

St. Paul's Letter to the Romans

Beloved God and Father, send Your Holy Spirit to guide us in our study of St. Paul's letter to the Church in Rome. This is a letter full of instruction in the doctrine of Your Holy Church, which is at times difficult to understand, but Lord, guided by the Trinitarian guardian of the revelation of Jesus Christ: sacred Scripture, our sacred Tradition, and the teaching of the universal Church, we are confident that the Holy Spirit will reveal to us the truth of Your Word. We pray in the name of God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. St. Paul, pray for us!

AMEN

Romans 1:1-7

Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy scriptures, the gospel concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh and designated Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord, through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of his name among all the nations, including yourselves who are called to belong to Jesus Christ; To all God's beloved in Rome, who are called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

I. Writing to a community he did not found he uses literary techniques

- A. Foothold to gain fellowship between writer and audience
- B. He must establish his authority as an Apostle
- C. Letter form with common Letter address

II. St. Paul claim to be an Apostle

- A. Common for him in his letters
- B. Status is from being of the Twelve
 - 1. Encounter with Jesus
 - 2. Apostolic mission to the gentiles
- C. Role as an Apostle
 - 1. Servant – service to the Gospel like Moses, Joshua, David (He is inserted boldly)
 - 2. The same two fold relationship exists for all follower of Jesus

- a. Know the Risen Lord – Charismatically – Sacramentally
- b. Respond to knowing by acting*

* This introduces a major theme of Romans – Faith leads to action or Not responding with actions proves faith is external or not faith at all

III. The Gospel Paul Preaches

A. The Gospel of God – Old Testament – God of creation, God of the Law is the first basis for our understanding, but incomplete

B. Christological – Jesus Christ as the final and most complete Revelation

- 1. Revelation of God
- 2. Liberation through the Son
- 3. Inauguration of the end time – the final stages of creation

C. Proof that Jesus is the Messiah – That He can begin the last age

- 1. Human Origins – **Note the Christology vs. Prologue to Johns Gospel**

This is a requirement in Jewish understanding and he had to be born of the House of David – Jesus fits both

- 2. Raised from the Dead

It is this action of God that Paul understand Jesus becomes the Messiah and the last age is begun. **Again we note this is not Trinitarian Theology 70 A.D.? - 325 A.D. Council of Nicea**

3. Paul's use of the word *Evangelion* in its plural form *evangelia* is the good news about royal births, wedding inaugurations anniversaries... This connecting Jesus to royalty

IV. Obedience of Faith

- A. To the Jews Torah – the *Shema*, Hear o Israel the Lord your God is one...
- B. To the Gentile Christian – responding to faith, using gifts of the Holy Ghost
- C. The Obedience to Faith that Paul is preaching is available to both the Jew and Gentile

1:8-17

First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because your faith is proclaimed in all the world. For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son, that without ceasing I mention you always in my prayers, asking that somehow by God's will I may now at last succeed in coming to you. For I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to strengthen you, that is, that we may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith, both yours and mine. I want you to know, brethren, that I have often intended to come to you (but thus far have been prevented), in order that I may reap some harvest among you as well as among the rest of the Gentiles. I am under obligation both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish: so I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome. For I am not ashamed of the gospel: it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who has faith, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed through faith for faith; as it is written, "He who through faith is righteous shall live."

I. The Introduction of the Letter

A. Changed from the normal form to clarify his position

B. If he is the Apostle to the Gentiles, why has it taken so long to get to Rome?

1. V. 9,10 Paul has been praying to come and for the community

2. V. 11,12 He has a spiritual gift to impart and to receive from the community

3. V. 13a It has always been his intention to visit

4. V. 13b,14 He was already acting among and for the Gentiles (East)

5. V. 15 He has always wanted to come, he is eager to come

6. V. 16,17 He wants to come because of the salvific power of the Gospel

II. Paul's Defensiveness as to the reason for the visit

A. At the conclusion of the letter he makes clear the issues. 15:23-32

B. This journey is to set the stage for the larger task of going to Spain

C. He plans to Visit to celebrate the exposition of the Gospel to the Gentiles*

*This will celebrate the Gospel and his bona fides as the Apostle to the Gentiles so they will support his western work.

III. Thanksgiving for the Community in Rome and their Faith

- A. A genuine acknowledgement of the mature Christian Community
- B. He is also trying to link together the house church into one eccleasical community, “The church at Rome”
- C. He knows of their faith and His visit will be of benefit to both the Church at Rome and to him spiritually – for mutual support (Think of our Synods - Bishop with the people of the Diocese)
- D. Paul recognizes that he is writing to a small group of believers who are surrounded by pagans and a tide of religious diversity (Sound Familiar) Their struggles have been like his struggle they will support each other.

The Body of the Letter 1:18 – 15:13

1:18-32

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and wickedness of men who by their wickedness suppress the truth. For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. Ever since the creation of the world his invisible nature, namely, his eternal power and deity, has been clearly perceived in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse; for although they knew God they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking and their senseless minds were darkened. Claiming to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man or birds or animals or reptiles. Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves, because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen. For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions. Their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural, and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in their own persons the due penalty for their error. And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a base mind and to improper conduct. They were filled with all manner of wickedness, evil, covetousness, malice. Full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malignity, they are gossips, slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless. Though they know God’s decree that those who do such things deserve to die, they not only do them but approve those who practice them.

I. Who is this Addressed in this Letter?

A. Gentiles Christians in Rome worshipping in house churches

B. Why then is he addressing the abuses of the Jews and writing as to Jew who is yet to be converted to Christianity? *

* This reveals the second major theme of the Letter – Salvation is universal. The truth was proclaimed to the Jews who distorted the truth and worshipped either the fact that they were "of the People" or the Law itself rather than the Law giver. The gentile is given the gift of receiving the Gospel without the baggage that still limits the Jews from knowing Jesus as Messiah. For it was God's Plan all along to save "His People" The definition of His People those who hear the word, believe and respond to the gift of Faith.

II. The Rejection of God's Truth by the world – A highly structured passage

A. First Paul states his theme

B. The God gave them up passages - thee separate statements

1. V. 21 Knew but did not Glorify, became fools
2. V. 25 exchanged the Truth for lies and worshipped creatures not the Creator
3. V. 28 Minds became worthless unable to understand God or act properly

C. Structure gives us an indication that his passage is based upon other work or works

1. Parallel if found in contemporary Jewish literature against gentile idolatry
2. The Book of Wisdom

a. Both assume man can understand God form the Natural Order*

* This is what Natural Law is all about. That God Creates, there is an ordering and purpose to all that has been created. We can perceive the beauty of God in the Ordering and determine our proper action by observing the actions of the Natural Order.

b. Both find it inexcusable that man is ignoring what is revealed in the Ordering of Creation – eyes to see, minds to understand...

c. Rejection of this revelation has two effects

1. Losing the ability to determine what is right and wrong
2. The long list of reprehensible behaviors

d. Both note that complacency is worse than the behavior itself *

* Going along to get along – not condemning wrong behavior. Those who still know right from wrong has the responsibility to proclaim the truth and correct the behavior that is wrong.

III. The connection between the Revelation of God's Wrath and God's Righteousness

A. Usually in Paul's Letters God's Wrath is noted in a future tense – the wrath to come

B. The God gave them up passages are tied to an immediate response

1. Note that the result of this giving up is first the improper action and then the result of those actions – The result of the actions is not God's Punishment for the actions – **Also Natural Law**

2. God's Wrath is unleashed upon all who violate God's revelation of Truth

a. Jew and Gentile are both subject to the result of their own actions

b. This moved Paul's Letter from Jewish Apocalyptic to universal

C. We should note Luther and Calvin

1. The fact that man's action in the face of God's Revealed truth is inexcusable

2. The Reformation response to this passage

IV. Review of the Theme: Man refused to know God and the result of that action

A. Praise, glory and honor to God are the proper response

B. Right actions follow the prayer and praise

C. Failure to respond correctly leads to:

1. Loss of faculty to "Know God"

2. Idolatry

3. Immorality of all kinds

Homoerotic sexuality is not inconsistent with this line of reasoning, nor is this insertion some kind of reactionary negative attack. Paul is looking around and noting what he sees are the best and clearest expressions of those whose actions are from a blindness to the Created Order of God.

Read page 70 and Note contemporary mental gymnastics to make it all fit neatly

The Relationship between philosophy and theology - The Human Person and the Human mind always asks some basic questions and among these are the nature of existence, the purpose of

life, the reality or lack of a life to come, the proper experience of life and the relationship between one human being and another.

Paul is aware that he is speaking to a Gentile audience that is also aware, like the Greeks, of many and varied philosophies; he is in fact centering all philosophy in the proper relationship to the Revelation of God. All of the Natural Philosophical Revelation of the human mind into the Divine Revelation recorded in the Ordering of Creation.