

Introduction

The Importance of Romans

No other book of the Bible so completely and systematically defines and explains the doctrines of the Christian faith and their application to living the Christian life as does Romans. Paul mentions and explains in varying degrees the truths of the faith: sin, law, judgment, faith, works, grace, justification, sanctification, hope, the church, the place of Jews and Gentiles in God's purpose, sovereign double predestination, the meaning of the Old Testament, citizenship in a wicked world, and the principles of piety and ethics (Steele and Thomas, *An Interpretive Outline*).

The Writer of Romans

The author of Romans is the Holy Spirit; Romans is divinely inspired and belongs to the canon of scripture. The writer is the apostle Paul. Paul was born in Tarsus of Cilicia and was a Roman citizen. He was educated in the Jewish tradition in the strict sect of the Pharisees, and he studied under the noted rabbi Gamaliel; he was a Hebrew of the Hebrews. In the earliest days of the church he was a leader in persecuting the Christians until his conversion on the Damascus road. He was called by Christ to be an apostle to the Gentiles. He went on three missionary journeys, preaching the gospel of Christ and establishing churches in many locations. Subsequently he wrote letters to many of these churches, which are preserved for us in the New Testament. Later in life he was sent to Rome to stand trial before Caesar. He was imprisoned there for a time, released for a time, and then imprisoned once again before being killed at Rome.

The Occasion for Romans

Paul wrote the letter to the Romans from Corinth while on his third missionary journey. The likely date of this writing was AD 57 or 58. Paul wanted to visit the church at Rome, but was unable to do so. The letter was probably written to prepare the way for a future possible visit. There were apparently no significant problems in the Roman church. Paul's letter is therefore instructional and preventive, not corrective. He writes to the Romans as Christian friends, even though most of them he does not know personally.

The Church in Rome

Scripture does not tell us much about the church at Rome. We do not know exactly how the Roman church came into existence. Certain it is that Peter was not the founder of the church, as the Roman Catholics allege in order to promote their contention that Peter was the first pope. We know that Peter was there later, but not at this time. The most likely explanation for the origin of the church at Rome is that it was founded by Jews of the dispersion and proselytes (converts) to the faith who had made their homes in Rome. We read in Acts 2:10 that visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, were among those present at Pentecost, and were numbered among the believers. The obvious conclusion is that when they returned to Rome, they brought the gospel of Christ with them; no doubt they proclaimed that gospel to the Gentile Romans among whom they lived, and the church came into being.

We do not know the size of the church at Rome. We do know the names of some of the members (ch. 16), although we know little or nothing about most of them. We do know from the language and topics dealt with in the epistle that the Roman church was a mix of Jews and Gentiles.

The Purpose of Romans

It is difficult to specify a single purpose that Paul expresses in the book. Rather, there are several related purposes to which

we can point. Although he had never been to Rome, Paul was concerned with the welfare of the church there.

His purpose was to set forth in a clear and logical manner the Christian doctrines and in this way to forestall any false teachings that might arise. There are hints in his epistle that point to possible problems looming on the horizon, specifically the opposition of Judaizers and the error of antinomianism. Thus the apostle wants the church to be knowledgeable and well-grounded in the faith of Christ.

His purpose was also to strengthen the church in its hope. The word *hope* is used far more frequently in Romans than in any other book of the Bible, indicating that hope is a very important aspect of the Christian life.

His purpose was to instruct the mixed Jew and Gentile church concerning the rejection of the Jews as a nation and the inclusion of the Gentiles in the church.

His purpose was to exhort and admonish the church concerning the Christian life, something that is always necessary for the church.

Theme and Division of Romans

There is no single theme in the epistle from which the apostle deviates. Yet we can say that the main idea of Romans is justification by grace through faith (Rom. 3:24, 3:28, 5:1).

The book is best divided into three parts:

1. Justification by faith and its implications (chapters 1–8).
2. The rejection of the Jews and the inclusion of the Gentiles (chapters 9–11).
3. Practical exhortations and personal matters (chapters 12–16).

Methodology

The question format of this study guide is intended to help God's people define and understand Paul's concepts and terms, as well as their relationships to one another. As much as possible the questions are intentionally leading, with the

goal of fostering discussion and assisting in the understanding of Romans, whether in Bible study societies or on a personal level. To the extent that the questions are accurately answered, the student of Romans will gain an understanding of the epistle.

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Romans 1

Romans 1:1–7

Paul introduces himself and greets the church of Rome.

1. Paul calls himself a servant (literally, “slave”) of Christ (v. 1). What does this term imply?
2. He also calls himself an apostle (v. 1). What was an apostle?
3. Why does Paul refer to the Old Testament in verses 2–3?
4. What does it mean that Christ is declared (appointed) to be the Son in power and according to the Spirit of holiness (v. 4)?
5. What does the resurrection of Christ prove (v. 4)?
6. Who are the “we” who have received grace and apostleship (v. 5)?

7. How is “for obedience to the faith among all nations” related to receiving grace and apostleship (v. 5)?
8. In what two ways does Paul describe the church of Rome? What do these terms mean (v. 7)?
9. What do “grace” and “peace” mean?

Romans 1:8–14

Paul expresses his desire to visit the church at Rome.

1. Why is Paul thankful for “all” the saints (v. 8)?
2. Why is he thankful to God (v. 8)?
3. How often does he pray for the saints (v. 9)? What do we learn from this?
4. What is intercessory prayer? Why is such prayer necessary?
5. For what is Paul thankful (v. 8)?

6. What is Paul's primary desire (v. 10)?

7. What three reasons does Paul give for wanting to visit the Roman church (vv. 11–13)?

8. What is the comfort of “mutual faith” (v. 12)?

9. Who are the Greeks and the barbarians (v. 14)?

10. What does it mean that he is a debtor to both?

Romans 1:15–17

Paul defines the gospel.

1. Why is Paul so eager to preach the gospel to the Roman church (vv. 14–15)?

2. What is the gospel of Christ—the Bible, the preaching, the message (v. 15)?

3. How is the gospel the power unto salvation (v. 16)?

4. Is the gospel an offer or a command? Compare the Arminian and Calvinistic views.
5. Is faith a condition to salvation (v. 16)?
6. What is the content of the gospel (v. 17)?
7. What is the “righteousness of God” (v. 17)?
8. What does it mean that righteousness is revealed “from faith to faith?”
9. What is the relation between faith and being just (v. 17)?
10. Why does the gospel come to the Jew first and then to the Greek (v. 16)?
11. What is the twofold effect of the gospel?
12. Why might one be ashamed of the gospel?

13. How do these verses encourage us not to be ashamed of the gospel?

Romans 1:18–32

Paul describes the wrath of God against the natural man. This passage shows the necessity of justification.

1. About whom is Paul writing—Jews, Gentiles, or unregenerate man in general (v. 18)?
2. What is the relation between this passage and the preceding (“For,” v. 18)?
3. What is the wrath of God?
4. Against what is it revealed (v. 18)?
5. Can men know that God’s wrath is revealed against them? How (v. 19)?
6. What does holding the truth in unrighteousness mean (v. 18)?