

"God's Purpose in God's Power – The Gospel Synthesized in Romans"

The Ministry of the Epistles

November 23, 2025

Theology is for doxology, that is, glorifying God by praise and thanks, by obedient holiness, and by laboring to extend God's kingdom, church, and cultural influence. The goal of theological Bible reading is not just to know truth about God (though one's quest for godliness must start there) but to know God personally in a relationship that honors him" (ESV Study Bible Notes)

GENRE

...Epistles are "Synthesizers" ...they teach, clarify, network/connect concepts, introduce 'doctrinal words' (summarizing aspects of the Big Story) ...they are "synthesizing": O.T. Patriarch stories + Egyptian Bondage Locals + Red Sea Miracle Events + the Law + Tabernacle Imagery + Prophetic Witness + Teachings/Life of Jesus + Cross/Resurrection/Ascension

?? - WHY am I interested in this "synthesis"? ...because there are things about my life, my moment, my existence that are crying out for some kind of explanation!

Rom 1:16-17 ¹⁶ For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. ¹⁷ For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, "The righteous shall live by faith."

"Power of God for Salvation" ...What kind of "power" do we need?

?? - Have You Stopped to Consider How Severe was THE FALL?

...POWER to do 2 Things:

- (1) Power... To make RIGHTEOUS what is UNRIGHTEOUS—**the Power to Save us from GOD!**
- (2) Power... To Make WILLING what is UNWILLING & UNINCLINED & UNMOTIVATED—**the Power to Save us from OURSELVES!** (Something so Powerful that nothing created can thwart—not Satan, not Sin, not even MAN!!—can Stop It!)

? - How Would You Go About Making Human Beings RIGHTEOUS?

...But That Won't Work! ...Rom 3

Power to Make us Righteous

Rom 3:10-12 ...The Bible's Insight on Human Righteousness is this! ...NONE = Righteous! (Plenty are "nice", "kind", "helpful", "decent")

Rom 3:21-25 ²¹ But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it— ²² the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction: ²³ for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴ and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, ²⁵ whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins.

...Romans "Synthesizes" all of the Bible's Theology and explains that Our "Righteousness" will be accomplished via SUBSTITUTION! ...Jesus will take on himself Our UNRIGHTEOUSNESS ...and He will Impart to Us His RIGHTEOUSNESS!

? - Are You SURE God's Plan ('Redemption') is Going to Work? ...Sometimes it can look like "sin, Satan, & suffering are in control of this world!"

Rom 9:6 But it is not as though the word of God has failed.

...WHY would this be part of the "Romans Conversation"? — Because sometimes we don't have eyes/understanding to see God's plan amidst the noise of "Life-Under-the-Sun"

?? - WHY Would I Ever Think God's Plan Could FAIL? ...that would imply it has some kind of "flaw" or "insufficiency" or "inability" in it! ...and since GOD has no "flaws" or "insufficiencies" in Him—we Must Have Managed to SMUGGLE Man Into This Redemption Plan!!

Power to Save us From OURSELVES

?? – What Kind of POWER Does it Take to Save us From OURSELVES?

?? – How Bad was the Fall? ...How Corrupting was the Fall? ...How Much Force is Exerted On Our Hearts/Minds by the "Unholy Trinity"—Sin + Satan + Self??

Rom 1:18-29 ¹⁸ For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth.

²¹ For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. ...²⁴ Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves, ²⁵ because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen.

²⁶ For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature...

...a "frame of mind" that generates consistent life-chaos—"given over to lusts" [desires don't function correctly in man!] --"impurity, dishonoring of their bodies"; doing life in a way that is "contrary to nature"

...a "frame of mind" that is "Ultimately Disoriented"! – v. 25

²⁸ And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done. ²⁹ They were filled with all manner of unrighteousness...

..."given up to ...surrendered to—a debased mind" ...Result—a full blown life of "unrighteousness"!

...These are "Powerful Conditions" and "Controlling Influences" on the Human Mind!!

There is this mind that is "futile, foolish, darkened, and debased" ...AND it is "WILLFULLY Hostile" and "AFFECTIONATELY Attracted Elsewhere" ('worshiped & served', 'dishonorable passions') and is "UNREASONABLY Confused" ("did not see fit to acknowledge God"; 'contrary to nature')

Eph 2:1-3 ¹ And you were dead in the trespasses and sins ² in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience— ³ among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were **by nature** children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.

...This is a "MANKIND Description" ...This is an "Active Posture" ...This is a "NATURE" issue.

Eph 4:17-19 ¹⁷ Now this I say and testify in the Lord, that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds. ¹⁸ They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart. ¹⁹ They have become callous and have given themselves up to sensuality, greedy to practice every kind of impurity.

... "given themselves up" - it is inaccurate to think of the fallen human heart/mind as "for the most part good, with the corruption element coming from the outside"!

"Those words do not mean that we are held in chains and prevented from doing what we would desperately love to do—trust and love Jesus. No, just the opposite: the chains are not external, preventing us from having our dearest wants; they are internal. They are our dearest wants. We do not stay in darkness because the door into light is locked. No. We stay in the darkness because we "[love] the darkness" and "[hate] the light" (John 3:19–20). The cannot is the impossibility of loving what you don't love and hating what you don't hate. We were slaves of sin, not of situations. That is, we were slaves of our strongest preferences, and we preferred sin to Christ." **John Piper**, "Providence", p. 524

Rom 8:7 For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot.

1 Cor 2:14 The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned.

...If there's a Source for Human Insecurity, Uncertainty, Fear, and Hopelessness in our season of "Life-Under-the-Sun"—it is when we elevate Man's Place & Role in God's PURPOSE! ...If you are looking for HOPE in the dark places of life—DON'T look for it in human potential!

A "Purpose" So Powerful it Cannot Fail!

Rom 9:1-6

...Israel was God's nation! ...a people given Lots of SPECIAL PRIVILEGES! —

?? **...SO, Did God's Plan FAIL??** ...Did it Fail to Overcome Man's UNWILLINGNESS & Internal Corruption?

Rom 4:1-5 ...This same power to make one righteous is found in Abraham's Salvation! ...ie, **Salvation, by Receiving Righteousness (not 'Achieving Righteousness') is NOT a N.T. Concept!!**

v. 4-5 ...Note the Contrast! (Receiving vs Achieving) **...Note what is Elevated** (man's work or God's Gift)

Rom 4:9-11

v. 9 ... ? – **Who's In On This Deal?** ...NOT Just Israel!—Abraham Was NOT an Israelite!

v. 11 ... **"The PURPOSE was to make him the father of ALL who believe"**

Rom 4:13-17

v. 13 ...Again! THIS is where we get the "power to become righteous"!!

v. 16 ... a "Promise/Purpose that rests on grace and is guaranteed" ... a FAILPROOF Plan!

v. 17 ...a Miraculous Power! A Beyond Human, Beyond Sin, Beyond Corrupt Creation, Beyond Satan POWER!!

There is Only ONE Plan/Purpose for Man's Salvation (ie, "Redemption"/"Gospel")

...But This Gospel of Salvation Has ALWAYS Been by Grace that is Received by Faith!

Gal 3:8-9

It is a Plan/Purpose that Elevates God! (ie, it is GOD-CENTERED)

Rom 9:6-11

...v. 11 ... [paraphrase] *"In the absence of any positive or negative human contribution—God Determined to have a plan/purpose that would NOT FAIL!"*

Rom 9:14-16

...Remember Our "BIG STORY" (Creation, Fall, Redemption, Restoration) ...It's a "Rescue Plan". It enters into the Most Dangerous, Hostile, Uncooperative, Unwilling Environment that Has Ever Existed (ie, "Fallen")—and It Succeeds—GUARANTEED!

"What Is Divine Providence? The reason this book is about the providence of God rather than the sovereignty of God is that the term sovereignty does not contain the idea of purposeful action, but the term providence does. Sovereignty focuses on God's right and power to do all that he wills, but in itself, it does not express any design or goal. Of course, God's sovereignty is purposeful. It does have design. It does pursue a goal. But we know this, not simply because God is sovereign, but because he is wise, and because the Bible portrays him as having purposes in all he does. "My counsel shall stand, and I will accomplish all my purpose" (Isa. 46:10). The focus of this book is on God's sovereignty considered not simply as powerful but as purposeful. Historically, the term providence has been used as shorthand for this more specific focus." **John Piper**, "Providence", p. 30