

OVERVIEW OF BOOK OF ROMANS

INTRODUCTION:

Moving the red box now to the **Pauline Epistles**.

13 epistles (not counting Hebrews) – divided into 4 categories:

early epistles: 1 & 2 Thess; Gal. – 2nd missionary journey -- eschatological

major: 1 & 2 Cor & Romans – 3rd missionary journey – soteriological – controversial

prison epistles: Ephes, Phil., Col. & Philemon – Christological and Ecclesiology –
contemplative

pastoral epistles: 1 & 2 Timothy and Titus

timeline focused around first imprisonment in Rome (before / during / after)

The Book of Romans has greatly impacted many significant Christian leaders – just to mention a couple:

- 1) In November 1515 there was a priest by the name of **Martin Luther**, who himself was known as an Augustinian monk, who was the professor of sacred theology in the Catholic university of Wittenberg. And to his students he began to expound the epistle to the Romans. And from November of 1515 to the following September of 1516, he daily spent himself in the understanding of that epistle. And as he daily prepared his lectures, he became more and more appreciative of the centrality of the Pauline doctrine of justification by...what?...faith. He writes, "I greatly longed to understand Paul's epistle to the Romans and nothing stood in the way but that one expression, 'the righteousness of God.' Because I took it to mean that righteousness whereby God is righteous and deals righteously in punishing the unrighteous. Night and day I pondered until I grasped the truth that the righteousness of God is that righteousness whereby through grace and sheer mercy He justifies us by faith. There upon I felt myself to be reborn and to have gone through open doors into paradise, the whole of Scripture took on a new meaning, and whereas before the righteousness of God had filled me with hate, it now began to fill me inexpressibly with a sweet love. The passage of Paul became to me the gateway to heaven." And need I say what contribution Martin Luther made?
- 2) It was the evening of May 24; the year was 1738. There was a man by the name of **John Wesley**. His biographer says that he went very unwillingly to a society in Aldersgate Street where a man was reading Luther's *Preface to the Epistle to the Romans*. About a quarter before nine he wrote in his journal, while he was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, "I myself felt my heart strangely warmed." Wesley goes on, "I felt I did trust in Christ and Christ alone for my salvation, and an assurance was given me that He had taken my sins away, even mine and saved me from the law of sin and death." And so it was in Aldersgate Street at the reading of the book of Romans that John Wesley was redeemed. And we all know the contribution he made.

Given the gravity and importance of Romans it is not surprising to see how many sermons some of the more famous expositors have dedicated to preaching thru the book:

D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones	366	14 year period
Donald Grey Barnhouse	200+	11 years
John MacArthur	186	8.5 years
James Montgomery Boice	129	9 years

If you download my full commentary on Romans from my website, you will find **54 messages**, so I am on the light side. I was joking around with Will on Wed. night and he commented: What hubris that you are going to cover the whole book in just one message on Sunday. Those Brits have quite the vocabulary.

Def.: Hubris is **excessive pride or confidence that often leads to someone's downfall**. It usually involves overestimating one's abilities –

So I want to begin this morning by confessing the impossibility of accomplishing our stated goal. But we must press on.

Background Facts related to the Book of Romans:

- Authorship of Paul not contested; actually he dictated to a secretary Tertius (**16:22**) who added his own personal greeting to the letter
- Written near the end of Paul's third missionary journey from the city of Corinth in 57 AD and carried by Phoebe to Rome – a church Paul had never visited (**Rom. 1:10-13**)
- Placed at beginning of Pauline corpus – provides doctrinal foundation; even though not the first letter written; and it is the longest

Matthew Henry:

“This epistle to the Romans is placed first, not because of the priority of its date, but because of the superlative excellency of the epistle, it being one of the longest and fullest of all, and perhaps because of the dignity of the place to which it is written.”

- Rome was the center of the empire, filled with wealth, power, and paganism.
- Uses a question and answer format – he anticipate the next objection to his overall argument and proceeds to answer it immediately
- **Godet**: “the cathedral of the Christian faith”
- Known in evangelism circles for its clear presentation of the gospel = **Romans Road**

Composition of the Church in Rome:

- Not founded by either Paul or Peter
- May have been founded by converts on the Day of Pentecost who responded to Peter's sermon and ended up returning to Rome; or by people who came from churches that had been established in other cities
- Organized as a network of house churches in the city
- We know that it was a fairly large church – the historian Tacitus writes: at the time of Nero's persecution: **a great multitude** were executed
- We know there was a Jewish contingent that was starting to fade in numbers and significance (**2:17**)
- We know there was a Gentile contingent that was growing in numbers and influence (**1:13; 1:5-6**)
- You cannot rightly understand Romans without the dynamic of the tension that existed between the Jews and Gentiles

Michael Bird: The situation in Rome, as far as we can reconstruct it, seems to assume that some kind of friction between Gentile Christians and Jewish Christians has developed. The issues could have been manifold and included in-house debates over Torah, leadership tensions caused by the expulsion and return of Jewish Christians to Rome, and divisions fostered by ethnic prejudices. Paul shows genuine concern that the Roman house churches might splinter along ethnic or theological lines. In light of that, Paul wants to work for the unity of the Roman churches by binding them together around the gospel and his vision of the church as the multi-ethnic people of God.

STRUCTURE:

Three-part structure – Viewing the Righteousness of God from 3 Perspectives:

1. DOCTRINAL: How the Gospel saves and sanctifies the sinner (Chap. 1-8)

Emphasis: Justification by faith

REVELATION OF THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD

2. COVENANTAL: How the Gospel relates to both Jews and Gentiles (Chap. 9-11)

Emphasis: Sovereignty of God in Election

VINDICATION OF THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD

3. PRACTICAL: How the Gospel bears on conduct (Chap. 12-15)

Emphasis: Love and Acceptance

APPLICATION OF THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD

BIG IDEA: GOD’S RIGHTEOUSNESS IS REVEALED IN THE GOSPEL, BRINGING SALVATION, SANCTIFICATION AND SECURITY TO ALL WHO LIVE BY FAITH – BOTH TO JEW AND GENTILE

More of a **theological treatise** with its systematic explanation of the Gospel coupled with practical exhortations rather than a typical letter. More of a formal presentation than a personal letter like 2 Corinthians.

G.G. Findlay: This is St. Paul’s *magnum opus*. Here we see him at his greatest as a constructive thinker and theologian. The Epistle to the Romans is the complete and mature expression of the apostle’s main doctrines, which it unfolds in due order and proportion and combines into an organic whole. For the purposes of systematic theology it is the most important book in the Bible. More than any other, it has determined the course of Christian thought.

Primary Purpose:

To show God’s sovereign plan of salvation and how the Jew and the Gentile fit into that plan of salvation – exhort them to live in harmony with each other

- **Chaps 1-8** – God’s sovereign Plan of Salvation
- **Chaps 9-11** – How both the Jews and the Gentiles fit into that plan (not a dispensational parenthesis) – this is the climax of the book
 - Jews: “I am better than you Gentiles”

- Gentiles: “God is finished with you Jews”
- **Chaps. 12-15** – exhorts them to receive one another and live in harmony

Secondary Purposes:

- To prepare the Roman church for his upcoming visit
- To prepare the Roman church to support his planned mission to Spain.
- To pass along some personal greetings to individuals in Rome

Overriding Passion of the Apostle Paul = **to glorify God**

- **11:36** -- "*For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things, to whom be glory forever. Amen.*"
- **15:6** -- "*That you may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.*"
- **16:27** -- "*To God only wise be glory through Jesus Christ forever. Amen.*"

William Tyndale:

“No man verily can read it too oft or study it too well; for the more it is studied the easier it is, the more it is chewed the pleasanter it is, and the more groundly it is searched the preciouser things are found in it, so great treasure of spiritual things lieth hid therein.”

EXPOSITION:

(1:1-15) INTRODUCTION — GOD’S CALLING COMPELS ALL BELIEVERS TO JOIN HANDS IN PROMOTING THE GOSPEL WORLDWIDE

A. (:1-7) God’s Call Promotes Gospel Ministry –

7 Essentials of God’s Call for the Apostle Paul (and for Your Life)

1. (:1a) Owned by the Master – Sender of the Epistle
2. (:1b) Plugged into Gifted Ministry
3. (:1c-4) Dedicated to the Gospel of God
 - a. Nature of the Gospel
 - b. (:2) Promise of the Gospel
 - c. (:3-4) Focus of the Gospel = Jesus Christ
4. (:5-6) Challenged by Worldwide Vision
 - a. (:5a) Goal of Evangelizing Gentiles of All Nations
 - b. (:5b) Goal of Glorifying Christ
 - c. (:6) Goal of Discipleship to Jesus Christ
5. (:7a) Sourced in God’s Love – Recipients of the Epistle
6. (:7b) Characterized by Holiness
7. (:7c) Dependent on God’s Resources – Greeting of the Epistle

B. (:8-15) Fulfilling God’s Calling –

Compels Us to Reach Out to Others to Produce Abundant Gospel Fruit

(:16-17) THEME VERSES: BOTH JEW AND GENTILE SHOULD UNITE IN BOASTING IN THE GOSPEL OF GOD –

2 REASONS:

1. (:16) Because the Gospel Saves –

It is the Power of God unto Salvation to Everyone Who Believes (to both Jew and Gentile)

2. (:17) Because the Gospel Reveals –

It makes plain the Righteousness of God that is Appropriated by Faith Alone (by both Jew and Gentile)

I. (1-8) THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD ANCHORS GOD’S PLAN OF SALVATION

**DOCTRINAL PERSPECTIVE: How the Gospel saves and sanctifies the sinner
Emphasis: Justification by faith**

A. (1:18 – 3:20) CONDEMNATION -- THERE IS NO ROOM FOR FALSE SECURITY (ON THE PART OF JEW OR GENTILE) BECAUSE THE GOSPEL REVEALS THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD IN CONDEMNING ALL BECAUSE ALL HAVE SINNED

1. (1:18-23) No Excuses for Rejecting God’s Truth –

Rejecting What We Naturally Know about God Leaves Us without Excuse and Always Brings God’s Wrath

2. (1:24-32) The Downward Spiral to Total Depravity and Disintegration of Society –

A Society that Abandons Truth (Their Knowledge about God) Is in Danger of Being Abandoned by God to Gross Sin and Immorality

1) (:24-25) SEXUAL IMPURITY IS GOD’S JUDGMENT FOR IDOLATRY

A. (:24) How Did God Judge Them? Sexual Impurity

“Therefore God gave them over in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, that their bodies might be dishonored among them.”

B. (:25) How Did They Abandon the Truth? Delusion and Idolatry

1. Delusion = Exchanged the Truth of God for a Lie

“For they exchanged the truth of God for a lie,”

2. Idolatry

“and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.”

2)(:26-27) HOMOSEXUALITY IS GOD’S JUDGMENT FOR WORSHIPING THE HUMAN BODY

A. (26a, 27b) How Does God Judge Such a Society? Degradation

*“For this reason God gave them over to degrading passions;”
“and receiving in their own persons the due penalty of their error.”*

B. How Did They Abandon the Truth? Homosexuality

1. (:26b) Women Rejected Natural Sexual Relations for Unnatural
“for their women exchanged the natural function for that which is unnatural,”
2. (:27a) Men Rejected Natural Sexual Relations for Unnatural
“and in the same way also the men abandoned the natural function of the woman and burned in their desire toward one another, men with men committing indecent acts”

3) (:28-32) UNRESTRAINED TOTAL DEPRAVITY IS GOD’S JUDGMENT FOR CASTING OFF THE FEAR OF GOD

A. (:28) How Did God Judge Them? Unrestrained Total Depravity --

“And just as they did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer, God gave them over to a depraved mind, to do those things which are not proper,”

B. (:29-32) How Did They Abandon the Truth? Smorgasbord of Sins

1. (:29-31) Practice of All Kinds of Sin
“being filled with all unrighteousness, wickedness, greed, evil; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malice; they are gossips, 30 slanderers, haters of God, insolent, arrogant, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, 31 without understanding, untrustworthy, unloving, unmerciful;”
2. (:32) Celebration of All Kinds of Sin
“and, although they know the ordinance of God, that those who practice such things are worthy of death, they not only do the same, but also give hearty approval to those who practice them.”

3. (2:1-16) Good Is Never Good Enough . . . Jewishness Provides No Free Pass —
Hypocritical Humanity (Religious Moralizers) Cannot Escape God’s Impartial Righteous Judgment

4. (2:17-29) Religion Never Saved a Soul – Jews Not Exempt from Condemnation – Exposing False Religious Security –
Even the Most Religious Person (Devout Jew) Cannot Escape God’s Righteous Judgment – True Spirituality Is Much More than Possessing Religious Privileges and Practicing Religious Rituals

5. (3:1-8) The Faithful Righteous Judge –
God’s Condemnation of All Men (Even the Most Religious) Does Not Contradict:
– The Value of Spiritual Privileges Or
– The Consistency of God’s Own Character (His Faithfulness and Justice)

6. (3:9-20) Testimony of **Scripture** – **Guilty as Charged** –

The Conclusion: Universal Corruption Leaves All Men without Excuse before God's Condemnation

B. (3:21 – 4:25) JUSTIFICATION -- THERE IS NO ROOM FOR BOASTING BECAUSE GOD'S ONLY PLAN OF SALVATION THROUGHOUT HISTORY HAS BEEN JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH APART FROM WORKS

1. (3:21-31) The Guts of the Gospel – God Manifests his Righteousness in Paying the Price to Justify Sinners by Grace through Faith

1) (:21-26) GOD'S PLAN OF SALVATION FOCUSES ON THE GIFT OF HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS

Alva McClain: This section is the very heart of the book of Romans. For this reason, all Christians ought to memorize **verses 21-26**. If someone should ask me, "Brother McClain, if you could have just six verses out of the Bible, and all the rest be taken away, which would you take?" I would select these six verses. All of God's gospel is there, and in a way found nowhere else in the Word of God.

- **(:21) The Manifestation of the Righteousness of God**
"But now apart from the Law the righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets"
- **(:22) The Appropriation of the Righteousness of God**
"even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe; for there is no distinction;"
- **(:23) The Desperate Need for the Righteousness of God**
"for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,"
- **(:24-25a) The Redemptive Aspects of the Righteousness of God**
 - 1) **(:24a) The Essence of Justification**
"being justified as a gift by His grace"
 - 2) **(:24b) The Essence of Redemption**
"through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus;"
 - 3) **(:25a) The Essence of Propitiation**
"whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith."
- **(:25b-26) The Vindication of the Righteousness of God**
"This was to demonstrate His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed; 26 for the demonstration, I say, of

His righteousness at the present time, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.”

2) (:27-31) GOD’S PLAN OF SALVATION LEAVES NO ROOM FOR A SPIRIT OF PRIDE – A REFUTATION OF 3 PRIDEFUL QUESTIONS

- (:27-28) What about Boasting in Works?

Faith Leaves No Room for Boasting in Our Own Accomplishments

“Where then is boasting? It is excluded.

By what kind of law? Of works? No, but by a law of faith.

28 For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from works of the Law.”

- (:29-30) What about Boasting in Ethnicity?

The Oneness of God Means a Universal, Common Plan of Salvation that Leaves No Room for a Spirit of Exclusivity

“Or is God the God of Jews only? Is He not the God of Gentiles also?

Yes, of Gentiles also, 30 since indeed God who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith is one.”

- (:31) What about the Role of the Law -- Is the Law then Worthless?

The Value of the Law Leaves No Room for a Spirit of Independent Lawlessness – Instead, Justification by Faith Should Motivate Holy Living

“Do we then nullify the Law through faith? May it never be!

On the contrary, we establish the Law.”

2. (4:1-17a) OT Roots to NT Truth – Sola Fide –

Justification by Faith apart from Works Has Always Been God’s Universal Plan of Salvation – The OT Example of Abraham

3. (4:17b-25) Real Faith: OT Example and NT Application –

Receiving God’s Promised Blessing Has Always Required Real Faith – the Kind of Faith that Looks beyond Natural obstacles to Find Assurance in God’s Power and Faithfulness

C. (5:1 – 8:39) SANCTIFICATION AND GLORIFICATION -- THERE IS NO ROOM FOR INSECURITY BECAUSE THE BLESSINGS OF JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH APPLY TO ALL BELIEVERS

1. (5:1-21) Confidence and Assurance for All Believers

2. (6:1-23) Freedom from the Dominion of Sin to Now Serve Righteousness

3. (7:1-25) Freedom from the Dominion of the Law and a New Life in Christ

4. (8:1-39) Freedom from the Dominion of Death and the Sure Hope of Glory

II. (9-11) THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD ENSURES HIS FAITHFULNESS TO HIS HISTORIC COVENANTS.

THERE IS NO ROOM FOR BOASTING BECAUSE GOD'S GREAT PLAN OF SALVATION UNFOLDED THROUGHOUT THE AGES DISPLAYS HIS SOVEREIGN GRACE AND JUDGMENT TO BOTH JEWS AND GENTILES

COVENANTAL PERSPECTIVE: How the Gospel relates to both Jews and Gentiles

Emphasis: Sovereignty of God in Election

(9:1-5) Nobody better equipped than the Apostle Paul to identify both with the Jewish perspective and the Gentile perspective towards God's kingdom agenda;

I am telling the truth in Christ, I am not lying, my conscience bearing me witness in the Holy Spirit, ² that I have great sorrow and unceasing grief in my heart. ³ For I could wish that I myself were accursed, separated from Christ for the sake of my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh, ⁴ who are Israelites, to whom belongs the adoption as sons and the glory and the covenants and the giving of the Law and the temple service and the promises, ⁵ whose are the fathers, and from whom is the Christ according to the flesh, who is over all, God blessed forever. Amen.

look at Paul's heart reflected in **10:1** as well:

Brethren, my heart's desire and my prayer to God for them is for their salvation.

- The Jews were wondering: Is God going to keep His covenant promises made to Abraham and David? Have they been permanently set aside?

- The Gentiles were becoming proud as they displaced the Jewish people in terms of prominence in God's church program – What's so special anymore about being Jewish?

A. (9:1-33) Israel's Past Election – Emphasis on God's Sovereignty

Classic chapter on God's Sovereignty in Election --

There is no injustice with God who has the right to show mercy and compassion to whom He wants and to harden whom He chooses (as demonstrated in the case of Pharaoh). You Jews should not be upset with Gentiles being grafted into the people of faith who are now spiritual children of Abraham.

B. (10:1-21) Israel's Present Rejection – Emphasis on Man's Responsibility

The principle: **vs. 13** – “Whoever will call on the name of the Lord will be save”

The sad reality is that for the most part in this present age, the Jews are characterized as “a disobedient and obstinate people” – **vs. 21**

C. (11:1-32) Israel's Future Reception – Emphasis on God's Faithfulness and Mercy

This is where the great controversy comes in with respect to eschatology:

Israel's rejection cannot be final and permanent – despite their unfaithfulness:

Jer. 31:35-37 *Thus says the LORD, Who gives the sun for light by day, And the fixed order of the moon and the stars for light by night, Who stirs up the sea so that its waves*

roar; The LORD of hosts is His name: ³⁶ "If this fixed order departs From before Me," declares the LORD, "Then the offspring of Israel also shall cease From being a nation before Me forever." ³⁷ Thus says the LORD, "If the heavens above can be measured, And the foundations of the earth searched out below, Then I will also cast off all the offspring of Israel For all that they have done," declares the LORD.

THE CENTRAL QUESTION

Does God still have a future, defined program for ethnic/national Israel in fulfillment of the Abrahamic and Davidic Covenants, or are those promises fulfilled in Christ and His church?

This is the heart of the issue.

Romans 9–11 is Paul's answer to the question:

Has God rejected His people Israel? (Rom. 11:1)

Paul's answer:

"May it never be!"

The disagreement is over **what that means eschatologically – Is there going to be a future 1,000 year millennial kingdom with a distinctly Jewish flavor**

Dispensational View:

Key phrase: "*and so all Israel will be saved*" (11:26)

This is interpreted as **a future national turning of ethnic Israel to Christ** in the end times in preparation for the millennial kingdom.

Opponents used to try to argue for a meaning of "*true Israel*" here in the sense of all of God's elect. But even most amillennialists have come around to admitting that this verse references ethnic Israel – since it follows right after **vs. 25** which makes the clear distinction between Gentiles and Israel. They just deny that there is any eschatological fulfillment of God's covenant promises.

In the Dispensational view, Covenant fulfillment remains national and territorial

The **Abrahamic Covenant** includes:

- physical descendants
- land promises
- national blessing
- worldwide blessing through the seed

The **Davidic Covenant** includes:

- throne
- kingdom
- royal dynasty
- Messiah reigning from David's line

Dispensationalism insists these promises require **literal historical fulfillment for national Israel**, especially in the millennium.

Key principle: **The church shares in blessing but does not inherit Israel's national covenant identity**

Gentiles are **grafted in (Rom. 11:17–24)**, but they do not become Israel.

By contrast, the Amillennial Position:

God's covenant promises find their fulfillment spiritually in Christ rather than literally in the nation of Israel, though many still expect a future conversion of ethnic Israel

- land promises are expanded to reference the new creation of heavens and earth
- throne promises are fulfilled in Christ's spiritual reign from heaven
- Israel fulfilled in what constitutes "true Israel" (**Rom. 9:6**) = the one unified people of God = Christ and His people

How would the Jews of Paul's day viewed those covenant promises? I think the answer is clear from **Acts 1** where the disciples ask Jesus if now is the time for the fulfillment of the kingdom promises.

Here in **Romans 11:29** we have Paul's conclusion to the matter:

"for the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable."

This applies to God's OT covenant promises to national Israel which should not now be reinterpreted in light of the NT.

D. (11:33-36) Theology Bursts Forth in **Doxology** – To God Be the Glory!

God's Great Plan of Salvation Deserves our Praise Because It Glorifies God's Inscrutability, Autonomy and Sovereignty

1. (:33-34) The Inscrutability of God
Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways! ³⁴ For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who became His counselor?

We must approach any study of theology with great humility. Pastor Harmon touched on this topic of the Incomprehensibility of God on Wed. night as we looked at Judges 13. We can never fully understand the ways of God. Both Jews and Gentiles would do well to inject a dose of humility into their perspectives.

2. (:35) The Autonomy of God
Or who has first given to Him that it might be paid back to him again?
3. (:36a) The Sovereignty of God
For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things.

What a marvelous comprehensive statement that keeps our theological perspective God-centric. It is all about God – not about us.

4. (:36b) The Glory to God
To Him be the glory forever. Amen.
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III. (12-15) THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD DEMANDS LOVE AND ACCEPTANCE BETWEEN BELIEVING JEWS AND GENTILES

ALL BELIEVERS MUST HUMBLY SERVE GOD TOGETHER AND LOVE ONE ANOTHER AS MEMBERS OF THE ONE BODY OF CHRIST IN ORDER TO PROMOTE THE WORLDWIDE MESSAGE OF THE GOSPEL

**PRACTICAL PERSPECTIVE: How the Gospel bears on conduct
Emphasis: Love and Acceptance**

(12:1-2) Famous **transition verses** as we begin this practical section of exhortations:

“I urge you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.”

Paul is now going to show how the righteousness of God is to be worked out in the daily lives of those who now possess that righteousness of God. Again, there will be special attention given to the relationships between believing Jews and Gentiles.

Breaking these verses down:

(:1a) **Our Motivation to Serve God**

*“I urge you **therefore**, brethren, by the mercies of God,”*

Everett Harrison: Whereas the heathen are prone to sacrifice in order to obtain mercy, biblical faith teaches that the divine mercy provides the basis for sacrifice as the fitting response.

(:1b) **Our Dedication to Serve God – Characterized by:**

- Commitment
“to present your bodies”
- Consecration
“a living and holy sacrifice,”
- Cherished
“acceptable to God,”

Characteristics of Worthy Sacrifices

- Must be associated with obedience and faith in God’s Word rather than rebellion and rejection of God’s Word
1 Sam. 15:22-23
- Attitude of reverence and fear of the Lord; not flippant or overly casual
- Must be sincere and from the heart; not hypocritical (**Isa. 29:13**)
- Must be purposeful and voluntary and cheerful – not out of sense of grudging obligation (**2 Cor. 9:7**)
- Must be designed to please God rather than to impress men (**Matt. 6:1**)
- Must be from a motivation of Thanks giving rather than trying to earn God’s favor (**Psalm 50:14, 23; Heb. 13:15**)

- Consistency with a Proper Understanding of How to Worship God
“which is your spiritual service of worship.”

(:2a) Our Transformation to Serve God

- Avoid Conformation to This World
“And do not be conformed to this world,”
- Pursue Mind Renewal Leading to Transformation
“but be transformed by the renewing of your mind,”

(:2b) Our Goal to Serve God

- Ability to Discern God’s Will
“that you may prove what the will of God is,”
- Approval of What God Desires
“that which is good and acceptable and perfect.”

This spiritual transformation will impact:

- Relationships in the local church (**chap. 12**)
- Responsibilities to the state (**chap. 13**)
- Restraint when it comes to doubtful things (**chap. 14-15**)

A. (12:1-8) Dedicated Service in Unity through Diversity –
 We Are Called to Serve God through Serving in His Body

B. (12:9-21) Divinely Commanded Love

C. (13:1-7) Submission to Divinely Appointed Civil Authority –
 We Are to Serve God by Submitting to Civil Government which Uses Its Delegated Power to Promote Good and Restrain Evil

D. (13:8-14) Love Must Be the Essence of Christian Conduct Since Christ Will Soon Return –
 We Are to Serve God By Loving One Another While We Still Have Opportunity

E. (14:1-23) Love Means Accepting All Brethren while Restricting Personal Liberty

F. (15:1-13) Spiritual Superglue

Thomas Schreiner: Throughout the letter the relationship between Jews and gentiles has been a major concern of Paul. Now he calls on both to accept one another for the glory of God. The summons to mutual acceptance should not be restricted to the horizontal level. Toleration of one another is mandated because thereby God’s name is glorified, and the primal sin of **Rom. 1:21**, where God is not glorified and thanked, is reversed by the harmony expressed in worship, in the community. . .

By no means, then, is Paul's goal merely to establish sociological peace between Jews and gentiles. The goal of his mission is to bring Jews and gentiles together in **fervent worship and praise of God**. The emphasis on praise provides the clue for the emphasis on hope in **verses 12–13**. Human beings place their hope in what will bring them the greatest happiness in the future. That is, the supreme object of our hope is also the object of our praise and worship. Thus Paul prays that believers will be **filled with hope**, because those who put their hope in God find him to be the delight and joy of their hearts.

(:7-13) THE MINISTRY OF CHRIST BRINGS GLORY TO GOD BY UNITING JEWS AND GENTILES TOGETHER IN PRAISE AND HOPE

1) (:7) PLEA FOR MUTUAL ACCEPTANCE (DESPITE DIFFERENCES) BASED ON THE MINISTRY OF CHRIST

“Wherefore, accept one another, just as Christ also accepted us to the glory of God.”

2) (:8-9a) PURPOSE OF THE MINISTRY OF CHRIST TO BOTH JEWS AND GENTILES

- **(:8) To the Jews – Confirming OT Covenant Promises to the Patriarchs – God's Faithfulness**

“For I say that Christ has become a servant to the circumcision on behalf of the truth of God”

- **(:9a) To the Gentiles – Causing Praise of God's Mercy for Inclusion – God's Mercy**

“and for the Gentiles to glorify God for His mercy;”

3) (:9b-12) PROPHETIC SUPPORT FOR GENTILES BEING INCLUDED IN MUTUAL WORSHIP – 4 OT QUOTATIONS

4) (:13) PRAYER FOR JOY AND PEACE STIMULATING ABUNDANT HOPE

“Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.”

The ability to experience the blessings of the gospel, to experience true unity in the church, depends upon the work of God in us. It's not something that comes to us naturally. The hope that we have doesn't develop naturally within us. It comes from the power of the Holy Spirit.

(15:14 – 16:27) CLOSING GREETINGS/WARNINGS — FELLOWSHIP IN THE LORD BINDS BELIEVERS TOGETHER IN PROMOTING THE GOSPEL WORLDWIDE WHILE GUARDING AGAINST ATTACK AND DECEPTION

A. (15:14-21) Paul's Mission and Travel Plans

B. (16:1-16) Commendation and Multiple Greetings

C. (16:17-23) Closing Warning and Final Greetings

(16:25-27) Final Doxology of Celebration of God's Glory

John Piper sums up what our response to all of this should be:

“We should be deeply sobered by the awful severity of God; humbled to the dust by the absoluteness of our dependence on His unconditional mercy; and irresistibly allured by the infinite treasury of his glory ready to be revealed to the vessels of glory. Thus we will be moved to forsake all confidence in human distinctions or achievements and we will entrust ourselves to mercy alone. In the hope of glory we will extend this mercy to others that they may see our good deeds and give glory to our Father in heaven.”

John Gill: Good summary:

“The chief design of this epistle is to set in a clear light the doctrine of justification: showing against the Gentiles, that it is not by the light of nature, and works done in obedience to that, and against the Jews, that it was not by the law of Moses, and the deeds of that; which he clearly evinces, by observing the sinful and wretched estate both of Jews and Gentiles: but that it is by the righteousness of Christ imputed through the grace of God, and received by faith; the effects of which are peace and joy in the soul, and holiness in the life and conversation: he gives an account of the justified ones, as that they are not without sin, which he illustrates by his own experience and case; and yet are possessed of various privileges, as freedom from condemnation, the blessing of adoption, and a right to the heavenly inheritance; he treats in it concerning predestination, the calling of the Gentiles, and the rejection of the Jews; and exhorts to the various duties incumbent on the saints, with respect to one another, and to the world, to duties of a moral and civil nature, and the use of things indifferent; and closes it with the salutations of divers persons.”