

Romans

August 9, 2009

The Book of Romans

The Theme of the Letter: Romans 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.’ ”

The Book of Romans is the about the Gospel which is the **righteousness of God in Jesus Christ**.

Some years ago one of our youth had a dialog with a young man who said he doesn't believe there is a God; that he is an atheist. But in the terror of the night, when his soul won't rest, and he has no peace in his soul; he knows there is a God. We are all born with the innate knowledge that God is. We may reject that knowledge, “hold it down,” “suppress it,” as Romans One says, and come to the point of being an “intellectual” atheist. A man can muster bravado and boast that he doesn't believe in God, but he is lying to himself.

The Bible calls such a man a fool.

“The fool has said in his heart, There is no God.” Psalm 14:1
Or, “no God for me.”

There is a Creator and He has revealed Himself in His creation.
All men know that there is a God. That is not to say that everyone knows God. That is an all together different matter. To know that there is a God and to know the only true God and Jesus Christ are very different matters.

Since there is a God; Ah, preacher, you have just made a leap of faith. You said, “Since there is a God ... , and you have not proven the existence of God. But I begin where the Bible begins. The Bible does not attempt to prove the existence of God, it says, ‘In the beginning God...’ So, Since there is a God and because we are accountable to Him for our soul, we ought to care about being “right” with God.

Well, what does that mean; being “right” with God?
I need to know, without doubting, that God has accepted me in Christ.
Accepted me? Yes, to be right with God! To have “peace with God.”

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How many ways do you believe there are to be right with God? It is popular in liberal religion to talk about the many ways to God. These liberals allow that any sincere effort to be right with God is acceptable. They would argue that the sincere Hindu is as right with God as anyone needs to be. That appeals to the pride of man but it fails when carried to its logical conclusion.

For example, let's suppose that there are nine "ways" to be right with God; but each "way" claims to be the correct way, then at least eight of the nine ways to be right with God, and maybe even all nine of the ways are false.

One of the tenets of Postmodernism is Pluralism. Pluralism is the idea that any and all religions are equally valid. No absolute truth; no moral judgment; deconstruction of language, e.g. "Depends of what the meaning of 'is' is."

But biblical Christianity makes the claim; that being right with God comes only through a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. How can you be sure which religion is correct?

Logically, there can only be one God. Think of the concept of many gods. By definition "God" is unique.

The conviction of the truth will not come by persuasive argument and powerful logic. You will only know God when it pleases God to reveal Himself to you. Does that then relieve you of the responsibility to know the true God. No! Chapter Two will take away that refuge of lies.

And if you can't accept that statement; don't you dare miss this series of studies that will follow.

**"The gospel is not a truth among other truths.
Rather, it sets a question mark against all truths."** Karl Barth

You need to know that to reject the proposition that there is only one way to God and that all men are responsible you must reject the teaching of the Bible; you must reject what Jesus said about Himself! So let me repeat what I said: "...Biblical Christianity makes the claim; that being right with God comes only through a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ."

**"Jesus does not give recipes that show the way to God as others of religion do.
He is Himself the way."** Karl Barth

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These two quotes from Karl Barth does not in any way endorse the neotheology of Karl Barth but I do not reject a profound statement no matter who says it. I simply qualify my quoting of Karl Barth.

This is the second in a series of studies on what John Piper calls, “The Greatest Letter Ever Written.” **The Book of Romans.**

As I began a fresh study for this series I was almost **daunted** by the wealth of writing that is available to study. Charles Hodge, Robert Haldane, John Murray, William Hendriksen and especially Martyn Lloyd-Jones of past years; and many others such as Curtis Vaughn and John Piper, and Douglas Moo who are contemporary to our time. But I was **revived** by the knowledge that what Paul had written to a church that he had not yet visited was the answer to the **paucity** of gospel sermons in our day.

Geoffrey Wilson writes: “Paul expresses frustration that he had not yet been to Rome ‘...*that I may impart to you some spiritual gift....*’ {Romans 1:11} But in God’s providence he did what must have seemed to Paul the next best thing. He wrote a letter **by which every presentation of the gospel must be judged!**”

If you listen to the some of the popular preachers of our day; if you have “ears to hear,” you will notice a common theme. Like the prophets that troubled Jeremiah: ***“They have healed the hurt of my people slightly, Saying, Peace, Peace, when there is no peace.”*** {Jeremiah 6:14} There may be nothing wrong, per se, with what they are preaching, if what you seek is to have a warm fuzzy feeling that “I’m not so bad after all.” You may have a balm for the hurt of your sin, but it is not **peace!** But do you have the spiritual maturity to discern what is missing from their message?

What is being preached about sin? More than that: What is sin?
Is the absolute necessity for **repentance** being preached ?
What about the absolute necessity for the new birth; **“you must be born again.”**
Even if they do preach the necessity for the new birth, they mess it up by telling you that it is in your power to cause the new birth.

Have you, **you personally**, ever been convicted of **your** sin?
Are you sure?

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How is the character of God being presented?

Is God being presented as some pitiful thing who is not able to perform His purpose unless you, O great man, give Him your permission?

Has the preacher told that God cannot be manipulated by what you do?

Is the holiness of God presented as His primary attribute?

Is the preacher in love with Jesus Christ?

You can tell what a preacher is in love with by what he preaches the most about. Is the preacher's message about Jesus Christ as He is revealed in the Word of God?

How do we as Christians evaluate the society in which we find ourselves?

What is your Worldview?

We say that we believe that abortion is wrong.

Do you know why Scripturally?

We say that a homosexual lifestyle is sinful.

Do you know why Scripturally?

In order to evaluate our culture we must have a **standard of doctrine**.

Are you afraid of doctrine? Are you afraid to think?

Oh, many people say, we don't need "doctrine."

"Doctrine" simply means teaching. And you **are** being taught.

You may be learning your doctrine at the "feet of Ophra."

If you are listening to Ophra and her ilk, then you **are** being indoctrinated by New Age philosophy. Perhaps subtly, you may have not applied for her home study course; but as you listen to the rationale she and the others present and you listen to the stories of their guests, you are learning New Age doctrine. Your truth and my truth may be opposites but they are both true; you have your truth and I have my truth. That is insanity!

Paul learned at the "feet of Gamaliel." Paul knew the Scripture before he met the Lord Jesus on the road to Damascus and was then used by the Holy Spirit to write most of the New Testament. Paul wrote "The greatest letter ever written," the

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Book of Romans, which, if you can receive it, will teach you how to understand your world.

Romans is doctrine.

As with Paul's other letters he writes first about doctrine. Chapters 1 - 11 are almost pure doctrine; and then in Chapters 12 - 16, he makes the application.

The letter begins with, as Jude calls it, "the way of Cain," sin!

You need to understand that there are really only two religions in the world. There are many names for these two religions, but they all come down to **works and grace**.

And here is a caution. Just because a religion claims to be of grace doesn't make it so. For example, the Roman Catholic Church says that justification is by grace. And we may agree with those words. But how do they define grace? They insist that grace is dispensed only through the sacraments of the Roman church as you continue to follow its teaching. So by their definition of "grace," grace becomes works.

Now you may be thinking, why must he attack another religion? Then ask yourself: Does the truth matter? A religion that teaches salvation by a system of works is opposed to the grace of God.

Can a Roman Catholic be saved? Yes, if they trust the righteousness of God in Jesus Christ alone. But if they trust the righteousness offered by the Catholic church and die in unbelief they will be forever lost.

And if that sounds like I am being too hard on the Roman Catholic Church, I will show you from the Book of Romans that many Baptists are trusting in their own works for being "right" with God. But don't Baptists insist on grace? Yes, but again how is that grace to be found? Does being right with God have anything at all to do with what I do? My decision? My baptism? What is the first cause?

Ask yourself, "Why did God save me?"
Carefully consider your answer to that question.

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Can a Baptist be saved? Yes, if they trust the righteousness of God in Jesus Christ and that alone. But if they trust the righteousness offered by most Baptist preachers and die in unbelief they will be forever lost. They offer propositions, that if you do such and such, you can manipulate God, and He will be obligated to save you.

No system of works can stand the test of the Book of Romans.

There are those who clearly understand what the Book of Romans teaches and deliberately reject its teaching. Like Cain, their pride will not yield to free and sovereign grace.

“But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak.” Hebrews 6:9

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In his Introduction to Romans, B. H. Carroll writes:

“It is the most fundamental, vital, logical, profound, and systematic discussion of the whole plan of salvation in all the literature of the world. It touches all men; it is universal in its application; it roots, not only man’s creation and fall, but also in the timeless purposes and decrees of God before the world was, and fruits in the eternity after this world’s purgation.”

“It considers man as man and not as Jew or Greek. It considers law, not as expressed in statute on Mount Sinai, but as antedating it and inherent in the divine purpose when man was created in the image of God. It considers sin, not in ceremonial defilement nor as an overt act, but as lawlessness of spirit and nature. It considers condemnation, not as personal to an individual offender because of many overt acts, but as a race resulting {sic} from one offense of the head of the race.

“Consequently, it considers justification, the opposite of condemnation, not as an impossible acquittal of a fallen sinner on account of his many acts of righteousness but as resting on one act of righteousness through the Second Head of the race. It considers, not an impossible morality coming from a corrupt and depraved nature, but a morality arising from regeneration, sanctification, resurrection, and

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glorification. It considers, not the divine government and providence as here and there looking in on particular men, in special times and given localities, but as an all-comprehensive sweep from eternity to eternity reaching with microscopic {sic} minuteness every detail of the nature of man, and universal in its control of all forces, and all subsidiary to the original divine purpose. The God of this letter is God indeed - not a partial, local deity, not blind chance, not cold, inexorable fate, but a purposeful, omniscient, omnipresent, omnipotent, infinitely holy, and infinitely loving God.”

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So I will continue this morning, not with an exposition of a portion of the text, e.g., Romans 1:1 “Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ...” Who is Paul? What kind of servant is Paul? A bond-slave, meaning what? Who is this Jesus Christ to whom Paul is indentured? That kind of exposition will come, the Lord willing, in later studies.

It is my intention to conclude the introduction to the Book of Romans that I began last Sunday with a preview of the great doctrines to be discovered in this great Book.

I hope you took my challenge and read through the Book of Romans in one sitting. I told you last week that I did that in one hour and ten minutes.

Just this morning I read: “Paul wrote one letter to the Romans, not sixteen separate chapters containing a varying number of units called verses.”

The Goldsworthy Trilogy: Gospel and Kingdom,
Graeme Goldsworthy, page 30

Chapter One: After the greeting, Paul gives his very reason for being.

“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

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The great theme of the Book of Romans is the Righteousness of God.

There is a lot of “righteousness” in the minds of men and women. They embrace thoughts of how religious they are and that while they are not perfect, they are not, after all, so bad as to be the objects of the Wrath of God!

Do you hear much preaching today on the **Wrath of God**?

The Doctrine of Condemnation? The Doctrine of Reprobation?

No, “seeker sensitive” preachers will “tickle their ears.” They dare not preach that all men are justly condemned by a holy God. That may offend someone and they won’t come back and that church won’t add another lost soul to its list of members.

Does preaching the wrath of God; The Doctrine of Condemnation; The Doctrine of Reprobation: offend you? Then you are rejecting the God of the Bible, and He may “give you up to a reprobate mind.”

Chapter Two: If men are indeed guilty, as described in Chapter One, and are judged guilty without the privilege of having heard the Law of God; Yes, even without ever having “a chance to hear the gospel.” What about the Jews who have the Law? The Jews are judged in the Law,
“For there is no partiality with God.” Romans 2:11

Chapter Three: Then, ***“What advantage has the Jew....?”*** They had the oracles of God, the Word of God, but are condemned by it because they did not believe; instead they believed God was indebted to them because they were Jews. Much the same as many Baptists believe God has an obligation to them because of their “decision.”

The great passage on the **Doctrine of the Righteousness of God** is
Romans 3:21-31

Chapter Four: **The Doctrine of Justification by Faith.** When was Abraham justified? When did Abraham become “right with God?” Abraham was declared “right” with God before the Law was given to Moses and before he was circumcised. Which means what? It means that Justification by Faith cannot come by keeping the Law and obeying commands. Justification is “apart from the Law.”

God justifies the ungodly, not those who have become “godly” by human works and law-keeping.

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Any mixture of works will contaminate grace. If I take a glass of the purest spring water and add the smallest bit of sewage, will you drink it? The whole glass is polluted. Any amount of works will exclude the righteousness of God.

Didn't Isaiah say, "*We are all like an unclean thing,
And our righteousnesses are like filthy rags;*" Isaiah 64:6

Chapter Five: **The Doctrine of Reconciliation.** How do we find peace with God? What is the spiritual condition of the man for whom Christ died? They are: Ungodly, they are sinners, they are enemies of God!

In Chapter Five is the great **Doctrine of Representation.** God deals with only two men in history, **Adam** and **Christ**, and you and I are represented in one or the other of those two men.

Chapter Six: The Life of God, the **Doctrine of Sanctification.**
A person who is dead to sin can no longer live in sin!

Chapter Seven: **The purpose of the Law of God.** The Law cannot justify, it can only aggravate sin. Also, the Law cannot sanctify. The only purpose of the Law is to convict of sin and lead a person to see the absolute sufficiency of Jesus Christ.

"O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?"
The answer is Jesus Christ!

Chapter Eight: The faithfulness of God: The **Doctrine of Election** and the **Doctrine of Predestination.** Men may reject it and resist it, and they try to twist it, but it is here in the Bible and men pervert its clear teaching to their own condemnation.

Chapter Nine: The **Doctrine of the Sovereignty of God in Divine Election.** Only a God who is sovereign can be called God!

You do not need to know if you are elect before you believe in Christ. In fact, you can only have any assurance that you are elect if you repent and trust Christ alone.

Charles Spurgeon gives an excellent illustration of election. He said to imagine a portal with the inscription "Whosoever will may enter in." When you enter and look back the inscription reads, "Chosen before the foundation of the world."

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Chapter Ten: Has God forsaken the Jews? Not at all. But you may be shocked to learn from the Bible who are the Jews that God calls and who are the Israel of God. If men are condemned and dead in sin, how can anyone be saved? They hear the gospel! But how? Chapter Ten will tell us.

Chapter Eleven: Surely the **Doctrine of Eschatology** [last things] is understood by everyone. Can you bear to listen to a thorough exposition of Romans 11:26? “***And so all Israel will be saved, ...***” You may think you have that all figured out. Well I may not have it **all** figured out but I believe that I am a lot closer to getting it right than many of the popular preachers have in our day.

So, Chapters One through Eleven contain the great **Doctrines of Grace**;

Then, Chapters Twelve through Sixteen: **The Doctrine of Service to God; the Doctrine of Obedience**. Paul gives the application of the doctrine.

Doctrine without personal application will make you into a Pharisee.
Application without doctrine will make you into an ignorant religious zealot.

We will, God willing, continue in the Book of Romans next week.
You should prepare by reading Romans. Try to read it at one sitting. Read it in several different translations. Read it over and over again. If you don't agree with what you read in Romans, by all means keep on reading it lest you be found fighting against the revelation of the only God who is able to save.

But what about the **Doctrine of the Love of God**? You have listed all of these doctrines and haven't mentioned the love of God. Yes, I have.

God saves sinners. Jesus said, “***Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. But go and learn what this means: ‘I desire mercy and not sacrifice.’ For I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance.***” Matthew 9:12-13

To what or to whom do you look to for your righteousness this very moment?

Jesus, as the Holy Spirit reveals Him in the Word of God is the **righteousness of God!**

And therein is the Love of God!