

An Analytical and Expository Outline of Romans

(by Johnny Felker)

Introduction

Paul's letter to the Romans is a wonderful discourse on the gospel. Every Christian should seek to thoroughly understand this book in order to appreciate the principles having to do with his own salvation and in order to understand the basis of spiritual fellowship with others. Though challenging and capable of being wrested, Romans is not just a book for preachers to ponder. Every Christian should accept the challenge of understanding the logic of Paul's argumentation in Romans. It will be most rewarding to all who do.

A few things will especially help in understanding Paul's message. First, read the book repeatedly. One of the remarkable features of this letter is how Paul explains himself as he develops the arguments of this book. What may not be clear in one verse may become more apparent as you continue to read more details about it later.

Second, do your word study carefully. A great deal of misunderstanding in Romans comes from careless lexicography. Pay special attention to the context in which Paul uses various terms like faith, works, law, etc. Consider to what these terms are put in contrast in order to help define them.

Third, avoid getting so caught up in details that you miss the bigger picture Paul is developing. Keep the larger outline in mind as you read. Try to get into the flow of the logic as Paul develops his theme from one paragraph to the next. Think about where Paul is headed in the presentation of the ideas. This will help you better understand some of the difficult passages.

Fourth, let Paul speak for himself. Don't try to impose upon the text preconceived ideas about what Paul "should" say or seek to alter the ideas to better refute denominational dogmas. The truth is all we should seek. Understanding the truth as God revealed it is the best way to equip ourselves to answer the misuse of Scripture.

Background

It appears Paul's letter was written to the Romans from Corinth. In chapter 16:23 Paul sends greetings from Gaius and Erastus. Gaius was one of the men baptized by Paul at Corinth (1 Cor. 1:14). Archaeologists have discovered a pavement in Corinth paid for by "Erastus, the city treasurer".

Similarly, it appears that Paul wrote the letter to the Romans during his three-month stay in Corinth before his trip to Jerusalem (Ac. 20:3). In Rom. 15:22-28 Paul suggests that he was about to go to Jerusalem with those who were taking a contribution from among the Gentiles for the needy saints in Jerusalem. Chronologies of Paul's life differ in some points; but it is defensible to say that the letter was written about 58 a.d.

Purpose

Simply put, Romans is a proclamation of the gospel Paul preached. Its theme verse is Romans 1:16-17. In some ways it serves as an outline of the main concepts Paul seeks to establish. Paul wants the Romans to understand that the gospel is the only answer to man's spiritual need of salvation and that it is sufficient not only to set men right with God but also to produce in them the holiness God seeks. It is God's way of salvation for everyone who believes.

The letter itself would afford the Romans the opportunity to become familiar with Paul's teaching and to make use of it in teaching others. It would also be an effective refutation of errors that plagued many NT churches such as Judaizing tendencies and licentiousness.

About this outline

This not intended to be a complete verse by verse commentary on Romans. Such would take many pages to compose. Instead it is a summary of the main ideas presented with some detail where that might be important. What I hope you will find most useful about this brief outline is the ability to move through the book with a general idea of what each section is teaching. I am using a format in which each level of the outline is put in a new text type. Major sections will be in one text type; major sub-sections or paragraphs in another; and specific arguments in another. In this way you may read through the commentary at the level of depth you want to study by reading the material with the same text type.