

WALKING THROUGH ROMANS - PART 1

SETTING THE TONE

This is not a typical Bible study where we simply go deeper into what was preached on Sunday. This is a decision to walk through a book, and that book is Romans. It has been a long time since we have done a full book study like this, and because of that, this requires a different level of engagement.

There is no set timeline on this study. It ends when it ends. The goal is not speed. The goal is understanding. The goal is that by the time we finish, you will have a working understanding of at least one book of the Bible, not just devotionally, but structurally, historically, and theologically.

This is introduction. This is tone setting. And in order to do that, we must understand the letter before reading the letter. We must understand the letter before reading the letter. We must understand the letter before reading the letter.

THE NATURE OF THE LETTER

Romans is not casual correspondence. It is not random thoughts written down. It is not a devotional pamphlet. Romans is a carefully constructed, intentionally written letter by an experienced author to a specific audience dealing with real tension.

That audience consists of both Jewish and Gentile believers. That means two different cultural backgrounds, two different histories, two different understandings of God, now trying to live together in one faith community.

And all of this is happening under the pressure of the Roman Empire. So if we rush into verses without understanding that, we will misread what Paul is trying to communicate.

THE DRIVING QUESTION

The question that drives the entire book is this: Has God remained faithful in a fractured world?

That question is not just for them. That question is for us. Because we are also living in a fractured world. So as we walk through Romans, we are not just asking what Paul was saying. We are asking how that truth meets us where we are.

FOUR MOVEMENTS

Before we read the text, we understand the text through four movements. The man behind the letter. The world behind the letter. The purpose of the letter. And the theological aim of the letter.

MOVEMENT 1 - THE MAN BEHIND THE LETTER

Romans is written by the Apostle Paul around 56 to 58 CE. This is not early Paul. This is mature Paul. This is Paul after years of ministry, after planting churches, after facing opposition, after being beaten, after being imprisoned, after navigating tension.

So when Paul writes Romans, he is not reacting. He is constructing. Romans is not a reactionary letter. It is a theological construction. He is laying out the gospel in full form.

Paul is operating with multiple identities at once. He is Jewish, trained deeply in the Torah. He is aware of Roman power and citizenship. He is called as an apostle to the Gentiles. And he is constantly navigating tension between these worlds.

APPLICATION - MATURITY

Maturity is not something you wish for. Maturity is something you develop. You cannot have mature thinking with immature faith.

If your faith is not developed, it will not survive in a shifting culture. Fragile faith shifts when culture shifts. But anchored faith remains.

MOVEMENT 2 - THE WORLD BEHIND THE LETTER

Paul is writing to believers in Rome, but not one centralized church. These are multiple house gatherings. And they are made up of both Jewish and Gentile believers.

In 49 CE, Emperor Claudius expelled all Jews from Rome. That means Jewish believers left and Gentile believers remained. The Gentiles shaped the church during that time.

When the Jews returned, everything had changed. So now tension exists. Who leads? Do we still follow the law? How do we function together?

And this is all happening under an empire where Caesar is called Lord. So when Paul says Jesus is Lord, that is not just theology. That is confrontation.

APPLICATION - PRESSURE

Pressure exposes what defines you. Whatever you give in to is what defines you. If you give in to culture, culture defines you. If you give in to systems, systems define you. But if you give in to Christ, Christ defines you.

MOVEMENT 3 - THE PURPOSE OF THE LETTER

Romans has a threefold purpose. It is missional, theological, and communal.

Missional means the gospel is meant to move. It is not meant to stay stagnant.

Theological means Paul is explaining what God has done, what faith is, how sin operates, and what life in the Spirit looks like.

Communal means Paul is addressing unity. Identity is not rooted in background or culture, but in Christ.

Before there can be partnership, there must be clarity. Confused faith divides. Stagnant faith weakens.

MOVEMENT 4 - THE THEOLOGICAL AIM

The theological aim of Romans is the faithfulness of God. Paul answers the question: Has God remained faithful?

His answer is yes. Even in the presence of sin, God has acted through Christ. Through His death, burial, resurrection, and ascension, humanity is given access to right standing and new life.

THE FLOW

Romans moves from brokenness to faithfulness to transformation.

FINAL TAKEAWAY

We are not studying for information. We are studying for formation. If God has remained faithful, then our response cannot be casual. Mature faith requires mature theology.