

Romans 1-3 - Bad News First

Romans Series (Part 4)

By Ed Stevens -- Then and Now Podcast -- Nov 17, 2013

Opening Remarks:

- A. Welcome to another study of biblical history and eschatology from a full preterist perspective.
- B. Last time we reviewed some of the purposes that Paul and the Holy Spirit may have had for composing the book of Romans, as well as surveyed some of the key historical events that may have been significant factors in shaping its contents. And we looked at a real simple outline of the book of Romans in its five basic sections, in order to trace Paul's flow of thought here.
- C. In today's podcast we will try to cover the first of those five sections of Romans, which we have labeled "The Bad News First."
- D. Let's pray before we begin our study --

God of Abraham, the One whose presence fills the infinite universe, and in Whom we live and move and have our being: We are studying Your Word which your Spirit inspired your bond-servant Paul to write down not only for the saints in Rome in the first century, but for all saints of all generations of this eternal age. Help us to understand what it meant to those saints in the first century, so that we can make the right application to us today. We pray this in the Name of your Son and our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

- E. Be sure you have your Bible open to Romans chapter one, so that you can see the biblical text as we talk about it.

Salutation and Prayer (Rom 1:1-17)

1:1-7 – *Salutation and Opening Comments*: Leon Morris in his *Pillar Commentary* on Romans notes that:

"[Paul] takes his letter openings more seriously than do his more conventional contemporaries, and he makes them the vehicles of important Christian teaching. This ordinarily means a somewhat longer introduction than was normal. Nowhere is Paul's ability to use the [conventional letter-writing form] more apparent than in Romans. This opening is longer and much more formal than in Paul's other letters – perhaps because he was not personally known to the Roman church, perhaps also because he did not want anyone to doubt his position as an apostle [to the Gentiles]" [Morris, p. 35].

1:1 – Paul describes himself as a "*bond-servant* (or slave) of Messiah Jesus" (Rom 1:1). The word here in the Greek is DOULOS (slave), not DIAKONOS (servant). In the Old Testament (Ex 21:3-6; Deut 15:16-17) there were several types of slaves or

servants. So, what does Paul have in mind when he calls himself the **slave of Christ Jesus**? Leon Morris explains:

As the Christians used the term ["slave"], it conveys the idea of complete and utter devotion, not the abjectness which was the normal condition of the slave. Paul is affirming that he belongs to Christ without reservation. The term is applied to Abraham (Gen 26:24), to Moses (Josh 1:2), and to the prophets from the time of Amos (Amos 3:7; Isa 20:3). Paul may thus be quietly affirming that he stands in the true succession of the prophets. If this is in mind, it may be significant that he speaks of himself as the slave, not of God (as the prophets did), but of Christ. He puts Christ in the highest possible place. [Morris, pp. 36-37].

Paul thinks of himself as bound to serve Christ throughout the rest of his life. That is what a bond-servant or slave is. They voluntarily submit themselves to serve their Master until their dying breath. Paul says he was called by Jesus personally and set apart for proclaiming the good news. He considered himself totally devoted to that gospel proclamation task until his martyrdom or the Parousia, whichever came first.

1:1-4 – Paul teaches some powerful truths here in his opening comments:

- The Trinity (God, His Son, and the Spirit) in Rom 1:1-4.
- The Gospel was promised in the Old Testament (Rom 1:1-2)
- Paul implies the pre-existence of the Son before He was born as a descendant of David according to the flesh (1:3).
- Jesus is the promised Davidic Messiah and Divine Son of God (Rom 1:3-4).
- Jesus was raised back out of Hades, thus proving true all of His claims to be the Divine Son of God (Rom 1:4)
- Jesus is "Lord" (not the Roman Emperor Nero) is stated 18 times here in Romans beginning here in Rom 1:4 (Rom 1:4, 7; 4:24; 5:1, 11, 21; 6:23; 7:25; 8:39; 10:9; 13:14; 14:9, 14; 15:6, 30; 16:18, 20, 24).

1:5 – Note that Paul views his apostolic task as "bringing about the *obedience of faith* among all the Gentiles." We see a similar phrase in Rom 16:26, "leading to *obedience of faith* among all the nations." And Rom 6 (esp. verse 17) shows that *obedience from the heart* is required to be set free from slavery to sin. For those who may be tempted to think that Paul teaches an "easy-believism" kind of faith that saves without any kind of repentance, obedience, or change of lifestyle, this verse sets the record straight. It is true that obedience is required for sanctification later after regeneration. But Paul in these three texts (Rom 1:5; 6:17; 16:26) necessarily implies that *obedience* from a heart that trusts in Christ is essential before we can walk in newness of life. It is not mere sterile belief of some facts about Christ which saves us. It is instead a kind of faith which obeys Christ by dying to sin (repenting) and no longer "living in it" (Rom 6:2). Rom 6:16 says it just about as clearly as it can be said: "Do you not know that when you present yourselves to someone as slaves for obedience, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin resulting in death, or of obedience resulting in righteousness" (forgiveness, justification, and

eternal life). Paul does not teach a saving kind of faith that is totally devoid of any kind of behavior or lifestyle changes. Instead, the kind of faith that Paul is teaching here in Romans is that faith which expresses itself in obedience, repentance, righteousness, and sanctification. Without that kind of obedient faith, there is no forgiveness, righteousness, justification and sanctification.

1:5-6 –Paul is not just *defending* his apostleship against some there at Rome who might have been questioning it. Instead he is *declaring* his Divinely-appointed apostleship *among all the Gentiles*, including the Gentile saints there in Rome. If we miss this point, we have missed something very significant here in Paul's message to the Romans. It is not just generic apostolic authority that he is asserting here, but more especially a Divinely appointed commission to "*all the Gentiles throughout the whole world*" including even those (and especially those) at Rome, even though he was not the founder of that church.

The length of this salutation and its powerful contents show that Paul was laser-focused on developing a good relationship with the Roman Christians. It is not just his *apostleship* that he emphasizes here, but more especially his being "called as an apostle ... to bring about the obedience of faith among all the Gentiles" (1:1,5). Notice that last phrase "among all the Gentiles." That idea of Paul being an apostle to all the Gentiles shows up repeatedly throughout this opening section (1:5; 1:8; 1:13-14; cf. 11:13; 15:16). And his exhortations to the Gentiles throughout the book are clearly coming from someone who considers himself to have apostolic authority over all the Gentiles throughout the whole world (including Rome), not just in the churches he had personally established in Greece, Macedonia, and Turkey (Rom 1:5, 13; 2:14, 24; 3:29; 9:24, 30; 11:11–13, 25; 15:9–12, 16, 18, 27; 16:4).

Quite often in Paul's letters, Paul mentions the *purpose* or *theme* of his letter in the opening and closing sections. And he does it here as well. In the first seventeen verses of chapter one, Paul was aiming to establish a close connection to the church in Rome (for several purposes). He shows that he has the right to do that, since he was "set apart" to preach the gospel to "all the Gentiles throughout the whole world," including "the rest of the Gentiles ... Greeks ... barbarians" and those "also who are in Rome" (Rom 1:1, 5-6, 8 and 13-15). Paul clearly sees himself as being under obligation to preach to ALL Gentiles, including the Greeks and barbarians. Therefore, the Gentiles in Rome are in a significant sense *within his jurisdiction* as an apostle to the Gentiles. The contents of this book would not have been accepted by the Romans or any other Gentiles unless they could see clearly that its author was Divinely appointed as an apostle to all the Gentiles, even among churches that he had not personally founded (Rom 15:16-32). Paul clearly understands their need to see that he was Divinely commissioned to minister the gospel to all Gentiles, including those at Rome, and takes great care to do so right here at the beginning and ending of this letter (both in Rom 1:5-6; and Rom 15:16-32).

1:7 – Paul refers to the Roman Christians as "beloved of God ... called as saints."

These are definitely terms of endearment, designed to effect a closer relationship with them. See similar compliments in Rom 15:14. Some ancient manuscript copies of Romans are missing the words "in Rome" here in verse 7. Bruce Metzger commented on this:

A majority of the Committee interpreted the absence of the words *ἐν Ρώμῃ* in several witnesses (G 1739^{mg} 1908^{mg} it^g Origen) either as the result of an accident in transcription, or more probably, as a deliberate excision, made in order to show that the letter is of general, not local, application. Whether the omission of the designation is also connected with the circulation of an alternative (shorter or longer) form of the letter (see the comment on 14.23) is an open question."
[Metzger, on Rom 1:7]

1:8-15 – *Paul's Prayer About the Roman Christians and For the Roman Christians:*

1:8 – Paul thanks God for the Roman saints, whose "faith is being proclaimed *in the whole world.*" Note this phrase "in the whole world" (Gk *en holo to kosmo*). Similar phrases are used in Matt 24:14, 26:13; Mark 16:15; esp. **Luke 2:1**; Acts 11:28; 19:27; 1 Jn 2:2; 5:19; Rev 3:10; 12:9; and 16:14. This was the Roman world or Diaspora.

1:9 – *Paul prays for the church there in Rome. Why?* We mentioned in past sessions the reason why the Holy Spirit moved Paul to claim and assert this apostolic authority among the Gentile Christians there at Rome. It was because this church at Rome was located in such a **strategic place** in the empire, which automatically gave them **a lot of influence** for the furtherance of the gospel. The gospel would have a hard time establishing itself anywhere else in the empire if it was not already represented in the city of Rome itself. But it was also because this church was looked to as a **model (or example) for all the other Gentile churches to follow**. If the predominantly Gentile church in Rome did not accept the Jewish Christians as fellow-heirs of grace, and honor the Jews for sharing their spiritual riches with them, then the rest of the Gentile churches would have difficulty doing that as well. Paul and the Holy Spirit are making sure that the **strategic influence** and **good example** of the Gentile Christians in Rome are properly developed and maintained. Moreover, the Holy Spirit knew about the upcoming **Neronian persecution**, and used Paul's letter to the Roman church to **strengthen and prepare them** for that horrendous tribulation that was soon to come (only six years after this book was written, AD 64).

1:10-15 – Paul wanted to visit Rome for several reasons: (1) to impart some spiritual gifts to them to fully establish them, (2) to encourage them and be encouraged by each other's faith, (3) to obtain some fruit or make disciples among them, and (4) to preach the true gospel to them.

At the end of the book (Rom 15:22-32), Paul mentions additional reasons why he wanted to visit the Christians in Rome: (1) to see them in passing when he traveled to Spain, (2) to enjoy their company for a while, (3) to be helped on his way to Spain by

them, (4) to make sure they were on the same page with him in regard to the contents of the gospel, (5) to help both the Jews and Gentiles accept each other and be united together, (6) to help the Gentile Christians understand that they were indebted to the Jews for sharing the kingdom with them, (7) to help the Jewish Christians accept the Gentiles as fellow-heirs, (8) to get the full blessing and support of the Roman Christians for his missionary efforts, and (9) to come to them in joy and find refreshing rest in their company.

Of course, the Holy Spirit was the prime facilitator behind all this, and it was His sovereign providential work behind the scenes that was at play here. Paul would indeed finally reach Rome about three years later, but not in the way he expected (as a prisoner), nor for all the purposes that he had envisioned (on his way to Spain). The Holy Spirit (the Paraclete or Helper) was directing all this for His own sovereign purposes and glory. And one of the most important purposes of the Holy Spirit was to make sure both the Jews and Gentiles accepted each other and were united together in this very strategic and influential city (Rome) in the heart of the Gentile world. That unity would be a model for all the churches of the Gentiles. This was the final step in solidifying the universal and eternal kingdom of Christ. The success of that transfer of the kingdom from the Jews to the universal kingdom of all nations was dependent upon both the Jews accepting the Gentiles, and the Gentiles honoring the Jews as the conduit of their spiritual blessings.

1:16-17 – *Gospel is the power of God for salvation of both Jews and Greeks.* In the first sixteen verses of this book, Paul has mentioned or alluded to the Gentiles five times, and to the Jews only once. It is clear that Paul is focused on reaching out to the Gentile Christians there in Rome. In verse 15 he had just stated that he was "eager to preach the gospel" in Rome. Here in verse 16 he notes that he is not ashamed of the gospel, nor afraid to preach it, even in a dangerous place like Rome, because the gospel had the power within itself to save everyone who believes, both Jews and Gentiles.

Notice the priority of Paul's preaching was still to the Jews **first**. Throughout all of his missionary journeys that was his priority, and it still was, even right here at the end of his third journey. This was critical for the accomplishment of the Great Commission, and for the successful transfer of the kingdom from the Jews to the universal and eternal kingdom of Christ. It was necessary that the Jews hear the gospel first. Most of them would reject the gospel and cut themselves off from the Olive Tree, leaving a vacancy for the Gentiles to fill up. Only a remnant of Jews would remain attached to the Olive Tree. The Gentiles were grafted into the place of those Jews who had been cut off, to join that righteous remnant of Jews and thus complete the full number of Israelites who were destined to be saved. But the wild branches (Gentiles) could not be grafted into the Olive Tree until some of the native branches (fleshly Israelites) were cut off first. This means that the gospel had to go to the Jews first, so that the unbelieving natural branches would be cut off first and make room for the wild branches to be grafted in their place.

The kingdom *blessings* belonged to Israel. All the kingdom *promises* had been given to Israel. Gentiles could only get into the Kingdom by becoming true spiritual Israelites (children of Abraham by faith in Christ). So the good news about the arrival of the Kingdom had to be preached to Israel FIRST. Israel had the first right of refusal. Then if they rejected it, the believing Gentiles could be grafted in place of those Israelites who were broken off in unbelief. And that is exactly what Paul was trying to accomplish in his missionary efforts. In every new city he entered, his first stop to preach was at the local synagogue. Then when they rejected the gospel, he immediately turned to the Gentiles to graft them into the Olive Tree from which the unbelieving Jews had just cut themselves off. This was Paul's procedure everywhere he went. He preached to the Jews first.

After the Gentiles were grafted in, and began to enjoy the spiritual blessings of the Kingdom, and to produce much fruit in every nation, it made the unbelieving Israelites jealous. Some of those native branches that had been cut off were now grafted back into their own native Olive Tree. Thus, as a result of the combination of: (1) the small remnant of believing Israelites, (2) the in-grafted Gentiles, and (3) the re-grafted Israelites, the FULL NUMBER of Israelites was finally achieved.

The fact that Paul talks about all of this here in the book of Romans, shows that this process was at the critical point of achievement. They were almost there. The gospel had been fully preached to all the Israelites in the Diaspora and the Roman world. Paul mentions that at least twice right here in this book, that the gospel had been fully preached (Rom 1:8; 10:18; 15:18-19; 16:26). Most of the Israelites had rejected it, while the Gentiles embraced it. This had made the unbelieving Israelites jealous, and some of them were beginning to take a second look at the spiritual kingdom, and were being grafted back into it. This was the signal that the End was near, when they saw the rest of the believing Israelites being regrafted into their own Olive Tree, thus completing the full number of true spiritual Israelites who would inherit the eternal, spiritual, and heavenly kingdom.

But if the Gentiles wanted to be saved, they had to be grafted into the Olive Tree of true spiritual Israel. They could not be saved apart from Israel. They had to have the acceptance and nourishment from the native Olive Tree to survive. The domesticated Olive Tree had to form a tight bond with those wild branches and provide the life-giving sap to those engrafted branches. Otherwise, the wild branches would die.

This bonding between the Jews and the Gentiles was critical. And it required something from both the Jews and Gentiles to make it work. The Gentiles had to humble themselves and become totally dependent upon the Jewish Olive Tree for their spiritual life. And the Jewish Olive Tree had to accept these new branches and bond with them in order to *produce the fruit that God required from all the nations.*

The Holy Spirit working through the apostles had just about completed this process. Right after Paul wrote this letter to the Roman church, he traveled to Jerusalem with the Gentile contributions. That love-offering was a clear indication that the Gentiles

appreciated, respected, honored, and depended on the Jews for their source of spiritual nourishment. If the Jewish Christians in Jerusalem accepted those love-offerings, it means that they were accepting the wild olive branches and forming a tight life-giving bond with them, in order to share in the fruit that those Gentile branches were producing in every nation of the Roman world. The Old Testament Jews had been commanded by God to bless all the nations, and share their spiritual blessings with them, and produce fruit in all the nations, but they had not done so. But now through Christ and the apostles and their preaching the gospel to the Gentiles, that fruit was being produced. And by accepting the Gentile contributions, the Jews were accepting the Gentiles as fellow-heirs of the Kingdom, and thus sharing in the fruit of the gospel that was being produced in all the Gentile nations.

That Gentile contribution sealed the deal. The Kingdom had now become universal among all nations. Its future was no longer endangered by the demise of the Temple in AD 70. The universal kingdom had been born, and was already breathing on its own. The umbilical cord could now be cut. And cut it was, at AD 70.

How Was 'ALL ISRAEL' Saved?

The futurists wonder how we can say that "all Israel" was saved before AD 70, when it is apparent that most of the fleshly Israelites were killed or enslaved at AD 70. But we need to remember that Paul was not talking about the salvation of fleshly Israel. Paul describes the achievement of Jew-Gentile unity as signaling the time when ALL Israel (the true spiritual Israel) would be saved. Of course, we will deal with that in greater detail when we get to chapters 9-11, but something needs to be said here at the beginning about what kind of salvation Paul is talking about. Obviously it was a salvation that would arrive at the Parousia, so it was not talking about their becoming Christians at the Parousia. Only those who were already Christians *before* the Parousia would get this other kind of salvation *at* the Parousia. How we define and explain that salvation of All Israel depends on whether we see the salvation as only collectively received, or as individually and cognitively experienced also.

Perhaps this would be a good spot to explain some of the differences between the **Individual Body** and **Collective Body** views regarding this Jew-Gentile unity that resulted in the salvation of "All Israel" (true spiritual Israel including Gentile believers) at the Parousia. This is one of those rare instances where there is some significant agreement between the two views.

For instance, both views (CBV and IBV) agree that the universal kingdom of both Jews and Gentiles was finally and fully established when ALL ISRAEL (true spiritual Israel made up of both Jews and Gentiles) was saved at the Parousia. *The difference between the views shows up when each view explains **WHAT** that salvation was, and **HOW** it was received and experienced by those first century saints at the Parousia.*

In one of his recent sermons, Dave Curtis asserted that both the Collective Body and Individual Body views believe in a collective body and individual bodies. He said that

belief in a collective body presupposes the existence of individual bodies, and vice versa. He may be right about that. But that is where the similarity between the two views ENDS. There is HUGE difference (poles apart) between the two views on how we explain the nature of fulfillment in relation to those two different kinds of bodies.

The **Collective Body View** sees that salvation of All Israel as a covenantal status change that was completed upon the collective body of all Jewish and Gentile believers at the Parousia. Those saints who remained alive at the Parousia did not experience that covenantal status change in an individual cognitive way, but rather only as a part of the collective body which received that new covenantal status.

The typical reaction of a futurist to this Collective Body explanation of the salvation is: "Huh? You mean that is all they received at the Parousia – just a share in the covenantal status change of the collective body, and nothing else? Was that all they were expecting to receive? Weren't they also expecting to individually see, hear, and experience that salvation in a tangible, cognitive, and individual bodily way?"

Lest there be any confusion on this point, we need to state for the record that the **Individual Body View** agrees with the idea of some kind of status change at the Parousia for the collective body of true spiritual ISRAEL. **But we don't stop there.** That is just one aspect of the whole complex of *salvation events* that occurred at the Parousia, not only for the collective body, but for all the individual saints as well.

It is this *individual experience* of the salvation at the Parousia which the Collective Body View simply does not allow for, because it would mean that those individual saints, who saw Christ at His Parousia and experienced that great salvation, would have been cognitively aware of that experience afterwards. They would have been talking about it to their friends, relatives, children, and grandchildren. They would not have remained silent about it, especially when they heard Papias, Polycarp, and Ignatius claiming that the Parousia was still future. So the Collective Body View sees that silence as proof that the Parousia was NOT experienced in an individual cognitive way, but rather was only a non-cognitive and non-experienced covenantal status change for a collective body. Do you catch what they are saying?

But this idea of there only being a non-cognitive and non-experienced covenantal status change for a collective body (and nothing more for the individual to experience) has a HUGE historical problem. Futurists, like Dr. Charles Hill of the Reformed Theological Seminary in Orlando, have pointed out that the first century saints were expecting to see, hear, and experience something at the Parousia. They were told that they would be **adopted** into the heavenly family of God, **revealed** as His sons and daughters (Rom 8), **"enter into"** that heavenly kingdom, **relieved** from their tribulation, **rescued** before the wrath came, and **rewarded** in the presence of Christ at His appearing (1 & 2 Thess). They were told that they would **see Him** at His appearing (1 Jn 2:28; 3:2), and would **glorify Him** on that day, and **marvel at Him** in the presence of all who had believed (2 Thess 1:6-10). *This was anything BUT a non-cognitive and non-experiential salvation at the Parousia event!*

They were not expecting to experience all that and be left around on earth afterwards totally in the dark about what had just happened. Paul told them that when the Perfect came, they would "know fully" and "see clearly as if face to face." *What happened to that full knowledge and experience of the Parousia afterwards? At the very time when they should have understood everything clearly, and experienced everything fully just as they had been promised, we find nothing but **silence and confusion**.*

Because of their *a priori* rejection of the biblical **bodily change** and **rapture** concepts, the **Collective Body View** is forced to interpret this silence and confusion as **proof** that the Parousia was not experienced in any cognitive way whatsoever, and that it must have been a non-cognitive and non-experienced covenantal status change only. Do you catch their logic on that?

Who is really arguing their case from silence here? It is not the Individual Body View, because we believe that the **expectation statements** are **biblical proof** that the Parousia would be seen, heard, and cognitively experienced by those individual saints. If the Parousia occurred, and they experienced it in the cognitive way that they were expecting, they could not have remained silent about it afterwards. If they were still around on earth after AD 70 and were silent about the Parousia, it would only prove one thing – non-occurrence of the Parousia. But if they were no longer on earth after AD 70, their silence would be perfectly understandable. They could not talk about it, because they were no longer on earth. They had been taken to heaven. Their physical bodies had been changed from mortal to immortal, and they had been caught up to be with all the other saints in the heavenly presence of Christ.

So we see that even though the **Collective Body View** and the **Individual Body View** might agree that there was some kind of salvation of ALL ISRAEL at the Parousia, each of the views **differ widely** on *how we explain the nature of that salvation, and how it was received and experienced by the individual saints at the Parousia*. As we noticed, the Collective Body View explains it merely as a non-cognitive and non-experiential covenantal status change for the collective body of all Jewish and Gentile believers at the Parousia. But the Individual Body View does not stop there. We agree that there was some kind of status change for all the saints (living and dead) at the Parousia, but it was NOT a non-cognitive and non-experiential change. *We believe that all those individual saints, dead or alive, knew the Parousia occurred and experienced it in the very cognitive way that the biblical expectation statements had led them to expect. So there is a **BIG difference** between the two views over how we explain the experience of that promised salvation of ALL ISRAEL at the Parousia.*

That is all we need to say about that at this point. We will deal with it more when we get into the third and fourth sections of our study here (Rom 6-11). Let's get back into the text here in Romans 1 verses 16 and 17.

Summary of the First 17 Verses and Our Perspective on Paul

These two verses (1:16-17) introduce what Paul is going to talk about in this book. Notice these key words or concepts that are mentioned here: (1) the *gospel*, (2) *salvation of believers*, (3) *Jewish* priority in hearing the gospel, (4) but *Gentiles* could also be saved if they believed, (5) the gospel revealed the *righteousness* of God, and (6) men gain *life* and a status of *righteousness* before God through their *faith*. This nicely summarizes the major contents of the book, and prepares the reader for objectively considering Paul's gospel and how it relates to both Jews and Gentiles.

Paul's gospel **IS** his *perspective* on salvation and justification. But it is not just his perspective. It is the Divine perspective as well. He claims direct revelation for his gospel (Gal 1:11-12), and that any who reject it are rejected as well (1 Cor 14:38). This means that if we want to have the correct perspective on salvation and justification, we need to know what Paul teaches in his gospel, because his gospel is the Divine Perspective on salvation (soteriology). And that is what this book of Romans is laser-focused on explaining.

The *Traditional Perspective on Paul* (TPP), which came from the early reformers like Luther and Calvin, ignores much of the *historical* and *eschatological* background that is so crucial to understanding the book of Romans. Reformed commentaries of the last five centuries have instead focused more on the *soteriological* argumentation of Paul here in Romans (i.e., justification by faith without works). However, within the last forty years (i.e., since E. P. Sanders' two books: *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, 1977; and *Paul: the Law and the Jewish People*, 1985) the traditional perspective on Paul (TPP) has come under increasing re-evaluation and modification. This process of critique and adjustment has been labeled as the *New Perspective on Paul* (NPP). While the motives behind the New Perspective are laudable, the presuppositions each of them starts with, and the methodology they use, has produced mixed results.

There is not just one NEW perspective on Paul. There are dozens of them. And none of them have really taken into consideration the full implications of the destruction of the Temple in AD 70. It is high time that we full preterists engage in that discussion, from a conservative evangelical perspective. We have a lot to offer regarding both the historical and eschatological aspects of the debate. Our contribution to the discussion is the Best Perspective on Paul (BPP), because it goes all the way back to the first century historical context and restores the original perspective on Paul (OPP), which is Paul's own perspective on himself (PPP), and the Divine Perspective as well. So in our study of Romans here we are reconnecting Paul's teaching on justification to its original historical and eschatological context to make sure we understand it correctly, the way Paul and the Holy Spirit intended for it to be understood and applied in the first century. That indeed is the Best Perspective on Paul, because it is the original biblical perspective on Paul and his gospel.

The Bad News First (Rom 1:18–3:20)

After Paul's opening comments in the first seventeen verses of chapter one, he jumps right into heart of his argumentation. He gives the bad news first, which is universal condemnation of all men, including both Jews and Gentiles.

Someone once said, "There ain't no good news if there ain't no bad news." In other words, the Good News will not appear to be good unless there is some bad news out there to contrast it with. A solution is not a solution unless there is a problem that it solves. Paul must have understood that principle well, since he does not give the Romans any good news until after he has whacked them with the bad news first.

From chapter 1 verse 18, all the way down to chapter 3 verse 20, Paul delivers a withering condemnation against the Gentile world first, and then puts the unbelieving Jews in the same boat with them. The whole world is under condemnation, not just the Gentiles. Both Jew and Gentile need to be rescued off of that sinking ship. Let's look at the structure of Paul's argumentation here against both the Gentiles and the Jews:

1:18-32 – Paul Begins With Something Every Christian Could Agree With: The Gentile World was grossly wicked and **under condemnation**. Both Jewish and Gentile Christians agreed with that. This got all of the saints there in Rome (both Jew and Gentile) on the same page with Paul (and the Holy Spirit). The Gentile World was obviously **under condemnation and wrath**, especially those who were grossly wicked like the ones he describes here in chapter one.

2:1-16 – Even those like the Greeks and Jews who condemn the gross wickedness of the Gentiles (such as the barbarians who were notoriously wicked), and who trust in their own wisdom and righteousness to earn God's favor, are **under condemnation** as well. Their great wisdom and moralistic lifestyle will not give them a get-out-of-jail-free card.

2:17-29 – But it was not just the Gentiles who were **under condemnation**. The Jews also had been cut off from the blessings by their unbelief and wickedness. The Jews put themselves on a pedestal above the Gentiles, and were **critical and judgmental** against the Gentiles, yet they were **guilty of the same kind of sinfulness**. It accomplished nothing toward their salvation for the Jews to have circumcision and law-keeping. They were **under condemnation** just like the Gentiles. In spite of their great wisdom and law-keeping righteousness, they were no better off than the moralizing Greeks, or even the more grossly wicked barbarians. The Jews are under the **same condemnation**, and likewise **subject to the judgment and wrath** of God.

*As a result of these three sections, Paul has now shut up all men, Jews and Gentiles alike, under **universal condemnation** – **very bad news indeed** – for all mankind – including the Jews!*

3:1-20 – Then Paul gives a rapid-fire response to various objections that some had raised against the principle of universal condemnation. After quickly and easily deconstructing each of those objections, he sealed his argument for universal condemnation air tight with a quote from seven different OT texts, proving that there is none righteous in God's sight, not even among the Jews. All had turned aside, and were under the condemnation and wrath of God.

Well, that was very bad news for the Jews especially. They did not like to think of themselves as being under the same condemnation as the Gentiles.

Conclusion:

We might ask how this first section of Romans lends any support to either the Collective Body View or the Individual Body View. I am not aware of any significant usage of these first three chapters of Romans by the Collective Body advocates to support their concept of a collective body. Their major use of Romans is focused on chapters six through eleven, and so when we get to those chapters in our study, we will be talking a lot more about how they use those chapters to defend their view.

However, there are some verses in these first three chapters where Paul deals with both collective groups (Gentiles, Greeks, barbarians, Jews) and individual exceptions to the general rules governing those collective groups. And there is no indication anywhere in these first three chapters that he is talking exclusively about the collective body of Israel being the only ones who were under condemnation.

The focus here is not on Israel exclusively, but rather on all men (Jew and Gentile alike). All are under condemnation equally. *There is not the slightest hint here in these three chapters that Paul is setting up some kind of collective body argument focused exclusively on old covenant Israel. Instead, his focus here is on proving that all men, especially the Gentiles, and even the Jews, were universally under condemnation.*

However, the first sixteen verses of chapter two has a very clear exceptional tone to it. Paul uses terms like "everyone", "yourself", "each person", "every soul", "written in their hearts" (individually), etc. All of these terms are connected to individuals, and not to a collective body. In Rom 2:9-10 especially, Paul makes it clear that there were individual exceptions to the general rule of condemnation. God will render to "each person" according to his own particular deeds (2:6). "Those" individuals who persevere in doing good will receive eternal life (2:7). "Those" individuals who do not obey the truth will receive wrath and indignation (2:8). There will be tribulation and distress for "every soul" (i.e., every individual) who does evil, regardless of whether he is Jew or Greek (2:9). It is clear that Paul is not setting up any collective body argument here. The language here is unambiguously individualistic (2:6-9).

The charge of condemnation was not slapped onto whole nations without exception. In chapter two, Paul clearly makes room for individual Jews and Gentiles to escape

condemnation. Paul talks about an individual Gentile (an "uncircumcised man") who keeps the requirements of the Law being regarded as "circumcised in heart" where it really counts (2:26-29).

Even though the whole world as a collective group was under universal condemnation, it did not mean that every individual would ultimately be condemned. That individual exceptional idea is found in chapter three as well. Paul refers to "some" Israelites who did not believe. It was not the whole collective body that was cut off, but only those who "did not believe" (3:3). These were individual exceptions to the general rule.

But the big point that we need to make here is that nowhere in this section about universal condemnation does Paul refer to that condemnation, judgment and wrath as death of the collective body of Israel. Nor does he refer to justification and imputed righteousness as resurrection of a dead collective body out of old covenant Judaism. Those ideas would have to be imported from outside this context.

Well, that is enough to cover in this session. We have seen the basic flow of Paul's argument here in chapters one through three, and how he shuts every Jewish and Gentile bragging mouth and brings all of them under condemnation. That was really bad news for everyone. In the next section (basically chapters 4 and 5), Paul will deliver some good news to them, and I'm sure they were ready to hear it after Paul delivered that withering condemnation in chapters one through three.

We need to note here that understanding the book of Romans is not rocket science. The only reason we preterists are having difficulty understanding it is because of the confusion that has been introduced into the study of the book of Romans by the untraditional approach of the Collective Body View. When we take a more traditional approach to it, this book of Romans is much easier to understand. That is about all we need to say at this point about these three chapters.

I will be in Baltimore this coming week to set up our exhibit booth at the Evangelical Theological Society conference. This will be our fifteenth year to set up an exhibit booth there, and it has been a very productive way to get the preterist message into the eyes and ears of some very influential theologians, pastors, scholars, ministry leaders, and seminary students in the conservative evangelical world.

There is a good chance that I may not be able to produce a podcast for next Sunday. So if I do not post a podcast next week, you will know why! :-)

That will wrap up our study for this session. Hope it was helpful for you. Please send me some feedback and tell me what you are learning in this study of Romans. Thanks so much for listening.

We urgently need your support!

If you are benefiting from these podcasts, please prayerfully consider supporting IPA with a donation of any amount. We cannot do this without you, and we need your help right now more than ever. The summer slump hit us hard, and expenses for our annual exhibit booth at the *Evangelical Theological Society* are taking a big bite. Plus, we are rebuilding our website from scratch to add a shopping cart, which is also putting a crimp in our budget. Your help is greatly needed. To make a donation or support monthly, [click here](#). Thanks for being partners with us.

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