

Report & Review
Romans 1-11
ABC 4/24/16

1. Report (S) Let me begin by saying "Thank You!" Your prayers, support, & allowing me to do this are appreciated more than I can express. You certainly *prayed me full & prayed me well*. What I mean by that, as most of you probably know, is that I had an allergic reaction to the malaria medicine I was taking. Tuesday night, before I left, I took my 1st pill. As I was getting ready to head to the airport on Wednesday morning I told Muriel, *I feel like I'm getting poison oak*. We assumed I wore something that still had some oil residue left on it. As the day progressed I didn't think much about it. Wednesday evening, I took my second pill as prescribed. On the flight between Seattle & Frankfurt I broke out with hives & itching. Putting 2 & 2 together, & doing some quick research in Frankfurt, it was clear I was allergic & took no more pills. For the next several days I continued to itch & break out. Having Benadryl, I began taking it regularly trusting it would help. Apparently, it doesn't cause me to become drowsy but sets me on edge. Monday night I stopped taking it & became much less anxious. Needless to say, this part of the trip wasn't much fun. But aren't you glad that we have a God who is in control of

everything? I have no idea why He allowed this, other than the fact it forced me to come to Him time & time again in prayer, relying on Him to get me through the day & the teaching.

So why did I go to Ethiopia & what did we do there? It's interesting that the gospel came to Ethiopia very early (S). **Acts**

8:26-37

The Christians there are very proud of their Christian heritage. But they are also quick to admit that Ethiopia is full of religion. The Ethiopian Orthodox church is everywhere, but, for the most part, is spiritually dead & based on tradition & legalism & not on the Bible. Services are conducted in an ancient language that the vast majority don't speak nor understand. Ethiopia still needs Philips to bring them the gospel.

A man named Girma (S) had a burden for his people & God has used him to spread the gospel in Ethiopia. Let me tell you a little about Girma. He was born & raised in Ethiopia & lived under communist rule. He went to college in Russia but eventually found asylum in Germany before moving to the Seattle area (which has a large Ethiopian community). It was during this time that he heard the gospel & came to know Jesus. He went to seminary & began pastoring an Ethiopian church in the Seattle area but he had a heart for the people of

Ethiopia. He began traveling to Ethiopia to train pastors as he could. Eventually, he realized he couldn't do it all on his own. He began to put an organization & plan together to train pastors & church leaders. The organization is Vision Leadership Institute. 6 years ago he began working with Global Training Network & Joel to do this. He put together a two year program where pastors & church leaders come together once a year for intensive training. They then meet monthly with a master teacher/pastor to do further study. After completing the two year program they graduate & are encouraged to go & teach others as well. During the time they come together they study such things as Hermeneutics, Systematic Theology, Character & Integrity, Leadership Principles, Bible Survey, Missions & Evangelism, & such. This began in 2 cities & is currently happening in 6 cities, with plans to expand to another 2 cities next year. (S) The day after arriving, I got to witness 84 students graduate in Nazaret/Adama. In 6 years over 800 students have gone through this training. They then return to their home churches & serve & teach others.

What did I do while there? Friday, April 8th was a rest & recover day. 40+ hours of travel takes a toll, especially as I get older. (S) Saturday we attended the graduation in Nazaret & I got to

shake hands & hand out diplomas. (S) This is a time of celebration & worship & a big deal for each of the graduates.

(S) Girma is in the process of being able to actually give a diploma that is recognized by the government. (S)

Sunday I was able to worship with a local church and then preach while their pastor, Mengistu, translated for me. (S)

Mengistu is a veterinarian by training, but gave up his practice to become a pastor. (S) This is what I saw as I stood up to

preach. It's a beautiful thing to listen & see them worship. (S)

Interestingly, about $\frac{1}{4}$ of the people speak English to some degree. Around $\frac{1}{2}$ can understand & read English. (S) It was very clear as we were teaching, who could understand us & who had to wait for the translation.

Monday through Wednesday Joel & I were in Debre Zeyit/Bishoftu. (S) I began with an introduction of why we study theology. If you were here for the sermon on the spiritual discipline of worship, it was very similar. We study theology so that we might know God better & worship Him more. (S) I ended up using this 4 times, once to each group of students, & they're adding it to their curriculum & syllabus. I also taught the doctrine of Jesus, doctrine of the Holy Spirit, doctrine of sin, & the doctrine of man. (S) While not getting to know the

students real well, we spent a lot of time with some of the pastors who also worked as translators for us. Twice we were able to have a meal with them in their homes. I had heard the African food was usually pretty basic & bland in flavor. (S) That's not true of Ethiopian food. Though it was basic (rice, bread, cabbage, & other veggies) it was all very flavorful & even spicy at times. I fit right in because they eat without utensils. They use injera (a fermented tiff flat-bread) to pick up & eat all their food.

As I reflect back on the trip, I know it was only by the strength of God that I made it. (S) Thank you for your prayers on my behalf. The highlight of the trip for me happened on Wednesday. This was our last day at the first city. I had brought pictures of my family to give to all the students to ask them to pray for our family & for you, our church. As I passed them out & gave a brief explanation of each of our kids, I told them about Nathan & Whitney adopting Udi from India. The night before Nathan had messaged me that all the paperwork was completed. They are now just waiting on Udi's passport & then they can go pick her up. As I told them this I asked them to pray that things would go quickly & smoothly. When I finished, my translator asked one of the students to pray. She

stood & passionately prayed for about 5 minutes with the rest of the class *amen*ing & even though I have no idea what she was saying, I just cried like a baby knowing they were interceding for my family.

Thursday & Friday Joel & I traveled to Nazaret to teach the students there. (S) This class only had 16-20 in it because the other 35-40 had jobs that they couldn't get time off from. This was by far the warmest day we had there & of course, it was the day we had car problems. (S) We had to get out & push start it whenever we came to a complete stop. Stopping on the expressway at the toll booth was interesting. Ever push start a car on the freeway? We did!

What else? (S) Between the two cities there were about 110 students. One was a blind girl from Addis. Her sister brought her each day over an hour each way. She was taking notes & as engaged as everyone else. 4 different translators worked with me, all either pastors or pastors in training. Two were excellent & 2 were still learning, but all did a good job. I can't imagine how tiring translating must be. (S) Here's one of the translators on Friday afternoon, waiting for the car to take me to the airport.

Just recently the pastors in the two cities we were in have rented a central office to use as a study & training center for small groups. They are building a library to be used by the pastors as well. (S) Here's what their library looked like when we left. It was half of that when we arrived. They were thrilled with the books that were donated to them.

(S) Ethiopia is a beautiful country that I only saw a small portion of. But I certainly knew I wasn't in the US! (S) The elevation where we were was around 6,000 feet. (S) It's an agricultural area on a plateau between the capital of Addis Ababa & the Rift Valley. (S) It's a happy & friendly people, although, according to one study, it's the 2nd poorest country on earth. It's a country of contrasts. (S) While a new hi-tech train line is just being finished & the Chinese have built very nice express ways for cars & trucks, many people still rely on horses & donkeys for transportation. (S) For short distances we often took the small, 3-wheeled tuk-tuks that seem to be everywhere except the US. (S) It was not uncommon to see someone herding their livestock through the middle of town. (S) While many buildings are elaborate & beautiful, the scaffolding all looks like this (S), eucalyptus logs nailed together. I'm sure there's much more I could say, but I'll let

that suffice for now. (S) What questions do you have that I might be able to answer? (X)

2. Review It's been 10 weeks since we've been in Romans, having taken a break to look at the miracles of Calvary leading up to Easter, I thought it would be beneficial to do a quick review of Romans so we're ready to resume next week at Rom 11:16. While I could have tried to summarize some of what we've learned earlier, I ran across some videos some time ago that I haven't been able to use, but serve my purpose very well this morning. Here's a review of Romans 1-4. VIDEO (7:35)

There is clearly a multi-cultural, global point to Romans. In 1:5 Paul tells us the goal of his apostleship. **We have received grace & apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith among all the Gentiles, for His name's sake.** That's why Paul preaches. That's why he's planning to go to Spain. That's why he writes this letter: to bring about faith in Jesus & the obedience that comes from it among all nations! Romans is for all the nations, the people groups who don't yet believe on Christ, who aren't justified, not yet sanctified, & therefore will not be glorified if they aren't reached with the gospel. In vs 14 he again tells us

his obligation as an apostle: I am under obligation both to Greeks & to barbarians, both to the wise & to the foolish. & lest we think he has left out the Jews, he says in vs 16, I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first & also to the Greek. The message of Romans breaks through national, cultural, economic, & educational distinctions. This is important to see, especially in our pluralistic day, a time very much like the 1st-century when the church spread so rapidly. Christianity isn't a tribal religion, but calls for faith & allegiance from every tribe & tongue & people & nation. Jesus isn't one among many gods. He is Lord of lords & King of kings, & there is no other name under heaven by which all men must be saved. The message of Romans isn't just one way of salvation among many. It is the way of salvation, because Jesus Christ is the one & only Son of God & Savior.

There is one Savior, one cross, one resurrection, & one way to be right with the one God: having His righteousness imputed to us by faith in Christ, not by works. Paul makes the case for justification by faith apart from works by using Abraham as an example: 4:3.

One of the most precious vss in the book is built off Abraham's example. 5

Not work but faith justifies. & not the godly but the ungodly are justified. This is good news for all humans as sinners & this is the merciful message of Romans. In chapter 5 Paul sums up with vs 1.

Here's part 2 of the Romans overview. VIDEO (6:58; 8:40)

& now you should go read it with some friends!

Although Romans is Paul's most theological book, a masterpiece that has stretched the minds of the most brilliant theologians for centuries, he wrote it to a church made up of common people, many of whom were probably slaves. The Holy Spirit knew that we all need the message of Romans. We need to be stripped of our own righteousness so that we run to Jesus & His sacrifice as our only righteousness. Then, being justified by faith, we need to grow in righteous conduct & relationships. We need to grow to embrace & embody the gospel of God. Read Romans again this week & join us next Sunday as we dive back into this great book together.