



CHAPTERS 1-4

## The Heart of the Gospel

CHAPTERS 5-8

## The Hope of the Gospel

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## The Transformation of the Gospel

# The True Gospel:

## Romans 1–8

**T**HE CENTRAL THEME OF ROMANS IS THE GOSPEL OF GOD concerning our Lord Jesus Christ. As we are to be Gospel-centered people, it is essential that we understand the biblical Gospel and not a false gospel. We have previously considered some distortions of the Gospel, particularly the popular “Prosperity Gospel”.

In that false and unbiblical gospel, followers of Jesus are promised success, wealth, health, and always feeling good about themselves. Jesus is presented as a kind of buddy, albeit a supernatural one, who is just there to help us fulfill our dreams. Tell Jesus what you want, and he will make sure you get it! In a culture where feeling good about ourselves, fulfilling our dreams, and being happy are top goals, we can understand why such a phony gospel is so popular!

In Galatians, Paul writes of the only true Gospel. “But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one preached to you let him be accursed” (Galatians 1:8). These strong statements are necessary lest we be deluded as to God’s only way of salvation.

### THE HEART OF THE GOSPEL

At the heart of the Gospel, the “purest Gospel” as Martin Luther describes it (*Preface to Romans*, 1552), is the magnificent truth of “justification by faith.” In Romans, Paul carefully and brilliantly presents this truth. Our salvation is not based on what we do or have done, but it is totally based on what God in

Christ Jesus our Lord has done. “For if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works; otherwise grace would no longer be grace” (Romans 11:6). Our hearts are warmed as we rejoice in this abounding grace which is available to all who call upon the name of the Lord.

Isn't it wonderful to know that our salvation is not based on our works, or our sincerity, or our endeavors, or our adherence to religious rituals? We rejoice that God declares us righteous by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone. Have you by faith received this salvation in Christ Jesus? This “pure” Gospel of the grace of God must always be central to our lives, our preaching, and our living!

## THE HOPE OF THE GOSPEL

In considering “the hope of the Gospel,” we studied Romans, chapters five through eight. What is the result of this justification by faith? What does it produce in our lives? From these chapters, it is clear that the Gospel must make a difference! For example, we have peace with God, access to Him, and His love is poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who is given to us (Romans 5:1–5). This Gospel is our only hope, as it is only through the Gospel that we who died “in Adam” can be made alive “in Christ.” All in Adam are under the condemnation of God because of their sin. Death has passed upon all because all have sinned (5:12). But in our Lord Jesus Christ there is justification, righteousness, and eternal life — all through God's abounding grace (5:12–21).

Paul emphatically dispels any notion that being saved by grace means that we live as we like. Quite to the contrary! We are united with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection. We have died to sin and are now alive to God in Christ Jesus. Authentic followers of Christ are no longer slaves to sin, but are slaves to righteousness and to God (Romans 6:1–23). This is the hope of the Gospel.

Not only is there freedom from sin, there is also freedom from the law. The law is good, as it comes from God and is a revelation of His holiness and goodness. The problem is not with the law, but with us who cannot obey the law! In chapter seven, Paul explains that we have died to the law and have been released from its condemnation and its demands. While it is true that we have died to

sin, we all experience a struggle — as sin has not died to us! Rescue is only found “through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

In chapter eight, Paul continues to underline the eternal assurance of salvation enjoyed by authentic followers of Jesus Christ. Now there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. There is a life of freedom for those who walk according to the Spirit (Romans 8:4) and don't fulfill the lusts of the flesh. They are now in God's family and look beyond this life to that which is to come. Meantime in this life, there are sufferings, groaning, and pain. But those who know Christ are assured that God is working all things together for good (8:28). There is nothing in the whole universe which can “separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord” (8:39). This is the hope of the Gospel! ❀

## REVIEW OF ROMANS: CHAPTERS 1–8

### THE HEART OF THE GOSPEL: CHAPTERS 1–4

#### I. Introduction to Romans

#### II. The Heart of the Gospel

Condemnation: The Universal Reign of Sin (*1:18–3:20*)

Justification: By Faith Alone (*3:21–4:25*)

### THE HOPE OF THE GOSPEL: CHAPTERS 5–8

#### I. Reconciliation — *Chapter 5*

#### II. Freedom from Sin and the Law — *Chapters 6 & 7*

#### III. Life in the Spirit — *Chapter 8*