



Paul for Everyone: Romans, Part One Chapters 1-8

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.

In this series, 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.

Librarian's note: See alternate cover edition of ISBN 0664227996 here.

Paul for Everyone: Romans, Part One Chapters 1-8 Details

Date : Published January 1st 2005 by Westminster John Knox Press (first published December 30th 2004)

ISBN :

Author : Tom Wright , N.T. Wright

Format : Paperback 194 pages

Genre : Religion, Theology, Christian, Nonfiction, Reference

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Sarah says

I'm reading this alongside an NT Wright video course I'm doing on Romans, this is the first of two books.

Tom Wright's style is easy to read, full of anecdotes, and insightful.

He makes Romans come alive. However, I wouldn't give it 5 stars as I think he overemphasises and over-repeats his thoughts about God's covenant faithfulness and its connection to righteousness, and how Paul is thinking of Israel's story as a backdrop to his teaching. Sometimes I think, "OK, OK, I get it, you don't need to explain that again".

But overall it's great.

Frank Peters says

N. T. Wright is someone whose writing I am drawn to, in spite of the fact that I rarely rate them highly. Why? Because Wright's books typically have sections that are either confusing, or else superficial; both of which are annoying. In this Bible study guide on the first part of Romans, Wright demonstrates that he is actually capable of writing to everyone! I did not believe this was possible before reading the book. Unfortunately, by writing to everyone, he does leave in a few superficial sections which were a bit depressing. In fact, in light of books by Forster and Marston, I was very interested in what Wright would say about that key passage in Romans 8. Instead Wright glossed over the passage and said nothing about it, at all! This was highly disappointing. Nevertheless the books are really good, and are in the same category as the NIV application commentary series. I will purchase more.

Andrea says

From one difficult-to-read author about another

Romans will always be one of the frustrating of Paul's letters, and that's saying a lot. Writing in the first century, as a Jew steeped in religious tradition and thoughtful knowledge, Paul can seem to be impenetrable. N. T. Wright wades in and actually makes Paul more accessible. However, Wright himself can be perplexingly opaque. He seems to enjoy stringing compound sentences together with parenthetical comments and should-be footnotes into what-the—paragraphs. Still, if you spend the time and reread as necessarily, he does eventually unlock the mysteries of the ancient brain of Paul.

Daniel Brændeland says

Very accessible, and through reading this commentary I have gained a greater understanding of Romans. This commentary have been helpfull for me, I now find it easier to read and understand not only Romans, but

the rest of Pauls epistels as well.

Carol says

We chose this book for a bible study discussion. We agreed that while the book was interesting and well written, it didn't leave us with much to discussion.

Eric says

Once again N.T. Wright brings his unique insights and deep knowledge of Christian history and theological clarity to focus on St. Paul's great letter to the Romans. Some of St. Paul's most famous work, quotes and theological framework are contained in these first 8 chapters, and N.T. Wright walks the reader through each paragraph with incredible skills and with a perspective on what these famous words mean for Christian life in the 21st century. Like all his books in this series, Wright makes 'big and heavy' theological constructs and implications plain and understandable for all readers. Even more, he is able to make connections to the challenges of faithful daily discipleship today.

I use these books as a source for daily devotional reflection. But they are also great sources of study, growth and exploration. No one has made the pages of Scripture more accessible and clear than the pen of N.T. Wright. This book is a great addition and resource to the library of any serious Christian disciple.

Christopher says

Moving out of the gospel accounts and the book of Acts, Mr. Wright now tackles the first 8 chapters of the book of Romans in this book. Once again, Mr. Wright follows the same format as his previous books, taking a few verses and expounding upon them for 4-5 pages. Yet this books is a bit of a mix bag. Sometimes Mr. Wright's writing can be so profound as to make you think about that passage for the rest of the day or in a new way way. Other times what he is trying convey is so confusing that you wish that he had spent more pages explaining it. His particular attempt to tie the famous passage of Romans 7:13-20 with Israel's failure at its historical mission to be God's covenantal people is unconvincing. And, once again, splitting his commentary on Romans into two different books seems rather arbitrary and more a money grab by the publishers, especially when you consider that together both commentaries on Romans aren't that much longer than his single volume on Luke. However, his passage on Romans 6:6-11 is eye-opening and his concluding passages on Romans 8 are not to be missed. I still highly recommend this series to anyone who wants to delve deeper into the New Testament.

Chris says

Excellent! Not as easy reading as some of Wright's other "for everyone" commentaries, but the material is golden. Wright follows the logic of Paul's argument through Romans in a way that few others can, showing its consistency and linearity, while being faithful to its context. Wright never cops out by suggesting that Paul has gone on a digression, to avoid having to connect one section to what came before it. Wright's argument makes sense of the entire work as a continuous argument in a way that genuinely challenges the

readings of many other scholars. Some may be ruffled by his interpretation of the book (because someone is always ruffled by someone else's interpretation of Romans), but Wright is on point and deserves to be taken seriously.

Brian says

Ah, Wright. Short verdict: confused, but definitely Christian.

Long review: N.T. Wright is making air-waves right now and reading this book what is remarkable how little "new perspective" he brings to the text. I have often turned to Wright's commentaries in moments of frustration trying to see if he pieced together something truly new (I have done the same with John Piper's *Desiring God* and had an even less pleasant experience reading it cover to cover). This is the worst way to read Wright. He's got good innovations, but he is not a careful exegete. He does not explain adequately to my mind the issues relating to *Pistis Christou*, *Diakosune*, covenant membership, baptism, etc. This leads to odd and (while I like Wright as a translator, despite his overflowing Englishness) just plain ol' confused passages.

Also, worst cover ever. And don't even get me started on his facile pooh-poohing of the Reformation. His analogies are okay, but tiresome when one wants to get to the meat of his commentary.

Still, he does get a lot of things right. And there's more than enough evidence to convict him of being a from the heart Christian. Don't let anyone tell you otherwise:

"God was obliged, in virtue of being the world's creator and judge, to act decisively with sin - which means, to punish it. Here we discover a further meaning in the idea of the 'place of mercy' in the previous sentence. The same root also refers to a 'propitiatory' sacrifice, that is, one which not only purifies people from sin but also turns away the wrath of God which would otherwise rightly fall on the sinner. Though, again, Paul does not spell out his meaning in any detail, there are all sorts of converging lines of thought which make it highly probable that he sees Jesus in this light as well, as the one upon whom the appropriate anger of God, directed against the sin of the world, has now fallen. ... At the heart of God's covenant justice, then, is his 'putting forth' of Jesus to take upon himself the anger of God of which Paul spoke in chapter 1. The final judgment day has been brought forward into the middle of history. God's righteous verdict against sinners has been meted out against the faithful Israelite, Israel's representative: the Messiah, Jesus." (pp. 57-58).

"Since we have been declared to be in the right, we have' [what? a warm glow in the heart? a sigh of relief that our sins have been forgiven? a new understanding of what it means to belong to God's people? Yes, all of those things and more, but at the centre of it all we have peace with God. ... At the centre of these promises is the establishment of a loving, welcoming personal relationship between individual humans and the creator God himself. ... When we are reconciled to the God who is our father, we discover that he wants not simply to enjoy this one-to-one relationship, but to enlist us in his service in working for his kingdom. And that will bring all kinds of pressures and problems which will require us to hang on in faith and hope even when we don't sense his presence, even when it doesn't 'feel' as though there's anything happening. We mustn't imagine that our feelings of being close to God is a true index of the reality. Emotions often deceive. Paul is summoning us to understand the reality, the solid rock beneath the shifting sands of feeling. The first two verses of chapter 5, then, celebrate our access into the very presence of God himself. We have 'the right to approach'" this is the language of the Temple, where certain people get to come near to where God is. 'Grace' here is almost a shorthand for the presence and power of God himself. As a result of being justified by faith, we are, in the old phrase, 'in a state of grace', a status, a position where we are surrounded by God's love and generosity, invited to breathe it in as our native air. As we do so, we realize that this is what we were made for; that this is what truly human existence ought to be like; and that it is the beginning of something so big, so massive, so unimaginably beautiful and powerful, that we almost burst as we think of it.

When we stand there in God's own presence, not trembling but deeply grateful, and begin to inhale his goodness, his wisdom, his power and his joy, we sense that we are being invited to go all the way, to become the true reflections-of-God, the true image-bearers, that we were made to be. Paul puts it like this: 'we celebrate the hope of the glory of God'. This is the glory that was lost through idolatry and sin (e.23). When we finally inherit this glory, the whole creation will be set free from corruption and share our new-found freedom, the freedom to be our true selves at last (8.21)." 81-83

Also, I was happy to see some C.S. Lewis (see pages 76-77 if interested). So, I found this book surprisingly good devotional reading; just don't expect a paradigm shift, read with a grain of salt, and there is much to be gleaned from the good bishop.

Jon says

I think Romans is one of the great books of the New Testament, and also one of the thorniest. Tom Wright deftly blows away a lot of the smoke of various interpretations we've inherited, and puts the book solidly in its historical context. I learned so much through this commentary--points I thought for sure were clearly made by Paul got replaced by fairly different points, much more powerful. I had to think as I worked through this, but I used it mostly devotionally and found my soul nourished while my mind (and heart) were challenged. I highly recommend it!

Amber Fernie says

I started to read this along with my Bible study group, but the study of it gradually fizzled out. NT Wright goes into a lot of detail, and this is an informative entry, but maybe not as accessible as intended. He also tends to play with language a bit to suit his viewpoints, and often comes to conclusions I don't feel are foregone.

Del Herman says

Hands down, N.T. Wright is the most original, compelling, and brilliant theologian alive today. The first half of his guide to St. Paul's Letter to the Romans (covering Chapters 1 to 8) is superb. Wright's discussion of Romans really inspired a newfound appreciation in me for this letter, which as Wright notes is St. Paul's masterpiece (and hence the first masterpiece of Christian theology). Wright also notes how influential Romans has been on Christendom and by default, Western civilization (Augustine, Luther, Wesley, and Barth were all inspired by Romans and developed new and original takes on the letter). However, what really compelled me was how Wright took apart the text, scrutinizing each word and bringing out the whole line of thought that the letter points out. Can't wait to read Part 2 (on 9-16)!

Scott says

Since we are going through Romans at our Bible study at church, I wanted to interact with Wright's interpretations. The commentary is written at the popular level, but it's not at all shallow. Wright continually draws the reader's attention to the big picture of both Romans as a whole and of God's redemptive plan,

pointing back to creation, the covenant with Abraham, and His purposes for Israel. His setting of the pieces of Romans in their context makes for an exhilarating read.

I could see why some are confused about Wright's view of justification, since it wasn't entirely clear to me, either. It's clear that he believes in justification by faith, though, and I wonder if part of the reason that it's not as clear is that he doesn't make individual justification the centerpiece of his interpretation. Instead, he focuses on the big picture of God's redemption of His people and of creation as well as the new life that we are to live in Christ.

One final thing: Wright doesn't capitalize Father, Son, or Holy Spirit when referring to the persons of the Trinity. I had never seen that before: is it a British thing?

David says

I had not read any NT Wright in a while and I always wanted to check out some of his "for everyone" books so I picked up this. Wright's commentary on Romans is very approachable for any reader, I could see this being used in local church small group studies and discussions. He writes as a pastor, beginning each chapter in the commentary with an illustration as if he were preaching. Of course, for those in the know, Wright's "New Perspective" views come through. What I always appreciate about Wright is that he sets the New Testament texts in the context of the entire story of Israel from creation on through Abraham, the Law, David, the prophets and the exile. If you are a pastor looking for an academic commentary, this is not for you. But it could be a good help in preparing to teach on Romans.

Maggie Boyd says

I had a hard time grading this book. The author gives some interesting insights but also goes into some questionable tangents. It wasn't quite what I was looking for but still an interesting read and good start on studying Romans.
