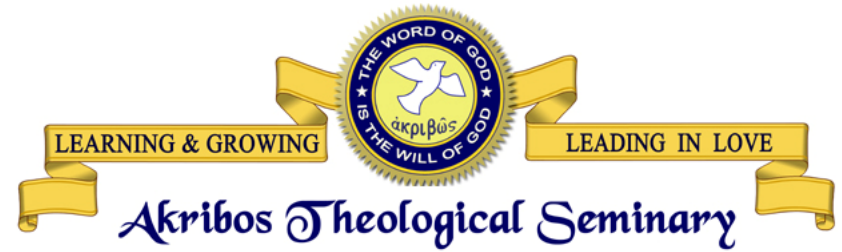




AKRIBOS THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY
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Training the Servants of Today for Leading Tomorrow

Issue 9

STUDIES IN GOD'S POWER

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WE GOT THE GOODS, WHEN WE WERE BAD

There have been many postulated reasons for Bible study and the principal position put forth for consideration is *“the endeavor towards learning in order to grow in one’s vertical relationship with God the Father of Jesus Christ.”*

This work is to be considered no more than a springboard for personal research and study of the Bible. The basis of this position is the consideration of the expectation of receiving a *“perfect”* work from an *“imperfect being”* that has *“imperfect knowledge.”* This understanding must be applied at various levels in order to emphasize the critical point that *“the work of Bible study must be, to the end, intensely personal and individual.”*¹

This issue of the journal is the first in a series, which begins to lay a foundation for the examination of the doctrinal epistle of Romans. The epistle to the Romans contains the principal instructions that are critical to the walk of every born again believer. This installment of the examination of the epistle to the Romans is a preliminary consideration of the opening chapters of the book of Romans.

¹ E. W. Bullinger, *How to Enjoy the Bible* Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1990, p. 407

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“*righteousness of God*” was made available without the law, even after God had proclaimed His wrath toward all men and their ungodliness and unrighteousness.

We were “*justified*” even when we could not speak and every mouth was stopped. The guilt of the natural man is so obvious, so complete, so thorough that there is nothing that can possibly be said in his defense. God’s “*justification*” comes “*freely*” by His “*grace*,” by God’s “*divine favor*,” which was bestowed upon us when we least deserved it. God clearly shows how *really, really* unmerited it was.

Just how great was that “*redemptive*” price paid by God? It was His only begotten Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. We were saved from God’s wrath in the form of being “*freely justified*” by His “*grace*” through the “*redemption*” that is in Christ Jesus.

...The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart:
 that is, the word of faith, which we preach;
 That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus,
 and shalt believe in thine heart that God
 hath raised him [*Jesus*] from the dead, thou shalt be saved.
 For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness;
 and with the mouth, confession is made unto salvation.

Romans 10:8b-10

WE GOT THE GOODS, WHEN WE WERE BAD

Table of Contents

A CONSIDERATION OF ROMANS 1:1-3:261

Introduction 1

The Structure of the Epistle to the Romans 5

Introduction to Romans 1:1-7..... 6

Introduction to Romans 1:16-15:33..... 7

The Gospel of God 7

The Mystery..... 8

Sonship 101..... 9

God’s Wrath..... 9

Establishing the Context 10

Man’s Ungodliness and Unrighteousness 11

The Court Hearing for the Gentiles 11

The Court Hearing for the Jews..... 13

The Verdict for the Gentile and the Jew 15

The Righteousness of God 16

The Grace of God..... 18

Summary 21

***Continually believing God's power and presence
 are in you and with you in every situation!***

BE THOU MY VISION

Be Thou my Vision, O Lord of my heart;
Naught be all else to me, save that Thou art
Thou my best Thought, by day or by night,
Waking or sleeping, Thy presence my light.

Be Thou my Wisdom, and Thou my true Word;
I ever with Thee and Thou with me, Lord;
Thou my great Father, I Thy true son;
Thou in me dwelling, and I with Thee one.

Be Thou my battle Shield, Sword for the fight;
Be Thou my Dignity, Thou my Delight;
Thou my soul's Shelter, Thou my high Tower:
Raise Thou me heavenward, O Power of my power.

Riches I heed not, nor man's empty praise,
Thou mine Inheritance, now and always:
Thou and Thou only, first in my heart,
High King of Heaven, my Treasure Thou art.

High King of Heaven, my victory won,
May I reach Heaven's joys, O bright Heaven's Sun!
Heart of my own heart, whatever befall,
Still be my Vision, O Ruler of all.

Dallan Forgaill, 8th Century (*ancient Irish*)
Translated by Mary E. Bryne, 1905

...The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach; That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him [*Jesus*] from the dead, thou shalt be saved.

Romans 10:8b-9

Now, where is this redemption: at the corner store, or Wal-Mart? No. Does it come from a particular flavor of religion or a particular church during any given week? This is one place where I can speak with a certain sense of experience. I have visited with my father, in my youth, probably no less than 30 different denominations or organizations in a search for the Truth. It is not with the Baptists; it is not with the Catholics; it is not with the Methodists; it is not with the Lutherans. It is in one name and one name only: that is the "*Lord Jesus Christ*." This redemption is "*in*" the Lord Jesus Christ. God's Word is so beautiful that one cannot help but stand in awe.

Romans 3:24-26

²⁴ Being **justified** [*How?*] **freely** by his **grace** through the **redemption** that is in Christ Jesus,

²⁵ Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, [*The word propitiation means payment.*] to declare his [*God's*] righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God;

²⁶ To declare, I say, at this time his [*God's*] righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.

Summary

The title, I think, of my teaching has to be "*We Got the Goods, When We Were Bad*." This section of Romans paints a rather accurate picture of how bad we were. We could not, even with the law, make ourselves righteous—we needed God's help.

By any measurement, we were found to be worthless and without value, but "*redemption*" was made available through the redemptive price paid by God.

We were made "*righteous*" with the "*righteousness of God*" when we had been judged by God to be under sin. The

worrying about how others view our spirituality. Because of this, we allow religion to tell us what to do, what not to touch, what not to taste. We are so caught up in being religious that we forget that what God wanted from the beginning was a personal relationship. By becoming religious, we end up getting the opposite of what God wanted, and fall far from the “*mark*.”

Through His “*grace*” (*unmerited, divine favor*), we have been “*justified*”—acquitted in His court of judgment. How were we justified? It was through, or by way of, the “*redemption that is in Christ Jesus*.”

The word “*redemption*” is rendered from the Greek word ἀπολυτρώσεως (*apolutroseos*). I am always excited when I look at a Greek word, and it is a compound word, because a compound word is a word made up of two words. When you look up the individual meaning of each word, and then bring it back to the whole, it adds to the richness and depth of its meaning.

The first part of this compound word is the Greek word ἀπο (*apo*), and is a Greek preposition that carries the meaning “*from or away from*.”¹² The second part of this compound word is the Greek word λυτρον (*lutron*), and means “*a ransom: the price paid for letting loose or setting free; hence, expiation, atonement*.”¹³ Do you see the beauty of God’s Word here? We have had the price paid and have been taken away from something; we have been set free! We were once prisoners; we were the property of someone else (Satan), and Jesus Christ¹⁴ changed that!

¹² Ibid, Bullinger, p. 308

¹³ Ibid, Bullinger, p. 622

¹⁴ See John 8:31-45 and Hebrews 2:14-15

“*We Got the Goods, When We Were Bad*”

A CONSIDERATION OF ROMANS 1:1-3:26

By Eric Shimkus

Introduction

Gaining an understanding of the Book of Romans is vital to the walk of every Christian believer. The Book of Romans contains the primary lessons, or basics, of the Christian’s education.

However, before jumping into the Book of Romans, I believe it is necessary to revisit some of the basic keys by which all scripture interprets itself.

From II Peter, we are first to know that no prophecy, “*none*” of it, is of any private (*one’s own*) interpretation.

II Peter 1:19-21

¹⁹ We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the daystar arise in your hearts:

²⁰ **Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation.**

²¹ For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost

We are to know that holy men of God spake (or wrote¹) as they were moved by the Holy Ghost, and that “*all*” scripture, as originally given, was given by the inspiration of God (God-breathed).

¹ See Jeremiah 36:4, Romans 1:2, and 16:22

II Timothy 3:16-17

- ¹⁶ **All scripture is given by inspiration of God**, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:
- ¹⁷ That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.

Although there were many writers, there is only one author—God!

Another key as to how The Word interprets itself is, God's Word interprets itself within the "*context*." This key is going to be a very large part of this introduction to the Book of Romans—the need to watch and follow "*context*."

Finally, to set the stage for this consideration of the Book of Romans, I would like not only to consider the order in which the Pauline Epistles² were written (the time line), but also the canonical (or Biblical) order in which we have received them today.

As we can see, Romans was actually the seventh of the epistles Paul wrote. There is great beauty and great love to be seen of God as to the order in which they were written. This is because in the First Century Church, they did not have all of the epistles together in

<u>Epistle</u>	<u>≈Date</u>
I Thessalonians	51
II Thessalonians	52
Hebrews	53
I Corinthians	55
Galatians	55
II Corinthians	56
Romans	58
Philippians	60
Philemon	61
Colossians	61
Ephesians	61
I Timothy	63
Titus	65
II Timothy	67

Table 1 - Chronological Order of the Pauline Epistles

² An epistle is a written document directed or sent to a person or group of persons, usually a letter and a very formal, often didactic (giving instructions) and elegant one. The letters from the Apostles to the Christians in the New Testament are often referred to as epistles.

Sometimes in seeking a more accurate knowledge of God's Word, we need to look at the "*words*" in The Word. This verse contains a few words that I want to look at more deeply.

"*Justified*" is rendered from the common Greek word δικαιοω (*dikaioo*). *Dikaioo* is a judicial term, meaning, "*to be cleared of*" or "*acquitted*." There is also a sense of "*to set forth as righteous, to justify by a judicial act*."¹⁰ It is from the word "*justified*" that we get the word "*justification*," which is another judicial term.¹¹ It is a term used in a court of law by a judge who has the authority to pass judgment. Notice how this "*justification*" was rendered. It was rendered "*freely*."

The common Greek word rendered as "*freely*" is δωρεαν (*dorean*), and it means, literally, "*gratis (received or given without cost or payment) or gratuitously*." God's "*justification*" was given "*freely*." It also has the undertone of meaning that, "*while being freely given, the receiver did not deserve it*." That is, undeservedly, it was "*freely*" given, without cause, and by His (God's) "*grace*."

The common Greek word rendered "*grace*" is χαρις (*charis*). One could easily spend months studying this word, but, for now, it is enough that we understand that the word *charis* means "*divine, unmerited favor*." We simply did not, and cannot, do anything to make ourselves worthy to deserve what God gave us "*freely*."

In the first three chapters of Romans, we are told how God sees the natural man. So very often, we fall into the trap of

¹⁰ E. W. Bullinger, DD, *A Critical Lexicon & Concordance*, Grand Rapids, MI: The Zondervan Corp., 1975, p. 429

¹¹ See Romans 4:25 and 5:18

which means, “*to miss the mark.*”⁸ In other words, “*You did not hit the bull’s eye.*”

Romans 3:23b

^{23b} ...and come short of the glory of God;

How many times do we worry about our sin? Did I fail to do enough good works? Was I not kind to strangers? Look at the context of the verse; our “*failure*” was in coming short of the “*glory of God.*” Remember, it was in the previous section that God’s wrath was revealed. It was revealed because of the ungodliness of the natural man. We did not have a true, personal, and vital relationship with our Heavenly Father. This was our unrighteousness. We were out in left field, and were “*all*” under sin. This is where we “*missed the mark.*”

Whether or not you go to the right church, wear the right clothes, or do the “*good deed*” has nothing to do with it. The only standard of “*sin*” we should acknowledge is in The Word. Whenever we “*miss the mark,*” we come “*short of the glory of God.*”⁹

The Grace of God

Romans 3:24

²⁴ Being **justified** [how?] **freely** by his **grace** through the **redemption** that is in Christ Jesus.

This verse is so wonderful that we need to stop and take a moment to savor it.

⁸ Joseph H., *Thayer’s Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 2002, p. 30

⁹ See II Corinthians 3:18 and 4:6.

one book, as we do now. It is so wonderful to know that one of the first things God wanted to communicate to this new church, to this new, young body of believers, was given in Thessalonians: “*the hope of Christ’s return.*”

Once all the “*Church*” Epistles had been revealed, Romans *became* the first. In Biblical order (what is known as “*canonical*” order), the epistle to the Romans is always first. It is also given that the “*canonical*” order of the Church Epistles has a distinct purpose.

A | **ROMANS** – “*Doctrine and Instruction.*” The Gospel of God: never hidden, but “*promised afore,*” God’s justification of Jew and Gentile individually—dead and risen with Christ (1:1-8:39); their relation dispensationally (9:1-11:35); practical counsel to the believer (12:1-16:24); and the subjective foundation of the mystery (16:25-26).

B | **CORINTHIANS** – “*Reproof.*” Practical failure to exhibit the teaching of Romans through not seeing their standing as having died and risen with Christ; and “*Leaven*” in practice (I Corinthians 5:6).

C | **GALATIANS** – “*Correction.*” Doctrinal failure as to the teaching of Romans: beginning with the truth of the new nature (*spirit*), they were “*soon removed*” (1:6), and sought to be made perfect in the old nature (*flesh*) (3:3); and “*Leaven*” in doctrine (5:9).

A | **EPHESIANS** – “*Doctrine and Instruction.*” The Mystery of God: always hidden, never before revealed, Jews and Gentiles collectively made “*one new man*” in Christ. We are seated in the heavenlies with Christ.

B | **PHILIPPIANS** – “*Reproof.*” Practical failure to exhibit the teaching of Ephesians in manifesting “*the mind of Christ*” as members of the one Body.

C | **COLOSSIANS** – “*Correction.*” Doctrinal failure as to the teaching of Ephesians: wrong doctrines which come from “*not holding the Head*” (2:9); and saints not seeing their completeness and perfection in Christ.

A | **THESSALONIANS** – “*Doctrine and Instruction.*” Not only “*dead and risen with Christ*” (as in Romans), not only seated in the heavenlies with Christ (as in Ephesians), but “*caught up to meet the Lord in the air, so to be forever with the Lord.*” In Romans, justified in Christ; in Ephesians, sanctified in Christ; and in Thessalonians, glorified with Christ. No “*reproof*” and no “*correction*,” all praise and thanksgiving; a typical church.

Table 2 – Structure and Purpose of Church Epistles³

First, we have the “*doctrine and instruction*” epistle of Romans. Romans is followed by Corinthians, which are epistles of “*reproof*” due to The Church’s failure to adhere to the “*doctrine and instruction*” in Romans. Next, is the epistle to the Galatians, which is an epistle of “*correction*,” correcting The Church’s error in its failure to adhere to the doctrine in Romans.

The pattern of “*doctrine, reproof, and correction*” is then repeated with the epistles to the Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians. The “*doctrinal*” epistles of Thessalonians stand alone, and are not followed by epistles of “*reproof*” or “*correction.*”

The Church Epistles (those written to all believers) are followed by the general epistles, which include four epistles providing instruction to those “*leading*” individual, organized assemblies.

A | **I TIMOTHY** – Earlier period. Timothy at Ephesus. Organized assemblies. Instruction as to officers and their duties. Assemblies seen in their order and rule.

B | **II TIMOTHY** – Later period. Organization ignored. Orderly rule succeeded by ruin. Officers superseded by “faithful men” (individual).

A | **TITUS** – Earlier period. Organized assemblies as in I Timothy.

B | **PHILEMON** – Later period. Practical exhibition of individual walk in truth of the later epistles.

Table 3 – Structure of the Personal Epistles⁴

³ E. W. Bullinger, DD, *The Church Epistles*, London, England, Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1905, p. 21

This should send cold chills up and down your spine. How righteous is God? Can there be anyone more righteous than God? NO!

Romans 3:21b-22a

²¹ ... being witnessed by the law and the prophets;

²² Even the righteousness of God **which is** by [*through*] faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that [*do one thing*] believe: ...

“*Believing*” is all it takes: no magic formulas, no list of things to do, no special club or church to join. It is plainly and simply by “*believing*” that we receive the “*righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ.*”

Romans 3:22b

^{22b} ...for there is no difference:

This phrase is important to the context, because God has been comparing the Jew to the Gentile, and their relationships with Him. It should be noted that as far as God is concerned, there are only three types of people in the world: Jews, Gentiles, and the Church of God. Everything else is a division caused by man. Man has divided himself based upon color, ethnicity, creed, and all other kinds of arbitrary things. These divisions mean nothing to God; He sees only Jews, Gentiles, and the Church of God.

Romans 3:23a

²³ For all have sinned...

The word “*sinned*” is the Greek word *hamarton* (*hemarton*). This word is a derivative of the common Greek word *amartano* (*hamartano*). The word *hamartano* is actually a marksman’s term,

nature of man, with or without the law, Jew or Gentile. Mankind as a whole is under sin; the natural man is sinful by *nature*. In the courtroom of God's justice, man has been found "guilty."

The Righteousness of God

Romans 1:16-3:20 is hard to read; it is hard to look at because this is where we came from. This is the natural man of body and soul. Now, let us see what God says next...

Romans 3:21a

²¹ But...

I want to stop right here for a minute. The word "*But*" is so critical. This word sets two things in contrast: in this case, what has just been said with that which follows. Observing comparison or conjunctive words when studying the Bible is a vital tool in identifying the context of a section of scripture. When we began reading in Romans 1:18, and continued to read chapter after chapter (forgetting chapter and verse numbers), we were looking for something: something that was going to summarize and close what we were reading. God devoted the better part of three chapters to tell us of the status of the natural man. Continuing, take careful notice of the next word:

Romans 3:21a

²¹ But **now**...

God does not say, "*later*." He does not say it is "*sometime in the past*," but "*now!*"

Romans 3:21a

²¹ But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested...

The remainder of the books in the New Testament are written for specific purposes other than that which is under consideration here. The student of God's Word is invited to consider the introduction and outline of these books as given in *The Companion Bible*. For now, we will return to the consideration of the Book of Romans.

The Structure of the Epistle to the Romans

For the purposes of this study, the general structure of Paul's epistle to the Romans is given as:

1:1-6	The Gospel of God... promised afore...
1:7	Address/Salutation – Romans is written to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ All that be in Rome ➤ Beloved of God ➤ Called saints
1:8-15	Paul's prayer for and desire to visit the Romans and to preach the Gospel to them.
1:16 – 8:39	Foundational Doctrinal ⁵ Teaching – " <i>Sonship 101</i> "
9:1 – 11:36	Parenthetical ⁶ passage concerning the Children of Israel
12:1 – 15:7	Foundational Practical Teaching – " <i>Walking as a Son 101</i> "
15:8 – 16:24	Paul's ministry of the Gospel; prayer for and desire to visit the Romans, salutations.
16:25-26	The Mystery!
16:27	The Ascription – To God only wise...

⁴ E. W. Bullinger, DD, *The Companion Bible*, Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1922, p. 1999

⁵ *Doctrine*, from Latin, *doctrina*, (compare "*doctor*"), means "*a body of teachings*" or "*instructions*;" taught principles or positions, as the body of teachings in a branch of knowledge or belief system.

⁶ *Parenthetical*: **1a**: an amplifying or explanatory word, phrase, or sentence inserted in a passage from which it is usually set off by punctuation; **b**: a remark or passage that departs from the theme of a discourse; digression (Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary).

Romans 1:1-7

When studying the Book of Romans, there are “*signposts*” that give us a sense of its structure. It is very important, as we read Romans, that we look for these signposts. Let us begin by reading Romans 1:1-7.

- ¹ Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God,
- ² (Which he [*God*] had promised afore by his prophets in the holy scriptures.)
- ³ Concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh;
- ⁴ And declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead:
- ⁵ By whom we have received grace and apostleship, for obedience to the faith among all nations, for his name:
- ⁶ Among whom are ye also the called of Jesus Christ:
- ⁷ To all that be in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.

As in all of the epistles of Paul, there is an “*address*.” The “*address*” is “*to whom*” the epistle is written. In this epistle, verse 7 is the “*address*.” As previously noted, this epistle was written to the Romans, those “*beloved of God*,” and those who are “*called to be saints*.”

If I wrote a letter to my wife telling her of my love for her and how great I think she is, I could then give this letter to someone else. They could open it, they could read it, they could learn from it, but it would not be written to them.

Since “*we*” are also “*beloved of God*” and “*called to be saints*,” the Book of Romans is a “*letter*” written by God to “*us*.” It is “*addressed*” to “*us*.” In this opening section of Chapter 1 of Romans, we have the address, the salutations, and “*to whom*” it is

Romans 3:10-18⁷

- ¹⁰ As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one:
- ¹¹ There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God.
- ¹² They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one.
- ¹³ Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips:
- ¹⁴ Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness:
- ¹⁵ Their feet are swift to shed blood:
- ¹⁶ Destruction and misery are in their ways:
- ¹⁷ And the way of peace have they not known:
- ¹⁸ There is no fear of God before their eyes.

The Verdict for the Gentile and the Jew

Romans 3:19-20 is the “*bookend*” that concludes the context that began in Romans 1:18.

Romans 3:19-20

- ¹⁹ Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty [*or subject to the judgment*] before God.
- ²⁰ Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin.

Wow! What a picture! God spent so much time accurately portraying the true nature of man: that with or without the Law, Jew or Gentile, all are under sin. God brought us to this point so He could conclude this whole thing by saying, “*there shall no flesh be justified in his sight*.” The context of Romans 1:18-3:20 is the status of the natural man from God’s perspective. It is the true

⁷ See Psalm 14:1-3, Psalm 5:9, Psalm 10:7, Proverbs 1:16, Isaiah 59:8-7, and Psalm 36:1.

men as we continue to deal with the same context. The chapter and verse markings are not a part of the original God-breathed Word. They have no Divine authority in rightly dividing God's Word. There are times when a chapter break is put in the middle of a sentence. In this case, we have a chapter break in the middle of the context, a context that continues and whose point has not been completely made. Now, do not get me wrong. I am very thankful that the chapter and verse breaks are there, otherwise, we would not be able to move through the Scriptures as easily as we do. Understanding that the context continues, we pick it up in Chapter 3 and Verse 1.

Romans 3:1-8

- ¹ What advantage then hath the Jew? or what profit is there of circumcision?
- ² Much every way: chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles [*the logos, the word*] of God.
- ³ For what if some did not believe? shall their unbelief make the faith of God without effect?
- ⁴ God forbid: yea, let God be true, but every man a liar; as it is written, That thou mightest be justified in thy sayings, and mightest overcome when thou art judged.
- ⁵ But if our unrighteousness commend the righteousness of God, what shall we say? Is God unrighteous who taketh vengeance? (I speak as a man)
- ⁶ God forbid: for then how shall God judge the world?
- ⁷ For if the truth of God hath more abounded through my lie unto his glory; why yet am I also judged as a sinner?
- ⁸ And not rather, (as we be slanderously reported, and as some affirm that we say,) Let us do evil, that good may come? whose damnation is just.
- ⁹ What then? are we better than they? No, in no wise: for we have before proved [*charged*] both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin;

Verses 10-18 are all citations from the Old Testament.

written. Immediately following verse 7, and continuing through verse 15, we can read of Paul's commitment to his ministry, his heart, and desire to visit the Romans.

Romans 1:16-15:33

Romans 1:16 all the way through to 8:39 is the "*doctrinal*" section of Romans. Romans 9:1 through 11:36 are parenthetical passages dealing with the Children of Israel. A parenthetical insertion is used where something by way of explanation interrupts the contextual thought. It is important to remember that when the inserted thought is completed, the interrupted thought must be considered in what follows. In this case, chapters 9, 10, and 11 deal with the Children of Israel. Romans 12:1 through 15:7 then gives the "*practical*" application of the "*doctrinal*" section that went before the digression.

I like to think of the "*doctrinal*" section as "*Sonship 101*" and then I like to think of chapters 12-15 as "*Walking as a Son 101*"—the practical, daily "*how to*." Now that we have considered most of the structure of Romans, it is vital that the "*doctrinal*" section be understood to be the foundational instruction for the Christian's education.

The Gospel of God

Returning to chapter 1 and verse 2, it is interesting to note that there is a parenthetical statement where God says:

Romans 1:2

- ² (Which he [*God*] had promised afore by his prophets in the holy scriptures,)

This gospel, the good news of God, is something that has not been hidden; it is something that has been prophesied before in the “*holy scriptures*.” In the next epistle, the Apostle Paul, by inspiration, writes:

I Corinthians 2:1-2

- ¹ And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the **testimony** [which is the Greek word *mysterion*—the *mystery*] of God.
- ² For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.

God dealt with the Corinthians with the foundation of the Christian walk, which is the understanding of salvation. It is interesting to note that it is not until the end of the Book of Romans that the “*mystery*” is even brought up.

The Mystery

Romans 16:25

- ²⁵ Now to him that is of power to establish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the **mystery**, which was kept secret since the world began,
- ²⁶ But now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith:

As we have noted previously, the Book of Ephesians follows Romans as the next doctrinal epistle, and picks up where Romans leaves off. Ephesians picks up with “*having made known unto you the mystery of his will*” (Ephesians 1:9). From this little digression into Ephesians, we can see more clearly the purpose of Romans as the primary education for the Christian believer.

The Court Hearing for the Jews

Now, in verse 17, we begin the court hearing for the Jews:

Romans 2:17-26

- ¹⁷ Behold, thou art called a Jew, and retest in the law, and makest thy boast of God,
- ¹⁸ And knowest his will, and approvest the things that are more excellent, being instructed out of the law;
- ¹⁹ And art confident that thou thyself art a guide of the blind, a light of them which are in darkness,
- ²⁰ An instructor of the foolish, a teacher of babes, which hast the form of knowledge and of the truth in the law.
- ²¹ Thou therefore which teachest another, teachest thou not thyself? thou that preachest a man should not steal, dost thou steal?
- ²² Thou that sayest a man should not commit adultery, dost thou commit adultery? thou that abhorrest idols, dost thou commit sacrilege?
- ²³ Thou that makest thy boast of the law, through breaking the law dishonourest thou God?
- ²⁴ For the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you, as it is written.
- ²⁵ For circumcision verily profiteth, if thou keep the law: but if thou be a breaker of the law, thy circumcision is made uncircumcision.
- ²⁶ Therefore if the uncircumcision keep the righteousness of the law, shall not his uncircumcision be counted for circumcision?
- ²⁷ And shall not uncircumcision which is by nature, if it fulfil the law, judge thee, who by the letter and circumcision dost transgress the law?
- ²⁸ For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh:
- ²⁹ But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God.

As we continue to read, we come to Romans 3:1. It is important here to recognize that chapters and verses were added by

Romans 2:1-16

- ¹ Therefore thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest: for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest doest the same things.
- ² But we are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth against them which commit such things.
- ³ And thinkest thou this, O man, that judgest them which do such things, and doest the same, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God?
- ⁴ Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?
- ⁵ But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God;
- ⁶ Who will render to every man according to his deeds:
- ⁷ To them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life:
- ⁸ But unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath,
- ⁹ Tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile;
- ¹⁰ But glory, honour, and peace, to every man that worketh good, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile:
- ¹¹ For there is no respect of persons with God.
- ¹² For as many as have sinned without law shall also perish without law: and as many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law;
- ¹³ (For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified.
- ¹⁴ For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves:
- ¹⁵ Which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another;)
- ¹⁶ In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel.

Sonship 101

Returning to the beginning of the “*doctrinal*” section of the Book of Romans, we read:

Romans 1:16-17

- ¹⁶ For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.
- ¹⁷ For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, “**The just shall live by faith.**”

This passage is the foundation for the “*doctrinal*” section of Romans: “*The just shall live by faith.*” Very often truths of the New Testament are explained in light of the right application of the Old Testament scriptures. These references to the Old Testament emphasize the great New Testament realities being revealed. In this case, paying attention to context, the statement “*as it is written,*” plants a signpost to consider the Old Testament. The phrase “*the just shall live by faith*” is from Habakkuk 2:4 and, as it has been noted, is the foundational statement for the “*doctrinal*” section of the Book of Romans.

God's Wrath

Romans 1:18-23

- ¹⁸ For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness;
- ¹⁹ Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them.
- ²⁰ For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse:

- ²¹ Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened.
²² Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools,
²³ And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things.

What a change all of a sudden: we go from “*the just shall live by faith*” to “*the wrath of God*.” Quite honestly, it is hard to read. What exactly are we dealing with here, and what has this to do with the education of the Christian believer?

Establishing the Context

In order to understand this section of Romans, we have to look for the context. We have to continue to read to find the “*signposts*” that “*bookend*” this section contextually. Before we continue reading, I am going to describe the context of this section so that when we get to the “*bookend*,” we will see together the conclusion of this section.

Romans 1:16 begins the “*practical*” section, and verses 18-32 are a revelation of God’s wrath against all ungodliness and the unrighteousness of men. Romans 2:1-16 is a sort of court hearing and verdict for the Gentiles, and Romans 2:17-3:8 is the court hearing for the Jews. When we reach Romans 3:19-20, we will see the verdict, and in the verses that follow 20, we will see the conclusion to this context. This section of Romans could be likened to a courtroom scene. Right after we read that “*the just shall live by faith*,” we read of God’s judgment, God’s point of view in Romans 1:18: “*the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men*.” With this in mind, let us continue to read, picking it up in verse 24.

Man’s Ungodliness and Unrighteousness

Romans 1:24-32

- ²⁴ Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves:
²⁵ Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen.
²⁶ For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature:
²⁷ And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompense of their error which was meet.
²⁸ And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient;
²⁹ Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers,
³⁰ Backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents,
³¹ Without understanding, covenant breakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful:
³² Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them.

The Court Hearing for the Gentiles

It is at this point, if you will, that the court hearing begins for the Gentiles.