The Bible and Bread

Context, Themes, and Word Study

The Epistle of Romans
Week 9

Romans Introduction ~ Eugene Peterson

The event that split history into "before" and "after" and changed the world took place about thirty years before **Paul** wrote this letter. The event—the life, death, and resurrection of **Jesus**—took place in a remote corner of the extensive **Roman Empire**: the **province of Judea in Palestine**. Hardly anyone noticed, certainly no one in busy and powerful Rome.

The letter to the Romans is a piece of exuberant and passionate thinking. This is the glorious life of the mind enlisted in the service of God. **Paul** takes the well-witnessed and devoutly believed fact of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth and thinks through its implications.

~ Eugene Peterson

How does it happen that in the death and resurrection of Jesus, world history took a new direction, and at the same moment the life of every man, woman, and child on the planet was eternally affected?

What is God up to?

What does it *mean* that Jesus "saves"?

What's behind all this, and where is it going?

~ Eugene Peterson

Paul's mind is supple and capacious.

He takes **logic** and **argument**,

poetry and **imagination**,

Scripture and **prayer**,

creation and **history** and

experience, and

weaves them into this letter that has become the premier document of Christian theology.

~ Eugene Peterson

Introduction to Romans ~ Wesley Study Bible

Wesley believed that Romans was written to show that neither Jews nor Gentiles "could obtain justification before God; and that therefore it was necessary for both to seek it from the free mercy of God by faith" and that "God had an absolute right to show mercy on what terms he pleases" (*Notes*, Romans, Preface).

Romans is widely regarded as Paul's most carefully considered, rhetorically sophisticated, and theologically important writing, composed near the end of his ministry and containing his mature reflections on the Christian faith. The letter's impact upon subsequent Christian history has been enormous, especially as a source for the Reformation doctrine of justification by faith.

~ Wesley Study Bible

…many scholars today argue that the more central issue is the ultimate fate of unbelieving Israel, a serious theological problem with which Paul, a Jewish apostle to Gentiles, wrestled prior to his final trip to Judea (15: 25). Has God's plan failed? Can God truly be considered righteous (a keyword in Romans) and not save Israel? Paul's argument climaxes in 11: 26, in which he asserts, "all Israel will be saved," and God's righteousness will be vindicated.

~ Wesley Study Bible

NIB

Romans Outline:

- The Faithfulness of God: Romans 1:1-4:25
- God's People in Christ as the True Humanity: Romans 5:1-8:39
- God's Promises and God's Faithfulness: Romans 9:1-11:36
- God's Call to Worship, Holiness, and Unity: Romans 12:1-16:27

Romans 14:1-15:13 ~ God's Call to Unity of Life and Worship Across Barriers of Custom and Ethnic Identity

Romans 15:1-13 ~ Mutual Welcome, Based on the Messiah

NIB

Chapters 12-16: The community that is created by this gospel must live as the true, renewed humanity, in its internal and external life. In particular, it must reflect God's intention that Jew and Gentile come together as one worshiping body in Christ. Paul's own plans are bent to this end, and his greetings to different groups in the Roman Church may indicate his desire to bring together disparate groups and common worship in mission.

NIB

Paul understands the difficult task of various cultures living together as one family who cherish very different traditions, not least of which are food taboos. Paul knows that this will not be solved overnight and stresses instead a doctrine of *adiaphora*: There are some practical things over which Christians can legitimately disagree, and they should not impair common worship. Underneath it all is Paul's desire that the Scripture should be fulfilled: "Rejoice, you Gentiles, with God's people!" (15: 10, quoting Deuteronomy 32: 43).

Romans 15:1-6 ~ NRSVUE

15 We who are strong ought to put up with the failings of the weak and not to please
ourselves. **2** Each of us must please our neighbor for the good purpose of building up
the neighbor. **3** For Christ did not please himself, but, as it is written, “The insults of
those who insult you have fallen on me.” **4** For whatever was written in former days was
written for our instruction, so that by steadfastness and by the encouragement of the
scriptures we might have hope. **5** May the God of steadfastness and encouragement
grant you to live in harmony with one another, in accordance with Christ Jesus, **6** so
that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus
Christ.

Romans 15:7-9 ~ NRSVUE

7 Welcome one another, therefore, just as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God. 8 For I tell you that Christ has become a servant of the circumcised on behalf of the truth of God in order that he might confirm the promises given to the ancestors 9 and that the gentiles might glorify God for his mercy. As it is written,

“Therefore I will confess you among the gentiles
and sing praises to your name”;

Romans 15:10-13 ~ NRSVUE

10 and again he says,
“Rejoice, O gentiles, with his people”;

11 and again,
“Praise the Lord, all you gentiles,
and let all the peoples praise him”;

12 and again Isaiah says,
“The root of Jesse shall come,
the one who rises to rule the gentiles;
in him the gentiles shall hope.”

13 May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Romans 15:1-6 ~ The Message

15 1-2 Those of us who are strong and able in the faith need to step in and lend a hand to those who falter, and not just do what is most convenient for us. Strength is for service, not status. Each one of us needs to look after the good of the people around us, asking ourselves, "How can I help?"

3-6 That's exactly what Jesus did. He didn't make it easy for himself by avoiding people's troubles, but waded right in and helped out. "I took on the troubles of the troubled," is the way Scripture puts it. Even if it was written in Scripture long ago, you can be sure it's written for *us*. God wants the combination of his steady, constant calling and warm, personal counsel in Scripture to come to characterize *us*, keeping us alert for whatever he will do next. May our dependably steady and warmly personal God develop maturity in you so that you get along with each other as well as Jesus gets along with us all. Then we'll be a choir—not our voices only, but our very lives singing in harmony in a stunning anthem to the God and Father of our Master Jesus!

Romans 15:7-9 ~ The Message

7-13 So reach out and welcome one another to God's glory. Jesus did it; now *you* do it! Jesus, staying true to God's purposes, reached out in a special way to the Jewish insiders so that the old ancestral promises would come true for them. As a result, the non-Jewish outsiders have been able to experience mercy and to show appreciation to God. Just think of all the Scriptures that will come true in what we do! For instance:

Then I'll join outsiders in a hymn-sing;
I'll sing to your name!

Romans 15:10-13 ~ The Message

And this one: Outsiders and insiders, rejoice together!

And again: People of all nations, celebrate God!
All colors and races, give hearty praise!

And Isaiah's word: There's the root of our ancestor Jesse,
    breaking through the earth and growing tree tall,
Tall enough for everyone everywhere to see and take hope!

Oh! May the God of green hope fill you up with joy, fill you up with peace, so that your believing lives, filled with the life-giving energy of the Holy Spirit, will brim over with hope!

Key Words | Themes

Themes

Words