

## COMMENTARY ON ROMANS

Paul J. Achtemeier, *Interpretation – A Biblical Commentary on Romans* (John Knox Press, Atlanta, GA. 1985).

### Introduction

**Paul** deals with problems as contemporary as tomorrow's newspaper. They are problems as global as the headlines and as intimate as those discussed in "Dear Abby." The fate and future of the Jewish people, the role of individual in the total sweep of history, the responsibilities of the citizen to the government of the country with which he or she may not always agree, the morality of actions in which adults engage, sexual and otherwise – all these and more occupy Paul in his letter to the Christians in Rome. It could not have been otherwise, because a letter to Rome was a letter to the political, military, and an economic capital of Paul's world; and he could no more avoid **such problems** than could a Christian author in our day writing to Christians in Washington D.C.

When the Roman Empire was tottering and the foundation of a civilization that had learned to value the Christian were crumbling, **Augustine learned** from Romans how one can construct a view of human nature and of the state which can survive the breakdown of civilization. When the **church** exalted itself too highly in its own understanding of the ways of God with human kind, **Luther and Calvin** learned from Romans how a church could be structured which allowed the gracious lordship of God in Jesus Christ to come to clearer expression. When faith and culture were too uncritically combined in the nineteenth century, so that the development of human culture and the purposes of God were naively assumed to be identical, **Karl Barth** learned from Romans that God's lordship embodies a NO to human pretension and pride (인간의 과장과 자부) which is the healing judgment of God's saving mercy.<sup>1</sup>

바울은 그가 당시의 세계의 정치적, 군사적, 경제적인 수도에 편지를 쓴 것입니다.

### **The Background of Paul's Thought**

In the biblical books the authors used their contemporary language and thought forms to embody what they had to tell their readers. So Paul's letter to Rome is framed within the cultural and linguistic possibilities open to him.<sup>2</sup>

The world Paul was living was Greco-Roman world that offered intellectual resources which were used to express views of the diving-human relationship. One was Rabbinic Judaism which was developed during Paul's lifetime. It's understanding of the Old Testament emphasized the covenant that God had made with Israel on Mount Sinai and the law that accompanied it. If the Jews as God's chosen people fulfilled that law, they could be sure that they were

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<sup>1</sup> Paul Achtemeier, *Interpretation: Romans*, Introduction, (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1985), 1

<sup>2</sup> Paul Achtemeier, *Interpretation: Romans*, Introduction, (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1985), 4.

fulfilling God's will for them in all of life's circumstances. Paul was much concerned with how God's will was to be discerned and fulfilled, and how that law was to be understood in relation to that problem. Such questions were directly related to the rabbinic concern for interpreting and following the Scriptures which we know as the Old Testament.<sup>3</sup>

The second way of interpreting God's relationship to his creation developed from some of the views of the prophets, who emphasized that God was in control of history, shaping events in accordance with his will. After the prophets ceased to appear, some people began to assume that this meant the world so evil it could only be changed by a radical divine intervention.- ..... final judgment. Because these purposes of God are hidden and can only be known if God reveals them, this way of understanding God's way with his creation came to be called "apocalyptic," which means "revealed." It is clear enough in Paul's letter that he, too, expected such a judgment to occur with the return of Christ and that therefore, he, too, was influenced by such a view.<sup>4</sup>

### **Rom. 2: 1-16: Judgment of God - Doers of the law 2:13**

The point Paul is making is that it is not what one knows but what one does that is the important thing. This contrast between knowing and doing is also seen in terms of the contrast between appearance and reality.<sup>5</sup> Knowing about the good (e.g., having God's law) is not the important thing, it is doing the good that God wants.<sup>6</sup> God will hold all people responsible for what they do. It is not enough to know about the good if one does not do it. If there is one thing Paul is clear about, it is the unavoidable scope and consequence of human responsibility. God expects his creatures –he expects us –not just to know about the good or to talk about it but to do it. If that holds for Jews as well as non-Jews here, it is clear Paul thinks it holds for Christians as well as non-Christians too. One may know who God is and who his Son is and therefore what the good is; but if such knowledge does not lead to doing what is good, it is vacuous and of no avail. God's grace does not deliver us from responsibility for what we do. Paul is convinced that we will all finally have to answer to God for what we have made of the life God has given us. That is part of the task laid on all creatures by the Creator.<sup>7</sup>

It is for that reason that the sign of grace to the chosen people was a law, which told them what it was God wanted them to do. It was for that reason that the Jews treasured that law as a manifestation of God's favor, God's grace to them. If God's wrath means letting creatures do what they want (see 1:24-32), then God's grace means giving the creatures a means of discipline so that they

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<sup>3</sup> Paul Achtemeier, *Interpretation: Romans*, Introduction, (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1985), 5.

<sup>4</sup> Paul Achtemeier, *Interpretation: Romans*, Introduction, (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1985), 6.

<sup>5</sup> Paul Achtemeier, *Interpretation: Romans*, Introduction, (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1985), 43.

<sup>6</sup> Paul Achtemeier, *Interpretation: Romans*, Introduction, (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1985), 46.

<sup>7</sup> Paul Achtemeier, *Interpretation: Romans*, Introduction, (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1985), 47.

do not fall into trap of following their own desires, which, just because they are creatures, inevitably have evil consequences. If creatures are incapable of serving as their own creators, and hence of doing what is good on their own, then it is a sign of the grace of the Creator to give to such creatures a way to do good rather than evil. To receive God's law was therefore for the chosen people the supreme sign of God's grace. To follow the law is to be responsible before God. To ignore it is to be irresponsible.<sup>8</sup>

Since God is the Creator of all people, not just the Jews, God is impartial in his goodness as he is in his judgment. Just as everyone knew enough about God to recognize him as Creator and hence themselves as creatures (1:19-20), so everyone has enough sense of what is good to be able to act responsibly before their Creator (2:14-15). There is therefore no partiality with God either in the matter of grace or in the matter of judgment.<sup>9</sup>

Perhaps the most powerful word for the preacher in this passage is its affirmation of the inescapable responsibility laid upon all creatures of God. The message of grace is not a message of indolence or irresponsibility. It is rather a summons to accept responsibility for one's acts. It is therefore a call to give up pretense and to come to terms with the kind of reality Paul has been describing. Again, it is clear from this passage that God's grace does not eliminate his judgment. Rather, by his grace we are allowed to live in a way that spares us from condemnation in that judgment. The relationship between appearance, idolatry, irresponsibility, on the one hand, and reality, the lordship of God, and responsible action, on the other, provides a further theme which could be profitably developed in a sermon. .. When Paul speaks of "Jew and Gentile" he means to describe the whole of humanity.<sup>10</sup>

### **Romans 12: 1-2** Structuring Power of Grace

Life under the lordship of God means a life under the structuring power of grace. That power transforms not only individuals, but the individual's relationships to the community around them. Living by the power of the Spirit, and accepting the gracious lordship of God, the Christian's world has been made new (II Cor. 5:17); and the task is now to let the structuring power of grace transform that world into the shape of grace. .. Grace s to affect the whole of human life.<sup>11</sup>

하나님의 주권안에 사는 생은 은혜안에서 구성되는 생을 의미하는데 이 은혜의 힘은 개인을변화, 개혁 시킬뿐만 아니라 그들이 몸담고 살아가는 공동체와 사회와의 관계도 개혁을 시킨다는 것입니다. 고후 5:17 의

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<sup>8</sup> Paul Achtemeier, *Interpretation: Romans*, Introduction, (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1985), 47.

<sup>9</sup> Paul Achtemeier, *Interpretation: Romans*, Introduction, (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1985), 47.

<sup>10</sup> Paul Achtemeier, *Interpretation: Romans*, Introduction, (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1985), 48.

<sup>11</sup> Paul Achtemeier, *Interpretation: Romans* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1985), 195.

말씀처럼 성령님의 능력에 따라 살고 하나님의 은혜스러운 주권을 받아드리는 기독교인들의 세계는 새로운 세상이라야 된다는 것입니다. 그래서 우리가 할 일은 그 은혜의 능력이 세상을 은혜의 모습으로 개혁시켜서 그것이 인류의 생 전반을 변화 하도록 해야 한다는 것입니다.

Paul tells his readers that their proper response to their Creator is the shaping of their total lives by his gracious will. Like the burnt offering given wholly to God, the Christian is to be a total sacrifice to God, and that sacrifice is to consist of the whole life. <sup>12</sup>

그들의 창조주에 대한 올바른 반응은 그의 은혜스러운 뜻에 따라 자신들의 생 전체의 형태를 이루는 것이라고 바울 선생님은 자신의 편지 수혜자들에게 말씀하십니다. 하나님께 드리는 제물이 온전히 하나님께 태워 바쳐야 하는 것처럼 기독교인들은 전적으로 하나님을 위한 희생제물이 되어야 하고 그 제물은 인간의 생 전체로 구성되는 제물이어야 한다는 것입니다.

Paul reflects that same idea in verse 21, when he again urges his readers not to be shaped by the reality of the world (evil) but to reshape that reality by the power of grace (good)... Christians are to shape themselves, their thinking and their doing, conformably to faith. <sup>13</sup>

21 절에도 세상의 현실 (악) 에 의해 구성되지 말고 은혜의 능력으로 그 현실(악)을 재 구성해주어야 한다고 .. 즉 기독교인들은 자신들을, 자신의 생각을, 그리고 행동을 믿음에 일치하도록 만들어 가야 한다는 같은 생각을 반영하고 계십니다.

Verse 2 may be translated: “Do not let yourselves be shaped by what everyone else does, but rather let yourselves be transformed by a whole new way of thinking, so you can discern what conforms to God’s will, namely what is good, and pleasing, and perfect.” That is grace at work: to be able to hear – and obey – such admonitions. <sup>14</sup>

#### **Rom. 12: 15-16 – Associate with the Lowly**

*Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. <sup>16</sup>Live in harmony with one another; do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly; do not claim to be wiser than you are.*

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<sup>12</sup> Paul Achtemeier, *Interpretation: Romans* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1985), 195.

<sup>13</sup> Paul Achtemeier, *Interpretation: Romans* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1985), 195.

<sup>14</sup> Paul Achtemeier, *Interpretation: Romans* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1985), 195-196.

Paul's letter to Rome was a letter to the political, military, and an economic capital of Paul's world; and he could no more avoid such problems than could a Christian author in our day writing to Christians in Washington D.C. <sup>15</sup>

그러므로 그 당시 로마는 바울이 살던 세계의 정치적, 군사적, 경제적인 수도였다고 말합니다.

Life under the lordship of God means a life under the structuring power of grace. That power transforms not only individuals, but the individual's relationships to the community around them. Living by the power of the Spirit, and accepting the gracious lordship of God, the Christian's world has been made new (II Cor. 5:17); and the task is now to let the structuring power of grace transform that world into the shape of grace. .. Grace s to affect the whole of human life.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Paul Achtemeier, *Interpretation: Romans*, Introduction, (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1985), P. 1).

<sup>16</sup> Paul Achtemeier, *Interprletation: Romans* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1985), Introduction, P. 195.

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<sup>18</sup> Paul Achtemeier, *Interpretation: Romans* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1985), Introduction, P. 195.

<sup>19</sup> Paul Achtemeier, *Interpretation: Romans* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1985), Introduction, 195-196.

### **Romans 15: 25-28: Collection for Jerusalem church**

*At present, however, I am going to Jerusalem in a ministry to the saints; <sup>26</sup>for Macedonia and Achaia have been pleased to share their resources with the poor among the saints at Jerusalem. <sup>27</sup>They were pleased to do this, and indeed they owe it to them; for if the Gentiles have come to share in their spiritual blessings, they ought also to be of service to them in material things. <sup>28</sup>So, when I have completed this, and have delivered to them what has been collected..*

### **Rom. 13:8-10 - Love neighbor sums up the Law**

To understand love as the basic requirement for the Christian who lives under the grace of Christ is to understand such Christian life as the fulfillment of the law God gave to Israel. As Christ is the one to whom the law of Israel had pointed and in whom it found its culmination and thus its end (recall 10:4), so in the love that same Christ commanded as the primary obligation of one human being to another (See Mark 12:28-31) one is also to find the culmination and hence the end of the law (Rom. 13:8-10). Paul emphasizes that point by framing his discussion with the explicit claim that such love is, as Jesus had said, the fulfillment of the law (vv. 8b, 10b; cf. Mark 12:31b). Love is thus to be the rule of the Christian life. <sup>20</sup>

That God loves us hardly means that he gets a warm feeling inside when he thinks of us. We know God loves us not because of the way he *feels* about us but because of what he has done for us: He gave his son for our redemption. What Paul and the rest of the New Testament mean by love therefore centers not on emotions but on actions. To love someone is actively to promote that person's good. To be commanded to love one's enemy means that one is commanded to work for that person's good, not harm. To love an enemy therefore does not mean primarily to change one's emotional state toward that person so much as it means to do good for that enemy, regardless of what one's emotional response to that person may happen to be. Love acts for the good of another. *That* is the love that Paul speaks of here, and that is the love that fulfills the law. As verse 9 makes clear, such love means to cease actions that harm another person and to do what promotes that person's good. <sup>21</sup>

Love consists in doing something for the good of others. Jesus, the incarnation of God's love, thus acts out that love in all he says and does. He is a love that warns as well as comforts that promises as well as fulfills. But above all he is a love that gives itself freely for the good of others, even if that means

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<sup>20</sup> Paul Achtemeier, *Interpretation: Romans* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1985), 208.

<sup>21</sup> Paul Achtemeier, *Interpretation: Romans* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1985), 209.

death on a cross. But he is also, and finally, God's redemptive love when he rises victorious from the grave. In that way we see that love is act, not sentiment.<sup>22</sup>

**Rom. 15:25-28 – Share resources**

When we realize that offering was not merely a friendly gesture, but was part of Paul's priestly ministry as an apostle, we can also understand the heavy freight of meaning that that offering bore. If the church in Jerusalem accepted the offering, it would be an acknowledgement that just as they have rightfully received a share of the material blessing of the Gentiles so the Gentiles have rightfully received a share of the spiritual blessings of Israel.<sup>23</sup> That is why the offering is of such great importance to Paul and why he solicits the prayers of his fellow Christians in Rome for its acceptance. He is asking for nothing less than their prayers for the unity of the people of God. And if the people of God is unified, then there are in fact no second-class Christians. Then racial origin will make no more difference than one's gender or social standing as far as one's Christian status is concerned: All will be one in Christ (see Gal. 3:28). Distinctions within a congregation which are based on social status or racial origin or gender are on the same level as the rejection by the Christians in Jerusalem of Paul's offering from the Gentile churches. It means a denial of the unity of God's people and their equality in his eyes.<sup>24</sup>

Another appropriate Gospel passage would be Luke 5:29-32 where people fuss at Jesus for associating with those who are beneath his –and their –social level. In light of our passage in Romans, one can begin to understand why Jesus associated with such persons as a matter of course. It was precisely to demonstrate the total absence of second-class status within the people of God. Jesus welcomed all who were outcasts, whether for reasons of illness, economic status, or social rank, to show God's care for them as well. There are no second-class people in God's eyes. Clearly enough, what Paul sought to accomplish with his offering to Jerusalem was identical to what Jesus had announced God's new people to be: a people among whom no group, of whatever social or cultural origin was of lesser importance.<sup>25</sup>

The perspective is broadened yet further when one considers the witness already contained in the Old Testament to the special attention God gives to the helpless and to the outcast. Psalm 146:6-10 or Isaiah 10:1-5 show God's concern when ill treatment is visited upon those who have no wealth or social position to call upon in their own defense. Clearly, there were to be no second-class citizens in Israel, God's people, and those who sought to establish such rankings found

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<sup>22</sup> Paul Achtemeier, *Interpretation: Romans* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1985), 210.

<sup>23</sup> Paul Achtemeier, *Interpretation: Romans* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1985), 230.

<sup>24</sup> Paul Achtemeier, *Interpretation: Romans* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1985), 231.

<sup>25</sup> Paul Achtemeier, *Interpretation: Romans* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1985), 232.

God himself as their opponent. That continues to be the case. The theme of God's equal concern for all people runs through the entire Bible, and it is a theme that speaks with force to the contemporary church. [We can see] Paul's concern for the unity between weak and strong within the church in Rome (14:1-15:13) with his concern for unity between Jew and Gentiles within the church at large.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Paul Achtemeier, *Interpretation: Romans* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1985), 232.