



“Romans—The Benchmark of Christian Truth” Romans 1:1-2

TO: THE CAPITOL COMMUNITY

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This month we begin our satellite Bible Studies during the interim session. Again we will be meeting in homes in Carson City, Las Vegas and Reno on a monthly basis. While geared to legislators, these studies are open to spouses and friends and colleagues of the Capitol community. Please call me at (775) 842-0765 for location and any questions that you might have. We look forward to being with you and serving you in this way.

I. INTRODUCTION

The influence of the Book of Romans is incalculable. A group of scholars once made a list of the fifteen greatest books, books that were great based upon their beneficial influence upon humanity. Included in this list were John Wesley's *Journal*, Luther's *95 Theses*, Augustine's *City of God* and John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*. As his *Journal* reveals, Wesley was an unsaved preacher until he read the book of Romans and understood God's way of salvation. Luther, a Catholic monk, was greatly influenced by Romans 1:17, "The just shall live by faith," which opened his eyes to the truth of justification by faith. Augustine's *City of God* was founded on his study of the Book of Romans. Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* was written after reading the Book of Romans in prison. It became the best selling book of all time, next to the Bible. Among the greatest books of the world, four which come near the top of the list were all directly influenced by the Book of Romans¹.

There is no doubt about the power of the book of Romans. It is our hope and prayer that the study of it will produce genuine excitement and genuine trepidation—excitement because of the possibilities of the life-changing themes that Romans brings us, and trepidation at the massive responsibility of handling the Word of God well. May God grant us discernment as the Holy Spirit guides us through this remarkable book²!

II. OVERVIEW

Romans is considered Paul's greatest work, and is placed first among his thirteen epistles in the New Testament, even though it was not the first written. While the four Gospels present the words and works of Jesus Christ, Romans explores the significance of His sacrificial death. Using a question-and-answer format, Paul records the most systematic presentation of doctrine (teaching) in the Bible. Romans is more than a book of theology: it is also a book of practical exhortation. Attachment "A" provides a brief overview of the book³.

III. PAUL—A SEMINATE WHO WAS ANTI-JESUS

Query: There are three distinguishing periods in Paul's career.

- His life as a Jew & Pharisee
- His conversion and divine seminary
- His ministry

What do you recall about each?

IV. PAUL—PAULS VIEW OF HIMSELF⁴ (1:1)

Romans 1:1 *Paul, a bondservant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated to the gospel of God*

Query: Do you see any indication of the secret of Paul's greatness in this verse?

The order of these words is important! Paul was first a bondservant, utterly surrendered to the Lord, and then he was a sent one; set apart to the Gospel.

1. **Bondservant—(doulos)** The practice found in Exodus 21:5-6 reflects the essence of Paul's use of the term *doulos*. The apostle had given himself wholeheartedly in love to the divine Master who saved him from sin and death. *Doulos* carries the basic idea of subservience and has a wide range of connotations. It was sometimes used of a person who voluntarily served others, but most

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commonly it referred to those who were in unwilling and permanent bondage, from which often there was no release but death⁵.

In 1 Corinthians 4:1 Paul refers to his slavery (*huperetes*) with another word; one used of the lowest galley slave.

2. **Called to be an apostle—set apart.** Paul was not self-appointed! God called him.

A Pharisee set himself apart for the Law, which Paul had done, but God set Paul apart for the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

V. THE GOSPEL (1:1-2)

^{NKJ} Romans 1:1 Paul, a bondservant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated to the gospel of God² which He promised before through His prophets in the Holy Scriptures,

Query: There are four things about the gospel that are worthy of consideration. Can you identify them?

1. The source of the gospel—God
2. The time of the promise of the Gospel—long before the coming of Christ.
3. The channel of transmission—A group of men
4. The communication of the Gospel—through written documents⁶.

THE BIBLE IS THE ONLY ABSOLUTELY DIVINE THING THAT THERE IS UPON THIS EARTH IN VISIBLE TANGIBLE FORM⁷.

MATTHEW 24:35; PSALM 119:89

Query: As you study the Scriptures do you see any inter-relationship between the Old and the New Testaments? How would you explain this?

Saint Augustine has left us a little rhymed couplet in Latin to tell us how the Old and the New are tied together:

*In Novo Testamento patet
Quae in Vetere latet.*

This means that in the New Testament the things were *patet*, patent, open, clear, comprehensible, which in

the Old Testament were *latet*, latent, obscure, hidden. Martin Luther handling of the couplet, as translated into English goes like this:

**The New is in the Old concealed,
The Old is by the New revealed⁸.**

That is the idea set forth in our text. The Gospel of God was promised aforetime by His prophets in the Holy Scriptures and written as men of God were moved by the Holy Spirit (2 Tim 3:16; 2 Peter 1:20-21).

VI. CONCLUSION—APPLICATION.

The first doctrinal utterance of the Lord Jesus after He arose from the dead was to teach that the truths of the Word of God were set forth in the Old Testament writings. The same applies today! The Bible is a complete entity. It is holy; it is whole; it is set apart by God for the purpose of revealing to us what we are and what He has done for us⁹.

Although Paul will cover a lot of different topics in our study of Romans, his main object appears to be to explain the gospel of Jesus Christ; the message of good news. He will clarify how a person is made right before God. We call this the doctrine of justification. Paul routinely ran into Jews who would argue with him that a person has to keep the Law of Moses in order to be right with God. Even some Jews who had come to believe Jesus was the Messiah would follow Paul from city to city and place the Christians under the bondage of the law, even demanding that the Gentile believers become circumcised in order to be saved. Paul will show us that it's only by believing in Jesus that we receive a right standing before God. May we learn much as we study this Good News!

¹<http://www.middletonbiblechurch.org/romans/romans1.htm>

² Hughes, R. Kent *Romans: Righteousness from Heaven*, (Crossway, a division of Good News Publishers, Wheaton, ©1991) p15

³ *The New Open Bible Study Edition* (Thomas Nelson, Nashville, © 1990, 1985, 1993) p1318

⁴ Hughes, R. Kent, *Romans, Righteousness from Heaven* (Crossway, Wheaton, ©1991 by R. Kent Hughes) p16 (outline)

⁵ MacArthur, John, *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary Romans 1-8* (Moody Bible Institute, ©1991) p4

⁶ Barnhouse, Donald Grey, *Man's Ruin, Romans 1:1-32* (Eerdmans Publishing, Grand Rapids, ©1952) p25

⁷ *Ibid*, p28

⁸ *Ibid*

⁹ *Ibid*, p36