

## Bad News and Good News

Message 2 of 6 in the series: "Romans: Christianity 101"

- A. About 25 years after Pentecost Sunday, Paul wrote an encouraging letter to Christians who, despite having very little instruction, had established thriving churches in the wicked city of ancient Rome. Paul's letter was written in a "Christianity 101" format to help the Christians in Rome better understand what followers of Christ should believe and how they should behave. Paul was hoping to visit them soon and teach them more in person.**

"This letter is from Paul, a slave of Christ Jesus, chosen by God to be an apostle and sent out to preach his Good News... I am writing to all of you in Rome who are loved by God and are called to be his own holy people... **Let me say first that I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because your faith in him is being talked about all over the world.** 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 spreading the Good News about his Son. One of the things I always pray for is the opportunity, God willing, to come at last to see you. For **I long to visit you so I can bring you some spiritual gift that will help you grow strong in the Lord. When we get together, I want to encourage you in your faith, but I also want to be encouraged by yours.**"

Romans 1:1, 7a, & 8-12 (NLT)

**IMPORTANT!** We all need instruction and encouragement from other Christians to better understand what we believe and how we should behave. "Let us think of ways to motivate one another to acts of love and good works. And let us not neglect our meeting together, as some people do, but **encourage one another**, especially now that the day of his return is drawing near." Hebrews 10:24-25 (NLT)

- B. First, Paul gave the Christians in Rome the bad news: we're all sinners deserving of God's wrath.**

Sin = deliberate, determined independence from God.

God's wrath = God's holy, justified anger toward sin, disobedience, and stubborn opposition to His purposes and His will.

1. Gentiles are deserving of God's wrath even though they never had the OT Law. "When the Gentiles sin, they will be destroyed, even though they never had God's written law. And the Jews, who do have God's law, will be judged by that law when they fail to obey it. For merely listening to the law doesn't make us right with God. It is obeying the law that makes us right in his sight. Even Gentiles, who do not have God's written law, show that they **know his law when they instinctively obey it, even without having heard it. They demonstrate that God's law is written in their hearts, for their own conscience and thoughts either accuse them or tell them they are doing right.** And this is the message I proclaim—that the day is coming when God, through Christ Jesus, will judge everyone's secret life." Romans 2:12-16 (NLT)

**IMPORTANT!** No one will be punished by God for what they don't know, but for disobeying the truth they do know. "The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of people, who suppress the truth by their wickedness, since **what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them.** For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that **people are without excuse.**" Romans 1:18-20 (NIV)

2. Jews are deserving of God's wrath even though they had God's Law because they didn't obey it. "You who call yourselves Jews are relying on God's law, and you boast about your special relationship with him. You know what he wants; you know what is right because you have been taught his law. You are convinced that you are a guide for the blind and a light for people who are lost in darkness. You think you can instruct the ignorant and teach children the ways of God. For you are certain that God's law gives you complete knowledge and truth. Well then, if you teach others, why don't you teach yourself? You tell others not to steal, but do you steal? You say it is wrong to commit adultery, but do you commit adultery? You condemn idolatry, but do you use items stolen from pagan temples? **You are so proud of knowing the law, but you dishonor God by breaking it.** No wonder the Scriptures say, 'The Gentiles blaspheme the name of God because of you.' ...For you are not a true Jew just because you were born of Jewish parents or because you have gone through the ceremony of circumcision. No, a true Jew is one whose heart is right with God. And **true circumcision is not merely obeying the letter of the law; rather, it is a change of heart produced by the Spirit.** And a person with a changed heart seeks praise from God, not from people." Romans 2:17-24 (NLT)

**IMPORTANT!** The OT Law can't save us because, although it exposes sin, it lacks the power to transform us. "Obviously, the law applies to those to whom it was given, for **its purpose is to keep people from having excuses, and to show that the entire world is guilty before God.** For no one can ever be made right with God by doing what the law commands. **The law simply shows us how sinful we are.**" Romans 3:19-20 (NLT)

3. We're all hopelessly mired in sin and deserving of God's wrath.

"Well then, should we conclude that we Jews are better than others? No, not at all, for we have already shown that all people, whether Jews or Gentiles, are under the power of sin. As the Scriptures say, '**No one is righteous—not even one.** No one is truly wise; no one is seeking God. All have turned away; all have become useless. No one does good, not a single one.' 'Their talk is foul, like the stench from an open grave. Their tongues are filled with lies.' 'Snake venom drips from their lips.' 'Their mouths are full of cursing and bitterness.' 'They rush to commit murder. Destruction and misery always follow them. They don't know where to find peace.' 'They have no fear of God at all.'" Romans 3:9-18 (NLT)

**C. Then Paul reminded the Christians in Rome of the Good News. Jesus paid the penalty for all of our sins on the cross. Everyone who places their faith in Jesus no longer needs to fear God's wrath.**

"But now God has shown us a way to be made right with him without keeping the requirements of the law, as was promised in the writings of Moses and the prophets long ago. **We are made right with God by placing our faith in Jesus Christ. And this is true for everyone who believes, no matter who we are. For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God's glorious standard.** Yet God, in his grace, freely makes us right in his sight. He did this through Christ Jesus when he freed us from the penalty for our sins. **For God presented Jesus as the sacrifice for sin. People are made right with God when they believe that Jesus sacrificed his life, shedding his blood.** This sacrifice shows that God was being fair when he held back and did not punish those who sinned in times past, for he was looking ahead and including them in what he would do in this present time. God did this to demonstrate his righteousness, for he himself is fair and just, and he makes sinners right in his sight when they believe in Jesus." Romans 3:21-26 (NLT)

1. We are saved by God's grace through faith, NOT through our own efforts to be good. "Can we boast, then, that we have done anything to be accepted by God? No, because our acquittal is not based on obeying the law. It is based on faith. **So we are made right with God through faith and not by obeying the law.** After all, is God the God of the Jews only? Isn't he also the God of the Gentiles? Of course he is. **There is only one God, and he makes people right with himself only by faith,** whether they are Jews or Gentiles." Romans 3:27-30 (NLT)
2. God's amazing gift of salvation through Jesus is worthless to us if we don't believe Jesus really took our place on the cross and accept Him as our Lord (boss) and Savior (rescuer). "But to all who **believed him and accepted him,** he gave the right to become children of God." John 1:12 (NLT)
3. Jesus is the only way for us to be made right with God. "I am the way, the truth, and the life. **No one can come to the Father except through me.**" John 14:6b (NLT) "Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but **whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on them.**" John 3:36 (NIV)
4. A personal relationship with Jesus will transform us. "This means that **anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person.** The old life is gone; a new life has begun!" 2 Corinthians 5:17 (NLT)

John Schmidt • 10-12-25 • [john@centeringlives.com](mailto:john@centeringlives.com)

**Connect Group Questions:**

1. Read Romans 1:7-12 & Hebrews 10:24-25. How do you think Paul hoped to encourage the believers in Rome? How do you think Paul hoped they would encourage him? How can we encourage each other?
2. Why do you think it was important for Paul to talk about the bad news (we're all sinners deserving God's wrath) before he talked about the Good News of Jesus' death on the cross and resurrection? (Romans 1:18 & 2:12-24, 2 Corinthians 5:21)
3. Why is it often hard for people in our culture to see themselves as hopelessly mired in sin? (Romans 3:9-18 & 23, 1 John 1:8-10)

4. React to the following statement: "The OT Law cannot save us because, although it exposes sin, it lacks the power to transform us." (Romans 3:19-20) How then, do we get transformed? (2 Corinthians 5:17, Philippians 2:13)
5. What's the difference between God's grace and human effort? (Ephesians 2:8-9, Romans 3:27-30) What role does faith play in our salvation? (John 1:12)
6. How should understanding the bad news and the Good News impact the way we live? (Colossians 4:5-6, 1 Corinthians 5:18-20)
7. Discuss the following Bible verses:

"I do not treat the grace of God as meaningless. For if keeping the law could make us right with God, then there was no need for Christ to die." Galatians 2:21 (NLT)

"For God did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ."  
1 Thessalonians 5:9 (NIV)