

## Romans 01 – Controversy of Paul

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Romans Introduction

### Saul – Paul: Just the Facts

- Saul born in Tarsus, raised in Jerusalem and learned Judaism from Gamliel, a famous *liberal* Rabbi (Ac 5:34; 22:3)
- Saul possibly groomed for the Sanhedrin; celibate also
- Saul's family had become Roman citizens (Ac 22:22-29)
- Saul knew and was proud of his Jewish lineage (Ph 3:3-6)
- Saul encountered Jesus on Damascus Road: Saved (Ac 9:3-9)
- Saul's mission: Salvation to the Gentiles (Ac 9:10-19)

Not unusual for Jews who had dealings with Gentiles to have two names: Jewish and Gentile  
Saul (Hebrew) Desired and Paul (Latin): Small  
Shows change in this man's relationship with God: Jew who desired God to man humble before God

### Did Not Seek the Apostles

- When Paul was saved, he did not seek to learn from the apostles or meet them for at least three years (Co 1:15-20)
- After his salvation, Paul went into the Arabian wilderness (of his day) possibly to Mt Horeb probably to reconcile his knowledge of the Old Testament to Jesus
- Then he came back to Damascus to preach Christ
- Only then did he go to Jerusalem to meet Peter and James, Jesus' brother, for two weeks

## Paul's Revelation

- Paul received a revelation and conferred with Peter, James and John privately to prevent schisms  
(Ac 15:1-35; Ga 2:1-10)
  - This occurred after Paul and Barnabas' first journey
  - Jew's gospel included circumcision and Torah
  - Paul's teaching excluded these ceremonial aspects
  - Apostles agreed with Paul; Paul would go to the Gentiles and Peter would continue with the Jews: schism averted

## Paul's Apostleship Doubted

- Paul would take the gospel to the Jews first
  - Paul would teach Jews the Gospel in synagogues before going to the Gentiles; some believed but most were very hostile inciting riots or stonings (Ac 14:1-23)
- Even among Gentiles, Paul's apostleship was doubted
  - Paul recounted his sufferings for the Gospel that made him *small* so Christ would be great (2Co 11:23-30)

## Finally, Paul Eschews the Jews

- At his trip to Rome while arrested, Paul conferred with the Jews to persuade them to believe; again, rejected  
(Ac 28:17-31)
  - It was at this point that Paul decided to go only to the Gentiles though his heart's desire was to see Jews saved (Ro 10:1-4)
  - (ΠΡΟΣ ΡΩΜΑΙΟΥΣ) Epistle to the Romans predates his decision; it was written before his arrest in Jerusalem (Ac 21:27-28; 11)

## Romans Written in Corinth

- Romans probably written approximately 54-56 A.D.
- Paul's third journey before returning to Jerusalem and arrest
- Already Paul bows to the reality of Jewish rejection



## Written to the Church

- Paul's letter addressed to the Church at Rome
  - Paul systematically details the gospel given to him by Christ, not the apostles
  - He gives the framework for salvation apart from Judaism even though based on Old Testament scriptures
  - Through Paul Jesus teaches all of us what the Law, Prophets and Writings taught about Messiah's salvation just as He did on the Emmaus Road (Lk 24:13-27)

## Paul Controversial in His Day

### Apostleship

- Paul seldom accepted as an apostle; he was not of the twelve
- Paul did not meet apostle's criteria: did not see Jesus in flesh (Ac 1:16-22)

### Church

- Jewish church schismed with Gentiles early (Ac 6:1-7)
- Judaizers said Gentiles to be under Jews in the faith; Paul rejected this (Ac 15)
- Paul: All equal in Christ (Gal 3:28)

## Church Developed on Paul

- Though Church is built on Christ, it developed from Paul's writings and his doctrines in Romans
  - Justification by Faith *alone*
  - Imputation of sin and righteousness
  - Rejection of works-based righteousness
  - Substitutionary atonement of Jesus for sinful people
  - Paul declares the mysteries of Christ now revealed through his gospel (2p 3.1-10)

## Paul Remains Controversial

- Undermining the true church requires destruction of Paul and his writings
  - He was doubted, ridiculed and often rejection in his day
  - He remains doubted, ridiculed and rejected in our day
  - The force of his logical arguments from Scripture must be overcome if the church is to be overcome
  - Today Paul is being *redefined* by worldly scholarship (1Co 1:28-31)

## New Perspective on Paul (NPP)

- The latest in a long line of Pauline assaults is the NPP
  - Claims to use normative hermeneutical approach to *discover* (redefine) what Paul *really* meant in his writings
  - The most popular author of NPP is N.T. Wright, Bishop of Durham, member of the House of Lords (Ret)
  - Excellent article detailing NPP is, *What's Wrong with Wright: Examining the New Perspective on Paul* by Phil Johnson

## Five Pillars of NPP

- These five pillars of NPP should alarm believers
  - 1<sup>st</sup> - We misunderstand first-century Judaism
  - 2<sup>nd</sup> - We misinterpret Paul's argument with Judaizers
  - 3<sup>rd</sup> - We mistake Paul's expression "works of the Law"
  - 4<sup>th</sup> - We misconstrue Paul's "justification by Faith"
  - 5<sup>th</sup> - We misread Paul's "righteousness of God"
- "We" refers to everyone agreeing with Paul as written

## First-century Judaism

- According to NPP, Judaism in Paul's time did not teach any form of works-righteousness
  - There was no understanding of individual salvation, but a covenant people responsible for keeping the the Law thus proving one is acceptable to God
  - This very ancient view of religion was being overthrown before the Axial Age (7c. 51.16-17)
  - Law changed focus from cultural to personal salvation

## Paul's argument with Judaizers

- According to NPP, the issue was how do you define the covenant people of God when they are not Jewish?
  - Works were not to win salvation but to continue membership in the covenantal relationship with God
  - One's works demonstrated one's faithfulness to God
- Simply put, this is the antithesis to James: Works do not secure faith but demonstrate one's faith (Ja. 2:14-18)

## Paul's "Works of the Law"

- According to NPP, ethnic badges of Judaism do not guarantee covenant membership thus cannot exclude Gentiles from the covenant
  - Supposedly Paul rejected the narrow confines of circumcision and other *badges* of Judaism
  - Paul really meant that all could keep the moral law (Ten Words) and join together in ecumenical unity
  - Begs question of how to keep the moral law

## Paul's "Justification by Faith"

- According to NPP, everyone has misconstrued what Paul meant by justification by faith
  - Justification has almost nothing to do with a person's standing with God but with covenant community
  - Justification is not about "getting in" but about "staying in" the covenant
- Not surprisingly, NPP mirrors RCC and Judaism and every false religion

## Paul's "Righteousness of God"

- According to NPP, divine righteousness cannot be imputed from God to you nor can your sin be imputed to Christ who then bears punishment of sin for you
  - God's righteousness is simply his covenantal faithfulness
  - Membership in the covenant must be maintained by one's own faithfulness to the moral law
- This negates purpose of the stauros; Christ's death

## Basis of Denying Paul's Doctrines

- NPP does not attack Paul, instead they do something much worse; they attack the veracity of Scripture
  - If Scripture is not correct or has not been interpreted correctly then all that flows from error must be wrong
  - This would demand a total rethinking of doctrine along the lines of societal definitions of right-wrong; good-bad
  - Bible is no longer determinant of doctrine but societies

## Define Society

- The definition of society is under vigorous dispute
  - Traditionally societies were defined by localized communities of common interests and beliefs which would interact with other localized communities
  - Sinful man uses violence to extend control of one community over as many others as possible
  - Currently the goal is to create global community which would define right and wrong apart from Bible

## Did We Get Paul Wrong?

- NPP would throw out over 2,000 years of doctrinal understanding and embrace errors long ago rejected such Semi-Pelagianism (Works-righteousness)
- As we study Romans, we will scrutinize Paul's words comparing them to biblical history to understand truth
- First and foremost: Scripture interprets Scripture