

**LESSON TWO**  
**THE GOSPEL OF GOD**

## Scripture Reading:

- Rom. 1:1 Paul, a slave of Christ Jesus, a called apostle, separated unto the gospel of God,  
Rom. 1:2 Which He promised beforehand through His prophets in the holy Scriptures,  
Rom. 1:3 Concerning His Son, who came out of the seed of David according to the flesh,  
Rom. 1:4 Who was designated the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness out of the resurrection of the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord;  
Rom. 1:5 Through whom we have received grace and apostleship unto the obedience of faith among all the Gentiles on behalf of His name,  
Rom. 1:6 Among whom you also are the called ones of Jesus Christ;  
Rom. 1:7 To all who are in Rome, beloved of God, the called saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.  
Rom. 1:8 First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all because your faith is proclaimed throughout the whole world.  
Rom. 1:9 For God is my witness, whom I serve in my spirit in the gospel of His Son, how unceasingly I make mention of you always in my prayers,  
Rom. 1:10 Beseeching if by any means now at last I may be prospered in the will of God to come to you.  
Rom. 1:11 For I long to see you that I may impart to you some spiritual gift so that you may be established;  
Rom. 1:12 That is, that I with you may be encouraged among you through the faith which is in one another, both yours and mine.  
Rom. 1:13 And I do not want you to be ignorant, brothers, that often I purposed to come to you (yet was hindered until the present), that I might have some fruit among you also, even as among the rest of the Gentiles.  
Rom. 1:14 I am debtor both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to wise and to foolish;  
Rom. 1:15 So, for my part, I am ready to announce the gospel to you also who are in Rome.  
Rom. 1:16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one who believes, both to Jew first and to Greek.  
Rom. 1:17 For the righteousness of God is revealed in it out of faith to faith, as it is written, "But the righteous shall have life and live by faith."

## **OUTLINE:**

### **I Promised in the Scriptures: —1:2.**

### **II Concerning Christ:**

A Come Out of the Seed of David—1:3.

B Designated the Son of God out of Resurrection—1:4.

### **III Preached by the Sent Ones:**

A In Spirit—1:9.

B By Prayers—1:9.

C With Eagerness—1:10-15.

### **IV Received by the Called Ones:**

A Through the Obedience of Faith—1:5.

B Unto Grace and Peace—1:5.

### **V The Power of God—1:16.**

### **VI The Righteousness of God Revealed in the Gospel:**

A Out of Faith to Faith—1:17.

B The Just Have Life and Live by Faith—1:17.

## QUESTIONS

### Section 1:

1. What is the difference between the Christ in the 4 gospels and the Christ in Romans?
2. What is the central point of the gospel of God?
3. Since Christ was already the Son of God before incarnation, why did He need to be designated the Son of God out of resurrection?
4. Explain the word designation. Use the illustration of the carnation seed to explain.

### Section 2:

1. What is the goal of the gospel of God as presented in the book of Romans?
2. What are the 3 requirements to achieve the above goal?
3. How is the gospel of God preached as seen in Romans? Use verses to explain.

### Section 3:

1. What does it mean to believe into God? List the negative and positive implications of believing.
2. What is it to be called?
3. In the age of grace (which is today), what is the unique commandment of God and what is the unique sin?
4. What does salvation in the book of Romans include?

### Section 4:

1. Why is the gospel of God so powerful?
2. Find the Bible reference for this verse, "If we confess our sins, God is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins..."
3. What is the proof that we have faith?

## **[Section 1]**

The gospel of God is the subject of the book of Romans (1:1). Christians are accustomed to saying that there are four gospels, the books of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. However, Paul also refers to his epistle to the Romans as a gospel. The gospel in the first four books of the New Testament concerns Christ in the flesh as He lived among His disciples before His death and resurrection. After His incarnation and before His death and resurrection, He was among His disciples, but not yet in them. The gospel in Romans concerns Christ as the Spirit, not Christ in the flesh. In Romans 8 we see that the Spirit of life who indwells us is simply Christ Himself. Christ is in us. The Christ in the four gospels was among the disciples; the Christ in Romans is within us. The Christ in the four gospels is the Christ after incarnation and before death and resurrection. As such, He is a Christ outside of us. The Christ in Romans is the Christ after His resurrection. As such, He is the Christ within us. This is something deeper and more subjective than the Christ in the gospels. Keep this one point in mind: that the gospel in Romans concerns Christ as the Spirit in us after His resurrection.

If we only have the gospel concerning Christ as in the first four books of the New Testament, our gospel is too objective. We need the fifth gospel, the book of Romans, to reveal the subjective gospel of Christ. Our Christ is not merely the Christ in the flesh after incarnation and before resurrection, the Christ who was among His disciples. Our Christ is higher and more subjective. He is the Spirit of life within us. He is such a subjective One. Though John chapters 14 and 15 revealed that Christ will be in His believers, yet that was not fulfilled before His resurrection. The book of Romans is the gospel of Christ after His resurrection, showing also that He is now the subjective Savior in His believers. So, this gospel is deeper and more subjective.

### **I. PROMISED IN THE SCRIPTURES**

This gospel was promised by God through the prophets in the Scriptures. This means that the gospel of God was not an accident; it was planned and prepared by God. The Bible shows us that this gospel was planned by God in eternity past. Before the foundation of the world, God planned to have this gospel. So, numerous times in the Holy Scriptures, from Genesis through Malachi, God spoke in promise through the prophets regarding the gospel of God.

## **II. CONCERNING CHRIST**

This gospel of God concerns a Person, Christ. Of course, forgiveness, salvation, etc. are included in the gospel, but they are not the central point. The gospel of God concerns the Person of the Son of God, Jesus Christ our Lord. This wonderful Person has two natures—the divine nature and the human nature, divinity and humanity.

### **A. Come Out of the Seed of David**

Paul mentions Christ's humanity first, not His divinity, saying that He was born out of the seed of David according to the flesh (1:3). This is His human nature, His humanity.

### **B. Designated the Son of God out of Resurrection**

Then Paul says that He was "designated the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness out of the resurrection of the dead" (1:4). This is a clear reference to Christ's divinity. Why is His humanity mentioned first and His divinity last?

Paul mentions Christ's humanity first because he maintains the sequence of Christ's process. Firstly, Christ passed through the process of incarnation to become flesh. Then He passed through the process of death and resurrection. By means of the second step of His process He became the Son of God out of resurrection. Christ has been processed in two steps: the first step—incarnation; the second step—death and resurrection. By these two steps Christ became two different things. He became flesh by incarnation and He became the Son of God through death and resurrection. His first step brought God into humanity. His second step brought man into divinity. Before His incarnation, Christ, as a divine Person, already was the Son of God (John 1:18). He was the Son of God before His incarnation, and even Romans 8:3 says, "God sent His Son." Since Christ already was the Son of God before the incarnation, why did He need to be designated the Son of God out of resurrection? Because by incarnation He had put on an element, the flesh, the human nature, that had nothing to do with divinity. As a divine Person Christ was the Son of God before His incarnation, but that part of Him which was Jesus with the flesh, the human nature, born of Mary, was not the Son of God. That part of Him was human. By His resurrection Christ has sanctified and uplifted that part of His human nature, His humanity, and He was designated out of this resurrection as the Son of God with this human nature. So, in this sense, the Bible says that He was begotten the Son of God in His resurrection (Acts 13:33; Heb. 1:5).

Let us consider the example of a small carnation seed. When this seed is sown into the earth, it grows and blossoms, a process which we may label its designation. When we behold a little carnation seed before it is sown into the ground, we may be unable to determine what kind of seed it is. However, once it has been sown, has grown, and has blossomed, it is designated. Its blossom is its designation. Therefore, everyone can say, "This is a carnation." Both the seed and the blossom are the carnation, but the blossom is very different in form from the seed. If the seed should remain as a seed without blossoming, it is difficult for most people to realize that it is a carnation. But after it has grown and blossomed, it is designated as a carnation for all to see.

When Christ was in the flesh during His 33½ years on the earth, He was exactly like the carnation seed. Although the Son of God was in Him, no one could recognize this easily. By being sown into death and growing up in resurrection, He blossomed. By this process He was designated the Son of God, and by this process He uplifted the flesh, the human nature. He did not put off the flesh, He did not put off humanity. He sanctified it, uplifted it and transformed it, and had Himself designated with this transformed humanity the Son of God with the divine power. When He was the Son of God before His incarnation, He had no human nature. After His resurrection He is the Son of God with humanity uplifted, sanctified, and transformed out of resurrection. He is now both of humanity and divinity. He is both the seed of David and the Son of God. He is a wonderful Person!

## **[Section 2]**

The first section of the book of Romans deals with redemption accomplished by Christ in the flesh. Romans 8:3 says that God sent His Son in the likeness of the flesh of sin and condemned sin in the flesh. The second part of Romans deals with the imparting of life. Romans first reveals Christ as the Redeemer in the flesh and then reveals Him as the life-giving Spirit. In Romans 8:2 we find the term "the Spirit of life." This is the indwelling Spirit. The indwelling Spirit is the Spirit of Christ, and the Spirit of Christ is actually Christ Himself within us (8:9-10).

Why does the book of Romans open the way it does? Every book of the Bible opens in a particular way, each one different from the others. Paul opens the book of Romans in the way he does because Romans has a goal, as seen in chapter 8, verses 29 and 30. This goal is to produce many sons of God. This goal of producing the many sons of God requires redemption, the imparting of life, and the living

by this life. As fallen men and as sinners, we need redemption, we need the divine life, and we need to live by the divine life that we may be regenerated, transformed, and fully glorified as the sons of God. Eventually, we all shall be the sons of God in full.

God had only one Son, His only begotten Son. However, God was not satisfied to have just one Son. He wanted many sons to be brought into glory. Therefore, God used His only begotten Son as a model, as a pattern, to produce many sons. Do you realize that Christ has passed through the process to be designated the Son of God and that we also are passing through the same process to be designated the sons of God? Originally, Christ was the only Son of God. At a certain time, this Son of God came into the flesh by the name of Jesus. The Son of God in the flesh was named Jesus. After 33½ years, Jesus was designated out of resurrection to be the Son of God. By this time, God had a Son with both divinity and humanity. Before His incarnation God's Son only possessed divinity; after His resurrection this Son of God had both divinity and humanity. Hallelujah! Now humanity has a part in God's Son. The Son of God today has both humanity and divinity.

What about us? We were born the sons of man, but we have been reborn the sons of God. Whether we are male or female, we are all sons of God. In a sense, God has no daughters. Although the Lord Jesus has many brothers, He has no sisters. In this sense, every sister is a brother. We are all brothers and we are all sons of God. We are sons of God because the Spirit of the Son of God has come into us (Gal. 4:6). Just as the Son of God came into the flesh by incarnation, so now the Spirit of the Son of God has come into so many of us who are flesh. Therefore, in a sense, each one of us is the same as Jesus. Jesus was a man in the flesh with the Son of God in Him. We also are men of flesh with the Son of God in us. Are you not a man of flesh with the Son of God in you? Certainly you are. But we should not remain as we are, should we? We are waiting to be designated. Oh, this man of flesh is going to be designated by sanctification, transformation, and glorification. Hallelujah! This man of flesh with the Son of God in him is under the process of sanctification, transformation, and glorification. The time will come when we will all declare, "We are designated to be sons of God out of resurrection!"

## **III. PREACHED BY THE SENT ONES**

Now we need to proceed further and consider how the gospel of God is preached. It is preached by the sent ones. The sent ones are the apostles

(1:5) separated for this purpose. Not all the believers are apostles, but, in a sense, all the believers are sent by the Lord for the gospel preaching.

### **A. In Spirit**

This gospel is preached in spirit (1:9). Note that the word spirit here begins with a small letter, thereby indicating that it does not refer to the Holy Spirit. All Christians believe that we must be in the Holy Spirit in order to preach the gospel. However, I never heard anyone tell us that we must be in our spirit. But Paul says that we need to be in our spirit. Preaching the gospel depends on our spirit. Paul said that he served God in the spirit in the gospel of His Son. When we preach the gospel, we should not employ any gimmicks; we should exercise our spirit.

Why is it only in the book of Romans that Paul says he serves God in his spirit? Because in this book he argues with the religious people who invariably are in something other than the spirit—in letters, in forms, or in doctrines. In the book of Romans Paul argues that whatever we do toward God must be done in our spirit, that whatever we are must be in spirit, and that whatever we have must be in spirit. In chapter 2, verse 29, he says that the genuine people of God must be in spirit, that true circumcision is not outward in the flesh but in the spirit. In chapter 7, verse 6, he says that we must serve God in newness of spirit. Paul refers to our human spirit eleven times in the book of Romans. The last instance is found in chapter 12, verse 11 where he says that we must be burning in spirit. Preaching the gospel of God is absolutely a matter of our spirit.

### **B. By Prayer**

For the preaching of the gospel we need much prayer (1:9). We need to pray for souls and to pray for the gospel. In preaching the gospel, prayer is more needful than any kind of effort. If we are prayerless, we will be fruitless in the gospel preaching.

### **C. With Eagerness**

Thirdly, we must preach the gospel with eagerness (1:13-15). If we mean business with the Lord in this matter of gospel preaching, we must exercise these three things: in spirit, by prayer, and with eagerness. Gimmicks and techniques will not be effective. We all need to exercise our spirit to touch people, to pray, and to be ready with eagerness. If the gospel does not inspire you, it will never inspire others. If the gospel cannot convince you, it will never convince others. If you yourself do not weep with

the gospel, no one else will repent. If you weep, others will weep in repentance. Once I read a biography of a brother who was prevailing in the gospel. He did not preach very much. However, when he stood up he wept in front of all the people. After a period of weeping before them, tears of repentance came down from the eyes of the people. That was preaching the gospel with eagerness.

### **[Section 3]**

## **IV. RECEIVED BY THE CALLED ONES**

The gospel of God is received by the called ones (1:6-7). What do these called ones do? They believe. Therefore, the gospel is received by the called ones and the believing ones. We are the called ones and the believing ones. To be called is to be called out; to believe is to believe into.

Romans gives us the example of Abraham. Abraham was called by God out of the created race. The created race had fallen into many things other than God and had become hopeless as far as God was concerned. God gave up that race, calling out of it a man named Abraham. So, Abraham became the father of the called race, a race that was not created by God, but a race that was called out by God. We have been called out of everything other than God: out of the old creation, the world, the human race, and ourselves. We have been called out of good things and out of bad things, out of everything that is not God Himself. Therefore, to be called is to come out of anything that is not God Himself.

After we were called, we believed. To believe means to believe into. To believe Jesus does not simply mean to believe that there is a Jesus. To believe Jesus means to believe into Jesus; to believe God is to believe into God. Believing requires us to admit that we are hopeless and helpless and that we can do nothing to please God. We need to forget ourselves and terminate ourselves, terminating all that we are, have, and do. This is believing. On the negative side, believing means to terminate all that we are, all that we have, and all that we can do. On the positive side, it means to take God as our everything, to put ourselves into God, trusting in what He has done for us, in what He can do for us, and what He will do for us. In other words, believing is simply terminating ourselves and putting ourselves into the full trust of God. This believing is reckoned before God as righteousness and binds God to save us.

The gospel is received by the people who have been called out of everything other than God and who have believed into the Triune God, terminating what they are, have, and do, and

trusting in God for what He has done, can do, and will do. If, as such a person, you receive the gospel of God, you will confess, "I am finished. It is no more I, but Christ Who lives in me. I do not need to do anything, for He has done everything, and He will do everything for me. All that I have, all that I am, and all that I can do has been terminated by my believing into Him. Now, He is my everything." This is the kind of person who receives the gospel of God.

#### **A. Through the Obedience of Faith**

The called ones receive the gospel of God through the obedience of faith (1:5). What is this? Under the law of Moses, God gave people ten commandments to obey. That kind of obedience was the obedience of the law, the obedience of the commandment. In this age of grace, God has given us one, unique commandment—to believe in Jesus. God does not require us to keep any commandment other than this. Regardless of who we are, we must obey God's commandment to believe in Jesus. Whoever believes in Christ shall be saved, and whoever will not believe in Christ has been condemned already because of his unbelief (John 3:18). When we obey God's unique commandment, we have the obedience of faith. This is why the Lord Jesus said in John 16:8-9 that the Holy Spirit will convict the world of sin for not believing on Him. Today there is one, unique commandment—believing in Jesus—and there is one, unique sin—not believing in Him. If you believe, you have the obedience of faith and you receive the gospel of God through such obedience. In the eyes of God the most obedient person is the one who believes in Jesus. The most disobedient person is the one who will not believe in Him. Nothing is more offensive to God than not believing in Jesus, and, on the contrary, nothing is more pleasing to God than believing in Him. If any sinner, any prodigal son, will say, "O God, thank You for sending Jesus Christ—I believe in Him," the Father will be pleased. God is happy with you when you have the obedience of faith.

#### **B. Unto Grace and Peace**

The receiving of the gospel through the obedience of faith results in grace and peace. Grace is God in Christ as everything to us for our enjoyment, and peace is the issue of the enjoyment of God's grace. This peace is the inward rest, comfort and satisfaction, not something outward.

#### **V. THE POWER OF GOD**

This gospel is the power of God unto salvation (1:16). In the book of Romans salvation means a great deal. Salvation not only means to save us

from God's condemnation and from hell; it means to save us from our naturalness, our self-likeness, our individualism, and our divisiveness. This salvation saves us to the uttermost, enabling us to be sanctified, conformed, glorified, transformed, built up with others as the one Body, and not divisive in the church life. The gospel of God is the power of God unto such a full, complete, and ultimate salvation. It is the power of God for all who believe. Praise the Lord! We believe.

#### **[Section 4]**

#### **VI. THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD REVEALED IN THE GOSPEL**

Why is the gospel so powerful? It is powerful because the righteousness of God is revealed in it (1:17). According to John 3:16, salvation is out of God's love. According to Ephesians 2:8, salvation is by God's grace. But here Paul does not say that salvation is out of the love of God or by the grace of God; he says that it comes by the righteousness of God.

Neither love nor grace is related to the law. No law forces people to love and no law compels people to give grace. Whether I love you or not, I am still lawful, and whether I extend grace to you or not, I am still legal. In a sense, God is not bound to love us. If He likes, He may love us; if He does not like, He may forget about us. Furthermore, God is not legally held to show us grace. Whenever He feels happy, He may say, "Here is grace"; when He feels unhappy, He may stay away from us. God is not bound to love; neither is He legally held to extend grace. Righteousness, on the contrary, is very much related to the law. Since Christ has fulfilled all the righteous requirements of the law, God is bound to save us. If you say, "Lord Jesus, You are my Savior," you can turn to God and say, "God, You have to forgive me. Whether You like it or not, You must forgive me. You are righteous if You forgive me, but You are unrighteous if You don't forgive me." Be strong to speak to God in this way. Because Christ has fulfilled all the righteous requirements of the law, God is bound by His righteousness to save us. Righteousness is a mighty bond. God is under such a bond to save us. God cannot escape—He has to save us because He is righteous. First John 1:9 says that if we confess our sins, God is righteous to forgive us our sins because Christ has died for us and has shed His blood for us. Therefore, God must cleanse us. There was power in the gospel preached by Paul because the righteousness of God was revealed in it. When we come to chapter 3, we will see God's righteousness.

### **A. Out of Faith to Faith**

The righteousness of God is revealed in the gospel out of faith and to faith (1:17), meaning that as long as we have the faith, we have the righteousness of God. The righteousness of God comes out of our faith and to our faith. Do not say that you have no faith. As long as you call on the name of the Lord Jesus, He is rich to you. When you call, "O Lord Jesus," He is your faith. Perhaps you will say you have no feeling that you believe. In response to this, I will tell you what happened to me over 40 years ago when I read a book about the assurance of salvation. This book said strongly that as long as we believe we are saved. Immediately I asked myself, "Have you believed? Do you have faith?" I began to doubt. For some days I was bothered about this and I was unable to eat and sleep well. I did not have the feeling that I believed. After I had been troubled for days, the Lord was merciful to me and helped me. The Lord said, "Stupid man, approach this question from another angle and ask yourself, 'Do you not believe?' Try your best not to believe." I tried not to believe in Jesus, but I was unable to do it. I simply could not stop believing in Him. This was the proof that I had the faith. If you feel that you have no faith, try to stop believing. As long as you are unable to cease believing, that proves you have the faith. Praise the Lord! We all have the faith. Provided we have this faith, God's righteousness is revealed out of this faith and to this faith. Although you may make every attempt to cast away your faith, you cannot do it because faith has come into you. Within you there is something that the Bible calls "the faith." As long as you have the faith, you have the righteousness of God.

To say that the righteousness of God is revealed does not mean that it had no prior existence. It simply means that, although it had been in existence previously, it had not been revealed or made visible. For anything that can be revealed must exist already. This righteousness of God is revealed out of faith and to faith.

Let me illustrate by holding a lovely calendar before your eyes. This calendar has been in existence for some time, but is just now being revealed to you. How is it revealed? It is revealed out of your sight and to your sight. If you were blind, the calendar could not be revealed to you, for the revelation of the calendar is out of your sight and to your sight. God's righteousness exists and has existed for ages. Since we believe in Jesus, we have the faith, and this faith is our spiritual sight. Out of this faith and to this faith the righteousness of God is revealed. Therefore,

the righteousness of God is revealed out of faith and to faith in the gospel. Praise the Lord!

### **B. The Just Have Life and Live by Faith**

The righteousness of God is revealed in the gospel that the just may have life and live by faith (1:17). The Greek word rendered "live" in this verse means both "to live" and "have life." The Chinese version translates it "to have life." Young's Concordance also tells us that the Greek word means to live and to have life. This verse is a quotation from Habakkuk 2:4, a verse which has been quoted three times in the New Testament. It is found in Hebrews 10:38 where, according to the context, it means the just shall live by faith. In Galatians 3:11 it means the just shall have life by faith because the context of Galatians 3 says that the law cannot give life to people (Gal. 3:21), that people can only have life by faith. Thus, in Galatians 3 it is not a question of living; it is a matter of having life. Romans 1:17 includes both of these meanings—to have life and to live. Therefore, we may translate the verse this way, "The just shall have life and live by faith."

This short sentence is a brief extract of the whole book of Romans. The book of Romans has three sections. The first section covers the issue of justification, showing us how to be righteous, how to be just, in the eyes of God. The second section tells us how to have life by being justified unto life (5:18). The way to have death is to be condemned by God; the way to have life is to be justified by Him. Then the third section tells us how to live. After we have received this life, we need to live it out mainly by practicing the Body life. The last section of Romans, from chapter 12 through the end of chapter 16, deals with our living. We mainly need to have the church life. The local churches are the main part of our living as revealed in chapter 16. Therefore, the entire book of Romans covers three things: being just, having life, and living properly. Praise the Lord! We all have been justified and we all have received the divine life. Now we are living out this life mainly in the Body, in the local church. This is the way to live by the divine life. The just shall have life and live by faith.