

## Romans Lecture Outline 2/24/16

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#### CONTEXT & BACKGROUND

- Romans is Paul's last letter, written c. 58.
- Roman community independent of Paul.
- Jewish presence in Rome apparently significant in first century
  - Since the first century BCE, Jews had made appeals, sent delegations periodically to Rome
  - Pompey brought slaves to Rome after Romans took control of Jerusalem.
  - Herod and his family had close ties with Rome; Josephus went to live in Rome; so did Berenice the sister of Agrippa II.

#### REASONS PAUL WRITES ROMANS

- **Mission to Spain theory:** Paul wishes to enlist support of Roman community for a future mission to Spain (chap. 15). Stendahl calls Romans Paul's "theology of mission."
- **Edict of Claudius theory:** Gentile-Jewish conflict caused by the return of the Jews (and thus Christian Jews) after the death of Claudius in 54, who had expelled the Jews in 49 CE. (Suetonius reports that Claudius expelled the Jews from Rome "because of their constant disturbances impelled by Chrestus.")
- **Galatians misinterpreted theory:** Paul's attitude toward Jewish law was misunderstood in his letter to the Galatians and he writes Romans to correct that misinterpretation. The Roman Christians are assumed to be more Jewish in their orientation. See Paul's use of Jewish priestly language (3:1; 12:1; 15:16).
- **Support for Jerusalem Collection:** Others point to the **Jerusalem collection** as Paul's motivation for writing. Paul is going to Jerusalem to deliver the collection before embarking on his mission West. As evident from 15:31, Paul is nervous about going to Jerusalem. If the Roman church has ties to the Jerusalem church, perhaps Paul writing to the Romans provides insurance (a letter of recommendation?) for his trip to Jerusalem.
- **Last will and Testament Theory**
- Most of these theories assume Paul has some measure of knowledge about the community at Rome, and that the substance of the letter relates specifically to circumstances relevant to Rome. If, as others argue, Paul has little or no knowledge of the community at Rome, then understanding the subject of the letter does not depend on knowledge about the Roman context. Then what's the significance of chapter 16?
- In my view, none of these explanations adequately accounts for the length, depth and subject-matter of Romans.

#### OVERVIEW OF ROMANS

- Opening, 1:1-15
- Thesis Statement (?), 1:16-17
- Gentiles and Jews in God's Cosmic Plan, 1:18-4:25
- The Role of Jesus in God's Cosmic Plan, chaps. 5-8

- Jews and Gentiles in God's Cosmic Plan, chaps. 9-11
- Paraenesis, chaps. 12-13
- The Strong and the Weak, 14:1-15:13
- Paul's Plans, 15:14-33
- Greetings and Closing, chap. 16, note women on list (Phoebe; Junia)

#### **GENTILES ARE PAUL'S FOCUS: CHAPTERS 1-4**

- Obedience of Faith; cf. 1:5 and 15:18; applies to Gentiles
- 1:16-17 & 1:18. Righteousness vs. wrath of God. (Cf. 1:18; 12:19; 13:4,5)
- Theme of idolatry; "ungodly" 1:18; 4:5; 5:6
- 1:18-3:31; Gentiles and Jews. Old vs New perspective
  - Righteousness and Wrath 1:16-18 (Cf. 12:19; 13:4-5)
  - "passing over of sins previously committed" 3:25
- Use of Diatribe style prevalent in Romans, esp. use of apostrophe and rhetorical questions
- Is God the God of Jews only? 3:27-31
- *Pistis chistou* = faith of/in Christ (objective vs. subjective genitive debate)

#### **CHAPTER 4: SIGNIFICANCE OF ABRAHAM**

- The traditional interpretation: Abraham is an example of justification by faith
- Alternative interpretation: Abraham as father of all – 4:16; recall 4:1. Paul does not use Abraham as an analogy or example, but rather he is trying to demonstrate that Abraham is father of Gentiles as well as Jews. (Alt translation of 4:1: "What then shall we say? That Abraham is our ancestor according to the flesh?"
- Abraham's act of faith: the conception of Isaac? Cf. 9:6-13: Abraham's patriarchal status as well as who counts as an heir is dependent on God's promises (grace) not on biology or any other fleshly connection.

#### **LAW AND SALVATION IN RELATION TO JEWS AND GENTILES**

- Old interpretation; see 3:9; 3:22-23
- But what of 2:13? 2:25-29?
- Ehrman and Gaventa represent the traditional reading of Romans; Stendahl and Eisenbaum, *radical* new perspective.
- **Discussion of Stendahl**
  - The good news of Christ is that *Gentiles* can be righteous apart from works of the law.
  - The law remains valid for Jews. Paul does not reject the law and neither does God.
  - Rhetorical insights determine that any and all negative statements about the law should be interpreted in light of the destructive force that the law represented for Gentiles only.
  - Chapter 7 – Paul uses a rhetorical technique called "speech-in-character"
  - Romans 9-11 perhaps reflects Paul's attempt to deal with potential misinterpretations of his statements on law (based on his experience at Galatia) as

well his explanation of how Jews and Gentiles figure in relation to each other as well as how the end of history plays itself out. Culmination: 11:26 - "All Israel will be saved." This statement is taken to mean that the Jews are saved, whether or not they accept Jesus, and confirms that Paul believed that the law remained valid for Jews. This is the "two ways" theory of salvation. (See also 3:30-31.)

## **DISCUSSION OF STENDAHL**

### **TERMS**

Justification by Faith

Righteousness

Law

Works of the law

Grace

Sin

Idolatry

*Pistis Christou* (faith in/of Christ)

Theology of Mission

Abraham (significance in Romans)

Israel (significance in Romans)

Phoebe

New Perspective on Paul

Radical New Perspective