

Romans

August 16, 2009

The Book of Romans

This is the third in our series of studies on the **Book of Romans**.

Title: “Jesus Christ is the Gospel”

“Life in Rome at the time of Paul.

“The city of Rome is located on seven hills on the Tiber River. It was the imperial capital of the Roman Empire which stretched from Arabia in the east to Britain in the west. The population exceeded a million inhabitants and the cities suffered from the kinds of urban problems that plague cities in the twenty-first century. The upper class lived in palatial villas while the middle class and lower class lived in tenement houses. The streets were lined with arches and temples and sacrificial altars.

“The Romans adopted Greek culture, language, and art. They deified the emperor and worshiped many other gods. With the many gods came many feast days on which the Romans would enjoy circuses, theaters and races. The same evils of drinking, gluttony, and gambling were prevalent in Roman society as they are today in our land.

“Into this cosmopolitan, wealthy culture came the Gospel of Jesus Christ.”

Source Unknown

Saul of Tarsus: The Apostle Paul

Neither of the world’s two reigning systems of philosophy, the **Stoic** and **Platonic**, satisfied the souls of men.

STOIC Hopeless fatalism with no life after death.

PLATONIC All religions were but different forms of expressing general truths.

Paul is the unique man for the time. Paul was educated at Tarsus, under Gamaliel, therefore he was skilled in the thought processes of the Jews. He was trained as a tent maker under Greek influence.

Romans

Paul was called of God as “one born in undue time.” There was no human mediation unless you allow that Paul heard the Gospel as he watched Stephen being stoned and “consented unto his death.”

On several occasions Paul defended his apostleship. The main prerequisite for an apostle was to have seen and to have been taught by the risen Christ.

The letter to the church at Rome is written from Corinth and probably carried to Rome by Phoebe { 16:1 } who was in the church at Cenchre, near Corinth, and thought to be from the church at Rome. Paul mentions a collection for the poor in Jerusalem which he was about to visit { 15:25 }.

The Letter to the Romans was written about 58-59 A.D. { about 30 years after the resurrection }

The church at Rome was not founded by Paul. Most scholars agree that people from Rome who were in Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost { Acts 2:10 } went home and continued in the faith.

Peter was not the first “Bishop of Rome” and it is doubtful that Peter was ever in Rome.

Romans 1:1-17

What do we have here in this letter?

An historical document that, perhaps, had some meaning to its readers in their particular culture, but has no real value to our modern world?

Or, do we have here God’s Word that is then necessarily true, and thus has relevance to all generations.

What can we learn about a person from his letters?

It is nearly impossible to discern all of the allusions to the Old Testament in this letter.

Romans

“The roughly sixty citations of the Old Testament in Romans – more numerous and concentrated than any of Paul’s other letters – are only a portion of the biblical witness upon which this letter rests.”

Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament,
G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson, Baker Academic, 2007, page 607

Paul was a highly respected Pharisee and knew the Holy Scriptures, i.e. the Old Testament.

Paul is writing to the Christians at Rome, Jews and Gentiles.

Paul had not been to Rome and wanted very much to go there.

Paul writes to ordinary people, and we have, perhaps, the greatest statement of the Gospel message. Vs 1: “The gospel of God...”

Vs 9: “...the gospel of His Son.”

Vs 16: “the gospel of Christ...”

Paul says three things about his motivation for preaching the Gospel:

1:14 **I have to** preach the Gospel - He has an obligation to all men;

1:15 **I want to** preach the Gospel - He is eager to preach the Gospel;

1:16 **I like to** preach the Gospel - He is not ashamed to preach the Gospel.

Even though he had not been to Rome; Paul was writing a letter to some people he knew {chapter 16}, to explain the Gospel in detail.

The Address 1:1-7

1:1 Paul’s credentials:

“A servant of Christ...” A willing servant of the Lord in the fashion of Moses and Isaiah.

A bondsman, Cf. Deut 15:12-18.

All Christians are slaves to Christ.

“You can’t be a servant to a dead man.” Charles Alexander

“...Called **to be** an apostle...” not just called an apostle, and not self appointed.

Romans

“...Separated to the Gospel of God.”

1:1b **The Gospel** {*euangelion*} is “good news.”
“...the gospel of God.”

From God as to its **origin**; or **about** God as to its subject.
Vs 3-5 suggests its **origin** as the meaning of the phrase “gospel of God.”

The Messiah was prophesied about in the Old Testament (1:2).

“... which He promised before through His prophets in the Holy Scriptures.”

The gospel is not a **new** way to God devised by God because of the failure of the sacrificial system of worship! Neither is it an “afterthought” by God, due to the refusal of the Jews to accept Jesus as their Messiah. The gospel is the **only** way of salvation from Adam to the last one of God’s elect who will be saved before the return of Jesus at the end of the age.

Cf. 3:21ff; 4:1ff; Cf. Galatians 3:6-9

1:3 “...concerning His Son {God’s Son} Jesus Christ our Lord...”

Jesus Christ is the sum and substance of the Gospel. {Read 1:1-6}

The Messiah is now proclaimed in the New Testament (1:3-4).

1:3 In regard to his human nature: He is a descendant of David.

1:4 In regard to his divine nature: His resurrection from the dead proves his deity.

1:6-7 Greetings to “...the called...,” “beloved of God...,” “called to be saints.”
Eschatology, so soon?

To my surprise and delight, while reading Douglas Moo’s commentary on Romans, I came across this observation:

Romans

“Consider, for instance, verse 7. Paul identifies his audience as ‘loved by God’ and ‘called to be saints.’ Both phrases are often used in the Old Testament to describe Israel. For instance, the famous vineyard analogy in Isaiah 5 begins by identifying Israel as God’s ‘loved one’ {Isa 5:1}. ‘Saints’ comes from the same root as the word ‘holy,’ one of the most common ways of describing Israel’s call before the Lord {see, e.g., Ex 19:6: ‘You will be for Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation’}. The first readers of Romans, though Gentiles, had a deep familiarity with the Old Testament - perhaps because they had been ‘God-fearers’ before they were converted. They would immediately have identified the background of this terminology and recognized that Paul was here asserting something amazing: that they, so long excluded as Gentiles from God’s people, are now included. They may have gone even further, reasoning that if they are now God’s saints, Israel must no longer be. Thus already here Paul begins to hint at the problem of Israel that he will address fully in chapters 9-11.”

NIV Application Commentary, Romans, Moo, page 41

Paul’s Interest in the Church at Rome 1:8-15

Paul writes this epistle to a local church assembly.

1:6-7 The identity of this church: It is the local body of Christ at Rome.

1:8 His praise of them: Paul praises them for their widely known faith.

1:9-10 He prays for them: He prays for the church and asks God that he be allowed to visit them.

1:11-12 Paul desires to see them.

1:13 Paul desires to serve them: He desires to sow seed among them.

1:14-15 The indebtedness to the church: Paul feels an obligation to minister to them.

The Theme of the Letter 1:16-17

“For I am not ashamed of **the gospel of Christ**, for it is the **power** of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. For in it the **righteousness of God is revealed** from faith to faith; as it is written, ‘The just shall live by faith.’ ” Romans 1:16-17

Romans

Closely connected to vs 14-15

1:16 He is not ashamed of a crucified Redeemer. Ashamed?
Crucifixion was used for criminals and it was a shameful death.

“...for it is the power of God...” { *dunamis* }

“...to salvation...” The entire scope: justification; sanctification;
glorification

“...to everyone who believes...”

1:17 In the Gospel there is being revealed, a righteousness of God.
This is its power: a God-kind of righteousness {8 times in Romans}
Cf. Philippians 3:9 and 2 Corinthians 5:21

“...faith to faith...” faith first to last; not one degree of faith to another.

And not OT faith into NT faith. Why? There is only one faith.

“... from faith, into faith...”

Faith begins with regeneration and continues with sanctification and ends with glorification.

“...as it is written, the just shall live by faith.” Habakkuk 2:4
This is the first direct quote from the OT in Romans.

Habakkuk 2:4

Behold, his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him:

but the just shall live by his faith. KJV

This was the verse in Romans that arrested the mind of Martin Luther and set in motion the Protestant Reformation.

I want to conclude with this **single point**. [conclude, finally, etc.]

Don't you love it when a preacher says, “And in conclusion.” And then preaches for another twenty minutes.

Romans

So, this is a rather lengthy conclusion: but it is the **single point** of this lesson, yes, even the main point of the Book of Romans.

What is Christianity?

Something you do? Some organization that you join?

Christianity is a vital relationship with the person of Jesus Christ!

To use a recent illustration; this week I attended the absolute worst funeral service ever. The preacher was of the Primitive Baptist faith and at one point he said that if you have ever prayed to God the Father or even thought about it you will be in heaven. A hallmark of this faith is no personal responsibility. I did not recognize the man the preacher talked about because I knew him well and he never gave any indication that he knew the Lord Jesus Christ. But that preacher had him in glory.

If you want to understand the Gospel of God; if you are ever to be saved; you must have a correct view of the **righteousness of God**.

Which means what?

God's justice? God is absolutely righteous.

What is "right"? God's covenant, His Law?

Cf. Isaiah 51:5-8 righteousness and salvation in parallel;
God, in Christ has brought His righteousness to His people.

Isaiah 51:5

My righteousness is near; my salvation is gone forth, and mine arms shall judge the people; the isles shall wait upon me, and on mine arm shall they trust. KJV

Again, if you want to understand the Gospel of God; if you are ever to be saved; you must have a correct view of the **righteousness of God**.

Romans

From Pilgrim's Progress: "Christian and Ignorance."

And I slept, and dreamed again, and saw the same two pilgrims going down the mountains along the highway towards the city. Now, a little below these mountains, on the left hand, lieth the country of Conceit, from which country there comes into the way in which the pilgrims walked, a little crooked lane. Here, therefore, they met with a very brisk lad that came out of that country, and his name was Ignorance. So Christian asked him from what parts he came, and whither he was going.

IGNOR. Sir, I was born in the country that lieth off there, a little on the left hand, and I am going to the Celestial City.

CHR. But how do you think to get in at the gate, for you may find some difficulty there?

IGNOR. As other good people do, said he.

CHR. But what have you to show at that gate, that the gate should be opened to you?

IGNOR. I know my Lord's will, and have been a good liver; I pay every man his own; I pray, fast, pay tithes, and give alms, and have left my country for whither I am going.

CHR. But thou camest not in at the wicket-gate, that is at the head of this way; thou camest in hither through that same crooked lane, and therefore I fear, however thou mayest think of thyself, when the reckoning-day shall come, thou wilt have laid to thy charge, that thou art a thief and a robber, instead of getting admittance into the city.

IGNOR. Gentlemen, ye be utter strangers to me; I know you not: be content to follow the religion of your country, and I will follow the religion of mine. I hope all will be well. And as for the gate that you talk of, all the world knows that is a great way off of our country. I cannot think that any man in all our parts doth so much as know the way to it; nor need they matter whether they do or no, since we have, as you see, a fine, pleasant, green lane, that comes down from our country, the next way into the way.

When Christian saw that the man was wise in his own conceit, he said to Hopeful whisperingly, "There is more hope of a fool than of him." [Prov 26:12](#). And said, moreover, "When he that is a fool walketh by the way, his wisdom faileth him, and he saith to every one that he is a fool. [Eccl 10:3](#). What, shall we talk farther with him, or outgo him at present, and so leave him to think of what he hath heard already, and then stop again for him afterwards, and see if by degrees we can do any good to him? Then said Hopeful,

Romans

"Let Ignorance a little while now muse
On what is said, and let him not refuse
Good counsel to embrace, lest he remain
Still ignorant of what's the chiefest gain.
God saith, those that no understanding have,
(Although he made them,) them he will not save."

HOPE. He further added, It is not good, I think, to say so to him all at once; let us pass him by, if you will, and talk to him anon, even as he is able to bear it.

So they both went on, and Ignorance he came after. Now, when they had passed him a little way, they entered into a very dark lane, where they met a man whom seven devils had bound with seven strong cords, and were carrying him back to the door that they saw on the side of the hill. [Matt 12:45](#); [Prov 5:22](#).

After an encounter with Atheist the Pilgrim again talks with *Ignorance*.

Ignor. What! would you have us trust to what Christ in his own Person has done without us? This conceit would loosen the reins of our Lust, and tolerate us to live as we list: For, what matter how we live, if we may be justify'd by Christ's Personal Righteousness, from all, when we believe it.

Chr. *Ignorance* is thy Name; and as thy name is, so art thou; even this thy answer demonstrateth what I say. *Ignorant* thou art of what *Justifying Righteousness* is, and as ignorant how to secure thy Soul through the Faith of it from the heavy Wrath of God. Yea, thou also art ignorant of the true effects of Saving Faith in this righteousness of Christ, which is to bow and win over the heart to God in Christ, to love his Name, his Word, Ways, and People and not as thou ignorantly imaginest.

(from Pilgrim's Progress, PC Study Bible formatted electronic database Copyright © 2003, 2006 by Biblesoft, Inc. All rights reserved.)_

What was the failure of *Ignorance*?

He knew the significant facts about Jesus.

He sincerely observed religion as a legalist.

Ignorance trusted in his obedience and not in Christ alone!

From a prisoner's paper that I graded:

"Legalism is a work that is never finished."

Romans

The charge made by *Ignorance* was against the righteousness of God; *Ignorance* said that the righteousness of God apart from works leads to licence. The theological term is Antinomianism.

I quote from Dr. Martin Lloyd-Jones:

“The true preaching of the gospel of salvation by grace alone always leads to the possibility of this charge [antinomianism] being brought against it. There is no better test as to whether a man is really preaching the New Testament gospel of salvation than this, that some people might misunderstand it and misrepresent it to mean that it really amounts to this, that because you are saved by grace alone it does not matter at all what you do; you can go on sinning as much as you like because it will redound to the glory of grace. That is a very good test of gospel preaching. If my preaching and presentation of the gospel of salvation does not expose it to that misunderstanding, then it is not the gospel.”

So in the final conclusion, I hope you will join me in this fresh experience of studying the Book of Romans. It may challenge you to question if you have truly put faith in Jesus Christ and Him alone; that is good. You would not want to be deceived as was *Ignorance*.

Even the great apostle said of himself: “But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified [reprobate].” 1 Cor 9:27

A faith never questioned is perhaps, presumption.

Jesus Christ is the sum and substance of the Gospel