

Remembering Romans

February 7, 2013

The story is told of a young man who dreamed about going on a cruise. He saved his earnings for several years and then went to the shipping lines to book his trip. He forked over the tremendous sum of money and made preparations to leave in a few weeks for the 10-day trip. Knowing that he would need to eat while traveling, and feeling that he could not afford to eat 'out', he packed several jars of peanut butter and plenty of bread.

He was absolutely enthralled in every way with the ship, the water, the scenery, the people—everything—but his 3-times-a-day peanut butter sandwiches. He had, of course, noticed people eating out on the decks to their fill and coming and going from the dining rooms with delicacies of every kind on trays and in their hands. About the fifth day into his trip he asked a passenger he'd come to know how he could afford all the food he was enjoying all day every day.

Do you know what he was told? All meals and desserts are included with the price of the ticket. He further learned that much more was available to him in the way of recreation and entertainment, as well. His meals were already paid for; he had been scrimping for nothing. Doesn't that 'take-the-cake'?

When we by faith repent of sin and receive the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ through His marvelous grace—*God's Riches at Christ's Expense*—we have received all that we need for relationship with the Father, for eternity in heaven as our destination, and for a purposeful life until we get there. Every one of our spiritual 'meals' are included in the price Christ paid for us! Grace is unearned and undeserved by us, but given generously by His gracious hand. Paul is going to show us his 'treatise on grace' through his letter to the Romans.

The most important point to remember is that we are all sinners, every one, and that sinners need grace—without it we will perish in our sin. From Billy Graham's book, *The Journey*, "When Isaiah glimpsed a vision of God he was overwhelmed by God's holiness—and his own sinfulness." Sin is disobedience to God, and it leads to discipline and death! Romans 3:10-12 contains an 8-fold indictment of every one who has ever lived:

- 10 "As it is written (quoting **Psalm 14:2-3**, Ecclesiastes 7:20 and Isaiah 64:6)—
 'There is 1) **no one** righteous, 2) not even **one**;
- 11 there is 3) **no one** who understands,
 4) **no one** who seeks God.
- 12 5) **All** have turned away; they have
 6) **Altogether** become worthless; there is
 7) **no one** who does good, 8) not even **one**."

And in case we've deceived ourselves into thinking that we are the 'one' exception, or that God somehow overlooked our goodness, our sinless state, Paul penned Romans 3:23-24: "*For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.*"

Before Romans in the New Testament, there was Isaiah—64:6-7 in the Old:

1) "*All of us have become like one who is unclean, and*

2) *all our righteous acts are like filthy rags;*

3) *we all shrivel up like a leaf, and*

4) *like the wind our sins sweep us away.*

5) *¶No one calls on your name or*

6) *strives to lay hold of you; for you have*

hidden your face from us and made us waste away because of our sins." And Jeremiah 5:1 "*Go up and down the streets of Jerusalem, look around and consider, search through her squares. If you can find but one person who deals honestly and seeks the truth, I will forgive this city.*"

So, why are we belaboring the point that we are all sinners? Because only sinners need grace—unmerited, unearned, underserved favor from Almighty God through His Son and Savior to the world—to be saved; grace to live and grace to die! We desperately need saving grace; we need sanctifying grace to grow in our daily walk, becoming more and more like Christ, and we need both **constraining grace** (compelling us to keep on walking) and **restraining grace** (confining us to the right(eous) walk). And Jeremiah told us hundreds of years earlier who would offer His own righteousness—by grace in 23:6b "*...This is the name by which he will be called: The LORD Our Righteousness.*" That is the Lord Jesus Christ by the will of the Father and appropriated to believers by the Holy Spirit!

Do we recall the day that grace's
finding, saving, keeping grip on us was felt?

When God did His buying work—redeeming work—
and purchased us without our help?

O let us sing, let us praise the plan the Planner planned—
That all our life—eternally—today is in His hand!

R. Jeanene Moore

The Apostle Paul introduced himself to the Church at Rome in Romans 1:1 as: **servant of Christ, called to be an apostle and set apart for the Gospel.** And then he presented three main points:

1) No human is righteous;

2) Jesus Christ is perfectly righteous, and

3) We are made righteous by faith in Him!

Paul said that through Christ and in His name he received grace and apostleship to call people...to the obedience that comes through faith. And then he includes us all in v 6—“*And you also are among those who are called to belong to Jesus Christ.*” Paul’s immense salutation is in v 7: “***Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ.***” Grace and peace can only originate from God!

Paul spelled out their condition and ours: We deserve other than grace—we deserve death. Romans 1:32—“*Although they know God’s righteous decree that those who* 1) ***do such things*** deserve death, they not only 2) ***continue to do these very things*** but also 3) ***approve of those who practice them.***”

What ‘such and very things’ we may ask? And Romans 1:26-31 lists them out: Verses **26-27** speak about the perversion of God-made male/female sexual unions in marriage (namely homosexuality) that they practiced. Satan is a pervert and everything good that God has made he will pervert and present to mankind to practice. And we buy—‘bite’—it; we believe the devil’s lie. **29**They are filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed and depravity, and full of envy, murder, strife, deceit and malice. Furthermore, they are gossips **30**slanderers, God-haters, insolent, arrogant, boastful “*and invent ways of doing evil*” and are disobedient to parents, **31**senseless, faithless, heartless, ruthless.

No one is excused—all are in desperate need of God’s act of grace from start to finish! We can be absolutely sure that God’s judgment of every person is based on truth. No one is judged wrongly by God. What He says we are—we are! Romans 2:4 “*Or do you show contempt for the riches of His kindness, tolerance and patience, not realizing that **God’s kindness leads you toward repentance?***”

Paul gave the definition of agape’ in 1 Corinthians 13:3 “*Love is patient; love is kind.*” After suffering with us in patient love for a very long time, God sent His kindness to lead us toward repentance through His great grace.

WARNING: In 1991, John MacArthur, Jr. said, “Sin is now defined by how it affects man, not how it dishonors God. Salvation is often presented as a means of receiving what Christ offers without obeying what He commands. ... **Rarely is the gospel presented well enough for unrepentant sinners to reject it.**” And he quoted Walter Chantry, author of *Today’s Gospel: Authentic or Synthetic* as saying: “Repackaging the gospel is sin!” Scripture proclaims in Galatians 1:8 that we are not to modify the gospel and 5:11 tells us that the ‘cross’ is an offense, and it warns about turning to a different gospel in 1:6-12.

The Gospel: God thought it: Jesus bought it, and Satan fought it!

The Gospel: is not a creed, a cause, a church or a code; it is Christ!

The Gospel: If it is new, it is not true!

The Gospel: There is only one right way, so all other ways are wrong!
 The Gospel: It is accepted or rejected; God doesn't grade on the curve!
 The Gospel: It is not Jesus and/or, plus; it is Christ ALONE!
 The Gospel: Satan perverts the Gospel of grace into a social gospel!
 The Gospel: Rejection of it leads to death and hell!

Billy Graham on hell: "Most of all, hell is separation from God. Not one word about hell in the Bible would ever make you want to go there."

Romans 7 deals with what the 'Law' is; what it is supposed to do and what it is not meant to do. The Law defines sin—without the commandment 'not-to-do' there would be no way to define sin. Remember in the Garden of Eden when God told Adam 'not-to' eat fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil? The garden-dwellers did not know what 'good' was—they did good as long as they didn't eat of that tree—and they did not as yet know what 'evil' was until they disobeyed God's command and ate the forbidden fruit.

Paul spoke to those who know what the 'Law' is! And he wanted them and us to know that what we once did to keep the law, as believers we now do out of love to our gracious God, so verses 4-6 he said, "*So, my brothers, you also died to the law through the body of Christ, that you might belong to another, to him who was raised from the dead, in order that we might bear fruit to God. ⁵For when we were controlled by the sinful nature, the sinful passions aroused by the law were at work in our bodies, so that we bore fruit for death. ⁶But now, by dying to what once bound us, we have been released from the law so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit, and not in the old way of the written code.*"

In Romans 7:7-24 Paul talked about the struggle he had with sin after salvation and the struggle that they would have and what the answer to that struggle is in 25a: "*Thanks be to God—through Jesus Christ our Lord!*" And in Romans 8 Paul's first words are "*Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, ²because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death. ³For what the law was powerless to do in that it was weakened by the sinful nature, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful man to be a sin offering....*"

We are set free from sin and death; our minds have been set on what the Spirit desires—the *One* who helps us in our weakness and intercedes for us—we are God's children; His heirs and co-heirs with Christ, and in all things God works for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to His purpose! **And that's the short list!** "The gospel—grace—was invented by God long before He created those on whom it would need to fall," said John MacArthur, Jr. "Who knew better than Paul just how good the good news really was?"

When Paul penned his letter to the Church in Rome, he had a theme: *righteousness*—something human beings don't naturally have. He wanted them and us to know that **God's grace offers His own righteousness** to the unrighteous! By the way, and by God's grace, Tertius was Paul's pen (16:22), and Phoebe is credited with delivering this letter to the church in Rome (16:1).

♥An idolator and a prostitute, and an inhabitant inside a wall of the purported world's oldest city—17 miles northeast of Jerusalem—this woman reached out for God's grace. Her home was a veritable hotel, with travelers coming from all over the east bringing particular news of a 'people' camped nearby for whom God had done wondrous things: delivering from bondage in Egypt; parting the Red Sea; giving victory in battle with the two kings of the Amorites, and continually watching over them for some 40 years.

Unhesitatingly believing the word she received, when the Israelite spies came to Jericho, Rahab provided aid, saving the two from capture by hiding them and helping them escape by lowering a scarlet cord over the wall. Her statement of faith in God came when she said in Joshua 2:8b *"I know that the LORD has given this land to you and that a great fear of you has fallen on us, so that all who live in this country are melting in fear because of you."* Then she told them all she had heard about what God had done for them, and summed up in verse 11: *"When we heard of it, our hearts melted and everyone's courage failed because of you, for **the LORD your God is God in heaven above and on the earth below.**"*

God's great grace has no boundaries! Not only was Rahab and her entire family spared the day her city was destroyed, she became the mother of Boaz—husband of Ruth—and was placed in the lineage of Christ Jesus. She is the only woman mentioned by name in the list of the faithful witnesses in Hebrews 11:31 *"**By faith the prostitute Rahab**, because she welcomed the spies, was not killed with those who were disobedient."* She is further mentioned in James 2:25 *"In the same way, **was not even Rahab the prostitute considered righteous** for what she did when she gave lodging to the spies and sent them off in a different direction?"*

"Salvation is the gift of God, in opposition to wages," said Charles Spurgeon, "not the payment of debt but the gift of grace. God chooses to give it. It is his royal prerogative." **Barabbas was the first person for whom Jesus died!** We do not know if he ever came to faith in Christ, there's no difference between us and Barabbas—though saved, we are sinners still. In Matthew 27:25-26 speaking of crucifying Christ instead of Barabbas, the people screamed: "Let His blood be on us and on our children!" And so it is...in a 'they-meant-it-for-evil-but-God-meant-it-for-good' twist, and a **Romans 8:28** promise: **Christ's blood is on us**, because of our choice to believe and receive God's great grace!