

**Romans, Spring Sunday School Class, 2021**  
**An Introduction**  
**By Pastor Chris**

**Quotes:**

- Godet: Romans is “the cathedral of the Christian faith”
- John Chrysostom, 5<sup>th</sup> century’s greatest preacher, had it read to him once a week!
- Poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge: Romans is “the most profound book in existence”.
- Reformer John Calvin: “if we understand this Epistle we have a passage opened to us to the understanding of the whole of Scripture.”

**General Impressions:**

- dead serious, deep, passionate, yet logical, w/ feel and flow of a riveting court case
- contains a repeated, rhetorical question – “what shall we say then?”
- Paul is like good trial lawyer, anticipating and answering objections
- long for an epistle or letter (takes about 1 hour to read)
- Steeped in more than 60 OT quotes and allusions
- Will challenge you mentally, emotionally, relationally, spiritually & theologically; you may wonder if you’ve ever really understood the gospel!

**Theme:** The righteousness of God as revealed in the good news of Jesus Christ.

**Key Verses:** 1:16-17

**What is the righteousness of God?**

- “The righteousness of God is that righteousness which God’s righteousness requires Him to require.” Cunningham
- “The sum total of all that God commands, demands, approves and Himself provides.” Moorehead

**Romans Thru Church History:**

Augustine was converted by Romans in 385. Later used Romans in theological debates with Pelagius, who taught man was good, not sinful, had a free will unaffected by sin and really no need for grace. Augustine taught man was sinful by nature, only God’s will truly free and unfettered and that our need for grace couldn’t be greater.

Romans and Augustine won the day and Pelagius was condemned as a heretic in 417.

What brought Martin Luther to Christ in 1517, which led to the Protestant Reformation!

Luther: “Romans is the true masterpiece of the NT and the very purest gospel ... it can never be too much or too well read or studied; and the more it is handled the more precious it becomes and the better it tastes.”

The New Geneva Study Bible says, “From its vantage point “the whole landscape of the Bible is open to view, and the relation of the parts to the whole becomes plain.”

John Wesley came to assured faith through the impact of Romans.

Charles Spurgeon was anchored in Romans, preaching over 130 messages from its text.

**Author:** Paul, uniquely saved, called, equipped and gifted to be the apostle to the Gentiles; Giant intellect, passionate, God-centered soul and shepherd’s heart. Trained in Jewish faith, Greek culture and Roman ways. Moses of the NT. He was zealous, intense, passionate ... full speed ahead sort of person.

**Paul’s BIO: (1-68)**

- Jew, of tribe of Benjamin – strong Jewish heritage, kept law, many trips to Jerusalem; wealthy, elite family; one sister we know of
- Born a Roman citizen 4 or 5 years after Christ in Tarsus, modern day Turkey, a commercial and intellectual center
- Education:
  - Began studying Scripture at 5 in synagogue school, legal traditions at 10
  - At 13 off to Jerusalem to study under the celebrated rabbi Gamaliel
  - Trained in tent-making
- Like his father, a Pharisee, strictest Jewish sect; on the fast track to superstardom among the Pharisees
- Man of the City, used city illustrations, sports metaphors, allusions to law courts and market place; could share Christ well in both synagogue or the marketplace; spent most of his time in major cities of Tarsus, Jerusalem, Corinth, Ephesus and Rome.

His Jewish name was Saul (“asked for”); His Greek/Roman name was Paul (“little”)

About 35 AD miraculously converted; became greatest missionary in Christian history. Conducted three missionary journeys thru much of the Mediterranean world, tirelessly preaching the gospel, planting churches, shepherding the sheep and fighting heresy.

In ~ 57 AD he visited impoverished Jewish Christians in Jerusalem with a love offering from the Gentile churches; was falsely accused of bringing a Gentile into the temple, arrested, beaten. Two years in custody, finally forced to appeal to Caesar. After a life-threatening trip at sea, including 2 weeks in a storm and a shipwreck, Paul reached Rome. Under house arrest for a while where he could speak freely, later released, rearrested and suffered martyrdom at Rome around AD 67-68, 10 years after writing Romans.

He penned 13 books of the NT – Romans, I and II Corinth., Gal, Eph., Phil. Col, I and II Thess, I and II Tim., Titus and Philemon.

**Church at Rome:** not founded directly by Paul or Peter, not visited before his writing by Paul or any other apostle. Likely a very large church that met in multiple homes.

**When written?** A.D. 57-58, 25 years after the resurrection of Christ. Paul had been a believer about 22 years; he's about 57 years old.

**Where written?** He wrote from Corinth, near end of 3<sup>rd</sup> journey, where Paul spent 3 months (Jan – Mar, 0057) before going back to Jerusalem.

**The Occasion of Writing:** Paul's long-standing desire to visit Rome (SEE 1:11-15 and 15:22-29). He wants to be sent on to Spain w/ their full support, so he presents the gospel he had been preaching for 20 years to build confidence and garner support.

**How did it get from Paul's mouth to the original scroll?** It was dictated by Paul to Tertius, his secretary (16:22).

**How did it get from Corinth to Rome?** It was hand-delivered by Phoebe (16:1-2), a deaconess of Cenchrea, near or part of the church in Corinth.

**Rome** was the capital of the Roman Empire, founded 753 B.C., over 1mm people (majority slaves), the most important city in the empire and as Paul's life is under constant threat, God desired that a comprehensive and systematic deposit of gospel truth be made in the most strategic of places.

**Specific Purpose of Romans:** To communicate to Jew and Gentile Christians that both are accepted by God based on a righteousness received by faith based on grace, not by good works based on Law-keeping, so that the gospel would produce humility and unity among these once enemies.

**General Purpose of Romans:** To thoroughly, systematically and clearly unpack the gospel and its implications for believers and churches.

### **7 Major themes:**

- I. Righteousness of God (root word used 60x + 7 uses of unrighteousness)
- II. Jews/Israel (22x in 6 different chapters) and Gentiles or Greeks (35x in 9 chapters); addressing a disunity/pride problem, one-upmanship; at times hard on Jews, at times on Gentiles.
- III. Sin (54x)
- IV. Law (73x) – purpose? To put sin to our account.
- V. Faith (40x noun; 21x verb) chapter 4 especially
- VI. Flesh: (26x in 10 different chapters); usually means our propensity to sin because of our fallen humanness.
- VII. Spirit (33x in 10 different chapters) – sometimes human, sometimes Divine