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SERIES INTRODUCTION

In every generation there is a fresh need for the faithful exposition of God's Word in the church. At the same time, the church must constantly do the work of theology: reflecting on the teaching of Scripture, confessing its doctrines of the Christian faith, and applying them to contemporary culture. We believe that these two tasks—the expositional and the theological—are interdependent. Our doctrine must derive from the biblical text, and our understanding of any particular passage of Scripture must arise from the doctrine taught in Scripture as a whole.

We further believe that these interdependent tasks of biblical exposition and theological reflection are best undertaken in the church, and most specifically in the pulpits of the church. This is all the more true since the study of Scripture properly results in doxology and praxis—that is, in praise to God and practical application in the lives of believers. In pursuit of these ends, we are pleased to present the Reformed Expository Commentary as a fresh exposition of Scripture for our generation in the church. We hope and pray that pastors, teachers, Bible study leaders, and many others will find this series to be a faithful, inspiring, and useful resource for the study of God's infallible, inerrant Word.

The Reformed Expository Commentary has four fundamental commitments. First, these commentaries aim to be *biblical*, presenting a comprehensive exposition characterized by careful attention to the details of the text. They are not exegetical commentaries—commenting word by word or even verse by verse—but integrated expositions of whole passages of Scripture. Each commentary will thus present a sequential, systematic treatment of an entire book of the Bible, passage by passage. Second, these commentaries are unashamedly *doctrinal*. We are committed to the Westminster Confession

Series Introduction

of Faith and Catechisms as containing the system of doctrine taught in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments. Each volume will teach, promote, and defend the doctrines of the Reformed faith as they are found in the Bible. Third, these commentaries are *redemptive-historical* in their orientation. We believe in the unity of the Bible and its central message of salvation in Christ. We are thus committed to a Christ-centered view of the Old Testament, in which its characters, events, regulations, and institutions are properly understood as pointing us to Christ and his gospel, as well as giving us examples to follow in living by faith. Fourth, these commentaries are *practical*, applying the text of Scripture to contemporary challenges of life—both public and private—with appropriate illustrations.

The contributors to the Reformed Expository Commentary are all pastor-scholars. As pastor, each author will first present his expositions in the pulpit ministry of his church. This means that these commentaries are rooted in the teaching of Scripture to real people in the church. While aiming to be scholarly, these expositions are not academic. Our intent is to be faithful, clear, and helpful to Christians who possess various levels of biblical and theological training—as should be true in any effective pulpit ministry. Inevitably this means that some issues of academic interest will not be covered. Nevertheless, we aim to achieve a responsible level of scholarship, seeking to promote and model this for pastors and other teachers in the church. Significant exegetical and theological difficulties, along with such historical and cultural background as is relevant to the text, will be treated with care.

We strive for a high standard of enduring excellence. This begins with the selection of the authors, all of whom have proved to be outstanding communicators of God's Word. But this pursuit of excellence is also reflected in a disciplined editorial process. Each volume is edited by both a series editor and a testament editor. The testament editors, Iain Duguid for the Old Testament and Daniel Doriani for the New Testament, are accomplished pastors and respected scholars who have taught at the seminary level. Their job is to ensure that each volume is sufficiently conversant with up-to-date scholarship and is faithful and accurate in its exposition of the text. As series editors, we oversee each volume to ensure its overall quality—including excellence of writing, soundness of teaching, and usefulness in application. Working together as an editorial team, along with the publisher, we are devoted to ensuring that these are the best commentaries that our gifted authors can

provide, so that the church will be served with trustworthy and exemplary expositions of God's Word.

It is our goal and prayer that the Reformed Expository Commentary will serve the church by renewing confidence in the clarity and power of Scripture and by upholding the great doctrinal heritage of the Reformed faith. We hope that pastors who read these commentaries will be encouraged in their own expository preaching ministry, which we believe to be the best and most biblical pattern for teaching God's Word in the church. We hope that lay teachers will find these commentaries among the most useful resources they rely on for understanding and presenting the text of the Bible. And we hope that the devotional quality of these studies of Scripture will instruct and inspire each Christian who reads them in joyful, obedient discipleship to Jesus Christ.

May the Lord bless all who read the Reformed Expository Commentary. We commit these volumes to the Lord Jesus Christ, praying that the Holy Spirit will use them for the instruction and edification of the church, with thanksgiving to God the Father for his unceasing faithfulness in building his church through the ministry of his Word.

Richard D. Phillips
Philip Graham Ryken
Series Editors

PREFACE

Today's Christianity is largely a religion of Paul, and Romans is the core of Paul's message, for it is the most systematic account of the faith. One might say that Genesis and Exodus provide the foundations for the faith, that the Psalms shape the worship and emotional life of God's people, that the Gospels present Jesus as Redeemer, Teacher, and example, and that Paul's epistles declare the core convictions of the redeemed. For that reason, Romans has been so fully examined that new commentaries need to explain why they exist. The answer is that the truth never changes, but that challenges to truth change constantly. Likewise, biblical ethics never changes, but temptations change constantly, so that each generation must restate the faith in its place and time.

This commentary is chiefly for those who preach and teach every week. It has both pastoral and academic roots, since I preached through Romans twice and taught Romans several times at a seminary level. This dual preparation leads to commentary that attempts to be *serious* but not academic. It is serious because it rests on interpretation of the Greek text, but it is not academic, since it does not attempt to examine every exegetical issue or scholarly article. Several excellent commentaries already do that (see bibliography). I attempt to address the issues that are essential for pastors and teachers today.

This commentary has four elements. First, it establishes the context, structure, and meaning of each passage. Second, it states the meaning as I understand it and mentions alternative readings when a debate is well known and clearly affects the sense of the text. Third, it comments on the great doctrines of Romans, especially if they are most timely or suffer neglect.

Preface

Fourth, it strives to assist preachers and teachers: Each chapter suggests how one might present Christ and the call to discipleship. It also offers illustrations. Many, from church history, show how heroes of the faith addressed perennial issues, but some are personal stories that may prompt teachers to recall their own compelling stories. Each chapter also proposes lines of application, often using the categories of duty, character, goals, and discernment. *Duty* states what believers might do in response to God's stated will. *Character* explores who people are and who they ought to be, by virtue of union with Christ. *Goals* consider the aims or projects that believers might pursue. *Discernment* explores how we may see the world as God does, especially when cultures see matters differently.

The mention of cultures reminds us that sound commentaries are both universal and local. Scholars attempt to state unchanging biblical teaching for their day. To generalize, a thousand years ago, European culture stressed honor, and Christian teaching in Europe did too: mankind dishonors God through sin and unbelief, Jesus restored God's honor, and we honor both God and ourselves when we live in faith and obedience. This message could appeal to Romans, for it teaches that sin dishonors God (Rom. 1:21) and that faith both honors God (14:6) and restores our honor (2:7–10). Five hundred years ago, European culture stressed morality. Even unbelievers knew biblical standards and confessed that they fell short morally. The Reformation effectively declared that no one can atone for his or her failings, that our sole hope is in the substitutionary righteousness of Christ, received by faith. Romans 1:16 to 5:11 teaches this almost continually.

The interest in honor and morality remains, but in Western culture today, the focus has shifted to identity, fulfillment, and achievement—and Christian teaching addresses those issues too. People worry less about morals; instead, they wonder whether they have achieved enough. People doubt themselves, worry whether they are acceptable, and try to protect their fragile egos. They need the gospel message of Romans 1–5, but they also need to hear that God created them in his image, so that they have intrinsic worth apart from achievements. They need to hear Romans 8: there is “no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus” (Rom. 8:1). They need to hear that God adopted them into his family (8:14–17, 23) as an act of free grace, not as a response to merit or performance.

PREFACE

My dual callings to be a pastor and a professor prompt a final note: A pastor's enthusiasm for Romans can exceed his congregation's. For that reason, I wrote fewer than fifty chapters, to suggest a way to cover Romans in less than a year. Wise leaders will know when to speed up or slow down to meet the needs of their people. Some may judge it best to present short series on Romans 3–5, Romans 8, or Romans 12–13. May the Lord guide you.

Daniel M. Doriani

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Editors can make or break a book and can lift or crush the spirit of an author. My editors, Phil Ryken, Rick Phillips, and Karen Magnuson, improved this book time and again, in ways small and large. It is a privilege to know them as collaborators and friends.



Romans

RIGHTEOUS BY FAITH

1

PAUL, SERVANT OF JESUS CHRIST AND APOSTLE FOR ROME

Romans 1:1

*Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle,
set apart for the gospel of God. (Rom. 1:1)*

INTRODUCING ROMANS

The Church in Rome

Paul's letter to the church in Rome is the longest and most complete expression of his theology. Romans is therefore both a treatise and a letter. In writing to Rome's Christians, Paul introduced himself to a church that he had not established. He had never seen it, yet hoped to visit while traveling to Spain.

No one knows who established the church in Rome. Acts 2:10 states that at Pentecost Jews from Rome heard Peter's sermon. Apparently, they brought the gospel to their synagogue and the faith spread from there. Later tradition alleges that Peter founded the church, but there is no evidence for this claim in Scripture or early tradition. Ambrosiaster, unknown except for his

fourth-century writings, said that the Romans embraced the faith without seeing any “signs” or “powers,” nor did they receive “their faith in Christ from any of the apostles.”¹

Time and Place of the Composition of Romans

Paul probably wrote his letter to the Romans around A.D. 57 while wintering in Corinth, where he had a long, fruitful ministry (Acts 18:1–11). Acts 20:1–3 notes that Paul spent three months in Greece. That would give him time to compose Romans, richly structured as it is. Further, several names from the greetings of Romans 16 are connected to Corinth. They include Gaius (Rom. 16:23; 1 Cor. 1:14), Erastus (Rom. 16:23; 2 Tim. 4:20), and Phoebe of Cenchreae (Rom. 16:1–2).² Paul directs the church in Rome to “welcome her”; she probably delivered the epistle and came from Corinth, since Cenchreae is Corinth’s eastern port, a short distance from Corinth proper. Once winter passed and the Mediterranean was safe for travel, Paul planned to bring a gift from gentile³ believers to the Jerusalem church. Afterward, he hoped to visit Rome, preach the gospel there, and then travel west to start churches in lands where the gospel was unknown: “since I have longed for many years to come to you, I hope to see you in passing as I go to Spain, and to be helped on my journey there by you, once I have enjoyed your company for a while” (Rom. 15:23–24).

So Paul hoped to visit the Roman church. He knew many individuals there (Rom. 16:1–16), but wrote Romans to inaugurate a relationship with the entire church. His presentation of the gospel is both self-introduction and a gift. In fact, Paul did visit Rome—but not as he intended, for he arrived as a prisoner, following his unwarranted arrest in Jerusalem (Acts 21–26, esp. 26:32).

The First Roman Christians

The church of Rome had both Jewish and gentile believers; scholars debate which group was larger. Paul certainly had Jewish believers in mind. He

1. Ambrosiaster, “Commentary on Romans,” in *Commentaries on Romans and 1–2 Corinthians*, ed. and trans. Gerald Bray (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2009), 1.

2. The names Gaius and Erastus are too common to demonstrate a link to Corinth. The case rests on Acts 20:1–3 and on Phoebe; Gaius and Erastus offer corroboration.

3. This book’s text does not capitalize “gentile” because the corresponding Greek term *ethnē* means “nations,” not a particular people group.

addresses Jews in Romans 2:17–25: “But if you call yourself a Jew . . .” Later, he calls Abraham “our forefather” (Rom. 4:1). He writes “to those who know the law” (7:1) and tells them that “you are not under law but under grace” (6:14). Paul often quotes the Old Testament and addresses themes of special interest to Jews in chapters 2–4 and 9–11: the law, circumcision, and heroes such as Abraham and David, for instance. Paul mentions Jews fourteen times and gentiles twenty-three times, so we conclude that the church had many in each group. Paul addresses gentile readers in Romans 1–3, 9, 11, and 15. He insists that the Lord always had gentiles in his redemptive plan. Indeed, God is Lord of the gentiles (3:29), and he summons them to faith (9:30; 11:11–13; 15:9–27).

The Theme of Romans

Paul’s introduction of Romans fits his typical pattern, although it is longer. At the start, he identifies himself as Paul, apostle of Christ Jesus (Rom. 1:1). At the close, he addresses the church—“To all those in Rome who are loved by God”—and offers them God’s grace and peace (1:7). In Romans, as in 1 Corinthians and Galatians, Paul developed the greeting with lines that hint at the letter’s theme. In 1 Corinthians 1:2, Paul mentions holiness, and in Galatians 1:1–3, he refers to his apostolic authority and to the gospel.

Paul’s extended greeting in Romans 1:1–7 sheds light on debates about the epistle’s theme. At least five lines foreshadow themes of Romans. First, Paul is “set apart for the gospel of God” (Rom. 1:1). Second, this gospel is nothing new; it was “promised beforehand through his prophets” (1:2). Third, the content of the gospel is the person and work of “Jesus Christ our Lord,” who is “descended from David according to the flesh” but “declared . . . the Son of God in power . . . by his resurrection from the dead” (1:3–4). Fourth, through Jesus, Paul received grace and apostleship (Rom. 1:5; cf. Acts 9:1–16). Fifth, the goal of Paul’s apostleship is “the obedience of faith” (Rom. 1:5). Whatever else that means, to obey the gospel entails faith in Christ (10:5). This is the message that Paul proclaims “among all the nations” (1:5) and to the Romans whom God loves and calls (1:7).

It seems, therefore, that along with Romans 1:16–17, Romans 1:1–7 functions as an overture to the epistle. Interpreters agree that the gospel, faith, righteousness, justification, and church unity are *themes* of Romans, but they disagree about the *central* theme. Contemporary theologians often

comment that the Reformers incorrectly called justification by faith *the* theme of Romans. In his debate with the Roman Catholic Church, Martin Luther focused on justification, and John Calvin did say that the “main subject” of Romans is “justification by faith,” but he specified that it is the focus of Romans 1–5, not the whole.⁴

“New Perspective” scholars such as Krister Stendahl, E. P. Sanders, James D. G. Dunn, and N. T. Wright de-emphasize Romans 3–5 and justification and accent Romans 8–11 and relationships between Jews and gentiles. Stendahl has argued that the Western church has a morbid conscience, captured especially in the way in which Augustine and Luther describe their moral struggles. Western Christians read those struggles back into Paul, obscuring his greater interest in the salvation of gentiles and their rights as converts.⁵ Sanders believes that the equal status of Jews and gentiles under Jesus Christ was essential to Paul. By denying that Judaism was legalistic, Sanders also de-emphasizes justification by faith. He has affirmed Albert Schweitzer’s dictum that union with Christ is the core of Pauline theology and that “righteousness by faith is . . . a subsidiary crater.”⁶ Wright and Dunn seemed to align with this view, but after protracted debate, Dunn at least partially renewed his commitment to justification by faith. He said that “justification by faith alone needs to be reasserted as strongly as ever it was by Paul or by Augustine or by Luther.” Dunn endorsed the importance of justification by faith, opposing “all attempts to add *anything* to the gospel.”⁷ Wright, however, redefines *justification*, asserting that it “is not ‘how you become a Christian,’ so much as ‘how you can tell who is a member of the covenant family.’”⁸ Wright does call *justification* a legal term, but for him it is a declaration about “who is a member of the family of God,” not a statement about “imputed righteousness.”⁹ Moreover,

4. John Calvin, *Romans*, trans. John Owen, in *Calvin’s Commentaries*, vol. 19 (1540; repr., Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003), xxxix, xxxi.

5. Krister Stendahl, *Paul among Jews and Gentiles and Other Essays* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1976), 2–27.

6. Albert Schweitzer, *The Mysticism of Paul the Apostle*, trans. William Montgomery (Baltimore/London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), 225.

7. James D. G. Dunn, “The New Perspective: Whence, What and Whither?,” in *The New Perspective on Paul*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 96 (emphasis his).

8. N. T. Wright, *What Saint Paul Really Said: Was Paul of Tarsus the Real Founder of Christianity?* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 119, 122.

9. Wright, *What Saint Paul Really Said*, 122–23.

since both Dunn and Wright accent corporate aspects of redemption, a justification that saves individuals falls into a corner. Throughout these debates, John Stott, Doug Moo, Thomas Schreiner, Colin Kruse, and other orthodox scholars reassert the centrality of justification and imputed righteousness in Romans.

Can we state that justification is the central theme of Romans? The rhetoric of Romans 1:1–16a sets up Paul’s theme statement in 1:16b–17. Paul calls himself an apostle of the long-anticipated gospel concerning Jesus, son of David, Son of God, and resurrected Lord. It is a gospel for the nations, a message that summons the obedience of faith (Rom. 1:1–5). Paul is unashamed—that is, proud—of this gospel and its power to save both Jew and Greek. The gospel reveals God’s righteousness or justice (both terms use the Greek word *dikaiosune*). God is just, and he establishes justice by putting humans into a right relationship with God. He does this freely, as a gift that people receive by faith and live out “from faith to faith” (1:17 NASB).¹⁰

Many scholars hesitate to name Romans’ “single, unifying topic,” but it seems best to say that the theme is the gospel, since Paul mentions the gospel or gospel proclamation at prominent junctures (Rom. 1:1, 9, 15–16; 10:15–16; 11:28; 15:16, 19–20; 16:25).¹¹ F. F. Bruce judged that “Paul’s gospel of justification by faith is most clearly expounded” in Romans and Galatians and “more systematically” presented in Romans.¹² God’s justifying grace is “available on equal terms to Jews and Gentiles.” That grace creates a “way of holiness” through the Spirit.¹³ C. E. B. Cranfield describes Romans as a “carefully reasoned account of the gospel.”¹⁴ John Stott and Raymond Brown largely agree, but maintain that a justification that leads to transformation or justice is essential to Romans.¹⁵ Paul is certainly interested in justice and justification, mentioning them almost sixty times. Still, the most common

10. Luke T. Johnson emphasizes the rhetoric of Romans 1:1–17 in *The Writings of the New Testament: An Interpretation* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986), 318–19.

11. Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 24, 29; Paul J. Achtemeier, Joel B. Green, and Marianne Meye Thompson, *Introducing the New Testament: Its Literature and Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 307.

12. F. F. Bruce, *Romans*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985), 30–31.

13. F. F. Bruce, “The Romans Debate—Continued,” in *The Romans Debate*, ed. Karl P. Donfried (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1991), 182–83.

14. C. E. B. Cranfield, *Romans*, 2 vols. (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1975, 1979), 1:23.

15. John Stott, *Romans: God’s Good News for the World*, The Bible Speaks Today (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1994), 35–36; Raymond E. Brown, *An Introduction to the New Testament* (New York: Doubleday, 1997), 576–77.

topic in Romans is Jesus Christ, whom Paul names eighty-five times.¹⁶ Calvin combines the threads beautifully when he summarizes Romans 1–5: “Man’s only righteousness is through the mercy of God in Christ, which being offered in the Gospel, is apprehended by faith.”¹⁷ Romans 6–8 then explores how gospel-bestowed righteousness causes *personal* righteousness through union with Christ and the presence of the Spirit. This occurs in a transformed community (Rom. 9–11) and in concrete actions that follow from a mind transformed by the gospel (Rom. 12–15).

From 1985 onward, a series of actions by Mikhail Gorbachev, Eduard Shevardnadze, Lech Wałęsa, and others led to the fall of the Iron Curtain that had held the people of Eastern Europe captive, under Soviet control, for decades. For a few months, there seemed to be freedom to open the borders to the West, but officials were slow to act, first in Hungary and then in East Germany, even as large crowds massed at the borders. But on November 9, 1989, an obscure East German border guard named Harald Jaeger opened a gate and let a fearless crowd of East Germans cross over into West Berlin and the freedoms of the West. For years, it had been his job to stop any people, shooting them if necessary, if they tried to escape East Berlin. Then one day he decided that this was wrong and acted on his belief. The Berlin Wall quickly collapsed, and a new postcommunist era began. In this analogy, the various political leaders parallel Jesus by their foundational actions while Jaeger represents the person whose mind is transformed. He acted on his convictions, joined a new community, and lived a new life. Likewise, Paul tells the Romans that new convictions lead to a new life.

AN OUTLINE OF ROMANS

An accurate overview of Romans will be helpful to grasp, since the knowledge of the whole enhances our study of every text. After a prologue describing his mission and goals (Rom. 1:1–16), Paul states his essential message: “In the gospel the righteousness of God is revealed—a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: ‘The righteous [or “the

16. Paul mentions “Jesus Christ” or “Christ Jesus” thirty-two times, “Christ” (alone) thirty-eight times, and “Jesus” (alone) five times, and he apparently refers to Jesus when he says “Lord” ten times. Paul uses the verb “justify” fifteen times, the noun “righteousness” thirty-four times, “righteous” seven times, and “justification” twice.

17. Calvin, *Romans*, xxix–xxx.

just”] will live by faith” (1:17 NIV). Righteousness comes by faith, rather than works, because “the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and wickedness of men” (1:18 RSV). “Ungodliness” especially signifies sins against God, while “wickedness” names sins against humanity. Paul describes the problem of sin from Romans 1:18 to 3:20. It is especially culpable because creation (1:19–21), conscience (1:32; 2:15), and Scripture all attest to God’s existence and standards.

Romans 1:18–32 focuses on Greco-Roman forms of sin. Pagans deny God’s honor and make idols (Rom. 1:18–23), they indulge themselves sexually (1:24–27), and many give themselves to depravity (1:28–32). Romans 2:1–3:20 describes sins that beset Jews. Those who know the covenant and its ethic pass judgment on those who break the law (2:1–3). Jews, knowing God’s character, reason that he is patient, but forget that patience offers time for repentance and does not preempt judgment (2:4–11). Jews will be tempted to rest in their heritage, while failing to live by it (2:12–3:4). If a scoffer proposes that his unrighteousness highlights God’s goodness, Paul sees through it (3:5–8). Paul closes with a catena of Old Testament texts to prove that no one is righteous. Since no rationalization for sin can hold, every mouth must fall silent, leaving “the whole world . . . accountable to God” (3:19), for “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (3:23). No one keeps God’s law, and none find the glory that should be theirs as God’s image-bearers.

In Romans 3:21, Paul turns from diagnosis to cure. If the problem is God’s just wrath against human unrighteousness, the solution is a righteousness from God, received through faith. Believers “are justified by his grace as a gift.” They are *legally* right with God because Jesus endured God’s proper wrath toward sin and liberated his people from slavery to it (Rom. 3:21–31).

Abraham and David then illustrate justification by faith. Abraham represents the man who does great things for God: he left his home, civilization, and security at God’s command, and then offered his only son as a sacrifice to God. Yet even Abraham was justified by faith, not works (Rom. 4:1–5). David too was right with God by faith, although his case contrasts with Abraham’s. God justified Abraham despite his good deeds and forgave David despite his evil deeds when he repented, noting, “Blessed is the man against whom the Lord will not count his sin” (4:6–8). Because Abraham lived by faith, he is the father of all, Jew and gentile (4:9–15). He also models

faith by trusting God's promises, even when the evidence—his advanced age—pointed against them (4:16–25).

Romans 5–6 describes the benefits of faith. We have peace with God, liberty in prayer, confidence in trials, and assurance of God's love. If Christ died for us while we were sinners, how much more will he care for us, now that he reconciled us to himself (Rom. 5:1–11)? We are united to Jesus rather than Adam (5:12–21). Because of that union, we are, in principle, free from sin. We have died to sin and live to God (6:1–10). We need to think that way (6:11–14) and live that way, as instruments of his righteousness and heirs of eternal life (6:15–23).

In Romans 7, Paul prevents a possible misunderstanding. Believers have died to the law. Free to serve God, they obey “the standard of teaching” (Rom. 6:17–18). They are no longer “captive” to the law and have “the new life of the Spirit” (7:1–6 RSV). Nonetheless, evil desires persist. Perversely, people tend to rebel when they hear God's commands (7:7–13). This commentary concludes that in Romans 7:14–25, Paul speaks as a representative believer. Therefore, it takes Romans 6–8 dialectically, by holding apparently contrary ideas in tension. Chapter 6 declares liberation from sin as a governing principle. Nonetheless, believers still battle sin and frequently lose. Therefore, we can speak with Paul, “I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate” (7:14–15). Our behavior baffles us, brings misery, and leads us to cry for deliverance (7:16–25).

There is, however, no condemnation for those who belong to Jesus (Rom. 8:1). Moreover, God is accomplishing his plan of redemption: what the law and human effort could not do, God did, by sending his Son. He fulfilled the law and renewed disciples, who now walk with his Spirit, set their minds on the things of God, and please God (8:1–10). As a result, believers experience renewal in body and spirit, as God's children (8:11–17). God's plan encompasses restoration for all creation, not just mankind, but at present, we groan as we await our redemption (8:17–25). Yet believers wait confidently, for redemption is not precarious. By God's foreknowledge and predestination, all things work together for good. Above all, those whom God calls he also justifies and glorifies. Nothing can separate us from the love of Christ (8:26–39).

The affirmation of God's effective salvation raises the question of unbelief. Romans 9–11 addresses this question, especially Jewish unbelief, and

relationships between Jews and gentiles. The topic is personal and emotional for Paul, and he revisits it in 9:1–5, 10:1–3, and 11:1–5. Israel’s unbelief brings Paul “unceasing anguish,” since his fellow Israelites have covenants, laws, and promises that foster faith (Rom. 9:1–5). Still, God’s purposes have not failed, for he always chose an Israel within Israel. After choosing Abraham, the Lord elected Isaac, not Ishmael, and Jacob, not Esau (9:6–13).

Is election unjust? No, for humans stand before God in sin, not in neutrality. God has mercy as he wills and he “hardens” the wicked, such as Pharaoh (Rom. 9:14–18). But if God does as he wills, how can he fault anyone? Paul replies that creatures have no right to question the Creator (9:19–23). Regardless, God always planned to redeem Jews and gentiles (9:24–29).

Romans 9:30–10:21 explores Israel’s disobedience to the gospel and the gentiles’ faith. Gentiles *received* the “righteousness that is by faith,” while Israel *pursued* the law as the way to righteousness (Rom. 9:30–33). So the Israelites had zeal but were not saved, because they tried to “establish their own” righteousness and refused to “submit to God’s righteousness.” They did not recognize that Jesus is “the end” or goal of the law. He fulfilled it and “earned a status of righteousness both for Himself . . . and also for all who believe in Him” (10:1–14).¹⁸ Next, Paul contrasts “the righteousness that is based on the law” with “the righteousness based on faith.” The latter justifies and saves *all* who call on the Lord (10:5–13). This requires evangelism. Still, many disbelieve; thus, God says, “I have held out my hands to a . . . contrary people” (10:14–21).

Paul agonizes over Israel’s fate, but knows that “God has not rejected his people.” Just as there was a remnant in Elijah’s day, a remnant of the elect remains, “chosen by grace” (Rom. 11:1–10). Israel stumbled, and that made room for the gentiles, but Israel will not fall forever (11:11–24). Yes, Israel disobeyed God, but his election, gifts, and calling will let God show his people mercy again (11:25–32). That assurance leads Paul to praise the Lord (11:33–36).

Romans 12–15 describes the conduct of believers, who offer their bodies and minds to God (Rom. 12:1–2). This sacrifice manifests itself when Christians exercise their gifts for the benefit of others (12:3–8), when they display godly virtue (12:9–13), and when they repay evil with good, leaving judgment to God (12:14–21). Believers also submit to authorities that God

18. Cranfield, *Romans*, 2:505.

ordains (13:1–7). They love one another through the law (13:8–10) and live with a sense of urgency (13:11–14).

Romans 14–15 shapes the church’s community life. Believers inevitably disagree on practical matters. The Romans differed about Jewish practices, laws touching food and calendar (Rom. 14:1–6).¹⁹ Instead of issuing a ruling to settle a dispute, Paul states principles for settling all disputes. In calling some “weak” and others “strong” (15:15), Paul acknowledges that there is a correct answer, which the strong know: all food is clean and every day is holy. Yet Paul’s prime concern is not the right answer but the right way to settle disputes. First, the weak must not judge the strong and the strong must not despise the weak (14:1–4). Second, whatever position anyone takes, he should be convinced of it (14:5–12). Third, even if the strong are right, they should sacrifice their freedom if it would harm a brother by inducing him to do something he considers sinful (14:13–23).

These commands rest on Jesus’ pattern. He pleased others, not himself; he welcomes all, even the weak (Rom. 15:1–7). Because God welcomes us, we welcome one another (14:1–3). Because Jesus died and rose, he is Lord and Judge of the church. Therefore, no Christian should judge or rule over another (14:8–12, 15, 18). Instead, Christians should glorify God and praise Christ (15:4–13). He is the hope of Jews and gentiles alike. He serves Jews by establishing God’s promises; he serves gentiles by offering God’s mercy (15:8–13).

In Romans 15:14–29, Paul returns to his plan to visit Rome. That trip is part of his larger aim to preach Christ where he is unknown. Paul closes with a request for prayer, since he must first visit Jerusalem, where dangers await (Rom. 15:30–33). Romans 16 concludes the letter with greetings and blessings, starting with a plea to welcome Phoebe, who probably carried Paul’s letter to the Romans (16:1–2). Paul then greets the church, including twenty-six named individuals. He commends women and men from all walks of life for service to God’s mission (16:1–16). He warns them about divisions and encourages discernment (16:17–20). Finally, he pronounces a blessing that recapitulates the gospel of Jesus: the call to mission and “the obedience of faith” in God (16:21–27).

Before we present our outline of Romans, let us pause to remember that while we need to analyze the epistle’s structure, we don’t study it as we

19. It may also be a debate about the value of self-denial or asceticism.

would examine a great poem or novel. In Romans we have the inspired summary of the truth about God, man, sin, salvation, and righteousness. It is a message to study; more deeply, it is a message to believe, for it grants life, reveals and inculcates God's love, and moves us to walk with our Lord. Here, then, is an outline of Romans:

- I. Paul's self-identification, greeting, and overture to the gospel (1:1-7)
- II. Paul and the church in Rome (1:8-15)
- III. The theme: The righteous live by faith in Jesus Christ (1:16-17)
- IV. The need for the righteous to live by faith: the problem of sin and judgment (1:18-3:20)
 - A. God's wrath toward all sin, with a focus on gentiles (1:18-32)
 - B. The privileges of Jews not exculpatory (2:1-3:20)
- V. The gospel stated (3:21-4:25)
 - A. Believers declared righteous: justification, redemption, propitiation (3:21-31)
 - B. Justification illustrated by Abraham and David (4:1-25)
- VI. The benefits of the gospel (5:1-8:39)
 - A. Peace with God (5:1-11)
 - B. Union with Christ, the second Adam (5:12-21)
 - C. Dead to sin and alive to God (6:1-23)
 - D. Freedom from condemnation despite the ongoing struggle with sin (7:1-25)
 - E. Marks of life in the Spirit: assurance, direction, and hope (8:1-39)
- VII. Defense of the gospel and God's faithfulness in the face of unbelief (9:1-11:36)
 - A. Anguish caused by unbelief (9:1-5; 11:1-2)
 - B. God's choice of an Israel within Israel (9:6-13)
 - C. God's compassion for Jews and gentiles (9:14-10:4)
 - D. Calling on the Lord and saved by faith (10:5-21)
 - E. God's abiding plan for Israel (11:1-36)
- VIII. Life in the gospel (12:1-15:13)
 - A. The heart of the matter (12:1-2)
 - B. Gifts for service and the many facets of love (12:3-21)

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- C. Living under authority, under law, and under the gaze of eternity
(13:1–14)
- D. Attaining unity when believers disagree (14:1–15:13)
- IX. Plans and greetings, driven by the gospel (15:14–16:27)