

Book of Romans

The Catholic Book

Call on the Holy Spirit to help discern and learn about this Book.

NOTES:

The Protestants love the Book of Romans, Catholics should love it more. This book has influenced church history more than any other in many ways, as it helped convert St. Augustine, and changed Luther's direction, and has had a direct impact over the last 20 years to many people. Does the Book of Romans teach that we are justified by faith *alone*, or is the book teaching we are justified by a faith that must work in love?

St. Paul wrote the book at the City of Corinth, and probably around 55 A.D. He had yet to visit the city of Rome. St. Paul himself understands his mission, and he considers himself as one of the apostles, having been sent by Christ when St. Paul was on the road to Damascus. Christ singled out St. Paul as the Christians had a singular difficulty or challenge to convert the Jews, as they had missed the Messiah and eventually murdered Him.

It would have been difficult for the men of Galilee to try and convert the elite and educated of Jerusalem. The Apostles called personally by Christ while He was on earth were from Galilee, largely uneducated, and not of the upper classes. The Sanhedrin, priestly and educated classes would not be easily converted by such men. Yet, Christ called on the Jew nation's greatest student of the greatest Rabbi. Paul was known as Saul before Christ called him, and Gamaliel was his teacher. In fact, Gamaliel was known as the teacher of teachers of the Jews. Paul was his best student and advocate for crushing the new Christian sect. Later we find in Scripture that he was sent to the Gentiles. Once St. Paul was commissioned by Christ Himself, no person knew the Scriptures better than St. Paul. He sets forth his case in the Book of Romans that Gentiles are allowed to come into the family on an equal level as the Jews. He is showing the perfection of the New Covenant in replacing the Old Covenant. Finally, he shows that indeed it is a family relationship, that once a person enters this special family, they are adopted sons and daughters of God the Father. This New Covenant was not just for the Jews, but for all people for all time.

I. Ten passages that highlight St. Paul's *Catholic Book of Romans* according to Scott Hahn.

a. Romans 1:5. "Obedience of faith." ***It is not by faith alone***, but by **obedient faith**, that opens and closes the Book of Romans. (Romans 16:26). Any interpretation that would try to separate faith from obedience would not be right, as a lawyer, St. Paul is letting us know from the beginning of the book to its end, obedience is part of faith.

b. Romans 2:13. "For it is not those who hear the law who are just in the sight of God; rather those who observe the law will be justified." The Protestants views this as often unconnected to the issue of

justification. There is an essential connection written here by Paul in obedience and faith.

Eight times this concept is listed in this chapter: Faith and works go hand in hand. Romans 2:6. God will render unto every man in accord with his works. Divine judgment. Romans 2:7. In well-doing that God rewards with eternal life. Romans 2:10. Honor for those who do good. Romans 2:13. When the gentiles do by nature (conscience), what the law requires, they are a law requires. They are doing what the law requires. Romans 2:14. Circumcision is of value **if** you obey the law. Romans 2:25. If a man who is uncircumcised keeps the law. Romans 2:26. Then those who are uncircumcised but keep the law will condemn you who are circumcised and follow the old law. This is a statement as to those who keep the ritual of the law but do not keep obedience.

In the Old Testament, the circumcision was the outward sign of justification, and gentiles who did not have the circumcision would be unjustified. This outward sign for the Jews was what it meant to be justified. If this were true, then it would have been difficult for many young men to be converted to Judaism.

The second chapter of Romans is a warning to people from taking pride in the wrong things. Ceremonial laws that were physical or external were signs pointing to an internal spiritual reality. At verse 29, St. Paul says that one is a Jew inwardly where circumcision is of the heart in the spirit, "his praise is not from man but from God." Romans 2:29.

Jeremiah 9:25. The prophet Jeremiah reminded the Jews here that it was not circumcision that matters as many of the gentiles were circumcised. What matters is a heart that is cut off from fleshly desires and fleshly nature.

St. Paul shows in Chapter two, especially verse 13, the concept of obedience of faith.

The Protestants, especially the fundamentalists, stated that this is, "Plan A." It is stated that St. Paul is setting up an ideal that is impossible to attain. He says you can "be justified if you obey the law, you can receive eternal glory if you keep the precepts, for the doer of the law will be justified." However, nobody does the law, so "Plan A" must be relinquished, and therefore, "Plan B" is proposed in Chapter 3. The Protestants will state that Jesus obeyed the law for us, so we don't have to obey as He did it for us. They will state there is nothing meritorious in obedience, and there is nothing that is righteousness in our justification and nothing righteous in our behavior.

The only real righteous is Christ's righteousness, and there is no righteousness put inside of us, it is only "imputed" to us in a legal way. Give up trying to save yourself, and just accept Christ as your, "Lord and Savior," and His righteousness will be a substitute for your lack thereof. So Romans

chapter two is strictly a hypothetical case, and impossible task or condition that nobody can meet.

Why do the Protestants say this?

c. Romans 3:9 and 3:10. “For we have already brought the charge against Jews Greeks [Gentiles] alike that they are all under the domination of sin.” Romans 3:9. As a first century Jew, **you would have been insulted**. St. Paul said that both are under the power of sin. Gentiles are under the power of sin, but the Jews have been liberated from the power of sin under the **Old Covenant**. St. Paul answers, “no.” St. Paul notes that the Old Covenant was good, but the best, the perfect, has arrived in the form of the **New Covenant**.

This is a point missed by Protestants when they look at Romans 3:10. Here he quotes a series of Old Testament passages. A lawyer will quote his source material. St. Paul was a lawyer.

Romans 3:10 quotes Psalms 14 and 53. The Protestants will quote that verse, citing the text, “There is no one just, not one, there is no one who understands, there is no one who seeks God....” The conclusion drawn is that no one obeys the law, therefore no one is justified by “Plan A,” therefore God sets in motion “Plan B,” and Jesus Christ does it all for you and your justification.

The Catholic Church says that Romans 2 and Romans 3 are two ways **at looking at the same plan. We have to do the law and that God will render to every man in accord with his works, but only doers of the law will be justified, and only by faith in grace through the Holy Spirit that we are capable of doing the law in a way that is truly pleasing to God.**

At first reading of Romans 3:10, a person must admit the Protestants have it right: “no one is just.” You have to read Psalms 14 and 53 **in context**, as the Protestants are giving meaning this text meaning **it could not have had, as to interpret it as classical Protestantism has interpreted, is to wrench this Psalm out of context.**

Review Psalm 14. It is a lament over widespread corruption. It states, “Fools say in their hearts, ‘There is no God.’All have gone astray, all alike are perverse.” Psalm 14 3. In further, it states, “Will these evildoers never learn? They devour my people as they devour bread; they do not call upon the Lord. They have good reason, then, to fear; God is with the company [generation] of the just.” Psalm 14-16.

There is another group of people! The generation of the just is mentioned, probably *the poor in spirit* that is just. Holy David was describing in this psalm what was probably common in Jewish history. Read David’s life. Who were his enemies? Yes, there was Goliath; yet the majority who wanted him dead was Israelites. The wicked were Jew and Gentile alike! The just in the company of God were not **all** Jews but only a few. The wicked spoken of in Psalm 14 is not the gentiles alone but also many of the Jews;

who are not intrinsically free from the power of sin just because they were circumcised.

Holy David's point is in accord with St. Paul's point: just because you are in the covenant does not make you of the covenant. A man can have all the externals (circumcision) and all the ceremonials, but that does not make you righteous. It will not save you!

Go back to Romans 3:10. St. Paul is not **quoting Psalm 14 out of context**. **St. Paul's point is that there are circumcised Israelites who are opposed to God's covenant plan of salvation.**

Being a Jew is not an automatic guarantee. It is an awesome thing that translates great responsibility but it does not grant to each person perfunctory salvation.

To sum up, Roman 3:10 would have to be wrenched out of context if you think you are justified by circumcision, you are wrong. One must be circumcised in heart, and there are Jews and Gentiles alike that are justified in the heart. That is the point of Romans 3:10.

St. Paul quotes Isaiah 59: 7,8 at verse Romans 3:17. The Isaiah citation notes that those who do evil separate them from God (Isaiah 59:2); and that these people run to evil, quick to shed innocent blood, .. and the way of peace they know not. Isaiah 59:7,8. Israelites here are condemned for being under the power of sin just as some of the Gentiles are under the power of sin.

The Old Covenant did not give the Jews the power to become children of God. The Jews had the Mosaic Law and the Gentiles had the natural law. The Jews had circumcision and the Gentiles had conscience. St. Paul states that simply being circumcised does make you justified, it requires a "circumcision of the heart."

d. Romans 3:28. This *passage launched the Protestant Reformation*. **This is the text that Luther cited as evidence that the Catholic Church was no longer a church but a synagogue of Satan. What monstrosity. He translated it as follows:**

For we consider that a person is justified by faith **alone** apart from the works of the law.

Romans 3:28. Luther felt he could put the word "**alone**" in the German text as it was substantially alike. It was as St. Paul intended. Luther superimposed his own intentions on the text, simply reading it to mean that people are justified by **faith alone apart from the law**.

Yet, what does St. Paul mean by "works of the law?" Obeying the law? No. In Roman 2, St. Paul emphasizes keeping the law and following its precepts. The phrase "works of the law" is from the Greek which meant the following of the Old Testament ceremonial laws, the kosher laws, and

circumcision. It is noted that evangelical scholar John J. Hughes, said the phrase “works of the law” cannot relate to the moral law, but relates to the Torah’s requirements of circumcision and the requirements of the “cultic” calendar (the ceremonial law). Roman 3:28 is an important intersection in the interpretation of the book itself, and the *entire foundation of the Protestant Reformation*. The phrase “works of the law” is sometimes translated as “observing the law,” as if keeping the Ten Commandments is something unessential and unnecessary for justification. How silly as such a conclusion would make nonsense of St. Paul’s arguments made up to this point.

St. Paul is stating in Roman 3:28 is that you are justified by faith, **not by circumcision and all of the weak ceremonies of the Old Covenant**. As the Book of Romans moves into chapters 4, 5, and 6, one will note that it is baptism, the New Covenant ceremony that justifies. St. Paul is not anti-ritual or anti-sacramental, he simply notes that a new **effective** ceremony as established by Christ, i.e. baptism, becomes effective to justification. (Romans 6:2). Baptism is the cause of our death to sin and opens the door to heaven and makes us pleasing to God.

The New Covenant ceremonies or sacraments, unlike the Old Covenant (Old Testament) works of the law, are powerful, fewer, easier, and efficacious. We are justified by faith outside the old covenant and its works of the law. We are justified by faith in the New Covenant as established by Christ in the conveyance of His grace through the Sacraments giving us the power to obey the Ten Commandments and makes us pleasing before God.

e. Romans 4. Abraham’s faith. Protestants will cite Abraham’s faith as justification by faith alone. St. Paul quotes Genesis 15:6 in Romans 4:3: “Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.” At first glance, it would appear Abraham was justified by faith alone. In other words, the Protestant reading of this includes, that no good works, no good deeds preceded Abraham’s righteousness in believing God. It was not depended upon any love or any obedience.

If you study the life of Abraham, there is a fatal flaw in this interpretation. Abraham believed and was justified at Genesis 15:6, but Abraham was called to leave his hometown, property, and family at the age of 70 years, and he left. He went out to the Promised Land. Genesis 12. In the Book of Hebrews, Chapter 11, is says, “By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place that he was to receive as an inheritance; he went out, not knowing where he was to go. By faith he sojourned in the promised land as in a foreign country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, heirs of the promise; ... by faith power to generate, even though he was past the normal age—and Sarah herself was sterile—for he thought the one who had made the promise was trustworthy.” It goes on and recounts that Abraham was promised that his descendents would be as numerous as the stars. So true.

Abraham exercises his faith in Genesis 12. He erects altars, prayers, pays tithes, receives a blessing, and swears an oath to worship God; all this

in Genesis 12 long before it is written in Genesis 15:6 that he was justified in believing God.

Protestants believe that Genesis 15:6 is applicable when Abraham was first justified. Yet, if that conclusion be true, then all of his good deeds, acts, and worship were done apart from saving faith before he was justified.

Hebrews 11 **makes it abundantly clear that Abraham was doing all of these things prior to Genesis 15:6, in saving faith. This fits the Catholic position on the issue of obedient faith.**

The Catholic position on justification is that it is in a status of sonship (or a family relationship), and it is always growing, always maturing, with the give and take relationship with a real heavenly Father. Genesis 15:6 is but a time when Scripture recognizes that Abraham's faith matured a little more.

Romans 3:4 is a turning point away from the "Bible Christians" misinterpretation of the Book of Romans. St. Paul states in Romans 4 that salvation is not like a wage to be earned, but an inheritance. (Can one who is not related to a father, inherit? By definition, no. One is an heir only if the father has no will. Where there is a will or last testament, these are called beneficiaries). It is to be received from the Father according to His promises.

Protestants are often taught a concept from Luther that salvation through Christ is like being in a Roman courtroom. God the Father as judge adjudicates each of us as guilty sinners on the basis of Christ's innocence and righteousness.

It is not a Roman courtroom. That idea is not mentioned in the Book of Romans. It is a Hebrew covenant. It is a family relationship. The ancient Hebrew covenant was a sacred family bond. It is not a courtroom. It is a household. The laws are a statement of the Father's love to help make His children thoughtful and more responsible to love Him and other family members.

St. Paul does not speak of a Roman courtroom, but of Hebrew covenant images, which were a family relationship and a bond between family members.

f. Romans 5. Contrast between Adam and Jesus Christ. Jesus is implied to be the Second Adam. Adam was seen as the first father of the earthly family, and Christ comes as to found a new covenant or family in righteousness. As Adam imparted death and judgment to his family, but Christ imparts grace, righteousness, glory, and life to us, his brothers and sisters.

Look at Romans 5:19: "For just as through the disobedience of one person the many were made sinners, so through the obedience of one that

many will be made righteousness.” Adam’s disobedience did not just declare us sinners, but **made us sinners. We were born that way. Original sin.**

By Christ’s obedience, He can make us righteous. In other words, it is not a courtroom judgment, or a pure and white cloak of Christ that is put over us as Luther talked about, but through Christ’s obedience were are **made righteous.** Romans 5:19. He imparts justice and righteousness to our souls in a state of grace, *not just imputed to us as Luther stated.* **Christ does not declare us righteous, He makes us righteous.**

g. Romans 6:2. At the end of Romans 5, we must ask, if Adam is the reason why humans are under the power of sin, and if Christ is the way out of sin, how do we get into the action? How do we get from Adam to Christ, from under the Old Covenant to under the New Covenant? **NOTICE THAT nowhere in Scripture, especially here at the end of Romans 5, does it say that you are to “Accept Jesus as your personal Lord and Savior” and that is all you need.**

How do we get out of Adam to Christ, look at Romans 6:2? This is the Catholic position. How can we who died to sin yet live in it? Paul answers at Romans 5:3: “Or are you unaware that we who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?” Note this most of all: **“We were indeed buried with him through baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the death by the glory of the Father, we too might live in newness of life.”** Romans 6:4. We died in sin at birth, and baptism is our new life of righteousness. Paul does not say, just accept Jesus as your Savior, he states to get out of Adam, you must be baptized **into the family of Jesus Christ and the family of God.**

h. Romans 7:15. Concupiscence. Romans 5 describes original sin, which is an inheritance of what received due to the sin of Adam. Romans 6 describes how original sin is blotted out by the sacrament of baptism. After we are baptized, do we stop sinning? The effect of baptism is powerful, as it wipes away original sin and all sin committed up to that time. Yet, concupiscence remains, our darkened minds, our weakened will, our disordered appetites and our lusts remain. These are not sinful themselves, but incline us toward sin. St. Paul is stating in Romans 7 something that is very Catholic: that these disordered things in me are **not sin. He call it sin, but it is not sin itself but the inclination to sin that is in each of us.** A good confessor will hear a teenage boy confess that he saw a pretty girl, and all these desires welled-up in him. The boy may ask for forgiveness for such, but the confessor will state that he cannot forgive him because he did not sin. If the boy feel the desire, yet does not allow it to lead him to fantasize or other do other things, then there is no sin. A person cannot help but have such desires. The greatest saints would look at a woman and feel attracted. That is what makes us a perfectly normal male or female as the case may be, but the idea is not to consent to the pleasure of the attraction or concupiscence. Luther called this sinful. In other words, Luther stated that this was not just sinful but that is was **sin**, and he said that such rendered all of his works as “dung.” He called it as a filthy rags. Luther said that humans are nothing but a dung hill covered with snow. **Not**

so. Not true. Luther was wrong. Dead wrong. In fact, we humans are children of God, in the Family of God, trying in grace on a daily basis to get through our concupiscence or sinful nature. All of the disordered affections and lusts can be overcome. This is where meritorious action makes a difference, as it gives us something to overcome within ourselves. It has been said that the greatest battle a person will fight in life is to conquer one's own will and weaknesses, i.e. concupiscence.

i. Romans 8:4. In Romans 3:31, there is a verse that is reaffirmed in Romans 8:4: "Are we then annulling the law by this faith? Of course not! On the contrary, we are supporting the law." Romans 3:31. Eighteen times St. Paul refers to the Holy Spirit in the 8th chapter of Romans. At Romans 4:8, St. Paul states, "so that the righteous decree of the law might be fulfilled in us, who live not according to the flesh but according to the spirit." The Holy Spirit has been given us for one purpose as emphasized in Romans 8, to make us holy, to enable us to keep the law, to give us **the power to obey. This does not excuse us from obeying the law, but renders it possible to obey the law in a way that pleases God the Father.**

St. Paul states that we are debtors to live not according to the flesh, but in accord with the Holy Spirit, in the sonship of God the Father. The climatic point of St. Paul's discussion in these preceding chapters is that we have been made justified as the children of God (not as defendants in a courtroom wearing the cloak of Christ that covers our sins).

For those who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God. For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you received a spirit of adoption, through which we cry, *Abba*, "Father!" The Spirit itself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if only we suffer with him so that we may also be glorified with him." Romans 14-17.

St. Paul is saying that we have the Holy Spirit to **keep the law. We are heirs of God provided that we suffer with Christ. We fear suffering.** St. Paul's point in Romans 8 in the second half of that chapter is that suffering is what unites you to Christ. Romans 8 is the favorite proof text of Protestants to say that, "once saved, always saved" no matter what you do. The Book of Romans seems to say that at chapter 8, verse 35, who shall separate us from the love of Christ? "What will separate us from the love of Christ? Will anguish, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or the sword? As it is written, for our sake we are being slain all the day; we are looked upon as sheep to be slaughtered." Romans 8:35. Does this prove that salvation is assured, guaranteed, warranted, if accept Jesus as our personal Lord and Savior? No. Look at the text. St. Paul's states at verse 18 that the sufferings of this day are nothing compared to the glories of Heaven. Verse 26 calls on the Holy Spirit with regard to suffering. The Holy Spirit helps us and intercedes for us. St. Paul is saying, "Don't fear suffering."

The Holy Spirit will help you in suffering. St. Paul's point is simple, is that all things work for good for those who love God. Romans 8:28. St. Paul's point here is not that we have "eternal security" or as many Protestants say, "fire insurance." He is saying that we have to suffer, that we are **only co-heirs with Christ if we suffer with Christ. We must share in his suffering. Sufferings do not separate us from Christ, but join us to Him. See, Romans 8:28-30.**

At Romans 8:35, St. Paul is stating that no matter what sufferings we endure, He is with us, we are joined with Him in that suffering. The verse does not say, that if we commit adultery, fornication, robbery, detraction, slander, scandal, that Christ is still with us. If the reader looks carefully at Romans 8:35, he or she will note it speaks only of suffering ["anguish, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or the sword"]; not of sin. It is a promise that God will deliver us no matter what we face, as it is the plan for our salvation as Christians.

Only one church on earth teaches this family relationship of salvation, and that is the Catholic Church. The redemptive value of suffering is great when we offer up our suffering in union with Christ in His life, His suffering, and His death, for in all, "these things [suffering events] we conquer overwhelmingly through him who loved us." Now that we are His children, what good thing will He withhold? We cannot be separated from Christ by any suffering, as God will get us through it. Like a natural father loves his own children, God the Father will withhold nothing. +

Notes of John Keenan, O.P.L., from Scott Hahn tape on the Book of Romans entitled "Romanism in Romans."