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COMMENTARY ON THE WHOLE BIBLE

Romans

by Matthew Henry

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AN EXPOSITION, WITH PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS, OF

THE EPISTLE OF ST. PAUL TO THE

ROMANS

If we may compare scripture with scripture, and take the opinion of some devout and pious persons, in the Old Testament David's Psalms, and in the New Testament Paul's Epistles, are stars of the first magnitude, that differ from the other stars in glory. The whole scripture is indeed an epistle from heaven to earth: but in it we have upon record several particular epistles, more of Paul's than of any other, for he was the chief of the apostles, and laboured more abundantly than they all. His natural parts, I doubt not, were very pregnant; his apprehension was quick and piercing; his expressions were fluent and copious; his affections, wherever he took, very warm and zealous, and his resolutions no less bold and daring: this made him, before his conversion, a very keen and bitter persecutor; but when the strong man armed was dispossessed, and the stronger than he came to divide the spoil and to sanctify these qualifications, he became the most skilful zealous preacher; never any better fitted to win souls, nor more successful. Fourteen of his epistles we have in the canon of scripture; many more, it is probable, he wrote in the course of his ministry, which might be profitable enough for doctrine, for reproof, etc., but, not being given by inspiration of God, they were not received as canonical scripture, nor handed down to us. Six epistles, said to be Paul's, written to Seneca, and eight of Seneca's to him, are spoken of by some of the ancients [*Sixt. Senens. Biblioth. Sanct. lib. 2*] and are extant; but, upon the first view, they appear spurious and counterfeit.

This epistle to the Romans is placed first, not because of the priority of its date, but because of the superlative excellency of the epistle, it being one of the longest and fullest of all, and perhaps because of the dignity of the place to which it is written. Chrysostom would have this epistle read over to him twice a week. It is gathered from some passages in the epistle that it was written *Anno Christi 56*, from Corinth, while Paul made a short stay there in his way to Troas, ~~4016~~ Acts 20:5, 6. He commendeth to the Romans

Phebe, a servant of the church at Cenchrea (Romans 16), which was a place belonging to Corinth. He calls Gaius his *host*, or the man with whom he lodged (⁴⁶²³Romans 16:23), and he was a Corinthian, not the same with Gaius of Derbe, mentioned Acts 20. Paul was now going up to Jerusalem, with the money that was given to the poor saints there; and of that he speaks, ⁴⁶⁵⁵Romans 15:26. The great mysteries treated of in this epistle must needs produce in this, as in other writings of Paul, many things dark and hard to be understood, ⁴⁶⁸⁶2 Peter 3:16. The method of this (as of several other of the epistles) is observable; the former part of it doctrinal, in the first eleven chapters; the latter part practical, in the last five: to inform the judgment and to reform the life. And the best way to understand the truths explained in the former part is to abide and abound in the practice of the duties prescribed in the latter part; for, if any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, ⁴⁷⁷⁷John 7:17.

I. The doctrinal part of the epistles instructs us,

1. Concerning the way of salvation

(1.)The foundation of it laid in justification, and that not by the Gentiles' works of nature (Romans 1), nor by the Jews' works of the law (Romans 2, 3), for both Jews and Gentiles were liable to the curse; but only by faith in Jesus Christ, ⁴⁸²¹Romans 3:21, etc.; Romans 4.

(2.)The steps of this salvation are,

[1.] Peace with God, Romans 5.

[2.] Sanctification, Romans 6, 7.

[3.] Glorification, Romans 8.

2. Concerning the persons saved, such as belong to the election of grace (Romans 9), Gentiles and Jews, Romans 10, 11. By this it appears that the subject he discourses of were such as were then the present truths, as the apostle speaks, ⁴⁹¹²2 Peter 1:12. Two things the Jews then stumbled at — justification by faith without the works of the law, and the admission of the Gentiles into the church; and therefore both these he studied to clear and vindicate.

II. The practical part follows, wherein we find,

1. Several general exhortations proper for all Christians, Romans 12.

2. Directions for our behaviour, as members of civil society, Romans 13.
3. Rules for the conduct of Christians to one another, as members of the Christian church, Romans 14 and ~~511~~Romans 15:1-14.

III. As he draws towards a conclusion, he makes an apology for writing to them (~~514~~Romans 15:14-16), gives them an account of himself and his own affairs (v. 17-21), promises them a visit (v. 22-29), begs their prayers (v. 30-33), sends particular salutations to many friends there (~~511~~Romans 16:1-16), warns them against those who caused divisions (v. 17-20), adds the salutations of his friends with him (v. 21-23), and ends with a benediction to them and a doxology to God (v. 24-27).