

Studying Romans

by Wayne Goff

Studying the book of Romans is a daunting task, and certainly the book Peter had in mind in 2 Peter 3 when he wrote “as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, has written to you, as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which untaught and unstable people twist to their own destruction, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures” (vv. 15-16). But notice that Peter said “some” not “all,” and “hard to understand” not “impossible.” It is probably my favorite book to study because you can study it, re-study it, and study it again, and each time you will delve into a different level of the truths found in the book. There are some things that are particularly difficult for me, but the challenge is wonderful!

Did you know that there are more Old Testament quotes (60+) in the book of Romans than any other New Testament book? Nineteen times Paul directly quotes the Old Testament, preceding the quote with the words “as it is written...” or a similar equivalent, (1:17; 2:24; 3:4, 10; 4:17; 8:36; 9:13, 33; 10:15; 11:8, 26; 15:3, 9, 21; etc.). It is Romans 15:4 that reminds us “For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.” You might think from this that Paul was writing chiefly to Jewish Christians in this book, but that is not so at all. He writes to both Jews and Gentiles, and the tone of the book is decidedly universal in its scope.

“Righteous” or “righteousness” appears 44 times in the 16 chapters of the book. The word is used of God, Christ, and men. Unfortunately, as Paul said in Romans 10:3 “For they being ignorant of God’s righteousness, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted to the righteousness of God.” This is true of every religion today. It seems that men are always trying to find their own way to their own kind of righteousness. Man fails miserably because he doesn’t know what to do or how to do it.

Paul speaks of “the righteousness of faith” (9:30) which is the righteousness attained by obedience to the gospel (1:5; 16:26). In opposition to that, he warns of those who seek “the law of righteousness” (9:31) and reminds them that man will not find righteousness that way. Those who deny one’s faith requires obedience in order to perfect it should re-read the opening statement (1:5) and closing statement of Romans (16:26)!

Salvation is offered to all who need it (1:16-17). So Paul diligently points out the sins of the Gentiles (1:18-32), then of the Jews (2:1-27), and thus of all men (3:23)! Who doesn’t need the Gospel?!

Romans speaks of the bondage caused by being enslaved to sin (6:12-23), and the freedom that is gained by walking according to the Spirit (8:1-5). There is hope in living the Christian life.

Paul deals with the nation of Israel and its rejection (chs. 9-10), but points out that any Jew (like himself, 11:1) can come back to God on the same basis as any other human!

He continues in Romans 12 with practical advice on how to get along with one another and as a church. Paul reminds us to be submissive to the governing authorities because they are endorsed by God (13:1-5). We learn in Romans 14 how to get along with one another’s conscience without compromising on the one hand, or being dictatorial on the other. There is much good to be learned from a careful study of the book.

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