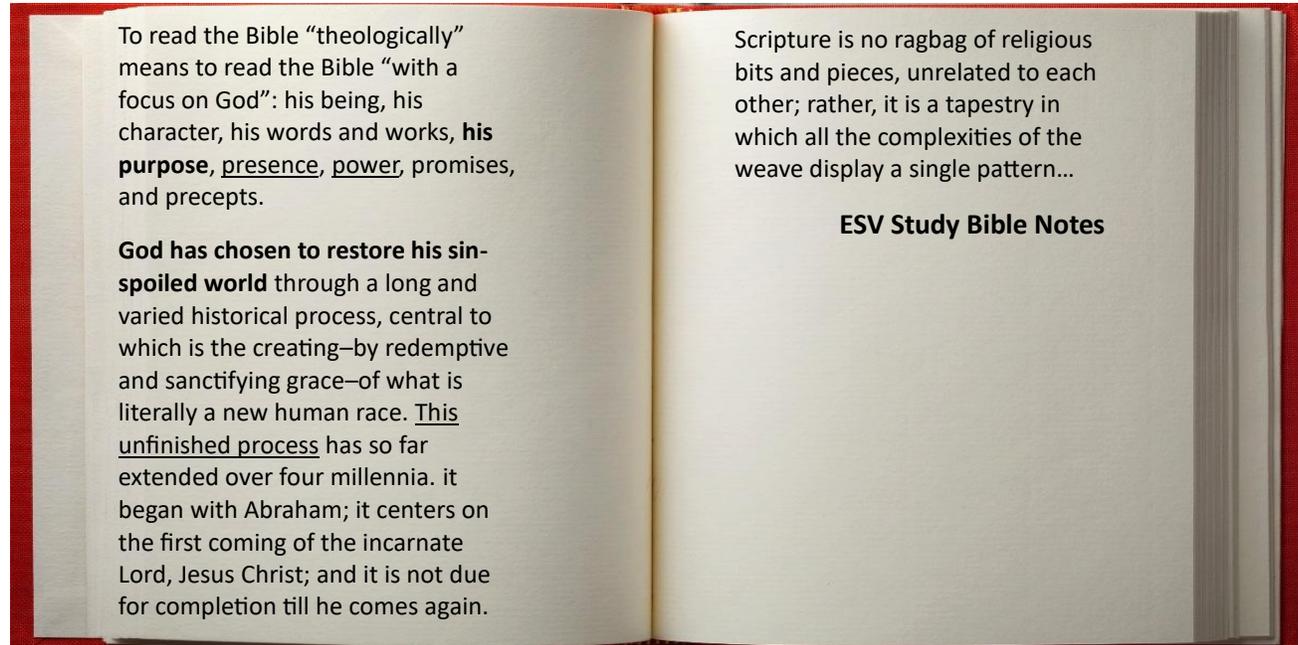


“God’s Big Story—ie, The Gospel” – Romans Pt. 1

The Ministry of the Epistles

November 16, 2025

“Bible Reading is More Than Just Reading!”



"Here's a challenge: You have to sum up the Bible, but you only have four words to do so. What will you choose? "God loved the world"? "Jesus died for you"? These and other similar formulations contain wonderful biblical truths, but they're not quite so good at capturing the rhythm of the biblical story.

At the risk of coming over as rather boring, let me suggest another four words: "creation, fall, redemption, consummation." Not quite as catchy, I'll grant you, but in these four words we have, compressed like a tightly coiled spring, a whole understanding of life, the world, and humanity. Everything the Bible addressed it sees as part of this grand story of God's creation of a good world, the fall into sin, God's heroic and ferociously patient rescue mission, and the consummation of all things in the new heaven and the new earth. Everything the Christian thinks about and feels—relationships, the natural world, politics, work, hobbies, triumph, tragedy, boredom—is part of this four-stage story." **Christopher Watkin**, "The Gospel After Christendom: An Introduction to Cultural Apologetics", p. 33-34

Law	History	Wisdom Poetry	Prophecy	Gospel	Letters
Old Testament Genesis Exodus Leviticus Numbers Deuteronomy	Old Testament Joshua Judges Ruth 1 & 2 Samuel 1 & 2 Kings 1 & 2 Chronicles Ezra Nehemiah Esther New Testament Acts	Old Testament Job Psalm Proverbs Ecclesiastes Song of Songs	Old Testament Isaiah Jeremiah Lamentations Ezekiel Daniel Hosea Obadiah Jonah Micah Nahum Habakuk Zephaniah Haggai Zechariah Malachi New Testament Revelation	New Testament Matthew Mark Luke John	New Testament Romans 1 & 2 Corinthians Galatians Ephesians Philippians Colossians 1 & 2 Thessalonians 1 & 2 Timothy Titus Hebrews James 1 & 2 Peter 1 & 2 & 3 John Philemon Jude

GENRES OF THE BIBLE

Genre - "Epistles"

"Epistles" ...more of a "teaching", "explaining", "connecting the pieces", "doctrinal forming" presentation.

"Synthesis" (Def.) - The combination of parts or elements so as to form a whole (Webster); the combining of the constituent elements of separate material or abstract entities into a single or unified entity (Dictionary.com) (From Greek 'sunthesis' - to place together' 17th Cent.)

Romans ...the Ultimate Epistle of Synthesis ...or... "Synthesizing the Gospel" ... "The Romans Road"

3 Synthesizing Visits in Romans

- Rom 1-3 ... "The Gospel for the Human Drama"
- Rom 4, 9-11 ... "God's Purpose in Election"
- Rom 12ff ... "Observation, Interpretation, APPLICATION"

Rom 1-3 ... The Gospel... for All-time, for All-Humanity

... The Bible Speaks of a Message that Sits in its Own Category of "Relevance", "Importance", and "Necessity" for Human Beings ...the unique word used to describe this is "GOSPEL".

Rom 1:1-7

v. 1 ... **"Gospel" (euangélion-Gk.) = "good news", glad tidings,**

- It has "Life/Existence Defining Qualities" ...Paul's Life Purpose
- It has "Historic Precedence" ...v. 2-3
- It Accomplishes Something UNIQUE! ...v.4 (Death's Defeat)
- It Rightfully Summons Human Allegiance! ...v. 5

...it is an "Existential Reality" for Heaven & Earth and for All-time!

Rev 14:6-7 ⁶ Then I saw another angel flying directly overhead, with an eternal gospel to proclaim to those who dwell on earth, to every nation and tribe and language and people. ⁷ And he said with a loud voice, "Fear God and give him glory, because the hour of his judgment has come, and worship him who made heaven and earth, the sea and the springs of water."

... "an eternal gospel"

...for "every nation, tribe, language, and people"

...The Gospel is a "for all time" message "for all the earth"!

Gal 3:8-9 ⁸ And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, "In you shall all the nations be blessed." ⁹ So then, those who are of faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith.

Luke 2:10 And the angel said to them, "Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people

Mark 1:14-15 ¹⁴ Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God, ¹⁵ and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel."

Acts 14:15-17 ¹⁵ "Men, why are you doing these things? We also are men, of like nature with you, and we bring you good news, that you should turn from these vain things to a living God, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and all that is in them. ¹⁶ In past generations he allowed all the nations to walk in their own ways. ¹⁷ Yet he did not leave himself without witness, for he did good by giving you rains from heaven and fruitful seasons, satisfying your hearts with food and gladness."

The gospel records a historical event, but this event transcends ordinary history. Similarly, it consists of narratives and teachings, but it also relates to human reality and shows itself to be **living power**." (Theo. Dict. of the N.T.)

Rom 1:16-17

...This "Gospel" is a "message" but it is also "electricity" (a power of some kind!).

...Thus, Gospel Proclamation and Gospel Receiving is More than Reading The NY Times or a Novel—it is interacting with Power-Energized-Words!! ...Thus, the "believing/receiving" of the Gospel is NOT like what happened in your high school World History Class or the Day you grasped the structure of a water molecule in Chemistry Class!

Matt 16:13-17

1 Cor 1 ...¹⁷ For Christ did not send me to baptize but to preach the gospel, and not with words of eloquent wisdom, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power.¹⁸ For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. ...²⁶ For consider your calling brothers, not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, and not many of you were of noble birth ...²⁷ But God chose...²⁹ so that no human being might boast in the presence of God. ³⁰ And because of him you are in Christ Jesus ...³¹ so that, as it is written, "Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord."

...So this "Gospel" is a "Set of Words" –BUT, it is Words Infused with Strange Power!

v. 17 ... **"in it [Gospel] the righteousness of God is revealed"**

...CLARIFY— "Righteousness is NOT the same as "moral decency" or "relative Human Goodness"

— Simply put: **"Righteousness is the quality of being "Right" with God's Purpose, Plan, & Intention."**

"the supreme question that each of us asks ourselves time and time again: What is wrong with the world? What is wrong with the human race? That question can take other forms: Why do we treat each other so terribly? Why do we do such horrible things, such as genocide and murder and driving others into poverty? Why can we not live at peace with one another and just be happy? Whatever form it takes, this question is central to making sense of existence. ...What's wrong with us?

...Many attempts have been made at answering this question. Some people hear news of ethnic cleansing and point to a sociological reason, arguing that it's clearly the result of racism. But that response doesn't actually answer the question. Why are we humans capable of such racist atrocities? How can we be so callous toward another race in the first place? ...Others may read the story about teenagers turned hit men and turn to sociology as well, saying it's the result of poverty. But why would a human being respond to poverty with murder, of all things? The sociological factor is not, at root, the answer. Sociological reasons may be the occasion for murder, but they are not the cause. The answer the Bible gives us for why we do such heinous things is both simple and complex. That answer is sin.

Many reading this may be irritated and think this is a primitive and old-fashioned analysis. My response—and the Bible's—is yes! Of course it's primitive and old-fashioned—because it's true and deeply woven into the world and its entire history. It would be a terrible answer if it weren't old-fashioned. ...But—and this is where the complexity of the answer begins to appear—sin is not limited to the most grievous things we read about in the news. The questions we ask about humanity's depravity also extend to our own selves. How does it become so easy for us to lie to someone? Why do we keep coming back to crippling addictions instead of giving them up the instant we realize they're hurting us? The truth of the matter is that we will never be able to answer these questions unless we come to understand sin. We will never be able to resolve our personal problems, let alone the rest of the world's

problems, unless we possess a full comprehension of sin. After all, how can we prescribe a remedy unless we first diagnose the disease?" Timothy Keller, "What's Wrong with the World", p. xii-xv

...Where did this condition of "SIN" (ie, "Unrighteousness") come from?

Rom 1:18ff ...Synthesizing the Story of CREATION & FALL

v. 18 ... Welcome to Earth—the Realm of the **"ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth"**

?? - WHY is their Pain, Suffering, Abuse, Neglect, Disease & Death? ...Do You Accept the "Rom 1 Answer"?

v. 19-20 ... **THE CREATION Chapter** ... Origin, Ownership, & Intent MATTER! ...THIS is the source of God's Definition of Righteous/Unrighteous!!

... God Initiated an Earthly Realm that was Purposeful and Righteous ... Man's "Repurposing" of His Existence = UNRIGHTEOUSNESS! ..."WRATH" is connected with the Rejection & Reinvention of Creation for Man's Substitute Purposes!

v. 21-24 ...**Man is a "Rejecter" and a "Rebel"!** ...[Remember the Biblical Storyline: Eden-->Flood-->Tower of Babel-->Egyptians

...It is NOT an accurate picture of Human Nature to describe us as "Innocent" or Inwardly Good (although we are perhaps "comparatively good" or "not as bad as others")

"The State of Theology (2025)" (Ligonier Ministries & Lifeway Research)—64% of evangelicals believe that "Everyone is born innocent in the eyes of God," and 53% affirm that "Everyone sins a little, but most people are good by nature."

"...having a series that examined sin in its many forms and dimensions was important in a place like New York City. People didn't like the word. Once after a service a well-dressed woman came up to Tim and shouted angrily (presumably because of the confession of sin in the liturgy of the worship service), "Neither I nor any of my children will ever confess to being sinners!" She then spun on her heel and marched out of the auditorium. On another occasion, a new convert invited Tim to meet with several of her friends. Their conversation was cordial until one of the women fixed Tim with a hard stare and said, "You think I'm a sinner, don't you?" Tim tried to explain that he did not believe she was different from anyone else. We are all sinners who fall short of what God meant us to be; we are all broken, all in need of grace. It didn't make any difference. The conversation was over. She believed sin was a "nuclear" word, reserved for the scum of the earth, applicable only to murderers, rapists, Nazis, and members of the KKK. Nothing Tim said could convince her otherwise. ...The need to explain sin in its many dimensions and its universal contagion of all people is clearly necessary. It's not a concept most people are familiar with, and when they do hear it, there is often resistance. The idea that we have all rebelled, in our own individual ways, against the rightful king of the universe, rejected his love, trampled on his heart . . . well, it just doesn't fit in our good/bad, right/wrong, I'm in/you're out world." **Kathy Keller** - from the preface of "What's Wrong with the World" by Tim Keller

Rom 3 — Synthesizing REDEMPTION

Rom 3:9-12 ... "All have sinned, none are righteous"

Rom 3:21-28 [The Righteousness of God Through Faith]

...Synthesis & Summary means Big DOCTRINAL Words!— "righteousness" (& "wrath") ... "faith", "apart from works" ... "justified" ... "redemption" ... "propitiation"

“If there is a lack of joy in your life today, if the thought of Jesus dying for you does not transfix and transform you, if you’re not able to draw power out of the thought of what he has done for you on the cross, then you don’t understand the enormity and power of your sin. You haven’t really seen how much of a debt Christ paid for you. You don’t know how far he has brought you. You don’t know the magnitude of what he has done. And you don’t know the seriousness and depth of your sin that led him to do what he did. Put another way, if you don’t understand sin, you are neither pessimistic enough nor optimistic enough to deal with life.

On the one hand, if you believe the reason people do the terrible things they do is because of poor social conditioning or evolution or repressed psychology, you’ll never be able to deal with life as it is. ... You won’t be pessimistic enough, so to speak, to grapple with the bleak realities of life.

On the other hand, without a full understanding of sin, you won’t have the grounds for the optimism necessary to remain hopeful in the midst of life’s harsh realities. Only via a clear view of sin can you see there are some things Jesus has done for us and has given to us and can do in us and is doing in us that make any earthly happiness look like little but trash. That’s what provides the joy and the confidence to survive. If you don’t understand sin, you’ll be neither pessimistic enough nor optimistic enough to deal with life.

If we stand any chance of answering the question of what is wrong with the world—much less of being saved from the answer to that question—we must begin with understanding the complexity and multifaceted nature of sin and end with understanding the unfailing love of a God who chooses to save us from it. **Keller, Timothy.** *What Is Wrong with the World?: The Surprising, Hopeful Answer to the Question We Cannot Avoid* (p. xix, xx). Zondervan. Kindle Edition.