



**GOD'S SAVING &
TRANSFORMING
GRACE**

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The Doctrinal Basis of Our Curriculum

A more detailed statement with references is available upon request.

- The verbal, plenary inspiration of the Scriptures
- Only one true God
- The Trinity of the Godhead
- The Holy Spirit and His ministry
- The personality of Satan
- The Genesis account of creation
- Original sin and the fall of man
- The virgin birth of Christ
- Salvation through faith in the shed blood of Christ
- The bodily resurrection and priesthood of Christ
- Grace and the new birth
- Justification by faith
- Sanctification of the believer
- The security of the believer
- The church
- The ordinances of the local church: baptism by immersion and the Lord's Supper
- Biblical separation—ecclesiastical and personal
- Obedience to civil government
- The place of Israel
- The pretribulation rapture of the church
- The premillennial return of Christ
- The millennial reign of Christ
- Eternal glory in Heaven for the righteous
- Eternal torment in Hell for the wicked

Alex Bauman, editor

180°: God's Saving & Transforming Grace, Romans

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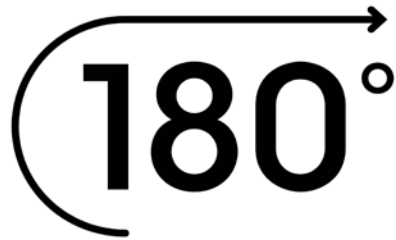
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Preface

A strong contrast exists between the hopeless, terrible condition of sinful people and the hope-filled, wonderful state of the redeemed believer. Overcoming the difference between the condition of the sinner and the state of the believer does not take gumption, grit, or grinding it out. It takes grace—God’s transforming grace. This is a Scriptural reality.

But what is Biblically true is not readily acknowledged by the unrighteous. Indeed, it is in effect denied. The purposefully evil person, the self-righteous judgmental person, and the self-satisfied religious person deal with God in totally ineffective and, in terms of Who God is, divinely offensive ways. As a result, each is condemned by God. The unrighteous person has no hope in or desire for a loving relationship with his Creator.

Sadly, many believers themselves do not adequately understand the Scriptural reality of God’s transforming grace. Having been saved by grace, they have somehow failed to understand the place of grace in daily Christian life. As a result, the redeemed saint fails to realize all that God has provided through His gospel.

180° is a study of the gospel of God, a doctrine that addresses the needs of the sinner and the believer. In Romans, Paul laid out the gospel truth for the sinner and the believer. This truth is summarized as *the power of God unto salvation* (Romans 1:16). *180°* presents the need for and the provision of salvation as the gracious gift of God to those in need of divine redemption. It also presents grace as the means available to the believer to enjoy the full benefits of God’s complete, transforming redemption.

180° Change

▶ Scripture Focus

Romans 1:1–17

Theme

Jesus Christ, the center of the gospel, uses people to spread the powerful gospel around the world.

Memory Verse

“For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek” (Romans 1:16).

GETTING STARTED

Perhaps nothing is as disheartening on a trip as finding out you spent the last several hours traveling in the wrong direction. A group of college guys did that on a long trip home for the holidays. What should have been an 18-hour trip turned into a 22-hour trip.

1. Have you ever thought you were making good time on a trip only to discover you were going the wrong way? If so, what tipped you off?

2. What did you think of your navigating skills once you realized you were going the wrong way?

A Pharisee named Paul was headed in the wrong direction in his efforts to please God. The gospel turned him around. This course will help us understand the gospel and Jesus Christ, the commander of the gospel mission, the center of the gospel message, the commissioner of the gospel's messengers, the controller of the gospel's movement, and the conveyor of the gospel's might.

SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

Jesus Is the Commander of the Gospel Mission

The apostle Paul, the writer of Romans, was a Roman citizen by birth (Acts 22:25–29). He was born and raised in Tarsus, a coastal city in Cilicia, about 350 miles north of Jerusalem (22:3). While many Jews were Hellenistic, speaking Greek and adopting Greek customs, Paul was not. He was a *Hebrew of the Hebrews* (Phil. 3:5), which means he spoke Aramaic and retained traditional Jewish customs.

Paul's parents sent him to Jerusalem to learn from the renowned teacher Gamaliel (Acts 5:34). Gamaliel taught Paul *according to the perfect manner of the law* (22:3); that is, according to strict Pharisaic tradition.

3. Read Galatians 1:13, 14. How seriously did Paul take his religion?

4. As a Pharisee, how aware was Paul of his need of salvation?

Paul saw himself as a good person. He firmly believed he served God's mission on earth. But that was not reality. Paul fought against God's mission. He was God's enemy.

5. Whom do you know who is admirably religious but in need of salvation and essentially an enemy of God?

While on his way to Damascus to arrest believers, Jesus Christ arrested Paul. A bright light shone from Heaven, blinded Paul, and knocked him to the ground. When Jesus Christ spoke from Heaven (Acts 22:7), Paul realized that his religious devotion was misplaced. God was unmoved by Paul's zealotry. In response Paul trusted in Jesus Christ as his personal Savior. Later, the Lord instructed Ananias to find Paul and disciple him (9:6, 10–22). The Word continued to transform Paul's life as he prepared for his apostolic ministry.

6. What can you learn about the power of the gospel from Paul's testimony?

Paul began his letter to the Romans with a statement of his relationship to Jesus Christ. He called himself a *servant of Jesus Christ* (Rom. 1:1), meaning he played the role of a *slave*. Jesus Christ owned Paul and called the shots in his life.

7. What does Paul's self-identification as a slave of Christ Jesus tell you about his commitment to the cause of Christ?

As a Pharisee, Paul strove to make himself look good. As a Christian, Paul strove to please Jesus Christ, the Commander of the mission to spread the gospel.

8. To what degree did the gospel change Paul?

Paul rightly identified himself as a slave of Jesus Christ, but that didn't mean he spoke without authority. He quickly pointed out that he served Christ as an *apostle* too (Rom. 1:1). According to the New Testament, a man had to meet two qualifications to be an apostle: (1) he had to be an eyewitness of the resurrected Lord (Acts 1:22; 1 Cor. 9:1), and (2) the

Lord had to commission him for apostolic service. Jesus Christ appeared to Paul on the road to Damascus and subsequently called him into His service (Acts 9).

The Lord clearly identified Paul's specific ministry calling. He said of Paul, *He is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel* (Acts 9:15b). After several years of preparation, Paul indeed traveled far and wide as the apostle to the Gentiles (13–28). During these years Paul faithfully preached to the unsaved and encouraged and exhorted believers through his letters. He wrote the book of Romans in Corinth on his third missionary journey, likely in the winter of AD 57 or perhaps the early spring of AD 58 (20:3).

9. Why was it important for Paul to state his apostleship when writing a letter such as Romans?

Paul viewed his apostleship with utmost seriousness. He described himself as *separated unto the gospel of God* (Rom. 1:1). To be *separated* meant he was set apart for the work of the gospel of God. God called Paul away from all other endeavors so that he might preach the gospel of his Commander, Jesus Christ.

God took proud, self-reliant Paul and humbled him. As a result, Paul turned his focus from himself to Christ. He devoted his life to the gospel of Christ so that others might have life and might themselves become strong witnesses for Christ.

Jesus Is the Center of the Gospel Message

Since the church at Rome was predominantly made up of Gentiles, Paul wisely added that the gospel message he so diligently preached has its roots in the *holy Scriptures*, a reference to the Old Testament (1:2). The gospel was not a new message. Rather, it was the culmination of God's plan that he determined in eternity past (Rev. 13:8) and revealed in the Garden of Eden (Gen. 3:15).

Who is at the center of this plan? Jesus Christ is (1:3). There is no gospel without Jesus Christ. Being fully God, He came to earth as a fully human descendant of David, meaning He was qualified to be the Messi-

ah, the Savior of the world (1:3). After Jesus died on the cross for the sins of the world, God the Father *declared* (Him) *to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead* (1:4). What is Paul saying here? Simply that Jesus rose from the dead and then lived by the power of the Spirit before ascending to Heaven. God then highly exalted Jesus (*declared to be the Son of God*) for willingly dying for the sins of the world (Phil. 2:5–11). Jesus’ humiliation on the cross led to His exaltation by the Father.

10. Read 1 Corinthians 2:1–5. Why was it important for Paul to preach Christ as the center of the gospel?

Jesus Is the Commissioner of the Gospel’s Messengers

Jesus’ death, resurrection, ascension, and exaltation did not end His work regarding salvation. In fact, all that work laid the foundation for Christ’s current ministries. Jesus is now the commissioner of the gospel’s messengers. He sends believers around the world to share His good news.

Christ commissioned Paul face to face. Paul considered it a gracious gift to be commissioned by Christ to share the gospel (1:5).

11. Read Romans 1:5. Why is a commission to share the gospel a gracious gift from God?

12. What might be true of a believer who sees Christ’s commission to share the gospel as a burden or even a punishment?

The goal of Paul’s work as an apostle was to bring about *obedience to the faith* in the people he met (1:5). The words *obedience* and *faith* represent two ways to look at the same response. A person cannot obey

God without faith, and faith will show itself in obedience. And a believer who has faith in God will obey Him by sharing the gospel wherever Christ sends him. So, Paul's ministry focused on reaching people for Christ so that they might in turn reach others for Christ. Christ's name was magnified throughout the nations by such a focus.

Paul went on to address the believers in Rome specifically. He said they were *the called of Jesus Christ* (1:6). That phrase conveys the idea of ownership and means the Roman believers were called to belong to Christ (1 Cor. 6:20). They were added to God's family and enlisted in Christ's workforce as messengers of the good news. They were *saints*, or *set-apart ones*, who existed to accomplish Christ's work on earth.

13. Read Romans 1:7a. What truth in this verse shows that being part of Christ's work on earth is a wonderful privilege?

14. Do you think believers today are as concerned about God's calling on their lives as they should be? Explain.

Jesus Is the Controller of the Gospel's Movement

Paul expressed thanks to God for the Romans because their faith was known *throughout the whole world* (the Roman Empire) (1:8). Although small in number compared with the total population of the empire, those believers cast a beam of spiritual light into distant places. Wherever Paul went, he heard about the firm, remarkable faith of the saints in Rome.

15. Read Romans 1:8. Why was it appropriate for Paul to give thanks *to God through Jesus Christ* for the proclamation of the Roman believers' faith throughout the Roman Empire?

Jesus is the controller of the gospel's movement—both the spread of the gospel to unbelievers and the effects of the gospel on the life of a believer. He works in lives of believers and magnifies His name through them. That is why Paul was so fervent in prayer for the believers in Rome (1:9). He recognized that any fruit in their lives would come through Christ's work in their hearts.

Yet, Paul recognized that God works through *people*. Paul wanted to go to Rome and meet the believers so he could have a direct part in their establishment in the faith (1:10, 11). He even humbly anticipated being encouraged and spiritually strengthened through their ministry in his life (1:12).

But all that was on hold because God had not yet made a way for Paul to get to Rome (1:13). Every time he planned to make a trip there, God stepped in with a different plan. That's because God directs believers to move to specific places to minister to specific people (cf. Acts 16:6–10). Such was the case for Paul. He wished to go to Rome to meet the believers there and preach the gospel in that city, but that was not part of Christ's plan to that point in Paul's life.

Paul was obligated to minister to the Gentiles whether they be Roman citizens (*Greeks*) or those considered *barbarians* living in other parts of the world (1:14). So Paul was not wasting his time with barbarians while he was hindered in going to Rome to preach to Greeks. In fact, we could say his ministry to the barbarians took precedence for a time over his ministry to the Greeks in Rome. That was okay with Paul because he was a *debtor* to all Gentiles. No one in Paul's world was too cultured or too *barbaric* for the gospel. The good news of salvation applies equally to all lives and all levels of education and cultural sophistication.

Christ would let Paul go to Rome to preach the gospel when the time was right. Until then, he made sure the believers in Rome knew that he was longing to be with them. *As much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel*, declared Paul (1:15). God had been preparing Paul for many years, but with these words, Paul stated the attitude of his own heart—his voluntary preparation. Whatever it involved (and ultimately it cost him his life), he was going to be God's ambassador to Rome.

Jesus Is the Conveyor of the Gospel's Might

Picking up on the theme that the gospel is for everyone, Paul stated the he was *not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth* (1:16). Why might someone be ashamed of the gospel? Because its message was so simple and because its central

figure seemed to be a lowly, delusional Jew Whom the Romans crucified. The Greek philosophical thinkers rejected the gospel of Christ. They considered it foolish to put one's faith in a failed insurrectionist. Yet Paul was anxious for the opportunity to preach the gospel in Rome. He understood that the gospel unleashed God's power to save the lost. He was Exhibit A, after all, of the gospel's power. When the gospel changed his life, Christians found it hard to believe that Saul of Tarsus, the persecutor, was converted (Acts 9:26).

The most notable example of power in Paul's day was the Roman army. The Roman soldiers used brute force to beat their enemies into submission. They enforced Roman rule by terror, slaughtering any people group who tried to resist them. By comparison, the gospel's power brought deliverance and freedom, hope and peace.

Jesus then, is the conveyor of the gospel's powerful might. Through Him, God gives the believer the power over sin and death. He declares the believer righteousness and alive instead of sinful and dead (1:17). Righteousness is being and doing right by God's standards. To be righteous is to be upright, just.

The condition for receiving this righteousness is faith. The catalyst for growth as a believer is also faith. That is why Paul used the phrase, *from faith to faith* (1:17). From first to last, the Christian life is a matter of faith in God.

MAKING IT PERSONAL

16. Is sharing the gospel important to you? What evidence from your life supports your answer?

17. How has this lesson changed your perspective on your part in sharing the gospel?

18. What do you need to do to prepare to share the gospel?

19. Commit to praying for boldness to witness to the lost Christ has brought across your path.