

More Argument for Analysis of Paul's Argument

The following analyses and observations provide somewhat a recapitulation of the arguments made before yet some additional ideas and clarifications are presented.

Observations across chapters

The problem addressed in the letter was that the Roman Gentile believers (where the term "believers" is used loosely) were boastful against Jews and denigrated the Jews such that the witness of the Gentiles became a negative effect in the number of Jews being saved.

Paul was also apparently trying to convince the Romans not to boast but rather to take the opposite action, that of serving each other. Then chapters 12 to 15 strongly build toward ideas of greater degrees of service and care for one another.

Then there was a building of doctrine in order to give the Roman believers an appreciation of the Law and to see how the Law relates to topics such as justification, sin and righteousness. A better attitude toward the Law was being promulgated stepwise and methodically. [Though this was not to

In conjunction with the improved attitude of the Law there seemed to be the attempt to create a better attitude toward the Jews.

Likely Paul also intended to provide certain understanding of principles or doctrines to the Romans.

There also appears to be some maneuvers to create a softer heart among the Romans. The promotion of a tender heart then would ease the antagonism of Roman Gentiles against Jews.

Progression regarding Jews

1. Paul introduces the idea of "Jew first and then Gentile" in chapter 1 as showing there's a problem where the Jew was not being treated as first. This presented idea seems pretty benign and obvious. The phrase is also a bit ambiguous in that the meaning could be negative or positive. The negative sense would say that the Jews had the first shot at salvation and now salvation is only for the Gentiles. And the negative sense is arguably the meaning assumed by the Gentile readers

2. The opening chapter tends to focus on inspirational mentions of Gentiles such as mentioning that Paul's ministry was to the Gentiles. The mentions of Jew and Jewish concepts is minimal.

3. The second chapter then spoke negatively of Jews. The observation of this negative aspect refers to verses 17 to the end. The issue is about hypocrisy as seen starting in vs 21. The issues, such as hypocrisy and boasting, actually appear to be described in a manner suggesting that Paul presented the issues as being stereotypes made by the Gentiles about Jews.

A problem may arising in the reading thousands of years later in that readers still may accept these terms as applying to Jews and as having applied to Jews at the time of the writing. But in reality the issues would normally be seen to apply equally to Jews and Gentiles, especially in the writings of Paul, who tended away from gross stereotypes. Paul mentioned that the Cretians were liars (Titus 1:13-14) but said so in a manner so as to make a simple rebuke so they would be corrected and then to permit them to live in faith from then on.

And as has been shown elsewhere about chapters 9 to 11, Paul wrote positively about Jews.

In looking at vs 24 where it says the Gentiles blaspheme the name off God cause of you [Jews], it is a bit funny that Paul actually was addressing this blaspheme, argumentatively, against the readers of the epistle to the Romans. The Gentile readers of the epistle seemed to be a mood to affirm that Jews were causing Gentiles to blaspheme, but yet the readers didn't see themselves included among the same Gentiles.

[Note that even Paul's use of the word "Gentiles" in general in the epistle was an indication that a problem was arising between Jews and Gentiles, since it seems the word "Gentiles" is used rarely in the other letters by Paul. Then the word "Gentiles" was used in verse 24 in a manner that was ambiguous between targeting the readers or targeting only other Gentiles. This ambiguity in targeted audience is seen in Rom 1:18-32 and in Rom 2:1-16.

Many other passages in Romans show the ambiguity.

In an approach similar to using ambiguity, Paul changed pronouns strategically to show where Paul identified with the reader of the letter as a contrast against the places where Paul made a pointed argument against the readers. This strategy is described in the article on pronouns in Paul's argument. Note though that endings of words in Greek provide most of the indications of audience, instead of using explicit pronouns.]

4. Verses 25 to 29 refer to the circumcision and to Jews in a manner characteristic of a definition [at least from a 21st American cultural point of view] rather than an accusation. Yet the ideas are negative against Jews who are circumcised. Then, in view of Rom 3:1-2, verses 25 to 29 suggest that there was no advantage to being circumcised or to being a Jew. So verses 25 to 29 make no actual indication but only provided a definition or formula showing when and where there is a benefit.

5. Entering chapter 3 there finally came statements of defense for the benefit of being a Jew. The first two verses finally said something positive about Jews after first making many accusations. Paul apparently saw the need to bring the discussion into a positive point about Jews. This positive statement would not be written to Jews since Jews would most likely have good thoughts about themselves. Instead, Paul addressed this to Gentiles who had a negative image about Jews.

Even verse 3 appears to decrease blame upon Jews by speaking about "some Jews" rather than "most Jews" having unbelief. It seems from the flow and context of Romans that the Gentile believers were saying that all Jews had rejected God and were therefore giving a negative view of God. Then, in contrast to the wording in Rom 3:3 speaking about some Jews being in unbelief, Paul showed in chapters 9 to 11 that only a remnant were saved. Paul hence had shifted from the moderation of the degree of Jewish unbelief into the presentation of widespread disbelief in chapters 9 to 11, that only a remnant would be saved. (For more general and detailed analysis, see the author's article on chapters 9 to 11.)

Verse 3:9 then equates Jew and Gentile. This is the second statement unambiguously describe Jew and Gentile as being in the same condition. Here's the progression:

1:16 ambiguous usage --as described earlier

2:9 negative topic --tribulation

2:10 positive topic -- glory, honor and peace to he that does good.

3:9 negative topic -- under sin -- but still equating Jew and Gentile

10:12 positive topic -- no difference in salvation between Jew and Greek/Gentile

Paul's juxtaposition of Jew and Gentile, when listed in sequence, shows how Paul has increasingly spoke more favorably of Jews.

6. Chapter 4 spoke positively about Abraham as the father of faith. This chapter showed a positive image about the Jews through their forefather but without mentioning of Abraham as a Jew. [Technically he was not a Jew but would be counted as a Jew by being recognized as a forefather of the Jews.] Paul therefore focused on faith but also showed the Jews in a good light. (There is a subtle argument here that if the Jews descended from Abraham then there may be some benefit or some inheritance of the qualities of faith from Abraham. But such subtle argument is observed only in relation to the conclusion about the idea of increasingly more favorable discussion being made about Jews as the letter progresses.)

7. Chapters 5 and 6 shy away from discussion of the Jews. But Romans 5:18 mentioned justification for all men in Jesus. Chapters 5 and 6 seem to act as an interlude during which some foundations about grace and righteousness are being discussed as a butress to justify the benefit of the Law seen in Rom 7:12, for example. And Paul delighted in the law in Rom 7:22.

Important to observe though is the idea that Paul focused on other problems in chapters 5 and 6 before returning to the defense of the Jews in subsequent chapters.

8. The Law is defended as being good in Rom 7. And seeing that Rom 3:1-2 and Rom 9:1-6 spoke of the Jews as being caretakers of the oracles and Law, the attitude about Jews and the attitude toward the Law were inextricably tied together in the minds of the Roman readers

9. Chapter 8 again focused on moving the Romans away from the flesh into more spirit-motivated behavior in the face of persecution. Yet a few arguments also seem to develop for the acceptance of Jews.

One argument, rather obfuscated, would be about moving the Gentile believers from carnal thinking, especially about their boasting (Rom 8:5-6).

A second argument is about God protecting the elect(8:33). Then Rom 9 to 11 discussed about the elect of the Jews too.

A third argument comes by mentioning the need for the Spirit to strengthen the believers(Rom 8:27). Such mention showed that the Romans needed help. And the need for help was presented in face of the pride of the Roman church. Their need for mercy and help then became a foundation for requesting mercy and help for the Jews in chapters 9 to 11.

Indeed, the arguments here were subtle but also apparently vital to Paul's attempt to fix the problems in the Roman church. These arguments became visible only after seeing the whole context and hence had to be found with some effort after seeing a motivation in Paul's writing.

10. Then chapters 9 to 11 represented the conclusion of Paul's effort to create a benevolent attitude by Roman Gentile believers toward Jews. The relevance and meaning of chapters 9 to 11 are described in another article by the author. And the summation of Paul's attempt to change the mindset of the Roman Gentiles is shown in that article. The appeal was made for the Romans to stop boasting in order that more Jews could potentially be saved.

Hence, Paul had developed a careful and subtle argument to lead Gentiles into benevolence toward Jews.

Tribulation

The boasting (Rom 3:27,Rom 11:18) and fleshly action (Rom 6:1,6) of the Romans may have been in reaction to tribulation. The tribulation and persecution are shown in the letter to the Romans.

Rom 5:3 showed "tribulation"

Rom 8:18 showed "sufferings"

Rom 8:36 -- being led as sheep to the slaughter.

Rom 8:37-38 indicated some strength and benefit in the face of death

Rom 13:2-3 showed resistance of the believers against the government

Rom 13:11-13 then showed that day was about to come and they should give up "rioting" (KJV+)

Rom 16:20 said that Satan would soon be bruised.

The bruising of Satan seems to address God's response to the persecution against the Romans (i.e. since the Romans are the audience, not that they are the only ones that were being persecuted).

Eschatology

Includes tribulation and suffering verses

Rom 5:9 "saved from the wrath of God" --this likely connects with same wrath made by John the Baptist (Luke 3:7 "you brood of vipers, who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?")

Rom 9:21 "creation set free ... into the freedom of the glory of the children of God"

Rom 9:25 with perseverance – perseverance is an eschatological concept.

Rom 9:27 spoke of the remnant as mentioned in Isa 10:22

Rom 9:29 spoke of the seed or remnant in relation to Sodom and Gomorrah

Rom 11:5 -- the remnant was present -- therefore Isa 10:22 (Rom 9:27) was being fulfilled along with all of Isa 10.

Rom 15:20 showed that another passage of Isaiah was fulfilled.

It seems that the "reign" is actually different from the "trust". So nations would be under His reign but believers among the nations would "trust" Him.

Rom 16:20 Satan soon would be bruised -- fulfilling Gen 3:15

The prophecy of Isa 10, for example, must have been fulfilled in the first century during the lifetime of the remnant or else the existence of the remnant was not significant. Yet Paul showed the significance by showing that the promise of God to Israel relied on the existence of that remnant at that time.

Also, the article on chapters 9 to 11, showed that Paul was concerned about the salvation of the Jews in a sense so that the remnant of Rom 11:5 would consist of the most number of Jews and that this number would maybe have increased if the Roman believers had a benevolent attitude toward the Jews. The concern of Paul therefore showed that the end time judgment of the Jews was approaching during the lifetime of the Roman believers (i.e. lifetime in general, not of all the Roman believers of that moment).

Boasting

The Roman believers had a problem of boasting

Rom 2:1 -- judging is a form of boasting so as to say "I am perfect and am the judge"

Rom 3:27 where then is boasting

Rom 11:18 showed the Roman Gentiles boasting against the Jews

Rom 12:3 thinking too highly of one's self.

This showed that Roman believers in general were thinking too highly of themselves instead of serving one another.

Rom 15:1 is antithetical to the act of boasting.

Judging

Judging and judgmental attitudes were presented in many fashions in the letter to the Romans. The idea that there was a problem about judgmental attitudes becomes strongly supported.

Some passages seem merely argumentative, as a style of argument, while other passages express details of problems at the Roman church.

Rom 1:18-32 is a judgment

Rom 2:1 "You who judge" spoke directly of at least one person potentially judging

Rom 2:1-16 spoke against judging

Rom 2:17-29 spoke judgment against hypocritical Jews.

Rom 3:9-19 spoke a judgment or an indictment. But this verse just describes the situation but doesn't mention a result.

Rom 3:27 showed judging by boasting about salvation

Rom 11:18 showed judging by boasting against Jews

Rom 14 showed judging based on eating of foods

Rom 14:10 --if you judge your brother

Fleshly behavior

Rom 3:27 where then is boasting

Rom 6 and Rom 8 -- following the flesh

Rom 9:8 ?? Not children of the flesh – this isn't talking about Roman believers and hence if off topic.

Rom 11:18 showed the Roman Gentiles boasting against the Jews

rom 13:14 no provision for the flesh

Rom 14 showed judging of others

Antagonistic Toward Jews

Rom 2:17-32 If you call yourself a Jew --presenting an accusation of hypocrisy

Rom 2:29-32 Accusations of false circumcision

Rom 3:1 Jews as being disadvantaged

Rom 11:18 boasting against the Jews

The whole context of chapters 9 to 11 also seem to conclude the effort of Paul to reduce the antagonism by Roman believers toward Jews.

Lack of Service to One Another

Rom 12:1-13 -- showing need for works of service

Rom 13:8-14 -- owe no one anything, and show love

Rom 14:1-3 -- since if you are judging others you aren't serving them

Rom 14:7 --liveth to himself -- i.e. This is being selfish and self-focused.

Rom 15:1 then showed to bear the weaknesses of the other. this indeed would be a service to others

Indications that Paul didn't assume that all were believers

A general impression formed that Paul didn't write as if all people in his audience were believers.

Rom 2:1-16 speaks against the individual who judges. Paul entered into a potentially hypothetical discussion by selecting a singular "you" in his accusation. But the "you" could apply to unsaved people among the Roman believers.

Rom 8:1 "no condemnation to those in Christ" --

So Paul didn't extend this protection from condemnation to everyone hearing or reading the letter.

Rom 8:5 "they after the flesh"

So Paul showed that some people, even among the listeners/readers, might have been in the flesh

Rom 8:11 "if the Spirit dwells in you"

This speaks conditionally of the Spirit being in them. The verbiage allows for some of the listeners to be unsaved and not have the Spirit within them.

Additional Observations

Quick Ideas

1. Is Israel now the Church?

No. Israel was treated in chapter 9 as only being bloodline descendants of Jacob. Then Paul described Israel as only being the subset of the bloodline who were also believers. Logically it seems that this subset is what Paul defined to be the remnant. Yet Paul then continues to talk about Israel as being all Jews.

2. Does Israel used in Romans to include Jews?

Yes. Paul appears to speak of Israel as being the bloodline descendants of Israel, who were then also described as being Jews. Paul shows this equivalence somewhat by speaking of Jews in Rom 3:1-2 and then equivalently of Israel in Rom 9:1-6. For chapters 9 to 11, the word "Israel" was required in order to connect the discussion with Old Testament prophecies. To argue contrarywise may be to say that Paul no longer was interested in talking about Jews from chapters 9 to 11 or that Paul now wanted to suddenly talk about a nation of Israel that no longer existed. It actually seems more likely that the Jews were called Israel but that Paul couldn't mention the word "Israel" until Paul had prepared the Romans by decreasing their prejudice by first speaking of "Jew" as the less bothersome word.

3. What is the Olive Tree in Romans 11?

It seems Paul used the Olive Tree to roughly represent those who are seen as God's people. The vine analogy of Jesus may have been avoided in order to avoid creating wrong doctrines in the minds of the Romans. Paul's focus was on what was more natural as a branch to the tree and hence he didn't seem to try to describe the church, for example.

The progression of chapter 11 would actually show that the branches removed were those who never were believers. So the branches removed were never in Christ Jesus, therefore the root or stump isn't Christ Jesus analogically. The branches added are somewhat describable as believers but Paul was just emphasizing that it wasn't sensible to boast. Therefore the removal of branches was about the analogy regarding boasting and not about building the church.

4. Who is the remnant?

The remnant (Rom 9:27, Rom 11:5, Isa 10:22) consisted of a subset of the Jews (Jews, who are also called "Israel"). The subset consisted of the Jews or Israelites who were also believers and hence were of the promise too. The remnant is described essentially by the argument of Paul in chapter 9 who describes a narrowing of the bloodline of Abraham based on the descendants of the promise. Then in Rom 11:1-6? it was shown that God had preserved the remnant just as He had done in the past. Paul said that the remnant was present which then meant that the prophecies to the remnant could therefore be fulfilled.

5. How could all Israel be saved?

It seems that Paul was describing that the remnant (Rom 11:5) as being Israel in Rom 11:26. The remnant (as mentioned in Rom 9:27) seemed to describe the reduced version of Israel from Rom 9:6. This analysis is only a proposal until more study has been done. It seems unlikely that a future promise exists to Israel since there was so great a destruction of Judea in the first century that any significant geneological records were lost.
See Isa 59:20

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