

INTRODUCTION

THE HIMALAYAS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

The end of one road most often leads to the beginning of another. If you have begun this booklet, then you have come from one road and are standing at the beginning of another, and the path before you continues to go up. Looking up at this path might put a crick in your neck. The road is steep. Romans might be thought of as the “Himalayas of the New Testament;” the going is sharp and the air is thin, but do not panic. People who climb high peaks practice, they work up to them, and they have a guide. You have most likely read the Bible before, so you have some practice, and I hope to be your guide. If you ever hired a guide, then you know there are a range of experiences available. My experience comes from walking this road before with other guides, amazing guides. I have provided you a list of them in the reference section.

Reading Romans requires knowing the big picture story of God’s Plan.* Its literary style might be akin to a legal brief. It is the legal argument, if you will allow, of how God’s Plan in Jesus fits all we have ever known about God.

I am going to try very hard to help us through it. I’ll be primarily referencing and quoting from the English Standard Version (ESV) Bible, which has introductions to each of the Books of the Bible. Some Bibles even provide an outline. In the quote that follows you can see how the ESV contributors see Romans dividing into various parts.

Romans is the longest and most systematically reasoned of Paul's letters. Paul announces its theme in 1:16-17: the gospel is God's power of salvation, because it shows us that the righteousness of God is through faith for all who believe. Paul explains the need for justification through faith because of sin (*cf.* 1:16-4:25). He then spells out the results of justification by faith in terms of both present experience and future hope (5:1-8:39). In the next three chapters, he expresses his sorrow that many of his fellow Israelites have not embraced the gospel, and he wrestles with the theological implications of this in chapters 9-11. He concludes by describing how the gospel should affect our everyday life in chapters 12-16. Paul is thought to have written this letter circa 57 A.D.

That is a general outline of the path we will be taking. Often for me, as I take the trek, the map begins to make sense. Let me share with you my view of what you will come into contact with in this Letter. You will come into contact with ideas. Ideas such as, there is a God, and that humans have rejected not merely the idea of God, but actually rejected God. Furthermore, this rejection has real implications for people today, and for them after they die. Remarkably, God does not give up on his greatest creation—humanity—for God sends Jesus Christ to make us right with God. Paul would no doubt tell us these are more than ideas—that it is Truth—for he, Paul, has seen Jesus. Let us therefore begin.

*See the appendix, The Big Picture Story of the Bible.