

# *Mount Pisgah A.M.E Church*

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**Bible Study, Wednesday, September 9, 2015**

**Survey of the Bible**

**Lesson 47: Romans**

## **The Book of Romans**

The Book of Romans is perhaps the greatest cataloging of doctrine in the Bible. While the gospels present the words and works of Jesus Christ, Romans explores the significance of His sacrificial death and resurrection for believers. Using a “question- answer” format, Paul records a systematic presentation of theology (study or understanding of God) and soteriology (study and understanding of how people are saved). However, Romans is also a book of practical application. It demonstrates that the Good News of Jesus Christ is more than facts to be believed; it is also a life to be lived. It shows us how we ought to live in light of the facts of salvation.

## **Author**

Both traditional and modern scholars agree that Paul wrote Romans, and that it is perhaps his greatest work. Romans is one of two epistles that Paul wrote to a city/church that he had never actually visited (the other is Colossians). Some critics challenge the UNITY of the book (.i.e. that it was always one book), since in chapter 16 Paul greets BY NAME twenty six people in a church he’d never been to. However, this is perhaps justified by the greetings being Paul’s efforts as a stranger to the Roman church to list his mutual friends with them. Paul met these people in the cities of his missionary journeys. In most cases, Paul’s authorship and the unity of the letter is not disputed.

## **The Times of Romans**

Paul did not establish the church at Rome, but had heard that it existed. Some suggest that Peter founded it after he was released from prison and left Jerusalem (Acts 12:1-19), however it also could have been founded by converts who returned from Jerusalem after Pentecost (Acts 2:10), or during the persecution after the stoning of Stephen (Acts 8:1-4). Paul’s intended travel itinerary (Romans 15:25-28) suggest that Paul was on his way to Jerusalem when he wrote the letter. This suggests that Paul wrote it during his third missionary journey, after passing through Macedonia. This would have placed the writing of Romans in 57 AD. Paul’s intention is to visit Rome on a future missionary journey where his ultimate destination is Spain.

## **Overview**

Romans is a theological treatise, a statement of doctrines (teachings) that are the foundation of our understanding of our relationship to God and how to make it right. Paul lays out a step by step case, first establishing that no one is without blame, even if they don’t have the law, and also that no one is “grandfathered in” to acceptability in God’s sight. After establishing an even playing field, on which all are equally in need of a salvation, Paul demonstrates how God solved the problem – by making salvation a free gift that can be attained simply by believing. He then goes on to explain how that faith operates to conform a person to the image of Christ (the original image that God intended for human kind (Genesis 1:26-28), not by a person’s human efforts, but by submission to the power of the Holy Spirit). Paul then answers the question of, “What about God’s covenant to Israel? Does this nullify it?” Then finally, Paul describes what this all means in terms of the sort of lives that believers ought to live in the world, and in community with one another.

## Outline

### **I. Doctrine and Theology (1:1- 11:36)**

- A. Greetings and Purposes (1:1-1:17)
- B. The Need for God's Righteousness (1:18-3:20)
  - 1. Why are Gentiles guilty of disobedience? (1:18-1:32)
    - a) God's lordship is clear from nature and human experience (1:18-1:20)
    - b) People rejected it (1:21-32)
  - 2. Why are Jews guilty of disobedience (2:1-3:8)
    - a) The Jew that judges others but is also guilty (2:1-2:16)
    - b) Righteousness is shown by obeying the law, not having it (2:17-2:29)
    - c) Our unrighteousness in contrast to God's holiness (3:1-3:8)
  - 3. Jews and Gentiles are equally guilty – NO ONE righteous (3:9-3:20)
- C. The Gift of God's Righteousness: Justification (3:21-5:21)
  - 1. Righteousness by FAITH (3:21-4:25)
    - a) A new kind of righteousness for all, received by FAITH in Jesus (3:21-3:31)
    - b) Abraham's FAITH justified him (4:1-4:8)
    - c) This was independent of circumcision (4:9-4:12)
    - d) Abraham and those who follow him justified APART from the law (4:13-4:25)
  - 2. Benefits of Righteousness by faith (5:1-5:11)
  - 3. The GIFT is greater than the Condemnation (5:12-5:21)
- D. The Application of God's Righteousness: Sanctification (6:1-8:39)
  - 1. Sin and Sanctification (6:1-6:23)
    - a) The believers death to sin in principle (6:1-6:14)
    - b) The believer's death to sin in practice (6:15-6:23)
  - 2. The Struggle with the Law (7:1-7:24)
    - a) Dead to the Law, alive to God (7:1-6)
    - b) The Law Cannot Deliver From Sin (7:7-7:24)
  - 3. Sanctification through the Spirit (7:25-8:39)
    - a) The Spirit delivers from the power of the flesh (8:1-8:11)
    - b) The Spirit makes us children of God (8:12-8:17)
    - c) The Spirit assures us of future glory (8:18-8:30)
    - d) The Spirit assures us of final victory (8:31-8:39)
- E. God's Gift In Light of God's Covenant: Righteousness Vindicated (9:1-11:36)
  - 1. Israel's Election: God's Sovereignty (9:1-9:29)
  - 2. Israel's Rejection: Works righteousness and rejection of Christ (9:30-10:21)
  - 3. Israel's Restoration: God's Rejection was purposeful, not permanent (11:1-11:36)

### **II. Application (12:1-16:27)**

- A. The Personality and Practice of Righteousness (12:1-13:14)
  - 1. The posture of a Christian (12:1,2)
  - 2. The personality of a Christian (12:3-12:21)
  - 3. The civil duties of a Christian (13:1-13:7)
  - 4. Connecting practice with future hope (13:8-13:14)
- B. Righteousness and Liberty (14:1-15:13)
- C. Conclusion and Greetings (15:14-16:27)
  - 1. Paul's purposes for writing (15:14 -15:22)
  - 2. Paul's travel plans and appeal (15:23-15:33)
  - 3. Greetings and Encouragements (16:1-16:24)
  - 4. Final Benediction (16:25-16:27)

## **Some Keys to understanding The Book of Romans**

- Rome was an ancient city (established in 753 BC). Many of the citizens had historically harbored polytheistic beliefs (beliefs in many Gods), and some of the beliefs were inherited from Greek mythology. (Zeus being the greatest). Most Romans believed that the Roman Emperor had divine characteristics and power.
- The Roman Empire generally allowed citizens and people under its authority to worship in whatever way they chose. The only exception was when a belief seemed to threaten the authority of the empire or the emperor – then it would be crushed quickly.
- Rome was a pivotal city to evangelize because the Romans built roads in and out of Rome to all places in the known world. Literally, the phrase “all roads lead to Rome” applies here.
- Romans powerfully establishes a foundation of ALL people’s need for Jesus Christ, and the means by which people can be acceptable to God.
- Romans major theme is righteousness. Righteousness, in this context, can be defined as uprightness, or acceptability before God. Romans focuses on who is righteous (or not), how righteousness can be attained, and how “being righteous” plays out in a person’s life.
- Another theological concept, JUSTIFICATION, can be defined as “being made right before God.” When God justifies, he makes us “just as if I’d” never sinned.
- The concept of SANCTIFICATION suggests that even though “positionally,” we are in right relationship with God, we are in a PROCESS of being made right with God. In a real sense, a person in Christ HAS been saved (justification), is BEING saved (sanctification), and WILL be saved (glorification) all at the same time.
- Foundational to all teaching on the spiritual life is Romans 6-8. The answers to the questions of how to be delivered from sin (i.e., how a person is “justified”), how to live a balanced life under grace, and how to live a victorious life through the power of the Holy Spirit (the process of “sanctification”) are all contained here.

## **Some Lessons from Romans**

- Paul emphasizes that he is “not ashamed of the gospel of Christ.” In other words, he had a passion to preach it and teach it even in central location of Roman power. We ought not be ashamed of our faith in whatever context we are called upon to proclaim or defend it.
- Romans gives some clear statements about behaviors that are inconsistent with God’s Word. However in the same section, Paul makes the case that NO ONE has cause to look down on ANYONE else, because all are equally in need of God’s grace. We ought to understand that God’s way of drawing people to Godself is through grace and love, not condemnation and guilt.
- Romans gives as a step by step process for leading a person to Christ
  - No one is “okay” in and of themselves. Everyone is guilty in light of God’s standard of righteousness (Romans 3:10, Romans 3:23)
  - We all struggle with sin (Romans 7:15, 7:18)
  - Sin carries a death penalty (Romans 6:23)
  - Salvation is GIFT, not something that is earned (Romans 6:23)
  - All a person has to do to be saved is confess and REALLY believe (Romans 10:9, 10)
  - After receiving the gift, a person has to submit to a process of transformation (Romans 12:1,2)
- It’s awesome to think that the sacrifice of Christ MORE THAN REVERSED the years of curse that original sin has imposed. The obedience of Christ was MORE significant than the trespass of Adam. In our lives, the power of obedience can completely erase and overwhelm whatever sin we have committed in our past.

- God's Spirit is working inside – our job is to submit to him.
- NOTHING can separate us from God's love. Nuff said.
- Israel's situation is that God's covenant cannot be broken. God will redeem Israel as God's instrument of blessing for the world. However, Israel is Israel BY FAITH. The same requirement of faith applies to those of historic Israel as historic Gentiles.
- We cannot expect to be conformed to the image of Christ and thus fulfill God's will unless we submit to the process of having our minds renewed (Romans 12:2)
- The principle of love is priority. As a Christian, I ought to see my responsibility to be a blessing to others as important as my "right to be me."
- God's wondrous plan of salvation ought to lead us to a tremendous sense of peace that overwhelms any stresses that this present existence tries to weigh us down with.