

Introduction to Romans 1-4

Moore Women | Term 2 2015 | Lionel Windsor

1 The influence and significance of Romans

386 AD. Augustine (Rom 13:13-14).

1518. Martin Luther (Rom 1:17).

“This Epistle is really the chief part of the New Testament and the very purest Gospel, and is worthy not only that every Christian should know it word for word, by heart, but occupy himself with it every day, as the daily bread of the soul. It can never be read or pondered too much, and the more it is dealt with the more precious it becomes, and the better it tastes.” Luther, *Preface to Romans* (1522).

1539. Calvin:

If we understand this Epistle, we have a passage opened to us to the understanding of the whole of scripture.

1738. Wesley

1919. Karl Barth.

Does you have any favourite parts from Romans?

2 The purpose of Romans (Rom 1:1-15, 15:14-16:27)

2.1 Paul's introduction to the Romans (Rom 1:1-5)

Rom 1:1-5 Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, ² which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy Scriptures, ³ concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh ⁴ and was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord, ⁵ through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of his name among all the nations,

The preacher: Paul, Servant, Apostle, Set apart

The message: the gospel

The subject: Jesus is Lord

God's purposes: from Israel to the world

2.2 The situation of the church(es) in Rome

A church with Jewish origins but many Greek adherents

c. 49 AD – expulsion of Jews under Claudius

c. 54 AD – return of Jews to Rome

c. 57 AD – Paul writes Romans during 3 month stay in Corinth / Greece (Acts 20:2-3).

2.3 Paul's purpose in writing Romans

Paul's purpose in writing Romans is: To continue and expand the scope of gospel-preaching

The dynamic spread of the gospel

How Paul's letter to the Romans promotes gospel preaching

Romans describes the place of the gospel and gospel-preaching in God's overall purposes, especially for Jew and Gentile

Romans applies this gospel-preaching dynamic to the situation in Rome, especially in relation to Jew-Gentile relationships.

Romans prepares the Christians in Rome to support Paul in expanding the gospel to the world

3 The themes of Romans (Rom 1:16-17)

Rom 1:16-17 For I am not ashamed of the gospel,
for it is the power of God
for salvation to everyone who believes,
to the Jew first and also to the Greek.
¹⁷ For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith,
as it is written,
“The righteous shall live by faith.”

3.1 The gospel as the power of God

3.2 Salvation

3.3 To everyone who *believes*

3.4 To everyone who believes

3.5 “To the Jew *first*, and also to the Greek”: The Jew-Gentile dynamic

3.6 The righteousness of God

3.7 Revealed

3.8 Righteousness through faith

Literally: “He who is righteous by faith will live”.

Righteousness = being in line with God’s legal and/or moral standard.

To justify = to declare that a person is indeed righteous.

Problem: we are not righteous in ourselves! So we cannot live. We are under God’s judgment.

Answer: we can be righteous / justified by faith in / of Christ: Cf. Rom 3:22, 25, 27, 30; 4:3, 5, 9, 11, 13; 5:1; 9:30; 10:4, 6, 10.

And so we can “live”: Cf. e.g. 5:17-18, 21; 6:22-23; 8:2

Justification / righteousness by faith: not the “theme” of Romans, but rather the foundational reality on which the argument of Romans is built (cf. Moo, Westerholm)

3.9 As it is written (Scripture in God’s purposes)

4 Israel's failure in God's purpose (Rom 1:18-3:20)

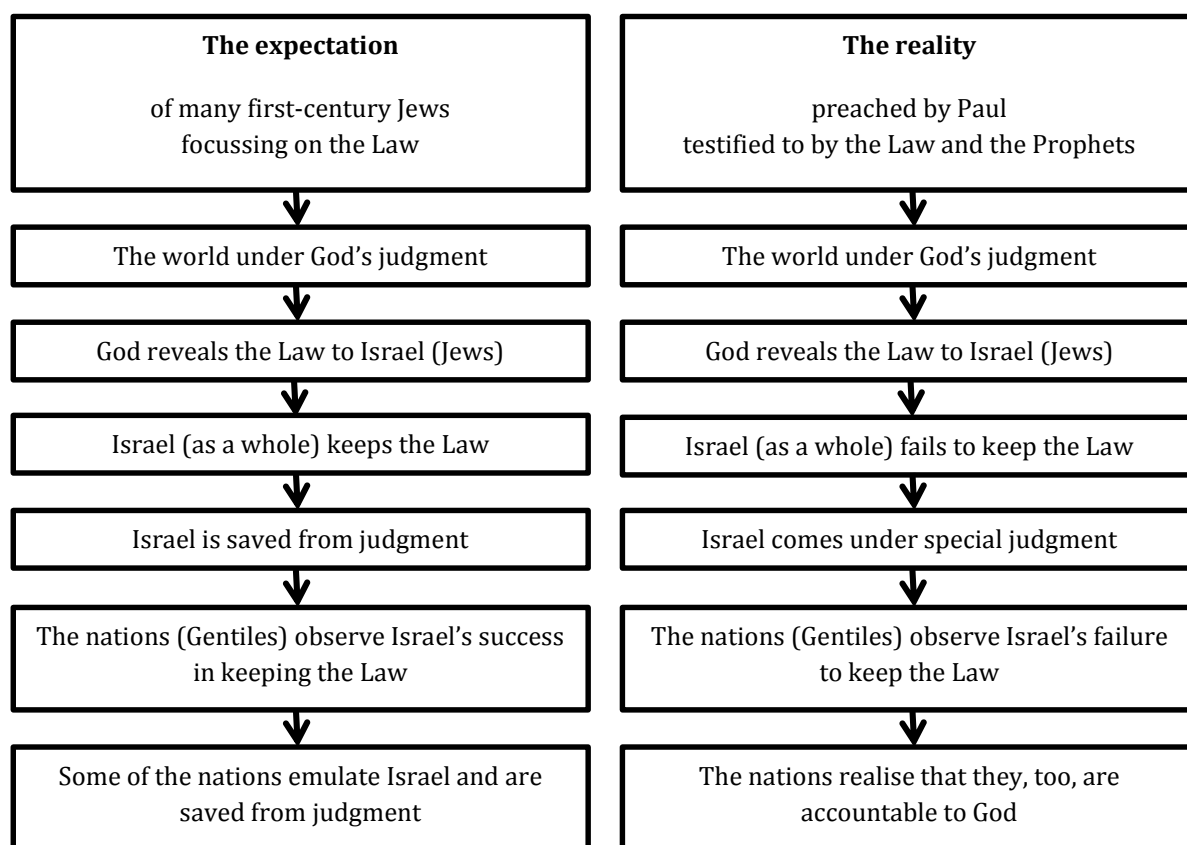
4.1 Revelation and salvation

4.2 The wood and the trees

Framework: A long "excursus" about judgment (Rom 1:18-3:20) within the overall argument about the righteousness of God through faith (Rom 1:17, 3:21-30).

BUT internally: A multifaceted argument, involving human sin (universal), God's law, Jewish failure, God's justice

4.3 The context of the argument



4.4 Romans 1:18-32: God's wrath against worldwide sin

4.5 Romans 2:1-16: God's wrath against Jewish sin

4.6 Romans 2:17-29: The failure of Jewish law-preaching

4.7 Romans 3:1-20: God's real purposes in giving the law

¹⁹ Now we know that whatever the law says it speaks to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be stopped, and the whole world may be held accountable to God. ²⁰ For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin.

4.8 Israel, the Law and the righteousness of God

5 Jesus' death in God's purpose (Rom 3:21-31)

5.1 The heart of the Christian message

5.2 The Righteousness of God in Christ (3:21-26)

The righteousness of God and its relationship to God's prior revelation

^{21a} But now the righteousness of God has been manifested

^{21b} apart from the Law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it

The righteousness of God and faith of / in Jesus Christ

^{22a} the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ

The universality of God's righteousness

^{22b} for all who believe.

^{22c} For there is no distinction:

The free gift of justification

²³ for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

^{24a} and are justified by his grace as a gift,

The means of justification: Jesus' sacrificial death

^{24b} through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus,

^{25a} whom God put forward as a **propitiation** by his blood, to be received by faith.

How this demonstrates God's righteousness

^{25c} This was to show God's righteousness,

^{25d} because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins.

^{26a} It was to show his righteousness at the present time,

^{26b} so that he might be just

^{26c} and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

5.3 The place of the Law (3:27-31)

"The boast" in the Law is excluded

^{27a} Then what becomes of our boasting? [literally, "Where is the boast?"]

You have to understand the Law the right way

^{27c} On what principle [lit. "through what kind of Law"]? On the principle ["Law"] of works? No, but on the principle ["Law"] of faith. ²⁸ For we hold that a man is justified by faith apart from works of law.

6 Abraham's faith in God's purpose (Rom 4)

6.1 What comes first: faith or works?

6.2 Why we have to deal with Abraham

6.3 The plotline of Abraham's life (Genesis 12-22)

(Thanks to Paul Williamson)

- Genesis 12:1-3. Abraham receives a two-fold promise: nationhood (**land + offspring**) and **international** blessing.
- Genesis 15. God unconditionally promises nationhood (**land + offspring**) to Abraham, and Abraham responds to this promise by faith.
- Genesis 17. God makes a covenant with Abraham that involves **international** blessing and which requires Abraham and his offspring to be obedient and to be circumcised
- Genesis 22. God requires Abraham to be obedient to his command to sacrifice his son. Because of Abraham's obedience, God confirms his promise of **offspring, land** and **international blessing**.

Common Jewish interpretation: reading the story backwards

Emphasis on Abraham's obedience, circumcision, his covenant "in the flesh" (the end of the story)

Paul's interpretation: reading the story forwards

Emphasis on promise, and Abraham's faith first before circumcision, obedience, law-keeping, etc.

6.4 Faith alone, not works (1-8)

6.5 Faith alone, not circumcision (9-12)

6.6 Faith alone, not the Law (13-17)

6.7 What is faith?

The nature of Abraham's faith (18-22)

The nature of Christian faith (23-25)

6.8 Unanswered questions

What does this tell us about our future? Does that mean we can just keep on sinning—in fact, doesn't more sin mean more grace? Is the law bad? What does it mean to live as a Christian? What about the "people of the Law"—has God just used them to show sin? Etc.

This is why Romans doesn't stop at chapter 4!

7 An outline of Romans: The gospel and God's purpose

- 1:1-15 – Paul's introduction to the Christians in Rome
- 1:16-17 – The theme statement of the letter
- 1:18-4:25 – God's righteousness and justification by faith
 - 1:18-3:20 – Israel's failure in God's purpose*
 - 3:21-31 – Jesus' death in God's purpose*
 - Ch. 4 – Abraham's faith in God's purpose*
- Chs. 5-8 – Christian assurance in God's purpose
 - Ch. 5 – Our assurance and God's purpose*
 - 6:1-7:6 – Freedom from sin in God's purpose*
 - 7:7-25 – The law and God's purpose*
 - Ch. 8 – The Spirit and God's purpose*
- Chs. 9-11 – Paul and Israel in God's purpose
 - Ch. 9 – Israel in God's purpose*
 - Ch. 10 – Paul's preaching in God's purpose*
 - Ch. 11 – Paul's preaching and Israel's future in God's purpose*
- 12:1-15:13 – Living in light of God's purpose
 - 12:1-2 – Living in light of God's past mercies*
 - 12:3-13 – Living in the body of Christ*
 - 12:14-13:10 – Living with those outside the body of Christ*
 - 13:11-14 – Living in light of God's promised future*
 - 14:1-15:13 – Mutual acceptance*
- 15:14-16:27 – Paul's ministry in God's purpose
 - 15:14-33 – Paul's priestly ministry*
 - 16:1-24 – Fellowship in Paul's ministry*
 - 16:25-27 – Summary: Paul's gospel in God's purpose*

8 Resources

- Moore College Romans study notes for the certificate course—good for overview
- Stott, John R. W. *The Message of Romans*, BST (1994)—devotional, good for application / overview
- Morris, Leon. *The Epistle to the Romans*, PNTC (1988)—pastoral but good in-depth discussion
- Moo, Douglas J. *The Epistle to the Romans*, NICNT (1996)—in depth, good discussions, also good for some pastoral application
- Schreiner, Thomas F. *Romans*, BECNT (1998)—also good in-depth discussions
- Cranfield, C. E. B. *Romans*, ICC (1975)—very technical, good for detailed issues