

4/11/10

Introduction to Romans

The first time we studied the book of Romans was in 1984, the second time was in 1994, it has been 16 year and here we are for our third time ready to study the book of Roman, though the Bible, verse by verse.

And as always, we want to do so by beginning with an introduction to the epistle that will help us to understand it's origin, content, purpose and many other elements, even it's influence in the life of people.

I. The letter to the Romans.

- A.** The letter to the Romans has been called many thing by those who have studied and been transformed by it.
1. Romans has been said to be testamentary, as the theological inheritance of the church.
 2. Romans has been called prophylactic, meaning something that guards against infection.
 3. Romans has been called "The cathedral of the Christian Faith".

4. Romans has been called "Masterpiece of the New Testament...truly the purest gospel" by Luther.
 5. Roman is a "Treaties" or "literary dialogue" or "letter essay" on the provisions of God's righteous for salvation, through Jesus Christ.
 - a. The key verses of Romans presents the theme of the letter. Rom. 1:16-17
 - b. The apostle, from that point on, proves this to be so, from every point of view and perspective.
 6. Chrysostom used to have it read over to him twice every week by his own expressed order...Unquestionably the fullest, deepest compendium of all sacred foundation truths." C.A. Fox
- B.** The content of the epistle to the Romans.
1. Romans has been said to be a concise and systematic order of calling witnesses to the stand of the divine courtroom to prove beyond a shadow of a doubt, that the entire world is guilty before God.
 2. Romans is an appeal by God through the apostle Paul, that men might recognize and accept God's righteousness in his Son by faith.

3. Romans is God's clear message that He has no alternative, He must carry out judgment if Christ is rejected.
4. Romans is the message of grace abounding over sin to the worst of sinners.
 - a. Socrates said to Plato, 500 years before Christ, "It may be that the deity can forgive sins, but I do not see how."
 - b. Yet the theme of Romans answers the question of Socrates. Rom. 1:16-17
 - c. Paul is quoting the prophet Habakkuk. Hab. 2:4
5. Romans is Paul's exposition to the believers at Rome that the concept of "the just shall live by faith" is not a new concept, but rather the concept of the Old Testament. Hab. 2:4
 - a. He will make reference to and quote from the Old Testament more than 50 times, touching the law, writings and the prophets.
 - b. Romans is the longest of Paul's letters, 7, 114 words.
 - c. Paul teaches the gospel to the saints, as oppose to preaching the gospel to the sinner.

C. The epistle of Romans has a great history of its influence over the lives of individual.

1. In 386 A.D. , Aurelius Augustinus, native of Tagaste in North Africa, Professor of Rhetoric at Milan for two years, sat in a garden one day weeping, almost persuaded to begin a new life but couldn't break away from his old life. He heard a child singing, "Tolle, lege! Tolle lege!" (Take up and read! Take up and read!) He picked up the scroll next to his friend and read, "not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying. But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provisions for the flesh, to fulfill the lust thereof." (Romans 13:13b-14)

* Instantly at the end of reading, "A clear light flooded my heart and all the darkness of doubt vanished."
2. In November 1515 Martin Luther, Augustine Monk and Professor of Sacred Theology in the University of Wittenberg expounded the book of Romans till next September. As he read the expression "the righteousness of God" it baffled him, till one day he realized after meditating and pondering that the truth, that the righteousness is that of God through grace and mercy, justifying us by faith.

3. May 24, 1778 John Wesley heard Luther's Preface to the Romans, during a Moravian meeting in Aldersgate Street, London, and he said, "While he was describing the changes which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, Christ alone, for my salvation; and an assurance was given me that he had taken my sins away, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death."
 - a. That means that this epistle works in transforming peoples lives.
 - b. I believe that God is going to transform each and everyone of us, and we are going to be different individuals after the book of Romans.
4. Dr. Ironside said, "In Romans we have the gospel taught to the saints, rather than the gospel preached."

D. The order of the letter to the Romans in the canon.

1. The message of Romans is one of thirteen or fourteen letters of Paul and I believe the most important regarding salvation, containing the most formal and systematic treatment of salvation.
2. The place of Romans in Paul's chronological order is sixth, 1-2 Thessalonians, Galatians, 1-2 Corinthians and then Romans.

- E.** The epistle of Romans is traditionally accepted as written from Corinth.
1. Paul was ready to depart for Jerusalem. Rom. 15:25
* "But now I am going to Jerusalem to minister to the saints."
 2. Paul had left to Macedonia and spent three months in Greece, wanting to be at Jerusalem for Pentecost. Acts 20:1-3; 20:16
* This would place him around late winter or early spring.
 3. Paul probably wrote the epistle of Roman from Corinth, around 57-58 A.D.
* If Paul was save on the Damascus Road in 35 A.D. , then Paul has been in the ministry for 22-23 years, at this point.
 4. The bearer of the epistle was Phoebe, the deaconess of Cenchrea, an eastern port at Corinth. Rom. 16:1-2
* "I commend to you Phoebe our sister, who is a servant of the church in Cenchrea, that you may receive her in the Lord in a manner worthy of the saints, and assist her in whatever business she has need of you; for indeed she has been a helper of many and of myself also."
 5. The emanuensis or secretary was Tertius. Rom. 16:22

* “I, Tertius, who wrote this epistle, greet you in the Lord.”

6. Gaius and Erastus from Corinth were with Paul. Rom. 16:23

* “Gaius, my host and the host of the whole church, greets you. Erastus, the treasurer of the city, greets you, and Quartus, a brother.”

This is the letter to the Romans!

II. The occasion or purpose of the letter to the Romans.

A. Paul always had a desire to go to Rome and fellowship with them. Rom. 1:11-15

1. To be a spiritual blessing, “For I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift, so that you may be established.” vs. 11
2. To be blessed by them, “that is, that I may be encouraged together with you by the mutual faith both of you and me.” vs. 12
3. To ultimately go to work in the harvest among the Gentiles at Rome, “Now I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that I often planned to come to you (but was hindered until now), that I might have some fruit among you also, just as among the other Gentiles.” vs. 13

4. To humbly serve, “I am a debtor both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to wise and to unwise.” vs. 14
5. To preach the gospel to sinners at Rome, “So, as much as is in me, I am ready to preach the gospel to you who are in Rome also.” vs. 15

B. Paul wanted to make perfectly clear the proclamation of the gospel alone saves, both Jew and Gentile and, they are one in Christ. Rom. 1:16-17

1. Paul was 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. vs. 16
2. For in it is the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, “the just shall live by faith.” vs. 17
3. Circumcision meant nothing, unless it was of the heart. Rom. 2:29
4. Abraham had nothing to boast about in works, he believed by faith in the promise of God. Rom. 4:2-3
5. Abraham is the Father of all who believe in faith of the promise. Rom. 4:11-12
6. The law can not empower us to obey, but only accuse us and provoke us to sin, making us guilty before God. Rom. 7

7. The church is distinct from the remnant of Israel, the church is the bride of Christ, Jew and Gentile, that will be removed from the earth, prior to the 7 year Tribulation, while Israel is the wife put away, the remnant, that is partially blind and will go through the 7 year Tribulation, looking to Jesus at His Second Coming. Rom. 9-11
- a. The problem being, Israel's unbelief and rejection of Jesus resulted in the calling of the Gentiles and not all Israelites are the remnant. Rom. 9
 - b. The solution is repentance through the gospel of Christ. Rom. 10
 - c. The confusion is removed, as God will rapture His church first, then 7 years later, at the end of the Tribulation God will reunited His wife Israel to Himself. Rom. 11
 - d. Judaism and Christianity are not the same, Christianity is the fulfillment of all promised and prophesied in Judaism!
- C. Paul had established churches in Galatia, Macedonia, Achaia and Asia, so he was looking for un-evangelized territory. Rom. 15:18-23
1. Paul had not dared to speak of any of those things Christ had not accomplished

- through him, in word and deed, to make the Gentiles obedient. vs. 18
2. Paul had been obedient to his call and preached the gospel throughout Jerusalem and around Illyricum. vs. 19
 2. Paul had also made it his aim to not preach the gospel where Christ was named, lest he should build on another man's foundation. vs. 20
 3. Paul quoted scripture, "but as it is written: "To whom He was not announced, they shall see; And those who have not heard shall understand." vs. 21
* Is. 52:15; 65:1
 4. Paul had been hindered much from coming to them, but now no longer having a place to preach and having a great desire to come to them. vs. 22-23
* It just wasn't in the will of God at the time!
- D. Paul expressed his purpose to see Rome, but it was by way to do missions in Spain. Acts 19:21; Rom. 15:24
1. Paul's destination was Spain, while Rome would be a mere passing. vs. 24a-b
* "whenever I journey to Spain, I shall come to you."
 2. Paul expressed the desire for their help to get him to Spain, perhaps using it as a

missionary base much like Antioch? vs. 24c-e

* “For I hope to see you on my journey, and to be helped on my way there by you, if first I may enjoy your company for a while.”

a. Paul arrived in Rome three years later, but as a prisoner, after being held as a political scapegoat by Felix, Festus and Agrippa. Acts 28:16

b. Paul had been falsely accused of polluting the temple with Gentiles, fulfilling the prophecy of Agabus. Acts 20-21

c. Jesus told Paul not to fear, that as he had testified for Him in Jerusalem, so he must also bear witness for Him at Rome. Acts 23:11

d. Paul resided in his own hired house preaching and teaching, no man forbidding him. Acts 28:20-31

* Whether he ever reached Spain is a matter and conjecture, though I believe he probably did, since he was release after his first imprisonment and wrote Timothy and Titus.

E. Paul communicated with them that he was on his way to deliver a financial gift to the poor saints in Jerusalem. Acts 19:21, Rom. 15:25-32

1. The Macedonian were pleased to make a contributors, considering themselves as debtors to the Jews for partaking of their spiritual things, they felt compelled to respond with their material things. vs. 26-27
2. The completion of this duty would turn his face towards Spain by way of Rome an assured he would come in the full blessing of the gospel of Christ. vs. 28-29
3. The apostle requested prayer, through the love of the Spirit, for protection from those unbelieving Jews, for the acceptance of the gift by the Jews from the Gentiles and that he be coming to them by the will of God. vs. 30-32

The occasion or purpose of the letter to the Roman!

III. The church at Rome.

A. The founding of the church.

1. No one knows who established the church at Rome, though there are several speculations.
 - a. The traditional view attributes it to Peter, but this is hard to believe since Paul doesn't mention his name.
 - b. When Paul arrived at Rome in his imprisonment to appeal before Caesar he met with the chief Jews and no

mention of Peter is made. Acts 28:17-25

2. The other is that the Jews and proselytes, who were at Jerusalem at the day of Pentecost returned and established the church. Acts 2:10c-d
 - * “visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes.”
 - a. There were also full proselytes, Gentiles that were circumcised.
 - b. There were “God-fearers” Gentiles that were attracted to the synagogue, who had taken on the observance of Jewish religion, but stopped short of circumcision.
 - c. For Greek considered circumcision a disfigurement of the body.
3. The last is that Christians established it as they expanded in evangelism through the persecution.
 - a. A strong Jewish community was at Rome, as the result of many Jewish captive brought back to Rome by Pompey in 62-63 B.C. and freed
 - b. In 59 B.C. Cicero referred to the large crowd of Jews at the trial of Flaccus, indicating their strength and influence. Pro Flacco 28:66
 - c. There had been an expulsion of Jewish believers in Christ from Rome by Claudius in 49-50 A.D. Acts 18:2

- d. Percilla and Aquila had been part of that expulsion and first met Paul at Corinth, but apparently had returned now for he salutes them in the epistle. Rom. 16:3

* Suetonius in his life of Claudius 25.2 says that Claudius expelled the Jews from Rome because they were constantly rioting at the instigation of “Chrestus”, who is believe to refer to Christ

4. Romans is written to a church that probably had been in existence for at least twenty-five years or so, therefore Paul teaches the gospel to the saints as oppose to preaching the gospel to the sinner.

B. The condition of the church at Rome.

1. The church seems to of been a well established church that had effectively been a light to the community. Rom. 1:8
 - * “First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world.”
2. The church was a mature church. Rom. 15:14
 - * “Now I myself am confident concerning you, my brethren, that you also are full of goodness, filled with

all knowledge, able also to admonish one another.”

3. The church was very possibly a large one meeting in homes, mentioning the church gathering at Priscilla and Aquila home.

Rom. 16:5

* “Likewise greet the church that is in their house. Greet my beloved Epaenetus, who is the firstfruits of Achaia to Christ.”

4. The church was predominately Gentile by the internal evidence. Rom. 1:5, 13-15, 11:13, 25, 15:16
5. There were some Jews, the minority. Rom. 1:16-17; 2:25-29; 9:11; 10:2; 14:15
6. The list in Chapter 16, not only reveals that Paul had met some of the saints at Rome, throughout his travels at one time or another, but 24 name are mentioned, 14 of which are believed to be slaves and 2/3 are Greek names.

C. The city of Rome.

1. There were some 50 million people occupied the empire.
2. The streets were paved, temples were everywhere, markets, theatres, coliseums etc.
3. There was as we stated, a large Jewish community, as captives were brought

back by Pompey and set free in 62-63 A.D.

4. The ministers guarded their Jewish Zealousness in the synagogue.
5. Others adopted Roman names and norms of life.
6. Perhaps as many as 50,000 Jews lived in Rome in the days of Paul.
7. The total population of Rome in the first century has been between 1-2 million, but an inscription has been found at Ostia of 4 million in 14 A.D.

This was the Church at Rome!

IV. The author of the letter to the Romans.

A. Paul is the author.

1. The opening salutation bears his name. Rom. 1:1
2. The authorship of Paul has not been contested, till perhaps the mid 20th century, but without any success.

B. Paul the man.

1. He was a former Pharisee of the highest credential in the Jewish community. Phil. 3:5-6
2. He was a Roman citizen. Acts 22:25
3. He was taught at the feet of Gamaliel.

4. He persecuted the church beyond measure. Acts 8:1; 9:12; 1Cor. 15:9; Gal. 1:13
5. He was called by Jesus to be a vessel of honor to the Gentiles, Kings and the children of Israel. Acts 9:15

C. Paul the missionary.

1. He had evangelized the area of Tarsus after he was sought out by the Jews and the disciples sent him from Jerusalem. Acts 9:26-30
2. He was sought out by Barnabas to help him establish the work at Antioch. Acts 11:25-26
3. He went on three missionary journeys to Asia and Europe. Acts 13-19
4. He was ready to leave for Spain.

This is the author of the letter to the Romans!

V. Key words, phrases, names, versus and doctrines.

1. Key words.
 - a. Gentiles “ethnos” appears 29 times, some times translated nation or nations”.
 - b. Jew “Ioudaios” 11 times.
 - c. Righteousness “dikaiousunee” 36 times, 7 times “dikaiois” righteous or just.

- d. Faith “pistis” 40 times.
 - e. Believe, believed or believing “Pistuo” 22 times.
 - f. Circumcision “peritomee” 15 times, uncircumcision “akrobustia” 11 times.
 - g. Law “nomos” 75 times.
 - h. Work, deeds “ergon” 18 times.
 - i. Justified “dikaioo” 15 times.
 - j. Spirit “pnuma”, spirit 36 times, over 28 refer to the Holy Spirit, 21 are found in chapter 8..
 - k. Promise “epangelia” 8 times.
 - l. Gospel 13 times.
2. Key phrases.
 - a. The gospel of Christ. Rom. 1:1, 16, 15:19, 20, 15:29, 16:25
 - b. The just shall live by faith. Rom. 1:17
 - c. Reckoning the Old man dead. Rom. 6:6, 11
 - d. Walk according to the Spirit. Rom. 8:1
 3. Key names and titles.
 - a. Paul a bond servant of Jesus Christ.
 - b. Abraham 9 times.
 - c. Adam, 2 times.
 - d. Jesus Christ, 34 times.
 - d. Lord, 45 times.
 - e. God 158 times.
 4. Key verses.
 - a. Rom. 1:16-17
 - b. Rom. 2:4

- c. Rom. 3:19
 - d. Rom. 4:13
 - e. Rom. 5:1
 - f. Rom. 5:12
 - g. Rom. 5:17
 - h. Rom. 6:6
 - i. Rom. 6:11
 - j. Rom. 7:24-25
 - k. Rom. 8:3-4
 - l. Rom. 8:15
 - m. Rom. 8:26-27
 - n. Rom. 8:28-30
 - o. Rom 10:17
 - p. Rom. 11:25
 - q. Rom. 12:1-2
5. Key doctrines.
- a. The deity of Jesus.
 - b. The grace of God.
 - c. The justification, redemption and glorification of the believer.
 - d. The Fatherhood of Abraham of all true believers.
 - e. The federal headship of Adam introducing sin and the federal headship of Jesus introducing justification and redemption from sin.
 - f. Sanctification.
 - g. Life in the Spirit.
 - h. The blindness of Israel in part till the rapture.
 - i. The gifts of the Holy Spirit.

- j. Respect and obedience to civil authorities.

VI. The division of the letter to the Romans, a simple outline.

- I.** Doctrinal: How the gospel alone saves the sinner, the is exposition. Rom. 1-8
 - II.** National or Prophetical: How the gospel applies to Israel. Rom. 9-11
 - III.** Practical: How the gospel is to be lived out, this is explanation. Rom. 12-15:13
 - IV.** Personal: How he is a minister of the gospel, this is application. Rom. 15:14-16:27
- * The outline is basic but superb by J. Sidlow Baxter

This is the Division of the letter to the Romans!