

New Testament Literature - Romans and Introduction to 1 Corinthians

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Abstract

In this lecture, Dr. Dave Mathewson examines the theological architecture of Romans and introduces Paul's first letter to the Corinthians. He explains Paul's argument moving from a universal diagnosis of sin to a divine prognosis of righteousness through faith in Christ, emphasizing how God maintains His justice through Christ's sacrificial redemption and propitiation. Mathewson also details the 'already but not yet' eschatological framework governing Paul's ethical imperatives, before transitioning to the historical, moral, and epistolary background of Paul's ongoing correspondence with the church at Corinth.

Outline

I. Reading Romans: Theological Framework

A. Old Perspective vs. New Perspective on Romans

1. Old Perspective: Focuses on individual salvation and standing before a holy God (Lutheran formulation).
2. New Perspective: Focuses on corporate Jew-Gentile relationships and requirements for covenant membership.
3. Integrated View: Paul addresses Jew-Gentile unity based on the foundational reality of individual salvation before God.

B. Paul's Argument: Diagnosis to Prognosis

1. Diagnosis (Romans 1–3): Universal human guilt and condemnation under sin for both Gentiles and Jews.
2. Prognosis (Romans 3:21ff): Divine solution offering righteousness available exclusively through faith in Jesus Christ.

II. The Heart of the Gospel (Romans 3:21–26)

A. Righteousness Apart from the Law

1. Independent of human Mosaic law-keeping.
2. Universally available to both Jews and Gentiles on an equal basis.

B. Theological Metaphors of Salvation

1. Redemption: Liberation from slavery to sin, recalling Old Testament Exodus deliverance.

2. Propitiation / Sacrifice of Atonement: Removal of sin and satisfaction/averting of God's holy wrath.

3. Mercy Seat (Hilasterion): Fulfillment of the Old Testament Ark of the Covenant sacrificial system.

C. The Justice and Righteousness of God

1. Preservation of God's holy character without lowering moral standards.

2. Vindication of God's justice in declaring sinners righteous through Christ's death.

III. Theological Implications and Christian Living

A. Refutation of Antinomianism (Romans 6)

1. Transformation as the necessary outcome of faith in Christ.

2. Identification with Christ's death (death to sin) and resurrection (walking in newness of life).

B. Definition and Context of Justification

1. Legal and courtroom background: God as Judge declaring believers righteous/innocent.

2. Covenantal dimensions rooted in Old Testament promises.

IV. Eschatological Framework: The 'Already / Not Yet' Tension

A. Kingdom Realized and Awaited

1. Shared framework between Jesus' kingdom teaching and Paul's theology.

2. Present reality of salvation alongside future awaited consummation.

B. The Two Humanities (Adam vs. Christ)

1. Sphere of Adam: Characterized by old self, bondage to sin, and death.

2. Sphere of Christ: Characterized by new self, righteousness, life, and the Holy Spirit.

C. Indicative and Imperative

1. Indicative ('Already'): Absolute declarations of believer's status in Christ (crucified old self).

2. Imperative ('Not Yet'): Ethical commands to actively resist sin and walk in new life.

V. Historical and Literary Introduction to 1 Corinthians

A. Historical Context of Corinth (Acts 18)

1. Paul's 18-month ministry founding the church.

2. Corinth as capital of Achaia: Prosperous, wealthy, and morally complex Greco-Roman city.

B. Epistolary Context and Correspondence History

1. Multi-letter exchange between Paul and the Corinthian church.

2. Identification of four distinct letters (1 Corinthians as second letter; 2 Corinthians as fourth letter, including missing pre-1 Corinthians letter and 'severe letter').