

# Romans 1:1-7

*Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.*

Date: 03 January 2021

Preacher: Paul Levy

[ 0 : 00 ] In the year 1515, a relatively unknown professor of theology, he gathered to lecture his students on the book of Romans.

! As he prepared those lectures, the glory of God in the gospel began to dawn on his mind. He began to grow his heart, began to change his life, and brought him face to face with the Lord Jesus Christ, and the grace of God in the Lord Jesus.

And so, a series of events were set in motion. As he began to lecture on this great letter, the Holy Spirit worked in his heart.

And a series of events eventually dawned as the Great Reformation in the 16th century. The professor, of course, was Martin Wissett, a doctor of theology, teaching theology to his students. He never repeated that series of lectures on Romans that he'd worked through the first time. He certainly preached on the book, and he certainly lectured on the book from time to time.

[ 1 : 06 ] But that particular series of lectures was not repeated, it was a lot. Eventually, a copy of the manuscript was found in 1908. The original manuscript of those lectures was found in the Prussian State Library in Berlin, published.

It's a glorious thing. One of the wonderful things about the Epistles of the Romans is that it's been instrumental in the life of the Christian Church.

And for that reason, it's one of the most exciting books in all of the New Testament. All of Scripture is inspired by God.

All of Scripture is inspired by God. But not all of Scripture is as crucial.

All of Scripture, the Gospels, Numbers, one-sample, two-sample, all inspired by God. But not every part of Scripture is as crucial.

[ 2 : 11 ] There are certain books in the Bible that you need to know. Genesis, Isaiah, John's Gospel, and Romans. They are absolutely essential for understanding the heart of Christianity.

And one of the wonderful things about Romans is that it's been at the heart of not only great events of history, not only the life of the Church, but it's been at the heart of the lives of many of the great individuals of the Church.

Martin Luther, Augustus the Hibernian, John Wesley. I think you can look back through history and see that the studying of the Book of Romans has often coincided with outbreaks of Reformation and revival and liveliness in the Church.

So think of the Haldane brothers. They were Scottish men. They were wealthy men. One of the brothers, Robert Haldane, he goes off to Geneva. And in Geneva, he sets out a little Bible study. And they studied the Book of Romans. And many in that little Bible study, the Robert Haldane, and Sajah, were converted. And they went back to France and they preached the Gospel and brought revival to the French Church.

[ 3 : 28 ] The history of how God has used this book is so encouraging to us. To study the Book of Romans, it is a vast, towering block of Biblical truth.

One preacher had said that when he preached through Romans, he felt like a mountaineer, climbing, gazing up into the clouds.

And he could see the peak of Everest as he preached. And I think that's true. It's a daunting task to study it. It is a daunting task to preach it. But as we look at the Book of Romans together, it will take us to places of heights, of majestic heights, where we will see the glory of God.

It will take us to the Himalayas. The Himalayas of doctrine. The Himalayas of the Gospel. And I think we will feel like we're mountain climbing.

But unlike that other preacher that I told you about earlier, I think we will find ourselves to feel like mountain climbers in the Himalayas. The flip flops out. The flip flops out.

[ 4 : 36 ] That as we kind of climb and traverse and really try to get into the Invisible and Romans, I think we will find ourselves, as I found myself, in a likelihood that's struggling.

With the glorious things that are set before us. Because Romans brings you face to face with the glory of God. Brings us face to face with the glory of God.

And then Paul turns the apostle, the application. And he says, in the light of that glory, in the light of what God is, and when he said, I appeal to you brothers and sisters, by the mercy of God to present your bodies as living sacrifices.

Howly and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. And then he says, do not be conformed to this world. Romans will make you different to this world. Romans will transform you by the renewal of your mind.

And by testing, you might be able to discern what is the will of God. You might be able to know how can you glorify and enjoy God forever. That's what Romans does.

[ 5 : 41 ] It brings us face to face with the glory of God and the gospel. But it will make it to man. And you will feel at times like you're climbing in the Himalayas with flip flops on.

Because you can't keep that. Because as we understand something of this life, we will be overwhelmed by God and the glory of who God is. And may the Spirit of God be a work in us as He brings us to this truth.

Now I want to ask this one. Why should you study this? I've got four reasons. Why should you study this? First of all, because it is inspired by God. All Scripture is God-given.

All Scripture is profitable for your good. Preaching for a proof, a correction for training in righteousness. So that the man, the woman, or the boy or girl may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

Now at the start of this year, we must not forget what an amazing gift, and a wonderful gift the Bible is. We must always remind ourselves of the very nature of the Bible.

[ 6 : 52 ] It's been given to you that you have known doctrine. It's been given so that you would be reprov'd and corrected. So that you and I would be trained in righteousness.

That we might be thoroughly equipped for every good work. We must not underestimate the gift of the Word of God. Now God of course has revealed Himself in the creative world, hasn't He?

There are things that you see in creation. You go outside, you see the world around you, and it tells you something about God. It tells you that God is powerful. It tells you that there is a creative God.

It tells you that there is a great God that you worshiped. But God has told us much more by Himself. John Calvin in his institute says this. So scripture, that's the Bible.

Gathering up the otherwise confused knowledge of God in our minds, having dispersed our dumbness, clearly shows us the true God.

[ 7 : 55 ] This therefore is a special gift, where God, to instruct the church, not merely uses immune teachers, but He opens His most hallowed lips.

You see the children come here, they look at the table. Phoebe, she points to something. And she points to something else. And what do we say? What do you say for a small child like that?

You say, use your words. Use your words. Your actions are not enough, and God uses His words. And the Bible that you have got on your lap this morning is given by the inspiration of God.

You see what Calvin is just saying. He's saying, God hasn't left you to try and simply understand it from the trees and the seas and the seasons. But there is a God.

God has used words. He's opened His lips. And what you have in Romans is some of the clearest, most powerful statements. From the lips of God, considering Himself and His glory.

[ 8 : 59 ] The study of the Bible is the study of God. And all theology is the study of God. That's what it means. And all theology is meant to be spirituality.

It's meant to affect how we live. Let me read on the book, John. I'll just check back in the sun. And he says this. All theology is also spirituality.

In the sense that it has an influence, good or bad, positive or negative, on its recipients of relationship or lack of relationship with God. And if our theology does not quicken the conscience or soften the heart, it actually hardens both.

If it does not encourage the commitment of faith, it reinforces the detachment of unbelief. If it fails to promote humility, it inevitably feeds pride.

Let me try and explain that to you. You see, that when you come to the Bible, you come to the preaching of God's words like the sun. The sun melts the ice, doesn't it?

[10:05] But the sun also harms the clay. When we come to church on a Sunday morning and on a Sunday evening, what's happening? What is God doing through the preaching of his words?

Well, if it doesn't quicken the conscience and soften the heart, it hardens God. It's like coming to church is quite a dangerous thing. You don't leave here neutrally after hearing the word of God. And so, as we come to study the book of Romans, we do it because it's the word of God. And as theology, the study of theology is giving us faith to promote spirituality about the people of God, and you and I need that.

And that leads me to the second reason why I think we should study it. And that is not only because it is God's word, it's because it is a book about God. If I were to ask you, what is the book of Romans all about?

You would know, wouldn't you? Because I'd preach to it and you'd remember those sermons so clearly, and they're so fresh to you and you'd think, why is he preaching on this? I'd agree with it. Now, if you've asked me, and started preparing this series for you, you might say, what is the book of Romans about?

[11:12] Having preached to it twice. I don't want to say, it's not about salvation. It's not about how we get right with God. It's not about union with Christ. It's not about justification.

It's a book about there being no condemnation for those who are in Christ's years. It's a book about the glory of the gospel and the lives of people and the lives of sinners. And that is true.

And that's how I preached it. And yet, why overlooked, I think it's the most fundamental thing now I've seen, is Romans is a book about God. And it's not merely about justification and getting right with God and the Christian life and the gospel and what Paul the apostle.

He writes the Roman Christians about God. Because the apostle Paul is a man preoccupied with God. And all I thought about that, I went on Bible gateway, I love Bible gateway, but you go on Bible gateway and I put in on search of church, I put in God.

And then you limit the search to Romans and you press click. And that's flung out. And I missed it. Up comes all the references to God in the book of Romans.

[12:25] 155, there's something around that. I can't remember about 67, it's fine. But I want to tell you, this is what Paul teaches you about God in the book of Romans.

So chapter 1 verse 1, the gospel. Chapter 1 verse 4, the sunburn. Chapter 1 verse 16 and the following, the power of the Lord, the righteousness of God, the God of the Lord.

Let's just stop there. Because we've got to verse 18 of chapter 1. And already, Paul has revealed God to us. But there is God the Son. The power of God.

The righteousness of God. The gospel of God. So God has a Son. God has power. God has righteousness. God has wrath. Do you see, already we're learning something about God, haven't we? I'm not going to give you all the references, you can go and Bible gateway yourself.

But he goes on to speak about the glory of God, the judgment of God, the oracles of God, the fear of God, the promise of God, the presence of God, peace with God, the love of God, the grace of God, being alive to God, being slaves among God, the free gift of God, the law of God, being sons of God, the children of God, the will of God, the right hand of God.

[13:38] Christ who is God, over all blessed forever, the word of God, the mercy of God, the mercy of God, the knowledge of God, the kindness of God, the severity of God, the zeal for God, God giving a stir of stupor, the enemies of God, the gifts and calling of God, the riches of God, the wisdom of God, the mercies, plural, the God of God, the kingdom of God, the God of endurance, the God of encouragement, the God of hope, the God of peace, the eternal God, the only wise God, be glory forevermore through Jesus Christ.

Christ who is the seed. And when I saw that, suddenly my eyes were opened, and I thought, this is about God. And whatever Paul speaks about, he brings it back to God, the wrath of God, the righteousness of God, the mercy of God, the gospel of God, the word of God, the will of God, the glory of God, everywhere that Paul looks, every subject he speaks about, everything he picks up, it is all in the context of God.

And who God is. And what God does. And what God says. And so the apostle Paul is a man who is taken up with God, and the character of God, and the work of God. He's a man who views all of life in relation to God.

And that's why theology bears upon all true spirituality. That's why I think Roman Romans will be so helpful to us as to study it, not only as God's word, but it brings us face to face with God himself.

Romans brings us to see God. Romans brings us to know God. It's not simply to weigh arguments into means of justification or justification or election. It's not simply so that you and I understand certain points of doctrine, as important as they are in the Christian life, but it brings us into the very presence of God.

[15:42] That's what we need. That's what we need. That's what we need. You come to the end of Romans chapter 11, and Paul can't contain himself any longer.

And he says, oh, the depths of all riches and the wisdom and knowledge of God. How inscrutable are his judgments? How inscrutable are his ways?

He says, oh, the depths of all riches and the depths of all riches and the depths of all riches. The third reason why we should study this book is not only because it's God's word, but not only because it will lead us to God, but because it's a book written by a great missionary.

A man with a burning zeal for the spread of knowledge of God. I don't know about you, I love missionary biographies.

When I'm down, when I'm feeling depressed and discouraged, I go to missionary biographies. Think of people like William Carey, or Hudson Taylor, or Edie Carmichael, or William Miller, Neeraan, C.G. Studd, Jim Elliot.

[17:01] We find that when we read great missionary biographies, great missionary words, we're moved. When we look at something like Helen Rose in here, and how she was used by God, and how she lived all out for God.

As we read them, we're often aware of this, there's something not right in me. We read them and we think their version of Christianity is different to the version I believe in in some way.

Because they gave of themselves, didn't they? They gave their whole self, they gave of their whole body. Remember that's the application of Romans.

Give your whole body to this gospel. And Paul writes as a missionary, writing with this missionary blood flowing through his veins, as one who was striving to bring the word of God to bear on God's word.

You're the zeal for the spread of the gospel. And so this book is different, isn't it? The missionary biographies are inspiring. This book is inspired by God. I'll check in your books in Romans 15.

[18:12] Let me show you this again. Romans 15. And Paul will tell us, you'll see his heart.

Romans 15 verse 18. Paul says, Paul says, I will not speak of anything except what Christ was accomplished through me.

To bring the Gentiles to obedience by word and deed, by the power of signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God. So that from Jerusalem all the way to the Lycaonia, I have fulfilled the ministry of the gospel of Christ.

And thus I make it my ambition of preaching the gospel, not by Christ, nor by the name of the Messiah, but by the name of the Messiah. And as it is written, those who have never been told of him will see, those who have never heard him will understand.

Do you see what it tells you about this man? That's so into his heart is this text of scripture, this Bible Bible. And as Paul understands that text of scripture, it gets his feet moving, and his arms moving, and his legs, and his lips, and his mouth, and his whole body.

All around the Middle East and Near Middle East, and all around the Mediterranean. And this text of the Bible is moving around the Mediterranean, because he wants those who have never heard to hear.

[19:28] And he's pushed by that, he's compelled by that, he's gripped by that. There are people who have not heard, and if they haven't heard, they will never understand. And this burning zeal for God has him burning himself out for Gentiles.

And yet he's still concerned for the Jews, isn't he? Get back in his chapter 9. And you see a zeal there, chapter 9, verse 1. I'm speaking the truth in Christ, I'm not lying.

My conscience bears witness in the Holy Spirit. He's heaping up these phrases, these statements, to show the seriousness of what he's going to say. That I have great sorrow and ceasing anguish in my heart.

For I can wish that I myself were accursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers and my kinsmen, all the flesh. Here is no self-centered armchair Christian.

No smug self-centered armchair Christian arguing points of theology, of electric justification.

[ 20 : 37 ] But it's a man who has this zeal burnt into his heart. He gives himself to the Gentiles. But when he thinks about his own people, when he thinks about his kin, his own sort, his own ethnic soul, his own identity, his own people, he heaps up these phrases to say, I wish I was accursed, but there were no cards.

It shows his brilliant zeal. It shows that he gave all himself. This passage I wrote in U.K. and Joanne, some of the kind of Scotsmen of the 19th century, ministers of the 1830s and 1840s. Men like Andrew Bonner, Rob Mark Shea, Horatius Bonner, John Mel, amazing stories. It tells you of how the Church of Scotland wanted to reach the Jews that spread around the world with the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

So they sent four of their best men. They took them out of their churches. Two of their brightest stars, Rob Mark Shea and his friend Andrew Bonner. And they sent them on a tour to Europe and Israel.

To find out how can we as a church accomplish mission to the Jews. It's a remarkable thing. You can read the prayers and the accounts of those men and what they saw.

[ 22 : 00 ] And while Rob Mark Shea was doing that, his church, St. Peter's in Dundee, a young student, a guy who's finishing up his studies, William Charles Burton, he came to fill the pulpit at Dundee.

And while he's preaching about Rob Mark Shea is away, revival breaks out in Mark Shea's pulpit. And when Mark Shea returned, he only had a couple more years to live before Dundee 28. William Charles Burns ends up going to China and sees hundreds of thousands of people converted. A blazing trial for Christ in China.

The Church of Scotland ends up, as a result of a shake of Bonner's grip, establishing ministries in Budapest. They send the outrageously gifted John Duncan, a brilliant Hebrew theologian, as an evangelist to the Jews.

He gets to be collected. Do you see that spirit drove the Church of Scotland to give up their best to give away. And here is Paul, he said, I yearn for the salvation of the Gentiles, and I yearn for the salvation of the Jews.

[ 23 : 15 ] Romans is a great missionary book. Given to us by a great missionary. And it points us to the direction of what it means to be missionaries for Christ.

And remember, he's writing this. Remember the Apostle Paul, it's already true of him. This, from Deuteronomy and Epiphany. You speak to all these servants of Christ, I'm a fellow man, I'm talking like a madman, with far greater neighbours, far more imprisonment, small capitalist people, as often as you tell.

I received from the hands of the Jews, the forty lashes minus one, three times I was beaten with Romans, once I was stunned. Three times I was shipped back to the night of the day, I was adrift on the sea. He's a frequent journey, it's a danger from rivers, it's a danger from Romans, it's a danger from my own people, a danger from Gentiles, a danger from the city, a danger from the wilderness, a danger from the sea, a danger from false lovers.

The toilet hardship from many sleepers night, the hangry and thirst, often the food and cold exposure, and then the other things I had, the daily anxiety from the churches.

He knows what it is to be compelled to take the gospel. I think Romans challenges us as a church to a very fundamental level, do we really believe in this?

[ 24 : 34 ] The fourth reason why I think we should study Romans is not only because it's scripture, not only because Romans brings us face to face of God, and not only because it speaks of the missionary work of people who are God, but because underneath this book lies a specific ministry of mercy.

It's often overlooked, come with me to Romans 15, verses 25 to 27. Romans 15 verse 25, this specific ministry of mercy.

How present however I have preached in Jerusalem, am I bringing aid to all the saints? The Macedonian and the Canaan, who please, make some contribution for the Pura and the saints in Jerusalem.

They will please be blessed. Indeed they would. For if the Gentiles have come to share in their spiritual blessings, they will also give service to them in particular blessings.

It's a beautiful picture of one church serving another church in a specific way. It's a ministry of mercy, it's a collection, it's an ambulance. Numbers 28, he's always going to Spain.

[ 25 : 47 ] When therefore I completed this and have delivered to the end, once I have been collected, I believe in Spain, by the way of you. That's where I want to get to Spain. But I'm going to call to see you on the way.

Verse 30, I am pleased you brothers by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to strive together with me in your prayers, to your money on. And he asks them to pray for something specific.

He asks them to pray, he says, there's anyone that I may be delivered for the unbelievers in Judea. And that my serious issues may be accepted for the saints. He's asking for prayer, his benevolence ministry in two ways.

First of all, he's saying, when I get there, there will be unbelievers that will try and kill me. So he says, why don't we just forward the collection or send someone else to let?

But do you see how he viewed this ministry of mercy he's going to give his whole body? And so he's saying, I pray that they will not kill me, but it didn't stop him going.

[ 26 : 48 ] He was giving his whole body to the ministry of mercy. And then he asks for prayer, for a second thing, he's asking for this gift of acceptance to the church in Jerusalem.

It's really taxed, but it seems that there may well be some opposition in the Jewish-centered Jerusalem church to receive the money that came from Gentiles. And he says, pray about this. Pray that the church would accept this ministry of mercy. Now that is the context in which this book is written. He's got a three month period where he's in or around Corinth.

The cost of getting ready for this journey. He's got three months space, so he writes this mountain towering block of truth that we know is around us.

With a desire that his ministry of mercy would be accepted. And that the church would grasp what it is to give of their bodies.

[ 27 : 45 ] And he's writing it with a great missionary zeal for both Jew and Gentile, both for foreigners and his own people. Who are blind. And he's writing because he wants to know God.

And he's writing because he's bringing us the scripture. So let me in the light of that give you three statements as I finish. Here in Romans 1 verse 1.

Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle and said, half of the gospel of God. A man is a servant and the book of Romans calls you to be a servant.

A bond servant, not a hired servant, but God's servant, owned by Christ and the serving of Christ. He's called to be an apostle because he says it's not his agenda, it is God speaking to him according to this.

He says he is separated from the gospel of Christ. So the word there for separated is the same word as Pharisee. It's really interesting, wasn't it?

[ 28 : 49 ] This old Pharisee is saying, I really am a Pharisee. Now, once I thought I was separated by now. Once I thought I was above everybody else, that I was holy, that I was perfect.

But now I found Christ, I really have been separated. I've been separated from the gospel. It doesn't say separated to preach the gospel. It's separated to be a gospel now.

What marks the apostle Paul is that when he writes this sentence, can you see it? It's not right here. It is not right here. It is not right here. It is not right here.

It says, I am Paul, I am his servant. He called me. He set me apart from the gospel. I am the gospel man. And they don't work with us. In IBC, that we would get to that same place where the first words we would say about ourselves, we would point people to the house.

Amen. That's great. Thank you. You're ending. this. By the first words we will say by ourselves we'll point people to Christ.

[ 29 : 50 ] All right. That's great.