

Sha'ul of Tarsus & His Letters ~ Part 113

Romans ~ Part 1

Note: To examine the graphics in this series, click on them for a pop-up version.

As I have emphasized in my previous posts, we begin delving into the profound significance of **Sha'ul's Letter to the Romans**, a crucial cornerstone of our faith. This significance is not to be taken lightly but deeply understood and appreciated. Your active engagement in grasping the depth of its meaning and impact on our spiritual journey is not just crucial. Still, it also shows your responsibility to understand the importance of this text in our faith. I would encourage you to download the PDF version of this post as a reference.

Introduction to the Letter to the Roman

As has been my practice in this series, I will start with F. LaGard Smith's introduction to his Chronological Bible. However, due to the enormous importance of the letter, I will also include several other authors' summations.

F. LaGard Smith

During this short time in Corinth, around 56-58 CE, Sha'ul writes a letter to the saints in Rome, telling them of his desire to visit them but indicating his inability to do so at this time. He tells them that he must go to Yerushalayim to deliver contributions from brethren in Macedonia and Achaia. He first explains his understanding of the Gospel, carefully contrasting it with the Law of Moshe.

The theme of his letter is that those who are righteous through faith will be those who truly live. Under God's righteousness, even a sinful man is justified and reconciled to God through grace. After laying a deep theological foundation, he concludes the letter with practical applications for transforming one's life to Christian service and regulating one's conduct about his fellowman, civil government, and those brothers and sisters in Christ who may be spiritually weak. Grace is not seen as a substitute for law but rather as a higher motivation to obey God's laws.

David H. Stern

The Jewish New Testament Commentary

A motif running through the entire book, perhaps even the point of the letter, is that, in contrast with the historical period covered by the *Tanakh*, when the Jews alone were God's chosen people, now, united with Yeshua the Messiah of Israel, believing Gentiles and Jews are fully equal members of God's people in respect to every element of salvation.

Edwin A. Blum

Holman Illustrated Bible Commentary

Paul's letter to the Roman house churches has been preeminent among the New Testament writings for its theological and pastoral influence. It focuses on the doctrine of salvation, including the practical implications for believers living out the salvation through Jesus Christ.

Paul the Apostle is the stated and indisputable author of the book of Romans. From the book of Acts and statements in Romans, we learn that Paul wrote this letter while he was in Corinth and on his way to Jerusalem in the spring of a.d. 57 to deliver an offering from the Gentile churches to poor Jewish Christians (Ac 20:3; Rom 15:25-29).

All of Paul's writings grew out of his missionary/pastoral work and were about the problems and needs of local churches. The book of Romans is also of this genre, but it is the least "local" because Paul had not yet been to Rome. This letter was his opportunity to expound the excellent news message (the gospel). He could discuss the essence of sin, the salvation accomplished on the cross, the union of the believer with Christ, how the Spirit works in the Christian to promote holiness, the place of the Jewish people in God's plan, future things, and Christian living or ethics. Though Paul did not write Romans as a systematic theology, his orderly exposition has been the fountain for developing that discipline.

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Paul's purpose in writing Romans can be identified from his direct statements in the text and inferred from the content. He expressly wrote that he wanted to impart spiritual strength to the believers at Rome (1:11–12; 16:25–26). He asked for prayer for the difficult task he was undertaking (15:32) and that he might be able to come and see them (15:30). He hoped to enlist the Roman churches to support a mission to the west (15:23–29). The letter's content shows that the churches experienced tensions between believers from different backgrounds. Paul wanted them to be united and to avoid disagreement and false teaching (16:17–18). The content also reveals his exposition of what is essential Christianity and what are matters of indifference.

Warren W. Wiersbe

Wiersbe's Expository Outlines on the New Testament

While God and Christianity inspire all Scripture, some parts of the Bible contain more doctrinal truth than others. Indeed, what Paul has to say in Romans is of more practical value to us than some of the lists in Numbers. St. Augustine was converted through reading Romans. Martin Luther launched the Reformation on Rom. 1:17: "The just shall live by faith." John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, was converted while listening to someone read Luther's commentary on Romans. If there is one book that every Christian should understand, it is this epistle. Why?

- (1) It presents doctrinal truth—justification, sanctification, adoption, judgment, and identification with Christ.
- (2) It presents dispensational truth in chapters 9–11, showing the relationship between Israel and the church in God's eternal plan.
- (3) It presents practical truth, teaching the secret of Christian victory over the flesh, Christians' duties toward each other, and their relationship to government.

Romans is an excellent exposition of the faith. It is the complete and most logical presentation of Christian truth in the entire NT. While some topics (such as the priesthood of Christ and the return of the Lord) are not dealt with in detail, they are mentioned and related to the other great doctrines of the faith. If a Bible student wishes to master any one book of the Bible, let it be Romans! Understanding this book is the key to unlocking the entire Word of God.

Dictionary of Paul and His Letters

Multiple Authors

Romans is the least controversial and most important of the prominent NT letters. At any rate, it is the least controversial in the "who wrote what when to whom" questions, making it so difficult to gain a firm handle on

most of the other NT writings. It is essential to be the first well-developed theological statement by a Christian theologian, which has come down to us and has had an incalculable influence on the framing of Christian theology ever since—arguably the most critical work of Christian theology ever written. This double feature of Romans is vital since it means that discussion of the letter can quickly leave behind such preliminary questions and focus on its substantive theological content without too much distraction from nagging introductory unknowns.

In our next post, we examine **Sha'ul's Letter to the Romans**.