

Four Things You Need to Know From Romans (So Far)
Romans 1-8
#36th in a Series on Paul's Letter to the Romans
Faith Community Church – June 252006

Objective: *To review the major ideas in Romans 1-8, so that our congregation can a) be reminded of the heart of the Gospel, b) re-evaluate their ongoing commitment to follow Christ by forsaking sin, and c) prepare our thinking for what comes in Romans 9-16.*

Introduction

Please finish this sentence: “You give us 22 minutes and”

We have near- instant access to news as it happens. What events are most important? Each week hundreds, if not thousands, of new books, movies, and cd's are released. How do you know what's good? Major league baseball will play close to 2500 games this season. How can you keep up with all of them?

In 22 minutes, KYW – and other news stations – claim that they can give you a summary of major events around the world, in our region, in business, in weather and in sports.

You can listen on the internet and in music stores to sound clips of almost any music CD. You can buy condensed copies of major best sellers on tape or CD. Almost every newspaper contains a quick summary of movies that are playing in the theaters.

And for the sports fan, there are programs like ESPN's SportsCenter or Baseball Tonight, where each game is summarized and you see the most significant plays that took place.

Highlights. A great deal of our information comes to us by means of highlights.

There are two problems that I can think of with highlights. One is that someone else is choosing what they think we need to hear, see and think. The other is that if highlights are all we have, our knowledge and understanding of anything is at best superficial. But on the whole these bite-sized bits of information can be very helpful, especially in giving us a view of the big picture.

As we're moving from the first half of Romans into the second half of the book, I was thinking this week, “What are the major ideas that Paul has written about?” “What should we be sure that we have grasped from these chapters, and why?” So before we leave this section of Romans, let's take a look back at the primary themes. If you get these four ideas, you won't necessarily master Romans, but you will have a solid idea of what the book is about to this point.

What You Need to Know From Romans

1. All people are alienated from God (1-3).
 - a. What has caused this alienation? Read Romans 1:18-23
 - i. We dishonor God.
 - ii. We disobey God.
 - b. We'd like to be able to compensate somehow, and many people try to compensate in one of two ways:
 - i. Superior moral performance – at least I don't do . . .
 - ii. Reliance on our religiosity
 - c. But for most of the first three chapters, Paul argues that we are all guilty of sin and as a result, all are alienated from God. This is not a discussion of degree (how good or bad people are), but of condition.
 - d. The question we need to ask is: *Have I acknowledged that I have both dishonored and disobeyed God and as a result am guilty before Him?*

2. We are made right with God through faith (3-5).
 - a. The key theme in these chapters is justification.
 - i. In the book that a number of you purchased when we began this series on Romans in January of 2005 called *5 Minute Theologian* (there's highlights again!), the author defines justification in this way: *Justification is God's declaration that we are righteous in his sight. The Greek legal word dikaios means "justify," the opposite of "condemn."*
 - ii. He goes on to say that: *Justification is more than forgiveness, which would make us only neutral in God's eyes; it declares us righteous as well. The basis for this divine pronouncement is God's placing our punishment on Christ and imputing Christ's righteousness to us. Because Christ's righteousness is really credited to us, justification is not a word game whereby God pretends we're something we're not. God did not ignore His righteous demands, but met them in Christ.*¹
 - iii. We find this taught clearly in Romans 3:21-25a.
 - b. In chapters 3-5, Paul argues two major ideas relating to justification:
 - i. We cannot be justified by virtue of our own behavior.
 - ii. We can only be justified as a result of faith in the sacrifice of Christ as the only acceptable payment for sin.
 - c. Therefore, the question we need to ask is this: *Have I put my faith in Christ alone for the forgiveness of my sin?*

3. Justified people are changed people and need to live out that change (6-8).
 - a. They key idea of this section is sanctification. What is that? Sanctification refers to the process of making us to be like Jesus. It is something that God is doing in the lives of those who have been justified.
 - b. Paul uses the image of slavery in these chapters to describe what we were and what we are. Read Romans 6:15-19.

¹ Cornish: *5 Minute Theologian*. 219-220.

- c. Then, after recognizing the reality that it is a struggle to live as a slave to righteousness, Paul tells us it is possible because of the power of the Holy Spirit in us. Read Romans 8:1-11.
 - d. This should lead us to ask this question: *Do I view this obligation to live as a servant of righteousness as seriously as I should?*
4. Finally, God's comprehensive plan for our lives can not and will not fail (8).
- a. Our present pain is a part of his master plan for our lives.
 - b. Our prospect is future glory (sharing the presence of God and the perfection that exceeds what was enjoyed when God first created the world).
 - c. These things are true because God has decreed our future. Read Romans 8:28-31.
 - d. As a result, ask yourself this question: *To what extent does knowing God's plan for me affect the way I live my life?*

Responding to the Message of Romans (so far)

I want us to know Romans, so make sure you have these four ideas nailed down. But I also want us to live Romans. So, do you understand your condition before God without Christ? Have you repented of your sin and trusted in Christ? Is the sincerity of your repentance shown in the way you are progressively rejecting sin and embracing godliness? And as you look at God's purpose for your life, are you heading in the same direction?