The message of Romans

The righteous will live by faith.

Romans 1:17

Tim Keller | Redeemer Presbyterian Church | 2003
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1. (v.1, 6) What is the passion and ultimate goal of Paul's life?

2. (v.1-6) What do we learn about the content of this gospel from the first 6 verses?

3. (v.8-15) What is the immediate goal of Paul?

4. (v.16) Why does Paul refer to being not ashamed (i.e. offended) by the gospel? In what ways can the gospel offend or be despised?

5. (v.16) What does Paul mean when he calls the gospel “the power of God”? In what ways is it powerful?
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Study 2 | Romans 1:18-32

1. (v.18) What does this verse tell us about the wrath of God?

2. (v.18-21) Why does Paul say that all human beings are “without excuse” if they don’t seek or serve God?

3. (v.20) What is made plain to us about God (and what is not)?

4. (v.22-25) What does tell us always happens to human beings who reject worship of the true God?

5. Application: What are some examples of idols? How are all problems the result of “worshipping the creature rather than the creator”? 
6. (vv.26-32) What are all the consequences of false worship Paul lists (spiritual, mental, moral, physical)? (These are mainly found in verses 26-32, but some are mentioned earlier in the passage).

7. (vv.18-32) Review question. In light of all you have studied, what have you learned about a) how God’s wrath works right now and b) why God’s wrath is fair and just.
1. (v.1) – “you therefore, have no excuse” Why does Paul address the religious in chap 2 right after his denunciations of 1:18-32? How do religious people “miss the gospel”?

2. (v.1-3) What are the consequences of condemning and judging others?

3. (v.4-5) What do these verses teach us about the patience of God?

4. (v.6-10) What is the general test by which God will judge people at the end? Does this contradict what Paul said about salvation in 1:16-17?
5. (v.7-8) What are some of the specific tests that indicate that a heart is right with God or not?

6. (v.12-15) How do people without the law of God still have it written upon their conscience?

7. Application: What practical daily difference could it make to you that there is a judgment day coming? (For example, how could it help you overcome resentment toward a person?)
1. (v.17-24) List 5-6 things Paul says the Jews of his day were proud of. How do they all boil down to one basic factor? In v. 25-29 Paul names a second basic factor on which the Jews relied — what was it?

2. Insert “Christian” for “Jew”, and other words for “circumcision” and paraphrase vv. 17-20 and vv.25-29 as a warning to active church people today.

3. (v.22) Since Jews totally abhorred idols and would never take one for themselves, what does Paul mean when he charges them with “robbing temples”?

4. (v.21-24) How and why does the first of these false confidences fail? v.25-29 How does the second fail?
5. (v.17) What do “rely” and “brag” mean? How can it be wrong to “brag” about your relationship to God? In what ways can the orthodox and moral totally miss the gospel?

6. (v.21-29) How, then, can you tell if an active church member’s faith is empty and under God’s judgment? What are the signs or symptoms of “dead orthodoxy”?

7. (v.23-24 and 29) What practical difference would it mean for you as a real Christian today if you took Paul’s warning seriously? Does anyone scorn God’s name because of you?
1. (v.9) Paul says every person is “under sin”. a) What does that mean? b) How can both religious people (Jews) and depraved pagans be “alike” under sin?

2. (v.10-18) Paul gives us a long list of all the effects of sin on us. There are at least seven. What are they?

3. (v.11) Paul says “no one seeks for God”. a) What does this mean? b) How does this statement square with all the people who seem to be searching for God?

4. (v.11) If Paul is right, what does it mean about anyone who is truly seeking to come into God’s presence?
5. (v.12) Paul says “no one does good” and that our deeds are “worthless”. But Jesus says we should do “good works” (Matt5:15). How could both be right? Why is it necessary to understand that “no one does good”?

6. (v.18) What is “the fear of God”? How does this fact — that we don’t fear God — explain and even summarize everything else Paul has said about sin?

7. (v.19-20) It is crucial that “every mouth be silenced”. That is a spiritual condition—what is it? Have you attained it?
Study 6 | Romans 3:21-31

1. (v.21-24) What can we learn from these 4 verses about what this “righteousness from God” is?

2. (v.22-25) What can we learn from these 4 verses about how this “righteousness from God” is received (and by whom)?

3. (v.24-26) Why does God only justify “through” his blood or “atonement sacrifice”? Can’t God just forgive us?

4. (v.25) The word “atonement sacrifice” in NIV translation can also be rendered “propitiation”. Look up “propitiation” in a dictionary — what does this word tell us about what Jesus death did for us?

5. (v.25-26) How can Jesus’ “atonement sacrifice” make God both “just” AND “the one who justifies” of those who believe?
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6. What distortions enter our lives if we think of God only as “just” or only as “justifier”?

7. Paul says the gospel excludes boasting (v.27). How does it do that? How has it excluded boasting in you?
Study 7 | Romans 4:1-25

1. Look at each place the word “credited” is used. Put the meaning of the term in your own words.

2. The Jews of the time thought faith = obedience of the law. How does Paul in vv.2-4 show that saving faith is no that?

3. Name the two parts of real saving faith according to v.5. Guiding Question: Paul says a Christian is one who “does not work.” (v.5) What does that mean?

4. How does this definition of faith differ from what so many churchgoers and religious people think faith is?
5. Paul talks in v.6 of “credited righteousness.” Define “credited righteousness” from v.5 and v.8.

6. How does Paul make his case in vv. 9-17 that salvation is not just for Jews, but for all?

7. How does the case of Abraham (vv.18-25) illustrate the difference between only believing in God, and believing God (v.3)? How can his example help you strengthen your faith (v.19)?
1. (v.1-2) List all the benefits which justification brings for us to enjoy?

2. (v.9-10) How secure is the future for a Christian, and why?

3. (v.3-4) How does Paul answer the question: “What good is all this if we suffer?” Why does he say we should rejoice in our suffering, not for them? How can we rejoice in suffering?

4. (v. 5-8) By what two ways can we know that God loves us?

5. (v.12) What are the signs that you are rejoicing in your reconciliation?
EXERCISE
Read the following questions and answers.

Trials and the Gospel

1. (v.3-5) How does Paul tell us suffering can change us?
Remember that Paul is telling us how suffering affects a person who knows he or she is justified strictly by grace, not works. In that case, Paul says suffering begins a chain reaction:

1. Suffering leads to “perseverance” (v.3). This is a word that really means single-mindedness. Suffering makes us “focus” — it helps us focus on what is really important. It makes us remember what really is lasting, helps us to re-align priorities, and so on. It removes distractions.

2. “Perseverance” leads to “character”. This is a word that really means “testedness”. It is a quality of confidence that comes from having been through an experience. It only comes from following through, and doing your duty despite it all. But the result is a growing poise only comes from the experience. For example, a sports team new to the championship playoffs may play poorly because they have not been in the position before. But a “tested” team will have no jitters. They perform well because they have been there before. Notice that without the first step, the second step won’t happen. Suffering, if it first leads you to focus on God and proper priorities, will lead to greater confidence as you come through it.

3. All this leads to growth in “hope”, which is a stronger assurance of one’s peace, access and future glory. Paul’s addition of v.5 right after v.3-4 seems to mean that Christians who a) focus single-mindedly on prayer and obedience to God, and who b) grow in confidence, will c) experience more of his love during suffering. “Poured out his love into our hearts.” Many Christians testify that they feel more of God’s presence and love during suffering, because it makes them focus and trust in him more.

Here’s the amazing assertion of Paul. When he shows that suffering starts a chain reaction that leads to hope, which is one of the fruits of justification, he is saying that the benefits of justification are self-propagating. They are not only not diminished by suffering, but they are enlarged by suffering. In other words, if you face suffering with a clear grasp of justification by grace alone, your joy in that grace will deepen, but (as he implies) if you face suffering with a mindset of justification by works, the suffering will break you, not make you.

Consider how persons takes suffering who are trying to be justified by works. Self-justifiers are always insecure at a deep level because they know they aren’t living up to their standards, but cannot admit it. So when suffering hits, they immediately feel they are being punished for their sins. They cannot take confidence in God’s love (v.5). Since
their belief God loved them was inadequately based anyway, now suffering shatters them. Suffering drives them away from God rather than toward him.

2. **Now consider some specific difficulty or trial you have experienced as a Christian. Did you see it doing in you what Paul describes? Why or why not?**

Here are some things to consider as you are analyzing your own “case study”:

A. Did it lead you to focus — to *single-mindedness*? Did it help you sift out the unimportant from the important? Did it help you focus attention more on prayer and on what God has done for you?

B. Has your sufferings produced *testedness*? Did you follow through despite fears? In other words, did it bring a kind of maturity and confidence that comes from having been through it all? Are you a less jittery person, a less fearful person?

C. Did it lead you to actual deeper experience of his presence and his love? Did you find a greater closeness, a sense of nearness?

If your sufferings did not lead to this, analyze why:

1. **Was it failures of the will?** Did you simply fail to spend time with God in worship and reflection? Or did you disobey him in some way to escape the hardness of the situation?

2. **Was it a failure of understanding the gospel?** Did the suffering make you doubt God’s love? That is a natural response, but did you eventually shake that off? The speed with which you do that is an indication of the degree of your understanding of justification. Remember that God can use suffering to “awaken” a person to some sin — as a kind of “intervention”. But interventions are only done by people out of love. God can and will treat you roughly if you need it, like a loving parent will do with wayward child — but all out of deep concern. If you are a Christian, God has sent all your punishment on to Christ. All his wrath for you fell into the heart of Jesus and was swallowed up and absorbed there — it disappeared.
1. (v.12) Why the “therefore” in v.12? What is the link to the previous passage?

2. (v.12) What do you learn about the relationship of sin and death in this one verse?

3. Read the following note.
The verb in v.12 “because all sinned” is an “aorist” tense. A Greek aorist tense is a past perfect even more definite and strong than our English perfect tense. The aorist always points to a single past action. It says that the whole race sinned in one single past action. To use a large collective noun “all” with such a specific verb tense is so awkward that it must be deliberate. If Paul meant “all sinned continually and individually” he would have used the present or the imperfect tense. One author put it this way: “if we are to give the aorist tense its full value [here], and in this argument we must do so, the more precise meaning will be that sin and death entered into the world because all men were guilty of one act of sin.” (William Barclay, Expository Times, LXX (1958-59), p. 192.

How does v.13-14 demonstrate that all die not because they sinned like Adam, but in Adam?
4. (v.12-14) Why is this teaching so repugnant to modern people and especially those in the West? Offer and discuss analogies that make it more understandable.

5. What is the similarity between Adam and Christ of which Paul speaks in v.14?

6. What are the dissimilarities between Adam and Christ that Paul mentions in v.15-21?

7. “This passage teaches us that, if Christ is our representative, whatever is true of him in God’s eyes is true of us” Do you agree with this statement? If it is true, how would it make a difference to your practical daily life?
1. Why does Paul pose the question in v.1? And what new subject will it help Paul introduce in the next chapters?

2. (v.2) What does it mean that we “died to sin”?

3. What are the signs that a person is no longer under the “mastery” (v.14) and the “reign” (v.12) from sin?

4. (v.3-5) How does Paul show that salvation through union with Christ necessarily leads to a changed life moving away from sin?
5. (v.6) Paul says our “old self” has been killed so that the “body of sin might be done away with”. What do you think he means?

6. One wrote: “If I fall into sin, it is because I do not realize who I am.” a) How does vv.3-10 support this assertion? b) How can we deal with sin this way?

7. (v.11-14) a) Why MUST we “count ourselves dead” if we already are? b) How does being “not under the law help us break the power of sin in our lives?”
1. (v.15) Put Paul’s question in your own words. Is his question of v.15 identical to his question of 6:1? What issue is he now addressing?

2. (v.16-18) What (in these verses) is the main argument brought against the notion that Christians are free to sin?

3. (v.16-23) How do the two possible “slaveries” compare a) in their origin, b) their development, c) their results?

4. (v.18-19) How practically do we live out and maintain our freedom from sin?
5. (7:1-6) a) What does the marriage metaphor teach us about our relationship to the law? b) our relationship to Christ? (Hint: How does the metaphor continue to answer the question of 6:15 – “are Christians now free to live as they choose?”

6. (7:6) In light of the marriage metaphor, what do you think it means to serve “in the new way of the Spirit” rather than in “the only way of the written code?”

7. Verse 7:4 says we have to be “dead to the law” to “bear fruit for God.” How does being “not under the law” help us break develop a holy life?
1. (v.7, 8, 13) It is the purpose of the law to show us something. a) What is it and b) in what ways does it do this?

2. (v.8-9) How, do you think, does the law actually aggravate or stir up the sin in our hearts (cf. v.5)? [Consult your own experience.]

3. (v.8-9) What do you think Paul meant when he said, “I was alive apart from the law”? And what do you think he meant when he says “Sin came and I died”?

4. (v.7-8) Which Biblical commandment seems to have “slain” Paul? Why, do you think would a Pharisee like Paul be so convicted by it?
5. (v.14-25) Is Paul speaking in these verses of an unbeliever’s struggle with sin, or is he talking about a believer’s struggle with sin? What is the evidence (in the text) for your answer?

6. (vv.14-25) What does Paul tell us here about a) what has changed b) what has not changed, c) what our need is, d) what our hope is as Christians?

7. If this is the Apostle’s present experience, how does this both warn and comfort us?
During the rest of this week, please keep the following “tongue assignment”. (These prescriptions come from various places in the New Testament.)

1. Do not complain or grumble.

2. Do not boast about anything.

3. Do not gossip or repeat a matter.

4. Do not run someone down — even a little bit.

5. Do not defend or excuse yourself, no matter what.

6. Do continually affirm others.

The purpose of this assignment is to reveal your own heart to you. Most people will have trouble lasting more than 3 or 4 hours without breaking it. (Of course, if you do last longer, you can’t brag to anyone of it!) This is a practical way to see the purpose of the law as Paul describes it.
1. (v.1) What does the phrase ‘no condemnation’ mean? Paraphrase it several ways. Does ‘no condemnation’ refer only to our past, or also to our present and future?

2. (v.1) One wrote: “most of our troubles are due to our failure to realize the truth of this verse [that there is ‘no condemnation’].” What troubles does this cause?

3. (v.1-2) What two great benefits have been given to us who are in Christ Jesus? (v.3-4) How did we get each of the two benefits come to us? What is the final purpose of both of them (v.4)?

4. (v.5-6) What does Paul say here is the connection between “minding” and “living”? What do you think it means to ‘set the mind’ on the Spirit in light of the rest of Romans 8?
5. (v.6) Write down some very practical ways in which ‘minding the Spirit’ leads to peace, but to forget the things of the Spirit leads to death?

6. (v.13) The ‘misdeeds of the body’ is the same as the ‘sinful nature’. How can it be ‘put to death by the Spirit’? Thy to answer this question from the text.

7. Write down some very practical ways in which you can ‘put to death’ a particular sin pattern. What will you say to your heart that can undercut sin’s power over you?
1. (v.14-15) Is everyone a child of God? Why or why not? What does it mean to be ‘led by the Spirit’?

2. What are our privileges of being an adopted son of God? (Collect from whole passage)

3. (v.15) What is the difference between the two “spirits”? Make a list of how a slave’s relationship to a head of an estate would specifically differ from that of a son. Which list describes your relationship to God best?

4. (v.16) How might the Spirit “testify” with your Spirit that you belong to him?
5. (v.19-22) What all are we told about nature here? How does this guide Christians into a unique approach to nature?

6. (v.18-23) a) What does Paul say is in store for us as children of God? (Make a list) b) What assurance does Paul give in the present time that we will come into glory?

1. (v.28) In what ways does a belief in the promise of v.28 effect the way we face
   a) the good and, b) bad circumstances, and even c) the failures and sins of our
   lives?

2. (v.28) What does Paul say are the two conditions for receiving this promise?
   What does each term mean?

3. (v.28) What does this text imply is the effect of “all things” on those who don’t
   love God? Why do you think the effect is different on them?

4. (v.29-30) How does v.29-30 explain what God’s ultimate “purpose” in history
   is, and also what our ultimate “good” is in v.28?
5. (v.29-30) How many groups or sets of people is he talking about in v.29-30? List the five active verbs in v.29-30 that describe what God does to this group. What does each term mean (remembering that this is the same group of people)?

6. (v.28-31) Why can Paul use the past tense “glorified” when speaking of Christian? What does this tell us about the certainty of our final salvation?

7. (v. 31-39) Paraphrase each of the five questions Paul poses (v. 31-35). Summarize Paul’s answer (v. 36-39) to the questions. How does the answer depend on the doctrine of v. 28-30? What is the practical purpose of the questions?
1. (v.1-5) Why would Paul think about the unbelief of the majority of Israel after chapter 8?

2. (v.4-5) What are each of the benefits enjoyed by Israel (v.4-5) and how does each prepare us and point toward Christ?

3. (v.6-13) How does Paul account for Jewish unbelief and still defend the ‘word’ (promises) of God (v.6)? How does he illustrate and prove his answer from the Old Testament?

4. (v.10-13) Why does Paul say it was Jacob that became a child who inherited the promises to Abraham, but Esau did not?
5. (v.14-16) How does Paul in these 3 verses refute the charge that God is unfair to choose some and reject others?

6. (v.17-23) What does it mean that God ‘hardens’? How does Paul then in verses 19-22 refute the charge that God is unfair to choose some and reject others?

7. Leaving behind the many intellectual questions that ‘election’ raises, what practical, beneficial effects can this doctrine have on the way you live?
1. (9:30-33) What does Paul say here is the reason for Jewish unbelief? Does this contradict what Paul says in 9:14-18? If not, why not and how not?

2. (9:30-33) What is completely ‘topsy-turvy’ about the situation Paul describes in how Jew and Gentile responded to the gospel? Why do you think that people are more concerned about religion and righteousness might be more prone to miss the gospel?

3. (10:1-8) What does Paul give Israel credit for (v.2a)? What does he say is the reason they did not submit to the gospel (v.2b-3)? Why blame them, then? How does Paul show that they should have known the gospel?

4. (10:4) In what specific way is Christ the end of the law? Therefore, in what way(s) is Christ not the end of the law? (Draw on what you have learned previously in Romans).
5. (10:9-13) What do these verses tell us about how to become a Christian?

6. (10:14-17) What do these verses tell us about evangelism? How are faith and hearing the word related in your own life?

7. (10:18-21) Summarize the steps in Paul’s final case for why Israel is inexcusable?
1. (v.1-6) What are the three or four bits of evidence that Paul gives to prove that God has not rejected the Jews?

2. (v.7-10) How does the word ‘retribution’ in v.9 answer the person who says “It is unfair of God to harden a person’s heart and mind toward the gospel! They never had a chance!” (Refer to similar verses in chapter 9 or 10).

3. (v.7) How is it possible to so want to please God that you reject his love for you? Have you seen this happen?

4. (v.11-16) What does Paul mean when he says he seeks to make unbelievers, especially Jewish unbelievers “envy”? Isn’t that stirring up unworthy motives?
5. (v.17-24) How does the olive tree metaphor warn the Gentiles? How does it square with what Paul said in 8:28-38 about the certainty of our salvation?

6. (v. 25-32) What is the ‘mystery’ Paul now reveals?

7. (v.33-36) This is Paul breaking into spontaneous worship! What can we learn about our own worship from this example?
1. (v.1-2) What two things does Paul urge us to do? What do they mean practically?

2. (v.1) a) What does Paul show is the only sufficient motivation for the hard work of Christian living? b) What other motivations are possible and how are they ineffective?

3. (v.1-2) How does Paul explain what is the right way to overcome spiritual stagnation and disobedience? i.e. How can we bring our hearts to “offer” ourselves wholly?

4. (v.3-4) What two mistakes should Christians avoid when thinking of themselves?
5. (v.3-4) From what two sources does a Christian get his or her self-image?

6. (v.3-8) Discern the “steps” or ways that Paul says one should take in order to discern one’s spiritual gifts.

7. (v.6-8) Give each gift a brief definition, on the basis of what you know from the rest of the Bible. Which ones could possibly describe you?
New relationships: Friends and enemies

1. (v.9) What do the three imperatives in this verse have in common? Why are these commands so important for setting up a lifestyle of love?

2. (v.9) How can we love unlovely persons who we do not like and yet still be “sincere”?

3. (v.10-16) Divide the 12-13 exhortations in these verses into 2-3 basic categories. Give a simple Biblical definition of love.

4. (v.10-16) How does the gospel alone make each aspect of love possible?
5. (v.10-16) Many think “sacrificial love” is unhealthy. How do the varied exhortations about love balance each other and prevent extremes?

6. (v.17-21) a) What things are we to do to those who are hostile to us? b) Why are we to do them? (i.e. what are our motives and reasons)?

7. Look at the following list and do a personal inventory. Ask: a) in which 2 of these am I weakest? b) where will I need them next (where will I be tested)? c) what practical steps can I take to strengthen myself in these two areas?

Love the unattractive people but with repentance and sincerity. (v.9)

Love but don’t make the person an idol who leads you to allow him/her to sin or you to sin. (v.9)

Love with dogged affection over the long haul, no matter what. Stay loyal. (v.10-12)

Love by making people feel honored and valuable. Listen and show utmost consideration to those around you. (v.10)

Love by being generous in a practical way with your home, money, and time. (v.13)

Love without bitterness. Don’t pay back or hold resentment against others. (v.14)

Love with empathy. Be willing to be emotionally involved with others. (v.15)

Love with humility, Be willing to associate with people who are very different than you. (v.16)

Love by not avoiding hostile people, but planning appropriate kind and courteous words and deeds. (v.21)
1. (v.1-7) What reasons does Paul give in verses 1-7 why it is right to submit to the authority of the civil government?

2. (v.1-7) How absolute is the state’s power over us? What indication is there in the text that the authority of the state has limits? What indication do you know of elsewhere in the Bible regarding limits to this authority?

3. (v.1-7) a) What is the “job description” of the state — its purposes and functions? b) What is the “job description” of the Christian citizen?

4. In what practical ways do Christians in this country today especially need to heed and apply these principles for understanding and relating to our government?
5. (v. 8-10) Why does vv.8-10 follow v.5-7? How are they related?

6. (v.8-10) a) How does Paul define love? b) How does this answer the person who says, “obedience to the rules of the law is not important — only love is”?

7. (v.11-14) What practical advice does Paul give us here for self-control?
1. (v.2-3, 5, 14, 20-21) What are the differences of opinion between the ‘strong’ and the ‘weak’?

2. (v.3) What do you think is a “weak in faith” Christian? Why does Paul refer to someone like this as “weak”?

3. (v.3, 15) What are the most natural and likely attitudes of the strong toward the weak? the weak toward the strong?

4. What “charges” does Paul make to both strong and weak? Where are the strong doing wrong? Where are the weak?
5. What important theological/Biblical truths does Paul say that weak are forgetting? the strong?

6. What positive advice does he give both the strong and the weak (i.e. what courses of action does he prescribe for each?)

7. Choose one or two issues that divide Christians today. How would Paul’s principles here apply to it?
1. (15:1-3) What sweeping ethical principle is laid down here? How does it go beyond what was discussed in chapter 14?

2. (15:3-4) What can we learn about the role of Scripture in our lives and the life of the church from these verses?

3. (15:5-7) What do these verses teach about the unity of Christians? How does it come?

4. (15:15-24) a) What do these verses teach about Paul’s ministry of ‘evangelism’, of spreading the message of the gospel? b) What can we learn from them today?
5. (15:25-29) What do these verses teach us about the church’s responsibility for so-called “social” needs of people?

6. (16:1-16) What do you learn about the life of the early church from this list of greetings and final notes?

7. (15:1-16:16) Review and list now all the various “ministries” that a community of Christians should be engaged in. Evaluate your own congregation and yourself in light of what you’ve learned.