

(T) Welcome to **Discipleship training On The Air**. In this Bible study series two teachers will do Bible study from ROMANS 1:1-17.

Romans 1:1-7 contains the call and task of the writer, the apostle Paul. And Romans 1:8-17 contains the introduction of the subject of the letter to the Romans. Romans 1:16 says, "I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile." Paul's letter to the Romans teaches the power of the gospel! It teaches that the gospel is God's power to *justify* people and it is God's power to *sanctify* people. The gospel is God's message about how people may be *saved and changed* to become new people!

(S) **STEP 1. READ**

Let us read Romans 1:1-17 together. When you are two or more people, take turns to read one verse each until you have completed the reading. Due to shortage of time, please read Romans 1:1-17 for yourself.

(T) **STEP 2. DISCOVER**

Let us discover and discuss some important truths in Romans 1:1-17. "Which truth in this passage is important for you?" or "Which truth in this passage touches your mind or heart?" Think and write your answer in your notebook. After a few minutes take turns to share your discoveries with one another.

(S) An important truth for me is in Romans 1:1-7 is about how the apostle Paul introduces himself. The letter to the Romans was not an invention of any human being, but is an inspired revelation of *the meaning of the gospel* to a very special person, the apostle Paul. The apostle Paul introduces himself as a servant of Jesus Christ, called and appointed to be an apostle and set apart to preach the gospel of God. The message of the gospel is above all, not what people must do to be saved, but *what the God of the Bible has done in Jesus Christ to save people*. This gospel message of the New Testament was already in part promised and displayed in the Old Testament. What Christ revealed to Paul about the gospel, was in complete harmony with what the Old Testament prophets taught. The subject of the gospel is Jesus Christ, his death and resurrection. His resurrection manifests his present state of exaltation in heaven. It is from this divine Person, Jesus Christ, that Paul received his task to be an apostle. The purpose of his task was to bring people to faith in Jesus Christ. His field of labour was not only his own town, but also all the nations in the world and this included the people living in Rome. Paul often began his letters by wishing the Christians God's grace and God's peace.

(T) An important truth for me is from Romans 1:8-17 about how the apostle Paul introduces the subject of his letter to the Romans. The subject of the letter to the Romans is "*salvation by faith for both the Jew and the Gentile.*" Paul introduces the greatest subject in preaching in a very respectable way. He expresses his respect and affection to the Christians in Rome. He thanks God for their faith and that their faith has influence everywhere. He expresses his concern for them by praying for them constantly and by making known his longing to come to visit them in order to strengthen them, to encourage one another and to have a harvest among them. Paul is obligated to preach the gospel to all people and therefore eager to preach it also to the Romans. His eagerness to preach the gospel arose from his clear understanding of the gospel. The gospel is not simply a message, but a *powerful means* by which God saves all the people who believe, without distinction of race and culture. The gospel is powerful and very effective, because it teaches *the true method of justification*, that is, the true way of salvation. The only way of salvation is by faith in the God of the Bible, who revealed himself in Jesus Christ. Thus, Paul introduces the two great subjects of his letter to the Romans. The first is *the method of salvation* and the second is *the people to whom salvation may be offered*. Salvation is by faith only and salvation should be offered to all people in the world, both non-Jews (Gentiles) and Jews.

(S) **STEP 3. QUESTION**

Let us try to understand all the truths in Romans 1:1-17 and ask our questions about the things we still do not understand. "Which question about anything in this passage would you like to ask to the group?" Think and write your question in your notebook. Then discuss the questions and try to find answers.

1st Question. (1:5) What is the meaning of the expression "to call people to obedience of faith"?

(T) The original text says that Paul received grace and apostleship with a view to bring about obedience of faith among all the nations. As apostle, Paul's task was to preach the gospel so that people in all nations may be brought to the obedience of faith. How should we understand the words "obedience of faith"? Although it is possible to interpret this as "obedience to the Christian faith" (objective), that is, obedience to the gospel, it is better to interpret this as "obedience that consists in faith" (subjective). Genuine Christian obedience is characterised by believing in Jesus Christ

(cf. John 6:28-29) and genuine Christian faith is characterised by obedience to Christ (cf. John 14:21,23). The implications are enormous. The *faith* that Paul preached was not simply a *one-time act of accepting* Jesus Christ as Saviour. The *kind of faith* that Paul intended to promote was a *lifetime commitment of obedience* to Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord. By preaching the gospel, the apostle Paul called people to a life of wholehearted devotion to Jesus Christ and his teachings.

2nd Question. (1:16) In what way is the gospel the power of God?

(S) In Romans 1:16, Paul says, “I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile.”

One. The gospel is the power of God, because it is that message through which God works and through which he saves people. 1 Corinthians 1:20-25 says that God saves people not through human wisdom or human power, but through the gospel. The power of God in the gospel is not manifested through a message about ‘one God’ (cf. Jewish religion) or a message about a perfect moral code (cf. Greek religion), but rather through a message about a crucified Redeemer. Jesus Christ and him crucified is the beginning and the end of the gospel message (cf. 1 Corinthians 1:18; 2:2; Galatians 5:11; 6:14).

Two. The gospel has a powerful effect on individuals. Every believer in Jesus Christ is *saved out of a certain state into another state*. Everyone who believes in Jesus Christ is *saved from certain evils* and is *saved to enjoy certain blessings*. Every believer in Jesus Christ is saved from the following evils. He is saved from the *guilt* of sin, because his sins are forgiven. He is saved from the *shame* of sin, because his name and honour is restored. He is saved from the *pollution* of sin, because the blood of Jesus Christ that was shed on the cross cleansed him. He is saved from the *slavery* to sin, because Jesus Christ set him free from the power of sin. He is saved from the eternal *punishment* of sin, which consists of separation from God, the wrath of God and everlasting death. He is saved from this punishment, because Jesus Christ took that punishment in his place onto himself!

Every believer in Jesus Christ is saved to enjoy the following blessings. He receives a perfect righteous state in the eyes of God. He receives the ability to grow in holiness. And he receives the ability to live a transformed and fruitful life. He is saved to enjoy God’s blessings, which consists of personal fellowship with God, the love of God and everlasting life.

Three. The gospel has a powerful effect on nations. The gospel saves people from every nation in the world! No matter what a person’s previous nationality or religion was, when he believes in Jesus Christ, he will certainly be saved! The Bible says, “First for the Jew, then for the non-Jew (Greek)”. The word ‘first’ does not mean ‘especially’, because the gospel was not specially designed for the Jews (3:9,22,29; 10:12). It means ‘first in time’, because the gospel was first preached to them (Matthew 10:5-6; Acts 13:46-47) and then preached by them to the ‘Greeks’ (Matthew 28:19). ‘The Greeks’ were those non-Jews or Gentiles with whom the Jews were most familiar at that time and they represent the Gentiles from every nation on earth.

3rd Question. (1:17) What righteousness from God is revealed in the gospel?

(T) One. Righteousness is not something that is attained by people. The word ‘righteousness’ is interpreted differently by different people. One group of people view righteousness as a moral righteousness that is attained when either the church or they themselves do something right. They believe that people are justified by their baptism by the church and by their good works afterwards. They believe that at baptism, God’s grace is poured into them so that they become inherently righteous and are able to do good works.

Another group of people also view righteousness as a moral righteousness that is attained by faith and evangelical obedience. They believe that people are justified by their own act of believing in the gospel and by their acts of obedience to the law and teachings of Jesus Christ afterwards. They view *faith as an act* by which they are justified.

Two. Righteousness as something that is given by God. No one can establish his own righteousness, because righteousness comes from God (3:21). In the whole letter to the Romans, *righteousness is not something that is attained by the believers themselves! Righteousness is something that is given by God to believers!* By a complete righteous life on earth and his sacrificial death on the cross, Jesus Christ satisfied the righteous indignation of God against sin and earned or merited the required righteousness for everyone who believes in him. The righteous Christ dies for the sins of the unrighteous people in order to bring them to God (1 Peter 3:18; cf. 2 Corinthians 5:21). He paid the complete penalty for sin in the place of those who believe in him. Therefore God *declares* these *believers completely (100%) righteous* and from then on *regards and treats them as perfectly (100%) righteous* in his eyes! Righteousness is therefore *not the moral righteousness of believers, but the judicial righteousness of God!*

4th Question. (1:16-17) By what kind of faith are people made righteous?

(S) The kind of faith that justifies or saves people, that is, that makes people righteous in God's eyes, has three aspects.

One. The first aspect of faith is knowledge. In order to believe in something, we must *know* what to believe. Thus, faith is an understanding of the truth as it is revealed in the Bible. Romans 10:14-17 says that 'faith' comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the preaching of the word of Christ. Faith is therefore based on knowledge of the gospel concerning Jesus Christ. The knowledge consists of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Because this knowledge is *given* to us when others preach the gospel to us, the knowledge of faith is based on God's grace.

Two. The second aspect of faith is trust. After we understand the truth, we still have to *believe or trust* that this truth is also the truth for us personally. With our mind and heart we believe that God credits the righteousness of Christ to our account, so that when God looks at us, he only sees the righteousness of Jesus Christ! We *rely or depend* on the fact that God declares us completely righteous, because of what Jesus Christ has done for us. Acts 16:14 says that it is God who opens our hearts to respond by faith to the gospel message. God *gives* this faith to us (cf. Acts 13:48; Eph 2:8; Phil 1:29; 2 Pet 1:1). Thus, even this personal trust of faith is based on God's grace.

Three. The third aspect of faith is action. When we genuinely believe the truth of the gospel, we *respond with action*. We *receive the truth and we confess the truth*. The faith in our mind and heart that Jesus Christ is the Saviour and that he offers us complete salvation is *expressed by receiving* Christ together with his completed work of salvation into our hearts and lives (cf. John 1:12). And it is *expressed by confessing* Jesus Christ openly as Saviour and Lord with our mouths. There is complete agreement between what we believe in our hearts and what we confess with our mouths. Romans 10:9-10 says, "If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved."

The faith that saves or justifies can be compared with *the sinner's empty hand* that is stretched out to God, the Giver, in order to receive God's gracious gift of salvation. The faith that saves or justifies is like *the coupling* that connects man's train with God's engine, that is, couples man's life to God's grace. The faith that saves or justifies is symbolised by *the trunk of a tree*, whose roots represent 'God's grace' and whose fruit symbolises 'a life of gratitude and good works'.

5th Question. (1:17) What is the meaning of the words "a righteousness from faith to faith"?

(T) The literal translation of the original text says, "A righteousness from God is being revealed in the gospel, a righteousness that is *from faith to faith*" (Greek ek+eis). This phrase has been interpreted to mean the following:

One. Some say it is a progressive phrase and means "from a weak faith to a more perfect faith".

Two. Others say it is an intensive phrase and means "by faith alone", or "by faith from beginning to end".

Three. However, a similar phrase is used in Romans 3:21-22. A righteousness from God has been manifested in the Old Testament Law and Prophets, a righteousness that is "*through* faith in Jesus Christ *to* all who believe" in Jesus Christ (Greek dia+dative). Another similar phrase is used in Galatians 3:21-22. The promise of "righteousness *by* faith is given *to* those who believe" (Greek ek+dative). Romans 1:17 emphasises both *the means*, that is, by faith, and *the recipients* of God's righteousness, that is, to everyone who believes. Thus, the best translation is, "The gospel reveals a righteousness that comes from God. This righteousness is only *by faith* and not by works of the law. And this righteousness is given *to every one who believes* without distinction of his race, culture or degree of faith!"

6th Question. (1:17) What is the meaning of the words "the righteous will live by faith"?

(S) The literal translation of the original text says, "The righteous (person) by faith (Greek ek) shall live". Some people interpret this phrase to mean, "The person who becomes righteous by faith, shall live". However, the quotation is from Habakkuk 2:4 and can only be translated to mean, "The righteous person will live by faith". The emphasis is on the way believers are justified. The meaning is that the righteous person is *saved or justified by faith* and not by doing the works of the law. Thus, the emphasis in both the Old Testament period and the New Testament period is that believers in the LORD Jesus Christ are justified or saved by faith only.

(T) **STEP 4. APPLY**

After brainstorming with one another and recording a list of *possible applications*, consider which possible application God wants you to turn into a *personal application*.

I want to make sure that my faith is not simply a *one-time act of accepting* Christ as Saviour, but a *life-time commitment of obedience* to Christ as Saviour and Lord. I realise now that 'faith' in the Bible is a life of wholehearted devotion to Jesus Christ and his teachings.

(S) When I preach the gospel of salvation, I want to emphasise both the *evils, from which* believers in Christ are saved, and the *blessings, to which* they are being saved. I want to preach that every believer in Christ is saved out of the state of guilt into a state of righteousness. Every believer in Christ is saved from the slavery to sin into freedom and from the pollution of sin into a holy life.

(T) **STEP 5. PRAY**

Let us take turns to pray about one truth that God has taught us in Romans 1:1-17.

Dear Father in heaven, I now realise that the Christian faith is a life-time commitment of obedience to you and a wholehearted devotion to you and your teachings in the Bible. I pray that you continue to give grace to me to live my whole life for you.

(S) Dear Father in heaven, I want to preach the truths of the gospel very clearly to people. I want to emphasise both the evils from which believers in Christ are saved and the blessings to which they are being saved. I realise that the evils from which we are saved as well as the blessings to which we are being saved are essential parts of the good news for people. Make me a faithful preacher of this gospel message! In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen!

(T) **ASSIGNMENT FOR NEXT WEEK**

First. Join a house fellowship that does Bible study. Use "the five steps" Bible study method to prepare Romans 1:18-32.

Second. See the workbooks "Go and preach God's Kingdom" and Internet on www.dota.net

Third. Listen every SATURDAY to WEDNESDAY on the radio to "Discipleship training on the air".