

SOUND DOCTRINE FOR SPIRITUAL SUCCESS – Studies in Romans: Introduction

Paul's epistle to the Christians in Rome can rightly be called the New Testament's guide to spiritually successful living. No other Biblical document contains a more thorough and comprehensive overview of how we should live as New Covenant Christians. From this one epistle we gain a clear understanding of God's plan of salvation for a lost and fallen humanity. In addition, the foundation for how our salvation can be applied in our everyday life is set forth in a manner that is simple yet profound; keeping us free from the self-righteous legalism which can so easily entrap any follower of our Savior.

After reading this incredible document, no one can ever claim to be ignorant of the distinction between Israel and the Church, as well as God's plan for both His chosen nation and the bride of Christ. No one can remain confused about the proper relationship between the Christian and human government, once they find themselves under the influence of Paul's admonition in regard to this controversial matter. Struggling with a false sense of guilt as a result of being manipulated by someone else's conscience, when it comes to those grey areas of life? Look no further than Paul's instruction in this letter.

The general consensus among Biblical scholars is that the apostle Paul wrote this epistle from Corinth, at the end of his third missionary journey, circa AD 57-58. It was most likely delivered by Phoebe, indicated in Romans 16:1-2. One unusual aspect of this correspondence is that it is lacking in personal issues, in contrast to Paul's other letters to the churches. That unique feature implies the apostle's lack of direct involvement in the planting, development and growth of this work of God in Rome. Based on Acts 2:10, it is possible and even likely, that visitors from Rome to Jerusalem during Pentecost, came to know Christ as Savior and Lord. Upon their return home, they planted the seeds of what would become the church, or churches, in the capital of the Roman Empire. In turn, this gave Paul the opportunity for writing a broad-based theological treatise, expanding upon sound doctrine in a manner more exhaustive than his other writings.

If there is one overarching lesson to be learned from what God has provided for us in this portion of His Word, it is this. The potential for spiritual success resides within every individual who has made that decision of faith in Jesus Christ as their personal Savior and Lord. The realization of that potential becomes an ongoing challenge for all of us, in learning sound doctrine, and by the grace of God, living it out in our everyday lives. My goal in our journey through Romans will be to motivate everyone toward living up to such a high standard established for us in this epistle.

If you are reading this introduction as someone who has never made the decision to trust Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, it's not too late to do so. The requirement for doing so is surprisingly simple and straightforward. It involves a change of mind and an act of faith. You must be willing to have a change of mind in regard to your personal self-awareness, in harmony with how God sees you, as a sinner in need of a Savior. In addition, you must be willing to re-evaluate what you consider to be the greatest need in your life right now, in conjunction with what the Bible says about that greatest need. It isn't getting a better job, so that you can make more money, so that you can live in a bigger house and drive a better car. Time and time again, the Bible tells us that the greatest need of every person's life is: TO BE FORGIVEN OF OUR SIN. Finally, we need to have a change of mind about who Jesus Christ is, as God incarnate, God the Son who became God the man, and the redemption which He accomplished for us all. Once that three-fold change of mind has occurred within you, then it is simply a matter of putting your trust in Christ as Savior and Lord, for the forgiveness of your sin and the beginning of a new everyday life with Him.