

DESIDERATA¹
ROMANS 1:18-32, *HOW DID WE GET IN THIS MESS?*
SEPTEMBER 28, 2008

BACKGROUND NOTES ON ROMANS

OUTLINE:

- I. INTRODUCTION 1:1-15
- II. THESIS 1:16-17
- III. THE WAY OF DELIVERANCE 1:18-5:21
- IV. THE WAY OF GODLINESS 6:1-8:39
- V. THE PLACE OF ISRAEL 9:1-11:36
- VI. CHRISTIAN LIVING 12:1-15:13
- VII. CONCLUSION 15:14-16:27

DOMINANT THEME: *One point that is often overlooked and should be noticed is that Romans is fundamentally a book about God.....The thought of God dominates this epistle. The word "God" occurs 153 times in Romans, an average of once in every 46 words. This is more often than in any other New Testament writing (except the short I Peter and I John)....Romans may truly be described in a way that no other book can be, as a book about God. (Leon Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 20)*

BACKGROUND FACTS:

- Date: 55 AD
- Written from Corinth to Rome
- Why written? *With the completion of his mission to the East (15:19)² an important chapter of his life had been closed. It is not unreasonable to suppose that, with this work done and with a mission field in Spain before his mind's eye, Paul hoped to transfer his base from Antioch to Rome. But before anything else happened he had a little time when he could be quiet (the three months of Acts 20:3).³ He used the time to write to the Roman Christians to let them know of his plan to visit them and to set down in order something of what the gospel meant. If Rome was to be his base, the Romans would need to be assured of his message and theological position. Thus such a weighty epistle is very much in place.*

*We may discern at least three things Paul specifically says he wanted to accomplish by his letter. First, he wanted to prepare the way for a visit to Rome (1:13; 15:22-24). Second, he wanted to secure the support of the Roman Christians for his Spanish mission (15:24). Third, he sought the prayers of the Romans, specifically prayers that he might be delivered from unbelievers, that the Jerusalem church would welcome the gift he was bringing, and that he might come to Rome "in joy" (15:30-32). (Leon Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 17)*

BIG IDEA: WHEN PEOPLE PUSH BACK ON GOD, GOD STEPS ASIDE AND LETS THEM FALL INTO THE INEVITABLE CONSEQUENCES.

¹ *Desideratum: Something considered necessary or highly desirable.*

² ^{NIV} **Romans 15:19**, *by the power of signs and miracles, through the power of the Spirit. So from Jerusalem all the way around to Illyricum, I have fully proclaimed the gospel of Christ.*

³ ^{NIV} **Acts 20:3**, *where [Greece] he stayed three months. Because the Jews made a plot against him just as he was about to sail for Syria, he decided to go back through Macedonia.*

- *A woman wrote in to the newspaper editorial page with the question, “What’s Wrong with the World?” G. K. Chesterton’s reply the next day went like this, “Dear Madam. What’s wrong with the world? I am. Yours truly, G. K. Chesterton.*
- *“Imagine a room,” he says, “in which a body lies crushed, flat as a pancake. A dozen detectives crawl around, examining the floor with magnifying glasses for any clue to the identity of the perpetrator. In the middle of the room, next to the body, stands a large gray elephant. The detectives carefully avoid bumping into the pachyderm’s legs as they crawl, and never even glance at it....Textbooks say detectives must ‘get their man,’ so they never consider elephants.” (Biochemist Michael Behe, Darwin’s Black Box)*
- *Deuteronomy 6:10, “When the LORD your God brings you into the land he swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, to give you--a land with large, flourishing cities you did not build, 11 houses filled with all kinds of good things you did not provide, wells you did not dig, and vineyards and olive groves you did not plant--then when you eat and are satisfied, 12 be careful that you do not forget the LORD...*
- *C. S. Lewis: There are only two kinds of people—those who say “Thy will be done” to God or those to whom God in the end says, “Thy will be done.” All that are in Hell choose it.*
- *Billy Graham: It’s back to the Bible or back to the jungle.*
- *Pastor Rick Warren asks: In the next 365 days, 235,000 Californians will die. Will they head into a Christ-less eternity? In the next 365 days, 2.3 million Americans will die. Will they head into a Christ-less eternity? In the next 365 days, 54 million worldwide will die. Will they head into a Christ-less eternity? (Pastors.Com, Jon Walker, “Warren: working on the things that matter,” 11/15/02)*
- *St. Gregory of Nyssa: We regard falling from God’s friendship as the only thing dreadful and we consider becoming God’s friend the only thing worthy of honor and desire. This...is the perfection of life.⁴*
- *George Orwell, observing the loss of religious faith in Europe (which he had applauded), remarked:
For two hundred years we had sawed and sawed and sawed at the branch we were sitting on. And, in the end, much more suddenly than anyone had foreseen, our efforts were rewarded, and down we came. But unfortunately there had been a little mistake. The thing at the bottom was not a bed of roses after all, it was a cesspool full of barbed wire....It appears that amputation of the soul isn’t just a simple surgical job, like having your appendix out. The wound has a tendency to go septic.⁵*

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⁴ Gregory was one of the Cappadocian fathers, 4th century A.D. Cappadocia was a region of modern-day Turkey.

⁵ Quoted in Philip Yancey, “On the Grand Canyon Bus,” *Christianity Today*, September 2008, 102