

Notes on Romans 1

Intro: After Paul's greeting and expression of intention to come to Rome, Paul sets forth the reason why he unashamedly preaches the gospel. It is the power of God unto salvation from sin. It is necessary, however, to show that men are in need of this gospel because they are sinners.

Romans 1:16-17

This is Paul's theme verse. It outlines the remainder of the book.

The gospel, God's power unto salvation (chapter 1-8)

Unto everyone who believes (chapters 9-11)

The righteous shall live by faith (chapters 12-16).

Though rooted in God's character, "the righteousness of God" is a righteousness that God reckons to us. Considers Paul's description: "not having a righteousness of my own derived from law but that which comes from God on the basis of faith" (Phil. 3:9).

This righteousness is "by faith", that is, it results from trust in the sacrifice God has provided rather than in our works.

Throughout Romans "faith" stands in contrast to "works". And we must carefully define these terms. In Romans "faith" is not mere mental assent to truth; nor are "works" mere acts of obedience that demonstrate faith. To say, we are saved by mental assent to truth and not through acts of obedience is to miss Paul's point. "Faith" in Romans refers to trust in God's sacrifice that may be accepted and appropriated upon conditions God has set forth. "Works" stands in contrast with faith and refers to righteousness that is earned by merit through perfect obedience to law. This is what makes 1:18-3:30 so important in Paul's thinking. To prove conclusively that all have sinned is to establish the impossibility of righteousness by works or by law and show the need for the gospel.

"Unto faith" suggests the intention of the gospel message. It is given in order that men may believe resulting in righteousness and salvation from sin and eternal wrath.

"As it is written..." Habbakuk, troubled by wicked Babylon's dominance over Israel, is assured that in time the life of the righteous will be vindicated. Hence, the righteous will live by faith. Perhaps in the original text the word "live" receives the stress. Paul however appropriates the text to emphasize another important word in the text—"faith". It is the principle upon which the righteous man is made righteous and upon which he lives his life.

Note how in Roman 3:22 expounds upon the statement of Romans 1:17.

"the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe".

God's wrath upon the pagan world (Rom. 1:18-32)

God's wrath is not anthropopathic; it is instead the essential accompaniment of His love. One cannot truly love what is good without a righteous anger toward what would undermine good and bring injury to others. God's wrath is manifestation of His holiness toward a sinful world. Men by their sinful lives "suppress" or hold down the truth, that is, they keep it from gaining respect and acceptance in men's hearts.

God's wrath is just because men have had a way to know God and the truth of God. The created world itself makes clear God's eternal power and divine nature.

The rejection of God was willful. They refused to give God the thanks or honor He is due as the creator. With this willful rejection came a darkening of understanding and a transformation of character (from wisdom to folly). The rejection of God's person is the rationale for moral license. Paul pictures God's wrath as manifest in history in "giving them over" to their lusts and their consequences. In any society, God often judges man by allowing him to experience the painful consequences of His actions. However, not all of God's wrath is meted out in this life (Rom. 2:5).