

The Epistle of Paul to the Romans

Introductory Observations

Martyn Lloyd-Jones on Romans:

“There is a sense in which we can say quite truthfully that the Epistle to the Romans has played a more important and a more crucial part in the history of the church possibly than any other single book in the whole of the Bible.”

The Conversion of Augustine of Hippo

Romans 13:12-14

The Pelagian Heresy

Augustine refutes and demolishes this error by expounding the epistle to the Romans

The Conversion of Martin Luther

In 1515, as a Roman Catholic professor of theology, he gives lectures on the epistle to the Romans. As he was studying Romans the great truth of justification by faith alone dawned upon his heart and mind.

William Tyndale’s Prologue to Romans in his NT of 1534, which is itself a translation of Martin *Luther’s Preface in Luther’s German NT* which was published in 1524:

“Forasmuch as this epistle is the principal and most excellent part of the New Testament and most pure evangelion, that is to say glad tidings, and that we call gospel, and also is a light and a way unto the whole scripture; I think it meet that every Christian man not only know it, by rote and without the book, but also exercise himself therein evermore continually, as with the daily bread of the soul. No man verily can read it too oft, or study it too well; for the more it is studied, the easier it is; the more it is chewed, the pleasanter it is; and the more groundly [profoundly, solidly] it is searched, the preciouser [more precious] things are found in it, so great treasure of spiritual things lieth hid therein. “

Martin Luther’s Introduction to Romans:

“The sum and substance of this letter is: to pull down, to pluck up, and to destroy all wisdom and righteousness of the flesh (i.e., of whatever importance they may be in the sight of men and even in our own eyes), no matter how heartily and sincerely they may be practiced, and to implant, establish, and make large the reality of sin (however unconscious we may be of its existence). As Christ says through the prophet Jeremiah: "to pluck up and to break down and to destroy and to overthrow" (Jer. 1:10), namely, everything that is in us (i.e., all that pleases us because it comes from ourselves and belongs to us) and "to build and to plant," namely, everything that is outside us and in Christ.”

Samuel Taylor Coleridge: “It is the profoundest piece of writing in existence.”

Paul and the Gospel – Part One

Romans 1:1 – 6

Division of Romans 1:1 – 17

1. Paul and the Gospel (vv. 1 – 6)
2. Paul and the Romans (vv. 7 – 13)
3. Paul and evangelism (vv. 14 – 17)

Paul begins his letter in a very personal way. “I,” “me,” and “my” occur more than 20 times in these opening verses.

The Writer: *Paul*

Dr. Steven Lawson: “Never had anyone more opposed to the gospel become its strongest exponent. “Paul” had previously been Saul of Tarsus, a devout Jewish Pharisee, who was hardened in external religion and self-righteousness. He was determined to eliminate Christianity from the face of the earth as its chief persecutor. But then the risen Christ appeared to him on the Damascus road and he was suddenly converted to faith in the Lord Jesus. Once an avowed enemy, he was now the leading preacher of the gospel he once opposed.”

- Paul had previously been Saul of Tarsus [Acts 7:58; Acts 8:1; Acts 9:1; Acts 13:9; Acts 21:39; Acts 22:3]
- A devout Jewish Pharisee, who was hardened in external religion and self-righteousness [Acts 22:3; Philippians 3:4 – 6]
- The chief persecutor of Christians [Acts 9:1; Acts 9:21; Acts 9:26; 1 Timothy 1:12 – 13]
- Converted to faith in Jesus when the risen Christ appeared to him on the Damascus road [Acts 9:1 – 6; Acts 26:9 – 20]

SLAVE: “...a servant of Jesus Christ...”

Luther: “He calls himself emphatically a servant because he wants to confess that he has received his office over others from God, as if he were to say: I preach the gospel and teach the church; I baptize and do other works which are God's alone. And I do not do all this as a lord who is set over you but as **a servant who is commissioned to minister to you. So I am a servant in your behalf, and my "service" does not refer to anything else but my duties toward you.** Its ultimate concern is God. This is not the case in that "service" which all of us are equally expected to render to God. To put it briefly: according to the moral and tropological sense, everyone is a servant of God by and for himself, but, according to the allegorical sense, a certain someone is **a servant of God for others and over others and for the sake of others.**”

SENT: “...called to be an apostle....”

This word (*apostolos*) means ‘one who is sent’ or ‘a sent one.’ It referred to a delegate or messenger who has been officially commissioned on a mission. An apostle in New Testament times was one who received direct revelation from God and was given a delegated authority from Jesus Christ to preside over the affairs of the church. Paul makes this designation so that the believers in Rome will know that he writes with infallible and binding authority over the affairs of the church. Everything that follows in this letter is the unvarnished truth that directly proceeds from Jesus Christ Himself.

The Defense of His Apostleship

1 Corinthians 9:5; 15:7 – 10

2 Corinthians 11; 12:11 – 12

Galatians 1:11 – 12 ; Galatians 1:15 – 19

The Extent of His Apostleship: *to the Gentiles*

Romans 1:13 – 15; 11:13; 15:9 – 12; 15:16

Galatians 2:2,7

SANCTIFIED: “...separated unto the gospel of God,”

The word for “separated” in the original has the same root as “Pharisee.” Paul may be using a play on words here: since Paul had been a Pharisee, as a Pharisee he had set himself apart for the law, but now God has set him apart for the gospel. In these opening words Paul seems to present the basic juxtaposition of law and gospel which is the theme of his letter.

Furthermore, Paul here means for his readers in Rome to know that the gospel is Paul’s primary occupation. Everything is secondary to his calling to proclaim the gospel. [see 1 Corinthians 1:17]

Set apart in the same manner common things and ordinary people were sanctified for the service of God. [Leviticus 8:11-12]

Set apart from his mother’s womb [Galatians 1:15 – 16]

Set apart by the church with Barnabas [Acts 13]

The Theme: *The Gospel of God*

Paul is only the messenger of the gospel; he is not its author. God is the author, source, and architect of the gospel – the message which Paul preaches.

John Stott: In Romans “Paul develops two paramount themes: 1) the justification of guilty sinners by God’s grace alone in Christ alone through faith alone, irrespective of either status or works. This is the most humbling and leveling of all Christian truths; 2) the consequent redefinition of the people of God, no longer according to descent, circumcision, or culture, but according to faith in Jesus, so that all believers are the true children of Abraham, regardless of their ethnic origin or religious practice.”

Dr. Steven Lawson: “*The gospel is God’s solution to our dilemma. It is the good news that has come down from the infinite genius of God. If we divided up into small groups today and met nonstop for the next ten thousand years brainstorming a plan of salvation, we could have never designed the gospel message. It could have only come from the sheer infinite genius of God.*”

Gospel is a compound word in the original language, meaning two words that come together as one. It is the Greek word *euangelion*. The *eu* at the beginning means ‘good.’ Someone might give a eulogy, which means ‘a good word,’ at a funeral. You can hear the Greek word *angelion* in the word angel, meaning a ‘messenger or message.’ When those two Greek words come together, the word gospel simply means ‘the good news, the good tidings, the glad tidings.’ The gospel is the good news of salvation through the Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ, to rescue us from the wrath of God.