

# The Gospel According To Paul: Romans

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## **OPENING OF THE LETTER (1:1-17)**

### **1. Opening Lines (1:1-7)**

*(1) Sender (1:1)*

*(2) Christological Confession (1:2-6)*

*(3) Addressees (1:7a)*

*(4) Greetings (1:7b)*

### **2. Thanksgiving (1:8-10)**

### **3. Expressed Desire to Visit Rome (1:11-15)**

### **4. Statement Of Paul's Thesis (1:16-17)**

This statement is packed with powerful themes that Paul unpacks and develops throughout this part of the letter (1:16-11:36). Each theme is discussed in view of an opposing theme which stand in juxtaposition to it; e.g., **the gospel** (as opposed to the law), **the power of God** (as opposed to the impotence of the law), **salvation under the gospel** (as opposed to condemnation under the curse of the law), **to everyone** (the universality of the gospel as opposed to the exclusiveness of the law), **who believes**

(as opposed to those who attempt to earn their salvation through works of the law), **to both Jews and Greeks** (as opposed to the Jew exclusively), **the righteousness of God** (as opposed to man's own righteousness or righteousness of the law), **which is revealed through faith** (as opposed to a righteousness which is attained through the keeping of the statutes, judgments, and commands of the Law).

## **THE REDEMPTION DRAMA** **(The Theological Block)** **(1:18-11:36)**

This section of material is called” the theological block” because here is found the development of Paul’s theology of the redemption of mankind. His most intriguing concepts concerning God’s coming into the world to effect the salvation of man are here: that all men stand before God as guilty of sin, that God has sent the promised Messiah into the world and those who most longed for the coming of the Messiah rejected him. Within the development of this Messianic theme he addresses several of the concepts which are at work in this redemption drama: a treatise on righteousness or justification, a treatise on faith, a treatise of the meaning of the death of Christ and the theme of divine reversal which God’s effected through the death and resurrection of Christ. A beautiful Adam/Christ typology is found here as well as a treatise on freedom from the power of sin, a treatise on freedom from the Law of Moses, and a treatise on freedom from the curse of death. This whole section of material may be called “The Redemption Drama” in that here is where the heart of Paul’s story of Jesus is told. His identity as the second Adam, the divine reversal of the curse brought upon mankind through the first Adam, and the means by which this salvation became a reality for the whole of mankind are beautifully developed here in this section. We here proceed to Paul’s first line of argument in this

theological section.

## **I. ALL MEN STAND BEFORE GOD AS GUILTY OF SIN, GENTILE AND JEW ALIKE (1:18-3:20)**

### **1. The Guilt of the Gentiles (1:18-32)**

*(1) Man's rejection of God: they gave him up (1:18-23)*

*(2) God's rejection of man: God gave them up (1:24-32)*

### **2. The Guilt of the Jews (2:1-3:20)**

*(1) There is no respect of persons with God (2:1-16).*

*(2) Being a Jew and knowing the law does not exempt one from the guilt of transgressing the law (2:17-29)*

*(3) What advantage is there in being a Jew? The Jews were entrusted with the oracles of God, but they nonetheless became enslaved to sin (3:1-8)*

*(4) The conclusion of the foregoing line of argumentation: there is none righteous, no not one, both Gentile and Jew stand before God enslaved to sin and condemned to death (3:9-20).*

## **II. THE MESSIANIC DELIVERANCE (3:21-8:39)**

The line of argumentation running through this whole block of material is that God has delivered man from enslavement to the power of sin and has given him new existence "in Christ," which is received by means of faith (3:21-8:39).

## 1. The Concept of a Righteousness Acquired by Faith (3:21-31)

*(1) A state of righteousness (state of justification or right standing) other than by lawkeeping has been revealed. It is a righteousness that came from God as a gift, which becomes a reality in one's life through believing that what is proclaimed about Jesus of Nazareth is true (3:21-23)*

*(2) By accepting God's gift of grace, all men receive acquittal; they are justified by believing in the redemptive work of Christ; i.e., his conquest of the forces of evil through his death and resurrection (3:24-26)*

*(3) Any attempt to achieve righteousness before God as a result of lawkeeping is futile. If one is to stand in a right relationship with God, he must do so on the basis of faith, not on the basis of lawkeeping (3:27-30)*

*(4) An anticipated question leading to the next line of argumentation*

Doesn't the teaching that one achieves righteousness through faith contradict the teaching of the Old Testament (i.e., the Law/Torah), (3:31)? Paul's answer to this question is a resounding "No!" To believe in the redemptive power of faith is to accept the testimony of the Law (OT).

At this point Paul enters into a series of treatises in which he develops five of the most essential themes of his theology: a treatise on faith, a treatise on the death of Christ, a treatise on freedom from the power of sin, a treatise on freedom from the Law, and a treatise on freedom from death. These treatises provide us with examples of the themes that made up the preaching of Paul, and likely constitute the closest thing we have to

compendium of his theology.

## **2. Treatise on Faith (4:1-25)**

*(1) An Old Testament example of faith (a precedent): the faith of Abraham (4:1-8)*

*(2) Faith was Abraham's means of righteousness (right standing with God) before the Law of Moses was given (4:9-15)*

*(3) The Abrahamic promise was given and fulfilled through faith (4:16-22)*

*(4) We too stand as righteous before God by means of faith, not by lawkeeping (4:23-25)*

## **3. Treatise on the Death of Christ: Paul's Adam/Christ Typology (5:1-21)**

*(1) Justification by mean of the death of Christ.* Through the death and resurrection of Christ, we have been justified (i.e., declared "not guilty"), and have been granted access into the grace of God (5:1-5)

*(2) Christ died in order to deliver adamic mankind from the enslaving power of sin.* His death was a death to adamic existence, an existence characterized by sin and the curse of death. His resurrection was a resurrection into new existence where grace rather than sin is the reigning power (5:6-11)

*(3) Divine reversal of the curse of Adam.* Sin and death entered into the world through the disbelief of the original Adam, grace and the free gift of righteousness overflowed into the world through the belief of the second Adam (Christ), (5:12-17)

Death reigned over all mankind (adamic man) through the

power of sin brought into the world by Adam. But the power of sin and death has been conquered and destroyed by Christ through his experience of human death, which effected the death of that existence, and his resurrection into new existence.

*(4) Summary statement of this line of argumentation.*

Therefore, as through the disobedience of one man (the first Adam) sin entered into the world (and many became "sinners"), so also, through the obedience of one man (the second Adam) grace entered into the world (that many may become righteous). As sin reigned in death, grace reigns in righteousness unto eternal life (5:18-21). Where sin is the malevolent power of Satan, grace is the benevolent power of God. The one (sin) is the power characteristic of existence "in Adam," the other (grace) is the power characteristic of existence "in Christ."

Paul's line of thought here is similar to that of 1 Cor 15:21-23; 42-57, where he portrays Christ as an Adam figure who is the first being to experience resurrection existence, in contrast to the first Adam, who is portrayed as a being of clay whose end is to return to the clay from which he came. Here the one man (Christ) stands as a representative figure of all those who, through transforming faith, transcend this existence into the spiritual realm of eternal life. The other man (Adam) stands as a representative figure of all those who, because of their disbelief, are beings whose existence centers in the flesh (clay) and are destined to return to the clay in death.

#### **4. Treatise on Freedom from the Power of Sin (6:1-23)**

*(1) Conversion is a dying and rising again.* It is dying to our old existence "in Adam" and rising into new existence "in Christ" (6:1-

(2) *Sin is no longer a reigning power in the lives of those who are "in Christ" (6:12-14)*

(3) *To be servants of sin leads to death, to be servants of righteousness leads to life (6:15-23)*

## **5. Treatise on Freedom from the Law of Moses (7:1-25)**

(1) *Analogy from marriage:* God's original plan for marriage was that a husband and wife were bound to one another in marriage until one of them dies. When we die to our adamic existence (existence "in Adam") we are freed from the law and its curse of death to those who violate it (7:1-6).

(2) *The purpose of law as revelation from God:* The Law was given to control human behavior; the Law defines sin and condemns those who transgress the Law (7:7-12)

(3) *Autographical example the role of the law:* The Law was as an instrument for good to the spiritual man but an instrument of condemnation to the man of flesh (7:13-25)

## **6. Treatise on Freedom from Death (8:1-27)**

(1) *Those who are "in Christ" are free from the law of sin and death (8:1-11)*

Those converted to Christ have died to their existence "in Adam" and have experienced new creation or spiritual renewal "in Christ." Their existence as spiritual beings is in constant tension with their existence as beings of flesh. The selfish desires of the flesh are always in conflict with the unselfish desires of the spirit. This same line of argument is found Paul's letter to the Galatians (Gal 5:16-26).

*(2) Those who have experienced new creation or spiritual renewal have become sons of God.*

Those who are the sons and daughters of God are led by the Spirit of God, God's Spirit bearing witness to their spirits that they are the children of God (8:12-17).

*(3) The problem of the flesh.*

Even though we have experienced spiritual renewal we are yet adamic men in the flesh. Our bodies will one day experience death and decay. In the resurrection, our bodies will also be created anew, as was the case with Christ, and we will be fully united with him in his resurrection existence (8:18-27).

That Paul here is speaking of man as "the creation" is obvious from careful analysis of the text. The "creation" under consideration here waits with eager longing (v 19), it has its own will (v 20), it hopes (v 20), it will be set free from its bondage to decay and will obtain the glorious liberty of the children of God (v 21), the whole of this creation (created mankind) groans in travail (v 22), and the creation under consideration here groans inwardly waiting for the redemption of the body (v 23). Paul is not speaking of a renewal of the planet earth, but the renewal of the body that will be accomplished in the resurrection in the end-time (see also 1 Cor 15:12-57, where Paul addresses this same theme in greater detail).

## **7. Summary of the Messianic Deliverance Section (8:28-39)**

*(1) All these things (the preceding) God has done for our good and our salvation (8:28-36)*

*(2) In all these things (the power of sin, the condemnation of the law, even human death) we are more than conquerors through him who loved us (8:37-39)*

### **III. ISRAEL'S REJECTION OF GOD'S MESSIAH AND GOD'S REJECTION OF ISRAEL (9:1-11:36)**

#### **1. Israel's Present State of Rejection (9:1-29)**

*(1) Paul's concern for Israel (9:1-5)*

*(2) What God has done is not inconsistent with his promises to  
Israel (9:6-13)*

*(3) God's rejection of Israel is not unjust (9:14-18)*

*(4) God's acceptance of the Gentiles is "according to the  
Scriptures" (9:19-29)*

#### **2. Israel's Refusal to Respond in Faith to God's Messiah (9:30- 10:21)**

*(1) Israel's fall is due to their disbelief (9:30-33)*

*(2) The righteousness of man Vs the righteousness of God: a case  
of justification on their own terms Vs justification on God's terms  
(10:1-4)*

*(3) Righteousness which is according to the law (lawkeeping) Vs  
the righteousness which is according to faith (10:5-13)*

Here Paul inserts the Christological core of his gospel: this salvation centers in the lordship of Christ and belief in that event which established his lordship - his resurrection from the dead (vv 9-10). Here Paul is simply restating the Christological confession with which he began this composition found in Rom 1:3-4.

*(4) The good news of salvation through faith in God's Messiah  
must be preached (10:14-15)*

*(5) Israel's rejection of this good news is "according to the Scriptures" (10:16-21)*

### **3. Israel May Yet Be Saved (11:1-32)**

*(1) A remnant of Israel is presently being saved (11:1-6)*

*(2) The remainder is hardened of heart "according to the Scriptures" (11:7-10)*

*(3) The hardening of Israel opened the door to the Gentiles (11:11-24)*

*(4) The mystery of how Israel will be saved through belief in the Messiah, "even as it is written" (11:25-32)*

*(5) Doxological closing to the Redemption Drama section (11:33-36)*

## **APOSTOLIC COUNSEL (12:1-15:13)**

### **I. THE RENEWING OF THE MIND (12:1-2)**

As Paul introduced his theological section with a thesis statement (1:16-17), this section has an introductory statement as well (12:1-2). Throughout this block of material Paul appeals to the Christians at Rome to apply what he has said to them in the foregoing to their daily walk in Christ. In conversion to Christ their spiritual existence was created anew, their moral character was created anew, and their relationship with a view to lordship was created anew. A transfer of lordship had occurred. In what follows he instructs them that they should be living in consistency with who they now were as new creations in Christ.

His advise to them throughout this section may be summed up in the words "self-sacrifice." With the power of who they are "in the spirit" in control of who they are "in the flesh," they will be able to live in this world without being controlled by the desires of the flesh. It is a constant struggle to keep the flesh from controlling our lives. Paul's answer to this is, "present your bodies (flesh) a living sacrifice to God" (12:1), then it is not so easy for one to live in service to the desires of the flesh. We are at war with this part of our "selves". The self-gratification of the flesh constantly wars with the self-service of the spirit. Paul's world was very much like ours, self-centered to the core. Paul counsels them, "be not conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind" (12:2).

Life lived according to the flesh is life conformed to this world, life lived according to the spirit is a life of spiritual service. Such living has the power to transform us. In the material that follows, Paul applies this to problems dealing with relationships and to the issue of liberty in matters of opinion, especially as applies to the tensions that existed between the Jewish Christians and the Gentile Christians of the Roman church.

## **II. COUNSEL CONCERNING RELATIONSHIPS (12:3-13:14)**

- 1. Concerning Attitude toward Oneself (12:3-8)**
- 2. Concerning Attitude toward Others (12:9-21)**
- 3. Concerning Attitude toward Authority (13:1-7)**
- 4. Concerning Love and Duty (13:8-10)**
- 5. A Call to Awaken to Moral Awareness (13:11-14)**

### **III. THE ROLE OF LIBERTY IN MATTERS OF OPINION (14:1-15:13)**

- 1. Concerning Foods and Holy Days (14:1-12)**
- 2. Concerning Matters of Conscience (14:13-23)**
- 3. Concerning Those Who Are Strong and Those Who  
Are Weak (15:1-4)**
- 4. A Plea for Unity to the Gentile and Jewish Segments of the  
Church (15:5-13)**

### **CLOSING OF THE LETTER (15:14-16:27)**

- 1. Pauline Travelogue (15:14-33)**
- 2. Words of Commendation and Salutations (16:1-16)**
- 3. Final Words of Warning (16:17-20)**
- 4. Those Who Send Greeting from Corinth (16:21-24)**
- 5. Doxological Ending (16:25-27)**