



Provided by the Church of the Lutheran Confession - Board of Missions

New Testament Survey

Lesson 28 – Romans 1-4 – Law and Gospel

Paul's Letter to the Romans

For the background of this letter, see Lesson 25.

Paul's letter to the Romans can be divided into seven parts:

1. Paul's introduction of himself and the stating of his theme (1:1-17)
2. God's **Law** condemns both Gentiles and Jews – all are sinners (1:18 – 3:20)
3. God's **Gospel** brings righteousness through faith in Christ Jesus (3:21 – 4:25)
4. The believer is **free** from God's wrath, from sin, from the Law, and from death (5:1 – 8:39)
5. God's ways with the **Jews** and the **Gentiles** (9:1 – 11:36)
6. How believers ought to **conduct** themselves (12:1 – 15:13)
7. Conclusion: Paul's plans, greetings, and last warnings (15:14 – 16:27)

Read each of the sections below. If you have questions, do not hesitate to ask them.

Paul's Introduction of Himself, and the Stating of His Theme (1:1-17)

Greetings (1:1-7)

Paul – to the saints in Rome – grace and peace.

Paul's intention to preach the Gospel in Rome (1: 8-15)

"I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift" (v. ____

"I am ready to preach the Gospel to you who are in Rome also" (v. ____

The theme of the letter to the Romans (1:16-17)

"I AM NOT ASHAMED OF THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST.

IT IS THE POWER OF GOD FOR SALVATION FOR EVERYONE WHO BELIEVES. ...

IN IT THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD IS REVEALED" (vv. ____

God's Law Condemns Both Gentiles and Jews – All Are Sinners (1:18 – 3:20)

Paul has announced his theme: the Gospel of Christ, the Good News of what Jesus has done for us. But before he presents the Gospel to us, he teaches the Law of God and points out all our sins to us so that we see the need for the Gospel. It is because we are such hopeless sinners that the Gospel is such Good News.

He shows how the heathen world had fallen away from God. Then he shows how all moralists, who look down on others, are also condemned by God's Law. This also includes the Jews, who had God's Law but did not obey it. Then Paul quotes the Old Testament to prove that every single person in the entire world, both Gentile and Jew, is a sinner in the sight of God.

God is angry with the heathen world because of their sin (1:18-32)

"The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness" (v. ____

Even though they knew God from His creation, **"they did not glorify Him as God"** (v. ____

They **"worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator"** (v. ____

As a judgment on their idolatry, God gave them up to their grossly sinful ways.

It is at this point that God condemns all homosexual behavior of men and women.

God is also angry with the moralists, who condemn others but not themselves (2:1-10)

"You are inexcusable. ... In whatever you judge another you condemn yourself" (v. ____

"Do you think ... that you will escape the judgment of God?" (v. ____

God is angry with the Jews who cannot keep the Law that God gave them (2:11-29)

"Not the hearers of the Law are just in the sight of God, but the doers of the Law" (v. ____

Some Gentiles, having the Law in their hearts, keep the Law better than the Jews.

"You who make your boast in the Law, do you dishonor God through breaking" it? (v. ____

Thus, God is angry with all sinners, whether outwardly good or evil; all are sinners (3:1-20)

"We have ... charged both Jews and Greeks that they are all under sin" (v. ____

Various Old Testament passages are quoted to show **"there is none who does good"** (v. ____

"By the deeds of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight, FOR BY THE LAW IS THE KNOWLEDGE OF SIN" (Use of Law as mirror) (v. ____

God's Gospel Brings Righteousness through Faith in Jesus Christ (3:21 – 4:25)

This section is really the main part of the letter, for in this section Paul tells the Romans what the Gospel of Christ really is: God's free gift to sinners, namely, the perfect righteousness given to all that was won for everyone by Jesus' suffering and death on the cross. The only way to receive this gift is by faith, that is, by trusting in Jesus and what He did for all sinners.

Paul uses the term “justify”, which means that God declares the whole world just (righteous) and holy, because Jesus absorbed in His body the punishment for all sins of all sinners. Even Old Testament believers like Abraham and David were saved through their faith in the Good News that God declares sinners forgiven and righteous because of the sacrificial death of Christ.

We are saved by grace, because of Christ’s redemption, received by faith (3:21-31)

“All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus” (vv. _____)

Notice that all those who have sinned are all justified or declared just.

“We conclude that a man is justified by faith apart from deeds of the Law” (v. ____)

Notice that only those who have faith in Jesus enjoy this justification of all.

Abraham received justification by faith in God’s promise, not by good deeds (4:1-5, 9-25)

“Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness” (v. ____)

This is a quotation from Genesis 15:6, which teaches justification by faith.

“To him who believes on Him ..., his faith is accounted for righteousness” (v. ____)

“Now to him who works, the wages are not counted as grace but as debt” (v. ____)

When a man works for wages, his pay is not a gift, but a debt.

But through faith in Jesus, one receives a gift of undeserved grace.

Abraham was justified by faith in God’s promise before he was circumcised.

Abraham was **“fully convinced that what He had promised He was able to perform”** (v. ____)

David teaches the same thing in Psalm 32 (4:6-8)

“Blessed are those ... whose sins are covered, ... to whom the LORD shall not impute sin”

(vv. _____)

Universal (or Objective) Justification and Individual (or Subjective) Justification

Universal justification = God declares the whole world righteous because of Christ’s work.

Individual justification = Each one receives the benefits of this justification by faith.

In one sense all are saved because Jesus died for all.

In another sense all are not saved because unbelievers refuse God’s gift of justification in Christ.

The Lutheran Emphasis on Justification by Faith

This teaching of justification by grace, for Christ’s sake, through faith, was forgotten very early in the history of the church. The early Christians began talking about doing good in

order to merit forgiveness and salvation. St. Augustine restored the true teaching for a time, but after his death the Roman church again lost sight of Paul's teaching.

Through their study of the Scriptures, Martin Luther and the other reformers at his time recovered the pure teaching of justification by faith apart from the deeds of the Law, as taught by Paul. But by this time the Roman Catholic Church was so contaminated by the concept of salvation by works that Luther and other reformers like him were excommunicated by the Roman church as false teachers. To this day the Roman Church condemns the teaching that we are justified (declared righteous) and forgiven by God through faith in Jesus Christ alone, apart from good works or works of the Law. Many Lutherans in our time have also fallen away from this teaching. May God help us, so that we may always teach this doctrine as Paul taught it to the Romans.

Our Lutheran confessions teach justification by faith. For example, the Augsburg Confession (1530) says: *"It is taught among us that we cannot obtain forgiveness of sin and righteousness before God by our own merits, works, or satisfactions, but that we receive forgiveness of sin and become righteous before God by grace, for Christ's sake, through faith, when we believe that Christ suffered for us and that for His sake our sin is forgiven and righteousness and eternal life are given to us."*

Some of the Lutheran hymns that we use in the United States also clearly teach this doctrine, particularly those written by Martin Luther and his associates. Here are some stanzas by a man named Paul Speratus, who was a friend of Martin Luther.

"Salvation unto us has come By God's free grace and favor;
Good works cannot avert our doom, They help and save us never.
Faith looks to Jesus Christ alone, Who did for all the world atone;
He is our one Redeemer."

"Since Christ hath full atonement made And brought to us salvation,
Each Christian therefore may be glad And build on this foundation.
Thy grace alone, dear Lord, I plead, Thy death is now my life indeed,
For Thou hast paid my ransom."

"Faith clings to Jesus' cross alone And rests in Him unceasing;
And by its fruits true faith is known, With love and hope increasing.
Yet faith alone doth justify, Works serve thy neighbor and supply
The proof that faith is living."

Questions

1. Why did the apostle Paul want to go to Rome?
2. What is the theme of Paul's letter to the Romans?
3. What does Paul say the Gospel is able to accomplish?
4. What does Paul mean when he speaks of the righteousness of God?
5. Why does Paul spend so much time in his letter discussing God's law?
6. In what ways were the Jews and Gentiles different from each other?
7. In what ways were the Jews and Gentiles the same?
8. What does Paul say about the man who finds fault with others?
9. How many people are sinners? How many people are justified in Christ?
10. What is the only way to receive the benefits of what Jesus did?
11. What does Paul say about Abraham and David?
12. What is the difference between wages and grace?
13. What does the word "imputation" mean?
14. What is the chief blessing of the Lutheran Reformation?