

GOD-SHAPED

Obedience of Faith



**A Textual Study of
the Letter of Paul to the Romans**

**Sunday Mornings • Auditorium
April-September 2014
Taught by Jason Hardin**

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Obedience of Faith

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• LESSON 1 (April 6) •

Romans 1:1-15

To Bring About the Obedience of Faith

“**T**o all those in Rome who are loved by God and called to be saints:
Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.” (Rom 1:7)

If you were a Christian in first-century Rome:

- You lived in one of the most incredible cities of the ancient world.
- You very well may have heard the gospel from someone who was in Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost in AD 30 when Peter first proclaimed the crucified Jesus as “Lord and Christ” (Acts 2:1-14, 22-24, 32-41).
- You very well may have known Jewish brothers and sisters who were expelled from Rome in AD 49 by Emperor Claudius (AD 41-54) because of strife over “Christus” (Acts 18:1-4).
- You very well may have welcomed your Jewish brethren back in AD 54 after Emperor Claudius died.
- In AD 57, you and your brothers and sisters in Christ received a letter from the apostle Paul who was writing from Corinth during his third missionary journey (Acts 20:1-3).
- You very well may have traveled to the Forum of Appius and Three Taverns in AD 60 to personally meet Paul (Acts 28:11-16).
- You very well may have visited with Paul throughout AD 60-62 and listened to him boldly proclaim the kingdom of God and teach extensively about the Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 28:30-31).
- You very well may have heard in person many of the encouragements and teachings Paul wrote in *Ephesians*, *Philippians*, *Colossians*, and *Philemon* (Phil 1:12-14).



Why was Rome one of the most incredible cities of the ancient world?

It's hard for us to imagine being banished from our homes because of our faith. Consider Hebrews 10:32-39. How do people get to the point where they are willing to endure such for the sake of their relationship with God?

- You were probably aware of the fact that, by that point in time, there were saints even in Caesar's own household (Phil 4:21-22).
- Your city suffered a terrible fire in the summer of AD 64 that burned for six days and seven nights, consuming almost three-fourths of the city. Word would have spread to you quickly that Emperor Nero had set the fire for his own amusement. Your life would have changed dramatically once Nero laid blame for the fire on Christians.
- You would have been personally familiar with persecution (Rom 8:31-39).
- You would have had some serious decisions to make.

Paul had been clear in his letter about his God-defined mission and how it related to you.

...we have received grace and apostleship **to bring about the obedience of faith...** (Rom 1:5)

Now to him who is able to strengthen you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery that was kept secret for long ages but has now been disclosed and through the prophetic writings has been made known to all nations, according to the command of the eternal God, **to bring about the obedience of faith**—to the only wise God be glory forevermore through Jesus Christ! Amen. (Rom 16:25-27)

Are you willing to “present” your body “as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship”? Will you refuse to be “conformed to this world,” choosing instead to be “transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect”? (Rom 12:1-2)

The letter of Paul to the Romans systematically reasons that the gospel is “the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.”

For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, “The righteous shall live by faith.” (Rom 1:16-17)

When Paul refers to people as “saints,” what does he have in mind? How do people come to be “saints”?

In your own words, what is “the obedience of faith”?

Why would the Spirit of God describe the obedience of faith as being “brought about” in the lives of people? And how does it happen?

Much can be learned from Romans 1:1-6. Take a moment to jot down how the following phrases enhance our understanding of God and his will for our lives.

Paul identifies himself in 1:1 as:

- ❖ A servant of Christ Jesus –
- ❖ Called to be an apostle –
- ❖ Set apart for the gospel of God –

Mention of the gospel leads Paul to describe it in 1:2-3 as:

- ❖ Promised beforehand through God's prophets in the holy Scriptures –
- ❖ Concerning God's Son –

In 1:3-6, Paul wants to make sure his readers in Rome recognize that God's Son is:

- ❖ Descended from David according to the flesh –
- ❖ Declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead –
- ❖ Jesus Christ our Lord –
- ❖ The one through whom he had received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith –
- ❖ Foreseeing, enabling, and accomplishing all of this for the sake of his name among all the nations –
- ❖ Calling people to belong to him as saints –

Romans 1:8-15 provides insight into how eagerly Paul longs to visit Rome and strengthen the Christians there in person. Other passages (Rom 15:22-24; Acts 19:21; 23:11) further enhance our grasp of his intentions. Why do you think he was so eager to reach Rome?

CLOSING THOUGHT: “So I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome” (1:15). But why? Why would Paul eagerly look forward to preaching the gospel to people who were already Christians? Because the gospel isn't merely God's tool to “get us saved” and leave us to our own devices; it is the call and the power to lead a daily walk of faith with Jesus (6:4; 8:4).

• LESSON 2 (April 13) •
Romans 1:16-17
**I Am Not Ashamed
of the Gospel**

In Romans 1:15-17, Paul writes:

I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome.

For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, “The righteous shall live by faith.”

We all know what it is to be embarrassed or ashamed. In 2 Corinthians 11:21-30, Paul addresses those who “boast according to the flesh” and concedes, “I too will boast.” But he does not boast of things we might naturally expect.

But whatever anyone else dares to boast of—I am speaking as a fool—I also dare to boast of that. Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they offspring of Abraham? So am I. Are they servants of Christ? I am a better one—I am talking like a madman—with far greater labors, far more imprisonments, with countless beatings, and often near death. Five times I received at the hands of the Jews the forty lashes less one. Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned. Three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I was adrift at sea; on frequent journeys, in danger from rivers, danger from robbers, danger from my own people, danger from Gentiles, danger in the city, danger in the wilderness, danger at sea, danger from false brothers; in toil and hardship, through many a sleepless night, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure. And, apart from other things, there is the daily pressure on me of my anxiety for all the churches.



When Paul referred to “the gospel” in his writings, what did he have in mind?

Can you think of other passages from the writings of Paul that enhance our understanding of what he means by “the gospel”?

Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is made to fall, and I am not indignant?

If I must boast, I will boast of the things that show my weakness.

In 2 Corinthians 12, Paul continues to “boast” and reveals the “thorn given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to harass me” (12:7). Three times he pleaded with the Lord about the thorn, that it would be taken away.

But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong. (2 Cor 12:9-10)

Don’t miss what Paul is revealing concerning real power.

- The gospel is the **power** of God for salvation to everyone who believes (Rom 1:16).
- Christ’s **power** is made perfect in the weakness of dependent, trusting disciples (2 Cor 12:9).

This is why the writer of Hebrews encourages Christians to be “looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God” (12:2).

Disciples of Jesus may be shamed in this world, but we don’t have to be **ashamed**! The righteousness of God has been revealed in the face of Jesus Christ. He is willing to heal us, transform our lives, and perfect us (Rom 1:17; 12:1-2). This is news of which we should not, must not, be ashamed.

CLOSING THOUGHT: Whether we are Jews or Gentiles, the power of God for salvation is available in his gospel. Our heavenly Father has revealed his righteousness to us and provided a means whereby we also can be made righteous (Rom 5:18-19; 2 Cor 5:17-21).

How might the things Paul mentions in 2 Cor 11:21-30 have caused shame—the sort of shame that would compel him to forsake Christ and stop proclaiming the gospel?

How is Christ’s power made perfect in human weakness?

What does Paul mean in Romans 1:17 by “from faith for faith”?

Practically speaking, what does it mean to “live by faith”?

• LESSON 3 (April 27) •

Romans 1:18-32

The Wrath of God is Revealed

Romans 1:18-32 is not the first time we are introduced to the wrath of God within the flow of his written revelation to mankind. Consider the small sampling below taken from more than 200 references to “wrath” in the Bible. What can be learned from:

- ❖ Exodus 22:21-24 –
- ❖ Deuteronomy 9:6-8 –
- ❖ 2 Kings 22:8-17 –
- ❖ Psalm 89:46 –
- ❖ Proverbs 11:4 –
- ❖ Nahum 1:1-8 –
- ❖ Matthew 3:1-10 –
- ❖ John 3:36 –

Which leads to Paul writing in Romans 1:18, “For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men...”



In your own words, what is “wrath”?

Why do we most frequently think of wrath in negative terms?

How then can God be simultaneously holy and wrathful?

In what way is God justified in showing wrath? How is the ungodliness and unrighteousness of men manifesting itself throughout the world? Take the time to meditate upon the list of offenses contained in Romans 1:18-32. Capture in your own words the horrific diagnosis God is delivering through Paul.

- ❖ Truth is suppressed (1:18) –
- ❖ God is not honored as God or thanked (1:21-22) –
- ❖ Human hearts are given over to foolishness and darkness (1:21) –
- ❖ In the name of so-called “wisdom,” the glory of the immortal God is exchanged for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things (1:22-23) –
- ❖ Lustful hearts fuel impurity and the dishonoring of God-given bodies (1:24) –
- ❖ The truth about God is exchanged for a lie and the creature is worshiped and served rather than the Creator (1:25) –
- ❖ Women and men exchange natural relations for relations that are contrary to nature and commit shameless acts (1:26-27) –

What “truth” is being “suppressed”? (1:18)

How does Creation itself show the invisible attributes, eternal power, and divine nature of our Creator? (1:20)

Why can God so definitively say, “So they are without excuse”? (1:20)

How do people who claim to be wise become fools? (1:22)

- ❖ People are filled with all manner of unrighteousness and bear the fruits of self-centered evil (1:28-31) –
- ❖ God’s righteous decree is willfully ignored and those who transgress it are approved (1:32) –

Romans 1:18-32 enables us to look at this tragic state of affairs from our Creator’s perspective. Paraphrasing the following passages into God’s point-of-view, what should we learn as the created of the Creator?

- ❖ “What can be known about me is plain, because I have shown it to humanity. For my invisible attributes, namely, my eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that I made. So you are without excuse” –
- ❖ “Since you do not see fit to acknowledge me, I give you up to debased minds to do what ought not to be done” –
- ❖ “My righteous decree is that those who practice such things deserve to die” –

CLOSING THOUGHT: To borrow from James 4:4, we have made ourselves enemies of God by perverting our passions and pledging our allegiance to this wicked world. The resulting situation could not be more desperate.

Something tragic is being communicated in 1:24 – “Therefore God gave them up...” What does this mean?

Why would God describe homosexual acts as “contrary to nature”? How should his language shape our understanding and stance today?

What is “a debased mind”? (1:28)

Why is it a serious offense to approve of that which God condemns?

• LESSON 4 (May 4) •
Romans 2:1-11
**You Have No
Excuse, O Man**

“**F**or God shows no partiality.” That’s the strong affirmation of Romans 2:11. Not only that, it’s what we want in the authority figures with whom we interact from day to day—an absence of partiality. We expect our civil judges to rule impartially in accordance with the established laws of the land. We expect our police officers to impartially enforce the rule of law as they protect the innocent and apprehend the guilty. We expect our teachers to instruct, correct, and nurture the maturation process of our children without partiality. We have these expectations because we find favoritism and prejudice hard to deal with at best, grossly offensive at worst.

In the first half of Romans 2, Paul not only establishes that our Creator does not show partiality, he also challenges the foolish human tendency to condemn in others the very things we tolerate in ourselves.

- ❖ How have you seen that phenomenon manifest itself in the lives of others?
- ❖ How have you seen the same phenomenon manifest itself in your own life?
- ❖ How might the phenomenon have been manifesting itself in the life of the saints in first-century Rome?



The first word in Romans 2 is “therefore.” Why? Think back to how Romans 1 concluded. What sort of bridge is Paul building between Romans 1 and 2 with the use of the word “therefore”?

When we say “you have no excuse” to someone, what are we communicating?

“Therefore you have no excuse, O man, every one of you who judges” (2:1). The Bible doesn’t shy away from addressing the topic of judging others, but it says more than the “judge not that ye be not judged” mantra that is so frequently thrown about without much context or elaboration. What should we learn from the following passages as disciples of Jesus?

❖ Matthew 7:1-5 –

❖ John 7:24 –

❖ James 4:11-12 –

❖ 1 Corinthians 5:1-12 –

How does what the Spirit of God is delivering through Paul in Romans 2:1-3 harmonize with and compliment the above passages? What is the root of the problem being exposed?

As a way of summarizing the passages to the left, when is judging someone else completely inappropriate and hypocritical?

On the flip-side, when is judging someone else not only appropriate, but called for?

When God calls on us to “judge for [ourselves],” what does he expect us to do? (example: Luke 12:57, 1 Cor 10:15; 11:13)

“Or do you presume on the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that God’s kindness is meant to lead you to repentance?” (2:5) Remember what Paul has already written in Romans 1:20.

For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse.

How do these statements from Paul in Romans amplify Jesus’ declaration in Matthew 5:45 that the Father in heaven “makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust”?

How is even the rising of the sun and the falling of the rain meant to lead us to repentance?

CLOSING THOUGHT: “The day of wrath when God’s righteous judgment will be revealed” is coming (2:5).

- Those with hard and impenitent hearts are storing up wrath for themselves (2:5).
- God will render to each one according to his works:
 - To those who by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, he will give eternal life (2:6-7).
 - For those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, there will be wrath and fury (2:8).
- There will be tribulation and distress for every human being who does evil, the Jew first and also the Greek, but glory and honor and peace for everyone who does good. God shows no partiality (2:9-11).

What does it mean, in your own words, to “presume” on something or someone?

How can we be guilty of presuming on God?

In practical terms, what does a “hard and impenitent heart” (2:5) look like?

Why is wrath the righteous divine response to a hard and impenitent human heart?