

Paul's Three Points in Romans

Introduction (1:1-15)

These verses reveal Paul's life purpose. He is a servant of the Christ and he wants others to be servants just as are the brethren at Rome. He also expresses his great appreciation for his Roman brothers and sisters, as well as his desire to share the good things of the Gospel with them.

JUSTIFICATION (1:16-8:39)

All Are Under God's Wrath (1:16-3:20)

Although the book of Romans has the most positive message ever taught, Paul begins its development with the greatest of all negatives—all are condemned sinners! To all those who want nothing to do with negative preaching, this is a disturbing starting point. For all who have deeply drunk of the contemporary spirit of self-centered pride, such a self-condemning beginning is totally unacceptable. But for those who understand the enormous gulf separating the Holy God from sinful humanity, there can be no other genesis for the story of salvation but the reality of our lost condition (cf. Isa. 6:1-5).

But Now ... (3:21-4:25)

Romans 3:21-31 takes us from the depths of sin's horror to the heights of salvation's wonder with two powerful words "**but now.**" With this Paul contrasts the lost condition of every accountable person with the salvation **now** possible because of the Christ. This most fundamental section of the entire Roman letter sets out in eleven short verses the most profound theology the world can know—Jesus saves!

The fourth chapter then draws from this powerful foundation theology of Romans 3:21-31 to extol the virtues of the way of faith. Merit cannot be claimed by any sinner—even the great Abraham! The sinner's only hope must come through faith in Jesus rather than through personal merit.

Our New Undeserved Status in Christ (5:1-21)

Through the death and resurrection of Jesus we have been introduced to God and all the peace and hope that are in this new relationship. The fact that we are most undeserving of this status, ought to cause our appreciation for this gift to rise to the level of all encompassing awe!

We are aligned with Adam because we have sinned just as he did, but we come to be aligned with Christ through faith in His sacrifice. Even when sin increased when the Law of Moses was given, God's grace was nevertheless sufficient to forgive all those who came in faith.

Shall We Continue in Sin Because of Grace? (6:1-23)

As we come to chapter six it is time for the Apostle to clear some things up. We got a hint of what this discussion would involve back in Romans 3:8. The very nature of Paul's message of faith and grace was such that a legalistic mind would be given to slanderous accusations. Paul, however, did not in even the slightest way intend to suggest that anyone could "continue in sin that grace may increase." Chapter six sets the record straight about the necessary place of righteous living for any who would doubt the truth about faith and grace. There is no such thing as "cheap grace"!

A New Covenant and the Reemphasis of the Way of Faith (7:1-25)

The Old Covenant was like a husband to whom believers had been married. To be married to Christ, a new Covenant was needed. The old way, therefore, had to be put to death by the death of Christ.

Some things however, had not changed. The Pharisaic way of self-righteousness Paul had once followed was still embraced by some. Self-righteousness had not been useful under the Old Covenant; it most certainly would not work under Christ. Jesus frees from sin, we cannot save ourselves!

Victory in Jesus (8:1-39)

What mere law or law keeping could not do, the Son of God did—He freed men and women from sin. Through Him we are assured of the resurrection from the dead, being fellow heirs with Christ, and being part of the consummation of God's eternal plan.

Because of Christ and through faith we have a mighty assurance! If we keep the faith there is no power in the creation that can separate us from our Lord. In Christ, there is no condemnation. In Christ, Satan can bring no charge against us.

THE JEWS **(9:1-11:36)**

Romans chapters nine through eleven form a parenthesis within the book of Romans. The first eight chapters develop in detail Paul's great explanation of justification through faith. Chapters twelve through sixteen give the ethical application of that argument. The parenthesis in-between deals with a special "problem," the problem of why most Jews had rejected the Gospel.

God's election of the Jews as a people had been no guarantee of their salvation. He used them as he did many people to work through history to the point of the coming of Jesus. This type of election does not insure an individual's salvation. The Jews still had to be faithful.

Those God saves are required to be people of faith. The Jews should have understood that God's using them as a people did not exempt them from an obedience of faith. Faith, not nationalistic or meritorious concerns, was the way of acceptance before God.

APPLICATION

(12:1-15:33)

Chapters 12-16 apply the principles of justification through faith to everyday life. The abstract case of Paul's argument relating to our justification here gives way to very concrete, lifestyle applications. Total commitment, selfless regard for others, and a constructive, loving attitude are required of Christians. We are not to allow any barriers to come between us and our brethren, unless they are barriers God Himself has named. Therefore, pride, selfishness, and all destructive attitudes are to give way to edification, encouragement, and humility.

Good Byes

(16:1-27)

The Gospel is about God and people. In particular, the Gospel is about God and people who are forgiven through the blood of Christ. People are important to Paul. He cares about his friends and the challenges they face. In this loving good bye, he cannot but warn them about smooth talking false teachers. He cares so much about the faithfulness of his brothers and sisters he, with the guidance of the Spirit, take an entire chapter to call many of them by name.

The bookend at the end of Romans is found in 16:26. The fact that the other bookend in Romans 1:5 makes the same declaration is no accident. "Obedience of faith," not "faith only" is the way imperfect human response accesses the perfect justification found only in Jesus.

Edwin S. Jones
April 5, 2009 (PM)