

Romans

Romans is a letter written from the Apostle Paul to the churches in the city of Rome. The New Testament has many letters written by Paul and other apostles and church leaders. Paul wrote most of his letters to churches that he had helped start or visited previously. His letter to the church in Rome is different. Paul had never been there but was planning to visit soon. He also had many friends in the churches there and received news of their faith and some of their challenges.

Writer: The Apostle Paul

Date of writing: Between 55-57 AD

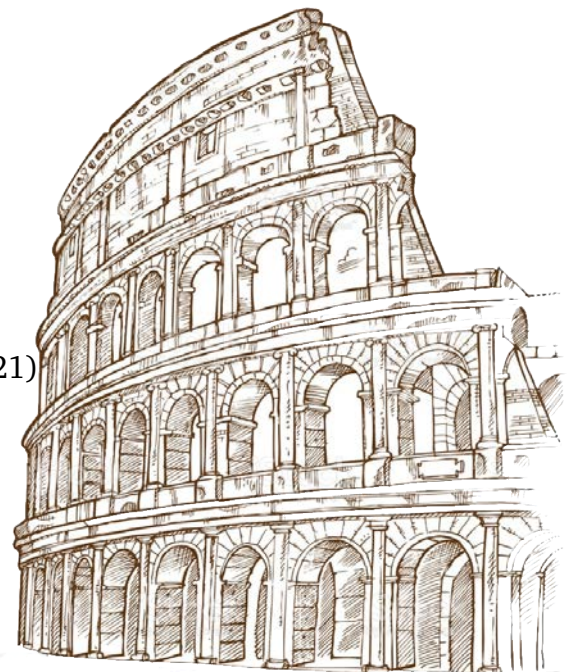
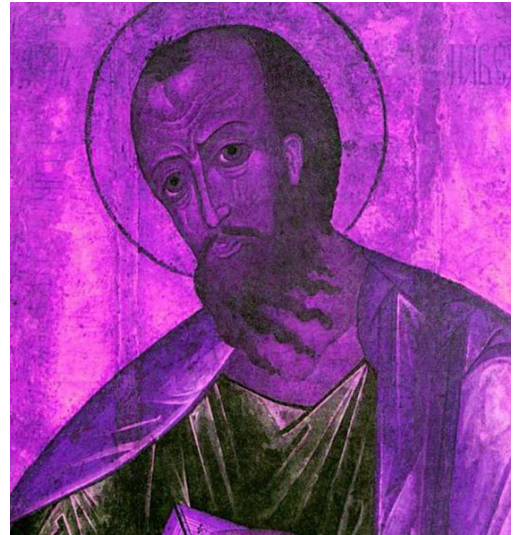
Original Audience: Followers of Jesus in the city of Rome

The Reason for the Letter: Paul's friend Phoebe planned to travel to Rome and could carry a letter to the believers there. Phoebe was a deacon of the church in the city of Cenchreae (16:1). Paul also planned to visit Rome soon and wanted the Roman church to help him take the Gospel to Spain. But, most importantly, Paul wrote the letter to bring unity to the Jewish and non-Jewish believers in the Roman church. Paul asks God to give them "the same attitude of mind toward each other that Christ Jesus had, so that with one mind and one voice you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" (15:5–6).

The Main Message of the Letter: Paul has heard about disagreements between the Jews and Gentiles in the Roman church. The Jewish believers wanted the Gentile believers to follow the Jewish customs of circumcision, sabbath, and food laws. Paul talks about these specific disagreements in his letter, but more importantly, Paul writes that the Gospel has changed everything for both the Jew and the Gentile. At the beginning of his letter, Paul writes, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile. For in the gospel the righteousness of God is revealed—a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: 'The righteous will live by faith'" (Romans 1:16–17).

The Outline of Paul's Teaching:

1. The Gospel reveals God's righteousness (Chapters 1–4)
 - Introductions and greetings (1:1–15)
 - Paul's main point for the whole letter (1:16–17)
 - All nations are trapped in sin (1:18–32)
 - Jewish people are also trapped in sin (2:1-3:8)
 - But, there is Good News! (3:9-26)
 - God has fulfilled his promise to Israel (3:27-4:25)
2. The Gospel creates a new humanity (Chapters 5–8)
 - People are made right with God through Jesus' death (5:1–21)
 - Dead to sin and alive in Christ (6:1–23)
 - The old law and the Spirit of God (7:1–8:11)
 - Life in the Spirit and new creation (8:12–39)



3. The Gospel fulfills God's promise to Israel (Chapters 9–11)
 - Israel's history (9:6–29)
 - God's faithfulness to Israel in the present (9:30–10:21)
 - Israel's future (11:1–36)
4. The Gospel unifies the Church (Chapters 12–16)
 - Unity through love (12:1–13:36)
 - Unity through showing grace to one another (14:1–15:13)
 - Paul's travel plans and closing greetings (15:14–16:27)

The City of Rome

Rome was the capital city of the entire Roman empire. It was an incredible city in the first century AD. Unlike most places, the city had clean water, a sewer system, public toilets, paved roads, libraries, tall buildings, and large monuments and theaters. This amazing city drew people from many different cultures and languages to live together. Historians estimate the population was around one million people. The church in Rome had Jewish believers and believers from many other backgrounds and cultures.

Becoming Righteous

Paul uses the words “righteousness” and “justified” many times in his letter to the Romans. Paul makes it very clear that all people have sinned (3:23). He also says that the result of our sin is death (6:23). Therefore, we deserve death because of our sins. However, God showed his love for us by sending Christ to die for us when we were still sinners (5:8). Finally, Paul says we have a small part to play in becoming righteous. He says, “for it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved” (10:10). Because God has made us righteous, we now offer our whole lives to him and obey his every command. That is the gospel! It is what Paul is talking about when he says, “I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes” (1:16).

Paul sent this letter with Phoebe to the churches in Rome. She might have read it to the churches or handed it over for someone else to read. We should read Paul's letters the same way we read a letter or message today: from beginning to end. Take time to read Romans all the way through. Then, go back and study each section in detail, considering and discussing these questions:

1. What do we learn about God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit in these verses?
2. What do we learn about humanity in these verses?
3. What do I need to do to be obedient to God?
4. Is there a belief or action I need to change?
5. Who can I share these verses with?



No!

Paul sometimes asks shocking questions that he expects the reader to answer, “No! May it never be!” These questions help Paul make his point very clear. Here are some examples: What shall we say? That God is unjust in bringing his wrath on us? (3:5)

Are we Jews any better off (than Gentiles)? (3:9)

Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? (6:1)

What shall we say, then? Is the law sinful? (7:7)