

I. Introduction to Romans

A. Today we are beginning a study of the book of Romans. And for our initial introduction to Romans, I will read the first seven verses and the last three verses of this profound, often quoted, theology rich, and lengthy letter.

1. Romans 1:1-7 . . . Paul, a bond-servant of Christ Jesus, called as an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, [2] which He promised beforehand through His prophets in the holy Scriptures, [3] concerning His Son, who was born of a descendant of David according to the flesh, [4] who was declared the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead, according to the Spirit of holiness, Jesus Christ our Lord, [5] through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith among all the Gentiles for His name's sake, [6] among whom you also are the called of Jesus Christ; [7] to all who are beloved of God in Rome, called as saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.
2. Romans 16:25-27 . . . Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery which has been kept secret for long ages past, [26] but now is manifested, and by the Scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the eternal God, has been made known to all the nations, leading to obedience of faith; [27] to the only wise God, through Jesus Christ, be the glory forever. Amen.

B. As we begin this study of Romans, you may be wondering, "Why Romans?" To that I might answer, "Because I have never taught all the way through the book of Romans." However, that answer is only a partial reason for commencing this study today.

1. Let me explain.
 - a. The book of Romans is filled with quotable quotes and foundational truths that are used to support much of the theology that the church holds dear today.
 - b. Romans is rich with explanations about the Law, the works of the law, sin, faith, good deeds, righteousness, justification, salvation, and eternal life.
 - c. Romans is used in most every evangelistic method and effort. In fact, one of the well known methods is called "The Roman's Road."

- d. And finally, Romans includes teaching on the gifts of the Spirit, life in the church, practical ways to live the Christian life, and an explanation of how our world got into the condition it is in.
- 2. Following somewhat behind those reasons for studying Romans is the fact that some Christians treat Romans, or at least parts of Romans, as if it is superior to all the other books of the Bible, or as if its truth is somehow truer than the truth in the rest of scripture.
 - a. Now I must admit there was a time when I thought the four gospels should be treated as if they are superior to the rest of the NT. After all, they contain the words of Christ, and if anyone got it right, surely Jesus did.
 - b. But I have come to be convinced that the whole of scripture is the word of God, and though it is spoken through different individuals and at different times in history, each book, and each chapter, and each verse is as much God's word as any other.
 - (1) This means that the eternal truths in the four gospels are not superior to the eternal truths in Romans, and Romans is not superior to the four gospels.
 - (2) And contrary to Luther's opinion, Romans is not superior to James, and James is not superior to Romans.
 - (3) My point here is that all of God's word is on an equal footing, for it is all God's word.
 - c. Now you may be wondering how this applies to our study of Romans. If we are to gain a rational and practical knowledge of God and an understanding of the ways of God, as revealed in Romans, we MUST – and I am emphasizing the must here – we MUST make an honest effort to examine, ponder, pray over, and seek to understand each individual part of Romans within its own smaller context, and within the context of the entire book, and within the larger context of the New Testament, and finally, within the largest possible context – the entire Bible.
 - d. In other words, as we study Romans, I am urging us to look at the truths in Romans as an integrated part of a larger whole so that we do not allow any individual part to stand above or apart from what God has revealed in the rest of His holy scriptures.
- C. As I have already said, one of the things that makes Romans such a popular book is its many quotable quotes. And though I am confident you know at many of them, listen as I read some of the more well-known quotes. And then I will use one of them to reinforce the point I just made.

1. Romans 1:16 . . . For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.
2. Romans 3:10-12 . . . There is none righteous, not even one; [11] there is none who understands, there is none who seeks for God; [12] all have turned aside, together they have become useless; there is none who does good, there is not even one.
3. Romans 3:23 . . . For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.
4. Romans 5:1 . . . Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.
5. Romans 5:8 . . . But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.
6. Romans 6:23 . . . For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.
7. Romans 7:19 . . . For the good that I want, I do not do, but I practice the very evil that I do not want.
8. Romans 7:24-25a . . . Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death? [25] Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!
9. Romans 8:15b . . . You have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, "Abba! Father!"
10. Romans 8:28 . . . And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.
11. Romans 8:35-39 . . . Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? . . . [38] For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, [39] nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.
12. Romans 10:13 . . . Whoever will call on the name of the Lord will be saved.
13. Romans 12:2a . . . And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.
14. Romans 12:20 . . . But if your enemy is hungry, feed him, and if he is thirsty, give him a drink; for in so doing you will heap burning coals on his head.
15. Romans 13:10 . . . Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.

16. Romans 14:23b . . . And whatever is not from faith is sin.

- D. Each of these quotes represents a marvelous truth, and some more than one truth.
1. However, there is a good side and bad side to repeating quotes from Roman's as often as many of us do.
 - a. On the good side – quoting from Romans can help us remember some of the profound, eternal, and life affecting truths contained in Romans, which in turn can strengthen our faith and promote growth in godliness.
 - b. On the bad side – if we lift a quote from its context – be it its immediate context or the context of other portions of Romans and the NT that address the same subject, and if we treat the quote as if, in and of itself, it is the fullest teaching of scripture on that subject, we too easily end up with a misrepresentation of the truth.
 2. For example,
 - a. A well know quote comes from Romans 5:1 . . . “Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” And this is often quoted to show that we are saved by faith alone.
 - b. Now I am not implying that there is anything wrong with this quote. It is 100% true. The problem is not the quote, but us. We are the ones who use such quotes in ways we ought not to.
 - (1) For example, this quote is misrepresented when it is treated as if it is the summarizing or final word on the subject of justification by faith.
 - (2) In other words, when we treat Romans 5:1 as if it is a truer truth than the other truths in Romans or the rest of the NT about justification, we end up misrepresenting this statement.
 - c. Now without digging too deep into Romans 5:1, let me show you how easy it is to misrepresent one statement by treating it as if it is the only or ultimate statement on a given subject.
 - (1) Popular theology and teaching hold that we are justified and therefore saved by nothing more and nothing less than faith – which has come to be defined as a sincere confidence in the redeeming work of Jesus Christ.
 - (2) Now there is no question but that saving faith and confidence in the redeeming work of Jesus Christ go hand-in-hand. And without question, faith is an expression of confidence. However, does the whole of Romans and the rest of the Bible teach that

confidence, alone, in the redeeming work of Jesus Christ save us?

- d. To answer that question, let's begin by taking a second look at Romans 5:1 . . . "Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."
- (1) If saving faith is confidence, alone, in the redeeming work of Jesus Christ, why put the descriptive label "Lord" in front of our savior's name, Jesus Christ?
 - (a) Could it be that this descriptive label is incidental and therefore non-essential to the point Paul is making?
 - (b) Or is it there for a purpose? And if for a purpose, what is the purpose?
 - (c) I believe the purpose is to reinforce the fact that justifying or saving faith includes both confidence and action in agreement with the confidence.
 - (d) And in this case, justifying or saving faith is confidence in the redeeming work of the Lord Jesus Christ, which given His position means our confidence must be accompanied by obedience. In other words, saving faith is confidence and obedience.
 - (2) Is there support for this in the rest of Romans and the rest of the NT? Yes. Consider:
 - (a) It is possible you remember the two sections of Romans we read at the start of this teaching time and the fact that Paul starts and ends his letter with a reference to the obedience of faith. This is no accident, and I believe his purpose was to assure his readers that faith without obedience is not Christian faith, and therefore it is neither justifying faith nor saving faith.
 - (b) Paul supports this understanding in Romans 2:13 when he says that "it is not the hearers of the Law who are just before God, but the doers of the Law will be justified."
 - (c) James put it this way: "You see that a man is justified by works and not by faith (*confidence*) alone. [25] In the same way, was not Rahab the harlot also justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out by another way? [26] For just as the body without the spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead" (James 2:24-26).

- (d) And Jesus said that “Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter. [22] Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?' [23] And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness' (Matthew 7:21-23).
- e. Let me give you an example outside scripture. Suppose you have a life-threatening illness and want to find a doctor who can cure you. Suppose someone recommends a doctor who has treated a number of others with this same illness and cured them all. So you go see this doctor, and after examining you, he assures you he can cure you. With a sigh of relief you affirm your confidence in him and assure him you are putting your life in his hands. He then prescribes certain medicines and a regimen for you to follow. You leave his office rejoicing and confident you will be cured of this life-threatening disease. Over the next weeks you constantly sing the praises of your doctor and proclaim your confidence in him. Yet you do not take the medicine nor do the regimen as prescribed, and in time the disease takes your life.
- (1) Did you have confidence in the doctor? YES! Was your confidence saving faith? NO!, for as long as it stood alone, separate from obedience to the doctor's orders, it was of no saving benefit.
- (2) Therefore, though you had the confidence part of faith, you still died because you lacked the obedience part of faith.
3. Does this mean that justification and salvation are “works based”? Do we earn justification and salvation by obeying our Lord Jesus Christ in such ways as keeping the Law or doing good works or living a godly life? Absolutely not.
- a. There is nothing we can do to earn or trade for or somehow put God in our debt when it comes to being justified and eternally saved from the penalty of sin.
- b. Why? Because the penalty for sin is death, and it has been that way since Adam and Eve. In other words, the penalty is not some specified amount of obedience or some measurable level of good deeds. And for certain, it isn't any amount of silver or gold. Plain and simple, the penalty for sin is death.

- c. Therefore, this death penalty can only be paid by dying – either dying yourself, for yourself, or having someone who does not owe the penalty die in your place.
 - d. Now to die for yourself is to pay a debt you owe. However, for someone who does not owe the penalty to die in your place is to receive a gift you do not deserve and have no means of paying for. After all, what do you have of value that is at least equal to and therefore able to properly compensate your redeemer for giving his life for you?
 - e. And so my point is simple, as long as the penalty for sin is death, there can be no such thing as salvation by works.
4. Therefore, to be justified and saved by faith alone requires a faith that includes confidence and obedience.
- a. Does this mean that we are saved by faith plus works? No, never! But it does mean that our faith much produce the natural outcome of living according to what we believe in – which in the case of saving faith requires obedience to our Lord Jesus Christ.
 - b. Therefore, the gift of eternal life is always a gift, just as justifying and saving faith is always the inseparable combination of confidence and obedience.

II. Conclusion

- A. Now in spite of all I have said about saving and justifying faith, I have done it for the purpose of pointing out the danger of treating Roman's quotable quotes as if they stand alone and proclaim the full truth about a given subject.
- B. And once again, as we work our way through Romans, I am urging all of us to examine specific statements in Romans in light of their immediate context, the larger context of the book of Romans, and the even larger context of the NT, or in some cases, the entire Bible.