

Introduction to the Book of Romans

What can be said about the Book of Romans that has not already been said? Martin Luther, the great reformer said Romans: “is the true masterpiece of the New Testament and the very purest Gospel, which is well worthy and deserving that a Christian man should not only learn it by heart, word for word, but also that he should daily deal with it as the daily bread of men’s souls. 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.”

It was the phrase in **verse 1:17** “the just shall live by faith” that fueled the fire in the heart of Luther that caused him to break from the Roman Catholic Church. I suppose it could be said that he is the original protestor.

Author and Christian theologian John Phillips said about Paul and the Book of Romans: “By the time he came to put down his pen, however, Paul had written this theological masterpiece and one of the most important documents in the history of the world—his epistle to the Romans.”

Although I cannot find evidence to satisfy myself, most scholars believe Paul wrote this epistle while in Corinth during his third missionary journey.

Romans is the fifth epistle written by the great Apostle, but it is situated at the beginning of the letters to the Churches. Knowing our Lord does nothing by chance, and knowing the facts of His Son had been recorded in the accounts of the Gospel according to Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John; He knew an explanation of those facts would be necessary, therefore, He inspired Paul to write the letter to the Romans.

It seems there is a question as to the theme of Romans. Some believe the theme is the Gospel, which is mentioned thirteen times. Others believe the theme is righteousness, which is mentioned thirty three times (only 91 times in the New Testament). Both of those words are used more in Romans than in any of the other New Testament books.

For me, the theme of Romans appears to be, the righteousness of God that is based on the Gospel of God. Because I cannot construct a better outline than the one given by the great Dr. Warren Wiersbe, I borrow from his commentary on the Book of Romans. What he has designed will, to a great degree, illustrate why I

believe righteousness is the theme of this great book. The basic structure of Dr. Warren Wiersbe's outline for the Book of Romans is:

RIGHTEOUSNESS DEMANDED 1:18–3:20

RIGHTEOUSNESS DECLARED 3:21–5:21

RIGHTEOUSNESS DEFENDED 6–8

RIGHTEOUSNESS DECLINED 9–11

RIGHTEOUSNESS DEMONSTRATED 12:1–15:7

A question that is worth pondering, is, how was the Church of Rome established? Was it established soon after those visiting Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost returned home with the good news of the resurrection of Jesus Christ fresh in their minds and hearts? Or, was the Church in Rome established by those special friends of Paul, Priscilla and Aquila, referred to in **chapter 16:4**? In fact, a reference is made in **verse 5** of "the Church that is in their house." Speculation may not be very productive, but it is thought provoking at times.

From other scripture, we can infer that Paul had a great affinity for Rome and a great desire to visit that great city. It may have been in his heart from the day Ananias testified to him about what the Lord had designed for him to do in **Acts 9**.

But, whatever the truth may be, it seems Paul was a perfect person to pen this great treatise of truth we know as the Book of Romans. He was the son of a Pharisee who was a Roman citizen of the City of Cilicia. It seems no one knows how Paul's father became a Roman citizen, but Paul described himself as a "freeborn" (**Acts 22:38**) Roman citizen. Meaning that he was born a Roman citizen because he was the son of his father which was a Roman citizen.

Paul had been schooled in the great university of Cilicia. He had sat at the feet of Gamaliel and became a trained Pharisee. And, as is already known, he was a citizen of the Roman City Cilicia which was a Roman province which was the capital of Tarsus. Those things and more, made him familiar with the Greek culture, its philosophy, and the world of Rome as to both its manner of life and power it displayed over the world of that day. Those things also made him a perfect candidate to carry the Gospel to both the world of his lineage, the Jewish world, as well the world of which he was a citizen, the Gentile world.

Allow me to add one more interesting fact about the Book of Romans (one among the many): one will find many references made to the Old Testament in this letter. In fact, I am told, there are more references to the Old Testament in the Book of Romans than all the other letters of the New Testament combined.

Romans is both a captivating and invigorating book. It is a book that demands our greatest attention and invites our greatest devotion. It is truly a jewel among jewels. Although it is a part of a whole, in many ways, it may be said without doing any harm to the whole canon of scripture, that it stands alone among all the rest of which it is a part.

As I begin this frail attempt to teach this great epistle, I do so with great intimidation, knowing full well my inability to try such a thing. I would be a fool to do some on my own. But, I am not alone in this effort. I am promised and assured of the assistance of the Holy Spirit which was with Paul when he penned these great words and I am sure He will be with me as I seek to understand them and then communicate them to our Lord's people so God will be glorified and His people edified. With great humility therefore, I begin...

Tom Price, 2023