BibleHelp

GOSPEL IN ROMANS · STUDY NOTES

Study 1: A guilty world

For personal study or groups

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How to use these notes. Watch each part's video on biblehelp.net, or read the text below. Look up each passage in your own Bible and write the answer on the lines. The verses are printed at the back if you need them. At the end there are questions to think about on your own or to discuss in a group.

PART 1

Idol worship, an inexcusable sin

Paul's letter to Rome (1:1–17)

"Romans" is Paul's explanation of the gospel. He greets a church he has never seen (1:1–7). He intends to visit, but writes to them instead (1:8–15). And he begins to give a full account of the gospel.

1 **Read Romans 1:16–17**

What does Paul say the gospel is, and who is it for?

The topic of our first study is **"A guilty world" (Romans 1:1–3:20)**: all are guilty before God and condemned. "All" means Jew and Gentile alike – those who had God's written revelation and those who did not.

Idol worship, an inexcusable sin (1:18–32)

1. God's true nature was obvious from creation (1:18–20). Mankind suppressed what was obvious about God (vv. 18–19): namely, that God is powerful, and divine, not human (v. 20).

2 **Read Romans 1:18–20**

What can everyone see about God in the world He made? Why are people without excuse?

2. God was likened to images of people and animals (1:23). God strongly forbids images of Himself (Exodus 20:4). As Creator of the universe, no image can portray His greatness (Isaiah

46:5–6).

3 **Read Romans 1:21–23**

What did people do instead of honouring God? How can a small view of God be like an idol?

See also: Exodus 20:4; Isaiah 46:5–6.

3. God reacted strongly to this vile portrayal of Himself (1:24–32). He gave mankind up to their "dishonorable" ways – sexual perversion and increasing sin – and let them suffer from their "wise" (v. 22) and hurtful (v. 27) practices.

4 **Read Romans 1:24–32**

What did God do when people turned away from Him? Why are so many of the world's troubles our own fault?

PART 2

Gentiles and Jews are both guilty

Both guilty (chapter 2)

1. Those who think they are better will be condemned (2:1–3). They condemn themselves when they judge others and yet do the same things (v. 1). The order of privilege is the order of condemnation: think of how David condemned himself when he judged another (2 Samuel 12:5–7).

5 **Read Romans 2:1–3**

What happens when we judge others for the very things we do ourselves?

See also: 2 Samuel 12:5–7.

2. Mankind is condemned, whether Jew or Gentile (2:12–16). Jews, by disobeying God's moral law – the Ten Commandments and so on (v. 12). Gentiles, by disobeying an inner sense of right, confirmed by conscience (vv. 14–15).

6 **Read Romans 2:12–16**

What do people know in their hearts, even without God's law? Can a good-living person who does not believe in God be right with Him?

3. It is not enough to have God's law (2:17–29). The Jew teaches the law but doesn't keep it (vv. 17–24). He has the mark of God's people – circumcision – but doesn't act like one (vv. 25–29).

7 **Read Romans 2:17–29**

What was wrong with the Jew Paul speaks of? Why is someone who is a Christian only in name in the same danger?

PART 3

The advantages of being a Jew

The advantages of being a Jew (3:1–20)

1. The main advantage was to have Scripture (3:1–8). The Old Testament Scriptures prepared them for Christ's coming (vv. 1–2; compare 2 Timothy 3:15). But God cannot be blamed for their failure to believe them (vv. 3–8).

8 **Read Romans 3:1–8**

What advantage did the Jews have (verse 2)? What advantage do people have who grow up with the whole Bible?

See also: 2 Timothy 3:15.

2. The privileged Jew is still guilty (3:9–18). Jews and Greeks (Gentiles) are all guilty (v. 9), as the Old Testament declares (vv. 10–18). The Jew is even more responsible, because he hasn't used his privileges (Luke 12:48).

9 **Read Romans 3:9–18**

Is anyone righteous? Why are people who grew up hearing the gospel even more responsible to God?

See also: Luke 12:48.

3. No one can save himself by keeping God's commands (3:19–20). Everyone is guilty before God; every mouth – every excuse – is silenced (v. 19). God's law gives "awareness of sin"; it cannot make us righteous, that is, "justify" us (v. 20).

10 **Read Romans 3:19–20**

Can anyone be made right with God by keeping the law? What does the law show us?

To conclude

Though we cannot make ourselves righteous, Paul will show us God's way of declaring a person righteous! This is the topic of the next study.

THINK IT THROUGH

Questions for reflection and discussion

1. Why is no one, religious or not, able to say they are innocent before God?

2. How does Romans 1 help explain the state of the world today?

3. If the law cannot make us righteous, what is it for?

HIDE IT IN YOUR HEART

Memory verse for study 1

Learn this verse by heart this week. Cut out the card and keep it where you will see it.

GOSPEL IN ROMANS · STUDY 1 · MEMORY VERSE

“I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, first to the Jew, then to the Greek.”

Romans 1:16

Berean Standard Bible · biblehelp.net

“I have hidden Your word in my heart that I might not sin against You.” (Psalm 119:11, BSB)

AT THE BACK

The Bible passages (BSB)

1 **Romans 1:16–17** *16I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, first to the Jew, then to the Greek. 17For the gospel reveals the righteousness of God that comes by faith from start to finish, just as it is written: "The righteous will live by faith."*

2 **Romans 1:18–20** *18The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness. 19For what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. 20For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood from His workmanship, so that men are without excuse.*

3 **Romans 1:21–23** *21For although they knew God, they neither glorified Him as God nor gave thanks to Him, but they became futile in their thinking and darkened in their foolish hearts. 22Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools, 23and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images of mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles.*

4 **Romans 1:24–32** *24Therefore God gave them over in the desires of their hearts to impurity for the dishonoring of their bodies with one another. 25They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is forever worthy of praise! Amen. 26For this reason God gave them over to dishonorable passions. Even their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural ones. 27Likewise, the men abandoned natural relations with women and burned with lust for one another. Men committed indecent acts with other men and received in themselves the due penalty for their error. 28Furthermore, since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, He gave them up to a depraved mind, to do what ought not to be done. 29They 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, 30slanderers, God-haters, insolent, arrogant, and boastful. They invent new forms of evil; they disobey their parents. 31They are senseless, faithless, heartless, merciless. 32Although they know God's righteous decree that those who do such things are worthy of death, they not only continue to do these things, but also approve of those who practice them.*

5 **Romans 2:1–3** *1You, therefore, have no excuse, you who pass judgment on another. For on whatever grounds you judge the other, you are condemning yourself, because you who pass judgment do the same things. 2And we know that God's judgment against those who do such things is based on truth. 3So when you, O man, pass judgment on others, yet do the same things, do you think you will escape God's judgment?*

6 **Romans 2:12–16** *12 All who sin apart from the law will also perish apart from the law, and all who*
sin under the law will be judged by the law. 13 For it is not the hearers of the law who are righteous before
God, but it is the doers of the law who will be declared righteous. 14 Indeed, when Gentiles, who do not
have the law, do by nature what the law requires, they are a law to themselves, even though they do not
have the law. 15 So they show that the work of the law is written on their hearts, their consciences also
bearing witness, and their thoughts either accusing or defending them 16 on the day when God will judge
men's secrets through Christ Jesus, as proclaimed by my gospel.

7 **Romans 2:17–29** *17 Now you, if you call yourself a Jew; if you rely on the law and boast in God; 18 if*
you know His will and approve of what is superior because you are instructed by the law; 19 if you are
convinced that you are a guide for the blind, a light for those in darkness, 20 an instructor of the foolish, a
teacher of infants, because you have in the law the embodiment of knowledge and truth— 21 you, then, who
teach others, do you not teach yourself? You who preach against stealing, do you steal? 22 You who forbid
adultery, do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols, do you rob temples? 23 You who boast in the law,
do you dishonor God by breaking the law? 24 As it is written: "God's name is blasphemed among the
Gentiles because of you." 25 Circumcision has value if you observe the law, but if you break the law, your
circumcision has become uncircumcision. 26 If a man who is not circumcised keeps the requirements of the
law, will not his uncircumcision be regarded as circumcision? 27 The one who is physically uncircumcised
yet keeps the law will condemn you who, even though you have the written code and circumcision, are a
lawbreaker. 28 A man is not a Jew because he is one outwardly, nor is circumcision only outward and
physical. 29 No, a man is a Jew because he is one inwardly, and circumcision is a matter of the heart, by
the Spirit, not by the written code. Such a man's praise does not come from men, but from God.

8 **Romans 3:1–8** *1 What, then, is the advantage of being a Jew? Or what is the value of circumcision?*
2 Much in every way. First of all, they have been entrusted with the very words of God. 3 What if some did
not have faith? Will their lack of faith nullify God's faithfulness? 4 Certainly not! Let God be true and every
man a liar. As it is written: "So that You may be proved right when You speak and victorious when You
judge." 5 But if our unrighteousness highlights the righteousness of God, what shall we say? That God is
unjust to inflict His wrath on us? I am speaking in human terms. 6 Certainly not! In that case, how could
God judge the world? 7 However, if my falsehood accentuates God's truthfulness, to the increase of His
glory, why am I still condemned as a sinner? 8 Why not say, as some slanderously claim that we say, "Let
us do evil that good may result"? Their condemnation is deserved!

9 **Romans 3:9–18** *9 What then? Are we any better? Not at all. For we have already made the charge*
that Jews and Greeks alike are all under sin. 10 As it is written: "There is no one righteous, not even one.
11 There is no one who understands, no one who seeks God. 12 All have turned away, they have together
become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one." 13 "Their throats are open graves; their
tongues practice deceit." "The venom of vipers is on their lips." 14 "Their mouths are full of cursing and
bitterness." 15 "Their feet are swift to shed blood; 16 ruin and misery lie in their wake, 17 and the way of
peace they have not known." 18 "There is no fear of God before their eyes."

10 **Romans 3:19–20** *19Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be silenced and the whole world held accountable to God. 20Therefore no one will be justified in His sight by works of the law. For the law merely brings awareness of sin.*

Scripture: Berean Standard Bible (BSB), public domain. Quotations keep its American spelling. Like many English Bibles, it often says ‘man’, ‘he’ or ‘brothers’ where it means people in general, men and women alike.

FOR GROUP LEADERS

Study 1: A guilty world

> **Memory verse:** “I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, first to the Jew, then to the Greek.” (Romans 1:16). Say it together at the end, and ask who can say it without looking.

Aims

- Introduce Romans as Paul's explanation of the gospel (1:16–17).
- Show from 1:1–3:20 that the whole world, Gentile and Jew, is guilty before God and cannot save itself.

Suggested timing (about 75 minutes)

- **5 min** Welcome and short prayer.
- **25 min** Part 1 video (4 min); Romans 1:16–17, 1:18–20, 1:21–23, 1:24–32 and their questions.
- **20 min** Part 2 video (3 min); Romans 2:1–3, 2:12–16, 2:17–29.
- **20 min** Part 3 video (3 min); Romans 3:1–8, 3:9–18, 3:19–20.
- **5 min** Summary and closing prayer.

Tips

- This study is meant to humble us, but point forward to study 2: the bad news prepares us for the good news.
- Handle Romans 1:24–32 with care and without singling anyone out; the list includes sins everyone commits (envy, gossip, arrogance).
- Encourage people with a Christian upbringing to see that privilege brings responsibility.

Answers to watch for

- **1:16–17:** the gospel is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes; the righteous will live by faith.
- **1:18–20:** God's power and nature are clearly seen in creation; people are without excuse.
- **1:21–23:** they exchanged God's glory for images.
- **1:24–32:** God gave them over to their sinful desires.
- **2:1–3:** those who judge others condemn themselves.
- **2:12–16:** Gentiles have the law written on their hearts; conscience bears witness.
- **2:17–29:** outward religion without a changed heart does not save.
- **3:1–8:** the Jews were entrusted with the very words of God.
- **3:9–18:** there is no one righteous, not even one.
- **3:19–20:** every mouth silenced; the law brings awareness of sin, not righteousness.