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Lesson 67- An Overview of the Book of Romans (part 1)

Last week we began our overview of the book of Romans, and we started learning about the rich historical context of this epistle which showed us the heart of Paul and his motivations for writing this letter to the Christians in Rome. And we discovered that these Christians in Rome were a church without a shepherd. They were saved and believed in Jesus, but the oppression from the Jews and the Judaizers to follow the Law was prevalent in the church and they didn't have a shepherd to keep the wolves away and teach them the revealed Gospel of Jesus Christ as it was given to the Apostle Paul.

The book of Romans is the definitive explanation of our Christianity: that we are saved by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone, apart from the works of the Law or any good works that man might try to add to the work of Jesus. The book of Romans is the revelation of the mystery of the Gospel, **Romans 16:25**. This is the Gospel that was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but has now been revealed to us through His Spirit. Notice how Paul begins his letter, **Romans 1:1-6**. This is the good news, the εὐαγγέλιον. And notice how Paul refers to this Gospel in verse 1... the Gospel of God. That God sent His Son, the Eternal Word who was with Him in the beginning, Jesus Christ, who came to this earth as a Man, as our Kinsman Redeemer, and paid the price for sin and was resurrected as our High Priest to administer the blood of the New Covenant to all who believe. The Gospel is not just for the Jew, God is the God of the Jew and the Gentile, Romans 3:29. And **WHOSOEVER** believes in Jesus is made the Righteousness of God in Him. As I have been pouring over this epistle, there is one Truth that keeps standing out: our Glorious Liberty in Christ Jesus. That in Him we are free from the bondage of sin and the bondage of the Law and made free in Christ Jesus as the Righteousness of God.

There are three words that continually come up throughout this epistle: Law (75), Faith (58), and Righteousness (61). The idea throughout this epistle is that the **Law** condemns us as sinners, but through **faith** in Jesus Christ we can be made **Righteous** in Him, **Romans 1:16-17**. Notice those words in verse 17, that through the Gospel, God's Righteousness is revealed. These first three chapters discuss the Righteousness of God. The Righteousness of God can be revealed in two ways and it's our choice in what way God's Righteousness is revealed to us: through the Law or through Grace. To the unbeliever, the Righteousness of God is revealed through the Law in wrath and guilt and results in eternal damnation; but to the believer, one who has faith in Jesus Christ, the Righteousness of God is revealed through the Gospel, through grace, and results in reconciliation with God, being declared Righteous (justified) and eternal life in Him.

Chapters 1-3- The Righteousness of God

From Romans 1:18 through Romans 3:20 Paul proves that all people are sinners. He proves that no one can be made Righteous by their own merits or good works, not the pagan, nor the moralist, not even the legalistic Jew who follows the Law. For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, Romans 3:23. Notice what Paul says in Romans 3:9... *for we have previously charged both Jews and Greeks that they are all under sin*. The purpose of these first three chapters is to prove that everyone is bound under the bondage of sin and no one can be made righteous by their own merits or good works. Romans 1:18-32 deals with the pagan who denies God, and within this segment Paul describes the wrath of God in terms of giving them over to their own ungodly ways; Romans 2:1-16 with the self-righteous moralist, which can be anyone, Jew or Gentile; and Romans 2:17-3:8 with the Legalistic Jew. And then makes the declaration that all are under sin, **Romans 3:9-12, 19-20**. This is what the Law does, it exposes our sin and shows us the need of a Savior. Paul says in Galatians 3:24, *"the Law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, so that we might be justified by faith."* The Law can't save us, it only shows us that we need to be saved.

So to that point, if the Law can't save us, why did God give the Law? The Law is God's Righteous standard that only Jesus could fulfill. God isn't going to lower His standard so we can meet it. Instead, He shows us

His standard, and in doing so makes it clear that no one can attain to it, therefore showing us the need of a Savior because Jesus Christ is the only One who could fulfill and uphold the Law perfectly, Rom 8:3-4. So Paul asks the question... what is the advantage of the Jew? Why did God choose a special nation for Himself? **Romans 3:1-2**. They were chosen for the purpose to usher in His Word, first as the oracles of God, *λόγια*, so that the *λόγος* could be made flesh. The Jews were chosen for the special purpose to usher in the Messiah. They were predestined for the service of bringing the Messiah into the world. Paul expounds on this topic in chapter 9. But Paul makes it clear that even with this special privilege, the Jews don't automatically inherit salvation just because they are Jews. Salvation is a matter of the heart, not the deeds of the Law; only by One means, through faith in Jesus Christ, Romans 2:28-29.

So after proving that we are all sinners and there is nothing we can do to save ourselves, Paul gives us the hope of the Gospel in Romans 3:21 and says "But now..." Thank God for His grace and mercy! But God... even when we were dead in our trespasses and sins... *but God, who is rich in mercy made us alive together with Christ, and raised us up together and made us sit together in Christ...* Eph 2:4-6. This is what Paul begins saying starting in Romans 3:21. That we are saved by grace through faith in Jesus Christ and nothing else. And in these verses, he not only explains the Gospel, but he gives us the legal reasons why and how a sinner can be justified. Because that's actually a contradiction in terms. It is not possible that a Righteous God could justify a sinner, unless there were someone to pay the price of that sin on our behalf. And that's what Paul explains in **Romans 3:21-26**. This is what I love about the book of Romans. Paul gets into the nuts and bolts of our Christianity and explains the legalities of our freedom in Christ. Then he makes a conclusion, **Romans 3:27-30**. This is Paul breaking down the middle wall of separation and bringing both Jew and Gentile together into one body in Christ through faith. Not by the works of the Law, but by grace through faith.

Chapter 4- The example of the faith of Abraham

Then in chapter 4, Paul gives us an example with Abraham describing how he, the father of the Jewish nation, was accounted righteous by faith and not by works. Even in the Old Testament, Salvation has always been a matter of faith and the heart and never by works, Romans 4:1-5. Abraham lived over 400 years before the Law was given to Moses, but Paul makes the point that he was even accounted righteous before he was circumcised, Romans 4:10-12; Gen 15:6. Paul is proving that following the Law isn't what saves a person, but our faith in Jesus Christ. That's what Abraham believed. He believed in the Messiah to come, that "in your seed all nations of the earth will be blessed," Gen 15:4-6; 22:18. This was the promise of the Messiah that would come through him, Romans 4:16, 21-25.

Chapter 5- Our Redemption in the Man, Jesus Christ

Chapter 5 begins with a "Therefore..." summing up the first four chapters and our justification by faith through our Lord Jesus Christ, **Romans 5:1-2**, 6-12. Then he continues to describe the curse and bondage of sin that came as a result of Adam's sin, and then contrasts this with our redemption in the Man, Jesus Christ, Romans 5:17-19.

Chapter 6- The walk of Sanctification

Since we are free from sin, does this give us a license to sin? Absolutely not! **Romans 6:1-4, 11-14**. This is the walk of Sanctification now that we have been Justified by grace through faith. The just shall live by faith. Sanctification is the continual walk of trusting and relying on Jesus Christ for everything. It's not setting up a bunch of boundaries and laws to not sin, but rather walking in such a love and appreciation of what He did, that its unthinkable to sin against Him. It is the continual progression of separating ourselves from the evil of this world and walking closer to Him in Christ-likeness, **Romans 6:19, 22-23**.

Chapter 7- The War Within the Believer

Paul begins describing the legalities of being dead to sin, dead to the Law, freeing us from the bondage of the Law and being married to another, Jesus Christ, **Romans 7:4**. But within this is a dichotomy because although our spirits have been reborn, our souls still need to be renewed and there is a lifetime war between our unregenerated flesh and our reborn spirit, **Romans 7:15, 21-25**. We are carrying around this body of death. A body that we have to crucify over and over again and bring it into submission to the Spirit. But there is no way to do this on our own. *Who will deliver me from this body of death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord!* Only Jesus Christ, through the power of the Holy Spirit, is able to purify us and lead us on the path of Sanctification into our Glorification in Him.

And this is where chapter 8 picks up... taking us into Glory. Chapter 8 is the pinnacle of the letter, so next week we will commit our study to this wonderful chapter.