

LESSON 6 at StudyRomans.org

When we ended last week we were looking at Question #14 from the list of twenty introductory questions on the Handout for Lesson 1: are there any textual issues with Romans?

And, as we saw, the answer is yes — there are such issues. And last week we started looking at the biggest such issue when it comes to Romans — and that issue is Romans 16. Some commentators do not think that Romans 16 was originally a part of Paul's letter to Rome.

Last week we looked at their reasons, and to quickly review:

- They ask how did Paul know all of the people he greets in Romans 16 if he had never been to Rome?
- They note that Priscilla and Aquila also travelled to Ephesus, and so they wonder whether the last chapter of Romans was really the last chapter of Ephesians.
- They note that Paul greets “the first convert to Christ **in Asia**,” and they say that sounds more like a greeting directed to someone in Ephesus than a greeting directed to someone in Rome.
- They say that Paul's warning against false teachers in Romans 16:17 comes a bit out of left field.
- And, finally, they point for support to a few ancient manuscripts of Romans that lack the final chapter.

When we ended last week, I said that **none of those arguments has any merit**. Why do I say that?

Let's start by looking at those ancient manuscripts that lack Romans 16. As it turns out, those manuscripts have something else in common — they also all lack Romans 15. **There is no manuscript of Romans with only 15 chapters.** Either they have all of Romans (as most of them do, including, for example, the papyrus shown on the Handout for Lesson 5), or they are missing the final **two** chapters (as a few of them do).

What does that mean? What it means is that those who argue for a shorter version of Romans have to explain more than just why the greetings in Romans 16 should be removed. Instead, they also have to explain why Romans 15 should be removed — and that is a much more difficult thing for them to explain.

Why? Because Romans 15 concludes the discussion in Romans 14. Paul's discussion of the weak and the strong does not end until Romans 15:6. Why would Paul split that argument in half, sending half of the argument to Rome and the other half to Ephesus?

But now **we** have something to explain — why are there some early manuscripts that lack the final two chapters of Romans?

Sometimes the simplest answer is the correct answer, and that may be the case here. Let's assume that I discovered today that some of the pages in my class notes were missing — where would those missing pages most likely have been located? At the top of my stack of notes or at the bottom of the stack? Missing pages most often drop off, for whatever reason, from the bottom of the stack. And maybe that is what happened to Romans 15-16 in some of the manuscripts — a few sheets at the bottom of a stack of papyri were misplaced.

But that is just speculation, and we don't really need to speculate here. Why not? Because, fortunately for us, someone else has already answered this question. In his ancient commentary on Romans, Origen (who died in AD 253) wrote that Marcion (who died in AD 160) had dropped everything in the book of Romans after Chapter 14.

But who was Marcion, and why would he have done such a thing?

Marcion was an early heretic who claimed to be a follower of Paul, but did not teach what Paul taught. Instead, Marcion was a Gnostic (or perhaps a quasi-Gnostic) who did not believe that the God of the Old Testament was also the God of the New Testament. He then set about to edit the books of the New Testament to better fit his false views about the Old Testament, which he taught was entirely opposed to the teachings of the New Testament. And, according to Origen, Marcion was the person who created this shortened version of Romans without its final two chapters.

But what is it about Romans 15 that would have caused Marcion such heartburn? That question answers itself as soon as we read Romans 15.

Romans 15:4 — For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.

That single verse is enough to demolish every false thing that Marcion taught — and so he just took his scissors to it! I think that explains what happened, and most commentaries agree with that explanation.

But we do still have a question to consider — **why would Paul include so many greetings to a church he had never visited?** He greets nearly 30 people by name! How did Paul know so many people in Rome, and why did he apparently name everyone he did know?

I think those questions answer themselves when we look at Paul's other epistles. When we do that, we find only one of them that also has a lengthy greeting at the end — the letter to the Colossians. The only difference is that most of the people named in the Colossian letter are people *sending* greetings, while most of the people named in Romans are people *receiving* greetings. But, either way, both books have lengthy greetings, unlike Paul's other epistles.

And what else do Romans and Colossians have in common? They were both written by Paul to churches he had not personally visited. And doesn't that make sense? Do we need lengthy greetings when everyone already knows everyone else?

But why name 30 people? Why not just name a few of them, and then say "Hi, y'all" to the rest?

I think the answer is that Paul was sending the same message to both the Romans and the Colossians: "You might believe that I don't know you and that you don't know me, but there are more connections between us than you might think!" Paul didn't need to do that with congregations he had visited, and so we see it only with the congregations he had not visited.

And there might be an additional reason why Paul named so many people.

Earlier we saw an example of how the *when* and the *where* of Romans helps us understand why unity is a theme of the letter. I think here we see another example of how that information about where and when the book was written helps us understand it. I think that information may help us understand why Paul seemingly named everyone he knew in Rome.

Not long before Paul wrote Romans, Paul also wrote First and Second Corinthians. And what was the big problem in Corinth? We answered that question earlier — the big problem in Corinth was division.

It seems that those who had been *personally* baptized by some famous preacher or apostle were arguing that they had some sort of special status in the church. And, remember, when Paul wrote Romans, he had just lived through all of that. “I am of Paul! I am of Cephas!”

And so, now, in Romans 16, Paul wants to say hello to those people in Rome that he already knows. Should Paul name just a few of them, or should he try to name all of them? I think Paul would try to name all of them to avoid creating some sort of a division between the named group of friends and the unnamed group of friends — and I think that may be why we see an apparently exhaustive list from Paul in Romans 16.

(15) What is the structure of Romans?

Do you remember in High School English when you were told to read a book or an essay and then create an outline of it? That is what this question is all about. If we were to create an outline of Romans, what

would it look like? What and how many main headings would we have? What sub-points would we have?

When we looked at the theme of righteousness, I mentioned that it is possible to view every section of Romans through that single lens. Here is how one commentary does that:

- (1:1-17) The Gospel As The Revelation Of God's **Righteousness**
- (1:18-3:20) God's **Righteousness** In His Wrath Against Sinners
- (3:21-4:25) The Saving **Righteousness** Of God
- (5:1-8:39) Hope As A Result Of **Righteousness** By Faith
- (9:1-11:36) God's **Righteousness** To Israel And The Gentiles
- (12:1-15:13) God's **Righteousness** In Everyday Life
- (15:14-16:23) Extending God's **Righteousness** Through Paul's Mission
- (16:25-27) Final Summary Of The Gospel Of God's **Righteousness**

And here is how another commentary does the same thing:

- (1:1-17) Introduction
- (1:18-3:20) The **Unrighteousness** of All Mankind
- (3:21-5:21) The **Righteousness** Only God Can Provide
- (6:1-8:39) The **Righteousness** in Which We are to Grow

- (9:1-11:36) God's **Righteousness** Vindicated
- (12:1-15:13) How **Righteousness** Manifests Itself
- (15:14-16:27) Conclusion

We need an outline ourselves. Should either of those outlines be our outline? We don't know yet! We need to finish our study of the text before we settle on an outline. After all, there are other possible ways to outline the letter.

We could outline Romans in terms of the **gospel**. Here is how another commentary does that:

- (1:1-17) The Letter's Opening
- (1:18-4:25) The Heart Of The **Gospel**
- (5:1-8:39) The Assurance Of The **Gospel**
- (9:1-11:36) The Defense Of The **Gospel**
- (12:1-15:13) The Transforming Power Of The **Gospel**
- (15:14-16:27) The Letter's Closing

There are many ways to outline this letter, and most of them are perfectly fine ways to look at the letter — but not all of them are equally helpful. We need to choose an outline that best helps us organize Paul's arguments and that best helps us understand how they all fit together.

And once we have our outline, could we rearrange the sections and have it all still make sense? If so, then I guess Paul is just changing the subject when he gets to Romans 9 and when he gets to Romans 12. But if we can't rearrange the sections in our outline, then we must have found a theme that ties it all together into a unified whole.

In short, we need an **outline** of Romans that is based on the **theme** of Romans. And what that means is that we can't really determine the **structure** of Romans until after we have determined the **theme** of Romans.

So let's add this project to our growing list of things that we will do as we study the book — look for the theme of Romans, create a glossary of Romans, and create an outline of Romans.

(16) How is the Old Testament used in Romans?

After studying Daniel, Zechariah, Ezra, Esther, Hosea, and Joel, I suspect that some of us were looking forward to studying a New Testament book. And that is what we are doing — or at least *sort of* what we are doing!

As we can see on the Handout for Lesson 6, Paul's letter to the Romans contains many Old Testament quotations and allusions. And what that means is that, although we are studying the **New** Testament, we will very often also need to look at the **Old** Testament.

There are 64 Old Testament citations listed on the Handout for Lesson 6, and I think that list includes all of the *direct* quotations and most of the allusions to the Old Testament. But it would be almost impossible

to ever say that we had found **all** of Paul's Old Testament allusions given how steeped Paul was in the Old Testament Scriptures.

If we look at the Handout, we can see a few interesting statistics:

- Of the 16 chapters in Romans, only three chapters contain no Old Testament quotations — Romans 5, 6, and 16. That fact is not very surprising when it comes to the greetings in the final chapter, but what about Romans 5 and 6? Why no Old Testament quotations there? We will look at that question later.
- If we sort the chapters by how many times they quote the Old Testament, four chapters rise to the top: Romans 3, 9, 10, and 11. Later, we will look at what that fact might tell us about those four chapters.
- When we look at the verses in Romans with Old Testament citations (shown by the circled red verse numbers on the Handout), we see that Paul often provided a string of verses with citations. The longest is the string of 9 such verses in Romans 3:10-18, but we see quite a few others as well. Why so many verses for the same purpose? Why not just give one verse and move on? We will look at that question later.
- In total, Paul cites verses from 16 Old Testament books, with the most (by far!) coming from Isaiah (16) and from the Psalms (15). In fact, just those two books are the source of almost half the Old Testament quotations in Romans. What does that fact tell us about Romans? What does that fact tell us about Psalms and Isaiah? What does that fact tell us about Paul?

We will wait until we get there for most of what we have to say about the individual citations, but let's pause here briefly to look at some of the difficulties we will face.

- One difficulty we will face is to explain why, in some cases, Paul's quotations from the Old Testament look quite different from what we find in our Old Testament. Is Paul paraphrasing? Or did Paul's Old Testament use different wording than ours?
- Another difficulty we will face is to explain why Paul sometimes seems to have combined widely separated Old Testament verses into a single citation.
- And another issue we will consider is to respond to a charge by some commentators that Paul is taking some of his Old Testament citations out of context.
- And, finally, how does the inspiration of the Bible factor into how freely Paul could quote the Old Testament?

We looked at some of those issues when we studied Hosea and Joel, both of which are Old Testament books quoted by Paul in Romans. But we will look at those issues again here, along with others that we have not previously considered.

One question we can ask at this point is **why**? Why does Paul spend so much time referring to the Old Testament?

I think we can answer that question with a single word — **evidence**. Paul uses the Old Testament as evidence in the letter to the Romans.

But was that evidence only for Paul's Jewish audience? No. Although the Jewish Christians would have been more familiar with that evidence, both the Jewish Christians and the Gentile Christians would have viewed the Old Testament as evidence. In fact, Paul describes the Old Testament that way in this letter.

Romans 15:4 — For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.

And we also find Paul using the Old Testament that way in this letter — as evidence for both Jews and Greeks.

Romans 3:9-18 (ESV) — What then? Are we Jews any better off? No, not at all. For we have already charged that all, **both Jews and Greeks**, are under sin, **as it is written...**

Paul then quotes the Old Testament as evidence that **all** have sinned — both Jews and Greeks.

And, although Romans 9-11 are primarily about the Jews, those chapters are addressed to both Jew and Gentile. “Now I am speaking to you Gentiles.” (Romans 11:13) So, even there, Paul is using the Old Testament as evidence for both Jew and Greek.

And here is the crucial point about all of these Old Testament quotations in Romans — Paul is not just **saying** things in Romans; Paul is **proving** things in Romans. Paul is making statements, and then Paul is proving those statements with evidence. How often does Paul do that? Just look at the Handout!

It seems that evidence was very important to the Apostle Paul. But why? I think we can find an answer to that question from the life of Paul.

Why did Saul become Paul? Why did the great persecutor of the church become the great champion of the church? Because of **evidence**. Saul saw Christ with his own eyes, and that changed everything. What Saul witnessed on that road to Damascus is what caused him to later obey the gospel and have his sins washed away in the waters of baptism.

In John 20:29, Jesus said to Thomas. “Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.” That was **not** the Apostle Paul! Paul believed in Christ because he had seen him. He had seen the evidence.

And so, yes, evidence was very important to Paul, and we find evidence all throughout this letter to the Romans.

Is that surprising? Perhaps it is to the world. Why? Because there is a widely held misconception in the world that Christians believe in God **despite** the evidence. But, of course, that view is exactly backwards — we believe in God **because** of the evidence. And, in fact, that is a point about God that Paul will make before we even get out of the first chapter.

Romans 1:19-20 (ESV) — For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse.

“For what can be known about God is plain to them, **because God has shown it to them.**” There is a word for that — evidence! The evidence for God is plain to them because God has shown it to them. That is why the Bible tells us that it is the fool who says there is no God (Psalm 14:1; Psalm 53:1). Only a fool would ignore the evidence for God.

But we still have a big question to consider — why did Paul need any evidence at all for what he was writing? After all, Paul was writing down the words of God. Shouldn’t that have been enough evidence all by itself? God says all have sinned. Why not just say that, Paul? Why also add all of that evidence from the Old Testament?

There is much that we could say in answer to that question, including, of course, that God is the one who breathed out those words in Romans and who provided all of that evidence from what he had breathed out earlier. But I think we can also answer that question by pointing to Paul himself.

Paul knew how to argue. Paul knew how to make logical arguments. Paul knew how to marshal the evidence for those arguments. And, yes, God breathed out those words, but God was using Paul as his instrument when he did that.

And when you use Paul as an instrument, your instrument has a keen legal mind who knows how to put arguments together so that they are convincing. We see Paul doing that very thing all throughout the book of Acts and all throughout his letters, and especially in Romans. Paul understood the power of persuasion!

And I think we can learn some very important lessons from Paul’s example. We in the Lord’s church are in the business of persuading

people. That is what we do when we proclaim the gospel — we teach them what they need to do — and we persuade them to do it.

Isn't that what we see in the first gospel sermon, not from Paul but from Peter? Didn't Peter also use evidence from the Old Testament? Didn't Peter use that evidence to convince people who thought they were right with God that they were in truth not right with God?

Did Peter's message make those people feel good about themselves? Absolutely not! Just the opposite. They were cut to the heart! And that is why they asked Peter what they needed to do to become right with God. Friends, that is how the gospel works! That is how the gospel has always worked!

And Peter and Paul cited chapter and verse for what they were saying and writing — even though what they were writing was as much Scripture as the evidence they were citing! It was all Scripture, and yet they still provided evidence. What does that fact say about us if we ever fail to cite chapter and verse for what we are saying?

And, yes, I have heard some say that our problem in the church of Christ is that we spend too much time citing chapter and verse for everything we teach. We may have a problem — **but that is not it!** Our problem is **not** that we use the Bible too much!

If we have a problem, it is that we listen to the world too much! We cite a verse about sin or judgment, and the world says that we are harsh and unloving. And then what do we do? Sometimes we quit teaching about sin and judgment. If we have a problem, that is it. **No one will ever believe the good news until they first believe the bad news!** That was true in Acts 2, and that is still true today. And if we

have stopped teaching the bad news, then we have also stopped proclaiming the gospel.

Acts 20:27 — For I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God.

Paul taught the whole counsel of God, and Paul did that using evidence. But Paul did much more than just use evidence — Paul used that evidence to frame masterful and powerful arguments. Paul knew how to argue! Paul knew how to convince! Paul knew how to persuade!

And what can we learn from Paul's example? We can learn how to argue! We can learn how to convince! We can learn how to persuade! We can learn how to reach people with the gospel of Christ.

And that brings us to our next question.

(17) What rhetorical techniques are used in Romans?

By “rhetorical technique” I simply mean any method that a writer or speaker uses to persuade his readers or listeners.

Paul was an absolute master at matching his rhetoric to his audience. One of the best examples is Paul's speech to the men of Athens on Mars Hill.

Acts 17:21-23 (ESV) — Now all the Athenians and the foreigners who lived there would spend their time in nothing except telling or hearing something new. So Paul, standing in the midst of the Areopagus, said: “Men of

Athens, I perceive that in every way you are very religious. For as I passed along and observed the objects of your worship, I found also an altar with this inscription, 'To the unknown god.' What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you."

The men of Athens wanted to hear only new things — and so that is exactly how Paul framed his message. "What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you."

That is a great example, but that is far from the only example. All throughout Acts and his letters, Paul matches his rhetoric to his audience. The message, of course, never changed — Paul always preached Jesus Christ and him crucified. But how that message was delivered did change depending on the audience. We just saw an example of that in Acts 17.

Likewise in Romans, we see different rhetorical techniques from Paul based on his primary audience at the time and based on the point he wants them to understand.

And I think we can also say that Paul's rhetoric was based on how he himself was perceived by his audience. For example, what do we see from Paul in his letters to the Christians in Corinth? What we see is Paul's apostolic authority.

2 Corinthians 10:8 (ESV) — For even if I boast a little too much of **our authority**, which the Lord gave for building you up and not for destroying you, I will not be ashamed.

2 Corinthians 13:10 (ESV) — For this reason I write these things while I am away from you, that when I come I may not have to be severe **in my use of the authority that the Lord has given me** for building up and not for tearing down.

Did Paul also have apostolic authority over the Christians in Rome? Yes, he did. Did Paul use that apostolic authority in Romans the same way he did in 2nd Corinthians? He did not. Unlike the church in Corinth, the church in Rome did not know Paul and had not been established by Paul, and so Paul needed to approach them differently.

And Paul was never dull! It is very difficult to persuade people by reading the phone book. If I am not excited by the message, how can I convince anyone else to be? If I am not interested in what I am saying, why should anyone else be?

Romans is not a dry theological treatise as some suggest. Even though Paul had never been to Rome, Paul's emotions are on full display in his letter to Rome.

Romans 1:9-11 (ESV) — For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son, that without ceasing I mention you always in my prayers, asking that somehow by God's will I may now at last succeed in coming to you. For I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to strengthen you.

Romans 9:3 (ESV) — For I could wish that I myself were accursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, my kinsmen according to the flesh.

Paul's letter to Rome created an emotional connection between himself and the Roman Christians before he ever visited Rome.

I think we can learn some valuable lessons by looking at how Paul proclaimed the gospel of Christ and persuaded people to obey it.

- Paul provided chapter and verse as evidence.
- Paul was willing to engage with and debate his opponents.
- Paul taught with both emotional appeal and logical reasoning.
- Paul was often very direct and very pointed.
- Paul was not afraid of difficult issues.
- Paul taught what people **needed** to hear rather than what they **wanted** to hear.

Does that describe us? Is that how we proclaim the gospel? (And here I am using the word “we” broadly to refer to the Lord’s church at large in the 21st century rather than to only our local congregation of the Lord’s church.)

Having been a member of the Lord’s church for over 50 years, my opinion is that we were once better at doing these things than we are today. We used to provide chapter and verse so much that people outside the church would come to us when they had a question about the Bible. We used to have debates with the denominations, some of which were attended by thousands of people. We had a reputation for tackling the difficult questions.

And what were we doing back when we did those things? We were growing! We were one of the fastest growing religious groups in the United States. We would regularly have gospel meetings with 10 to 20

people or more responding. And that was happening when we were following Paul's example.

And now? Are we still following Paul's example? Or have we become too sophisticated for all of that? Are we afraid that if we preach the truth then we will be called harsh and unloving?

Paul taught the truth. Was Paul harsh and unloving? What does the Bible say? Doesn't the Bible tell us that Paul was so loving that he was willing to give up his own salvation for the sake of others?

But are we really supposed to follow Paul's example? Are we really supposed to imitate Paul? Again, what does the Bible say?

Philippians 3:17-18 (ESV) — Brothers, **join in imitating me**, and keep your eyes on those who walk according to the example you have in us. For many, of whom I have often told you and now tell you even with tears, walk as enemies of the cross of Christ.

1 Corinthians 11:1 (ESV) — **Be imitators of me**, as I am of Christ.

Yes, these are difficult questions, but remember — when we follow Paul's example, we are not afraid of difficult questions!