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## Unit 1 Romans 1:1–32

### *Rebellion*

#### DAY 1: INTRODUCTION

1. Why do you think Romans is an important book for us to study?
2. Read Romans 1:1–6.
  - a) What does verse 2 say about the gospel? (See also Luke 24:44.)
  - b) *Who* is the gospel about and *what* are we told about him? (v 3–4)
  - c) What does Paul say about himself? (v 1, 5)

#### DAY 2: ROMANS 1:7–15

3. What does it mean to you that believers “are loved by God” and called to be holy?
4. *What* did Paul pray for? (v 10) *Why*? (v 11–13)

### **DAY 3: ROMANS 1:16–17**

5. Why wasn't Paul ashamed of the gospel? (v 16)
  
6. a) What does the gospel reveal?  
  
b) In verse 17, Paul refers to Habakkuk 2:4: "the righteous will live by faith". What do you think this means for us?
  
7. Re-read v 7a, 16–17. If there was tension between Jewish and Gentile believers in Rome, how do you think Paul's words would help?

### **DAY 4: ROMANS 1:18–23**

*Paul now starts to build his case about sin and righteousness. He begins with the bad news and does not hold back.*

8. What is God's wrath directed against? (v 18)
  
9. Why are all people without excuse before God? (v 19–20; see also Psalm 19:1–4a.)

10. How did people respond to this knowledge about God? (Romans 1:21–23)

11. Idolatry can take many forms. From verse 23, why is it foolish?

**DAY 5: ROMANS 1:24–27**

12. What did God give humanity over to? (v 24, 26a)

13. a) People exchanged the truth about God for a lie. What are some false ideas about God that we hear today?

b) How might you answer *one* of these false ideas?

**DAY 6: ROMANS 1:22–27**

14. Verse 24 begins, “*Therefore* God gave them over ...”, and verse 26 begins, “*Because of this*, God gave them over ...”. Look back at verses 23 and 25. Why did God give people over to their sinful desires?

15. What do you think “God gave them over” means?

*Day 6 ...*

*Reflect and pray:* Paul wrote realistically and clearly about difficult issues in our fallen world. Read verses 26–27 again. Who can you pray for? Ask God to show them his mercy and shine the light of his truth in their lives and in the world.

#### **DAY 7: ROMANS 1:28–32**

16. What was the *third thing* God gave humanity over to, and *why*? (v 28)

17. Until now, Paul has focused on idol-worship and sexual sins as evidence of humanity turning away from God. Look carefully at the sins he lists in verses 29–31. What do you notice?

18. Write out verse 32 in your own words.

*Read these notes at home after the group meeting.*

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### **Unit 1 review notes**

### **Romans 1:1–32**

#### ***Rebellion***

#### **Paul and the gospel (1:1–2)**

The gospel is the good news about Jesus Christ. But how is chapter 1 of Romans *good* news? It seems so bleak!

In the first chapters of Romans, Paul shows how bad humanity's position is before God. We cannot understand just *how good* the good news is, unless

we first understand the desperate situation we are in without Christ. What are believers saved *from*?

We might sometimes think the gospel is all about us and our needs. However, it is *God's gospel*, announced through his Old Testament prophets. And it is about *God's Son*. Through Jesus, we receive God's mercy and grace. The gospel is *for* us, not *about* us.

This is the gospel Paul was called by God to proclaim.

### **Who is Jesus Christ? (1:3–5)**

Jesus took on flesh and was born a descendant of David. During his time on earth, Jesus lived humbly as the Son of Man. But because of his resurrection, Jesus is now announced as the Son of God and powerful reigning Lord. He is both fully human and fully God. This is Jesus Christ, our Lord.

These truths are vital. Because Jesus came as a man, he could die for us. Because he is fully human — and yet never sinned — he could be the perfect sacrifice for our sin. Because Jesus is fully God, his sacrificial death was enough to pay for *all* our sin. And death could not hold him!

### **The believers in Rome (1:6–7)**

The Jews had held a privileged position as God's chosen people. Other people could join the Jews, but they had to take on all the Jewish laws — effectively *become* Jewish. But now the doors were flung wide open! Anyone from any nation who has faith in Jesus Christ can be part of God's people.

The Gentile believers in Rome were among the vast numbers of Gentiles who were — and are — called to belong to Jesus. But *all* the Roman believers (Gentiles and Jews) were equally “loved by God”, all equally “called to be his holy people” (1:7). As believers, they were one.

What does it mean to be God's holy people? As believers, we are set apart *for* God, and set apart *from* sin. We are to love and serve God. And by the Holy Spirit's power, we grow in holiness.

Do we seek to live as God's holy people — set apart from the world, living for God alone and for his purposes?

### **Thanksgiving and prayer (1:8–15)**

Paul was deeply thankful for the faith of these Roman believers; it was being declared all over the world. These believers were living in a city that worshipped many gods and even the emperor. Yet the believers' witness remained strong.

Paul prayed for the believers constantly — a wonderful example to us. Do we pray for the needs of people we have not met? Are we willing to encourage others, as well as be encouraged? Do we seek to strengthen others' faith?

### **The power of God: the gospel (1:16–17)**

Many believers are tempted at times to be “ashamed of the gospel” (1:16) and so remain silent. When someone rejects Christ's claims, they might also reject the messenger. The gospel often seems like foolishness to unbelievers, but Paul counted it a privilege to keep on preaching.

The gospel is indeed good news. It opens the way to eternal life because it is the power of God to save sinners. In the gospel, we see God's grace and righteousness. By faith — nothing but faith — sinners who believe in Jesus are declared righteous: not guilty before God. But our faith is not simply an idea in our head or our heart. Every day, the righteous *live* by faith.

Let's not be ashamed. Let's ask for the Holy Spirit's help to share this wonderful good news. Our mission is to declare it clearly and faithfully. It is powerful!

### **The case against the world (1:18–32)**

#### *The truth is available*

Paul describes in general terms how the world has responded to God.

Even though we cannot see God, through creation he has revealed to all people certain basic facts about himself. He exists. He has “eternal power” (1:20). He is God.

However, the world chooses *not* to glorify or thank God. People reject even this basic knowledge of him. They turn to worshipping images of created things instead of “the glory of the immortal God” (1:23). Here Paul is perhaps referring to the Gentile (non-Jewish) world at large. Or perhaps he is referring to the state we are all in — without Christ.

As a consequence of this rejection, God “gave them over” (1:24) to their own desires: sexual sin, “shameful lusts” (1:26) and depraved minds. Does this mean God causes people to sin? No! It means their choice to reject God causes them to sink ever further into rebellion, and into the sin which results from this. It is sobering to realise that God gives people what they want.

Sexual sins were a clear example of how humanity had turned from God — but people's rebellion is played out in a long list of wicked behaviour. We might think of many things in Paul's list (1:29–31) as ‘serious’ sins: murder,

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envy, depravity. But gossip, and a lack of love and mercy are also included. To God, sin is sin. So is *approving* of sin. Some of these sins are our failings too. We cannot pass judgement on others without realising that, even as believers, we too are sinners and were once under the same judgement as non-believers.

### *God's wrath*

Many people, even believers, do not like the idea of God's wrath. They prefer to think God is *only* a God of love. However, we have all rebelled against God. This rebellion has consequences.

God's wrath is based on his truth and righteousness. It is his judgement on people who reject him. There is clear evidence for God, but many people ignore the truth of this evidence. They will have no excuse before God.

In their consciences, people know there is judgement for wickedness (1:32). Yet sadly, they continue to commit sin, and approve of it. We see this awful truth in our own society. May this truth cause us to warn people and share the gospel of Jesus wherever and whenever we can.

We all need the good news of Jesus Christ. We need his righteousness. And God, in his mercy, makes it freely available to everyone who puts their faith in him. <sup>1</sup>are enough to make them Christians. What are some of these actions?