

Road Declaration

Romans: The Book of Revolution

No other book in all the Bible has sparked revival, reformation, and revival like the book of Romans!

- In AD 386, a young man in North Africa, who was already becoming known as a philosopher and well as one who had dedicated himself to a life of licentiousness and immorality, was in a garden and overheard children singing “Tolle lege, tolle lege,” which means “take up and read.” This young man, whose name was Aurelius Augustine, went to a lectern in the garden where a Bible was chained to it and opened the Book. It fell open to Romans 13:11-14.

“¹¹And do this, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed. ¹²The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Therefore let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light. ¹³Let us walk [a]properly, as in the day, not in revelry and drunkenness, not in lewdness and lust, not in strife and envy. ¹⁴But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts.”

- The Spirit of God mediating through the Word of God awakened Augustine’s heart and he gave his life to Christ, and he became one of the greatest theologians of all time.
- Almost 1200 years later in 1515, an Augustinian Monk was about to teach through the book of Romans, he found a notation from an ancient manuscript of Augustine defining the righteousness of Christ. Augustine said that when Paul speaks of the righteousness of God in Romans 1, it is not the righteousness by which God Himself is righteous, but the righteousness that He freely gives to those who put their faith in Christ. For the first time in his life, Martin Luther, whose conscience has been wounded by the burden of the law of God, understood the gospel of Christ!

- It was Romans 1:17 “...*The just shall live by faith.*” that transformed Martin Luther and led to the greatest spiritual and theological reformation in the history of the church.
- On May 24, 1738, a discouraged and depressed missionary named John Wesley entered a Moravian meeting at Aldersgate in London, England. It was there that he heard Luther’s preface to his commentary on the book of Romans. He later wrote, “I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone, for salvation; and an assurance was given me that He had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved from the law of sin and death.” (Wiersbe, *Be Right*, p.7)
 - John Wesley would leave that meeting a changed man and would lead the greatest revival England has ever experienced.
 - Swiss commentator Godet, who wrote on the great revivals of history, said, “The Reformation was certainly the work of the epistle to the Romans...and it is probable that every great spiritual renovation in the church will always be linked, both in cause and effect, to a deeper knowledge of this book.”
 - Chrysostom, one the great fathers of the church had the book of Romans read to him twice a week.
 - Coleridge once said that the epistle to the Romans is “the most profound writing that exists.”
 - John Bunyon, who wrote the most widely read Christian book ever, outside of the Bible, *A Pilgrim’s Progress*, was transformed (while in prison) by the book of Romans.
- The great preacher and pastor Donald Grey Barnhouse tells the story of how he began his pastorate at Philadelphia’s Tenth Presbyterian Church, “When I first became the pastor of the Philadelphia church, I began my ministry by preaching on the epistle of Romans. My first Sunday in that pulpit found me giving an exposition of the first verse of the epistle...For three-

and one-half years I never took a text outside of the epistle to the Romans. I saw the church transformed; the audience filled the pews and then the galleries; and the work went on with great blessing. But just as important as the transformation of the church was the transformation of the preacher.” (Barnhouse’s *Commentary on Romans*, “Preface”)

The Epistle of Romans has the most complete diagnosis of man’s sin, the most glorious setting forth of the remedy of justification by faith.

The theme verse is Romans 1:17:

“¹⁷ For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, “The just shall live by faith.””

- The overarching theme of Romans is the righteousness that comes from God: the glorious truth that God justifies guilty, condemned sinners by grace alone through faith in Christ alone!
- The first 11 chapters present the theological truths of that doctrine.
- Chapters 12-16 detail the practical outworking in the life of the Christ follower:
 - The story of this book is that salvation is available to anyone from any stage of sin, whatever you have done, wherever you have lived. There is salvation available through our Savior Jesus Christ, who went to the cross and reconciled us to Himself.

Are you ready to dive into the most revolutionary book ever written?

Romans 1:1 “Paul”... let’s just stop right there.

- One cannot completely appreciate the Epistle of Romans until you understand the life and times of the author.

- Paul was a Jew who had once been named Saul, and had grown up under the great Jewish teacher, Gamaliel.
- He was a Pharisee, like his father before him, and he had grown up zealous for the Jewish religion and the Law.
- Saul had grown up believing that the Jews had a patent and copyright on God and the Scriptures:
 - Saul, his name before his conversion to faith in Christ, was not an anti-semite (meaning anti-Jewish), he was a semite-anti...if anyone opposed the way of the Jews, he hated them vehemently.
 - Saul was a bigoted persecutor of Christianity, who killed anyone who opposed the doctrines of Judaism—no one defended Judaism like Saul.
 - Saul believed that the promises given to Abraham in the Old Testament was only for the Jews.
 - But then something happened to Saul that changed his life forever.

Acts 9:1-22 From Saul to Paul: A Radical Conversion

Look at Acts 9:1-5:

- A goad: a sharp pencil shaped stick in the backboard on the wagon or plow...if the ox didn't want to go forward and would kick back to reverse course the goad would jab into the leg of the ox.
 - God had been working on Saul's heart, maybe when he saw the martyrdom of Stephen (Acts 6-7), or, possibly as he saw the faith and peace of the Christians as he hauled them off to prison.

- Maybe one of the children he threw into prison had shared with Saul just how much God loved him...we don't know.
- But God had been working on Saul's heart.
- Are you kicking against the goads today? Are you kicking against God's will? Are you screaming at those Christians who are bugging you to come to church?
- But the spiritual goads are not sticking you on the calves of your leg; His goads are sticking you in the heart! In your pride!
- God is knocking you off your "high horse" and you only have one thing to do, and that is look up.

Vs. 6-22

- Saul has now become Paul.
- Paul now becomes a "worker"... "bondservant", not for Judaism, but Jesus!
- From persecutor to preacher!
- Let's now look back at Romans 1.

Paul says 3 important things about himself.

Romans 1:1 "*Paul, a bondservant of Jesus Christ...*"

So, Paul now self identifies himself as, first of all, "*a bondservant of Jesus Christ.*"

- The word is "doulos." A doulos was a person who had been purchased to serve a master.
- This term of being a "doulos," a slave would have been meaningful to the Romans because there were over 6 million slaves in the Roman Empire at that time.
- But slave could be translated, "bondservant."

- The phrase goes back to a ceremony described in Exodus 21.
- It was a unique term that was used of a slave who actually had the opportunity to go free, but chose to be a slave...

Exodus 21:1-6

***"¹Now these are the judgments which you shall set before them:
²If you buy a Hebrew servant, he shall serve six years; and in the seventh he shall go out free and pay nothing. ³If he comes in by himself, he shall go out by himself; if he comes in married, then his wife shall go out with him. ⁴If his master has given him a wife, and she has borne him sons or daughters, the wife and her children shall be her master's, and he shall go out by himself. ⁵But if the servant plainly says, 'I love my master, my wife, and my children; I will not go out free,' ⁶then his master shall bring him to the judges. He shall also bring him to the door, or to the doorpost, and his master shall pierce his ear with an awl; and he shall serve him forever."***

- There were slaves who knew the love and mercy of their masters and wanted to serve them out of love for the rest of their lives...their ears were pierced as the mark of being a bonds slave, a willing servant to a loving master.
- Paul had chosen to be a "bondslave of Jesus Christ."
- The story has been told in one of the hymns of Frances Havergal,

"I love, I love my Master,
 I will not go out free,
 For He is my Redeemer;
 He paid the price for me,
 I would not leave His service
 It is so sweet and blest
 And in the weariest moments
 He gives the truest rest."

- Ever since the fall of Adam, man has been enslaved to a thousand masters...sin is a cruel taskmaster.

- Slavery to self is a bondage that includes all other slaveries.
- All of us are slaves! You're either a slave to Sin or a slave to Christ.
- There is no freedom apart from the work of God in one's heart.
- In the midst of your bondage, if you haven't willingly given your life to Christ, open your heart to the greatest freedom known to man, a wholehearted relationship with Jesus Christ.
- Become a willing free "bondservant of Jesus Christ" today!

The secret of Paul's greatness lies in the order of the phrases in vs 1.

Romans 1:1

"Paul, a bondservant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle,"

- Paul is first of all a "bondslave"; utterly and completely surrendered to Christ, and then he was an apostle.
- Apostle means "sent out one." It might be better understood as "missionary."
- Paul was first a loving and committed slave of Jesus and almost immediately, he is a missionary for Him, sharing his faith, preaching the gospel to anyone who will listen.
- Paul was first...one who had fallen in love with His master, before he was serving His master.
- God had done an amazing work of grace in Paul's heart...he had hated Christians, and now he was a brother with those he had persecuted.

Paul says he was "called" to be an apostle.

- This was not Paul's idea. Whom God calls, He equips for that calling.
- It is not a career but a calling!
- E.g., One of my greatest concerns is just how many young men make their decisions to take a pastorate based on salary, opportunity for advancement, and the applause of men...this plays too important a part...this may be why, in the U.S., the average pastorate is about 4 years in a church.
- See John Piper's book *We Are Not Professionals*.
- Paul would have never understood such business-like, such "occupational" decisions...he felt called by God to be an apostle...and he suffered great persecution for that decision.
- Every minister must earnestly understand this...have you been called by God?

Romans 1:1

"Paul, a bondservant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated to the gospel of God"

- There can be no true work of God unless one is separated to the gospel of Christ.
- E.g., At times people ask me if we must give up things in order to follow Jesus. My answer is always the same: you're not looking at this relationship with Christ from the right angle...let me explain-
 - If you are in Colorado Springs and must go to Denver, you cannot be separated to Denver without being separated from Colorado Springs.
 - But you don't think, "I'm being separated from Colorado Springs"; you think, "I'm going to Denver."

- Paul doesn't say "I gave up Judaism; I gave up this old life"; Rather he says, "*I'm separated into Christ.*"
- The person who tries to be separated from the world without being separated into Christ is in a strange position.
- There are so many believers who are so narrow and unloving because they are giving up things from the wrong end.
- Two kinds of believers: those who constantly brag about what they give up for Jesus, and the other who strikes you as a wholehearted person, but he doesn't talk about what he does or doesn't do, he just lives a life of joy...and you know they would never do something because of their faith.
- Joy is the result when we give ourselves to Christ first and leave the other behind!
- The word separated is a very interesting one. You may know it because there is an English word that is very similar...the word is *aphorizo*, and if you look closely, it contains the word, **Horizon.**
- Its transliteration would be "off horizon."
- All of us have stood on a mountain or high place where we could see a panoramic view of the far horizon.
- E.g., Recently I was driving to Fairplay on Hwy 24 and as you crest and come down Wilkinson's Pass, you can see all the Collegiate Peaks range!
- When we give ourselves to Christ, God gives us a whole new horizon...the Horizon of Joy.
 - It is a horizon of joy: "*...the joy of the Lord is our strength.*" (Nehemiah 8:10)

- “*Delight thyself in the Lord...*” (Psalm 37:4)
- The great Puritan preacher, Richard Baxter said, “May the living God, who is the portion and rest of the saints, make our carnal minds so spiritual and our earthly minds so heavenly, that loving Him, and delighting in Him, may be the work of our lives.” (*Desiring God*, by Piper, “Preface”)
- J.I. Packer, in describing Baxter wrote, “the hope of heaven brought him joy, and joy brought him strength, and so, like John Calvin before him, and George Whitfield after him, and like the Apostle Paul himself...he was astoundingly enabled to labor on, accomplishing more than would ever have seemed possible in a single lifetime.” (Ibid.)
- The true follower of Christ never gives up anything! But there are many things that will give him up. They will go away one by one as we follow and fall in love with Jesus.
- If you are a follower of Christ, you should set your spiritual binoculars on the horizon of joy!
- *The Westminster Confession of Faith* reads, “The chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever.”

Have you discovered the joy of following Jesus?

Have you discovered the joy of your salvation?

Begin the great adventure today!!