

# Addresses on Romans



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# THE EPISTLE OF PAUL TO THE ROMANS

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## LECTURE I

## INTRODUCTION

Before we enter upon the study of Paul's Epistle to the Romans, let us take a glance at our chart, noting a few significant facts by way of introduction. Even a rapid reading of the book shows us that the key word is "righteousness," and that the key verses are these: "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith" (1:16, 17).

The human author was Paul (1:1); and under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, he wrote this epistle from Corinth in the year 60 A. D. Although it is chronologically the sixth epistle to Gentile believers, yet the Holy Spirit has placed it first in the New Testament canon of the Scriptures—for a very significant reason, which is so important that a separate topic is devoted to it, as follows:

### ROMANS—THE BASIS OF ALL CHURCH DOCTRINE

Paul's Epistle to the Romans sets forth the foundation truth for all church doctrine—justification by faith. It shows how a guilty sinner may become righteous before God by simple faith in His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. In Ephesians we read of how all those who are made righteous by faith in Christ, both Jew and Gentile, are gathered into the one Body, which is His church. In Colossians we dwell much upon the eternal glory and deity of the Lord Jesus, who is the Head of that Body. And in Philippians we learn the blessed experience in the life of the believer when the Head and the Body are in perfect unison, when the Head controls the Body. Thus it is

that these four great epistles set forth church truth—all founded upon the great theme presented in Romans, justification by faith. Before there could be a church, Christ had to die for our sins "according to the scriptures," and rise again from the dead "according to the scriptures" (1 Cor. 15:3, 4). Before there could be a church, the guilty sinner had to be justified before a holy God.

### READ THE BOOK

Unless we grasp the meaning of Romans, we shall not be well-grounded in "the faith once for all delivered unto the saints" (Jude 3), ready to comprehend these other church truths. Therefore, let us enter upon this study with the prayer that God will teach us by His Holy Spirit these fundamental principles of our Christian faith. To this end, may I ask every member of the radio audience to be consistent in the reading of the epistle? First read it through at one sitting, not studying it analytically, but merely reading it as you would an article or a letter from a friend. Or, better still, imagine yourself a member of this Church at Rome in the days of the great apostle, and read the book as if it were a letter from Paul to you. Remember that many of the Roman Christians were slaves; others doubtless were Roman citizens, and enjoyed all the privileges of free men. Put yourself back into those days, and read it as a personal letter to you. By the time you have read it several times, you will come to realize why Martin Luther called it the chief book of the New Testament, and why tens of thousands of people came out of darkness as a result of the Protestant Reformation, started by Luther, following his study of the book of Romans.

Luther's enemies claim that he severed his connection with the Roman Catholic Church in order to marry, for he was a priest. But that is not true, for he was not married until some thirteen years after he broke away from Romanism. It was Luther's study of the letter to the Romans that led to the Protestant Reformation.

THE THEME OF THE EPISTLE—  
"THE GOSPEL OF GOD"

1:1, 16, 17

Even the first careful reading of the epistle shows us plainly that the theme of this important document is: "The gospel of God" (1:1), which is the gift of God's righteousness, summed up in the key verses, Romans 1:16, 17. The word "gospel" means "good news." And it is the good news "concerning" God's "Son Jesus Christ our Lord" (1:3). The Gospel is not confined to the book of Romans. Paul and the other New Testament writers, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, unfold the theme in other books. But in Romans we have the foundation. The highest revelation which came from the pen of Paul is set forth in Ephesians and Colossians, but the content of these epistles will be closed to us until we understand Romans.

In what ways was this Gospel "promised afore" as we read in Romans 1:2? By types and in sacrifices, and by the direct words of God's "prophets in the holy scriptures." (See Rom. 1:2.) All Jewish believers looked forward to this Gospel. From Genesis 1:3 to Malachi the promises and predictions of the Gospel are found. The Old Testament is the foundation for the teaching of the Gospel. So, you see, it is a serious matter to reject the Old Testament.

The necessity for this gift is made known in Romans 3:23: "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." We have all come short of God's standard, but this standard must be reached before we can enjoy His presence; therefore, He offers the sinner the free gift of His righteousness.

"The glory of God" refers to what God is. We must be in perfect conformity to the glory of God, or miss it altogether. Moreover, the very best of us can not reach this standard. It is not falling short of *another man's standard*; it is falling short of *God's standard*, what God is, as revealed in His attributes.

Have you read of the character of God? God is holy; He hates what is wrong. Holiness is an essential attribute of God; He bears no compromise with sin. If you have ever yielded to one single thought or act that is deceitful, you are sinful. If you have ever exaggerated or misrepresented facts the least bit, you are sinful. Everything God does is right. He hates wrong, and is Himself the Judge of what is wrong. So, you see, if you have committed one sin, you have fallen short of God's standard. You have fallen short of "the glory of God."

Again, God is true; He has never told a lie, never acted a lie, never thought a lie. And He hates everything that is not perfectly true.

God is good; His name is "Love"; and he delights in loving-kindness. You will remember how the Lord Jesus Christ summed up the law, saying: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself" (Luke 10:27).

If you have fallen short of God's standard of holiness, goodness, truth, love—if you have fallen short of such attributes as these, my friend, you have forfeited your chance to stand before God on your own merit. And all human history is but the record of how man has "sinned, and come short of the glory of God." From Genesis to Malachi we have the account of how man has ever failed. The purpose of God in testing man by the various dispensations was to prove to man his need of a Saviour. Man innocent failed. He failed under conscience, under human government, under promise, under law. God's purpose was to try man in different ways, giving him chance after chance. And all ended in failure. These dispensations were for the purpose of preparing man for the righteousness of Christ, offered as a free gift when He became the Sin-Bearer on Calvary. And it is about this gift of God's righteousness that we are to study in the epistle before us.

In Romans 1:18-3:20 we have a court scene. The Gentiles