



R · O · M · A · N · S

NOT ASHAMED of the GOSPEL

DR. ROB GODARD

DEDICATION

Romans is a book that has impacted my life more than any other. Its depth, breadth, and call to trust in God no matter what has enriched my experience of God's love unlike any other book. Romans is a book I could live in and never tire of. Lori, you have impacted my life here on Earth more than any other (outside of God). I could live with you forever and never tire of you. Thank you for helping my life be an adventure. I love you, the four precious boys we are blessed to have entrusted to us by God (Ryan, Jeff, Ben and Graeme, you continue to challenge and amaze me), and the life we have been given to live together. You have enriched my life, and as we take this journey through the book of Romans as a church, I am thankful that you are my closest friend on this journey here on earth.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

It is exciting to serve God at Cloverdale Baptist Church. I am thankful for great elders and deacons, and a staff that seeks God-glorifying excellence. Pastor Les and Elias, well done again on pushing for this to get done. It is good to serve Jesus together in this local church!

I love Jesus' church and am honored to serve her!

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GROWTH GROUPS

There are three reasons for making the development of these study books a priority at Cloverdale Baptist Church:

1. We want to prioritize the hearing and applying of God's Word.

This is essential for the authentication of who God's people are (Matthew 7:21-28); and our growth into being who God wants us to be (Psalm 138:2; James 1:22-25). It is our prayer and desire that this book helps you to focus on what God's Word is saying, and that it helps to lead you into applying His Word to everyday life.

2. We value small group ministry.

It is our belief that small group ministry can produce passion in God's people (Hebrews 10:25), and serve as a protection for God's people (Hebrews 3:12-14). Sin can be deceitful, and hardened hearts can lead to despair. Small group ministry protects us from sin, and engages our hearts for devotion. We would love for all our people to be engaged in small group ministry and in that, grow to love one another, and God, more and more.

3. We are looking for long term change.

It is our hope, as we interact with God's Word together, that these books will help you remember what you are learning and longing to apply. It is our desire that they become for you a tool to look back at, and grow with in the coming years as you continue to progress in conformity to the image of our Lord Jesus (Galatians 4:19). We believe that God's Word is powerful and will not return void (Isaiah 55:11), and it is helpful for His people to have reminders of where He has equipped them for every good work (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

If you are not in a small group we encourage you to join one, and until you do, to use the questions part of this notebook not only for reflection, but to interact with your family and/or friends in a way that is actively seeking to apply the Bible to your life (Deuteronomy 6:1-9).

May our God use this book through the power of His Spirit to bring change in His people for His glory.

OVERVIEW

Perhaps no other letter in the history of the world has had such a tremendous impact as the book of Romans.

John MacArthur states, *“Most, if not all, of the great revivals and reformations in the history of the church have been directly related to the book of Romans...It’s commonly agreed that the Epistle to the Romans is one of the greatest Christian writings. It is power has been demonstrated again and again at critical points in the history of the church.”*

As I long for revival in my own life and in this church, Romans is one of the most powerful places to go to produce it in us.

Romans is written somewhere between 56-58 A.D.; Paul is in Corinth on his third missionary journey and longing to be a part of what is going on in the Roman church. The book is about life change as an overflow of experiencing the Gospel (1:5, 16-17). It draws us closer to God so we can without shame draw others in the same direction.

It is not a systematic theology, and yet the theology in the book of Romans is overwhelmingly rich, with each part adding to the whole and leaving every Spirit-filled believer overwhelmed with God’s love. Romans is a book that changes the world by changing people. So, as we prayerfully engage in this journey together, may we offer ourselves afresh to God, to the impact of His Gospel, and the glory of the message of this letter.

Oh that we would be revived in our passion and first love for God as we experience His love!

KEY WORDS & CONCEPTS IN ROMANS¹

Condemnation: This is a word used in Romans to show God’s right view of sinful humanity in their guilt before Him. It is what He views us as (condemned) in showing what we rightly deserve because of our sin and is the opposite of justification.

Faith: Hebrews 11:1, 6 describes it as being certain of what we hope for and certain of what we cannot see. It is also something that allows us to please God, and without it, it becomes impossible to please God. Perhaps simply understood, it is “the unqualified acceptance of and dependence on the completed work of Jesus Christ to secure God’s mercy toward believers (Swindoll)”. It is all of grace (Ephesians 2:1-10) and is essential for salvation and sanctification.

Flesh: As used in theology, it describes the identity of humans who are not saved by grace through faith and the orientation that believers battle after being saved. Those who belong to Jesus battle the flesh, the world, and the devil. The battle against the flesh is a battle against habits and patterns of thinking that are in opposition to God and are ultimately self-centred.

Glorification: This is the end of salvation. It will be the reality that all who die in Christ receive, most fully, when Jesus returns for His church. This will include an absolute freedom from sin and its consequences and a beauty in conformity to Christ in incorruptible perfect bodies that will last for all eternity in the presence of God.

Gospel: The word Gospel simply means “good news”. When Christians use this term, they mean the good news about Jesus Christ.

This includes the Holiness of God and His demand for perfection and the fallenness of humans and their sin that falls short of God’s glory; the wonder of life, death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus and the call to respond to this grace by faith in Jesus alone.

The Gospel is, broadly speaking, the entire Bible, but simply it is focused on Jesus and the cross.

A good summary of the Gospel from 9 Marks is:

1. God. God is the creator of all things (Gen. 1:1). He is perfectly holy, worthy of all worship, and will punish sin (1 John 1:5, Rev. 4:11, Rom. 2:5-8).

¹ Idea taken from Swindoll, Charles: Coming To Terms With Sin. IFL

2. Man. All people, though created good, have become sinful by nature (Gen. 1:26-28, Ps. 51:5, Rom. 3:23). From birth, all people are alienated from God, hostile to God, and subject to the wrath of God (Eph. 2:1-3).

3. Christ. Jesus Christ, who is fully God and fully man, lived a sinless life, died on the cross to bear God's wrath in the place of all who would believe in him, and rose from the grave in order to give his people eternal life (John 1:1, 1 Tim. 2:5, Heb. 7:26, Rom. 3:21-26, 2 Cor. 5:21, 1 Cor. 15:20-22).

4. Response. God calls everyone everywhere to repent of their sins and trust in Christ in order to be saved (Mark 1:15, Acts 20:21, Rom. 10:9-10).

(Some of this material has been adapted from *The Gospel and Personal Evangelism* by Mark Dever, p. 43) <https://www.9marks.org/answer/what-gospel/>

Grace: God's unmerited favour given to sinners who deserve His wrath and from Him receive good. Being saved by grace includes the reality that there is nothing in humans that could earn or cause them to deserve being saved, but God who is rich in grace chooses in that grace to save those who deserve wrath. Sometimes an acrostic for this has been used: "*God's Riches At Christ's Expense*". It is good but leaves out the underserved nature of this. Instead of receiving God's wrath and judgment, which all humans deserve, those who experience saving grace receive His love and blessing. Salvation is *all of grace*.

Justification: This is a precious word that some have defined as "*the declared reality for Christians that we are righteous — just as if I had never sinned*", and that is helpful, but awesomely it is more; it includes "*just as if I had always obeyed*". Swindoll helpfully defines it like this, "*God's declaration or pronouncement that sinners, upon believing in Christ, are righteous because of Christ—even though still in a sinning state.*" Those who believe are *declared righteous*.

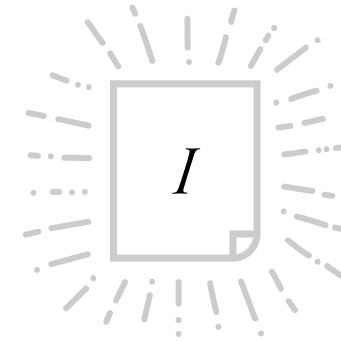
Propitiation: This is the satisfaction of God's wrath against sin through the shed blood of Jesus on the cross. For Christians it is the reality that God's wrath that is rightly being poured out against sin and sinners has been satisfied on their behalf by Jesus (2 Corinthians 5:21).

Regeneration: This word refers to rebirth, or being born again. Humans are born in sin, and are dead in their trespasses and sin. Spiritual birth results in regeneration and changes who the believer is. Christ is formed in their hearts, and they are made partakers in the divine nature (2 Corinthians 5:17).

Sanctification: The basic meaning of "*sanctify*", is to be set apart. As this word is used, it is the pursuit of becoming who we are, or the pursuit of holiness. It is the process by which Christians move towards practical holiness. It is the growth process towards being like Jesus (Romans 8:29). God's Spirit works in His followers to will and to act as they discipline their lives for holiness.

Sin: Sin is anything that falls short of God's glory. It means to have missed the mark, and humans are sinful by nature, nurture, and choice. The condition that sin places humans under is called slavery, and freedom can only be found in Christ. It is a transgression of God's holy law and includes action and passivity. It places humans under God's righteous holy judgment as those born in sin who are slaves to sin and continue to sin.

Sovereignty: What does it mean that God is sovereign? It means that God is *all powerful, all knowing, and all wise* and is working everything out in conformity to the purpose of His Will (Ephesians 1:11). He is over all things and is the *sovereign ruler*.



UNASHAMED OF THE GOSPEL OF JESUS CHRIST

Romans 1:1-17

The book of Romans is one of the most important books that has ever been written. MacArthur states, *"Most, if not all of the great revivals and reformations in the history of the church have been directly related to the book of Romans"*. It is a book that followers of Jesus cherish because of its richness in theology and the way it can be worked out in everyday life. It is a book about the way the Gospel can become the centre of the life of the follower or the believer, or more simply, it displays to followers of Jesus what Gospel-centred living looks like. This book is worth spending time getting to know, for through it we will meet the God of the Bible, see His Gospel plan more fully, and allow this plan to infiltrate and dominate our lives.

I am not ashamed of the Gospel! Oh that we will come together to know and live this rich gift from God to us!

UNASHAMED OF THE GOSPEL OF JESUS CHRIST

ROMANS 1:1-17

Introduction

"Most, if not all, of the great revivals and reformations in the history of the church have been directly related to the book of Romans." ²

"It is commonly agreed that the Epistle to the Romans is one of the greatest Christian writings. Its power has been demonstrated again and again at critical points in the history of the church." Source unknown

1. Gospel obedience | VERSES 1-5

2. Gospel obligation | VERSES 14-15

3. Gospel orientation | VERSES 16-17

- It is the power of God

- It saves

- It is for everyone...who believes

- It produces righteousness

Implications

- Be Romans saturated

- Be unashamed of the Gospel

- Be authentic

²MacArthur, John. Romans 1-8. Pg. ix.

EXTRA NOTES

EXTRA NOTES



GROWTH GROUP QUESTIONS

ROMANS 1:1-17

- How has the book of Romans impacted your life in the past?

 - Discuss together how the book of Romans has impacted Christian history.
 - > Why do you think its impact has been so profound?

 - Romans 1:5 tells us why Paul is writing this letter, as well as summing up the passion of his life...why is this significant?

 - If people are not living out the obedience of faith for the sake of His name, what does this mean?

 - Why was Paul thankful to God for the Romans (Verses 8-10)? Why is this something that Paul is thankful to God for?
- What does it mean to be, "*under obligation*," for Paul? For us?

 - How does this change how we live our lives?
 - > How did it change how Paul lived his life?

 - What does it mean to be unashamed of the Gospel?

 - How will this show in everyday life?

 - Go over the four reasons that Paul gives to not be ashamed of the Gospel, and discuss why they should motivate believers to be unashamed?

 - How do these first 17 verses help you to know you are authentic in your faith and challenge you to be a fully devoted follower of Jesus?

EXTRA NOTES

EXTRA NOTES

PRAYER

Prayer is a central part of our growing together. At Cloverdale Baptist Church, we want our prayers to be Biblical and thus will be patterning our prayers in this growth book on biblical prayers. Our hope is that as each group follows the patterns, they would be a blessing to you in your corporate prayers and training for you in your private prayers.

The first, a pattern to help remember the privilege of taking things to God and how we should do that. Read the texts and follow the pattern they lay out.

PHILIPPIANS 4:4-7

"Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice. ⁵ Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand; ⁶ do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. ⁷ And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."

REJOICE IN THE LORD

Start your prayer time with a focus on God and praising Him. In Him, no matter what is happening in the world, we can find joy. As you rejoice in Him, focus on who He is, and praise Him for the attributes that He brings to your mind.

REST IN THE LORD

"Do not be anxious" This is a command. As we pray to the LORD, we know He is sovereign, good, and loving, so we can rest in Him completely. Take the time to declare your dependence and trust on Him, and where you find your heart anxious, confess that and ask for peace.

THANKSGIVING

Spend time in thanksgiving. This is so important to us in our prayers both as a reminder and also in obedience to His command to be thankful (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18). Seek to be thankful in all of your prayers, and if you feel there is not much to be thankful for, focus on the Gospel.

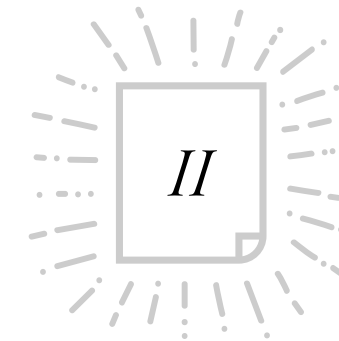
SUPPLICATION

This is an opportunity to bring before the LORD any and all requests and concerns you have. Remember nothing is too small for God if it is on your heart. Share with one another any requests you have. Please pray for us as a church as we kick off many of our ministries in the next few weeks.

MEMORIZE & MEDITATE

"Through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of his name among all the nations"

ROMANS 1:5



THE ROADS TO DESTRUCTION

Romans 1:18-32

To understand the Gospel one must understand that it is the good news of salvation. Key to this understanding and depth of experience is understanding and experiencing what we are saved from. Romans 1:18-32 is one of the key passages in the Bible in helping us to grow in our grasp of what it means to be under God's wrath, and in pointing us to the reality of finding our exclusive hope in Jesus and the cross. This passage is one that focuses on Gentiles or those who do not have Biblical knowledge of God, and yet it shows clearly why all humans are without excuse and helps us to see the pathway to destruction so that we can avoid it!

This is a passage that shows us that what displeases God is when He is not acknowledged as God, honored, or thanked. Therefore authentic believers who experience God's amazing grace and the salvation that comes from the wrath of God will acknowledge Him as God, glorify Him in all they say and do, and spend their time thanking Him.

THE ROADS TO DESTRUCTION

ROMANS 1:18-32

Introduction

1. The portrait of God | VERSES 18-20

"One of the most striking things about the Bible is the vigor with which both Testaments emphasize the reality and terror of God's wrath." J. I. Packer

ROMANS 5:6-11

EPHESIANS 5:6

COLOSSIANS 3:5-6

2. The pathway of rejection | VERSES 18-23

- Rejection of truth

- Rejection of honoring God

- Rejection of thanking God

3. The pain of our rejection | VERSES 24-32

- Futile thinking

- Worship of false gods

JEREMIAH 2:12-13

- Impurity & the pain it brings

Implications

- Salvation is needed from God's wrath

- Our worldview must be wordy, not worldly

- Our lives must acknowledge God, honor God, & give thanks to God

EXTRA NOTES

EXTRA NOTES



GROWTH GROUP QUESTIONS

ROMANS 1:18-32

- Read Romans 1:16-32

- Why do you think that immediately after sharing the power of the Gospel, Paul talks about the wrath of God?

- What is the wrath of God being talked about here?

- Why is it so important to God for us to know about this (Romans 5:6-11)?

- Why do you think that we struggle understanding this attribute of God?

- What does it mean to suppress the truth?
 - > How can we avoid this?

- What does it mean to NOT acknowledge God?
 - > How can we avoid this?

- What does it mean to NOT honor God?
 - > How can we avoid this?

- What does it mean to *not* be thankful?
 - > How can we be thankful?

- What does it mean that God, “*gives them over*”?

- In our cultural context, discuss the content of: *futile thinking, worship of false gods, impurity*:

- How can we be those who help our world see more clearly?

- Interact with Pastor Rob’s implications:
 - > Salvation is needed from God’s wrath
 - > Our worldview must be biblical, not worldly
 - > Our lives must acknowledge God, honor God, and give thanks to God

- How do we best apply this passage of Scripture to our lives?

EXTRA NOTES

EXTRA NOTES

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Psalms is the Bible's prayer and praise book and so valuable to help us shape our prayers and songs.

PSALM 9:1

"I will give thanks to the LORD with my whole heart; I will recount all of your wonderful deeds."

PSALM 107:1-2

*"Oh give thanks to the LORD, for he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever!
 2 Let the redeemed of the LORD say so, whom he has redeemed from trouble."*

The focus of this time of prayer will be on **thanksgiving** and seeking God's glory. Spend time praying with your eyes open recounting with thanksgiving the great things that God has done. If this takes all your time, rejoice it has been spent well.

IF YOU HAVE MORE TIME

Pray that we would be God-centred and God-glorifying as a church and as individuals. Pray that our view of God would be more and more Biblical and our pursuit of God's glory more and more fruitful.

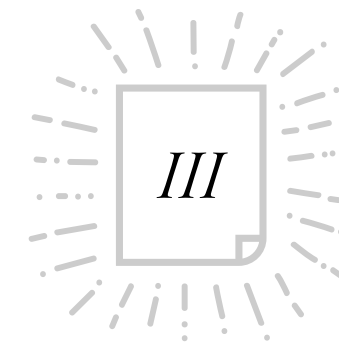
IF YOU HAVE EVEN MORE TIME

Share different requests you have in your group, and pray for one another.

MEMORIZE & MEDITATE

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

ROMANS 1:16



CANADA, WE HAVE A PROBLEM

Romans 1:18–2:29

As we look around us at this nation of Canada, it is easy to see we have a problem. We are perhaps the greatest nation on earth, and yet there are so many hurting people. East Hastings exists, sin seems to be running rampant, and there is an insanity of thinking that seems to define us.

Romans is so helpful in explaining the situation we are in and also showing us how we got here and how to get out. Knowing the problem is key to knowing how to solve the problem. Romans, this book about the greatness and power of salvation, begins its journey with showing the problem that humans are in. And Canada, we have a problem in which only Jesus can offer hope.

CANADA, WE HAVE A PROBLEM

ROMANS 1:18-2:29

Introduction

1. Sexual sin | VERSES 1:24; 26-27

2. Mental sin | VERSE 1:28

3. Rampant sins | VERSES 1:28-32

4. Religious sin | VERSES 2:1-11

Implications

- Passion for Jesus & people

- Avoid religious judgmentalism

- Acknowledge God in all of life

PSALM 16:8

EXTRA NOTES

EXTRA NOTES



GROWTH GROUP QUESTIONS

ROMANS 1:18-2:29

- If you were defining the main problems that Canada has, what would you say they are?
- Read Romans 1:18-32
- God's Word is clear on sexual sin being one of the things that the world is given over to.
 - > Where do you see this?
- How can we as a church choose purity and encourage our people to be pure?
- Why do you think that the Bible is so clear on the evil of homosexuality?
 - > Why do you think so many churches are ignoring this now?
 - > How can we love those who struggle with this sin as we stand firm on the Biblical truth that sex is to happen only in marriage between a man and a woman.
- Discuss why, from this passage, God gave them over to sexual sin.
- What do you think a depraved mind is (verse 28)?
- How does it display itself in our world today?
- Discuss why, from this passage, God gave them over to a depraved mind?
- Why do you think this list is included in Romans 1:28-30?
- Chapter 2 is all about religious sin: why is this important for us to hear?
- Review the implications from Pastor Rob's sermon. How you individually and as a group apply these?
 - > Passion for Jesus and people
 - > Avoid religious judgmentalism
 - > Acknowledge God in all of life
- What is the best way we as Christians can impact the world around us (Romans 1:16-17)?
- Why do you think Jerry Bridges said, "*living in the conscious presence of God is the key to revival*"? How can we do this (Psalm 16:8)?

EXTRA NOTES

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Psalms is the Bible's prayer and praise book and so valuable to help us shape our prayers and songs.

PSALM 51:10

"Create in me a clean heart, O God and renew a right spirit within me."

PHILIPPIANS 1:9-11

"And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment,¹⁰ so that you may approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ,¹¹ filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God."

Purity is a major issue in Canadian Christianity, and this shouldn't surprise us as it has been throughout history. Spend time as you begin praying focusing on God's holiness. Reflect on Isaiah 6:1-4

Praise God in the splendour of His holiness...

CONFESSION

Spend time privately as individuals (in your minds) confessing your sins to God and longing for purity. (Read together 1 John 1:9 to close this time in prayer).

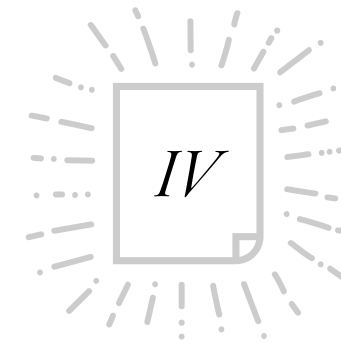
Pray for an **abounding love** in your life and the life of our church. This is seen in self-sacrificial service of others. Pray that we would know what is right, and rejoice in this knowledge and pursuit. Pray that we would hate what God hates and love what God loves, so that through this, we would be a people who approve what is excellent. Pray that we would bear fruit in personal righteousness and in our pursuit of a culture of evangelism.

OTHER PRAYER REQUESTS:

MEMORIZE & MEDITATE

"I have set the Lord always before me; because he is at my right hand, I shall not be shaken."

PSALM 16:8



CANADA, IT IS WORSE THAN YOU THINK

Romans 3:1-20

We live in a world that downplays the consequences of sin even as it experiences them. War is imminent, depravity rampant, rape, abortion, abuse, personal hopelessness, suicide abound, and we could go on. We live in a fallen and broken world, and as heartbreaking as the above list is, it is worse than that. We are separated from the God of the Bible through our inability to keep His law. We are sinners who don't seek Him and because of that are under judgement. The law helps, but in this case, only to show us how sinful we actually are. No matter how hard we try, we can't be declared approved in His sight by human works.

The power of the Gospel is most beautifully displayed in the knowledge of the holiness of God and honesty of our own lost-ness. We have an *emergency*, and the only thing to do is to cry out to God and cling to the Savior, as we discover the *power of the Gospel!*

CANADA, IT IS WORSE THAN YOU THINK

ROMANS 3:1-20

Introduction

1. The smoke screen

2. The wind of the Word

- Sin is discovered when we see God | VERSES 2:16; 3:11, 18-19

- Sin comes to everyone | VERSES 3:9-12

- Sin affects every part of everyone | VERSES 3:13-17

- Sin removes all self-hope | VERSES 3:19-20

EXODUS 20:1-17

MATTHEW 5:21-30

Implications | **EMERGENCY**

1. Recognize who God is

2. Repent of all sin

3. Rejoice in the Gospel

EXTRA NOTES

EXTRA NOTES



GROWTH GROUP QUESTIONS

ROMANS 3:1-20

- Why do you think Paul spends so much time on what it means to be lost?
- Why do you think Paul doesn't spend a lot of time on the immorality details of the Roman culture or Jewish people (some) but rather focuses on God?
- What are the smoke screens that this text displays?
- How do we set up smoke screens in our lives so that we don't have to deal with God's holiness or our sin?
- What are the main smoke screens you think people in church use? In culture?
- How do we allow God's Word to blow the smoke away?
- Do you think people in the church have a Biblical view of sin? (Romans 3:1-20)
 - > Do you?
- What does it mean that sin must always be understood in its relationship to God?
 - > Why is this important to realize?
- How can we communicate that sin comes to everyone in a victim-mentality culture?
- What does it mean that humans are "*totally depraved*"?
 - > Why is it important to realize this?
- Respond to: "*Sin removes all earthly hope.*"
- Walk together through the **implications** of the message asking the following questions:
 - > What are they?
 - > Are there other implications that you would add to these?
 - > How can you apply these personally?
 - > How can you help us sound the alarm in our community (each one reach one)?
 - > What are some ways we can deepen our joy in the Gospel (1 Peter 1:8)?
 - > How does understanding this passage deepen our appreciation and experience of the Gospel?

EXTRA NOTES

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EPHESIANS 3:14-21

"For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, ¹⁵ from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, ¹⁶ that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, ¹⁷ so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, ¹⁸ may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, ¹⁹ and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

²⁰ Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, ²¹ to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen."

Start your prayers by rejoicing in God being your Father. This is an amazing reality that Packer states, "You sum up the whole of New Testament religion if you describe it as the knowledge of God as one's holy Father. If you want to judge how well a person understands Christianity, find out how much he makes of the thought of being God's child, and having God as his Father. If this is not the thought that prompts and controls his worship and prayers and his whole outlook on life, it means that he does not understand Christianity very well at all." Rejoice in your sonship!

SUPPLICATIONS

- Growing Faith
- Experience of God's Love
- Be Filled To The Fullness Of God

PRAISE

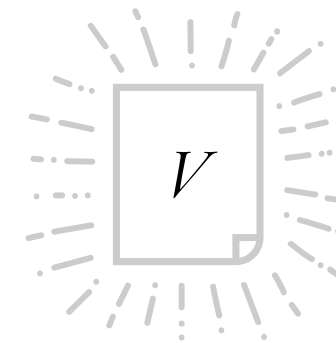
- Focus on verses 20-21
- He Is Able
- He Is Glorious



MEMORIZE & MEDITATE

"But with you there is forgiveness, that you may be feared."

PSALM 130:4



BUT NOW: THE RIGHTEOUSNESS WE NEED

Romans 3:21-31

There are some who think that verse 21 contain the greatest words in the entire bible, *but now...* This is what many of the leading pastors and theologians consider the greatest paragraph in the Bible. It is a passage filled with hope and a call for Christians to believe in the God of the Bible and what He has provided.

May God use this passage and this message to enlarge our hearts, enliven our passion, and enrich lives lived for His glory.

BUT NOW: THE RIGHTEOUSNESS WE NEED

ROMANS 3:21–31

Introduction

Donald Grey Barnhouse said, *“I am convinced after these many years of Bible study that these verses are the most important in the Bible.”*

Piper said, *“I want so much for my young people, my children, you and all the adults of our church to build your lives on this chapter and this paragraph, to make it the sun at the centre of the solar system of your lives. I believe that most people’s lives are out of kilter because they don’t have the sun, the gospel as the centre of their solar system, so the planets of all their lives are banging into each other with all kinds of odd gravitational pulls, because nothing is working because the sun isn’t at the centre. Other things besides this massive, glorious gospel of God aren’t at the centre.”*

Boice said, *“There is nothing in all of life and history that is more important than these teachings.”*

1. Jesus Offers Salvation | VERSES 3:22-26

- Jesus Christ Offers Salvation As A Grace Gift | VERSE 24

- Jesus Offers Justification | VERSE 24

- Jesus Paid The Redemption Price | VERSES 24-25

- Jesus Satisfied God’s Wrath By His Blood | VERSE 25

2. We must believe | VERSES 22–31

HEBREWS 11:1

3. Everything is changed | VERSE 31

- This gives us a right view of God

- This provides the opportunity for a right relationship with God

- This causes us to seek God’s Glory in all of life

GALATIANS 6:14

Implications

- Gospel-centred living

- Live with passion

EXTRA NOTES

EXTRA NOTES



GROWTH GROUP QUESTIONS

ROMANS 3:21-31

- What do you think the most important paragraph in the Bible is?
 - > Why do you think this?

- Why do you think that Boice, Piper, and others think that this passage is the most important in Scripture?

- Read Romans 3:21-31
- What does it mean that Jesus offers salvation?

- Why is it so significant that this is a grace gift from Him?
 - > How does this change how we respond to this gift?

- What does the word *justification* mean?

- Why is it important to know these words?

- What does it mean that Jesus redeemed us? 1 PETER 1:18-19

- What does the word *propitiation* mean?

- How does this help us to know the heart of God better?

- Why does this text emphasize our response of faith so strongly?

- How does this help us grasp Ephesians 2:1-10 better?

- Define *faith* together as a group. HEBREWS 11:1

- Share the Gospel with one another in a short and simple manner.

- What does it mean that everything has changed?

- Why do you think for so many Christians this is not the case?

- How does this passage help us to understand the heart of God?

- Read Galatians 6:14
- What is Gospel-centred living?

- What does this mean for you personally in terms of passionate living?

EXTRA NOTES

EXTRA NOTES

PRAYER

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1 THESSALONIANS 1:2-3

*"We always thank God for all of you and continually mention you in our prayers.
³ We remember before our God and Father your work produced by faith, your labor prompted by love, and your endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ."*

This prayer thanks God for the growth of His people. God gets all the glory. Start by thanking God for the Gospel. Thank God for His work in your life to help you become obedient. Take time to think through people who have ministered to you and thank God for them.

Ask God to work in your (and your group and our church) life so that:

- You have faith that overflows into works
- You have love that overflows into labor
- You have endurance that is inspired by your hope in God

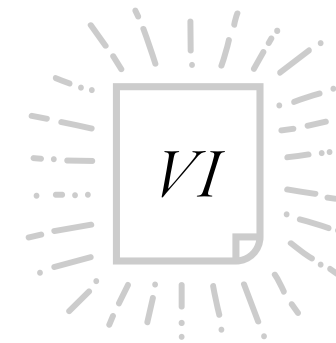
Pray this for our pastors, elders and deacons.

OTHER REQUESTS:

MEMORIZE & MEDITATE

"For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴ and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus."

ROMANS 3:23-24



GOSPEL LIVING: AIM TO PLEASE HIM

Romans 1-3

In the last message, we looked at the most important passage in the Bible according to many scholars. Once understood, looking back from it will show us how to live.

This message shows how to please God effectively as an overflow of Gospel-centred living. The Gospel in this case is not only essential in terms of our motivation but also our joy. The Gospel motivates us for we now see true love and experience God's love. It is also our joy, as so often in pursuing a life that pleases God, guilt and shame at how far we fall short can overwhelm us...so the Gospel lays the foundation as well as gives the motivation for a life that pleases God. Only as we move forward in grace can we continue to move forward in joy. The closer we get to Him, the more we will realize how much we need His grace, and so we must live in that grace as we go hard after holiness!

My prayer is that as we reflect on these chapters of holy Scripture, we will discover together the richness of a community that makes it our aim to *please Him!*

GOSPEL LIVING: AIM TO PLEASE HIM

ROMANS 1-3

Introduction

PHILIPPIANS 1:21

2 CORINTHIANS 5:6-9

Make it your aim to please him! Yes, but how?

1. The power of the Gospel

2. The pursuit of God's pleasure

ROMANS TOP 10

1. Pursuing Godliness & righteousness | VERSE 18

EPHESIANS 5:1-2

1 TIMOTHY 4:8

2. Pursuing biblical truth | VERSE 18

ROMANS 12:1-2

MATTHEW 7:21-27

2 TIMOTHY 4:3

3. Pursuing the honor of God | VERSE 21

1 CORINTHIANS 10:31

1 PETER 2:11-12

REVELATION 4:10-11

4. Overflows in thanksgiving to God | VERSE 21

1 THESSALONIANS 5:16-19

PHILIPPIANS 4:4-7

5. Pursuing a biblical view of God | VERSE 25

6. Pursuing exclusive worship of God | VERSE 25

ROMANS 12:1-2

7. Pursuing awareness of His presence | VERSE 28

PSALM 16:8

8. Overflowing approval of what God approves | VERSE 32

PHILIPPIANS 4:8

9. Living a life of repentance | VERSE 2:1

1 JOHN 1:9

10. Living in the fear of the LORD | VERSE 2:18

Implications

- Be Gospel-centred
- Make it your goal to please Him
- Go and live for His honor together

EXTRA NOTES

EXTRA NOTES



GROWTH GROUP QUESTIONS

ROMANS 1-3

- Why do you think so few of us seek to please God as the underlying motive for our lives?

- How can we gain this passion more and more to make it our aim to please Him?

- Meditate on 2 Corinthians 5:6-9.

- What will this look like in life?

- Read Romans 1:16-2:1.
- Why is the Gospel-centred life key to finding victory in these areas?

- Look through Pastor Rob's list of attributes of those who make it their aim to please God, for each:

> Define it in your own words

> Describe what this looks like practically

> Discuss how you can show this in your life

- As you close, remind one another what Gospel-centred living is, and why it is so important as an attribute for those who desire to please God

EXTRA NOTES

EXTRA NOTES

PRAYER

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ROMANS 1:8-10

"First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because your faith is proclaimed in all the world. ⁹ For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son, that without ceasing I mention you ¹⁰ always in my prayers, asking that somehow by God's will I may now at last succeed in coming to you."

Start in *thanksgiving* as we have for so many of our prayer times in this study. Please thank God for those who serve you: pastors, elders, deacons, and missionaries.

Key Prayer Request From This Text: That we would be servants and God would open up clear pathways for us to serve Him by building His body.

- Pray for a servant's heart (for you and the church)
- Pray for opportunities
- Pray that CBC would be a place filled with people full of God who serve Him with joy!

OTHER REQUESTS:

MEMORIZE & MEDITATE

"So whether we are at home or away,
we make it our aim to please him."

2 CORINTHIANS 5:9



OVERWHELMED BY FORGIVENESS

Romans 4:7-8

Forgiveness is one of the realities in our world that is hard to experience or practice. It is one of the most precious gifts we can receive from God and one of the most important gifts we can offer to those around us.

When we truly grasp the depth of our forgiveness, it is overwhelming! God's Word uses stories that are from the history of Israel to help us gain a new experiential understanding of what it is to delight in being forgiven!

My prayer is that Romans 4 will become for you a precious reminder of what God has done for you, a practical tool to deepen your delight in His forgiveness, and a push to be Word-saturated so that His promises and Person allow us to respond to all of life in a way that displays that we walk by faith and not by sight.

OVERWHELMED BY FORGIVENESS

ROMANS 4:7-8

Introduction

- The treasure of faith | VERSES 1-17

- What does faith look like? | VERSES 18-25

God is the object of faith

- Abraham believed that God gives life to the dead

- Abraham believed that God creates things from nothing

- God's promises are always true

Implications

- Be God-centred

- Be free

- Be Word-saturated

- Be impacted

EXTRA NOTES

EXTRA NOTES



GROWTH GROUP QUESTIONS

ROMANS 4:7-8

- Why do you think we so often struggle with not being overwhelmed by God's forgiveness?
 - What are some ways we can understand and experience the preciousness of His forgiveness more richly?
 - Why is seeing God's holiness (Isaiah 6) so key to seeing our sin, our need for forgiveness, and the rich reality of the experience of being forgiven?
 - What are some ways you can know God's holiness more personally?
 - Why is faith so central to Romans 4?
 - How does Paul use Genesis 15 to back up his argument?
 - Take the time to define and describe faith as a group.
 - > Interact with Hebrews 11:1-6
 - Why is it essential we understand that the God of the Bible is the object of our faith?
- What does Abraham's faith teach us? **HEBREWS 11:8-19**
 - How do the promises of God help us obey even when it is difficult? How did they help Abraham?
 - Interacting with Pastor Rob's implications:
 - What does it mean to be God-centred? How can you do this in your life?
 - What does it mean to be free? How can you be free in your life?
 - What does it mean to be Word-saturated? How can you do this in your life?
 - What is the impact God wants us to have from this text?
 - > How can you get it?
 - What are some ideas you have to deepen your experience of God's forgiveness of you?

EXTRA NOTES

EXTRA NOTES

PRAYER

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ROMANS 15:5-6

"May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus,⁶ that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."

The prayer guiding our groups is a prayer for unity. It begins with encouragement in terms of God's character and what He provides, so we will begin there.

Start in praise: Take the time to brainstorm together on the attributes of God, and then state those attributes in praise back to God.

PETITION

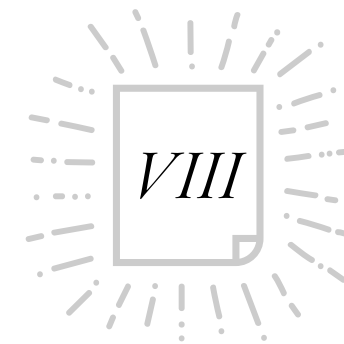
- That we would be people who endure in God's strength in the ministries and life He has given us.
- That we would be encouragers who are encouraged.
- Unity for our Growth Groups and church:
 - > That we would have harmony
 - > That our unity would be around Jesus Christ
 - > That we would glorify Him in our unity

OTHER REQUESTS:

MEMORIZE & MEDITATE

"Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven, and whose sins are covered;⁸ blessed is the man against whom the Lord will not count his sin."

ROMANS 4:7-8



ABSOLUTE SECURITY IN CHRIST

Romans 5:1-2

We live in an age of anxiety, and yet the Bible tells us not to be anxious about anything (Philippians 4:4-6). How do we obey a command like this when our reality and frailty teach us to experience anything but assurance?

The Bible has a lot to teach us about who God is and what He has done. When we understand these and respond in faith, we will discover that God's Spirit leads us in faith to *absolute security*.

If you have been struggling with anxiety and insecurity, it would be my prayer that in the midst of the storm, you would experience in faith the reality of who God is and what He has done for you and find *peace*!

 **ABSOLUTE SECURITY
IN CHRIST****ROMANS 5:1-2**Introduction

ECCLESIASTES 3:15

1. I am justified in Christ

Douglas Moo States, *“Justification effects for the believer a new and permanent status... it is a once for all act by which God acquits the sinner.”*

2. I have peace with God

3. I have access to God

HEBREWS 10:19-22

4. I have joy in hope

2 CORINTHIANS 3:18

Implications

- Realize this is true and life changing!

- I am justified

- I have peace with God

- I have access to God

- I have joy in hope

- Everything is different!

Preach the Gospel to yourself every day!

EXTRA NOTES

EXTRA NOTES



GROWTH GROUP QUESTIONS

ROMANS 5:1-2

- Why is understanding, experiencing, and reminding ourselves of the Gospel so *important*?

- How can we learn to see ourselves as God sees us?

- Why is it so important to understand the theological terms that the Bible gives us to grasp who we are?

- Define together what it means that we are *justified in Christ*.
 - > Why is this so important to experience?

- Define together what it means to have *peace with God*.
 - > Why is this so important?

- Define together what it means to have *access to God*.

> Why is this so important?

- Define together what it means to have *joy in hope*.

> Why is this so important?

- What are some ways you can deepen your understanding of these realities?

- How can you deepen your experience of these realities?

- How does security flow from knowing who God is and what He has done for us?

EXTRA NOTES

EXTRA NOTES

PRAYER

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LUKE 10:2

"And he said to them, 'The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.'"

This is more of a prayer request from Jesus than a pattern for prayer, and as such we will seek to pray for what He has requested us to pray for.

PRAISE

Take time as you begin to praise God for so great a salvation! That we as God's people would be faithful in our experience of the Gospel!

MISSIONARIES

Take the time to pray for the missionaries from our church whom you know. Pray for other missionaries.

CULTURE OF EVANGELISM

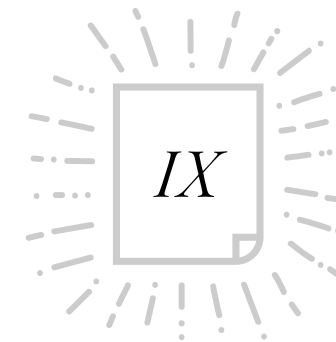
We are seeking to build a culture of evangelism at Cloverdale Baptist Church, meaning we want each one to reach one. We desire that all attendees who know Jesus are aware of the harvest field and are seeking to be workers in that harvest as Jesus' ambassadors.

- Pray that you would have a Gospel-inspired heart to reach out.
- Pray this for our church.
- Pray that we would bear much fruit.
- Pray that those seeking to help us build this culture of evangelism would have wisdom and success.
- Pray that we would bear much fruit and that this fruit would last!

MEMORIZE & MEDITATE

"And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ."

PHILIPPIANS 1:6



ABSOLUTE TRUST: IN SUFFERING

Romans 5:3-4

They say the only two things that are guaranteed are death and taxes, and if understood correctly, you could say the only thing in life all of us can be sure of is suffering!

If God is truly Sovereign (and He is), why do bad things happen to good people? God's Word never gives us the full detailed answer that we often want, but it does give us a helpful structure that shapes our worldview and can give us the strength to trust Him in all of life and all suffering. As we study Romans, one of the beautiful life changing things we will see on display is that suffering is used by God to accomplish His will for His glory. Romans 5 is a great place for us to begin to understand this.

My prayer is that God would use the study of this chapter to deepen our understanding and experience of His love so that we can live all of life in absolute trust, and when we suffer, we can rejoice!

ABSOLUTE TRUST: IN SUFFERING

ROMANS 5:3-4

Introduction

There is **discipline** suffering

HEBREWS 12:5-7

There is **delightful** suffering

There is **dissension** suffering

There is **dependence** suffering

2 CORINTHIANS 12:9-10

There is **development** suffering

1. Suffering produces endurance

2. Endurance produces character

3. Character produces hope

4. Hope displays dependence

Implications

- Discover God's purpose in your suffering

- Rejoice in your suffering!

EXTRA NOTES

EXTRA NOTES



GROWTH GROUP QUESTIONS

ROMANS 5:3-4

- Why do you think so many Christians suffer?

 - How can we learn to see suffering in a Biblical way?

 - Why would the Bible tell us to rejoice in our suffering, or "*consider it pure joy*"?

 - Together discuss each of the purposes of Christian suffering that Pastor Rob talked about:
 - > Discipline Suffering

 - > Delightful Suffering

 - > Dissension Suffering

 - > Dependence Suffering

 - > Development Suffering
- Romans 5 displays in a beautiful way how God uses suffering to produce endurance, character, and hope. In a practical way describe how this has happened to you.

 - Have you seen this happen in others' lives?

 - If you don't see it in the midst of suffering, how can you have hope that allows you to suffer in a confident way?

 - How does Romans 8:28-29 help in your desire to suffer in a God-honouring way?

 - How can we as God's people (you as a Growth Group) be an encouragement to one another in the midst of suffering and do it in a way that honours God?

EXTRA NOTES

EXTRA NOTES

PRAYER

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HEBREWS 4:14-16

"Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. ¹⁵ For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. ¹⁶ Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need."

PRAISE

Begin your time in praise of God for so great a salvation. Jesus has accomplished this for us, and we rejoice in this!

PETITION

This is an encouragement for us to go to the One who helps us with mercy and grace in our time of need.

SPIRITUAL NEED

Spend time asking God to keep you from temptation and to stand firm and display the beauty of His grace in all of life.

SPIRITUAL NEED

Pray for those in your sphere of influence who don't know Jesus.

PHYSICAL NEED

Pray for those who in your knowledge, are struggling with physical needs.

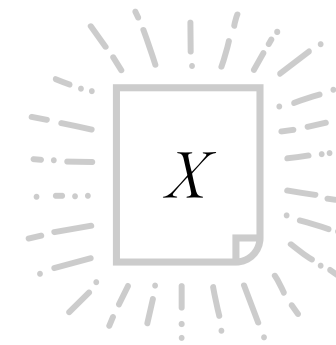
OTHER REQUESTS:

*After you are finished praying, **thank** Jesus that He truly understands and is there to help us!*

MEMORIZE & MEDITATE

"Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, ³ for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness."

JAMES 1:2-3



ABSOLUTE TRUST: DEMONSTRATED LOVE

Romans 5:6-11

It has been said that you can't understand and experience the love of God unless you grasp the reality of our place outside of Christ. If you don't grasp your sin and its consequences, you will never be able to experience the wealth of God's love demonstrated in light of who we were when we received it.

The bad news must come before we can grasp the richness of the good news. My prayer, with Paul, is that we would experience God's love afresh through this study of His Word (Ephesians 3:14-21) and through this never be the same. I pray that we would know Him, and His love would compel us to live our lives to the praise of His glorious grace!

Worthy is the Lamb who was slain!

ABSOLUTE TRUST: DEMONSTRATED IN LOVE

ROMANS 5:6-11

Introduction

1. The awful truth

WE ARE: Weak • Ungodly • Sinners • Objects of wrath • Enemies of God

2. The awesome truth

1 TIMOTHY 1:15

3. The applied truth

"The Apostles argument is that this method, this way of salvation that God has planned, is a complete whole, and therefore, if we have been justified by Christ's blood we are joined to Christ, we are in Christ, and we shall therefore be saved by Him completely and perfectly." Martyn Lloyd-Jones

Implications

- Experience His love

- Enjoy His purpose

- Eagerly seek to please Him

EXTRA NOTES

EXTRA NOTES



GROWTH GROUP QUESTIONS

ROMANS 5:6-11

- Why do you think the beauty of God's love is seen most clearly in relation to our sin?

 - How can we take the time to understand who we are without Jesus, without being overwhelmed with shame and guilt?

 - How does this text describe those who are not yet saved, and why is this important?

 - How can we experience the love of Jesus more richly in our everyday life?
- Walk through the words of Romans 5, and give a simple definition for each...
 - > Weak

 - > Ungodly

 - > Sinner

 - > Object of wrath

 - > Enemy of God

 - How do these relational realities help us to experience the love of God?

 - Are you compelled by the love of God (2 Corinthians 5:14)? What does that even mean? What does that look like in everyday life?

 - What are some steps you can take to experience His love?

 - As an overflow of His love for you, how can you be someone who chooses to love like this?

EXTRA NOTES

EXTRA NOTES

PRAYER

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COLOSSIANS 1:9-14

"And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, ¹⁰ so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him: bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; ¹¹ being strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy; ¹² giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light. ¹³ He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, ¹⁴ in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins."

PRAISE

For who God is.

THANKSGIVING

For what God has done. **VERSES 12-14**

PETITION

- That we would be filled with the knowledge of God's will
- That we would walk worthy of the calling we have received
- That we would bear fruit
- That our knowledge of God would be ever increasing and loyal to His Word
- That we would be strengthened according to His power (wow!)
- That we would endure and have patience and joy

OTHER REQUESTS:

MEMORIZE & MEDITATE

"But God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us."

ROMANS 5:8

ADDITIONAL ARTICLES

WHAT IS THE GOSPEL?

We often talk about being Gospel-centred or Gospel-focused. To understand how to build a culture that is honouring to God, it is essential that we understand, experience, and constantly bathe in the Gospel. To begin this growth in being a Gospel-centred culture, we must grasp what the Gospel is. There are many in our world who use the term but don't understand or experience the transformation.

The Gospel is literally "*the good news*," and it is good because it addresses the deepest and most desperate need that all humans have. The Bible is clear that getting the Gospel wrong is dangerous (Galatians 1:8-10) and leads to destruction. It is very sad that there are those who think they are saved but are not (Matthew 7:21-27) and those who are saved by grace through faith who are not living in the fullness of what experiencing the Gospel daily provides.

To experience this good news there are five realities that must be grasped, believed, and then lived in light of in daily experience.

1. God: A rich experience of the Gospel is God-centred and always includes a belief about who God is that matches how He has revealed Himself in His Word. There is only one true God, who is holy, and made us in His image to worship Him. His holiness refers to His separateness from His creation and His absolute purity.

2. Humans: All humans have sinned (Romans 3:23) and in this separated ourselves from God and placed us under His righteous wrath. The wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23), and the only way for sinners to pay for sin is to spend eternity separated from God in hell.

3. Jesus: God loved us so much that He, according to His eternal plan, sent Jesus, His only Son into the world. Jesus lived a perfect life thus fulfilling the law Himself in our place; He died on the cross in our place thus taking on Himself the sins of those who believe in Him. He rose again from the dead and in this conquered sin and death. He displayed that God accepted this sacrifice, and His wrath against sinners who believe in Jesus has been fully exhausted.

4. Humans: God now calls on humans, by grace through faith, to repent of their sins and trust in Jesus alone for forgiveness. This belief in Jesus alone is a faith that saves. When humans believe they are forgiven and reconciled to God, this new relationship becomes the centre of their lives.

5. Spirit-Filled Life: All who are saved by grace through faith are made new creations, and seek to live a life that is surrendered to the Lordship of Jesus and devoted to His glory. This pursuit of holiness is a progression that He helps believers to pursue. The Spirit-filled life will include a desire to never ignore so great a salvation.

Mark Dever summarizes it like this...

A good way to summarize this good news is to biblically unpack the words God, Man, Christ, Response.

1. God: God is the creator of all things (Gen. 1:1). He is perfectly holy, worthy of all worship, and will punish sin (1 John 1:5, Rev. 4:11, Rom. 2:5-8).

2. Man: All people, though created good, have become sinful by nature (Gen. 1:26-28, Ps. 51:5, Rom. 3:23). From birth, all people are alienated from God, hostile to God, and subject to the wrath of God (Eph. 2:1-3).

3. Christ: Jesus Christ, who is fully God and fully man, lived a sinless life, died on the cross to bear God's wrath in the place of all who would believe in him, and rose from the grave in order to give his people eternal life (John 1:1, 1 Tim. 2:5, Heb. 7:26, Rom. 3:21-26, 2 Cor. 5:21, 1 Cor. 15:20-22).

4. Response: God calls everyone everywhere to repent of their sins and trust in Christ in order to be saved (Mark 1:15, Acts 20:21, Rom. 10:9-10).

(Some of this material has been adapted from *The Gospel and Personal Evangelism* by Mark Dever, p. 43)

<https://www.9marks.org/answer/what-gospel/>

The Gospel is so simple that a child can understand it, and yet so profound, that it will be something those who know Jesus will spend eternity celebrating (Ephesians 2:7).

These realities of the Gospel are amazing and must be grasped, believed, and experienced to be saved and to live a victorious Christian life. It is not enough to know these, or even to believe them, they *must never be neglected* (Hebrews 2:3). The best way to "escape" this danger is to preach the Gospel to ourselves every day.



HOW TO PREACH THE GOSPEL TO YOURSELF EVERY DAY

Why is this important?

The simple answer is that the Gospel serves as the centre of a heart that is fully devoted to Jesus. It also helps us to obey Hebrews 2:3 and be those who do not ignore so great a salvation! The Gospel compels us to a life of full devotion to Jesus (2 Corinthians 5:14; Romans 12:1-2), and if we are having trouble in our spiritual life, it is always related foundationally to our experience of the Gospel.

Colossians 1:4-6 states, *“Since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love that you have for all the saints,⁵ because of the hope laid up for you in heaven. Of this you have heard before in the word of the truth, the gospel,⁶ which has come to you, as indeed in the whole world it is bearing fruit and increasing—as it also does among you, since the day you heard it and understood the grace of God in truth.”*

This passage shows that we begin in the Gospel, and then carry on, as its fruit is increasing in our lives! This is what we want: the Gospel experienced and increasing its power in bearing fruit in our lives! The Gospel not only introduces us to God, it produces the motives and freedoms that come from its work in our lives.

How do we remind ourselves of the Gospel every day so that it can be applied to every area of our thinking, believing, and living? Preaching the Gospel to yourself is a habit that, once formed, is a pattern of life. It is a reminder of what Jesus has done for you and what that means in terms of your identity with Him.

It is the discipline of actively calling to mind what Jesus has done for you and the wonderful results of this gift of salvation.

It is acknowledging the fullness of the Gospel and then reminding yourself of the implications. This can be done standing in front of a mirror and talking to yourself (perhaps when no one else is around), or in prayer, rejoicing in who God is and what He has done. It is also great as a weapon against condemnation and apathy, against pride and self-pity, and the list could go on.

This idea of *remembering* is all over the Bible (Deuteronomy 6:12) and something to apply whether through a mound of rocks over Achan, a mound of rocks in the river and on the shore, a tassel, a feast, or so many more. We are called to *never* forget certain things because those things shape everything else. They

help us think, they guard our hearts, (Proverbs 4:23), and when lived in light of, they glorify God!

When you are tempted to feel overwhelmed in guilt and shame at your sin, remind yourself that Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection are what give you forgiveness and freedom. Memorize important Scriptures like Romans 8:1 or 1 John 1:9, and live in light of the reality of the Gospel.

If you are tempted to pride or self-pity, remind yourself of Ephesians 2:8-10, and rejoice in God’s workmanship; He gets the glory, and you have immense value in Him. Boast in your weaknesses, and remember that God uses weak people (1 Corinthians 1:18-30; 2 Corinthians 12:9-10). If you lack passion and find yourself apathetic, meditate on the love of Jesus as seen in the cross, and you will find yourself compelled (2 Corinthians 5:14).

It is not a surprise that the ordinances God has given the church focus on this reality: remembering, fixing our eyes on Jesus, proclaiming His death until He returns, and rejoicing in our identity with Him. The Gospel must be central in our thoughts and lives if we are to live confident, obedient, joy-filled lives.

It is the discipline of actively calling to mind what Jesus has done for you and the wonderful results of this gift of salvation. We need memorials, no longer at Gilgal, but on our mirrors, in our cars, and on our knees.

When I am praying, I journal, and in this I seek to thank God early on for what He has done for me in the Gospel and plead with Him to deepen my experience of His love (Ephesians 3:14-21). Consciously place the beauty of your salvation before your eyes every day! *Never forget...*and it will change everything else about you!

PREACH THE GOSPEL TO YOURSELF EVERY DAY!

Simplify:

- Remember what God has done for you in the Gospel
- Reflect on these riches
- Repent of wrong thinking
- Rejoice in God’s great love
- Renew your commitment to live for His glory with every breath



THE INCREASING FRUIT THAT COMES FROM REMEMBERING THE GOSPEL

What is the impact of having the Gospel at the foundation of a life? What is the fruit that will bear and grow if the Christian life is lived in the power of Gospel?

Colossians 1:4-6 states, *“Since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love that you have for all the saints, ⁵ because of the hope laid up for you in heaven. Of this you have heard before in the word of the truth, the gospel, ⁶ which has come to you, as indeed in the whole world it is bearing fruit and increasing—as it also does among you, since the day you heard it and understood the grace of God in truth.”*

We would argue that this Gospel life that is lived out will impact everything, but we want to focus on 6 areas of life that will be changed and changing if life is lived in the context of the Gospel.

If you find yourself struggling with sin or overwhelmed with life in a way that is depressing, the Gospel is the solution and help when remembered and experienced. One of the best ways to do this is to preach to ourselves as Psalm 42 and other places declare, to take the truth of the Gospel, and apply it to our lives so that everything else is changed.

For the Christian, this is the most important *keystone* habit. It will overflow and impact so many other things. The following are realities that when seen through the Gospel are path changers for the believer.

a) Freedom From Condemnation: Romans 8:1

Oh the joy of grasping this, especially when we see the seriousness of sin in our lives! The closer we get to God, the further away we realize we are and the more we need to experience His loving forgiveness!

One of the great crippling realities in the life of a Christian is when we realize how HOLY God really is and that even our good deeds are as filthy rags. When authentic believers come face to face with sin. In the context of the holiness of God, the precious reality of total cleansing is overwhelming.

We can be crippled by our guilt and sin if we do not orient our lives around the Gospel, if we do not grasp the beauty and freedom of what Jesus has done for us in our freedom from condemnation.

J.C. Ryle wrote, *“the man whose soul is growing feels his own sinfulness and*

unworthiness more every year...the nearer he draws to God, and the more he sees of God’s holiness perfection, the more thoroughly is he sensible of his own countless imperfections.”

So the more we grow in our relationship with God, the more we need the reality of the Gospel to remind us of our forgiveness! In Christ, we are free from condemnation!

b) Passion For Life For His Glory: 2 Corinthians 5:14

2 Corinthians 5:14 lets us know that when we understand and rejoice in the love of Jesus, it controls us! It is impossible to be apathetic when you experience the richness of the Gospel; it is a driver of passion.

The word for *“controls”* in 2 Corinthians 5:14 is a word that is forceful! It grabs, it presses, it does not ask for permission.

Kenneth Wuest paraphrases this verse like this, *“The love which Christ has for me presses on me from all sides, holding me to one end and prohibiting me from considering any other, wrapping itself around me in tenderness, giving me an impelling motive.”*

One who grasps the richness of the Gospel cannot be apathetic. God’s love, when experienced is a controlling love that drives the life of the one who has so experienced it. You can’t remain the same if you understand what Jesus has done for you.

If you find yourself drifting into apathy or contentedness with sin, the answer is not only to fight sin and apathy but to fight it with a delight in the Gospel! In fact the Gospel is the place that will give an overwhelming passion to pursue Jesus and seek to live for Him.

Luke 7:36-50, *“One of the Pharisees asked him to eat with him, and he went into the Pharisee’s house and reclined at table. ³⁷ And behold, a woman of the city, who was a sinner, when she learned that he was reclining at table in the Pharisee’s house, brought an alabaster flask of ointment, ³⁸ and standing behind him at his feet, weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears and wiped them with the hair of her head and kissed his feet and anointed them with the ointment. ³⁹ Now when the Pharisee who had invited him saw this, he said to himself, “If this man were a prophet, he would have known who and what sort of woman this is who is touching him, for she is a sinner.” ⁴⁰ And Jesus answering said to him, “Simon, I have something to say to you.” And he answered, “Say it, Teacher.”*

⁴¹ "A certain moneylender had two debtors. One owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. ⁴² When they could not pay, he cancelled the debt of both. Now which of them will love him more?" ⁴³ Simon answered, "The one, I suppose, for whom he cancelled the larger debt." And he said to him, "You have judged rightly." ⁴⁴ Then turning toward the woman he said to Simon, "Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave me no water for my feet, but she has wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. ⁴⁵ You gave me no kiss, but from the time I came in she has not ceased to kiss my feet. ⁴⁶ You did not anoint my head with oil, but she has anointed my feet with ointment. ⁴⁷ Therefore I tell you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven—for she loved much. But he who is forgiven little, loves little." ⁴⁸ And he said to her, "Your sins are forgiven." ⁴⁹ Then those who were at table with him began to say among themselves, "Who is this, who even forgives sins?" ⁵⁰ And he said to the woman, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace."

If you feel so overwhelmed with your sin that you can't function, rejoice in Jesus becoming sin for you, and live free from condemnation! If you are not choosing obedience but struggling with sin your life, rejoice in Jesus' love for you, and experience it so richly that you can't help but obey!

The Gospel oriented life is free from condemnation, is passionate about pleasing Jesus, and next, it produces...

c) Sacrificial Love For One Another: EPHESIANS 5:1-2

This is so important for us to be loving to one another, for Jesus said it is the defining mark of His true followers (John 13:33-34). The only way to love like Jesus is to repeatedly experience the Gospel in fresh and deepening ways.

The only way we can become imitators of God as dearly loved children is to experience God's love, and then as an overflow of that experience, we love one another as we have been loved selflessly and filled with a willingness to pursue God's best for others.

Sadly, often the church is known for things other than love and the key reason for this is that we have lost sight of our experience of His love. Loving one another is not only not an optional command, it is an overflow of a Gospel-centred life. We must never forget the Gospel of Jesus; we must constantly call it to mind.

If you struggle loving those around you with the love of God, if you find yourself longing to be loved rather than loving, or gossiping and slandering rather than serving, begin with a long gaze at the love of Jesus, and bask in the Gospel.

You will never be the same!

d) Forgiving One Another: EPHESIANS 4:32

There are some things that are so difficult to forgive! In fact, from a worldly perspective, impossible. If you struggle forgiving others, the key issue is to meditate on the Gospel and your own forgiveness!

Jesus takes us there in Matthew 18...

"Then Peter came up and said to him, "Lord, how often will my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? As many as seven times?" ²² Jesus said to him, "I do not say to you seven times, but seventy-seven times.

²³ "Therefore the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his servants. ²⁴ When he began to settle, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents. ²⁵ And since he could not pay, his master ordered him to be sold, with his wife and children and all that he had, and payment to be made. ²⁶ So the servant fell on his knees, imploring him, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything.' ²⁷ And out of pity for him, the master of that servant released him and forgave him the debt. ²⁸ But when that same servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii, and seizing him, he began to choke him, saying, 'Pay what you owe.' ²⁹ So his fellow servant fell down and pleaded with him, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you.' ³⁰ He refused and went and put him in prison until he should pay the debt. ³¹ When his fellow servants saw what had taken place, they were greatly distressed, and they went and reported to their master all that had taken place. ³² Then his master summoned him and said to him, 'You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. ³³ And should not you have had mercy on your fellow servant, as I had mercy on you?' ³⁴ And in anger his master delivered him to the jailers, until he should pay all his debt. ³⁵ So also my heavenly Father will do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother from your heart."

This is extremely strong in terms of what true forgiveness produces in those who have truly understood it! It is actually overwhelming in terms of the command and consequence of not forgiving others, but notice the process to a forgiving heart — it is knowing how much we have been forgiven and treating others how we are treated!

If you struggle with forgiving someone who has deeply offended you, hear the commands of God, but also experience His love and forgiveness afresh in the Gospel! If you feel like you can't forgive someone who has wronged you, bask

in the Gospel, and you won't be able to keep the forgiveness from flowing from your heart!

e) Knowing Your Identity In Christ: 2 CORINTHIANS 5:21

If you struggle with insecurity and feel overwhelmed at your own weakness, realize whose you are and who you are!

YOU ARE IN CHRIST!

This is who you are!

When God looks at you, He sees the righteousness of Jesus. He sees Jesus and His obedience that is given to you in Him. His power at work in your life. John 15 shows us how this is worked out in our connection to the *vine* and what this means for producing fruit. If we remain in Him, we will prove ourselves to be His by what our lives are showing and producing.

You need never feel overwhelmed with your circumstances or unable to accomplish what God has asked you to do! You are literally His "work of art" and He has created you in Christ Jesus (Ephesians 2:10), so you need never feel insecure or unable if you are in His will. Self-confidence is weak and frail and will never fully be satisfied by those who truly know themselves. Confidence in Christ will never fail for those who truly know Him and who they are in Him.

In fact Paul takes this to new heights when he boasts in his weaknesses so that the power of Christ may rest on him (2 Corinthians 12:10). It is all about whose you are, and in Him, who you are, not how you feel about yourself. I am His son, I am loved by Him, I am justified, I am a new creation, I am in *Him*! If you struggle with depression and defeat, with insecurity and anxiety, then meditate on the beauty of the Gospel and your identity through it in Jesus, and you will never be the same!

f) Humility: MATTHEW 5:3

God hates pride and self-centredness, and the cure for both is the Gospel!

Matthew 5:3 *"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."*

God approves the humble. We find hope in our honest evaluation of ourselves, and in this hope we rejoice greatly as we see God at work in us and through us for His glory! Humility comes from the Gospel, our faith in it, and experience of

it. When we see what we deserve, we will never look down on others. We will see them through Gospel eyes (2 Corinthians 5:16).

We will hate sin! In our hatred of sin, we will see ourselves as fellow beggars who long for those who are sinners to know Jesus and find forgiveness, freedom, and a new lease on pursuing holiness as God defines it! We will view others as opportunities to display the love of Jesus to rather than a more worldly self-centred sight.

g) Mission: 2 CORINTHIANS 5:11-21

The Gospel experienced is the greatest motive to live a life that shares this great news with others. The more we experience the Gospel the more it drives our prayers and our pursuit of others to know Jesus.

The better we understand the richness of what Jesus has done for us, the more our lives will display the beauty of who He is. We choose to live for Him and His glory, and in that we become those whom Christ makes His appeal through. If you struggle with choosing to share the Gospel with those around you, preach the Gospel to yourself and you will experience afresh a passion to reach out as an ambassador for the King of kings.

h) Hope: ROMANS 8:32

The more we think about the Gospel and settle in on the greatness of who God is and what He has done for us, the more we will experience the richness of life as planned by God.

HE IS FOR US!

In all of life, no matter what is going on in our own lives, HE IS FOR US! Oh that we would grasp this!

Romans 8:32 is now one of my favourite verses! *"He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?"*

The abundant Christian life comes from Gospel orientation! If you struggle with forgiveness, hear the commands of God, but also experience His love and forgiveness afresh in the Gospel! If you feel so overwhelmed with your sin that you can't function, rejoice in Jesus becoming sin for you, and live free from condemnation! If you are not choosing obedience but struggling with sin your

life, rejoice in Jesus' love for you, and experience it so richly that you can't help but obey!

Again, if you struggle loving those around you with the love of God, if you find yourself longing to be loved rather than loving, or gossiping and slandering rather than serving, begin with a long gaze at the love of Jesus, and bask in the Gospel. You will never be the same!

If you feel like you can't forgive someone who has wronged you, bask in the Gospel, and you won't be able to keep the forgiveness from flowing from your heart! If you find yourself insecure, anxious, or fearful, go back to the Gospel; stop there, stay there! If you have selfishness and pride and look down on others, or slander them, go back to the greatness of Grace!

If you lack hope, feel despair, and are in a situation that feels overwhelming, *go back to the Gospel and stay there! Never forget...and you will forever be changed!*



I AM NOT ASHAMED OF THE GOSPEL

What does it mean for us at Cloverdale Baptist Church to not be ashamed of the Gospel? This is an important question as it is the theme of the book of Romans, as Paul seeks to minister in a way that displays this lack of shame (Romans 1:16-17).

Perhaps an easier question to answer would be, what does it mean to be ashamed of the Gospel? It means that we try to hide who we are so as to avoid feeling embarrassed or awkward about Jesus and what His Word teaches.

So what does it mean to be unashamed of the Gospel? It means that we seek to show how great this Gospel is with our lives and with our lips. It means we grasp how great God is and that He has called us to a ministry of reconciliation, and so we live our lives as Ambassadors for Jesus.

To experience the Gospel is to boast in the cross (Galatians 6:14). To not be ashamed of the Gospel is to live in such a way that our lives and lips always point to Jesus. It is so much more than wearing a cross, or driving with a fish on our cars. It is seeing all of life as an opportunity to represent Jesus well.

To not be ashamed of the Gospel means that we will seek to live as faithful ambassadors, representing Him in every area of our lives all of the time. We will not only believe the Gospel, we will know it well enough that we will be actively looking for opportunities to share it. Life and lips (1 Peter 2:11-12) engaged for the glory of God (1 Corinthians 10:31).

ALL OF LIFE WILL BECOME AN OPPORTUNITY TO LOVE GOD AND LIVE IN OBEDIENCE TO HIS WORD.

If each of us is willing to be personally not ashamed of the Gospel we will be a people who together build a culture of evangelism in a place where we love God so much that the overflow of our hearts will be praying for, preparing for, and pushing for opportunities to share the Gospel.

Don't be ashamed of the Gospel. Join us in our pursuit of a culture of evangelism by choosing to live a life that is not ashamed of the Gospel! Actively look for appointments that God is giving you, and choose to be one who is sharing with life and lips the wonder of who God is and what He has done.



WHAT IS BIBLICAL WISDOM & HOW DO I GET IT?

I was recently at a prayer meeting where we were studying the attributes of God and using that as a trampoline to praise God and petition Him in the context of who He is. It was a wonderful study and closed with asking the question, how do we get biblical wisdom? I think this is so important for us as we seek to live our lives in a way that brings honour and glory to God. How do we make difficult choices in everyday life, so that who God is, is always on display in us and through us.

Lately it seems many Christians are making unwise decisions. Pastors, Christian leaders, and many others who call themselves Christians, statistically living like the world in moral failure (impacts every church), confusion and chaos that seems to be growing exponentially in the midst of a world gone mad. Followers of Jesus need wisdom like never before!

This should not surprise us, as the Bible declares that the pursuit of wisdom must be a high priority for followers of God. It is worth giving up everything we own to get it (Proverbs 8:11). It is better than gold (Proverbs 16:16) and as such should be something we treasure and pursue and seek to pass on to our children (entire book of Proverbs).

Author Haddon W. Robinson in his foreword to Robert L. Alden's book *Proverbs: A Commentary on an Ancient Book of Timeless Advice* states, "Men and women educated to earn a living often don't know anything about handling life itself. Alumni from noted universities have mastered information about a narrow slice of life but couldn't make it out of the first grade when it comes to living successfully with family and friends. Let's face it. Knowledge is not enough to meet life's problems. We need wisdom, the ability to handle life with skill" (p. 7).

My children have left, or are leaving high school. Lori and I long for them to get good educations, to have great jobs, to live lives that are successful, but significantly more important to us than these things is their pursuit of, and attainment of, godly wisdom. I am often asked by people how they could pray for me, and my number one request is for biblical wisdom. So often in life and ministry we are faced with decisions that are difficult and don't seem to have an easy win. We need wisdom!

In the Bible the concept of wisdom focuses on real life decisions. It is based on

knowledge and how that knowledge works itself out in a way that is the best way to live life in the presence of God and in a way that He would approve. Biblical wisdom is applied knowledge, and when it is active in people, they know what to choose, and choose it.

One person described it like this, "*knowledge is knowing how to use a gun, and wisdom is knowing when to use it and when to keep it holstered.*" In the Biblical sense, it is knowing God's Word and how to live it out in the real world and help others do the same. It is a grasp of how best to live in the world but not be of the world in day to day decisions, big and small.

THE BIBLE PLACES A HUGE EMPHASIS ON WISDOM, AND HOW TO GET IT.

To keep this simple, we will ask the question, how do I get Biblical wisdom? As I teach our boys, and as I pursue this myself and seek it for our church, how do I become wise?

THE BIBLE GIVES A PATHWAY TO WISDOM, AND EVERY CHRISTIAN SHOULD SEEK TO BE ON IT!

1. **Fear God:** Proverbs 9:10; Psalm 111:10. This is where the Bible begins, and therefore as those who want to live their lives in a wise way, where we should start as well. To fear God means to know who He is as He has revealed Himself and to tremble in awe before Him. It means knowing how holy God is, how much He hates sin, and choosing to live life in a way that honours and pleases Him (Hebrews 12:14; 27-29). If you want Biblical wisdom, it is essential to be growing in your knowledge of God and who He has revealed Himself to be, and choose to fear Him (Proverbs 8:13). Biblical wisdom is always based in relationship, and this relationship with God must be based in a growing understanding and interaction with who He has revealed Himself to be. To be biblically wise, you must **fear God**.

2. **Ask God:** James 1:5 is simple and clear. If you lack wisdom, ask God and He will give it to you if you are fully devoted to Him and living in faith. Fearing God is foundational to asking God, so there is an order to this attainment of biblical wisdom. But here, simply put, "*If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him.*" To be biblically wise, you must ask God.

3. Surrender To God: Romans 12:1-2 is a call to be living sacrifices in the context of the grace and mercy of God. It is full and absolute surrender to the one who died in our place. This is essential to healthy Christian living and key to attaining the ability to know what God's perfect will is. This will always be in the context of a knowledge of who God is and what God has done and is the pathway for every true believer. Putting God first in full surrender to the Lordship of Jesus is not only essential for being healthy as a Christian, it is another mark on the pathway to biblical wisdom. To be one who is following Jesus always includes a denial of self and a devotion to Jesus (Luke 9:23). Preferring one another shows that one has experienced the love of Jesus and is living in light of it (Romans 12:10; Ephesians 5:1-2). Proverbs 3:5-6 should not only be a favourite verse of those in God's family, it should be practically and actively lived out. To be biblically wise, you must be fully surrendered to Him.

4. Choose To Be Bible-Saturated: Romans 12:1-2 moves from full surrender to transforming one's mind. This is done through steady and passionate devotion-reading, studying, memorizing, and growing in God's Word. Psalm 1 marks the introduction to Psalms and successful Christian living and directs the one who wants to be honouring to God in all of life to meditate on His law day and night (Colossians 3:16-17). To be biblically wise, you must be Word-saturated.

5. Choose An Eternal Focus: Psalm 90:12 declares that if we learn to number our days, we will gain a heart of wisdom. When we realize how weak we are and how short our days are, we will learn to make the most of every opportunity (Ephesians 5:16) and in the grace of God, look for the good works He has prepared in advance for us to do (Ephesians 2:10). Wisdom comes from seeing reality from God's perspective and living life in light of the reality of eternity (2 Corinthians 4:16-18). To be biblically wise, you must live your life in light of eternity.

6. Counsel From Others: Proverbs 11:14. It is good to seek help from godly people who are wise, know us or the situation well, and can offer us what they believe to be God's wisdom. A person pursuing wisdom will always ask wise people for counsel (Proverbs 12:15; 13:10; 19:10; 24:6; 27:9) To live a biblically wise life, you must seek counsel from wise people.

Whether you are in grade 12, fourth year university, in your forties, or 112, you need to grow in Biblical wisdom, and treasure it as God's Word calls for in His people!

So often in our circles we have a growing knowledge of doctrine, and this is great...but needs to be matched with a growing wisdom. Choose to be on the

path of constantly growing in wisdom, and you will be one whom God declares when He sees you, "Well done My good and faithful servant."

We need wisdom as followers of God, or we will be swallowed in the chaos of the world and live in her likeness! Followers of Jesus need to choose to be those who are constantly growing in wisdom. On this path, each step matters and will lead to an increased speed and delight in learning how to live life for the glory of God. As God's children, we need to learn to handle life with skill, and He shows us the pathway to this treasure...walk it!

Proverbs 16:16 "How much better to get wisdom than gold! To get understanding is to be chosen rather than silver."

Questions for reflection: What is the difference between knowledge and understanding? Why do you think God values wisdom so much? Do you value wisdom as much as God does in how you are choosing to live your life? As you reflect on the five stones that make up the pathway to biblical wisdom, which ones do you need to focus on the most?

Don't forget, "*your view of God is the most important thing about you,*" and live your life with wisdom for the glory of God.



ROMANS 1-3 ON DISPLAY IN CANADA

I love being Canadian and living in Canada. We live in a country that for a long time has truly been the *True North Strong and Free*. For much of my lifetime, Judeo-Christian values, although not lived fully, have been assumed and protected.

Lately it seems we are moving rapidly away from this as a nation. The Romans 1-3 realities are more clearly seen today than yesterday in Canada and perhaps will be the reality we live in for many years. This is an opportunity to shine brightly for God in distinction from the world but also can be intimidating for those seeking to be loyal to God and his word.

SOGI is invading our school system and seeking to normalize, and perhaps even encourage, what throughout our history has been seen as worthy of being in the DSM and in the Bible described as sin. Our children are being taught that what the Bible shows as something that will separate people from Him (1 Corinthians 6:9-20) is not only okay but who they should respect and emulate.

The Supreme Court ruled on the Trinity Western Law School and has decided that freedom of religion is not as important as what is perceived by the Ontario court of appeal as, "*deeply discriminatory to the LGBT community*." Some have said that this will yield open access for LGBT students (this was never a part of Trinity's attempt to limit). Instead, it will mean that those who hold to what the Bible teaches about marriage and purity will not be able to train lawyers.

The government changed their rules around how employers can qualify for funding to hire students through the Canada Summer Jobs program. The idea was to ensure that any groups that are pro-life or believe what the Bible teaches about LGBTQ can't get funding. This means that those who affirm what God's Word teaches will not have access to government funding.

And this list of changes could continue and given their trajectory, will increase. So how do those who love God and want to obey His Word respond to what appears to be a rapid retreat from God's love, obedience to His Word, and attacks on Christian values?

Christians should be the best citizens any nation has, so we should actively pursue what we know to be God's best in the ways that good citizens do. We should vote, petition, educate, and pursue what we believe is best for our

nation within the freedoms we have in Canada. This is good and right, *but* we are called to more as followers of Christ. How should fully devoted followers of Jesus respond in a way that is uniquely Christian?

Saddened: It is right to feel sad when people, who need to recognize what sin is so that they can join us in humility and repentance in faith in Jesus, are blinded by the world around them. It should break our hearts when authentic Christianity's influence is limited by law and, perhaps worse, when it is overtly attacked. Our hearts should break, not only for the general direction that our country is taking, but also for the hurt that this direction will cause to so many people who are encouraged to participate in sin and support it. We should mourn for those who are trapped in sin and for those who are trapping them. God's love should cause us, in humility as fellow sinners, to weep.

Surprised: That we have had it this good for this long. The Bible teaches that if we want to live for Jesus, the world will not be our friend. Canada has at least had a foundational morality that was very friendly to those who claim to follow God's Word. We should not be surprised that our world is moving in this direction, and we should understand from God's Word that we are to be found *in* the world but not *of* the world (John 17; James 4:4). We should not be surprised that the world is not the most comfortable place for true followers of Jesus (2 Timothy 3:12).

Shocked: That some who call themselves Christians are moving along the same path as the World and denying what God's Word so clearly teaches on purity and exclusive devotion to Him. There are churches who for the sake of a few dollars, or acceptance, or cultural adjustments for what they think is evangelism are adjusting what the Bible clearly teaches. When the church becomes like the world to reach the world, the church reaches the world for the world. As Christians we must realize that we are different (1 Peter 2:11-12) and in this difference stand firm. We must be those who hear and obey the Bible and show in our speaking the truth in love who God is and what God wants (Ephesians 4:15-16).

Still: As we reflect on what is going on around us, we should always be doing this in a way that realizes that God is Sovereign and good and worthy of our trust ALWAYS (Psalm 46:10). Whether we are reflecting on Joseph (Genesis 50:20), Job (Job 1:21-22; 2:10), or Jesus (Acts 2:23; 4:28), we will see clearly that not only is God active in space time history, He is Sovereign over space time history. We can trust Him! No matter what is going on around us (Habakkuk 3:17-18;

Psalm 46:3), He is *still sovereign!* As those concerned about the direction of our nation, the first answer we should have is *trust & prayer* (1 Timothy 2:2).

Sacrificial service: Christians are often tagged with the judgmental label. Sadly those who name the name of Christ sometimes earn this. May we learn to weep with those who are struggling, and be willing to give ourselves to show people how great God and His Gospel are (Ephesians 5:1-2). We are to be known for our love (John 13:33-34), and although we live in a world filled with people who disagree with us, they need this love. We should ask ourselves in light of what Jesus has done for us (1 John 4:19), how we can be those who love those who disagree with His way (Romans 5:8). Our world is filled with broken people, and the farther away we get from God's Word, the more brokenness we will face. We want to be known as those who are loved by God, and overflow His love to others. We should do our very best as individuals to have an impact on our world as salt and light. In this, may we spend way more time looking for ways to self-sacrificially love those around us who are hurting and broken than in pursuing political change.

Stand steady: Christians are called to be followers of Christ. To obey His Word, no matter what the cost, is the mandate of those who call Jesus Lord (Matthew 7:21-27). If we are not doers of the Word, we are failing in our faith (James 1:22). We are to be those who are Word-saturated, and then follow Jesus as Lord by obeying His Word. On issues where culture is moving away from what God's Word teaches, we must *stand firm and let nothing move us!* Luther was correct when he said, "If I profess with the loudest voice and clearest exposition every portion of the truth of God except precisely that little point which the world and the devil are at that moment attacking, I am not confessing Christ, however boldly I may be professing Christ. Where the battle rages, there the loyalty of the soldier is proved, and to be steady on all the battlefield besides is mere flight and disgrace if he flinches at that point." (Quoted in Parker T. Williamson, *Standing Firm: Reclaiming Christian Faith in Times of Controversy* [Springfield, PA: PLC Publications, 1996], p. 5)

Marriage is sacred, and Trinity Western is right to declare, "*sexual intimacy that violates the sacredness of marriage between a man and a woman*" is something that should be abstained from!

Show: In a world moving rapidly away from Christ, the distinction of followers of Jesus should be, will be, more clear (1 Peter 2:11-12). This is an opportunity

for us to show people how great God is, to display the beauty of forgiveness, the power of love, the richness of what Jesus has done for people like us and can do for those we are showing His Gospel to. Jesus came to earth, lived a perfect life, and died in our place, so that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life. As those seeking to glorify God, our passion is to point people to Jesus (Matthew 11:11, 28:18-20), and this comes from humble hearts longing to show others the richness of forgiveness that we have experienced. Our mission is to make disciples, and to do this we want to be ready to give an answer to those who notice the hope we have in us (1 Peter 3:15).

We live in scary times, and yet maybe we are here for such a time as this (Esther 4:14). Actually, if we belong to Him, we are here for this time, and He has good works for us to walk in (Ephesians 2:10). Yes, the culture seems to be drifting, and sadly many in the church seem to be pulled along in the current. Yes the pace at which the culture is moving away from Christ seems to be increasing, and this can create discomfort in His followers.

So...

May our God find us faithful and on mission for Him in this country we call home. Oh that He would send a renewal to the church of first love devotion to Him, and as an overflow, we would see our reputation being one of Holiness and Love.

The further Canada drifts, the brighter authentic followers of Jesus will shine. May our God strengthen our resolve to live for His glory in love and loyalty to Him and His Word.



