

The Pilgrimage To A Spirit-Led Life

Part One: An Introduction

Introduction:-

We are, with the study of the first eight chapters of Romans, going on a spiritual pilgrimage; which you will find both inspiring and challenging. You will travel through the darkest depths of human depravity and then on to the glistening heights of God's Grace and Glory.

Romans unfolds spiritual truth in terms of flawless logic, challenging our spiritual and intellectual powers.

Romans will **not** yield up its true riches unless we are willing to take time and make every effort to understand each step of this pilgrimage. Prayer, self-examination and perseverance are essential to reap the full rewards of this pilgrimage.

I call it a pilgrimage, for it will not be without pain and despair.

Outline

The central theme of whole letter to Christians at Rome is righteousness.

God's answer to the question asked by Job.

Job 9:2 [Amplified Bible] *“But how can mortal man be right before God.”*

Also the statement made in **Matthew 5:6** [NIV] *“Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled.”*

Not all in the Church have this desire for righteousness at the top of their list of priorities in life.

People seek:-

(a) Blessings; (b) Power (c) Healing (d) Prosperity (e) Spiritual Gifts, but I hope that by the end of our study of Romans we all may have a greater hunger and thirst for righteousness.

The theme of the first seven chapters of Romans is the ten progressive stages of a spiritual pilgrimage, the destination being described in chapter eight.

Consider first the main theme of Romans:- Righteousness.

God has a great deal to say about righteousness.

Psalm 11:7 [NIV] *“For the LORD is righteous, he loves justice; upright men will see his face.”*

God loves righteousness.

Psalm 15:1-2 [NIV] *“LORD, who may dwell in your sanctuary? Who may live on your holy hill? He whose walk is blameless and who does what is righteous, who speaks the truth from his heart.”*

The righteous shall abide with God.

Psalm 85:8-13 [NIV] *“I will listen to what God the LORD will say; he promises peace to his people, his saints, but let them not return to folly. Surely his salvation is near those who fear him, that his glory may dwell in our land. Love and faithfulness meet together; **righteousness** and peace kiss each other. Faithfulness springs forth from the earth, and **righteousness** looks down from heaven. The LORD will indeed give what is good, and our land will yield its harvest. **Righteousness** goes before him and prepares the way for his steps.”*

Righteousness is foremost to God and a way in which we should walk.

Proverbs 11:18 [NIV] *“The wicked man earns deceptive wages, but he who sows righteousness reaps a sure reward.”*

Sowing righteousness will reap a reward from God.

Psalm 92:12-15 [NIV] *“The **righteous** will flourish like a palm tree, they will grow like a cedar of Lebanon; planted in the house of the LORD, they will flourish in the courts of our God. They will still bear fruit in old age, they will stay fresh and green, proclaiming, “The LORD is upright; he is my Rock, and there is no wickedness in him.”*

Our lives should in the end show that there is **no** unrighteousness **in God**.

Matthew 5:6 [NIV] *“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for **righteousness**, for they will be filled.”*

Romans 14:17 [NIV] *“For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of **righteousness**, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit,”*

Kingdom of God is **not** the rituals of meat and drink but righteousness.

Note the order – first righteousness, **then** peace and joy.

We will come across two words in the **English Translation** of Romans: “*Righteousness*” and “*Just*” which are different in their meaning **but** in the original languages of the Bible – Hebrews and Greek – there is only one word:- Hebrew – Trâdaq; Greek – Dikaiosis and derivative Dikaioma.

There is no difference in original language, so when we are talking about righteousness, we are also talking about justice.

General Layout of Letter

1. Chapters 1-8

which deal with righteousness and how to attain it, by a spiritual pilgrimage.

2. Chapters 9-11

which deal with God's chosen people.

3. Chapters 12-15

which deal with practical questions of life and living. The out-working of what is dealt with is chapters 1-8.

4. Chapter 16

which helps us to understand what importance God puts on personal relationships with Him and one with another. We are **not** just a number to God.

Romans Chapters 1-8 is a spiritual pilgrimage – the end goal is the Spirit led life which is described in **Chapter 8** but we have to make the journey through **Chapters 1-7** before we reach this wonderful destination.

Romans 1:1 [NIV] *“Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle and set apart for the gospel of God”*

When Paul wrote this letter to the Romans he was writing to a Church which was situated in the greatest city in the greatest empire in the world.

Because of this, Paul chooses his words and thoughts with the greatest care.

Paul begins by giving his own credentials.

1. (a) Firstly a slave [Doulos] of Jesus Christ.

Paul's favourite title for Jesus was Lord [Kurios].

Kurios describes someone who has undisputed possession of a person or thing; master or owner in most definite and absolute sense.

The very opposite of the word Lord [Kurios] is slave [Doulos].

Jesus had loved Paul and given Himself for him but Paul was sure he no longer belonged to himself but entirely to Jesus – an utter obligation of love to Jesus His Christ [Messiah]

(b) The word slave [Doulos] has another side to it in the Old Testament.

The regular word that described the great men of God was “*Ebbd*” servant – bond man – their greatness lay in the fact that they were slaves of God, and so it did with Paul.

So the term slave of Jesus Christ describes at one and the same time the obligation of great love and honour of an office.

2. Paul also describes himself as “*called to be an Apostle*”.

In the Old Testament the great men were men who heard and answered the call from God.

Abraham – Genesis 12:1-3 [NIV] *“The LORD had said to Abram, “**Leave your country, your people and your father's household and go to the land I will show you.** I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.”*

Moses – Exodus 3:10 [NIV] *“So now, go. **I am sending you to Pharaoh** to bring my people the Israelites out of Egypt.”*

Jeremiah – Jeremiah 1:1-2 and 2:1-2 [NIV] *“The words of Jeremiah son of Hilkiah, one of the priests at Anathoth in the territory of Benjamin. The word of the LORD came to him in the thirteenth year of the reign of Josiah son of Amon king of Judah,” ... “The word of the LORD came to me: “**Go and proclaim in the hearing of Jerusalem:** “I remember the devotion of your youth, how as a bride you loved me and followed me through the desert, through a land not sown.”*

Isaiah – Isaiah 6:8-9 [NIV] *“Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, “**Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?**” And I said, “**Here am I. Send me!**” He said, “**Go and tell this people:** “Be ever hearing, but never understanding; be ever seeing, but never perceiving.”*

Christians – John 15:16 [NIV] *“You did not choose me, but **I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last.** Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name.”*

We, like Paul, should not think of life in terms of what we want to do, but in terms of what God wants us to do !!!

3. Paul describes himself as “*separated (set apart) unto (to serve) the Gospel (Good News) of God*”; the message Jesus the Christ brought.

(a) **Set apart by God**

Galatians 1:15 [NIV] *“But when God, **who set me apart from birth** and called me by his grace, was pleased”*

Even before his birth, for every person God has a plan.

Every person is to become an expression of the mind of God.

No person's life is without purpose in God's eyes.

God has a particular task for each of us to do if we answer the call.

(b) **Set apart for men**

Acts 13:2-3 [NIV] “While they were worshipping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, “**Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.**” So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off.”

Same word as in **Galatians 1:15** and this was to preach to the Gentiles (those without God). **Ephesians 3:7-9** [NIV] “**I became a servant of this gospel by the gift of God's grace given me through the working of his power.** Although I am less than the least of all God's people, this grace was given me: to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to make plain to everyone the administration of this mystery, which for ages past was kept hidden in God, who created all things.”

4. **Romans 1:5** [NIV] “Through him and for his name's sake, **we received grace and apostleship to call people from among all the Gentiles to the obedience that comes from faith.**”

With this “*setting apart*” we **receive two things from God.**

This scripture tells us what these two things are.

Note: “We” – Paul was including Christians at Rome and by extension all Christians as well as himself.

1 Grace – grace always describes some gift which is absolutely free, unearned and undeserved.

The law lays down what man must do; the gospel lays down what God has done.

Salvation depends **not** on what our efforts can accomplish but on what God's Love for us **has** done.

We will cover this in greater detail later, when we come to **Romans 5:6-11.**

2 A Task – Paul's task was to bring the gospel to the Gentiles.

We are set apart **not** for a special honour but for special responsibility.

God has set us apart not for glory but for toil.

Paul was a Pharisee (**Philippians 3:5**); the name means “*the separated one*”; we tended to act like Pharisees at times, considering ourselves to be special (not servants of this world); different (not dedicated to task our Master has given us).

Christianity will always separate us, **but** it separates us **not** for privilege, self-glory or pride **but** for service, humility and love for **all** men.

Paul also in these verses at the beginning of his letter outlines the main subject of the letter “*The Gospel of God*”.

Romans 1:2-3 [NIV] “*the gospel he promised beforehand through his prophets in the Holy Scriptures regarding his Son, who as to his human nature was a descendant of David,*”

The gospel message is **not** a new message, although Paul's main task was to bring the gospel to the Gentiles.

When he came to a new city he went into the synagogue to reach first any Jews in that city, and the only way to reach their minds was through the Old Testament writings (don't forget that a Jew still does **not** give credibility to the New Testament – considers Christ only as a good teacher of the Mosaic Law, not the Messiah they are still looking for).

“*Son of David*” **Matthew 1:1** adds “*son of Abraham*” who was the first from whose family the Messiah was prophesised to come (**Genesis 22:18**) and David, who was the **last**.

To a Jewish reader these men were the great starting points of any true genealogy of the promised Messiah.

Romans 1:4 [NIV] *“and who through the Spirit of holiness was declared with power to be the Son of God, by his resurrection from the dead: Jesus Christ our Lord.”*

“Son of God” **Note** “declared” – literally “marked off” – defined as – per-determined – shown or proved.

“Made” seed of David but “proved” Son of God.

How?

“With power” according to the “Spirit of Holiness”, the Hebrew way of rendering Holy Spirit by “the resurrection from the dead”.

Without the “Good News” of the resurrection we have **no** hope.

1 Corinthians 15:11-20; 57-58 [NIV] *“Whether, then, it was I or they, this is what we preach, and this is what you believed. But if it is preached that Christ has been raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? **If there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith.** More than that, we are then found to be false witnesses about God, for we have testified about God that he raised Christ from the dead. But he did not raise him if in fact the dead are not raised. For if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised either. And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost. If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are to be pitied more than all men. But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.” ... “But thanks be to God! **He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labour in the Lord is not in vain.**”*

Our victory over our greatest enemy, death, is only through “our Lord Jesus the Messiah”.

The resurrection is what sets Jesus apart from all other prophets, teachers and great men.

All others have died and leave memories but **Jesus lives on now** in great power and authority **for us.**

Romans 1:5-6 [NIV] *“Through him and for his name's sake, we received grace and apostleship to call people from among all the Gentiles to the obedience that comes from faith. And you also are among those who are called to belong to Jesus Christ.”*

This is what it should mean to us – what we receive through this foretold resurrection from the dead of Jesus, part of the power filling promises of God.

Grace apostleship obedience faith witness to all nations because of our calling

John 15:1-27 This is what Paul is referring to.

John 15:3 [NIV] *“You are already **clean** because of the word I have spoken to you.”*

Clean – imputed Righteousness through grace.

John 15:5 [NIV] *“I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, **he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.**”*

A promise of the power to become fruitful.

John 15:10 [NIV] *“If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father's commands and remain in his love.”*

Obedience to Jesus' words.

John 15:12-13 [NIV] *“My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no-one than this, that **he lay down his life for his friends.**”*

This willingness to “*lay down our lives in love*” – (give our time to others) is the most powerful witness we can ever give, far more powerful than clever arguments over words and their true meaning.

John 13:34-35 [NIV] *“A new command I give you: **Love one another.** As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”*

“all know”

John 15:14-17 [NIV] *“You are my friends if you do what I command. I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you. You did not choose me, **but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last.** Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name. This is my command: Love each other.”*

Our personal commission.

Could the “*eternal fruit*” be others whom we help to receive eternal life?

John 15:18-24 [NIV] *“If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first. If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. **As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you.** Remember the words I spoke to you: 'No servant is greater than his master.' **If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also.** If they obeyed my teaching, they will obey yours also. They will treat you this way because of my name, for they do not know the One who sent me. If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not be guilty of sin. Now, however, they have no excuse for their sin. He who hates me hates my Father as well. If I had not done among them what no-one else did, they would not be guilty of sin. But now they have seen these miracles, and yet they have hated both me and my Father.”*

Not an easy life promised.

John 15:25 [NIV] *“But this is to fulfil what is written in their Law: 'They hated me without reason.'”*

Prophesised in writings of Old Testament.

John 15:26 [NIV] *“When the Counsellor comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the **Spirit of truth** who goes out from the Father, **he will testify about me.**”*

All the powerful help needed to endure whatever this life of loving others may bring our way in persecution.

Sometimes the guilt feeling we cause in others causes them to hate us for the good they see us doing.

1 Peter 2:20 *“when you do well, and suffer for it, you take it patiently, this is acceptable with God.”*

John 15:27 [NIV] *“And you also must testify, for you have been with me from the beginning.”*

We must also witness as an apostle (one sent) of Jesus Christ, to fulfil the commission Jesus Christ has given us.