

Romans 3:1-2

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[0 : 00] Grab a seat and turn in your copy of God's Word to Romans chapter 3.!

After a couple of weeks off, we're going to resume. Our study of the book of Romans. And before we do, let's pray together. Father God, please bless this time as we approach a text that is rather difficult, as we lay a stage to understand it rightly.

Soften our hearts to receive your Word. May it change us so that we'll never be the same. In Christ's name, amen. Romans chapter 3, we'll read together verses 1 through 8.

Then what advantage has the Jew? Or what is the value of circumcision? Much in every way. To begin with, the Jews were entrusted with the oracles of God.

What if some were unfaithful? Does their faithlessness nullify the faithfulness of God? By no means. Let God be true, though everyone were a liar.

[1 : 29] As it is written, that you may be justified in your words and prevail when you are judged. But if our unrighteousness serves to show the righteousness of God, what shall we say? That God is unrighteous to inflict wrath on us?

I speak in a human way. By no means. For then how could God judge the world? But if through my lie God's truth abounds to his glory, why am I still being condemned as a sinner?

And why not do evil that good may come? As some people slanderously charge us with saying, their condemnation is just. What a way to get back into Romans, huh?

This text, this paragraph is said by many. Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, who's quite a brilliant man, to be one of the most difficult texts in the New Testament.

I have had others that have confounded me more than this one. So I don't agree with him that it's the most difficult. But it is certainly one of the most difficult texts in the New Testament.

[2 : 34] This morning, I just want to stop at the end of verse 2. And I want to lay for us kind of a foundation to go on next week to understand it in its entirety for two reasons.

Firstly, I think it's important for us to understand why it is that God inspires hard texts. So that's kind of the question I want to ask this morning. Why does God inspire hard texts?

And then how should we properly handle them? And secondly, it would be good for me to have another week to be sure that the bearing I think I have on this, my understanding of it, if we talked personally together about it, I think I could get you to see what I'm seeing in the text.

It needs to be put into more eloquent words in this setting. So I could certainly use another week. But I believe what we have in these first two verses is of great value for us this morning. And so I ask that you'll key in with me.

But for us to do that, we've got to set the stage. We've got to start, rewind a little bit and lead up to the beginning of chapter 3 to understand where Paul is taking us. And this will be key for next week as well.

[3 : 38] So flip back a page to Romans chapter 1. We're going to read verse 16 and 17, which is kind of Paul's thesis statement for the book of Romans. He writes, 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.

For in it, the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith. As it is written, the righteous shall live by faith. So he's beginning to break down this argument that the law is what justified God's people, but that it's in fact righteousness that comes through faith.

So he lays that out as this thesis. And then he begins to work us through a process over the coming chapters to understand what that actually means and the implications it has for our living.

So that's where he starts. And he moves on in chapter 1 to talk about how the condemnation on the world is just. Those who are outside the law, those who have not received the word of God, are just

in their condemnation because they've seen the glory of God in the world.

We see that later on in chapter 1. And then in chapter 2, he turns his attention back to the Jews, those who had received the law, those who thought they were righteous because of their actions.

[4 : 50] And let's read together verse 12 and 13. It says, And then he moves on to talk about this outward act of circumcision that the Jews carried in their flesh, the sign of the covenant between them and God.

And he begins to deconstruct for us the thought that that is what, that action, that outward thing, that show that was put on on the outside is what justified them before God. So let's read 25, 28, and 29 together.

For circumcision indeed is of value if you obey the law. But if you break the law, which all Jews had, your circumcision becomes uncircumcision. Verse 28.

For no one is a Jew who is merely one outwardly, nor is circumcision outward and physical. But a Jew is one inwardly, and circumcision is a matter of the heart, by the spirit, not by the letter.

His praise is not from man, but from God. So he has now taken through chapter 2 those things that the Jewish people at this time held precious, those things that they thought made them right, made them proper before God, made them God's people.

[6 : 13] And he has stripped them away. And Paul, in his very eloquent way, his very logical fashion, recognizes that at this point there will be questions from his Jewish readers. As this was read in Rome, as somebody stood up to read this letter to the church, there were going to be Jewish listeners that were going to ask a question.

In a great way, Paul goes on to ask those very same questions. A Jew would say, well, wait a minute, Paul. Everything that you've just said nullifies everything we've ever known to be true about God.

It nullifies the covenant, nullifies circumcision altogether, nullifies the law. Everything you've said has deconstructed everything we've ever known to be true. We might as well throw out our scriptures.

We ought to take those 39 books that we call the Old Testament, which was their scripture at the time, and we ought to just toss it out because now you're saying that none of that matters any longer. He's going to answer that question for us in the coming weeks.

Not what he's saying at all. All he's trying to communicate is that there is now no difference between the Jew and the Greek. The way that righteousness comes to them is through faith in Christ.

[7 : 18] That's what he's doing for us. So he then gives some credit, and that's where we are, verse 1 and verse 2. Back then to the Jewish people, he says, then what advantage has the Jew?

That's the question somebody in the audience would have asked him. Then what advantage has the Jew? Or what is the value of circumcision? Which he responds, much in every way. To begin with, the Jews were entrusted with the oracles of God.

And that's where we'll stop for chapter 3. The Jews were entrusted with the oracles of God. Now, it's interesting. He does this in chapter 1, verse 8 as well, when he says, first.

And here, in the second part of verse 2, in chapter 3, he says, to begin with. And you expect him then to go on to list things. So chapter 1, verse 8, he says, first, I thank my God.

And you expect him to then say, and second, and thirdly, fourthly. And he doesn't. He just says that one thing. First. First, giving it preeminence over all the other things he's about to say.

[8 : 22] Which is what he does here in verse 2. He says, to begin with. Firstly. Of most importance. Of all the benefits that the Jews have. Which we're going to talk about in the coming weeks.

A year, possibly, in chapter 11. Which makes me cringe having to preach that chapter. We're going to get there. But firstly. More importantly than anything else.

Any benefit that the Jews had. They were entrusted. They were given the very wisdom of God. That phrase, oracles of God, is only used four times in the New Testament. And it means, literally, the wisdom of God.

The utterances of God. They were given that precious prize of the utterances of God. The oracles of God. We've been given the same, haven't we?

As this church. We now have the expanded version. The 66 chapters. We have the great commentary on all of the Old Testament. We now can read about Christ.

[9 : 24] Know about him. And we have a greater understanding of who he is and what he's accomplished for his church. And we ought to, as his church, hold those things precious.

We ought to hunger to meet with our God through his written word. Then causes you to ask the question, why is it, if God is loving to his church, if his bent in this world is to glorify himself by redeeming his church, why is this book not a little simpler?

Have you ever been frustrated in your life that it's not just a little bit easier to read? It's a great thing we try to accomplish in Christendom. We try to dumb it down, have easier translations, so that we can just get it a little bit better.

And training our minds to understand it. We want it just a little bit simpler for us. Could God have not just listed it out for us? Made it incredibly easy?

Kind of cleared up some of the theological debate that we have within our churches? Just really laid it out clean for us. God loves us immensely and does what's best for us no matter what.

[10:31] So hard text must be good for us then. These things, these challenges, these eight verses in chapter three must be for our benefit. So what do these things accomplish?

What is it that they are set about doing? That's the first question. What do hard text accomplish for the church? They bring four things.

Number one, humility. I am so humbled when I come to things like this. Honestly, I'm humbled all the time when I come to the scriptures because I'm not really very intelligent.

It's a strain for me to understand, to outline. I'm not very talented in English grammar, much less Greek grammar. It's a challenge to me, but especially hard texts like this are so humbling.

They cause me to come to God and say, God, I am not God and I need you to understand this.

They put us in a proper position when we're approaching the scriptures.

[11:40] We can't approach text like this with arrogance. There's no way any of us in this room could go, oh, I know exactly what that means on a first reading. Not a chance. If you are, you are awfully puffed up.

And then I would like to hear your explanation of the text because it probably helped me. All right. First Corinthians 2:14 says 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. The natural person. Paul's talking here about about the reprobate, the sinner, the person who does not have the spirit of God abiding within him.

But certainly as that person is incapable of understanding the things of God, we still carry around that flesh, that baggage. Right. That pulls us down, that battles, so to speak, the spirit within us.

It makes these things very difficult. I desperately want to empty myself when I come to scripture like this. That God will speak to me from his word. Secondly, hard texts bring prayer, which flows out of what I've just said.

[12:47] If I am humble and I desire to have a word from God, knowing that this is him speaking to me and for our church and for our community. For this time, I desperately want to hear him.

I will go to him in prayer. Cry to him to help me understand. Psalm 119:18 says, open my eyes that I may behold wondrous things out of your law.

And Psalm 25:5, lead me in your truth and teach me. It should be the cry of our heart as we approach texts like this. Thirdly, thought.

Hard texts bring thought or deep thinking, if you prefer. And you might say at this point, but Nathan, you've just said we should be humble and we should pray that God will illuminate us.

Absolutely. No doubt about that at all. But the two things are not mutually exclusive. Hard thinking and asking God to provide are not mutually exclusive. Because the hard thinking is the grace God gives to us for our understanding.

[13:55] It takes study. I have never once preached a sermon where I used the text alone and I just stared at it and prayed all week. Not once. That's just the way I start.

But then I go to other sources. I go places and I try to search and I find and I strain to know what is meant by every word in that text. It brings about hard, deep thinking.

2 Timothy 2:7, Paul exhorts Timothy to think over what I say. For the Lord will give you understanding in everything. So there you see the two things being taught. Think it over.

Work on it. Roll it over in your mind. For the Lord will give you understanding in that. C.S. Lewis once said something like this. It's not an exact quote.

You do not have to be educated to be a Christian. For Christianity is in itself an education. We are all theologians.

[14:54] We are all called to know and know more about God. Not just to store knowledge away in our heads, which is a fault many of us have. But to know him.

To know his person. And have that flow out into radical, Christ-like living. We do not challenge our minds the way we should. We are, even if you didn't grow up, an MTV generation.

Bopping from one thing to the next. Highly distracted and unfocused. Hard texts. If we're faithful to study them. If we care. If we go to something like this and don't just skip it because it's difficult.

We'll bring about deep thinking. Number four. Hard texts bring education.

2 Timothy 2.2 says that what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses. Entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.

[15:54] Hard texts like this birth education. Both from a historical standpoint. You know, the Bible itself has been responsible for higher education in the world.

Men wanting to rightly handle the scriptures. Who learned how to do so and taught it to others and started schools to do it. Which caused people to want to learn more about the God of the Bible.

How many universities were born? Because a vast majority of our now public schools were actually started as Christian institutions. Most of the private have some affiliation in the history.

Scripture bring education. And not just in a formal setting outside of the church. But within the church as well. They cause us to have to do things like we're doing this morning.

Right? We have to talk about how to use scripture like this. What do we do with it? Because all of you are capable of what I'm going to do this morning. And next week. And the following week.

Right?

[16:52] You're all capable. You all have the mental capacity and the spirit of God within you. To understand that you just have to know how to go about it. So let's spend a little bit of time talking about that.

So hard texts bring these four vitally important things to the health of a Christian and to a church. So then how then should these hard texts be handled? And certainly I've mentioned some of that with humbly and prayer.

Fervently. Those texts should be handled in that way. But what is the methodology? What is the science behind going about it? It's a little fancy term called hermeneutics.

You don't have to write it down if you don't want to. Which simply defines the theory of biblical interpretation. Or it's a study of the principles by which the Bible is interpreted. Hermeneutics.

I'm not going to give you an exhaustive hermeneutic lesson. There are things beyond what I'm going to say this morning. But I want to show you three stages of the hermeneutic process. And three principles of the hermeneutic process.

[17:58] So first three stages. First you have the exegesis. And just so you know, I'm not using big words this morning to sound smart. These are the proper terms for these things.

So I'll do my best to explain them. Exegesis. The process of exegesis is to bring out everything out of the text. The thoughts, the attitudes, the assumptions, and so forth of the writer.

The context in which that writer lived as well as the context in which the recipients of the letter or book lived. It's to bring out the details that are both in the text, but the things that surround it as well so that we can better understand.

This book was written in various literary forms. It was written to specific audiences. And we believe that the Word of God was inspired and it was for the church. But the letter to the Romans was written to the Romans.

So if we want to rightly understand it, we have to understand the context in which the Romans lived. It helps to know where Paul was when he wrote the letter.

[19:02] What he was experiencing in that. The scriptures were divinely inspired, but God used human means to do so. So Paul was in his personality when he wrote.

He wasn't taken over and was a little robot that pinned things. He was Paul writing to the Romans under the inspiration of the Spirit of God. So we have to know these things to understand.

Let me give you an example. A political cartoon of today might be a donkey playing tug of war with an elephant. Picturing that?

A donkey playing tug of war with an elephant. We all get what that means, right? Democratic, Republican Party. Those are the symbols of them. At battle. The two-party system here in our country. But in 2,000 years, do you think anyone would get that?

Unless they came back and studied the history and said, oh, at the time that that was written or drawn, they had a two-party system. And these were the symbols of that system.

[20 : 00] Now I get what the cartoonist was trying to say. In the same way, we must exegete a text. We must understand the details around it. And guess what? There are lots of wonderful resources to do this.

Many of you have studied Bibles that do it in brief. There are lots of online sources. Understand the culture that the Bible was being written to.

We have to know the linguistic and cultural and historical and religious things. We've got to put ourselves in the shoes of the writer to really understand the text.

That's the first stage. Exegesis. Secondly is synthesis. Exegesis. Which means to gather up the fruits of exegesis.

Those things that we have learned from the text. And place them in a larger context. In the classroom, this would probably be called biblical theology. From the pulpit, it's called exposition.

[21 : 02] Speaking. To help you take some terms you may know. Biblical theology, exposition. Synthesis is taking those truths and saying, okay, so now that I see those things to be taught here, let me take a step back from the text.

From the things I know to be true about God and his work and the world. And place them in that context. That's how, as we study the word, we're taken to other scriptures that help shore up the argument that's being made in the scripture here.

Which we'll do quite a bit next week. That's why Paul himself, in writing, uses the Old Testament in a drastic way. He's expositing. He's taking proofs from before.

Those things that the Jews knew to be true. And pulling them to the future and shoring up his argument. So that's the second stage or phase, which is synthesis.

The one I enjoy the least. And the third stage is application. Application assumes the consistency of God from one age to another.

[22 : 06] And asks the question, how does the meaning of this text apply to our living today? Our culture does not change the meaning of the scriptures.

But once we have a grasp on the culture that it was being written to, what was the truth being communicated to that culture? And how then does that truth affect our living?

Okay? Are you with me? We don't change what the meaning is because of the culture, but it speaks to our culture almost always in the exact same way it did here.

All right? Are you with me? So that's application. And you'll hear me say this all the time. All doctrine is necessarily practical. If we're not doing that, if we're just learning things to learn things, what of it?

Okay? This morning, I'm giving you a bunch of kind of schoolroom lessons here. What is the application of what I'm saying this morning? I hope that we study our Bibles better.

[23 : 04] I hope that we love the Word of God more and challenge ourselves with it that we might be more Christ-like. So there's your application. All right? So three stages. Three principles. All right?

Here we go. Get a little bit head here, but I'm going to give you some examples, so maybe we'll stay alive this morning. All right? There's three principles which are driven by the doctrine of inspiration and the doctrine of inerrancy.

All right? I've already mentioned that the Bible is inspired. It's the inspired Word of God. God himself is the author of it. A single divine mind. All right?

One guy wrote the whole thing. Used various means and lots of people over time to accomplish it. But one author. All right?

So as I approach a difficult text like this, that comforts me. Right? Gosh, it seems so contradictory. I read over here this thing. And now he's saying this over here.

[23 : 58] My mind wants to explode. I can back up and say, one guy wrote it and he's God. So let me sort this out. Let me see if I can wrestle with it and find the bearing of the text.

All right? 2 Timothy 3.16 says that all scripture is beat out by God. 2 Peter 1.21. Peter writes, for no prophecy was ever produced by the will of men, but men spoke from God, the oracles of God, as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

So the scriptures are inspired and they are inerrant. So entirely consistent. That one mind didn't change his mind. That's a problem with a lot of our books, a lot of our sermons.

I'm sure if I had every sermon that I've ever preached recorded and I went back and listened to some of them, I'd go, oh, gosh, I was so wrong about that. God never does that. Right? It's all inerrant. It's all completely consistent and true.

In John 10.35, Jesus says, Scripture cannot be broken. In Hebrews 6.18, the writer says, it is impossible for God to lie. Entirely impossible.

[25 : 05] All right? So out of these two doctrines, the doctrine of inspiration and inerrancy, we have three principles. Number one. Scripture is interpreted by Scripture.

Scripture interprets Scripture. Let me start by saying, not in every case. All right? Hear me carefully. Not in every case.

Here's an example of that. Exodus 23.19. The people of Israel are given a commandment. You shall not boil a young goat in its mother's milk. There is no Scripture, to my knowledge, that explains that.

There's no Pauline commentary on what that means. But we do know from archaeology that that was a Canaanite ritual of fertility.

So they were being commanded to not act like the Canaanites. To not be pagan. To set themselves apart. Okay? So I couldn't have gotten that from another Scripture, but I can get that from history.

[26 : 06] So not in every case, but let me show you an example where it does work and works very often. Next is chapter 32. We have the people of God have been taken out of Egypt, been delivered across the Red Sea, received the Ten Commandments.

Moses is back up on the mountain, and the people have built the golden calf. Right? So quickly they have forgotten their God, and they have begun to worship a golden calf. And God decides, from the historical text, that he is going to go down and just destroy them all.

And Moses pleads with him not to do so. And then in verse 14 of chapter 32, Moses records, And the Lord relented from the disaster that he had spoken of bringing on his people.

Now, at first reading, it would seem that God changed his mind. Right? The historical record says, God told Moses, You better leave me alone, because I'm about to go wipe out the nation.

Right? Hey, quit talking to me, Moses. I got something to go take care of. Right? But Moses pleads with him, says, God, for your glory, your people that you delivered, don't kill them all. And God changes his mind.

[27 : 21] What would that mean for us if we pulled that entirely out of its context? We are wasting our time right now, aren't we? Because we ought to all be praying right now. We ought to all be in prayer that God not destroy the world.

The final judgment. That's what we ought to be setting ourselves about constantly. Right? God's mind cannot be changed. How do we know that? Because scripture interprets scripture. We have an Old Testament story later explained in places like Job 42.2, where Job says to God, I know that you can do all things and that no purpose of yours can be thwarted.

None. No purpose. God says, I'm going to go kill the people. And Moses says, don't do it. And he goes, yeah, all right. Is that what happened? Or did God not intend to kill him to begin with? Right? But in order to test Moses' faithfulness. In order to see Moses realize who his God was. And that he was about redeeming his people. Did God not test him?

Right? Psalm 135.6 says, whatever the Lord pleases, he does. In heaven and on earth, in the seas and all the deeps. Right? So God does whatever he wants to do.

[28 : 28] He's entirely sovereign. And we cannot change his mind. We can be moved by God to pray. And God uses the prayers of his people to accomplish his will.

But we cannot change his mind. Right? Our national days of prayer for rain. Things like that. If that, if that action is what moved God to make it rain.

He was intending to do it already. And he used his people to accomplish it. Hey, are you with me on that? And that's how we use the scripture to interpret the scripture. All right? So that was number one.

Scripture is interpreted by scripture. Very similarly, but stated in the negative, number two is, scripture should not be set against scripture. So you never want to understand that scriptures are teaching you something that are in contradiction to something else.

All right? Here's our doctrine of inerrancy at play. All right? Scripture should not be set against scripture. Let me give you an example. 1 Peter 2, 9 and 10 reads, But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the

excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.

[29 : 43] Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people. Once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy. And he is, Peter is writing, he's alluding to the book of Hosea.

And if you know the story of Hosea, Hosea married a woman named Gomer, who was a harlot. She was a whore. She cheated on him multiple times. She put herself in a situation where she was sold into slavery. Right?

Has anybody ever, of their own volition, freely gotten themselves out of slavery that we know of?

No. No one ever has.

That's kind of what the term means, right? Enslaved and bonded to. And then we see in the story, Hosea goes, as this beautiful picture of what Christ has done for his church, he goes and he buys her out of the marketplace.

That's what he's, that's what Peter's thinking about as he's writing this to the churches here. We're a chosen people, standing, exposed in the marketplace.

[30 : 40] But Christ has redeemed us, paid the price of our sin, clothed us in his righteousness, and taken us home. Right? God is fully sovereign over our salvation.

What that says. Right? 2 Peter 3, verse 9. Same writer. Same guy. He's either consistently inspired, or he's schizophrenic.

He says in verse 9, The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise, as some count slowness, but is patient towards you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.

What? Now I'm confused. I've been reading straight through the New Testament. Now here I saw God is sovereign over salvation, as Peter has shown us, as he's alluded to Hosea, and now he gets here and he says, God wants all people to come to repentance?

I'm so confused. I thought God could accomplish whatever he wanted to accomplish. I shouldn't interpret them differently, should I? I shouldn't say, Well, here we see this taught, and here we see this taught. I don't know.

[31 : 43] It's a bad hermeneutic to do that. So what we have to do is we have to step back. We have to look at the greater context. We have to look at what's going on. We have to remember that Peter was writing a letter to the churches.

Right? His intended recipients of this letter were Christians that God was in the process of redeeming. A work both accomplished and being accomplished.

All right? We have been made perfect in Christ, and we are being perfected in Christ. So that's how you apply that hermeneutical principle to the scriptures. Hard text, huh?

Okay, and then thirdly. So number one, Scripture is interpreted by Scripture. Number two, Scripture should not be set against Scripture. And number three, what appears obscure should be interpreted by what is plain.

What appears obscure or secondary should be interpreted by what is plain or primary in the scriptures. God at times speaks to us with such great simplicity and then at times with such great profundity, like the first eight chapters of, or first eight verses of chapter three.

[32 : 50] So what appears obscure should be interpreted by what is plain. And what's important for us to do in our study of the Bible is to understand the themes of the Bible. This is why systematic theologies are helpful to us.

Well, they tend to get a little bit boxy, take God and reduce him to some simple points, it helps us apply some themes to Scripture, of which I want to give you three.

And I hope if you're taking notes, you'll actually write these down and I'll spell one of them for you.

Firstly, the Scriptures are Christocentric. Secondly, covenantal.

And thirdly, charismatic. K-E-R-Y-G-M-A-T-I-C. I promise I'm not doing this to sound smart.

Christocentric, covenantal, and charismatic.

I had to type that into Wikipedia. Firstly, they're Christocentric. All of the Bible is about Jesus. You want to know the evidence that we don't believe this as Christians?

[33 : 56] In our Christian bookstores, we sell and buy Bibles that exclude the first two-thirds. Right?

I'm sorry if anybody of you are carrying a New Testament today, but the rest of it matters a lot. The other 39 books also speak of Christ. You hear the person say, well, I just really like the New Testament.

It bothers me with all that Old Testament stuff. Oh, it's beautiful. That's why we are going from a New Testament book on Sunday morning to an Old Testament book on Sunday morning. In like a year and a half, when we finish Romans, we'll go to an Old Testament book of the Bible because it's important that we understand this theme that runs through the Bible, this red thread, that Christ is central to it all.

In every text of the Bible, we can in some way see Christ. And I don't want to make that seem too insane. You might go, really? In the lineages leading up to Noah?

How in the world can I see that there? In some way, there's a connection to Christ. The great climax of the story. God's redemptive purpose in the world.

[35 : 07] Some way, it's going to connect you there. So here's an example. Turn to Psalm 135. Psalm 135. I was reading this yesterday.

Psalm 135, verse 15 through 18. The idols of the nations are silver and gold, the work of human hands. They have mouths, but do not speak. They have eyes, but do not see.

They have ears, but do not hear, nor is there any breath in their mouths. All right? So a comparison to the living God. The idols that men make are lifeless. Verse 18.

Those who make them become like them, so do all who trust in them. Isn't that crazy? Those who make them become like them, lifeless, so do all who trust in them.

Lifeless. So, so how do we see Christ in that? So we see that those who worship idols, who are idolaters, are lifeless. Right? We see the nature of man, his depravity.

[36 : 14] Well, how does it speak of Christ? Well, it speaks of our need of him, doesn't it? To have life, to have abundant life in him. John chapter 20, verse 30 and 31. It's kind of his stated purpose for writing the gospel of John.

He says, Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book, but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

This is a small example that I experienced yesterday. How do you take a text like that and point it to Christ? The Bible is Christ-centric. I can guarantee it can be done. Secondly, it's covenantal.

Big picture theme going on throughout Scripture. God has made a promise to his people. began with Abraham. The Abrahamic covenant.

There's a lot of covenants made throughout Scripture, but with Abraham, God makes a covenant, and the tradition at the time was to tear a goat in half, and both parties of the covenant, so Wes and I make a bargain with each other, we make an agreement, we would both walk through two halves of this goat to say, if I break the covenant, that's what should happen to me.

[37 : 31] Not that it would, but that's what should happen to me. I should be ripped in two. When God makes this covenant with Abraham, guess who passes through? Only God. The Scriptures are covenantal.

God has made a promise to his people. He promised Abraham that he would bless the nations through his family, and he's done that, right? We're sitting here this morning because of that covenant. So we must be able to see the theme of covenant throughout the Scriptures.

It'll help us understand what's taking place, especially in the book of Romans. All right. Thirdly, charismatic. It's a new word for me this week.

Charismatic. It has its root in the Greek word for preaching, so the Bible is a proclamation. It's a theme of it. It's a proclamation of God's glory through the redemption of his people in Christ.

That's the theme of the Bible. What is it that's being said in a hard text? How is it that this thing is charismatic? How is it that it's proclaiming the good news of Jesus Christ to the glory of God? I don't have an example for you, but those are our three.

[38 : 40] Those are our three large terms, I would say. Those are our themes that we need to be paying attention to. Hermeneutic terms that we need to be aware of as we're trying to interpret Scripture.

So, Scripture is interpreted by Scripture. Scripture should not be set against Scripture. What appears obscure should be interpreted by what is plain. And there's more to it, but my prayer is next week as we approach these difficult verses, which is primarily for myself as I have to preach it, but I hope for you as you're wrestling with it this week and potentially even next Sunday as we're sitting, that we want to apply principles like this because we want to know what this text means.

That knowing what God has said to His people is highly valuable to us, and this is why it should be. Our salvation is brought to us by words, certainly by the action of Christ, right?

The action, what He accomplished is what secures our salvation. But I wasn't there. How do I know what happened? It's brought to me by words, isn't it?

I know the good news because somebody wrote it down. When it was shared with me, it was shared to me by words. The Spirit of God intersects the Word of God in people's lives.

[40 : 11] The faith to believe. Not to save souls. The Word of God. How dare we neglect it? I do this.

I am not as hungry as I should be to know God through His Word. And my prayer is, as we roll into next week and the rest of our study in Romans and as long as we get to meet together and learn about God together, that we will desire to know Him, that we will wrestle with hard text, that we will see that His Word is a great love and a gift to us, and that we'll faithfully pursue Him through it. Let's pray together.