

By Johnny Ramsey

OUTLINE ON ROMANS

Paul, who had never met the Roman brethren, writes this deep treatise to the church at Rome. The main purpose seems to be the informing of both Jewish and Gentile Christians of their equality in the gospel. The theme of the book, and probably the entire New Testament is Romans 1:16 - The Gospel, God's Power to Save. These sixteen chapters can be very logically divided into sections. They are:

- (1) Chapters 1-3: The Universal Sinfulness of Man (3:23); the paganism of the Gentiles (1:18-32); the hypocrisy of the Jews (Romans 2) and God's answer for all - the gospel of Christ (Romans 1:16-17). Rome was the Metropolis of the world. All roads truly did lead to this seat of governmental power. Perhaps the church had been established as a result of the "strangers from Rome" (Acts 2:10) who heard the first gospel sermon on Pentecost.
- (2) Chapters 4-7: The system of faith, the gospel, now justifies man. Abraham, the Jew's idol, had been pleasing to Jehovah long before the law of Moses came into existence. This system of faith helps man to combat sin - yet God's grace has a constant opponent - man's sin. Just as death entered the world by sin (Adam) so by God's grace (Christ) life will be victorious over death. However, man is not to continue in sin that grace may abound (6:1). The child of God, under the gospel, is dead to sin, freed from the law's bondage, married to Christ - therefore sin does not reign in his mortal body. Chapter seven is a striking passage informing us of the constant battle between man's fleshly and spiritual natures. Verse 25 sums up the anguish in the Christian's heart produced by this dilemma.
- (3) Chapter 8 is in a class by itself in the book of Romans. It is unquestionably one of the finest chapters in the Book of God. Serving somewhat as a pivot point in Romans, it contains the thought of Chapter 7 (the need for a decision in serving either carnal appetites or spiritual purposes) and at the same time introduces chapters 9-11 which points up the sinfulness and rebellion of the Jews. Chapter Eight emphasizes the goodness of God, His over-all plan for redeeming man and His providential, constant love for His people.
- (4) Chapters 9-11 illustrate very forcefully the degeneracy of the Jewish people spiritually. In the first few verses of 9 and 10 Paul emphasizes his love for the Israelites even in their obstinance. He was proof positive that any Jew could be saved who would be. In fact Jehovah was still patiently longing for the salvation of those who were "fitted" for destruction. The word fitted in 9:22 is "Kateertismena" meaning: "They fitted themselves for destruction." A comparison of Jeremiah 18:1-12 helps us here. Christ was a rock of offense to the Jews (9:32-33; Isaiah 28:16). He would not be their type of Messiah! Chapter ten emphasizes the fact that Israel had substituted for God's righteousness their own. However, in the divine scheme of redemption, there is no substitute for belief in Christ and all that it embraces! There is no longer any distinction between Jew and Greek. The Israelites had ample opportunities to believe and obey - and God continued to plead with such a disobedient people (10-21). Chapter eleven depicts the glaring fact that God didn't cast off His people - they forsook Jehovah! This opened the way of salvation to the Gentiles who now were making some Jews jealous enough to come back to the Lord. One of the strongest passages is 11:22 depicting God's goodness and wrath - man being the determining factor. Every Jew shall be saved who will but comply with the requirements of the gospel. In the same manner does the system of faith pertain to the Greek (Romans 1:17; Galatians 3:26-27; Acts 10:34). The closing of this section, 11:33-36 magnifies the depth of God's goodness, love, mercy, wisdom and knowledge. Man cannot fathom His greatness, give Him counsel (or advice). It is for us to humbly, gratefully and readily obey His will and sing His praise!

(5) Chapters 12-16: A section on practical living as Christians.

12. Characteristics of devoted children of God: Sacrificial, United, Sincere, Sympathetic, Industrious, Hopeful, Benevolent, Peace-loving, Honest, Kind. We should put these attributes into daily practice because of the depths of God's love toward us.
13. Subjection to Civil Government: Acts 5:29 and Matthew 22:21 should be noted here. The Christian doesn't need to fear civil powers. They are a terror to the evil doer. Application Today: A child of God should be a good citizen, obedient to any law of the land that doesn't contravene God's law. Verses 8-14 emphasize our debt of love to all men (1:14) and the necessity of doing God's will now.
14. Christians' Attitudes Toward Each Other: Compare I Corinthians 6, 8, 12. The importance of love in dealing with fellow saints. On matters of expediency let love decide. Don't do anything that can't be done conscientiously (14:23). Notice 14:12.
15. We Are Not To Please Ourselves: Verses 1-3. Verse 20 stresses a point we usually overlook!
16. Closing Remarks: Verses 16-20 seems very important.

ADDITIONAL MATERIAL

Mosheim, a Great Historian, Speaks of the Evil In the First Century:

"All the nations lived in the practice of the most abominable superstitions. The rites used in their worship were absurd and ridiculous, and frequently cruel and obscene. Most nations offered animals, and some proceeded to the enormity of human sacrifices. The consequences of this wretched theology were a universal corruption of Manners, which discovered itself in the impunity of the most flagitious crimes. It is also well known, that no public law prohibited the sports of the gladiators, the exercise of unnatural lust, the licentiousness of divorce, the custom of exposing infants, and of procuring abortions, nor the frontless atrocity of consecrating publicly brothels to certain divinities. Now it is manifest that these tenets remove, at once, the strongest motives to virtue, and the most powerful restraints upon vice. The attentive reader will easily conclude, from this short view of the miserable state of the world at the birth of Christ, that mankind, in this period of darkness and corruption, stood highly in need of some divine teacher to convey to the mind true and certain principles of religion and wisdom, and to recall wandering mortals to the sublime paths of piety and virtue A set of miserable and un-thinking creatures treat with negligence, nay, sometimes with contempt, the religion of Jesus, not considering that they are indebted to it for all the good things which they so ungratefully enjoy."

Seneca, A Stoic Philosopher Spoke in A. D. 60:

"All is full of crime and vice; there is more committed than can be healed by punishment. A monstrous contest of wickedness is going on."

In Chapter Six, we wish to mention these additional points. We could sum up the chapter by saying it deals with this subject: A Christian and Sin! There are two extremes in the religious world. One is that a Christian cannot sin. The other one is that a Christian can sin all he wants to and still get forgiveness. The latter

idea is glibly related thusly: "We are human and sin every day but God will forgive." Man is prone to stress the forgiveness of Sin; reality stresses the stain and scar of sin. We reap what we sow (Galatians 6:7-8) when we commit sin. David sinned and was forgiven - but the sword never departed from his house. He paid the consequences for the rest of his days! Incidentally, Romans 6 is the best possible commentary on I John, Chapter 3. Read the two together and you will see that sin does not, yea can not, reign and dominate in a Christian's life. We are dead to sin and alive unto God. Walking in newness of the life that was made possible by obedience from the heart we shun the wages of sin and partake of the free gift of God - life eternal through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

In Chapter Eight, we find a beautiful, moving, thrilling treatise on just what it means to be in Christ. In the previous division of the book we read of the greatest battle ever fought. It is the gigantic struggle between man's flesh and his spirit. There was nothing in the Law of Moses that could loose Paul (or any other person) from the law of sin and death. Only by becoming dead to the Law by the body of Christ was there any hope. Romans 8:1-39, more than any other section of Holy Writ makes me glad to be a Christian. It starts and ends with the same point: What It Means To Be In Christ!

1. No Condemnation
2. Freedom From Sin and Death
3. Walking In The Spirit
4. Possessing The Spirit of Christ
5. Heirs of God; Joint Heirs With Christ
6. Redemption of One's Body
7. Christ and the Spirit Help Us When We Pray
8. Everything Has Worked For Our Good
9. We Are Conformed to Christ's Image
10. We Are More Than Conquerors

These are the blessings that belong to those in Christ Jesus!

Chapter Twelve, in a very practical way, deals with the duties of the Christian life. After three difficult doctrinal chapters it comes as an oasis in the desert. Upon citing the depth of the unfathomed riches of God's wisdom and knowledge and love the inspired apostle taught that our devotion would be but a natural response to such grace.

The Christian Life Is A:

1. Surrendered Life
2. Surrounded Life
3. Sacrificial Life
4. Self-less Life
5. Successful Life
6. Satisfying Life

Romans 12 stresses the practical application of the gospel, God's power to save.

The Spirit of Christianity is the religion of the second mile. Read Matthew 5:38-48. Vengeance belongs to God. Retaliation is ungodly. It is our reasonable service to live justly before our Maker. Not fitting the mold of earthly creatures but in the renewing of our mind we shall be transformed into servants of our Lord. There will be as much difference in our new manner of life as a Christian and that old carnality as there is in a caterpillar and a butterfly.

Read I Peter 4:4; Ephesians 4:17-24; I Corinthians 6:9-11 and II Corinthians 5:17.

In many ways Romans is the pivotal book of the entire Bible. The theme of all Scripture is Romans 1:16: God's power to save is the gospel of Christ! It is impossible to handle aright the Word of God if one misuses the book of Romans. It is my firm conviction that most commentaries have missed the message of this epistle by Paul and have made it but an apology for Martin Luther. Except for monumental works by Grubbs and Whiteside even our brethren have bowed at the shrine of faith only in discussing this sixth book of the New Testament. Actually, Romans is a study of the gospel system --- a system of obedient faith (Romans 1:5; 16:26) and its application to both Jew and Greek. Rather than teaching "salvation by faith alone" it clearly affirms that men must obey the gospel, God's system of faith or be lost. It abundantly shows the inadequacy of the Law of Moses for the Jews or the Patriarchal system for the Gentiles or idolatry by either segment of society.

Notice, carefully, the following references, outside Romans, that document this approach:

1. Acts 6:7 ---- "a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith"
2. Galatians 1:23 ---- "I now preach the faith which I once destroyed"
3. I Timothy 4:1 ---- "Some shall depart from the faith"
4. Acts 24:24 ---- "Felix sent for Paul, and heard him concerning the faith in Christ"
5. Jude 3 ---- "Contend earnestly for the faith" _
6. Acts 13:8 ---- "Elymas withstood them, seeking to turn the deputy away from the faith"
7. Philippians 1:27 ---- "Striving together for the faith of the gospel"
8. Titus 1:13 ---- "Rebuke them sharply that they may be sound in the faith."

These verses blend with Romans 3:27 that mentions "the law of faith" and, along with Galatians 3:26, forever prove that the gospel Paul preached was a system of faith that men had to obey or be lost. Felix came to hear the faith; Paul preached the gospel to him. Paul had once opposed the system of faith but upon being converted he preached that same gospel system! From the first chapter to the last in Romans the inspired writer sets forth the urgency of all men who desire salvation to receive this system promised by God, preserved through Abraham's seed and preached by the apostles. It is, indeed, God's dynamite to blast sin, tradition, paganism and hopelessness out of men's hearts.

Using these introductory remarks notice how consistently Romans outlines itself:

- (1) The Gentiles desperately need the Gospel
- (2) So do the arrogant Jews
- (3) All have sinned and must be saved by the gospel of Christ (redemption in the Lord) 3:24
- (4) Abraham was saved by a system of obedient faith years before the Law of Moses was given. Men today are justified by a system of obedient faith after the law has been annulled.

- (5) Sin, in the world since Adam, can only be overcome through Christ.
- (6) A person's relationship to sin is seen in his portrayal of the death, burial and resurrection of Christ in baptism thus giving the individual triumph over sin and death through Christ as he obeys from the heart a form of the gospel (Romans 6:17-23; I Corinthians 15:1-4).
- (7) We are dead to the Ten Commandment Law and married to the One who rose from the dead. There was no power in the first covenant to gain victory over the law of sin and death that wars in our bodies. But, we can thank God for such hope in Christ (see especially Romans 7:24-8:3).
- (8) The theme of this chapter is What It Means To Be In Christ or Blessings of the Gospel.

In chapters 9, 10 and 11 we come to the deeper section of Romans. However, allowing the key of Romans 1:16-17 to unlock the door we really find no extreme difficulty. In these chapters, the great apostle declares his love and compassion for the Jews who have stubbornly rejected the fruition of their Messianic hopes, even Jesus the Christ. But God's matchless love still is extended to them even though they fashioned themselves for destruction as they stumbled over the very One who came to save them. Paul earnestly prays that the Jews might be saved although they really have no excuse for being lost since the gospel message has been preached in all the earth and is in their midst. But this system of faith comes through hearing the Word and they will not hear! In fact, the Jews remained a disobedient and gainsaying people. As chapter eleven unveils itself Paul uses himself as "Exhibit A" to prove that any Jew who desires to be saved certainly can be saved. Then he chides the Gentiles for developing the same exclusive spirit the Hebrews once held. In 11:22 we have the memorable statement that ought to keep us all humble before our Creator:

"Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: On them that fell, severity, but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness --- otherwise, thou also shalt be cut off."

Unquestionably, it is only through the Redeemer that came out of Zion (Isaiah 59:20) that anyone --- Jew or Greek --- can be saved. But, this came about through the covenant Jehovah promised and in the gospel Paul preached. The benign goodness of God caused the peerless apostle to extol in deep joy the immeasurable, unfathomed riches of the wisdom and knowledge of the heavenly Father who needs no counsel or advice from His creation. The gospel is God's power to save and not a system of faith devised by man! This plan of God, however, must be obeyed by men and then appropriated into their lives. The last five chapters deal with the practical use of the gospel system in the daily living of Christians. We will sacrificially live for God, being considerate of our fellows and obedient to our rulers --- owing only love to all men! We will remember our influence upon others even in indifferent matters and strive to never engage in anything that violates our own conscience. Sincerity demands that we attempt to build on no other man's foundation as we take the unsearchable riches of Christ and the comforting Scriptures to the whole world. This system of faith, once a mystery but now revealed in the gospel, must be obeyed by all nations (Romans 16:24-26) and is so precious that anyone tampering with it must be marked as a false teacher (16:17).

In view of these clear, definitive points, it grieves me to see even brethren adopting sectarian views of the book of Romans. No wonder we have several preachers today who are teaching "grace only, faith only, better felt than told" religion.

Notice the logic of this conclusion.

Ephesians 2:8 --- Saved by grace

Romans 1:16 --- Saved by the Gospel

Acts 20:24 --- Paul preached the Gospel of the grace of God.

No gospel, no grace! God's grace teaches us (Titus 2:11) and we are lost if we fail to obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ (II Thessalonians 1:7-9). We need to stop this sectarian preaching on God's grace and remember that Christ does have a law (Galatians 6:2) that must be obeyed (I Peter 4:17).

"Trust and obey for there's no other way
To be happy in Jesus --- But to trust and obey!"

There is no stigma attached to obeying the Lord. In fact we should be happy to "do whatever he tells us to do" (John 2:5). Christ is "the author of eternal salvation to all those who obey him" and heaven is prepared for those who keep His commandments (Hebrews 5:9; Revelation 22:14). Only religious liberals shy away from the term obedience. Jesus came to do the Father's will (John 6:38) and He did it (John 17:4). May this obedient mind be found in each of us (Philippians 2:5-8).