

LIVING BY FAITH



A VERSE-BY-VERSE
STUDY OF ROMANS



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by Daniel L. Segraves

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All Scripture quotations in this book are from the King James Version of the Bible unless otherwise identified.

To my mother and the memory of my father,
who gave me an example of genuine Christianity
and demonstrated what it means to live by faith.

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Preface

I suppose I have taught through the Book of Romans more than thirty times. This includes teaching the book during weekly Bible studies as a pastor, in an adult Sunday school class, in Bible college classes, and in seminary.

Every time I go through this marvelous book, my faith is invigorated, my joy is renewed and the sheer ecstasy of being at peace with God sweeps over me again. It is an understatement to say that the Book of Romans is a masterpiece of inspired literature. The message of this book undergirds the entire concept of the Christian life.

Over the years, I have heard many testimonies from people whose lives were changed by their study of the Book of Romans. These are people who were already saved before they came to an intensive study of the book. But they labored under the burden of uncertainty about their salvation, their worth to God, and His love for them. The discovery of the message of Romans set them joyously free to serve God with gladness.

I first wrote this book to serve as the basic text for a Bible college class on Romans. At the suggestion of David K. Bernard, I revised this commentary into another book, *Themes From a Letter to Rome*, which was published by Word Aflame Press in 1995. *Themes From a Letter to Rome* is a treatment of the seven major themes in the book, including righteousness and justification, law, grace, faith, holiness, the Jews, and the

Gentiles. The book has a chapter for each theme which deals with every verse in the book pertaining to that theme. After further consultation with the Pentecostal Publishing House, I determined it would be appropriate to publish the verse-by-verse commentary in addition to *Themes From a Letter to Rome*. The two books serve different purposes. *Themes From a Letter to Rome* is arranged topically, and it does not deal with every verse in the book. It is helpful for those who wish to explore all the Book of Romans has to say on its major themes. But for those who wish to study a specific verse, or for those who wish to study the entire book systematically, this commentary will serve that purpose.

It is my prayer that your life will be transformed by a study of Romans, just as mine was.

DANIEL L. SEGRAVES

Introduction

*I*n the broadest of terms, the message of Romans could be summarized as follows: All human beings—regardless of their ethnic origins—are sinners. The gospel is God’s solution to this problem. The benefits of the gospel are received on the basis of faith.

Summary

A chapter-by-chapter summary of the book would look something like this:

Chapter 1: Gentiles fail to live up to the knowledge of God which is communicated by general revelation.

Chapter 2: Jews fail to live up to the knowledge of God which is communicated by special revelation.

Chapter 3: All people, whether Gentiles or Jews, are sinners.

Chapter 4: Justification is by faith.

Chapter 5: There are two men who represent the entire human race—Adam and Christ.

Chapter 6: Sanctification is by union with Christ.

Chapter 7: The law or the flesh are unable to give power over sin.

Chapter 8: The Holy Spirit is the way to victory over sin.

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Chapter 9: In the past, national Israel was elected.

Chapter 10: At present, national Israel is rejected.

Chapter 11: In the future, Israel will be saved.

Chapter 12: Practical Christianity has to do with one's personal life and church and social relationships.

Chapter 13: Practical Christianity has to do with the believer's relationship to civil government.

Chapter 14: Practical Christianity has to do with the relationships between those who differ with each other.

Chapter 15: Practical Christianity has to do with following Christ.

Chapter 16: Paul sends personal greetings to his readers.

Themes

Several themes are woven throughout the Book of Romans.¹ They could be grouped as follows: Righteousness/justification/sanctification; faith/believing; salvation/life/hope; Israel/Gentiles; law. These themes appear as indicated below:

Righteousness/justification/sanctification:

Chapter 1:17, 32

Chapter 2:5, 13, 26

Chapter 3:4-5, 8, 10, 20-22, 24-26, 28, 30

Chapter 4: 2-3, 5-9, 11, 13, 22, 25

Chapter 5:1, 7, 9, 16-19, 21

Chapter 6:13, 16, 18-20

Chapter 7:12

Chapter 8:4, 10, 30

Chapter 9:28, 30-31

Chapter 10:3-6, 10

Chapter 14:17

Chapter 15:16

Faith/believing:

- Chapter 1:5, 8, 12, 16-17
- Chapter 3:3, 22, 25-28
- Chapter 4:3, 5, 9, 11-14, 16-20, 24
- Chapter 5:1-2
- Chapter 6:8
- Chapter 9:30, 32-33
- Chapter 10:4, 6, 8-11, 14, 16-17
- Chapter 11:20, 30-31
- Chapter 12:3,6
- Chapter 13:11
- Chapter 14:1-2, 22-23
- Chapter 15:31
- Chapter 16:26

Salvation/life/hope:

- Chapter 1:16-17
- Chapter 2:7
- Chapter 4:18
- Chapter 5:2, 4-5, 9-10, 17-18, 21
- Chapter 6:2, 4, 8, 22-23
- Chapter 7:10
- Chapter 8:2, 6, 10, 12-13, 20, 24-25, 38
- Chapter 9:27
- Chapter 10:1, 5, 9-10, 13
- Chapter 11:3, 11, 14-15, 26
- Chapter 12:12, 18
- Chapter 13:11
- Chapter 14:8, 11
- Chapter 15:4, 13
- Chapter 16:4

Israel/Gentiles

- Chapter 1:13-14, 16
- Chapter 2:9-10, 14, 17, 24, 28-29

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Chapter 3:1, 9, 29
Chapter 9:6, 24, 27, 30-31
Chapter 10:1, 12, 19, 21
Chapter 11:1-2, 7, 11-13, 25-26
Chapter 15:9-12, 16, 18, 27
Chapter 16:4

Law

Chapter 2:12-15, 17-18, 20, 23, 25-27
Chapter 3:19-21, 27-28, 31
Chapter 4:13-16
Chapter 5:13, 20
Chapter 6:14-15
Chapter 7:1-9, 12, 14, 16, 21-23, 25
Chapter 8:2-4, 7
Chapter 9:4, 31-32
Chapter 10:4-5
Chapter 13:8, 10

Inspiration and Place in the Canon

The place of Romans in the canon of Scripture has never been questioned by competent critics. It is contained in P⁴⁶ of the Chester Beatty Papyri collection from the third century, the Canon of Muratori from about A.D. 170, and Marcion's list, also from the late second century, although Marcion abbreviated the book in keeping with his prejudice against the Hebrew Scriptures.

The acceptance of the letter as inspired Scripture is also attested to by the fact that it was viewed as authoritative by Clement of Rome, Polycarp, Irenaeus and Ignatius, whose testimony comes from the era between A.D. 90 and A.D. 150.

Author

That Paul was the author of Romans is the testimony of the letter itself (1:1). The authenticity of this claim has been universally accepted by believers. Only the most radical critics of the early 19th century challenged the Pauline authorship of the letter, but this claim does not meet the rigors of the best scholarship.

Although Paul was Jewish, from the tribe of Benjamin, he was born a citizen of Rome in Tarsus. His family was relatively wealthy, and Saul (his Jewish name) was given an education which included initial training in Judaism. Later he received rabbinic, or Pharisaic, training under Gamaliel, a grandson of Hillel, in Jerusalem. It was common for Pharisees to learn a trade; Saul learned tentmaking.

Saul probably left Jerusalem before John the Baptist and Jesus came on the scene, for he never indicates any first-hand knowledge of either. It is apparent that he was back in Jerusalem shortly after the birth of the church on the Day of Pentecost. It is probable that he was a member of the Sanhedrin at this point.

Saul's life was dramatically and instantly changed on the road to Damascus. As he traveled toward Damascus to continue his role in the condemnation of those who had placed their faith in Jesus as the Jewish Messiah, he made a discovery most unexpected for him: Jesus was, after all, the Messiah. Saul's persecution of the church was actually persecution of the long-awaited Messiah Himself. (See Acts 9:1-6; 22:5-11; 26:12-19.)

Date of Composition and Place of Writing

Paul wrote the letter to the Romans at the end of his third missionary journey, which spanned from the spring of 53 to May, 57. (See Romans 1:10-15; 15:23-28.) He planned

to go to Jerusalem to give to the Jewish believers there a gift from Gentile believers elsewhere. After his visit at Jerusalem he intended to travel to Spain, stopping at Rome on the way.

An examination of the chronology of II Corinthians 7-9 suggests that Paul wrote this letter in Corinth. He was in Corinth three months (Acts 20:3). Apparently he wrote the letter at that time, sometime during the winter of 56-57.

Original Audience

The letter is not addressed to the “church at Rome,” but to the “saints” in Rome (Romans 1:7). This and the reference to the church meeting in the house of Aquila and Priscilla (Romans 16:5) indicates that there were several Christian congregations in the city, and the letter was intended to be read by all of them.

We cannot know for certain who founded the church in Rome. It is apparent that Paul was never in the city before this time (Romans 1:13). There is no evidence that Peter founded the church; Paul’s failure to mention Peter virtually assures that Peter was not the founder.

It may be that Jews from Rome who were in Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:10) returned home with their newfound faith and that the church sprang up from their proclamation of the gospel.

Some scholars are of the opinion that the church in Rome was originally made up of those who had been converted directly or indirectly through Paul’s ministry in other places and who had migrated to Rome. This may be indicated by his reluctance to building on the foundation of another (Romans 15:20) and by his greetings to many persons by name in chapter 16.

Purpose

It is apparent that there was tension between the Gentile and Jewish believers in Rome. (See Romans 1:5, 13, 16; 2:1, 12, 17; 3:1, 9, 19, 29-30; 4:11-12, 16; 9:24, 30; 10:12; 11:11-13, 8-24; 14:1-6, 10; 15:1, 7-9, 16.) It may be that the congregations in Rome were actually separated ethnically.

It is apparent that at least some of the Gentile believers were arrogant about their freedom from those things practiced by their Jewish brethren and that this arrogance caused them to be less than charitable toward the Jews. (See Romans 11:13, 18, 20, 25; 14-15.) On the other hand, at least some of the Jewish believers despised the Gentile believers on the basis of the idea of Jewish superiority. (See Romans 2:17-3:2, 9; 4:1-22.)

Paul organized his letter to deal first with the theology which should have produced solidarity between Jewish and Gentile believers (chapters 1-11); then he dealt with the practical consequences of this theology (chapters 12-15).

Even Paul's discussion of his travel plans demonstrates the concept of Jewish-Gentile solidarity in the Messiah Jesus. (See Romans 15:22-29.) He was delivering a gift from Gentile believers to their Jewish brethren.²

Endnotes

¹A complete treatment of these themes can be seen in the author's book *Themes From a Letter to Rome* (Hazelwood, MO: Word Aflame Press, 1995).

²Indebtedness for the material under Author, Date of Composition and Place of Writing, Original Audience and Purpose is acknowledged to Gary Tuck, Ph.D.

I.

Prologue (1:1-17)

The greetings in all of Paul's letters followed the form common to personal letters written for social purposes during the first century of the Roman Empire. As opposed to our practice today of not revealing the name of the letter's writer until the end of the letter, personal correspondence of the time revealed the author's name at the very beginning. Thus Paul identifies himself as the author of this letter to the believers at Rome (v. 7).

It was also common in first century correspondence to extend greetings and wishes for well-being to the recipients of a letter. Though Paul expands on this and does it in a decidedly Christian way, he is nevertheless following the form common to personal correspondence of the day.

A. Greeting (1:1-7)

(1:1) Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God,

Verse 1. Paul identifies himself as a slave (Greek, *doulos*) of Jesus Christ. This is an immediate testimony of Paul's belief in the deity of Jesus, for devout Jews would never confess that they were slaves to any man. The Law of Moses warned the Jewish people that they were to worship the Lord God and serve only Him. (See Matthew 4:10; Deuteronomy 6:13; 10:20.) Indeed, the Hebrew word for worship (*abad*) is closely allied with the idea of serving.

The ancient Jews saw all of life as service, and thus worship, to God. This included not only their involvement in the tabernacle rituals or their reading of the Torah (the Pentateuch; the first five books of the Bible), but also their work in the fields or any other use of their physical energy and skills. Because they viewed themselves as slaves (servants) of YHWH alone, the Jews refused to acknowledge that they were the servants of anyone else, even when they were politically subjugated. When Jesus said to the Jews, “And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (John 8:32, NKJV), they responded with apparent indignation, “We are Abraham’s descendants, and have never been in bondage to anyone. How can you say, ‘You will be made free’?” (John 8:33, NKJV). This is a typical Jewish response; in their mind, they were in bondage only to God, not any man. The truth, of course, is that throughout their history, Israel had been in bondage to various political oppressors, including Egypt, Assyria and Babylon. Even at the time Jesus ministered, Israel was a Roman province known as Judaea. Also, many of the Jews in Rome, to which Paul directed this letter, had arrived there originally as slaves or were the descendants of those who had done so. But because of the prohibition on serving anyone other than the true God, devout Jews would not admit that they were the servants of any other.

Thus when Paul, among the most devout of all Jews (Philippians 3:4-6; Galatians 1:14), confessed immediately from the beginning of his letter that he was a servant of Jesus Christ, it was understood by any Jewish reader to be a declaration of the deity of Jesus. A Jew would serve God only; therefore Jesus is God.

The English word “servant” may soften somewhat the significance of the Greek *doulos*. The NKJV translates *doulos* “bondservant.” Some translations render it “slave.” The idea of *doulos* has to do with complete submission. The English “servant” may imply an employee, but the Greek *doulos* has to do with one who is actually owned or pur-