

A Romans Rap

written by **Robert A. J. Gagnon, Ph.D.**

Associate Professor of New Testament, Pittsburgh Theological Seminary – May 19, 2010

Students at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary had an End of the Year Awards event, the point of which was to act a bit goofy and have a good laugh. I was approached to do a rap since the previous year I had done a short rap called "Luvination" for a spoof entitled "Calvin Does Casablanca" (replacing Humphrey Bogart in the famous movie with John Calvin). For this year's event I decided to write a rap that summarizes the message of Romans. The mode is humorous but I did make a serious effort to represent the distinctive message of Romans accurately. Slightly long perhaps for a rap song (at 5-6 minutes, though many rap songs approach 5 min.) but not long enough, certainly, to do full justice to Romans. The second stanza was supposed to serve as a refrain but the text was already too long for it to serve that purpose. The exercise was fun.

Hear me, my friends ... and don't turn me off!
I realize I'm not ... the usual prof.
Rarely will you see ... a professor like me
Recount Paul's Romans ... in a rap symphony.
I rap not for me ... but for the tripping rock.
That's Jesus Christ ... and call me "Snoop Doc."

It's a Romans rap ... it's a Romans rap!
You might not know it ... but it's a layered trap.
Just when you think ... that you're off the hook,
God's righteousness ... makes you take a *second* look.
There's only one real way ... that you can boast:
Put your boast in God ... or end up as toast.

Paul makes clear ... that he works like a priest.
He offers up Gentiles—not a brute beast!
Obedience of faith ... is the name of the game;
the fruit of holiness ... by any other name.
Sharing his gift ... is what he's gonna do;
proclaiming the gospel ... to the Romans too.
The renewal of the mind ... not to the age conform;
rather by the gospel ... be fully transformed.

He starts by saying ... that he's not ashamed
of the gospel, you know, God's power to claim
every life that holds ... no rightness of its own
but rests instead ... on Christ's *death* to atone
The righteousness of God ... best story ever told.
God's faithfulness and truth ... to promises of old.
God sent his very Son ... just to make amends
for the universal sin ... that you know offends.

First he traps the Gentile ... then he traps the Jew.
Look out, bro and sis ... the next trap's for you!
Gentiles suppressing ... the truth in creation,
In God's eyes ... that's a big abomination!
Ignoring God's power ... and great divinity,
They worshiped human statues ... embraced idolatry.
God gave them over ... to their impurity;
so against nature ... no complementarity.
The net widens further ... to arrogance and greed.
It's obvious to the Jew ... Gentiles are bad seed.

But the Jew who judges ... is also without excuse;
for to sin against the law ... is also an abuse.
Though he might sin less ... and less egregiously,
he knows more than others ... that's plain for him to see.
And though he has the law ... and the sign of circumcision,
these things won't save him—they give no exemption.

Christians who read this ... and think they get a pass,
you who say you know Christ—wait, not so fast!
Just 'cause you're forgiven ... you say “Why not sin?”
But if sin is your lord ... you're not going to win.
Jesus, you know ... is raised from the dead;
and you're baptized ... into Jesus as your head.
So if you live ... so that sin is your lord,
“The wages of sin” ... will be your reward.

Let's remember this ... there's not one law but four.
The law of my mind ... wants the law of God more.
But then the law of sin ... comes knockin' on the door.
The result of all that ... is I lose the whole war.
So there's a fourth law ... it's really needed now—
the gift of the Spirit ... that empowers you somehow.

It's true not just for ... the other guy but you:
two ways still ... I'll tell you what to do.
One way leads to life ... the other leads to death;
life when you kill ... the sinful deeds of the flesh.
Mouthing the confession ... that "Jesus is my Lord,"
when not led by the Spirit ... won't keep you on board.

Now let's all return ... to bragging in how good
God and Christ were ... when estranged we stood.
While we were sinners ... Christ died for us.
Do you think now ... he'll throw you under the bus?
Nothing outside you ... in all material creation
can separate you ... from God's "luvination."

But how could God be right ... if most of Israel is lost?
Did he save the world ... at such a horrible cost?
Let's get one thing straight: ... It's not *God's* fault.
The Messiah whom God sent ... *they* did not exalt.
Yet does that mean ... that God is through with them?
No, God will remove ... the hardness that condemns.

First the fullness of ... the Gentiles must come in;
then comes the fullness ... of Israel, God's friend.
Stop to think, Gentiles, ... how easy it would be
to remove your wild branches ... from the olive tree.
So don't boast over Israel ... but just remember this:
God can restore them *if* ... in unbelief they don't persist.

There's more that could be said ... to you, Paul's pupils;
instead I'll push on now ... to an issue of Jewish scruples.
Fighting in Roman churches ... over meat and calendar!
Don't you guys get it?—they're *adiaphora*;
“matters of indifference” ... to the kingdom of God,
which consists of righteousness ... not pork or scrod.
Now don't misunderstand—we're not talking about sex.
Immorality must be cast off ... or face a train wreck.

But things that don't matter ... please just leave alone;
and focus on how God ... welcomed you all home.
United praise of God ... for pouring out his grace,
that's the surest way ... for the church to run the race.
We've won something better ... than a lottery;
by divine design, not chance ... I think you'll agree.

Now I've told my tale ... of Romans in rap.
It's far from perfect ... I'm an ordinary chap.
But God is wonderful ... to him doff your hat.
Who'd have ever guessed ... God would do all that!
So glory be to God ... who is the King of kings;
for from him *and* through him *and* to him ... are all things.