“The Most Powerful Sentence Ever Written”

January 21, 2018

I John 2:1-11

Please open your Bible today to the 3rd chapter of Romans.

Someone asked “Why study Romans?”

And one writer puts it this way. “Romans is a personal letter from God to each one of his spiritual children.” [Found on [www.challies.com](http://www.challies.com) “Four Great Reasons To Read Romans” by Tim Challies].

*“Read Romans this way, and you will find that it has unique power to search out and deal with things that are so much part of you that ordinarily you do not give them a thought—your sinful habits and attitudes; your instinct for hypocrisy; your natural self-righteousness and self-reliance;*

*your constant unbelief; your moral frivolity and shallowness in repentance; your half-heartedness, worldliness, fearfulness, despondency; your spiritual conceit and insensitiveness. And you will also find that this shattering letter has unique power to evoke the joy, assurance, boldness, liberty, and ardor of spirit which God both requires of and gives to those who love him.”* (J.I. Packer)

You’ve heard me say that the Book of Romans is the greatest book ever written. Well, today I want to turn your attention to a passage in the third chapter of Romans that is “The Most Powerful Sentence Ever Written – Part 2.” Shall we pray?

By now you know that I like to teach. In particular, I’ve enjoyed teaching the Bible now for some forty years. And I want to thank God first and then you all again for giving me the opportunity each week to teach God’s Word. Now, usually when I teach I preach. And when I preach, I teach. But let me remind you of why.

You have a Bible in your hand. It should be your own Bible. And I’m sure you realize that all Christians must read God’s Word. And all Christians must study the Bible. But why?

The Bible wasn’t written for the Greek or Hebrew scholar. It was written for you and me; for each of us, as Paul says II Timothy 3:15 *“And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. (16) All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable [useful] for doctrine [teaching], for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: (17) that the man of God may be perfect [proficient, skilled], thoroughly furnished [equipped] unto all good works.”*

You need to study the Bible so you will understand, like Timothy, your need be saved; so you will be proficient (the Old English is perfect) and so you will be equipped to serve people with your good works. And what better place to learn God’s Word than in your home by your parents teaching it to you?

John Newton had a godly mother who, up until the age of six, taught John the Bible. Just two weeks before his seventh birthday, John’s mother died of consumption. And John struggled intensely for the next ten years of his life.

Then, one day changed his life forever. John discovered just how powerful sin is and he recalled the days he spent at his mother’s knee, learning and memorizing the truths of the Bible. That day on a ship off the coast of Scotland, he put his trust in Christ and was undeniably changed. Most everyone in the world now knows the poem that John wrote. It’s called “Amazing Grace.” But did you know that he wrote nine verses. Sometime I’ll read them with you.

Now, Romans three. Find with me Romans 3:21.

Most of you will remember that when you studied High School English, you were told that sentences were made up of phrases; in particular, you probably remember prepositional phrases. But in English we’ve got eight; eight different kinds of phrases. Today we’ll look for just one type of phrase here in this “the most powerful sentence ever written.”

The phrases we find here in this passage are known as “verb phrases.” Now, I admit that this is one very long sentence. So, like every other long sentence, it’s made up of phrases. This one has three.

And last time we looked at the first of those three phrases. Today I’d like you to look with me at the second. We begin at verse twenty-one. See if you can detect the three verb phrases with me.

Romans 3:21*“But now the righteousness of God without the law* ***is manifested****, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; (22) Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe:*

*for there is no difference: (23) For all* ***have sinned, and come short*** *of the glory of God;*

*(24) Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: (25) Whom God* ***hath set forth*** *to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; (26) To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.”*

Let me remind you of Phrase # 1.

Phrase # 1 - Romans 3:21*“But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; (22) Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe:*

Here’s the essence of the most powerful sentence ever written.

1. God’s righteousness is available to us apart from the deeds of the law.
2. God’s righteousness is testified to throughout the Old Testament.
3. God’s righteousness is given to anyone and everyone who exercises faith in Jesus Christ.

Is there really anything more important than being right with God? Righteousness is the condition in which you are in a right relationship with God. That’s what Paul is telling us here. And, who makes the first move in this relationship? God has made His own righteousness available to you in the Person and work of His Son, Jesus Christ. Can you think of anything more remarkable than that?

And the clearest picture God has given us of how this all works is the picture of someone putting a new robe upon you.

What happens to you at the moment you are saved?

Do you remember what the father of the Prodigal did for his son when he arrived home? Luke 15:20 *“And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him.*

*(21) And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son. (22) But the father said to his servants,* ***Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him****; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet: …”*

At the moment you believe on Christ, God puts His best robe on you, the Robe of Righteousness. This is the exact same message we find in the OT. Isaiah 61:10 *“I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels.”*

So, folks, the sooner you discover the reality that all your good works are of no spiritual value before salvation, the better; because then and only then will you look to God to have mercy upon you.

II Corinthians 5:21 *“For he [the Father] hath made him [the Son] to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.”*

First, then, God’s righteousness is the only answer to your sinful condition.

And here’s Paul’s second point. Everyone is equal when it comes to the question of sin.

You can call it Phrase # 2 – Romans 3:22 “*for there is no difference: (23) for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;*

And here’s what Paul tells us in this second phrase.

1. Everyone is a sinner.
2. Everyone has fallen short of God’s glory.

The message of Phrase # 2 is the basis for Phrase # 1. What I mean is this. You will never see your need for righteousness if you don’t see the message of these two verses. Romans 3:22 “*for there is no difference: (23) for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; …”*

Now, how well are you learning the Book of Romans? And how much of the Book have you taken to heart? Everything in Romans prior to these verses is negative. It’s condemnation. With as much emphasis as possible, Paul tells us that, prior to our salvation, there is no one who is righteous in the LORD’s eyes. Yes, we’re righteous in our own eyes. Yes, we compare ourselves with others. And we think we’re quote “not as bad as so-and-so.”

But that’s because we haven’t yet come to understand the negative side of the Gospel. There are two main parts to the Gospel. You’ve got the bad news and then you’ve got the good news. The bad news is, that, along with everyone else on the planet and throughout history, everybody sins. Everyone is a sinner by nature and by habit.

And when you read these first few chapters of Romans, you discover, not just bad news; but some really bad news; some very unsettling news. Simply put, no one has the power (ability) within themselves to meet God’s requirement of righteousness. And by nature and by choice we love our sins. So, yes, God wants you to know the bad news because the Good News is only good when you understand the serious-ness of the bad news.

Listen, folks, everybody likes Good News. And rarely, if ever, does anyone want to hear the bad news. And this is especially true when it comes to the Gospel.

“David was converted to Christ out of a life of drugs and sexual promiscuity while living in Florida. He came across a Bible in a roundabout way, brought to his home by an unbelieving friend who had been given it by a Christian. Nobody planned on reading it.

But a hurricane had recently wiped out everything David owned. And he was prompted to consider what he was doing with his life. Somehow he found himself in Romans and started reading.

He said that Paul’s revelation of the depravity of man apart from Christ crushed him. He knew that he was exactly who Paul was talking about. David says, *“He was talking about me. I knew he was. And I was scared to death. I thought, ‘I see where this is going. And I want out’. Thankfully, Romans showed him that too.”* [Found on [www.crossway.org](http://www.crossway.org) “Why Study Romans” by Jared C. Wilson].

One teacher puts it this way. Romans speaks frankly about *“the issue of human sin and responsibility. The night is very black indeed throughout these chapters; there is a deathly chill in the air between God and his creatures and the frightening darkness is looking more permanent with each stroke of the apostle’s pen.”* [Found on [www.bible.org](http://www.bible.org) “Study And Exposition of Romans 3:21-21.”]

Here’s Paul in his first few words to those living in Rome.

Romans 1:18 *“For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness; (19) Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them.*

*(20) For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse: (21) Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened.*

*(22) Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, (23) and changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things. (24) Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves: …”*

Romans 1:28 *“And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate [degenerate and un-principled] mind, to do those things which are not convenient [morally proper]; (29) Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity [meanness]; whisperers [those who plot to do evil in secret],*

*(30) Backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, (31) without under-standing, covenant breakers, without natural affection, implacable [anger can’t be stopped], unmerciful: (32) Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them.”*

Romans 3:10 *“As it is written, there is none righteous, no, not one: (11) there is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. (12) They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one.”*

I don’t know if there is worse news recorded anywhere. So, yes, in Romans you find the worst possible news a person can ever hear. But folks, can anyone be saved if they don’t know what they are being saved from?

The, once you’ve come to terms with just how great a sinner you really are; once you are clear on the bad news, Paul presents the one thing we need above everything else; God’s righteousness.

After reading about the Bad News that we are really in very bad shape spiritually because of our sins, we then hear from Paul this Good News that God doesn’t require you to gain righteousness by your own efforts.

Here again is what Paul tells us in this second phrase.

1. Everyone is a sinner.
2. Everyone has fallen short of God’s glory.

Romans 3:22 “*for there is no difference: (23) for all have sinned,*

*and come short of the glory of God; …”*

Can you see how this second phrase is the basis for the first one? We’re all sinners who have fallen short of God’s glory.

Some Bible scholars say that man’s biggest problem is sin. And, for the most part, that is true. But that’s not exactly what Paul teaches. He adds this line *“and come short of the glory of God.”*

Sin is one thing. But coming short of God’s glory is another. Sin is universal. Everyone, everywhere is a sinner. If there is one thing that marks the human condition, it is sin.

“*We are ever striving after what is forbidden, and coveting what is denied us.”* Those of you who’ve studied Latin will recall the name Ovid. Ovid was born in the century just before Christ and he died just twenty years after Jesus was born. He wrote what we today might call “love” poems. And Latin students over the years have studied them. By the way, just four years before Jesus was born, Ovid was banished to a very remote town on the far edge of the Roman Empire called Tomis. No one knows for sure what he had done to offend Augustus. But it was so serious that the Roman Emperor he was banished for life from Rome. Here’s what Ovid said about sin. “*We are ever striving after what is forbidden, and coveting what is denied us.”*

W. H. Auden wrote a book of poems called “A Certain World: A Commonplace Book.” In his chapter titled “Hell,” he says this about sin. *“All sin tends to be addictive, and the terminal point of addiction is what is called damnation.”*

Our natural condition, as human beings, is depravity. We prefer sin over knowing God. We love ourselves first while all the while not wanting to call ourselves sinners. The first command God calls us to is to love Him; and to love Him whole-heartedly. And who here loves God whole-heartedly?

Sin, folks, is man’s biggest and deepest trouble. You can be compared to being stuck in quick-sand; the more we struggle, the deeper go.

Yes, sin is universal. But, says the Holy Spirit in Paul, not only is no one righteous, but we all come short of God’s glory.

Can you think of a reason why God created the world? Of all the reasons why He created, this is the highest. God created you and He created all the world around you to announce His glory. And the sin in your heart creates a spiritual blindness so that, by nature, we don’t focus on giving glory to God. We focus on ourselves.

And we human beings simply prefer not to believe that the LORD made this world. We fall short of His glory. We have no fear of God. We fall short. We prefer to not be near God. We fall short.

The Father wants you to be like Christ. But you fall short. God holds the Highest Place in the universe, the Highest Place in eternity and the Highest Place in Heaven and we have little or no interest in knowing Him as He is. We fall short. He is light and we prefer the darkness of falling short. He is love and we love ourselves. He is life. And we don’t believe it. We fall short.

He calls us to love Him and we fall short. He commands us to worship Him in the beauty of holiness and we fall short. He’s calls us to pray together and we don’t have time. We fall short. We don’t love Him with our whole hearts. We don’t see the need to worship Him or to pray with one another. We fall short.

Think about anything that Satan desires and you can be sure that that thing is the exact opposite of God’s glory. He’s not the man upstairs. He’s not your pal. He’s not someone to blame when things don’t go your way. He’s magnificent and mighty and majestic and marvelous in His Person and His works. Yet, who here has an interest in knowing Him?

You see. We fall short. Yes, we’ve all sinned. Sinners agree that we are all sinners. We all agree on that, don’t we? But we all fall short of the one foundational reason why God made us. We aren’t announcing His glory to others. We refuse to see His glory in the thunder and rain and snow and in the stars and in the sunrise and in the sunsets of every single day. He’s glorious in His holiness. We fall short.

One of the many singers who used to sing before Evangelist Dwight L. Moody would get up to preach had such an impact on Moody that many times after the solo, after the congregation listened in holy worship, Moody wouldn’t ever preach. He would just give the invitation for people to receive Christ right after the man finished singing.

One song in particular was often used this way. In those days they called it “The Glory Song.” [Found on [www.blueletterbible.org](http://www.blueletterbible.org) “The Glory of God” by David Hocking].

It was written by Charles H. Gabriel back in the year 1900. It goes like this.

1. When all my labors and trials are o’er,  
   And I am safe on that beautiful shore,  
   Just to be near the dear Lord I adore,  
   Will through the ages be glory for me.
   * *Refrain:*  
     Oh, that will be glory for me,  
     Glory for me, glory for me,  
     When by His grace I shall look on His face,  
     That will be glory, be glory for me.
2. When, by the gift of His infinite grace,  
   I am accorded in heaven a place,  
   Just to be there and to look on His face,  
   Will through the ages be glory for me.
3. Friends will be there I have loved long ago;  
   Joy like a river around me will flow;  
   Yet just a smile from my Savior, I know,  
   Will through the ages be glory for me.

Soren Kierkegaard, the Danish theologian, used to tell a story about a certain kingdom where there was a handsome prince, searching for a woman worthy enough to be his wife and to become queen of the land.

One day while running an errand for his father he passed through a poor village. As he glanced out the window of his carriage his eyes fell on a beautiful peasant maiden. During ensuing days, he often passed by the young lady and soon fell in love with her by sight.

But he had a problem. How could he seek her hand? He could command her to marry him, but the prince wanted someone who would marry him out of love, not coercion. He could show up at her door in his splendid uniform in a gold carriage drawn by six horses, attendants in tow, and bearing a chest of jewels and gold coins. But then how would he know if she really loved him or if she was just overawed and overwhelmed with his splendor?

Finally he came up with another solution. He stripped off his royal robes, put on common dress, moved into the village, and got to know her without revealing his identity. As he lived among the people, the prince and the maiden became friends, shared each other’s interests, and talked about their concerns.

The young lady grew to love him for who he was because he had first loved her. This is the message of the gospel! The Prince of Peace Himself, Jesus Christ, laid aside His robes of his glory, garbed himself as a peasant, became a human being, and moved into our village, onto our planet, to woo us to Himself.

He clothes repentant sinners in His own righteousness. Now, both the One who makes us holy and those who are being made holy are members of the same family. Therefore He is not ashamed to call us brothers.” [Found on [www.pastorware.files.wordpress.com](http://www.pastorware.files.wordpress.com) “The Prodigal Son” by Soren Kierkegaard].

We’ve all sinned and come short of the Glory of God. And yet, at the moment we trust in Christ, God does for us something we could never do for ourselves. He puts His robe of righteousness on us. Do you have that robe on today?

If not, here’s what you need to do. Acknowledge that your sin is what separates you from God. And when you will repent of your sins and believe on the LORD Jesus Christ, you will be saved.

* To Repent - to change your mind about God, Christ, your sin, and God’s free gift of salvation.
* To Believe - to simply trust Jesus Christ alone as the One Who paid the entire penalty for your sins.

Jesus Christ paid the penalty for every sin you ever

committed. He became your Substitute on the day He died on Calvary two thousand years ago.

This is the greatest news in all the world. The Father gave Only His Son to pay the penalty for all your sins. Jesus died on the Cross as your Substitute and He wants to be your Savior today. Won’t you cry out to Him for His free gift of salvation? What could possibly hold you back from having a saving relationship with your Creator?

Think about the LORD as the One Who loves you and delights to have you as His Child and to have you know and understand Him. He delighted in purchasing salvation in order to bring His forgiveness into your heart. John 3:16 *“God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”*

Would you pray this prayer today? The Sinner’s Prayer. *“Father, I realize I am a sinner. I believe that Jesus died in my place on the cross. I repent of my sins. I want to be completely forgiven today. I am trusting you right now to save me. Thank you. Amen”*

Jesus said, Revelation 3:20 *“Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If any man hear My voice and open the door, I will come in to him and sup with him and he with Me.”*

Shall we pray?

Hymn # 128 “I Sing the Mighty Power of God”