

The Heart of Romans

June 01, 2008

Open my eyes that I may see wonderful things in your law.

Psalms 119:18

Agenda

- ◉ Welcome and introductions
- ◉ A plan for the course
- ◉ Some initial thoughts on Romans
- ◉ Some thoughts on Bible study

A (Flexible) Plan for the Course

June	July	August
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Intro

Overview

Chapter 5

Chapter 6

Chapter 7

Chapter 8

Chapter 12

Summary

We may lose a session or two due to missionary visits

Some Particulars on Romans

- **What:** In Romans we have the advent of a new literary form in the Bible: an epistle
- **When:** In the late AD 50s, possibly spring AD 58, just before leaving for Jerusalem (15:25)
- **Who:** From Paul, apostle to the Gentiles (1:1) to the saints in Rome (1:7)
- **Where:** Greece, possibly Corinth
- **Why:** To declare the righteousness of God



The Big Ideas In Romans

1. God's Wrath Against Mankind
2. God's Righteous Judgment
3. Man's Sin; Righteousness Through Faith
4. Justification By Faith
5. Justification; The Effects of the Fall
6. Sanctification: How & Why to Live A Holy Life
7. Dead to the Law; Struggling With Sin
8. Victory In Jesus
9. God's Sovereign Choice
10. Israel's Unbelief
11. The Remnant of Israel
12. Living Sacrifices; Love
13. Submission to Authorities; Love
14. The Weaker Brother
15. Weak & Strong; Paul's Ministry to the Gentiles
16. Closing Greetings

Handling the Word of Truth

Various Things We Can Do With The Bible

- We can ***read and interpret*** it for what it says and what it means
- We can ***draw inferences*** as to what it implies
- We can ***make application*** to particular situations in our lives
- We can ***speculate*** about what it might mean

Some General Principles of Bible Study

- Read the Bible as you would read any other book
 - Do use sanctified common sense
 - Don't assume the authors are unintelligent
 - Do read it with an open mind
- Don't necessarily expect the Bible to agree with your prejudices
 - We come to the Bible to be changed
 - We don't come to the Bible to pass judgment on it
- Interpret the Bible literally unless the context makes it clear the meaning is figurative
- Read the Bible carefully!
 - Did the Israelites cross the Red Sea during the day or at night? (Ex 14)
 - Do the angels rejoice when a sinner repents? (Lk 15:10)

Scripture Instructs Us In General Principles and Specific Examples

Scripture frequently alludes to the Law of the Harvest

- *As I have observed, those who plow evil and those who sow trouble reap it. (Job 4:8)*
- *By their fruit you will recognize them. Do people pick grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? (Matthew 7:16)*
- *Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. (2 Cor. 9:6)*
- *Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life. (Galatians 6:7-8)*

Examples of Reaping and Sowing

- *Jacob deceived Isaac as to the birth order of he and his brother*
- *Jacob was in turn deceived as to the birth order of Rachel and Leah*
- *Jacob deceived his father in a ruse involving a goat (for food & skin)*
- *Jacob was deceived by his sons in a ruse involving a goat (for blood)*
- *Pharaoh had the sons of the Hebrews killed (Ex 1:22)*
- *Pharaoh saw his son die at the hand of God (Ex 11:5, 12:29; cf. 4:22-23)*
- *Ahab had Naboth slain so that the dogs licked up his blood (1Ki 21:19)*
- *Ahab was killed so that the dogs licked up his blood (1Ki 22:38)*
- *Saul was present at the stoning of Stephen, giving approval to his death (Acts 7:57-8:1a)*
- *Paul was stoned and left for dead at Lystra (Acts 14:19)*

A Quick Study in Inference

The Calculus of Double Blessing in the Life of Job

When Job was blessed he had

- 7,000 sheep
- 3,000 camels
- 500 yoke of oxen
- 500 donkeys
- 7 sons
- 3 daughters

– Job 1:2-3

When Job was doubly blessed he had

- 14,000 sheep
- 6,000 camels
- 1,000 yoke of oxen
- 1,000 donkeys
- 7 sons
- 3 daughters

– Job 42:12-13

*Now about the dead rising--have you not read in the book of Moses, in the account of the bush, how God said to him, 'I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob'? He is not the God of the dead, but of the living. You are badly mistaken! **Mark 12:26-27***

Should Bible Study Be Practical?

*As the rain and the snow
come down from heaven,
and do not return to it
without watering the earth
and making it bud and flourish,
so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater,
so is my word that goes out from my mouth:
It will not return to me empty,
but will accomplish what I desire
and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.
Isaiah 55:10-11*

God guarantees results!

Some Observations

- God's economy of words implies every word in the Bible is important (Pr 30:5; Mt 4:4)
- Nature contains the pictures that are missing from the Bible (Ps 19)
 - This implies we must have a creationist worldview to read the Bible for all it's worth
 - One of God's purposes in creation is to illustrate truth
- That God did not organize the Bible like an encyclopedia implies that He intends for us to read all of it
- God's truths are often in tension with one another
- God's truths are spiritually discerned (1Co 2:14)
- Satan desires to keep people from understanding the Word of God (2Co 4:4)
- Spiritual warfare is fought in the realm of the mind (2Co 10:4-5)
- We must learn to think like Christians (Ro 12:2)
- **We should be cautious about declaring that particular topics are not in the Bible!**

Speaking of Things That Actually Are In the Bible

Burial or Cremation?

- Burial of the dead is presented as normative in Scripture, being mentioned about 150 times
- Throughout Scripture (over two dozen times), cremation and other means of disposing of a body speak either of judgment or pagan worship, but never of a proper means of handling the body of a deceased believer
- Burial gives a testimony of faith in the resurrection, suggesting that our bodies are seeds to be sown (1Co 15:35-44)

Bonus Material

Seven Keys to Understanding Scripture¹

1. Look for the author's intended meaning
 - There is a meaning in the text
 - God is the ultimate Author of the Bible
2. Read a passage in context
 - We must get a grasp of the whole in order to understand the parts
 - The context is the passage, the book and ultimately the whole Bible
 - There is historical and cultural context (Point 4)
 - We should cultivate a broad sense of Biblical literacy (Point 7)

¹Adapted from Tremper Longman III, *Seven Keys to Understanding Scripture*, Discipleship Journal, Issue 89, 14 Sep/Oct 1995, pp. 48-52.

Seven Keys to Understanding Scripture¹

3. Identify the genre of the passage you are reading
 - History, poetry, prophecy, proverb, gospel, parable, epistles, apocalypse
4. Consider the historical and cultural background of the Bible
 - We must learn to read the writings of the Bible as its contemporaries would
 - Commentaries, books on Bible history and culture are useful

Seven Keys to Understanding Scripture¹

5. Consider the grammar and structure within the passage
 - We must read a passage closely and in detail
 - Look at conjunctions, tenses, adjectives and other indications of relationships between words and clauses
 - We can make use of original language (Hebrew and Greek) tools
6. Interpret experience in the light of Scripture, not Scripture in the light of experience
 - We are prone to allowing our prejudices shape our interpretation of Scripture, rather than the other way around
 - e.g. tongues for today or not?
 - e.g. seeking God's will when I've already made up my mind
 - e.g. viewing Scripture in light of our culture/society/economic system

Seven Keys to Understanding Scripture¹

7. Always seek the full counsel of Scripture
 - We should never read Scripture in isolation from the whole Bible
 - While the Bible is an anthology of many books, it is also One Book
 - While it has many stories to tell, they all contribute to a Single Story
 - If one passage seems to teach something but another passage clearly teaches something else, we must understand the former in terms of the latter

In Addition to the Seven Keys¹

- Read the Bible in community
 - Use commentaries and other resources
 - Join a Bible study group
 - Don't be a lone ranger
- Bathe your Scripture reading in prayer
 - Pray generally for illumination as you read
 - Pray specifically over difficult passages
 - Without the Holy Spirit we cannot understand God's Word (1Co 2:6-16)

¹Adapted from Tremper Longman III, *Seven Keys to Understanding Scripture*, Discipleship Journal, Issue 89, 18 Sep/Oct 1995, pp. 48-52.