

“Word on Wednesday Bible Study”

“The Righteousness of God”

Minister Perseus Poku

October 30, 2024

Date of Writing: Circa 57 AD

Location: Paul wrote this letter in Corinth.

Target audience: Jewish and Gentile Christians living in Rome

Theme: The Righteousness of God

The apostle Paul opens by expressing his desire to visit Rome that he may share the gospel with them. Paul attempts to instruct the church about righteousness versus sinfulness. The epistle to the Romans is a manual on how a Christian should live. Paul instructs the believers in Rome that Christians cannot do everything they want to do. It is a calling and a challenge to live according to Godly precepts. Christian author Max Lucado, writes the following regarding the book of Romans:

In this profound epistle, Paul explores all the wrong options and takes us to the only correct one. The wrong solutions are pleasure and pride (chapters 1 and 2); the correction solution is Christ Jesus (3:21-26). According to Paul, we are saved by grace (undeserved, unearned favor), through faith (complete trust) in Jesus and his work.¹

Chapter 1

Introduction

(verses 1-6)

The first seven verses of this chapter contain Paul’s salutary greetings to the recipients of his letter. He informs his readers about the following:

1. He is a servant of Jesus Christ.-vs. 1
2. He has been sanctified for the gospel.-vs. 1
3. The gospel is a fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy.-vs. 2
4. Jesus came from the lineage of David.-vs. 3

¹ Max Lucado, *Romans* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2007), vi.

5. Jesus is the Son of God in accordance with God's spirit who is Holy. In addition, the power of Christ is tied in to the resurrection.-vs. 4
6. The grace of the believer is obtained through the resurrection of Christ. In addition, God's grace made it possible for apostleship. vv.5-6

The late scholar FF Bruce wrote the following as it relates to the resurrection of Christ:

While Christ's resurrection was proclaimed by the early Christians as a historical event, it had more than a merely historical significance for them. First of all, it was the grand demonstration of the Messiahship of Jesus. It did not make Him messiah but it proved that He was the Messiah.²

The Occasion

(verses 7-16)

This section of Paul's writing characterizes the recipients of his letter. Paul was writing to the saints in Rome. He describes them from a holy perspective. In this salutary part of the letter, Paul deliberately chose words that would compel the saints in Rome to view themselves the way that God views them.

1. They are beloved of God.-vs.7
2. Called to be saints.-vs. 7

Paul reminds the saints in Rome that he is always praying for them (vs. 9). In addition, we learn that he is endeavoring to see them physically (vs. 10). Moreover, we learn about his intent and occasion of the letter in verse 11. Paul wanted to give them some spiritual teachings so they may be established or rooted.

It was his desire to see the saints in Rome but something would always hinder his progress (vs. 13). He wanted to get to Rome to minister to both the Jews and Gentiles (vs. 13). Paul was no longer a bigot. He had been changed by God and willing to minister to all people (vs. 14).

He is ready to preach the gospel to those who are in Rome. Paul's zeal is unmatched. He is willing to preach the good news to all people without reservation. The artistry and sophistry of Rome would not be a distraction to him. Paul was determined regardless of the occasion to preach the tenets of the good news. In regards to the topic of the gospel, author C.K. Barrett writes the following:

The work of salvation was begun, though not completed, in the ministry, death and resurrection of Jesus, and from the beginning it was marked by power in the miracles, in

² F.F Bruce, *The New Testament Documents Are They Reliable?* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1981), 66.

the resurrection, and subsequently in the work of the Holy Spirit. It was in virtue of this power that the gospel preached by Paul and his apostolic colleagues had its effect among those who heard it and experienced the powers of the age to come.³

Paul declares his attitude regarding the proclamation of the gospel. He is not afraid. (vs. 16). Furthermore, he articulates the reason for his stance. Paul states that he is not ashamed to preach the gospel because it is necessary for salvation. In other words, if people are going to be saved and not condemned they need to hear the gospel. Paul unpacked this theology further in chapter 10 (cf. Romans 10: 14).

Righteousness Defined

(verses 17-32)

“The just shall live by faith.” Paul quotes from the Old Testament as an attempt to illustrate that the New Testament is unified with the Old. The Old Testament concealed is now revealed in the New Testament as written long ago by Habbakuk.

“Behold, his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him: but the just shall live by his faith.”- Habakkuk 2:4.

Paul concludes this chapter by introducing the concept of righteousness. The Jew saw righteousness as a result of merit based on legalism. However, Paul just like Jesus was challenging the existing theology regarding what actions are acceptable in the eyes of God.

Paul reminds the believers in Rome that ungodly behavior ushers in the wrath of God (vs. 18). He continues for the remainder of the chapter juxtaposing righteousness with unrighteousness. In order to further argue his point, Paul selects the working of nature to prove God’s grace. In other words, the universe is a testament to the power of God (vv. 19-20).

God has used *nature* to cause men to ask the question “Where did all this come from?” As a result, no one will be left with an excuse concerning why they did not pursue the creator (vs. 20).

Paul continues to detail the history of human apostasy in his attempt to highlight the need for salvation through Christ. The anatomy of the human rebellion against God:

- ✓ When they knew God, they did not glorify him as God. They became vain in their imaginations and their foolish heart was darkened (vs. 21).
- ✓ They professed to be wise but in actuality their actions were foolish because they denied the authentic God of the universe (vs. 22).
- ✓ They changed the glory of God into an image like corruptible man, birds, four footed beasts, and creeping things (vs. 23).

³ C.K Barrett, *The Epistle To The Romans* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1987), 28.

Paul's dissertation clearly details the difference between righteousness and non-righteousness which is evidence by certain behavior. Unrighteous people behave in a certain way which is contrary to righteous living. In verse 24 Paul highlights one of the many behaviors that believers should not engage in. Paul argues that because of their fleshly lusts and disobedience they dishonored their own bodies. How did they dishonor their bodies? Paul clearly states the following:

- ✓ Their women engaged in vile affections by engaging in acts that are unnatural based on design (vs. 26).
- ✓ The men of Rome also left their natural relationship with women and engaged in sexual relations with other men (vs. 27).

As a result of their disobedience, God gave them up to a reprobate mind (vs. 28). Paul concludes this section by again highlighting unrighteous behavior which Christians ought to avoid.

Paul encourages the believers in Rome to stay away from the following:

1. Unrighteousness
2. Fornication
3. Wickedness
4. Covetousness
5. Maliciousness
6. Envy
7. Murder
8. Debate/Strife
9. Deceit
10. Malignity/Malice
11. Whisperers/Gossipers
12. Backbiters/Slanderers
13. Haters of God
14. Despiteful/Insolent
15. Pride/Arrogant
16. Boasters
17. Inventors of Evil things
18. Disobedient to Parents
19. Lack of understanding
20. Covenant Breaker/No fidelity
21. Unloving
22. Implacable/Unchangeable feelings
23. Unmerciful

Paul writes that those who commit the aforementioned acts are worthy of death. He further clarifies that he is referring to those who engage in the unrighteous acts without repentance. They take joy in their immoral lifestyle. Paul argues against this type of behavior.

“THINK ON THESE THINGS”

1. How do we determine if an act is right or wrong?
2. How should Christians respond when others call them intolerant?
3. What kind of text is chapter 1, verse 28? Is it Prescriptive or Descriptive?
4. How can one demonstrate that they are not ashamed of the gospel?
5. How should Christians respond to the LGBTQ community?