

## **Bibles???**

### **The Word of God is the Absolute Truth and the Final Authority**

We are going to begin a new book today.

Turn your bibles with me to the book of Romans.

I made the announcements a few months back when we were in 1 John that we were going to do Romans after finishing John's short letters.

And ever since then – I have been looking forward to this amazing letter.

I warned you guys that we will be taking it slow.

And the reason is that this is a book that is very heavy in theology.

This is a book that as we read it and study it and meditate on it – by the power of the Holy Spirit, it will transform our hearts.

Just like it did to the likes of Martin Luther – very instrumental to the reformation

“It [Romans] is the true masterpiece of the New Testament, and the very purest Gospel, which is well worthy and deserving that a Christian man should not only learn it by heart, word for word, but also that he should daily deal with it as the daily bread of men's souls. For it can never be too much or too well read or studied; and the more it is handled the more precious it becomes, and the better it tastes.”

John Wesley – another individual whose heart was transformed by Romans – for many years, he was preaching the gospel and he wasn't even saved.

He was a spiritually dead preacher preaching un-lived truths –

But stirred his heart by using the Boof of Romans and he became the instrument that God would use to spark the Great Awakening in the 1700's.

John Bunyan the author of the Pilgrim's Progress

William Tyndale – the guy responsible for translating the bible to English. The book of Romans affected him so much that it moved him to make it available for others to read.

All men whose hearts were transformed by the book of Romans.

And in the same way that their hearts were transformed, I am going to suggest that it can change your lives too.

And it all revolves understanding God's grace.

Let's pray...

### Read Text

I want to provide a little background on the book before we dissect our text.

The Book of Romans was written by the Apostle Paul during his third missionary trip – when he was in Corinth.

And one of the things that we find not only in Romans but also in the book of Acts is that Paul had a desire to go to Rome.

And his desire was to provide the early church in Rome with sound doctrine.

He knew that they had received the gospel but he wanted to explain the gospel.

He wants to make sure that they grasp how a person is made right before God – justification.

Remember, everywhere Paul went, he was encountering individuals who would argue with him that a person had to keep the Law of Moses in order to be right with God.

They would place believers under the bandage of the law, even demanding that the Gentile believers become circumcised in order to be saved.

So Paul shows them and us in this letter that it is only by believing in Jesus Christ that we receive a right standing before God.

And church, that indeed is good news.

Because Paul will tell us about the liberties and freedoms that we have in Jesus Christ.

That is the message of the gospel and that is why this letter is so important.

You see, many believers today – they are still walking in bondage to some ritual, to some tradition, to some belief.

But that is not the message of the gospel.

All of the Book of Romans can be summarized in one verse –

Hab 2:4 – The just shall live by faith

Let's look at our text -

**[Rom 1:1-7 NKJV] 1 Paul, a bondservant of Jesus Christ, called [to be] an apostle, separated to the gospel of God**

Paul, a bondservant of Jesus Christ – the word bondservant – is the Greek word Doulos.

It is a slave.

Not just any type of slave – but a voluntary slave – a slave by choice.

A slave who when offered the opportunity to be set free – says, “No, I love serving my master so much that I will continue to choose to serve him faithfully until death”

We have a description of this in the Old Testament in Exodus 21 – where the servant would choose to become the bond servant and the master would put his ear against the doorpost and drive an awl through his ear, piercing his ear, and this was a sign to everyone that he was a slave by choice.

A little bit of ear was left at the Master's doorpost – demonstrating submission to the Master's will.

Because whoever has our ear – that is our master – that is who we are a slave to.

By the way – this is why in Revelation chapter 2 and 3, when Jesus addresses the churches – “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit is saying”

That is what Paul is identifying himself to the church in Rome –

He is revealing his true identity to them.

I am a slave by choice – in full submission to the will of my Master

When you think about it, Paul could have introduced himself in any number of ways.

“Paul, the awesome, powerful, authoritative miracle-working church-planting apostle of Jesus Christ”

After all, think of what Paul has done by this time.

Along with Barnabas, he helped establish the great church in Antioch.

Also with Barnabas, he helped start the Galatian churches in Antioch of Pisidia, Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe.

He went on to start even more churches in Troas, Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea, and Corinth.

He pastored the church in Ephesus for three years –

This was the guy who was going to be the author of 1/3 of the New Testament

This was the guy that people were getting healed by coming in contact with his sweaty rags.

And so Paul identifies himself as a slave, as a bondservant

As someone who serves

But the key to understand Paul's self image is to remind ourselves, not of his job – simply as slave but of his Master's identity – the Lord Jesus Christ

The fact that Paul would call himself a slave of Jesus meant that he desired to live a life of subservience and subjection to the Word of God and to the will of God

It also indicates a certain relationship of devotion in which Paul is employed by God and because he is employed by God, he is being taken care of by God and he is completely at God's disposal.

Paul was the slave of the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords

Paul also considered himself to be "called"

Turn with me to Galatians 1

**[Gal 1:15-17 NKJV] 15 But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb and called [me] through His grace, 16 to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately confer with**

**flesh and blood, 17 nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those [who were] apostles before me; but I went to Arabia, and returned again to Damascus.**

Notice the order –

In Gal 1- God called [me] through His grace, in Romans 1 God called me to be an apostle.

The grace comes before the apostleship.

Salvation comes before service.

Before Jesus says “go”, He says “come to Me”

And as I mentioned early – John Wesley was one who was out on the missions field – and didn't have a relationship with God.

And there are many people today who attend church who have not experienced His grace or need to be reminded of His grace.

Paul was called by God to be an ambassador or a messenger

He was not a self appointed apostle

He was set apart or separated to the gospel of God.

Meaning that everything else in life followed this.

Paul has a purpose in his life.

He has something that makes him different from what he used to be.

His purpose wasn't unique.

It is the same purpose that all disciples have. His purpose was to be a part of sharing the good news of God to the world.

By the way – all Christians are called by God and set apart by God – that includes everyone here.

We have been set apart for a divine purpose.

And it is this calling and this setting us apart is the motivation that drives us to be faithful to what God has called us and set apart us to do.

Paul understood exactly what he was called to do –

And no amount of hardships or setbacks were going to stop him from being faithful to what God had called him to do.

The question that we must ask ourselves this morning is – do we know what He has called and separated us to do?

He has called us to have a relationship with Him

He has called us to be His friend

He has called us to be His constant companion – to abide in Him



He has called us to know Him and make Him known

He has called every single one of us to be His mouthpiece – His messenger

We are the bearer of His grace and of His love.

We have the Helper living inside of us – who reflects that love

Who are we?

What is our identity?

How would we answer that question? The same way that Paul would.

By our service, by our calling and by what we have been separated to do.

**2 which He promised before through His prophets in the Holy Scriptures, 3 concerning His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh, 4 [and] declared [to be] the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead.**

Paul as he is writing this –

He wants to make sure that the reader understands that the gospel is not some that he made up.

And the proof of this is that the message of the gospel is contained throughout the Old Testament.

The gospel was not some philosophy that was taught so man can feel better about themselves.

God spoke in times past about the reality of what it meant to be separated from God and how sin and sickness had taken a toll and how we would need a Redeemer.

So, not only was the gospel prophesied about in the Old Testament – it was personified in Jesus Christ.

The gospel is about Jesus

He is God's son. He is the Christ. He is our Lord.

He is the center of the gospel.

There is no good news apart from Jesus Christ.

When we think of the gospel in regards to forgiveness of sins, we must talk about Jesus.

He is the one that died for our sins.

He is 100% man and 100% God

He is the Son of God and Son of man – from the very seed of David.

Now, in verse 4, I had you make a note of the phrase -

**and] declared [to be] the Son of God**

this is speaking regarding the resurrection –

But we must be careful to understand that the resurrection didn't make Jesus the Son of God.

Jesus was the Son of God before time began

Jesus is eternally God

The resurrection only revealed what was already true about Jesus – that He was God

And as I taught over and over again when we studied John's letters

To lessen or minimize the truth regarding the humanity and divinity of Jesus is to change the gospel itself.

Jesus had to be both man and God in order to identify with us, in order to help us.

**[Heb 2:17-18 NKJV] 17 Therefore, in all things He had to be made like [His] brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things [pertaining] to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. 18 For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted.**

**[Heb 4:14-15 NKJV] 14 Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast [our] confession. 15 For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all [points] tempted as [we are, yet] without sin.**

Jesus doesn't simply empathize with us, He doesn't simply try to understand the struggles that we have day after day

He sympathizes with us – because He has walked where we have walked.

He had walked in this world

He has walked in our shoes.

He has been there and yet, He was able to do it without sin.

**5 Through Him we have received grace and apostleship for obedience to the faith among all nations for His name, 6 among whom you also are the called of Jesus Christ;**

Through Him –

In his letters – two of the phrases that Paul always uses is through Him and in Him – very important that we make note when he uses them.

And reason that Paul uses them is because he wants us to make sure that we understand that it is all about Jesus and not about us.

Through Him (Jesus) we have received grace

Not because I try to be a good person

Not because of anything I do

This is Paul's first use of the word "grace" which will be such an important part of the rest of the letter.

Grace is the unearned favor & blessing God pours on us because of what Jesus did.

It was Jesus' work on the cross that enables God's grace to flow to each and every one of us – and where would we be without God's grace?

Grace isn't something we strive for,

Grace isn't something we earn,

Grace isn't something we work up to, or in any way acquire through our own efforts.

Grace comes only one way; as it says here –

We receive it . . .

Through Him we have received grace.

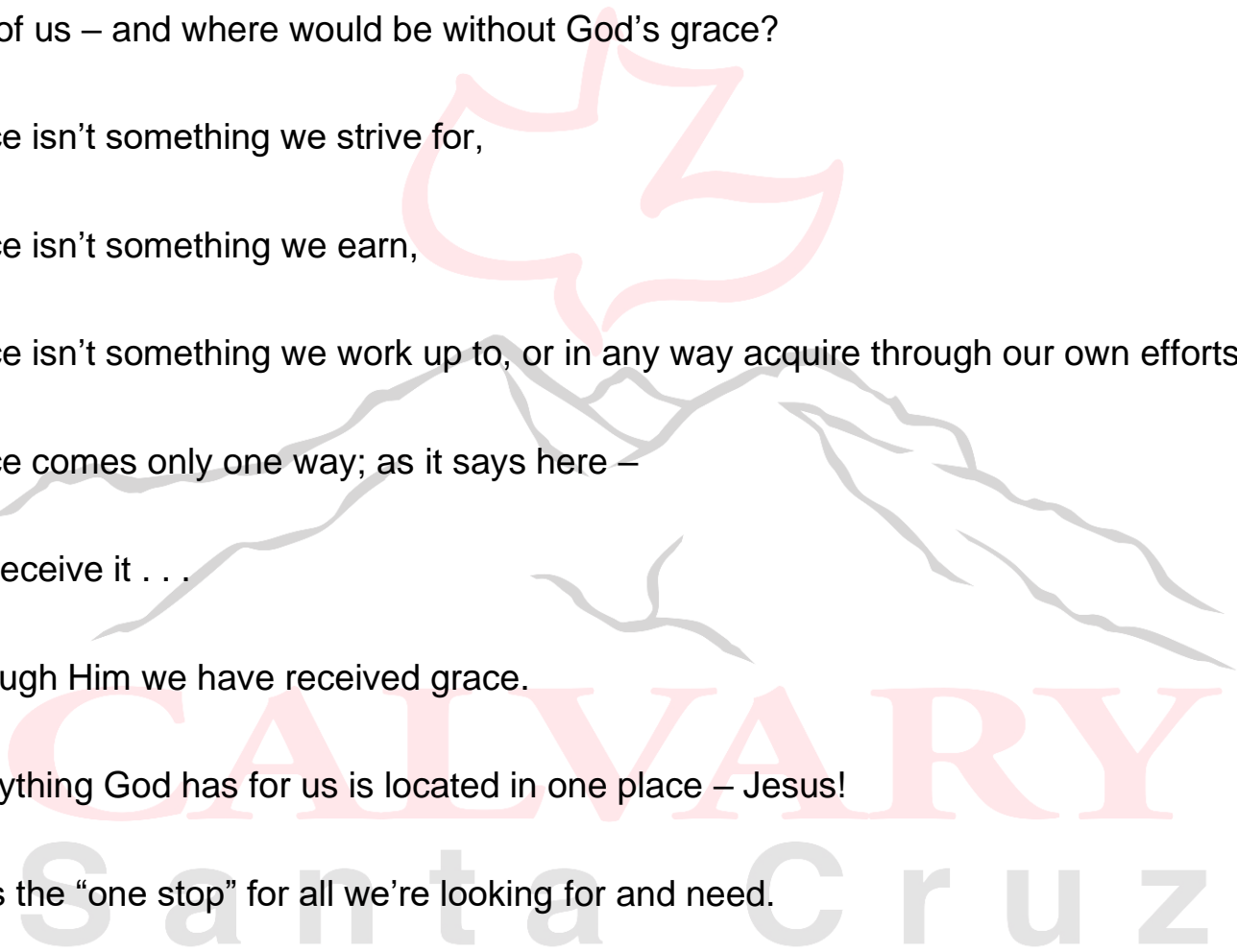
Everything God has for us is located in one place – Jesus!

He is the "one stop" for all we're looking for and need.

This means –

Grace comes through Him.

Healing comes through Him.



Purpose & meaning are in Him.

Hope is in Him.

Joy & strength are in Him.

LIFE is in Him

Paul understood grace

Paul is going to talk about grace over and over again

In 1 Timothy 1

**[1Ti 1:15-16 NKJV] 15 This [is] a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief. 16 However, for this reason I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show all longsuffering, as a pattern to those who are going to believe on Him for everlasting life.**

In other words – what Paul is telling Timothy

“Tim, grace changed my life”

Paul would not have been called to be an apostle without grace.

And the reason that we have to grasp grace is because if we do not understand what grace has done for us is to think that somehow we merit something with God.

There can be no salvation believing that.

There is salvation found in recognizing that we are sinners and it is only through God's grace, that we never earn, that has made our salvation possible.

Through Him – it is all about Jesus.

**7 To all who are in Rome, beloved of God, called [to be] saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.**

In many of his other letters, Paul usually addresses a specific church or a group of churches.

Church in Corinth or the churches in Galatia.

But here in verse seven, Paul addresses all who are in Rome.

But notice that it is not an appeal based on how much they love God.

It is an appeal based on God's love for them.

And church that is the gospel – about His love for us

God LOVES YOU!

He loves the world so much He sent his Precious Son to die for our sins.

But the Father loves the Son so much, He holds a special love for those Who love the Son too.

These are beloved

These are saints

In the NT, all the followers of Christ are saints.

The word simply means one who is set apart from the petty, vain things of this world to the special purposes of God.

And that includes you and me

Paul finishes his greeting with – “Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.”

This is a very simple but powerful observation

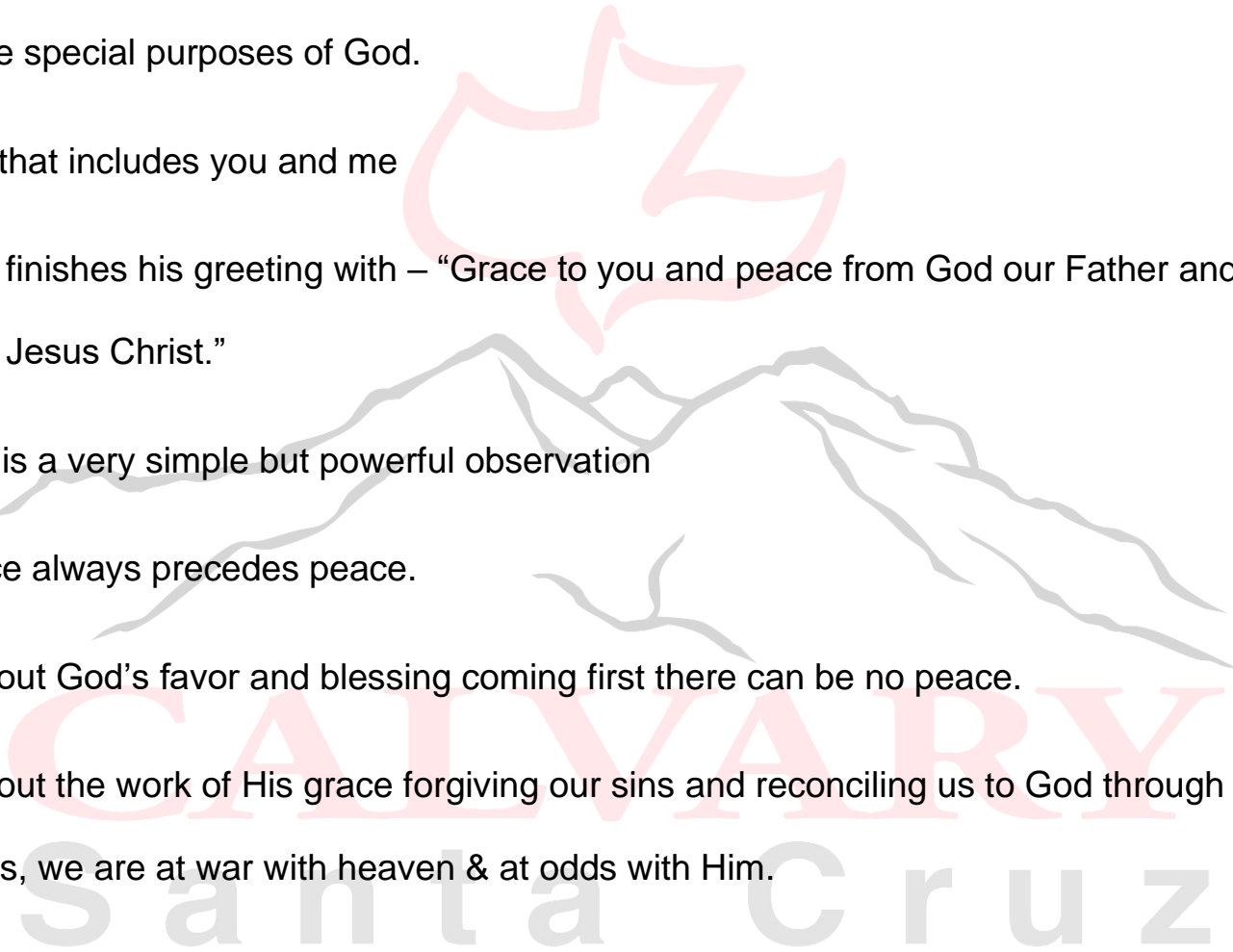
Grace always precedes peace.

Without God’s favor and blessing coming first there can be no peace.

Without the work of His grace forgiving our sins and reconciling us to God through the Cross, we are at war with heaven & at odds with Him.

Peace is the great need of the human heart & our sin-sick world.

But there’s no peace without grace.





And so if we are here this morning and are struggling to find peace, even as a Christian – we need to examine ourselves to see if we have truly grabbed onto God's grace.

Because when we understand God's grace even we stumble – even when we struggle through our walk, God grace will overcome.

Where God's grace comes & does its work - then there's peace!

And on that note, grace and peace to you.

And this is just the first seven verses. Next week, we dig into the meat. This was just the introduction.

Let's pray...

To Receive Christ do the following:

Admit, "I am a sinner."

Confess and be willing to turn from your sin.

Believe, by faith that Jesus Christ died for you on the cross.

Receive, through prayer, Jesus Christ into your heart and receive eternal life.

Dear Lord Jesus,

I know that I am a sinner and need Your forgiveness. I believe that You died on the cross for my sins. Please forgive me for my sins and cleanse me by Your blood. I accept You by faith as my personal Lord and Savior. Give me a thirst for Your Word and Help me to follow You all of my days. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

In the business world – there is something called the law of diminishing return

And pretty much it says that once we have something, it tends to satisfy us less and less.

And unfortunately this is what happens to believers who stop growing in His grace – they take their eyes off of Him and start looking to self.

This is why Romans is so important – puts the focus back on Him.

[Num 6:24-26 NLT] 24 '

May the LORD bless you and protect you.

May the LORD smile on you and be gracious to you.

May the LORD show you his favor and give you his peace.'

