

Week 29

Romans / Προς Ῥωμαίων / to the Romans

Romans was written by Paul sometime near 57 CE, it was probably dictated while in Corinth near the end of his 3rd missionary journey. Romans is Paul's longest epistle, and more than any other NT book, it provides us with something close to a theology of Christian belief.

In terms of its place in the Church throughout the ages...The letter played a major role in the conversions of Augustine, Wesley, and was a major influence (along with Galatians) in Luther's decision to break with the Church of Rome. The book of Romans is considered by most scholars, as the most influential of Paul's epistles. And today, if there were a poll in favorite chapters in the Bible, Romans 8 would win hands down. (Though I'm more of a Romans 3 or 5 guy)

Paul's unambiguous themes (of universality of sin and the subsequent need for salvation (1-3), how it is we are saved – justification by faith (3:21-5:21), our freedom from sin through Jesus (6) our freedom from the law (7), our life in the Spirit (8), predestination (9-11) and the practical theology/ethics (12-16) are at the core of our understanding of the gospel and the life to which we are called.

Eat Up. Oh... and by the way, we will go longer and slower with our walk through Romans.

One caveat – this goes for all scripture – We need to be careful not to force our theological priorities on someone who wrote 2000 years ago. All you have to do is compare the theology in Galatians with that of James for it to become clear that different circumstances cause us to prioritize different beliefs.

Sunday, June 12th Romans 1:16-32

For Reflection: You can see fourfold structure to chapter 1: a greeting (1-7), a thanksgiving (8-15), a thematic summary (16-17), and then we plunge into the universality of sin (18- 32). *When are you ashamed of your Savior, or the gospel? (16-17). What aspects of creation declare most clearly the creator to you (20)? Given current events, how infected with evil are we?*

Lagniappe: Psalm 19:1-6 and Psalm 14:1-3

Monday, June 13th Romans 2:1-11 & 17-24

For Reflection: Again, we are in a section in which Paul is stating his understanding of the universality of sin. In chapter 1 the focus is what we might think of as the sin of sinners. In chapter 2 the focus is on the sin of the religious. The result is the same in each chapter – judgement. *Does it surprise you that Paul dedicates the entire 2nd chapter to the sin of those who claim to not sin. An entire*

chapter to the sins we have not historically focused on in the church - hmmm. "God does not show favoritism." How does Paul's chapter 2 focus make you feel?

Lagniappe: Isaiah 29:13 (high hard cheese- be careful)

Tuesday, June 14th Romans 3:9-20

For Reflection: This section marks the conclusion of Paul's teaching on the universality of sin - good news coming tomorrow. A lot of no-one's, alls and not even one's here. Paul buttresses his teaching and gives authority to his arguments by calling in David as his witness (10-18). *Are ALL unrighteous apart from Christ?*

Lagniappe: Psalms 53:1-3 (That sounds familiar – curious.)¹

Wednesday, June 15th Romans 3:21-31

For Reflection: Here is one of the big "buts" of the Bible – maybe the biggest. Though these verses be few they are fierce – with apologies to Willy Shakes. These verses are cited as conversion causing / repentance producing verses for Martin Luther, John Wesley, and Karl Barth. Apparently, God uses this passage. Grace and faith are lifted up as the only way to righteousness and justification before God. *Has grace and faith transformed your life? If so how? If not, I'm pretty sure Paul is saying that you are trusting in faulty foundations.*

Lagniappe: Psalm 32:1-2

Thursday, June 16th Romans 4

For Reflection: It seems to me that the great spiritual disease in our time, or any time, is not the failure to obey, it is the failure to believe.² Obedience would come as a matter of course if we simply believed/trusted. Do you believe?

Lagniappe: John 11:25-26 - Jesus' words to a grieving friend

Friday, June 17th Romans 5

For Reflection: *How has God used/redeemed sufferings in your life?* When I need to feel gratitude (a great anti-depressant) I read Romans 5:6-8. *If someone asked you, how they might get right with God – what would you say?*

Lagniappe: Psalm 31:1-2

¹ See Sunday's lagniappe - Psalm 14:1-3,

² This is the major premise of a book entitled *The Cure* by Lynch, McNicol and Thrall

Saturday, June 18th Romans 6

For Reflection: This is a challenging chapter to understand. I find it helps to start with the big picture. Paul, in his letters, is worried about two errors: 1) Making justification and righteousness synonymous – thus if justification and sanctification are the same thing, then we are saved by our works. 2) Making justification and sanctification antithetical – thus you must love one, and hate the other. The second error is Paul's chief concern in this chapter. The faith Paul proclaims is neither a minor tweak of Jewish legalism, nor a "convenient" rejection of our call to holiness. *Which is easier for you to embrace the grace of justification or the challenging call to holiness?* Ultimately, Paul says we have two hands, so hold on to both, but it's helpful to know which requires more intentionality from you. For Paul sanctification isn't a matter of spiritual will, it's a matter of freedom from sin

Lagniappe: Leviticus 19:2 & 1 Peter 1:15-16