

Pine Knoll Sabbath School Study Notes
Fourth Quarter 2017: *Salvation by Faith Alone: The Book of Romans*
Lesson 1 “The Apostle Paul in Rome”

Read for this week’s study

Romans 15:20–27; Acts 28:17–31; Philippians 1:12; Romans 1:7; Ephesians 1; Romans 15:14.

Memory Text

“First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world” (Romans 1:8, NKJV).

Lesson Outline from Adult Sabbath School Study Guide

- I. Introduction
- II. The Apostle Paul’s Letter
- III. Paul’s Desire to Visit Rome
- IV. Paul in Rome
- V. The “Saints” in Rome
- VI. The Believers in Rome
- VII. Further Study

Questions and Notes for Consideration

Facilitator: Daniel Duda

1. “It is important for a student of the book of Romans to understand the book’s historical background. Context is always crucial when seeking to understand the Word of God. We need to know and understand the issues that were being addressed. Paul was writing to a specific group of Christians at a specific time and for a specific reason; knowing that reason as much as possible will greatly benefit us in our study. (Sabbath afternoon)
2. “Thus, let’s go back in time. Let’s transport ourselves back to first-century Rome, become members of the congregation there, and then, as first-century church members, let us listen to Paul and the words that the Holy Spirit gave him to deliver to the believers in Rome.” (Sabbath afternoon)
3. Why is the context always crucial when seeking to understand the Word of God? Why do we first need to “know and understand the issues” that Paul was addressing to a specific group of Christians at a specific time and for a specific reason?
4. To what extent is it even possible to “transport ourselves back to first-century Rome, become members of the congregation there, and listen to [apostle] Paul”?

5. “And yet however localized the immediate issues that Paul was addressing, the principles behind them are universal. Yes, Paul was speaking to a specific group of people; and yes, he had a specific issue in mind when he wrote the letter. But as we know, many centuries later in a totally different time and context, the words he wrote were as relevant to Martin Luther as they were to Paul when he first wrote them.” (Sabbath afternoon)
6. We do not read the Bible in a vacuum. Historically, even 1500 years later, it is important to know how Martin Luther understood Romans, because of the impact his understanding had not only on his own generation and world, but also through the centuries on to us. So the more we know about the history of the interpretation, the better. However, Luther read Romans through the eyes of his own times. And in that sense, his interpretation is not decisive, though [historically] significant.
7. “And they are relevant to us as well today.” (Sabbath afternoon) – Surely the words are relevant to us, because they were inspired. But how can we be sure that we are not inadvertently reading Romans through the eyes of Martin Luther, medieval Catholicism, or Ellen White? If we read Romans through the eyes of first century Judaism we can best apply the results to us in 2017 wherever we are in the world.
8. In Romans 15:20-27 Paul is clear that his purpose of coming to Rome is not to do primary evangelism. There was still, of course, plenty of room in Rome for pioneer evangelism: in an enormous city of at least a million inhabitants there were probably no more than a hundred Christians. But Paul wants to go to Spain. He wants to bring the Roman Christians on board as his mission partners, as his new home church for his onward journeys. For that he sketches out more fully the big picture of God’s purposes, stressing particularly the unity of the Messiah’s family and the way in which this works out both for Jews and Gentiles.
9. There is no evidence that Paul ever reached Spain. But his desire to do so, the fact that he wrote Romans as part of preparation for such a trip, points out an extremely important lesson for us. God sometimes allows us to dream dreams of what he wants us to do, not necessarily so that we can fulfill all of them. He knows us well and which paths may have better outcomes in our lives and ministry.
10. But God wants us to take those first steps towards something bigger. Paul didn’t get to Spain. But that did not matter; the gospel got there anyway. What mattered and has been enormously significant in the whole history of the church, is that, as part of his plan to go to Spain, Paul wrote Romans.
11. How does God want you as an individual to think big? How does God want us as a community to see beyond our immediate horizons and think big? What are the first steps that we need to take, both as individuals and as a community?
12. God has a mission and he uses individuals and his church to accomplish it, even when we do not see the whole picture! We are encouraged to think big and take those necessary first steps, knowing God will work with us for good, and others will be blessed.

Thoughts from Graham Maxwell

Recommended Listening: The entire series by Graham Maxwell on the book of Romans is available at <http://pkp.cc/MMROMANS66>

As Ellen White says: “In the providence of God, one language, Greek, was spoken throughout the Mediterranean world those days.”

And that’s why the gospel could go; as Paul says in Galatians: “To every nation under heaven in a single generation”. But since Paul chose to write in good everyday Greek, then we ought to read it in good everyday English, or French, or Japanese, or Korean, or whatever we prefer. There’s every historical reason for reading Romans in familiar modern speech language. Why introduce the difficulty of a hard to understand translation between us and what Paul intends to say? When Romans was read in the church in Rome, to the group there, they didn’t have the problem that it was in “old fashioned language”. It was in up-to-date Greek, so we ought to read it in up-to-date language today. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series Romans, chapter 1, recorded September, 1977, Loma Linda, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct links:*

<http://pkp.cc/1MMROMANS66> (Part 1) <http://pkp.cc/2MMROMANS66> (Part 2)

Because of the chapter and verse divisions, the temptation is ever present to read here a little and there a little. Now in that famous principle of interpretation, how little is a little supposed to be? Does it mean here a key text and there a key text? When the Bible was written, there were no texts like that. So it could mean here a book and there a paragraph, here a chapter, and there a section; and, as you know, if you make your “little” small enough, you can prove anything you like out of Scripture, just put the right little pieces together. Sometimes teachings are even based on half a verse, ignoring the other half. And if only the Bible had not been cut up into verse divisions, there wouldn’t be this temptation to take all these little pieces out of context and put them together.

I’m sure Paul intended that his letter be read as a whole. How would it seem, say to your mother, if you respond, “Thanks so much for the letter just received. I hope to finish it in about two weeks. I read three paragraphs a day and seven on Sabbath.” Mother would assume you weren’t very interested. She assumes the letter will be read all the way through; and Paul intended that Romans be read all the way through. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series Romans, chapter 1, recorded September, 1977, Loma Linda, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct links:*

<http://pkp.cc/1MMROMANS66> (Part 1) <http://pkp.cc/2MMROMANS66> (Part 2)

The basic principle of interpretation, which we need to remind ourselves of periodically, is that it was the setting, the context that determined the meaning of a passage when it was originally written. We use that for all literature, even for the letters to Mother. We hope that when Mother receives the letter, she will know something of the setting. Have you ever gone home and found a letter you wrote to your folks years afterwards, and read a paragraph you wrote yourself, and it doesn't make any sense? In fact, it seems rather puzzling, and you hope it doesn't mean what it seems to mean. Until all of a sudden, you remember the setting. "Ah, yes! That is what it meant!" Then you suddenly realize that maybe Mother didn't know what the setting was, so you hasten to Mother and say, "By the way, did you understand that paragraph? Let me tell you what the setting was when I wrote it." And Mother would say, "Oh, I am relieved. I worried about that for years! I thought it meant something else."

The same way with the Bible. It was the original context, the original setting that determined the meaning of a passage when it was originally written; and to the extent that we can recover the original setting, we're in a position to recover the original meaning. And you remember how often that was illustrated when we went through the sixty-six books. If you hear God thundering on Sinai without knowing the setting, you might conclude he is a fearsome deity, hardly one to be loved. But when we reconstruct the setting, here are a noisy people, unwilling to listen, irreverent, disrespectful, and God wishing to communicate with them for their best good. He chose to raise his voice to get their attention. He wasn't angry with them. He's not a harsh God. In fact, Moses stood at the foot of the mountain and said, "There's nothing to be afraid of. If you'll just be quiet, then he can speak to you softly, as he prefers to do."

But, without the setting, we could misinterpret what God was doing. Sometimes for convenience this setting, this context, is divided into two aspects: the grammatical context, having to do with the words, the relationship of the words, and the historical context, the historical setting. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series Romans, chapter 1, recorded September, 1977, Loma Linda, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct links:*

<http://pkp.cc/1MMROMANS66> (Part 1) <http://pkp.cc/2MMROMANS66> (Part 2)

The historical setting: Paul says, "It's alright to marry if you can't contain yourself, but it would be better to be as I am." Does this mean that married Christians are second-class saints? And yet, as we read on in Paul he says the most gracious things about marriage. And at wedding ceremonies, whose writings do we read the most, but Paul's? He's not opposed to marriage. So we have to create the setting. Why do you think he said, "I wish you could be as I am"? Why did he say, "I would not allow a woman to speak in church", and we do it all the time. Are we disobeying Scripture, or do we understand the meaning?

Paul had a reason for saying what he did at that time. In Corinthians Paul says, "Eat whatever you find in the meat market without raising any question on the ground of conscience." And you think, "Impossible!" That's undermining some important beliefs of ours. Be sure to put that in its setting on the way to Romans 14:1 and 2.

You might want to turn and look at this, as an illustration of how we'll surely want to recreate the historical setting. Romans 14. Now, some versions will be much more dramatic than mine. The one I brought tonight is the *1952 Revised Standard Version* in the direct line of the *King James Version*, an American idiom, and still I think, about the best all-around study Bible that there is. "As for the man who is weak in faith, welcome him, but not for disputes over opinions. One believes he may eat anything, while the weak man eats only vegetables." Now, what does that do to many of us here tonight? Do you like being in that class? Number one you are married, so you are a second-class saint, and now, you are a vegetarian, and so you're a weak person. These are very discouraging verses. But not if you put them both in their proper setting. Do some versions have it much more dramatic than that? They do, don't they.

Well, a little further on, Paul says, in verse five, "One man esteems one day as better than another, while another man esteems all days alike. Let every man be fully convinced in his own mind." As if maybe it doesn't matter? What does that do to the Sabbath? We certainly would want to put that in its proper historical setting. And we'll try to do that. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series Romans, chapter 1, recorded September, 1977, Loma Linda, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct links:*
[http://pkp.cc/1MMROMANS66 \(Part 1\)](http://pkp.cc/1MMROMANS66) [http://pkp.cc/2MMROMANS66 \(Part 2\)](http://pkp.cc/2MMROMANS66)

When God said of Israel in Amos 3:2, "Thee only have I known among the nations" did he not know the others? He knew them, didn't he? He knows them all. But he says, "Thee only have I known." Then that's knowing a limited group for some reason.

How about the group that arise in the wrong resurrection and find to their horror that it's not the Second Coming, it's the third, and they present themselves to Christ with their tithe receipts and their mission reports, and say, "Lord, Lord, open unto us, have we not done many wonderful works in Thy name? We've even cast out devils in Thy name, we've been soul winners. Think of all the tithe we've paid, enough to buy many tickets to the Kingdom. Think of all the Sabbaths we've given up, we deserve to be saved."

And the Lord says, "Go away, I never knew you." I thought he knew even the number of hairs on our head. So this can't mean, "I don't know who you are and what you've done." He says, "I know thy works" doesn't he? "I know what you've done, but I never knew *you*." So often in the Bible to know means to know in a special way. It's the same word that's used for the way a husband knows his wife, to know in a very special way. It can mean friendship, closeness,

intimacy. When Jesus says to these hard working saints, “Go away, I never knew you” doesn’t he mean you obeyed me for the wrong reason? You never were friends of mine. And friendship is the very essence of our relationship with God that he desires. And so he says, “You’re legalistic, unwilling obedience misrepresented me as the very harsh, demanding God that Satan has made me out to be. You were no friends of mine. Go away, I never knew you. We never were really friends.” {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series Romans, chapter 8, recorded November, 1977, Loma Linda, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct links:*

<http://pkp.cc/15MMROMANS66> (Part 1) <http://pkp.cc/16MMROMANS66> (Part 2)

Ellen White comments while speaking with such admiration of the reformers, of Luther and of Calvin, these are our roots are they not? She said it is true that, “Luther and his co-laborers accomplished a noble work for God; but, coming as they did from the Roman Church, having themselves believed and advocated her doctrines, it was not to be expected that they would discern all these errors. It was their work to break the fetters of Rome and to give the Bible to the world; yet there were important truths which they failed to discover, and grave errors which they did not renounce.”

And she mentions two of them. She mentions the misunderstanding of the Sabbath, and the other one is the doctrine of hell. Now if you believe that God has said, “Love and obey me or I am bound by law and justice to torture you for eternity”, would not your preoccupation be with forgiveness? If God forgives me I will not be sent to hell. And so righteousness by faith has been limited to a preoccupation with forgiveness. But we need much more than forgiveness. Forgiveness does not heal the damage done. Heaven will not be peopled with pardoned criminals but with transformed saints with new hearts and right spirits who keep the commandments of God and are loyal to Jesus. That’s what it talks about here in the Three Angels’ Messages. We need more than pardon. And if you realize that God never said, “Love me or I’ll torture you to death”, but he says “if you do not trust me I cannot heal you. And if I do not heal you, you will die. And I’ll cry.” Then it’s very different, you see. We’re preoccupied then with healing and we want new hearts and right spirits. We want to be like chapter 14:12. We want to be people who keep his commandments and are loyal to his Son. And those who are loyal to his Son are his friends, and God will save all his friends.

So hats off to the reformers, but let’s not go back there, that’s the great appeal these days as you may know. That’s the present rift that’s developed among us, the appeal to go back to the reformation which is turning your back on Ellen White and the great controversy trust model. And some of us are not about to do that at all, that’s a retreat.

Oh, that reference about the reformers is in *Spirit of Prophecy*, those old little volumes, volume 4, page 180. Isn’t that stunning about the reformers that she would say that with all gratitude

toward them. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, The Three Angel's Messages, #5, recorded October, 1981, Loma Linda, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link: <http://pkp.cc/5MM3ANGELSM>*

Further Study with Ellen White

Through the gospel, souls that are degraded and enslaved by Satan are to be redeemed to share the glorious liberty of the sons of God. God's purpose is not merely to deliver from the suffering that is the inevitable result of sin, but to save from sin itself. {MB 60.3}

Through creation and redemption, through nature and through Christ, the glories of the divine character are revealed. By the marvelous display of his love in giving "his only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life," the character of God is revealed to the intelligences of the universe. Through Christ our Heavenly Father is made known as the God of love. {ST, February 13, 1893 par. 5}

All heaven is interested in our salvation. The angels of God, thousands upon thousands, and ten thousand times ten thousand, are commissioned to minister to those who shall be heirs of salvation. They guard us against evil and press back the powers of darkness that are seeking our destruction. {MH 253.3}

The blessings of salvation are for every soul. Nothing but his own choice can prevent any man from becoming a partaker of the promise in Christ by the gospel. {DA 403.2}

Through the plan of salvation a larger purpose is to be wrought out even than the salvation of man and the redemption of the earth. Through the revelation of the character of God in Christ, the beneficence of the divine government would be manifested before the universe, the charge of Satan refuted, the nature and result of sin made plain, and the perpetuity of the law fully demonstrated. {TMK 366.4}

But the plan of redemption had a yet broader and deeper purpose than the salvation of man. It was not for this alone that Christ came to the earth; it was not merely that the inhabitants of this little world might regard the law of God as it should be regarded; but it was to vindicate the character of God before the universe. To this result of His great sacrifice—its influence upon the intelligences of other worlds, as well as upon man—the Saviour looked forward when just before His crucifixion He said: "Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all unto Me." John 12:31, 32. The act of Christ in dying for the salvation of man would not only make heaven accessible to men, but before all the universe it would justify God and His Son in their dealing with the rebellion of Satan. It would establish the perpetuity of the law of God and would reveal the nature and the results of sin. {PP 68.2}

By coming to dwell with us, Jesus was to reveal God both to men and to angels. . . But not alone for His earthborn children was this revelation given. Our little world is the lesson book of the universe. God's wonderful purpose of grace, the mystery of redeeming love, is the theme into which "angels desire to look," and it will be their study throughout endless ages. {DA 19.2}

To the angels and the unfallen worlds the cry, "It is finished," had a deep significance. It was for them as well as for us that the great work of redemption had been accomplished. They with us share the fruits of Christ's victory. {DA 758.2}

Not until the death of Christ was the character of Satan clearly revealed to the angels or to the unfallen worlds. The archapostate had so clothed himself with deception that even holy beings had not understood his principles. They had not clearly seen the nature of his rebellion. {DA 758.3}

That which alone can effectually restrain from sin in this world of darkness, will prevent sin in heaven. The significance of the death of Christ will be seen by saints and angels. . . The angels ascribe honor and glory to Christ, for even they are not secure except by looking to the sufferings of the Son of God. It is through the efficacy of the cross that the angels of heaven are guarded from apostasy. Without the cross they would be no more secure against evil than were the angels before the fall of Satan. Angelic perfection failed in heaven. . . The plan of salvation, making manifest the justice and love of God, provides an eternal safeguard against defection in unfallen worlds, as well as among those who shall be redeemed by the blood of the Lamb. {ST, December 30, 1889 par. 4}

The gospel invitation is not to be narrowed down and presented only to a select few, who, we suppose, will do us honor if they accept it. The message is to be given to all. When God blesses His children, it is not alone for their own sake, but for the world's sake. As He bestows His gifts on us, it is that we may multiply them by imparting. {MH 102.1}

The Samaritan woman who talked with Jesus at Jacob's well had no sooner found the Saviour than she brought others to Him. She proved herself a more effective missionary than His own disciples. The disciples saw nothing in Samaria to indicate that it was an encouraging field. Their thoughts were fixed upon a great work to be done in the future. They did not see that right around them was a harvest to be gathered. But through the woman whom they despised a whole cityful were brought to hear Jesus. She carried the light at once to her countrymen. {MH 102.2}

This woman represents the working of a practical faith in Christ. Every true disciple is born into the kingdom of God as a missionary. No sooner does he come to know the Saviour than he desires to make others acquainted with Him. The saving and sanctifying truth cannot be shut up in his heart. He who drinks of the living water becomes a fountain of life. The receiver becomes a giver. The grace of Christ in the soul is like a spring in the desert, welling up to refresh all, and

making those who are ready to perish eager to drink of the water of life. In doing this work a greater blessing is received than if we work merely to benefit ourselves. It is in working to spread the good news of salvation that we are brought near to the Saviour. {MH 102.3}

The Saviour is still carrying forward the same work as when He proffered the water of life to the woman of Samaria. Those who call themselves His followers may despise and shun the outcast ones; but no circumstance of birth or nationality, no condition of life, can turn away His love from the children of men. To every soul, however sinful, Jesus says, If thou hadst asked of Me, I would have given thee living water. {DA 194.1}

The gospel invitation is not to be narrowed down, and presented only to a select few, who, we suppose, will do us honor if they accept it. The message is to be given to all. Wherever hearts are open to receive the truth, Christ is ready to instruct them. He reveals to them the Father, and the worship acceptable to Him who reads the heart. For such He uses no parables. To them, as to the woman at the well, He says, "I that speak unto thee am He." {DA 194.2}

Heaven's plan of salvation is broad enough to embrace the whole world. God longs to breathe into prostrate humanity the breath of life. And He will not permit any soul to be disappointed who is sincere in his longing for something higher and nobler than anything the world can offer. Constantly He is sending His angels to those who, while surrounded by circumstances the most discouraging, pray in faith for some power higher than themselves to take possession of them and bring deliverance and peace. In various ways God will reveal Himself to them and will place them in touch with providences that will establish their confidence in the One who has given Himself a ransom for all, "that they might set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep His commandments." Psalm 78:7. {PK 377.1}

No distinction on account of nationality, race, or caste, is recognized by God. He is the Maker of all mankind. All men are of one family by creation, and all are one through redemption. Christ came to demolish every wall of partition, to throw open every compartment of the temple courts, that every soul may have free access to God. His love is so broad, so deep, so full, that it penetrates everywhere. It lifts out of Satan's influence those who have been deluded by his deceptions, and places them within reach of the throne of God, the throne encircled by the rainbow of promise. In Christ there is neither Jew nor Greek, bond nor free. {PK 369.3}