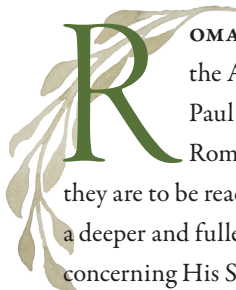


# The Transformation of the Gospel

*By John H. Munro*



ROMANS IS THE BRILLIANT EXPOSITION OF THE GOSPEL by the Apostle Paul. Writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Paul is giving us “the purest Gospel” in this magnificent letter to the Romans. While the 16 chapters can be quickly read in one sitting, they are to be read, re-read, prayed over, and reflected upon so that we may have a deeper and fuller understanding of this good news which comes from God concerning His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. No wonder it has been described as one of the greatest letters ever written! If I had to choose two books from the New Testament, I think my choices would be Romans and John’s Gospel. But I am glad I don’t have to make that choice, as all 66 books of the Bible are inspired by God and “profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work” (2 Timothy 3:16–17).

## PROFOUND TRUTHS

Some of the first verses I memorized were from the book of Romans. I think of these core truths:

*For I am not ashamed of the Gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes (Romans 1:16).*

*For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23).*

*But God shows His love for us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us (Romans 5:8).*

*For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord (Romans 6:23).*

*There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus (Romans 8:1).*

*I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect (Romans 12:1–2).*

So in some sense, I have lived in the book of the Romans all of my life, but my understanding of the simple but profound truths of the Gospel continue to deepen. It is certainly a book I never tire of, and I trust your personal study of its pages is resulting in a fruitful harvest.

## THE HEART AND HOPE OF THE GOSPEL

In chapters 1–4, Paul has presented to us the heart of the Gospel. He establishes that every single person, irrespective of their background or conduct, is a guilty sinner before a holy God. Then he explains God’s way of salvation: justification by faith.

Then in chapters 5–8, Paul deals with the hope of the Gospel. These chapters are full of rich truths regarding the effects and results of our justification. Those who are justified by faith can never be the same again. We have peace with God — freedom from the power of sin and the power of the Law. We are indwelt by the Spirit who assures us of our eternal salvation. There is nothing in the whole universe which can separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Paul, in presenting the hope of the Gospel, is reminding us that things will never be the same again during all of life and indeed for all of eternity. This is all of the

grace of God. Praise His name that there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus!

## THE DEFENSE OF THE GOSPEL

In chapters 9–11, Paul gives a masterful defense of the Gospel. He is writing to the Christians at Rome where there were converted Gentiles as well as converted Jews. While Paul had said that the Gospel came first “to the Jew” (1:16), some of his thoughts in Romans could be interpreted that now that we are no longer under the Law, God has turned his back on Israel as they have rejected the Messiah. Has God forgotten His ancient people? Has the Church replaced Israel? Paul is clearly passionate in his love for Israel and his desire for them to come to saving faith in the Messiah. He explains that “the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable” (11:29), and that while Gentiles have come into the place of blessing, this in no way excludes Israel. In fact, the nation has a glorious future which will overflow in blessings to the Gentiles! These three chapters are not the easiest in the letter, but they are an outstanding vindication of the purposes of God in relation to Jew and Gentile. “For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be glory forever. Amen” (11:36).

## THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE GOSPEL

Now in chapters 12–16, Paul explains the transformation of the Gospel in the lives of authentic followers of Jesus Christ. Yes, the Gospel does make a difference! At the beginning of chapter 12, Paul urgently calls for a consecration to God from those who have been justified by faith. Clearly, there is to be a radical difference; those saved by God’s grace are not to be conformed to the world, but rather they are to be transformed.

It is Paul’s usual pattern to lay the doctrinal foundation in his letters and then give ethical exhortations. We see this same pattern in Ephesians and Colossians:

*I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called (Ephesians 4:1).*

*Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry (Colossians 3:5).*

What a difference this would make in our society, if we obeyed Paul's exhortations in these closing chapters of Romans. Our world is weary of words, and so Christ-followers must not only proclaim Christ but also display Him in their lives.

This transformation impacts all of life. After laying the foundation in Romans 12:1–2, Paul deals with the transformation as it impacts our relationships with our fellow believers. Then he turns to deal with the unbelieving world, before returning to the necessity of using the freedom believers have in Christ. They are not to please themselves, but they are always to edify others, particularly those who are weaker in the faith.

Paul concludes by outlining some of his strategy for missions and his deep desire to visit the center of the Roman Empire. The epistle closes with a moving encouragement by Paul to many of his fellow believers and a rich doxology:

*Now to him who is able to strengthen you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery that was kept secret for long ages but has now been disclosed and through the prophetic writings has been made known to all nations, according to the command of the eternal God, to bring about the obedience of faith — to the only wise God be glory forevermore through Jesus Christ! Amen (Romans 16:25–27).* 🌿

## OUTLINE

# The Book of Romans

### THE HEART OF THE GOSPEL: CHAPTERS 1–4

#### Introduction (1:1–17)

- A. Greetings from Paul (1:1–7)
- B. Paul and the Romans (1:8–15)
- C. Theme of Romans (1:16–17)

#### The Heart of the Gospel (1:18–4:25)

- A. Condemnation: The Universal Reign of Sin (1:18–3:20)
  - 1. Condemnation of the Ungodly (1:18–32)
  - 2. Condemnation of the Moralist (2:1–16)
  - 3. Condemnation of the Jew (2:17–3:8)
  - 4. Condemnation of the Whole World (3:9–20)
- B. Justification: By Faith Alone (3:21–4:25)
  - 1. Explanation of Justification by Faith Alone (3:21–31)
  - 2. Illustration of Justification by Faith Alone (4:1–25)

### THE HOPE OF THE GOSPEL: CHAPTERS 5–8

- A. Reconciliation with God (Chapter 5)
  - 1. Peace with God (5:1–11)
  - 2. Grace Greater than Sin and Death (5:12–21)
- B. Sanctification (Chapters 6–8)
  - 1. Freedom from the Slavery of Sin (6:1–14)
  - 2. Slaves of God (6:15–23)
  - 3. Freedom from the Law (7:1–6)
  - 4. Conflict with the Law and Sin (7:7–25)
  - 5. Freedom from the Condemnation of Sin and Death (8:1–11)
  - 6. Life in the Spirit Gives Assurance of Victory (8:12–29)
  - 7. The Triumph of the Hope of the Gospel (8:30–39)

## THE DEFENSE OF THE GOSPEL: CHAPTERS 9–11

- A. Israel's Present Rejection of the Messiah (9:1–29)
- B. Israel Responsible for Its Present Rejection of the Messiah (9:30–10:13)
- C. The Remedy for and the Results of Israel's Rejection (10:14–21)
- D. Israel's Present Rejection of the Messiah Is Not Complete (11:1–10)
- E. Israel's Present Rejection of the Messiah Is Not Final (11:11–24)
- F. Israel's Restoration Is Certain (11:25–32)
- G. God Is to be Praised for His Wisdom and Knowledge (11:33–36)

## THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE GOSPEL: CHAPTERS 12–16

- A. The Transformation of the Gospel Impacts Our Relationships with Fellow Believers (12:1–13)
  - 1. The Foundation of Personal Consecration (12:1–2)
  - 2. Humility and Serving Others (12:3–8)
  - 3. The Transformation of Love (12:9–13)
- B. The Transformation in the World (12:14–13:14)
  - 1. In Relationship to Hostile Unbelievers (12:14–21)
  - 2. In Relationship to the State (13:1–7)
  - 3. Loving Our Neighbors (13:8–10)
  - 4. Separation from the Darkness (13:11–14)
- C. The Transformation of Christ-followers in Relationship to the Weak and the Strong (Chapters 14 & 15)
  - 1. Impacting Weak Believers (14:1–12)
  - 2. Impacting Strong Believers (14:13–23)
  - 3. Accepting Others (15:1–13)
- D. Paul's Strategy and Plans (15:14–33)
  - 1. Paul's Strategy for Missions (15:14–21)
  - 2. Paul's Desire to Visit Rome (15:22–33)
- E. Conclusion (16:1–27)
  - 1. Greetings by Paul to Friends (16:1–16)
  - 2. Warnings and Doxology (16:17–27)