

The message the book of romans theology religion essay



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As evident in all other epistles written by Paul to the churches, in his epistle to the roman his aim was to proclaim the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ by teaching doctrine and edify and encourage the believers who would receive his letter. Particularly, to all the brethrens who were loved by God and called to be saints according to Roman 1: 7, and of course because he himself was a Roman citizen, he had a unique passion for those in the assembly of believers in Rome. Since he had not, to this point, visited the church in Rome, this letter also served as his introduction to them. One of the key verses of the letter is found in Roman 1: 16 “ I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes, first for the Jew, then for the Gentile.”

THE MESSAGE

The Book of Romans is primarily a work of doctrine and can be divided into four sections: righteousness needed, 1: 18-3: 20; righteousness provided, 3: 21-8: 39; righteousness vindicated, 9: 1-11: 36; righteousness practiced, 12: 1-15: 13. The main theme of this letter is obvious of course righteousness. Guided by the Holy Spirit, Paul first condemns all men of their sinfulness. He expresses his desire to preach the truth of God’s Word to those in Rome. It was his hope to have assurance they were staying on the right path. He strongly points out that he is not ashamed of the gospel (Romans 1: 16), because it is the power by which everyone is saved.

The Book of Romans tells us about God, who He is and what He has done. It tells us of Jesus Christ, what His death accomplished. It tells us about ourselves, what we were like without Christ and who we are after trusting in Christ. Paul points out that God did not demand men have their lives

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straightened out before coming to Christ. While we were still sinners Christ died on a cross for our sins.

1 Corinthian

PURPOSE

The apostle Paul founded the church in Corinth. A few years after leaving the church, the apostle Paul heard some disturbing reports about the Corinthian church. They were full of pride and were excusing sexual immorality.

Spiritual gifts were being used improperly, and there was rampant misunderstanding of key Christian doctrines. The apostle Paul wrote his first letter to the Corinthians in an attempt to restore the Corinthian church to its foundation Jesus Christ.

MESSAGE

The Corinthian church was plagued by divisions. The believers in Corinth were dividing into groups loyal to certain spiritual leaders (1 Corinthians 1: 12; 3: 1-6). Paul exhorted the Corinthian believers to be united because of devotion to Christ (1 Corinthians 3: 21-23). Many in the church were essentially approving of an immoral relationship (1 Corinthians 5: 1-2). Paul commanded them to expel the wicked man from the church (1 Corinthians 5: 13). The Corinthian believers were taking each other to court (1 Corinthians 6: 1-2). Paul taught the Corinthians that it would be better to be taken advantage of than to damage their Christian testimony.

Paul gave the Corinthian church instructions on marriage and celibacy (chapter 7), food sacrificed to idols (chapters 8 and 10), Christian freedom

(chapter 9), the veiling of women(1 Corinthians 11: 1-16), the Lord's Supper (1 Corinthians 11: 17-34), spiritual gifts (chapters 12-14), and the resurrection (chapter 15). Paul organized the book of 1 Corinthians by answering questions the Corinthian believers had asked him and by responding to improper conduct and erroneous beliefs they had accepted.

Paul uses the story of the Israelites wandering in the wilderness to illustrate to the Corinthian believers the folly of the misuse of freedom and the danger of overconfidence. Paul warned the Corinthians about their lack of self-discipline in 1 Corinthians 9: 24-27. He goes on to describe the Israelites who, despite seeing God's miracles and care for them, the parting of the Red Sea, the miraculous provision of manna from heaven and water from a rock, they misused their freedom, rebelled against God, and fell into immorality and idolatry. Paul exhorts the Corinthian church to note the example of the Israelites and avoid lusts and sexual immorality and putting Christ to the test and complaining.

2 Corinthian

PURPOSE

In his second letter to the Corinthians, Paul expresses his relief and joy that the Corinthians had received his severe letter now lost in a positive manner. That letter addressed issues that were tearing the church apart, primarily the arrival of self-styled false apostle who were assaulting Paul's character, sowing discord among the believers, and teaching false doctrine.

THE MESSAGE

Paul explains the nature of his ministry. Triumph through Christ and sincerity in the sight of God were the hallmarks of his ministry to the churches. He compares the glorious ministry of the righteousness of Christ to the “ministry of condemnation” which is the law and declares his faith in the validity of his ministry in spite of intense persecution. Chapter 5 outlines the basis of the Christian faith the new nature (v. 17) and the exchange of our sin for the righteousness of Christ (v. 21).

Furthermore, Chapters 6 and 7 find Paul defending himself and his ministry, assuring the Corinthians yet again of his sincere love for them and exhorting them to repentance and holy living. In chapters 8 and 9, Paul exhorts the believers at Corinth to follow the examples of the brothers in Macedonia and extend generosity to the saints in need. He teaches them the principles and rewards of gracious giving.

Paul ends his letter by reiterating his authority among them (chapter 10) and concern for their faithfulness to him in the face of fierce opposition from false apostles. He calls himself a fool for having to reluctantly boast of his qualifications and his suffering for Christ in chapter 11. He ends his epistle by describing the vision of heaven he was allowed to experience and the “thorn in the flesh” he was given by God to ensure his humility (chapter 12). The last chapter contains his exhortation to the Corinthians to examine themselves to see whether what they profess is reality, and ends with a benediction of love and peace.

Galatians

PURPOSE

The churches in Galatia were formed partly of converted Jews and partly of Gentile converts, as was generally the case. Paul asserts his apostolic character and the doctrines he taught, that he might confirm the Galatians churches in the faith of Christ, especially with respect to the important point of justification by faith alone. Thus the subject is mainly the same as that which is discussed in the Epistle to the Romans, that is, justification by faith alone. In this epistle, however, attention is particularly directed to the point that men are justified by faith without the works of the Law of Moses.

MESSAGE

Galatians was not written as an essay in contemporary history. It was a protest against corruption of the gospel of Christ. The essential truth of justification by faith rather than by the works of the law had been obscured by the Judaizers' insistence that believers in Christ must keep the law if they expected to be perfect before God.

When Paul learned that this teaching had begun to penetrate the Galatians churches and that it had alienated them from their heritage of liberty, he wrote the impassioned remonstrance contained in this epistle. Paul appealed to the Galatians to stand fast in their freedom, and not get entangled again with a yoke of bondage (that is, the Mosaic law) (Galatians 5: 1). Christian freedom is not an excuse to gratify one's lower nature rather, it is an opportunity to love one another (Galatians 5: 13; 6: 7-10).

He stresses further that such freedom does not insulate one from life's struggles. Indeed, it may intensify the battle between the Spirit and the flesh. Nevertheless, the flesh (the lower nature) has been crucified with Christ (Galatians 2: 20); and, as a consequence, the Spirit will bear His fruit such as love, joy, and peace in the life of the believer (Galatians 5: 22-23).

The letter to the Galatians was written in a spirit of inspired agitation. For Paul, the issue was not whether a person was circumcised, but whether he had become "a new creation" (Galatians 6: 15). If Paul had not been successful in his argument for justification by faith alone, Christianity would have remained a sect within Judaism, rather than becoming the universal way of salvation. Galatians, therefore, is not only Luther's epistle; it is the epistle of every believer who confesses with Paul, "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me" (Galatians 2: 20).

The books of James and Galatians illustrate two aspects of Christianity that from the very beginning have seemed to be in conflict, though in reality they are supplementary. James insists on the ethic of Christ, a demand that faith prove its existence by its fruits. Nevertheless, James, no less than Paul, emphasizes the need of the transformation of the individual by the grace of God (James 1: 18).

Galatians stresses the dynamic of the gospel that produces ethic (Galatians 3: 13-14). Nor was Paul less concerned than James about the ethical life

(Galatians 5: 13). Like the two sides of a coin, these two aspects of Christian truth must always accompany each other.

Ephesians

PURPOSE

Paul intended that all who long for Christ-like maturity would receive this writing. Enclosed within the Book of Ephesians is the discipline needed to develop into true children of God. Furthermore, a study in Ephesians will help to fortify and to establish the believer so he can fulfil the purpose and calling God has given. The aim of this epistle is to confirm and to equip a maturing church. It presents a balanced view of the body of Christ and its importance in God's economy.

MESSAGE

Doctrine occupies the greatest portion of the Book of Ephesians. Half of the teaching in this epistle relates to our standing in Christ, and the remainder of it affects our condition. All too often those who teach from this book bypass all the foundational instruction and go directly to the closing chapter. It is this chapter that emphasizes the warfare or the struggle of the saints.

However, to benefit fully from the contents of this epistle, one must begin at the beginning of Paul's instruction in this letter.

First, as followers of Christ, we must fully understand who God declares us to be. We must also become grounded in the knowledge of God's accomplishment for all humanity. Next, our present existence and walk must become exercised and strengthened. This must continue until we no longer

totter or stagger back and forth with every spirit of teaching and subtlety of men.

Paul's writing breaks down into three main segments. (1) Chapters one through three introduce principles with respect to God's accomplishment. (2) Chapters four and five put forth principles regarding our present existence. (3) Chapter six presents principles concerning our daily struggle.

Philippians

PURPOSE

The Epistle to the Philippians, one of Paul's prison epistles, was written in Rome. It was at Philippi, which the apostle visited on his second missionary journey (Acts 16: 12), that Lydia and the Philippians jailer and his family were converted to Christ. Now, some few years later, the church was well established, as may be inferred from its address which includes "bishops (elders) and deacons" (Philippians 1: 1).

MESSAGE

Philippians can be called "Resources Through Suffering." The book is about Christ in our life, Christ in our mind, Christ as our goal, Christ as our strength, and joy through suffering. It was written during Paul's imprisonment in Rome, about thirty years after Christ's ascension and about ten years after Paul first preached at Philippi.

Paul was Nero's prisoner, yet the epistle fairly shouts with triumph, the words "joy" and "rejoice" appearing frequently (Philippians 1: 4, , 28; Philippians 3: 1, 4: 1, 4, 10). Right Christian experience is the outworking,

whatever our circumstances may be, of the life, nature, and mind of Christ living in us (Philippians 1: 6, 11; 2: 5, 13). Philippians reaches its pinnacle at 2: 5-11 with the glorious and profound declaration regarding the humiliation and exaltation of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Colossian

PURPOSE

The Book of Colossians is a mini-ethics course, addressing every area of Christian life. Paul progresses from the individual life to the home and family, from work to the way we should treat others. The theme of this book is the sufficiency of our Lord, Jesus Christ, in meeting our needs in every area.

MESSAGE

Colossians was written explicitly to defeat the heresy that had arisen in Colosse, which endangered the existence of the church. While we do not know what was told to Paul, this letter is his response.

We can surmise based on Paul's response that he was dealing with a defective view of Christ denying His real and true humanity and not accepting His full deity. Paul appears also to dispute the "Jewish" emphasis on circumcision and traditions (Colossians 2: 8-11; 3: 11). The heresy addressed appears to be either a Jewish-Gnosticism or a mix between Jewish asceticism and Greek philosophy. He does a remarkable job in pointing us to the sufficiency of Christ.

The Book of Colossians contains doctrinal instruction about the deity of Christ and false philosophies (1: 15-2: 23), as well as practical exhortations

regarding Christian conduct, including friends and speech (3: 1-4: 18). As with all the early churches, the issue of Jewish legalism in Colosse was of great concern to Paul. So radical was the concept of salvation by grace apart from works that those steeped in Old Testament law found it very difficult to grasp. Consequently, there was a continual movement among the legalists to add certain requirements from the law to this new faith.

1 Thessalonians

PURPOSE

In the church of Thessalonica there were some misunderstandings about the return of Christ. Paul desired to clear them up in his letter. He also writes it as an instruction in holy living.

MESSAGE

The first three chapters are about Paul longing to visit the church in Thessalonica but not being able to because Satan stopped them (1 Thessalonians 2: 18), and how Paul cared for them and was encouraged to hear how they had been. Paul then prays for them (1 Thessalonians 3: 11-13). In chapter 4, Paul is instructing the believers in Thessalonica on how to live, in Christ Jesus, a holy life (1 Thessalonians 4: 1-12). Paul goes on to instruct them of a misconception they had. He tells them that the people who have died in Christ Jesus will also go to heaven when He comes back (1 Thessalonians 4: 13-18, 5: 1-11). The book ends with final instructions of living the Christian life.

Paul reminds the Thessalonians that the persecution they were receiving from their “ own countrymen” (v. 2: 15), the Jews who rejected their Messiah,

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is the same that the Old Testament prophets suffered (Jeremiah 2: 30; Matthew 23: 31). Jesus warned that true prophets of God would always be opposed by the unrighteous (Luke 11: 49). In Colossians, Paul reminds them of that truth.

2 Thessalonians

PURPOSE

The church in Thessalonica still had some misconceptions about the Day of the Lord. They thought it had come already so they stopped with their work. They were being persecuted badly. Paul wrote to clear up misconceptions and to comfort them.

MESSAGE

Paul greets the church at Thessalonica and encourages and exhorts them. He commends them for what he hears they are doing in the Lord, and he prays for them (2 Thessalonians 1: 11-12). In chapter 2, Paul explains what will happen in the Day of the Lord (2 Thessalonians 2: 1-12). Paul then encourages them to stand firm and instructs them to keep away from idle men who don't live by the gospel.

1 Timothy

PURPOSE

Paul wrote to Timothy to encourage him in his responsibility for overseeing the work of the Ephesians church and possibly the other churches in the province of Asia (1 Timothy 1: 3). This letter lays the foundation for ordaining elders (1 Timothy 3: 1-7), and provides guidance for ordaining people into

offices of the church (1 Timothy 3: 8-13). In essence, 1 Timothy is a leadership manual for church organization and administration.

MESSAGE

This is the first letter Paul wrote to Timothy, a young pastor who had been a help to Paul in his work. Timothy was a Greek. His mother was a Jewess and his father was Greek. Paul was more than just a mentor and leader to Timothy, he was like a father to him, and Timothy was like a son to Paul (1 Timothy 1: 2). Paul begins the letter by urging Timothy to be on guard for false teachers and false doctrine. However, much of the letter deals with pastoral conduct.

Paul instructs Timothy in worship (chapter 2) and developing mature leaders for the church (chapter 3). Most of the letter deals with pastoral conduct, warnings about false teachers, and the church's responsibility toward single members, widows, elders, and slaves. All throughout the letter, Paul encourages Timothy to stand firm, to persevere, and to remain true to his calling.

2 Timothy

PURPOSE

The Book of 2 Timothy is essentially Paul's last words. Paul looked past his own circumstances to express concern for the churches and specifically for Timothy. Paul wanted to use his last words to encourage Timothy, and all other believers, to persevere in faith (2 Timothy 3: 14) and proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ (2 Timothy 4: 2).

MESSAGE

Paul encourages Timothy to remain passionate for Christ and to remain firm in sound doctrine (2 Timothy 1: 1-2, 13-14). Paul reminds Timothy to avoid ungodly beliefs and practices and to flee from anything immoral (2 Timothy 2: 14-26). In the end times there will be both intense persecution and apostasy from the Christian faith (2 Timothy 3: 1-17). Paul closes with an intense plea for believers to stand firm in the faith and to finish the race strong (2 Timothy 4: 1-8).

Titus

PURPOSE

The Epistle to Titus is known as one of the Pastoral Epistles as are the two letters to Timothy. This epistle was written by the apostle Paul to encourage his brother in the faith, Titus, whom he had left in Crete to lead the church which Paul had established on one of his missionary journeys (Titus 1: 5). This letter advises Titus regarding what qualifications to look for in leaders for the church. He also warns Titus of the reputations of those living on the island of Crete (Titus 1: 12).

MESSAGE

How wonderful it must have been when Titus received a letter from his mentor, the apostle Paul. Paul was a much-honoured man and rightly so, after establishing several churches throughout the eastern world. This famous introduction from the apostle would have been read by Titus: “ To Titus, my true son in our common faith: Grace and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Saviour” (Titus 1: 4).

The island of Crete where Titus was left by Paul to lead the church was inhabited by natives of the island and Jews who did not know the truth of Jesus Christ (Titus 1: 12-14). Paul felt it to be his responsibility to follow through with Titus to instruct and encourage him in developing leaders within the church at Crete. As the apostle Paul directed Titus in his search for leaders, Paul also suggested how Titus would instruct the leaders so that they could grow in their faith in Christ. His instructions included those for both men and women of all ages (Titus 2: 1-8).

Philemon

PURPOSE

The letter to Philemon is the shortest of all Paul's writings and deals with the practice of slavery. The letter suggests that Paul was in prison at the time of the writing. Philemon was a slave owner who also hosted a church in his home. During the time of Paul's ministry in Ephesus, Philemon had likely journeyed to the city, heard Paul's preaching and became a Christian. The slave Onesimus robbed his master, Philemon, and ran away, making his way to Rome and to Paul. Onesimus was still the property of Philemon, and Paul wrote to smooth the way for his return to his master. Through Paul's witnessing to him, Onesimus had become a Christian (Philemon 10) and Paul wanted Philemon to accept Onesimus as a brother in Christ and not merely as a slave.

MESSAGE

Paul had warned slave owners that they had a responsibility towards their slaves and showed slaves as responsible moral beings who were to fear God.

In Philemon, Paul did not condemn slavery, but he presented Onesimus as a Christian brother instead of a slave. When an owner can refer to a slave as a brother, the slave has reached a position in which the legal title of slave is meaningless.

The early church did not attack slavery directly but it laid the foundation for a new relationship between owner and slave. Paul attempted to unite both Philemon and Onesimus with Christian love so that emancipation would become necessary. Only after exposure to the light of the gospel could the institution of slavery die.