



Paul for Everyone: Romans, Part Two Chapters 9-16

Tom Wright , N.T. Wright

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Writing in an approachable and anecdotal style, Tom Wright helps us see the great sweep of this letter. Romans has long been viewed as the book above all in which Paul puts forth the basic doctrines of the faith, and the picture of God's life for us. It is the classic setting-out of the Gospel.

Tom Wright has undertaken a tremendous task: to provide guides to all the books of the New Testament and to include in them his own translation of the entire text. Each short passage is followed by a highly readable discussion, with background information, useful explanations and suggestions, and thoughts as to how the text can be relevant to our lives today. A glossary is included at the back of each book. The series is suitable for group study, personal use, or daily devotions.

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Christopher says

This is the second time that I have questioned the wisdom of Mr. Wright, the editor, or the publisher's decision to split one of these commentaries into two books and the second time I've had to backtrack and say that this may have been a good idea. Rightfully, a lot of Bible scholars look at Romans 1-8 as the Apostle Paul's best writing in the New Testament if not in all of Christendom, but then give short shrift to the second half of Romans by never connecting it to what was said in the first half. Mr. Wright in this small commentary makes a compelling case for considering chapters 9-16 to be part of a cohesive whole whose themes were in the subtext of the first half, but have been conveniently ignored by scholars in the past. It is eye-opening to read and, as usual, Mr. Wright makes a compelling case. I highly recommend this volume to anyone who has read the book of Romans and been confused by its second half when compared to its first half.

Roger Woods says

Tom Wright's Everyone guides are consistently helpful although they can be "deep" at times and take some thinking through. We have been studying Paul's Letter to the Romans at our local Bible Study group so this Guide has been very useful along with Tom Wright's study guide.

David Holford says

Wright always delivers

Just as expected from the "For Everyone" series, a clear understanding of scripture couched in an anecdotal approach from one of the premier New Testament scholars writing today.

Eric says

One has come to expect great and insightful reading from N.T. Wright, and this book is no exception that that expectation. Once again, with his deep insight of human history and Christian understanding, Wright continues his exploration of St. Paul's longest and most in depth letter in the New Testament. Especially insightful is his exploration of chapters 9-11, chapters which, unfortunately through much of human history, have been ignored and thereby allowed reigns of antisemitism to rise with disastrous result. Wright then goes on with great insight to share how Paul pulls his entire argument together in the concluding chapters, offering a message of hope and empowerment to all who have discovered the Kingship of Jesus Christ.

As in the other books in this series, Wright goes through, passage by passage, the reasoning of St. Paul. He does so making wonderful connections and illustrations to modern times which the reader will understand. Then, most sections conclude with a challenging "so what?" statement or question. Wright doesn't just write history, nor is he simply and academic. He regularly brings things all together to challenge the reader to

consider what these words and messages mean for life today.

As always - highly recommended reading for anyone who wants to truly understand the message of Paul the Apostle and the God's great gift of Jesus the Christ.

Flip says

Not bad.

James Mayfield says

Good stuff. Once again this volume strength is that it constantly is putting the verses and chapters into the larger context of Paul's arguments/points and then bringing it out further into the context of Jesus and the whole Bible.

Phyllis says

I have been using NT Wright's for Everyone series for my morning reading. I have gained a lot from them.

Maggie Boyd says

Wright gives some startling insights on the early church, not all of which I am sure I agree with. I also found that what he focused on was occasionally the last thing of interest to me, while what I needed him to focus on was barely covered. However, of the books I read on this epistle this one was among the best. The author examines the text carefully, does his own translation and explanations and sticks to basic scholarship in a simple, penetrating manner.

Kevin says

This is the second part of Wright's translation/commentary on Romans. I highly recommend this series. A great way to gain a better understanding of this powerful and yet complex book of the Bible.

Wilhelmina Jenkins says

Wright's examination of the second half of the Book of Romans is as compelling as Paul for Everyone:Romans: Chapters 1-8. I am looking forward to reading more of his New Testament for Everyone books.

Scott says

I enjoyed Wright's second volume for the same reasons I enjoyed the first: he consistently places each section of the text in the context of redemptive history. I'd like to read more of this series in the future.

Andrea Engle says

Straight-forward and succinct, N. T. Wright's continuation of his translation of the book of Romans consists of chapters 9-16 ... his studied avoidance of words, such as righteousness and sanctification, loaded with theological baggage, is refreshing and adds new clarity to the text ... For example, this is how he translates the beginning of chapter 12: "So, my dear family, this is my appeal to you by the mercies of God: offer your bodies as a living sacrifice ..."

Tim says

The Biblical selections are longer here, as are Wright's discussions. Unlike all the previous selections from the series that I have read these worked poorly for devotional purposes - in part because of the length and in part because of chapters 9-11 in Romans. Still good and insightful, just more unwieldy.

Erin says

QUOTES:

'Confessing Jesus as Lord' was what people did when getting baptized. This makes a link with Romans 6, but also reminds us of two other points, both of which are relevant to what Paul is saying here and throughout the letter. First, in Paul's world 'Lord' was a title for Caesar. Saying Jesus was 'Lord' meant, ultimately, that Caesar wasn't. Second, when Paul quotes from the prophet Joel in verse 13, 'Lord' in that passage refers of course to the 'Lord of the Old Testament, **YHWH**, Israel's God. As in several other places, and here looking back to 9.5 in particular, Paul is quite clear that Jesus the Messiah, who died and rose again, was the personal embodiment of Israel's God, coming at last to do what he had always promised. In and through him, reversing the disaster of Israel's earlier failure (2.24), the name of Israel's God has now at last been glorified among the nations of the world. (p.33, re. Romans 10:5-13)

The key to it all [living in the 'new age', the 'age to come' that Christ is ushering in, in which God gives new life to the world and humankind, bringing justice, joy and peace once and for all.] is the transforming of the *mind*. Many Christians in today's world never come to terms with this. They hope they will be able to live up to something like Christian standards while still thinking the way the rest of the world things. It can't be done. Paul's analysis of human rebellion against God in 1.18-32 included a fair amount of wrong *thinking*. Having the mind renewed by the persuasion of the **spirit** is the vital start of that true human living which is God's loving will for all his children. (p. 69, re. Romans 12:1-5)

This, after all, is a way of growing up to maturity. People sometimes suggest that living a Christian life means a kind of immaturity, since you are guided not by thinking things through for yourself but by rules and regulations derived from elsewhere. That isn't Paul's vision of Christian living. Of course there are plenty

of firm boundaries. . . . But at the centre of genuine Christianity is a mind awake, alert, not content to take a few guidelines off the peg but determined to understand *why* human life is meant to be lived in one way rather than another. In fact, it is the way of life of 'the present [evil] age' [characterized by rebellion against God and the corruption and death which result] which often involves the real human immaturity, as people simply look at the surrounding culture, with all its shallow and silly patterns of behaviour, and copy it unthinkingly. (p. 70, re. Romans 12:1-5)

--The Church does this far too much. The culture wars show a Church that copies the surrounding culture unthinkingly in its shallow and silly patterns of behaviour.

[Now] Paul turns to its [the Church's] outward appearance. Even with those who persecute the church, the right response is not cursing, but blessing. . . . The command to celebrate and mourn (verse 15) with those who are happy or sad doesn't just refer to other church members; Christians are to be known as good neighbours, prepared to join in the fun when someone on the street has good news, and to be there to support and weep alongside those who face tragedy. It is within that kind of setting, where Christians are known, liked and respected, that people will be prepared to listen to them talking about the Lord they serve, the one who seemed to let evil conquer him when he died on the cross but who, in fact, overcame it with the power of his own love and life. (p. 82, re. Romans 12:14-21)

The entire section on Romans 13.1-7 re. The Divine Purpose, and Limited Role, of Ruling Authorities (pp. 82-88)

The entire section on Romans 14.13-23 re. The Way of Love and Peace (pp. 104-109)

On the basis of Psalm 69, he [Paul] sets out a principle: even the Messiah was not able to 'please himself', but instead had to take on himself the insults which people were heaping on to Israel's God. . . . We shouldn't miss the link by which Paul joins this point with his appeal to 'the strong' (people who, like himself, knew that God had created all foods and that no food was unclean in itself, as he says in 14.14). He is saying that the self-humiliation, the renouncing of rights, which formed the path Jesus had to tread to complete his messianic work, is also the path which Christians must tread as they put that work into practice. . . .

Indeed, the appeal in that same passage of Philippians [2.1-5] for people to *think in the same way* as one another is echoed exactly in verse 5. This is at first strange. The whole point of the discussion from 14.1 onwards has been to address the situation of how Christians are to live alongside people who do *not* think like them, and how they must not try to force others into the position they themselves have taken up. But Paul is urging a different point. He is insisting that *all* Christians should learn to think the same *about mutual submission in accordance with the Messiah*. . . .

The point of it all is not simply being able to live in peace and quiet without squabbling. That would be, so to speak, simply clearing the ground of rubble. The point is to build: and what needs to be built is the common life of praise and worship. [A glad unanimity] which indicates both to the watching world and to the Christians themselves that they are not worshipping a merely local deity, the projection of their own culture, but the One True God of all the world, the God now known as the father of Jesus the Messiah.

(pp. 113-114, re. Romans 15:1-6)

[Paul speaks eagerly about going on to Spain.] Paul was longing to do there what he had done everywhere else.

This helps us to understand something vital about why Paul wrote Romans. Up to now, his base of operations, his [-->p.125] 'home church' insofar as he had one by this stage, was Antioch, near the coast of north-west Syria. . . . Perhaps [Paul is eager] to bring the Roman Christians on board as his mission partners, perhaps even as his new home church, for his onward journeys.

Did Paul ever get to Spain? There is no evidence whatever that he did. But his desire to do so, and the fact that he wrote Romans as part of the preparation for such a trip, points out an extremely important lesson for us all. Perhaps God sometimes allows us to dream dreams of what he wants us to do, not necessarily so that we can fulfil all of them -- that might just make us proud and self-satisfied -- but so that we will take the first

steps towards fulfilling them.

And perhaps those first steps (as they appear to us) are in fact the key things that God *actually* wants us to do. Paul may not have got to Spain. That didn't matter; the gospel got there fairly soon anyway. What mattered then, and had mattered enormously in the whole history of the church, is that, as part of his plan to go to Spain, he wrote Romans. We should never underestimate what God will do through things which we see as small steps to a larger end. (pp. 124-125, re. Romans 15.14-24)

[In] the collection to which he refers here and elsewhere, the money was emphatically not for himself or his fellow-workers. . . .

It was, specifically, for the Christians in Judea. We thereby meet [some things] worth reflecting on carefully. First, one of the reasons why the church in Judaea was poor seems to be that in their first flush of enthusiasm for the gospel they had done what some other renewal movements of their day had done. They had pooled their property, selling farms and fields and putting the money into common possession. But now, following a famine, and no doubt facing hostility from their own fellow Judaeans who rejected the gospel and resented their allegiance to it, [-->p.128] they were in dire need. Meanwhile Paul, as part of his regular Christian teaching, had been instructing Gentile communities, not to sell up and have a common purse, but to look after one another's physical and financial needs from within communities where, it was assumed, some would continue to own houses and businesses and be in a position to help others. The same end was in view, namely that none should be in want. The same theology underlay both patterns, namely the self-giving of God in Jesus as the pattern and model. But the practice was different. Now Paul, with his way of doing things, was in a position to help the churches in Judea, whose early experiment seems to have ended in failure, perhaps through no fault of their own.

Second, it was from Judaea that there had come the settled and sustained Christian opposition to Paul and his gospel which had dogged his footsteps from the early days in Galatia. . . . How easy it would have been for Paul to turn his back on them, to work with and for only those who agreed with 'the gospel' as he saw it and preached it -- the gospel according to which the Gentiles were fellow heirs, on equal terms with Jewish believers. But it is precisely these people, the source of the opposition to his work, for whom Paul is now undertaking a difficult and dangerous mission [dangerous for the large sums of money on their persons]. [-->129] There is a serious and urgent lesson there for those who are tempted to use financial muscle to exercise theological influence within the church. At the core of the gospel is God's generous love for those who were not only undeserving but also in active opposition (Romans 5.10). Even if we think we are correct in seeing certain others as in the wrong (we should, of course, always beware of our own bias), they might just be there very people we ought to be helping. (pp. 127-129 , re. Romans 15.25-33)

Rom. 16:19-20: "I want you to be wise when it comes to good, and innocent when it comes to evil. The God of peace will quickly crush the satan under your feet."

Mat. 10:16: "Therefore be as wise as serpents and as innocent as doves."

This is one of those passages...where we may detect in the way Paul says things a brief flash at least of memory of words of Jesus. Here in verse 19 we may be right to hear an echo of that famous saying of Jesus in Matthew 10.16 about the doves and the serpents--which may be part of the reason why he then declares that God will soon crush the satan, the old serpent itself, underfoot. (This looks like an allusion to Genesis 3.15: as before in this letter, Paul has the story of Adam and Eve as the backdrop to what he is saying.)

In particular, he wants the church to grow up and learn how to understand, in love and good sense, that there is an ever-present danger of false teaching in the church. Coupled with this there is, of course, an ever-present danger that people will imagine false teaching where there is none, or will label as 'false teaching' something which just happens not to coincide with the particular way they are used to hearing things said. Recognizing these wrinkles and possibilities is part of learning to be both wise and innocent.

(pp. 136-137, re. Romans 16.17-23)

David says

Not much else to say on this that I did not say on the first part of Wright's commentary on Romans. Good stuff.
