

Romans

An Introduction - Part 2

September 28, 2014

I. Introduction to our Introduction to Romans

A. This is our second Sunday of preparation for commencing our study of Romans. Today, we will look at the blending of Calvinism and Arminianism in Romans, what it means to live by the Law /law, and what it means to do the works of the Law/law.

B. Prayer

II. Introduction to Romans - Part 2

A. Many within the Body of Christ hold to one of the two major competing theologies – Arminianism and Calvinism. Many include portions of the book of Romans when defending their chosen position – which to the unbiased mind means that Romans includes scripture statements friendly to both Arminianism and Calvinism.

1. An example in support of Arminianism: Romans 10:8-13 . . . But what does it say? "The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart"—that is, the word of faith which we are preaching, [9] that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; [10] for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation. [11] For the Scripture says, "Whoever believes in Him will not be disappointed." [12] For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, abounding in riches for all who call on Him; [13] for "Whoever will call on the name of the Lord will be saved."
2. An example in support of Calvinism: Romans 8:29-30 . . . For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren; [30] and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified.
3. I am pointing this out because I want to reiterate a message I have given you over the years – which is – according to a complete reading of the holy scriptures,
 - a. God is sovereign yet man has free will,
 - b. God elects and predestines yet man is free to reject or submit,

- c. God calls yet man must repent, trust in Jesus Christ for salvation, and move forward in living a life of obedience,
 - d. God chooses one person over the other, hardens the heart of whom He will, and shows mercy to whom He chooses to show mercy yet man will be judged according to his deeds and if he lives according to the flesh, he must die, but if by the Spirit he is putting to death the deeds of the body, he will live.
 - 4. In our life-time we may not be able to provide the perfect explanation of how these seemingly competing truths can both be true. And yet, Romans seamlessly moves back and forth through these two truths and treats them both as true.
 - a. Therefore, to choose one over the other requires setting aside some scriptures in favor of others.
 - b. And it is for this reason that I have and continue to urge us to trust the wisdom of God and hold the truths He gives us as His truth, which makes it worthy to be held as our truth, even if we cannot fully explain how it all fits together.
- B. What does it mean to live by the Law / law? What are the works of the Law / law?
- 1. This is not an easy question to answer because Paul uses the word “law” in various ways throughout Romans, and he does not provide footnotes or a chart to tell us which meaning goes with which use of the word “law.”
 - 2. In fact, the difficulty involved in discerning how Paul uses the word “law” in each case has resulted in very little agreement among Bible commentators and Greek scholars as to what he means each time he uses it. Even the different Bible translations and paraphrases wrestle with this – capitalizing the “L” sometimes and leaving it in the lower case other times. And yet, even that method does not give a clear indication of the different uses and meanings of either the capitalized word “Law” or the lower case word “law” as it appears in Romans.
 - a. Now it is my opinion that we ought to be able to read the Bible and understand it sufficiently to live accordingly, even if we do not know world or church history, or have a working knowledge of Greek, or have the advantage of commentaries and Bible dictionaries. After all, God’s word is living and active (Hebrews 4:12); the Holy Spirit guides us into all truth (John 16:13) and teaches us all things regarding the Christ-like life (John 14:26).

- b. In other words, without the aid of post-graduate scholarship, I believe we can forge ahead and do our best, by the gracious help of God, to gain sufficient insight and understanding to make sense of Paul's differing uses of the word "law," be it capitalized in our Bible or in the lower case. And that is what we will do.
- 3. To give you a sense of what we are up against, the word law appears 78 times in Romans. In the NASB, 50 of the 78 have the capital "L" and 28 are in the lower case.
- 4. When the NASB capitalizes the word Law, it appears to be referring to the Mosaic Law.
 - a. However, that is not totally helpful because
 - (1) Sometimes Paul is referring to the unbreakable moral codes in the Mosaic Law – such as the Ten Commandments, the marriage laws, proper business practices, lending and borrowing practices, proper treatment of servants, tithing, charitable giving, and care for the poor.
 - (2) Sometimes Paul is referring to the ceremonial and religious ritual laws – such as feast days, fast days, visits to the Temple, times and kinds of sacrifices, purification methods following a time of impurity, and dietary laws.
 - (3) And sometimes Paul is referring to the whole Mosaic Law (moral, ceremonial, and religious ritual).
 - b. However, added to these three variations is the fact that Paul uses the capitalized word "Law" in reference to two kinds of law keepers.
 - (1) The first group is made up of those who persevere in doing good, who are sincere in living according to the Law in all areas of life, who want to obey and please God. Paul refers to this first group as the righteous, as those who live by faith, the remnant, those who live in such a way as to seek for glory and honor and immortality, those who show the work of the Law written in their hearts, and those who are the doers of the Law.
 - (a) Jesus refers to them as those who build their house on the rock by both listening to and doing what He says (Matthew 7:24).
 - (b) James refers to them as doers of the word and not merely hearers who delude themselves (James 1:21-22).

- (c) Peter speaks of them as those who are diligent to make certain about God's calling and choosing them by practicing the ways of godliness (2 Peter 1:10).
 - (d) And John speaks of them as those who walk in the light as God, himself, is in the light (1 John 1:6-7).
 - (2) The second group is made up of those who selectively keep parts of the Law while willingly and repeatedly breaking other parts of the Law. These Paul refers to as the circumcised who live as if they are not circumcised, who have the Law but live as if they don't have the Law, who judge others yet practice the same things, who pursue a law of righteousness but do not arrive at [the righteousness that should come from keeping] that law, who stumble over the stumbling stone, who have a zeal for God but not in accordance to knowledge, who seek to establish their own righteousness rather than submit to the righteousness of God.
 - (a) Jesus refers to them as those who outwardly appear righteous to men, but inwardly you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness (Matthew 23:28), and as those who tithe meticulously yet disregard justice and the love of God (Luke 11:42), and as those who do all their deeds to be noticed by men (Matthew 23:5).
 - (b) James refers to them as having faith without the appropriate accompanying works (James 2:14-26).
 - (c) And John refers to them as those who claim to know God but do not keep His commandments (1 John 2:3-6).
 - c. My point here is that the capitalized word "Law" is used in a variety of ways – which means we must read slowly, carefully, prayerfully, and with discernment if we are to give the intended meaning to the word Law wherever it appears.
- 5. However, that only covers 50 of the 78 uses of the word law in Romans. There are another 28 which the NASB leaves in all lower case. And here again, the word law is used in several different ways.
 - a. Sometimes it is used to refer to the principle of law or the ideal of law. We see examples of this in:
 - (1) Romans 3:27-28 . . . Where then is boasting? It is excluded. By what kind of law? Of works? No, but by a law of faith. [28] For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from works of the Law.

(2) Romans 7:23 . . . but I see a different law in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin which is in my members.

- b. Sometimes the word “law” is used to refer to the established laws of the land or the culture or life in general. We see this in Romans 7:1-3 . . . Or do you not know, brethren (for I am speaking to those who know the law), that the law has jurisdiction over a person as long as he lives? [2] For the married woman is bound by law to her husband while he is living; but if her husband dies, she is released from the law concerning the husband. [3] So then, if while her husband is living she is joined to another man, she shall be called an adulteress; but if her husband dies, she is free from the law, so that she is not an adulteress though she is joined to another man.
- c. And sometimes the word “law” is used to refer to the mode in which someone or something acts. An example of this is found in Romans 8:2 . . . For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death.
- d. Therefore, we see that the lower case word “law” is used in a several different ways just like the upper case word “Law” – which means we must read slowly, carefully, prayerfully, and with discernment if we are to give the intended meaning to all the uses of the word “law” wherever it appears.

C. What does it mean to live by the Law/law, and what are the works of the Law/law? Here again, there is not a single answer.

- 1. When Paul speaks of those who live by the Law and do the works of the Law in a God-pleasing way, he refers to them as living by faith – a faith that produces a faithful obedience and a quality of righteousness that results in sanctification, with the outcome being that of being given the gift of eternal life.
 - a. This is the faith that Paul speaks of in his introduction when he quotes Habakkuk 2:4: “But the righteous man shall live by faith” (Romans 1:17b).
 - b. This is the faith that Paul speaks of when he points to Abraham as the classic example of those who are justified by faith.
 - c. This is the faith that moves us beyond an outward and selective and self-promoting practice of the law to a righteousness that

pleases God because it applies the law to all areas of life – outwardly and inwardly.

- d. And this is the faith, when practiced by us – as it was by Abraham – that results in our justification and being given the free gift of salvation.
2. Paul gives a number of examples of those who live by this righteousness producing, justifying, saving, faith.
 - a. These are those who, by perseverance in doing good, seek for glory and honor and immortality (Romans 2:7); who make it their aim to do good in all things and in all ways (Romans 2:10).
 - b. These are those who consider themselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God, who do not allow sin to reign/rule in their mortal body so that they obey its lusts, who do not go on presenting the members of their body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness, but who present themselves to God as those alive from the dead, and their members as instruments of righteousness to God (Romans 6:11-13); who, by the empowerment and help of the Holy Spirit are putting to death the deeds of the body (Romans 8:13b); and who are laying aside the deeds of darkness and putting on the armor of light (Romans 13:12b).
 - c. Such are those who are abhorring what is evil and clinging to what is good (Romans 12:9); who are blessing those who persecute them instead of returning evil for evil (Romans 12:14-17); who, instead of being overcome by evil, are overcoming evil with good (Romans 12:21); and who are who are fulfilling the whole law by loving their neighbor as themselves (Rom. 13:8-10).
 - d. In other words, to live by faith (the inseparable combination of confidence and obedience) means keeping the law inwardly and outwardly with integrity, diligence, and perseverance. This is the kind of godly life Paul is referring to when he speaks of living by faith as opposed to doing the works of the Law.
3. When Paul speaks of living by the Law and doing the works of the Law apart from faith, he is referring to those who are confident they are justified before God and have eternal salvation –
 - a. because of their national and religious heritage (Israelite, Catholic, Christian, Baptist, Lutheran, etc.),
 - b. and because they possess and have been taught in the Law (Holy Scriptures),
 - c. and because they have been circumcised – or baptized, or have prayed the prayer for salvation,

- d. and because they continue to practice the commonly expected religious practices of their group (fasting, special holy days, Lord's Supper, regular Sabbath/ church attendance, scripture reading, prayer, tithing, charitable work, etc.).
- 4. Yet these same people who live by the law, but not by faith, who are confident they are justified before God and feel assured they have eternal salvation – these same people selectively keep parts of the Law while knowingly and repeatedly breaking other parts of the Law. In other words, their Law keeping does not result in whole-life, whole-hearted righteous living.
- 5. Paul's classic example of this kind of hypocritical law keeping is found in Romans 2:17-29. However, I will only read verses 21-23 & 25. "You, therefore, who teach another, do you not teach yourself? You who preach that one shall not steal, do you steal? [22] You who say that one should not commit adultery, do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols, do you rob temples (greed)? [23] You who boast in the Law, through your breaking the Law, do you dishonor God? [25] For indeed circumcision is of value if you practice the Law; but if you are a transgressor of the Law, your circumcision has become uncircumcision."
- 6. In other words, when Paul is referring to those who consider themselves law-keepers but are not living by faith, he is speaking of those who "Though they profess to know God, by their deeds they deny Him" (Titus 1:16a).

III. Conclusion

- A. There is much to learn from Romans – about God, about God's way of salvation, about living a life of faith, about the Law, about ourselves, and other important truths.
- B. May we prayerfully and carefully make our way through this book that comes to us from God through His servant, Paul.