

## CJ'S CITY – 21 MAY 2006: THE MESSAGE OF ROMANS

TEXT: ROMANS 1-17

### **INTRODUCTION:**

The Epistle of Paul to the Romans is undoubtedly the most powerful human document that has ever been written.

It is pure gold from beginning to end.

1. St. Augustine<sup>1</sup>, whose shadow has loomed large over the church since the fourth century, was converted by reading just a few verses of the 13th chapter of the book of Romans.

2. Martin Luther<sup>2</sup>, studying the writings of Augustine, came to an understanding of

---

#### <sup>1</sup> **St. Augustine of Hippo, Saint / Theologian**

- . **Born:** 13 November 354
- . **Birthplace:** Modern-day Algeria
- . **Died:** 430
- . **Best Known As:** Influential Christian thinker

Name at birth: Aurelius Augustinus

Augustine was born in a Roman province and educated at Carthage. As a young man he became interested in philosophy, with little interest in Christianity until a religious experience in his early thirties. By 396 he had become bishop of Hippo, and his sermons and writings gained fame, notably his *Confessions* and the treatise *City of God*. His notions of God's grace, free will and Original Sin had a great influence on Christian theology.

#### <sup>2</sup> **Martin Luther, Theologian**

- . **Born:** 10 November 1483
- . **Birthplace:** Eisleben, Germany
- . **Died:** 18 February 1546
- . **Best Known As:** German monk who started Protestant Reformation

Without quite intending to, Martin Luther changed the course of Christianity and Western history. His 1517 complaint against specific abuses in the Roman Catholic church -- a document now known as the 95 Theses -- sparked the explosive Protestant Reformation that swept Europe for the rest of the century. Born to a Roman Catholic family (his father was a copper miner), Luther graduated from the University of Erfurt in 1505 but abandoned his legal studies to enter a monastery devoted to [St. Augustine](#). He was ordained to the priesthood in 1507 and by 1512 was a doctor of theology and a Bible professor at the University of Wittenberg. Luther was a gifted preacher but his theology began to clash with that of the Catholic church: he wrote that salvation came not by any human work but by absolute faith in God's promise of forgiveness on account of [Jesus Christ](#). Luther didn't anticipate the uproar touched off by the 95 Theses he sent to a bishop and archbishop to protest "indulgences" being sold by the Catholic hierarchy. His controversial beliefs earned him excommunication from the church, but he pressed on with many new followers. Luther produced the first reader-friendly German translation of the Bible and developed a new form of Christian worship that emphasized preaching and popular hymns, permitted the clergy to marry, and honored

faith. The 16th verse of the very first chapter of the letter spoke volumes to Luther's heart as he thought and meditated on the great phrase, "The righteous shall live by faith." This book's effect on Luther ushered in the great Protestant Reformation, the greatest awakening that our world has seen since the days of the apostles.

3. John Bunyan<sup>3</sup>, studying Romans in the Bedford jail, was so caught up by the themes of this great letter that out of it he penned *Pilgrim's Progress*, which has taught many people how a Christian relates to the world in which he lives.

4. As you know, John Wesley, listening one day to Luther's preface to the commentary on Romans, found his own heart strangely warmed and out of that came the great evangelical awakening of the eighteenth century.

5. My own life was totally transformed as I heard the word of God in Romans 3, especially verse 23

Perhaps that will whet our appetites as we come to this great epistle.

## Background:

---

ordinary life in the world as a field for God's service.

Extra credit: In 1525, Luther married a former nun, Katharina (Katherine) von Bora, sixteen years younger than he. They had six children . . . Luther's hymn, "A Mighty Fortress is our God" (circa 1529), has been translated into more than 50 languages . . . It is likely that Luther nailed his 95 Theses to the door of the castle church in Wittenberg, but historians disagree on that story's accuracy... Yes, the Lutheran church is named for Luther.

### <sup>3</sup> **John Bunyan, Writer / Religious Figure**

- . **Born:** November 1628
- . **Birthplace:** Elstow, Bedfordshire, England
- . **Died:** 31 August 1688
- . **Best Known As:** Author of *The Pilgrim's Progress*

John Bunyan's 17th-century book *The Pilgrim's Progress* is classic literature's most famous Christian allegory. Bunyan grew up in a village outside Bedford, England, the son of a tinker (or brazier -- a mender of metal household utensils). Initially he followed his father's trade, but in the late 1640s a spiritual awakening caused Bunyan to give up his "ungodly" ways and become a devoted student of biblical scripture. By the end of the 1650s he was a popular preacher and prolific writer who used plain language to spell out a theology in the tradition of [Martin Luther](#) and [John Calvin](#). He was a prominent member of a nonconformist Baptist church in Bedford until his refusal to give up preaching without a license led to his imprisonment in 1660. He spent the next twelve years in jail, preaching to inmates and writing sermons, poems, essays and books. After his release he published the first of several editions of *The Pilgrim's Progress* (1678), an allegory in which a character named Christian encounters various perils on his way to Heaven. An entertaining read and Protestant teaching tool, the book became a standard of English literature and one of the most reprinted religious texts in the world. Bunyan's other books include *The Holy City* (1665), *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners* (1666) and *The Holy War* (1682).

## **The Occasion and Purpose of Writing Romans**

- **Enable believers to be confident of and clearly communicate the Gospel.**

Paul had not established the church at Rome and had no apostles there. Therefore he wanted to make sure they were on the right theological track. He gave them systematic teaching of the Christian faith.

- **Help Christians to clearly communicate the Gospel with others.**

They lived under Caesar in the powerful Roman empire sometimes with persecution. He encouraged them to keep steadfast under pressures and showed them the relationship they have with the empire and Roman culture.

- **Share with the Roman church that his visit will be delayed and short.**

He was returning from his 3rd missionary journey to deliver an offering from the Gentiles to the poverty-stricken Jews at Jerusalem (15:25-28).

Romans was a letter in which he made preparation with the Romans for his 4th missionary journey to Rome and the West (Spain).

- **Excite them with the great worldwide plans of God.**

The Jews were regularly interfering with the expansion of the gospel to the Gentiles. Paul gave them a proper theological perspective on the relationship between the Jews and the Gentiles so they could vigorously spread God's kingdom.

## **Paul, the Author of Romans**

- Steeped in Old Testament teachings; Pharisee of Pharisees (Phil 3:5).
- Logical thought; from age 13 trained by Gamaliel according to law (Ac 22:3)
- Both parents were Jews and yet were Roman citizens (Acts 22:25-29).
- Born in Tarsus of Cilicia but brought up in Jerusalem (Ac 22:3)
- Highly committed and motivated: Dramatic conversion (Ac 22:5-10).
- Suffered intensely (II Co 11:23-27).

### **The Church at Rome: the addressee**

- 'Beloved of God' indicates their confession of Christ (Ro 1:7)
- They lived in Rome.
- The church was known for its strength and influence throughout the world (Ro 1:8)
- Composed of Jews (Ro 2:17, 4:12) and Gentiles (Ro 11, 15:15-16)
- Possessed characteristics of an urban setting (Gromacki, p. 179)
- They lived in a heathen, idolatrous, lust-oriented society.

### **The Time and Place of Writing Romans**

- Paul wrote Romans after he wrote the 2 Corinthian epistles (Ro 15:26).
- Paul wrote it during his brief stay at Corinth around 55-56 AD (Gromacki, p. 180)
- Phoebe probably carried it there.

### **Rome**

That Rome was founded in 753 BC is a fanciful legend more than objective history. Rome was located on the Tiber river 15 miles in from the sea.

Over time the swamps and mounds gradually were built up and so known as 'The City of Seven Hills'.

In NT times the population hovered over a million with some placing it about 4 million. There were about 420 temples to Roman gods and gods of conquered people. A good-sized colony of Jews lived there.

### **ROMANS OUTLINE:**

#### **IN THE INTRODUCTION, FOUND IN THE FIRST 17 VERSES,**

Paul writes to us about Christ, about the Roman Christians and about himself.

As in every good introduction, he declares here the major themes of the letter.

The letter itself is divided into three major divisions (1-8; 9-11; 12-16) These divisions grow naturally out of one another.

## SECTION 1

**Chapters 1-8** As we shall see, the first eight chapters are doctrinal explanations of what God is doing with man; how he redeems the total man -- body, soul and spirit.

### JUSTIFICATION<sup>4</sup> INSTANT!

***It is a legal act of God, at the instant we believe in Christ, in which God:***

- (1) ...forgives our sins,
- (2) ...imputes the righteousness of Christ to us,
- (3) ...declares us to be righteous in His sight, thereby
- (4) ...delivering us forever from all condemnation, guaranteeing for us a title to heaven.

### SANCTIFICATION<sup>5</sup> PROGRESSIVE!

***It is a progressive work of a divine partnership between God and man:***

- (1) ...that makes us more and more free from sin
- (2) ...and builds us towards a Christ-like character
- (3) ...rooted on the Agape Love of God

## DISTINCT DIFFERENCE BETWEEN JUSTIFICATION AND SANCTIFICATION

### *Justification*

### *Sanctification*

*Legal Standing*

*Internal condition*

*Instant and once and for all  
out life*

*Progressive and continuous through*

*All God's Work*

*We work in partnership with Him*

*Perfect in this life (Just as if you never sinned)*

*Being perfected in this life*

*Equal in all Christians*

*Greater in some than in others*

### GLORIFICATION<sup>6</sup> FINAL

---

<sup>4</sup> Grudem, Wayne, Systematic Theology, pp. 722-3

<sup>5</sup> Ibid, pp.746-7

Glorification is the final step in the application of redemption, the steps are:

Predestined, Called, Justified, Sanctified, and Glorified

Glorification will happen when Christ returns and raises from the dead the bodies of all believers for all time who died, and reunites them with their spirits and souls, and changes the bodies of all believers who remain alive, thereby giving all believers at the same time perfect resurrection bodies like his own.

### **CHAPTERS 9-11 (ISRAEL AS AN ILLUSTRATION)**

### **CHAPTERS 12-16 (APPLICATION OF THE MIGHTY TRUTHS)**

Thus, the book covers all of life. If you will remember that simple outline you will have a key to the book of Romans.

#### **CHRIST**

The first major theme is about Christ, because there is no Christianity without him. Christianity is not a creed; it is a life -- a life to be lived again in you. Therefore, you must learn about Christ.

That is the theme of the letter and it is the note with which it begins.

#### **ROMAN CHRISTIANS**

Next, Paul writes about the Roman Christians because they are just like us. In fact, this is the central problem with which Christianity grapples -- human beings like you and me. All that is described about them in this letter is true of us, as everything that is true of us was true of them.

#### **PAUL "EXHIBIT A"**

Third, Paul writes about himself because he is the pattern of what Christ will do; he is "Exhibit A," a living example of God's grace. All this is simply to make visible and clear to us what God intends to do in Christ.

This letter requires a summary treatment. (Main Themes and Principle Thoughts)

But Romans moves in such a logical development that the best way to handle it is to trace

---

<sup>6</sup> Ibid, pp.828-9

through the argument, without getting bogged down in details, so that we might see the devastating logic by which the apostle develops his theme.

**When we are through, we will see how magnificently he has captured all the mighty truths of the Gospel for us.**

Romans 1:16

**I am not ashamed of the gospel: it is the power of God ... {Rom 1:16a RSV}**

Who would be ashamed of the power of God, the greatest force possible in the universe, at work in the gospel?

The Power

- Transforms life
- Brings purpose for living

That is the Gospel

**... it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who has faith, to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. {Rom 1:16b RSV}**

Paul will show us why as we go along, for in the Gospel,

**Key Verse: A Quote from OT, the Book of Habakkuk**

**...the righteousness of God is revealed through faith for faith; as it is written, He who through faith is righteous shall live. {Rom 1:17b RSV}**

That is Paul's theme -- the righteousness of God, which is revealed in the gospel.

That, therefore, brings us to the message itself -- the gospel which the apostle will preach to the Christians, and thus reach all the nations. This is what Paul says of the gospel in Verses 16 and 17:

**I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes; first for the Jew, then for the Gentile. For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: "The righteous will live by faith." (Romans 1:16-17 NIV)**

This quotation from Habakkuk that Paul uses is the Scripture that gripped Martin Luther's heart. Paul says that this is the great fact that he is expounding in the gospel. He is not ashamed of it, he says, and that is a way of saying that he is proud of it. He can't wait to get to Rome.

Paul especially is not ashamed of the gospel in Rome because the Romans appreciated power, just as the British, the rest of the Western world do. The Romans prided themselves on their power.

Military Power:

- They had military power that could conquer all the nations that stood in their path;

Road Network

- They had a tremendous program of road-building;

Legal Structure

- They had some of the greatest law-makers of history;

Literature and Art

- They had the power to write literature and create art.

Despite all that power the Romans were powerless

- But Paul knew that the Romans also were powerless when it came to changing hearts.
- They were powerless to eliminate slavery; half of the population of the Roman Empire were slaves.
- They were powerless to change the stubborn, hostile, hateful hearts of men and eliminate violence; the Roman Empire was full of violence and corruption and the suicide rate was extremely high. The Romans could do nothing about these things.

Military Power

The British Military is one of the top 10 in the world

## Economic Power<sup>7</sup>

- London's £165bn (17%) economy is larger than most EU's countries, the UK stands at \$2,295bn
- 481 Foreign Banks
- Over 50 % of EU-based investment
- World's largest fund management (£3.000bn) and international insurance (£22bn)
- Media<sup>8</sup>
- Advertising and Communications: London the largest network of telecommunication service companies in Europe
- Fashion and Design: 85% of the UK fashion designers are based in London
- Business Services: - 750,000 employed in London, renewed expansion expected
- Tourism: 2<sup>nd</sup> Largest and fast growing industry in London

## Intellectual/Rational Power<sup>9</sup>

Elevation of Reason over everything else including God, "over himself, over his own body and mind, the individual is sovereign,"

## Medical Power

Road Network, the UK has one of the most advanced road networks in the world

## Soft Power<sup>10</sup>

Despite all that power the London is powerless

---

<sup>7</sup> Source: London.gov.uk

<sup>8</sup> Source: London-first.co.uk

<sup>9</sup> Mill, John Stuart

<sup>10</sup> "co-opting people rather than coercing them" Soft power is the ability to get what you want by attracting and persuading others to adopt your goals. Nye, Joseph

It needs a Spiritual, Moral and Cultural Renaissance

- Breakdown of family units (Divorce Capital of Europe)
- Crime
- Unwanted pregnancies
- Unemployment
- Drugs
- Homelessness
- Loneliness

And Paul says that is why he is so proud of the gospel -- because it is the power of God to do those very things that men cannot do. We never need to apologize for the gospel. It is absolutely without rival...

Second, Paul is not ashamed of the gospel because it reveals a righteousness from God. Righteousness is an old word that we don't understand very much.

I would like to substitute for it the word *worth*, a worth before God. A sense of acceptance before God is given to you. You can't earn it, you certainly don't deserve it, but it is given. God really accepts you because of the gospel, because of the good news of the work of Jesus Christ on our behalf.

Therefore, it is something that you, or I, or anybody else can have, and it is complete, perfect. That is what Paul is going to be talking about throughout the book of Romans -- the gospel of God.

The last thing Paul says is that this righteousness is received by faith. It is not something we can ever earn; it is something we can take anytime we need it, and that is good news.

Our worth before God is not something we receive once, by faith, at the beginning of our Christian lives. It is something we remind ourselves of every time we feel depressed, despairing, discouraged, defeated, etc. God has loved us, restored us, and we have perfect standing in his sight.

He already accepts us and loves us as much as he possibly can; nothing more can be added to it. That is the righteousness that is revealed in the gospel, by faith, to all who

believe, no matter what their background or training may be.

These are the great themes of Romans. As we go through this book together, I hope these themes will have their effect upon our hearts as they had an effect upon the hearts of many in the 1st century church.<sup>11</sup>

---

<sup>11</sup> Ray C. Stedman, <http://pbc.org/dp/stedman/romans2/>