? Is it a new philosophy, is it more interesting than the other books? No, it is the life changing GOOD NEWS! Good news of grace apostleship, Paul knows firsthand how life changing this is. Without the grace of God, he would not and could not have been an apostle.

You and I would not and could not receive this without Gods grace, but why does God give us these gifts? To call others like us to the obedience that comes from faith in the name of Jesus. The gospel is big enough and great enough for the whole world, and it must go out to impact all nations.

V6-7 **By Who, From Who, To Who**

As mentioned earlier, Paul had never been to Rome, and he did not found the Roman church. This makes the Book of Romans different because most of Paul's letters were to churches, he founded. It seems the church in Rome began somewhat spontaneously as Christians came to the great city of the Empire and settled there. In Acts it describes how there were people from Rome among the Jews present at the Day of Pentecost; so, when they returned home, there was a Christian community in Rome. Beyond that, the origins of the church in Rome are somewhat obscure, but Christians continually migrated to Rome from all parts of

the Empire. It shouldn't surprise us that a church started there spontaneously, without being directly planted by an apostle.

Later in Romans 16 Paul mentions that he knew many of the Christians living in Rome. Even if Paul only knew many of the Roman Christians by acquaintance, he knew two things about them and every true Christian. He knew they were loved by God and that they were called to be His holy people or saints. Paul reminds the Roman church that because they believed, they too belong to the same family as him.

Spurgeon said this; "You notice that the words 'to be' are put in by the translators; but though they are supplied, they are not really necessary to the sense. These believers in Rome were 'called saints.' They were not called because they were saints; but they became saints through that calling."

The gospel had reached the Roman Christians, demonstrating that they are the called of Jesus Christ. To be called a saint means that you have been set apart for a holy purpose. The moment that anyone receives Christ, they are set apart and sealed by The Spirit as saints of the living God.

Grace to you and peace from God: Paul formally addresses his readers with his familiar greeting, combining the Greek greeting of grace with the Jewish greeting of peace. This grace and peace are not the kind wish of a man; they are *gifts*, coming from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

This short introduction shows us that Romans is different than many of the other letters Paul wrote to churches. Other New Testament letters focus more on the church and its challenges and problems. The Letter to the Romans focuses more on God and His great plan of redemption.

In closing, are you a saint this morning? The reason that we preach this gospel is that we are set apart as: Bond-slaves of Christ, Bringing the Good News that was promised Beforehand, so that others might also Belong to Him." Paul's life was about bringing others into the Church of Jesus Christ. This is the highest honor for us all, to bring glory to His Name! I am not asking you if you simply believe in Him, I am asking if you belong to Him. Are you His bond-slave, has your ear been attached to the door post of His house. For this is what it truly means to be born again, to make ourselves small in the vast horizon of His greatness, so that others may see and hear of the marvelous grace of Jesus!