



# A Study of Romans

## An Introduction



## 1. The Key Questions About the Letter to the Romans

Who: The Author is the Apostle Paul. It is the longest of his 13 Books (maybe 14 if he wrote Hebrews)

What: An explanation of the fundamental nature of Christ. It's Paul's ***"Pocket-Sized Guide to Jesus"***

When: Winter of 56-58 A.D. (1,963 years ago)

Where: Paul was in the city of Corinth at the close of his 3<sup>rd</sup> missionary journey and on the eve of his departure to Jerusalem.

How: A letter sent to Rome carried by Phoebe, a servant (*diakonos*) and patron (*prostatis*) of the Church at Cenchrae.

Why: To let the Christians in Rome know that he (Paul) was coming to explain the basis of man's standing before his Creator.

## 2. Romans Gets Top Reviews

*"The Epistle to the Romans is the true masterpiece of the New Testament and the very purest Gospel, which is well worth and deserving that a Christian should not only learn it by heart, word for word, but also that he should daily deal with it as the daily bread of men's souls. I can never be too much or too well read and studied, and the more it is handled the more precious it becomes, and the better it tastes."* – **Martin Luther**

*“Romans is the most profound book in existence” – Samuel Taylor Coleridge*

*“Romans was written as a letter by a great pastor...to a church, and like all New Testament literature it had a very practical aim and end in view. The Apostle was concerned to help Christians in Rome, to build them up and establish them in their most holy faith.” – D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones*

*“...when any one gains a knowledge of this Epistle, he has an entrance opened to him to all the most hidden treasures of Scripture” – John Calvin*

### **3. Romans Credited as the Motivation for Major Protestant Reforms**

Augustine - in 386 AD, after hearing a child singing “take up and read”, opened a book of Paul’s writings and randomly landed on Romans 13: 13-14 which spoke directly to his sinful lifestyle. His immediate conversion led to priesthood and eventual sainthood.

Martin Luther - his lectures on Romans in 1515-16 coincided with his criticism of Roman Catholicism which led to his 95 Theses of 1517.

John Wesley – claimed that he felt his heart “strangely warmed” while listening to Luther’s Preface to the Epistle of Romans while attending service at a Moravian Church in London. Wesley’s evangelical conversion experience is famous as the foundation of Methodism.

### **4. Why Study Romans? - The Key Takeaways**

An understanding of grace through faith in Christ

The concept of salvation coming from faith and not from religious actions

The idea that **no one** can follow God’s Law perfectly

The human condition

Instruction for everyday Christian living

### **5. The Historical Background of Romans**

In Rome circa 54 AD the relationship between Christian Jews and Christian Gentiles was severely strained. Jewish belief in the finality of Mosaic Law as the expression of the Will of God, and the insistence that Gentiles who would become Christians must be circumcised and keep the Law of Moses.

One of the great problems of the time was the question whether a Gentile could be a Christian without first converting to Judaism. On the grounds that Christianity started as a Jewish religion, many powerful Jewish leaders were steadfast that it remain so in the practice of circumcision, which was a physical rite which stood as the initial ceremony in the Jewish naturalization of Gentiles.

In the late 40's AD, a very large portion of Rome's substantial Jewish population had to leave the city following riots that may have resulted from early Christian preaching among the Jewish community, but most assuredly resulting from Emperor Claudius who enacted an edict of expulsion of Jews from Rome (49 AD).

However, the death of Claudius in 54 AD brought in his successor Nero, who rescinded his decrees making it possible for expelled Jews to return and resettle in Rome. So, into this renewed strained environment enters the Epistle written to all Roman Christians to pursue genuine unity in the Gospel.

Paul knew at the time of his writing that some Jewish Christians who had returned to Rome would now be facing the difficult question of how to live alongside Gentile co-believers as one family given the cherished and very different cultural traditions (circumcision, food taboos, etc.).

The historical sequence of activities in Rome circa 54 AD fit the intent and main insistence of Paul's letter to the Romans like a glove.

## **6. The Intent and Paul's Main Insistence in His Letter to the Romans**

Paul knows about the friction between Jews and Gentiles living in Rome because of his prior experiences in Antioch. Furthermore, knowing that these differences will not be resolved overnight, Paul introduces a doctrine of *adiaphora* (Greek meaning "not different or "indifferent"). In other words, there are some cultural and practical things over which Christians can legitimately disagree, but these differences should not impair common worship.

Paul's Epistle insists that man's justification before God rests fundamentally on the Mercy of Christ, not on the Law of Moses. Furthermore, it's not a matter of Law at all because the sinful nature of man cannot fully live up to God's Law (as an expression of God's Holiness). It is only Christ, out of the goodness of his heart that forgives Man's sins.

Paul makes Jesus the lens through which all Christians, Jew and Gentile alike, may see the saving plan of God and to live in the obedience of faith. The Epistle does not imply that "obedience flows **from** faith"; it implies that "obedience that **is** faith". Paul explains that Man's judgement before God depends, **not on obedience to moral and religious commandments, but on accepting Christ's redeeming work.** In other words, the path to salvation is not from deeds the Man has done for himself, but faith, and trusting in what Christ has done for the Man.



*The Colosseum at Rome*

## 7. Study Schedule of the 16 Chapters of Romans

9/5/21	Romans Intro	Overview; Importance of the Epistle; Intent and Insistence of Paul; Schedule of Chapters
9/12/21	Romans 1: 1-32	Opening address; Words of Thanksgiving; Power of the Gospel; Idolatry: the Corruption of Religion; Immorality: the Corruption of Life
9/19/21	Romans 2 : 1-29	Just Judgement of God; Doers of the Law; Law and True Circumcision
9/26/21	Romans 3: 1-31	Faithfulness and Justice of God; Universal Domination of Sin; Righteousness of God Manifested; Justification by Faith
10/3/21	Romans 4: 1-25	Justification of Abraham; The Promise to Abraham; The Faith of Abraham
10/10/21	Romans 5: 1-21	Peace with God through Christ; Reconciliation with God through Christ; Sin and Death through Adam; Disgrace in Adam, Divine Grace in Christ
10/17/21	Romans 6: 1-23	Dying and Rising with Christ in Baptism; Dead to Sin but Alive to God; Freed from Sin and Slaves to Righteousness
10/24/21	Romans 7: 1-25	Release From the Law; Defense of the Law; Indictment of Sin
10/31/21	Romans 8: 1-39	The Flesh and the Spirit; Children of God by Adoption; Revelation and Redemption of the Children of God; More Than Conquerors in Christ
11/7/21	Romans 9: 1-33	God's Gifts to Israel; God's Purposes in History; The Freedom to Show Mercy; The Potter and the Clay; The Stone in Zion
11/14/21	Romans 10: 1-21	Christ at the End of the Law; The Righteousness of Faith; Israel's Unbelief as Disobedience
11/21/21	Romans 11: 1-36	Paul and the Remnant; Apostleship to the Gentiles; The Olive Tree of Israel; The Mystery of Israel's Salvation; Final Hymn and Doxology
11/28/21	Romans 12: 1-21	An Offering of Body and Mind; The Body of Christ; The Primacy of Love and Peace
12/5/21	Romans 13: 1-14 Romans 14: 1-23	Submission to Ruling Authorities; Love as Fulfillment of the Law; Putting on Christ; Welcoming the Weak; Loving the Weak
12/12/21	Romans 15: 1-33	Oneness in Christ; Welcoming All in Christ; The Priestly Service of the Gospel; Jerusalem, then Rome, then Spain
12/19/21	Romans 16: 1-27	Commendation for Phoebe and Paul's Greetings; A Warning from Paul, Greetings from Corinth; Concluding Doxology

## 8. Some Challenges for the Study of Romans

Most Biblical scholars agree that Romans is the masterpiece of Paul's Epistles. It is one of the richest expositions of the Christian gospel ever captured in writing. While offering an amazing theological and spiritual vision, it also a very demanding read and intellectually a challenge to understand. Anyone who claims to completely understand Romans is mistaken.

Paul's terse style of writing is also challenging. In Romans, he stuffs a maximum amount of meaning into a minimum amount of words. As a result, sometimes the impressions that come to mind when surface reading his words will not penetrate very deep into the points that he is trying to make. Many times, you may have to carefully read a passage several times over to comprehend his message.

Paul was one of the most brilliant theologians in Church history and offers precious wisdom which takes some exertion to understand. And this is why we will study Romans one chapter at a time for 16 months, even when some chapters contain only 4 paragraphs. But you will see that as we discuss those chapters that are a half of a page long, the message is a mile deep!

Between Romans and Hebrews, it can be said that these are the two Books are the foundation of the Theology of the New Testament. In Romans, a great number of the great theological issues are addressed, with almost each chapter containing a doctrinal theme. They are:

- Christ's Resurrection
- Christ's deity
- Christ's humanity
- Faith
- Judgement
- Sin
- Depravity
- Justification
- Reconciliation
- Grace
- Eternal Life
- Sanctification
- Security
- Election
- Christ's second coming
- Judgement of believers

----- **END OF LESSON** -----

NEXT WEEK – read Romans 1:1-32

Covering: Opening address; Words of Thanksgiving; Power of the Gospel; Idolatry: the Corruption of Religion; Immorality: the Corruption of Life