

Epistle to the Romans

I. Introduction to Romans

A. Author: Paul, the author of Romans, was first known as Saul of Tarsus who persecuted the early church. Paul was trained as a rabbi in first century Judaism. Jesus appeared to Paul on his way to Damascus. Paul, blinded by the experience, was led to Damascus and prayed for by a faithful disciple named Ananias. Paul regained his sight and became a fearless apostle to the Gentiles.

B. Important Dates and Events in Paul's Life¹

A.D. 33	Paul converted
AD 35	Paul's first post-conversion visit to Jerusalem
AD 35-46	Paul in Cilicia and Syria
AD 46	Paul's second visit to Jerusalem
AD 47-49	Paul and Barnabas in Cyprus and Galatia
AD 48-49	<i>Letter to the Galatians</i>
AD 49	Jerusalem Council
AD 49-50	Paul and Silas travel from Syrian Antioch through Asia Minor to Macedonia and Achaia
AD 50	<i>Letters to the Thessalonians</i>
AD 50-52	Paul in Corinth
AD 52	Paul's third visit to Jerusalem
AD 52-55	Paul in Ephesus
AD 55-56	<i>Letters to the Corinthians</i>
AD 55-57	Paul in Macedonia Illyricum and Achaia
AD 56-57	<i>Letter to the Romans</i>
AD 57	Paul's fourth and last visit to Jerusalem
AD 57-59	Paul imprisoned in Caesarea
AD 59	Paul begins voyage to Rome
AD 60	Paul arrives in Rome
AD 60-62	Paul's house arrest
AD 60-62	<i>Prison Epistles</i>
AD 65	<i>Pastoral Epistles</i>
AD 67	Paul executed

C. The World of Letters: One third of the New Testament is made up of letters called epistles. Paul wrote thirteen of these letters as Christianity expanded out from Palestine into the world that was dominated by the Roman Empire. The Romans had brought "Pax Romana" or peace into the world. They banished pirates from the Mediterranean and ships carried merchandise of Roman trade. Roads were built and travel was safe. Letters were the primary form of communication. Paul's letters played a key role in his relationship with the churches. Letters were usually written in response to people's needs and questions. In Paul's letter to the Romans, he was writing about the core of his faith and belief.

D. Date: Paul wrote the Epistle to the Romans while he was in Corinth during his third missionary journey. Paul was on a mission to minister to the poor believers in Jerusalem and to give them money that had been gathered from the Gentile churches (Romans 15:22-29). The letter was most likely written around 56 or 57 AD when Paul was planning on visiting the believers in Rome (Romans 1:1:11,12) while on his way to Jerusalem. Paul's plan did not work. He came to Rome as a prisoner three years later. He remained on house arrest for at least two years before he was executed just outside of Rome.

E. Background: Paul had never visited the church at Rome (1:9-13). He did not yet have an intimate relationship with believers at Rome, so his letter was doctrinal tone rather than a more personal letter. It is

¹ From F.F. Bruce, *Paul: Apostle of the Heart Set Free* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977), 475.

not known exactly how the Roman church began, but it is possible that some Roman Jews who were converted on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:10) began the church. Rome was a cosmopolitan city of about one million people at this time and served as the capital of the Roman Empire that stretched from Britain to Arabia. It was the diplomatic and trade center of the known world.

- F. **Unique Features** The Epistle to the Romans is the most thorough theological testimonial in the New Testament. The main aim of his summation is radical righteousness that is found only through relationship with Jesus Christ.

II. Key Themes in Romans²: *Being right with God through faith in Christ.*

- A. **God's Righteousness is Revealed in Judgment:** The concept of God's righteousness is developed in Romans 1:18-3:20.
- B. **God's Righteousness is Revealed in Salvation:** The way to righteousness is through obedience of Christ (Romans 3:21-5:21)
- C. **God's Provision for Practical Righteousness by the Spirit:** Our absolute freedom from sin is gained not through the law but through grace (Romans 6-8).
- D. **God is Righteous in Dealing with Israel:** God's righteousness is shown in how He deals justly with Israel in the past, present, and future (Romans 9-11).
- E. **God's Justice and Mercy Lead to a Life in the Spirit:** Practical instruction for daily life in the Spirit (Romans 12-15).

III. The Epistle of the Romans Influence over Historical Leaders

- A. **Augustine:** The Epistle to the Romans has influenced world history by stimulating change in world changing leaders. Augustine was a North African intellectual and church leaders who after years of paganism and licentiousness, found new life through reading the book of Romans. In the midst of wrestling with a tortured conscience and doubt, his sexual addiction was broken when he read and applied Romans 13:13-14. Augustine wrote "I had no wish to read further; there was no need to. For...it was as though my heart was filled with a light of confidence and all the shadows of my doubt were swept away."³ Augustine's writings impacted European civilization for the next 1,000 years.
- B. **Martin Luther:** Paul's Epistle to the Romans invigorated Martin Luther who was disturbed by the depth of sin in his own life. He grappled with the words of Romans 1:17 which says "...The just shall live by faith." He had a breakthrough in his own life when he realized that salvation is not gained through our own good works but through Jesus Christ alone. When Luther nailed the 95 Thesis on the Wittenberg door, the Reformation began and swept through Europe. The letter to the Romans was the springboard for this groundbreaking time.
- C. **John Wesley:** The book of Romans not only influenced the early church through Augustine, or the Reformation through Luther, but it also ignited the spiritual revivals that moved through England during the 1700's. John Wesley listened to the reading of Luther's introduction to Romans at the Aldersgate meeting that he later narrated: "While he was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt that I did trust in Christ, Christ alone for my salvation: And an assurance was given me that he had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death."⁴ John Wesley's life was changed and it impacted the methodical spread of the gospel during his lifetime.

² David P. Seemuth, *The Spirit-Filled Life New Testament Commentary Series*, (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2005), pp. 10, 11.

³ *The Confessions of St. Augustine*, bk. 7, ch.12.

⁴ *The Works of John Wesley, 14 vols., 3rd ed.* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1991), 1:103.

IV. Outline of Romans

A. Introduction and Theme (1:1-17)

1. Salutation (Romans 1:1-17)
2. Theme Verses (Romans 1:16-17)

B. The Need: *Sinfulness* (1:18- 3:20)

1. Gentiles know of God but reject Him (1:18-32)
2. Jews have God's laws but are not righteous
3. God is just to judge all (3:1-20)

C. The Remedy: *Justification* (3:21-5:21)

1. We are justified through faith (3:21-31)
 - a. All have sinned and fall short of God's glory (3:23)
 - b. We find redemption in Christ Jesus who is our propitiation (3:24-25)
2. We are justified apart from human work (4:1-8)
 - a. Abraham believed God, and it was *accounted* to Him.
 - b. David describes the blessing when God *imputes* righteousness.
 - c. Abraham is justified before circumcision
3. We are justified apart from religious rites (4:9-12)
4. We are justified apart from the law (4:13-25)
5. The results of justification (5:1-11)
6. The contrast (5:12-21)
 - a. Adam brought sin, death, and condemnation.
 - b. Christ brought righteousness, life, and justification.

D. The Outcome: *Sanctification* (6-8)

1. Deliverance from Death, and resurrection with Christ (6:1-13)
2. Deliverance from the Law (6:14-7:14)
3. Deliverance from the Old Nature (8:1-14)

E. The Problem: *Israel's unbelief* (9-11)

1. God exercised mercy (9)
2. Israel had a responsibility and failed (10:2, 3)
3. God did not cast them away forever (11:1)
4. There is still a remnant that believes (11:5)
5. Gentiles are warned to learn through experience (11:13-22)
6. The nation of Israel is yet to be saved (11:25-27)

F. The Obligation: *Our Reasonable Service* (12-15:13)

1. Toward God (12:1, 2)
2. Toward Fellow Believers (12:3-15)
3. Toward All men (12:17-21)
4. Toward Government (13:1-7)
5. Outworking of the Law through Love (13:8-15:3)
6. Jews and Gentiles are one in Christ

G. Conclusion (15:14-16:27)

1. Paul's desire to minister in Rome (15:32)
2. Personal Greetings
3. Benediction

V. Recommendations for Study

A. Memorize the "Roman's Road"

1. Romans 3:23 "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." - Admit that you are a sinner.
2. Romans 6:23a "...The wages of sin is death..." - Understand that you deserve death for your sin.

3. Romans 6:23b "...But the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." - Ask God to forgive you and save you.
4. Romans 5:8, "God demonstrates His own love for us, in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us!"- Give your life to God
5. Romans 10:13 "Whoever will call on the name of the Lord will be saved!" - Call out to God in the name of Jesus!
6. Romans 10:9,10 "...If you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Jesus from the dead, you shall be saved; for with the heart man believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation."- Ask Him to come into your heart.

B. Write out your Testimony to Share with Others: Take time to remember and write about how you first came to Christ. What problems were you facing? How did you know that you needed a savior? Were there people that God used to lead you to Himself? How did your life change after you received Christ? What is your life like now? Write out your testimony and then write down one person that you know who does not know Christ. During the study of Romans pray daily for this person and ask God for an opportunity to share your testimony with them.

Walking Out the Word

LIFE School of Ministry

Guided Study: Use the questions below to help you go deeper in your study and reflection of Romans 1:1-5:21. Consider using these questions as a springboard to writing personal entries in *The Daily Life Journal*. Your teacher-facilitator will choose discussion questions to use from this lesson during your group meeting. Enjoy walking out the word together!

Romans 1

Greeting (1:1-7)

- What does the term *bondservant* mean in the Roman culture? Paul was “separated to the gospel.” In what ways have you also been set apart for the gospel? Take an honest assessment; does being “set apart” impact your daily life as a disciple? Why or why not?

Desire to visit Rome (1:8-15)

- What do we learn about Paul’s prayer life in this passage? Do you pray without ceasing during your day? Or are there times you find yourself turning away from Jesus towards other things?
- For what reason did Paul desire to visit Rome?

The Just Shall Live by Faith (1:16-17)

- Are you ashamed of sharing the gospel with others? Who did Paul share the gospel with first? Why?
- What does the phrase “the just shall live by faith mean?”

God’s Wrath on the Unrighteous (1:18-32)

- When we look at creation what is “clearly seen”? How does creation reveal God to us? What does the Bible mean when it says “their women exchanged the natural use of what is against nature?”(1:26). What does Paul mean in the next verse that likewise “with men committing what is shameful”? (1:27) See Leviticus 18:22. How is this Scripture relevant in today’s culture?

Romans 2

God’s Righteous Judgment (2:1-16)

- Share a personal story about how the “goodness of God” leads to repentance (2:4). The theme of Romans is the “just shall live by faith.” What do these verses say about that theme? Were you tempted this week to walk by your “good works” rather than by faith?

The Jews Guilty as the Gentiles (2:17-24)

- What does Paul mean when he says that “the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you?” (Look up Ezekiel 16:27; Isaiah 52:5 and Ezekiel 36:22 as background).

Circumcision of no Avail (2:25-29)

- What was the purpose of the rite of circumcision? (See Genesis 17:1-14; Deuteronomy 30:6; Jeremiah 4:4). Compare and Contrast the physical act of circumcision to the “circumcision of the heart.”

Romans 3

God’s Judgment Defended (3:1-8)

- What are the three questions? (Hint: Read verses 1, 3 and 5). How does Paul answer each question? (Hint: Read verses 2, 4, and 6). Discuss the advantages and disadvantages of growing up in a Christian home.

All Have Sinned (3:9-20)

- What is the purpose of the law? (See verses 19-20). How does the law help you to understand sin? Does knowing the law lead you to your need for a savior?

God’s Righteousness through Faith (3:21-31)

- Define “righteousness.” What does “propitiation” mean? What does “justification” mean? Define “redemption.” (Hint: Use the Introduction to Romans as a guide).
- Does faith make the law void? (3:31)

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Romans 4

Abraham Justified by Faith (4:1-4)

- What do you know about Abraham's life? (See Genesis 11-25) What does Paul mean by "Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness"? (Hint: Look up the Greek word for "accounted").

David Celebrates the Same Truth (4:5-12)

- How did David celebrate the same truth as Abraham? How do you think the Jews responded to Paul's claim in verse 11 that Abraham was also the father of the uncircumcised who believe?

The Promise Granted through Faith (4:13-25)

- How did Abraham claim his promise? God is the one who give life to the dead and He is the one who "calls those things which do not exist as though they did" (4:17). What promises in your life is God prompting you to believe Him for in faith. (Notice that faith is not presumptuous or self-seeking).

Romans 5

Faith Triumphs in Trouble (5:1-5)

- Do you presently rejoice in your sufferings? What does your suffering produce in your life? (Trace the progression of the key words in 5:3-4). Why does hope not disappoint? Why and how are we able to rejoice in God?

Death in Adam, Life in Christ (5:12-21)

- How did sin enter the world? (Genesis 3:1-24) How did Adam's sin impact us? What comparison is Paul drawing between Adam and Christ? How does Jesus' death and resurrection impact us today? Are you abounding in Jesus' grace on a daily basis? Why or why not?

Walking Out the Word

LIFE School of Ministry

Guided Study: Use the questions below to help you go deeper in your study and reflection of Romans 6:1-10:21. Consider using these questions as a springboard to writing personal entries in *The Daily Life Journal*. Your teacher-facilitator will choose discussion questions to use from this lesson during your group meeting. Enjoy walking out the word together!

Romans 6

Dead to Sin, Alive to God (6:1-14)

- In what ways do people become slaves to sin? What does it mean to be truly dead to sin? Share a testimony of how Jesus has set you free. Share a prayer request of an area that you are believing for total freedom that is not yet manifest in your life. What gives you the most hope from this passage?

From Slave of Sin to Slaves of God (6:15-23)

- What is slavery to God? What is holiness? In your own life, describe a revelation that you have had that you no longer need to be a slave to your old desires.

Romans 7

Freed from the Law (7:1-6)

- What areas from your past still need to die for you to truly live?

Sin's Advantage in the Law (7:7-12)

- Look at the pronouns in 7:1-6 and compare them to the pronouns in 7:7-25. What alteration do you see? What significance is there in the change of pronouns?

Law Cannot Save from Sin (7:13-25)

- What purpose does the law serve? Is there any areas in your life where your "spirit is willing" but your "flesh is weak"?

Romans 8

Free from Indwelling Sin (8:1-11)

- Contrast the different attributes of someone who live according to the flesh and those who live according to the Spirit.

Sonship Through the Spirit (8:12-17)

- What does it mean to be "led by the Spirit" (8:14)? What does it mean that we have received the "spirit of adoption"? Describe how we are joint-heirs with Christ.

From Suffering to Glory (8:18-30)

- How does the Spirit help us in our weakness? How does the promise of God's purposes being worked for good in 8:28 relate to verses 8:26-27?

God's Everlasting Love (8:31-39)

- Do you really have a personal revelation that God is for you? Have you every felt separated from God's love? When and how? What was the turning point in your life?

Romans 9

Israel's Rejection of Christ (9:1-5)

- List eight benefits that belong to Israel. With all these benefits, why did Israel reject Christ?

Israel's Rejection and God's Purpose (9:6-13)

- According to this passage of Scripture, who are God's children? How might God's plan make a gentile or a Jew feel?

Israel's Rejection and God's Justice (9:14-33)

- Who is the stumbling stone of 9:32? How would this person cause Israel to stumble? What does this have to do with the difference between faith and works? (Hint: keep reading into Romans 10).

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Romans 10

Israel Needs the Gospel (10:1-13)

- What does it mean to believe “with the heart” and to confess “with the mouth”? When did you first confess Christ in a public setting? If someone asked you, “What’s the difference between other religions and Christianity?” how would you answer?

Israel Rejects the Gospel (10:14-21)

- During the time of the early church, people were proclaiming Cesar as Lord. Only Christians were bold enough to say, “Jesus is Lord.” Are you bold in your faith, or do you tend to be quiet about your beliefs?

Walking Out the Word

LIFE School of Ministry

Guided Study: Use the questions below to help you go deeper in your study and reflection of Romans 11:1-16:27. Consider using these questions as a springboard to writing personal entries in *The Daily Life Journal*. Your teacher-facilitator will choose discussion questions to use from this lesson during your group meeting. Enjoy walking out the word together!

Romans 11

Israel's Rejection Not Total (11:1-10)

- What is the key question that is addressed in Romans 11:1? What is Paul's answer to this question? What is a "remnant"? On what basis are Paul and others chosen (11:5-6)

Israel's Rejection Not Final (11:11-36)

- What good thing came from the Jew's transgression (11:11)? What is Paul's hope for the Jews (11:14)? Why does Paul desire for the Gentile readers to be aware of God's plan for the Jews? (11:25) How does the doxology of Romans 11:33-36 relate to Paul's theological argument of Romans 11:16-33? When you deal with complex issues in the world, do you end up in an attitude of praise and worship to the God of the Universe? Or do you tend to feel overwhelmed and tired out?

Romans 12

Living Sacrifices to God (12:1-2)

- What does it mean to you personally to offer yourself as a living sacrifice every single day? Paul warns in Romans 12:2 not to be conformed to the world. In what ways do you think that many Christians in the United States are conformed to the world? According to Paul, what is the key to being transformed?

Serve God with Spiritual Gifts (12:3-8)

- How are we to think about ourselves? (12:3) How does this verse relate to the Spiritual gifts listed in verses 12:4-8? What are your top two motivational gifts that are listed in these verses?

Behave Like a Christian (12:9-21)

- How are these verses of Romans related to Romans 12:1-2? Of the instructions listed in Romans 12:9-21, which two are the most natural for you to follow? Which two instructions do you have the most difficulty obeying? Share a personal example of when you overcame evil with good.

Romans 13

Submit to Government (13:1-7)

- According to Paul, why should we submit to governing authorities? Identify the authorities in your life. Who is over you? Who is beside you? Whom are you pouring your life into? Are you walking in proper alignment? When is it appropriate to obey God rather than man? How is this different from the selective submission that many Americans walk in that rejects anything that an authority figure says that they disagree with or are uncomfortable with?

Love Your Neighbor (13:8-10)

- How is love the fulfillment of the law? How does this chapter help you to understand the meaning of love? Share an example of love that you have personally experienced.

Put On Christ (13:11-14)

- Share very personally and transparently. What does it mean for Jesus to be your life? What does it mean to clothe yourself daily with Jesus? Describe specific instances where you made provision for your flesh and meditated how you could fulfill your lust. What was the outcome? Since all of us have experienced negative consequences of making provision for our flesh, what are practical spiritual and inspired tactics of overcoming temptation in our personal lives? Commit this to prayer together.

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Romans 14

The Law of Liberty (14:1-13)

- What principles does Paul lay out on dealing with differences of opinion in the church? Notice that the things that they were disagreeing about were neither commanded nor forbidden in Scripture, they are morally neutral. Does Paul mean that we are never to judge another Christian?

The Law of Love (14:14-23)

- Has your personal freedom ever been a stumbling block to someone else? How does the law of love influence how you live and relate to others?

Romans 15

Bearing Other's Burdens and Glorifying God Together (15:1-13)

- In Romans, 15:7 Paul states "receive one another, just as Christ also receives us"? Do you live that out, or do you tend to be partial to whom you receive and how you receive them? How does the law of love impact your embracing of other Christians who are different from you?

From Jerusalem (15:14-33)

- Why is Paul concerned that he not "build on another man's foundation"? (15:20). How does this impact our focus in world evangelization?

Romans 16

Greeting Roman Saints (16:1-16)

- As you look at the names listed, notice the male and female names. What does this imply about the ministry of men and women in the early church?

Avoid Divisive Personas (16:17-20)

- What characterizes the divisive persons that are mentioned here? How does this apply to us today?

Greetings from Paul's Friends (16:21-24)

- Notice the greetings that are shared by Paul's friends. What does this communicate about Christian community in the early church?

Benediction (16:25-27)

- After reading and meditating on the book of Romans, do you feel more established in the gospel? Spend time in prayer thanking God for the revelation that has come to you through the book of Romans. Ask him to open your heart to receive even more from the Word as we next begin our study in 1 Corinthians.