

A PASSAGE THROUGH THE NEW TESTAMENT

Part Four “The Liberty Epistles”



by J.S. Smith

Romans

Author: Paul • Date: 57 A.D.

Along with books of Galatians and Hebrews, the letter to the Romans forms a triune effort at dispelling the controversy between the old and new covenants. Hebrews goes to great lengths in asserting that Jewish converts to Christ should remain faithful because the new covenant is better and is the substance of God's plan, whereas the old was simply its shadow. Galatians assaults the Judaizing teacher with clear evidence that one need not keep the law of Moses to be a Christian. Romans completes that model as it teaches that no one can be saved by doing works of the old law; rather one is saved when he lives by faith in the Savior.

It may be that the Roman church had its genesis on the day of Pentecost, for there were citizens of that city present when Peter preached his first lesson. As Paul writes, he had not yet visited the city himself, though he was acquainted with many of the saints that lived there.

It seems clear that this epistle was penned from Corinth as the apostle was engaged in collecting benevolence funds for the needy brethren in Jerusalem (15:25-26, 16:23). This would place the epistle about the year 57 A.D. in origin.

Throughout the first century church, the Judaizing element was very strong and dangerous. They demanded that Gentile converts to Christianity undergo circumcision (if male) and keep other tenets of the old law to be considered faithful. The fourteenth chapter of this book, however, makes it plain that God holds such decisions as matters of indifference regarding participation or abstention.



Galatians

Author: Paul • 57 A.D.

The book is addressed to the Galatians. Galatia was dominated by the Gauls at one time. It is from these ancient Frenchmen that the region draws its name. But like so many others, Galatia eventually was taken by Rome. Galatia seems to have retained its original language as it added Greek as well. Julius Caesar described the Galatians as a people who are “fickle in their resolves and fond of change...not to be trusted.”

The author formed these churches on his second missionary tour, c. 51 A.D (Acts 16:6). Paul was detained among them by sickness (4:13). Galatia was the very edge of his preaching area in Asia at this time. but he visited them again on his third journey to strengthen the disciples (18:23). The basic nature of the region’s impulsiveness and vanity surely invaded the churches but Paul was impressed with the manner in which they received him, even in his physical deformity. Still, the church faced doctrinal confusion when Judaizing teachers challenged their reliance on the Lord instead of the Old Law.

The purpose of this epistle is once again fighting the influence of the Judaizing teachers who troubled the early church. They were persuading the Galatian Christians that becoming a Jew was a prerequisite for becoming a Christian and that they could not be saved without being circumcised. Once again, his apostolic authority is questioned—some supposing him to be an unfaithful messenger of the true 12. The letter seems to have been written in 57 A.D. from either Macedonia or Corinth in the same period as Romans and 2 Corinthians.

Lesson 1: The Righteousness of God

Romans 1:1-32

1. (1:1-7) By what act did God declare Jesus to be the son of God with power from the Holy Spirit?
2. What was special about the recipients of this letter that made them “saints”? Were they better than most Christians?
3. (1:8-15) Had Paul visited the Roman saints yet? Why did he want to go to them now?
4. (1:16-25) How does Paul describe the gospel he preached?
5. How do some so-called Christians betray the confidence that Paul had in the gospel today, even as they try to increase their numbers?
6. What does it mean to “live by faith”?
7. What is an example of suppressing the truth (verse 18; cf. Acts 20:25-27)?

8. Why are unbelievers “without excuse”?

9. (1:26-31) What does the writer have specifically in mind as he condemns “vile passions”?

10. Three times in this chapter, Paul tells us what God does with those so committed to sin that they will not leave their iniquity to do right. What does God do with such people (verses 24, 26, 28)?

11. Would most people in this world believe that all the things in this list deserve the ultimate punishment? Which ones do you think many people would believe should be overlooked?

12. What sin is attached to practicing such things by extension?

Lesson 2: Circumcision of the Heart

Romans 2:1-3:20

1. (2:1-11) What one word, made popular by Jesus in his condemnation of the Pharisees, would describe the sin of verse 1?
2. How does one show that he despises the patience of God?
3. According to what will God render His judgment of men?
4. What does Paul claim will lead to eternal life? What leads to eternal anguish?
5. (2:12-16) Who are justified in the sight of God?
6. (2:17-24) How does Paul describe the hypocrisy of the Jews in this passage?
7. What was the effect of this hypocrisy on outsiders?
8. (2:25-29) Would circumcision alone justify the Jews in God's sight? Will baptism alone justify a Christian in God's sight?
9. Paul, a Jew by birth himself, makes an astonishing statement here regarding the genuine identity of God's people. What is it?

10. When is this circumcision of the heart consummated (Col. 2:11-12)?

11. (3:1-8) Many wonder how God could ever condemn anyone to hell and this passage anticipates such an objection. How?

12. (3:9-20) As the apostle to the Gentiles, Paul opens the gospel up to those outside the nation of Israel. How does he express the impartiality of God regarding all men here?

13. The final part of Paul's quotation sufficiently summarizes the obstacle between men and God. What is it?

14. Why can no one be saved simply by keeping the law of Moses perfectly?

15. Why can no one be saved by following the New Testament perfectly?

16. How then can men be saved?

Lesson 3: Justification By Faith

Romans 3:21-4:25

1. (3:21-26) In what way is there no difference between one man and any another?
2. How can a man be justified in God's court then?
3. (3:27-31) Where is boasting then?
4. Are faith and the concept of a law mutually exclusive and beyond reconciliation?
5. How is Paul's treatment of the law related to Christ's statement that He came to fulfill the law and the prophets, not destroy them?
6. (4:1-12) Why could Abraham not be justified by his merit?

7. Is it possible for someone today to be so good that he would not need grace and therefore could be said to have earned his salvation?

8. This passage upholds the truth that faith saves. Compare to Hebrews 11:6, 8-19. At what point was God satisfied that Abraham's faith was of the redemptive variety?

9. (4:13-15) Calvinists often suggest that we are not under law in any sense of the word today. What would be the implication if this were true, according to this text?

10. (4:16-22) This passage ends "Therefore it was accounted to him for righteousness." The preceding six verses prove that Abraham's saving faith was more than just belief that God existed. How would you characterize Abraham's saving faith?

11. (4:23-25) Why does Paul say that Jesus was killed and then raised?

12. Premillennialism teaches that the crucifixion of Christ was not part of God's original plan, but a contingency when the Jews rejected him. If this is so, what is the implication for the purpose stated in verse 25?

Lesson 4: Adam and Jesus

Romans 5:1-21

1. (5:1-5) Are the saved justified by faith? Are the saved justified by faith only (James 2:24)?

2. Why should we rejoice in tribulations?

3. List the three virtues noted by Paul in this passage which are produced from one another.

4. How is the love of God poured into the hearts of the saved?

5. (5:6-11) Paul talks about three different types of men, in consideration of why another would die for them. Indicate the likelihood that someone would die for such as these:
 - Righteous man:

 - Good man:

 - Ungodly sinners, enemies:

6. Much of our faith rests on the benefits of Christ's death, but Paul also reminds us of the benefits of his initial and second life after the resurrection. What benefit does Christ's life give us (Heb. 7:25)?

7. (5:12-19) How did sin and death initially enter the world?

8. How did death spread to all men?

9. Calvinists argue that everyone bears the guilt of Adam's sin, but this passage shows that each man bears only the guilt of his own sin in that it says they did not sin according to Adam's transgression. Consider Ezekiel 18:18-20. Is anyone but Adam accountable for Adam's sin?

10. Paul paints Adam as typical of the Christ that was to come. What comparison and contrast between the effect of the two lives can you see in this passage?

11. Are all men in the world automatically made righteous just because Christ died? Why or why not?

12. Are all men then automatically made unrighteous just because Adam sinned?

13. (5:20-21) Why did the law enter the picture (Rom. 7:7)?

Lesson 5: Liberty From The Flesh

Romans 6:1-7:25

1. (6:1-4) Why did some think their continual sin was not a big deal?
2. Does one need to be “in Christ” to be saved? How does one get “in Christ”? To what does Paul liken baptism?
3. What does it mean to “walk in newness of life”?
4. (6:5-11) In what way are men made free when they obey the gospel (John 8:30-32)? How is one united to the likeness of Christ’s death?
5. (6:12-14) To what should the Christian’s freedom lead him?
6. Does being under grace mean that there is no law for Christians (Rom. 3:27, 8:2)?
7. (6:15-19) What importance does Paul attach to obedience?
8. How were the saved delivered from sin?
9. In what way are Christians still slaves?
10. (6:20-23) What are the wages of sin? Does this mean that condemnation is earned by man?

11. Is it possible then to earn salvation? Why or why not?

12. How then can salvation be attained?

13. (7:1-6) Indirectly, this passage tells us about the sanctity and endurance of marriage. For how long is every scriptural marriage to last? What does the Bible call a woman who divorces her husband because she wants to marry someone else and then does just that (her first husband has not cheated on her)?

14. How does this passage impact on those that want to borrow the Sabbath or instrumental music from Old Testament authority?

15. (7:7-12) What is the great value of the law of Moses?

16. (7:13-20) Describe the inner conflict that troubled Paul especially before he obeyed the gospel.

17. (7:21-25) How did Paul feel about God's law?

Lesson 6: Life In The Spirit

Romans 8:1-39

1. (8:1-8) There is no condemnation of those in Christ Jesus. How does one get “in Christ” (Rom. 6:1-4, Gal. 3:27)?
2. Is it possible for one “in Christ” to depart from there (Gal. 5:4)? If so, how? If not, why not?
3. What law is meant by “the law of sin and death?”
4. How does Paul describe a life that is according to the flesh?
5. (8:9-17) This passage says that both the Spirit and Christ dwell in the Christian. How is this possible?
6. If ours is not a spirit of bondage and fear, what is it (1 John 4:18, 2 Tim. 1:7, Heb. 4:14-16)?
7. What evidence exists that we are children of God (Gal. 5:16-26)?

8. If we suffer with Christ, what shall we also enjoy with him?

9. (8:18-25) How did Paul compare the sufferings of life with his hope for eternity?

10. What is said to groan and labor with birth pangs?

11. With what attitude must we wait for our final redemption?

12. What tests this attitude?

13. (8:26-30) With what does the spirit make intercession for us? Why?

14. (8:31-39) If God is for us, who can be against us?

15. What shall separate us from the love of God?

Lesson 7: Self-Righteousness

Romans 9:1-10:21

1. (9:1-5) What caused Paul to grieve so deeply?

2. List the eight historic benefits of the Israelites in this passage.

- | | |
|----|----|
| 1. | 5. |
| 2. | 6. |
| 3. | 7. |
| 4. | 8. |

3. (9:6-13) What does Paul mean by saying “They are not all Israel who are of Israel”?

4. This passage deals with God’s choice of Jacob’s descendants to include the Messiah, rather than Esau’s. What is meant by the statement of God, “Jacob I have loved, but Esau I have hated”?

5. (9:14-18) God asserts His right to choose the terms by which He will extend mercy to man. Why did Pharaoh not receive His mercy?

6. (9:19-29) How are we to be like clay in the potter’s hands?

7. Who are the vessels of wrath? Who are the vessels of mercy?

8. How can it be proven here that Gentiles are also candidates for salvation?

9. (9:30-33) Why were the Jews mostly lost?

10. (10:1-13) What was wrong with Israel's zeal for God?

11. What two actions are mentioned as conditions of salvation in verse 9?

12. What did Ananias attach to the idea of calling on the name of the Lord when he preached to Saul of Tarsus (Acts 22:16)?

13. (10:14-21) Why are the feet of a preacher beautiful?

14. How does faith come?

15. Can a soul be saved before and without hearing the gospel?

Lesson 8: God and Israel

Romans 11:1-36

1. (11:1-6) Has God cast away the Israelites? How do we know?
2. How had God responded to Elijah when he complained of his isolation? How can God's response affect us when we feel similarly downtrodden and alone?
3. (11:7-10) Why were the Israelites blinded?
4. (11:11-18) What was one anticipated byproduct of the Gentile's salvation?
5. What does Paul mean by the branches that were broken off? What does Paul mean by the wild branches that were grafted in?
6. Why does Paul condemn the boasting of the saved Gentiles (Rom. 3:27)?
7. (11:19-24) What reasoning is given for the encouragement that Gentile Christians should "fear"?

8. What condition is placed upon the goodness of God toward the saved?

9. (11:25-27) How will all Israel be saved?

10. (11:28-36) Ultimately, does God desire the loss of any soul?

Lesson 9: Your Reasonable Service

Romans 12:1-13:14

1. (12:1-2) How do we present our bodies to God as a living sacrifice?
2. What are some ways in which Christians are tempted to conform to the world?
3. (12:3-8) What does Paul mean by warning us not to think of ourselves more highly than is proper (1 Cor. 10:12)?
4. List the seven gifts Paul mentions in this passage.
 - 1.
 - 2.
 - 3.
 - 4.
 - 5.
 - 6.
 - 7.
5. (12:9-13) How is love sometimes tainted by hypocrisy (1 John 3:17)?
6. What does it mean to give preference to one another (Phil. 2:1-4)?
7. (12:14-21) What is the danger when a man is wise in his own opinion?
8. How should one deal with people who refuse to be at peace with him?

9. How does one “give place to wrath”?

10. What is the hope in feeding one’s enemy?

11. (13:1-7) What should be our attitude toward government?

12. What right does the government possess, as endowed by God?

13. (13:8-14) In what are the commandments summarized?

14. What should be our attitude toward works of darkness? What degree of tolerance should we possess for our sinful habits?

Lesson 10: Receive One Another

Romans 14:1-15:7

1. (14:1-4) Does this passage concern those who are weak in the faith, those who are not even in the faith, or those who are sinful within the faith?
2. What is God's mandate regarding the eating of meat? What does he say concerning vegetarianism?
3. Should we judge our brethren as faithful or not, based upon whether they eat meat or not?
4. (14:5-6) What is God's doctrine concerning the observation of certain days?
5. (14:7-11) If there is no sin in making either decision on these two matters, how could sin enter into the situation?
6. Using this context, why would it be wrong to insert social drinking, modern dancing or abortion into this passage and declare that any decision is tolerable and should be received by opponents?
7. (14:12-13) Instead of judging a brother's faithfulness based on these matters, what should be our interest?
8. Which group was known for avoiding meats and observing special days—Jews or Gentiles? Which group, then, is the weak brethren?
9. (14:14-18) If I consider something to be unclean, what should my attitude toward it be, even if it is clean in reality?

10. If a Jewish Christian were troubled by a Gentile Christian's meat eating, how should the latter handle the situation?

11. The context says things in this realm are accepted and approved by God. Why then can we not insert unscriptural marriages and soft pornography into this passage and render them received?

12. (14:19-23) In the pursuit of peace, should we allow anyone to place anything they want under the protection of this passage?

13. How should we handle decision about which we are unsure whether a thing is sinful or not?

14. (15:1-7) What should be our attitude toward a brother's scruples?

15. What is the value of the Old Testament to us today?

Lesson 11: Conclusion

Romans 15:8-16:27

1. (15:8-13) How is Jesus a servant to the circumcision?
2. Isaiah's prophecy offers two clues as to identity and mission of the Messiah, both of which were fulfilled by Jesus against some odds. What are those two clues?
3. (15:14-21) Paul trusts the Roman saints will receive admonition both from him and another source. What is it?
4. What accompanied Paul's preaching that confirmed God wanted the Gentiles to hear the gospel?
5. (15:22-29) Why was Paul much hindered from visiting Rome?
6. Why was he headed now for Jerusalem? To open a new Church of Christ Hospital? To open a mission to provide charity for all men of every religious belief?
7. (15:30-33) What was Paul concerned about as he headed there?

8. (16:1-2) Who was Phoebe?

9. (16:3-16) Who were Priscilla and Aquila?

10. With what did Paul encourage Christians to greet one another? How is this different from any other kind?

11. Why should one feel more secure as a member of a local church of Christ than a local Baptist or Methodist church?

12. (16:17-20) What is the church to do about divisive people?

13. What is the motivation of the divisive?

14. (16:21-27) Who wrote this epistle?

15. Some suggest that Christians cannot hold positions in government. What Bible character did?

Lesson 12: The Apostle and The Gospel

Galatians 1:1-24

1. (1:1-5) How does Paul claim his apostleship was conferred upon Him? Find scriptures from the book of Acts that will support his claim.
2. Some of the Galatian Christians were forsaking the law of liberty in Christ for the misguided hope of salvation in Moses. But what did Jesus do for us by contrast? Did He do this willingly?
3. (1:6-10) Verse six shows some evidence of a character flaw that was a part of the Galatian reputation. What is the flaw and what is the evidence?
4. Does Paul accept the establishment of what he calls “another gospel”? How does he describe this different gospel?
5. Those who were perverting the gospel in Galatia were false teachers who were propagating a false doctrine. Paul encourages the Galatians to discern from their teaching if it true and if they are purposely perverting the gospel, they are to be considered *anathema*. What does this mean?
6. The Judaizing teachers played on racial tension by claiming Paul’s teaching was designed to please men—the Gentiles. Does the history of Paul’s life portray a man who was simply seeking the favor of men?
7. (1:11-17) If Paul didn’t receive the gospel from men like the twelve apostles, from where did he receive it?

8. Do you think Paul's former life made him a logical choice for God as the apostle to take the gospel to the next level?

9. As evidence of his independence from the 12, he claims to have avoided what city for a time?

10. (1:18-24) Refer to Acts 9:20-30. Describe Paul's experiences upon beginning his evangelistic work.

Lesson 13: Peter, Paul and the Law

Galatians 2:1-21

1. (2:1-5) Paul mentions next his third visit to Jerusalem, c. 51 A.D. Read about this visit in Acts 15. According to Acts 15:5, over what was the dispute?
2. According to verse 24, what was the decree concerning this?
3. Some false brethren (apparently Jews) appeared at this meeting with one goal. What was it according to verse 4?
4. (2:6-10) Describe the relationship between Paul and Peter upon departing from Jerusalem.
5. (2:11-13) Unlike the Judaizers who accused Paul behind his back, Paul withstood Peter. How and why (verse 11).
6. Why was Peter in this condition? Did he know better?

7. What was the result of Peter's actions?

8. (2:14-21) The contention of the Judaizing teachers and the actions of Peter carried several troubling implications. We will discuss them in class. What destroyed things in verse 18 were they trying to rebuild?

Lesson 14: Justification By Faith

Galatians 3:1-3:29

1. (3:1-5) The first five verses of this chapter deal with the intended maturation process of the Christians there in Galatia. Paul's desire for them was that they mature beyond to the flesh to the spiritual. What were they doing instead?
2. What was the fleshly set of ordinances they sought?
3. What lesson should this teach those in our day who want to appeal to the Old Law to justify their practices?
4. What would you say to someone who claimed to be a member of an Old Testament and New Testament church?
5. (3:6-9) Whom are the spiritual sons of Abraham? How are they justified? Give an example of the great faith of Abraham.
6. (3:10-14) What law is the writer talking about? Should this discussion of the law be used to diminish keeping the perfect law of liberty in the New Testament?

7. (3:15-18) Were the promise and blessing described in verse 14 instituted in the Old Law (verse 18)? Could the covenant between Abraham and God be annulled?

8. (3:19-25) According to verses 19 and 24, what was the purpose of the old law?

9. (3:26-29) How do we put on Christ and become sons of God?

Lesson 15: Abraham

Galatians 4:1-31

1. (4:1-7) Paul notes that Jesus's work on earth allowed them to be receive what (verse 5, cf. John 1:12, Romans 8:1-17)? How must children of God live?
2. How are Christians related to God (1 John 3:1-3)? How are they related to Christ (Heb. 2:11)?
3. What is our inheritance (1 Peter 1:3-5)
4. (4:8-11) This paragraph especially addresses the Gentile Christians who were being compelled by Jewish Christians to submit to certain tenets of the old law. Are Christians required to keep the Sabbath and other festivals (Col. 2:16)?
5. What is an implication of verse 11?
6. (4:12-16) This passage has confounded trivial discussions for centuries. What was Paul's infirmity?
7. The cliché, "the truth hurts," applies here. Is someone who tells you the truth your enemy or your friend?
8. (4:17-20) Paul describes the Judaizing teachers as the real enemies. What were they trying to shut the Gentile Christians out of and why?

9. (4:21-31) Paul points to the Old Testament to show the sufficiency of the New. Identify these characters:

a. Who are Abraham's handmaiden and her son?

b. Who are Abraham's wife and her son?

10. Who persecuted whom and how does this apply to this lesson?

Lesson 16: Stand In Liberty

Galatians 5:1-26

1. (5:1-6) After reading Paul's discourse on circumcision here, refer to Acts 16:3 where he had Timothy circumcised. Can you reconcile these two passages?
2. Is it possible to fall from grace? How?
3. Does this passage extol the virtue of faith only?
4. (5:7-12) Paul uses a new testament proverb in verse 9 to show the urgency of the situation. What is the proverb and its implications in this problem?
3. Paul goes on to make the point that if he were still preaching circumcision (as some there held) the Jews would not be persecuting him anymore because the stumbling block of the cross would have been done away. Was he still being persecuted?
4. What is Paul's prescription for those Judaizing teachers who are misleading the Galatians?
5. (5:13-15) Paul returns to the liberty in Christ. Should a Christian feel free to sin because of that liberty?
6. How do Christians bite and devour one another?

7. (5:16-18) How do we prove that we are being led by the Holy Spirit?

8. (5:19-22) Are there any sins in this list that would disqualify one from entry into the kingdom of God that you would consider fairly common? What must the Christian do with these desires?

9. (5:23-26) How do we crucify fleshly desires?

10. How does conceit provoke others to envy?

Lesson 17: The Marks of Jesus

Galatians 6:1-18

1. (6:1-3) List four characteristics that should be a part of our attempts to restore an overtaken brother:

- verse 1:

- verse 1:

- verse 2:

- verse 3:

2. (6:4-5) In what respects must one bear his own load?

3. (6:6-10) Are these verses an admonition to the individual or to the church? Note the pronouns and other clues that tell the story.

4. What eternal truth does this passage teach about sowing and reaping?

5. (6:11-18) Why were some Judaizing teachers pushing circumcision on Gentiles?

6. In what should we boast? Explain.

7. What point does Paul wish to emphasize by taking the pen from his amanuensis and inscribing himself?

Other Class Material By This Author

A Passage Through the Old Testament

OT1 In The Beginning
OT2 From Egypt to Canaan
OT3 Taming Canaan
OT4 The Throne of David

OT5 Israel and Judah
OT6 The Major Prophets
OT7 The Minor Prophets
OT8 Wisdom Lit./Post-Exile

A Passage Through the New Testament

NT01 Harmonized Gospels
NT02 Acts of the Apostles
NT03 Early Epistles
NT04 Liberty Epistles
NT05 First Corinthians
NT06 Second Corinthians

NT07 Prison Epistles
NT08 Preacher Epistles
NT09 Hebrew Epistle
NT10 Minor Epistles
NT11 Revelation to John

Topical Studies

Biblical Typology
Brotherly Love
Characters of The Acts
Characters of The Old Testament
Great Themes of Isaiah
New Testament Churches
Parables of Jesus
Proverbs: The Beginning of Knowledge

Sermon on the Mount
Special Studies
The 10 Commandments Today
The Church of Christ
The Life and Times of Jesus
The Spirit World
Works of Flesh-Fruits of Spirit



J.S. Smith
Fort Worth, Texas
Electronic Mail: jeffssmith@mac.com
Internet: www.electronicgospel.org
© 1995 All Rights Reserved

Reproductions may be freely made and used, provided proper credit is given to the author and no charge is ever made in association with this material without the express written consent of the author.