

(Romans) Historical Impact of the Epistle to the Romans

by Brian Brodersen

The epistle to the Romans is a revolutionary book that has played a crucial part in the history of the church, influencing major events and leading to the conversion of many notable individuals.

Duration: 23:45

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, Romans 1:16, Romans 2:4, Romans 3:23, Romans 4:25, Romans 5:8, Romans 6:23

Topics: "Biblical Authority", "Justification By Faith"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the power of the word of God to transform lives. He shares a story about Charles Spurgeon's response to a young man asking how to defend the faith, highlighting the idea that the scriptures do not need defending but rather proclaiming. The sermon then introduces the book of Romans, dividing it into three sections: sin and the need for justification, God's love demonstrated through Christ's sacrifice, and the victory over sin. The speaker also encourages the audience to commit key verses from Romans to memory.

Transcript

All right, Romans, the epistle of Paul to the Romans. Although Romans was not the first epistle written by the apostle Paul, as you notice, it's been placed first in our New Testament, and rightfully so, because it really is in many ways first in importance. It was Dr. D. Martin Lloyd-Jones who said this concerning the book of Romans.

He said, there is a sense in which we can say quite truthfully that the epistle to the Romans has possibly played a more important and more crucial part in the history of the church than any other single book in the whole of the Bible. Romans truly has been used by God in an exceptional manner in church history and in the lives of individual men. It was in the year 386 AD, there was a bright young philosopher, professor of rhetoric in Milan, Italy, a young man who had opportunity to speak before the Roman emperor, a man who was a great man in many ways, but a frustrated man.

He was a man who through all of his learning and all of his honor that he had received, all of the accolades, he was an empty, empty man. He had had a relationship with a woman. He never did marry her.

They were together for some 13 years and she left him. And he was in a dejected state. As a boy, he had grown up with somewhat of a Christian influence because his mother was a Christian.

But now here at this stage in his life, he was a broken man in many ways, although he had, in a sense, the world at his fingertips. And he sat in the backyard of a friend one day and he wept because he knew that his life of immorality, he knew that all these things were wrong and unfulfilling, but he just didn't feel that there was any way he could escape it. And nearby, there were some children that were playing a game.

And in the game, they happened to sing to one another these words, pick up and read, pick up and read. And he heard these children singing and he took that to be God speaking to him. So he picked up the epistle to the Romans and he read it and he was converted.

And he became one of the great leaders in the history of the church. His name was Augustine. In the year 1513, there was another man, another brilliant young man.

He was a doctor of theology. He was a man who took his religion very, very seriously. He was a Catholic priest.

And he wanted so desperately to please God, but he knew that he was sinful through and through. And the more he tried to please God, the more he sensed he failed and the more he realized he was worthy of condemnation. And he lived under this fear and this dread that he would certainly be condemned by God someday.

But he was appointed to teach the Bible. He was the professor and his specific duty at the university was to teach the Bible. And he was given the task of teaching Paul's epistle to the Romans.

And it was while he was teaching this epistle to the Romans that he came to understand for the very first time in his life the grace of God. You see, when he read about the righteousness of God in the New Testament, he saw it as something that was unattainable, that God was so righteous that it just automatically consigned us to condemnation. He didn't understand that the righteousness of God, as revealed in the New Testament and particularly here in the epistle to the Romans, is a righteousness that God provides for those who cannot attain that righteous standard themselves.

And so as he was studying this epistle to the Romans, when he came to the 17th verse of the first chapter, where there it says that in the gospel is revealed the righteousness of God, he began to ponder that. He began to meditate on that and he came to understand that the gospel is a message that tells us about the righteousness that God gives to us if we simply believe in Jesus Christ. And there and then he embraced Christ personally and was born again.

His name was Martin Luther. And of course, God used him in an extraordinary way to bring about an awakening to an entire continent. And then of course, across the continent, even into the various European colonies.

Sometime later, in 1738, in a small group meeting in a home in Aldersgate Street in London, set a man who was in many ways a failure. He had left England many years earlier and come to colonial America as a missionary. He was driven out of the colonies.

He was a complete failure. He was so full of fear and crossing the Atlantic. He was petrified.

He thought certainly the ship would sink and he would go to his doom. But he was a priest in the Anglican Church. But as he sat one night there in this little home study in Aldersgate Street, someone picked up Luther's commentary on Romans and began to read it.

And as those segments on justification by faith were being read, he said that his heart was strangely warmed. And there that night, he was converted and he became the great evangelist of the 18th century. His name was John Wesley.

In 1955, a man who had spent now many years in pastoral ministry, pastored many churches. But yet, he himself didn't really know the grace of God. Oh, he knew about salvation in Christ.

He knew you needed to be saved. He knew you needed to be baptized in the Spirit. He knew you needed to get out and preach the gospel.

And he preached it faithfully week in and week out. But he himself did not really know or understand the grace of God. And he came across a commentary by a man, W.H. Griffith Thomas, commentary on Romans.

And he began to read that commentary on Romans. And that commentary revolutionized his life. That man was Chuck Smith, pastor of this church.

And through the epistle to the Romans, God brought Chuck to a place of understanding the grace of God that enabled him then to go on and teach God's word and establish many people in God's grace. So you can see, and boy, we could just go on all night with the list of people who have been impacted by this great epistle of Paul to the Romans. And that's why I'm so excited about being able to teach it here with you guys, because I know for sure this is going to impact our lives.

God's going to use this word to revolutionize us. You know, this is a revolutionary book. I mean, that's really what's, that's been the result of this book grabbing hold of people.

It has literally created spiritual revolutions. That's what the Reformation was. It was a spiritual revolution.

That's what the 18th century was with John Wesley, the revival there. It was a spiritual revolution. As a matter of fact, the historians say that it was the Wesleyan revival that spared England from a revolution like the French had.

It was a spiritual revolution. And there's been somewhat of a revolution here as a result of the impact of the epistle to the Romans. So we're going to be looking for God to revolutionize our lives as we study this epistle together.

I want to encourage you guys in a couple of things. I want to encourage you, first of all, to read through this epistle to the Romans. I happen to teach Romans at our Bible college, and I'm currently in my ninth time through Romans with our Bible college students.

But one of the things that I have them do, it's one of the projects to complete the class, is they actually have to write a paragraph on each chapter of Romans. In their own words, they've got to paraphrase what the first through the 16 chapters of Romans says. That's their assignment.

Now, I'm not going to assign you that. But what I would do is I would encourage you to be reading through this epistle throughout the duration of our study through it. Because if you can get this lodged in your heart

and mind, oh, it'll make all the difference in the world for the rest of your life.

So I want to encourage you to do that. Secondly, I want to encourage you to be praying for friends, colleagues at work, neighbors, praying for opportunities to invite men to come out and study this word with us. Now, we're not necessarily going to give an invitation every week or anything like that.

But this book is so powerful. Just the exposition of it has the power just to grab hold of somebody's heart and transform their lives. And so we want to see God do that.

And so I would encourage you to prayerfully seek to bring guys out with you, to let them hear the word of God. You know, Chuck and I were talking today in his office. And he went last Sunday evening to dedicate the church that he grew up in, or at least in his early years, 75th anniversary, I think the church was having.

And so they asked him to come back. And it's still part of the denomination that Chuck was part of as a child and one that he left. And so it was an interesting experience to say the least.

I don't want to say too much about it because I wasn't there, but my wife gave me a firsthand report and she happened to call her dad the next day and say, dad, I just want to thank you for having left that denomination. And he said, well, I want to thank me too for having left it. It's the best thing I ever did.

But today, as we were talking, he was saying, you know, when, when they were there in that denomination, they, of course they believed in Jesus. They love Jesus. They knew that you're supposed to serve Jesus, but the K and Chuck were both saying, we didn't know how no one ever told us.

And we were never taught anything. And, you know, Chuck was talking to me about the revolution that took place in his life when he read, uh, or studied Paul's epistle to the Romans. And, and I was thinking to myself, you know, the great tragedy in the church today is that people have left off teaching the word of God, because when you just teach the word, you know, when you just faithfully get up and let, in a sense, you just let the word speak for itself.

The word of God itself is the power of God to bring salvation to people. It's the power of God to transform people's lives. You know, one time a young man came to Charles Spurgeon and he said, how do I defend the faith? How do I defend the Bible? And Spurgeon said, well, how would you defend a lion? He said, you don't defend a lion.

You just open the cage and get out of the way. And, you know, it's true with the scriptures as well. We don't need to defend them so much as to just simply proclaim them.

And as we do that, that is God's power to bring new life to people. So again, I encourage you guys to seek out those men and, and look for those opportunities to invite guys to come and join us as we study here. I just want to give you a quick sort of a overview of Romans, and then we're going to go ahead and get into our groups tonight.

But Romans can be divided up probably into three different sections, although you can certainly subdivide it. I'll give you a quick sort of an overview in the, you know, sort of the biggest picture, but then I want to just come down and take a minute and break it down a little bit further. But chapters one through eight are essentially one unit in which Paul is expounding the grace of God.

Romans is what you would call, it's a doctrinal epistle. It is a theological treatise in a sense. Now, there are many other epistles in the New Testament that are similar in the sense that they are doctrinal.

Ephesians is, is a doctrinal epistle. Colossians is a doctrinal epistle. Hebrews, of course, is a doctrinal epistle.

But then you have like, say, a 1 Corinthians or maybe to some extent 2 Corinthians. You have James. These are not so much doctrinal epistles as practical.

So a doctrinal epistle is, is an epistle that concentrates heavily upon doctrine, theology, and that's what Romans does. So the first eight chapters are an exposition of the grace of God. Then you come to chapters nine through eleven, and chapters nine through eleven explain the Jewish problem, the problem of Jewish unbelief and why the Jews have not received their Messiah.

And then in chapter twelve, on through the rest, well the fifteenth chapter, we come to the practical aspect of the epistle where Paul begins with the statement, I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God to present your bodies a living sacrifice. He says, in essence, he says, I'm, I'm pleading with you based upon all of the grace and mercy that I've been teaching you about, that God has shown toward you. I'm pleased of all that he's done for you.

And then from twelve on through fifteen, he just gives us a series of practical exhortation and instruction on how to live the Christian life. And then chapter sixteen is more or less just, you know, the final thoughts and greetings and so forth. So that's kind of the, you know, looking at it from the farthest distance back.

But as you come a bit closer, you can break it down a little bit more. And that's the way we're going to actually study it. In the first, basically the first fifteen verses, Paul is sort of introducing himself to the church in Rome, because Paul had not visited the church in Rome.

This was one of the churches that he had not been involved in establishing, and he was very anxious to get to them, but he hadn't yet been able to visit them. So he gives an introduction of himself. And then in the next two verses, fifteen through seventeen, he gives a declaration concerning the gospel.

But then in verse eighteen of chapter one, on through verse twenty of chapter three, Paul is like a prosecuting attorney, and what he does is he lays out his case for the condemnation of the entire human race. And so from chapter one, verse eighteen, through chapter three, verse twenty, it's all one continuous argument to show basically this, summed up in verse twenty-three of chapter three, all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. But then when we come to verse twenty-one of chapter three, he immediately goes into the remedy for sin.

And he talks about how now the righteousness of God, apart from the law, the law can't save us, it only condemns us. He shows us that in those chapters. He says, but now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, but it's witnessed to by the law and the prophets.

It's the righteousness that God provides through faith in Jesus Christ. And then from three twenty-one, all the way through the end of chapter four, he lays out the doctrine of justification by grace through faith. And then we come to the fifth chapter, and he says, okay, now that you've been justified by faith, these are the results.

This is what's happened. Here's all of the benefits of being justified by grace through faith. We have peace with God, we have access into the grace of God, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God, which means we have absolute confidence that we're going to heaven.

And then, into the fifth chapter there, he takes a moment and he takes us back. He takes us back to the beginning. He takes us back to Adam.

He takes us back to the introduction of sin into the world. And he shows us how one man brought sin into the world, and then he shows us how one man also dealt with the sin problem, that man being Jesus Christ. And then in chapter six, he shows us basically the steps to victory over sin.

In chapter seven, he shows that apart from the grace of God, we could never have a victory over sin because the law keeps us in a state of inability. And he finishes up that seventh chapter by saying, oh wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from this body of death? And he says, oh but I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. And then we come to the glorious eighth chapter, where there he says, therefore there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

And then that eighth chapter, he just goes deeper and deeper and deeper into all of the benefit and all the blessing that's come to us through our faith in Jesus Christ. And then as I said in the ninth chapter, he deals with the issue of Israel and then the practical aspect as we get into the last chapters there. So that's how we're going to approach our study of this epistle.

Some nights we'll take one verse, like next week, and then other nights we'll take maybe even a chapter and a half. We're just going to, you know, let the Lord lead us. We've got about 22 weeks or so to get through this, and I trust that God's going to help us to do that.

But as we go through Romans, you're going to come across verses that you're definitely going to want to commit to memory. And let me just remind you of some real quickly. 116, for I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is a power of God to salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.

That's something that you're going to want to commit to memory. In the second chapter, there we're told it's the goodness of God that leads us to repentance. We hear these things.

It comes from the second chapter of Romans. Already mentioned in chapter three, all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. And then there in the fourth chapter, Paul tells us there at the end of the chapter, something so beautiful that Christ was delivered up because of our offenses, but he was raised up for our justification.

And then there in the fifth chapter, we have that wonderful statement in the eighth verse for God demonstrated his love toward us. And while in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for the ungodly. And then there in the sixth chapter, he tells us about that, you know, the victory.

If we were dead, we died with Christ and we've been raised with him. And now knowing this, that, you know, sin no longer has dominion over us. And all of these wonderful things.

Romans eight, of course, the the great verse there, the 28th verse. You remember that one? All things work together for good to those who love God. And you're going to find as we go through Romans, you're going to these verses are going to be popping up, say, oh, right.

Oh, that's where that verse is. Chapter 10. Faith comes by hearing, hearing by the word of God.

Verse 17 are backed up a little bit. If we confess with our mouth, the Lord Jesus believe in our heart that God raised him from the dead, we shall be saved. And all of these wonderful things that we will be gleaning, but not just, you know, isolated verses, but we'll see them in their context and we'll see all of the application that they have for us.

And so as we wrap up this segment of our time tonight again, I want to just encourage you to come here each Thursday night in a spirit of expectation, expecting God to do something in your life, expecting God to do something through your life. And I promise on God's word that he'll do that because he blesses those who approach him by faith. And as we come believing in faith that God, you've got to work that you want to do in my life and through my life and among all of us as men, we can expect that God is going to honor that and meet us and do great things.

All right. God bless you.

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/11/SID11304.mp3>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/brian-brodersen/romans-historical-impact-of-the-epistle-to-the-romans/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net