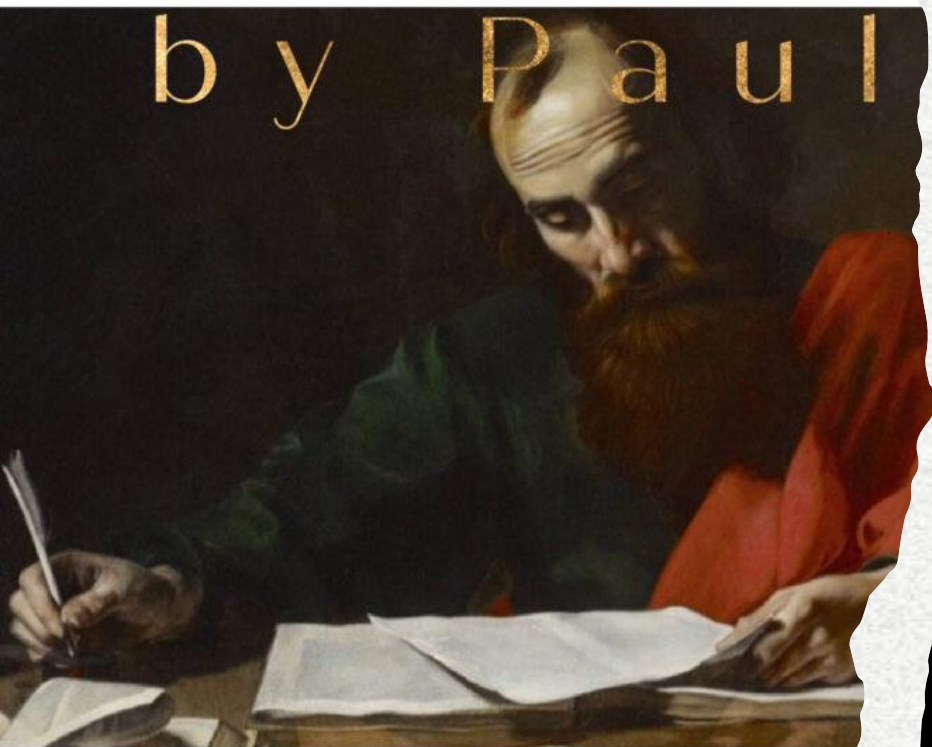


Romans by Paul



The Apostle's Defense
of Catholic Doctrine

Richard L. Akins

Romans by Paul

The Beautiful, the Good and the True

- Bishop Barron often speaks about showing people the ‘beauty’ of the faith
- I was last here with enRoute talking about my novel, The Rebirth of Nicodemus. We need such stories to attack people through the *beautiful*.
- *We Catholics no longer tell the best stories.*
- We also need the **truth**. That is the driving force behind my new book, Romans by Paul.



Our Challenge

- To maintain family unity, I went with my children to Evangelical Services every other weekend for a decade.
- I was often challenged to explain and defend my choice to remain Catholic.
- **I found myself with 8th grade answers to adult questions.**
- These challenges are systematically developed to turn Catholics away from the Church.
 - Imagine the Chicago Bears only practicing their own plays without considering what the other team is planning to do.

Evangelicals

- Evangelicals come in many flavors, but the most aggressive anti-Catholic consider themselves ‘Bible-believing’, ‘*Reformed*’ ‘*Calvinist*’ or ‘*Evangelical*’.
- For example, the Harvest Bible Chapel’s web-site claims:
 - “We believe that without exception every man is **totally depraved** and needs a Savior.”
- Salvation is therefore entirely up to God, who chooses us individually to be either saved (elect) or lost (reprobate) from the beginning of time.

Depravity through *Romans*

- *There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands; there is no one who seeks God. All have turned away...there is no one who does good, not even one. (Romans 3:11-12)*
- *All of us once lived among them in the passions of our flesh, following the desires of flesh and senses, and we were **by nature** children of wrath, like everyone else. (Eph 2:3)*
- Therefore – **all** are Totally Depraved **by nature** and doomed to hell.

Sola Fide

- If we are all by nature Totally Depraved, then nothing we can do, think, say or feel can aid us toward salvation. Our Mass, sacraments, good works, etc., within the Catholic faith **cost us salvation** because they replace faith in Jesus.
- All that matters, then, is faith alone (Sola Fide).
- And...God predetermines which individuals will have that faith.

‘But...that’s unfair!’

Evangelicals answer that charge with scripture:

- *“Even before they had been born or had done anything good or bad (so that God’s purpose of election might continue, not by works but by his call) (their mother) was told, “The elder shall serve the younger.” As it is written, “I have loved Jacob, but I have hated Esau.” (Rom 9:11-13)*
- *“You will say to me then, “Why then does he still find fault? For who can resist his will?”...What if God, desiring to show his wrath and to make known his power, has endured...the objects of wrath that are made for destruction; and...done so...to make known the riches of his glory for the objects of mercy” (Rom 9:19-20; 23)*
- **God, in other words, engages in what I call **Predestined Individual Election (PIE).****

Why 'PIE'?

- “In order to manifest his glory, God has ordered that some men and angels should be predestined to everlasting life and that others should be foreordained to everlasting death”. (*Westminster Confession (1646), Chapter 3, Paragraph 3*).

????

Think about that.

What did Jesus do?

- *“But the gift is not like the trespass. For if the many died by the trespass of the one man, **how much more did God’s grace and the gift that came by the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, overflow to the many!** For if, by the trespass of the one man, death reigned through that one man, **how much more** will those who receive God’s abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, **Jesus Christ!**” (Rom 5:15, 17)*
- And yet, Calvinism teaches that the sin of Adam cursed us all, while the sacrifice of Jesus saved only a few who were already destined for heaven?

The Four Negative Outcomes

Why does this matter?

- 1) If some Christians believe other Christ-followers are predestined individually for hell, and therefore remain eternal enemies of God, we cannot stand in unity to effectively bring Christian truth to the world.
- 2) The resulting disunity directly contradicts the will of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

“I ask not only on behalf of them, but also on behalf of those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us....” (John 17:20-21)

The Four Negative Outcomes

3) PIE threatens the attributes of God

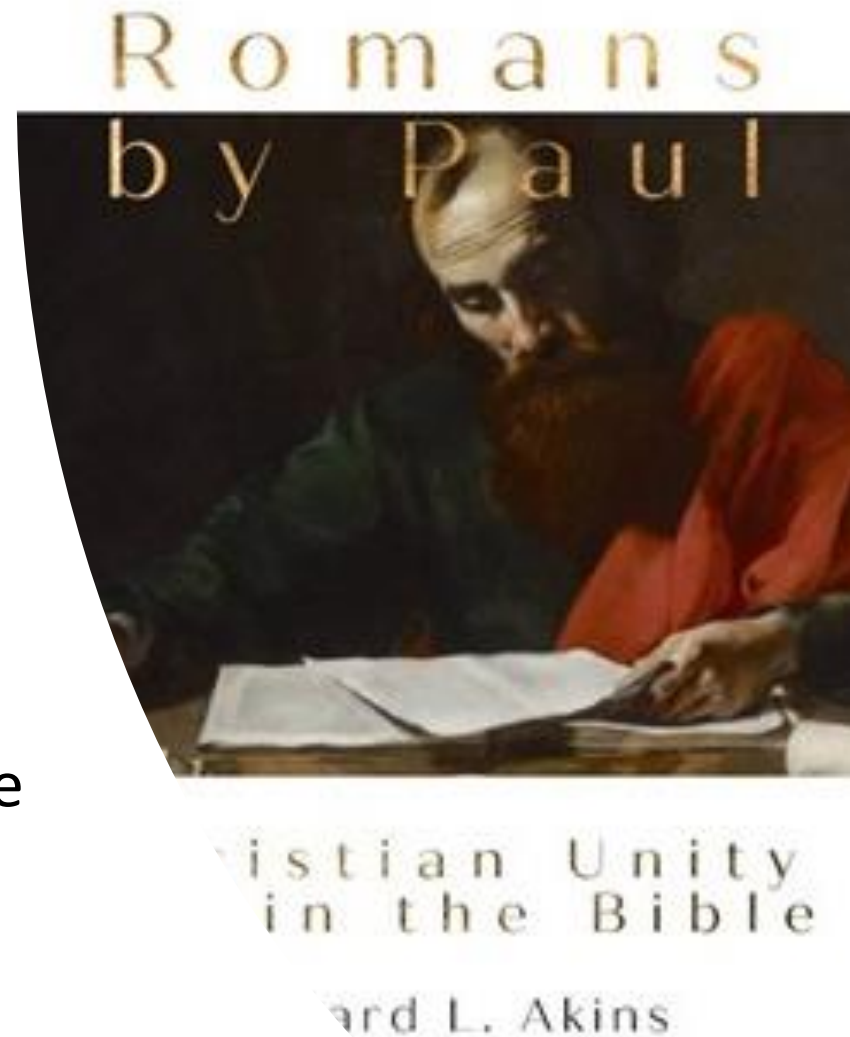
- c. Omnipotence
- d. Omniscience
- e. **Mercy** - forgiveness
- f. **Love** – the desire for the best for each person
- g. **Righteousness** (including fairness)

4) Personal faith and salvation

Convincing Catholics who believe in Christ that they are doomed because of an incorrect faith in Jesus is more likely to tear them from Christ forever than to convert them to another form of Christianity.

Why *Romans by Paul*?

- Clearly identify the arguments and specific biblical references used against Catholicism.
- Systematically address these challenges primarily through the ***same biblical citations***.
- Teach Catholics the answers to challenges before they face them.
- Increase our confidence as we Catholics study the Bible.



Answering from the Bible

- For example, the quote from Romans that there is 'no one righteous' is from Psalm 14. But, in the very next Psalm we read what can be interpreted as the opposite, that there are righteous people.

*"LORD, who may dwell in your sacred tent?
Who may live on your holy mountain?"*

*The one whose walk is blameless,
who does what is righteous", (Ps. 15:1-2)*

Jacob and Esau in Romans

- **Jacob** and **Esau** in Romans 9 are not used to represent themselves, but they represent the **Jews** and **Gentiles** as they did dozens of times in the Old Testament.
- The quote used by Paul is from Malachi 1:3, where the prophet speaks about the inheritance of Jacob and Esau (the Jews and the Gentiles).
- Selected Old Testament Uses of 'Jacob' in place of 'Israel':
 - Num. 23:7 Ez. 39:25 Deut. 32:9, 33:4 Hos. 12:2 1 Sam. 12:8
 - Am. 6:8 1 Chron. 16:17 Ob. 1:17 Psa. 14:7 Mic. 1:5 Is. 41:8
 - Jer. 26:10



Esau the Christian?

- To further see that God did not 'hate' Esau individually, we can read Genesis 30-33 where Esau is enormously blessed economically and forgives his brother (in a way very similar to Jesus' story of the Father's forgiveness of the Prodigal Son).

"But Esau ran to meet Jacob and embraced him; he threw his arms around his neck and kissed him." (Gen 33:4)

"But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him." (Luke 15:20).

The Use of Jacob and Esau

- Paul used other Old Testament individuals to represent the Jews and Gentiles. He tells us this explicitly in Galatians. He speaks of Sarah and Hagar and then writes,

*“These things may be taken figuratively, for **these women represent two covenants.**” (Gal. 4:24)*

Excerpt from Romans by Paul:

So, why did Paul write this? He was dealing with arguments and challenges between his new Christian brethren from those who previously were Jewish and those who were Gentiles. One can imagine the arguments....

Jewish Christian – ‘Our people followed all of God’s rules, and now none of that matters and we have to live within a new Christian community with Gentiles?’

Gentile Christian – ‘For a thousand years we have been spit upon by the Jews and now we have to live with them in a new Christian family?’

Faith and Obedience

- **Argument – faith alone**
- **Rom 1:17**, *‘The righteous will live by faith.’*
- Interpretation - That those deemed to have the righteousness of Christ will enjoy eternal life through faith alone.
- However,
 - Rom 1:17 quotes Hab. 2:4 which says, *‘the righteous person will live by his faithfulness’*
- In other words, we do not find ourselves with faith one day and suddenly possess eternal life due to that faith alone. *We live our lives in faithfulness* to our faith in Christ.
- Are we sure? The previous verse in Hab. says *‘See, the enemy is puffed up; his desires are not upright’*. The comparison is not between one with faith and one without faith, but in the actions of the one living according to his faith and the other not.
- Romans 1:28-32 concerns all of those who do not live by their faithfulness, but chose to sin even though God’s *‘divine nature has been clearly seen....and they have no excuse’* (Rom 1:20)

Counted as Righteousness

Romans 4:3

- What does Scripture say? “**Abraham** believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.”

Romans 4:12

- And he is then also the father of the circumcised who not only are circumcised but who also follow in the footsteps of the faith that our father **Abraham** had before he was circumcised.
- Genesis 15 was not about eternal life, but God’s promise to make Abraham the father of nations.
- Genesis 22:12 ‘Now I know that you fear God, because you have not withheld from me your son, your only son.’”

Keys to Romans by Paul

- We begin by reviewing the underlying doctrines of the Calvinist/Reformed faith summarized by the Five Points (of Calvinism)
 - Total Depravity
 - Unconditional Election
 - Limited Atonement
 - Irresistible Grace
 - Perseverance of the Saints

A Wilted TULIP

- Because of the Fall, all humans are born totally depraved and cannot desire anything of God. God elected some **individually** from the beginning of time (without setting conditions upon them of any kind) to regenerate their depraved souls so they will believe in Jesus. Jesus came and died specifically (and only) for those few elect, and the elect cannot resist the grace given to them by the Father, and they will persevere until the end of their lives in this saving grace ('once saved, always saved').

Is it Fair?

Understand the Evangelical rationale.

The best Calvinism argument –

- Suppose a governor reviews the cases of ten people on death row and grants full pardons to five of them. Is anyone being treated unfairly?
- ‘No’, claim the Reformers, five received mercy, the other five only received justice.

TULIP Revisited

- However, God is a celestial being who flew past the Earth one day, found billions of souls destined for hell and heroically saved a few.
- God....is *God*.
- **He made us**, and if we are created Totally Depraved, **he** made us that way. Calvinism essentially claims that God changed our souls to hopelessly hate him due to the sin of Adam.
- ALL humans therefore receive **injustice**, despite God granting mercy to a small fraction of us for entirely arbitrary reasons.
- It is as if God is a governor who condemns ten people to death row for crimes they could not help but commit, and then granted mercy arbitrarily to only one half.

Perseverance of the Saints

- What about the other end of TULIP? The 'P', Perseverance of the Saints.
- Our everyday, real-life experience demonstrates that believers leave Jesus all the time.
- John 6 is a perfect biblical representation, "*Because of this many of his **disciples** turned back and **no longer** went about with him.*"
- The case of the 'Rich Young Ruler' also shows us a man, supposedly Totally Depraved and only able to come to God through God's regeneration of his soul, who still desires a relationship with God and eternal life. But, then, he still turns his back on the Lord.
- He either 1) must not have been Totally Depraved and came to visit Jesus due to his own natural desire or, 2) God regenerated his Totally Depraved soul but he resisted this (irresistible) grace and did not Persevere. Either option runs contrary to TULIP.

False Faith

- The Evangelical response to the real-life examples of those not persevering in the faith is ‘well, they did not have true faith to begin with’.
- Calvin in his ‘Institutes’ admitted as much, saying God gives some a false faith so close and indistinguishable to true faith that it makes God all the more justified when he punishes them after taking this false faith away.

Ask ‘how do we know it is true faith?’ They will answer, ‘Because they do not lose that faith.’

‘Well,’ we might respond, ‘that’s exactly the Catholic doctrine of dying in a state of grace.’

The Gospel

- Ultimately, Evangelicals will claim that Catholics do not follow the true Gospel and therefore are not Christian.
- But is the Gospel, the Good News, really the idea that God made all of us Totally Deprave, without human will, and chooses from before we are even born to save only a few?
- Or, is the true Gospel what we read about in Paul's book to the Romans and elsewhere in the New Testament, that salvation is now available to all, Jew and Gentile alike, through Jesus who loves all of us?

Romans by Paul

- Examples of specific biblical arguments and the Catholic defense
- Review of the true Gospel - the offer of salvation to all, Jew and Gentile, through the Gospel of John and elsewhere.
- Catholic practices and beliefs through the parables of Jesus.
- A call to Christian Unity

Romans by Paul

- Perfect for RCIA graduates, teens and college aged Catholics, those who are challenged in their faith, and Catholics beginning a deeper study of Scripture.
- <https://enroutebooksandmedia.com/romansbypaul/>

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