

We're going to start into Paul's letter to the Roman church. It is the longest of Paul's letters, and gives us the most extensive discussion on what it means to follow Jesus. Let's talk a bit about the background for this letter.

Why do we care about the background of a book of the bible? It's all the inspired word of God, right? We can just read it, and the Holy Spirit speaks to us through it.

Yes, this is true in one sense. But it is also important to understand the context of what was written to better understand the intentions behind the writer.

This letter wasn't written to us, but it was written for us.

The Holy Spirit inspired Paul's writing, and worked through many people over the centuries to distribute and preserve these words so that we have them today with remarkable confidence in their accuracy.

Romans 1 background

The Roman church may have been birthed out of the Day of Pentecost. Acts 2:10 details all of the visitors who were in Jerusalem, which included Jews from Rome. Slide 2



Paul may have heard about the church in Rome specifically from a pair of early disciples named Priscilla and Aquila. **Slide 3**

Acts 18:1 After this Paul left Athens and went to Corinth. 2 And he found a Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to leave Rome. And he went to see them, 4 and because he was of the same trade he stayed with them and worked, for they were tentmakers by trade.

Claudius ordered the Jews out of Rome ~ 49 AD.



Slide 4 The letter is believed to have been written around A.D. 57 during Paul's third missionary journey, likely from Corinth. Many Jewish Christians had probably returned to Rome by the time of this letter.

We can speculate that there may have been some issues between the Jewish and Gentile believers. Paul brings speaks quite a bit to some questions about following the law, that is the Old Covenant versus "A righteousness that come by faith".

Some key themes in Romans: **Slide 5**

- The gospel is good news! We are saved from judgment by faith in Jesus
- That same faith gives us power to learn to follow Jesus and do right as God changes us from the inside out
- Many practical out-workings of our faith in relationship to one another

As we read this letter from Paul, it will help us to understand what it means to follow Jesus, the practical reality of being a child of God, and how to apply that in daily life. **My prayer is that as we understand what Jesus has done FOR us, we will learn to walk with greater closeness to God (like a child with a loving Father) and walk in Holy Spirit-empowered obedience. An obedience that comes from a changed heart and mind.**

Have Freeman come up and read Rom 1:1-17

Key points in this passage: Slide 6

- The gospel of Jesus was God's plan from the beginning. It was never plan B.
- The gospel isn't just believing the right things, but about power.
- From faith for faith means from start to finish means abiding in Jesus, which is the key to becoming who we are called to be

1. *The gospel of Jesus was God's plan from the beginning* Slide 7

Rom 1:2-5 God promised this Good News long ago through his prophets in the holy Scriptures. The Good News is about his Son. In his earthly life he was born into King David's family line, and he was shown to be the Son of God when he was raised from the dead by the power of the Holy Spirit. He is Jesus Christ our Lord. Through Christ, God has given us the privilege and authority as apostles to tell Gentiles everywhere what God has done for them, so that they will believe and obey him, bringing glory to his name.

Sometimes we have the idea in our minds that God created us, and then was surprised when we rebelled against him and so had to come up with a way to restore things. But our God, in his wisdom, **chose to create mankind with free will, allowing us to choose whether to obey Him freely**, or go our own way. Of course, we went our own way so we could prove to ourselves that we make a mess out of everything we touch apart from Him.

Slide 8 All way back in Genesis, right at the start, we see the early prophetic shadows of Jesus when God pronounces the curse on the serpent:

Gen 3:15 And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel."

And then again when God provided coverings for Adam and Eve:

Gen 3:21 The LORD God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife and clothed them.

God showed them that a descendant of Adam and Eve would one day destroy the work of our enemy the devil. And when he killed and skinned those animals to make clothes for them it showed sin brings death, and only by the shedding of blood could sin be covered over.

Note also, that God always intended to offer salvation by faith to the whole world. When God initiated the Old Covenant with Abraham he said this:

Gen 15:5-6 He took him outside and said, “Look up at the sky and count the stars—if indeed you can count them.” Then he said to him, “So shall your offspring be.”

Abram believed the LORD, and he credited it to him as righteousness.

Gen 22:18 And through your offspring all nations of the earth will be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice.”

That offspring was Jesus.

Right from the start, God had a plan! And it included you before he even created the concept of time. **Slide 9**

2 Tim 1:9-10 He has saved us and called us to a holy life—not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace. This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time, but it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Savior, Christ Jesus, who has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.

When I hear that God has been putting this plan in place since before he created anything, and **when I realize that his plan included my life in him even before he created anything, it becomes easier to trust him with all the little things that happen in my life, too.**

And that is what faith in Jesus is all about. It is learning to trust our God in all circumstances and for all things.

2. The gospel isn't just believing the right things; it's about the power of God

Slide 10

Rom 1:16 For I am not ashamed of this Good News about Christ. It is the power of God at work, saving everyone who believes—the Jew first and also the Gentile.

Sometimes when we talk about “sharing the gospel,” we think about the particular words we are sharing or the format of it. But the gospel of Jesus, rightly understood, is about learning to follow Jesus, with the Holy Spirit changing us from the inside out and empowering us to want what God wants, to think the way God thinks, and to do what God wants done.

The Gospel = Good News Slide 11

- Saved from wrath
- We are given a new heart that wants to do right (2 Cor 5:17)
- Our minds renewed by God's Word so we learn to think right (Rom 12:2)
- The Holy Spirit empowers us to do right as a joyful child of our Father!

- Eternity with joys forevermore!

Also realize that the Good News includes the Holy Spirit! **Slide 12**

Rom 1:11-12 For I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to strengthen you – that is, that we may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith, both yours and mine.

The apostle Paul wanted to stir up the gifts of the Holy Spirit within the Roman church so that the people would be built up and encouraged. **We are not walking this journey on our own, believing the right things and trying to do the right things.** It is walking with God by His power, and walking together as the family of God, encouraging one another by the enabling of the Holy Spirit.

3. Walking by Faith is the key to us becoming who we are called to be **Slide 13**

Rom 1:17 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."

We aren't called to walk by our own effort or strength of human will. But what does it mean to walk by faith? Sometimes we get this picture in our mind that walking by faith, or walking in the Spirit, is like a zombie thing, where we are just mindlessly waiting for God to motivate our next step. The opposite extreme is being totally self-reliant, which is also not good.

But if we think of "Faith" more as "Trust," it makes more sense. **Slide 14**

It is all about putting ourselves in a place where God can do his transforming work in us. **It starts by faith** when we put our complete Trust in the finished work of Christ on the cross. We enter into salvation by turning away from our sinful way, and acknowledging Jesus death on the cross as the only sufficient payment for our sinful rebellion against God.

We then pledge to follow Jesus.

In that moment, we are now viewed by Jesus as Righteous. We are credited with righteousness. That means we have now been saved from the penalty of our sins, but not only that, we are made a new creation, and God begins to change our desires so that we desire to pursue God in obedience. As we abide in Christ, he changes us, empowers us, and enables us to want, AND to do the next step of obedience he is calling us to.

Php 2:13 For God is working in you, giving you the desire and the power to do what pleases him.

I want to encourage everyone, and especially those who are just starting to follow Jesus. There are times when you will struggle, and even though you are trying to do right, you might fail. Don't give up, or say "this Christian thing doesn't work". **Slide 15**

- Remember that God's plan included you before even time began.
- You are credited with righteousness the exact moment you trusted Jesus.
- Just keep doing your part and walk in trust that God IS changing you.

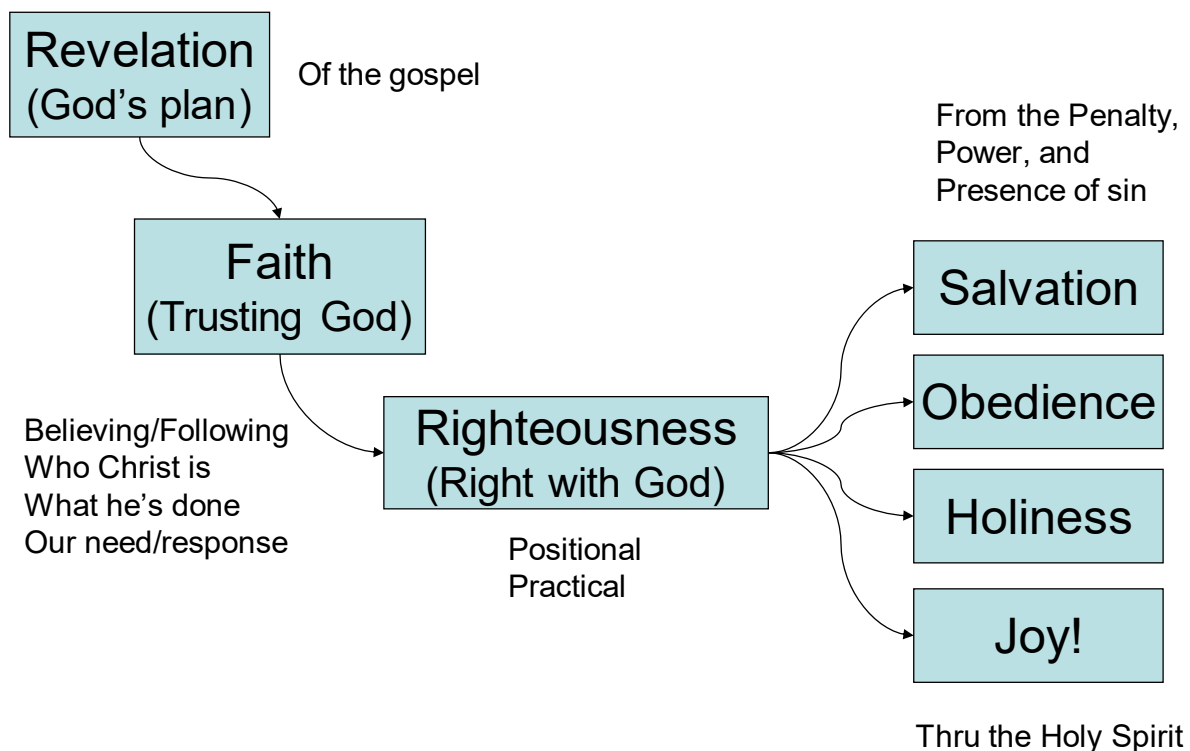
Php 1:6 And I am certain that God, who began the good work within you, will continue his work until it is finally finished on the day when Christ Jesus returns.

What is your part? Submit your will to God. Draw close to God through worship, reading His word, talking to Him. When you fall, ask him to forgive you and take then next step of obedience.

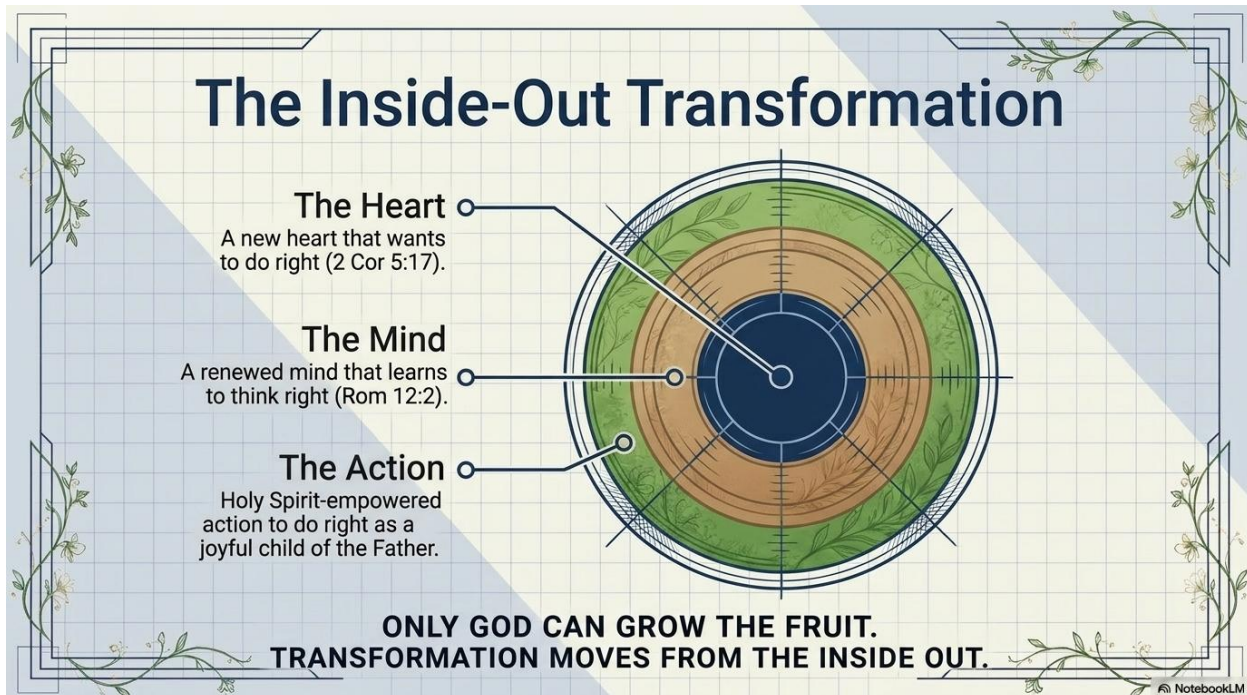
It is now Christ who lives within me. It is not by my efforts, but by trusting in Jesus.

Gal 2:20 My old self has been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me. So I live in this earthly body by trusting in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

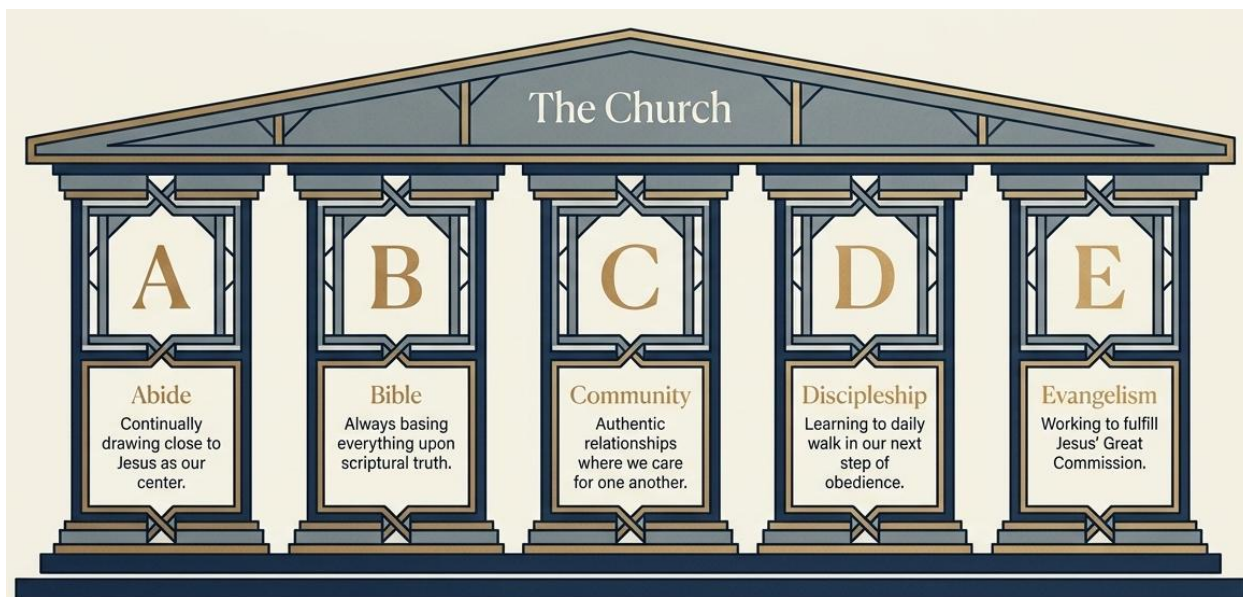
I tend to think in processes, so I made this chart summarizing this idea of the gospel of faith. **Slide 16**



Faith from beginning to the end.



Slide 18 I shared this picture last week about the 5 areas of focus under GC². There is a reason why “Abide” comes first. (Yes, it starts with A, so there is that.) This is the power behind everything we do. A righteousness that is by faith from start to finish. It begins by abiding, we walk by abiding, and we will finish by abiding.



Those who want to pray, please come up. I'll pray and close us out.