



Christian Reality

For I am not ashamed of the gospel: it is the power of God for salvation to every one who has faith...

Romans 1:16



Romans 1-3

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HOLY TRINITY CHURCH
INTEGRATED BIBLE STUDIES
For Individuals & Small Groups



How to get best value out of these studies...

Welcome to a new series of New Testament studies in the book of **Romans**. These Study Guides are designed in a three part format...

- 1 Opening questions to get you thinking are listed as **Appetisers**.
- 2 Those which get you to investigate the text are contained in the **Main Course**.
- 3 The **Take Away Value** section prompts you to reflect on what you've looked at and consider how it will change you and those in your group.

If you're using these Guides in a Small Group, it is vital that you have done preparatory work *before* you get to your meeting. This will be of great benefit not only to you, but to the other members of your group.

If you're doing these studies individually, make sure you let someone know you are doing so, and arrange a time to meet with them when you've finished (or even before) to let them know how your life is being changed by God's Word.

If you're after good commentaries or resources to complement your looking into the bible, speak to your Small Group Leader or one of the staff, and we'll try to be as helpful as possible. Most people aren't going to spend lots of dollars on theological works, so we're constantly on the look out for good quality titles that will result in money well spent.

We trust you'll find the guides helpful, and we welcome any feedback you can give us as you use them.

Always surround your time looking into God's Word with **prayer**, asking God to change your heart and life so that you – with God's people – might become more and more like our Lord Jesus Christ.

Recommended Reading:

Author F F Bruce, *Romans*, Tyndale Commentary, IVP. 1983

Author Fritz Ridenour, *How to be a Christian Without Being Religious*, Regal Books. 1986

Author J R W Stott *Encountering the Gospel's Power*, John Stott Bible Studies, IVP. 1998

Take Away Value

9. How have these 3 chapters about sin, contributed to your view of
 - a) other people?
 - b) yourself?
10. Why is it both important and healthy to accept this divine diagnosis of our true human condition? Look at vv21-29, but also consider other reasons as well.
11. In discussing the evidence of our sin, we can easily evade it by changing the subject, bolstering a poor self esteem, blaming our gene pool, our parents, education or society. Why is it an essential part of our human dignity to acknowledge and take responsibility for our sin?
12. Read through 3:21-31 again. Jump ahead to 5:1-8. What is the true basis for self love and self-esteem?
13. Some people who hear the words of this chapter immediately think they are worse than others, and are plunged into self-despair, some immediately think how much better they are than others and become complacent. Both are unrealistic views of sin. How would you use the truth of universal sin with both groups to provide a true basis for self-esteem and self-love?

3. What is the grand conclusion of 3:9-12?

4. Read vv13-18.
Which of these images of scripture are most powerful for you? Why?

5. Notice the body parts connected to sin. How does this impact your understanding of sin?

6. This is a pretty ugly picture...how do you feel about seeing yourself in this way?

7. Read Romans 3:19-20. How is it that the law ends up putting Jew/Gentile, moralist/pagan onto the same side of the street?

8. Martin Luther said,
“The principal point...of the law, is to not make men better but worse, it shows them their sin, that by that knowledge they may be humbled, terrified and broken...and by this means driven to seek grace.”

V22 says there is no distinction between people. In vv21-31, find as many ways as you can that illustrate there is no distinction between people.



CHRISTIAN REALITY

Romans 1-3: Outline of Series

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|---------|-----------------|---|
| Study 1 | Romans 1:1-17 | The Reality of a God Who Takes The Initiative |
| Study 2 | Romans 1:15-32 | Left to Our Own Devices |
| Study 3 | Romans 2:1-16 | A Skeleton or Two in the Closet |
| Study 4 | Romans 2:17-3:8 | The Dangers of Privilege |
| Study 5 | Romans 3:9-31 | Together on the Wrong Side of Town |

Study 1 The Reality of a God Who Takes the Initiative

In this message we will explore the importance of partnership in the gospel and mutual encouragement (v.12). We will look at what it means to be pressured into being ashamed of the gospel and why it is the power of God. God's righteousness will be a key idea here.

Study 2 Left to Our Own Devices

God's righteousness will now be contrasted with His wrath, two complementary truths. We will compare human anger to God's and track the downward spiral of sinful people. Confession of our human condition will be an essential part of this message. Several exchanges take place in v. 23 and v. 25, which only lead to absolute poverty!

Study 3 A Skeleton or Two in the Closet

God's judgement is the theme here. We will look at the dangers of playing self-appointed judge, consider God's complete impartiality and the hypocrisy that comes with those have God's law. It would be good to keep contrasting the differences between human judgement and God's. God's law here does the work of exposing our sin, not justifying us.

Study 4 The Dangers of Privilege

This is the message warning us not to base our acceptance before God on anything other than Christ's work. We will examine why God gave people the law and the purpose of circumcision. We will contrast the person who is self-rescued and the person who is grace rescued.

Study 5 *Together on the Wrong Side of Town*

God does not distinguish human beings on the basis of race, colour, class, etc. There is no one righteous – not even one! Acknowledging our personal responsibility for our sin is an essential part of our human dignity. This message will emphasise both the importance and healthiness of accepting the divine diagnosis of 3:10.

1

Study 1 **The Reality of a God Who Takes the Initiative** **Romans 1:1-14**

Why Study Romans?

1. The apostle Paul wrote over one quarter of the New Testament. **Romans showcases to us in a comprehensive and spelled out way the gospel he preached**, as well as its practical implications. If you aren't sure what the gospel is, after reading Romans you should have a most thorough grasp of how it works!
2. **This letter covers some of the great themes that dominate the Bible from beginning to end:** the problem of human sin, the dilemma it creates, God's great plan to reverse its effect and restore people in relationship to himself. Romans can teach you the whole message of the Bible.
3. **A cursory glance at church history will show that it transformed the lives of Christian leaders** such as Augustine, Luther and Wesley as they came to a full knowledge of the gospel and how it works.
4. No matter how long we've been Christians, there is always the potential to misunderstand the gospel and begin conducting our relationship with God based on our performance. This quickly deteriorates into a barren and impersonal relationship of transactions. The exercise being focussed on is earning religious 'frequent flyer points'. **Romans provides the perfect antidote for the person who has lost sight of God's grace to rescue them.**

5

Study 5 **Together on the Wrong Side of Town** **Romans 3:9-31**

Appetiser

1. People make human divisions based upon all sorts of criteria – eg: in Adelaide blue collar, white collar, public or private school education.
What are some of your own?

One of the most common divisions can be based on where you live. In our area, a major road has become the divide. Those who are going somewhere in life live east of it, those who are no-hopers live to the west of it. Paul destroys such divisions, and firmly reminds the Romans that when it comes to God, together, they all live on the wrong side of town, so to speak.

Main Course

2. Read Romans 3:9-18

How do you know Paul is approaching the end of his lengthy argument (v9)? Try and summarise the argument so far into these sections:

- a) 1:18-32
- b) 2:1-16
- c) 2:17-3:8

6. Examine vv29 carefully. What are the four contrasts drawn between a true Jew (God's person) and a Jew by birth.
7. Now read Romans 3:1-2. In what ways had the Jews been entrusted with the very oracles of God?
8. Read 3:1-8, with a picture in your mind of Paul (the self-rescued Pharisee) and Paul (the grace-rescued Christian) in debate with each other. How would you respond to the argument that we need to sin greatly that we might know the greatness of God's forgiveness (vv5-8)

Take Away Value

9. In reading Romans, you are in some way being entrusted with the oracles of God. How might you use them to defend:
 - a) the character of God?
 - b) the character of the gospel from misrepresentation?
10. What things (religious or otherwise) are you prone to misplace your confidence in?
11. Read Romans 2:24 again; spend some time together corporately confessing the ways you have misrepresented God to the unbeliever.

Appetiser

5. Imagine you are a new Christian in the first century, living in the capital of a world empire. Your city is the hub of politics, art and sport. You heard of Christianity from a recent Jewish arrival who was escaping to the safety of Rome. He told you his story about a martyr named Jesus. You believed but now a letter from the apostle arrives. What does this letter tell you about what you've committed to?

Main Course

6. Look closely now at Romans 1:8-16. Try and identify Paul's purpose in writing this letter.
7. What does Paul tell us about the gospel in vv. 1-7?
8. Why is it significant that the great leader and apostle wants to minister to them and be ministered to by them? (vv11-12). Why is **mutual** encouragement important to Christians?
9. Read 15:23-24. What does this tell you of Paul's mission?
10. Look closely at 15:25-29. How does Paul handle the potential tension created between Jewish Christians and their Gentile counterparts? Read Romans 11:13-24. What is Paul's solution to the conflict?

Take Away Value

11. What have you learned about:

1. Paul?
2. The Romans?
3. The gospel?

Personally, how has it become good news for you?

12. In your own walk with God, in what ways can the focus quickly shift from responding to what God has done for you, to earning a relationship with God.
13. At the outset of this book, how would you answer the person who thought all religions were the same?

2

Study 2 Left to Our Own Devices Romans 1:15-32

Appetiser:

1. Read Acts 25:23-26:29, in which on one of three occasions, Paul explains how he became a Christian and offers a defence for his preaching of the gospel.
 - (a) What were some of the pressures upon Paul to be ashamed of the gospel?

14. Think of some ways you might practice fairness of judgement akin to God's?

4

Study 4 The Dangers of Privilege Romans 2:17-3:8

Appetisers:

1. We place our confidence in all sorts of things for which we have no real proof. e.g., roadmaps, elevators, doctors, mechanics. Think of a situation where you have misplaced your confidence. (*This may vary from the highly amusing to the quite devastating.*)
2. What are some false assumptions generally made about gaining God's favour? What are some of yours?

Main Course

3. Read vv17-29. What kinds of things did these people depend upon to give them a relationship with God?
4. What is the purpose of Paul's questions in vv21-23?
5. Try and describe the relationship between keeping the law and circumcision (vv25-29)

Take Away Value

8. 2:15 speaks of conscience. Why is conscience important in this setting?
9. What impact does God's refusal to play favourites have on you personally? – on your relationships?
10. Paul uncovers an ironic human foible: our tendency to be critical of everybody but ourselves. We gain some warped enjoyment from condemning in others the very faults present in our own lives. Freud called this 'projection', but Paul describes it centuries earlier! It is a clever device which allows us to retain our sins and self respect simultaneously. In what situations are you prone to 'project' on others?
11. In talking of judgement, Paul emphasises God's absolute fairness in judging people on consideration of whether they have lived up to their knowledge. This is a hypothetical, because Paul knows that no human being can possibly be saved this way. Why is he emphasising it then? (Clue 3:21)
12. Discuss this statement:
"Until the law has done its work of exposing and condemning our sin, we are not ready to hear about a gospel that justifies."
13. Read v16. How would you advise someone to prepare for the "day of God's wrath"?

(b) Why are you sometimes ashamed of the gospel?

Main Course:

2. Now look closely at Romans 1:16-17 where Paul outlines the theme of the gospel. A preacher once said: "there's no sense in declaring that you're ashamed of something unless you've been tempted to feel ashamed of it". What reasons does he give for not being ashamed of the gospel?
3. Now try and draw some comparisons between the righteousness of God v17 and the wrath of God v18. How are these complementary truths of the gospel?
4. The righteousness of God is an Old Testament expression Paul expects his readers to be familiar with. God's righteousness is his readiness to do what is right and fitting. In this sense, the term is similar to God's steadfast love or faithfulness and describes the nature of God as revealed in his relationship with Jesus. How is that righteousness now revealed in a new way?
5. The wrath of God. Read through 1:18-32. Why is God angry with humankind?
6. What is the significance of the expression "God gave them over", vv.24, 26 and 28? How is giving people what they want an expression of God's anger?

In what way is God's anger different from human anger?

7. How is this behaviour a deliberate assault on God?

Take Away Value

8. In part, how do these verses help answer the question of the fate of those who have never heard the gospel? How would you use these verses in such a discussion to show they are without excuse?
9. Provide a definition of sin based on Romans 1:18-32.
10. What ways do you personally need to resist the downward spiral of sin?
11. What have you learned about God that would keep you out of downward spiral?
12. How has your understanding of God's anger changed?

Study 3 A Skeleton or Two in the Closet Romans 2:1-16

3

Appetiser

1. Judgement is a loaded word...what pictures come into your mind when you visualise a judge?

Main Course

2. In chapter 1 Paul finishes outlining the situation of the pagan world before God, now he turns to the situation of the Jew. Although he doesn't state this till 2:17, it seems likely that the Jewish moralist is on view for the whole chapter.
- Look closely at the questions posed in vv3 and 4. What are the immediate dangers for playing self-appointed judge to the pagan of chapter 1?
3. What is the difference between human judgement and God's? (vv1-4)
4. In what ways does God not show favouritism? Compare with Acts 10:34.
5. In vv 12-16, how is the Jew in a far worse situation than the Gentiles?
6. Read Phil. 3:1-9, Paul's personal account of his own Jewish life prior to becoming a Christian. How does Paul view the righteousness he gained by the law?
7. In what ways do we think ourselves superior to the ignorant pagan?