

Romans 2 - Obedience to the Faith

As we continue on in the book of Romans as we are exploring its great foundational teachings on Christianity. As Paul was preparing to visit the Christians at Rome, he wrote this book as an introductory letter. This was something important for Paul to do because some did not know his full reputation. Remember that Paul was an *enemy* of the Gospel before God called him to *preach* the Gospel. When the believers heard that Paul was coming around after he got saved, they were quite anxious because he had been an executioner of Christians. When God sent Ananias to minister to Paul after he was saved, Ananias was fearful because of Paul's reputation:

Acts 9:13-17 Then Ananias answered, Lord, I have heard by many of this man, how much evil he hath done to thy saints at Jerusalem:

14And here he hath authority from the chief priests to bind all that call on thy name.

15But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel:

16For I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake.

17And Ananias went his way, and entered into the house; and putting his hands on him said, Brother Saul, the Lord, *even* Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost.

Paul reminded the Galatians of his reputation:

Gal 1:13 For ye have heard of my conversation in time past in the Jews' religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted the church

of God, and wasted it:

Gal 1:21-24 Afterwards I came into the regions of Syria and Cilicia;

22And was unknown by face unto the churches of Judaea which were in Christ:

23But they had heard only, That he which persecuted us in times past now preacheth the faith which once he destroyed.

24And they glorified God in me.

This is fascinating. When people tell me that they are too sinful to get saved, I will ask them how many Christians and preachers have they killed lately. Of course, the answer is none, but it wouldn't matter because no one could be worse than Paul and God not only saved him but put him into the ministry!

For Paul to introduce himself to the Romans, it was extra significant for him to testify that he was a true believer. By this time, Paul had a vastly improved reputation, but the first thing we all should make sure we have secure in our spiritual lives is a testimony of salvation by faith in the Gospel.

1. The Gospel is the Resurrection -

Last week we considered the introduction to the book of Romans as it was founded on the Gospel. The Gospel is specifically the good news of the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. We saw this in Rom 1:

Rom 1:1-4 Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called *to be* an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God,

2(Which he had promised afore by his prophets in the holy scriptures,)

3Concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh;

4And declared *to be* the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the

resurrection from the dead:

1Cor 15:3-4 For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures;

4And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures...

Technically, the death, burial, and resurrection is all there is to the Gospel. The Gospel, if we summed it up in a single word, is the *resurrection*. If you look up every time where the Gospel is defined, it refers to the Resurrection.

Col 1:5 For the hope which is laid up for you in heaven [**the Resurrection**], whereof ye heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel;

2Tim 2:8-9 Remember that Jesus Christ of the seed of David was raised from the dead according to my gospel: [**the Resurrection**]

9Wherein I suffer trouble, as an evil doer, *even* unto bonds; but the word of God is not bound. [**Preaching the Resurrection is what got Paul arrested**]

2. Salvation is obedience to the Gospel -

Someone might ask, "But what about faith? Doesn't the Gospel also include that if we believe in Jesus that we will be saved from our sins?" That certainly is good news, but the Gospel/Good News is that *Jesus* overcame death by rising from the dead. If we *respond* to that Good News and *receive* the Good News, yes, we will be saved from our sins and death and Hell.

When the women visited the tomb of Christ on that first Easter and found it empty, they were sent back with what certainly *was* Good News – Jesus had risen! When we refer to the Gospel today, we include the blessing that if someone accepts the risen Christ as his

Savior he will be saved. However, it is possible for someone to believe the Good News of Jesus' resurrection intellectually and not be saved.

We see this, now, in Rom 1:5 as we continue with *application* of the Gospel.

Rom 1:5 By whom we have received grace and apostleship, for obedience to the faith among all nations, for his name:

The idea of obedience to the faith is interesting because it is so perplexing. How *does* one *obey* the faith. Would that be like the time your seven year old comes to you and says, "Dad, this whole Santa Claus thing, it's not real is it?" Would being obedient to the faith be something like saying to him, "Obey me! I command you to *believe* in Santa Claus"? If I were to command you to jump, you know what obeying that would look like. What does it look like to obey faith? The meaning of the Greek word that is translated *obedience* means that you believe *to the point that you are persuaded and commit yourself to*, in this case the Gospel of the Resurrection of Christ.

Rom 10:8-10 But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, *even* in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach;

9That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.

10For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.

In the moment we acknowledged we were sinners and committed, or trusted, our eternity to Jesus Christ by calling upon Him for salvation with our mouth, it is at that point that we were saved.

Rom 10:12-13 For there is no difference between the Jew and

the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him.

13For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.

In Hebrews 4 Paul refers back to how the Jews in their Exodus from Egypt heard the Gospel in the message of the Passover sacrifice. It was not effective for them because they did not receive it with faith.

Heb 4:2 For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard *it*.

We were saved by faith in the Gospel, but there is no hope for those who will not commit themselves by faith in Christ according to 1Pet 4 and 2Thess 1.

1Pet 4:17 For the time *is come* that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if *it* first *begin* at us, what shall the end *be* of them that obey not the gospel of God?

2Thess 1:7-8 And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels,
8In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ:

According to Eph 1 and 1Cor 15, we are saved after we receive the Gospel message by faith.

Eph 1:11-14 In whom also we have obtained an inheritance [**the Resurrection**], being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will:

12That we should be to the praise

of his glory, who first trusted in Christ.

13In whom ye also *trusted*, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise,

14Which is the earnest of our inheritance [the Resurrection] until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.

1Cor 15:1 Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel [the Resurrection] which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand;

3. The obligation of the Gospel -

Receiving the Gospel by faith next puts us into an interesting position. If a doctor had a cure for cancer and gave it to you to so you could be healed, how evil would it be for you to withhold it from others? What is worse is that God has given us the cure for sin and Hell so that we could deliver it to others. This is why Paul describes sharing the Gospel as a *debt*. It is not ours to keep to ourselves. As stewards of His grace, we downright *owe* it to others. This concern is next addressed by Paul in

Rom 1:7, 13-15 To all that be in Rome, beloved of God, called *to be* saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.

13Now I would not have you ignorant, brethren, that oftentimes I purposed to come unto you, (but was let hitherto,) that I might have some fruit among you also, even as among other Gentiles.

14I am debtor both to the Greeks, and to the Barbarians; both to the wise, and to the unwise.

15So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also.

Matt 10:7-8 And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand...freely ye have received, freely give.

The grace of God will be a big idea later on. Paul mentions it here because it is how God allows us to receive the Gospel by faith. Grace is not a measure of righteousness that is infused in our souls based on how well we behave. Grace is an attitude. It is the attitude of God where He offers us salvation *in spite* of the fact that we do not, nor could we ever, deserve it. Meriting or deserving grace is nonsense, like hot ice, dry water, or a short sky-scraper. In God's love, our salvation was paid for by the sacrifice of Christ; our judgment of Hell was removed and suffered by Christ when He was on the cross. In His love He graciously gave us a new life. Many people have remembered this by the acronym GRACE - God's Riches At Christ's Expense.

This is why you will always see grace mentioned before peace. When we have received salvation by God's grace, we become at peace with Him. That peace is not mere tranquility or serenity. It is peace with God. When we were His enemy because of our sin He graciously made peace with us through Christ.

Rom 5:1-2 Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ:

2By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God [**which, by the way, is the resurrection!**].

Having salvation so freely given to us does not mean we are then free to sin.

Rom 6:1-4 What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?

2God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?

3Know ye not, that so many of us

as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?

4Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

We are free from death and death in Hell, but we are not free to do merely as we please. Being saved for all eternity, when we do sin, we ask God for forgiveness not to become His child again or to be saved again. Now we ask forgiveness in the way of apologizing for the sins that crop up in our lives. When I got married to my wife it was for better or for worse, for richer or poorer, in sickness and in health, till death do us part. Each time I sinned and she ended up getting the worse, the poorer, or the sickness, I didn't have to marry her all over again. I stayed married to her and I apologized. That is why marriage is so sacred. It is a picture of our relationship with Christ.

Now we have such a precious gift that we would be even more mean to keep it to ourselves than if we kept the cancer cure to ourselves. This is why Paul next speaks of our obligation to share that peace with God to others.

God has sent His Son to die for you. His Son was then resurrected as He overcame death. Are you ready to ask God to forgive you and make you His child forever? By His grace He will give you a new heart.

Have you asked Christ, but then are frustrated by the presence of sin in your life? As you next grow in God's grace, your lifestyle will change to wonderfully serving God in the Gospel.

1John 1:7-9 But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.

8If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the

truth is not in us.

9If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Acts 9:13-17, Gal 1:13, 1:21-24

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2. Salvation is obedience to the Gospel - Rom 1:5, 10:8-13, Heb 4:2, 1Pet 4:17, 2Thess 1:7-8, Eph 1:11-14, 1Cor 15:1
3. The obligation of the Gospel - Rom 1:7,, Matt 10:7-8, Rom 5:1-2, 6:1-4, 1John 1:7-9