

“The Man, the Message, and the Mission” // Romans 1:1–17 //

Romans #2

GARNER

Welcome, Summit family at all of our campuses in the Triangle! This is a **very special weekend** because we officially welcome one more campus today. Would you **put your hands together** and welcome with me the **Garner campus!**

Last week, our Garner campus had a **pre-launch service**. Dress-rehearsal. Scrimmage. It was bigger than we expected:

- We had 222 people there.
- Including 5 first-time guests!

I’ve shared with you that **we have heard from a lot of people** in the Garner area who have been praying for this campus *for years*. So would you **take just a moment to join** in those prayers?

- Thank you for the chance to grow...
- I think of what Pastor Gage asked me to pray for: Servants first/ bold in gospel proclamation / filled with faith at what God will do next

INTRODUCTION

We are **just beginning a year-long study** of the book of Romans.

- **Romans 1 in your Bible**; p. 18 in your Journal.
- **Last week, we basically got an overview of the year.** Today, we’re going to just **start in vs. 1** and begin working our way through all 433 verses of this book--hopefully the first 17 verses.

NOW, why Romans, you ask? Many of the greatest Christian leaders have considered it the most important theological book ever written—

- **Martin Luther** said it was the most important part of the NT and that its central premise, **justification by faith alone**, was the doctrine on which the church rises and falls

Furthermore, study of this book has been behind almost every major awakening in Christian history. It was study of this book that launched the Protestant Reformation.

Yet... I have **never preached through it**—honestly, I’ve been a little afraid of it.

- **There are some really difficult passages to understand.**
- **But this made me feel better:** I remembered something Peter had at the end of his second letter, “Paul’s letters contain some things that are hard to understand, which ignorant and unstable people distort, as they do the other Scriptures...” (2 Peter 3:16) Peter found himself **scratching his head** over parts of this book so it’s ok if you and I feel a little intimidated.
- I get this **image of Peter sitting in a coffee shop** in Jerusalem reading parts of this book scratching his head saying “I don’t understand what this means...”

Because this book is so important, we have produced a JOURNAL for you. It gives you a reading plan; places to journal; places to take notes during messages; Scripture memory passages. And I **made you this promise: if you will engage with just this for a year**, by the time we’re done you’ll be a different person.

- **Pick one up**, bring it back each week
- **Not get one?**

And, let me remind you again that while it is free for you, but it is not free. It was a pretty big investment of resources on our part, but we think it is worth it. So, write your name and contact information in it and **bring it back with you** each week. This is your **passport for the year.**

Let's review what we went over last week:

Romans a book about the gospel. It is the clearest, most in-depth look at the gospel in all of Scripture.

*But, and here's where people miss the boat--the book is written about the gospel for Christians. Look at vs. 7: **To all who are in Rome, loved by God, called as saints.***

Christians miss the boat on this because they think the gospel is only for unbelievers. But Paul is going to show us that **in the gospel are all the resources we need to thrive in the Christian life.**

- *The gospel is **not just the way you begin** the Christian life, it's the way you grow in the Christian life.*
- Not just the **diving board, but the pool.**
- **Like a well...**

Specifically, and I didn't tell you this last week, but Paul has a very practical problem he is trying to address in this book: the division of Jews and Gentiles in the church at Rome. You see, the original church consisted of Jews and Gentiles... which was already its own issues, because Jews and Gentiles had all these cultural differences--Jews had this special diet and code of laws, they had different political viewpoints. But then, Emperor Claudius had ordered all the Jews (Jewish Christians included) to get out of Rome (in Acts 18:1-2). After 5 years years they were allowed to come back and so rejoined the church. They used to be in charge of the church, but now the Gentiles have been running it by themselves for a while at this point. You can imagine the drama that is creating.

- **Our original property...** A point at which they took possession of the building, but they let us keep using it for a few months. Without telling us, when they took possession of it they just made all these changes. Put in this pink carpet (ours was puke green) and put in all this marble. A couple of cash registers. Statues of gold eagles. Cologne bottles--none were **Old Spice** or Axe body spray that I liked. 40-foot stretch limo.

That's not the same thing going on here... but you can imagine that there were all kinds of fireworks.

So, Paul is showing them how the **gospel creates a new humanity** that gives them the ability to overcome their differences--political, cultural, stylistic, etc.

Well, like I said, TODAY, WE'RE GOING TO try to LOOK AT THE FIRST 17 VERSES. In them, Paul introduces 3 things to us: **the man, the message and the mission:**

I. The MAN: Who was Paul?

1 Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called as an apostle and set apart for the gospel of God—

Paul was a former Pharisee:

- Pharisees were a **sect in Judaism** hyper-devoted to the law.
- And in Philippians Paul tells us he was **not just any Pharisee**, but a **"Pharisee of the Pharisees."**¹
 - **He had trained under Gamaliel**, one of the most sought after teachers of his day.
 - Something like being a **Rhodes Scholar** of religion today. You didn't **choose a teacher like Gamaliel**, he chose you. He was the **Mr. Miyagi** of Phariseeism.
- **For sure, Paul would have had most**, if not all, of the **Hebrew Scriptures** memorized and been proficient in multiple languages.
- **And he was zealous not just for knowing the laws, but for keeping them.** Paul says in Philippians, if anybody thinks they are good at keeping the law, humbly, I was better.² "I was good at being good."
- He was **so zealous, in fact**, that he devoted himself to destroying Christians. We may see that as a bad thing, but Paul (at least initially) saw it as a good thing. He thought **Christians were the**

¹ Phil 3:5

² Philippians 3:4-6

enemies of God, and he said, “I was **so zealous** that I was willing even to kill for his glory.” I would literally do “whatever it takes.”

- **Which was part of his dilemma:** he started to realize that his zeal for being good had led him to a really bad place.

Believe it or not, Bill Maher, Sam Harris, Richard Dawkins and the Apostle Paul agree on one thing—religion can turn you into a really bad person. Religion caters to the **worst parts of us:** pride, self-centeredness, judgmentalism self-righteousness, and bigotry.

- Which is why religious people are the worst. And all God’s people said... (I was wondering...)
 - **Soren Kierkegaard** told a great story about this: “That’s my carrot!”: **fearful, inherently competitive...**
 - **Religion done to distinguish** you from others or set you apart is inherently selfish and leads you to insecurity, selfishness and cruelty—which is the worst sin!
- **That’s religion.**

***The one exception to that: the gospel.** Because the gospel teaches the opposite of religion: It teaches that God offers salvation not to those earn it as a reward, but those who are unworthy and receive it as a gift.*

And because of that Paul, says, I am now (still in vs. 1) a...

“servant”

- **In Gr., “Doulos,” “slave.” Lowest of the low.**
 - This is the **opposite of** what he had been going for as a Pharisee.
 - **As a Pharisee, his zeal in religion was aimed to elevate him above people.** Now he sees his relationship- to Jesus as the reason to lower himself and serve them.
 - **As a Pharisee, when he encountered people who were sinful and had problems,** he would say, “Well, you’re just getting what you deserve. If you were awesome like me, you wouldn’t have those problems. **Now,** he would say, “Yeah, I had lots of

problems, too. Thank God it didn’t stop Jesus from coming after me.”

- **As a Pharisee, when people would wrong him or treat him badly,** he would respond with vengeance. *I’m righteous, and if you treat me badly, I’ll pay you back.* **NOW,** Paul would say, “I treated Jesus pretty badly, too. Thank God he kept loving me.”
- **As a Pharisee, when Paul saw someone in need, he’d say, “What I have is mine--I earned it, and I don’t owe it to anybody.”** Maybe throw them a carrot. **NOW,** he would say, “Thank God Jesus didn’t keep what was his for himself. If so, I’d be lost.”
- **You see, the gospel of grace produces in us a fundamentally different spirit than zealousness in religion does.** Religion makes you proud and self-centered. The gospel makes you humble and generous.
 - **You guys know** one of my good friends who preaches here sometimes, Clayton King--there’s a **guy on their pastoral team whose pregnant wife** and young child were involved in a terrible accident. An EMT worker fell asleep at the wheel and hit them head on and killed the wife and her unborn child. The guy driving was being irresponsible--he had worked a **24 hour shift and shouldn’t have been driving.**
 - Well, this pastor showed up at the guy’s sentencing--who was facing felony charges and harsh time, and pleaded for more lenient sentence. That began a friendship that **has lasted 8-years** where they have met every couple of weeks and this guy has basically become like one of their family.

I didn’t hear it from Clayton. The story was carried on the **Today show,** and the pastor was asked “why?” and he said simply, “This is what Jesus did for me. After I wronged him, he brought me close. It just makes sense that I do this for others.”

- **Religion doesn’t do that to you; the gospel does.**
- **The gospel humbles you: You can even see it in Paul’s name.** Before he met Jesus, the **name Paul went by was “Saul,”** who was

the proud, victorious Israelite king who stood head and shoulders above everyone. But **now he went by Paul**, which in Latin meant “little,” which is fitting because that's how he now saw himself: small, but loved by a great God and recipient of extravagant grace. The gospel transformed **Saul the mighty into Paul the small**.

- **Has that transformation happened to you?**
- We have lots of people who are good at being good and all the things that go with that--fearfulness, competitiveness, and insecurity

Notice what he says next...

“set apart for the gospel of God”

- Formerly, Paul had **tried to distinguish himself** through his talents and his goodness. Now he **wants to be known only** for the gospel.
- **He said, “I’ve seen what I can do.** And it wasn’t good. So, **better to put Jesus on display** than Paul.”
- **QUESTION: What do you want to be known for? How are you trying to set yourself apart?**
- **Here’s what I know: You being impressed with my talents** is going to help you at all.
 - First, **like Paul, what you see on stage** is not all there is to me. I’m a lot less impressive the more you get to know me. Second, **even if I were perfect**, my example wouldn’t help you--it would just crush you and discourage you. You’d think, “Well, I can never be perfect like I assume he is.”
 - So, **much better to use my platform to make JC** famous than J.D.
 - **Better to be honest about my struggles** so I can point you to where I’ve found grace and help, because more than you need a role model to emulate, you need a Savior to hope in
- **Jim Elliot said, “We** Christians are just a bunch of nobodies pointing to a great big somebody
- Again: **What do you want people to know about you?** Are you trying to be Saul the amazing or Paul the small?

OK! We’re done with vs. 1! Only 432 verses to go in Romans.

II. The MESSAGE: What made Paul so confident?

Why is **Paul willing to go around the world** to places he’s not welcome and to people he’s never met, enduring unspeakable hardships to get this message across? And why are we always urging you to talk to people about it--sometimes even total strangers? Isn’t that needlessly awkward? Isn’t religion more of a private matter better left alone?

And, **let me acknowledge**--a lot of Christians have bad social manners, and God and the gospel are not to blame for that. **They were socially awkward** before they became Christians.

But **if you are a guest here today**--I’ll go ahead and own it: **We want to convert you.**

There, I said it. We really want you to trust Jesus like we have.

I’ll let Paul explain why. **Paul says, vs. 2, this is why I’m so driven: First, this was all...**

“...promised beforehand through his prophets” (vs. 2)

- Paul’s **most compelling evidence** that religion was **not a private thing** was how Jesus fulfilled OT prophecy.
- **Interesting: Even before he talks about the resurrection**, he brings this up.
 - **In Luke 24, after the crucifixion**, a couple of Jesus’ disciples were walking along the **road to Emmaus really discouraged** at all that had transpired. Jesus, who had just resurrected from the dead, sidles up beside them, all incognito.
 - And **he starts trying to assure them** that he really was who had told them he was. **Now, you would think that the easiest way** to do that would be to simply reveal himself to them as the resurrected one.

- But **evidently, he believed showing them how every single page** of a book written by more than 30 different authors over the space of 1500 years had consistently told one story, about him, was even more convincing than the resurrection.
- **Showing, for example, that**
 - In **Genesis** he was the word of God creating the heavens and the earth and the fulfillment of the promise God gave to Adam and Eve to give them a son who would crush the head of the serpent
 - Or that from **Exodus** that he was the Passover Lamb
 - In **Leviticus**, the holy place where we meet with God
 - From **Numbers**: He was our ever-present guide, our pillar of cloud
 - **From Deuteronomy**: he was the prophet coming who would be greater than Moses

And that's just the first 5 books! He would shown them how he was the point of the other 34 as well, not to mention really specific ones like how in...

- In **Esther**...our faithful advocate in the throne room risking his life to save ours
- In **Isaiah**...
- **Hosea**...
- In **Jonah**...
- In the book of **Micah**... the everlasting ruler born to us in Bethlehem
- **Zechariah**... the King who comes into Jerusalem riding on a donkey, betrayed for 30 pieces of silver, the Son who was pierced whom one day every son would one day behold
- And **300 other** specific prophecies that tell us the time, place, character and ministry of the Messiah
- Note: This was what was **most convincing for me** in my faith. (if you're unsure about Jesus fulfilling prophecies, go back and listen to my year-long series *The Whole Story* we did in 2016).

"...by the resurrection of the dead" (vs. 4)

- This was the other piece of evidence the Apostles put forward to validate their claims.
- **We saw him raised from the dead.** I don't have time to go deeply into it here, but if you are unsure about all this, this is **the very place** to start examining The evidence for the resurrection is solid.
- Get a **book like Lee Strobel's Case for Christ**. Lee was a very liberal, very cynical journalist for the Chicago Tribune who was sick of the Christians in his life sharing Christ with him and wanted to prove the idiocy of their faith. So, he **set out to prove** the resurrection was a hoax.
- **At the end he concluded what so many have concluded**--there is no way these stories could be made up or the stuff of legends. Only a predisposed bias against the evidence leads there. The evidence for the resurrection is **more solid** than is the evidence we accept for many other indisputable historical facts.

Paul continues...

"...through him we received grace..." (vs. 5)³

- Paul **saw the message of grace** as a distinguishing characteristic of the gospel.
- Those that say that **all religions teach the same thing** simply demonstrate they have never really looked at it that deeply.
- Every religion in the world works off of this premise: **I obey; therefore I am accepted.** The gospel works off the opposite: **I am accepted, therefore I obey.**⁴
- **C.S. Lewis** story: "2 lessons to learn..." Don't mess with CS; grace is the distinguishing mark

"...and apostleship" (vs. 5)

- There are two uses of the term "apostle" in the Bible
 - **Capital "A" Authoritative**: one of the original 12, plus Paul. This is what Paul is referring to here. These Apostles were specially commissioned by Jesus in places like **Matthew 16** and **John 14** to write the Bible, and they had to have been eyewitnesses of the risen Jesus. Jesus gave them the authority

³ This verse should build on ppt.

⁴ Both on one slide coming up 1 at a time

to validate the message--which is why all of the were either written by an Apostle or under the oversight of an Apostle. **That's a "cap A" Apostle.**

- **Small "a":** The commission given to carry the gospel. It just means "sent one."
 - In one sense, **all those who are saved are sent.**
 - Follow me, Jesus said...
 - You are SENT
- **Paul was an Apostle in both senses.** Having seen the resurrected Christ, he was authorized to articulate the message. **He was also compelled like all of us** to take the gospel around the world.

Why does this gospel compel all of us to carry it around the world, sharing it with our neighbors?

Well, 3 reasons he alludes to here:

- **First, how do you receive this kind of grace and keep it to yourself?**
 - Imagine a disease broke out in RDU... people got sick and in 24 hours they died. You somehow discover a cure. How could you keep it to yourself? More on that in a minute.
- **Second, we know that God has commanded this happen: Look again at vs. 5.** We have received *grace and apostleship* "...to bring about the obedience of faith..." God has declared Jesus is Lord and commanded all people everywhere to submit to him and if we're obeying God we're part of making that happen.
 - I am **reading a biography of LBJ right now** and at one point in the struggle to pass the Civil Rights bill there was a lot of senators who were sitting on the sidelines hiding behind "procedural problems" to keep the bill from coming to the floor. And finally, LBJ said to the nation, "This is it. There's no more hiding. Either you get behind this bill or acknowledge yourself as an enemy of civil rights."
 - **It's similar for Christians.** If you believe Jesus is Lord, you have to **be doing what you can** to bring others into obedience to him. If you're not, stop claiming to be one of his followers because this is the most central of his commands.

- Stop hiding behind excuses for not evangelizing.
- **Like Spurgeon: missionary or impostor**
- Not the **Great Suggestion**--Great Commission
- **One last reason** we go Paul alludes to... **"...for the sake of his name among all the Gentiles."** (vs. 5). **The name of Jesus is worthy** to be worshipped among the nations! It's not **just compassion** that sends us. In your heart of hearts you want to see Jesus recognized in the nations for who he is. **I feel this when...**
 - Overseas:
 - Watching them bow down
 - **Or when I watch the Grammys:** your skill was made for Jesus, not for you

That's the man, the message... finally, let's look at what Paul says about...

III. The MISSION: *How committed is Paul to this task?*

Paul discusses that in **vv. 14–17**, and he says 3 things about the mission: "I am not ashamed. In fact, I am eager. And, I feel under obligation."

"...for I am not ashamed" (vs. 16)

- **In saying "I am not ashamed,"** Paul indicates that some people are going to be tempted to be ashamed (this is him anticipating and answering objections like I told you last week.)
- **What is it about the gospel that tempts people to feel ashamed?** *Tim Keller says there are 4 reasons modern Christians feel ashamed of the gospel:*
 - **FIRST, It tells us we're such spiritual failures** that the only way to be saved is through a **free gift**. "This offends moral and religious people who think their decency gives them an advantage over the less moral."

⁵ Tim Keller, *Romans for You*, 18–19.

- **SECOND**, it tells us **that we're so wicked** that **only the death** of Jesus could save us. *"This offends the popular belief in the innate goodness of humanity" (or that we just need to get in touch with our inner beauty.)*
- **THIRD**, it teaches us that **all so-called good, sincere people** will not automatically make it to heaven. *"This offends the modern notion that any nice person anywhere can find God 'in his own way.'"* **It says that God is the only one** who can provide salvation, and **if you are going to receive it**, you have to do it *his way*.
- **LASTLY**, this gospel tells us that **our salvation was accomplished by Jesus' serving and suffering, and we should expect the same in following him**: *"This offends people who want salvation to be an easy life—nice and comfortable."*
- **There are 4 ways** that this message will not be popular with modern people.
- **To be "not ashamed" of it** means you recognize that and proclaim it faithfully anyway.
- Paul says, **"I know this message offends** all of us, but I'm **not ashamed** of it b/c I know **it and it alone** contains the **power** of new life!"
 - **One of our high school boys said to me last week**, "The problem with phone numbers is that they have to be exactly right or they don't help at all. You don't get points for being almost right or being in the vicinity." If you are trying to remember a girl's number and get it almost right except for **one digit it doesn't connect you to one of her friends** or other girls like her.
 - Paul says, **"You might not like the message**, but it's the only one that connects you to the power of God."

So, I'm not ashamed of it, but even more than that,

"I am eager" (vs. 15).

- I **won't spend a lot time here**, because we spent time with this last weekend, but Paul says: **"I've felt its power in my life**; I know it is the only hope of salvation. So, I *want* to get it to you!"

- **This is how I want us to feel about our community**. It's how I feel about our church... **why we push so hard** to be effective.
- Why more campuses; churches to plant; emphases on giving
- **I want it in my preaching**. I love preaching deep. But most of all I feel want to win people to Jesus and equip you to win others to Jesus.
- **I feel like Spurgeon**: **"If my hearers are not converted, I have wasted my time; I have lost the exercise of brain and heart. I feel as if I lost my hope and lost my life, unless I find for my Lord some of his blood-bought ones... That's what I'm doing up here. And to you seminary students: I would sooner bring one sinner to Jesus Christ than unpack all the divine mysteries in the Word."**
- *Don't come argue with me about predestination if you haven't shared Jesus with someone in a year*
- The opposite of **"ashamed of the gospel"** is not **"proud to be a Christian,"** but **eagerness to share**.

Even more,

"I am obligated" (vs. 14).

- **We've talked about this before**. The word he uses here means debtor. But he'd never even met them? How can he feel under obligation to people he's never met?
- **2 ways to be in debt**: owe someone money; be given money for someone else.
 - **Say you worked for "Feed the Children"** and had been given a huge donation of \$1,000,000. What would people think of you if you decided that you'd just stash that money away for a while? That's not YOUR money, and you owe it to others to share it. It's the very reason it was given to you!
- **That's what God tells us** about the gospel message. You were **no more worthy** of it than anyone around the world. But God blessed you with it, and with the privilege of hearing the gospel comes the responsibility of spreading the gospel. And to not do that is stealing.

MUSIC

- When you realize how much you owe to others, how unworthy you were to hear the gospel and how much you owe to Jesus for giving it to you... it changes how you look at your life.
- You start to look at your ambitions and dreams, talents and resources differently. You start to say, **“Only one life to live will soon be past...”**
- You start to make extraordinary and radical decisions about your life.
 - **My son is named for Adoniram Judson**--first Baptist missionary. Went to Burma. He had fallen in love with a girl named Ann Hasseltine who shared his love for the nations, and he wanted to ask her father’s permission to marry her. So, he wrote him this letter, and thankfully it was preserved for history:

I have now to ask whether you can consent to part with your daughter early next spring, to see her no more in this world... Whether you can consent to her departure to (foreign, dangerous) lands, and her subjection to the hardships and sufferings of a missionary life? Whether you can consent to her exposure to... every kind of want and distress; to degradation, insult, persecution, and maybe even a violent death? Can you consent to all this, for the sake of him who left his heavenly home and died for her and for you; for the sake of perishing, immortal souls; for the sake of... the glory of God? Can you consent to all this, in hope of soon meeting your daughter in the world of glory, with a crown of righteousness brightened by the acclamations of praise which shall redound to her Savior from (lost nations) saved through her witness?⁶

- **How would you dads like to get a letter like that from the boy your daughter starts dating at college??**
- **But is this how you feel about the gospel?**

- **Are you ashamed of the gospel**, or are you eager to share, and willing to do whatever it takes to get the gospel to others?
- **Are you willing to take some intentional steps this year that direction?**
 - Mission trip
 - Move overseas/church plants -- talk to our team!
 - WY1?
 - Ask: **What habits need to change?** Commit to have someone not a Christian in your home at least 1x a month
 - **VIDEO** - MY CHALLENGE TO YOU: Don’t coast through this life. Do you feel **eager and unashamed** when it comes to sharing the gospel with your one? If you committed to disciple one person this year the impact could have a multiplying effect far beyond anything you ever imagined - **check this out...**

⁶ Letter to Mr. Hasseltine asking for his daughter’s hand in marriage by Adoniram Judson. Lightly edited. <http://www.wholesomewords.org/missions/bjudson8.html>