

**Sermon, February 12, 2012**  
**“What Is Christianity?” Romans 1:15-17**  
**Pastor Thomas P. Bellhy**

**The 27 Books of the New Testament**

- Gospels: Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John
- Early Church: Book of Acts
- 13 Letters of Paul: **Romans**, 1 Corinthians, 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 Thessalonians, 2 Thessalonians, 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon
- 8 General Letters: Hebrews, James, 1 Peter, 2 Peter, 1 John, 2 John, 3 John, Jude
- Prophecy: Revelations

**Overview of Romans:**

- Romans is the first (in Biblical order) of the Apostle Paul’s letters
- Written sometime between 55-57AD
- Wrote to the already existing church in Rome, the capital and most important city in the Roman Empire.
- Paul’s primary purpose in writing Romans was to teach the great truths of the gospel of grace to believers who had never received apostolic instruction.

**General Outline of Romans:**<sup>1</sup>

- I. Greetings and Introduction (1:1–15)
- II. Theme (1:16, 17)
- III. Condemnation: Mankind’s Universal Sinfulness (1:18–3:20)
- IV. Justification: The Provision of God’s Righteousness (3:21–5:21)
- V. Sanctification: The Demonstration of God’s Righteousness (6:1–8:39)
- VI. God Demonstrates His Righteousness in Jew and Gentile (9:1–11:36)
- VII. Application: The Behavior of God’s Righteousness (12:1–15:13)
- VIII. Conclusion, Greetings, and Benediction (15:14–16:27)

**Major Themes of Romans:**

- Paul’s greatest comprehensive writing on the entirety of the gospel message
- Key to understanding all of Scripture
- Brings together all of the Bible’s greatest themes: principles of spiritual leadership (1:8–15); God’s wrath against sinful mankind (1:18–32); principles of divine judgment (2:1–16); the universality of sin (3:9–20); an exposition and defense of justification by faith alone (3:21–4:25); the security of salvation (5:1–11); the transference of Adam’s sin (5:12–21); sanctification (chaps. 6–8); sovereign election (chap. 9); God’s plan for Israel (chap. 11); spiritual gifts and practical godliness (chap. 12); the believer’s responsibility to human government (chap. 13); and principles of Christian liberty (14:1–15:12).<sup>2</sup>

**The supreme theme of Romans is that righteousness comes from God: the glorious truth that God justifies guilty, condemned sinners by grace alone through faith in Christ alone. In short then, the Letter to the Romans gives the answer to the question, “What is Christianity?”**

**1. Paul expresses his eagerness and boldness in proclaiming the gospel message unashamed, Christianity is a message from God.**

**Romans 1:14-16a**<sup>14</sup> *I am a debtor both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish*<sup>15</sup> -- hence my eagerness to proclaim the gospel to you also who are in Rome.<sup>16</sup> *For I am not ashamed of the gospel;*

- Paul’s life after his Damascus road conversion (pursuing and persecuting Christians) was devoted to bringing the gospel message throughout the Gentile world.
- It is estimated that he traveled some 14,000 miles during his three missionary journeys.
- He was beaten, stoned, whipped, imprisoned, shipwrecked...none of which moved him from his gospel path, telling the story of Christianity.

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<sup>1</sup>MacArthur, John Jr: *The MacArthur Study Bible*. electronic ed. Nashville : Word Pub., 1997, c1997, S. Ro 1:1

<sup>2</sup>New Geneva Study Bible, 1995, p.1765. MacArthur, John Jr: *The MacArthur Study Bible*. electronic ed. Nashville : Word Pub., 1997, c1997, S. Ro 1:1

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**2. Christianity is summed up in the gospel message.**

- **Romans 1:16b** ...it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who has faith, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.
- Paul proclaimed a God-given message of salvation.
- The very power (dunamis, dynamite) of God...the word of God in the gospel message is given so that people may be saved.
- Salvation is for those who believe...**John 3:16**
- The message was preached to the Jew first and also to the Greek

**3. The gospel message is the righteousness of God credited to believing sinners, Christianity is God’s work.**

- **Romans 1:16b** <sup>17</sup> For in it the righteousness of God is revealed through faith for faith; as it is written, “The one who is righteous will live by faith.”.
- Righteousness is not that which **you work** for; it is received through faith.
- Paul builds his message throughout Romans:
  - Christianity is understanding that we have a sinful human nature. Humans are ALL sinful and in need of salvation from this sinful state back into a restored relationship with their creator (Ch 1-3).
    - **Romans 3:10** <sup>10</sup> as it is written, “**THERE IS NONE RIGHTEOUS, NOT EVEN ONE;**
    - **Romans 3:23** <sup>23</sup> for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God
  - Christianity knows we need to believe in the sacrifice of Jesus. The work of Christ on the cross was the gracious sacrifice for the sins of those who believe, now reconciled with God (Ch 3-5).
    - **Romans 3:21-25** <sup>22</sup> even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe; for there is no distinction; <sup>23</sup> for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, <sup>24</sup> being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus; whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith.
    - **Romans 4:5** <sup>5</sup> But to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is credited as righteousness.
    - **Romans 4:9** <sup>9</sup> Is this blessing then on the circumcised, or on the uncircumcised also? For we say, “**FAITH WAS CREDITED TO ABRAHAM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS.**”
    - **Romans 5:1-2** Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, <sup>2</sup> through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand; and we exult in hope of the glory of God.
    - **Romans 5:8-11**
  - Christianity is being raised again to new life in relationship with God. When we believe we reconciled with God; we are justified, we have new life, spiritually born again. Then as we live we are continuously sanctified and kept in God’s hands (Ch 6-8).
    - **Romans 6:4**
    - **Not perfect, but being molded and shaped by the hand of God... Romans 7:18-19** <sup>18</sup>
    - **Romans 8:1-2**
    - **The blessed assurance of grace freely accepted by faith will never leave you... Romans 8:38 - 9:1**

**4. What does Romans tell us?**

- The Letter to the Romans gives the answer to the question, “What is Christianity?”
- Christianity is a message from God, summed up in the gospel, and is God’s work,
  - Christianity is understanding that we have a sinful human nature
  - Christianity knows we need to believe in the sacrifice of Jesus.
  - Christianity is being raised again to new life in relationship with God.
- The supreme theme of Romans is that righteousness comes from God: the glorious truth that God justifies guilty, condemned sinners by grace alone through faith in Christ alone.
- Go tell the story.