The Book of Romans

A Preface:

God’s Deepest Mystery

The World’s Greatest Story

***Thinking about the Righteousness of God***

**Romans 1:16–17 (ESV)**

16For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. 17For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, “The righteous shall live by faith.”

***An icon(ic) question: What is The Thinker thinking?***

****** It’s a good question, and even one we can answer. Auguste Rodin’s famous bigger-than-life statue was originally a much smaller part of a larger work, a huge double door for an art museum which was never built. The door was a bronze casting, “The Gates of Hell,” depicting the Last Judgment, and souls being cast into hell, a scene in the literary work, *Inferno,* by Dante Alighieri.

So the short answer to the question is that The Thinker is thinking about the destinies of heaven and hell, and who is going to which. He is thinking about the most important question we can consider, that is, how can we participate in eternal joy and escape God’s wrath?

The New Testament book of Romans tackles that question, and explains the precise “mechanism” or way that God is able to bring sinners to heaven: The Cross of Christ.

Paul’s letter to the Romans clarifies the issue:

**1. *How can sinners be accepted by God?***

God does not grade “on the curve.” The only way to be accepted by God is to be found perfect. Even one sin or character flaw excludes us from heaven and exposes us to God’s wrath. Romans 1:18-20; 3:9-12

**2. *How does mankind (religion) answer that question?***

Religion deals with sin in two complementary ways, first by downplaying God’s justice in favor of His love, and second, by self-righteousness: comparing himself to greater sinners, and/or soothing his conscience by crafting a system of works and sacrifices that he believes balances the scales in his favor. Results: fail. Micah 6:6, 7; Romans 3:19, 20

***3. Why is the question “a problem” for a loving God?***

God has no problems. But God is love. He also is perfectly just. So how can a just God pour out love upon those who have violated His commandments? In a word, He can’t. It just isn’t possible for God to excuse sin in a sinner, no matter how much He may love him. Isa. 6:1-5

**4. *What does God reveal as a way to wed love and justice?***

His righteousness. God reveals that in the Cross, He Himself, in the Person of His Son, dies in the place of the sinner He loves. That way, His justice is intact, for the sin-debt is paid. No religion anywhere, at any time, has suggested such a thing. Romans 3:21-26

**5. *Why is God’s righteousness such “good news”?***

God’s righteousness in the Gospel is good news first, because it is both just and loving, second because it is an eternal, irreversible declaration of forgiveness and righteousness, independent of our works, third, because it rescues us from God’s wrath, fourth, because it is a gift received by faith alone, and fifth, because it is for the joy of all peoples.