

Romans

Introduction, Background and Argument

1. Title and Destination

1.1 *Pros Romaious* “To the Romans”

1.2 Rome was founded in 753BC.

1.3 At the time of Christ, Rome was the greatest city in the world with over one million inhabitants.

1.4 The social strata of the population was divided between the ultra-rich and slaves, the majority of which were slaves.

1.5 The church in Rome was not established by Peter or Paul (Rom 15:20), but most likely by Jews and proselytes who believed on the day of Pentecost and then returned to Rome (Acts 2:10). Gentiles may have been added to the church through converts of those who first believed as well as from Paul’s converts from other cities who moved to Rome.

1.6 When Romans was written the makeup of the church may have been primarily Gentile believers (1:5, 12-14; 11:13; 11:28-31; 15:15-16) with a minority being Jewish believers (2:17-3:8; 3:21-4:1; 7:1-14; 14:1-15:12). This may have been due to Jews reticency to return to Rome after Emperor Claudius expelled them from Rome in AD50.

2. Authorship and Date

2.1 The vocabulary, style, logic and theological development are consistent with Paul’s other letters.

2.2 Paul had been in Macedonia and Achaia collecting the offering for the poor believers in Jerusalem when he wrote Romans (Rom 15:26-28).

2.3 Paul was in Corinth when he dictated Romans to Tertius while being hosted by Gaius (Acts 20:3-6; Rom 16:22-23; 1 Cor 1:14)

2.4 The letter was given to Phoebe, a member of the church at Cencrea, near Corinth, who delivered it to the Christians at Rome in AD57 (16:1-2; Acts 20:2-3).

3. Unity

Some manuscripts omit 15:1-16:24, and others manuscripts place 16:25-27 at the end of chapter 14. These variations have led some scholars to conclude that the last two chapters of Romans were not original or that Paul wrote two editions. However, most scholars accept chapter 15 as logically consistent with the rest of the letter. The main debate is over chapter 16 where Paul oddly greets 26 people from a church he had never visited. However, it may not be odd at all considering that he had likely met these people in other cities during his missionary journeys. Further, it may have been typical of Paul to individually greet people at a church he had never visited since he also does this in his letter to those at Colossae.

4. Purpose(s) of Writing

First, Paul wanted to mutually benefit from the sharing of spiritual gifts (Rom 1:11). Second, Paul wanted to preach the gospel to those in Rome since no other apostle had preached in Rome (Rom 1:15; 15:20ff). Third, Paul wanted to prepare them for his long desired visit (15:22-24). Fourth, Paul planned to move his ministry base to Rome since he intended to go to Spain (Acts 13:1-4; 14:26; 15:22, 23, 30; Acts 20:1-2). Fifth, Paul intended the letter to serve as a doctrinal base for the church at Rome since he knew his life was in danger and he might not be able to come (15:30-32). Sixth, Paul wrote to curb the trend toward anti-Semitism in the church at Rome due to Emperor Claudius' edict that banished Jews from Rome several years earlier (Rom 9-11).

5. Argument

In the first section, Paul introduces his letter with his longest greeting by introducing the gospel in the context of the OT covenant promises regarding David who culminated in the Messiah who died and rose again so that Jewish believers would fulfill the privilege of going to Gentiles to bring them to faith. The gospel is the power of God for salvation for Jew and Gentile. In it the righteousness of God is revealed as it spreads from each person of faith.

In the second section, Paul shows that God's righteousness reveals the universal need of righteousness. He divides the human race into three parts. First, immoral Gentiles know God exists but suppress that truth in unrighteousness. As a consequence God gives them over to the lusts of the mind to do that which is unfitting. Second, moral Gentiles evidence they know God by following the law in their conscience. Third, Jews had the law and still did not measure up to God's righteousness because they altered it into an external righteousness. All are condemned because they have fallen short of the glory of God and are in need of God's righteousness.

In the third section, Paul shows how God's righteousness is imputed to us through faith. God's righteous demands were met by Jesus Christ who died on the cross for our sin. This made imputed righteousness available to all who believe in Him. Abraham, who lived before the Law, was justified by faith apart from works, and David, who lived after the Law, was also justified by faith apart from works. Thus, justification is always by faith apart from works. This is true for Jews and Gentiles. Further, Abraham was justified while uncircumcised so that he would become the father of all who believe. Some results of justification by faith are peace with God, exultation in our hope as well as our difficulties knowing that God is at work in us to develop our character by means of the Spirit He has given us. Much more being justified we will be saved from future wrath.

In the fourth section, Paul shows how God's righteousness is imparted to us as we walk by the Spirit. We were all dead in Adam, but now we are alive in Christ. The goal of imputed righteousness is that sin will no longer reign over us, but grace will reign through imparted righteousness. We should not continue in sin because we have been crucified with Christ, baptized into His death, and raised with Him to live a new life. We are no longer slaves to sin, but alive to God in Christ, so we should present ourselves to Him for service. This new life cannot be based on the flesh obeying the Law because we died to the Law and now serve in the Spirit. This does not mean that the Law is sin. The Law is good because it reveals sin. Trying to live according to the Law, however, will only result in failure. There is a conflict within believers as they want to do what is good, but they can't do it due to the flesh. Neither the Law nor the flesh can achieve victory. Thank God for the Spirit whom God has given us. If we walk according to the Spirit by setting our mind on the things of the Spirit we will enjoy victory as he imparts righteousness to us.

In the fifth section, Paul shows how God's righteousness is identified with us in the resurrection. Present suffering cannot compare to the glory that is to be revealed in the resurrection, so this motivates us to persevere as we wait eagerly for it. The Spirit helps us along the way by interceding for us according to God's will. God is working all things together for good for us because He has a plan for our lives. If He is for us, who can be against us?

In the sixth section, Paul shows how God's righteousness is vindicated with respect to His covenant people Israel. Israel had every advantage, but only those who believed partake of the covenant promises. Gentiles can also partake of the promises if they pursue righteousness by faith. Israel as a whole failed because they pursued righteousness by works, causing them to stumble over the Messiah. Thus, God was turning to the Gentiles. This did not mean God rejected Israel. There is always a believing remnant. However, God used their transgression to bring salvation to the Gentiles in order to make Israel jealous. God is now showing mercy to Gentiles who are partaking of the spiritual blessings of Israel's covenants. When the fullness of Gentiles comes in then God will show mercy to Israel so that all will have been disobedient and He might show mercy to all.

In the seventh section, Paul shows the practical outworking of righteousness in the believers life in how their spiritual gifts are used, in relation to fellow believers, in relation to unbelievers, in relation to the government. The law of love is to govern as we draw nearer to the day of salvation. We should put on the armor of God, and not make any provision for the flesh. Those who understand we are not under the Law should not cause those without understanding to stumble. Setting aside liberty for the sake of brothers is the rule, putting others ahead of ourselves and continuing in the Scriptures so we might have hope. Paul prays for them to be unified and filled with hope and joy and

peace so they can abound in hope by the Spirit. He concludes with his travel plans and a long list of individual greetings.

6. Theme

The revelation of God's righteousness in the gospel of life (Rom 1:16-17).

7. Outline

7.1 Condemnation: The Universal Need of God's Righteousness (1:1-3:20)

7.2 Justification: The Imputation of God's Righteousness (3:21-5:11)

7.3 Sanctification: The Impartation of God's Righteousness (5:12-8:17)

7.4 Glorification: The Identification with God's Righteousness (8:18-39)

7.5 Israel: The Vindication of God's Righteousness (9:1-11:36)

7.6 Application: The Outworking of God's Righteousness (12:1-16:27)

8. Uniquenesses

8.1 Paul's magnum opus.

8.2 The first systematic theology.

8.3 Paul's most extensive analysis of the righteousness of God and the gospel.

8.4 Paul's most formal letter.

8.5 Paul's most acclaimed work.

8.5.1 The Dutch Annotations say, "This epistle is rightly accounted a key for the right understanding of all the Holy Scriptures."

8.5.2 William Plumer said, "The epistle...is excelled by no portion of God's word in the weight and excellence of its matter."

8.5.3 French commentator Frederic Godet called it "the cathedral of the Christian faith."

8.5.4 W. H. Griffith Thomas said, "It is a theological education in itself."

8.5.5 Luther in his famous prologue that led to John Wesley's salvation said, "This Epistle is the chief book of the New Testament, the purest gospel. It deserves not only to be known word for word by every Christian, but to be the subject of his meditation day by day, the daily bread of his soul."

8.5.6 When Luther read Romans 1:17, "The righteous will live by faith," he said, "it burst upon me, the whole truth that righteousness comes by faith, not by works, and instantly I was set free like a bird out of a cage."

8.5.7 Melancthon "copied it twice with his own hand..."

8.5.8 McClain said, "for the first time, and for the only time in all the epistles of the New Testament, the great doctrines, the system of Christianity, are set forth in logical discourse."

8.6 Paul asks 74 rhetorical questions.

9. Controversial Passages

9.1 Paul's usage of wrath in Romans 1:18; 2: ; 5:8. Can a Christian be under God's wrath?

9.2 Romans 9-11; what type of election is in view? What is Paul's argument? Paul's argument is that God had given Israel every advantage, and yet when the Messiah came they rejected Him because they were pursuing righteousness by works rather than by faith. Gentiles pursued righteousness by faith and were now being saved. God is not done with Israel though. He still has a remnant, and when He is done saving Gentiles all Israel will be saved so that God will show mercy to all.

9.3 Rom 8:1, does this verse refer to justification or sanctification? No longer condemned to the penalty of sin or no longer condemned to the power of sin?

9.4 Rom 6:23, does eternal life refer to phase 1 or 2?

10. Keys to Romans

10.1 Key Word: Righteousness

10.2 Key Verse(s); Rom 1:16, 17, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith, as it is written, "But the righteous man shall live by faith."

Rom 3:23, "for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God

Rom 5:12, "Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned—

10.3 Key Idea: God's righteousness is revealed in the gospel because in Christ's death His righteousness was satisfied so that people could be justified by faith in the Son, sanctified by the Spirit, and glorified by the Father, vindicated in His faithfulness to Israel, and demonstrated practically in our relationships with others.