



20240421 Intro to Romans

This morning, we begin our study of the Book of Romans¹. We can better understand the letter of Paul to the Romans by learning a little bit about who Paul was and who the Romans were. I tackle projects from the big picture, and I move toward the details. Others study the details and then work their way out to the “big idea.” I’d like to go over the big idea of the book of Romans before we begin our verse-by-verse study of the book, so this morning let’s work on getting a summary in our minds about what is to come.

This book was a letter written by the Apostle Paul to a church (or just a group of believers) that gathered in Rome, the capital city of the Roman Empire. It was written between 56-58 AD. Paul was writing Jewish and Gentile believers in Jesus. Naturally, there were frictions due to the ethnic differences, but the greatest differences arose in questions concerning how a person is saved and the importance of the Jewish law. By “Jewish Law” I mean the totality of Jewish thinking, scriptures, and faith. In addition, Paul deals with the struggle of ongoing sin in the life of the believer after salvation, and he makes declarations as to our identity in Christ. This is one of the meatiest books in the New Testament, and it is full of fundamental Bible doctrines.

THE ROMANS



Rome, the capital of modern-day Italy, was founded in 753 BC. There was a small tribe of people there called the Etruscans who lived in and around what is now the city of Rome. They had a tradition of having descended from Aeneas, who had come after the fall of Troy. You might recognize the name Troy as Paul mentioned Troas (Acts 16:8). Many scholars believe this was indeed ancient Troy, and others indicate it was more descriptive of the entire region where ancient Troy was located. Myth had it that Aeneas’ descendants included twin brothers named Romulus and Remus², who were “Latins” who, having been orphaned, were nursed by a she-wolf. Later in their lives, it is said that Romulus killed Remus, and Romulus founded Rome on the Tiber River, becoming the first king of Rome. This was all happening during the time that the Prophet Amos was writing. This was about 250 years after the reign of King David in Jerusalem. Rome would have been founded about 30 years before the Assyrians carried the northern kingdom of Israel away into captivity in 721 BC.

¹ Romans study image courtesy of Russell Cushman 2024

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<https://www.ecosia.org/images?q=romulus+and+remus&license=public#id=D767B2FC159FE91CC822E5F2B7327419602D2180>

Rome increased in size and strength as it conquered people groups and tribes around it. The period of the monarchy (kings) ended in 510 BC. The Roman Republic began in 509



BC and extended until 31 BC (about 30 years before Jesus was born). During this time period, from 509 BC-31 BC, Rome was governed as a Republic. The motto of the Roman Republic was "Senatus PopulusQue Romanus" (meaning ruled by the Senate and the people). This was emblazoned on Roman flags, standards, etc, as SPQR meaning "The Senate and the Roman People." The Republic began its transition to becoming an Empire on March 15, 44 BC, when Julius Caesar was assassinated. This left a power vacuum. He was the dictator of the Republic at the time. He had an adopted son named Gaius Julius **Caesar Augustus**. This adopted son was challenged by Marco Antonio who allied himself with Cleopatra, the Queen of Egypt.³ The Republic Period ended in 31 BC with the defeat of the challenge

by Marco Antonio. Hence, Caesar Augustus secured himself as the first Roman "Emperor." He is the first Emperor mentioned in the Bible. It was under him that Joseph and Mary went to Bethlehem when "all of the world was taxed" (Luke 2:1).



This Empire period⁴ would extend from 31 BC (approximately 30 years before Jesus' birth) until 476 AD when Visigoths and Vandals would come in from what is now Germany and would sack Rome. In God's providence this provided enough time for the gospel to spread like wildfire through the known world. By the date of the invasion of the Western Empire, the Empire had established an Eastern Capital in Byzantium (modern-day Istanbul). That part

continued until it fell to Muslim hoards in 1453 AD. Much of the eastern Christian world then became predominantly Muslim by the sword. The majority of Muslims have tried since then to overtake the West and are still trying to take over the West and to subject it to the Rule of Islam.

Why Did God Choose for Jesus to Come When He did?

Certainly, we cannot know the mind of God, but can we speculate why God chose the time of the Roman Empire to bring salvation to the world? There are probably many

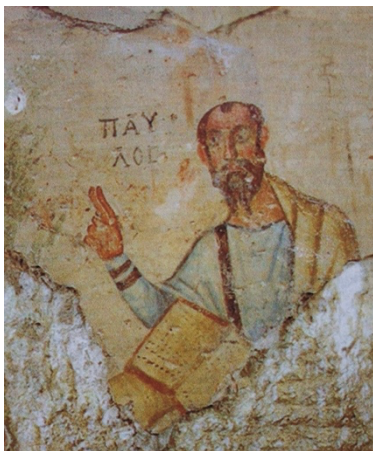
³ Queen Cleopatra and Mark Antony as imagined by German-born American artist Joseph Christian Leyendecker – Public Domain

⁴ <https://brewminate.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/RomanEmpireMap01.png>

answers. Rome was different than anything that had ever come before it. The Romans discovered and invented the manufacture of cement/concrete. With their engineering skills, they were able to build things that endured and were different from anything the world had ever produced. The Romans were experts in road building, and they produced a system of roads (many of which have remnants that exist today). They built 13,000 miles of road in Gaul (includes modern France, Germany and much of Western Europe) and 2,500 miles of roads in Britain. The Roman army provided protection and security for all who traveled on these roads. That "Pax Romana" (Roman peace), coupled with good roads to all of the known world, provided safe passage for the gospel to move freely.

The Romans provided a language base that was understood in all of the known world. At first, they used common everyday Greek which had been brought to the world by Alexander the Great. Slowly, Latin replaced Greek. Even today, those of us who speak English (via its French connection), Spanish, French, Romanian, Portuguese, and a host of other languages are speaking modern versions of classical Latin. After Jerome translated the Bible into Latin (383 AD-404 AD), the gospel could be taken freely, safely, and easily throughout the Roman Empire. I believe this is why scripture tells us the following:

⁴ But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, ⁵ to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons." ⁶ And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out, "Abba, Father!" ⁷ Therefore you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ. (Galatians 4:4-7, NKJV).



SAUL-PAUL OF TARSUS

Saul⁵ was born around 5 AD on the Mediterranean coast in Tarsus of Cilicia⁶ in what is modern-day Turkey. His parents were Jews who had Roman citizenship. It is believed that the family moved to Jerusalem between 15AD-20 AD where Paul received an amazing education (Acts 22:3). Most likely, the family was quite wealthy because



⁵ Courtesy of HVSb – House Visual Study Bible – Earliest known painting of Paul – Ephesus, Turkey

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<https://www.ecosia.org/images?q=tarsus+of+cilicia&license=shareCommercially#id=D65D3208F900A756AD2D202B7B79D46F626B58C9>

he was educated in law and scripture under the famous Rabbi Gamaliel. He was a Pharisee, which was a very scholarly, religious, spiritually-oriented Jewish group/sect.

Being a zealous Jew, Saul became a chief persecutor of the fledgling church in Jerusalem. He was present at Stephen's stoning. Scripture tells us that those who stoned Stephen came and laid their cloaks at Saul's feet (Acts 7:58). Saul was a righteous Pharisee who felt he was doing what God wanted him to do. His conversion is probably the most dramatic conversion we see in the Bible. He was on his way to Damascus when the Lord Jesus appeared to him and said, ³ *As he journeyed he came near Damascus, and suddenly a light shone around him from heaven.* ⁴ *Then he fell to the ground, and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?"* (Acts 9:3-4, NKJV).

Saul likely had a Roman name as well, and soon after his conversion, referred to himself as "Paul." He was the perfect combination of a person zealous for the things of God, a Jewish legal scholar, a Greek philosopher, and a Roman citizen. He was God's tool to change the paradigm in bringing the light of the gospel to the Gentiles "in the fullness of time." We don't know exactly how the church in Rome started, but we do know that on the Day of Pentecost, there were Jewish visitors from Rome (Acts 2:10). These no doubt included converts who believed in Jesus and made their way back to Rome. These Jewish Christians must have had an assembly (synagogue in Greek) / fellowship or perhaps numerous assemblies, and in time, Gentiles made their way into the group/s. We reason this because Paul addresses the Philippian church, and he greets those of "Caesar's household." ²¹ *Greet every saint in Christ Jesus. The brethren who are with me greet you.* ²² *All the saints greet you, but especially those who are of Caesar's household.* (Philippians 4:21-22, NKJV).

What Are the Main Ideas In the Book of Romans? – Focal Point = Righteousness

Key Verses are listed and might include:

Chapters 1-3 SIN [Righteousness Needed] – Think of righteousness as "we're not right with God." We are in fact "wrong" with God. Paul is dealing with the guilt of all of mankind. He will hammer home the truth that there is none righteous no not one (Romans 3:10-11 see below). He, in essence, looks into "God's courtroom" and expresses man's sinful condition as God sees it. He declares that sin is universal and that man is infected by the "sin dna" (author's term) inherited from Adam. Key verses are as follows:

Romans 1:16 *For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek.* (NKJV).

Romans 3:9-11 *What then? Are we better than they? Not at all. For we have previously charged both Jews and Greeks that they are all under sin.¹⁰ As it is written: "There is none*

righteous, no, not one;¹ There is none who understands; There is none who seeks after God.” (NKJV).

Romans 3:21 *But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, (NKJV).*

Romans 3:23 *for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,” (NKJV).*

Chapters 4-5 SALVATION [Righteousness Provided] – He declares that salvation from eternal death comes by faith alone. That is man’s “escape route” from his sinful condition. No works can be done that can save a person. The provision of Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross was an act of mercy and grace, even in our fallen condition. God loved us when we were lost in sin. The goodness of God leads us to repentance.

Romans 5:8 *But God commendeth His love towards us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. (KJV).*

Romans 3:20 *Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin. (NKJV).* So, Jesus is a greater Savior than we are sinners.

Chapters 6-8 SANCTIFICATION [Righteous Identity - growing in grace] - Chapter 7 highlights the struggle with our Adamic nature with victory coming only by deliverance through the power of the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:16, 2 Corinthians 5:17). These verses explain the interaction between us as God’s “new creation” and our old Adamic nature. Likewise, they give assurance to the believer of eternal security by which NOTHING can remove a true believer from God’s hand. Key verses include:

Romans 6:23 *For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. (KJV).*

Romans 8:9 *But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His. (NKJV).*

Romans 8:28 *And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. (KJV).*

Romans 8:37-39 *Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. ³⁸ For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, ³⁹ Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. (KJV).*

Chapters 9-11 SOVEREIGNTY [The path to Righteousness] – This includes the concept of Israel being set aside for a season as God reaches out beyond Israel to the Gentiles. These verses give clear unequivocal instructions that answer the question of the Philippian jailer who asked, “What must I do to be saved?” Paul tells us:

Romans 10:9-10 *That if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. ¹⁰ For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. (NKJV).*

Chapters 12-16 SERVICE [Righteousness Practiced] – This is a discussion of service done by the believer and the moment by moment daily living out of our identity in Christ. This is centered not by trying to avoid sin, but rather by walking in the Spirit (Galatians 5:16). In doing so, we will be focused on living out our identity in Christ and we will not become attracted and/or distracted by the workings of the world, the flesh, and the devil.

Romans 12:1-2 *I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your ^{1b}reasonable service. ² And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God. (NKJV).*

Romans 12:19 *Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, “Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,” says the Lord. (NKJV).*

Romans 16:17 *Now I urge you, brethren, note those who cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and avoid them. (NKJV).*

This will be an exciting journey as we understand who we are in Christ. We will learn in detail of the promises of God concerning that identity as well as the clear declarations of WHO WE ARE IN CHRIST AND THE BENEFITS OF OUR SONSHIP AS JOINT-HEIRS WITH JESUS.

Invitation – Romans Road

Let us pray.

Union Grove is one of the oldest Baptist communities of faith in the State of Texas dating back to 1844. Pastor Faber McMullen may be reached by email at uniongrove362@gmail.com or by snail mail at: 15301 FM 362, Navasota, Texas 77868. Tel: 936-825-1227 (Edited and proofed by Amanda Neese- Webster, Texas.) All financial gifts to this ministry are tax-deductible as a 501 (c) (3) Corporation.