

Intro to **ROMANS**

Author: This is the first of 13 NT books written by the Apostle Paul. Paul was born a Hebrew, grew up to be a Pharisee, a staunch preserver of the Jewish Law, and a fierce opponent of Christianity. He became a believer in Christ when Christ appeared to him on the Damascus Road.

Context of the Culture of 1st Century Rome: The Roman Empire was one of the greatest empires in world history. However, as empires often go, the Roman Empire imploded and fell. The fall was gradual and took several centuries, but the reasons for the fall range from political corruption, constant wars and military spending, failing economy, and a decline in morality. Rome was perverse. Rome devalued human life, as evidenced in the gladiatorial conquests to the death that were held in the coliseum. They were sexually perverse and sexual immorality ran rampant. It was within this culture that Christianity had its birth and a church of believers was started in Rome.

Chapter by Chapter Synopsis:

Chapter 1 / The Gospel of Jesus Christ / The Depravity of Man

Paul makes the case right out of the gate that it is faith through Jesus Christ, his death and resurrection, that are the heart of the Gospel. His “thesis” statement for this book is in verse 16: “For I am not ashamed of the Gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes. For in the Gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is from first to last, by faith...just as it is written, the righteous shall live by faith.”

Verses 18 and following reveal the truth of the depravity of mankind. He gives a clear understanding of how wicked the Greeks and Romans had become, but he also lists sins that are reflected in all of us. It is a lead in to his declaration in chapter 3, “There is none righteous, no not one.”

Chapter 2 / The Futility of Self Righteousness

In chapter 2, Paul begins with the declaration that we all are sinners, and any attempts to judge anyone else are futile, because we are all guilty. The latter part of the chapter makes a statement concerning the attempts of the Jews to obtain righteousness through works and the futility of that process, as well.

Chapter 3

Continues with this discussion, and drives the point home even more in verse 9: “There is none righteous, no not one...” In verse 21, he continues his explanation of the thesis he established on chapter one—that a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known. This righteousness comes directly from God and is obtained not through works, but through belief in Christ. It is equally for all, for all of us have sinned and have come short of the glory of God.

Chapter 4 / The Example of Abraham

Paul gives an illustration of this principle with a real life example. He cites Abraham and the fact that Abraham’s righteousness did not come through his works. Rather, “Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness. In verse 18, Paul says that “Abraham, against all hope, in hope, believed, and so became the father of many nations.

Chapter 5 / The Source of our Hope

Paul takes an aside to give us some of the benefits that come from our justified life through faith. Among them, peace, joy, and most of all hope. At the heart of this hope is the reality of the sacrifice that Christ made on our behalf. “Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man...But God demonstrated his love for us like this: in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.” Paul embeds this in the reality of God’s grace and makes the declaration that where our sin was great, grace was greater.

Chapter 6 / The New Life in Christ

Paul then gets into a discussion as to the former hold that sin had on our old lives, and the power that God gives us to experience this new life in Christ Jesus. He puts sin into perspective, that while still having to deal with it, we are no longer slaves to it. Verse 23 is where we find that famous verse, “For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ, our Lord.”

Chapter 7 / Our Struggle with Sin

Paul describes the dilemma that we all find ourselves in—the struggle with two voices inside of us, and the reality that often times, it is the evil that we hate that we sometimes do ahead of the good that we love. He asks “Who will save me from this body of death? Thanks be to God, through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

Chapter 8 / The Law of Sonship

This chapter is filled with familiar verses of scripture. He begins by emphatically declaring that what the law was powerless to do, God did through the death and resurrection of Christ. Because of our faith in Him, we have been declared righteous, and therefore, are free from condemnation. Furthermore, we have been given the spirit of Sonship. Because of that unique relationship, we have a God who is working in our favor, is working to make all-things work for our God, and has given us a bond of love that is inseparable.

Chapters 9-11 / The Sovereignty of God

Paul gets into a discourse where he describes God’s sovereignty and favor by his grafting the Gentiles into the root of Israel. In chapter 10, he gives the clear plan for salvation: “That if you confess with your mouth ‘Jesus is Lord’ and believe in your heart that God has raised him from the dead, you will be saved.”

Chapter 12 / Conformation and Transformation

As God’s dearly loved believers, Paul makes an appeal for us to not be conformers but transformers through the renewing of our minds. He ends with a teaching on our various spiritual gifts, as well as a clear statement on how we, as believers, should be people of genuine love.

Chapter 13 / Submission to the Governing Authorities

Also as believers in Christ, Paul exhorts us to be submissive servants to our government leaders. He concludes this chapter with another statement concerning the showing of genuine agape love on behalf of believers.

Chapter 14 / The Weak and the Strong Believers

Paul wades into some controversial waters by addressing the gray areas of our lives governed by the law of love and the personal discretion of the believer. Paul exhorts us to not pass judgment on each other for these areas, and instead, to determine that we will not be a stumbling block to another believer.

Chapter 15 / The Obligation of True Believers

Again appealing on the basis of our faith in Christ, Paul encourages us to be true brothers and sisters by bearing and holding each other up. He underscores his commitment to preach the Gospel, and ends the chapter with revealing his plans to come to Rome.

Chapter 16 / Final Greetings

In this final chapter, Paul commends and sends several people to the church at Rome as his ambassadors, and as people who have been instrumental friends to him in the ministry. Among them are Phoebe, Priscilla, Aquilla, Andronicus, and Junio. He then gives them a warning about forming divisions among the fellowship, and encourages them to remain faithful. He closes the book with his final goodbyes, and then, with one of the most eloquent benedictions in all of scripture:

*“Now to Him, who is able to establish you by my gospel and the proclamation of Jesus Christ,
according to the revelation of the mystery hidden for long ages past,
but now revealed and made known through the prophetic writings by the command
of the eternal God, so that all nations might believe and obey Him
- to the only wise God
be glory forever through Jesus Christ!
Amen.”*