

Gospel Reset, Part 2—Romans 1-6—8/28/2016

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As summer winds down this weekend & next weekend with Labor Day, I thought I'd continue a little refresher I began a few weeks ago.

Then we'll return to our study of Revelation after Labor Day.

Last week, it was interesting that Davis Prickett quoted Martin Luther as saying we need regular refreshers from Paul's letter to the Romans.

That's what I'm seeking to do with this Gospel Reset as we looked last time at Romans 1-3 in recalling the Gospel.

After that, I thought it would be helpful to reset our minds with the way the Gospel applies to everyday life from Romans 4-8 also.

I thought we could close our summer semester considering the goodness of God revealed in the Gospel themes in Romans.

The goodness of God is one of the broader truths that is most often questioned in our times & it's one we most often need to remember.

I shared the Gospel with someone recently & many of his questions related to how we know God is good & trustworthy.

In the quagmire of confusion of our secular society, people know God is there but they lack solid answers for the why questions about God.

They need biblical explanations of God's goodness.

So I thought it would be helpful to outline ways we see God's goodness in the truths of the 1st 8 chapters of Romans.

Today we'll overview 6 ways to see God's goodness from the Gospel treasures contained in Romans 1-6.

We'll breeze over the first four from the first four chapters since we already read through chapters 1-3 in my last message.

And I read chapter 4 for our Scripture reading earlier today so that it's fresh in our minds for me to summarize quickly.

Then we'll read & consider chapters 5-6 more fully to connect the Gospel to daily life in relation to God's goodness.

We still need to see God's goodness as maturing Christians.

We need to treasure God's goodness as part of growing in faith.

Every sin is a choice against God's goodness & a decision to believe the same lie the Devil used in the garden with Eve.

You teens will remember Jose Espinoza at YBI retreat repeating temptation's assaults as saying 'God's not good' & 'God's not true.'

Jose boiled down the fight to follow Christ & flee sin as the fight to believe that God IS good & God IS true.

I want to help all of us in that fight with refreshers from Romans.

In Romans, that starts by recognizing that the bad news about US is in contrast to the goodness of God.

After the introductory remarks in Romans 1:1-17, you may recall that Romans 1:18-3:20 are Paul's steps to prove our need for the Gospel.

In order to value Jesus the Sinless Savior, we first need to rightly view the depth & debt of our sins.

Paul proved that by showing in chapter 1 that immoral people lack righteousness & in chapter 2 that moral people also lack righteousness.

Then he summarized those in Romans 3:1-20 by stating that all people lack righteousness.

Those who do not have God's written revelation in the Scripture—those Paul described as without the Law—still have a remnant of God's moral code written on their hearts.

Every single individual either congratulates or convicts himself based on that hard-wired sense of right & wrong.

That's the nature of being created in God's image.

So as a 1st point, I remind you of the truths of Romans 1 where we see God's goodness in His creation & general revelation.

So point #1 of 6 ways to see God's goodness is from Romans 1.

#1—see God's goodness in His creation & general revelation.

As Psalm 19 exclaims, creation calls out praise to the Creator & Romans 1 adds that our inward sense of right & wrong also points to our Creator as the Lawgiver.

God is good to show His glory in creation & in the conscience.

That's why Romans 1 reiterates what Psalm 14 illustrates, that it is a moral act of rebellion to deny God's existence.

Evidence of God's existence is within & around us all.

And the beauty & intricacy & wonder & pleasure in the universe is part of God displaying His goodness.

Our abilities to reason & set standards & have emotions & enjoy relationships are part of God's goodness to us.

That's why the only consistent worldview starts with God as Creator.

As Proverbs 9:10 states, the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom & without that all else goes wrong.

And God made that response of fearing Him accessible to everyone.

Through what has been made around us & what is in us, all humans know God is there as our Maker & our Judge.

God revealed that generally—meaning to everyone—& that's why it's called general revelation.

That's distinct from the special revelation God gave through His proven spokesman that we have in the Scriptures.

The Bible is God's special revelation of who He is & what He has said is good & what He requires & how to enjoy His design.

So that brings us to Romans 2-3 where we can 2ndly see God's goodness in His justice & special revelation.

Point #2—see God's goodness in His justice & His special revelation.

I'm reviewing chapters 1-3 quickly as part of this outline.

So I remind you that chapter 2 begins by appealing to our sense of justice that leads us to judge others who do wrong.

That ability to judge others is part of God's justice hard-wired in us that points to His good order of protection & enjoyment.

And He extended that goodness further with clear definitions of what's good & right in the special revelation of the Bible.

So God is good to give not only creation & general revelation, but also His standards of justice & His special revelation.

All that is evident in Romans 1 through chapter 3, verse 20.

You recall that after proving that immoral & moral people lack righteousness, he concluded that no one is righteous in 3:10-12.

That was the bad news about us as sinful people made by a good God.

But then Paul turned to God's goodness in His grace & Gospel revelation in Romans 3:21 through the end of chapter 3.

Romans 3:21-31 extols the wonder that God provides righteousness by faith in Jesus Christ.

God forgives sin & grants what's needed to reach Him freely as a gift to all who trust & treasure Jesus Christ.

That free gift is initiated & applied all by God's grace revealed in the message of Jesus Christ called the Gospel.

Jesus is God the Son who came from heaven to be a man to live perfectly & die sacrificially to satisfy justice in paying for the sins of everyone who would ever believe.

That's God's grace & Gospel revelation in Romans 3:21-31.

So as a 3rd point in framing up what we covered last time, we can see God's goodness in His grace & Gospel revelation.

1st, see God's goodness in His creation & His general revelation.

2nd, see God's goodness in His justice & His special revelation.

Then, 3rd, see God's goodness in His grace & His Gospel revelation.

Since I covered all that last time, I'll mention it & move on.

Next from chapter 4, which I read earlier, note 4^{thly} today that we can see God's goodness in His faithfulness & His consistent revelation.

As a 4th Gospel reset from Romans today, see God's goodness in His faithfulness & consistent revelation.

Romans 4 recounts God's grace to OT heroes Abraham & David & how they were saved by grace through faith alone like we are today.

God has been faithful to fulfill His past promises as He has consistently moved by His grace to save souls through history.

Believers through the ages like Abraham & David & Paul been saved not by their own works but by faith in God's Promised Savior.

That's all part of God's faithfulness & consistent revelation.

As we see that, we can praise His goodness & we can trust Him.

Those are themes of God's goodness through Romans 1-4.

But once you've trusted in this God as revealed in Christ, then what?

If you know all that, then can you rest?

If you can, what does that look like & what should it not look like?

What about when you fail again?—how do you respond?

Do you wonder if God or other people will still accept you?

Do you distance yourself from God & others?

Or do you work hard to try to make up for it or get busy doing good to make you feel better?

Or if your sin is really bad or repetitive, do you sink into hopelessness wondering if you'll ever have victory?

And where do you run when you really blow it or when everything around you seems to blowing up?

The goodness of God toward His people revealed in Romans 5-6 gives some help in dealing with such questions.

So turn to Romans 5 where we pick up our Gospel Reset & start reading to pick up a 5th point for today.

Follow along with me as I read Romans 5:1-2. [READ]

The 5th point to note today as we start into chapter 5 is to see the goodness of God in His love and His secure salvation.

Point #5—see God’s goodness in His love & secure salvation.

Since verse 1 starts with ‘therefore’, it is building on what we’ve covered about justification by grace through faith in Jesus Christ.

And when verse 1 refers to ‘having been justified by faith’, it narrows the circle of who is included in the benefits of God’s ultimate goodness.

God has a general love for all people & He has shown that in the blessings of life & laughter & food & friendships & more.

But Romans 5 gets very specific about the love of God at a far greater level shown to those who are justified by faith in Christ.

So you want to be sure you are justified—be sure you grasp that.

To be justified is to be declared right with God, to be categorized & classified in God’s legal system as not-guilty.

To be justified is to be counted righteous & reconciled to God.

And that comes by grace through faith in Christ, not through any works as chapters 3-4 explained.

Verse 1 says that being justified by faith, we have peace with God.

That means we are no longer at war against God & He is no longer at war against us.

Trust in that truth also brings a personal feeling & experience of peace.

We can be anchored in Christ because verse 2 says it is through Jesus that we stand in a place of total grace with God.

A lot of people in our times struggle to figure out their place in life.

Have you heard of others say that or have you felt like you were trying to find your place?

Well, here’s how to find your place no matter what group or setting you are in—find it in God’s grace.

If you know your place is your identity of standing in God’s grace, then you never need to feel lost.

In contrast, if your sense of security is linked to whether people accept you or how well you perform, you will float around with no anchor.

If you need others to affirm you for you to feel ok, you will continually struggle with insecurities or control freak issues.

And you’ll never be free to love other people because you’ll always need to get something from them to make you whole.

But for the Christian, your place in Christ is in God’s grace & His secure salvation.

That is secure because it is by being rooted in who Jesus is & what Jesus has already done & He is always enough.

You might think of it like this—God does not offer a prepaid allowance plan where your minutes of salvation can run out & you can be left with no access to God.

God does not start to charge or require more if we sin too much.

And God also does not offer a pay-as-you-go plan where you feel peace or assurance if you've done well for the week.

Because Jesus' death finished paying the eternal debt in full, His people have the unlimited plan where His grace never runs out.

We receive God's free goodness continually & we exult in the assured hope of a growing experience of God's goodness.

That's what it means to exult in hope of the glory of God in verse 2.

Our life with God will always get better because we move from one level of glory to the next, as 2nd Corinthians 3:18 puts it.

We experience more & more glorious goodness of God forever.

That is what it means to have a secure salvation & exult in it!

And that is another way that we see God's goodness.

God is so able to provide secure salvation that He even abounds His goodness through the worst of situations.

Read Romans 5:3-5 to see that. [READ]

God builds this upward spiral of gracious transformation and joyous hope in and through difficult times.

We know that God will do that because He has already done the far greater thing in sending Jesus to die for us when we were enemies.

Read Romans 5:6-11. [READ]

If God has done the greater thing in reconciling rebels to show His love in Christ's death, He will surely take care of everything else.

Much more with Christ risen & believers as His friends, God will pour out His love to protect us in His secure salvation.

God has demonstrated His love in the greatest problem, so He will continue His love in the lesser troubles of this life.

And in doing so, God proves His goodness to His people.

So the next time you sin, remember that & don't assume you need to distance yourself from God or other people until you make up for it.

Don't doubt if God still loves you if He's already sacrificed His own Son on the cross for you.

Don't run to other refuges or therapies for hope & help when you lack peace or feel insecure or long to feel accepted or find your place.

Run to this God to see & experience afresh His goodness in His love & His secure salvation in Christ.

Put your mind to work meditating on the treasures of this chapter & pour your heart out to God in prayer & thanksgiving.

And that reality grows deeper in verses 12-21 where the effects of being in Christ are shown as far greater than being in Adam.

As I read it, realize that just as Adam's sin applied to everyone who was his, so also Christ's death & life apply to everyone who is His.

Just as everyone in Adam gets what Adam earned, so everyone in Christ gets what Christ earned.

Follow along with me as I read Romans 5:12-21. [READ]

Here's the overall point of the section—Adam brought sin to all who are connected with him & that is totally based on Adam's work alone.

So also Christ brings salvation to all who are connected to Him & that is totally based on Christ's work alone.

And that secures our salvation freely & irreversibly in Christ.

Isn't that amazing?

That is the goodness of God on display.

So see God's goodness--#5—in His love & His secure salvation.

Then ask yourself—if I have run to this loving God & His security through the cross, what do I do next?

What if you have run to the cross again & again & yet you feel like you are making NO progress or having NO victory over sin?

Then what?

Then you move into Romans 6 for more hope in God's goodness by seeing God's goodness in His promises & freeing power.

That's point #6 today—Romans 6 awakens us to see God's goodness in His promises & His freeing power.

Look at Romans 6:1-2 with me. [READ]

With the free, lavish forgiveness that has been described for those in Christ, the question comes up if sin matters.

Should we care if we keep on sinning since all sin is forgiven?

Yes we should—& be warned that a lack of care about sin contradicts the new nature of being forgiven for sin.

The new nature of those whose sins are forgiven by Christ is one that does not want to sin.

Verse 2 describes Christians as having died to sin—died not only to its eternal penalty, but also to its power.

Death to sin with Christ is connected to new life in Christ & that new life wants to overcome sin and live differently.

Read Romans 6:3-10. [READ]

To be a Christian is to have your old nature dead in union with Christ's death & to be raised to new life like Christ was raised.

That's what it means to be born again, to use the term Jesus used in John 3, to be regenerated as Titus 3:5 puts it.

Regeneration is being born again, made alive into a totally new person.

The old person dies with Christ & we are raised by the Spirit into totally new life.

As new creatures in Christ, 2nd Corinthians 5:17 says the old has gone & the new has come.

That new life & death of the old is what Romans 6 highlights to give us hope for change.

As new people in Christ, Romans 6:7 says, we are freed from sin—freed from its total rule and control over us as its slaves.

If you trust Christ, then you are free.

God promises here that you do not have to sin anymore.

If you are in Christ, you are free to obey God, free to walk in newness of life, free to let go of addictions & enslavements.

You can't do anything you want because you are not all-powerful.

But you CAN do what God has commanded and that means you can live in the blessings of the true freedom of obedience.

True freedom is NOT being able to chase any lust that controls you & makes you its slave.

Instead, true freedom is being able to enjoy obeying the good design of God for our lives and the blessings of His ways.

That's the true freeing power God promises to those in Christ.

In Christ, we are free to live the abundant life He promised.

This freedom is ours in Christ and we simply need to consider it true and apply it by the Spirit in our daily battles.

We're told that in Romans 6:11-23 so now read that. [READ]

Here's a perfect example of how God can promise something & declare something true of us & yet we must act on it.

God has not saved people for us to wallow in our sin and never have any victory and never know how to change.

He promises we are free in Christ to obey Him with power to change.

But then He tells us that we must count that to be true & we must actively present our minds & bodies to God as instruments of righteousness & no longer as tools for sin.

We must do something with God's promises.

We must act by faith to apply the victory He has provided.

But we can expect God to give grace because we even obey by grace.

So Christians must not approach obedience as a way we measure up to a law or as a means of gaining favor with God.

Verses 14-15 say we are no longer under law as how we relate to God.

Instead we are under grace and that grace relationship empowers us to be happy, trusting slaves of God.

We enjoy God's service because we see Him as the most loving, good, wise, gracious Master possible.

We don't serve God because we have to.

We serve Him because we want to.

We serve Him because we see and respond to His goodness.

And as we do so, verse 19 notes that we grow in sanctification.

That means we become more happily holy.

Sanctification is the process of God making us more holy in our lives.

Our justification is a one-time declaration from God about us.

But our sanctification is a process, not a one-time event.

We grow in holiness by trusting what Christ has done to give us the grace of freedom from sin & power to obey.

And though we won't reach perfect obedience & holiness until we are glorified in God's presence, we should be ever growing more faithful.

We should be progressing in sanctification.

We can experience that growth as Christians because God has given us new life with a new nature with new freedom & new power.

So 6thly & finally today, we see the goodness of God in His promises & His freeing power—that's point #6.

See how good God is not to leave us struggling along in sin with no help & no hope & no promises & no power.

God is so good to His people that He causes our old nature to die & we receive a new nature with divine power to change.

We receive divine promises that describe our freedom and direct us how to overcome sin & enjoy holiness.

You don't have to flounder around in despair or helplessness.

If you know Christ, you can change!

So see the goodness of your God and respond to Him.

See God's goodness (1) in His creation & general revelation, (2) in His justice & special revelation, (3) in His grace & His Gospel revelation, & (4) in His faithfulness & His consistent revelation.

Then finally, see God's goodness in (5) in His love & His secure salvation, & (6) in His promises and His freeing power.

Do you see the goodness of God in the Gospel treasures?

If so, then live in the fullness of this marvelous Gospel!

Don't treat it as a past fact that has little to do with daily life.

Have you truly been born again where you really know your old nature is gone & you have been made completely new?

I don't mean you won't have struggles because all Christians will fight to grow in holiness until we see the Lord.

But have you really come to peace with God in the fullness of a relationship with Him based only on His grace?

There is nothing more freeing, more empowering, more secure, more satisfying, & more loving, than knowing God in Christ.

I pray you know Him.

If we can help to lead you to Him, please let us know.

I pray we will all know Him more day by day as we meditate upon & apply the glories of His goodness.

Pray with me as we close.