

THE EPISTLE TO THE ROMANS

INTRODUCTION TO ROMANS

A. Authorship

1. There is little or no doubt for Pauline authorship.
2. It is supported internally.
 - a. Romans 1:1, *Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God,*
 - b. There are confirming coincidences between Romans, Acts and other Pauline epistles.
 - 1) His intention to visit Rome, Romans 1:10-13, 15; 15:22-32 which is confirmed in Acts 19:21.
 - 2) He claimed to be of the tribe of Benjamin, Romans 11:1, note Philippians 3:5.
 - 3) Paul's journey to Jerusalem with a love gift from the churches in Macedonia and Achaia, Romans 15:25-27, note Acts 19:21.
 - 4) He sent greetings to Priscilla and Aquila, Romans 16:3, note Acts 19:203.
3. It is supported externally.
 - a. Clement (95 A.D.), Ignatius (115 A.D.) and Polycarp (115 A.D.), the first three theologians of the Church.
 - b. Irenaeus (150A.D) and Justin Martyr, early theologians who helped define orthodoxy.
 - c. Every list of New Testament books of the early church attributed Romans to Paul.
4. This and most of Paul's epistles were written by a scribe who wrote down Paul's message while Paul dictated it.
 - a. This was probably due to Paul's poor eyesight.
 - b. This scribe is identified as Tertius in Romans 16:22, *I Tertius, who wrote this letter, greet you in the Lord.*

B. The place and date of writing

1. He was in Corinth at the end of his Third Missionary Journey, Acts 20:2-3, *When he had gone through those regions and had given them much encouragement, he came to Greece. There he spent three months, and when a plot was made against him by the Jews as he was about to set sail for Syria, he decided to return through Macedonia.*
2. Paul wrote the letter in early Spring of 57 A.D., as he was preparing to leave for Jerusalem in time for Pentecost, Acts 20:16, *For Paul had decided to sail past Ephesus, so that he might not have to spend time in Asia, for he was hastening to be at Jerusalem, if possible, on the day of Pentecost.*

C. The destination and recipients

1. The city of Rome
 - a. It was the world capital of the Roman Empire.
 - b. There were about 4 million people in the region.
 - c. There was political stability in the early years of Nero and the region was administered by Seneca.
 - d. There was religious syncretism. Numerous religions coexisted and blended together.
2. The church or churches in Rome
 - a. Paul may have addressed the letter to *the saints* because there was more than one church in Rome, Romans 1:7, *To all those in Rome who are loved by God and called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.*
 - b. It is known that there is at least one church in Rome which met in the home of Aquila and Priscilla, Romans 16:5, *Greet also the church in their house. Greet my beloved Epaphroditus, who was the first convert to Christ in Asia.*
 - c. Composition of the church
 - 1) There were both Jews and Gentiles in the churches in Rome.
 - 2) Aquila, Andronicus and Junias were Jews.
 - a) Acts 18:2, *And he found a Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to leave Rome. And he went to see them,*
 - b) Romans 16:7, *Greet Andronicus and Junia, my kinsmen and my fellow prisoners. They are well known to the apostles, and they were in Christ before me.*
 - 3) There was a small Jewish community in Rome due to persecution, so most church members were Gentiles.
 - d. Origin of the church
 - 1) It was not planted by an apostle or missionary.
 - 2) It was possibly planted by converts from Pentecost when 3,000 came to faith as noted in Acts 2.
 - 3) Also, Christians from Paul's churches in Asia, Macedonia and Achaia may have brought the Gospel to Rome.

- e. Condition of the church
 - 1) There was a broad socioeconomic cross section including slaves and political leaders in Rome.
 - 2) There were no obvious doctrinal errors as was evident in Galatia.

D. Purposes for Paul's writing Romans

- 1. Paul announced his plans to visit Rome on his way to Spain, Romans 15:24, *I hope to see you in passing as I go to Spain, and to be helped on my journey there by you, once I have enjoyed your company for a while.*
- 2. Paul wanted to present a complete and detailed presentation of the Gospel to the Roman Church, Romans 1:15, *So I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome.*
- 3. Some believe he wanted to stave off a possible visit by Judaizers as seen in Galatia.

E. Quotes on Romans

- 1. Martin Luther, *It can never be read or pondered too much, and the more it is dealt with the more precious it becomes, and the better it tastes.*
- 2. John Calvin, *If we understand this Epistle, we have a passage opened to us to the understanding of the whole of Scripture.*
- 3. Leon Morris, *Romans is ultimately a book about God: how he acted to bring salvation, how his justice is preserved, how his purposes are worked out in history, how he can be served by his people.*

F. Outline of Romans (to current lesson)

- 1. Introduction (1:1-17)
 - a. Paul's greeting to the church at Rome (1-7)
 - b. Paul's purposes for writing the epistle (8-15)
 - c. The theme of Paul's epistle (16-17)
- 2. The need for God's righteousness (1:18-3:20)
 - a. Condemnation on unrighteousness (1:18-32)
 - b. God's principles of judgment (2:1-16)
 - c. Condemnation of unfaithful Jews (2:17-3:8)
 - d. Condemnation of all humanity (3:9-20)
- 3. Justification: the provision of righteousness from God (3:21-5:21)
 - a. A description of justification (3:21-26)
 - b. Introductory comments on justification by faith in Christ alone (3:27-31)
 - c. A defense of justification by faith from the Old Testament (4:1-25)
 - d. Peace with God (5:1-11)
 - e. Death and Life (5:12-21)
- 4. Sanctification: from position to practice (6:1-8:39)
 - a. Concerning Sin (6:1-23)
 - b. Concerning the Law (7:1-25)
 - c. Concerning the Spirit (8:1-39)