

Studies in Romans 1 - 8 (1)

Paul's letter to the Christians at Rome was written from Corinth, during the 3 months Paul spent there near the end of his 3rd missionary journey (see Acts 20 v 3). He wrote the letter anticipating that he would visit Rome soon (see Romans 15 v 23, 24). The letter deals with the righteousness of God in his dealings with men, especially his righteousness as shown in the gospel. David Newell's chart (attached) outlining Roman's is headed, 'God's Method of Making Bad Men Good'. The letter answers the question of the Old Testament e.g. Job 9 v 2 "*how should man be just with God?*" The key verse is 1 v 17 where Paul is speaking of the gospel of Christ "*therein is the righteousness of God revealed*".

From David Newell's chart it can be seen that there are 3 main sections:

Doctrinal 1 v 18 – 8 v 39, which deals with the problem of sin. It is this section that will be considered in this series.

Dispensational chap 9 – 11, which deals with the problem of the Jews past, present and future (10 v 1 "*my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved*")

Practical 12 v 1 – 15 v 13, which deals with the problem of living, how to serve God (12 v 2 "*be not conformed ... but be ye transformed*")

The doctrinal section can be divided into 3 sub sections:

1 v 18 – 3 v 20 The Need – Sin: what we are by nature 3 v 20 "*Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight*".

3 v 21 – 5 v 21 The Provision – Salvation: how to be saved 5 v 1 "*Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ*".

Chap 6 – 8 The Effect – Sanctification: how to live a godly life 8 v 4 "*That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.*"

Reading: Study 1 – Romans 1 v 1 - 32

v 1 – 17 Introduction

v 1 – 7 **Salutation – The apostle and the saints** v1 and 7 "*called to be*"

v 8 – 17 **Reason for Writing** v11 "*For I long to see you*".

Praying and Preaching v 9 "*I make mention of you always in my prayers.*"
v 15 "*I am ready to preach the gospel*"

The Salutation:

In these opening remarks the apostle tells us a little of himself, the gospel, the Lord Jesus and the Roman Christians.

1) The Apostle – Paul introduces himself as "*a servant (a bond servant) of Jesus Christ*". Paul had met the risen Lord Jesus on the Damascus road and had been called to a great work, but he was ever conscious of the greatness of the Lord and his own insignificance. He practiced what he taught Rom 12 v 3 "*not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think*".

Although a bondservant, he was also "*called to be an apostle*". An apostle, one sent forth Acts 9 v 15 "*he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles*". We too have been called and are chosen vessels; called for a purpose, called to serve God.

The third point he makes about himself is that he is "*separated (set apart) unto the gospel*".

2) The Gospel – Concerning the gospel Paul firstly states its origin, "*the gospel of God*". He then reminds his readers that it was "*promised afore*". Old Testament prophets wrote concerning this, but did not understand what they wrote Rom 16 v 25 "*according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began.*" This gospel, spoken of by the prophets, has as its subject v3 "*his Son Jesus Christ*". The message of the gospel was and is and always will be centred on "*his Son Jesus Christ*".

3) His Son – Concerning Jesus Christ Paul states that he is “*our Lord*”. On the Damascus Road Paul acknowledged the Lordship of Jesus and this relationship he constantly lived by “*Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?*” What about us? Is he Lord?

The apostle continues to show that He became man, “*made of the seed of David*” but was “*declared to be the Son of God*”. He came into the world through birth, like other men, but by his resurrection he alone is declared Son of God.

4) The Recipients, the Christians at Rome – As Paul knew the call of God to be an apostle, so he writes of these believers “*called of Jesus Christ*” and “*called to be saints*”. They, and we, belonged to the Lord Jesus and had been set apart by God. Set apart, separated from sin and consecrated to God. Not only this, but Paul can also say “*beloved of God*”. This should thrill our heart, we belong to God, we have been called by him, we are set apart for him and we are loved of God. Paul had never been in Rome, had not met the majority of the Christians there and yet he has this confidence concerning them and concerning us.

Reason for Writing:

In these few verses v 8 – 17 we find the apostle praying and preaching, as well as his desire “*to come unto you.*”

v 8 – 10 Praying – Although he did not know the Christians at Rome he had a care for them v9 “*I make mention of you always in my prayers*”. Can this be a challenge to us? An encouragement to pray for other believers? Often we hear missionaries requesting prayer for believers in other lands, those we will never meet on earth, but if we follow Paul’s example we should have a care and concern for them and pray for them. As Paul prays, he firstly gives thanks to God for them. He records that wherever he goes he hears of the faith of the Roman Church. Paul could say something similar about the Thessalonians 1 Thess 1 v8 “*in every place your faith to God-ward is spread abroad*”. Do we have a testimony like this?

Paul did not just pray occasionally, but “*without ceasing*”; such was his love for the Christians and not only at Rome. The apostle had a great confidence in his God and was not afraid to be specific in his prayer. He prayed and committed the matter to God v10 “*by the will of God*”. He prayed specifically and left it in the hands of God, “*I might have a prosperous journey....to come unto you.*” Are there times when our prayers are more general due to fear of the answer being not what we expected or desired? (see 11 Cor 12 v 8, 9). When Paul eventually arrived in Rome it was as a prisoner and the journey, humanly speaking, could hardly be described as good, but it was “*the will of God*”.

v11 – 13 in these next few verses the writer outlines his desire “*to come unto you*”. His desire to visit Rome was not to experience the culture and art at the centre of Roman civilisation, nor was it to be at the centre of world power and authority, but for the spiritual good of the Christians at Rome v13 “*that I might have some fruit among you*”.

v14 – 17 Preaching – As he closes his introduction Paul turns to the gospel, that to which he is separated, that which is ‘God’s method of making bad men good’. He considers himself “*a debtor*”. He has been entrusted with the gospel and therefore wherever man is found, in whatever condition they may be, the apostle felt an obligation to “*preach the gospel*”. Do we know anything of this? (see Rom 15 v 20).

In the final two verses of this section Paul outlines the subject of his letter, the righteousness of God in his dealings with men through the gospel. The gospel is the means by which men are brought to salvation. As men believe the preaching, so the power of God brings salvation. It is a message that is universal, for it is “*to everyone that believeth*”. How could Paul, or we, be ashamed for the power of God that raised Jesus Christ from the dead (v4) is seen in the gospel, bringing salvation, new life to all who believe. God’s righteousness revealed in the gospel is made known solely on the basis of faith and so, he concludes “*The just shall live by faith.*”