

## Introducing the Book of Romans

Nearly a year ago, God used a unique set of circumstances to highlight the book of Romans in my life

- I began to immerse myself in this book
- What I found was life-changing

As I continued preaching through the book of Genesis, I prayed about what to study afterwards

- I thought about preaching the book of Exodus
- But I decided against that for numerous reasons

I wanted to return to the New Testament

- And the book of Romans was an easy choice

I always like to begin a new series by taking an entire message to introduce the book

- That is what I plan on doing this morning

We will briefly examine many facets of the book of Romans

- Authorship
- Importance
- Influence
- The Church of Rome
- Purpose
- Structure/outline

I pray that this morning's overview will prompt you to study this book along with us

- The best preparation you can do is to read the Text of Romans numerous times
- Become familiar with the contents of this great book

### I. Authorship

The first word of the book of Romans tells us who the human author was, "Paul" (Rom 1:1)

- Before he came to know Jesus Christ, his name was Saul

Saul was a Jew who was meticulous in his following of the Jewish religion

- Many years after his conversion to Christianity, this man wrote, "If anyone else has a mind to put confidence in the flesh, I far more: 5 circumcised the eighth day, of the nation of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the Law, a Pharisee; 6 as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to the righteousness which is in the Law, found blameless." (Phil 3:4b-6)

Saul was zealous to the point of persecuting other Christians

- Acts 9 tells us that he was given permission to bring Christians "bound to Jerusalem" (9:2)

Yet God in His sovereignty stopped Saul in his tracks

- We are told of the conversion of this ruthless man in this same chapter of Acts

Verse 3 picks up the account, “And it came about that as he journeyed, he was approaching Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him; 4 and he fell to the ground, and heard a voice saying to him, ‘Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?’ 5 And he said, ‘Who art Thou, Lord?’ And He *said*, ‘I am Jesus whom you are persecuting, 6 but rise, and enter the city, and it shall be told you what you must do’” (9:3-6)

- Jesus Christ personally identified Himself to Saul

Notice that Jesus did not say, “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting My people?”

- He didn’t say, “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting the Church?”

Jesus Christ told young Saul, “**Why are you persecuting Me?**”

- Saul’s attacks against Christians were really against Christ Himself
- He had been opposing God!

But God changed Saul eternally on that day

- “**I was formerly a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent aggressor. And yet I was shown mercy, because I acted ignorantly in unbelief**” (1 Tim 1:13)

Saul was an enemy of the Christian faith

- But Paul was one of its biggest proponents

This is the power of the Gospel

- And this is what Romans is all about

## **II. Importance of this book**

Romans is, without a doubt, the most comprehensive treatment of doctrine in the New Testament

- Far more than the Gospels and Acts
- Far more than any other epistle

This isn’t to say, however, that Romans covers every single point of doctrine

- It does not cover in detail such doctrines as eschatology, the church, and the Lord’s Table<sup>1</sup>

If Romans included every theological doctrine, we would have no need of the other epistles

- But each book teaches us more about the entire scope of doctrine that God would have us to learn

Romans is the first Pauline epistle in our English versions

- That is not based on date of writing
- I believe it is based on the importance of this book

## **III. Influence of this book**

It should go without saying that the teachings of the book of Romans are widely known

- This is, in fact, a testimony to the importance of this book

---

<sup>1</sup> Everett F. Harrison, *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary, Romans*, 8.

When we think back to the Reformation, we could very accurately say that it was the teachings of the book of Romans that God used to bring about this great movement<sup>2</sup>

- A true knowledge of God
- A true knowledge of man
- A true knowledge of the Church

Who has not heard of the Romans road?

- This is a simple Gospel presentation taking several verses from the book of Romans
- You don't ever have to turn outside of this one book

The book of Romans has been used of God to bring many sinners to a point of repentance and transformation

- Perhaps some of you here were influenced heavily by the teachings of the book of Romans when your sins were forgiven

Martin Luther was a monk in the Roman Catholic Church

- As he was teaching through the book of Romans, he had tremendous problems understanding the truth of Romans 1:17, "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 1:17)
- Yet when God opened Luther's eyes to this truth, listen to how Luther responded, "I grasped the truth that the righteousness of God is that righteousness whereby, through grace and sheer mercy, He justifies us by faith. Thereupon I felt myself to be reborn and to have gone through open doors into paradise. The whole of Scripture took on a new meaning, and whereas before 'the righteousness of God' had filled me with hate, now it became unto me inexpressively sweet in greater love. This passage of Paul became to me a gateway to heaven."<sup>3</sup>

John Wesley is said to have his heart "strangely warmed" when the truths of Romans were set forth to him<sup>4</sup>

Chrysostom, one of the early church leaders, had the book of Romans read to him twice a week

In the summer of AD 386 Aurelius Augustinus was weeping in a garden

- He heard a child singing, *Tolle, lege! Tolle, lege!* (Take up and read! Take up and read!)

Augustine picked up a scroll of the Bible and God providentially led him to read a portion from Romans 13, "Let us behave properly as in the day, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual promiscuity and sensuality, not in strife and jealousy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts." (Rom 13:13-14)

- This passage profoundly shaped Augustine for the rest of his days<sup>5</sup>

Luther once wrote of Romans, "The epistle of the Romans is the true masterpiece of the New Testament and the very purest gospel..."<sup>6</sup>

But don't think that Romans is just for the intellectuals

- On the contrary, it is a book for everyone

---

<sup>2</sup> Donald Grey Barnhouse, *Romans, Vol 1, 2.*

<sup>3</sup> Martin Luther, *Luther's Works* (Weimar edition, 1926), 54:179-80.

<sup>4</sup> Barnhouse, 2.

<sup>5</sup> F.F. Bruce, *Tyndale NT Commentaries, Romans, 56.*

<sup>6</sup> Barnhouse, 2.

For the unbelieving, it will clearly present the way of salvation

- For the immature, it will grow and sanctify you toward Christlikeness
- For the mature, it will deepen your awareness of God's majesty and glory

Yes, friend, the book of Romans is for every one of us

- If we will hear its truths and apply them to our heart

A scientist may say that a mother's milk is the perfect food for her newborn<sup>7</sup>

- He may analyze the milk, giving its chemical components and showing its nutritious value

But all of that research is in vain unless that newborn drinks that milk

- Once the milk is internalized, the nutrients will become effective
- As that baby is given his mother's milk, he will grow

So it is with the book of Romans

- We are not merely pursuing academic knowledge
- We are not merely investigating great truths

My goal is to feed you the milk and meat from the book of Romans

- But you must internalize it

Every time that you sit under the teaching of the book of Romans, you must come with a humble heart, ready to listen and learn

- Don't come to God's Word with a proud, stubborn, hardened heart

#### **IV. The Church at Rome**

The beginning of the church of Rome is shrouded in uncertainty

- No one quite knows how this powerful church was started

In the book of Acts, we are told about many churches being started by Paul and his missionary team

- But not so with the believers in Rome
- The apostle Paul had never been to the church of Rome

The earliest record of believers from Rome is in Acts 2, during Pentecost

- ***Please turn to Acts 2***

- **"Now there were Jews living in Jerusalem, devout men, from every nation under heaven. And when this sound occurred, the multitude came together, and were bewildered, because they were each one hearing them speak in his own language. And they were amazed and marveled, saying, "Why, are not all these who are speaking Galileans? "And how is it that we each hear them in our own language to which we were born? "Parthians and Medes and Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the districts of Libya around Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabs—we hear them in our own tongues speaking of the mighty deeds of God" (Acts 2:5-11)**

Most of the references in Acts to "Rome" or "Roman" are in reference to the government, not the church

- Acts 2:10 seems to be the sole exception

---

<sup>7</sup> Barnhouse, 3.

So if there were believers from Rome who came to Jerusalem during Pentecost, how did they initially hear about the Gospel?

- We are not told in Scripture

The apostle Paul wrote in the fifteenth chapter of Romans, "**And thus I aspired to preach the gospel, not where Christ was already named, that I might not build upon another man's foundation**" (Romans 15:20)

- Paul wanted to do a "fresh start" in the places where he ministered

What Romans 15:20 tells us is that no other apostle had established a ministry in Rome

- The Roman Catholic Church traces its roots back to Rome and says that Peter was the first pope<sup>8</sup>

Yet we have evidence here in Romans 15:20 that disproves this notion

- Peter was not the first apostle to visit Rome
- Therefore, he could not have been the founding leader of this church

By the time that Paul wrote this epistle to the church at Rome, it was a strong, vibrant ministry

- Even without the support and leadership of an apostle, the church was doing well

The church consisted of both Jews and Gentiles

- This will become apparent through our detailed study

## **V. Purpose of Romans**

We know that Paul embarked on three missionary journeys

- We can follow these journeys in the book of Acts
- Phil has been teaching through this in SS

Paul wrote the book of Romans toward the end of his third missionary journey

- Romans 15 tells us that he was on his way to Jerusalem to deliver an offering to the poor believers in the Jerusalem Church (15:25)

We know that Paul wrote this letter from the city of Corinth<sup>9</sup>

- There are many references in this book who are all associated with Corinth
  - o Phoebe (16:1)
  - o Gaius (16:23)
  - o Erastus (16:23)

Phoebe, a servant in the local church, was responsible for delivering this message to the believers at Rome

The book of Romans was not written to address false teaching or rebuke immoral living

- The Roman church was doctrinally sound and there were no known moral issues for Paul to address

But why did Paul write this letter?

- We know that he had never been to Rome, even though he was a Roman citizen by birth<sup>10</sup>

---

<sup>8</sup> Alan F. Johnson, *Everyman's Bible Commentary, Romans*, 18.

<sup>9</sup> John MacArthur, *The MacArthur Bible Handbook*, 363.

<sup>10</sup> Bruce, 14.

One of the purposes of writing Romans was for Paul to teach the great truths of the Christian faith to a church that had never received apostolic instruction<sup>11</sup>

Paul hoped to visit this church for several reasons<sup>12</sup>

- To build up the believers (1:11)
- To preach the Gospel (1:15-17)
- To gain encouragement, prayer support, and financial assistance from the church of Rome (1:12; 15:32)

Why did Paul need financial assistance toward the end of his third missionary journey?

- He had already proclaimed the Gospel in many areas
- "but now, with no further place for me in these regions, and since I have had for many years a longing to come to you whenever I go to Spain—for I hope to see you in passing, and to be helped on my way there by you, when I have first enjoyed your company for a while" (Romans 15:23-24)

Paul wanted to journey to Spain

- But he needed the financial assistance of the church of Rome
- He wouldn't be able to travel to Rome otherwise

So Paul writes this great treatise of Christian doctrine so as to set forth in great detail what Paul believed and taught to others

- It served as a summary of his Christian beliefs

We are concerned with theology here at CBC

- We wouldn't knowingly allow someone to teach who had drastically differing beliefs than our doctrinal statement
- We wouldn't knowingly support a missionary who had drastically different beliefs than our doctrinal statement

This is why part of the membership process is gauging where a person is doctrinally

- We want there to be a likemindedness among the believers here
- We want us to be on the same page, doctrinally speaking

## **VI. Structure/outline of Romans**

Some of you have already asked me how long it will take for us to go through Romans

- Honestly, I don't know

I am grateful that you allow me freedom to decide what pace we cover through various books

- With Genesis, I could sometimes cover a chapter at a time
- This was because many chapters of Genesis were narrative

But as we come to Romans, realize that Paul's logic must be rightly understood

- Each sentence is pregnant with rich doctrine
- So we will take our time going through this treatise of the Christian faith

---

<sup>11</sup> MacArthur, *The MacArthur Bible Handbook*, 364.

<sup>12</sup> MacArthur, *The MacArthur Bible Handbook*, 364.

But for the sake of this morning, I would like to preach the book of Romans in one sermon

- That's right
- I want to give you an overview of this great book

Over the next few years (hint, hint), I will seek to be your guide through this book

- We will look at the minute details of this book

But there is also a place for gaining the big picture

- That's what I want to do for you right now

We will follow a simple outline that I believe is easily found in the book of Romans

- Paul gives a few, brief introductory remarks (1:1-15)
- Paul then introduces the theme of this great epistle (1:16-17)
- **Condemnation** – the universal need for salvation (1:18-3:20)
- **Justification** – how sinners are made right in the sight of God (3:21-5:21)
- **Sanctification** – the importance of believers growing to be more like Christ (6:1-8:39)
- **Restoration** – Paul will deal with the fact of the Jews' disbelief and rejection of Jesus Christ as the Messiah (9:1-11:36)
- **Application** – how Christians are to behave, using practical issues from life (12:1-15:13)
- Closing remarks, greetings, and doxology (15:14-16:27)

I trust that this morning's overview will whet your appetite for the book of Romans

- Read this book as much as you can
- Familiarize yourself with its contents

#### 1. Paul gives a few, brief introductory remarks (1:1-15)

Paul launches this book with a fitting reminder of his credentials (1:1)

- He is a bond-servant of Christ Jesus
- He was called as an apostle
- He was set apart for the Gospel of God

The apostle then gives a brief synopsis of Jesus Christ

- He was “**promised beforehand through His prophets in the holy Scriptures**” (1:2)
- He was “**born of a descendant of David according to the flesh**” (1:3)
- He was “**declared the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead, according to the Spirit of holiness**” (1:4)
- Through Jesus “**we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith among all the Gentiles, for His name's sake**” (1:5)

We are reminded early in this epistle of the importance and influence of this local church

- “**First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, because your faith is being proclaimed throughout the whole world**” (Rom 1:8)

Paul then reminds the believers that he unceasingly prays that God would allow him to visit this church and minister to them (1:9-12)

- He had tried to visit on numerous occasions; however, he had been prevented until now (1:13)

The apostle is ready to preach the Gospel to those who are in Rome (1:15)

## 2. Paul then introduces the theme of this great epistle (1:16-17)

These two verses will serve as the banner theme of the entire epistle

- This will set the pace for what Paul is about to write

Paul isn't ashamed of the Gospel

- Rather, the Gospel has inherent power to effect salvation to anyone who believes (1:16)

It is solely through the Gospel of God that true righteousness can be found

- And those who have been saved must live lives of faith (1:17)

## 3. **Condemnation** – the universal need for salvation (1:18-3:20)

This first big section covers the issue of the unbeliever's wretched state before God

- As we are born into this world, each of us manifests the sin nature
- No one needs to be taught how to sin

God's attitude toward the wickedness of mankind is given in Romans 1:18, "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness"

- God doesn't turn away from sin
- Rather, His wrath is revealed against "all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men"

Unbelieving mankind continues to resist God's conviction

- The result is that God gives these individuals over to their sinfulness
- They sink deeper and deeper into sin and depravity

But none of us can compare ourselves with one another

- Sin is sin, and God hates every bit of it

No one can elevate himself to the point of judge and jury

- We aren't the standard

God sets the standard!

- He is the righteous One

Those who have never heard the Gospel are still subject to the righteous standard of God

- They are without excuse

Even the nation of Israel who had great privileges remains guilty apart from Christ

- The Law can't save them
- Their ancestry can't save them

In the eyes of God, there is no one righteous

- There is no one who understands spiritual truth on his own
- There is no one who seeks after God on his own initiative
- There is no one who is inherently good
- There is no one who instinctively shows proper respect and reverence for God

That is a terrible indictment on the entire world, isn't it?

- We are all guilty
- We are all sinners

But there is hope through Christ

- God has provided a way of salvation

#### 4. **Justification** – how sinners are made right in the sight of God (3:21-5:21)

All of humanity is worthy of the wrath of God

- So how can a person be right with God?
- Better yet, **can** a person be right with God?

Praise God that there is a way for a sinner to be right with God

- But it's not through keeping the Law

Salvation can only be through Jesus Christ

- **“for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24 being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus; 25 whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith”** (3:23-25a)

This idea of **“being justified”** is crucial to the book of Romans

- This is a Greek term that means “to be made righteous”

Isn't that what sinners need?

- Those who have been separated from God need to have a way to be made righteous
- Romans 3:10 has told us that there is no one righteous

God has revealed this way of salvation to everyone who believes

- Not just for the Jews
- But also for the Gentiles

In Paul's day, the Jews prided themselves on being the children of Abraham

- Jesus dealt with this same issue during His earthly ministry (Mt 3:9; Lk 3:8)

Paul shows that the Jews were not following after Abraham's example

- The apostle quotes Genesis 15:6, **“For what does the Scripture say? ‘And Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness’”** (Romans 4:3)

Abraham was justified simply through his belief in God

- Before the Law was even given
- Before he was circumcised

As a result of being made right with God, **“we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ”** (Romans 5:1)

- What a blessing!
- What a privilege!

Paul then compares and contrasts Adam with Jesus Christ

- Adam sinned, thereby bringing condemnation
- Christ never sinned, thereby bringing salvation

Where sin occurs, grace is powerful enough to overcome it

- Such is the power of the Gospel
  - o It delivers one from condemnation
  - o But it also declares a sinner to be righteous in the sight of God

#### 5. **Sanctification** – the importance of believers growing to be more like Christ (6:1-8:39)

Sinners can be made right in the sight of God simply by trusting in Jesus Christ

- It's as straightforward as that

But a temptation might be for Christians to become complacent after having their sins forgiven

- They may erroneously think that they can live however they want
- After all, God's grace will overcome any sin, right?

The truth of the matter is that it does matter how you live after having your sins forgiven

- Paul shows that in Romans 6-8

We learn in this chapter that those who have been made right with God have died to sin

- Sin no longer has power and authority over them any longer

Believers are no longer slaves to sin (6:12-14)

- Therefore, we don't have to obey its demands

The Law cannot save anyone

- But that doesn't mean that we should avoid the Law
- God has revealed His character through the Law

The believer will find a great struggle when seeking to obey Christ

- He will do things that he knows he shouldn't
- He will not do things that he knows he should

But far from this being cause for condemnation, this struggle is actually evidence that this individual has been justified

- The presence of a spiritual war within should be great assurance that that person belongs to Christ

Our obligation and loyalty are now to Christ

- Not to sin

We will struggle to do what is right while on this earth

- But one day, God will liberate us
- He will free us from the sinful flesh

We are assured that nothing can separate us from the love of Christ

- What an encouragement this is!

6. **Restoration** – Paul will deal with the fact of the Jews’ disbelief and rejection of Jesus Christ as the Messiah (9:1-11:36)

But what about the Jews who have rejected their Messiah?

- Are they all going to be separated from God for all eternity?
- How can God do this after all the great promises He made to them in the Old Testament?

God has not failed His people

- Every promise will come true

But Paul teaches us that it is important to understand who God’s people are

- It is not based on your physical birth
- It is based on your spiritual birth

Jews and Gentiles alike can become God’s people

- "For the Scripture says, ‘Whoever believes in Him will not be disappointed.’ For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, abounding in riches for all who call upon Him; for ‘Whoever will call upon the name of the Lord will be saved’" (Romans 10:11-13)

But in order for individuals to come to know Jesus Christ, they must first hear the Gospel

- Thus, it is imperative that every believer proclaim this saving Gospel to unbelievers
- Both to Jews and to Gentiles

God has not neglected His people

- Salvation is not contingent upon what mankind does
- Salvation is contingent upon what God has done

7. **Application** – how Christians are to behave, using practical issues from life (12:1-15:13)

In light of the fact that God has rescued sinful, guilty humanity from the wrath of God, Christians should seek to live lives of spiritual service

- They should continually present themselves to God, to be used of Him

Every area of our lives should be changing to be more like Christ

- Our words
- Our love toward others
- Our prayer life
- Our response to persecution
- Our submission to the government

As we mature in the Christian faith, we must be aware of those around us who may have different convictions

- We shouldn’t attempt to force our convictions on others
- Likewise, others shouldn’t force their convictions on us

Each of us will stand before God and give an accounting for our lives

- We won’t answer for anyone else or to anyone else

Therefore, we should accept others the way they are

- This is how Christ accepted us

Paul closes this section with a prayerful incentive to right living, "Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit" (Rom 15:13)

#### 8. Closing remarks, greetings, and doxology (15:14-16:27)

Paul ends this letter with an appeal for these believers to heed what he has written

- Some of the information in Romans may have been difficult to hear
- But it was needed nonetheless

The apostle makes it clear that he has never been to the church in Rome

- He had tried numerous times, but had been prevented

Paul asks the Roman church to pray for him

- He asks them to consider supporting him financially, so that he can travel to Spain to proclaim the Gospel there

Romans 16 is a series of greetings to those in the church of Rome

- Undoubtedly, he had met some of these individuals in his three missionary journeys
- He lets them know that he has not forgotten them

The book of Romans ends with this powerful doxology, "Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery which has been kept secret for long ages past, but now is manifested, and by the Scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the eternal God, has been made known to all the nations, leading to obedience of faith; to the only wise God, through Jesus Christ, be the glory forever. Amen." (Rom 16:25-27)

This great doxology serves as a reminder of many of the precious truths found in the book of Romans

- Focus on the Gospel
- Focus on Jesus Christ
- Focus on the holy Scriptures
- Focus on taking the Gospel to every nation

That is the book of Romans in a nutshell

- That is a summary of the basic structure of the book

And it will be our joy to dive into this book next week, teaching verse-by-verse through its contents

- I trust that you will commit yourself to the study of Romans

Based on the power of God's Word, I promise you that it will change your life