

# *Romans*

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FOUNDERS STUDY GUIDE COMMENTARY

# *Romans*

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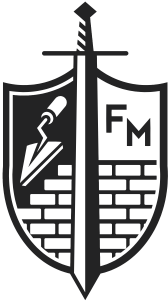
Curtis Vaughan  
and  
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## *Dedication and Appreciation*

Who but our Lord can rightly value the usefulness of Dr. Curtis Vaughan for the cause of Christ? His gentle demeanor, his warm scholarship, and his love of Christ stand out in the minds of many students and friends. How often I have found his former students, now pastors, speaking with reverent thanksgiving for him and testifying that his teachings were not only biblically enlightening but life-transforming.

The first part of this commentary (Romans 1–8) was written by Dr. Vaughan. It is with humble appreciation for his work that I dedicate the second part (Romans 9–16) to the grateful memory of Dr. Curtis Vaughan, Christian gentleman and beloved scholar. May Southern Baptists and all Baptists rightly count his biblical teachings a light to guide them into the future, depending upon the unchanging Word of God.

It has been edifying personally to prepare this commentary for Founders Ministries. I appreciate Dr. Tom Ascol, President of Founders Ministries, for his patient encouragements and Dr. Ken Puls for his help editing the project. Further, I extend appreciation to First Baptist Church, Clinton, Louisiana, for giving me one-month sabbaticals for several years to complete this work. My fellow pastors, Dr. Tom Hicks and Mitch Axson, encouraged me to press on in this project. Others have graciously given financial support to Founders for the printing. In addition, I give my thanks to Dr. Mark Taylor of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary who graciously supplied me with Dr. Vaughan's course outline for Romans from Dr. Vaughan's own papers. With love, I give my thanks to my precious wife, Deborah, who has encouraged me each step of the way. And finally, I extend my appreciation to my loving daughter and son-in-law, Joanna and Todd Jones, who so graciously opened their home for my monthly sabbaticals. How blessed is the man who has been given such loving friends and family!

Fred A. Malone  
Clinton, Louisiana



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# *Introduction*

## TO THE FOUNDERS PRESS EDITION

When Dr. Curtis Vaughan's commentary on Romans was originally published in 1976 by Zondervan Press, he provided the outline for the book and study notes for the first eight chapters. The rest of the study notes (Romans 9–16) were completed by his friend and colleague, Dr. Bruce Corley. For this edition, Founders Ministries requested me to write the commentary for Romans 9–16 and join it to Dr. Vaughan's work. In this new commentary I will attempt to follow Dr. Vaughan's outline as much as possible.

Many scholars have agreed that Romans 1–8 compose the main theological argument of Paul, followed by his practical applications in 12–16. This is the same pattern he followed in Ephesians 1–3 and 4–6, respectively. However, questions arise about 9–11. These three chapters form one argument about the status of Israel, the Jews, in regard to their salvation. Some have considered 9–11 to be a parenthesis or excursus inserted between chapters 8 and 12. The difficulty is seeing how 9–11 relates to the glorious conclusion of Chapter 8 on the assurance of God's faithfulness in the Christian's salvation (8:28–39) as well as seeing how it connects as necessary to the pastoral applications of 12–16.

However, it is only natural for Paul to add 9–11 to Chapter 8 at this point in the theological part of Romans simply because it seems that Israel, God's original elect nation, had rejected the gospel almost as a whole. In other words, how does the glowing assurance of God's faithfulness in Romans 8 explain the rejection of the gospel by most of God's elect nation? Does the Messiah's rejection by God's elect nation as a whole

undermine the Christian assurance of Chapters 1–8? Is God faithful to His Old and New Covenant promises? Romans 9–11 answers that question in defense of God’s faithfulness in salvation, particularly in regard to the Jews of Paul’s day and in the future as well. So, the connection with Chapter 8 is very natural.

Further, after spending much time in Romans 1–8 on justification and a holy life, Paul introduced the concept of divine election and predestination in 8:28–30. Again, how does election comfort the Christian if God’s elect nation has rejected the gospel? In 9–11, Paul clarifies and expands the doctrine of election so beautifully outlined in 8:28–30. In fact, you cannot understand 9–11 without understanding its connection to the theology of Chapters 1–8. Again, there is a close connection between 1–8 and 9–11. Yes, God is faithful to His promises.

Therefore, the better division of Romans is that the theological argument encompasses Chapters 1–11 as a whole, while Chapters 12–16 apply that theology to the Christian and the church, now composed of Jews and Gentiles together. There is far greater unity and consistency to Paul’s plan for the Roman epistle than many attribute to him. In fact, Chapters 9–11 are as necessary to the applications that he brings in 12–16 as 1–8. To a Roman congregation of largely Gentiles, with a minority of Jews, the questions of God’s plan to continue saving Jews or not in 9–11 directly apply to the issues of Christian unity, Christian liberty, and unprejudiced acceptance of one another so well applied in 12–16.

So, let us accept that 9–11 belongs to the theological discourse of 1–8, is dependent upon those first eight chapters for understanding, and is necessary to the full understanding of 12–16. The proper division of the Roman Epistle is Paul’s theological argument in 1–11, followed by his pastoral applications in 12–16. This structure will be the basis for this commentary on Chapters 9–16.

## Paul’s frame of mind when writing Romans

Dr. Vaughan places Paul in Corinth when he wrote Romans (Acts 20:3), sometime between 55–58 A.D.<sup>1</sup> As early as Acts 19:21, while at Ephesus, Paul purposed to go to Rome. But first he had to go to Jerusa-

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<sup>1</sup> See Dr. Vaughan’s notes in Chapter 1: Background for the Study of Romans, page 32.

lem on a mission of mercy. He described it to the Romans as a ministry (*diakonia*) to the poor Jewish saints in Jerusalem, carrying a contribution (*koinonia*) from the Gentile churches in Macedonia and Achaia (Romans 15:25–26; 1 Corinthians 16:1–4; 2 Corinthians 8–9). When he had finished giving the contribution to the Jerusalem church, then he planned to go to Rome for a brief stay, hoping that the Roman believers would help him on to Spain (15:23–24).

This collection of gifts for the poor saints in Jerusalem occupied Paul's mind at least from Acts 19:21 and controlled his life plans to the end of the book of Acts. After the collection was delivered and warmly received by the Jewish Christians, Paul was dragged out of the temple by unbelieving Jews and beaten (Acts 21:17ff.). When they attempted to kill him, the Roman authorities stepped in, arresting Paul to investigate the great disturbance. When he was allowed his request to speak to the angry Jewish multitude, Paul gave his Damascus road testimony to the crowd. They listened until he reported that Jesus had commanded him to take the gospel to the hated Gentiles. Then they were incensed, demanding his death.

When the Roman soldiers were about to question him by torture (scourging), Paul shouted out his Roman citizenship. This spared him the scourging, but wanting to settle this by law, the commander sent him to the Jewish Sanhedrin to be examined. At this event, ending in division and uproar, the commander rescued Paul and took him back to the barracks. That night the Lord stood at his side and told him to take courage, that he had witnessed of Christ faithfully in Jerusalem and that he would do the same in Rome. Escaping plans by forty Jewish assassins to kill him, over two hundred Roman soldiers took Paul to Caesarea to be examined by governor Felix. For two years he was imprisoned there until Festus replaced Felix. Again, Paul testified of the faith to Festus, then to the visiting King Agrippa. Festus tried to persuade Paul to return to Jerusalem for trial, but Paul appealed to Caesar as a Roman citizen. After many more trials, Paul arrived as a prisoner in Rome, welcomed by fellow believers to whom he wrote in Romans 16. Finally, Paul taught Jew and Gentile in Rome the gospel he so longed to bring them (Acts 28:15–31; Romans 1:13–15).

Three long years had passed since Paul was first arrested in Jerusalem till his coming to Rome. God answered his prayers, yet by means of many trials. However, it must be remembered, it was the collection from the Gentile churches which occasioned Paul's arrest in Jerusalem, his

controversies with the Jews, and his journey to Rome. Even though he had been warned by the prophet Agabus (Acts 21:10–14) that the visit to Jerusalem would end this way, he was determined even to death to take this collection from the Gentile churches back to the Jewish church in Jerusalem. Besides God’s directing, why was Paul so determined?

There are probably several elements to Paul’s thinking about this collection, but one was this: *he saw the voluntary collection from the Gentile churches to the poor of the Jewish church in Jerusalem to be a means to bring greater unity between Jewish and Gentile churches, as well as between individual Christians of both backgrounds.* It would be an example and testimony of Christ’s call and prayer to love one another as He first loved us (John 13:34–35; 17:20–26).

This collection was not a demand from the Jewish Christians for reparations from Gentile Christians from their forefathers’ persecutions of the Jews. Nor was it anything but a one-time benevolent gift from Gentile churches to the poor saints in Jerusalem, also given as a token of appreciation that their salvation had come from the Jews (Romans 15:25–27). This collection was designed by Paul to bring unity between the two Christian groups who were having trouble melding into one new man (Ephesians 2:12–18). It would bring a greater unity to the worldwide church, thus bearing a faithful witness to the power of the gospel (Romans 1:16–17).

The remaining differences between professing Christians of Jewish and Gentile background are well documented in the New Testament. The Council of Jerusalem over Gentile circumcision (Acts 15), the problems in Galatia with the heretical “Christian” Judaizers (Galatians 1:6–9), the tensions in Corinth over eating meats (1 Corinthians 8–10), and Paul’s Apostolic rebuke of Peter and Barnabas for withdrawing from Gentile believers in Antioch due to fear from “certain men from James” (Galatians 2:11–14); all these incidents and more convinced Paul that the ongoing tensions between Jewish and Gentile Christians needed urgent attention. How often he had taught that such differences must no longer divide Christian unity (Galatians 3:26–29; Ephesians 2:11–22; 1 Corinthians 8:1–13)? Christ’s command to love one another must be upheld with Christian unity; one body, one Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, “one God and Father who is over all and through all and in all” (Ephesians 4:1–6; Romans 15:5–7).

At the writing of Romans, Paul hoped that this ministry to the saints in Jerusalem would prove acceptable to them (Romans 15:31), thus prov-

ing that the Gentile churches were of like faith and mind with the Jewish church. For after all, Gentile Christians, having received spiritual things from Jewish Christians, are indebted to serve them in material things (Romans 15:26–27). The unity of Gentile and Jewish Christians was weighing on Paul's mind as he wrote to the Romans from Corinth (Acts 20:3). Could it be that this concern had more to do with the structure and theological message of Romans than has been attributed to it? Could it be that Paul had heard that there was a growing problem in Rome about this issue?

### Paul's Concern for Christian Unity in Rome

Many reasons have been offered for Paul's purpose in writing to the Romans. Some point to the doctrinal nature of the book; that Paul, uncertain of his future, took the Roman Epistle as an opportunity to put down his gospel in complete form for all to read. Others emphasize his writing the full gospel specifically to the Roman churches in case he did not make it to Rome, or to gather their support for his mission to Spain. Still others, to steel the Romans against possible heretical teachers or Jewish opposition.<sup>2</sup> All of these proposed purposes have merit with perhaps a combination involved.

However, there is one purpose which deserves more attention than has been given it: *that Paul was concerned that the largely Gentile Roman church, together with the Jewish minority, understand and practice Christian love and unity toward each other.* Thus, unity in sound doctrine was necessary to overcome remaining racial, cultural, and religious differences.

Dr. Vaughan takes the position that the Roman church was a mixture of Jews and Gentiles, the Gentiles being the majority:

A relatively small number of scholars hold that the church at Rome was preponderantly Jewish. Theodor Zahn, for example, argued that "in Rome the Gentile Christians constituted a comparatively small minority" (*Introduction to the New Testament*, II, 422).

The Traditional view is that the church was essentially a Gentile church. Paul addresses the Roman Christians as Gentiles (e.g., 1:5–6, 13–15; 11:13); in the progress of his argument he speaks of the Jews in the third person (cf. Chapters 9–11); and the majority of the names

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<sup>2</sup> See pages 32–33 for Vaughan's background for the study of Romans.

cited in Chapter 16 are Gentile names. Among others, Godet, Hort, Gifford, Sanday and Headlam, Denney, Dodd, and Murray subscribe to this view. Cranfield thinks no decisive answer can be given and suggests that we “leave the question open” (p. 21).<sup>3</sup>

Taking the Gentiles in the majority (Romans 1:5–6, 13; 11:13; 15:15; see Hendriksen, 22), Paul is concerned that differences of race, religious background, past offenses, and even Christian opinions about secondary matters not destroy Christian unity in any church of Jesus Christ (Romans 12:1–15:13). For the gospel of Jesus Christ is for both Jew and Gentile, forging a new people of God under the New Covenant, and calling them to love one another as God has first loved each of them, to forgive one another as Christ forgave them, and to serve one another as Christ served them (Ephesians 4:31–5:2).

Christian unity was a major concern for Paul. We must remember that the Romans hated the Jews and vice-versa. We must remember that the Jews hated the Greeks for what Antiochus Epiphanes did to them and the Temple in 167 B.C. They hated the Romans because of when Pompey captured Jerusalem in 63 B.C., defiling the Temple. They hated the Samaritans as unclean and heretics. They hated each other in the division between Sadducees and Pharisees. And they hated each other in the division between Hebraic and Hellenistic Jews scattered in the diaspora. In Paul’s day, the Gentiles generally hated the Jews and the Jews generally hated the Gentiles. Such was the background of racial, cultural, and religious differences between the two groups which made up the Roman church. Further, the attention to proper Christian liberty in Romans 14 may indicate a problem in Rome much like 1 Corinthians 8–10. Also, the problem of Christian unity may be a key to understanding the greatly debated meaning of Romans 9–11 concerning God’s future plan for unbelieving Israel, both as a nation and as individuals. In any case, this issue needs to be given more attention than it has received.

So, is there any real evidence in Romans that Paul’s general concern for Christian unity between Jews and Gentiles is a major purpose behind this Epistle as well as the other reasons mentioned above? I believe that there is much evidence of this. If we accept that the majority of Roman Christians were Gentile, while the minority were Jewish, then:

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<sup>3</sup> See page 31.

1. We can understand why Paul the Jew often emphasized his apostleship to the Gentiles (1:5; 11:13; 15:16, 18). This is in spite of the fact that, at the time of writing Romans and after, Paul usually preached first to the Jews before he turned to the Gentiles (Acts 13:14–52; 17:1–2, 10; 18:4–6, 19; 19:8–10, 21; 21:39–40; 22:1–24). Paul’s Gentile apostleship never excluded the Jews from his preaching, but it explains why he emphasized his Gentile mission to the Roman church. They were largely Gentiles and must listen to their apostle’s teaching about God’s plan for the salvation of Jews. They must not succumb to arrogance toward Jewish Christians, nor to Jews in general, just because so many Gentiles were being saved while so many Jews were hardened toward the gospel (Romans 11:18–23).
2. Paul’s consideration that the Roman church as largely Gentile explains his emphasis throughout the Epistle that the gospel is still for all men, both Jews and Gentiles (Romans 1:16–17; 2:10–11, 25–29; 3:9; 4:11–12; 5:18; 9:24; 10:4, 12–13; 11:12–15, 25–26; 30–31; 15:7–13). The Gentile Roman church must not display arrogance toward believing Jews in fellowship, nor must they adopt a hardness toward unbelieving Jews in regard to evangelism.
3. We can now understand the fact that Paul mentions both Jew and Gentile in regard to condemnation and justification (Romans 1–4), yet only mentions “brethren” when instructing the mixed church for Christian living (Romans 5–8, 12–15). This testifies to Paul’s concern that the former differences must no longer divide Christians. Now, together, they are one new people and must accept one another in love and unity even with different backgrounds and past offenses (Rom. 12:3–5, 9–10, 16; 13:8–10; 14:1, 19; 15:5–7). The sins of the past from one group against the other must be put to death at the feet of Christ as they accept each other as one new people—by faith in the gospel of reconciliation. Again, there were no demands for reparations from one group against the other, nor were there demands from one group against the other to repent for their forefathers’ sins. Rather, there was to be unity based upon their common beliefs, their common Lord, and their acceptance of each other as both being “under grace (Romans 6:14; 15:1–7).”

4. We can understand why Paul composed such a robust exposition of the gospel to the Roman church. Rome was at the Western extreme of the spread of the gospel up to Paul's time of writing. He hoped to extend it to Spain and beyond. To prevent the Roman and farther churches from being infected by the Jew-Gentile conflicts and false teachers from the East (Romans 16:17-20), it would be logical for Paul to press for Roman unity based upon a thorough theological foundation for the future. If one were to plan a theological treatise to join Jews and Gentiles into one unified body in Christ, he would have to establish that both Jews and Gentiles are equally sinners and condemned by God (Romans 1-3:19); that both must be saved the same way through justification by faith alone in Christ alone (3:18-5:21); that both must live a godly life through union with Christ, kept and empowered by the same Spirit (6:1-8:39); that both have been saved by the same electing grace from among Jews and Gentiles (9:24); that both Jews and Gentiles are responsible to repent and believe in the same gospel preached (10:1-21); that God is continuing to save both from among Jews and Gentiles to the present day and will do so into the future (Romans 11:30-33); and that both are to live humbly together according to the same standards of Christian obedience in unity, refusing to let secondary matters divide them (12:1-15:13). And this is exactly what Paul did in Romans. The structure of Romans shouts for Christian unity on the basis of each being sinners, saved by the same grace and Savior, and joined by God into one new people. Christian unity must be forged on the anvil of a robust theology.

In a day when Christian unity in the local church and beyond is fragile and fragmented, the robust theology of Romans calls all Christians to be unified by a robust understanding of the gospel, a holy life as defined by Scripture, and a humble commitment to Christian love toward one another, no matter the past sins of the other's forefathers nor for present non-essential differences. The uncertain origin of the following appeal is a fitting summary for the purpose and argument of Romans: "Unity in things essential, liberty in things non-essential, charity in all things."

What would happen if Christians and churches recommitted themselves to the sound theology of Romans, the rediscovery of true holiness as defined by this Epistle, and the practice of the humble, self-denying love between brethren of the same Lord, the same faith, the same bap-



tism, and the same Father? What if *sola scriptura* and the *sufficiency of Scripture* alone sifted our hyper-reasoned opinions that divide true Christians? Perhaps the prayer of our Lord for Christian unity around Himself as a witness to the world would be answered with another great revival (John 17:21)! May God grant it so!

Fred A. Malone



# *Outline*

## TO THE BOOK OF ROMANS

### I. Chapter 1: Background for the Study of Romans

- A. The Church at Rome
- B. The Epistle to the Romans

### II. Chapter 2: Introduction to Romans (Romans 1:1–17)

- A. The Address (1:1–7)
  - 1. Paul presents his credentials (1:1)
  - 2. Paul describes his gospel (1:1b–5)
  - 3. Paul greets his readers (1:6, 7)
- B. An Explanation of Paul's Interest in the Roman Church (1:8–15)
  - 1. Paul begins with an expression of appreciation for the Roman church (1:8)
  - 2. The apostle reveals that he had for a long time had a deep desire to visit Rome (1:9–13)
  - 3. Paul affirms a sense of spiritual obligation toward the believers of Rome (1:14, 15; cf. 1 Corinthians 9:16–19)

### C. Statement of the Theme of the Book (1:16, 17)

1. Paul is not ashamed of it (1:16a)
2. The gospel is the power of God unto salvation (1:16b)
3. In the gospel there “is revealed a righteousness of God” (1:17)

## III. Chapter 3: The Wrath of God: The Doctrine of Condemnation (Romans 1:18–3:20)

### A. The Wrath of God Upon the Pagan World (1:18–32)

1. The revelation of God’s wrath (1:18)
2. The grounds for God’s wrath (1:19–23)
  - a. God’s revelation of Himself (vv. 19–20)
  - b. Man’s rejection of God’s revelation (vv. 21–23)
3. The execution of God’s wrath (1:24–32)
  - a. Abandoned to uncleanness (vv. 24, 25)
  - b. Abandoned to passions of dishonor (vv. 26, 27)
  - c. Abandoned to a reprobate mind (vv. 28–32)

### B. The Wrath of God upon the Jew (2:1–3:8)

1. The nature of God’s judgment (2:1–16)
  - a. Verses 2–11 stress the impartiality of God’s judgment
  - b. Verses 12–16 stress the universality of man’s accountability to God
2. The Jew’s failure to live up to his privileges (2:17–29)
  - a. The Jew’s possession of the law (vv. 17–24)
  - b. The rite of circumcision (vv. 25–29)
3. Jewish objections to Paul’s teaching (3:1–8)

- a. First objection (vv. 1, 2)
- b. Second objection (vv. 3, 4)
- c. Third objection (vv. 5–8)

C. The Wrath of God upon the Whole World (3:9–20)

1. The universality of sin (3:9–18)
2. The operation of the law (3:19, 20)

IV. Chapter 4: The Righteousness of God: The Doctrine of Justification (Romans 3:21–5:21)

A. A Summary of the Divine Righteousness (3:21–31)

1. It is “apart from the Law” (3:21a)
2. It is “through faith in Jesus Christ” (3:22)
3. It is freely bestowed: “being justified freely by his grace” (3:24a)
4. It is made possible by the death of Jesus (3:24b–26)
5. It involves far-reaching consequences (3:27–31)

B. An Example of the Divine Righteousness (4:1–25)

1. Abraham’s justification is explained by faith, not works (4:1–8)
2. Abraham’s justification was not dependent on the rite of circumcision (4:9–12)
3. Abraham’s justification was apart from law (4:13–17)
4. Abraham’s faith was typical of the Christian’s faith (4:17–25)
  - a. The character of Abraham’s faith (vv.17–22)
  - b. Abraham’s faith as typical of the Christian’s faith (vv. 23–25)

C. The Results of the Divine Righteousness (5:1–11)

1. Peace with God (5:1)
2. Joyful hope (5:2–8)
3. The Assurance of final and complete salvation (5:9–11)

D. The Grounds of the Divine Righteousness (5:12–21)

V. Chapter 5: The Life of God: The Doctrine of Sanctification  
(Romans 6:1–8:39)

A. A Life Characterized by Holiness (Romans 6)

1. The first question and its answer (6:1–14)
  - a. Union with Christ means death to sin (vv. 2b–4a)
  - b. Union with Christ means participation in new life (vv. 4b–11)
  - c. Union with Christ is incongruous with a life of sin (vv. 12–14)

2. The second question and its answer (6:15–23)

B. A Life Characterized by Freedom From the Law (Romans 7)

1. The believer's freedom from the law (7:1–6)
2. The character of the law (7:7–25)
  - a. The law and the unbeliever (vv.7–13)
    - (1) The law reveals sin, brings the knowledge of it, exposes it for what it really is (v. 7)
    - (2) The law arouses and awakens sin (vv. 8–11)
    - (3) The law, in spite of its role of arousing and awakening sin, was not in itself to be blamed for Paul's "death" (vv. 12, 13)
  - b. The law and the believer (vv. 14–23)

c. Conclusion (vv. 24, 25)

C. A Life Indwelt by the Spirit (Romans 8)

1. A life of victory (8:1–13)
  - a. Victory over sin (vv. 1–8)
  - b. Victory over death (vv. 9–13)
2. A life of sonship (8:14–17a)
3. A life characterized by the hope of glory (8:17b–30)
4. A life of assurance and security (8:31–39)

VI. Chapter 6: The Faithfulness of God: The Doctrine of Election (Romans 9:1–11:36)

A. Lament for Israel (9:1–5)

1. The intercessory grief of Paul (9:1–3)
2. The spiritual tragedy of Israel (9:4, 5)

B. The Saving Purpose of God in Election (9:6–29)

1. The principle of election (9:6–13)
  - a. The case of Isaac and Ishmael: election transcends birthright (vv. 7–9)
  - b. The case of Jacob and Esau: election supersedes works (vv. 10–13)
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- b. Confirmed in the promises of the prophets (vv. 25–29)
- C. A Righteousness of God for All Who Believe in Christ (9:30–10:21)
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  - 2. The believer’s righteousness in Christ (10:1–13)
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    - b. It is immediate through the proclaimed word (vv. 5–10)
    - c. It is available to everyone who calls (vv. 11–13)
  - 3. The worldwide proclamation of Christ (10:14–21)
    - a. The necessity of preaching (vv. 14, 15)
    - b. The persuasion of hearing (vv. 16, 17)
    - c. The witness of disobedience (vv. 18–21)
- D. The Mystery of Israel’s Future Restoration (11:1–32)
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    - a. The solitary example of Paul (v. 1b)
    - b. The elect remnant of Jewish Christians (vv. 2–6)
    - c. The hardened majority of Israel (vv. 7–10)
  - 2. The possibility of mercy through the gospel (11:11–24)
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    - b. A continuity belonging to the chosen people (vv. 16–24)
  - 3. The prophecy of mercy upon all (11:25–32)
    - a. The fullness of the Gentiles (v. 25)
    - b. The salvation of all Israel (vv. 26, 27)



c. Mercy upon the disobedient (vv. 28–32)

E. A Hymn of Praise to God (11:33–36)

1. Praise of God's knowledge (11:33b)
2. Praise of God's wisdom (11:34)
3. Praise of God's riches (11:35, 36)

## VII. Chapter 7: The Service of God: The Doctrine of Obedience (Romans 12:1–15:13)

A. The General Appeal for Self-consecration (12:1, 2)

1. The ground of the appeal is the mercies of God (12:1a)
2. The substance of the appeal is the surrender of self (12:1b, 2b)
  - a. Dedication is the sacrifice of self to God (vv. 1b, c)
  - b. Transformation is the conformity of self to the new age (vv. 2a, b)
3. The outcome of the appeal is the proving of the will of God (12:2c)

B. Duties to God and Fellow Believers (12:3–21)

1. Think soberly—a sane self-estimate (12:3–5)
  - a. The measure of a sane self-estimate is the divine gift of faith (v. 3c)
  - b. The motive for a sane self-estimate is the unity of the body (vv. 4, 5)
2. Minister diligently—the exercise of spiritual gifts (12:6–8)
  - a. The gifts of inspired utterance include prophecy, teaching, and exhortation (vv. 6b, 7b, 8a)

- b. The gifts of sympathetic service (vv. 7a, 8b, c, d) are ministry, giving, ruling, and showing mercy
  - 3. Love sincerely—the display of unfeigned affection (12:9–21)
    - a. Love to the brother within (vv. 9–13)
    - b. Love to the enemy without (vv. 14–21)
- C. Duties to the State and Fellow Citizens (13:1–14)
  - 1. Submit to the governing authorities (13:1–7)
    - a. The state is a divinely ordained institution (vv. 1, 2)
    - b. The state is the minister of true justice (vv. 3, 4)
    - c. The state is the franchise of public conscience (vv. 5–7)
  - 2. Be a debtor to love (13:8–10)
  - 3. Prepare for the approaching day (13:11–14)
    - a. Nearness that signals the approaching day (v.11)
    - b. Earnestness that befits the approaching day (vv. 12, 13)
    - c. The readiness that welcomes the approaching day (v. 14)
- D. Duties Touching the Relations Between Weak and Strong Christians (14:1–15:13)
  - 1. The problem of the strong and the weak (14:1–12)
    - a. The serious magnitude of the problem threatens the fellowship of the church (v. 1)
    - b. The harsh feelings in the problem arise from matters of indifference (vv. 2–5)
    - c. The neglected factor in the problem is each man's

- responsibility to God (vv. 6–12)
- 2. The principle of walking in love (14:13–23)
  - a. It is a principle that measures a man in the light of the cross (vv. 13–15)
  - b. It is a principle that acknowledges the nature of the kingdom of God (vv. 16–18)
  - c. It is a principle that pursues the aim of mutual edification (vv. 19–21)
  - d. It is a principle that safeguards the character of faith (vv. 22, 23)
- 3. The pattern of the ministry of the Lord (15:1–13)
  - a. The concern of Christ for the burdens of others (vv. 1–6)
  - b. The welcome of Christ for Jew and Gentile (vv. 7–13)

## VII. Chapter 8: Conclusion (Romans 15:14–16:27)

### A. A Narrative of the Apostolic Mission (15:14–33)

- 1. Reasons for writing the epistle (15:14–16)
  - a. To remind the Romans of what they already believe (vv. 14, 15a)
  - b. To claim the Romans for the priestly service of the gospel (vv. 15b, 16)
- 2. Results of preaching among the Gentiles (15:17–21)
  - a. The conversion of Gentiles has been certified by signs of divine activity (vv. 18a, 19a)
  - b. The mission in the east has been completed by fully disseminating the gospel (vv. 19b–21)

3. Plans for future missionary ventures (15:22–29)
    - a. A journey into Spain (vv. 24, 28b) is the goal of Paul's enlarged field of work (cf. 2 Cor. 10:15, 16)
    - b. The strategic importance of Rome (vv. 24b, 29) makes the church a vital link in Paul's itinerary
    - c. The Gentile collection for Jerusalem (vv. 25–28a) is the immediate prospect in Paul's plans
  4. Prayers from Rome requested by Paul (15:30–33)
- B. Personal Greetings to Roman Christians (16:1–23)
1. A commendation of Phoebe (16:1, 2)
  2. Greetings to friends in Rome (16:3–16)
    - a. The richness of their fellowship emerges from the remarkable diversity of individuals named
    - b. The closeness of their faith is suggested by family and household associations
    - c. The fruitfulness of their labor shows a deep commitment to Christ
  3. A warning against false teachers (16:17–20)
  4. Greetings from Paul's companions (16:21–23)
- C. A Final Doxology in Praise of God (16:24–27)

## CHAPTER 1

# *Background for the Study of Romans*

“O St. Paul,” wrote Frederic Godet, “had thy one work been to compose an Epistle to the Romans, that alone should have rendered thee dear to every sound reason” (p. x) — and no believer would be disposed to disagree.

The influence of the book upon the course of Christianity—indeed, the history of the world—is beyond measure, and testimonies to its value and power, extending from the patristic period to the modern era, could be multiplied. Chrysostom, whose homilies on the epistle are still available, had it read to him twice each week. It was, as is well known, the instrument used of God to bring spiritual life to Augustine, and its message concerning the righteousness of God was that which to Martin Luther “became the gateway to heaven.” To the great reformer Romans was “the true masterpiece of the New Testament, the purest gospel. It deserves,” he said, “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; for it can never be too much or too well studied and the more time one spends on it the more precious it becomes.” These words are taken from the Preface of Luther’s commentary on Romans. Most of our readers will recall that while that Preface was being read publicly in a Moravian meeting in Aldersgate Street in London, John Wesley felt his heart “strangely warmed.” Matthew Henry thought of the Psalms of David and the Epis-

bles of Paul as “stars of the first magnitude”; but Romans, he said, “is superlatively excellent, the largest and fullest of all.” Farrar spoke of it as “one of the greatest and deepest and most memorably influential of all compositions ever written by human pen.” And Deissmann, writing in *The Expository Times*, affirms that “fire, holy fire, glows between its lines. This holy divine flame is what warms and interpenetrates us. The deep understanding of human misery, the terrible shuddering before the power of sin, but at the same time the jubilant rejoicing of the redeemed child of God—this is what for all time assures to the Roman Epistles a victorious sway over the hearts of men who are sinful and who thirst for redemption” (XI, 10).

### A. The Church at Rome

It will be helpful, in approaching the study of this book, to consider briefly a few pertinent facts about the church at Rome. Actually, we know little about it, but there are indications that it was quite large and important at a relatively early date. Clement, writing around the close of the first century, refers to the Christians in Rome at the time of the Neronian persecutions (mid-sixties) as “a large body” (1 Clement 6:1), and Tacitus (*Annals* 15:44) speaks of them as “an immense multitude.”

There are two principal questions relative to the church at Rome. First, how did it come to be established? It is impossible to give a dogmatic answer to this, but there are several matters of which we may be reasonably sure. (1) The church was not established by Paul, for he had not yet visited Rome at the time of the writing of the Roman letter (cf. 1:8–15). (2) It was not founded by Peter. That apostle was in Jerusalem at the time of the Jerusalem Conference (A.D. 49) and appears, prior to that time, to have engaged only in missionary activities which did not take him far from Jerusalem (cf. Acts 9:32–11:18). Yet there is good reason to believe that there were Christians in Rome before A.D. 49, the approximate date of Claudius’ edict banishing Jews from Rome, for (as is generally felt on the basis of a statement by Seutonius) the reason for the Jews expulsion involved controversies among them concerning Christ. Aquila and Priscilla were in Corinth a few months after Claudius’ decree (Acts 18:2), and the New Testament at least implies that they were believers before leaving Rome. In the New Testament the only possible reference to Peter’s being in Rome is in 1 Peter 5:13, and this passage can be so interpreted only if “Babylon” is understood as a cryptic name for Rome. (3) It is unlikely that any other apostle founded the Roman church, for

in the Roman letter Paul affirms that it was not his policy to build on another person's foundation (15:20). Yet he appears to consider the Roman church as within the sphere of his commission.

Positively, two possibilities emerge: (1) The church may have been established through the witnessing of early converts<sup>1</sup> who, following their conversion, visited Rome or settled there. Godet, who subscribes to this view, likens the founding of the Roman church to the founding of that at Antioch (cf. Acts 11:19ff.). (2) Another possibility, not radically different from the foregoing, is that the Roman church was organized as a result of the witnessing of Roman Jews or proselytes who were in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost (or some subsequent festival) and were converted through their contact with believers in Jerusalem. (That there were Romans present on the day of Pentecost we know from Acts 2:10.) This latter view is advocated by F. J. A. Hort (*Prolegomena*, pp. 8, 9). Perhaps the truth of the establishment of the Roman church combines both these factors.

The second question, which perhaps is more important than the former for one's interpretation of Romans, concerns the composition of the church at Rome. The epistle clearly implies that it was both Jewish<sup>2</sup> and Gentile, but was it *predominantly Jewish* or *predominantly Gentile*?

A relatively small number of scholars hold that the church at Rome was preponderantly Jewish. Theodor Zahn, for example, argued that "in Rome the Gentile Christians constituted a comparatively small minority" (*Introduction to the New Testament*, II, 422).

The traditional view is that the church was essentially a Gentile church. Paul addresses the Roman Christians as Gentile (e.g., 1:5, 6, 13-15; 11:13); in the progress of his argument he speaks of the Jews in the third person (cf. Chapters 9-11); and the majority of the names cited in Chapter 16 are Gentile names. Among others, Godet, Hort, Gifford, Sanday and Headlam, Denney, Dodd, and Murray subscribe to this view. Cranfield thinks no decisive answer can be given and suggests that we "leave the question open" (p. 21).

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<sup>1</sup> Some would say these were Gentile converts, arguing that Acts 28 represents the Jews of Rome as declaring an amazing ignorance of Christianity (cf. Godet, p. 65).

<sup>2</sup> Hort thinks chapters 2 and 4 suggest that some of the original readers must have been Jews. He also thinks that the scruples of Judaism are in the background of chapters 14 and 15, and on the evidence of 15:7-13 he concludes that there must have been some Jewish members in the Roman church. With this view, there is general agreement.

## B. The Epistle to the Romans

Several definite historical allusions within the epistle help us to *date* it with a measure of certainty and confidence. For instance, from the introductory portion of chapter 1 we gather that Paul had not yet visited Rome at the time he wrote this letter (1:8–15; cf. 15:23, 24). Again, from 15:24–31 we learn that the apostle, at the time of writing Romans, was about to leave for Jerusalem with an offering contributed by Christians of Macedonia and Achaia for the needy saints in Jerusalem (cf. Acts 19:21; 20:1–3). This set of facts places the writing of Romans near the close of the third missionary journey. Moreover, in 16:1, 2 Paul commends Phoebe to the church at Rome and identifies her as a member of the church at Cenchrea (the eastern seaport of Corinth). She probably was the bearer of the Roman letter to its destination, and if this assumption is correct Paul must have been in Corinth when he wrote the letter. Another passage of interest is 16:23, where Paul sends greetings to the Romans from “Erastus, the city treasurer.” Erastus is associated with Corinth in 2 Timothy 4:20, and an inscription was found in Corinth some years ago which mention an Erastus as an official of the city. Finally, in 16:23 we learn that one Gaius was Paul’s host at the time Romans was written. This was a rather common name of the day, but we know that there was a Gaius at Corinth who was baptized by Paul (1 Corinthians 1:14).

The cumulative evidence of these passages suggests that Romans was written some time between A.D. 55 and 58, near the close of his third missionary journey while the apostle was in Corinth. Dodd dates Romans in February of A.D. 59; Barrett, in the spring of A.D. 55. Franzmann (*The Word of the Lord Grows*) prefers A.D. 55/56 as the date; Cranfield, A.D. 55/56 or 56/57; Bruce, “the early days of A.D. 57.” A.D. 57/58 is widely held (e.g., Lightfoot, Sanday and Headlam, and Murray).

There are three leading views relative to the *occasion* of Romans. One says it was a crisis in the life of the church, namely, the threatening danger of the Judaizing heresy (cf. Galatians), which called forth this epistle. On this view, then, Romans was written to combat a tendency on the part of at least some of the Romans to embrace this heretical teaching. A second theory understands the occasion for the letter to be, not a crisis in the life of the church, but a development in Paul’s own plans. The apostle, it is explained, wished to visit Spain and felt he needed to win the support of the Roman church for that mission. The Epistle to the Romans accomplishes this end by displaying the merits of, and by removing



the objections to, Paul's gospel (cf. 15:14–33). (See Dodd, Cranfield, et al.) The third view takes the occasion to be Paul's conflict with unbelieving Jews. It seems, so the argument goes, that at the time of writing Romans the apostle's most dangerous enemies were not the Judaizing teachers, but the Jews who professed no relation to Jesus Christ (cf. 2 Corinthians 11; Acts 20:23; 21:11, 27). Gifford champions this theory and presents a convincing case for it.

There is more to be said for the second and third views, but there is some truth in each of them. Therefore, the true occasion of Romans may be learned by combining elements of all three.

The purpose of the book is necessarily bound up with its occasion. So one's understanding of this matter will, to a large measure, be determined by what he thinks of the occasion of the book. The traditional position is that Romans is a theological treatise written with a general didactic aim. On this view, it was occasioned by no special set of circumstances either in the life of the church, the plans of the apostle, or the nature of his opposition at the time. Advocates of this theory think that Paul wrote Romans to put his ideas into systematic form and give a full statement of Christian doctrine simply for the satisfaction of his own mind. Some who take this position feel that Paul might have written this book as his "testament" to Christendom. Romans probably comes closer to being a general and systematic statement of Christian doctrine than any other of Paul's epistles, but it is questionable that this was Paul's primary purpose in writing the book.

A more recent view is that the apostle wrote Romans to win the support of the Roman church for his intended visit to Spain (see paragraph on occasion, above). He did this, it is explained, by setting out a reasoned and orderly statement of the gospel as he preached it.

Gifford believes that "As the main purpose of the whole Epistle we can acknowledge nothing less comprehensive than the desire of the Apostle, at a momentous crisis in his own life's work and in the history of the whole Church of Christ, to set forth a full and systematic statement of those fundamental principles of the Gospel, which render it the one true religion for all the nations of the earth, and meet especially those deepest wants of human nature, which Judaism could not satisfy, righteousness in the sight of God, and deliverance from the power of sin and death" (p. 20).

## FOR FURTHER STUDY

1. Read Romans at one sitting. If you cannot do this, read Chapters 1–11, then at another sitting Chapters 12–16. Or, read Chapters 1–8, then Chapters 9–16. If possible, do your reading in a translation which you have not used before—or at least in a translation which employs modern English. An accurate, readable rendering is *The New International Version*, published by Zondervan.
2. In your first reading of Romans be alert to historical references and allusions which shed light on the circumstances under which Paul wrote the book.
3. As you read Romans, watch for recurring words and phrases.
4. Read Acts 20:1ff. for Luke's account of Paul's ministry in the period during which Romans was written. Use a map to check the location of Rome in reference to Corinth.
5. If you have a Bible dictionary, read articles on Paul, Romans, Aquila, and Phoebe. *The Zondervan Pictorial Bible Dictionary* and *The New Bible Dictionary* (Eerdmans) are good one-volume works. More detailed discussions may be found in *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*.