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A JOURNEY THROUGH THE BIBLE

Reading: Romans 1:1-17

46. THE BOOK OF ROMANS

Let's go back some four thousand years. We see a man sitting on an ash heap. His name is Job. He has a controversy with God because he doesn't understand what is going on, or why he should be going through so much difficulty. Did you know that in the King James Version of the Bible there are more than 300 questions in the book of Job ? But the most important of all those questions is found in (25:4) where Bildad says, "*How then can man be justified with God ?*" Now let's move up to the Autumn of the year 1515. An Augustinian monk is lecturing on the book of Romans, and one verse comes to him with great power, "*the just shall live by faith,*" (1:17) Martin Luther could hardly believe his eyes. "*The just shall live by fastings,*" no, "*the just shall live by feelings,*" no, "*the just shall live by fear,*" no, "*the just shall live by faith.*" My that was the beginning of a change in Martin Luther's life and the beginning of the Reformation.

Now let's move up to 24th May 1738 a discouraged missionary went very unwillingly to a religious meeting in Aldersgate Street, in London. That missionary was John Wesley. Just a few months before John Wesley had written in his journal "*I went to America to convert the*

Indians but oh who shall convert me ?" That evening in Aldersgate his question was answered, for there a miracle took place. The message Wesley heard that evening was preface to Martin Luther's commentary on Romans. Wesley writes "*About a quarter before nine I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone for salvation, and assurance was given me that He had taken away my sin even mine and saved me from the law of sin and death.*" Let's move up a little closer in time. Ray Steadman tells the story of a church in Great Falls in Montana which was once regarded as the most liberal church in that city. The pastor happened to be in the city of Chicago one weekend so he decided to visit the Moody Memorial Church to see what the fundamentalists were saying. He was looking quite frankly for something to criticize. There he listened to Dr. Harry Ironside teaching from the book of Romans, and this liberal pastor *found his heart gradually being challenged and won over by the message.*

After the service he went forward and talked with Dr. Ironside, who gave him a copy of his lectures on the Romans. The pastor read through the book on the train back to Montana. *By the time he reached the city of Great Falls he was a changed man.* The next Sunday he went into the pulpit and began to proclaim the truths of the book of Romans, in return that church was completely transformed. *It changed from a mausoleum of dead, liberal theology to a powerhouse of vibrant evangelical witness and all within the space of a few years.* That pastor and church were transformed by the power of the book of Romans. You see, while all Scripture is inspired

of God and profitable there are some parts of the Bible that contain more doctrinal truth than others, and Romans falls into that category. Now keep in mind that the New Testament may be divided into three main parts,

- 1. *The Historical Books: The Four gospels and Acts:***
- 2. *The Doctrinal Books: The Twenty One Epistles:***
- 3. *The Prophetical Book: The Book of Revelation:***

Romans is the first of 21 New Testament letters or epistles. Martin Luther called this book “ *the chief book of the New Testament.*” John Calvin said, “ *It opened the door to all the treasures in the Scriptures.*” Romans was not the first letter to be written but it is fittingly placed first. Leon Tucker wisely remarked until we know the Righteousness of Romans we cannot move on to,

The Order of Corinthians:
The Liberty of Galatians:
The Calling of Ephesians:
The Joy of Philippians:
The Head of Colossians:
The Coming One of Thessalonians:
The Substance of Hebrews:

Now when we come to the Book of Romans we need to think about,

1. THE CITY:

Rome. For Paul address's this letter “ *To all that be in Rome.*” (1:7) Rome was the centre of the world. The

capital of the Roman Empire it was founded in 753 B.C. but is not mentioned in Scripture until New Testament times. Rome is located along the banks of the River Tiber, about fifteen miles from the Mediterranean Sea. This would be a strategic place for the gospel since in those days all roads really did lead to Rome. Paul felt that since all roads led to Rome, all roads led from Rome. So let him do a work for God at Rome and the world would feel its impact. 1.

2. THE CHURCH:

We know very little about the church at Rome. We do know that were people from Rome at Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:10) and no doubt they returned to Rome, saved by grace, and carrying the message of the Cross. You know, when you visit Rome, the guides will tell you that Peter was the first bishop of Rome. That is unlikely for had Peter been in Rome Paul would have made reference to him in this letter. Still again, if any of the apostles had already been there Paul would not have had the desire of going there for his practice was not to go where another had laboured. (15:20) Moreover, Paul was the apostle to the Gentiles (15:16) and while there was a Jewish element in this church, it was regarded by Paul as a Gentile church. (Rom 1:13-15)

Now for some time Paul had wanted to visit the Roman church, but had been prevented from doing so. (1:13) In God's providence Paul's inability to visit Rome gave the world this inspired masterpiece of gospel doctrine. 1, 2,

3. THE CORRESPONDENT:

He introduces himself in the opening verse “ *Paul a servant of Jesus Christ,*” (1:1) So Paul wrote Romans and he wrote this letter from Corinth as the references to Phoebe (16:1 Cenchrea) Gaius (16:23) and Erastus (16:23) all of whom were associated with Corinth, indicate. Romans was written by Paul during his three month visit in Corinth (Acts 20:1-3) around 56 A.D. and Phoebe was given the great responsibility of delivering this letter to the Roman believers. (16:1-2) *Now why did Paul write this letter to the Roman believers ?* Well, it was a substitute for Paul’s immediate contact with the church at Rome. (1:13) It was his intention to visit the capital shortly so he sent a letter in advance that would embody the principles of Christianity which he believed and preached. You see, *the gospels introduce us to the Person of Christ*, but Paul in Romans introduces us to the *Principles of Christianity*. My if there is one book that every believer should understand it is this letter. Why ?

It presents Doctrinal Truth: the great themes of justification, sanctification and glorification are here brought before us.

It presents National or Prophetical Truth: showing the relationship between Israel and the church in the eternal plan of God.

It presents Practical Truth: teaching the secret of Christian victory over the flesh, the duties Christians have toward each other and their relationship to government.

Romans is the great exposition of the faith. It is the complete and most logical presentation of Christian truth in the entire New Testament. Romans is divided into three sections, doctrinal, national and practical. *It deals with the Salvation problem, the Semitic problem and the Sanctification problem. It is concerned with getting right about God, thinking right about the Jews and living right as Christians. It starts with the hell of Sin, and finishes with the Heaven of Holiness, and points the way from the way to the other.*

(1)DOCTRINAL Ch’s 1-8

After the opening greeting in which Paul presents himself as an apostle (1:1) a servant (1:9) a debtor (1:14) and a preacher (1:15) he introduces us to four great themes. The first is,

(a)CONDEMNATION: 1:18-3:20

The wrath of God upon man’s sin. (1:18) For in these opening chapters Paul paints a black picture of human sin. All without exception are found to be without excuse and without escape facing the wrath of God. It is as though Paul is using the familiar words of the Court in these opening chapters. “ *Hear ye ! Hear ye ! Court is now in session.*” The Book of Romans is the door that leads us into God’s courtroom. The theme of Romans is the righteousness of God but Paul had to begin with the unrighteousness of man. Until man knows that he is a sinner he cannot appreciate the gracious salvation God offers in Jesus Christ. Paul followed the basic Bible

pattern first law, then condemnation, then grace and salvation. So here in these opening chapters of Romans we have a court scene. *The Holy Spirit is the Prosecutor of the human race and the court recorder is Paul.* In (Ch 1) the Gentile is arraigned. In (Ch 2) the Jew is arraigned, in (Ch 3) the whole world is arraigned. Did you ever notice the repetition of the word “ *none*,” in (Ch 3) “ *There is none righteous no not one.*” (3:10) The word “ *sin*,” is used 48 times in this letter. My (Ch 1) reads like a Sunday newspaper published in Rome. In particular Rome was a hotbed of homosexuality. David Pawson says “ *Out of the first 15 Roman Emperors 14 were practising homosexuals. If the Emperors were like that can you imagine what the court was like ?*” What a catalogue of sin is listed in (Ch 1) and how it parallels with our day. Three times it says that God gave people up. He gave them up to uncleanness, He gave them up to vile affections, He gave them up to a reprobate mind. *Do you want to know God’s evaluation of homosexuality as an alternative lifestyle ?*

Then read (Rom Ch 1) They gave God up, God gives them up. Then Paul shows the fallacy of supposed Jewish superiority and shows that the Jews are stricken with the same sin plague. (2:1-3:20) The Holy Spirit summarizes His case against mankind by saying, “ *For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.*” (3:23) Alan Cairns in his book “ *A Sure Foundation*,” says

There is a view of sin today that is altogether too shallow. Sin is defined as merely acts of unrighteousness. But the apostle insists that the wrath of God is revealed against

ungodliness that is the root of sin, and against unrighteousness that is the fruit of sin.

The word sinned means “ *to miss the mark.*” It’s as though you and I have shot at a target and missed it. The point is not how far we missed it, but that we missed it. And what’s the target ? The character and will of God. To miss the target is to sin. The words “ *come short*,” signify to fall behind in a race and thus fail to reach the goal. What’s the goal ? “ *The glory of God.*” And what’s “ *the glory of God.*” The seraphim answer, “ *Holy, holy holy, is the Lord of hosts the whole earth is full of His glory.*” (Is 6:3) The “ *glory of God*,” speaks of His purity and perfection as revealed in the life of the Lord Jesus. My “ *to come short of the glory of God*,” is to be incapable of standing unblameable in His presence, for Isaiah declares “ *Your iniquities have separated between you and your God and your sins have hid His face from you.*” (59:2)

My the Lord wants to have fellowship with you. But God is sinless and you are sinful, God is righteous and you are unrighteous, God is just and you are unjust. Do you see now you need to be accounted as righteous before God ? Are you convinced of your state before God ? Do you see yourself as a sinner ? Have you ever placed your life alongside the perfect life of Jesus Christ ? (a)

(b) JUSTIFICATION: 3:21-5:21

Paul had proved that all men are sinners, but now he was to explain how sinners can be saved. The theological term for this salvation is justification by faith. Now Martin

Luther thought that justification was a process, but it is not. It is a proclamation. It is an act. ***It is that act of God in which He declares righteous the sinner who believes on Christ.*** Justification changes our standing. It means that God not only forgives our sins and forgets our sins, it means that God forgets we were ever sinners. Isn't that amazing ? We are regarded as one with the Lord Jesus and therefore the benefits of Christ's life and death are ours. In the matter of our punishment God looks on the death of Christ and says, " *it is sufficient,*" in the matter of our acceptance, God looks on the obedience of Christ and says, " *I am well pleased.*" The result ? We are not only spared the punishment and brought into fellowship with God, God forgets we were ever sinners. There are three phrases you want to mark in your Bible in the book of Romans and these three phrases explain to us the basis of justification. You see, God justifies sinners,

By Grace:

Paul says, " *being justified freely by His grace.*" (3:24) The word " *freely,*" means " *without a cause.*" It could be translated, " *Being justified without a cause in you.*" You see, there's nothing in you and me to recommend us to God. Justification is purely an act of God's grace and grace means favour that isn't deserved and can't be earned.

By Faith:

Look at (5:1) You see, whenever you have grace you have to have faith, whenever you have law you have to have works. In (Ch 4) two outstanding men are brought

onto the witness stand to testify that salvation is not by works but by faith.

By Blood:

Do you see what Paul says ? " *Much more then being justified by His blood.*" (5:9) You see, someone has to pay the price for sin. My justification is not some sort of fictional thing where God says, " *I'll close my eyes and forget that they have sinned.*" God in His holiness must deal with sin. In order to justify the ungodly God has to deal with their ungodliness. We are justified by His blood for on the cross Christ bore the penalty for our sin and now God can be " *just and the justifier of them who believe on Jesus.*" (3:26)

**Because the sinless Saviour died
My guilty soul is counted free
For God the just is satisfied
To look on Him and pardon me**

The old devil comes and says, " *how in the world can you declare Denis Lyle righteous ?*" The answer comes " *By the blood of Jesus Christ.*" " *But what about Denis Lyle's sins ?*" The answer comes again " *Christ died for those sins and they have been taken care of.*" My we are justified by grace not by human merit, we are justified by faith not by works, we are justified by blood because Christ died for us. My do you see the benefits of justification that are listed for us in (Ch 5) ? We have peace with God: the court battle is now over. (5:1) We have access to God: the believer can now approach God because of his new standing. We have assurance from

God: (5:3) we are indwelt by God: for “ *the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.*” (5:5) and we are preserved by God: (5:6-11) So we have a new standing and our destiny is settled in Christ. Yet we often experience up and down times with the Lord, sometimes looking to Him as our Saviour, living for Him as our Lord, while at other times slipping back into the bondage of sin. What is God’s solution to this roller coaster existence we find ourselves in ? The answer is,

(c) SANCTIFICATION: 6:1-8:11

In other words, our union with Christ produces holiness of life. This word “ *sanctify,*” means “ *to dedicate to God,*” or “ *to set apart for God.*” It comes from the same root word as the word “ *saint.*” A “ *saint,*” is nothing more or less than a person who is set apart for God. All genuine believers are saints, sanctified and set apart for His service. You see, God’s purpose is that we are not only saved but sanctified. *Now justification is an act, but sanctification is a work. Justification deals with the penalty of sin, sanctification deals with the power of sin. Justification works for us, sanctification works in us.* Now Paul constantly had to face objections to the doctrine of justification. One objection was this. “ *If you say you are saved without works then your works does not matter. How you live does not matter. If God’s grace abounds when we sin then let’s continue sinning so we might experience more grace.*”

But we cannot. Why ? Because we are in Christ. And when Christ died on the cross we died. When Christ was buried we were buried. When Christ arose we arose.

“ *How shall we then are dead to sin live any longer therein ?*” (6:2) You see, the basic truth that Paul is teaching here is the believers identification with Christ in His death, burial and resurrection. Paul illustrates this truth by believer’s baptism. *You see, baptism is an outward symbol of an inward experience.* When I go into the water, I am saying that when Christ died, I died, when I go under the water, I am saying that when Christ was buried I was buried, when I come up out of the water, I am saying that when Christ was raised I was raised. The three keys words in (Ch 6) are “ *know, reckon and yield.*” We are to actively count on the truth of God’s assurance that “ *the old man,*” that is, the man of old, the man we used to be is “ *crucified with him,*” (6:6) In the moment of temptation we are to yield, not to the temptation but to the new life within.

No doubt we will have problems as (Ch 7) intimates for its only through the indwelling Spirit (Ch 8) that we overcome the flesh and live a fruitful Christian life. Now one of the great chapters in the New Testament is (Ch 8) a chapter in which the Holy Spirit is frequently mentioned. Did you notice that the chapter begins with “ *no condemnation,*” and it ends with “ *no separation,*” ?

**For once in Christ,
In Christ forever
Nothing from His love
Can sever**

(d) GLORIFICATION: 8:12-8:39

My what a thrilling salvation we have. Free from the *penalty of sin* because Christ died for us (Ch 5) free from the *power of sin* because we died with Christ (Ch 6, 7) and one day we will be free from the very *presence of sin* when nature is delivered from bondage. You see, we are “ *waiting for the adoption, that is the redemption of the body.*” (8:23) The soul has been redeemed but not the body. But one day the Christian himself will receive a new body, in fact the whole creation (creature in 8:19-21) will one day be delivered from bondage and all nature will enjoy with us “ *the glorious liberty of the children of God.*” (8:21) Now I want you to notice that all the verbs in (8:30) are past tense. The believer has been called, justified and glorified. My is this not eternal security ? Now listen Paul has up to now discussed, why does the sinner need to be saved ? Answer, condemnation. How is the sinner saved ? Answer, justification. What happens after the sinner gets saved ? Answer, sanctification. Will the sinner remain saved ? Answer, glorification. (1)

(2) NATIONAL CH'S 9-11

Or if you prefer prophetic. You see, Paul deals here with the place given to the Jews. Now the Jew occupies a special place of privilege in God's purposes for this world. The nation was selected, separated and schooled to be a testimony to the true and living God to all mankind. For two thousand years if God had anything to say He said to the Jew. The Jew was blessed with a special

covenant relationship with God. *The Jew was given the land, the law, and the Lord.* He was given both the Scripture and the Saviour. For Christ came into the world born of a Jewish mother and reared in a Hebrew home. The Jews responded by murdering Him. How then could the great Messianic Old Testament passages concerning the coming kingdom be fulfilled ? *Has God cast away the Jew ?* Many British churches believe that He has. They believe in a teaching called ***Replacement Theology***. This the teaching that since the rejection of Christ as the Messiah and His crucifixion, God has abandoned His purposes for Israel, all the numerous Old Testament blessings and promises being transferred to the church. Some folk believe that the church is the new Israel despite the fact that the Scripture never uses such a term. (Gal 6:16) In fact the name Israel was never given to the church in the New Testament and Paul has to remind his readers here that God has not finished with the Jews just because they rejected Him.

Yet the question remains, what has happened to their Millennial hope ? Well, Romans (Ch 9, 10, & 11) deal with Israel's spiritual history, **past** (Ch 9) **present** (Ch 10) and **future** (Ch 11) Paul's purpose is to explain how God could set aside His chosen people and save the Gentiles and how He will restore the nation of Israel at some future date. You will notice then, that Paul deals with,

(a) THE PAST: ISRAEL'S ELECTION Ch 9

Some may agree with the old maxim, “ *how odd of God to choose the Jews.* ” Odd or not God has certainly done so. (Gen 12:1-3) And throughout the past, the Lord always had a small believing remnant, (11:6-7) the true Israel of God in the midst of an otherwise rebellious and apostate nation. My do you see here Paul’s burden for Israel ? I mean he lays his heart bare for the Jewish people saying he would go to hell if it would get them to heaven. Do we have that kind of burden for lost souls ? Paul says “ *I have sorrow in my heart,* ” (9:2) sheer heaviness of spirit brought Paul to tears yes real tears not crocodile tears. On another occasion he could remind his brethren that “ *by the space of three years,* ” he “ *ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears.* ” (Acts 20:31) (a)

(b) THE PRESENT: ISRAEL’S REJECTION: Ch 10

The key word in this chapter is “ *righteousness,* ” but the Jews would not submit themselves to faith righteousness, their racial and religious pride turned them from simple faith to blind religion. (10:3) The result of Israel’s rejection is that the Lord has turned to the Gentiles and is now taking out of them a people for His name. (Acts 15:14) Does this mean that God is finished with the Jew ? No, for in (Ch 11) Paul deals with,

(c) THE FUTURE: ISRAEL’S CONVERSION: Ch 11

Do you see (11:1) ? “ *Perish the thought,* ” says Paul. Today, the Hebrew nation is cut off from its former place of blessing, but when this present age is over the Jewish

nation will again be restored in grafted in as God’s chosen people and God’s promises to Abraham (Gen 13:14-17 15:5, 18 17:8) and to David (2 Sam 7:12-16 23:5) will be reinstated. When the church is completed (11:23) the Saviour will come to the air and catch it away, then will begin the seven year tribulation here “ *the time of Jacob’s trouble,* ” (Jer 30:7) At the end of that period the “ *Deliverer,* ” (11:26) will come “ and so all Israel shall be saved.” My there is a future for Israel. God is faithful to His Word. Men may change but God cannot change or revoke His promises. (11:29) My when Paul contemplated God’s plan for the Jews and the Gentiles is it any wonder that he broke out in a hymn of praise to the Lord ? (1) (2)

(3) PRACTICAL CH’S 12-16

You see, in the Christian life doctrine and duty always go together. What we believe helps to determine how we behave. It’s not enough for us to understand Paul’s doctrinal explanations. We must translate our learning into living. So in this final section we see,

(a) The Christian Life from a Social Perspective: Ch 12

In these opening verses there is an appeal for consecration with a view to inward transformation for this says Sidlow Baxter is the “ *root of all Christian godliness.* ” Then right to the end of the chapter we see the fruit of this in humble and loving service toward others. Isn’t it interesting that having concluded eleven chapters of thrilling doctrine that

defines what God has done for the Christian, Paul does not say, “ *here’s what you need to receive.*” He says, “ *here’s what you need to give.*” “ *Your bodies,*” a comprehensive statement meaning themselves spirit, soul and body. (1 Thes 5:23) “ *Take my life and let it be consecrated Lord to Thee,*” have you ever said that and meant it ? (a)

(b) *The Christian Life from a Civil Perspective Ch 13*

That is our responsibility to the state. Sure, we have been called out of this world (Jn 15:18 17:14) but we still have responsibilities to the state. Do you recall what Christ said ? “ *Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar’s and unto God the things that are God’s.*” (Matt 22:21) My the church is not to bear the sword, the government does that. You see, God has established only three institutions on earth, the home (Gen 2:18-25) the church (Acts 2) and human government. (Gen 9:1-17) Their functions are not to overlap for when they do there is confusion and trouble. So here is our responsibility as Christians. “ *Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers,*” (13:1) Are you starting to see that the Christian life is a total life experience ? (a) (b)

(c) *The Christian Life from a Mutual Perspective:*
Ch’s 14-16

As Paul deals with the problem of questionable things in the Christian life and what to do when sincere Christians disagree about personal practices. On the one hand you might have Jewish believers who want to cling to *diets*

(14:2) and *days* (14:5) while the Gentile believers may want to turn their Christian liberty into license and offend their Jewish brothers and sisters. In just the same way today there may certain “ *gray areas,*” of life where Christians disagree. Paul does not a list of dos and don’ts but he urges us to pursue *peaceful things*: (14:19) to pursue *pleasing things*: (15:2) to pursue *encouraging things*: (15:3-5) to pursue *glorifying things*. (15:6) Paul closes this letter with a series of greetings to friends in the fellowship. He greets twenty six people by name as well as two unnamed saints along with churches that were meeting in homes. What is the significance of this ? It shows us that Paul was a friend maker as well as a soul winner. Like his Master Paul knew the sheep by name and had a personal concern for each of them. Are you a friend maker ? Do you go out of your way to befriend “ *new people,*” who come into this assembly ?

In closing Romans let me leave you not so much with *Paul’s Greetings* but with *Paul’s God*. For Paul’s closes this letter with some great assertions about God. In (16:20) He is the God of Peace, in (16:26) He is the Everlasting God, and in (16:27) He is the only Wise God. *Now there were difficult days ahead for these believers at Rome.* But God would give them peace in persecution, and they need not fear the torture for they know that, as the eternal God, they can go to Him who, in His wisdom will use even the fury of Nero to His glory. My what a God we have. *A God who will give peace in the midst of your storm, power in the midst of your service and perspective in the midst of your suffering.* Trust Him.

