

Romans Overview

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The Scriptures are able to make us wise unto salvation

Paul told Timothy, “And that **from a child** thou hast known **the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation** through faith which is in Christ Jesus” (2Ti 3:15). Of course Timothy, whose mother was Jewish, grew up knowing only the Old Testament Scriptures while we have a greater advantage of all the Scriptures. But the point is that it’s not any church, denomination, minister, or theological system but the correct understanding of the Scriptures that gives us the wisdom we need to be saved.

If we’re too busy and distracted to study the Scriptures in sincere objective search for the truth, then we’ll perish. That’s certainly blunt but the truth and needs to be said. This world, including its “Christian” churches, isn’t trying to help us find the truth but working relentlessly to deceive and confuse us. If we keep waiting to search for the truth on our own, we likely won’t have enough time to find it. My own dear mother didn’t start searching for the truth until the last few months of her life while she was dying of cancer. I honestly don’t know that she found it.

I’m very blessed to have had over 30 years to diligently study the Scriptures in search for the truth. And the most important thing I’ve learned is that Jesus Christ is always right and anyone disagreeing with Him is absolutely wrong! The best thing I can do is be on His side in agreement with Him regardless of what anyone else is saying or teaching. It matters not what billions of people say but only what Jesus Christ said. When it comes to salvation, safety and assurance isn’t in numbers of people but in one person.

Here a little, there a little

Isaiah prophesied about the Day of Pentecost accompanied with the sign of tongues, “For precept *must be* upon precept, **precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, *and* there a little**: For with stammering lips and **another tongue** will he speak to this people” (Isa 28:10-11). On that day, Peter preached a sermon which was indeed “precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, *and* there a little.” He quoted certain lines of text from the writings of Joel and David to prove beyond reasonable doubt that Jesus of Nazareth is indeed the Lord and Messiah of God’s people, “Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ” (Act 2:36). By quoting a little here and a little there, and building one precept upon another precept, he convinced and convicted the hearts of his hearers, “Now when they heard *this*, they were **pricked in their heart**” (Act 2:37). And about 3,000 Jewish men repented and submitted to Jesus Christ that day. They couldn’t legitimately deny the logical and reasonable case Peter made for Jesus Christ from the Scriptures. Therefore, any Jewish people that reject Him are left without excuse. They’re trapped and taken by the logical case, “But the word of the LORD was unto them precept upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, *and* there a little; that they might go, and **fall backward, and be broken, and snared, and taken**” (Isa 28:13).

God authored the Old Testament Scriptures in various genres such as directive, historic, instructive, melodic, poetic, prophetic, proverbial, and even romantic. But on the Day of Pentecost He introduced a new way of communicating to them, “precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, *and* there a little.” The apostles would now begin preaching evangelistic sermons and writing letters in which they would build airtight logical arguments from the Scriptures to leave God’s people without excuse. Paul’s letter to the Romans is the greatest dissertation ever penned of building one precept from the Scriptures upon another, one line upon another line, and with a little here and a little there.

Hermeneutics, man-made rules for interpreting the Scriptures, isn’t God’s way. It’s foolish to think we can put God’s infinite wisdom in such a box. Hermeneutics and apologetics are simply means by which men can impose their interpretations and doctrines upon people. Although some basic principles and methods can be helpful, ultimately they’re harmful. They give the appearance of championing objectivity since everyone agrees to submit to the same rules. But the “ministers,” however, don’t follow their own rules. They’re very clever and skilled at using hermeneutics to argue their doctrines while dismissing anything else as “bad hermeneutics.”

God’s way, on the other hand, is for us to arrive at the truth by attaining harmony across all of Scripture through logical arguments and conclusions built upon valid assumptions. Truth is reality; it’s the actual state of existence; it’s the way things really are. Truth always comports with sound logic and reason. And truth simply makes the most sense. Inconsistencies, absurdities, and confusion are indicators that what’s being taught isn’t true. Truth is generally simple and easy to understand. Complex and sophisticated arguments using big words and theological jargon are red flags that what’s being taught isn’t true. Jesus’ teaching with parables about farming, feasts, and fishing testifies to the simplicity of truth.

The truth is in Jesus

The truth is found only in Jesus Christ: “grace and truth came by Jesus Christ” (Jhn 1:17); “And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (Jhn 8:32); “And if I say the truth, why do ye not believe me?” (Jhn 8:46); “I am the way, the truth, and the life” (Jhn 14:6); “Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice” (Jhn 18:37); “the truth is in Jesus” (Eph 4:21).

The teaching and preaching of Jesus Christ is the truth. It’s the required starting point and basis for knowing God, ourselves, and everything else in life. None of us are the arbiters of the truth and neither is any system of theology. Jesus Christ has the absolute power and authority to decide all matters of dispute. What He says is the final word.

The foundation upon which we know and understand the truth is the Old Testament Scriptures by the prophets and the New Testament Scriptures by the apostles, with Jesus Christ Himself being the preeminent “stone” in the foundation, “And are built upon **the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ** himself being the **chief corner stone**” (Eph 2:20). Christ’s teaching is the rubric by which we’re able to understand all of Scripture. We can only understand the Old Testament writings of the prophets and the New Testament writings of the apostles by starting with the teaching of Jesus Christ as our basis. Christ’s teaching is the beginning necessity like milk is for babies, “For every one that useth **milk** is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is **a babe**. But **strong meat** belongeth to them that are of **full age**, *even* those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil. Therefore leaving **the principles of**

the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto **perfection [maturity]**" (Heb 5:13-14,6:1). Babies certainly can't handle solid food. We must be nourished with the "milk" of Christ's teaching to grow and mature in our understanding and thinking before we're able to "digest" anything else.

The very first words of Scripture narrating the creation, "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. And the earth was without form, and void; and **darkness was upon the face of the deep**. And the Spirit [*breath*] of God moved upon the face of the waters. **And God said, Let there be light: and there was light.**" (Gen 1:1-3), were also prophetic of the ministry of Jesus Christ. God showed from the beginning what the spiritual condition of mankind would be 4,000 years later—darkness would be upon the hearts and minds of humanity but the Creator Himself would come into the world and shine the "light" of the truth by His preaching and teaching. This is what John meant by "**All things were made by him**; and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life; and the life was the light of men. **And the light shineth in darkness**; and the darkness comprehended it not." (Jhn 1:3-5). And not only the whole world, but even God's own people had become engulfed in deep darkness.

Paul said the same as John, "lest **the light** of the glorious **gospel of Christ**, who is the image of God, should **shine unto them** ... For God, who commanded **the light to shine out of darkness**" (2Co 4:4-6). God shining light into darkness in the beginning was prophetic of Christ preaching the "light" of His gospel message into the "dark" hearts and minds of humanity.

Our hearts and minds are "dark" without the understanding and knowledge of the truth taught by Jesus Christ, "Having the **understanding** darkened, being **alienated from the life of God** through the **ignorance** that is in them, because of **the blindness of their heart** ... But ye have not so **learned Christ**; If so be that ye have **heard him**, and have been **taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus**" (Eph 4:18-21). Without hearing and understanding the truth Christ taught, we're alienated from God and therefore without any hope of eternal life. Our only hope is to learn from Christ—to hear and understand His teaching, then submit to Him in obedience.

The gospel message Jesus Christ preached

God foretold through Moses, "**I will raise them up a Prophet** from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will **put my words in his mouth**; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him" (Deu 18:19). He would send His Son into this world in the ministry of a Prophet to speak everything and only what He was sent to speak. He declared: "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me" (4:34); "I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me" (5:30); "not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me" (6:38); "My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me" (7:16); "as my Father hath taught me, I speak these things" (8:28); "I speak that which I have seen with my Father" (8:38); "I do always those things that please him" (8:29); "I and *my* Father are one" (10:30); "the Father *is* in me, and I in him" (10:38); "For I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak" (12:49); "he that hath seen me hath seen the Father ... I am in the Father, and the Father in me? the words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself" (14:9,10); "I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me" (17:8); "thou, Father, *art* in me, and I in thee ... we are one" (17:21,22).

The gospel is the message Jesus Christ Himself preached and taught in His short ministry of three or four years. His twelve apostles, with Paul replacing Judas, were personally taught His gospel. Therefore, the gospel message they preached and taught agrees completely with His. There's no difference, disagreement, or

disconnect in the content of their messages whatsoever. And since they learned from Him, we must use His gospel message as our prescript for understanding everything they taught.

John wrote, “Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son.” (2Jo 1:9). Those that transgress—teach something different than what Christ taught, or depart from what they once taught—don’t have God. But those that abide by His teaching have both God the Father and His Son Jesus Christ. John also wrote, “**We are of God**: he that knoweth God **heareth us**; he that is not of God **heareth not us**. Hereby know we the spirit [*breath*] of **truth**, and the spirit [*breath*] of **error**.” (1Jo 4:6). The certainty of truth and error is the teaching of the apostles personally instructed by Jesus Christ.

Christ Himself said to all seven of the churches in Asia, “He that **hath an ear, let him hear** what the Spirit [*breath*] saith unto the churches” (Rev 2:7,11,17,29, 3:6,13,22). Essentially, He was saying, “If you hear anything, you had better listen to what I’m telling you!” To have “ears to hear” (Mat 13:9; Mar 4:9; Luk 8:8) is to use our ears for hearing what’s most important—the teaching of Jesus Christ. After all, if we won’t hear what’s most important, what are our ears really good for? What Christ taught is our only hope. If we won’t listen to Him, we’re completely hopeless.

Paul’s letter to the Romans

Paul’s letter to the Romans is a detailed explanation of the gospel message Jesus Christ Himself preached because he stated this at its beginning and ending, “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ” (1:16), “the preaching of Jesus Christ” (16:25). The gospel is the message Jesus Christ was sent into this world to preach and the entire letter of Romans expounds His gospel.

Romans embodies the principle of “precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, *and* there a little” more than any other writing in Scripture. Paul didn’t begin this letter with a list of hermeneutical rules by which everyone would first concede. Rather, throughout his letter he quoted voluminously from the Scriptures by which he constructed logical arguments that couldn’t be legitimately denied. And those single quotations were never intended to be standalone statements but to be accompanied by the entire context of the Scriptures from which they came. Thus, the immediate context of his letter plus the wider context of Israel’s history supporting his arguments achieved harmony across all of Scripture and confidence in having arrived at the truth.

Twisting the Scriptures

Peter speaking of Paul’s letters stated, “As also in **all his epistles**, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are **unlearned [*amathēs* 261] and unstable [*astēriktoi* 793] wrest [*strebloō* 4761]**, as *they do* also the other **scriptures**, unto their own destruction” (2Pe 3:16). The Greek adjective *amathēs* is the negation of the verb *manthanō* which means “to learn.” Likewise, the adjective *astēriktoi* is the negation of the verb *stērizō* which is “to establish.” Peter was describing teachers that haven’t learned from Christ and haven’t been established in the truth He taught, “But ye have

not so **learned Christ**; If so be that ye have **heard him**, and have been **taught by him**, as the truth is in Jesus” (Eph 4:21).

The Greek verb *strebloō* is used in the New Testament only this once. However, it’s a derivative of the verb *strephō* which means “to turn” as it’s used in its first three occurrences: “whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, **turn [strephō 4762]** to him the other also” (Mat 5:39); “lest they trample them under their feet, and **turn again [strephō 4762]** and rend you” (Mat 7:6); “But he **turned [strephō 4762]**, and said unto Peter” (Mat 16:23). Concerning Paul’s writings, Peter recognized them as Scripture and stated that those who haven’t learned from Christ and been established in the truth “turn” what Paul said into something he didn’t say.

For example, Paul’s quote from Habakkuk, “The just shall live **by faith [faithfulness]**” (1:17) is taken to mean that he taught we’re saved by believing. But this is simply “turning” what he truly said into something he didn’t say. What we must do, however, is become learned and established in the gospel message Jesus Christ taught and preached then use it to understand Paul.

Paul’s letter to the Romans has been “turned” into an erroneous doctrinal system by false teachers under the control of the enemy. The first ten chapters in particular have been used as an instrument for teaching all sorts of doctrines from devils, “Now the Spirit [*breath*] speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits [*breaths*], and doctrines of devils” (1Ti 4:1). The following are just some of the statements from each of the first ten chapters along with the doctrines supported by them: “The just shall live by faith” (1:17), that salvation is by faith or believing; “do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves: Which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness” (2:14-15), that everyone is born with an innate-nature of morality written in their conscience; “a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law” (3:28), that salvation is by faith and not by keeping God’s commandments; “Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness” (4:3), that Abraham is our example of righteousness by faith; “Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men” (5:12), that spiritual death passed upon Adam’s descendants; “For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord” (6:23), that death is eternal separation from God in hell; “O wretched man that I am!” (7:24), that Paul was constantly defeated by sin; “For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate” (8:29), that God predestines which individuals will be saved; “That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved” (10:9), that salvation is by a confession of faith and believing in the heart.

Now, not everyone “turning” what Paul said and teaching false doctrine is necessarily a false teacher. We can be ignorant (without knowledge) or confused (without understanding) about what Christ taught and God will forgive us when we repent and submit to the truth. However, those knowingly and blatantly teaching different than what Christ taught certainly are false teachers. They’ve rejected the truth and have no hope. No amount of debating with them will ever change their minds. Their hearts are hardened and they’ve been given over to the enemy to do his will.

Paul revealed the mystery

The theme of Paul’s letter to the Romans is “the preaching of Jesus Christ” with a supporting theme of “the mystery,” “Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and **the preaching of Jesus**

Christ, according to the revelation of **the mystery**, which was kept secret since the world began” (16:25). Paul revealed the message of the gospel Christ Himself preached that had been hidden by figurative language within the creation narrative and fall of man. God “preached” the gospel message in the very beginning before any of mankind’s history had unfolded. And since the gospel message had already been foretold before it was consummated, nobody could deny that what had transpired was from God according to His purpose. The mystery left everyone without excuse.

In God’s wisdom, He orchestrated certain events in history to leave His own people without excuse for rejecting His Son. For example: God speaking “Let there be light” into the darkness in the beginning was prophetic of His Son coming to preach the “light” into this “dark” world; Noah’s Ark was a type of Christ in that life is saved through water baptism; Abraham obeying God and offering his son Isaac as a sacrifice prefigured God’s sacrifice of His Son; Joseph being rejected by his 12 brethren then becoming the ruler that saved them is an irrefutable portrait and prophecy of the 12 tribes and God’s Son; the bread of life coming down from heaven in the Exodus was a type of God’s Son.

My approach and methodology

I’m not smarter than anyone else but have simply been sincerely seeking God since 1990 and have consistently submitted to the truth once I found it. My approach has been to understand the truth in the Scriptures as objectively as possible by setting aside all of my assumptions and being honest with what is truly being said. When our beginning assumptions are false, they invariably lead to false conclusions. But as we begin building a foundation of correct assumptions upon which we understand the Scriptures, we’ll reach the right conclusions and the truth. It’s like a snowball effect that the more truth we know and understand, the more truth we’re able to know and understand.

Jesus told His disciples, “Who **hath** ears to hear, let him hear ... For whosoever **hath**, to him shall be given, and he shall have **more abundance**: but whosoever **hath not**, from him shall be **taken away** even that he hath ... By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not **understand**; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not **perceive**” (Mat 13:9,12,14). If we have ears to hear we’ll be given more abundance of understanding and perception, but if we won’t hear then even what we already understand will be taken away. He will give us more if we’ll listen but take it away if we won’t.

The writer of Hebrews said, “Of whom we have many things to say, and **hard to be uttered**, seeing ye are **dull of hearing**” (Heb 5:11), “Therefore leaving the principles of **the doctrine of Christ**” (Heb 6:1). For example: we can’t move on to algebra if we’re still unable to add, subtract, multiply, and divide. Likewise, we can’t proceed to more advanced subjects in the Scriptures until we grasp and embrace the basic principles that Jesus Christ taught. I’m still trying to get the basics down solidly which is why I hardly even attempt to understand the book of Revelation at this point in my life. We must first hear and do what Christ said in His Sermon on the Mount, “**heareth** these sayings of mine, and **doeth them** ... **heareth** these sayings of mine, and **doeth them not**” (Mat 7:24,26), before we can hear and do what He said in Revelation, “Blessed *is* he that readeth, and they that **hear the words** of this prophecy, and **keep those things** which are written therein” (Rev 1:3).

Understanding the Scriptures isn’t just an academic endeavor either. Much education and time studying doesn’t always correlate to much fruit. Paul prayed for the Ephesians to understand, “making mention of you in my **prayers** ... The eyes of your **understanding** being enlightened” (Eph 1:16,18). We must seek God in

prayer to understand the truth His Son taught and submit to it once it's found. I spend a lot of time studying but also a lot of time seeking God. I can't tell you how many times I've come to understand certain truths from the Scriptures when I wasn't studying or even trying to understand. Many times God has helped me understand in answer to prayer.

I approach Paul's letter to the Romans as a detailed framework by which the gospel message of Jesus Christ can be best understood. By inspiration and wisdom from God, Paul arranged each subject within his letter to best reach the overall understanding of the gospel. And I don't necessarily expound upon every statement he made but rather try to bring out the understanding of each passage within the flow of his letter.

I'll tell you up front that I'm not an expert in Greek or Hebrew. But that's actually to your benefit. The experts want us dependent upon them to tell us what the Scriptures are saying and therefore follow them, trusting our salvation to them. But that's not where I want to be. I want to trust my salvation to the Savior Himself and His apostles that He sent. When it comes to the original languages of the Scriptures, all that's truly necessary is a dependable study tool like BlueLetterBible.org with which simple word studies can be performed. Therefore, it's not about trusting me but easily researching these things for yourself. I'm not trying to get you to trust and follow me but trust and follow the Lord.

The meanings of Greek and Hebrew words is determined, not by Lexicons and theological dictionaries written by men, but by how those words were used throughout the Scriptures. And meanings of words are also understood many times by the root words from which they're derived. But the "experts" mock this practice, not because it's wrong but for the very reason that it's right! They don't want us doing it because it leads to the actual meaning of the words and to the truth. Rather, they want to tell us what the words supposedly mean to keep us dependent upon them and their false teaching.

In addition to giving us wrong definitions for certain words, these "experts" also translated some Greek words into English as generic words with false meanings they've infused into them. By doing this, they hinder our understanding of what's truly being said. Just a few examples are "grace" instead of "favor," "saints" instead of "separated," and "spirit" instead of "breath." Therefore, when we read our English Bibles, it sounds as though the Scriptures are truly saying what the false teachers are teaching. If we won't take the initiative to research words for ourselves, we'll stay deceived by them and perish.

I'm content with being a "nobody"

I'll never forget the time when I sat in the office of my pastor and started sharing with joy how that I had been laying aside my current assumptions and was approaching the Scriptures as objectively as possible. Sincerely thinking he would be pleased with my humble and noble efforts, instead he abruptly interrupted me with yelling and anger! I was completely shocked and confused by his response and left his office crying. But I didn't know then what I know now. These men don't want us seeking the truth objectively but staying bound to their false system of theology. They're not being used by God but by someone else.

Truth always paints us into a corner so to speak. It's easy to submit to comfortable and convenient truths. Eventually, however, we'll come to the knowledge of difficult truths that compel us to take sides. We either must allow ourselves to be humiliated before people and rejected by them to stay faithful to the truth, or out of self-preservation and saving face we'll begin fighting against the truth. Because of His love toward His

Father, Christ allowed Himself to be shamefully humiliated before people. And we show our love to Christ by following His example. I went through many humiliating circumstances over the past few years that helped break much of my pride and submit to the truth taught by Jesus Christ.

I've been accused of being prideful and thinking that I know better than all the ministers, pastors, scholars, and theologians. Actually, what's prideful is to think we know better than Jesus Christ Himself and to disagree with Him. It takes humility to admit we don't know and submit ourselves to Him and His teaching. It's humility to stand in agreement with Him in the face of all the opposition that comes with that stance. But I'm no longer afraid of disagreeing with Christ's enemies, I'm afraid of disagreeing with Christ.

As far as my writing style itself, I'm certainly not a great writer but try to communicate in a logical and simple way that's easy to understand. In obedience to the commandment to love our neighbor as ourselves, I try to put myself in the place of my readers and write as I would want to be written to. Rather than saying things in such a way as to protect myself from others getting upset with me, I say things in the way that will help my audience know the truth and be saved. If I have to be the "bad guy" then so be it. That's what love does.

I'm no minister but simply an average family man that works a full-time job and writes when I have time. I've been accused of trying to get recognition for myself. Actually, I'm a "nobody" and content with keeping it that way.