

THE BOOK OF ROMANS

Name

We now begin the study of the Epistles in the New Testament; 13 of the 21 were written by Paul, and so they are called the Pauline Epistles. He wrote his letters to the churches at Thessalonica, Galatia, Corinth and Rome during his missionary journeys. It was while he was prisoner in Rome that he wrote his letters to the church at Ephesus, one to the Colossians, one to Philemon and the Philippians. After his imprisonment he wrote two letters – one to Timothy and one to Titus.

Paul was born at Tarsus, of pure Jewish stock. His teacher was Gamaliel, the great teacher of the Pharisees. Like all Hebrew boys, he learned a trade – he was a tent maker. At Jerusalem he was present at the stoning of Stephen, who was the first Christian martyr. No doubt, this made a tremendous impression on him. On the way to Damascus, on a mission to persecute more Christians, the young Pharisee had a head-on collision with Jesus Christ. After his miraculous conversion he was baptized and received the commission to preach the Gospel. He retired to Zrabia and spent three years there in study and preparation.

After laboring in Tarsus for three years, and one year in Antioch, directed by the Holy Spirit, Paul became a great missionary to the Gentiles. On his three journeys he founded many churches and wrote his Epistles. The combination of Roman citizenship, Greek education and Hebrew education, wonderfully qualified him for his great work, but you will find that he trusted alone in the grace of God in Christ Jesus, 1:5.

A life filled with sacrifice and suffering, he sealed his testimony with his own life's blood. Tradition says that he was beheaded at Rome and his body buried in the catacombs.

Understanding Romans

Did you have a hard time reading the Book of Romans in comparison to the Gospels? I'm sure you did. And this is for two reasons: 1) The literary style of Paul, who had the habit of starting a sentence and then digressing and digressing, until you wonder what the subject of the sentence was, and 2) the Epistle is written about a problem that to us is no problem at all but was then a live, burning issue: whether or not a Gentile could be a Christian without becoming a Jewish proselyte. We think of Christianity as being a Gentile religion, because so few Jews are Christian. But Christianity started with the Jews, and certain Jewish leaders were determined that it should remain that way.

Date and Occasion

The date of the writing of this Epistle was probably the winter of 57-58 AD. Paul was in Corinth at the close of the third missionary journey, on the eve of his departure to Jerusalem with the offering for the poor believers, 15:22-27. A woman named Phoebe, of Cenchrea, which was a suburb of Corinth, was sailing for Rome, 16:1-2. Paul took advantage of the situation to send

this letter by her. There was no postal service then, and if something was to be delivered, it had to be done by someone going to that place. She carried this letter to Rome. Titus carried II Corinthians, Tychicus carried Ephesians and Colossians, and Onesimus, Philemon.

Purpose and Plan

Judging from the contents of the Epistle, the apostle's purpose seems to be: 1) to teach the believers at Rome the fundamental doctrines of salvation and so to fortify them against the error of the Judaizers, chapters 1-8; 2) to explain the unbelief of Israel and to indicate its extent and duration, chapters 9-11; 3) to urge his readers to enter into the fullness of Christian life, chapter 12; 4) to admonish them to be subject to the higher powers and to have love for one another, chapter 13; 5) to enjoin them to exercise tolerance toward the weak, 14:1-15:13; 6) to reveal to them his purpose and plans, 15:14-33 7) to commend Phoebe to the church at Rome, 16:1-4; and 8) to send his greetings to many former associates and friends, 16:5-27. The key of the book can be found in Romans, 1:16-17. Will you read that for us, please?

Analysis

I. WHAT ARE WE BY NATURE? Romans 1:1-3:20.

The Spirit of God has taken an x-ray picture of the heart of man and has not found it good, but evil and sinful, so bad that it cannot be displayed to a mixed audience, for we hear, "there is none that doeth good, no not one." The Maker and Judge of man, God the Father, asks the jury in heaven, "Is there no one who will plead the cause for these prisoners shackled by sin?" No one answers. Then the Son of God says, "Yes, I am here to represent these. It is true, they are guilty, but I bore their sins and guilt on the cross. I died in their place that they might go free." So the Judge set them free.

II. HOW TO BECOME A CHRISTIAN: Romans 3:21-5:21.

How does God save sinners? Through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus. He has offered us salvation, not by what we do or by what we are, but He has justified us before God; that is, He has made us right with God. We too have great benefits when we are justified by God's grace. Grace is unmerited favor. In this life we find that faith is followed by peace, pardon and promise, 5:1-5, and more than all, the assurance of salvation, 5:6-11. How can a man be justified by God? Read 3:24-28. God imparts His righteousness to us in the following manner:

- A. By grace, 3:24 – the source of it.
- B. By God, 3:26, 8:33 – He is the giver of it.
- C. By blood, 3:24, 5:9 – the reason for it.
- D. By faith, 3:22 – the means whereby it is received.
- E. By works, James 2:21-23 – the way it is shown.
- F. By experience, 5:1-4 – the blessings from it.

III. HOW TO LIVE A CHRISTIAN LIFE, Romans 6-8.

Probably the question of the century, wouldn't you say? But it isn't as complex as it may sound, if we look to the Word for the answer. First of all, RECKON – “Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead to sin but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord,” 6:11. We must first of all realize that Christ has made us dead to sin; we are no longer the slaves of sin – the chains have been removed, we are free. Secondly, YIELD – “Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin; but yield yourselves unto God as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God,” 6:13. This means, “let go” of your life and “let God” live through you. This is the surrendered life. This is the right way to live a life of victory and blessing. When this happens, the Christian finds a new standard for his life. He does not try to live up to the law, for he is no longer under it. He strives to please the One who dwells in him. “For me to live is Christ”...that is His glory.

IV. THE PROBLEM OF JEWISH UNBELIEF, 9-11.

The story of the Jews being set aside and scattered throughout the world without a homeland without a king is a warning for us. God is a sovereign God; He will do what He will. He has a perfect right to turn to the Gentiles because the Jews would not accept Jesus as their Lord and Savior, 9:32. They tried to set up their own righteousness. But man does not build up righteousness. He only receives it. If God will set aside His chosen people, will He not set us aside if we are disobedient? Let us be careful to heed His commandments. Let us ask Christ to take our lives and lead them in His path...then we can't fail. Halley says, “Israel's rejection is temporary. It resulted in the salvation of the Gentiles. But the day will come when all Israel shall be saved,” 11:26. Do you agree with this? If so, why?

V. HOW TO SERVE GOD, 12-16.

“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service,” 12:1. In this appeal Paul urges us to have our life measure up to our belief. He says that the doctrine of justification of faith will not allow us to be lax in our daily life and conduct. We are saved to serve. The Christian's life must be lived in direct relationship to his conviction of faith.

A modern definition of a Christian is “a person who will die for the church he will not attend.” How many of us will say nothing when Christ's name is brought into question or is used in vain. Let others see Christ in you. Live for Him and then you will be ready to die for Him.

Questions on Romans

1. Why, in 1:16, is the Gospel to go first to the Jews?
2. What are the conditions of a person that Paul suggests lead to sexual impurity and even homosexuality? 1:21-28
3. How will the judgment of God be based for those who do not know the Law? 2:12-16
4. What three issues are true of us all according to 3:10-12?
5. How, according to 4:1-5, was Abraham justified?
6. Where do we receive true peace (5:1-2) and what are the results of peace in our lives? 5:3-4
7. According to 5:12 & 17, where did death come from?
8. What happens in baptism according to 6:1-5?
9. How do we count ourselves “dead to sin?” 6:11-14
10. What is the battle Paul is fighting in 7:15-25?
11. What is the difference between a person whose mind is controlled by the Spirit and one who is not? 8:5-8
12. What happens to prayers that seem not to make sense? 8:26-27
13. What great messages are included in 8:31-39?
14. Who is the true Israel? 9:6, 27; 11:5-7, 25-26
15. What does 10:1-4 tell us of the “end of the Law?”
16. When can we know someone is saved? 10:9-13
17. What is the message of “rejection” recorded in 11:13-23?
18. Who is able to fully understand the knowledge and wisdom of God? 11:33-34
19. What we do needs always to be done in love. That being true, what does it mean in the context of 12:20-21?
20. What is the two-fold purpose of governing authorities? 13:1-6

- 21. What does it mean in 14:13 that we should not put a stumbling block in our brother's way?
- 22. How, according to 15:5-7, was unity to be gotten?
- 23. What significance is the "naming of people" in Chapter 16, and "warning" in 16:17-18?

Paragraph Summaries
