

Series: The Gospel Unpacked
God's Righteousness Rom 1:1-32

We've been working through the story of the Gospel...eyewitness reports of what Jesus said and did. And we paused after the last supper to focus in on Jesus' prayer at that time (Jn 17). A prayer that reveals the oneness of Jesus and the Father...and how this oneness in love and truth is going to be revealed through the church. So we become the beacon to the world that God does love the world and sent His Son. And that light shines it's brightest when we love God #1 and let His love overflow to one another. I gave you an acronym to help remember how God makes us one: S – saved (one way to know God), E – empowered (one way to be godly), E – entrusted (one mission).

Then we looked at how Jesus' prayer has come true...the disciples became apostles to begin the church by the power and wisdom of the Holy Spirit. And the teaching was recorded (Bible). And besides the presence of God in each believer (by the Holy Spirit), the next generations were given gifts to connect us vitally like an interdependent body, all under Christ. And God has called people to help the church stay true and on mission (to make disciples who obey Jesus). So last sermon, we had a little interview

time with our Elder board. It is God's will for local churches to have a group of men appointed – not perfect but honorable men who are willing (1 Pet 5) to help shepherd God's flock. And in this information age, all the more must we be vigilant to hold fast to the teachings of Christ and not allow ourselves to be compromised by the teachings and patterns of this world. Now, God has made it plain to me that I can finish the last days of Christ's ministry in the new year...and time it so it finishes on Resurrection day – Easter. There has been something else on my heart to preach for this fall.

When you receive a wrapped present with your name on it. What do you do?

Depends on the occasion, right? But even if you must wait to open it, you're still excited that person cared enough to do that for you, right? The next few sermons till Christmas...we're going to be unpacking the greatest gift we can receive this side of heaven. The Gospel. Sometimes people receive this gift and love God for giving it...but don't really take everything out of the box. And so they miss out. I don't want that to happen to us. So we're going to study God's most complete

letter for unpacking the Gospel. The most complete instructions for unpacking the Gospel is Paul's letter to the believers in Rome.

Prayer

Paul's been inspired to write to a group of believers he's never met. It's basically letter of introduction that explains what he's been preaching so there's no confusion. No doubt, there would have been enemies spreading lies. He hopes to get to Rome on his way to Spain...so motivated by God to bring the Gospel further and further. But right now, he's nearing the end of his third missionary journey...headed back to certain danger in Jerusalem. Why? He is bringing an offering from the church plants in Asia and Greece because God has made him aware that a famine is coming (Acts 20:1-5). God wants him to...despite the pleas of his friends. He knows he will face his mortal enemies and he knows he will be bound, imprisoned and handed over to the Gentiles (Act 20:24, 21:10-11). We find out later in Acts that this was God's way of getting Paul to the center of the Roman empire to preach the Gospel in the highest courts on earth. Paul was chosen.

Read v1 - Called

Paul was set apart to preach the Gospel. Humanly speaking...there's no way he looked in the mirror one day

and said...I'm going to tell everyone about God's goodness in sending His Son. And no one else would have selected him either.

Read highlights from Life of Paul

I'm going to be moving past some details at times – I urge you to do a complete reading of these passages at home. There's a great section on how Jesus is both God and man.

Read V6 Called to Obedient Faith

Jesus said, *by this everyone will know you are my disciples, if you love one another*. And why would we love that person over there? Out of reverence for Christ (Eph 5:21). That has nothing to do with personality or thinking preferences, Amen?

Read V7 How about us?

Did we just wake up one day and decide to follow Jesus? No, we are also called by God. A spiritual awakening has to happen (very unique for Paul)...and only God can do that. Each of you have your story of how God reached you...and continues to. Paul goes on to discuss his care for them through prayer and his longing to see them and share in the harvest of seeing people saved through the Gospel. Now we come to Paul's mission.

Read v14-15 Jews and Gentiles

Here we have a hint that Paul is aware there is both Jews and Gentile believers in Rome gathering together.

It's likely this church began from the Jewish believers scattered after the first great persecution in Jerusalem. In Rome there were many Jews, slaves, slave owners and elite.

Read v16 (TOGETHER)

It seems Paul has picked up the need to remind the Gentiles where the Gospel first came from. This will come up again later in the letter.

Read v17 Theme: Righteous By Faith

Righteous – behavior that is morally justifiable or right. The Bible shows us that God is the only judge of righteousness. God's laws, character and behavior define righteousness. Why is it necessary? How is it gained? What are the benefits? How should those who have it live?

These are questions, Paul will be answering as the Gospel is unpacked. Paul also makes it clear that any righteousness that may exist in this world (i.e. Christ's church) is only from God...and received by faith. Paul is going to be explaining how our faith works to receive righteousness but first we are to focus on God's righteousness. We need to see how far humanity falls short of God's standard...to stress how urgent is the need for a savior.

'The righteous will live by faith' is a quote from Habakkuk (2:4) the prophet-guardian. He asks God,

"Why do you tolerate wrongdoing?"

^{1:3} God answers that He is raising up Babylon to punish ^{1:6}. Habakkuk is again distressed and asks, "Why let the wicked swallow up those more righteous ^{1:13}?" God lets Habakkuk know that the wicked will not go unpunished. He has His eye on the righteous – and God defines the righteous as those who live faithfully ^(2:4) ...despite injustice. Habakkuk responds in prayer asking the Lord, "in wrath, remember mercy." In the end, Habakkuk is satisfied that God will save the faithful ^{3:18}.

Paul's quote of Habakkuk reveals why he connects the subject of God's righteousness to God's wrath on the wicked...those who sin against God. The ancients deserved God's wrath (Judah and Babylon). How about people in Paul's day...or our day? Who can meet God's righteous standard by their own merits?

Read 1:18-20 Thankless & Immoral

The first group Paul brings up the thankless people who ignore God as Creator and ignore the sense of right and wrong that God has instilled in this world. There are consequences to wrong actions and benefits to right actions. And there is the witness of God's people and law in history. Instead, these people (pagans) suppress the truth by their wicked thoughts and actions.

Read 1:21-23 Other gods Honored

Instead of using their God-given intelligence to seek Him, they foolishly seek other gods.

What brings God's wrath?

Ignoring Him and honoring others instead.

⁷ *"You shall have no other gods before me.*

⁸ *"You shall not make for yourself an image in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. ⁹ You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me,*

¹⁰ *but showing love to a thousand generations of those who love me and keep my commandments.*

¹¹ *"You shall not misuse the name of the LORD your God, for the LORD will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name. Duet 5:7-11*

How does God respond to those who dishonor Him? How is God's wrath revealed against those who ignore Him and His moral law?

Read 1:24-27 Sin of the Body

God allows sin to run its course. So, the first way God reveals His wrath is by letting the curse on humanity (Adam and Eve's sin) take hold. The heart becomes harder and the conscience weaker...to the deep urge

to sin. This is sin expressed at its most basic level...to go against the original plan for God to make us fruitful and multiply. That unique chemistry that God gave to motivate people to seek the oneness of marriage and commitment and to raise godly children is twisted by another desire. A desire that originated with Satan to go against God's way. And when a person gives in to evil desires, sin is born. And Sin full-grown, gives birth to death (Ja 1:13-15). These desires are selfish and are never satisfied.

And so they exchange God's purposes (life, love and stewardship) for Satan's lie which leads to degrading the body, servitude to others, and unnatural sexual relations (homosexuality etc.).

Read 1:28-32 Sin of the Mind

Paul moves from the baser sins to the desires that affect all thinking. And now every conceivable evil is the temptation. Not one of us is immune to temptation. These lists will touch on some areas of temptation we personally struggle with. When we saturate our mind with the world's thinking...the struggle is intensified. It is Satan's lie that we are not affected by what we see and hear (be careful little eyes and ears).

The final justification for God's wrath is that these people pull others down to their level...entangling others in sin and death (v32).