

Synthetic Bible Studies

Containing an outline study of every book of the Bible
with suggestions for Sermons, Addresses and
Bible Expositions

By

James M. Gray, D.D.

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LESSON SIX

ROMANS

In studying the Epistle of Paul to the Romans we meet with:

I. The Salutation, 1:1-7

The salutation consists of certain descriptions which may be indicated thus:

The writer (v. 1).

The Gospel to which he has been separated, (v. 2).

The person of whom that Gospel testifies, (vv. 3, 4).

The particular service to which the writer has been called, (v. 5).

The people to whom this message is now sent, (vv. 6, 7).

II. Thanksgiving, 1:8-15

Observe that for which the thanksgiving is offered (v. 8), and how that the thanksgiving is mingled with prayer (v. 9). A special petition in this prayer is indicated (v. 10), and the object of that petition (v. 11). The modesty of the great apostle is beautifully illustrated in verse 12, the reason for his delay in visiting them (v. 13), and the obligation he feels toward them (vv. 14, 15).

The terms of this thanksgiving would indicate that Paul had not yet visited Rome, and hence that

the Epistle antedates the events in the closing chapters of the Acts which we have so recently considered.

Little did he know at this time, doubtless, how it should please his Lord and Master to gratify that longing desire to see them of which he speaks. If we inquire, therefore, how this Epistle came to be written to them, we find a hint in 16:1, where Phoebe, the deaconess, is mentioned as about to embark on a business journey from Cenchrea to Rome, of which advantage is taken to send a message.

Cenchrea, as the map shows, is adjacent to Corinth, which gives rise to the probability that the Epistle was penned, as were some others doubtless, during Paul's long residence in the last named city. See Acts 18.

But part of the argument which goes to show that Paul had not visited Rome up until this time, shows also that no other apostle had done so. Reference is here meant to what he says in verse 11, about the impartation to them of spiritual gifts. Had he been preceded by any other apostle such gifts would have been likely to be dispensed to the church.

Moreover, it seems to have been a principle with Paul not to build on another man's foundation. See 15:20, and II Corinthians 10:14-16.

If, therefore, any other apostle had established the church in Rome before Paul, he would not have thought of going there at all. This, therefore, would seem to settle the question also, as to whether Peter founded the church at Rome? Roman Catholicism makes much of its affirmations on this point, but it would appear that they are affirmations only.

Who then, did found the church at Rome? Doubtless those we call laymen. From among the great multitudes present at Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost who were converted and baptized with the HOLY GHOST on that day there were some from Rome who, on returning to their home city, carried the seed of the Gospel with them, and it had thus borne fruit.

III. Theme; the Gift of Righteousness, 1:16, 17

The Epistle to the Romans is not so much of an Epistle, a letter, as it is a treatise.

It has a theme, and that theme may be said to be stated in the two verses we are now considering.

The apostle had expressed himself as ready to preach the Gospel to them that were at Rome, the barbarians, as Latins were called to distinguish them from the Greeks, and he now essays a reason for his readiness to do this. He declares that he is "**not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ.**" And why is he not ashamed of it? Because of its dynamics, because of what it can do. "**It is the power of God unto salvation.**"

- but wherein consists its power?

- in what does its power lie?

- what is the essence of the Gospel? It is this, that "**therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith.**"

It is not GOD's own character of righteousness that is revealed, in other words, but another righteousness, a righteousness, as the Epistle goes on to teach, which GOD gives to men, imputes to them on the exercise of their faith in CHRIST. To use another's words, it is "the rightness which proceeds from GOD, i. e., the right relation in which man is placed by a judicial act of GOD."

It does not mean that a man is made righteous in his personal character, but declared righteous in point of law. The phrase is used seven times in the Epistle, and becomes its keynote, carrying its meaning with it as it goes along.

We are justified, therefore, in calling the theme of the Epistle, "*The Gift of Righteousness*."

From the human side, that which man does in order to be justified is to believe (trust) on CHRIST; but from the divine side, that which GOD does, which justifies the man who believes on CHRIST, is to impute unto him His own righteousness.

IV. Necessity of the Gift, 1:18-3:20

No sooner does the apostle reach the declaration of his theme than he plunges into the development of it.

And the first point he dwells upon is its necessity.

Just as a righteousness of GOD is revealed from heaven, so a wrath of GOD against all unrighteousness of men is revealed (v. 18); and it is this revelation of His wrath which makes necessary the revelation of His righteousness if men shall be saved. This revelation of GOD's wrath is in the Scriptures, but it is also in the conscience of every human being; as the context plainly shows. But we must not do GOD the injustice to associate this wrath with impatience on His part, or anything arbitrary or unjust.

It is, as Bishop Moule says, the anger of Him who never for a moment can be untrue to Himself, who is Love and who is Light, but who is also a consuming Fire (Hebrews 10:31; 12:29).

The unrighteousness of men against which this holy wrath is revealed is stated in detail in the verses which follow in this chapter.

And it is of the most solemn interest to note that men are without excuse in committing it (vv. 19-23).

In excusing the heathen world to-day we are apt to say that they know no better, but GOD's Word says differently. Not only did they know better, but knowing better, they deliberately closed their eyes and turned their backs upon that knowledge, and the darkness and wickedness into which they have fallen from being the cause has become the effect of their awful folly (vv. 24-32).

Nor is this a condition true of some men in the world and not of all, for in 2:1-16, the indictment

is laid at the door of every one. Not that all men are guilty of all the sins enumerated in the black catalogue of chapter 1, but being guilty of some, they are without exception exposed to the wrath revealed against the whole. And this is true not only of the Gentile, but of the Jewish world.

The latter, the Jews, might be ready in their self-righteousness, to accept the dictum as applying to those whom they regarded as outside the pale of GOD's promises and ignorant of His revealed Word; but surely it could not be true of them who rested in the law, and made their boast of GOD, and knew His will, and considered themselves as guides to the blind and a light of them that were in darkness!

Yes, it was true of them also, as the apostle most plainly avers in verses 17-29.

Moreover, so far as the Jews were concerned, it was hardly necessary to produce the testimony of history and experience as in the case of the blind and ignorant Gentiles, for did not their own laws in which they so much boasted teach the same? It is thus the apostle speaks in 3:1-20.

Should the Jews indignantly dispute his position so far as they were concerned, on the ground that he thus put them, the chosen people, on a level with the Gentiles, he would remind them that the very oracles of GOD, whose commitment to them constituted one of their chief glories, were the authority for what he now said.

He would recall to them the teachings of those oracles (vv. 9-18), and he would press the point upon their attention that the teaching thus quoted could not have been directed in the first place to the Gentiles, who did not have the Scriptures in which they were contained, but to the Jews distinctively, who, only, in that sense, were "**under the law**" (v. 19).

The result is, he would have them know, that their mouths as well as the mouths of the Gentiles, were stopped, and all the world, Jew and Gentile alike, was guilty before GOD. The wrath of GOD revealed against the unrighteousness of one class as much as against that of the other, left the one as truly as the other in need of the gift of His righteousness, which is by faith, if either class were to be saved (v. 20).

V. Application of the Gift, 3:21-4:25

Paul gathered up his argument under the preceding division in one concentrated sentence: "**By the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified** (whether Jew or Gentile); **for by the law is the knowledge** (i. e., the moral knowledge) **of sin.**"

The more, and better, a man knows the law, the more, and better, he knows what a sinner he is. The Jew thought he knew the law but he did not, as all his history proved.

He is represented as surprised at the apostle's declaration that one cannot be justified by keeping it. Where shall one obtain a righteousness if not by the law? Paul tells him where. He tells him of a righteousness of GOD entirely apart from, independent of the law altogether (v. 21). What righteousness is it? Verse 22 answers.

That which comes through faith in JESUS CHRIST, a righteousness given unto and put "**upon**

all them that believe," whether Jew or Gentile, "**for there is no difference**" between them.

In this connection observe verse 25 very particularly, to see what that is concerning JESUS CHRIST on which saving faith rests. It is not His earthly life, character or example merely, glorious and holy as they were, but His death. Propitiation means "*a price of expiation*," and this price was His blood.

This explains, Paul says, why GOD bore with sinners in the past, why He forbore them. It was because of what He had eternally purposed, and now made manifest in CHRIST (v. 26).

This allusion finds illustration and emphasis in chapter 4.

Go back a moment to 3:21. Did some Israelite take exception that this doctrine of righteousness by faith was new? Nay, the apostle answers that it is old. It is found in the Old Testament, it is "**witnessed by the law and the prophets.**"

And did they ask where or how it was so witnessed? Chapter 4 replies by pointing to the case of Abraham under the general head of the law, and David under the prophets. Both of these distinguished representatives of the Jewish nation and Jewish religion were justified by faith and, Both by the deeds of the law.

VI. Effect of the Gift Upon Man in His Relation to GOD, Chapter 5

Being justified by faith, being thus declared righteous in point of law, what is the effect of this new and blessed relationship into which man is brought? It is one of "**peace with God**" (5:1), "**access**," (v. 2), and joy or "**rejoicing**" (same verse). Moreover, this rejoicing is described as rejoicing "**in hope of the glory of God**" (v. 2), in "**tribulations**" (v. 3), and in "**God**" Himself (v. 11).

The latter half of this chapter corroborates and strengthens the declaration of the former half by a comparison between the imputation of Adam's sin to the race and that of CHRIST's righteousness to His people (vv. 12-21).

Here surely, are some of "**the deep things of God**," some of "**the things hard to be understood**" in our brother Paul's writings, but which are to be accepted as the other things have been accepted, as CHRIST Himself is accepted, by faith.

To quote Bishop Moule again, we are to remember as another fact of the case, that this division of the chapter deals only incidentally with Adam after all. Its main theme is CHRIST. Adam is the illustration, CHRIST is the subject. We are to be shown in Adam, by contrast, some of "**the unsearchable riches of Christ.**" So that our main attention is called not to the brief outline of the mystery of the fall (vv. 12-14), but to the assertions of the related splendor of the redemption (vv. 15-21).

Paul closed the last division of his Epistle to the Romans with a triumphant paean to the reign of grace.

Where sin abounded, i. e., "in the place, the region of fallen humanity," there did grace much more abound, it was equal to the emergency, meeting and overcoming the foe in the case of them that believe.

But this might lead to a false and impious conclusion. If the more sin abounded the more grace, would it not magnify the grace to continue, even after justification, in the commission of sin? The apostle meets this objection in the next division of his treatise, where he shows that the fruit of justification by faith, in the believer's experience, is that of personal holiness.

We might designate the next division, therefore, as

VII. Effect of the Gift Upon Man in His Own Experience, Chapters 6-8

This truth the apostle sets before us in a gradational series of reflections.

In the first place, he shows in chapter 6, that by means of justification man has been brought into a new sphere of existence altogether, where, in the sight of GOD, he is now dead to sin and alive unto GOD (v. 2).

The meaning of verse 3 seems to be, that, so closely is the believer identified with the Lord JESUS CHRIST in GOD's mind and plan, that when the Saviour died to sin, died to it in the sense that He paid its penalty and it could never again bring Him into the place of judgment, the believer died (in Him) to it in precisely the same way.

Verse 4 is to be interpreted also on the same principle. When the Lord JESUS CHRIST rose from the dead into newness of life, especially with reference to sin and its eternal consequences, the believer is regarded as having risen with Him, and as now walking before GOD judicially on the plane of resurrection. It is the duty of the believer to hold to this truth by faith, whether he understands or experiences it or not (v. 11). It is the pedestal upon which he rises into an apprehension of his real power over the sins of the flesh (vv. 12-14).

But the apostle proceeding to the second stage of development in his part of his argument, shows, in chapter 7, that the justified man is not only brought into a new sphere of existence, but is also actually undergoing a new experience - an experience of conflict with sin in the flesh.

The last half of the chapter, say from verse 14 onward, lays emphasis on this.

Paul is doubtless giving us his own experience there at some period of his religious life, or at least the experience of some typical man, awakened to a knowledge of sin, regenerated let us say, saved by grace, and yet living on a low plane of experience and knowledge of the truth. Justified by faith is he, and because of that very fact, he is undergoing a spiritual struggle unknown to him before. While living in an unjustified state, his central choice was for self, but now, even in its failures, it is for GOD. Yet that mysterious other self is latent still, and asserts itself in awful reality at times where he is off his guard. It puts him to torture and shame, and he cries out in the agony of his soul. Is there no balm in Gilead?- is there no physician near? O, wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from, or out of this body of death? He answers his own question, when he says, "**Thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord**

Jesus Christ."

This leads very naturally to the third and last stage in the development of this part of his theme in which he is showing the way to holiness, or, as we have described it, the effect of the gift of GOD's righteousness upon man in his own experience.

- it makes him personally holy, first, by bringing him into a new sphere of action or existence (chap. 6).
- secondly, by awakening within him the consciousness of a new experience, that of internal conflict with sin (chap. 7); and
- thirdly, by putting within him a new possession, the HOLY GHOST, through whom he is able to overcome in the conflict, and make that death to sin real in his life and conduct which is already real of him judicially, in the sight of GOD.

This third point is elaborated in chapter 8, whose relation to the preceding chapter is very clear and beautiful.

Here the HOLY SPIRIT is present everywhere as the secret of victory over sin. The chapter begins with a deep re-assertion of our justification, and then unfolds the work of the indwelling Spirit in our sanctification, and finally our glorification, bringing us back again to the point of departure in chapter 5.

How does the HOLY SPIRIT accomplish this?

- first, by setting us free from the law of sin and death (8:2), so that we willingly walk after the Spirit (vv. 3-5);
- secondly, by quickening our mortal bodies day by day, so that we are able to mortify (make to die) the deeds of the flesh in us (vv. 9-13);
- thirdly, by leading us as the sons of GOD (vv. 14, 15);
- fourthly, by witnessing within us concerning our position and heirship in CHRIST (vv. 16, 17);
- fifthly, by praying in us (vv. 26, 27), etc.

We thus see that as the effect of the gift of GOD's righteousness upon man in his relations to GOD is to make him personally acceptable to GOD, its effect in his own experience is to make him personally holy.

VIII. Relation of the Gift to Israel as a Nation, Chapters 9-11

That which follows in this Epistle, in chapters 9-11, is frequently regarded as a kind of parenthesis.

The apostle interrupts the flow of this main line of argument to discourse for a while of his own beloved Israel. It seems so hard that they, by their own blindness and unbelief, should be left out of the distribution of GOD's blessings of grace, and the Gentiles, who had never been His people in the same sense as they were, should be the recipients of them.

Moreover,

- what was the effect of the situation on the Jews themselves?
- how would they regard such a Gospel?
- could they believe it to be true? And if true, did it not make the GOD and the promises to them of the Old Testament untrue?

Before he can proceed further, therefore, the great apostle must discourse of these things.

- he must pour out the love of his heart for his people.
- he must remind them that GOD's promises to them still hold true, and shall be fulfilled.
- he must exhort them once more to believe.
- he must seek to arouse their holy jealousy to do so. And
- he must, at the same time, curb and restrain the pride and boasting of the Gentiles against them.

He begins this section with an outburst of sorrow over the situation (9:1-5).

He next defends the truth of GOD even though so many of Israel are left out (vv. 6-13).

He next defends His righteousness in leaving them out (vv. 14-18), and His wisdom as well (vv. 19-29).

In the fourth place, he defines the reason, from the human side at least, why they are left out, throwing the responsibility upon themselves (vv. 30-33).

Chapter 10 seems like a parenthesis within a parenthesis. He breaks off in the argumentative part of his discourse

- to once more express the sorrow of his heart for Israel (v. 1)
- to acknowledge the good that is in them (v. 2),
- to point out their error (v. 3),
- to set before them the truth (v. 4),
- to urge it upon their acceptance (vv. 5-13), and
- expostulate with them for turning their backs upon it (vv. 14-21).

He then returns to his main thought about Israel.

The people were cast away indeed, but not all of them (11:1-6).

There was an election of grace. There were some, the believing ones, saved under the Gospel, while others were blinded (vv. 7-10). But this blindness of Israel as a nation is not a perpetual blindness, even as all the prophets foretold (v. 11). Moreover, in the meantime, there is a blessing in it for the Gentiles, (same verse). Their restoration to GOD's favor (their fulness) is coming by and by, however, and that will mean a still greater blessing to the Gentiles (vv. 12-15). In the meantime the Gentiles are not to boast (vv. 16-22); for Israel can be taken back again into GOD's favor as easily as the Gentiles received that favor (vv. 23, 24); and that is, indeed, what assuredly shall come to pass (vv. 25-32).

This is wonderful, indeed, but we who are familiar with the story of the Old Testament prophets

are not surprised at it.

Well may we say, however, as doth the apostle, **"O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of GOD!"**

IX. Effect of the Gift Upon Man in His Relation to Others, Chapters 12-15

It is neither Jew nor Gentile, as such, whom Paul has in mind in the closing section of the Epistle which we have now reached, but both of these classes again as they are found in the church, and as he has been dealing with them in the first eight chapters.

He has come to the practical application of his great theme, and as he has shown its bearing upon man in his relation to GOD, and in his own experience, it is necessary in order to round out and conclude the whole, to show its bearing upon him in his relation to his fellow-men. This he now does.

As he stands related to GOD, the justified man has been brought into a state of grace where before he was abiding in a state of wrath. As far as his own experience is concerned, he is now in a state of holiness, where before he was in a state of sin. And as far as his relation to others is concerned, he is now in a state of love where before he was in a state of selfishness.

How is he to show his gratitude to GOD for all His blessings (12:1, 2)?

You will observe it is out of this presentation of his body to GOD, which, in turn, is his expression of gratitude to GOD, that there spring all those kindly and loving relationships to his fellowmen, by which the justified man shows the effect of the gift of GOD's righteousness to him.

And what are some of these relationships as specified by the apostle:

- (1) Meekness and humility in the exercise of spiritual gifts (vv. 3-8).
- (2) Love and kindness in the general duties of personal conduct (vv. 13-21).
- (3) Subjection to human authority (13:1-14).
- (4) Consideration of the weak disciple (14:1-15:7).

Some would include verses 8-13 in the last-named general division of the Epistle, and begin the "conclusion" at verse 14.

But it seems to me that the great theme of the treatise is practically closed at verse 7, and that the first half-dozen verses following are to be regarded partly as a summing up of the preceding, and partly leading up to the conclusion with its commendations and benedictions.

~ end of Lesson 6 ~
