

THE EPISTLE
TO THE
ROMANS



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STUDIES ON ROMANS

1. INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDIES

The Reason for Our Studies in Romans

In this Series we hope to cover those issues of the Gospel which will constitute a review of the nature of the Gospel, and help us to see its wholeness, why it inspired Paul to travel and proclaim it incessantly, and so come to understand it that we will have a like passion for it, coming to comprehend how this Epistle covers the elements of universal human depravity, the wrath of God upon its evil, the liberation from wrath and judgement by the propitiatory act of the Cross, and the liberation for the law's condemnation to move out in the justification God has given, and to know the liberation from sin, to have power over it, and to know the sanctification God has provided in the Gospel and so experience holiness of life.

We will then delve into the conflict in the Christian life which comes as we would be obedient to the law, the power that sin seeks to exercise in that struggle and the freedom of practical holiness we come to know through the Holy Spirit. The doctrine of our Sonship of the Father and the inheritance we will have as sons, win lead us to see more elements of life in the Spirit, such as intercessory prayer, predestination and election and the assurance that nothing can separate us from the love of God.

We will then see Paul's idea of the obedience of faith as it relates to Israel and the church, the way of worship and holiness

of life, the fullness of love in interpersonal community relationships, and the inspiration to share the powerful gospel with the nations that they might come to the obedience of faith.

All of this will lift our eyes from personal navel gazing, from grieving concerning our innate sinfulness which manifests itself in our lives so that we come to see that the gospel is so structured as to ensure us that the basis of our faith is viable, the exercise of it brings 'the joy of faith', and to see that faith always has its eschatological look to the holy telos when the nations come to the obedience of faith, ie. submission to Christ. It will release us from desiring experiences of spirituality which might seem to give us assurance that we are in the fullness of God's Fatherhood, the fullness of Christ and the fullness of the Holy Spirit. We will realise that we have all of these in, by, and from the gospel, so that we are indeed justified by faith, sanctified by God, that we live the life of faith in practical holiness, and that our present is greatly strengthened by that which is yet to come.

All of this material lies within the Epistle to the Romans, but of course we will look at supportive and explanatory materials from other parts of Scripture when we feel that is needful and helpful. We conclude then that a study of the text of Romans will bring great benefit to us.

2. A BRIEF STUDY GUIDE TO THE EPISTLE

Note: We will not have time to do a verse by verse exegesis and exposition. We will therefore select from the text that which we think helpful and pertinent to our situation, but the material below is not merely a guide to the contents of the Letter but to holistic impact that comes to all believers from the Epistle. We cannot be selective as to certain elements. Note: Much will depend on the

opening up of the passages which will substantiate our faith and bring us into that exhortation which related to the sanctified life.

Chapters One to Three

1: 1-15. The Christological basis for the gospel, Christ Son of God and Lord by his death and resurrection: Paul's apostolic authority and ministry are to come now to Rome.

1: 16-17. No need to be ashamed of the gospel because its basis is faith. It is as simple as having faith in God and this means bringing Man to righteousness.

1: 16-32. The reason for, and the nature of God's wrath, something we must know for ourselves. The universal depravity of man.

2:1-3:19. Both Jews and Gentiles are to be accounted as depraved and so are accountable before God for his wrath and judgement.

3:21-3 1. God's grace shown in the propitiatory act of God in Christ which justifies the believing sinner on the basis of Christ's work on the Cross. This gratuitous justification does no damage to the law, but substantiates it whilst setting the sinner free in conscience from its condemnation.

Chapter Four

1-23. The nature of faith which justifies in the cases of David and Abraham, based on the promises of God which issue from his nature.

24-25. As for Abraham, so for us; the death and resurrection of Christ ensure our justification-by faith.

Chapter Five

1-11. The outcome and fruits of justification. The dynamics of the new state of love, and the gift of reconciliation.

12-21. Sin and death through Adam from the beginning to the end are defeated by Christ as God's grace to sinful man. The liberation is not meagre but abundant. Adam's humanity is unholy, Christ's

the root and fruit of sanctification. We are aware, here, of two aeons, two systems.

Chapter Six

1-1. Being justified by faith might seem to be a status rather than a dynamic action which would be the root of holiness. Grace abounding liberates sinners from* sin and death. This happens when a person is baptised into Christ. He/she goes down into Christ's death and dies to the penalty of sin, is justified from sin. To die to sin is to live to God. This is how the justified person must see it. Note: It is after this action of the gospel that sanctification is seen to be present and powerful.

12-23. Sin is powerless unless we give it power, but we present all we are to God as those who, by grace, have been released from sin's power. We choose either to be slaves to sin or righteousness. We, as believers, can only choose the latter. Submission to Christ/the gospel (the form of teaching! NRSV) bring righteousness and, so, sanctification (cf 6:22; 1 Tim. 2:15). As in 5:12-22 sin brought shame and death, now obedience (to Christ, the gospel) brings sanctification, and eternal life.

Chapter Seven

1-6. As in 3:31 we are now (afresh) faced with law. Law has to be considered, It is ever present. Yet as the law with penalty it brings no fruit (cf. Gal. 5:19-21), but only sins. In Christ's death the justified died to the law (Gal. 2: 19-20; cf. 5:24) and are free to be wedded to Christ for fruitfulness. The new era/aeon (5:12ff.) is that of the Spirit and so obedience to the law [as a dynamic way of life] is now operative.

7-12. An examination of law and sin using it dynamically, as a fulcrum to lever a person into sinning (cf 7:5) is perceived. The law rightly promised life (Lev. 18:5) but sin used it deceptively. The law must, then we be seen as holy, just and good.

13-25. This working of sin through law will ever be in the believer who loves the law after his/her inner person. Sin *of itself* is stronger than the believer *of his/her* set(Sin forces the hand of one whose mind is to do the good and desist from the evil. That is how it is. One who fights this battle this way (*of him/her self*) will always be exhausted and only relieved of the exhausting struggle in the telos. Seeing the ultimate release gives dynamic to persist in the present battling. The believer serves God in his mind/intention, but with the flesh (his innate weakness) serves sin which is stronger than him/her self

Chapter Eight

1-4. Whatever any case may be, this principle stands *invincible*, there is no condemnation The justified person is set free from the law as the law of sin and death' . The law cannot effect 'serving in the new life of the Spirit' (7:6) but the Spirit can. Hence-because of the Spirit-the believer fulfils 'the righteous demand (*diakoioma*) of the law' (cf . Matt. 5:17-18; Gal. 5:22-23) This requires walking in the Spirit.

5-8. The flesh (the fallenness of man, humanity tainted by sin) is incorrigible. It can never obey God, indeed is ever hostile to him. To be in the flesh means one can never please God. Obeying his law pleases him!

9-13. Being in the Spirit is being in Christ. Thus the flesh has no hold on the believer who kills the [fleshly] 'deeds of the body' by him, the Spirit of Christ.

14-25. By the Spirit is sonship and sonship brings inheritance, which in turn is linked with (and is) glorification, albeit suffering is presently required. Inheritance involves ultimate glorification. Even with having the Spirit's first fruits, we groan for the day of liberation.

26-30. In the groaning, suffering time we need to pray, but are helpless. The Spirit does this by powerful, passionate internal

intercession (cf, 8:34, Christ's twin intercession). So we are confident that all things are being worked by God for our own good—confirmation to the image of his Son for the liberty of the glory of the sons of God' (v. 2 1). God's act is fore-knowledge predestination, calling, conformation, and on this we rest.

31-39. God has justified and against all condemners, for this Christ died and has risen and incessantly intercedes at the Father's right hand. This means nothing can separate the elect from God, his love in Christ is so strong and deep. Many powerful forces seek to do this, but in vain. We are stabilised and comforted by this knowledge.

CHAPTERS 9-11

These chapters are to show that God has sovereignly made no mistakes in history.

Chapter Nine

None of his promises to Israel is void. His principle of 'I will have mercy upon whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion' is inviolable, else were God not God. These recipients of mercy are not only Jews but Gentiles. Having faith is the response to hearing the gospel (cf. 10: 17).

Chapter Ten

The law presents itself but Christ is all that the law is about. The word which faith receives makes no law-performance demands. The word is wholly available to faith. The word is the gospel which is essential for calling on the Lord and being saved. Faith comes by hearing this 'word of Christ'-Christ himself preaching the gospel through his sent messengers-but not all in Israel are hearing. This refusal is their culpable choice.

Chapter Eleven

There is yet a remnant of Israel who will hear. If others do not hear it is not because God's intention (word) for Israel has failed, but the deliberate dullness of the [so-called] hearers. Even so, their refusal to hear has brought the gospel to the Gentiles. Their rejection has led to the Gentiles' acceptance by God. The full story is not yet told. All Israel will be saved. God's calling is without [his] recall of it. This wisdom of God in regard to Israel and the Gentiles is incredible. Hence a heartfelt doxology.

Chapter Twelve

1-2. Realising all these mercies (1:18-11:32) Paul exhorts his readers to a most significant action, that of presenting their bodies as a living sacrifice for 'understanding worship'. They are not to be [idol-worshippers] as the world about them, but renewal of the mind (by the Spirit?) is for them to be transformed. On this action all that follows in the chapter is dependent. It is the 'spiritual worship, the transformed life, the true holiness'.

3 -2 1. We can say that what follows in these verses is really an outworking of the true spiritual law of God as Israel had known it in worship of God, honouring of the neighbour, loving and caring for him in action, and not fighting the enemy with his own weapons. It reminds us of the Sermon on the Mount, especially the five (or six) antitheses which take us deep into the heart of true law.

Chapter Thirteen

1-10. These injunctions (*paranetics*) are the continuation of the way one lives in the transformed life, first towards the authorities God has set in the world and then the way in which the neighbour is to be treated and related to.

1 1- 14. The holy life is always lived with the eschaton in view. If there has been any deviation from the transformed life then it must

quickly be put aside. An awakening is due. No provision must be made for the flesh, and this can only be if we put on Christ.

Chapters Fourteen and Fifteen

14:1-15:15:13. This is really one section which, like I Corinthians chapter 8, deals with the weaker brethren, as the Corinthians chapter deals with the person of weak conscience. They are virtually the same. The way of love, the way of consideration for the weaker ones must be primary. Then will all members live in unity, in peace, in love. The great exemplar of such serving others is Christ, who became a servant firstly for the Jews and then for the conversion of the Gentiles. Faith aids the community to ‘abound in hope’.

15:14-31 covers the ministry Paul has had in serving all, especially the Gentiles, and the ministry he sees ahead of him. He gives the key to true ministry and this information is valuable, but his passion is to preach the gospel to all. He also strongly emphasises the need for the collection of aid for the poor saints in Jerusalem. He appeals for the prayers of the Roman Christians for his ministry when he goes into Judea where danger certainly awaits him.

Chapter Sixteen

1-24. This section is filled with interesting material about his friends in Jerusalem, of which there are many. He recounts the ministries they have had and this account is valuable for us. He sends greetings and love.

25-27 takes up the theme of ‘the obedience of faith’ which he has touched on in 1:5 and 15:18. Certainly it is the key to his understanding of the Lordship of Christ and God’s intention to gather in the nations under that Lordship.

3. CONCLUSION: WE ARE JUSTIFIED, SANCTIFIED CALLED TO WORSHIP AND SERVICE IN THE GOSPEL

If we are selective in the passages which help us to develop certain elements for their own sake, then we will miss the great thrust of the gospel of which Paul is not ashamed. It is not mere evangelism he is about but ‘the whole counsel of God’. Doubtless many of these elements are dealt with in greater length in some other Epistles, but if we simply make subjective demands in order to extend and fill out our own spirituality, then we will fail to be caught up in the wholesome and holistic dynamic of the Epistle, which for Paul was true spirituality, if he could have used such a term.

A Useful Exercise

It would be helpful for all who undertake these Studies to sit down and write out what has come to you as you have traversed this Epistle. How has it come to you? Has it broadened your views of the extent of the gospel, and the great plan of God to bring all the nations to the obedience of faith? Would you say that in fact this is what the Letter is dealing with as a whole ‘the obedience of faith’?