

# THE BOOK OF ROMANS

## Content

In our last study we took a look at the “context” of the Book of the Romans.

- An understanding of the context of this Epistle is essential to a correct understanding of its content.
- We took a brief look at its *dispensational context* by observing where God placed it in Scripture (right after the books of transition—right after the dispensational transition from Israel to the Church).
  - ✓ In this context we see that Romans is the doctrinal foundation for the remainder of Paul's epistles.
- Then we took some time to look at the *historical context* of Romans.
  - ✓ This context helps us to understand *when* Paul wrote Romans (around Acts 20; AD 60) and that in turn leads us to an understanding of *why* Paul wrote the letter.
  - ✓ Paul was too busy preaching the Gospel to the lost to go and preach the Gospel in Rome, but he planned on doing so on his way into Spain (to preach the Gospel to the lost!).

Therefore, we know that Romans is basically a “Gospel tract.” Romans contains a presentation of the Gospel exactly as Paul would have preached it to the Romans had he been able to go there personally.

### I. Overview & Orientation

#### A. The Keys to the Content

1. The Key Passage: Romans 1.16-17 (you could even include verse 18 if you wanted)
  - a) In these verses we see (in just a few words) the entire message of the Book of Romans.
  - b) Romans is a book about the salvation of those who believe because it is a book about how God *justifies* the sinner by giving him *righteousness* (God's righteousness).
2. The Key Word: “Righteousness”
  - a) Romans is a book about the message of the Gospel and that message is about *righteousness*.
  - b) “Righteous” or “Righteousness” appears over 40 times in this book (in about as many verses).
3. The Greatest Need: Proverbs 11.4
  - a) Romans, therefore, speaks to man's greatest need: Man needs *righteousness*.
  - b) This is why Romans is so important: It teaches us *how* to evangelize the lost by presenting to them the truths of the Gospel message in the order they need to hear them.
    - (1) We are not offering “life enhancement” to people (“accept Jesus and everything will be okay”).
    - (2) We are offering *righteousness* because sinners are *condemned to die* before a holy God because they have sinned against him—they have broken His Law and are guilty.
4. The Key Theme: *Romans is, therefore, a book about the revelation of the righteousness of God.*

#### B. The Structure of the Content

1. Romans can be divided easily into either two or three main sections, depending on what you do with Romans 9-11 (which is a parenthetical explanation of the nation of Israel; you could remove those chapters and read from Romans 8 straight into Romans 12 and not see any break in context).
2. We are going to look at Romans in two parts—in two “halves” (trying to keep it simple).
  - a) Romans 1-8 (first half): Paul addresses *salvation*. So, first we see “evangelism.”
  - b) Romans 9-16 (second half): Paul addresses *sanctification*: Secondly we see “edification.”

## II. Romans 1-8: The Revelation of the Righteousness of God for Salvation

### A. Observations

1. First, remember that this is the half that deals with “evangelism.” In these chapters Paul explains the Gospel just like he always preached it. Here we see the pattern of witnessing we should follow.
2. Second, these first eight chapters divide neatly into two sections:
  - a) Romans 1-4: Salvation from sins (Paul deals with individual sins).
  - b) Romans 5-8: Salvation from sin (Paul deals with the sin nature inherited from Adam).

### B. Romans 1-4: Salvation from Sins

1. Here is where evangelism must start (here is where a presentation of Gospel must begin): sins.
  - a) It is because of the individual sinner's sins that he is condemned and under the wrath of God.
  - b) So, Paul begins his presentation of the Gospel by addressing the individual and his personal sins before God (not “we all have sinned” and not “we were all born sinners”).
  - c) This is important (essential!) because this shows us the general method of evangelism employed by the Apostle Paul (whom we should imitate and follow; 1Cor 11.1).
  - d) The issue is very simple: If we do not take the time at the beginning to explain to the sinner his problem, why would we think he would be interested in the solution?
    - (1) If the sinner thinks he's “good enough” to get into heaven, then the good news of the Gospel will not make sense to him. He won't want it.
    - (2) By God's design, we are supposed to help the sinner first see his sins and understand his guilt before God. It's “personal” and he needs to know it.

#### 2. *Romans 1: Declaration—The Sins of the Wicked*

- a) (Rom 1.13-17) Paul states his purpose in writing: He is going to preach the Gospel.
- b) Pay attention to the very next words! Pay attention to how Paul begins his “witness encounter.”
- c) (Rom 1.18) Bad news! Paul speaks first of the wrath of God upon the wicked.
- d) (Rom 1.19-20) Since he is addressing Gentiles, he starts with creation and the obvious fact that creation demands the existence of a Creator (just like a building demands a builder).
- e) And then in the remainder of the chapter he speaks of the increasing wickedness of sinners who have turned away from the Creator and followed their own desires.
- f) Paul begins his Gospel presentation speaking of the wrath of God (v18), the wickedness of man (v19-33), and finishes the chapter talking about judgment and the death penalty (v32).
- g) That's a far cry from “God loves you and has a wonderful plan for you life.” And Paul doesn't stop there. He continues with the issue of the sins of the individual in chapter 2.

#### 3. *Romans 2: Condemnation—The Sins of the Hypocrite*

- a) (Rom 2.1) Paul now addresses the hypocrite who condemns others for what he allows.
- b) (Rom 2.11-16) Paul is speaking to both the Jews (who have a written law) and Gentiles (who have God's moral Law written upon their hearts). We all do the same hypocritical thing.
- c) (Rom 2.17-24) Paul uses the moral Law (as expressed in the Ten Commandments) to bring about a personal knowledge of personal sins.
  - (1) We all know it's wrong to lie... steal... commit adultery... Have you done those things? Then you're guilty and deserve punishment (hell), not reward (heaven).
  - (2) (1Tim 1.8-11) This is the lawful use of the Law in our dispensation: Evangelism. Learn how to use the Law. (Recommended materials: Ray Comfort, Mark Cahill, Todd Friel).

#### 4. **Romans 3: Conclusion—All of Humanity Needs the Solution**

- a) Romans 3.23 is usually where we start our explanation of the Gospel, but that statement is too general to bring about a conviction of personal sins.
  - (1) Paul just spent two entire chapters explaining to the sinner that he has sinned before a holy and righteous God, and his sins have condemned him.
  - (2) You cannot get to chapter 3 and “all have sinned” unless you go through chapters 1 and 2 first, applying the Law to the individual sinner in order to bring about a knowledge of sins.
- b) (Rom 3.9-12) Paul reviews and summarizes the problem:
  - (1) All men are equal; there is none righteous because all have sinned—broken the Law.
  - (2) Observe here, too, Paul's method of evangelism. He addresses the essential issues.
    - (a) (v10) None are righteous (that's what it takes to get into heaven: moral perfection).
    - (b) (v11-12) Paul says that no one is righteous because no one has done good always (i.e., we all have done bad—broken God's Law—at some point).
    - (c) This is why an easy (and biblical) way to begin a witness encounter is by asking, “Do you think you're good enough to go to heaven?” That is the crux of the issue.
- c) (Rom 3.21-23) Paul reveals the solution to the problem.
  - (1) Because all have sinned, all need the same solution: The righteousness of God in Christ.
  - (2) Remember, we are not offering “life enhancement” when we preach the Gospel. Man's one greatest need is righteousness because without that he will perish on the Day of Judgment.

#### 5. **Romans 4: Justification—God Grants Salvation by Faith**

- a) (Rom 4.4) Salvation is not by works... why?
  - (1) The sinner is condemned because he has personally broken God's Law.
  - (2) To offer good works to God, the righteous Judge, is like offering a judge a bribe to get out of punishment (which is also illegal and will increase the debt the criminal has to pay).
  - (3) Therefore, salvation must be by grace alone and not by works (works would be a “bribe”).
- b) (Rom 4.5) God will justify the condemned sinner that “believes.”
  - (1) Observe the key elements: The sinner needs to be justified and he needs righteousness.
    - (a) Again we see that Paul couches his Gospel presentation in legal terms.
    - (b) We should strive to do the same in our witness encounters, because salvation is primarily a legal transaction (we broke God's Law, Jesus “paid our fine”).
  - (2) We should also note that biblical “belief” includes both repentance and faith.
    - (a) One turns from sin (repentance) and turns to Jesus Christ to save him (faith).
    - (b) (Acts 17.30-31; 20.20-21) Paul's call to salvation was a call to repentance and faith.
    - (c) That is why we can expect fruit from a true conversion. And that is why we can expect the false convert to “believe in vain” without any visible fruit in his life.

#### C. **Romans 5-8: Salvation from Sin**

- 1. Here is where an informed sinner can understand the issues of salvation a little deeper. His situation before God is primarily his fault (because of his “sins”), but it goes deeper than that.
  - a) Paul continues his Gospel presentation by addressing the issue of “sin” (vs. “sins”).
  - b) From Romans 1-4 we can assume the sinner understands that his sins have condemned him, and that he can be saved in Jesus Christ. Now, it's time to address the sin nature in all of us.

## **2. *Romans 5: Preservation—Security in Christ***

- a) In this chapter Paul begins his discourse on sin by examining the relationship between Jesus Christ and Adam.
- b) (Rom 5.12) Because sin entered into the world through Adam, it was passed down from him to all of his physical descendants. We sin because we are sinners.
  - (1) (Rom 5.13) However, God (being good and right and just and kind) does not condemn the sinner for his inherited sin—his sin nature.
  - (2) Even though a person is born in sin, God does not impute that sin until there is a “law” present (until the person has the moral capacity to discern between right and wrong).
  - (3) In the moment the sinner willingly and knowingly does wrong, the whole of God's wrath comes upon him and he is in need of salvation.
- c) (Rom 5.15) Just as Adam is the head of a line of dead descendants, so Jesus Christ is the new Head of a new line of descendants made alive by God's grace.
- d) (Rom 5.19-21) Therefore, in Christ we are saved from the sin we inherited from Adam.

## **3. *Romans 6: Crucifixion—Sanctification in Christ***

- a) In Romans 6 Paul addresses the fact that sin still lives (resides) in us. If we have been given righteousness and life in Christ (Rom 5), why do we still struggle with sin? That's Romans 6.
- b) (Rom 6.12) Sin still resides in our flesh (our bodies, our members), but it ought not reign.
- c) (Rom 6.22) Rather, since we are “crucified with Christ” (we no longer live; we no longer rule in our lives), sin does not control us. We can and should live and grow in holiness.
- d) However, even though we have been crucified with Christ, the reality is that we struggle with sin. And that is what Paul addresses in the next chapter.

## **4. *Romans 7: Realization—Conflict in Life***

- a) (Rom 7.21-24) The reality of the Christian life is that, as long as we are covered with this sinful body, we will struggle against the sin nature that resides in it.
  - (1) It's actually the struggle against sin that is one of the most convincing evidences of a true conversion. Don't expect sinless perfection; expect a constant struggle to do right.
  - (2) The false convert doesn't struggle with sin, he enjoys it. The true convert struggles with sin and cries out with Paul in verse 24 when he falls into sin.
- b) (Rom 7.25) Our victory is found, not in self-discipline or anything of the sort; it is found only in Christ. And Paul develops this thought in the following chapter (our victory in Christ).

## **5. *Romans 8: Glorification—Liberty by the Spirit***

- a) (Rom 8.1) While in this body of sin we always have the choice to either walk after the flesh (our desires) or to walk after the Spirit (God's desires, as revealed in the Scripture).
- b) (Rom 8.2) The victory over sin (which is basically a life of growing in holiness—growing in Christ-likeness) is found only in the Spirit, as we walk according to His leading (Scripture).
- c) Here ends the first half (the doctrinal and “evangelistic” half of Romans).
  - (1) Paul ends this section, in Romans 8, with the victory over sin that is found in Christ.
  - (2) You could very easily read Romans 8.35-39 (the grand victory we have in Christ!) and then continue immediately with Romans 12.1-2 (the right response to what we have in Christ) without any contextual problems at all.
  - (3) Romans 9-11 is parenthetical. Paul needed to explain something to the Christians before he got to the practical application of what salvation should look like in the life of a believer.

### III. Romans 9-16: The Revelation of the Righteousness of God for Sanctification

#### A. Observations

1. This is the “practical” section of Romans that deals with “edification” (spiritual growth and maturity) after one converts to Christ by the hearing of the preaching of the Gospel.
2. We see, first, the rejection of God's plan by Israel (Rom 9-11) and then the revelation of God's plan of sanctification for the Church (Rom 12-16).

#### B. Romans 9-11: The National Explanation

##### 1. *Romans 9: Past—The Election of Israel in the Past*

- a) This is one of the most problematic chapters in Romans because of what many Calvinists have insisted on teaching from it (the election of some to salvation and others to condemnation).
- b) Romans 9 deals with the issue of the past election of the nation of Israel to be God's people.
  - (1) It does not deal with the salvation of individuals (through “sovereign election”).
  - (2) For example: (v11-13) The “election” of Jacob and Esau is not to individual salvation.
    - (a) (v12 cf. Gen 25.23) The verse quoted speaks of the election of two “nations”.
    - (b) Romans 9 explains the fact that God elected Israel in the past to be His chosen people, and that will never change (He chose them and they are an elect nation forever).
- c) If the individual Jew wants to be saved, that “national election” does him no good. He must proceed to chapter 10 and understand God's severity toward Israel at the present...

##### 2. *Romans 10: Present—The Severity of God toward Israel in the Present*

- a) (Rom 10.3) Again we see the issue (the crux) of salvation: Righteousness (not by works!).
- b) (Rom 10.4) Salvation in our dispensation is through Christ and Christ alone (Jew or Gentile).
- c) (Rom 10.13-17) Paul lays out God's design for saving sinners (God's missions method) in our dispensation: The preaching of the Gospel to the lost (we must go and witness to them).
- d) (Rom 10.21) And we see clearly the reason for God's present severity toward Israel.

##### 3. *Romans 11: Future—The Salvation of Israel in the Future*

- a) (Rom 11.1) God is not finished with Israel. The Church does not replace Israel in God's plan.
- b) (Rom 11.11) God is simply using us to make Israel jealous and bring her to reconciliation.
- c) (Rom 11.25-26) After our rapture, God will use the Tribulation Period to bring Israel to repentance and faith in Jesus as their Messiah, and Jews from all 12 tribes will be saved.
- d) (Rom 11.29) God's past election of Israel is “without repentance” (it is unconditional).

#### C. Romans 12-16: The Personal Application

##### 1. Observations

- a) In these final five chapters of Romans, Paul exhorts the believers (those who have understood the Gospel and believed on Christ) to right living. This is the “practical application” section.
- b) The sinner who turns from sin (repentance) to Christ (faith) is regenerated (born again) by the Holy Spirit of God who takes up permanent residence in his spirit.
- c) Therefore, because salvation is such a radical change (both by choice—repentance—and by God's regeneration—the new birth), we can rightly expect to see some visible evidence.
  - (1) Christ said in Matthew 7.20 that we can know a tree by its fruit (fruit is visible).
  - (2) In Romans 12-16 Paul exhorts the believers to behave like Christians should behave—to let their conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ (Php 1.27).

## **2. *Romans 12: Transformation—Our Sacrifice to God***

- a) (Rom 12.1) The Christian should present his body (what he does with the physical members of his body during each 24 hour day) to God, to do what God wants him to do with that body.
  - e.g., A good way to do this: Read your Bible every day and obey what it says.
- b) (Rom 12.2) This bodily presentation will result in a transformation in character and conduct.

## **3. *Romans 13: Submission—Our Service in Society***

- a) (Rom 13.1) The Christian is expected to submit to the government (when the government does not obligate him to disobey God) because for the Christian, the focus is on others, not on self.
- b) (Rom 13.8) A Christian has received everything (and more) in Christ. He is now free to love and serve others and help meet their needs (e.g., evangelism and edification).

## **4. *Romans 14: Humility—Separation from Self***

- a) (Rom 14.20) The Gospel results in a disposition to sacrifice “me!” and “mine!” for the welfare of others.
- b) (Rom 14.8) That attitude is the result of understanding that salvation results in our submission to the Lord. We repent of sin and self and follow Jesus Christ (submit to Him and obey Him).

## **5. *Romans 15: Exhortation—Sympathy toward Others***

- a) (Rom 15.2) The Gospel results in a genuine desire in the believer to “edify” others.
- b) (Rom 15.20-21) That desire to “edify” manifests itself most often in a “missionary spirit” (a fervent desire to preach the Gospel to the lost so that they might be saved and edified).

## **6. *Romans 16: Collaboration—Salutations to the Brethren***

- a) Romans ends with a long list of names and salutations (a dictionary of biblical proper names makes an interesting study of Romans 16; find out what the names mean).
- b) What we should notice throughout the list is that Paul greets those who are laboring with him; he greets his “colaborers.”
  - (1) Our fellowship one with another is not based on superficial hugs and greetings at the door of the church on Sundays.
  - (2) True fellowship always grows out of laboring together in the ministry and mission of (primarily) evangelism and (secondarily) edification. That's where fellowship is sweet!
- c) (Rom 16.17) Fellowship is broken by those who don't want to pull the same yoke, doing the same work in the same field.

## **Conclusion:**

### **Romans is a book about the revelation of the righteousness of God in the Gospel of Jesus Christ.**

- In Romans 1-8 we see the righteousness of God in salvation (Paul preaches the Gospel).
- In Romans 9-16 we see the righteousness of God in sanctification (the Gospel results in a changed life).

### **The next book in the canon of Scripture is 1Corinthians.**

- In 1Corinthians we see Paul reprove believers for their failure to practically apply the truths of the Gospel that he laid out in Romans.
- In 1Corinthians we see a church divided by carnality rather than a body united in the mission of discipleship: Evangelizing the lost and edifying the saved.
- We need to read the Bible (learn theology), but we need to also obey what we read (apply it; do it). And that's where the Corinthians failed (exactly where many “carnal” churches fail today: application).