

# Romans

## Summary

The book of Romans is a letter written by the apostle Paul, and it is the largest of Paul's epistles (letters). It was originally sent to Christians in Rome. It was intended to be read at multiple meeting places of new believers to teach them about important doctrinal issues such as salvation, sanctification, and relations with other believers. Paul did not found the church in Rome; it is believed that those who founded the church were some of those who converted on the day of Pentecost in Jerusalem (Acts 2). The Christian community in Rome at that time was quite large, and it consisted of both Jewish and Gentile believers. Paul did not personally know these converts, so this letter is less personal and less of an exhortation than his other letters; however, he is still quite passionate in his writing in which he provides directives for new believers. He lays out God's plan for the redemption of mankind, including original sin, salvation through faith, the beauty of grace, and how the Holy Spirit works in the lives of believers. In essence, the book of Romans instructs Christians across generations of what to believe (chapters 1-11) and how to live (ch.12-16). He addresses how both Jewish and Gentile converts should view the old law of Moses, but explains how the promises to the Israelites are fulfilled in Christ, referencing the Old Testament eighty-four times.

## Author

It is widely known that during his third missionary journey in Corinth (Greece), the apostle Paul wrote the letter to the church in Rome. The letter to the Romans was penned by Tertius of Iconium, as Paul dictated his words to be written down.

## Date

Most scholars believe that the book of Romans was written in the early spring of A.D. 57. This would have been around Paul's third missionary journey.

## Primary Characters

Paul (Romans 1-16)

David (Romans 1, 4)

Abraham (Romans 4, 9)

Adam (Romans 5)

Moses (Romans 9-10)

Isaiah (Romans 9, 15)

## Historical Moments

Paul Writes His Letter to the Romans (Romans 1-16)

Paul's Declares His Desire to Visit the Church in Rome (Romans 1, 15)

## Major Theological Themes

**Man's Sinfulness and Need for Salvation** - Paul says that because we have a beautiful, intricate, and amazing world around us, it is evident that a Great Artist created these things, and He is the one who should be worshipped. However, people began to *worship and serve created things rather than the Creator* (Romans 1:25). He goes on to explain how the people who rejected God's truth also gave in to their sinful nature and practiced the things that they knew to be wicked. This is applicable to our world today because people do not want to worship a holy God; they want to be their own god. This attitude leads to sin and destruction. Fortunately, we have hope. Although we have all sinned and fallen short of God's best, God has offered a way for us to be saved from our sin, and He has given us the gift of eternal life. Through Christ, we are no longer judged according to the law and our sinfulness, but according to our faith in Him.

**The Fulfillment of the Old Law in Christ** - Romans is a glance into the Old Testament, and believers in Christ must look to this book to understand God's redemptive plan for His people. God had created a set of rules and sacrifices for His people to follow to set them apart to be holy. When Jesus came along, He lived a perfect life according to the law of Moses. He also became the ultimate sacrifice for all humankind; once and for all by willingly giving up His life. Because of Christ's sinless life and His fulfillment of the laws of the old covenant, people no longer have to live by the old set of rules in order to have a relationship with God. Because of Christ's atoning sacrifice for our sins, we no longer have to make animal sacrifices to be cleansed from our sins and be right with God. Christians today are under a new covenant through Christ – one that sets us free from the obligation of perfection through rules, but instead, only requires our faith in the perfect person of Jesus.

**Justification: Made Righteous Through Faith** - Christ fulfilled the old law, and it is because of His obedience to God the Father that we are viewed as righteous in God's sight if we put our faith and trust in Him. Many times in Romans, Paul emphasizes that it is faith that saves a person, not their works. However, it is through actions that one's true relationship with Him is reflected. We are considered righteous in the eyes of God when we put our faith and trust in Christ. This is called the doctrine of justification; being declared righteous in the eyes of God because of one's faith in Jesus.

## Lessons Learned from Romans

**The Gospel Is for Everyone (and Brings Freedom)** - Early on in Romans, Paul reminds the readers that the gospel is for both the Jews and the Greeks; it is only through faith in the righteousness of Christ that saves them. Some people may be intimidated by Christianity, believing that they need to attain perfection in order to be accepted into the family of God. Surely there are ways in which God tells us to live. However, it is through sanctification (the process of being made more like Jesus through the work of the Holy Spirit) that our actions change and our love for Jesus grows. We should not feel pressure to be accepted in a certain Christian circle. On the flip side, Paul reminds us that we should not hold other people to our own personal convictions, which are not black and white in the Scriptures. Paul tells the Jews that they should not require Gentile believers to adhere to old Jewish customs such as circumcision or food laws, yet they are allowed to continue practicing them. Likewise, Christians with certain personal convictions should not expect others to hold to their standard of living. The gospel brings us freedom, not only from our sin but from the expectation of following a set of rules perfectly in order to be accepted by God. As Christians, we live to please God because we love Him and trust Him, not to become boastful or prideful about our actions.

**The Holy Spirit Is Our Helper** - Another way to describe sanctification is the process of learning to live how God already views us. Because of our sinful nature, we need a helper in this process, and God knew that. This is why He gave His own Spirit to live within the heart of each believer, to help us live according to His desires. The Holy Spirit leads us away from sin and into righteous living by convicting us of sin (Romans 8:12-14), empowering us to live rightly (Romans 15:19), assuring us that we are children of God (Romans 8:16), helping us know how to pray and what to pray for (Romans 8:26-27), setting us free from the law of sin and death (Romans 8:2), helping us in our weakness (Romans 8:11), reminding us of His presence (Romans 8:9) and of God's love for us so that we are not disappointed (Romans 5:5), helping us discern truth (Romans 9:1), and allowing us to partake and persevere in sufferings so that we may also live with Him in glory (Romans 8:16-17). The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of God and the Spirit that raised Christ from the dead. This is the Spirit that dwells within us. This should be encouraging, comforting, and empowering for us.