

# PAULS' 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 56-57<sup>AD</sup> - Composed in Corinth on 3<sup>rd</sup> 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 thus fulfilling 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]. Jesus' reign and kingdom are the truth of which the Roman Empire was an imposter.
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 their circulation and were not part of the completed canon yet. The Law was rightly viewed by Jews and God-fearers as a wonderful blessing from God that revealed His character and His will. (7:12; Ps 119).
5. A constant struggle of the early church was to determine to what extent Gentile converts should obey the Law. Some held that circumcision, Sabbath observance, and keeping the food laws were required, while others did not. This struggle is a major theme of the New Testament (Acts, Galatians, 1 Cor. etc.)
6. Emperor Claudius (41-54<sup>AD</sup>) ordered a mass deportation of Jews from Rome in 49<sup>AD</sup>. This likely occurred due to disturbances in synagogues over the Christian Gospel. (Acts 18:2)
7. The deportation emptied the church in Rome of Christ-believing Jews, leaving mostly God-fearers. This greatly reduced the "Jewish" influence and character of the Roman churches.
8. As the Gospel spread, Gentiles with no Jewish affiliation began to believe and joined the church. They likely had no appetite for Jewish Law and customs. This resulted in tension over how to worship God.
9. The tension grew as Jews returned from deportation and discovered the church, that was founded upon their Messiah, their Law, and their rituals had drastically changed.
10. The church was divided over what it meant to worship Jesus the Christ 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" the commandments given to Israel as contained in Genesis-Deuteronomy (other uses as well)
- "works of the Law" works in general, primarily rituals of the Law (circumcision, food laws, Sabbath, etc.)
- "faith" a humble trust in God and His promises; Faith is the means of accessing God's grace

## **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 (Salvation by Faith)

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

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

2:1-12 – The Hypocrite's Need for the Gospel (God's Judgment is Righteous)

2:13-29 – The Hebrews' 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