

# Romans: Flow of Thought

Romans Series (Part 2)

*By Ed Stevens -- Then and Now Podcast -- Nov 3, 2013*

## Opening Remarks:

- A. Welcome to another study of biblical history and eschatology from a full preterist perspective.
- B. Last time we began a new series of studies on the book of **Romans**. We introduced the book by asking and answering five key questions: (1) **Who** wrote this? (2) **To Whom** was it written? (3) **When** was it written? (4) **Where** was it written? and (5) **Why** was it written? The most important of those questions is the "Why Was It Written" question. We noted that Paul wrote the epistle to the Romans for the purpose of promoting unity and koinonia (mutually sharing in the one common faith and becoming one body of Christ). There was a danger of the Jewish Christians refusing to accept the Gentile Christians, and the Gentiles refusing to acknowledge their indebtedness to the Jews. Paul's major concern in this epistle is to challenge both parties to accept each other and unite together as one new people of God.
- C. In this session, we need to look at the overall BIG PICTURE of the epistle. It is always tempting to jump into the middle of the book of Romans and start trying to interpret it without seeing the big picture first. We need to put that overall perspective in place first, so that we can see how the various sections of the book relate to each other, and understand what Paul is trying to accomplish here.
- D. Before we get into that overview, let's ask God for His help --

Blessed Trinity, whose perfect Triune unity provides the basis for and ultimate example of the kind of unity You want your children to maintain: We praise your Holy and Matchless Name. We are so grateful for your work in the life of Apostle Paul to create a new people for your own possession, with both Jews and Gentiles united together in one body. Help us as we study his letter to the Roman church, to understand its message and apply it to our lives properly, so that it will refresh our hearts and renew our commitment to offer our lives as willing sacrifices for the advancement of Your Kingdom on earth, like your servant Paul did. This we pray in the Name of Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.

## The BIG Picture

Last time we noted how the big concern Paul had, which prompted him to write at least the first twelve chapters of Romans, was his desire to see both the Jews and Gentiles united together in the one common faith. That unity was being threatened by both the Jews and the Gentiles, who were not quite sure they were ready to accept each other as fellow-heirs of the Kingdom.

However, Paul arrests both the Jews and the Gentiles and locks them all up under condemnation. He gives them the bad news first, then unloads the good news on them. Both were lost, but both can now be saved on the very same basis (justification by grace through faith, apart from any works of righteousness). Paul thoroughly deals with this Jew-Gentile conflict and shows how the Gospel grafts both of them back into the Olive Tree from which both of them had been cut off.

This epistle evidently accomplished what Paul and the Holy Spirit designed it to accomplish. The church survived this threat of the Jew-Gentile conflict, and was able to unite both Jews and Gentiles together into one universal church, through the work of Paul and all of the other inspired apostles, by the enablement of the Holy Spirit.

We can see that this was Paul's major purpose in writing the letter when we follow his argumentation. Some of the commentaries on Romans have done an excellent job of laying out Paul's flow of thinking for us. I especially liked Haldane's explanation of it in the Preface to his commentary on Romans. I want to read some of his good comments here for us. Keep in mind that Haldane wrote these words two hundred years ago, but it is still relevant for us today. His style of writing may be somewhat challenging for modern ears to follow, but the thoughts that he has expressed here about Paul's epistle to the Romans are very helpful and God-glorifying. Out of the over three dozen commentaries I have on Romans, I liked his survey of the contents of Romans the best.

## Flow of Thought in Romans

----- BEGINNING OF HALDANE QUOTE -----

### Taken from the Preface of Haldane's commentary on Romans:

In the **first part** of this epistle (chapters 1-11), Paul discusses chiefly the two great questions which at the beginning of the gospel were agitated between the Jews and the Christians, namely that of **justification before God**, and that of the **calling of the Gentiles**. Since the gospel held forth a method of justification very different from that of the law, the Jews could not relish a doctrine which appeared to them novel and contrary to their prejudices. And since they found themselves in possession of the covenant of God, to the exclusion of other nations, they could not allow the apostles to call the Gentiles to the knowledge of the true God and to the hope of this salvation, since that implies that the Jews had lost their exclusive preeminence over the nations. The principal object, then, of the apostle Paul was to combat these two prejudices. He directs his attention to the former in the first nine chapters, and treats of the other in the 10th and 11th.

In regard to the **second part** of the epistle (chapters 12-16), Paul first enjoins general precepts for the conduct of believers, afterwards in regard to civil life, and finally with regard to church communion.

In the **first five chapters**, the great doctrine of justification by faith is more fully discussed here than in any other part of Scripture. The design of the apostle is to establish two things: the first is that there being only two ways of justification before God, namely, that of works, which the law proposes, and that of grace by Jesus Christ, which the gospel reveals, the first is entirely shut against men, and in order to their being saved, there remains only the last. The other thing that he designs to establish is, that justification by grace, through faith in Jesus Christ, respects indifferently all men, both Jews and Gentiles, and that it abolishes the distinction which the law had made between them. To arrive at this, he first proves that the Gentiles, as well as the Jews, are subject to the judgment of God; and since all are sinners and guilty, neither the one nor the other can escape condemnation by their works. He humbles them both. He sets before the Gentiles the blind ignorance and unrighteousness both of themselves and of their philosophers of whom they boasted; and he teaches humility to the Jews by showing that they were guilty of similar vices. He undermines in both the pride of self-merit, and teaches all to build their hopes on Jesus Christ alone; proving that their salvation can neither emanate from their philosophy nor from their law, but only from the grace of Jesus Christ.

In the **first chapter**, the apostle commences by directing our attention to the person of the son of God in his incarnation in time, and his divine nature from eternity, as the great subject of that gospel which he was commissioned to proclaim. After a most striking introduction, which was in every way calculated to arrest the attention and conciliate the affection of those whom he addressed, he briefly announces the grand truth, which he intends afterwards to establish, that the gospel is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believes, because in it is revealed the righteousness of God. Unless such a righteousness had been provided, all men must have suffered the punishment due to sin, seeing God had denounced his high displeasure against all ungodliness and unrighteousness.

The **first point** which the apostle establishes, is the ruined condition of men, who, being entirely divested of righteousness, are by nature are all under sin. The charge of ungodliness, and of consequent unrighteousness, he proves first against the Gentiles. They had departed from the worship of God, even though in the works of the visible creation they had sufficient notification of his power and Godhead. In their conduct they had violated the law written in their hearts, and had sinned in opposition to what they knew to be right, and to the testimony of their conscience in its favor. All of them, therefore, lay under the sentence of condemnation, which will be pronounced upon the workers of iniquity in the day when God shall judge the secrets of men. In the second chapter, a similar charge of transgression and guilt is established against the Jews, notwithstanding the superior advantage of a written revelation with which they had been favored.

Having proved in the **first two chapters**, by an appeal to undeniable facts, that the Gentiles and the Jews were both guilty before God, in the **third chapter**, after dealing with some objections regarding the Jews, Paul takes both Jews and Gentiles together, and paints a fearful picture, drawn from the testimony of the Old Testament Scriptures, of the universal guilt and depravity of all mankind, showing that there is none righteous, no not one, and that all are depraved, wicked, and alienated from God. He thus establishes it as an undeniable truth, that every man in his natural state lies under the just condemnation of God, as a rebel against him, in all the three ways in which he had been pleased to reveal himself, whether by the works of creation, the work of the law written on the heart, or by the revelation of grace.

From these premises he then draws the obvious and inevitable conclusion, that by obedience to law no man living shall be justified; that so far from justifying, the law proves everyone to be guilty and under condemnation. The way is thus prepared for the grand display of the grace and mercy of God announced in the gospel, by which men are saved consistently with the honor of the law. What the law could not do, not from any deficiency in itself, but owing to the depravity of man, God has fully accomplished. Man has no righteousness of his own which he can plead, but God has provided a righteousness for him. This righteousness, infinitely superior to that which he originally possessed, is provided solely by grace, and received solely by faith. ... This way of salvation equally applies to all, both Jews and Gentiles – men of every nation and every character; there is no difference, for all without exception are sinners.

The apostle, in the **fourth chapter**, dwells on the faith through which the righteousness of God is received, and then further confirms and illustrates his doctrine by showing that Abraham himself, the progenitor of the Jews, was justified not by works but by faith, and that in this way he was the father of all believers, the pattern and the type of the justification of both Jews and Gentiles. And in order to complete the view of the great subject of his discussion, Paul considers, in the **fifth chapter**, two principal effects of justification by Jesus Christ, namely, peace with God and assurance of salvation, even in the midst of the troubles and afflictions to which believers are exposed. And because Jesus Christ is the author of this divine reconciliation, he compares him with Adam, who was the source of condemnation, concluding with a striking account of the entrance of sin and of righteousness, both of which he had been discussing. He next shows the reason why, between Adam and Jesus Christ, God caused the law of Moses to intervene, by means of which the extent of the evil of sin, and the efficiency of the remedy brought in by righteousness were both fully exhibited to the glory of the grace of God.

*Since the doctrine of the justification of sinners by the imputation of the righteousness of Christ (without regard to their works which manifest in all their extent the guilt, depravity and helplessness of man in order to magnify grace in his pardon) might be charged with leading to licentiousness, Paul does not fail to state this objection and solidly to refute it. This he does in the sixth and seventh chapters, in which he*

proves that, so far from setting aside the necessity of obedience to God, the doctrine of justification stands indissolubly connected with the very foundation of holiness and obedience. This foundation is union with the Redeemer, through that faith by which the believer is justified. On the contrary, the law operates by its three strengths to stimulate and call into action the corruptions of the human heart, while at the same time it condemns all who are under its dominion. But through their union with Christ, believers are delivered from the law; and being under grace which produces love, they are enabled to bring forth fruit acceptable to God. The law, however, is in itself holy and just, and good. As such it is employed by the Spirit of God to convince his people of sin, to teach them the value of the remedy provided in the gospel, and to lead them to depend upon the Lord, from an awareness of the remaining corruption of their hearts. This corruption, as the apostle shows by a striking description of his own experience (in **chapter seven**), will continue to exert its power in believers so long as they are in the body.

As a general conclusion from all that had gone before, the believer's entire freedom from condemnation through union with his glorious head, and his consequent sanctification, are both asserted in the **eighth chapter**, neither of which effects could have been accomplished by the law. The opposite results of death to the carnal mind, which actuated man in his natural state, and of life to the spiritual mind, which he receives in his renovation, are clearly pointed out; and as the love of God had been shown in the fifth chapter to be so peculiarly transcendent, from the consideration that Christ died for men, not as friends and worthy objects, but as without strength, ungodly, sinners, enemies, so here are the natural state of those on whom such unspeakable blessings are bestowed is described as enmity against God. The effects of the inhabitation of the Holy Spirit in those who are regenerated are next disclosed, together with the glorious privileges which it secures. Amidst present sufferings, the highest consolations are promised to the children of God.

The contemplation of such ineffable blessings as he had just been describing [in **chapter eight**], reminds the apostle of the mournful state of the generality of his countrymen [the Jews], who though distinguished in the highest degree by their extra privileges, still rejected the Messiah, as he himself had once done. And as the doctrine he had been inculcating seemed to set aside the promises which God had made to the Jewish people, and to take from them the divine covenant under which they had been placed, Paul states that objection and answers it, in the **ninth chapter** – showing first that the promises of spiritual blessings regarded only believers, who are the real Israelites and the true seed of Abraham; and secondly that faith itself being an effect of grace, God bestows it according to his sovereign will, so that the difference between believers and unbelievers is a consequence of his free election, of which the sole cause is his good pleasure, which he exercises both in regard to the Jews and the Gentiles. Nothing then, had frustrated the purpose of God; and his Word had taken effect so far as he had appointed it to. The doctrine of God's sovereignty is here fully discussed in chapter nine; and that very objection which is daily made, why does he still find fault, is stated and forever put down. Instead of *national election*, the great subject in this chapter is *national rejection*, and the *personal election* of a small remnant, without which the whole nation of Israel would

have been destroyed. So devoid of reason is the objection usually made to the doctrine of election, saying that it is a cruel doctrine [since it means that God predestines some to eternal damnation]. In the end of the **ninth chapter**, the apostle is led to the consideration of the fatal error of the great body of the Jews, who sought justification by works and not by faith. Mistaking the intent and the end of their law, they stumbled at this doctrine, which is the common stumbling-stone to all unregenerate men.

In the **tenth chapter**, Paul continues the same subject, and by new proofs drawn from the Old Testament, shows that the righteousness of God, which the Jews rejected by trying to establish their own righteousness for their justification, is received solely by faith in Jesus Christ, and that the gospel includes both the Gentiles and the Jews. Paul expresses no surprise that the Jews rejected it, since this had been predicted by the prophets. The Jews thus excluded themselves from salvation, not discerning the true character of the Messiah as the focus of the law and the author of righteousness to every believer. When the Israelites reflected on the declaration of Moses, that to obtain life by the law required perfect obedience, to which its demands must in every case be yielded, they might have been convinced that on this ground they could not be justified by their own efforts. On the contrary, by the law they were universally condemned. The apostle also exhibits the freeness of salvation through the Redeemer, and the certainty that all who accept it shall be saved. And since Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God, the necessity of preaching the gospel to the Gentiles is inferred and asserted. The result corresponded with the prediction. The righteousness which is by faith was received by the Gentiles, although they had not been inquiring for it; while the Jews who followed after the law of righteousness, had not attained to righteousness.

In the prosecution of this subject, the apostle had shown that the wrath of God is revealed against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men; and by the most irresistible arguments and evidence that could not be overcome, he had brought in both Jews and Gentiles as guilty and condemned sinners, justly obnoxious to the vengeance of Heaven. Had the Almighty been pleased to abandon the apostate race of Adam, as he did the angels, to perish in their sins, none could have impeached his justice, or arraigned the rigor of the divine procedure. But in the unsearchable riches of the mercies of God, he was pleased to bring near a righteousness, by which his violated law should be magnified, and a multitude whom no man can number rescued from destruction. This righteousness is revealed in the gospel – a righteousness worthy of the source from which it flows – a righteousness which shall forever humble the pride of the creature, and bring glory to God in the highest. The mercies of God are thus dispensed in such a way as to cut off all ground for boasting on the part of those who are justified. They are, on the contrary, designed to exalt the divine sovereignty, and to humble those who are saved in the dust before him who works all things according to the counsel of his own will, and without giving any account of his matters, either justifies or condemns the guilty according to his supreme pleasure.

In the **eleventh chapter**, the apostle finishes his argument. He here resumes the doctrine of the personal election of a remnant of Israel, of which he had spoken in the

ninth chapter, and affirms in the most express terms, that it is wholly of grace, which consequently excludes as its cause every idea of work, or of merit, on the part of man. He shows that the unbelief of the Jews has not been universal, God having still reserved some of them by his gratuitous election, while as a nation he has allowed them to fall; and that this fall has been appointed, in the wise providence of God, to open the way for the calling of the Gentiles. But in order that the Gentiles may not triumph over that outcast nation, Paul predicts that God will one day raise it up again ... to communion with himself.

In **chapters twelve and following**, Paul turns to survey the practical results which naturally flow from the doctrines he has been discussing. He was addressing those who were at Rome, beloved of God, called Saints; and by the remembrance of those mercies of which, whether Jews or Gentiles, they were the monuments, he beseeches them to present their bodies a living sacrifice to God. In thus demanding the entire surrender or sacrifice of their bodies, he enforces the duty upon them by designating it as their reasonable service. Nothing can be more agreeable to the dictates of right reason, than to spend and be spent in the service of that God, whose glory is transcendent, whose power is infinite, whose justice is inviolable, and whose tender mercies are over all his works. On this firm foundation the apostle establishes the various duties to which men are called, as associated with each other in society, whether in the ordinary relations of life, or as subjects of civil government, or as members of the church of Christ.

According to our views of the character of God, so will be our conduct. The corruption of morals, which degraded and destroyed the heathen world, was the natural result of what infidels have designated as their "elegant mythology." The abominable character of the heathen gods and goddesses were the cause of the abominations of their worshipers. But wherever the true God has been known, wherever the character of Jehovah has been proclaimed, there a new standard of morals has been erected; and even those who reject his salvation are forced to counterfeit the virtues to which they do not attain. True Christianity and sound morals are indissolubly linked together; and in the same proportion as men are estranged from the knowledge and service of God, so we will find their actions stained with the corruptions of sin.

Where in all the boasted moral systems of Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Cicero, Epictetus, Seneca, or the rest of the Greek and Roman philosophers, shall be found anything comparable to the purity and beauty of the virtues enjoined upon us by Paul in the **closing chapters of this epistle**? Even modern writers on ethics, when departing from the only pure standard of virtue, discover the grossest ignorance and inconsistency. But Paul, writing without any of the aids of human wisdom, draws his precepts from the fountain of heavenly truth, and inculcates on the disciples of Jesus a code of duties, which if habitually practiced by mankind, would change the world from what it is – a scene of strife, jealousy, and division – and make it what it was before the entrance of sin, a paradise fit for the Lord to visit, and for man to dwell in.

----- END OF HALDANE QUOTE -----

## Conclusion:

Those were some very good comments by Haldane, to help us become familiar with the amazing contents of the book of Romans. We have seen that Haldane had a pretty good grasp of this issue about Jew-Gentile unity, and how Paul motivated both of them to strive for unity by putting both Jew and Gentile under condemnation, and then offering them the solution that is only found in Christ. That was a brilliant strategy by Apostle Paul (clearly inspired by the Holy Spirit), and evidently it worked very well.

In subsequent sessions, we will look more closely at how Paul sets up his argument for Jew-Gentile unity here in the first eleven chapters of Romans. I don't know if we will cover all of the remaining chapters (12-16), but I do want to deal with the first eleven chapters, because that is where Paul develops his argument most explicitly and thoroughly.

We need to keep Paul's goal of achieving Jew-Gentile Unity in mind as we study Romans. It seems to be the primary concern behind most of the contents of his epistle. Knowing this will help us understand **why Paul** says these particular things to this **particular group** of people at this particular **time** and **place**.

And that is the fundamental goal of every interpreter of scripture: to discover as much as we can about what the **original author** intended to communicate to his **original audience**.

In the Appendix, I have included a few more quotes from various commentaries about the purposes Paul had in mind when he wrote this epistle. That will help us answer that all-important "Why was it written" question, and enable us to understand the meaning and message of Paul's incredible letter to the Romans. There are also some outlines of Romans in the Appendix, to help us get more familiar with its contents.

Next time we will begin looking at the text of Romans in chapter one, and go as far as we can. Hopefully we can cover chapter two as well, and maybe even get into chapter three.

That pretty much wraps up our study this session. If you have any questions or comments, don't hesitate to email me. Thanks so much for listening.

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## **Appendix A – Why Paul Wrote This Epistle?**

### **Purposes of Paul's Epistle to the Romans**

#### **By John Witmer - Bible Knowledge Commentary**

While Phoebe's projected trip to Rome (Rom. 16:2) was undoubtedly the specific occasion for Paul's writing this letter, he had several objectives in writing. The most obvious was to announce his plans to visit Rome after his return to Jerusalem (15:24, 28-29; cf. Acts 19:21) and to prepare the Christian community there for his coming. The believers in Rome had been on Paul's heart and prayer list for a long time (Rom. 1:9-10) and his desire to visit them and to minister to them, unfulfilled to this point, was finally about to be satisfied (1:11-15; 15:22-23, 29, 32). Therefore Paul wanted to inform them of his plans and to have them anticipate and pray for their fulfillment (15:30-32).

A second purpose Paul had for writing this letter was to present a complete and detailed statement of the gospel message he proclaimed. Paul was eager "to preach the gospel also to you who are at Rome" (1:15) and he wanted them to know what it was. As a result in this letter Paul accomplished what Jude desired to do, "to write to you about the salvation we share" (Jude 3). Perhaps Jude was kept from doing this because Paul already had, for Romans certainly is a very full and logical presentation of the Triune Godhead's plan of salvation for human beings, from its beginning in man's condemnation in sin to its consummation in their sharing eternity in God's presence, conformed to the image of God's Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

A third purpose for writing this letter is not as obvious as the first two. It is related to the tension between the Jewish and the Gentile segments in the Christian community at Rome and a possible conflict between them. Paul was hounded in his ministry by the Judaizers, who followed him from city to city and sought to lead his converts away from liberty in the gospel (Gal. 5:1). The letter to the Galatians is Paul's classic though not his only response to the Judaizers. Their attacks on Paul incorporated physical violence about the time this letter to the Romans was written (Acts 20:3). Whether the Judaizers had reached Rome before Paul or not, the Jew-versus-Gentile issue looms large in this letter. Paul did not take sides, but he carefully set forth both sides of the question. On the one hand he emphasized the historical and chronological priority of the Jews—"first for the Jew, then for the Gentile" (Rom. 1:16; cf. 2:9-10). He also stressed the "advantage ... in being a Jew" (3:1-2; 9:4-5). On the other hand he pointed out that "since there is only one God" (3:30), He is the God of the Gentiles as well as the God of the Jews (3:29). As a result "Jews and Gentiles alike are all under sin" (3:9) and alike are saved by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and His redemptive and propitiatory sacrifice. Furthermore, in order to bring believing Gentiles into His program of salvation, extending His grace to all human beings, God temporarily halted His specific program for Israel as a chosen nation, since that nation through its official leaders and as a whole had rejected in unbelief God's Son as the Messiah. During this period God continues to have a believing "remnant chosen by grace" (11:5) "until the full number of the Gentiles has come in" (11:25) and God takes up again and fulfills His promises to Israel as a nation.

Related to the Jewish-Gentile tension that runs throughout this letter is a muted but definite undertone that questions God's goodness and wisdom and justice as seen in His plan of salvation. No complaints against God are voiced, but they are implied. As

a result this letter to the Romans is more than an exposition of Paul's "gospel of God's grace" (Acts 20:24), a declaration of God's plan of salvation for all human beings by grace through faith. It is a theodicy, an apologetic for God, a defense and vindication of God's nature and His plan for saving people. It sets God forth "to be just and the One who justifies the man who has faith in Jesus" (Rom. 3:26). It exults in "the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God" (11:33) and challenges the readers, "Let God be true, and every man a liar" (3:4).

## **Purpose of the Book of Romans**

### **By James R. Edwards - New International Biblical Commentary**

It should be obvious from the foregoing that Romans owes its existence to more than one impulse of the apostle. The theological, pastoral, and missionary hypotheses each claim support, though none claims total support. In what follows let us attempt a plausible reconstruction of our own.

According to Paul's own testimony, Romans is anchored in his missionary consciousness. This is consonant with the picture of Paul from Acts as well as from his epistles. Having concluded a phase of missionary work in what is now Turkey and Greece, Paul planned to visit Jerusalem and deliver the collection to the impoverished Jewish Christians, after which he would turn west to Rome, and from there to Spain. His plan was buttressed by two resolves. First, as his "literary ambassador" Romans would provide an account of himself before his appearance in the capital (1:10; 15:23–24).<sup>28</sup> Second, conscious of the sensitive task of delivering the collection to Jerusalem, Paul would enlist the Romans in prayer support for his visit to the Holy City (15:30–32). Both resolves were designed to involve the Romans in Paul's ministry.

These are Paul's stated purposes, and we take them seriously. There is at least one other rationale, however, about which Paul, for reasons which will become obvious, was advisably reticent. When he hopes to "impart some spiritual gift to make you strong" (1:11), or to "have a harvest among you" (1:13), Paul hints at a deeper impulse in the letter. The theme of Jews and Gentiles ebbs and flows throughout the epistle. It is clear that Romans is addressed to predominantly Gentile congregations (1:5; 13–15; 11:13), though one in which a significant Jewish element was present (1:16–17; 9:11; 14:15). If our reconstruction of the background of the epistle is anywhere near accurate, then Romans is addressed to the problems which inevitably resulted when Jewish Christians began returning to Rome following the edict of Claudius. We can imagine their trials of readjusting to churches which had become increasingly Gentile in their absence. Would Gentile believers who had established their supremacy during the Jewish absence, and for whom the law was now largely irrelevant, continue to find a place within their fellowship for a Jewish [Rom., p. 16] Christian minority which still embraced the law? Paul cannot have been unaware of such concerns.

Paul was a veteran of two decades of Gentile-Jewish tug-of-war. If there was a champion in early Christianity to address the situation in Rome it was he. Naturally he would (and did) draw upon doctrines which had proved their mettle in previous combat. In no other Pauline letter do we hear so many echoes from earlier letters. From Galatia, where Paul had labored in a situation similar to Rome, he reintroduces justification by faith (Gal. 3-4; Rom. 1-4; 9:30-10:4), Abraham as the father of faith and nations (Gal. 3; Rom. 4), and the sending of the Son as the redeemer for sin (Gal. 4:4ff.; Rom. 8). From Corinth he repeats his analogy of the first and last Adam (1 Cor. 15:22ff.; Rom. 5:12ff.),

the languishing of natural humanity under law, sin, and death (1 Cor. 15:56f.; Rom. 7:7-25), the church as the body of Christ (1 Cor. 12; Rom. 12:4ff.), and the reconciliation of dissensions between Jews and Gentiles over ethnic customs (1 Cor. 8-10; Rom. 14-15). These and other ideas from his arsenal of experience proved invaluable at Rome.

There were, of course, strategic interests at Rome about which Paul had been less concerned when he wrote to Galatia and Corinth. Those churches he had founded, and his jealous labors on their behalf allowed him, when necessary, to confront them head-on when his gospel was jeopardized. Paul was a man of profound territorial instincts, but such instincts had to be tempered when he wrote to Rome, for he had not founded the church there, and he was ever mindful not to build on someone else's foundation (15:20). In Romans Paul must assume a lower profile and avoid airs of presumption. His task was to present an answer he was confident of to a situation he was familiar with, but without the benefit of a firsthand relationship. Consequently, he relies on the content of the gospel rather than on the personal influence he otherwise might have enjoyed.

To conclude our discussion: the theological, pastoral, and missionary motifs all played a role in the purpose of Romans. We may be confident of this quite apart from whatever merits our historical reconstruction possesses, for the three purposes were, always and everywhere, inextricably a part of the man Paul. Paul was an impassioned mind. He believed that the gospel of Jesus Christ held the ultimate solution to the problems of the world because it had provided the solution to the problems in his own [Rom., p. 17] life. The gospel was for him an objective and compelling truth. The knowledge of Christ dwarfed everything else in his life and propelled him to hazard all for regions that had not heard the name of Christ. Paul was, however, more than an impassioned mind with a profound missionary call. He was possessed by a pastor's heart. A man with an immense capacity for human relationships, he labored, contended, and wept for his flocks scattered around the shores of the Mediterranean world, indefatigably confident that the gospel would transform them as it had him.

## **Theme of the Book of Romans**

### **By John Witmer - Bible Knowledge Commentary**

Growing out of Paul's three purposes for writing this letter (especially the latter two purposes), is the theme of the work. In the simplest and most general terms it is "the gospel" (1:16). More specifically it is "a righteousness from God" which "is revealed" in that gospel and is understood and appropriated "by faith from first to last" (1:17). This "righteousness from God" is first the righteousness God Himself possesses and manifests in all His actions; and second, it is the righteousness that God gives to human beings by grace through faith. This involves an imputed righteous standing before God (justification) and an imparted righteous practice and a progressively transformed lifestyle, the latter due to the regenerating and indwelling Holy Spirit of God (regeneration and sanctification). Practice is consummated and conformed to standing (glorification) when a believer in Jesus Christ through death and resurrection or through translation—"our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies" (8:23)—stands in the presence of God "conformed to the likeness of His Son" (8:29). God's program of salvation for people will not fail because it is His work, and "He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus" (Phil. 1:6).

## **Outline of the Book of Romans**

### **By James R. Edwards - New International Biblical Commentary**

The epistle can be divided into two parts, a longer, predominantly doctrinal section in chapters 1–8, and a section of more practical application in chapters 12–16. In between, in chapters 9–11, is an excursus, a special consideration in which Paul struggles to understand why the gospel, which was intended for the Jews, has on the whole been rejected by them.

In the opening chapter Paul scales to the height of his argument that the gospel is the power of salvation for everyone who believes (1:16–17). He sets this theme temporarily aside, however, in order to demonstrate the need of all humanity for salvation. In the case of Gentiles the need is apparent, for they have transgressed the law of conscience, and “the wrath of God is being revealed . . . against all the godlessness and wickedness of men” (1:18–32). But Jews, even though they pride themselves on their righteousness, are equally guilty before God for failing to live by the law of Moses (2:1–3:20). Once Paul demonstrates that both Gentiles and Jews are guilty before God, deserving God’s wrath and judgment, he then returns to the opening theme of salvation. In a passage loaded with theological ammunition (3:21–31), Paul lets loose a volley of high caliber terminology—righteousness, faith, law, grace, redemption, atonement, sin—to attest that humanity is made right with God not by its supposed merits, but by squarely facing its faults and appealing to God’s grace in the saving work of Jesus Christ. Paul substantiates this in chapter 4 by citing the example of Abraham to show that the promise of God is realized by faith, not by law. The consequence of justification by faith is a life of peace and confidence before God (5:1–11). If in chapter 4 Abraham exemplifies the life of faith, in the latter half of chapter 5 Adam exemplifies life held hostage to sin (5:12–21). But Jesus Christ overcomes Adam’s sin. To paraphrase John Calvin, Christ’s ability to save is greater than Adam’s ability to corrupt.

Paul then turns to the problem of sin in the Christian life. Some may assert that since salvation comes by grace rather than works, believers are free to do as they please. Paul vigorously denies this. Grace can never be regarded as a stimulus to sin; [Rom., p. 4] rather, it draws believers into a loyal union with Christ (6:1–14). Christ has freed believers from slavery to sin so that they may become, so to speak, slaves to righteousness (6:15–23). But if justification comes through faith, what is the role of the law? Using an analogy from marriage in 7:1–6, Paul declares that the cross has transferred believers from the principle of law to the person of Christ. Paul concedes that one (although not the only) function of the law is to convict Christians of sin by bringing it to light. The straightedge of the law graphically convinces humanity of its need for a savior (7:7–25). Paul concludes the first part of the epistle by one of the most triumphant chapters in the Bible. Believers are not condemned by God because of the poverty of their moral and spiritual lives, but are raised by the power of the Holy Spirit to face all adversity through the costly and redeeming love of God in Jesus Christ (8:1–39).

In chapters 9–11 Paul devotes a lengthy and ardent excursus to a theme he introduced as early as 1:16–17, i.e., the relationship of Israel to the gospel. Along with many early Christians, Paul was deeply perplexed concerning why the gospel had fared worse among Jews for whom it was intended than among Gentiles for whom it was not.

In broad outline, Paul's discussion of the problem falls into three parts. First, he vindicates the faithfulness and justice of God in chapter 9. He then shows in chapter 10 that although Israel knew the gospel, Israel rejected it. Finally, in chapter 11, Paul testifies that the remnant of Jews who had accepted Jesus as Messiah, along with the more numerous Gentiles, were a foreshadowing that "all Israel will be saved" (11:26).

Chapters 12–16 comprise the second major division of the epistle and introduce several practical ramifications of the gospel which Paul developed in the first eight chapters. There can be only one proper response to the liberating love of God in Jesus Christ, and that is to present oneself as a living sacrifice to God (12:1–2). In addition to bestowing life to believers, God's grace bestows gifts for living. The gifts of the Spirit are given not to compete with others, nor to conform to others, but to complement the gifts of others in the church (12:3–8). This is followed by a series of instructions for Christian behavior in society (12:9–21). Chapter 13 broaches the question of Christian attitudes toward government (1–7), neighbors (8–10), and the second coming (11–14). This is followed by the problem of judging others (14:1–12) and cooperation (14:13–15:13). Paul concludes the epistle with his [Rom., p. 5] travel plans to Spain (15:14–33) and a surprisingly long list of warm and personal greetings (16:1–27).

## Appendix B – Outlines of Romans

### New Bible Commentary Outline:

- 1:1-17 The letter opening**
  - 1:1-7 Prescript
  - 1:8-15 Thanksgiving and occasion
  - 1:16-17 The theme of the letter
- 1:18-4:25 The gospel and the righteousness of God by faith**
  - 1:18-32 God's wrath on the Gentiles
  - 2:1-3:8 God's wrath on the Jews
  - 3:9-20 The guilt of all humankind
  - 3:21-26 The righteousness of God
  - 3:27-4:25 'By faith alone'
- 5:1-8:39 The gospel and the power of God for salvation**
  - 5:1-11 The hope of glory
  - 5:12-21 The reign of grace and life
  - 6:1-23 Freedom from bondage to sin
  - 7:1-25 Freedom from bondage to the law
  - 8:1-30 Assurance of eternal life in the Spirit
  - 8:31-39 Celebration of the believer's security
- 9:1-11:36 The gospel and Israel**
  - 9:1-6a The issue: Paul's anguish over Israel
  - 9:6b-29 Israel's past: God's sovereign election
  - 9:30-10:21 Israel's present: disobedience
  - 11:1-10 Israel's present: 'a remnant by grace'
  - 11:11-32 Israel's future: salvation
  - 11:33-36 The awesome purpose and plan of God
- 12:1-15:13 The gospel and the transformation of life**
  - 12:1-2 The heart of the matter: a renewed mind
  - 12:3-8 Humility and gifts
  - 12:9-21 Love
  - 13:1-7 The Christian's responsibility to government
  - 13:8-10 Love and the law
  - 13:11-14 Recognizing the times
  - 14:1-15:13 Appeals for unity
- 15:14-16:27 The letter closing**
  - 15:14-33 Paul's ministry and plans
  - 16:1-16 Commendation and greetings
  - 16:17-20 Warning about false teachers
  - 16:21-27 Final greetings and doxology

## Bible Knowledge Commentary Outline:

- I. Introductory Matters (1:1-17)
  - A. Epistolary greetings (1:1-7)
  - B. Establishing rapport (1:8-15)
  - C. Emphasizing theme (1:16-17)
- II. God's Righteousness Revealed in Condemnation (1:18-3:20)
  - A. Condemnation against pagan humanity (1:18-32)
    - 1. Reasons for condemnation (1:18-23)
    - 2. Results of condemnation (1:24-32)
  - B. Condemnation according to divine standards (2:1-16)
    - 1. Truthfulness (2:1-4)
    - 2. Impartiality (2:5-11)
    - 3. Jesus Christ (2:12-16)
  - C. Condemnation against unfaithful Jews (2:17-3:8)
    - 1. Condemnation because of their hypocrisy (2:17-24)
    - 2. Condemnation because of their trust in rites (2:25-29)
    - 3. Condemnation because of their unbelief (3:1-8)
  - D. Condemnation against all human beings (3:9-20)
    - 1. All are under sin (3:9-18)
    - 2. All are conscious of sin (3:19-20)
- III. God's Righteousness Revealed in Justification (3:21-5:21)
  - A. Provided righteousness explained (3:21-31)
  - B. Provided righteousness illustrated (chap. 4)
    - 1. By faith not works (4:1-8)
    - 2. By faith not rites (4:9-12)
    - 3. By faith not the Law (4:13-17)
    - 4. By faith in God's promise (4:18-25)
  - C. Provided righteousness enjoyed (5:1-11)
  - D. Provided righteousness contrasted (5:12-21)
- IV. God's Righteousness Revealed in Sanctification (chaps. 6-8)
  - A. Ground of sanctification (6:1-4)
  - B. Attitudes for sanctification (6:5-23)
    - 1. Reckon (6:5-11)
    - 2. Yield (6:12-14)
    - 3. Serve (6:15-23)
  - C. Conflict in sanctification (chap. 7)
    - 1. The believer and the Law (7:1-6)
    - 2. The Law and sin (7:7-13)
    - 3. The believer and sin (7:14-25)
  - D. Power for sanctification (8:1-17)
  - E. Goal of sanctification (8:18-27)
  - F. Certainty of sanctification (8:28-39)

- V. God's Righteousness Revealed in Sovereign Choice (chaps. 9-11)
  - A. God's sovereign choice enunciated (9:1-29)
    - 1. Israel's privileges (9:1-5)
    - 2. The choice illustrated (9:6-18)
    - 3. The choice explained (9:19-29)
  - B. God's sovereign choice applied (9:30-10:21)
    - 1. Israel's stumbling (9:30-10:4)
    - 2. God's gracious offer (10:5-15)
    - 3. Israel's rejection (10:16-21)
  - C. God's sovereign choice fulfilled (chap. 11)
    - 1. In election of grace (11:1-10)
    - 2. In Gentiles (11:11-24)
    - 3. In Israel's salvation (11:25-32)
    - 4. To God's glory and praise (11:33-36)
- VI. God's Righteousness Revealed in Transformed Living (12:1-15:13)
  - A. The basic consecration (12:1-2)
  - B. In Christian ministry (12:3-8)
  - C. In social relationships (12:9-21)
  - D. In relation to authority (13:1-7)
  - E. In light of the future (13:8-14)
  - F. In dealing with other Christians (14:1-15:13)
    - 1. Without judging (14:1-12)
    - 2. Without hindering (14:13-23)
    - 3. As imitators of Christ (15:1-13)
- VII. Concluding Remarks (15:14-16:27)
  - A. Personal plans (15:14-33)
  - B. Personal greetings (16:1-16)
  - C. Final words (16:17-27)

## NIV Bible Commentary Outline:

### INTRODUCTION

1. Background
2. Authorship, Date, and Place of Origin
3. Destination
4. Occasion and Purpose
5. Theological Values
6. Special Problem

### EXPOSITION

- I. Introduction (1:1-15)
  - A. Salutation (1:1-7)
  - B. Paul and the Church at Rome (1:8-15)
- II. Theme: The Gospel As the Revelation of the Righteousness of God (1:16-17)
- III. The Need for Salvation: The Plight of Humanity (1:18-3:20)
  - A. In the Pagan World (1:18-32)
  - B. Principles of Judgment (2:1-16)
  - C. Specific Guilt of the Jew (2:17-3:8)
  - D. Summary (3:9-20)
- IV. Justification: The Imputation of Righteousness (3:21-5:21)
  - A. The Description of Justification (3:21-26)
  - B. The Availability of Justification Through Faith Alone (3:27-31)
  - C. The Illustration of Justification From the Old Testament (4:1-25)
    1. The case of Abraham (4:1-5)
    2. The case of David (4:6-8)
    3. The promise to Abraham—apart from circumcision (4:9-12)
    4. The promise to Abraham—apart from the law (4:13-17)
    5. Abraham's faith as the standard for every believer (4:18-25)
  - D. The Benefits of Justification (5:1-11)
  - E. The Universal Applicability of Justification (5:12-21)
- V. Sanctification: The Impartation of Righteousness (6:1-8:39)
  - A. The Believer's Union With Christ in Death and in Resurrection Life (6:1-14)
    1. The statement of the fact (6:1-10)
    2. The appeal based on the fact (6:11-14)
  - B. Union With Christ Viewed As Enslavement to Righteousness (6:15-23)
  - C. Union With Christ Viewed As Deliverance From Law (7:1-6)
  - D. The Relationship Between Law and Sin (7:7-25)
  - E. The Blessings of Life in the Spirit (8:1-39)
    1. Liberation by the Spirit from the law of sin and death (8:1-11)
    2. Additional ministries of the Spirit (8:12-27)
    3. The security and permanence of the life of the redeemed (8:28-39)
- VI. The Problem of Israel: God's Righteousness Vindicated (9:1-11:36)
  - A. Paul's Sorrow Over Israel's Condition (9:1-5)
  - B. God's Choice of Israel Based on Election, Not on Natural Generation or Works of Merit (9:6-13)
  - C. God's Freedom to Act in His Own Sovereign Right (9:14-29)

- D. Israel's Failure to Attain Righteousness Due to Reliance on Works Rather Than Faith (9:30-10:21)
- E. Israel Not Entirely Rejected; There Is a Remnant of Believers (11:1-10)
- F. Israel's Temporary Rejection and the Salvation of Gentiles (11:11-24)
- G. Israel's Future Salvation (11:25-32)
- H. Praise to God for His Wisdom and His Ways (11:33-36)
- VII. Our Spiritual Service: The Practice of Righteousness (12:1-15:13)
  - A. The Appeal for Dedication of the Believer (12:1-2)
  - B. Varied Ministries in the Church, the Body of Christ (12:3-8)
  - C. Principles Governing Christian Conduct (12:9-21)
  - D. The Duty of Submission to Civil Authority (13:1-7)
  - E. The Comprehensive Obligation of Love (13:8-10)
  - F. The Purifying Power of Hope (13:11-14)
  - G. Questions of Conscience Wherein Christians Differ (14:1-15:13)
    1. Brethren must refrain from judging one another (14:1-12)
    2. Brethren must avoid offending one another (14:13-23)
    3. The unity of the strong and the weak in Christ (15:1-13)
- VIII. Conclusion (15:13-16:27)
  - A. Paul's Past Labors, Present Program, and Future Plans (15:14-33)
  - B. The Commendation of Phoebe (16:1-2)
  - C. Warning Concerning Schismatics, Personal Greetings, and Doxology (16:3-27)