

AN ANALYSIS OF THE FLOW OF THOUGHT IN PAUL'S LETTER TO THE ROMANS: THE MEANING OF SALVATION

- I. INTRODUCTION -- 1:1-15 -- the situation, persons, and purpose
  - 1. Paul's official relation to the Roman church: his apostleship is established by redemption and divine appointment; his gospel, by the divine promise as fulfilled in the triumph of God's SON, "Jesus Christ our Lord"; greeting to the Roman saints (the Pauline blessing) -- 1-7
  - 2. Paul's personal relation to the Roman church: commendation, and explanations of interest, desire, and hope; readiness to preach -- 8-15.  
#1: The THEME: "CONCERNING HIS SON"; #2: THE FOCUS: CHRIST AND OTHERS.

- II. DOCTRINAL ARGUMENT-EXPOSITION -- 1:16-8: THE MEANING OF SALVATION.
  - 1. THESIS--1:16f: "The Gospel...God's power...salvation...God's righteousness...faith"; salvation is (1) by faith and (2) universal; the Gospel provides the moral and spiritual power for the regeneration of human life; righteousness is both an attribute of God and a demand from man; the Gospel is self-vindicating because God-empowered and life-giving; the thesis requires definition, defense, exposition.
    - 2. THESIS DEMONSTRATION--1:18-8.
      - 1) HISTORICAL OBJECTIVE) VINDICATION: SOCIAL FAILURE AND DIVINE REFORMATION--1.18-5 SINFULNESS DESTROYS: RIGHTEOUSNESS CREATES.
      - (1) THE NIGHT: SOCIAL FAILURE--1.18-3.20: HUMANITY CONDEMNED: The lack - need of God's righteousness is universal, and so is his consequent judgment; but the blame is man's not God's (Paul's theodicy).
        - (1. THE GENTILE WORLD--1.18---is religiously and morally bankrupt and under divine indictment, having neglected faith in God as revealed in nature and having therefore failed to attain to righteousness. Morality and religion are interdetermining. When "God's righteousness" is refused, "wrath...from heaven" is inevitable: men close their eyes, and God blinds them with pride and idolatry.
        - (2. PIVOTAL TRANSITION: HUMAN VS. DIVINE JUDGMENT--2.1-92. Human judgment (proximate and prejudiced) backfires in divine judgment (ultimate and "according to truth"). Subtle transition to---
        - (3. THE JEWISH WORLD--2.9b-3.20--is not exempt from the divine judgment, for its sin is of the same kind and of even greater degree: failure to attain the divine righteousness, Judgment of others but not of self, false confidence. The firstness of the Jew is more extensive than he thinks: he is first in wrath-judgment as well as in righteousness-opportunity--and the latter is worse than worthless when abused: irresponsible possession of divine revelation is supranational: It is a personal attainment based on personal commitment, not an objectively provided social inheritance. The awful reality of universal guilt makes insignificant any apparent advantages of any particular group: "all" are "under sin."
      - (2) THE DAY: DIVINE REFORMATION--3.21-5: THE OBJECTIVE PROVISION OF SALVATION: HUMANITY JUSTIFIED: The historical failure of human righteousness has made necessary the historical MANIFESTATION OF THE DIVINE RIGHTEOUSNESS IN JESUS, who is God's grace-gift by faith-commitment-obedience, historically exemplified in pre-legal Abraham (4) and now experientially validated in us (5.1-11) whom Christ has introduced to God through the reconciliation of His vicarious death and the salvation of His victorious, risen life, making possible for all "eternal life" through reconciliation. Christ-"grace" as creator (life) is more than the equal of Adam-"sin" as destroyer (death) (5.12- ).
        - (1. GOD has manifested HIS way for man's attainment of righteousness: "FAITH IN JESUS CHRIST...no distinction...justified" -3.21-.
        - (2. This method, justification by faith, is consonant with God's previous dealing with men, as the Scriptures record--4.
        - (3. By it a new standing before God has been won--5.1-11.
        - (4. The newness of this relation to God is evident in its foundation: the historical act-state of sin in Adam has been replaced by the historical act-state of righteousness in Christ--5.12-.

- 2) PSYCHOLOGICAL (SUBJECTIVE) VINDICATION: INDIVIDUAL FAILURE AND DIVINE REGENERATION--6-8: SIN DISINTEGRATES: RIGHTEOUSNESS UNITES. THE SUBJECTIVE APPROPRIATION of salvation is through UNION WITH CHRIST, which involves death to sin (6), freedom from the Law (7), and life to God (8). This makes spiritual victory possible (6): though it is contested (7), it is finally in the Spirit realized (8). The victory of Christ thus makes real our justification (3:21-5), sanctification (6-8.16), and glorification (8.17- ).
- (1) This is the true basis of Christian life--6.1-11: the believer relives the Christ-archetyped way of salvation, finding the post-resurrectional "newness of life."
- (2) The conflict of the two masters, law-sin-death and Christ-righteousness-life, can find its only real resolution in complete devotion to the second, for the first cannot offer constructive satisfaction--6.12-7.6.
- (3) This does not mean that the law is sin, but that its illumination of sin either provokes further sinning in the self-centered, or increases his consciousness of sin by concentrating his attention on the still-existing though decreasing area of sin in him. Law is thus revelatory but nonredemptive, providing no moral motive power to the "mind" in its battle with the "flesh". The source of evidence for these propositions is Paul's own experience--7.7-.
- (4) The subjective conflict, unsolvable by self-centered attention, subsides when its cosmic counterpart is seen incarnately resolved "in Christ Jesus," in and through whom "the law of the Spirit of life" is operative. The divine "Spirit" breaks up the fight between human "mind" and human "flesh" by enslaving both to the divine purpose, thus bringing God-centered liberty and triumph and, with them, certain filial obligations--8

III. THE PROBLEM OF ISRAEL'S REJECTION OF CHRIST--9-11: THE CHRISTIAN INTERPRETATION of History.

1. The fundamental assumption here and everywhere is that God's activity is always consonant with His righteousness and His love as revealed in Christ and as experienced by the believer.
2. Two defensive (theodic) explanations are offered--9: the selective nature of the divine purpose ("remnant") and the consequent spiritual definition of "Israel."
3. Israel is responsible for the rejection--10. The law, meant to be a means to the attainment of true righteousness, became the end, and so prevented faith, which alone could bring the true end, God's righteousness, freely offered to Jew and Greek alike.
4. We must have faith that GOD controls the whole situation and that He still has a plan for Israel's redemption. The believing remnant, the ray of hope in the past, is today's and tomorrow's hope also. Then, too, their unbelief made possible the Gentiles' belief, which in turn will stimulate the Jews to faith --"so all Israel shall be saved"; the universal offer of salvation is validated by the divine intention to "have mercy upon all." His mercy we can fully know, though not His wisdom, knowledge, and judgments--11.

IV. PRACTICAL EXHORTATION-INSTRUCTION: THE IMITATION OF CHRIST-12-15.4.  
DUTIES. THE BASIS: PERSONAL COMMITMENT TO THE WILL OF GOD IN CHRIST, THE ONLY ADEQUATE RESPONSE TO HIS GRACE; true humility--12.1-15.4.

V. THE WORLD CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP: CONCLUSION--15.5- .

— W. Elliott