

PAUL'S EPISTLE TO THE ROMANS

AUTHOR: Apostle Paul (1:1) Missionary to the Gentiles – Paul did not found the Roman church

AUDIENCE: Roman Christians – Predominately Gentiles (Rom 1:5-6, 1:13, 9:3-4, 11:13-31)

DATE: Winter 56-57AD - Composed in Corinth on 3rd missionary journey (Rom 16; Acts 20:1-3)

PURPOSE: To call the Roman churches to worship God according to His will, by obeying the Gospel of Jesus Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit which fulfills the Mosaic Law.

BACKGROUND: These historical and religious issues affect our interpretation of Romans.

1. Rome's population was well over 1 million people. The Emperor was viewed as divine and called "Lord and Savior." His birth was announced as a "gospel" and he promised to bring "peace" to the world [Pax Romana].
2. Rome housed thousands of Jews and some God-fearers (Gentile converts) who worshiped in the synagogue.
3. The church in Rome likely began by people converted at Pentecost (Acts 2:10) who returned with the Gospel to their synagogue. No evidence suggests an apostle ever visited Rome before Paul.
4. The only Scriptures the early church had were the OT. The letters of the apostles had just begun circulation and were not yet broadly recognized. The Law was rightly viewed as a wonderful blessing from God that revealed His character and His will.
5. The early church struggled to understand the extent to which Gentile converts should obey the Law. Some held that Sabbath observance, circumcision, and keeping the food laws were required, while others did not. (cf. Acts, Galatians, 1 Cor. etc.)
6. Emperor Claudius (41-54AD) ordered a deportation of Jews from Rome (49AD), likely due to uproars over the Gospel (Acts 18:2).
7. The deportation emptied the church in Rome of Christ-believing Jews, leaving mostly God-fearers. This greatly reduced the "Jewishness" of the Roman churches. As the Gospel spread, Gentiles with no Jewish affiliation believed and joined the church.
8. As Jews returned from deportation, the church became divided over what it meant to worship Jesus the Jewish Messiah correctly. Those who wanted to follow the Jewish customs (the weak) were judging those who did not (the strong.)

KEY TERMS: These terms are repeated in Romans and are important to understanding the book.

- "gospel" the good news that God has provided salvation for all people through Jesus Christ
- "righteousness of God" God's good character and His faithfulness to provide justification for sinners
- "Law" (x78) the commandments given to Israel as contained in Genesis-Deuteronomy; a principle; short for Mosaic rituals
- "works" (x17) general word for one's deeds; "works of the Law" (x3) primarily Mosaic rituals (circumcision, food laws, Sabbath)
- "faith" (x41) a humble trust in God and His promises; Faith is the means of accessing God's grace
- "grace" (x21) a gracious gift from God that results in salvation as well as the empowerment from God to do His will
- "Jew" (x13) Physically those who descended from Abraham through Isaac, Spiritually those who have the faith of Abraham
- "Gentile" (x23) people who do not descend from Abraham, but are from among the "nations"
- "Spirit" (x35) all but 4 references are to the Holy Spirit of God, the third person of the Trinity who indwells believers
- "sin" (x57) the state of alienation from God; the act of rebellion against God's natural and special revelation

OUTLINE OF ROMANS: THE GLORIOUS GOSPEL OF GRACE IN JESUS

(1:1-17) THE INTRODUCTION TO THE GOSPEL OF JESUS CHRIST

1:1-7 – The Focus of the Gospel (Jesus Christ)

1:8-17 – The Promise of the Gospel (By Faith in Christ Alone)

(1:18-4:25) THE NEED FOR THE GOSPEL OF JESUS CHRIST

1:18-32 – The Hardened Heathen's Need for the Gospel (God's Wrath is Upon Them)

2:1-29 – The Hypocritical Hebrew's Need for the Gospel (God Requires Obedience, Not Just Knowledge)

3:1-20 – All of Humanity's Need for the Gospel (God is Righteous, All Fall Short)

3:21-31 – God's Grace in the Gospel (God's Righteousness Apart from Law)

4:1-25 – God's Requirement in the Gospel (Faith)

(5:1-8:39) THE RESULT OF THE GOSPEL OF JESUS CHRIST

5:1-11 – The Result of the Gospel: Freedom to Rejoice in Hope

5:12-21 – The Result of the Gospel: Freedom from the Curse

6:1-23 – The Result of the Gospel: Freedom from Sin's Slavery

7:1-25 – The Result of the Gospel: Freedom from Law

8:1-39 – The Result of the Gospel: Freedom, Hope, & Security in the Spirit

(9:1-11:36) GOD'S WISDOM AND MERCY IN THE GOSPEL OF JESUS CHRIST

9:1-29 – God's Purpose in Election: Mercy & Glory for Jews & Gentiles

9:30-10:21 – Paradox of God's Purpose: Israel Stumbles & Gentiles Receive Mercy

11:1-36 – Outworking of God's Purpose in History: More Mercy to More People

(12:1-15:13) GOD-HONORING WORSHIP THROUGH THE GOSPEL OF JESUS CHRIST

12:1-13 – Living Sacrifices: Humbly Love as the Body of Christ (Among Believers)

12:14-13:7 – Living Submissively: Humbly Trust God's Justice (Among Enemies)

13:8-14 – Living Lawfully: Fulfilling the Law through Love (Among All People)

14:1-12 – Putting on the Lord: Be Free from Judgment

14:13-23 – Putting on the Lord: Pursue Peace with Each Other

15:1-13 – Putting on the Lord: Jews and Gentiles Hoping Together in Christ

(15:14-16:27) GOD'S WORK THROUGH PAUL FOR THE GOSPEL OF JESUS CHRIST

15:14-21 – God's Power Fuels Paul's Ministry to the Gentiles

15:22-33 – Paul's Plan to Visit Rome

16:1-16 – Paul's Personal Greetings

16:17-27 – Paul's Final Exhortation and Doxology