

# Romans 1

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[ 0 : 00 ] Good morning and a warm welcome to the service this morning, those who are watching online and those who are listening in on the telephone, it's good for us once more to come together and to worship God this morning.

One or two intimations, first of all to say that the service tonight will be online just before six o'clock and the YF will meet on Zoom as they have done in past weeks and we'll get information about that. Also the prayer fellowship, the prayer meeting will be on Wednesday on Zoom at half past seven and Gordon Thompson of the Faith Mission, who we know well, is going to share a word of encouragement at that prayer meeting on Wednesday.

So be encouraged to come along to that. It's good to see the numbers who are coming to the prayer meeting. I would encourage you to keep on praying because we have a God who hears and who answers our prayers.

So these I think are all the intimations and we'll begin now this time of worship by singing to God's praise. We sing from Psalm 34. Psalm 34, we sing from verses 1 to verse 9.

[ 1 : 33 ] God will I bless all times his praise. My mouth shall still express. My soul shall boast in God. The meek shall hear with joyfulness. It's down to the end of verse 9.

We'll taste and see that God is good. Who trusts in him is blessed. Fear God is saints. None that in fear shall be with want oppressed. These verses we sing to God's praise.

God will I bless all times his praise. My mouth shall still express.

My soul shall boast in God. The meek shall hear with joyfulness.

Extol the Lord with me. Let us exalt his name.

[ 2 : 34 ] I sought the Lord. He heard and did me from all fears delivered.

They looked to him and lightened. Not shame and were their faces.

This poor man cried God heard and saved him from all his distresses.

The angel of the Lord encamps and round encompasses.

All those about that to him feared and them delivered us.

[ 3 : 46 ] Oh, taste and see that God is good. Who trusts in him is blessed.

Fear God is saints. None that him feared shall be with want oppressed.

Let's unite their hearts in prayer.

Let's pray together. Our heavenly Father, we thank you for this morning, this Lord's Day morning.

God is blessed. Once again, we come together in this way to worship the God, the one true God, the Lord who is risen from the dead.

We thank you that you are God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. And we thank you, Father, for sending your son Jesus into this world. We thank you, Lord Jesus, for coming into this world, for living for us, for dying for us and for rising from the dead.

[ 5 : 03 ] And we thank you for that resurrection that we remember. And we give thanks for each Lord's Day morning. And we praise you for the work of the Holy Spirit, who illuminates our minds, who opens our eyes, who enables us to see Jesus and our great need of Jesus.

And we pray, Holy Spirit, that you would be at work in each of our lives, in each of our hearts at this time. That our eyes would be lifted to the hills and beyond the hills to the God who made heaven and earth.

Enable us, we pray, to come and worship. Enable us, we pray, to worship you in spirit and in truth, to be in the spirit on this Lord's Day.

And we pray that on this day, we would know that blessing, that refreshment of Sabbath rest. We are told to stop work. We are told to rest in the Lord.

And we thank you that as we do so, as we wait upon you, you are the God who renews our strength, who enables us to rise up on wings like eagles, to run and not grow weary, to walk and not faint.

[ 6 : 19 ] We thank you that you are the God who is good. And we pray that we and many whom we bring to you in prayer would taste and see that God is good.

Lord, that we would find that blessing, that happiness, that contentment, that joy that comes from being in a close walk with you.

So, Lord, draw near to us, we pray, as we would seek to draw near to you. Once more, we confess our sin morning by morning. We are conscious that as we travel through this world, our feet become dirty with the sin that sticks to us.

And we pray that you would cleanse us in the blood of Christ, that we may be made clean, that we would be purified from all unrighteousness. And we pray that you would make each one of us righteous in the righteousness that comes from God, that gift of grace that we receive as we come in faith to Jesus.

So help us, Lord, we ask in this hour to be in the Spirit, to be looking to Jesus, to be given the faith that we need. And, Lord, to exalt you in all that we do and all that we say and all that we think.

[ 7 : 36 ] We pray that you would help those who are in particular need at this time. We thank you, Lord, that as we come in prayer, we are able to bring people and bring places and situations to you that we are not able physically to get to.

We thank you that we can go to the ends of the earth with our prayers, and we can ask that you would be at work. And we ask, Lord, that you would be at work at this time. We hear about people in different countries who are in great need.

We hear about the situation in Peru at this time, as we get reports from various of your people, as we hear about such a high percentage of people with coronavirus, as we hear about health care systems that are not able to cope, and people on the streets suffering and even dying in these places where they do not have the provisions that we have.

And we pray for countries like Peru and others like them, that they would know, Lord, your hand upon them. We scarcely know what to pray, but we just bring them to you and ask, Lord, that you would be at work in the midst of this suffering.

As we hear about Africa and as we hear about the prospect of there being such a shortage of food if this virus does not lift in the next few weeks, Lord, the prospect of famine in months ahead, we ask, Lord, that you would intervene.

[ 9 : 12 ] These prayers are prayers that are huge. They seem so vast to us, but you are the God who is able to do more than we can ask or imagine.

And Lord, we pray for the needs of those who are closer to us as well. We pray for those who are sick at this time. We thank, Lord, of those in our congregation who are struggling.

We pray especially for Ian Davidson as he receives chemotherapy, as he has been in hospital in past days, and as he again thinks about the prospect of treatment again this week.

We pray that you would uphold him and Shona also, and that your hand of healing would be upon him, and Lord, that he would know your presence and the grace that is sufficient, whether we are given healing or whether we are not given physical healing.

We pray, Father, for those who are housebound, those who are lonely, those who are suffering under the weight of addiction, those whose minds become dark with depression and become fraught with anxiety.

[ 10 : 22 ] We draw near to you, Lord, and we bring them to you and ask that you would meet each one at the point of their need. We pray for our young people as they are homeschooled and for their parents and those who care for them.

We pray, Lord, for students who are looking at the exams coming up in future weeks. And we ask that you would steady them and help them in their studies, even as they study online through this crisis at present.

And we thank you, Lord, that we can come to you with all our worries, all our concerns, all our loved ones. And we ask, Lord, that you would help them, that you would be near to them.

Help us in the week that's ahead. You know what's ahead, Lord, for us, and we ask that you would guide us and lead us in it. We pray, Lord, for the meeting scheduled, especially the prayer meeting, and for your blessing upon it.

We thank you for Gordon Thompson, for the encouragement that he has been to the congregation here and for the way that you have spoken through. And we ask, Lord, that you would give him the words to say on Wednesday evening.

[ 11 : 30 ] And, Lord, as he ministers online, as he ministers as part of the Faith Mission Team, we ask, Lord, that you would be with them. We know that there were tent missions scheduled for places nearby here that have had to be cancelled.

And we pray, Lord, that in spite of these cancellations, that you would be at work. Because, Lord, we know that you are, and we see evidence of the fact that you are.

So we pray that your name would be lifted high, that you would be glorified, and that in these days, even though we are in lockdown, even though we may suffer restrictions and inactivity, we pray that you would be at work, Lord, and that we would see many people coming to faith in Christ at this time.

So hear our prayers, and go before us, we ask, in Jesus' name, and for Jesus' sake. Amen. Boys and girls, I wish you were here with me this morning.

I wish I could ask for some volunteers for what I'm about to do. But there's no volunteers here, apart from the man behind the camera, and he's not volunteering. And I want to show you something.

[ 12 : 49 ] I'll probably need to tell a glass of water in a second again. I want to show you this. I don't know if you can see that. Can you see that quite clearly? Yeah. You know what that is?

You get green ones. You get red ones as well. So do you know what these are? Well, I'm guessing you're shouting out in your houses, and I'm guessing you probably know that these things are, they're chillies.

And what are chillies known for? If I was to ask you, what do you know about chillies, then I'm pretty sure I know what you would say in response.

You would say that they're famous for being not so much tasty, or pretty, but they're known for being hot. Chillies are hot.

But how do you know they're hot? Because, I mean, I'm holding it in my hand just now, and it doesn't feel hot. And if I smell it, it just smells like a pepper.

[ 14 : 02 ] It doesn't smell hot. It doesn't look very hot. There's no smoke coming off it. So, if it's hot, how do we know it's hot? Well, this is what I'd love to ask for a volunteer.

I wouldn't ask any of the boys and girls to volunteer, but if there was a church full of people, I would ask for somebody to come forward and explain to us how chillies are hot.

But seeing as there's no volunteers, I'm going to have to do this myself. So, how do we know it's hot? Well, we have to do this, don't we? We have to bite it.

We have to taste it. We have to... We have to crunch it between our teeth. And at first, I don't feel very much, don't taste very much.

But now that I get a wee bit of seed, maybe at the bottom, I'm starting to feel heat. And I'm starting to know that these chillies are actually very powerful things.

[ 15 : 16 ] I couldn't eat all of this or my mouth would be on fire. My mouth's actually a wee, but on fire already. It's a powerful thing. It doesn't look like it. It doesn't smell like it.

You wouldn't expect it. And if you'd never seen a silly before and you just decided to crunch it like an apple, you'd know all about it. But this thing is powerful. And that's like the message of the Bible. It's like the Bible. Some people, they take the Bible and they'll hold it up and they'll say, it's a bit boring. Some people say, we know better than that, I hope.

But some people would say, I don't know why you go to church and I don't know why you open the Bible because it's a bit boring. It's just a book with a black cover and there's no pictures in it.

And it's read by people, mainly older people, in black suits like yours. It's a bit boring. But the thing is, when we open the Bible and when we read it and we start to see Jesus and see how much we need him, and not just when we open it and when we read it, but when we take it in.

[ 16 : 31 ] For the chilly, you have to take it in before we start to feel the heat and the warmth and the power. We have to taste it.

And for God's word, for the message, the good news about Jesus, we have to take it in by faith. We have to taste it.

That's why we sang the psalm that we sang, Psalm 34. It says, Oh, taste and see that God is good. When we taste and see that God is good, that's when we know his blessing. That's when we feel the warmth of God with us, in us, around us.

And when we taste and see the promises of God in the Bible, we know, just like we know when we bite into a chili, that this message is powerful.

[ 17 : 34 ] Paul, the apostle, in Romans chapter 1, which we're going to read in a wee while with the older ones, he says of the gospel message, it's the power of God unto salvation.

So boys and girls, I want you just to be encouraged today to open your Bibles to, and not just to open your Bibles, but to ask that God would take the words of the Bible and he'd put them in our hearts.

I think it was Gordon who's going to speak on Wednesday night at the prayer meeting who said that God, he gives us lots of promises but we have to swallow them. We swallow them by faith for them to do us good.

So boys and girls, taste and see that God is good. ask God to work with power in your life, in your heart to forgive your sins.

I ask him to forgive my sin and to fill us with the Holy Spirit, to fill us with the Spirit of Jesus who is able to save us. Let's pray about that now.

[ 18 : 48 ] Lord God, we thank you for your word. We thank you that your word is powerful. We thank you, Lord, that you are the God who is good and we thank you that when we trust you, you are so willing to bless us, to make us happy and content in our hearts in a way that nothing and no one else in this world can.

We know, Lord, that we are sinners, we get things wrong, the things that we think and say and do, but we thank you that the message of the gospel, the good news about Jesus is powerful and when we ask you to come in to our lives, when we take hold of your promises and swallow them, we thank you that you have promised that you will forgive us all of our sin and you will save us forever. You will give us that safety that is found only in Jesus. So, Lord Jesus, be at work amongst the young ones, we pray, as they watch and as they go to their Sunday school lesson, just in a wee while, speak into their hearts, Lord, we pray, as we ask that you would speak into all of our hearts and we ask all these things in Jesus' name and for Jesus' sake.

Amen. We're going to open God's Word now and we're going to read from Romans chapter 1.

We finished 2 Peter on Wednesday evening and we turn now to Romans chapter 1 and we'll read the whole of this chapter. This is God's Word.

[ 20 : 27 ] Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle and set apart for the gospel of God, the gospel he promised beforehand through his prophets in the Holy Scriptures regarding his son, who as to his human nature was a descendant of David and who through the spirit of holiness was declared with power to be the Son of God by his resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Through him and for his name's sake, we received grace and apostleship to call people from among all the Gentiles to the obedience that comes from faith. And you also are among those who are called to belong to Jesus Christ.

to all in Rome who are loved by God and called to be his saints. Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ.

First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you because your faith has been reported all over the world. God, whom I serve with my whole heart in preaching the gospel of his Son is my witness how constantly I remember you in my prayers at all times.

And I pray that now at last by God's will the way may be open for me to come to you. I long to see you so that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to make you strong.

[ 21 : 55 ] That is, that you and I may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith. I do not want you to be unaware, brothers, that I planned many times to come to you but have been prevented from doing so until now in order that I might have a harvest among you just as I have had among the other Gentiles.

I am bound both to Greeks and non-Greeks both to the wise and to the foolish. That is why I am so eager to preach the gospel also to you who are in Rome.

I am not ashamed of the gospel because it is the power of God for all for the salvation of everyone who believes. First for the Jew then for the Gentile.

For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last. Just as it is written, the righteous will live by faith.

The wrath of God has been revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness since what may be known about God is plain to them because God made it plain to them.

[ 23 : 06 ] For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities his eternal power and divine nature have been clearly seen being understood from what has been made so that men are without excuse.

For although they knew God they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. Although they claimed to be wise they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles.

Therefore God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another. They exchanged the truth of God for a lie and worshipped and served created things rather than the creator who is forever praised.

Amen. Because of this God gave them over to shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural ones. In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another.

Men committed indecent acts with other men and received in themselves the due penalty for their perversion. Furthermore, since they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, he gave them over to a depraved mind to do what ought not to be done.

[ 24 : 38 ] They have become filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed, and depravity. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, and malice. They are gossips, slanderers, God-haters, insolent, arrogant, and boastful.

They invent ways of doing evil. They disobey their parents. They are senseless, faithless, heartless, ruthless. Although they know God's righteous decree that those who do such things deserve death, they not only continue to do these very things, but also approve of those who practice them.

Amen. And may God bless his word to us and give us understanding as we come to study it.

We'll pray for a moment again. Lord God, we ask that as we meditate upon your word for these moments that we would know the help of the Holy Spirit.

Lord God, that we would be taught, that we would be guided in our speaking, in our listening, in our responding, so that we may grasp the good news and the bad news of this chapter.

[ 25 : 53 ] And Lord, that we may take hold of Christ who is able to save us to the uttermost. So be at work, Lord, amongst us we pray. May your word come forth with the power of the Holy Spirit.

And what we pray for ourselves here, we pray, Lord, for the children as they gather in their Sunday school class. We pray, Lord, for the other congregations around us here in this place for the Free Presbyterian Church and the Church of Scotland.

We pray for the continuing church over in Scalpey as well and the Episcopalians who meet on the main street. Lord, whatever Christ crucified is preached, we ask that you would be at work building your church, Lord, glorifying your own name, encouraging your people.

And we ask all these things in Jesus' name and for Jesus' sake. Amen. If you could turn now, please, in your Bibles to Romans chapter 1.

The name Martin Lloyd-Jones probably is familiar to many people who are listening in or who are watching just now.

[ 27 : 09 ] He was often known as the Doctor, Dr. Martin Lloyd-Jones. He was a great preacher, probably the greatest known preacher of the last century.

He lived from 1899 to 1981 and he's probably most famous for his study in Romans, which you can read and you can still look at these sermons, listen in to these sermons.

But he began a study in the book of Romans in the year 1952. He retired from ministry in the year 1968 and he'd only reached Romans chapter 15.

So he spent 16 years evening by evening on the Lord's Day preaching through this book and he only got to chapter 15.

He never actually got to finish the book and I say that just to underline by way of introduction how deep this book is. It's like the ocean.

[ 28 : 17 ] You could spend a lifetime exploring the depths of this letter to the Romans and still only see a fraction of what's there. But like the ocean, many people for fear of it and fear of the depths of it never actually go into it.

We see that often on beaches. People sitting on the deck chair or sitting on the beach mat and they see the waves sparkling in the sun and they say to each other how inviting that looks.

How wonderful it would be to plunge in there but they never venture in. They never got off the chair for fear of the depths of the ocean.

And what I hope to do over these next 16 weeks I think is simply to venture in to this book just to go to use the ocean illustration as a just to go for a paddle.

We're not going to go deep in the 30 minutes or so that we have each week as we study this but I hope that in the 30 minutes that we have week by week we'll be able to get an overview of each chapter of the book that will encourage us to go in our own time a bit deeper and I hope that when we get to the end of this this book we'll want to go back to the beginning actually and not splash about ankle depth but plunge in a bit further.

[ 30 : 00 ] So let's let's turn to Romans chapter one and I want to look at this chapter in the time that we have today under three headings.

We'll look first of all at the introduction Paul's introduction and we'll look secondly at the restriction that Paul was under as he writes to the Romans and we'll look thirdly at the proclamation that Paul makes to the Romans.

So first of all the introduction and that takes us from verse one to verse seven. Now Paul is the author here of this letter.

He makes that clear from the beginning and he's writing to people that he's never actually met before so he begins by introducing himself and addressing the Romans.

Paul he says verse one a servant of Christ Jesus called to be an apostle set apart for the gospel of God and he writes in this way this introduction down to the end of verse seven.

[ 31 : 07 ] You can scan the verses yourselves there but when we think about this when we introduce ourselves when we're in company and when we find ourselves meeting for the first time new people we usually in our introduction we talk about ourselves we may give our we will usually give our name we may speak about the place that we were born in or the place that we live in we may speak about our family we may say something about what we do or where we work and Paul as he comes with this introduction he brings a little of that in but the thing to note in this introduction is he brings a lot of Jesus in right from the very point of introduction right from the very point of contact here it's clear that just as Paul wrote elsewhere for Paul to live is Christ

Christ is his life and there's four words here that Paul uses to describe himself and let me just give you these four words the first word is small you won't find small in the opening verses here but small is the that's what the name Paul means and that's the name that he was given when he first meets with Christ he's known as Saul the Pharisee but after meeting with Jesus on the Damascus road and as Paul goes into ministry as he is called by Christ to go into ministry his name changes from Saul to Paul and Paul means small or humble and that's certainly that's something that's evident in in Paul's life before when he was Saul he was a man who was a rising star in the world of the Pharisees he was full of himself he was full of his own importance his fixation would be on his career as a Pharisee but after meeting Jesus everything changes

Saul became Paul he's humbled he becomes small Saul decreases in order that Christ could increase in him and through him the first word there is Paul which means small the second word that Paul uses to introduce himself is he he says that he is a servant of Christ Jesus verse 1 the word there that's used in Greek is the word doulos which means slave Paul clearly recognizes and he teaches elsewhere that he that he is not his own but he recognizes that he he was bought at a price that's what he says in 1 Corinthians 6 19 and 20 he's a servant he's a willing slave who has been bought by the blood of Jesus he is he is a servant of Christ Jesus the third word that Paul uses in his introduction is sent one or the word that we have in the text here is apostle Greek word apostolos simply means sent one and on the Damascus road you can read about that in Acts 9 or Acts 22 he meets with the resurrected Christ and Jesus sends him out as an ambassador for Christ Jesus determines that this man Saul who would become Paul would be his chosen instrument to carry the gospel message to the Gentiles and the final thing that Paul says in his introduction of himself is that he is one who is set apart he has been set apart for the gospel of God he's been set apart from his old life of sin and selfish gain he's been set apart from his old life of that cold legal

Jewish religion and he has been brought into this living relationship with Jesus he's been set apart for Jesus and for the work of the gospel of Jesus Christ and then as Paul continues he right from

the beginning of this he cannot stop himself from speaking about Jesus who is Jesus asks Paul well he's the Messiah verse 2 he's the one promised beforehand through his prophets and the holy scriptures Paul wants him to know Jesus is the Messiah he's the Christ he speaks in verse 3 about Jesus who was fully human who as to his human nature was a descendant of David and Jesus needed to be fully human if he was going to take our sin away from us as our substitute Paul introduces that theology from the very beginning of this book then he goes on in verse 4 to say that Jesus was fully

[ 36 : 34 ] God who through the spirit of holiness was declared with power to be the son of God by his resurrection from the dead Jesus Christ our Lord and Jesus needed to be fully God in order to be able to give God's salvation to us only God could save us and Jesus was he is the God man he is the son of God and so Paul he cannot wait to tell him about who Jesus is he said a little about who he is in relation to Christ and then he speaks about who Jesus is and then he turns to the Romans and he and he says well who are you and he says in verse 7 you are loved by God he wants them to know that from the beginning you are a people who are loved by God now were they a perfect people was this the perfect church that Paul was writing to no he wasn't writing to the perfect church this was a church like like every church it had problems we'll see that as we go through this but still in spite of who they were in spite of their problems they were loved by

God which must have been such a comfort for them and it should be a great comfort for us in spite of our problems in spite of our our failings we are loved by God and he addresses them also as those who are saints which is just another word for Christians they are Christ's ones and I know there's more in these verses in the introductions but what I want us to see under this heading is that Paul's identity and the Romans identity it was hidden in Christ and today by way of application there's so many people and so many young people in particular who are struggling with their identity who they are what life is for where they can find love where they can find approval where they can find purpose where they can find meaning and some people would say to those who are wrestling with these questions well the key to unlocking your identity is finding your gender or your sexuality or your intellect or your sporting abilities but that's not true that's part of who we are but that's not the answer to finding our identity at the deep soul level the answer to where our identity lies is found in

Christ we were made by Jesus we were made for Jesus we are loved by Jesus and the cross itself shows us the extent to which we are loved and we find true purpose and freedom and joy and contentment in this life and then for eternity when we are able to say with the apostle Paul for me to live as Christ I am someone who is in Christ so that's a little about the introduction that Paul brings here in verses 1 to 7 and then we move secondly on here to the restriction that was placed upon the apostle Paul and the restriction that

Paul was under it emerges as we look at the verses from verse 8 to verse 15 and it is entitled in my Bible here Paul's longing to visit Rome he has a longing to visit Rome but there is a restriction we know something of that at present I don't know who it is that you might be longing to visit at present you may be longing to visit family members or friends that you haven't seen physically for a long time you may be longing to go to certain places you may be longing to be back in this church building with those whom you love but we can't at present do that because we are under restriction and Paul he longed to visit Rome he says in verse 11

I long to see and he's not longing to visit Rome to experience the culture the good food of Rome he wants to visit this growing church he heard about them he's not the one who planted this church but he's heard about this church verse 8 their faith has been reported all over the world and he wants to encourage them verse 11 through the gift of his preaching so that they'll be made strong so that they'll be made steady he wants to be encouraged also by them as he enjoys fellowship with them verse 12 and he wants to see a harvest amongst them just as he's seen amongst the other Gentiles he's bringing God's word and he knows that God's word will not return void it will not return empty and so as Paul looks in the direction of Rome he sees fields which are white for harvest and he wants to experience something of that but although he longs to see them he was restricted he planned verse 13 many times to come to them but he never got there yet the door seemed to be to be locked and he's praying in verse 10 that the door would open so that he could see them so you sense the frustration that

[ 43 : 02 ] Paul was experiencing as he was under this restriction but little did Paul know how God would use this restriction Paul wasn't able to move in the direction of Rome at this point but what

did Paul do he prayed verse 8 he prayed with thankfulness for them and he says constantly he remembered them in his prayers at all times he's not able to go but he is able to pray and so constantly without ceasing he is praying for these people now there's a lesson there for us at this time do you and I feel frustrated at lockdown do we feel a sense of frustration about not being able to go to some of the places that we want to go to and not being able to see some of the people we want to see do we feel a frustration even in terms of not being able to do some of the spiritual activities that we might want to do well what can we do we can actually when we're under this restriction do the most effective thing possible we can pray you know it's great to see at this time of restriction when the door of this hall the prayer meeting room is not open that actually we have double the amount of people at the

Zoom prayer meeting that we normally have sitting in this room I hope that will continue when the doors open back up but we can take encouragement from the fact that when we are limited in what we can do we have space we have time we have an obligation and a privilege to be able to come to God in prayer we may be restricted but God is not restricted in this lockdown the guardian which is not known for its sympathy towards Christians confirmed that in an article that was published last Thursday I think it was the headline said British public turn to prayer as one in four tune into religious services now that's a huge number I think supposing every church in the nation had sought to use every evangelistic tool and course to seek to reach the nation there still wouldn't have been that kind of response we still wouldn't have seen one in four people looking for services where God's word would be opened so what's going on in this time of restriction can God visit Rome, God was at work. See, because Paul couldn't physically visit, he wrote.

Because he wrote as he was carried along by the Holy Spirit and inspired to write, not only did the church in Rome receive this letter, but we have this letter. God is speaking to us through this letter that he inspired the apostle Paul to give to the Romans. So God was still at work under restriction. And God is still at work through this letter, even when we know a measure of restriction at present. So what was it then that Paul had to say to the Romans? He longs to see them. He longs to speak to them. He longs to preach to them.

So what was the essence of the message that Paul so longed to preach? Well, we'll look now at the final point, the proclamation that Paul makes to the Romans. We've seen the introduction.

[ 47 : 22 ] We've considered the fact that he was under restriction. And finally, we'll look at the proclamation that Paul makes. And to summarize the essence of the message that we find in Romans chapter 1, this message that Paul brings was a message of sin and a message of salvation.

And I wanted to look at it in that order. First of all, Paul brings a message of bad news. It's a message of sin to the people there in Rome. And he spends a fair bit of time in these verses, 18 to 32, speaking about the sin that was evident in that place. Now, when we are feeling unwell, we may get to a point where we know we have to go to the doctor. And when the doctor examines us and seeks to try to find out why we are unwell, they may want to do some tests. They may want to send us for a scan to get to the root cause of what's leaving us feeling the way that we feel. And when we get the scan result, the picture, if there is something sinister, if there's a tumour, if there is a shadow on the lung, or something that reveals the clear cause of our illness, the doctor will say, I'm sorry about this. I'm sorry to have to give you this news. But they hold up the picture and they say, but here is the problem. Here is the reason for the condition that you are suffering under. And in 18 to 32, verses 18 to 32 of Romans 1, God through Paul, he says to the Romans, here is the problem. And I'm not going to read through all these verses again. They're sore enough to read through once in the time that we have. But what we have in these verses is a detailed picture of the situation that provoked God's wrath, his settled anger against them in AD 57.

And what's clear here and throughout scripture is that sin is the root. It's always the root of the problem. And all the gruesome symptoms of the sin that they suffered under were there in the verses for them and for us to see. Now we pick back up the doctor and the scan illustration. Now when the doctor shows us the scan, she doesn't say, well, let's now spend the rest of the day fixating on this awful scan, this awful picture that brings such bad news. No, she shows us the scan, she'll show us the picture and she'll show us the picture for long enough for us to be convinced that we have a problem in order that we will move on from the problem and seek treatment if there's treatment available.

[ 50 : 42 ] And I hope as we have read through these verses and as we consider these verses, we can see that the problem that Paul spoke of in respect of Rome in AD 57 is not simply a problem that is limited to Rome in AD 57. We can surely see that this is a painful picture of our culture today. This is a portrait of our country today in 2020. And I don't think I need to belabor the details of this because I think it's obvious for us to see this. We're looking in the mirror in these verses. We are seeing our land. We are seeing the world that we live in in these verses. But not only do we see the land and the world that we live in, not only do we see all that surrounds us, but we are given a snapshot in these verses of our own hearts. We don't get to look around and wag our finger as we read through these verses. We must face up the reality of what is within us. One commentator, Hale, says,

Paul here gives us some examples of various sins. It's easy to see such sins in other people, but it's not so easy to recognize them in ourselves. We don't like to see ourselves as being wicked or evil. But if we examine ourselves closely, we will likely find in ourselves some of these same sins. We don't like to see ourselves. Greed? Envy? Deceit? Are we gossips? Slanderers? Are we arrogant?

Boastful? Asks the commentator. I don't think it takes us long to see that this problem of sin and some of these symptoms which are detailed in these verses, they speak into our own hearts. They speak into the rebellion of our own hearts.

Paul Tripp, the commentator, says, So this message is not something simply for back there in Rome and then in 1857. This is a message for us. It's a message for here. It's a message for now.

[ 53 : 35 ] But I suppose the question is, will we hear it? Will we take this on board? There was a university in England some years back, one of the big universities in England. It was round about 2002.

And the Christian Union in the university wanted to try and reach out to the students to speak to them about the message of the gospel.

Part of this program that they undertook was to take the text of Romans chapter 1 and they printed it on a modern looking flyer.

And they gave it out on the university campus. They didn't identify the text as being part of the Bible. They didn't give any indication of where the text came from.

They just took the text of Romans 1, they lifted it as it was, they printed it in contemporary fashion, and they handed it out. Now what was the reaction on the university campus? Well, the reaction was rage.

[ 54 : 43 ] And in no time at all, within a matter of hours, the university authorities, they pulled the Christian Union leaders up before the dean.

And they demanded that they appear with the author before the highest authorities in the university so that the author could be disciplined and silenced.

They didn't know this was the message of the Bible, but what they read and what they heard of, they didn't like. They wanted it censored for its offensiveness.

They didn't want to hear the message. But you know, that's like saying to the doctor when we are sick, and we've got the scan result that tells us the reason that we're sick.

I don't like this picture. It's like saying to the doctor who's handed us over a snapshot of our own condition, saying, I don't like this diagnosis.

[ 55 : 45 ] I don't like this picture. I don't like this scan that I've received. Give me another one. Give me a scan that will make me feel good about myself. You know, God cares too much for us to do that.

He loves us too much not to tell us the truth. The reality is, I know that sadly the church hasn't always done that.

And sometimes I know when the culture says to us, I don't like this message, the church has said, okay, well, we'll see what we can do to change it.

We'll see if we can tone this down somewhat, if it offends you, but God won't do that. The church may have done that. The church may do that. But God is a God who tells us the truth.

He tells us about sin. He shows us the symptoms so that we will know if we are infected. And the reality is, we are all infected.

[ 56 : 48 ] God, as he uses Paul, he shows us our sin in order that he can bring us to salvation. He shows us our sickness in order that we can be brought to the cure.

And that takes us to the heart of the chapter, which really is the heart of Paul's message in Romans. He says in verse 16 to verse 18, Now Paul's obsession It's very obvious to see Paul's obsession was the gospel.

Now what is the gospel? The word literally means good herald, good news. If an emperor in the Roman world won a battle in some far-off military field, he would send heralds to declare after the victory had been won, that it had been won, and that peace had now been secured, and that the people were safe.

And Tim Keller, the commentator, says the gospel is an announcement, a declaration. The gospel is not advice to be followed. It is good news about what has been done.

So Paul is used by God to be a herald who proclaims what Christ has done. And what has Christ done?

[ 58 : 44 ] Well, Christ has enabled sinners to be saved. And who can be saved? Well, God says through Paul in verse 16, everyone can be saved, everyone who believes, first for the Jew, then for the Gentile.

That's us. The gospel is good news for people who are unrighteous. It's good news for people who recognize in this awful list our own hearts.

We may see the offenses of our own lives in verses 18 to 32, but we are promised in this good news in this gospel message that although we are unrighteous, we can be given a righteousness, verse 17, that comes from God.

What will it cost us? Nothing. It's the free gift of God's grace. Who paid for it? Jesus paid for it. He did it on the cross. That's where our salvation was worked out. That's where the wrath of God was taken away from us. That's where the righteousness of God is offered to us.

[ 60 : 04 ] It's at the cross. God made him who knew no sin, writes Paul in 2 Corinthians 5. God made him who knew no sin, that's Jesus, to be sin.

For us, so that we might become the righteousness of God. And when we grasp that truth, when we take hold of this good news, when we are given faith to believe this, it changes everything.

Martin Luther was a famous German monk. He lived from 1483 to 1546. He's a name we recognize from the Reformation.

And he is a man, a young man, who was taught that God required him to live a righteous life in order that he could be saved.

That's what he was taught under the Roman Catholic teaching. And so Luther, he tried, and he tried, and he tried. He was as serious a man as a man could be.

[ 61 : 10 ] He was so serious about his religion. He was the most committed, the most diligent monk. But the more he tried to be righteous, the more he knew he couldn't do it.

And so he began to hate God for requiring of him what he could not do. And one day, Martin Luther was reading this chapter, Romans chapter 1.

And God, in the power of the Holy Spirit, opened his eyes. And he finally understood that the righteousness of God was not the standard that Luther had to hit by his own good works and religious efforts.

But he understood that this righteousness of God was actually the gift of God that was offered to him in and through Jesus.

And in that moment, as Luther saw that, everything changed. This is what he said. He said, I stood before God as a sinner. Therefore, I did not love a righteous and angry God, but rather hated and murmured against him.

[ 62 : 26 ] Then he says, I grasped that the righteousness of God is that righteousness by which through grace and sheer mercy God justifies us through faith.

Thereupon, he says, I felt myself to be reborn and to have gone through open doors into paradise. I broke through, he says. And as I had formerly hated the expression the righteousness of God, I now began to regard it as my dearest and most comforting word.

See, Luther's life was transformed and touched forever, changed forever by the gospel that he discovered for the first time in this book, in this chapter of Romans.

He grasped the good news of what God had done for him, the good news that God had done for him what he could not do for himself.

God had made him righteous in Christ, something that he could never do through his own efforts. And my prayer as we finish is simply that our lives would be touched in the same way, that we

would know something of what Luther wrote of in his testimony there, that we would break through from the bad news about our sin to the good news about Christ's salvation, which is freely offered to us in this same gospel.

[ 64 : 14 ] So may we be given the faith to grasp it, to take hold of it, and to know that salvation that has been procured through the blood of Jesus.

We will pray. Heavenly Father, we do ask that you would work in the power of the Holy Spirit, and that if there is anyone who is listening or watching who is still trying to save themselves through their religious works and activities, Lord God, that they would see what Luther saw, that the righteousness of God is not the standard that we have to hit in our own efforts, but it's the gift of God in Jesus.

We pray, Lord, for any who may be bristling even at this moment, offended by the list of what God calls sin, and yet we pray that you would enable them and each of us to know that it is only because of the deep love of God that he tells us the truth about our own hearts and our own need of him.

So help each one of us, we pray, to turn in faith to Jesus and to know that we are saved, that we are secure, that we find our identity in and through the person and the finished work of Jesus.

Help us to take hold of him, we pray. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. We sing to finish the words of that great hymn, and can it be that I should gain an interest in the Saviour's blood?

[ 66 : 09 ] Died he for me who caused his pain for me who him to death pursued? Amazing love, how can it be that thou, my God, shouldst die for me?

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Amazing love, how can it be that thou, my God, shouldst die for me?

Amazing love, how can it be that thou, my God, shouldst die for me?

[ 67 : 32 ] tis mystery on the mortal ties who can explore his strange design in vain the first what seraph tries to to sum the depths of love divine tis mercy all let earth adore let angel minds inquire no more tis mercy all let earth adore let angel minds inquire no more he he left his father's throne above so free so infinite his grace emptied himself of all but love and and bled all

Adam's helpless race tis mercy all immense and free for oh my God it found us free tis mercy all immense and free for oh my God it found out me long my imprisoned spirit lay fast bound in sin and nature's light mine I defused a quick me gray I woke at the angel played with light my chains fell off my heart was free

I rose went forth and followed me my chains fell off my heart was free I rose went forth and followed thee man his was that o una survol yeah i dread jesus and all in him is mine alive in him everybody with love And clothing righteousness divine.

Bold I approach the eternal throne. And claim a crown to Christ my old.

Bold I approach the eternal throne. And claim a crown through Christ my own.

[ 71 : 37 ] And now may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. And the love of God the Father. And the fellowship of God the Holy Spirit. Be with us all both now and forevermore. Amen.