

# Romans

Romans 1:1-16:27

By Phil Kayser at Dominion Covenant Church on 2020-06-14

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## I. Paul and the church of Rome

Well, let's dive straight into the text. Verse 1 begins with an introduction: "Paul, a bondservant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated to the gospel of God..." This is the first epistle of Paul that we have in the New Testament, and it logically follows Acts which ends with Paul teaching in Rome. Now I will point out that it is not the first epistle that Paul wrote. He actually wrote five epistles before he wrote Romans. He wrote Galatians in AD 49, 1 and 2 Thessalonians in AD 51, 1 Corinthians in AD 55, 2 Corinthians in AD 56, and Romans in AD 57. So that means that the New Testament books were not grouped chronologically. They are grouped logically. And there is a logic to this order. Acts ends with Paul teaching in Rome for two years, and this book gives us a hint as to what the content of Paul's teaching might have been like.

Paul's First missionary journey	Paul's second missionary journey	Paul's third missionary journey	Imprisonment in Caesarea and later in Rome	Paul's fourth missionary journey	Paul's final imprisonment and execution in Rome
AD 46-50	AD 50-53	AD 53-57	AD 57-62	AD 62-65	AD 65
Acts 13-14	Acts 15:36-18:22	Acts 18:23-21:15	Acts 21:16-28:31	1 Timothy Titus	2 Timothy



We saw in the book of Acts that Paul longed to go to Rome. Why? He tells us in verses 9-15:

9 For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of His Son, that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers, 10 making request if, by some means, now at last I may find a way in the will of God to come to you. 11 For I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift, so that you may be established— 12 that is, that I may be encouraged together with you by the mutual faith both of you and me. 13 Now I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that I often planned to come to you (but was hindered until now), that I might have some fruit among you also, just as among the other Gentiles. 14 I am a debtor both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to wise and to unwise. 15 So, as much as is in me, I am ready to preach

the gospel to you who are in Rome also.

There were at least three reasons why Paul wanted to go to Rome besides being a blessing to them. I already mentioned the first reason when I preached on Acts - he longed to be a part of the fulfillment of Daniel's vision in Daniel 2, where the stone cut without hands comes from heaven and strikes Rome at its feet, beginning the process of grinding the humanistic governments of the world to powder and replacing them with the the Gospel of the kingdom - the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

The second reason he wanted to go to Rome was that he hoped to use Rome as a launching base for another missions trip - this time, to the uncharted territories of Spain. He mentions this in chapter 15:24. And 1 and 2 Timothy picks up where Acts leaves off. Those books indicate that he was acquitted in Rome, and Paul's fourth missionary journey took place after the last verses of Acts. Once he got out of house arrest, Rome became the perfect launching point for that missions venture, which included Spain, but also included several other countries. So there was a logistical reason for wanting to be in Rome.

But before that could happen, the church at Rome needed some healing. And God sent Paul to help with that healing. That's the third reason. You will notice several calls to unity in this book. Just as we have racial tensions in several cities in America today, there were racial tensions in Rome. And sadly, those racial tensions had crept into the church. Let me give a bit of background on how that happened. We know from Acts that there had already been a thriving church in Rome for quite some time. It was composed of Jews and Gentiles, with the Jewish portion predominating and guiding the church. In Acts 18:1-2 the emperor Claudius got fed up with the rioting of Jewish troublemakers (I believe it was riots against Christians), and he expelled all Jews from the capital - not making any distinctions between Jewish Christians and Talmudic Jews. He just treated all Jews alike. That was when Aquilla and his wife Priscilla left Rome. That was a huge blow to the church of Rome. But the Gentile Christians rose to the occasion and engaged in massive outreach and the church grew.

Five years later, the emperor allowed the Jews to return. But when the Jewish Christians returned to their church (and they probably did see it as being their church), things had changed; they had totally changed. There had been such a huge influx of Gentiles that a whole new culture had developed, and it created a rather significant divide, with the Jews insisting that the Gentiles get circumcised, keep the Jewish food laws, follow the Jewish religious calendar, etc. And of course, there was resistance to this because

the Gentile Christians understood Paul's message. His earlier epistles had already had impact in every church. So that explains why Paul spends so much time dealing with such Jewish issues as food, festivals, and circumcision. I won't be getting into those controversies today, but I just mention them because they illustrate why Paul wanted the church of Rome to be unified. There are a lot of lessons the modern church could learn just from those controversies.

And the Gospel that Paul speaks of is the perfect solution to this racial tension. In fact, all three of those reasons for going to Rome were also good reasons for Paul to write the most comprehensive discussion of the Gospel seen anywhere in the Bible. The word "gospel" occurs 13 times in this book, but the idea of the Gospel is pervasive throughout.

But this is not the truncated Gospel of some modern Christians. It's not a Gospel where sinners invite Jesus into their hearts. Romans makes clear that God is sovereign in salvation, and He doesn't need anyone's permission. It is the sinner who bows in unconditional surrender. For example, Jesus didn't knock on the door of Paul's heart hoping that Paul would invite Him in. No, He knocked Paul off his horse, busted down the door of his heart, and gave him a spiritual heart transplant - without Paul's permission. This is sovereign grace, not man-centered grace. This is a Gospel that reflects the glory of God (with that Greek word for "glory" occurring 23 times in the book). This is not an antinomian Gospel that ignores the law of God. The word "righteousness" occurs 44 times as being an essential component of the Gospel and the word law occurs 81 times - sometimes negatively and sometimes positively. The Gospel that is described in Romans is a bold God-centered Gospel that reflects the "righteousness of God" a key phrase in Romans - in fact, some commentators say that the righteousness of God is at the heart of the Gospel of this book. And I would agree. Let me outline it, just based on the righteousness of God in this Epistle.

## **II. 10,000 foot overview of Romans**

- In chapters 1-3 we see that mankind lacks the righteousness of God and stands condemned by that righteousness. He needs that righteousness, but doesn't have it. In fact, he doesn't want it. He suppresses it and tries to get rid of it. He is totally depraved and unable to come to God.
- So God has to initiate every aspect of the Good News. It starts with the effectual calling of the Holy Spirit that instantly results in a new creation (a regeneration). That instantly results in people seeing God, themselves, sin, and righteousness differently, and converting. That results in justification. But it all comes from

God. And chapters 4-5 are especially preoccupied with the imputation of our sins to Jesus and the legal imputation of Christ's righteousness to us. And it is received by faith. And that faith itself is a gift from God. Again, it is a sovereign Gospel.

- Then, in chapters 6-8 we see how God's righteousness does more than simply justify us legally before a court. It's not just imputed to us; it is also imparted into us via sanctification, which is also entered into by faith. So the righteousness of God sets people apart legally as saints in chapters 4-5 (that's justification) and it goes on to work in those saints to conform them to God's righteousness in chapters 6-8. That's sanctification.
- In chapters 9-11 Paul vindicates the righteousness of God in predestination as well as in His future program for Jew and Gentile. And the interesting thing about those chapters is that God's righteousness will be communicated to the nations themselves. It is not just an individual Gospel; it is a Gospel to nations as nations. And what he says there also displays sovereign grace because nations will not turn to God on their own.

When you study all of this you realize that the true Gospel humbles man whereas the man-centered Gospel humbles God and exalts man. So chapters 9-11 are an absolutely necessary corrective to the pitiful truncated Gospel of modern evangelicalism.

But where the first eleven chapters beautifully lay out the sovereign Gospel of grace, chapters 12-16 go on to show how the Good News of God's righteousness makes revolutionary changes in the individual, and in his work, and family, church, and culture as a whole. So the whole book is a book about the Gospel - a Gospel that must transform everything by moving people away from self-trust, self-law, self-righteousness to receiving God's righteousness in justification, living by God's righteousness in sanctification, and winning nations to God's righteousness through evangelism. That kind of a God-centered Gospel will change the world.

That is the 10,000 foot high airplane view of Romans. Let's fly down lower and see a few more details.

### **III. Digging deeper**

#### **A. *The Gospel (Romans 1-11)***

##### **Man lacks God's righteousness (Rom. 1-3)**

Romans 1:1-3 immediately corrects two modern heretical views of the Gospel. In verses 1-2 Paul declares that the Gospel is not something new. It is a "gospel which He promised before through His prophets in the Holy

Scriptures.” And in this book Paul will constantly quote the Old Testament to prove His doctrine. Old Testament saints were saved in the same way we are - by looking in faith to the cross. The only difference is that they looked forward to the cross by faith while we look back to the cross by faith. And Paul will use Abraham as a prime example of justification by faith because the Judaisers claimed to follow Abraham, but Paul shows that they rejected Abraham’s justification and replaced it with a meritorious justification - just like the Roman Catholics have done. So when hyper-Dispensational pastors today say that Jews were saved by keeping the law rather than by faith, they are preaching heresy - flat out heresy; damnable heresy.

The second error that he corrects is the one that says that Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John preach the Gospel of the kingdom whereas Paul preaches a Gospel of grace - as if there are two Gospels! Weird. Beyond weird. This too flows from hyper-Dispensationalism that says the church-age was completely unanticipated. They claim that the church age was inserted when the Jews rejected Christ’s kingdom, and that kingdom and law got postponed till some future millennium. So they distinguish between law for Israel and grace for the church, and claim there is a Gospel of law for Jews and a Gospel of Grace for Christians. That is a false dichotomy. Later Paul will say that the Gospel actually establishes the law. But he hints at it here as well. Verses 3-6 indicate that Jesus did not postpone His kingdom for 2000 years. He is right now the promised Messiah and Son of David. And as that kingly Son of David Jesus has been declared to be “the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead.” And verse 8 affirms exactly what the Gospels did, that this Gospel demands obedience to the faith among all nations for His name. This continues to be the Gospel of His kingdom that has national implications - the same Gospel of the kingdom that Paul preached in the last two verses of Acts in Rome. You cannot separate the kingdom from the Gospel.

Verses 16-17 say that this Gospel (when rightly understood) has four things true about it. First, it is God’s power to salvation. In other words, it is not man reaching out to God. Man is dead in his sins. He needs to be resurrected. Paul says that the Gospel is God’s power to salvation. It is God powerfully reaching an unreachable and hopelessly lost mankind.

Second, verse 17 says, “For in it the righteousness of God is revealed.” The “it” refers to the Gospel. Far from ditching God’s righteousness, the Gospel reveals God’s righteousness." You don’t have any Gospel whatsoever if you don’t have God’s righteousness revealed in it. The Gospel is not inviting Jesus into your heart. The Gospel involves the imputation of Christ’s

righteousness to sinners. It's a miracle.

Third, it is received by faith.

Fourth, it moves people "from faith to faith" - in other words, the Christian life doesn't just start by receiving justification by faith. It continues to live by faith in God's provision forever. In other words, the Gospel is relevant to us every day of our lives and in everything that we do. And Paul will brilliantly display that applicability in chapters 12-16.

Those four things are hard for prideful man to swallow. Every religion invented by man has man being not quite so bad, and man seeking God, and man earning God's favor. But chapters 1-3 show how all mankind is hopelessly lost apart from grace. If you don't understand that bad news, you don't have the good news.

The Jews no doubt applauded chapter 1:18-32 that describes the sinful thoughts and actions of the Gentiles who kept sliding into more and more corruption and who kept suppressing the truth in unrighteousness. But then Paul exposes the Jewish hypocrisy in chapters 2-3. They claimed to be upright and holy and took pride in their moral accomplishments. But though their sin was manifested in different ways, they too are utterly without merit in God's sight and utterly unable to achieve the righteousness of God. And Paul is clear that without the perfect righteousness of God, you can't get to heaven. You've got to be perfect. It's not enough to have the law, as the Jews did. Paul said that the law simply made them more guilty - because they had more knowledge, right? His logical conclusion in verses 9-20 is that all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. The collage of Old Testament Scriptures he quotes in chapter 3 verses 10-18 is devastating to the self-righteous Jew. Quoting their own Scriptures, Paul paints a depressing collage of what total depravity looks like. Let me read that, beginning at verse 10:

Rom. 3:10 As it is written: "There is none righteous, no, not one; 11 There is none who understands; There is none who seeks after God. 12 They have all turned aside; They have together become unprofitable; There is none who does good, no, not one." 13 "Their throat is an open tomb; With their tongues they have practiced deceit"; "The poison of asps is under their lips"; 14 "Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness." 15 "Their feet are swift to shed blood; 16 Destruction and misery are in their ways; 17 And the way of peace they have not known." 18 "There is no fear of God before their eyes."

Since there is no one righteous, there is only one way we could be declared righteous. Verse 24 says, "being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." It's free. We can't buy it. The word "justified" simply means "to be declared righteous." How on earth could the

unrighteous be declared righteous? It's not by bribery because it is freely given, right? Nor is the judge lying when He says that you and I are 100% righteous. So how does He do it?

That is the subject matter of chapters 4-5, but he summarizes it in the remaining verses of chapter 3 by indicating that Jesus averted God's wrath from our sins by taking our sins and paying the penalty for our sins. And since there is no such thing as double jeopardy in God's justice, if Christ paid for our sins, we don't have to pay for them. It is only because Jesus was our legal substitute that verse 26 says that the Gospel could "demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus." How can he be just if He justifies a sinner? Isn't a just judge supposed to condemn sinners and never justify them?

### **Justification - God's righteousness is legally imputed and received by faith (Rom. 4-5)**

Well, chapters 4-5 go into that subject in great depth. To the Jew who insisted that you couldn't be declared righteous without first getting circumcised, Paul points to their hero, Abraham, who was justified before he got circumcised. Logically that destroys their argument. To those who insisted on other law keeping requirements in order to add to God's justification, Paul again appeals to Abraham who was justified at the beginning of his walk before he had done any good works. And when chapter 4:22 says that it "was accounted to him for righteousness," the word "accounted" is λογίζομαι, which is an accounting term. The debt is wiped out and legally we are treated as having done all the righteous deeds that Jesus did. His deeds were credited to our account.

This doctrine is what divides Protestantism from Rome. Sadly, modern evangelicalism and even some modern Reformed people have abandoned this historic doctrine of the three imputations. I wish I had more time to delve into it because justification is the essence of Christianity. I made a little chart on the right hand side of your outlines that shows three imputations: the imputation of Adam's sin to all mankind; the imputation of the sins of the elect to Jesus. And the imputation of Christ's righteous deeds to the elect. Not all Auburn Avenue people have denied those three imputations, but those who do have lost the Gospel.

### **Sanctification: God's righteousness is powerfully imparted to the Christian (Rom. 6-8)**

But chapter 6 begins to deal with the issues of sanctification. If we are



counted as righteous, does it matter how we live? Can't we just sin with impunity and not worry about it? We are legally covered, right? Or as verse 1 words it, "Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?" And his answer in verse 2 is a resounding "Certainly not!"

If we legally died in Christ when we were united to Him by the baptism of the Spirit, then we died to that old sinful life. To go back to it is to deny our conversion. All who are in Christ now pursue a whole new life. Another way of saying it is that all who are justified are automatically beginning to be sanctified. If you are not being sanctified, then you were never truly justified. So these three chapters deal with the part of the Good News called "sanctification."

God gloriously gives us the righteousness of God in a different way than in justification. Where justification was a legal credit imputed to us, this is an actual power imparted inside of us. And if we are really Christians, we will grow in sanctification. As verses 15-23 word it, we have been purchased out of slavery of sin and of Satan and are now slaves of God and righteousness. We are always going to be slaves to something. If we are not slaves to God, we are not saved.

But chapter 7 deals with the vexing question, "OK, if I am a new man in Christ, why do I still sin? I hate sinning, but I still do it. Why? I love God's law, but I find myself still violating it. What's going on?"

And let me tell you four things that Romans 7 is not saying. These are the main misinterpretations of Romans 7 that turn good news into bad news.

- First, it is not saying that habitual sinning is the normal Christian life. That's the way some people interpret it. But that completely contradicts chapter 8, which indicates that victory over sin, and sonship, and love for God's law is the normal Christian walk. Yes, the person being described in chapter 7 is a Christian, but this is definitely not speaking about what should be normal for that Christian.
- Second, it is not saying that the person in chapter 7 is an unregenerate but convicted unbeliever whereas chapter 8 is the believer's walk. In overreaction to the first view, this is where some people go. Verses 1-6 clearly show that it is the post-conversion Christian that he has in mind. This person agrees with the law and calls it good in verse 16. In verse 19 he wants to do the right thing, but somehow can't. We have already seen in chapter 3 that that does not describe the unregenerate - not one. The unregenerate heart hates God's law. Verse 20 says its not the real "I" that is doing it. Well, that would seem to indicate that the real "I" has changed. How in the world could that be? In verse 22 this man delights in God's law in the inward man. But he still finds himself sinning. It is clearly a believer, not an unbeliever. And yet it is a believer who is very frustrated.

- Third, chapter 7 is not describing an optional stage in a Christians life - a so-called carnal Christian stage, with chapter 8 being an optional stage of victory if you know the secrets to a victorious life. And of course, (and I'm being facetious here) you have to buy their book to know what the seven steps to victory are. No. That does not exegetically cut it. That's the Keswick movement view or the Higher Life movement's view.
- And fourth, it is not describing a Christian before he is baptized with the Spirit while chapter 8 is describing a Christian who speaks in tongues and is baptized in the Spirit.

So what is it? I believe that Jay Adams is correct when he says that it is describing a Christian in the first stages of struggling to put off sinful habits. You can't just instantly shed bad habits. Adams explains that when a sin (or anything else) becomes a habit, we do it without even thinking. It becomes a part of our nervous system and is programmed into our flesh. Sin is so habitual that it is instinctual. And this is true of all habits, whether sinful or not. For example, when it is a bad tennis habit, you just react, and you hit the ball wrong every time. And it frustrates you during that stage when you are trying to put off bad habits and to put on new habits.

Well, the same is true of righteousness. Everything about this chapter describes habits. Verse 16 - you do it even though you don't want to. Verse 17, you are not intentionally doing it, but the habit is so ingrained that it is part of your nervous system. You just automatically do it. Your wife gives you that certain look, and without even thinking you automatically react with anger, or withdrawal, or whatever the habit has become. Verse 23 speaks of the law of sin dwelling in my members. My members are the parts of my body. How does sin dwell there? It's not a virus. Sin is an action that we are responsible for. But when sin becomes so deeply ingrained that it is a habit, that habit (or what has become a law of sin) dwells in our members via the nervous system. He calls it a law of sin because it is a pattern of sin. And when people fall into the same sin pattern over and over again, they finally cry out in despair, as verse 24 does - "O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?" He blames the body because that's where Jay Adams says the habits are programmed- in the body; in the nervous system.

But he doesn't leave us there. He says in verse 25, "I thank God—through Jesus Christ our Lord!" That's how we are delivered from these sinful habits, and that is the subject matter of chapter 8. But before he gets there, he gives the summary statement of chapter 7 in the rest of verse 25: "So then, with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin." A regenerated person is convinced in his mind that he should follow the law of

God. It's a guide for our lives. But habits become a part of our nervous system that we do without even thinking. So until those habits are broken and new righteous habits are developed, our nervous system will continue to kick in and make us serve the habits (or law) of sin. That's Jay Adams interpretation. It's part of the process of dehabituation and rehabituation.

And so chapter 8 tells a Christian how to overcome each and every bad habit. You can graduate from chapter 7 to chapter 8. You will not be able to get rid of every evil habit at the same time, but if you are regenerate, you will gradually (by the power of the Holy Spirit) put on new habits of righteousness that become as easy to do as the old sinful habits used to be. That's the glorious theology of sanctification in chapter 8. Don't park on chapter 7. Now, chapter 7 is encouraging in that it let's you know that you are not going crazy when you struggle with habits. But chapter 8 is encouraging because it guarantees that you can lick those habits of sin.

And I won't go through all of the tools of the Spirit in chapter 8, but they are marvelous. The Spirit not only enables us to cry out "Abba, Father," but to enter more and more into our sonship privileges by faith. Will it produce pain and discomfort as we battle our old habits? Yes. He talks about the pain there, but he encourages us (like a racer) to fix our eyes on the goal not on our pain (verses 18-25). This disparity between our upward calling and where we are, leads us to pray in the Spirit for victory (verses 26-27), a Spirit who has guaranteed to finish the golden chain of salvation from predestination, to calling, to justification, to glorification. He says, "Don't worry. What God has begun, He will complete. Keep going. Keep battling. God will give you victory after victory." And the Spirit of God keeps us from despairing by making us realize that while we are engaged in this battle, nothing can separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. In fact, the last verses of chapter 8 might even be the central verses of this book. I didn't give them in your outline, but perhaps should have.

### **The Gospel as it relates to predestination (Rom. 9)**

But if God's grace is so powerful (and it is), why are more Jews and Gentiles not believing? Why doesn't God save everybody? He could. And that's where chapters 9-11 come in. God is sovereign over even that, and has planned to move the earth from a remnant believing to every nation believing. But it will all occur in His timing and plan. And it will give great glory to God.

Chapter 9 gives the doctrine of predestination. It too undergirds the doctrine

that man cannot earn salvation. No one was worthy. So why did God save anyone? Because He chose to. He is the potter, we are the clay. He makes some pots for glory and some for destruction. He can make us to be what He wants us to be. Verse 16 says, “So then it is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy.” He chose Jacob and rejected Esau. He chose Israel, and rejected Pharaoh. Verse 18 puts it bluntly - “Therefore He has mercy on whom He wills, and whom He wills He hardens.” People respond in verse 19 that this isn’t fair. And Paul’s response is rather interesting - who are you to judge God? If God gave us fairness, then everyone would end up in hell. You don’t want fairness. God has the right to choose whom he will. He doesn’t have to save anyone. The whole chapter is a very humbling teaching which makes us bow before our Maker in thankfulness that He chose us. He certainly didn’t need to. There is no room for pride once you understand total depravity and predestination. The sovereign Gospel of Romans humbles the pride of man. It especially humbled the racial pride that the Jews had. He had already dealt with that to some degree in chapter 2.

### **The Gospel as it relates to God’s plans for conversion of nations (Rom. 10-11)**

But Paul goes on in the rest of chapter 9 through chapter 11 to discuss the future application of God’s sovereign Gospel to the Jewish nation and Gentile nations. The bottom line is that God has chosen to reject Israel as a nation for a time and save only a remnant of Jews in every age until the majority of Gentile nations become saved. We aren’t there yet, are we? Then God will sovereignly save every man, woman, and child (the entire nation) of Israel at some point, which will result in such blessing upon the world it will be like a metaphorical resurrection of the world. That will be the period when people live long lives, animals become domesticated, and the curse on earth is hugely reversed. I don’t have the time to argue those points. Amils take a totally different viewpoint, but I will show how the Amil view logically leads to blind submission to statism in chapter 13.

Anyway, as Paul surveys in his mind everything that he has said from chapters 1-11, God’s goodness, wisdom, glory, sovereignty, grace, and majesty absolutely blow his mind and he can’t help but burst out into a doxology. He ends the chapter saying,

Rom. 11:33 Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out! 34 “For who has known the mind of the LORD? Or who has become His counselor?” 35 “Or who has first given to Him And it shall be repaid to him?” 36 For of Him and through Him and to Him are

all things, to whom be glory forever. Amen.

Now that is a God-centered gospel. It humbles man and makes man glory in God and adore his Maker and Savior.

### ***B. The logical applications of the Gospel (Rom. 12-16)***

But in chapter 12 and following Paul ends the book with practical applications. He almost always does this in his epistles. We will see that Corinthians is an exception. The first half is doctrine and the last part is the logical applications that can be made from that doctrine. And I don't have time to deal with the logic of the book, but I read a logical commentary on Romans that was fabulous. It showed all the principles of logic that Paul used in this book - and it is a watertight logically knit together argument. At least one Colonial law school made all its students go through Romans showing the Biblical logic. I wish they would do that nowadays, but I have only seen one modern book that has done that.

Anyway, what Paul does in chapters 12-16 is to systematically demonstrate that our lives must be consistent with the Gospel that he has outlined. Chapter 12 begins, "I beseech you therefore brethren..." Whenever you see the word "therefore" you should ask yourselves what it is there for. It is a logical indicator that helps you to interpret the passage. In this case, the word "therefore" is the hinge upon which the whole book of Romans turns. He's saying, "In light of the Gospel that I have been talking about in chapters 1-11, I beseech you to present your bodies as a living sacrifice." And the rest of the book is a series of similar exhortations applied to every area of life.

### **His sovereign claims over the individual (12:1-16)**

The first exhortation is,

Rom. 12:1 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.

I won't deal with all the amazing implications of this verse, but let me at least say that how we use our current bodies totally relates to the Gospel of the first eleven chapters. Our bodies are important. They will be redeemed. But that means that our bodies must not be denigrated or abused now. If you really understand the transformational power of the Gospel, you realize that it requires us to totally submit our bodies to God and use them to His glory. Every member of our body must be trained to be a slave to righteousness.

Verse 2 says,

2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

The Greek word for conformed is συσχηματίζεσθαι, which refers to clay being squeezed into a mold. So one translation literally translates it, “Don’t let the world squeeze you into its mold.” That’s conformity. And nowhere are we told to be squeezed into the mold of Christ. A person can try to be conformed to the world or try to be conformed to Christ. That’s outward, and it has no life.

But transformation is a miraculous process that goes beyond mere outward conformity. Any one of you can outwardly conform and pretend to be a Christian. But transformation is different. The Greek word for transformed is μεταμορφόω, and it basically means metamorphosis. The English word that describes what happens in the transition of a caterpillar into a beautiful butterfly is taken straight over from the Greek into English. And Paul says that that is what should be happening to us. If we have truly embraced the doctrines of chapters 1-11 there will be a process of transformation into the image of Christ.

Outward conformity does not make you a Christian. Going to church does not make you a Christian anymore than walking into a garage makes you an automobile. You could squeeze a caterpillar into a mold that looked like a butterfly, but you would only make a mess, and kill it. It wouldn’t be a butterfly unless it went through the miraculous process of metamorphosis. Some churches try to conform everyone into a mold. They are happy if you all do the same thing and kind of look like a butterfly. That’s not what we are after in this church. So we shouldn’t see the contrast as a choice between conformity to the world and conformity to Christ. Rather, metamorphosis is a miraculous inside-out transformation that the Spirit produces. It’s the difference between the clay image of a butterfly and a real butterfly. The Gospel brings life, not just a doctrine of life.

We could go on and on in this chapter to show how the Gospel produces humility in the individual, gives gifts to the individual, and gives hatred for what God hates and love for what God loves, etc., but we need to move on to the next point.

### **His sovereign claims over the church (12:3-16)**

Chapter 12 also speaks of God’s sovereign claims over the church. If the Gospel is transforming individuals, it should affect the whole church. Just as one example, verses 4-5 say, “For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function, so we being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another.” Paul says that

the Gospel does not go to either extreme of having so much individualism that the church is jettisoned, or of having such an emphasis on the church that the individual is lost. If God has redeemed more than just you, it means that more than just you is important to God and should be important to us. We are inconsistent with the Gospel if we isolate ourselves from the church, which He purchased with His dear blood. In fact, Paul clearly connects individual sanctification with the church's mutual ministry. R.C. Sproul senior said,

It is both foolish and wicked to suppose that we will make much progress in sanctification if we isolate ourselves from the visible church. Indeed, it is commonplace to hear people declare that they don't need to unite with a church to be a Christian. They claim that their devotion is personal and private, not institutional or corporate. This is not the testimony of the great saints of history; it is the confession of fools.

It is foolish because it is at utter odds with the Gospel; it is logically inconsistent with the Gospel that Paul has preached in the first 11 chapters, which has both individual and corporate dimensions. Paul says in effect, "In light of all that God has done for you in your redemption, in light of all that I have told you in chapters 1-11 you should be stirred up to fervent love for one another in the church."

### **His sovereign claims over society (12:17-13:10)**

Next, he tells us how we ought to live with our neighbors in chapter 12:17 through chapter 13:10. This involves every social relationship including civil government in chapter 13:1-7.

Now here is a point where you can challenge people's eschatology. Ask them if their interpretation of chapter 13 on civil government flows from the Gospel that Paul described in chapters 1-11. How do God's claims over society relate to the "therefore" which begins this section? Well, they are indeed logically related if (and only if) you interpret chapters 9-11 as referring to the salvation of nations (as Postmils and Premils say), and not just individuals (as Amils and Full Preterists interpret it). Many Amillennialists insist that Romans 9-11 is only talking about individuals being saved and that the church will always be a tiny remnant of any nation. Now these are good men, but their faulty eschatology in chapters 9-11 affects very negatively their interpretation of chapter 13.

Because they don't believe that nations will ever be disciplined into Christian nations (chapters 9-11), they interpret Romans 13 not as a mandate for civil government to serve Christ as Christ dictates, but as a call to total submission to any kind of tyranny. In fact, the Lutherans who were the most consistent in their application of this interpretation, refused to oppose Hitler.

They said, “It’s clear. Look at chapter 13 – “Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God. Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves.” They taught that you can’t resist civil government.

Well, that’s not what the text says at all. It says you can’t resist God’s authority, and that a civil government has no authority except for the authority that God has explicitly delegated to them. In fact, the Greek of verse 1 is quite strong. It says, “For there is no authority if not from God.” If God has not given the authority, the government may not arrogate that authority to itself. You can see that those two interpretations are poles apart.

On my interpretation, it will take the grace of God (that Romans 9-11 talks about) in order to accomplish what God mandates in Romans 13:1-7. It is speaking of limited government by civil magistrates whose passion is to be ministers of God. My friends, that will take the Gospel of chapters 1-11 to accomplish. It will never be accomplished by mere politics.

On the Amil interpretation, there is no need for the Gospel to reach the civil magistrate in Romans 13:1-7. They assume that civil magistrates will be like Nero, and if we have to give blind submission to Nero on whatever he says (as being God’s will), then we must have blind submission to all magistrates on whatever they say (as being God’s will). Your view of the Gospel in chapters 1-11 will profoundly affect your interpretation of chapter 13.

But I’ve actually taken these two chapters out of order. How does all this transpire? He starts with our individual societal relations in chapter 12 before moving on to civil relations in chapter 13. We will never see long-term change for the good simply by imposing it with another presidency. Chapter 12 must come before chapter 13.

Let’s look first of all at our responsibilities as citizens. Before we can expect to bring the civil government under the crown rights of King Jesus (that’s chapter 13), we must act responsibly with social issues ourselves (chapter 12). The only way you can have the godly civil government of chapter 13, is if you have the pervasive godly self-government of chapter 12 throughout the citizenry. Do you have the characteristics of chapter 12? Don’t protest the evils of civil government if you refuse to have the self-government of chapter 12. And what a better way to learn self-government than in the ways mentioned in 12:9-21? Those principles make for godly citizens of the family, church and state. It’s a fantastic catalog of the power of a godly citizenry in overcoming evil with good – not simply enduring evil, but



overcoming evil with good. He's calling us to win the battle with the Gospel, not simply to endure the battle.

But the Gospel produces other duties given in 13:8-10. Let's read that.

Romans 13:8 Owe no one anything except to love one another, for he who loves another has fulfilled the law. Romans 13:9 For the commandments, "You shall not commit adultery," "You shall not murder," "You shall not steal," "You shall not bear false witness," "You shall not covet," and if there is any other commandment, are all summed up in this saying, namely, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." Romans 13:10 Love does no harm to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.

So I think you can see that if we are to have a holy government, it makes logical sense that we must have a godly citizenry. And that's exactly what the founding fathers of America said - that this republic would only stand so long as America remains a Christian country. The following words are inscribed on the Department of Justice Building in Washington, D.C.:

"Justice in the life and conduct of the state is possible only as first it resides in the hearts and souls of the citizens." Christians should be model citizens just because of their relationship to God. Paul does not pit law against grace. God's grace spurs us to keeping God's laws even as they relate to social issues. Nor does he pit law against love. Verse 10 says, "Love does no harm to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law." Can you see how the Gospel has broad ramifications?

But it will also one day transform humanistic civil governments into model Christian governments. Augustine pointed out that apart from grace, states are simply legal thieves and murderers. And I echo his sentiment. America does not conform to Romans 13:1-7. America is exactly what Augustine said - it is an organized band of robbers and murderers. And if you think that is slander, look at all the abortions our nation has tolerated. Look at all the ungodly wars we have been involved in. Look at the ungodly taxation, eminent domain, asset forfeiture, and other iniquitous evils. Just because you are used to it does not make it right. Civil officers are not ministers of God except as they submit themselves to God. God calls them bestial empires in Daniel and in the book of Revelation when they do their own will. We ought not to vote for what God rejects. But the way many people interpret chapter 13 makes a mockery out of Paul's logic.

Let me substitute Idi Amin into key places in this passage so that you can see how out-of-touch the interpretation of many people is. Idi Amin was the wicked ruler of Uganda who sought to persecute Christians into extinction. He explicitly said he would exterminate them. He hunted them down, tortured them, raped them, killed them. He even ate some Christians in his

cannibalistic rituals. He was a terror to these Christians. The very name Idi Amin raises the specter of hundreds of Christians buried up to their necks next to anthills to be eaten alive. He was a persecutor of the church just like Nero was. So let me read this passage substituting him just so you can see how ludicrous the typical interpretation is.

Let every soul be subject to Idi Amin. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist have been appointed by God. Therefore whoever resists Idi Amin resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist Idi Amin will bring judgment on themselves. For Idi Amin is not a terror to good works, but to evil. Do you want to be unafraid of Idi Amin? Do what is good, and you will have praise from Idi Amin. For he is God's minister to you for good. But if you do evil, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain; for he is God's minister, an avenger to execute wrath on him who practices evil. Therefore you must be subject to Idi Amin, not only because of wrath but also for conscience' sake. For because of this you also pay taxes, for he is God's minister attending continually to this very thing.

I think you get the point. Idi Amin was not a terror to evil; he was a terror to good people. He surrounded himself with the most wicked and corrupt people you could imagine, and he rewarded them for their evil. He did the exact opposite of what this passage says a magistrate should do. This passage is a paradigm of a Christian magistrate, not a description of Nero. If this spoke of unqualified submission to civil governments, it would be contradicting itself.

The only interpretation that makes sense is one that says that the Gospel must reach even civil magistrates if they are to serve in government the way that they must. The Gospel of chapters 1-8 is powerful enough to reach such civil magistrates, and in fact, chapters 9-11 give God's iron clad guarantee that all nations will eventually become converted, including the nation of Israel. When you take that interpretation, suddenly chapter 13 becomes a mandate for living out the Gospel in the civil sphere. It's showing the calling of a civil magistrate to love small government, to love justice, to praise good, and punish evil, and to be self-consciously a servant of King Jesus in all that he does.

### **His sovereign claims over the goal of history (13:11-14)**

I won't be able to preach on everything in these chapters, but let me give you hints of how you can continue to study and apply the Gospel to every area of life. Chapter 13:11-14 shows how the Gospel that was outlined gives

us an entirely different perspective on history and what to anticipate in the future. In fact, the cross reverses history. Where all of history was winding down into apostasy prior to the cross and true believers were only a remnant, all of history is advancing after the cross from glory to glory. I wish I had time to preach on it, but I don't.

### **Miscellaneous other implications of the Gospel**

What are some other logical implications? Chapter 14 says that the Gospel should transform the way we exercise rights and liberties. Do we have rights and liberties? Absolutely we do, but we must see them as extensions of the Gospel that have been purchased by Jesus, not as excuses for self-centered living. So many people are selfish in their exercise of liberties, but the Gospel makes us exercise those liberties for Christ and for others. Read that chapter and I think you will be blown away by the Gospel interpretation of rights and liberties.

Chapter 15 says that the Gospel should transform the way we look at tribulation. It will give us supernatural joy. Why not? It is a victorious Gospel, and as Romans 8 says, nothing in all of creation can separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. That includes persecution.

The same chapter speaks of Paul's enthusiasm for evangelism, miracles, giving as debtors to God's grace, planning for the future. According to Paul, the way you give should flow out of the gospel. Viewed that way, you can give enthusiastically and generously. You give not out of compulsion, but out of grace.

Chapter 16 applies the Gospel to fellowship, ministry and other issues. Even Paul's greetings in that chapter are saturated with an awareness of all that Christ has done for them and expects of them. Almost every verse in chapter 16 makes some allusion to Christ's work on their behalf and their work for one another and for Christ. The Gospel purchased us to gladly be slaves to God. Are you a slave to God or a slave to yourself?

In 16:17-19 he clearly sets forth the proposition that you are either serving Christ or you are serving yourself. The Gospel sets us free to serve Christ. Look at verse 18 - "For those who are such do not serve our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly." What a contradiction it is to be purchased and owned by Christ and to spend your whole life serving your belly. And he shows other ways in which the Gospel always produces a servant's heart that engages in ministry - always.

Verse 20 is an allusion to Genesis 3:15 which prophesied that Satan would bruise Christ's heel, but Christ would crush Satan's head. It's not a weak Gospel; it's a victorious Gospel. It's a skull-crushing Gospel. But it's interesting how Paul words it. Elsewhere we know that Christ crushed Satan's head on the cross, but here he says, "And the God of peace will crush Satan under your feet shortly." How can both be true? They can both be true because Satan was crushed in principle (legally) on the cross, is being crushed progressively under the feet of the saints, and would be cast into the pit in AD 70 by the prayers of the very Christians that he writing to. Many doctrines have these three phases: 1) accomplished in principle on the cross, 2) progressively applied over history, and 3) final fulfillment at some point in the future. Was Satan crushed in Rome shortly? Yes. I believe he was literally cast into the pit in AD 70. Not all of his demonic armies were but he was. But even if you don't believe that, certainly Satan's kingdom was losing over the next two centuries. Those early Christian saints did indeed see demons on the retreat as the Roman empire became more and more Christianized until by one report there were more Christians in the empire than pagans shortly before the time of Constantine. And that was under enormous persecution.

There are so many implications of the redemption of Jesus Christ that we have not even touched upon today. Too many people see the Gospel as only being a ticket to heaven. It is that. But the good news is that Christ's redemption goes (as the Christmas hymn words) far as the curse is found. In your outlines I have a chart that shows the impact of the fall's curse in every area of life - spiritually, physically, mentally, emotionally, volitionally, religiously, psychologically, motivationally, teleologically, deontologically, socially, individually, environmentally, generationally, and cosmically. I've decided to not preach that portion of this sermon. It would take way too long. But if you try meditating on how the Gospel will reverse every one of those points in that chart in history, it will blow your mind. Our aspirations and faith are limited by our vision. Too many people have a low vision of what the Gospel can accomplish. Romans is a book that is mind-blowing in the comprehensive way that the Gospel will change this world - yes even environmentally as wild animals are eventually domesticated and humans live many hundreds of years. Isaiah's prophecies clearly stand behind Paul's epistle. Brothers and sisters, I charge you from the book of Romans to believe in a big God with a big Gospel. Amen.

Stuff I left out:

**Extent of the Effects of the Fall in Genesis 3-4**  
**Outline by Phillip G. Kayser**

Spiritually	Spirit separated from God. "In the day that you eat ... you shall surely die" Man runs from God, fearful of God, self-justifying, under God's judgment	Gen 2:17; 3:1ff
Physically	Body separated from God's favor (recognized in the loss of glory covering). Results in pain, discomfort and eventual death (to dust)	Gen. 3:7,16-19
Mentally	Reasoning independently, rationalization, deception, uses to defend self rather than to glorify God	Gen. 3:1-13
Emotionally	Fear, anger, anxiety, depression, disappointment, coveting	Gen. 3:8
Volitionally (will)	Man acted independently (v 6), became corrupted in dominion (v. 7), rebelled against authority (v. 16), or dominated with it (v. 16)	Gen 3:6-19
Religiously	False coverings (3:7) and false religion (4:3)	Gen 3:7; 4:3
Psychologically (personal sense of well being)	Shame, loss of confidence, sense of alienation, motivations turned to idols rather than God, conscience is bothered	Gen. 2:25 versus 3:7-19
Motivationally	Conflicting motivations (e.g., desire for approval - 3:6,7,8; 4:4-5, yet impulse alienate & accuse when in trouble - 3:12; 4:8); self-serving rather than God serving; physical drives of safety, sustenance, sex, etc. perverted (3:16; 4:19; security found in things, wealth, power, wisdom, etc. rather than God (4:17,24); social drives (like modeling, desiring to please, appreciation, companionship, love, acceptance, etc) and yearning for meaning and significance are perverted to serve self rather than God (4:1-25)	Gen. 3:6,7,8,12,16; 4:1-25
Teleologically	Man's goals become self-serving	Gen. 3:7; 4:7-8,17,19-24
Deontologically	Man's sense of justice is perverted; His conscience is perverted (see 3 aspects of conscience - legislative, judicial and executive)	Gen. 4:23-24
Socially	"The woman you gave to me, she gave me and I ate" - blame shifting, discontent with marriage, seeking to justify the sin, attacking versus protecting, anger, depression (countenance fell), and murder	Gen. 3:12; Gen. 4:4-7
Individually (Personally)	Fugitive, self-pity ("My punishment is too great to bear")	Gen. 4:9,12
Environmentally	"Cursed is the ground because of you" Thorns, 2 <sup>nd</sup> law of Thermodynamics works against rather than for man	Gen. 3:17-19
Generationally	Passed on from father to son	Gen. 5:3; Rom. 5:12
Cosmically	Thorns, thistles, death... "The creation was subjected to futility... bondage of corruption... whole creation groans..."	Gen. 3:17-19; Rom 8:19-23

You can see from that chart that the fall impacted man spiritually because he was separated from God. The Gospel reverses that alienation and wants us to have intimacy with God. The Fall impacted man physically, mentally, emotionally, and volitionally. And the wonder of the Gospel message in the New Testament is that God is helping to reverse those things by the transformation of our minds, of our emotions, and of our wills. You can't ignore your emotions. They must be sanctified to God.

The Gospel removes the false coverings of religiosity that Adam tried to concoct and enables us to be open and free before God and man. We don't need to cover for ourselves spiritually. Christ is our covering.

Since the Fall of Adam had a motivational impact, God has to begin transforming every motivation from being self-serving to being God-serving. Since the fall impacted our goals, so does the Gospel. Since the Fall turned man's sense of justice upside down, the Gospel must restore our sense of right and wrong and justice. It restores us to God's law and even re-writes the law on our hearts.

Since the Fall distorted the social relationships between Adam and Eve, the Gospel was given the power to transform marriages. Marriages no longer have to live in misery if they are willing to apply the Gospel to every part of their marriage. Where the Fall brought death and murder, the Gospel brings life and healing. Where the Fall tore apart man's environment, nations that are saturated by the Gospel will find that even the physical environment

begins to serve them well. In fact, Isaiah prophesies that there is coming a time when people will live longer (just like they did before the fall), and animals will not be as dangerous. You may have seen the transformations videos. Whatever you think of certain aspects of those videos, it is clear that the Gospel impacts even the environment. And I can tell you stories of pervasively Christian towns and larger communities around the world that are seeing unprecedented Deuteronomy 28 blessings falling on them.

The Fall was passed on generationally from father to son, and the Gospel covenant is also a pledge of God to be a God to us and to our children after us. And where sin abounded, Paul says that grace abounds much more. Where curses passed to the third and fourth generation of those who hate him, God's blessings pass to a thousand generation of those who love Him.

And of course, since the Fall impacted the very universe and made it groan, one of the last things we will see under the reign of Jesus is a new heavens and a new earth. Romans 8 talks about that.

Is there not a lot to rejoice over when we consider the Gospel and its logical implications? There is. I love this book. And I beseech you to make your life more and more consistent with the Gospel and to experience God's grace in everything that you do. Amen.