

Transitions in the Letter to Romans
(part of [RomansTopics](#))

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Topic: Argument of Paul to the Romans

Intro

The Gentile believers in Rome became hostile to the Jews as apparent reaction to the affliction of the believers by the Roman Government. This reaction is seen as one where the big dog picks on the little dog after which the little dog picks on one even smaller. The Roman believers acted in jealousy and boasting likely as a reaction of the flesh to their present struggles. Indeed the affliction of the Roman government extended into Rome as seen by the afflictions or tribulation (Rom 5:3) and by the possibility of killing or other trouble nearly as bad. (Rom 8:35-36)

The hostility to the Jews went against the goal of Paul to make Jews jealous unto salvation, since the aggression of Gentiles would entice no Jews into fellowship. Also, the Roman believers were following the flesh instead of the Spirit. Of course the hostile actions also reflected the fleshly desire for revenge, just as much as the boasting of the flesh.

Paul had a few goals in mind following the improvement of the Rome church. The first was support for the church at Jerusalem and second was for Rome to be a platform to reach Spain.

Topics addressed by Paul to the readers:

- Hostility to Jews
- Boasting of believers
- Following the flesh (used their freedom to sin)
- Perseverance of faith through the affliction
- Paul's desire to reach Spain

Paul had to figure out how to get this remote church group to read and benefit from his letter. The letter was written in a manner to entice the Roman believers to read a letter that rebuked them. But history tends to indicate that the letter wasn't widely successful to Paul's expectation.

The analysis provided herein is a summary investigation into the topic, purpose and discussion of each chapter of the Book of Romans. The goal is to provide a quick presentation or restatement of the approach used by Paul to persuade the readers.

Ch 1

Topic: Enticements

Problem: Gentiles were judgmental

This transitions the reader from not be willing to read the letter into a condition where the reader is interested.

The reader is brought into a great sermon against another group called "them"

The "them" then also are condemned for boasting.]

Then in vs 32 "Who knowing the judgment of God" is used as a transition into the first issue Paul addresses, namely that of the judgmental attitude of the Roman believers.

Ch 2

Topic: Judging. Jews in judgment of Law.

Problem: Gentiles were alienating the Jews

The "them" is converted into "you" in Rom 2:1, such that the Greek and barbarian readers (Rom 1:14) are now held to account for judging. The Roman readers come out of the same guilty blood of all mankind yet were being judgmental of people. And even the topic of boasting in Rom 1:30 becomes part of the guilt that the readers are exposed in their hypocrisy since this is one of the problems Paul addresses again in the same letter. Paul then discusses the problem of judging in verses 1-16.

Paul proceeds to judge Jews based on behavior with respect to the law. Paul is using the law in a judgmental

sense. But this judgmental sense would not apply to believers, since believers are not under law.(Rom 6:16)

The discussion of the law provides a subtle foundation to transition to the topic of the law in Rom 3:19ff. After giving an apparent rebuke against Jews Paul follows in a more positive mood about the existence of true Jews in vs 28-29. The positive tone then acts as a transition to the discussion of the Romans' issues concerning Jews.

Ch 3

Topic: Analysis of the Law.

Problem: Gentiles rejecting Jews over issue of Law

Paul then introduces issues that actually appear to reflect complaints of the Gentile believers against the Jews. The first issue that the Gentiles hold seems to say that the Jews are disadvantaged for holding on to the law (Rom 3:1). By the ensuing topics we can see that the Romans had little regard for the Law of Moses. In vs 1 to 18, Paul tries to diminish or resolve these issues.

Rom 3:9-18 basically reveals the law's condemnation of all people while Paul also places Jew and Greek on equally guilty ground. The quotes of the Psalms represents the "law" and also acts as a transition to momentarily discuss the law.

Then Paul returns to justify the law in vs 19-21 showing the law in a good manner in that the law and prophets became a witness to the method and plan of God to bring righteousness. This acts as a transition to the topic of justification since the concept of "justification" becomes clearer through an awareness of the law.

The readers now learned or relearned the topic of justification in verses 21-26. The discussion of law and justification are foundations for and transition to Paul's concern about the Roman gentiles' boasting.

[Paul seems to have intended to show that boasting could only come from works of law, but then Paul also had removed all significance to works of law since the believers are justified by the gift of faith. Ro 3:30 confirms that the Romans were trying to boast over against the Jews by a distinction between law and faith, or some other ground.]

The letter to the Romans in v 3:31 shows that the Roman gentile believers held the law as a hindrance to the Jews. Paul uses the question "Do we make void the law?" as a transition to see what Abraham has to say on the same topic of the law and grace.

Ch 4

Topics: justification by faith. Problem of the law. Security of believer

Problems: Boasting of the gentiles. Endurance of believers

Focus now goes to the situation of Abraham in order to show how faith nullifies works which nullify boasting. Several topics have continued: boasting, antisemitism, law, justification and grace. These topics are intertwined by the genius of Paul's writing.

Vs 4:1 could be paraphrased to say, "What has Abraham perceived about faith and law?"

Rom 4:2-7 shows that Paul is still concerned about boasting. He deals with the boasting still by discussing the justification by faith.

Rom 4:8-12 equalizes Jew and Gentile. The argument focuses on righteousness through justification by faith.

Rom 4:13-18 emphasizes justification by faith so that nothing can condemn the true seed. *Faith* is presented as the indication of eternal security.

While completing the discussion of the law and of reasons against boasting by virtue of grace and faith, Paul transitions to eternal security through grace and faith in Rom 4:18-25. This security then becomes the foundation and transition to the believer's ability to handle affliction or tribulation.

[The judgment in AD70 would be for sin, so Paul had to show that believers are not in sin.]

Ch 5

Topic: affliction or tribulation. Discussion of **grace**

Problem: endurance of believers

Paul continues in verses 1 and 2 to show the basis for protection and assurance to the believer for the affliction or tribulation mentioned in verse 3. Vs 4-5 presents the positive aspect of such affliction. The vs 6-8 try to give more strength to get through the affliction. And finally there is a judgment in vs 9 where God's wrath is manifested.

Grace is presented as a transition and antithesis to sin.

Rom 5:10-11 continues to emphasize the degree of love shown to man by God. This is grace and is the transition to a greater discussion on grace.

Rom 5:12-21 Shows God's grace appearing in Jesus as the final Adam.

The verses 20 and 21 act as a transition from grace to the issue of the flesh focused behavior of the Roman believers. Paul introduces the issue of the willful sin of the believers.

Ch 6

Topic: Why sin should be stopped? Equipping saints against the flesh.

Problem: The Romans were acting within a view of freedom which was actually slavery.

The believers likely held to their approach of *freedom* on the excuse that they had grace. Paul then presents this idea in a question to which he gives an answer, "Shall we sin that grace might increase?"

Rom 6:1-14 shows believers died to sin. Therefore they ought not sin. Paul also speaks of the power of resurrection.

[This "death to sin" seems to be only the power not to sin. Yet believers still have the ability to sin. "Sin" in this context seems to be referring to the actions to satisfy all sorts of fleshly lusts.]

Verse 14 then is the transition to the the argument against the idea one can sin cause he is under grace. Paul tells them that they are not under law but under grace. [This shows that people would tend to sin under the law.]

A transition from free/freedom to master/slave relationship is seen in vs 15. The Romans sinned cause they felt they could, not being under law. Rom 6:15-23 Shows that bodies and minds are to be seen as slaves of righteousness or slaves of the law.

Ch 7

Topic: Freedom from the power/control of Law

Problem: The Law needs to be shown in positive light

[Paul is getting into the heart of the presentation on the Law to give the complete picture.

He is showing in verses 1 to 6 that the Law and flesh work together. He provides contrasts so that the believers may have better ability to get away from the lust of the flesh. This is mainly a restatement of the ideas in Rom 6:1-7]

Verse 6 talks about the Law promoting sin as a transition to the issue of defending the Law of Moses. Paul addressed earlier in 3:31 that faith doesn't make the law void. Now he must speak against the Romans' idea that the Law is sin. So Rom 7:6-14 highlights some important aspects of the Law. At the same Paul mentions the struggle of the mind and flesh. This seems to occur as a foundation and transition to the idea of being led by the Spirit (Ch 8).

Rom 7:15-25 mentions the struggle of the mind, flesh and Law. This struggle is the same one described in Rom 6:1-7

Verses 24 and 25 then transition to the solution. The words just presented now show the need for the Spirit.

Ch 8

Topics: Being led by the Spirit. The current sufferings

Problems: The believers need knowledge to help endure the sufferings

Paul wanted the Romans to have the awareness of the idea not to follow the flesh as seen in 6:1-6 but Paul didn't want them to feel condemned or unique in their struggle, so now Paul shows that there is no condemnation in Rom 8:1-2

Rom 8:1-17 provides a framework of hope and strength to endure the sufferings the believers were encountering. Paul wanted them to have the best mindset to avoid reacting to the suffering by seeking fleshly desires or by giving up. (This is

Verses 16 and 17 transition from making the believers aware of the Spirit into the next topic of the current affliction

So from verses 18 to 27 the suffering is shown to be commonly brought upon those of faith.

Rom 8:27-28 becomes the transition from the hope and strength in the Spirit (for enduring of suffering) into the love of God. Such discussion on love is a recap of God's reason for protecting believers, but also His love is used as a transition back to the topic of Israel whom God loves.

Ch 9

Topics: Show God's faithfulness to the promise. Paul's plead for his people. God's mercy

Problems: Show gentiles that God still has mercy on Jews

Paul has been preparing from the onset of this letter to come to this topic. Paul is showing his love and God's love for his own people in verses 1 to 6.

This section defends God's integrity while showing that not all are saved.

Verses 7 to 13 show the importance of the promise and how the promise relates to certain historical figures.

A transition is made to God's mercy through mention of difference between Jacob and Esau. The promise of God is connected with the mercy of God.

In Ro 9:14-18 the mercy is emphasized, that all of us depend on God's mercy to come to Him. [This again addresses the idea against boasting.]

Then from 19 to 26 Paul shows there is no right to complain against God. God even extended mercy to the Gentiles in Jesus.

[vs 27-39 reveals that God was still showing mercy to Israel]

Paul then goes to speak again of salvation of faith instead of by the law in verses 30 to 33. He uses the topic of Christ as one to trust or one on whom to stumble; this becomes the transition to the discussion on those actions made to share salvation to Israel

Ch 10

Topics: salvation was near to Israel

Problems: Show gentiles that God is still reaching the Jews. (These Roman believers felt God had forsaken the Jews, and the Romans then took on the attitude of forsaking Israel.)

Verses 1 to 8 show salvation is really close to the Israelites (from Paul's viewpoint).

Then there's a transition from saying salvation is close to saying they may be changed if they heard the gospel. Though, chapter 10 actually is written to just show the tools that were all ready being used to bring forth salvation to the Jews.

Verses 9 to 13 show that the Jews had a potential to repent if they heard the gospel. Verses 14 to 18 show they did have the opportunity to hear the gospel. Hence the proper warning had come from God to the Jews.

Rom 10:19-21 then brings up the jealousy issue, which was the purpose for Paul reaching the gentiles. This acts as a transition to show that this jealousy was to draw the Jews and that God was still drawing them.

Ch 11

Topics: The success of God's work to bring salvation to His people

Problem: Romans might think that God cast away His people

Rom 11:1-10 speaks of God bringing forth all that He foreknew.

Rom 11:11-16 highlights the ministry of gentiles as being largely for the gain of Jews.

Rom 11:17-24 now places the saved Israelites as more natural to salvation than the gentiles. Paul has transitioned the readers from being antagonist to Jews into being graciously grafted in.

The letter has transitioned now from boasting against Jews, into gracious grafts among the olive tree, into having open arms to the Israelites as seen in verses 25 to 32

This concludes the main task of reconciliation of Gentiles to Jews that Paul was attempting.

The humbling of Ch11 acts as a bit of a transition to the topic of *Serving* in chapter 12

Ch 12

Topics: serving one another's needs, loving one's enemies

Problem: Romans were selfish and boastful and also was ecking out revenge

Rom 12:1-2 is the enticement on the topic of serving

[12:3 tells the Roman believers again not to boast.]

Verse 14 starts a transition into showing love for the enemy. Verse 17 brings up the same idea as well as living peaceably. These occur within the discussion on serving each other.

So Rom 12:17-21 speak of love for the enemy.

Ch 13

Topics: The government is of God's authority. Loving one another and living right

Problem: The believers were resisting the government

Paul's mention of the enemy and of peaceable living then acts as a transition to discuss one of the enemies, that of the government.

The mention of governments in Rom 13:1-7 shows that the believers were resisting the actions of their government and maybe that the government was starting to take action against believers.

[The believers apparently weren't paying taxes or tribute. They may have also seen the Roman Empire as being part of the Daniel 2 statute that was collapsing.]

Rendering taxes then becomes a transition to "owe no man anything" in vs 8 which is a transition to love and right living.

"Making no provision for the flesh" then becomes a transition to the idea of casting off the fleshly boasting in order to help one's brother in humility

Ch 14

Topics: Judging of brethren

Problem: Believers were judging each other unrighteously

Transitions from the idea of helping the weak in faith to the idea of not causing any other to stumble.

The idea of not being alive only for oneself acts as the transition to the idea of helping in each other's weaknesses (Rom 14:7)

Ch 15

Topics: Higher level of service by pleasing other's needs. Recap on God's work among Gentiles and His mercy

Problem: Paul saw need to give higher aspiration than just simple service

Paul transitions from the idea of not harming or judging each other into the idea of finding things to please one's

neighbor.

Rom 15:8 -12 Recaps God's work in the Gentiles and the importance of mercy among them.

Rpm 15:13 -33 Pauls' plans and missionary work

Ch 16

Rom 16:1-24 Paul's passing of greetings

Rom 16:25-27 Concluding remarks

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Version Information

- Version 1.0 -- April 16,2007 -- First version of analysis of transitions.
- Version 1.1 -- Sep 17, 2007 -- Removal of assertion that Jews were persecuting the Roman believers. Subsequent analysis showed that the main persecution was by the government upon the the Roman believers. There may have been some abusive language by Jews (see Rom 3:8) but nothing worse was reported by Paul.
- Version 1.2 -- Sep 21,2007 -- minor corrections

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