

A THEOLOGICAL EXPOSITION OF ROMANS 1-8

Robert J. Dunzweiler

INTRODUCTION (Romans 1:1-17)

Sometime during 56 or 57 A.D., during his third missionary journey, the apostle Paul wrote this epistle to the church at Rome. He anticipated visiting Rome for the first time, to strengthen the believers there.

This letter contains the fullest and most systematic exposition of the gospel to be found anywhere in Scripture.

John Calvin, in his summary of the argument of Romans, stated:

With regard to this Epistle . . . it will hence appear beyond all controversy, that beside other excellencies, and those remarkable, this can with truth be said of it, and it is what can never be sufficiently appreciated -- that when any one gains a knowledge of this Epistle, he has an entrance opened to him to all the most hidden treasures of Scripture.

John Wesley, recalling the experience that transformed his life when he was 35 years old, wrote the following:

In the evening I went very unwillingly to a society in Aldersgate Street where one was reading Luther's preface to the Epistle to the Romans. About a quarter before nine, while he was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone, for salvation; and an assurance was given me, that He had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death.

Martin Luther, in the preface to his commentary on the book of Romans, wrote:

This epistle is the real chief part of the New Testament, and the very purest gospel, which, indeed, deserves that a Christian not only know it word for word by heart but deal with it daily as with daily bread of the soul. For it can never be read or considered too much or too well, and the more it is handled, the more delightful it becomes, and the better it tastes.

This epistle emphasizes the gospel! (And you thought it emphasized that dry old stuff, doctrine!)

The apostle Paul mentions the gospel in 1:1, where he calls it "the gospel of God"; in 1:9, where he calls it "the gospel of His Son"; and in 1:15, where he says he is ready to preach the gospel to those in Rome also.

In 1:16-17, Paul states the theme of the epistle: the good news of deliverance from sin through the revelation of God's righteousness to everyone who trusts in Jesus Christ.

Besides the Introduction (1:1-17) and the Conclusion (15:14-16:27), there are five major sections to the epistle:

Section One -- God's condemnation of all human beings for their unrighteousness (1:18-3:20)