

Expositional Notes on Romans

NT 601

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INTRODUCTION

Apparently from Corinth before his Jerusalem trip, the Apostle Paul wrote to the main church of the six assemblies in Rome (Rom. 15:25-26; 16:1-5). The Christian church efforts in Rome were well known, presumably having a history going back to the early converts from Pentecost who started assemblies in the Roman capital (Acts 2:10).¹ Rome was founded supposedly by Romulus in 753 BC beside the Tiber River, and built upon seven hills. It became the center of Italian activity, housing many slaves and many temples to Roman deities. The city was the hub of the Roman Empire as “all roads lead to Rome.” Individuals would travel in and out of the city, as did Phebe who had business to conduct (Rom. 16:1-2). Paul had a burden to exercise his spiritual gift of “prophecy” with the Roman churches (Rom. 1:10-11; 12:6; I Cor. 13:2). He wanted them to pray that he would have a spiritually profitable trip to Rome, which indeed he had (Acts 21-28). This key city of the first century needed Paul’s gospel preaching of the righteousness of God, the doctrine of the justification by faith alone.

BACKGROUND

Paul had not been to Rome yet, but he knew that his calling was as the Lord had stated to Ananias, saying, “*for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel: ¹⁶ For I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake*” (Acts 9:15-16). He apparently recognized that to fulfill the Lord’s will he must go to Rome where he would find Gentiles, kings, and Jews. However, the Jewish element was banned from Rome under Emperor Claudius (c. AD 50), and did not return until after the emperor’s death in AD 54 (Acts 18:2). Consequently, Paul included instructions about how Gentile churches were to treat returning Jewish Christians by not focusing on days and diets (Rom. 14:1 ff.).

¹Other sources for the Roman Christians whom Paul knew were his earlier converts and his disciples’ converts. He mentioned at least 26 believers by name in these churches, yet he had not been to Rome or had started any of the six churches (Rom. 16:1-16).

AUTHOR AND DATE

Many early patristics accepted the Pauline authorship of Romans, including Ignatius, Polycarp, Hippolytus, and Marcion. Even many biblical critics agree as to Paul's authorship, and for good reason, since the author declared that he was Paul the apostle (Rom. 1:1). He was guest to his host Gaius (Rom. 16:23), which Corinthian believer was tied to Paul and Corinth, suggesting the sending location of the letter as well. Albeit, Tertius was the scribe who actually penned the Epistle, Paul was the author who used this secretary (Rom. 16:22). He probably wrote the Letter around AD 55-56. He came before Gallio in AD 51 (Acts 18:12-17), stayed in Corinth many days (Acts 18:18), travelled to Syria, Ephesus, and Antioch (Acts 18:19-23). He ministered again in Ephesus for several years (Acts 19:8-10), returned to Corinth through Macedonia (Acts 20:2-3), and wrote Romans before going to Jerusalem (Rom. 15:25).

CHARACTERISTICS

Of the Pauline *corpus*, Romans is the most formal, longest, and most systematic work. He used more OT citations than the rest of his Epistles combined. The Apostle to the Gentiles built many doctrines on the biblical foundation of justification by faith. This *Epistle to the Romans* became very influential in establishing Rome as the capital of Christianity in the first century. Romans established Paul as a "church man," since he started churches, wrote to churches, and sent greetings from churches to other churches.

OUTLINE

I. INTRODUCTION (1:1-17)

- A. Paul's Salutation (1:1-7)
- B. Paul's Request (1:8-15)
- C. Paul's Theme: The Righteousness of God (1:16-17)

II. RIGHTEOUSNESS INTRODUCED BECAUSE OF SIN (1:18-3:20)

- A. The Gentiles' Sin (1:18-32)
- B. The Moralists' Sin (2:1-16)
- C. The Jews' Sin (2:17-3:8)
- D. Mankind's Sin (3:9-20)

III. RIGHTEOUSNESS IMPUTED FOR SALVATION (3:21-5:21)

- A. What is Righteousness? (3:21-31)
- B. Who is an Example of Righteousness? (4:1-25)
- C. How is Righteousness Applied (5:1-21)

IV. RIGHTEOUSNESS IMPARTED FOR SANCTIFICATION (6:1-8:39)

- A. Relative to Sin (6:1-23)
- B. Relative to the Law (7:1-25)
- C. Relative to the Holy Spirit (8:1-39)

V. RIGHTEOUSNESS INSTRUCTIONAL IN SOVEREIGNTY (9:1-11:36)

- A. For the Jews (9:1-10:21)
- B. For the Gentiles (11:1-36)

VI. RIGHTEOUSNESS INSTRUMENTAL FOR SERVICE (12:1-15:33)

- A. In the Local Body (12:1-21)
- B. Under Government (13:1-14)
- C. With Believers (14:1-15:13)
- D. For Christ (15:14-33)

VII. GREETINGS AND CONCLUSION (16:1-27)

EXEGESIS

I. INTRODUCTION (1:1-17)

Chapter One

After giving his salutation concerning the “*gospel*”² to all that were in Rome (vv. 1-7), the apostle laid out his prayer request to the Roman churches³ that he might be able to have a prosperous journey (εὐοδόω [4x] literally “a good journey”) to Rome (vv. 8-15). He was not ashamed of the inglorious Gospel (I Cor. 1:16-17) because he knew it was the power of God to convert convicted sinners. He cited Hab. 2:4 as his key text, saying “*the just shall live by faith*” (vv. 16-17; cf. also Gal. 3:11 and Heb. 10:38).

II. RIGHTEOUSNESS INTRODUCED BECAUSE OF SIN (1:18-3:20)

Chapter One

The Apostle detailed the Gentile’s sin going back to shortly after the Garden expulsion. The Lord’s wrath has been upon man since the post *lapsis*, including Cain and his ilk that knew the reality of Jehovah God and reduced the perception of Him to the image of animals, and consequently manifesting vile wickedness which is the fruit of the fallen nature of man (vv. 18-32). Paul declared that men “*are without excuse*” (v. 20).

Chapter Two

Paul began to develop his argument against the moral antagonist whether real or literary, indicting the individual man for being inexcusable who judges others for the previous litany of sins but commits the same. The Lord will judge according to truth (v. 2), deeds (v. 6), without respect of persons (v. 11), and according to “*my gospel*” (v. 16). He has given all men a “*conscience*”⁴ so that they have divine ethics written on their hearts (14-15). The Jew is even more culpable since he has conscience and the law, and is condemned along with the moral

²The good news that salvation was in the coming God-man (“*according to the flesh, according to the spirit of holiness*”), permeated the OT prophets.

³There are six distinct groupings of believers in Rom. 16:1-16, which fellowships were house churches (vv. 1-2, 3-5, 6-10, 11, 12-14, and 15).

⁴The Latin word is a compound made up of “con” (with or ‘co’) and “science” (knowledge) referring to “co-knowledge.” Man has co-knowledge with God about right and wrong. The Latin follows the Greek compound συνείδησις (32x).

Gentile. The true Jew, according to Paul, is the believing Jew, who is circumcised inwardly, and whose “praise”⁵ is of God (vv. 17-29).

Chapter Three

The Apostle continued to condemn the Jew who did have the advantage of being the vehicle through whom the OT Scriptures came—they were “*the oracles of God*” (Acts 7:38; I Pet. 4:11; Heb. 5:12). Using a series of rhetorical questions, Paul argued for the righteousness of God and the unrighteousness of man (vv. 1-8). Relying heavily upon OT passages (Rom. 1:2) such as the Psalms and Isaiah (e.g., 5:9 and 59:7-8 respectively), he delineated the thorough wickedness of man from head to foot, concluding that the entire world was guilty before God (vv. 9-20).

III. RIGHTEOUSNESS IMPUTED FOR SALVATION (3:21-5:21)

Chapter Three

In the richest and most precise description⁶ of the doctrine of justification (cf. also Eph. 1:3-14), Paul expressed the sinfulness of man⁷ and the justification of God, based on faith and not on the deeds of the law (vv. 21-31).

Chapter Four

The Apostle had indicated that his gospel was not new but had OT authority, and now he gave several illustrations of two great saints who were justified by faith, as revealed in the Tanak. His first and most elaborate example was Abraham, citing Gen. 15:6 as a proof text. Moreover, he used another example dear to the Jews, namely David, alluding to Ps 32:1-2. He went on to argue that Abraham became the father of all believers because he was justified by faith and not by the work of circumcision, since he believed before he was circumcised (vv. 1-16). Abraham was a man of great faith who did not stagger at God’s promises. He had righteousness “*imputed*”⁸ to him because of his faith, not because of works (vv. 17-25).

⁵Paul is probably making an oblique pun on the word “praise” since Judah means “praise” in Hebrew, although the Apostle used the Greek word ἔπαινος.

⁶The Apostle used theologically rich terms such “*grace,*” “*redemption,*” “*propitiation,*” “*blood,*” “*righteousness,*” “*remission,*” “*forebearance,*” “*just,*” “*justifier,*” and “*believeth.*”

⁷All have fallen short of the original glory God gave man to glorify the Lord (Isa. 43:7).

⁸The verb λογίζομαι means to account for, or put to, or credit one’s account.

Chapter Five

Christ's righteousness for justification is applied by faith alone, the author replied. The Lord Jesus Christ died for mankind and provided salvation from wrath for sin through the bloody death and resurrected life of Jesus (vv. 1-11). Through Adam came the ruin of mankind,⁹ and through the Lord Jesus Christ comes the potential righteousness for all men.¹⁰ Adam brought death; Christ brings life. In Adam all are sinners; in Christ all may have righteousness. Because of Adam all are condemned; because of Christ all may be justified. Christ's grace is far greater than Adam's sin (vv. 12-21).

IV. RIGHTEOUSNESS IMPARTED FOR SANCTIFICATION (6:1-8:39)

Chapter Six

Paul dealt with righteousness relative to sin. Water immersion¹¹ pictures a burial, and things that are buried are dead, he argues. The believer may not live in sin since he has died to sin positionally. Practically, sin no longer has dominion over the repentant sinner. The believer may now become a servant to obedience unto righteousness. The believer no longer receives the wages of sin, which is death, but the gift of eternal life (vv. 1-23).

Chapter Seven

The Apostle to the Gentiles dealt with righteousness and the law. The spiritual man is delivered from the law (vv. 1-6).¹² The natural man is doomed by the law (vv. 7-14). The carnal man is defeated by the law (vv. 15-25). There is another law that gives victory (chapter 8).

Chapter Eight

Finally, Paul dealt with righteousness relative to the Spirit of God.¹³ Life walking after the Spirit is liberating for those in Christ (vv.1-11). The Spirit blesses the believer by leading

⁹The imputation of sin was "seminal" and not merely "federal" since God saw all of mankind in the loins of the first man (cf. Heb. 7:9-10).

¹⁰All men were originally in the Book of Life with the potential of "*justification of life*" (v. 18). The elect must obtain their salvation by meeting the conditions of repentance and faith (II Tim. 2:10; Mk. 1:15).

¹¹Baptism pictures death to the old nature and resurrection life in the new nature. Of all Christians, Baptists should recognize and apply this truth best of all, giving them victory over the "dead and buried" old nature.

¹²According to the Law, death breaks the marriage bond.

¹³Although "*Spirit*" (πνεῦμα) quite often refers to the Holy Spirit, the context will help determine if the Spirit is Christ's divine nature (Rom. 1:3-4) or the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:26).

him, by giving assurance of salvation, by interceding in prayer, and by affirming the security of eternal life (vv. 12-39).

V. RIGHEOUSNESS INSTRUCTIONAL IN SOVEREIGNTY (9:1-11:36)

Chapter Nine

The Lord had sovereignly selected the Israelites giving great privileges¹⁴ to them and yet they rejected Him, Paul sorrowfully declared. Ultimately only a believing remnant gained the blessings since they were “*not all Israel which are of Israel.*” The Lord’s messianic seed went through Abraham to Isaac to Jacob according to the Lord’s promise (vv. 1-14). The Lord in sovereignty chose His lineage and the means of salvation for the remnant, namely the law of faith, or faith righteousness and not works righteousness (vv. 15-33).

Chapter Ten

The chosen people of the Lord rejected the chosen way of salvation, breaking the Apostle’s heart. Therefore, salvation is obtainable to all who call upon the name of the Lord Jesus Christ (cf. Joel 2:32), Jew or Gentile (vv. 1-20). Citing Isaiah (65:2), Paul declared the gracious offer of the Lord, saying, “*All day long I have stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people*” (v. 21).

Chapter Eleven

The elect people who rejected the Lord have not been cast off completely, because a believing remnant will come forth.¹⁵ The believing remnant, which makes up the true “Israel” (cf. Rom. 2:28-29) will be saved, Paul affirmed. In allowing “*blindness*” (or hardness) to happen in part to the Jews, the Lord gave opportunity for the Gentiles to be saved (vv. 1-36).

VI. RIGHTEOUSNESS INSTRUMENTAL FOR SERVICE (12:1-15:33)

Chapter Twelve

For the justified, they must now serve the Lord in His new place of worship, the NT assembly or body of Christ (vv. 1-5). This service involves using one of seven gifts that God

¹⁴The seven privileges included adoption, “*shekinah*” glory, the covenants, the law, liturgical service, the promises, and the Messiah or Christ (who is God).

¹⁵Using a horticulture example, Paul reversed the common practice by alluding to the unnatural grafting of the wild branch (Gentiles) into the cultivated root (Jews) for theological reasons.

gives each believer (vv. 6-15).¹⁶ The justified believer then may carry out his responsibilities to himself, to his service, and to his society (vv. 16-21).

Chapter Thirteen

Social responsibilities include those to the state (vv. 1-7),¹⁷ and those to society. The justified church member must have a sterling testimony to the world as he put on the Lord Jesus Christ (vv. 8-14).

Chapter Fourteen

As Jews starting coming back into Rome (Acts 18:1-2), the Gentiles in the NT assemblies needed to allow them to have freedom with regard to days and diets. They were not to judge others about their freedoms with regard to “non-essentials,” since all will be judged by the Lord. The goal is to love one another to the point of edification (vv. 1-23).

Chapter Fifteen

The assembly must be united around love for others rather than for self, as both the Lord Jesus and Paul did not please themselves but the Lord God with their respective service for others (vv. 1-27). The Apostle concluded with his prayer requests that he would be delivered from unbelievers, that his service would be accepted by the Jews, that he would come with joy, and that they would be mutually refreshed (28-33).¹⁸

VII. GREETINGS AND CONCLUSION (16:1-27)

Chapter Sixteen

The Apostle Paul addressed the main church at Rome along with five others and greeted his Christian friends in the Lord (vv. 1-16). He then warned about local churches and their common enemies, led by Satan (vv. 17-20). He gave personal greetings and concluded with the divine plan about Paul’s “*my gospel*” ministry so all mankind would be obedient to the Lord (vv. 21-27).

¹⁶A Christian will have only one gift of the following seven (cf. I Pet. 4:10-11): prophecy, ministry, teaching, exhortation, giving, ruling, or shewing mercy.

¹⁷Officials of the state are ministers of God, regardless of personal salvation, since God ordained human government (Gen. 9:6).

¹⁸All of these requests were answered (*vide* Acts 21-28).

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