

Romans: Part 2

Today we begin the study of the book of Romans. Last week we learned a great deal about the author of the book, Paul. Now let's see how God used Him to spread the word of the truth of the Gospel message.

ROMANS 1:1-7 (NLT): GREETING

1 This letter is from Paul, Jesus Christ's slave, chosen by God to be an apostle and sent out to preach his Good News.

2 This Good News was promised long ago by God through his prophets in the holy Scriptures.

3 It is the Good News about his Son, Jesus, who came as a man, born into King David's royal family line.

4 And Jesus Christ our Lord was shown to be the Son of God when God powerfully raised him from the dead by means of the Holy Spirit.

5 Through Christ, God has given us the privilege and authority to tell Gentiles everywhere what God has done for them, so that they will believe and obey him, bringing glory to his name.

6 You are among those who have been called to belong to Jesus Christ, 7 dear friends in Rome. God loves you dearly, and he has called you to be his very own people. May grace and peace be yours from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

The main theme to Paul's introduction to the epistle (a composition in the form of a letter) to the Romans is found at the end of verse 1. It is the Good News (the Gospel) of God. This is what the entire book is all about. If we look at any newspaper or magazine today, or turn to the news on radio or television, we find the news is bad and getting worse. What is happening on a large scale is only the magnification of what is happening on an individual level. Men, women, and children are in the grip of a frightening power, a power that controls them from deep within, and drives them to self-destruction. That power is sin, and sin makes for bad news either individually or on a national scale.

I see at least 4 major categories where sin results in bad news for all of us:

1) Sin creates selfishness. Humankind, for the most part, is self-centered. Many people like to do their own thing if allowed to do so and they will go as far as society's toleration level will allow. When a friend, family member, or spouse no longer provides what an individual wants, that person is cast aside as if they were useless. People today demand their rights. Such demands are evidence of what is deep in their hearts, self-destructive selfishness. Men, women, and children turn from what's morally right because of their selfish lust for gain, fame, dominance, popularity, money, and physical fulfillment. The bottom line is that people are unable to sustain meaningful relationships. They are unable to really love. They are unable to give freely of themselves. Thus they forfeit what is the real source of joy, **selflessness**. Such behavior leads people to utter loneliness and

despair, for the more one gets, the harder one becomes to be satisfied. Sin produces selfishness and selfishness produces despair.

2) Sin results in guilt. Doing whatever is necessary to gain your own ends brings about guilt, because God has designed us to feel something when we sin. God has given us guilt as a way to tell us we're on the wrong road and something has to change. Many of us live with anxiety, fear, sleeplessness, psychological problems, ulcers, and sickness caused by our guilt. We try to deaden the pain or detract attention from this guilt with alcohol, drugs, TV, popular music, sex, travel, physical fitness, food, and some even go as far as suicide. This is simply more bad news because selfishness leads to guilt, and guilt leads to meaninglessness.

3) Sin results in meaninglessness. Sooner or later, no matter how rich or successful, one will say to oneself, "Is this what life is all about?" Life becomes an endless cycle of trying to be fulfilled, when that goal is an impossibility. In that type of life there is no fulfillment, and where there is no fulfillment, all the basic questions are raised: Is this all there is? Where are the real answers? What are the real questions? Why am I alive? What's the meaning of life? What is truth? How do I find out what is true?

Human beings are fed a steady diet of lies by Satan who is temporarily being allowed to run the world system. Such people live a series of 24 hour days without significance. Nothing changes and meaninglessness is usually the result, and with meaninglessness comes emptiness.

4) Sin results in hopelessness. We've seen that people may start out with a consumptive selfishness and finally wake up to the fact that such consumptiveness provides us a first hand proof of the law of diminishing returns. The end product is guilt for having done all they've done to get where they are. Born out of the anxiety of guilt is a meaninglessness in life. Born out of the meaninglessness is the bad news that you have nothing now and virtually no hope for anything later. This feeling could be classified as utter hopelessness, and we therefore face death with no hope. In order to ease the pain of that reality people do all they can not to face the ultimate reality of their own death. They joke about it, laughing at it, mocking it, or somehow disregard the reality of it in order to alleviate the fear that it brings. But the simple fact is that is the worst possible bad news because there's not only nothing here, but there's nothing ahead either.

Whatever good news there is occasionally seems to fade quickly. Is there any really good news? Is there any good news about the nature of sin, that it can be dealt with? Is there any good news about selfishness, that you don't have to live that way? Is there any good news about guilt and anxiety, that it can be alleviated? Is there any good news about the meaning of life? Is there any good news about the future life after death? Paul tells us in verse 1 that yes, there is good news, and that **good news** is the Gospel. There's good news that sin can be forgiven, that life can have meaning, and that the future can be eternally glorious. However, when we observe the way the world reacts to the Gospel, one would think it was bad news.

Now Paul must have been so excited about what he was going to say in Romans that he

couldn't wait until he got to the end for us to understand the entire message. So he summarized it all in the first 7 verses. Verse 1 tells us that God had chosen Paul, a willing servant, to be the **first major** spokesman for the "Good News." Paul, then, **brings us a message directly from God Himself**. Imagine if you went to your mailbox and found a letter that was directly from God. You'd be speechless, right? That's exactly what is occurring in the book of Romans and all the other letters God dictated to Paul for you. We all need to stand in awe of God's Word in the Bible because although He used men and women to write the message, the message is directly from God.

There is a hunger in the human heart that can only be fed and satisfied with the Word of God. Each person has been created so that they cannot find rest unless it is in God. There is no more graphic illustration of this than the multitude of religions that exist today throughout the world and that have existed throughout the history of humankind. It's not a question of whether people will worship, it's only a question of what they'll worship.

But because of humankind's perverse nature, they inevitably reject the true God. Instead, they worship things and gods of their own creation, things they can be comfortable with. Who wants to believe in a God who expects you to do the right thing? By choosing such things to believe in, they find no solution to their sinful confusion but only an intensifying emptiness.

This then Is the Good News. God is now offering a solution to all that confusion because of His love and mercy. He's giving this to us along with eternal life as a free gift. Jesus Christ is the Good News. What makes it really unbelievable is that we don't deserve such favor, yet God wants us to have it because He loves us. Verse 2 tells us that the Good News is not a new idea, but that it was announced by various prophets in the Old Testament over a period of 1,000 years. So it's not new Good News, it's old Good News. There are approximately 106 prophecies in the Old Testament that predicted things that would happen in relation to the coming of the Messiah. All of these predictions came true in the life of Jesus which, in and of itself should prove He was the Son of God. What do you think the statistical probability is for 106 out of 106 prophecies to come true by mere chance? If you can conceive of such a number, it is 1 chance in 1 to the 72nd power, which comes to a number of 1 followed by 72 zeroes.

Did Jesus come with a new revelation which was disconnected from the message of the law and prophets? Let's read what Jesus said in Matthew 5:17-20 (NLT):

- 17 "Don't misunderstand why I have come. I did not come to abolish the law of Moses or the writings of the prophets. No, I came to fulfill them.*
18 I assure you, until heaven and earth disappear, even the smallest detail of God's law will remain until its purpose is achieved.
19 So if you break the smallest commandment and teach others to do the same, you will be the least in the Kingdom of Heaven. But anyone who obeys God's laws and teaches them will be great in the Kingdom of Heaven.
20 "But I warn you—unless you obey God better than the teachers of

religious law and the Pharisees do, you can't enter the Kingdom of Heaven at all!

Jesus didn't come to put the law aside. He came in order that the purpose of the law might be fulfilled. Last week we learned that Jesus came in order to fulfill perfectly all the requirements of the law. In so doing He was the only one who ever lived that was qualified to be the perfect sacrifice for sin.

When we believe through the power of the Holy Spirit, after hearing the message of the Gospel, that Jesus died on the cross as that perfect sacrifice for our sin, God declares us righteous and our sins forgiven. From that point on we are members of the family of God and our eternity in Heaven is secured. It can never be lost. In this process, our lives are joined with Jesus, and because of His perfect righteousness, He may give that righteousness to us, and when God looks at our lives, they are as pure as the life of Jesus. That is why the Bible says in John 14:6:

Jesus told him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one can come to the Father except through me."

The Jews said they couldn't become Christians because they'd be denying their heritage. The truth is that by not becoming Christians they've denied their heritage because they could not keep the requirements of the law on their own. The gift was meant for them as well as the rest of the people of the world.

The really Good News in **verse 3** is that God became a man. Why? So that he might become one of us. He came in order to show us that as a man in the flesh He could experience all the suffering and pain of humanity yet still keep the law of God perfectly. Jesus submitted Himself totally to the will of God and kept all of the law. In this way He could become a member of the human race which would qualify Him to take our place and die the death that we would have had to die without Him. He could therefore become the substitute for humankind and provide us righteousness. Is that Good News or not?

Then, we hear from those who claim that Jesus never existed. Those people should spend some time studying history before they make such arbitrary claims. There happens to be documented historical evidence of Jesus and His works outside of the accounts in the Bible. The Roman secular historian, Cornelius Tacitus (A.D. 55-A.D. 120), tells us that the founder of the Christian faith was Jesus Christ and that he was put to death by the Roman emperor, Tiberius.¹

Josephus, another secular historian who was thought of very fondly by the Romans, wrote in A.D. 90, in volume 2, book 18, chapter 3 of *The Antiquities of the Jews*:

Now, there was about this time, Jesus, a wise man, if it be lawful to call him a man. For he was a doer of wonderful

¹ Who's Who in Christian History.

*works. A teacher of such men as received the truth with pleasure. He drew over to him many of the Jews and many of the Gentiles. He was Christ (the anointed one promised by the Old Testament prophets). And when Pilate condemned him to the cross, those that loved him at the first did not forsake him. For he appeared to them **alive** again the third day as the divine prophets had foretold. And the Tribe of Christians, so named for him, are not extinct as of this day.²*

There was a letter sent by Publius Lentilus to the Roman senate. Archaeologists found this letter and it dates to the time Christ was alive. This is what it says:

*There appeared in these days a man of great virtue named Jesus Christ, who is yet among us. Of the Gentiles accepted as a prophet of truth, but his disciples call him the Son of God. **He raises the dead** and cures all manner of disease. A man of stature, somewhat tall and comely [having a pleasing, attractive appearance]³, with a very reverend countenance such as the beholder must both love and fear. His hair is the color of a chestnut, full ripe. Plain to the ears whence downward it is more curling and waving about his shoulders. In the midst of his forehead is a partition of his hair after the manner of the Nazarites.*

His forehead is plain and very delicate. His face without spot or wrinkle. Beautiful with a lovely red color. His nose and mouth are forked. His beard thick and colored like his hair, not very long. His look is innocent and mature. His eyes are gray, quick and clear. In reprovng (to criticize for a fault or misdeed)⁴ he is terrible. In admonishing (to counsel against something),⁵ he is courteous and fair spoken. Pleasant in conversation, none remembered if any have seen him laugh, but many have seen him weep.

In proportion to body, most excellent. His hands and arms delectable to behold. In speaking, very temperate (exercising moderation and self-restraint)⁶, modest, and wise. A man of singular beauty surpassing the children of men.

² The Antiquities of the Jews.

³ Parentheses added.

⁴ Parentheses added.

⁵ Parentheses added.

⁶ Parentheses added.

Perhaps Publius got a little carried away in his description of Jesus. But this letter can leave little doubt that Jesus did exist and that he was a man, and from the description given he was apparently more than just a man. In fact this description is a great lead in to verse 4, which tells us that Jesus was the Son of God with power. And how was that power provided? By the Holy Spirit. If there was any doubt in any one's mind as to whether Jesus was the Son of God, the resurrection should have ended it. What could be a greater demonstration of power than to raise someone from the dead? We read a verse like this almost in passing today, but at the time Paul wrote about it, there was no doubt of its historical occurrence and what it meant. But in spite of the overwhelming evidence in the Bible and from secular historians, those that want to deny who Jesus really was have made every possible attempt to suggest that Jesus' death and resurrection didn't really occur. The simple fact is that it did.

Verses 3 and 4 show us both Jesus' complete humanity and complete deity, fully God and fully man. He had to be human to take our place and He had to be God to conquer death, Hell, and Satan. He truly came to be "the ransom for many" that Jesus said He would be in Matthew 20:28:

*28 For even I, the Son of Man, came here not to be served but to serve others, and to give my life as a **ransom for many.**"*

"Faith," as used in Romans 1:5, is not believing the unbelievable but trusting in God's word because of what one has come to know about God's character. And faith expresses itself in acts of obedience.

A FAITH THAT DOES NOT OBEY IS NOT A TRUE, JUSTIFYING FAITH (James 2:21-26; Galatians 5:6; 1 Thessalonians 1:3; 2 Thessalonians 1:11; Hebrews 11:17).

Romans 1:7 is a greeting from Paul to all the Christians in Rome, both Jew and Gentile. It's very possible that there were several house churches in Rome at this time and the letter was read in each of them rather than to a gathering of all the Christians.

As we move to Romans 1:8-17, we find ten marks of true spiritual service:

*8 Let me say first of all that your faith in God is becoming known throughout the world. **How I thank God** through Jesus Christ for each one of you.*

*9 **God knows how often I pray for you.** Day and night I bring you and your needs in prayer to God, whom I serve with all my heart by telling others the Good News about his Son.*

*10 One of the things I always pray for is **the opportunity, God willing, to come at last to see you.***

*11 For I long to visit you so **I can share a spiritual blessing with you** that will help you grow strong in the Lord.*

*12 **I'm eager to encourage you in your faith, but I also want to be encouraged by yours.** In this way, each of us will be a blessing to the*

other.

*13 I want you to know, dear brothers and sisters, that I planned many times to visit you, but I was prevented until now. **I want to work among you and see good results**, just as I have done among other Gentiles.*

*14 For I have **a great sense of obligation to people** in our culture and to people in other cultures, to the educated and uneducated alike.*

*15 So **I am eager** to come to you in Rome, too, to preach God's Good News.*

*16 For **I am not ashamed of this Good News about Christ. It is the power of God at work, saving everyone who believes**—Jews first and also Gentiles.*

*17 This Good News tells us how God makes us right in his sight. **This is accomplished from start to finish by faith**. As the Scriptures say, "It is through faith that a righteous person has life."*

When Paul writes in verse 8 that they have become known throughout the world, it might be of interest to you to know that the Christian Church in Rome may have been one of the first to be founded outside of Judea and Syria, and it was established some 10 years before Paul's arrival in Rome.

In Romans 1:8, we find the first mark of spiritual service, a **thankful attitude**. Some people see negative in everything, they can only see the glass half empty. One of the reasons for this is that the only good things they care about are the good things that happen to them. They know nothing about being grateful for what God has done for someone else. Paul thanks God for what God is doing for the Romans. When Paul wrote this letter he was in Corinth and the Jews there were plotting to kill him. But he still found reason to be thankful to God. His greatest concern was the Kingdom of God and not his own hide. Gratefulness comes from deep within. Those who aren't thankful are usually those who feel they haven't received what they deserve. But if God gave us what we deserve, I doubt that we'd be thankful.

Verse 9 highlights a **concerned and prayerful attitude**. A concerned heart prays for others. We see it again in Ephesians 6:18:

***Pray at all times and on every occasion in the power of the Holy Spirit.**
Stay alert and be persistent in your prayers for all Christians everywhere.*

What do you think Paul said in his prayer? Might he have requested money for the remodeling of the church? Might he have asked for a larger chariot? Or a high speed papyrus tablet and pen? Or perhaps more leisure time? Not Paul. Listen to Paul's prayer in Ephesians 3:14-19 (NLT):

*14 For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,
15 from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named,
16 that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with **might through His Spirit** in the inner person,*

*17 that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, **being rooted and grounded in love,**
 18 may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height—
 19 to know **the love of Christ** which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.*

None of this is material stuff; it's all spiritual stuff. This attitude continues in Paul's prayer for the Colossians in Colossians 1:9-12:

*9 So we have continued praying for you ever since we first heard about you. We ask God to give you **a complete understanding of what he wants** to do in your lives, and we ask him to **make you wise** with spiritual wisdom.
 10 Then the way you live will always honor and please the Lord, and you will continually **do good, kind things for others**. All the while, you will learn to know God better and better.
 11 We also pray that you will be **strengthened with his glorious power** so that you will have all the **patience and endurance** you need. May you be filled with joy,
 12 always thanking the Father, **who has enabled you to share the inheritance** that belongs to God's holy people, who live in the light.*

Paul prayed for the hearts of people to be knit together with the heart of God, for them to know God's will, and for obedience to do it.

In Romans 1:10 we discover a **servicing attitude**. Paul not only prays for the Romans, he also is willing to be involved in God's work among them. It's easy just to pray for someone, but it's something else again to be willing to get involved and help them. God knows well if we're praying from a position of safety or from a submissive spirit. Paul's showing us what prayer is really all about. This is how we should pray: "*Lord, I would like this to happen, and if it is your will for it to happen, I am willing to get in the middle of it so that you, Lord, might use me to accomplish that which is your will.*"

So the first 3 marks of true spiritual service involve a thankful attitude, a prayerful and concerned attitude, and a servicing attitude. You can't serve God with externals, such as lighting candles, crossing yourself in the sign of the cross, or doing penance. You serve God from the heart or you don't serve Him at all. You know what happens when you serve this way? Amazing things begin to happen, John 4:23,24 (NLT):

*23 But the time is coming and is already here when true worshipers will **worship the Father in spirit and in truth**. The Father is looking for anyone who will worship him that way.
 24 For God is Spirit, so those who worship him must worship in spirit and in truth."*

The fourth mark of true spiritual service is a **submissive attitude**. Also in Romans 1:10 we see that Paul's behavior was regulated by his commitment to the will of God. His concern was to do the will of God from the heart.

The plan of God is outlined in the Bible. If we know the Bible, submit to it, and seek to live in accordance with it, we shall find ourselves living in joy and harmony with God. If we reject this plan, establish our own, and resist God or deny Him, we will find no peace in life.

In Romans 1:11 we find that the fifth mark of true spiritual service is a **loving attitude**. "*I long to see you*" at the beginning of this verse would certainly imply love. Paul also wanted to go to Rome to give them something. What does love do? Love gives as we're clearly told in John 3:16:

*16 "For God so loved the world, that **He gave His only begotten Son**, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.*

A major characteristic of love is unselfish giving. Paul wants to give them Christ and all the benefits of life and eternity that go along with this gift. Paul knew so much about true love and a loving attitude that he wrote about it at length in his letter to the Corinthians. We often hear 1 Corinthians chapter 13 quoted as the definition of love.

Romans 1:12 also shows us the **attitude of humility**. Paul isn't claiming to be the superstar gift giver, but rather he will give something to them, they will give something to him, and they will give to one another. That's humility. Some people think they have nothing to learn and they have it all to give. That's arrogance. The humble person says, "*Let's learn together.*" That's the kind of humility you find in a pure heart according to what Peter writes in 1 Peter 5:2-6:

2 Care for the flock of God entrusted to you. Watch over it willingly, not grudgingly—not for what you will get out of it, but because you are eager to serve God.

3 Don't lord it over the people assigned to your care, but lead them by your good example.

4 And when the head Shepherd comes, your reward will be a never-ending share in his glory and honor.

5 You younger men, accept the authority of the elders. And all of you, serve each other in humility, for "God sets himself against the proud, but he shows favor to the humble."

6 So humble yourselves under the mighty power of God, and in his good time he will honor you.

To be humble means to consider the needs of others more important than your own. Jesus considered our need so great that He left the comforts of Heaven to meet it, and He did. In so doing, He humbled Himself.

As we move on to Romans 1:13 we find a **fruitful attitude**, which can be defined as a desire to produce fruit. Paul knew that the purpose of preaching was not to get applause and his own TV show because of his brilliant delivery. THE PURPOSE OF PREACHING IS FRUIT. It's to get you to think about divine truth, to touch your heart. Spiritual fruit consists of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness, self-control, living within God's will, giving, righteousness, making converts to Christianity, and perhaps a few others that may have alluded me for the moment. John records Jesus' words in John 15:16 (NLT):

*16 You didn't choose me. I chose you. I appointed you to go and **produce fruit** that will last.*

Seeking spiritual fruit was the main purpose of all apostolic activity. A person who serves with his heart, a person whose spiritual service is genuine, is only content with fruit. So real ministry is not a ministry of maintenance where you have a group of sanctified church members just sitting around looking at each other. Real ministry is touching the lives of people who do not know the truth about Jesus Christ. Real ministry challenges, encourages, and helps those who are Christians to keep growing in their faith.

Most of us don't have much of a problem seeing clearly the confusion, chaos, and lostness of this world, or the foolishness that's pumped out in the name of human philosophy. We hear the ignorance that comes at us through the media, the lies, wrong answers, and wrong opinions that flood us from a variety of sources each day. So many people have no idea what they're talking about. To be able to invade that world and bring someone to the truth, that's what living is all about.

In Romans 1:14 we find the eighth mark of spiritual service, an **attitude of obligation**. Paul says that he has an obligation. Ministry is not just a job to Paul, it's an obligation to God for the good of people. Because people who do not know the truth about Jesus are in a dangerous situation, and because those that do know have the information that can save their lives, they are obligated to tell them. Wherever a Christian sees a need, they are obligated to attempt to meet that need. Suppose you were walking down the street and saw one end of a house on fire. Through the picture window at the other end of the house you could see the family eating dinner in their dining room, unaware of the danger they were in. You could walk by thinking they will soon become aware of the fire and flee to safety, or surely someone else will notice the fire and warn them to flee to safety. Of course you wouldn't do that because that would not be the responsible or right thing to do. You would warn them of the danger they were in. That's exactly the responsibility one has who knows the truth about the message of the Bible. People will suffer without a saving relationship with their Creator. The responsible or right thing to do is warn them of the danger.

The ninth mark of spiritual service, and we find it in verse 15, is an **eager attitude**. This can't be described any better than by looking at what Paul said in several of his writings. We'll begin with Philippians 1:21:

“For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.”

Acts 20:22:

“And now I am going to Jerusalem, drawn there irresistibly by the Holy Spirit, not knowing what awaits me.”

Colossians 1:24:

“I am glad when I suffer for you in my body, for I am completing what remains of Christ’s sufferings for his body, the church.”

Paul’s only concern was to fulfill the plan of God and the ministry God had given him. How about you? Are you eager? It might be helpful to know that Paul had all these attitudes knowing that Rome was a hostile environment and most of the people in Rome would reject him and his message. He knew they hated Christ.

We now come to the tenth mark of spiritual service which is found in verse 16, an **attitude of boldness**. In spite of all the potential danger and rejection, why is Paul so anxious to get to Rome? Because he’s *“not ashamed of the Gospel.”* Whenever he gets an opportunity to preach, he’ll preach. It’s kind of sad what shame will do to a person. Many people are real eager in the planning stage but once the battle starts, they faint. There are many people like that in our country today that have turned against the war on terrorism. You also see it in the church. Some people are very supportive of projects until the hard work begins and then they’re nowhere to be found. Others quickly back away from their faith when they are confronted by a non-believer or atheist. Someone might say to them, *“You mean to say we’re all sinners? But I’ve never broken the law. I donate to charity. You can’t mean to tell me I’m a sinner and can’t get into Heaven?”* Suddenly we see the so-called Christian back peddling to be “less offensive.” That is being ashamed of the Gospel. Others have a tendency to downplay certain truths in the Bible because they don’t seem to fit in with what is politically correct today. That’s being ashamed of the Gospel. They demonstrate the eagerness, but they don’t have the boldness, the unashamedness.

Paul demonstrated this quality in every city that he visited because he nearly lost his life everywhere he went, and that was because he never pulled a punch. A true servant of God will always face all situations in an unashamed, bold way. The great ones never compromise or become ashamed. Jeffrey Wilson writes, *“The unpopularity of a crucified Christ has prompted many to present a message which is more palatable to the unbeliever. But the removal of the offense of the cross renders the message ineffective. An inoffensive Gospel is an inoperative Gospel.”* The Church has weakened the Gospel so that it won’t offend anyone because that’s the kind of mentality so many people have. But when that is done the message itself is weakened and few are truly brought to the point of becoming fully devoted followers of Christ.. If you find in your life shame for the Gospel of Christ, it should be a reminder of how far away you are from the heart of true spiritual service.

When you get right down to it, the things that keep people from Christ are personal comforts. They're afraid of giving up comfort and personal possessions and are afraid of losing them. Or they are afraid their reputation will be hurt if they take a bold stand as a Christian. Along come false teachers and they offer the very thing that keeps people from Christ and allow them to have their comforts or their good standing in the eyes of the world. People, therefore, by-pass the real Gospel for a phony.

Next week we'll finish chapter one of Romans and give you four words that are the key to unlocking the Gospel message.