

Romans Outline

Introduction: Romans is known as a letter or an epistle, but even a cursory glance at Romans is enough to know this isn't just another memo from Paul. Paul's letter to the Romans comes as close to a systematic theological work as we get from Paul, who normally wrote as a pastor giving practical advice to various communities facing various challenges.

The main difficulty in Romans is the bitter division between Jews and Gentiles. In the first major section of the letter Paul demonstrates how the division falls apart in the person of Christ- that both Jews and Gentiles are condemned by their inability to follow the law and that both Jews and Gentiles find salvation and unity in Christ.

But then the second problem Paul clearly agonizes over is what is the problem of why he's having more success among the Gentiles than the Jews. In other words why didn't Israel, Christ's own people, accept him? Paul's answer is that this is a great mystery and perhaps part of God's plan to open up salvation to Gentiles. Paul closes his argument with a beautiful hope for universal salvation among Israel in the future, and what sounds like universal salvation among the Gentiles as well.

The final section deals with how to live together despite these differences in the light of this hope. The main controversy Paul deals with here is the problem of eating food sacrificed to idols. Paul acknowledges that since idols aren't real- there actually isn't a problem with eating food sacrificed to them. The Christian is free to do this or not as she chooses. However, Paul acknowledges that some "weaker" Christians are offended by the practice, feeling it is too Gentile. So while Paul affirms there is nothing theologically wrong with it, he counsels the "stronger" Christians (the ones who know it's ok) to abstain out of care for their weaker brothers and sisters. All in all, a deft way to acknowledge a thorny theological issue and offer practical guidance. Now, whether Paul's advice worked or whether the Roman church found itself embroiled in a church split is unknown, but I like to think it worked.

Section One: All condemned under law; all saved by faith

Chapter 1: Paul's greeting; his wish to travel to Rome; God's wrath against all who sin

Chapter 2: All sin; the law will not protect Jews

Chapter 3: No one righteous- not one; God's righteousness comes through faith in Christ

Chapter 4: Abraham justified by faith not works; true offspring those with faith- not genetics

Chapter 5: Peace and joy come through this faith; death enters through Adam- but life in Christ

Chapter 6: Now dead to sin through baptism, offer selves to righteousness not sin

Chapter 7: Analogy from marriage- we are dead to sin; but the reality is we struggle now

Chapter 8: No condemnation for those in Christ; we have received spirit of adoption;

Future glory offers hope for present struggle; nothing can separate us

Section Two: The problem (and hope) of Israel

Chapter 9: Problem of Israel's unbelief; Paul's take- God hardening Israel now to show grace
At a later point

Chapter 10: No difference between Jew and Greek now- unity in faith; yet why doesn't Israel believe?

Chapter 11: God hasn't rejected Israel- God created a remnant; the purpose of I's unbelief
Was to open faith to the Gentiles; there is the hope of being again grafted in;
Ultimate salvation for all Israel and a "full measure" of Gentiles

Section Three: Living Together in Faith

Chapter 12: Lives as a living sacrifice to God; bless all- do not return evil for evil

Chapter 13: Submit to authorities; use law as a guide to loving neighbor

Chapter 14: Controversy over eating food sacrificed to idols; stop judging one another;

Eating this food ok- but stop for now out of love for others

Chapter 15: The strong should forbear with the weak; accept one another; Paul's plan to visit

Chapter 16: Commendations- note the importance of the women

Stories to know: Nothing can separate us from God in Christ Jesus 8:31-39; Marks of the Christian 12:9-18; The controversy over eating food sacrificed to idols 14:1-6