

Paul's Letter to the Romans: An Overview

Teacher's Guide

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This study is part of a full graduate-level course on Pauline Literature taught by Dr. Ian Bond. The complete Student Outline and the lectures in MP3 format, are available for purchase and download from Teach the Nations, Inc.

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I. OUTLINE OF ROMANS

A. Chapters 1-8

1. Sin (1:1-3:20) — Starts the letter by looking at sin in the city of Rome and reminds both groups that they are sinners.
 - a. Jews are no better than GENTILES, Gentiles are not better than JEWS.
2. Justification (3:21-5:21) — He covers the way in which guilty sinners can be declared innocent saints before God.
 - a. Jew and Gentile can get right with God and both are “JUSTIFIED” in the same way—by FAITH.
 - i. The same blood saves them, so there is no need to argue about who is more important.
3. Licence and legalism (6-7)
 - a. Gentiles were prone to LICENCE and Jews were prone to LEGALISM.
 - i. Licence occurs when Christians mistakenly believe that their freedom in Christ allows them to ignore divine laws.
 - ii. Legalism causes Christians to believe that keeping the Law gives them merit before God.
 - b. Chapter 6: Paul deals with licence—reminds them that when they were BAPTIZED they recognized that sin had no more DOMINION over them.
 - c. Chapter 7: Paul deals with legalism as it relates to his own difficulties in KEEPING the LAW—especially the command not to COVET.
4. Liberty (8)
 - a. Paul writes about the liberty of the SPIRIT and explains how it UNITES both Jew and Gentile.

B. Chapters 9-11

1. The discussion about the place of the JEWS is crucial to the whole letter.
 - a. The Gentiles were tempted to think that they were the NEW ISRAEL, having REPLACED the Jewish people, who were now out of God's purposes.

C. Chapters 12-16

1. Deals with practical areas of CONDUCT, but focuses on those issues that will cause tension between JEWISH and GENTILE believers.
 - a. Food — Gentiles were comfortable eating food that was non-kosher or had been offered to idols.
 - b. Observing a special day in the week — The Jews kept a Sabbath (Saturday) as their special day and the Gentiles didn't keep a special day at all.
 - i. Paul explains that it is entirely a matter of choice.

II. ISRAEL IN PAUL'S THEOLOGY

A. Israel's PAST selection (Chapter 9)

1. Paul expresses his deep sadness for his people.
 - a. He would be willing to go to hell if it would mean them getting to heaven.
 - b. He explains that, although they had everything going for them, they had still rejected the one whom God had sent.
2. Paul uses examples from Israel's history to illustrate God's special selection of Israel:
 - a. Ishmael and Isaac — Isaac was selected above the older Ishmael.
 - i. Abraham had tried to arrange his own future through his union with Hagar, but God's promise of a son still stands.
 - b. Jacob and Esau — once again, the youngest inherited the blessing, rather than the older, despite the fact that he was the rogue of the two.

- c. Moses and Pharaoh — Paul explains God’s hand in the hardening of Pharaoh’s heart, implying that God chose to do so in response to Pharaoh’s own reluctance to go God’s way.
 - d. Gentiles and Jews — God has also chosen the Gentiles and, for a time, has “rejected” the Jews.
 - 3. Summary of Paul’s teaching on predestination.
 - a. God is under no obligation to be merciful to anyone.
 - b. God chooses for a purpose—that he may display his wrath and his judgment.
 - c. Those chosen for justice deserve it (e.g. Pharaoh was given repeated chances to change his mind). Those chosen for mercy do not deserve it.
- B. Israel’s **PRESENT** stubbornness (Romans 10)
- 1. On the human side we have a responsibility to live in a right relationship with God; but we have two choices:
 - a. **WORKS** (the Law)—Trust by the **LAW**.
 - i. By this method we seek to produce our own righteousness.
 - ii. This is doomed to failure—but this is the general approach of the Jewish nation.
 - b. **WORDS** (the Gospel)—Trust in the **LORD**.
 - i. By this method God’s righteousness is provided for us.
 - ii. We accept our inability to keep the Law, and we look to the one who has kept the Law in its entirety.
- C. Israel’s **FUTURE** salvation (Romans 11)
- 1. God has always preserved a **REMNANT**.
 - 2. It is true that **SOME** Jews have been hardened, but this does not mean that the people as a whole have fallen **BEYOND RECOVERY**.
 - 3. Therefore, Gentiles should not be **SMUG** about their welcome into the covenant people of God.
 - a. For just as the Jews have been “broken off,” so can they, and just as they were grafted in—so can the Jews be once again...and one day they will.

III. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

A. Summary of Romans

1. Prologue – Paul’s message – from JEW to GENTILE
2. Saved in the same way
 - a. RIGHTEOUSNESS from God
 - i. Judgment for the SINNER under WRATH
 - ii. Justification for the SAINT through FAITH
 - b. RECONCILIATION through Christ
 - i. Death as sin’s PENALTY — he died for sinners
 - ii. Dominion of sin’s POWER — we died to sin
 - c. RENEWAL in the Holy Spirit
 - i. Bondage of LAW in the FLESH — defeat and despair
 - ii. Freedom of LIFE in the SPIRIT — conquest and confidence
3. Belong to the same God
 - a. In the past Israel was SELECTED
 - b. In the present Israel is STUBBORN
 - c. In the future Israel will be SAVED
4. Live in the same world
 - a. Their PERSONAL bearing—in service and suffering
 - b. Their PUBLIC behavior—in state and society
 - c. Their PRACTICAL brotherhood—in scruples and song
5. Epilogue — Paul’s method — WORD, SIGN, and DEED
6. Individual greetings

B. Conclusion

1. In addressing the difficult issue of Church unity, Romans provides insights into how the Church should develop from its Jewish roots, while at the same time providing clarity on key issues of faith for God’s people in every generation.

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2. Romans is a masterpiece of clear, logical thinking, and many scholars feel that it is the finest of Paul's writings.
3. Many Christians have memorized Romans—such is the esteem in which it is held.
 - a. It is thus a key book for any believer to grasp.
 - b. I urge you to read it and re-read it until you grasp its message.

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