



ST. BENEDICT'S
ANGLICAN CHURCH

Belong. Believe. Become.

THE EPISTLE OF ST. PAUL TO THE ROMANS

OUTLINE

1-11 The Gospel of Christ and the Human Condition

12-16 Exhortation to Gospel Living

Read 2 Peter 3:14-16. Paul is difficult to understand. Peter may have been commenting more on the sophisticated Greek he employed as a highly educated man. Still, the depth and scope of his insight into the Gospel of Christ are not without their intellectual challenges.

Romans is “the crown jewel of the Pauline Epistles.

Philip Melanchthon, a protege of Martin Luther, called Romans a compendium of all Christian doctrine; though this certainly an overstatement, it does make a point about the epistles' theological magnitude.

We want to approach Romans with the appropriate respect demanded by all such masterpieces. In the preface to his commentary, Origen writes, “I want to say by way of a preface what is usually observed by the diligent, that the Apostle [Paul] seems to have been more perfect in this letter than in the others.”

We must also remember that this Epistle *is approachable*: it is intelligible and profitable to the diligent, “who first by praying to God who teaches man

knowledge (Ps 94.10) and who gives the word of wisdom through the spirit and enlightens every man.”¹

What is Romans about? Why does Paul write to the church at Rome? Why such a lengthy exposition of Christian doctrine? What is his motivation?

Let's begin at the end...

PAUL'S MOTIVATION

(1) Gospel partnership to expand into Spain & (2) Concern to deliver financial support to the impoverished Jerusalem Saints.

#1 READ (15:14-24) Paul's Gospel Expansion into Spain.

I. Paul is writing to establish a partnership with the Romans in bringing the Gospel to Spain.

- A. With the exception of those named in chapter 16, he was not directly acquainted with the believers in Rome;
- B. In a way, Romans is his letter of introduction to them to build credibility and prepare for his arrival.

Presupposes that Paul has never been to Rome, so...

II. How did the Gospel get to Rome?

A. Little is known about the origins of the Roman church.

B. Most likely took root in the synagogue community:

1. Jewish migrants settled in Rome as early as 2BC;
2. Archeology has discovered the names of more than 12 synagogues established in ancient Rome;

C. Acts chapter 2 records Roman Jews being in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost:

¹ Origen, *Preface*, 53.

1. **2:8** And how is it that each one of us hears them in our own native language? **9** Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and the province of Asia, **10** Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, **11** both Jews and proselytes.

- D. **2:41** So those who accepted his message were baptized, and that day about 3,000 people were added.

We may assume with a good deal of certainty that some were baptized and returned to Rome, where Christianity took root within the synagogue community.

III. What about Peter?

- A. Eusebius records in his *Ecclesiastical History* that Peter came to Rome at the beginning of the reign of Claudius (41-54), and Eusebius' claim finds support with most historians and scholars.
- B. It is possible that Paul helped organize and encourage a small community of believers who were already in existence.
- C. Peter was certainly not in Rome when Paul wrote, or else he would have mentioned him in the epistle, or certainly in the list of names in chapter 16.
- D. HOWEVER, NOTHING Paul says in the epistle undermines the tradition of Paul having ministered in Rome during the 40's AD.
- E. Paul is making an exception to his usual practice in visiting Rome where "others have built a foundation"= Peter went before him.
 1. **READ 15:19b** So from Jerusalem even as far as Illyricum I have fully preached the gospel of Christ. **20** And in this way, I desire to preach where Christ has not been named, so as not to build on another person's foundation, **21** but as it is written: "Those who were not told about him will see, and those who have not heard will understand."**22** This is the reason I was often hindered from coming to you. **23** But now there is nothing

more to keep me in these regions, and I have for many years desired to come to you 24 when I go to Spain. For I hope to visit you when I pass through and that you will help me on my journey thereafter, I have enjoyed your company for a while.

- F. This may shed some light on why Paul refers to “my gospel” three times in the Epistle, indicating that “his gospel” isn’t different from Peter’s or the apostolic message shared and preached by all Apostles.
- G. What is beyond dispute is that the Christian community in Rome was already well established by the time Paul wrote his epistle:
 1. He has desired to visit them for many years (15:23);
 2. Their “Faith is heralded throughout the world” (1:8)
 3. “Your obedience is known to all” (16:19)

One thing is for certain: this is a church that has existed long enough to have stirred the admiration of Christians everywhere.

#2 READ (15:24-33) Paul’s Concern Collection for the Poor Jerusalem Saints

- H. The collection for the Jerusalem church occupies significant portions of the Pauline epistles (1 Cor 16:1–4; 2 Cor 8:1–9:15; Rom 15:14–32),
- I. This spanned the course of years of Paul’s ministry and was something that Paul claimed he was prepared to suffer for, perhaps die for (Rom 15:30–31).

His stated concerns then, are (1) completing his mission to the poor Christians in Jerusalem and attaining their prayers, and (2) expanding the Gospel westward.

OR, is Paul’s concern the immediate circumstances of the church at Rome, challenges arising from Jewish/Gentile relationships?

- IV. Paul is writing to sort out a pastoral problem that has come to his attention.
- A. **Acts 18:2** Edict of Claudius 49AD expelled most Jews from the city:
 - 1. 1 After this Paul left Athens and went to Corinth. 2 And he found a Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla **because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to leave Rome.** And he went to see them, 3 and because he was of the same trade he stayed with them and worked, for they were tentmakers by trade. 4 And he reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath, and tried to persuade Jews and Greeks.
 - B. The influx of Gentiles during this time certainly changed the composition of the church in Rome.
 - C. 54AD Death of Claudius began a return of Jews and Jewish Christians. This means that for at least 5 years the church in Rome was purely Gentile.
- V. The Jewish Situation. Paul is writing this letter in the wake of Jews returning to their former parishes. And, they have returned as a minority with the Christian community. This is causing friction and disunity.
- A. Divergent perspectives on the plan of God exacerbated by ethnic and religious prejudices
 - B. JEWS are boasting of being the chosen people of God, placing a high premium on the rituals of the Law that signify Israel's election: *circumcision (2:23-25; 4:1-11) dietary regulations & feast day observances (14:1-12).*
 - C. Some view themselves as superior to uncircumcised Christians (2:17-23), they have a special claim on God as though He is not equally the God of the Gentiles (3:27-31).

VI. The Gentile Situation.

- A. In the absence of their Jewish brethren, some Gentiles have begun to think of themselves as a replacement for Israel, as though God had rejected His beloved people of old (11:1-24).
- B. Latecomers who think they have superseded their predecessors.
- C. The result: certain Jewish and Gentile disciples are condescending and unwelcoming towards one another (15:7).

Why is the Apostle keenly concerned with the present rift between Jewish and Gentile Christians? Why does he go through great lengths (11 chapters) to unify them in the universal human condition of sin and the saving power of the Gospel?

VII. ATTAINING CHRISTIAN UNITY.

- A. **Ps 133:1** Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! 2 It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard: that went down to the skirts of his garments; 3 As the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion: for there the Lord commanded the blessing, even life forevermore.
 - 1. For the Spirit of God dwells within the house of peace. And where the Spirit is there is blessing and life forevermore.
- B. Unity images the Trinitarian Reality: distinct yet one in the bond of mutual giving love.
- C. For the sake of promoting the Gospel:
 - 1. How can the Gospel advance among a people divided, at odds with one another, and inwardly consumed?
 - 2. Chapters 12-14 contain Paul's appeal to be united in the Gospel; both in understanding and conduct; *to live the Gospel*.
- D. Listen to his prayers in chapter 15, having concluded his exhortations in chapters 12-14 for all of the believers to live Gospel lives:

1. **15:5** Now may the God of endurance and comfort give you **unity with one another** in accordance with Christ Jesus, **6** so that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.
2. **15:13** Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you believe in him, **so that you may abound in hope** by the power of the Holy Spirit.
3. **15:30** I appeal to you, brothers, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, **to strive together with me in your prayers to God on my behalf**, 31 that I may be delivered from the unbelievers in Judea, and that my service for Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints, 32 so that by God's will I may come to you with joy and be refreshed in your company. 33 **May the God of peace be with you all. Amen.**

E. Paul desires to find a church in Rome who from the strength of unification in the Gospel of Jesus Christ, can co-labor in his priestly ministry to God:

1. **15** **But I have written more boldly to you on some points** so as to remind you, because of the grace given to me by God **16** to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles. I serve the gospel of God like a priest, so that the Gentiles may become an acceptable offering, sanctified by the Holy Spirit.
2. His lengthy and sophisticated exposition of sin, grace, and salvation is motivated by a desire to bring Gentiles into the kingdom of God; with their assistance "That you will help me on my journey there..." (15:24).

F. This is why Paul places so much emphasis on establishing equality:

G. The Gospel is the power to save **everyone who believes:**

1. **1:16** For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is God's power for salvation **to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.**

H. All are under Judgment **for all have sinned against God:**

1. **1:18** For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven **against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of people** who suppress the truth by their unrighteousness, **19** because what can be known about God is plain to them.
2. **2:1** Therefore you are without excuse, **whoever you are,** when you judge someone else. For on whatever grounds you judge another, you condemn yourself, because you who judge practice the same things.
3. **3:9** What then? Are we better off? Certainly not, for we have already charged that **Jews and Greeks alike are all under sin,** **10** just as it is written: "*There is no one righteous, not even one;*

I. **God Shows No Partiality:**

1. **2:6** He *will reward each one according to his works:* **7** eternal life to those who by perseverance in good works seek glory and honor and immortality, **8** but wrath and anger to those who live in selfish ambition and do not obey the truth but follow unrighteousness. **9** There will be affliction and distress on everyone who does evil, **on the Jew first and also the Greek,** **10** but glory and honor and peace for everyone who does good, **for the Jew first and also the Greek. 11 For there is no partiality with God.**

J. **Justification For Any Who Believe:**

1. **3:21** But now apart from the law the righteousness of God (although it is attested by the law and the prophets) has been disclosed— **22** namely, **the righteousness of God through the**

faithfulness of Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction, 23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. **24** But they are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.

K. [ALL OF THE] Righteous shall live by Faith:

1. **5:1** Therefore, since we have been declared righteous by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, **2** through whom we have also obtained access into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in the hope of God's glory.

L. Christ died for ALL OF THEM, Loves ALL OF THEM, Will Save ALL who trust in Him:

1. **5:8** But God demonstrates **his own love for us**, in that while we were still sinners, **Christ died for us. 9** Much more then, because we have now been declared righteous by his blood, **we will be saved through him from God's wrath. 10** For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, how much more, since we have been reconciled, will we be saved by his life?

M. The Faithful Overcome By Faith In Christ:

1. **8:37** No, in all these things,, **we have complete victory through him who loved us! 38** For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor heavenly rulers, nor things that are present, nor things to come, nor powers, **39** nor height, nor depth, **nor anything else in creation will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.**

VIII. Returning To The Jewish/Gentile Christian Situation...

- A. A majority of Paul's arguments are for unifying the Jewish and Gentile Christians by developing the relation of Jews and Christians within the history of the covenant.

- B. The transfer of religion from Judaism to Christianity, from the letter to the Spirit, from shadow to truth in terms of Salvation History AND the transforming of the individual person.
- C. His intentions: (1) to offer a robust and thorough explanation of the righteousness of God now available through faith in Jesus Christ to any who believe (2) to place both the Jewish and gentile Christians on equal footing (while not destroying their distinct histories)= ALL have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God, AND any who call on the name of the Lord shall be saved= both Jew and the Greek.
- D. To accomplish this, he develops important theological themes vital to his understanding of God working in history for the salvation of the world:
1. The Righteousness of God & The Power of the Gospel.
 - a) *"But now apart from the law of the righteousness of God has been disclosed- namely, the righteousness of God through the faithfulness of Jesus Christ for all who believe." Romans 3:21-23*
 - b) πίστις Χριστοῦ (pistis Christou) and similar phrases in Paul (here and in v. 26; Gal 2:16, 20; 3:22; Eph 3:12; Phil 3:9) involve a subjective genitive and mean "Christ's faith" or "Christ's faithfulness" (Objective genitive= faith in Christ).
 2. Salvation & Justification.
 3. The reconciliation of the world & God's Covenant Promises.
 4. What Faith Is & And what Paul means by the Obedience of Faith (1:5; 16:26).
 5. The Works of the Law (**3:28**; 4:2, 6; 9:11, 32; 11:6; 13:3, 12).
 - a) **28** For we consider that a person is declared righteous by faith apart from the works of the law.

6. Justification by Faith & the relation of Faith and Works.
7. Man's Freedom, His nature, & Merit.
8. The Doctrine of Election & The Restoration of Israel.
9. The Requirements of the Christian Life.

SYNTHESIZING THE PRINCIPLE THEMES

- IX. Romans is primarily a defense and articulation of the Gospel (1-11) AND the basis for Paul's appeal for harmony between Gentile and Jewish Christians within the church at Rome (12-16)
- X. The Epistle establishes THE BASIS and NECESSITY for Christian in the Gospel. It is intended to begin the work of reunification in advance of Paul's arrival SO THAT the Apostle will find a strong, unified, and supportive partner in the westward expansion of the Gospel to Spain.

Paul's letter to the Christians in Rome is his masterpiece. It covers many different topics from many different angles, bringing them all together into a fast-moving and compelling line of thought.

Romans is all about the God who, as Paul says, unveils his power and grace through the good news about Jesus. And, as Paul insists, again and again, this power and grace are available for everyone who believes.