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Romans

Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ.
Romans 10:17

Key verses: Habakkuk 2:4; Romans 1:17, 2:5-11; 3:9-26; 5:12-21; 8:1-17; 10:9-17; 12; 16:25-27

Key personalities: Paul and his companions

Timeline: The Church is established and grows by the Power of the Holy Spirit and the multiplying networks of Paul, 35-66 A.D.

The Book of Romans is more of a treatise than a letter. It is Paul's greatest work. It is considered by theologians and experts in literature one of the greatest, if not the greatest piece of literature, ever conceived! It is Christian theology defined; it is the Who and why we believe and how we live out our faith. Paul is writing to the Romans (whom he was planning to visit soon) to give encouragement as we are shown how that theology affects our lives. Romans teaches us about the means and meaning of salvation. Romans teaches us about the Law and how it pointed to Christ, the nature of God, the universality of sin, the saving act of Christ, and its appropriation and application of our faith. If we trust in Christ as our Savior, we will live our faith in gratitude. It is the longest and the most significant of all the Epistles. There is no separation between theology and practice. Real Christianity is practical by the exhortation of applied doctrine into practice.

The thesis statement of Romans is that Paul is not ashamed of the Gospel, "for it is the power of God unto salvation" (1:16). No speculative systematizing here! What follows from 1:17 on is the unfolding and unpacking of that power.

Romans shows us that the Gospel is good news! It is the promise of fulfillment from the Old Testament and centered upon what Christ did on our behalf: That all of humanity is guilty before God and in danger of His judgment. Christ came to earth as a man (Jew), lived a perfect life on our behalf and died in God's wrath and punishment, which He did not deserve, on our behalf (which we do deserve). He rose again to purchase our salvation, "the power of God to salvation." Jesus Christ made us righteous before God, thus we need not fear God's judgment when we have faith in our Lord (Rom. 1:16-17).

Key Happenings: Romans showcases the reason and purpose of faith!

Paul uses Habakkuk 2:4, 14 for the foundation to Romans, the reason and purpose of faith! Simply know it, believe it, love it, and enjoy it. Salvation is impossible, knowledge of God is unattainable, eternal life is unthinkable, and covenant fellowship is indefinable without Christ.

Unpacking Romans is like removing the cover of an old box spring mattress--all the springs will jump at you.

Paul was a chief persecutor of Christians. Paul was on his way to persecute more Christians when he was converted *directly* by the Risen Christ. Paul was gripped by the Gospel; his whole life was surrendered and controlled by the Gospel. After we have been saved, we have peace with God, and gratitude for what He did. Our focus is to please Him and not ourselves. Has the Gospel gripped you? We just simply believe it, love it, and enjoy it. Salvation is impossible, knowledge of God is unattainable, eternal life is unthinkable, and covenant fellowship is indefinable without Christ (Eph. 1:9-10; Rom. 16:25-27)!

The main Purpose of Romans is to Know Christ and make Him Known!

- **Paul was convincing the Roman church to become partners in the mission to the Gentiles** and support him. Rome was the main Gentile city, in contrast with Jerusalem as the main Jewish city. Paul's main points: We live for Faith, and we are called to glorify Christ in all that we do! Paul fervently urges that when we worship (as a lifestyle as opposed to just a gathering for a service) and are obedient to Christ, we must also demonstrate His

love in how we relate to others. Paul seeks missionary support for his journeys because of the urgent need of the world to hear the Gospel (Acts 28; Rom. 16).

- **Paul invites the Roman church** into his circle for an apostolic foundation. It is possible that Philip was their Apostle and planter, and he was martyred. It is probable that false teachers moved in; consequently, Paul wrote to correct and to instruct people to stay away from what is false and embrace His effectual empowerment and true--Truth. Real Christianity involves a cost and a commitment. Christ must be adored and honored first and foremost--over all else! The overarching call of God is to have a correct view of Christ so our lives are aligned with His precepts and character. This way, we can be on guard, and live in a proper, pleasing way to glorify our Lord, so that people will see Christ exhibited in us (2 Pet. 2: 12-16; Rev. 2: 1-7)!
- **Paul gives them a theology manifesto**, a comprehensive, systematic and logical way to know Christ for the church and life. Everything is affected by sin and everyone is a sinner and needs a Savior, Who is Christ the Lord, to give us grace to forgive our sins. We must trust and obey Christ as our Lord in faith and practice out of our love and gratitude for living now and life in eternity.

Paul defends the Gospel, "not ashamed of the Gospel" against the attacks of the false teachers and antagonistic Jews. We are saved by Christ alone, by faith alone. However, it will be demonstrated if it has taken root in us (James 2: 14-26).

- The Gospel is the revelation of the righteousness of God, the lightning rod that conducts God's creative power, because it reveals the justice of God in the justification of the ungodly (Rom. 1-4)
- The Gospel is the operation of divine power, our induction into the domain of the Holy Spirit, because it is the means by which those who place all their faith in Jesus Christ are transferred from the realm of sin and death into the realm of the Spirit and life (Rom. 5-8).
- The Gospel is a powerful demonstration of God's saving action, because it is through faith in Christ that a New, Eschatological Israel, composed of Jew and Gentile, is constituted in fulfillment of the promises made to the fathers (Rom. 9-11).
- The Gospel as the Transformation of Social Relationships by the life-changing power of God, because it transforms social relationships by virtue of the dynamic of love, which is the fulfillment of the law (Rom. 12-15).

Why such oppositions in doctrine to God's true Truth? Christianity was new and seemed too good and too simple to be true. It surely seemed it needed something more, and many were willing and able to bring their agendas and trends into the mix. We must guard against allowing bad people to fleece our flocks or cause deception in our churches. We do this by correct teaching, standing up for Truth as Paul did, getting rid of the false teachers, and putting those who are prideful out of leadership and positions of influence. Then, we can hold fast to the victory we have in Christ!

Paul was aware of his own mortality and the possibility that he might not survive the journey to Jerusalem; this is the urgency to get the Gospel down in writing. Yet, Paul takes the time to list 27 people, nine who were women, for personal gratitude. Considering Paul's culture and position, this is very humbling and astonishing. How can Paul's example inspire you not to take people for granted and to give proper appreciation (Rom. 16)!

- **Gods Righteous Wrath Explained:** Romans 1:18-32. God is just in His wrath. We cannot go to Him and say, I am a good person and do not deserve this. We all deserve death and Hell, but by God's grace through our faith we can be with Him, saved for eternity! The wrath of God is to be taken seriously, especially by those who reject Him. We need to understand God's Righteousness, as He is absolutely Pure and Holy; while we are full of heinous sin, no matter how good we try to be. God is also a God of judgment; He has the right, authority and power to judge us as His creation. And, we have no excuse because God has placed this knowledge we are to have within our conscience. When we reject God and follow our own needs and ideas we are in fact inviting His wrath and judgment upon us. We cannot think or say, "Hey, I did not know," because we do know! Every human has a conscience to know what is good or bad, but not all know God!
- **Gods Judgment Explained:** Romans 2:5-11. God is absolutely "just," and will reward everyone according to their works, and there will be degrees of punishment. God has pure intentions, pure, uncorrupted love, mercy and omniscient knowledge, so He knows all things and how everything and everyone is intertwined into each

other relationally in the past, present and future. We have no such knowledge. He knows the truth about each of us; there is nothing to hide, so confess and repent! There is no escape from God's judgment (1:18)! Salvation is a gift, NOT a reward (5:15-17; 6:23)! It is ONLY by what Christ has done that we can be saved. Our sins have been neutered on the cross and covered by His righteousness, thus we have been judged by God's standards of holiness with Christ taking our place in judgment (John 5:24). The Bible does not teach that most people will be saved; rather, Jesus Himself said most will be lost, and only a few saved (Gen. 18:25; Matt.7: 14; Luke 12:47-48; John 14:6; Acts 4:12; Rom. 2:6)

- **Righteousness by Faith:** Romans 3:9-26. We are totally lost and helpless without Christ! Justification is by faith alone, righteousness is apart from the Law (3:21-4:25). By Christ, we are reconciled to God. Faith is the instrument and not the cause; Christ is the cause! God has a righteous basis for our justification through the sacrifice of His Son, for our sins. Grace was not cheap for God. Christ paid a great debt by pleasing God's wrath, both in metaphysical pain and human pain of the crucifixion (Lev. 16; Psalm 103:12). The promises of God will be of no use to us unless we have the understanding of God and the obedience of that understanding! When we do accept Christ, we should have to desire to please Him and excel to benefit society and His glory.
- **Life Through Christ:** Romans 5:12-21. The miracle of redemption is that the Holy Spirit places in us a new nature, and our reward and response is a new life. The miracle is that we cannot touch or remove our sin, we cannot even hide it, and we can't even see it. He does and He removes it from His sight. Redemption is that we are delivered from the heredity of sin. God is weaving His redemptive threads through it and through us. These redemptive threads become our covering, the atonement of Christ's work on the cross as our new garments declaring us sin free and pure before our Lord. Our tendency is to remain in sin, we relish it and desire it, and help fuel its growth (John 3:16-19).
- **Life by the Holy Spirit:** Romans 8:1-17; Galatians 5:16-26. Romans 8:1-17 gives us the great comfort and assurance, "*Those who are in Christ, and walk after the Spirit, are free from condemnation.*" We who are believers have the Holy Spirit and turn from our fallen desires can be, "*adopted*". We are able to persevere even through suffering by being "*heirs of God*". We are saved and have hope beyond our own comprehension because we will be delivered--if not now, in a time to come. The Holy Spirit is supporting our prayers, rendering them acceptable to God! And then the great verse of comfort, "*All things work together for the good of those who love God, as called according to his purpose,*" which tells us our great hope and a glimpse of how God works by predestination. That we are secured by who and what Christ did on our behalf. His life, death, resurrection, and now His intercession on our behalf. The chapter closes with a statement that cannot be matched in power and scope, how much He loves us, that, "*Nothing shall separate them from the love of God through Christ.*"
- **Saved By Grace Alone: Romans 10:9-10.** Salvation comes only by our faith in Christ from the hearing of His Word (Holy Spirit and The Holy Spirit through the Bible). The true believer is the one who bases all their life, "IT ALL", upon Christ, with full trust and assurance of faith and obedience (Gal. 2:20-21; Col. 3:1-3). Their faith was the law, but the law's goal was Christ (Ex. 32:16). Confession and belief are the acknowledgment of justification. All we do is accept what Christ has done. Christians receive the gift of grace, but do not purchase the gift.
- **Living Sacrifices:** Romans 12. *Living Sacrifice*, to praise God as a continual lifestyle of worship. This motive continues and refers to the fact that we belong solely to God, not to ourselves or anything else (Rom. 3:25; 6:12-17; 8:13; John 15:13-15; 37-38; 1 John 3:16), His shed blood paid for us! That you truly have dedicated your right to yourself to Christ! That we give Him are all. It is easy to die for a cause, but are you willing to live for Him? In perfect obedience, so your life is poured out, that your strength is gone and you rely on Him?

This is how we must live, because the Gospel is the transforming and the converting power of God.

The Gospel transforms fallen social relationships by virtue of the dynamics of love, which is the fulfillment of the law! Paul lays out the truth of what Christ has done. It must affect our lives and attitudes and the people around us. Christianity is an offering to others in gratitude, by what Christ has done. Pleasing ourselves is not the goal of the Christian life as so many pursue. We are to follow Christ and be imitators of His character, so it transforms our character. We are doing this through love and acceptance of others as Christ did with us that we did not deserve.

We cannot separate doctrine from life. All of Romans is theology and practice! We are called to theological reflection, which is to know God, in the most profound way designed to show us how God works and in our ability to

understand and comprehend. This begs a response in our life. All four sections involve those who have faith in Jesus in an existential exploration of the meaning of life (the Gospel) as God's power in our lives, that we too may join Paul in proclaiming, "I am not ashamed of theology, for this theology is the power of God unto salvation to all who believe!"

So beware not to distinguish theology from practical application! It is a common complaint amongst Christians that theology is boring and dry and speculative; some would you have believe that theology is useless with no real meaning. That is because they do not want to know God. To put down or deny theology is to say that we are ashamed of the Gospel of Christ!

Key Takeaway: Our Christian walk is ALL about God working through us. Thus, theology is our boot camp and the army is our duty in application. Yet, it is the least thing considered by the average Christian's pursuit, especially those who never take ownership of their faith, who grew up in a church and see it as cultural and duty, and not devotion and lifestyle. The danger is for the Christian to sit in a pew, learn all that they can, and take comfort in that knowledge, but never do anything with it. It is the church that refuses to evangelize, the Christian that refuses to share their faith, or model Christ (Hos.6: 6; Mica. 6:6-8; Matt. 12 9-14; James 1:21-27)! The proof test is if you use people, or serve them? Have you just gathered information, or do you apply it?

The Call to the Church? Paul, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, wrote Romans by being motivated from his devotion and zeal and with a sense of obligation that the Church must be rooted in God and not in our ideas and expectations or anything else. Make sure your church is rooted in Christ alone, not in our motivations or pride. Our sense of obligation will certainly affect all that we do, so we have to make sure we lead and manage like Paul with a sense of prayerfulness, gratitude and indebtedness to Christ (Rom. 11:13-14; (1 Cor. 6:19-20; Eph. 1:15; 3:1-8; Phil. 1:6-9)!

Questions to Ponder

1. When someone is antagonistic to you because of your faith, how do you: Feel? React and respond?
2. Sin is serious, why is it something we are not to just glance over thinking I am OK?
3. How does theological decay turn into moral decay as an excuse to rationalize the sin?
4. If you are not grounded in sound doctrine you will not have a solid foundation in life and in the decisions you make. Do you agree or not and why?
5. The incredible news is our sin is covered! Has this hit you so your life shows the change Christ made for you?
6. How does it make you feel that Christ entered the world to pay your price of punishment when He did not have to or deserve it?
7. Why do you suppose we cannot have a good relationship with God, if we are not treating each other with respect and love? What about vice versa?
8. Because God is generous with His grace toward us, so we should be generous toward each other and be thankful. What do you think of that statement?
9. Why would some people think they are special and will go to Heaven and receive no judgment when they reject Christ?
10. Have you ever considered that the law is written upon our hearts, if so how does that make a difference in your behaviors?
11. What can you do to make a commitment to have a Christian mindset away from our selfish nature and or the world over to His character?
12. Are you totally submitted to God's ways, do you feel indebted, or do you feel owed? Being "poured out" is to take the focus off yourself and place it on others, as Christ did for us. Paul spent his life to express it!