

OUTLINE OF ROMANS

In order to understand Paul's letter to the Romans, one must know why he wrote the letter.

Paul's letter was written as a result of a problem that had arisen in the church. It involved a controversy between two factions which made up the Church, the Jews and Gentiles. These two parties were judging and contending with one another which chapter 14 definitely shows to be true. The controversy, however, amounts to more than contending about foods and days, etc. It had to do with the Jews apparently trying to impose circumcision on the Gentile converts at Rome. This is shown in many places in the letter itself in the manner in which Paul brings in the matter of circumcision. When we understand the nature and attitude of the Jews, we will not find it difficult to comprehend this point.

In ch. 10:3, Paul shows that Israel was ignorant of God's righteousness and went about to establish their own righteousness. The Jews were given the law, yet did not obey it (Rom. 2:21-24). Notice what Christ thought of the Jews in His day (Luke 18:9, 16:15). They honor Him with their lips, but their hearts are far from Him (Mark 7:7). In their self-righteousness, they made rules of their own concerning physical cleanliness, being meticulous in tithing, etc., but they forgot the really important matters of honest judgment, love of God, etc. (Luke 11:39,42).

So, the Jews were making physical circumcision and the keeping of ritualistic laws the all important thing as the way to be righteous. We find that even after conversion, some were clinging to the old way (Acts 15:1) just as some do today when coming out of the pagan churches of this world and into God's true Church. Paul was even entreated to go through the rite of purification in order to show some of the newly converted Jews that he did not teach against the law of Moses. ~~Acts 21:24~~

And so as we go through Romans, we will see that the Jews (or some of them at least) were creating dissension in the church by trying to impose circumcision on the Gentiles. They were almost completely leaving Christ out of the picture. Remember, Christ was the great stumbling block to the Jews (Rom. 9:32).

Ch. 1

Paul employs psychology in beginning this letter. He asserts his authority and brings Christ into the picture immediately. Then he softens their hearts by telling how he longs to come to them and impart some spiritual gift. This is the softening-up process in preparation for the blow to follow.

Then he begins to trim the Gentiles down to size for their vanity in thinking they were better than the Jews because they had all the great pagan philosophers to their credit as ~~ancestors~~. Paul shows that they (pagan philosophers) were some of the most corrupt, wretched people of all. Therefore, to have them as ancestors was nothing to boast of.

Ch. 2

Then he turns on the Jews and trims them down to size. They were looking down on and judging the Gentiles because they were God's chosen and felt that they were better than the Gentiles. Paul continues to show that the Jews who had the law were not obeying and thus were blaspheming God before the world, therefore, they had no reason to boast. Then he shows that circumcision profits us only if we keep the law (v.25) and that if uncircumcision keeps the righteousness of the law, his uncircumcision will be counted as circumcision (v.26), and he is a Jew who is one inwardly (v.28). The manner in which Paul brings circumcision in at this point shows that the contention must have been concerning circumcision.

Ch. 3

Paul then begins to uphold that which was given to the Jews - the word of God - showing that it still stands inexorable even though some of those who received it did not believe it. This is to prevent the Gentiles from nullifying God's word in their own minds which human nature would tend to do when beholding the faults of those to whom God's word was committed - the Jews.

Apparently the Jews had the idea that since their unrighteousness commended the righteousness of God, the more they sinned, the more they were honoring God (v.5-8). Some were even saying that Paul and the other true teachers were teaching this doctrine (v.8). That is why the Jews were going about breaking God's laws (2:17-24). Read this section again. They believed that just as long as they were circumcised they would be saved. They didn't need to keep God's spiritual commandments. And in all of this sin, the Jews actually thought they were better than the Gentiles. They were filled with racial and religious pride. But Paul ended that thought by showing all have sinned (v.9-23), and that we are justified, not through circumcision or anything we can do (v. 28-30), but by the grace of Christ (v.24) through faith in His blood for the remission of sin (v.25). But he also shows that the law is not made void through faith.

So to sum up ch. 3, Paul shows that justification cannot be attained by anything we can do, but by grace, thus bringing Christ into picture as the only means of achieving salvation. The Jews and Gentiles in their carnality and vanity had relegated Christ to a position of unimportance.

Ch. 4

Paul brings in the example of Abraham, showing that he was reckoned as righteous BEFORE circumcision. Circumcision was merely a seal of what Abraham had already attained through FAITH, and furthermore he is the father of all who believe - the circumcised and uncircumcised alike.

Again, why does Paul bring in this example and dwell at such length on it, if the contention between the Jews and Gentiles was not one concerning circumcision. The Jews were apparently trying to impose it on the Gentiles as the all important means for being

saved (Acts 15:1). In v. 24-25, he brings in Christ again, thus expunging a false concept and implanting a right one at the same time.

Ch. 5

Paul shows the work that Christ did for mankind - how he died for a sinning, undeserving world.

Again, he is placing Christ in the limelight in order to bring the Jews and Gentiles alike to see wherein salvation really lies - in Christ and not in physical circumcision or anything they could do. Remember that Christ was the stumbling stone of the Jews and even though they sought after the law of righteousness, they did not attain it, because they sought it not by faith, but by the works of the law (or by "what they could do" as the Moffatt has it in 9:31-33). So again we see they had cast Jesus out of the picture altogether.

That precept must have been lingering in the minds of some of the Jews at Rome even though they were converted, or, perhaps, there were some false teachers there deliberately trying to upset the church and trying to impose circumcision on the Gentile converts which was a tendency of the Jews.

Ch. 6

Even though Christ came that we might be justified by faith in Him, Paul shows that after we are baptized, we must walk in newness of life (v.4). All have sinned (Rom. 3:23). Now we must quit sinning, crucify the old man and become a new person, not sinning any longer, but obeying God's righteous laws.

Paul brings this in to keep a balance in the minds of the Romans. Human nature tends to go from one extreme to another and if Paul did not show them that there is a law to obey even though they cannot be justified by that law, then they would probably just turn their attention to Christ as their source of salvation as they had previously looked to circumcision. In other words, they would rely on faith alone and still not obey the spiritual laws, as the worldly churches do today.

So Paul is showing that even though one cannot be justified, or made righteous by keeping the law, but that justification comes through faith in Christ's sacrifice, there is a righteous law to be obeyed in order to keep one righteous after his guilty past has been blotted out by the blood of Christ.

Ch. 7

Paul goes further to explain that we must die to sin. In v. 1-4 he uses the illustration of the law concerning marriage - of how a woman is bound to her husband as long as he lives but if he dies, she is free from that law.

Again, all have sinned, have been serving sin, or, have been a servant of sin. Paul said in ch. 6:16 that we are servants to whom we obey whether of sin unto death or of obedience unto righteousness. Since Satan is the author of sin, we are a servant of

Satan when we are serving sin. In other words we are married to or bound to him through disobedience. Christ will not commit adultery. So as long as we are bound to Satan we cannot be married to Christ. Therefore when we die to sin, that is, we repent of sin and quit serving sin, and become a new person, a righteous person, we can then be married to Christ without being an adulteress. Paul said in ch. 6:13, yield yourselves to God as those that are alive from the dead. So one who yields himself to God has killed the old man, thus loosing himself from Satan (or the death penalty) and can be married to Christ.

Again we see Paul brings Christ into the picture showing that He is the source of salvation and that the law which must be obeyed cannot be kept by our own strength but by Christ's strength.

Ch. 8

Paul continues explaining the great all important part which Christ plays in our salvation. What the law could not do (pardon our sins) Christ came to perform (v.3).

He shows that to be carnally minded is death because the carnal mind cannot keep God's righteous, holy law (v. 6-7). We need God's Spirit dwelling in us (v. 9-14).

Then Paul begins to focus the mind of the Romans on the great glorious reward which God has for those who love Him. This is to take their minds off of their petty grievances and trivialities over which they were contending - circumcision, eating and drinking, judging one another, etc. (ch. 14). He is again softening them up for the correction coming later.

Ch. 9

Again Paul employs psychology in dealing with the Jews. He expresses his sorrow for his fellow Israelites who have cut themselves off from God's promises.

Then he shames the Jews by showing that they were offered salvation first but did not obtain it because they would not yield themselves to God but in their vanity sought it their own way - "by what they could do" (v. 32 Moffatt). In other words they were not willing to admit their own inadequacy and to rely on Christ. Christ was a stumbling stone to them (v. 32-33).

Paul brings this in to quell the braggadocio of the Jews toward the Gentiles.

Ch. 10

Paul continues to deflate the ego of the Jews by showing that they were ignorant of God's righteousness and had not submitted themselves to God because they were trying to be righteous their own way, through circumcision and other physical things (see Thayer's Lexicon, page 149, art. 1, c.).

Then again he brings Christ into the picture showing that His righteous character is the end (product) of the law and that

righteousness cannot be achieved apart from faith in Christ. Verses 5-7 show that the righteousness of faith is not one that we can achieve by efforts on our part, but that God had made His word readily available to all (verse 8), that righteousness comes from believing in Christ (verse 10), and that WHOSOEVER believes can be saved, the Gentiles as well as the Jews (v. 11-12). (The word "believe" is translated from "pisteuo" in the Greek and means "...A conviction,..that Jesus is the Messiah...conjoined with OBEDIENCE to Christ - Thayer's Lexicon, page 511).

And, so Paul shames the Jews by showing that they had every opportunity to know the truth and obey (verses 18, 19, 21). Yet, they did not submit themselves to God, whereas, the Gentiles who were not seeking God found Him (v. 20). God did this to provoke the Israelites to jealousy, so that they might repent.

Thus, again Paul shows the Jews that they have nothing to boast about and that having been given the "Oracles" of God did not make them better than the Gentiles, but actually placed them in a lower position, spiritually, because they were not obeying what they had. On the other hand, the Gentiles who had had no knowledge of the law had been obeying it in part just by nature out of conscience's sake (ch. 2:14-15).

Ch. 11

Paul shows here that God has not cast away His people, Israel, but only blinded them until the fulness of the Gentiles comes in. Also, Paul shows that even though He has blinded the major part of Israel, He has a remnant (election of grace). Paul is showing the Gentile converts that they had better not boast because Israel is temporarily blinded, because it happened in order that they (Gentiles) could come in. He (Paul) is again keeping the whole scheme of things in balance, so that neither Jews nor Gentiles have room to boast. He shows in verse 31 that through the same mercy all are saved. Then he focuses their minds on God's great love, wisdom and mercy (v. 33-36).

Ch. 12

Paul's admonition to give themselves over completely to God, not to be conformed to the world, but renewed in the spirit. In verse 3 is an admonition to quit philosophizing (thinking higher than one ought to think on inconsequential matters). He continues by showing how to be a good follower of Christ.

This fits in with the overall problem because the Jews and Gentiles were trying to elevate themselves above one another. They were looking down on and judging one another (ch. 14).

Ch. 13

God is showing that submission to ALL authority is mandatory, civil as well as divine. He evidently brings this in because the Jews who were claiming to have God's law were not keeping it and possibly bringing reproach and persecution on the church. Rome at this time was the seat of power and authority of the world so Paul would want them especially to set an example so they would not bring persecution on other Christians living in other areas controlled by

Rome. (Of course all of these things are written for us today as much as they were for the people of that time).

Ch. 14

In addition to the two factions previously pointed out -- Gentiles (ch. 1:13) and Jews (ch. 2:17) -- Paul shows two other factions within the church at Rome -- the weak and the strong. The weak (in understanding) Gentiles were still clinging to some of their old superstitions, such as vegetarianism, some days being luckier than others, partial fasting on certain days, etc. The Jews who understood were accusing and the Gentiles were in turn exalting themselves above the Jews. Both factions were judging one another. Apparently, the Jews were trying to impose circumcision on the Gentiles. They were contending with one another about these physical matters and leaving Christ completely out of the picture. That is why Paul mentions Christ and His work so often throughout the book.

Ch. 15

After administering correction in chapter 14, Paul begins to bring Christ into the picture again. He also keeps the scheme of things concerning Jew and Gentile in balance. Though each has some advantages over the other (like receiving the law for the Jew and being placed ahead of the Jew for a time for the Gentile) all is according to God's mercy and one is not above the other as far as salvation is concerned. Paul also employs psychology in commending the Romans for their faith and good works. He then directs their minds away from the trivialities of eating, drinking, observing days, etc. and focuses them on the higher goal of salvation.

Ch. 16

Paul's salutations and greeting to persons in Rome from Paul and others. Again, he brings Christ into the picture at the very end (v. 24-27).