

Valley Bible Church - Bible Survey

Bible Survey Lesson 68: Introduction and Outline, The Book of Romans

Introduction:

To cover the book of Romans in one week is a challenge. Dr. Martin Lloyd Jones did it in six volumes. John MacArthur did it in three years. The last time I did it I took thirteen weeks and felt I was "running" through Romans.

But, this is a survey, so let's begin.

Romans is an intriguing book and typically Pauline. As both Randy and I have pointed out, Paul's books tend to be, at the same time, books of systematic theology (heavy, technical, and instructional) and applied theology (simple, practical and life affecting).

Romans covers the doctrines of:

SIN--All men are sinners by birth and by bent.

SALVATION--Men can escape sin's curse by grace through faith.

SANCTIFICATION--The forgiven are set apart and made holy.

SOVEREIGNTY--God can do whatever He wants.

SERVICE--In response to God's reaching out for us we reach out to others, both inside and outside of the body of Christ.

Author:

We have already looked at Paul in detail (See Introduction to Epistles of Paul) concluding that he was God's ideal choice to take the gospel to the pagan Gentiles throughout the known world. He was multi-cultural (Jewish and Roman). He was multi-religious (Jewish and Christian). He was multi-lingual (Hebrew, Greek, and Aramaic). He was raised in a city that was a melting pot of races, cultures, religions, philosophies, and he was a Roman citizen.

The City of Rome

Rome was the capital and most important city of the Roman Empire. It was an old city, founded in 753 B. C., but came to prominence when the Romans conquered the known world. In Paul's time the city had a population of over one million and boasted of great, mighty and magnificent buildings.

The center of the city included the Emperor's Palace, the Circus Maximus, the Forum, and many other magnificent buildings (See drawing of city in Mac Arthur Study Bible). The ruins of many of these wonders of the world are still visible today. It was a glorious city.

Valley Bible Church - Bible Survey

However, many of the people among its huge population were slaves and many areas of the city were slums. It was a mixture of sophisticated culture and perverse immorality. The emperor ruled absolutely and Rome was the ultimate seat of justice to which Paul eventually appealed.

The Church at Rome

Paul had heard of the church at Rome, but he had never been there, nor had Peter, or any other apostle. Even though Peter and Paul were martyred in Rome, it is unlikely that they founded the church.

Evidently some who were converted on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2) returned to Rome or converts from Paul's trips moved into that city and founded a church. Perhaps the latter is more likely since the membership was predominantly Gentile as mentioned in chapters 1 and 15.

Paul had heard great things about the church in Rome. In chapter 1 verse 8 he stated, "*. . . I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, because your faith is being proclaimed throughout the whole world.*"

Jesus had promised Paul that he would stand before kings, and he had always been anxious to minister in that great church (1:13). He sent this letter of introduction to prepare the way for a planned visit (15:14-17).

He must have known that a healthy church in Rome would impact the entire Empire because he wrote a careful, systematic foundation for the doctrine of salvation by grace, through faith and its meaning for Christian living.

The letter was written from Corinth in about A.D. 56 when Paul, near the end of his third missions trip, was collecting an offering to take to a poor, persecuted, and dying church in Jerusalem.

His plan was to deliver the money then continue on to Rome and Spain. These plans were delayed by his arrest in Jerusalem, but of course, he eventually got a free trip to Rome provided by the government.

OUTLINE OF THE BOOK OF ROMANS

When introducing himself to the Roman church Paul didn't hold anything back. He boldly proclaims who he is and what he preaches.

I. NEWS (Chapter 1:1-17)

A. Messenger (1:1-15)

Paul introduces himself as a "*bond-servant of Jesus Christ, called as an Apostle and set apart for the gospel of God,*"(v. 1) and one who "*unceasingly makes mention of them in his prayers making request that he may come to them.*" (Paraphrase v. 9) "*to preach the gospel to you who are at Rome.*" (v. 15)

Valley Bible Church - Bible Survey

B. Message (1:16-17)

What is the gospel? **Read Romans 1:16-17**

It is the unchangeable good news that the prophet Habakkuk preached to Judea that centuries later will trigger the Reformation as a seeking Martin Luther stumbles on to it.

Salvation is through faith alone, and Paul will now spend 16 chapters explaining and applying this important doctrine.

But, before he elaborates on the good news, there is some bad news:

II. BAD NEWS (Chapters 1:18-3:20)

The bad news is that man is guilty of heinous sin before a Holy God.

A. It is bad (1:18-3:8)

How bad is it?

1. Gentiles Guilty (1:18-32)

Man is guilty because God clearly revealed Himself to them in their inner man and in creation but they chose to worship the creature rather than the creator. As a result of their willful ignorance God abandoned them allowing all the vile result of their arrogance to work its evil.

2. Moralists Guilty (2:1-16)

Even those who dare to look around and point a finger at the evil men citing the Law as their authority are guilty of the same sins. If we chose to stand or fall before God on our adherence to the law, we are condemned. No one can keep the whole law.

3. Jews Guilty (2:17-3:8)

1. He did not keep the Law and if the Law is the yardstick, even the Jews, who glory in keeping the letter of the Law are guilty because they are "circumcised in their bodies, but not in their hearts. *"He is a (true) Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that which is of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter; and his praise is not from men, but from God."* (v. 29)

2. He did not believe God

As Paul will point out later. *"Abraham believed God and it was put to his account as righteousness."*

This looks bad, but it is worse still . . .

Valley Bible Church - Bible Survey

B. It is very bad (3:9-20)

"There is none righteous, not even one" (v. 10)

The bad news is: No one is righteous

No one understands

No one seeks after God

No one does good

No one fears God

NO ONE DESERVES GOD'S SALVATION

So, by their acts of sin, men and women are condemned.

The bad news is that things are truly hopeless. But, there is . . .

III. GOOD NEWS (Chapters 3:21-11:36)

A. Salvation (3:21-5:21)

Salvation isn't earned, it's a gift.

1. Righteousness Explained (3:21-31)

3:23-24--"for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus."

Salvation is by grace, through faith, a FREE GIFT.

2. Righteousness Illustrated (4:1-5:21)

Paul's example of this concept is Abraham. He could not have been saved by keeping the Law, it was not written yet. He could not have been saved by the rite of circumcision, it wasn't observed yet. He could not have been saved by works, the rules weren't presented yet.

How then? Verse 3--"*Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness.*"

Abraham believed (showed his faith) and God, by His grace, counted that as righteousness to his account.

B. Separation (6:1-8:39)

The natural result of the justification of God, by grace through faith is separation **from** the world and **unto** God.

Valley Bible Church - Bible Survey

1. Principles of Sanctification (6)

QUESTION: Because our hopeless condition immersed in sin brought the grace of God into action will continued sin bring even more Grace? *"May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it."* NO, WE ARE DEAD TO SIN AND DEAD MEN CAN'T REACT. Also, we have changed masters. We were slaves to sin, now we are slaves to God, separated for His service.

2. Practice of Sanctification (7)

Paul uses himself as an example of the battle for separation that naturally enters the believers life. He wants to live righteously and fulfill the demands of God but is frustrated by sin that still indwells him.

This is the believer's daily battle. The tension of the Christian life with its simultaneous hope and hopelessness, its victories and frustrations. Is there any viable answer to this dilemma?

3. Power of Sanctification (8)

The power to live a separated life is supernatural. It comes through the Holy Spirit, as God *"who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who indwells you,"* (v. 11)

This same Holy Spirit gives us power to live a free, obedient, expectant, exciting life. In fact, *"We overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us."* (v. 37)

The third piece of "Good News" is that God is sovereign.

C. Sovereignty (9:1-11:36)

This portion discusses the faithful and sovereign nature of God.

1. Israel's Past (9 and 10)

Israel was God's chosen nation and He was more than faithful to them in unending attempts to draw them unto Himself. But they rejected Him and have been placed aside.

2. Israel's Future (11)

But, God has a sovereign plan, *first* to unite Jew and Gentile through the church into one people. And, *second*, to reestablish them in the Promised Land as a nation fulfilling all of His covenant promises made to their fathers.

IV. EFFECTIVE NEWS (Chapters 12:1-16:24)

Paul concludes his letter, as he always does, with the practical application of the doctrine of Salvation, Justification and Sanctification. We are not only saved from something but we are saved to something.

Valley Bible Church - Bible Survey

True conversion will result in an effective:

A. Christian Life (12:1-13:7)

1. Spiritual (12:1-13)

The first change will be a spiritual transformation: a dedication of the whole self to God, a renewal of our minds and a conformity to the image of Jesus. We should be so changed that we can actually discern, desire, and approve the will of God.

2. Social (12:14-21)

The life transformation will extend into our interaction with others and we will exercise our gifts in the body to serve each other.

3. Secular (13:1-7)

We will properly respond to our society, and our government since they are ordained of God to carry out His plan.

True conversion will also result in:

B. Christian Love (13:8-16:27)

1. Relationships (13:8-15:13)

Love will be at the core of our relationships. We will not wrong, judge, hinder, or hurt, but will imitate Christ and His actions toward others. Mutual love and respect among the believers are marks of true disciples.

2. Review

Paul ends his letter by sharing his plans to travel, to preach and to remain faithful.

Lessons:

1. All men and women are lost and it is their own fault. They choose to reject the truth that is evident around and within them.
2. All are lost forever unless God intervenes. He made salvation available by His grace.
3. Salvation is by grace through faith and cannot be earned.
4. Even believers continue the battle against sin in their lives. The way to win is by dying every day and allowing the Holy Spirit to control us.