

## Mod 5: How would you explain Grace in terms of Romans 1-8?

Read: Romans 1-17

### I. ROMANS: PAUL'S GOSPEL OF GRACE.

The Bible is very clear that *saving* grace comes through Jesus Christ alone. “Grace and truth were realized through Jesus Christ” (John 1:17). “Be strong in the grace that is in Jesus Christ” (2 Tim. 2:1). “We are saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus” (Acts 15:11). “For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men” (Titus 2:11). See Romans 3:24; 5:15.

We must stress that Jesus is the ONLY source of saving grace. “And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved” (Acts 4:12). Most religions have a concept of “salvation,” but none of them can truly save.

This is because sinners can be saved only by grace, and grace comes only through Jesus. Sects such as bhakti Hinduism and True Pure Land Buddhism CLAIM to provide a gracious salvation, but they are deceiving themselves and others. Grace is possible nowhere outside Christianity, because Christianity alone has the only true source of grace: the sinless divine Redeemer, Jesus Christ.

### II. THE OBEDIENCE OF FAITH.

An important expression occurs at both the beginning and the end of Romans, in 1:5 and 16:26, not unlike bookends that encompass the entire work. It is the same Greek phrase in both verses: *eis hupakoēn pisteōs*, literally, “unto obedience of faith” (there is no “the” before “obedience”). It is important because with this phrase Paul sums up the overall purpose of his ministry as the Apostle to the Gentiles. He declares that he was “called as an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God” (Rom 1:1). To what end was he called? In 1:5 he says he received his apostleship “to bring about the obedience of faith among all the Gentiles.” This is his “mission statement,” as it were, and could well function as the mission statement of the church in any era. The very goal of the gospel is to bring sinners to “obedience of faith.”<sup>1</sup>

The concept of mission or goal or purpose is found in the preposition *eis*, which precedes “*obedience of faith*.” In such a context it means “unto, for the purpose of, toward the goal of, in order to bring about.” The NASB translates it “*to bring about*” in **1:5** and “*leading to*” in **16:26**. The ESV has “*to bring about*” in both verses. The point is that this is the result any of us, not just Paul, should be looking for when we share the gospel with the lost: we are seeking to bring them to “*obedience of faith*.”

If this is the case, then it would seem that this is a very important concept. This is why it is rather surprising to see such widespread disagreement as to what it means.

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<sup>1</sup> Cottrell, J. (2009). *What the Bible Says about Grace: Set Free!* (p. 123). Joplin, MO: College Press Publishing Company.

### III. THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD.

The third theme I am discussing from *Romans 1:1–17* is *the righteousness of God*, introduced by Paul in *v. 17*: “*For in it [the gospel] the righteousness of God is revealed.*” What is righteousness as such?

## GRACE THEMES IN ROMANS 1:1–17

There is no true doctrine of grace outside the Bible.<sup>2</sup> In his article, “God’s Way Is Grace,” Leon Morris rightly says, “Salvation by grace is a characteristically Christian idea. It is a truth of revelation, not an idea common to mankind at large. In fact men at large almost invariably tend to think of salvation in terms of merit. All kinds of religions from the most primitive to the most cultural can be found to agree on this one point, that however salvation is understood, it is brought about as the result of man’s striving”

Religion to the heathen means man’s endeavor to placate the deity through his own efforts and works, through worship, sacrifices, moral exercises, ascetic discipline, and the like. The religion of the heathen is therefore a religion of the Law”

- I. Romans: Paul’s Gospel of Grace
- II. The Obedience of Faith
- III. The Righteousness of God
  - A. God’s Righteousness, or Personal Righteousness?
  - B. God’s Gift to Sinners, or God’s Perfect Moral Character?
  - C. Imputed Righteousness, or Imparted Righteousness?
  - D. Christ’s Payment of Sin’s Penalty, or Christ’s Sinless Life?<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Cottrell, J. (2009). *What the Bible Says about Grace: Set Free!* (p. 89). Joplin, MO: College Press Publishing Company.

<sup>3</sup> Cottrell, J. (2009). *What the Bible Says about Grace: Set Free!* (p. 119). Joplin, MO: College Press Publishing Company.

# Explaining Grace in Terms of Romans 1–8

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### GRACE THEMES IN ROMANS 1:1–17

- I. Romans: Paul’s Gospel of Grace
- II. The Obedience of Faith
- III. The Righteousness of God
  - A. God’s Righteousness, or Personal Righteousness?
  - B. God’s Gift to Sinners, or God’s Perfect Moral Character?
  - C. Imputed Righteousness, or Imparted Righteousness?
  - D. Christ’s Payment of Sin’s Penalty, or Christ’s Sinless Life?

**W**e will deal with grace themes in the same general order that Paul deals with them in *Romans 1–8*. These chapters in Romans are the mother lode for the golden treasures of grace. They are such a masterpiece of profound and orderly thinking that delving into them is not only a spiritual experience but an aesthetic one as well.

No wonder, then, that James Boice advises that “it is time to rediscover Romans” (*Romans 1, 10*). Actually, it is *always* time to “rediscover” Romans; down through the history of Christianity individuals have been doing just this, with earthshaking results. It can and does happen over and over—in the lives of individuals, in congregations, in the Church at large. F.F. Bruce has well said, “There is no telling what may happen when people begin to study the Epistle to the Romans” (**60**).

The first seventeen verses of Romans (*1:1–17*) are rightly regarded as an introduction to the entire letter. Here Paul establishes his credentials as an apostle (*vv. 1–7*), speaks of his concern for and intentions regarding the church at Rome (*vv. 8–15*), and lights the fuse to the stick of gospel dynamite that will explode into our consciousness in what follows (*vv. 16–17*).

### ROMANS: PAUL’S GOSPEL OF GRACE

Is the book of *Romans* *gospel* or *doctrine*? Some describe it as gospel. Martin Luther declared, “This epistle is really the chief part of the New Testament, and is truly the purest gospel” (“**Romans**,” **365**). The nineteenth-century RM scholar Moses Lard said, “It is the whole gospel compressed into the short space of a single letter” (**xx**). In John Stott’s words, Romans is “the fullest, plainest and grandest statement of the gospel in the New Testament” (**19**).

Others say it is doctrine. Lenski, a Lutheran scholar, says, “The truth laid down in Romans forms the Gibraltar basis of doctrine, teaching, and confession” (**8**). Douglas Moo says, “When we think of Romans, we think of doctrine.” This is appropriate, because “Paul’s letter to the

Romans is thoroughly doctrinal” (*Epistle, 1*). Even Moses Lard calls it Paul’s “great doctrinal chart for the future” (xx).

Actually, to ask whether *Romans* is gospel or doctrine is a false choice. It is *both*. The popular idea that “the gospel” is something distinct from doctrine is simply not true. The word “doctrine” means *teaching*, and the word “gospel” means *good news*. We may grant that some biblical teaching or doctrine is *bad news*, e.g., the doctrine of hell. But much Bible doctrine is *good news*; it is indeed “the purest gospel.” Paul summarizes the gospel in these words, “*that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures*” (*1 Cor 15:1–4*). Is this not good news? We may think of Romans as “gospel doctrine,” in which Paul is expounding for us the deeper implications of the phrase “*for our sins*” in *1 Corinthians 15:3*.

To be sure, we may think of *Romans* as a doctrinal essay. On his third missionary journey Paul spent three months in Corinth, which is probably when he wrote this epistle. This lengthy layover in Corinth gave him some time to organize and consolidate his thinking. The result is a well-thought-out doctrinal essay, produced of course through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. This does not mean that Romans is a complete systematic theology; it rather focuses on the doctrine of salvation, in particular, the *manner* in which we are saved.<sup>4</sup> Some are skeptical of the idea that grace is found only in the Bible. The most-often cited examples are as follows.<sup>5</sup>

One form of the Buddhist religion is often cited as an example of a doctrine of salvation by grace found outside the Bible...

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<sup>4</sup> Cottrell, J. (2009). *What the Bible Says about Grace: Set Free!* (pp. 120–121). Joplin, MO: College Press Publishing Company.

<sup>5</sup> Cottrell, J. (2009). *What the Bible Says about Grace: Set Free!* (p. 93). Joplin, MO: College Press Publishing Company.