

Paul's Letter  
to the  
**Romans**

Studies on  
Romans 1-8





## Why Did Paul Write Romans?

You only need to read through Romans to realise that it is different to Paul's other letter. It has more theological content. It is more detailed and complex than his other letters. But it is not at first obvious why Paul wrote this letter. Some have suggested that Paul was nearing the end of his life and he wanted to write a letter that outlined what he believed ... his *theological treatise*. But if that's the case, why send it to the church in Rome ... a church he'd never visited.

Without a doubt the biggest issue that the early church had to face was the tension between Jews Christians and Gentile Christians. Judaism found its fulfilment in the coming of Jesus. But many Jewish Christians were wanting to maintain elements of the old covenant. Almost every letter in the New Testament touches on this issue, and some letters (eg. Galatians, Hebrews & Romans) are devoted almost exclusively to that issue.

The Gospel message Paul was proclaiming sounded to Jews and Jewish Christians as though God had shifted the goal posts ... changed the rules ½ way through the game. But Paul wants to stress in this letter that God has remained totally faithful to the plan and promises he made. Romans is essentially a book about the faithfulness of God.

## The Structure of Romans

Romans is the most tightly structured of Paul's letters. Most people agree that it is one sustained argument from 1:18 through to 11:36.

1:1-17 – Introduction & Thematic Statement

1:18-8:27 – Righteousness by Faith

1:18-2:16 – The unrighteousness of the Gentiles

2:17-3:8 – The unrighteousness of the Jews

3:9-20 – Summary so far ... no one will be declared righteous by the law

3:21-31 – Righteousness by Faith

4:1-25 – Righteousness by Faith: The Example of Abraham

5:1-8:39 – God's Righteousness

9:1-11:36 – God's Righteousness & His Relationship with Israel

12:1-15:13 – Practical Application of Righteousness by Faith

15:14-16:27 – Closing Remarks & Request for Support

# The Power of the Gospel

## Study 1 – Romans 1:1-17

### Getting Started

If you were asked to sum up the Gospel in just a few sentences what would you say?

### Looking at the Bible

Paul begins his letter to the Romans with a declaration of the gospel, because for Paul, the gospel motivates everything else. The good news about Jesus will be both the subject and the object of his letter. It explains the reason he is writing, the purpose of his ministry to the gentiles, it is what he wants the Romans to understand more and more. So that is where he begins...

### *The Gospel of God (v1-5)*

What do we learn from these opening five verses about 'the gospel' (i.e. good news) that Paul had been sent to declare?

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## ***Paul and Rome (v6-17)***

Sometimes Romans is talked about as a book of theology, rather than a letter, but it is certainly both. What do Paul's personal greetings to the church in Rome show about;

*The Roman church*

*The reason he is writing and wants to visit (see also 15:24-32)*

*His concerns about Jews and Gentiles*

Verses 16 and 17 have been described as the summary of the rest of the letter. Paul will have a lot more to say about *faith* and *righteousness*, but what can say about both from this opening 'salvo'?

## **Thinking Practically**

Can you think of a time when you felt 'ashamed' of the gospel?

How does Romans 1 help you to be confident and unashamed about your faith?

How should Romans 1:1-17 impact our view of ourselves and others when it comes to salvation?

# People are No Damn Good

## Study 2 – Romans 1:18-3:20

### Getting Started

Some think that humans are basically good and improving. What examples would proponents use to support the idea? What examples could be offered to refute the idea?

### The Passage

This is a large section of Romans ... but it is helpful to look at the whole section together as the point that Paul makes from chapter 1 and 2 is found in chapter 3.

### *The World that has Rejected its Creator (1:18-32)*

In this passage we see a pattern. Fill in the spaces below.

Vs	What they knew	What they did	What God handed them over to
21-24			
25-27			
28-32			

What would you say was Paul's point in chapter 1? Who do you think Paul is talking about? Jews? Gentiles? Everyone?

### ***You Want Justice? (2:1-3:8)***

2:1-16 seems to be speaking to Gentile Christians who may be wanting to pass judgement on others or think that their “good life” will make them acceptable to God. Who does he suggest God will give “eternal life” to (2:6-10)?

2:17-29 is specifically addressed to the Jewish Christians. How would you sum up Paul’s argument?

But Paul also wants to say that there are advantages to being Jewish. What does he say they are (3:1-2)?

### ***People are No Damn Good (3:9-20)***

The conclusion to Paul’s argument in this section starts in verse 9. How would you summarize his conclusion?

Why do you think Paul has gone into such detail to show that all people are sinful (both Jews & Gentiles)?

### **Thinking Practically**

List the things that Paul calls “sins” (especially in 1:18-32). What does that tell us about sin and our lives? What does that tell us about the world we live in?

Look back at 2:6-10. Will there be anyone to whom God will give eternal life because they were able to “by persistence in doing good seek glory, honour and immortality”? (See also 3:9ff)

Are you ever tempted to think that there are “good people” and perhaps don’t need to hear the Gospel?

# The Heart of the Gospel

## Study 3 – Romans 3:21-4:25

### Getting Started

What is it that makes the idea of “salvation by grace” such a hard thing for people to understand and accept?

### Looking at the Bible

Recapping – Read Romans 3:19-20. How does that sum up Paul’s argument so far in the letter (1:18-3:20)?

As we look at this chapter we need to be sensitive to the fact that this is not simply a matter of Faith Vs Works. The “works” that are on view are the things that God had told the people of Israel to do (obedience to the law, circumcision, etc).

Paul mentions the word law 6 times on 3:19-21. What is it that the law doesn’t do? What is it that the law does do? What does Paul mean when he says “There is no difference,…” (3:21)?

What does the word “righteousness” mean? How does Paul say God’s righteousness “made known”? How is God’s righteousness received by us?

What do you think Paul means when he says “he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished” (3:25)

Try summarizing Paul’s logic in 3:21-25 in three or four points:

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Paul knows that what he has said may sound controversial (especially to the Jewish Christians) and he anticipates their questions. Fill in the spaces below.

<b>Vs</b>	<b>Anticipated Question/Issue</b>	<b>Paul's response</b>
27-28		
29-30		
31		

Paul offers Abraham as the “perfect example” that God’s plan has always been righteousness by faith not by old testament law. In 4:3 Paul quotes from Genesis 16. On what basis was righteousness credited to Abraham? What is the point Paul wants to make about circumcision in 4:10? Summarize the point is Paul making to his Jewish Christians in Rome.

### **Thinking Practically**

Some people say that it is arrogant of Christians to say they “know they are going to heaven”. How would you answer that from this passage?

Some people say they are “not worthy of God’s forgiveness”. How would you answer that from this passage?

# Set Free From Sin

## Study 4 – Romans 5:1-6:23

### Getting Started

What would you say is the best thing about being a Christian?

### Looking at the Bible

#### *Romans 5:1-11*

Make a list of those things which are now yours because of Jesus (see especially verse 1-6). How can you remember to rejoice in these things?

An end to suffering is NOT one of the things we are promised. How is it possible to rejoice in suffering?

In verse 9, we run into this idea of being reconciled to God. How does our reconciliation with God teach us about his love for us?

#### *Romans 5:12-21 Two Adams*

How does Adam help us better understand what Jesus did? How are they similar, how are they different?

## ***Romans 6 – Sin and Grace***

A Christian friend of yours tells you that what they love about Christianity is the fact that they don't need to feel bad about the things they do wrong, because Jesus is always there to forgive them.

What would you want them to understand from Romans Chapter 6?

How does the idea of slavery help us appreciate the change that knowing Jesus has made in our lives?

How do we 'participate' in the death and resurrection of Jesus (1-14)?

### **Thinking Practically**

If we are 'freed from sin', and now 'slaves to righteousness', how do you view your ongoing struggle with sin?

How does this passage motivate you to obey God?

# Don't Spit on the Floor

## Study 5 – Romans 7:1-8:17

### Getting Started

In the Old Testament we see that God gave the Law (10 Commandments and all the other law) to his people Israel. What do you think the role of the law was?

### Looking at the Bible

Many people have looked at Romans 7 and said that as Christians we can identify with what Paul is saying ... that tension of knowing what you should do, but then doing the opposite. But on closer examination, Paul isn't talking generally to all Christians. It seems he is talking more specifically to Jewish Christians helping them to understand their experience.

### *God's Promise of a New Covenant (Ezekiel 36 & Jeremiah 31)*

God promised he would make a new covenant with his people that would be different to the old covenant ... and the defining difference would be that God's Spirit would be given to all his people.

Break into pairs and read either Ezekiel 36:24-28 or Jeremiah 31:31-33. Note the significant elements of the new covenant God was going to make.

### *Under the Law and Set Free from the Law (7:1-6)*

Paul begins the section with a legal analogy about divorce and a husband dying. Who does he say he is "speaking to" (7:1)? What does he mean by that? What is the point Paul is making in the marriage/death analogy? (See 7:6)

### ***The Place of the Law (7:7-25)***

Paul knows the obvious question in the minds of his Jewish Christian reader: "Is the law sin?" Paul says the law had 2 roles: Showing sin and provoking sin. What does he say about each of those roles in this passage?

<b>Showing Sin</b>	<b>Provoking Sin</b>

After saying that the law provokes sin, Paul anticipates the question. What is the question and what is Paul's answer?

### ***The New Way of the Spirit (8:1-17)***

How many times does Paul mention the "Spirit" in this passage? What do you think it means that "the righteous requirements of the law might be fully met in us" (8:4)?

List the things that the Spirit will do for us or enable us to do.

### **Thinking Practically**

Look back at your answer to the first question in this study. In light of what Paul says in Romans 7:7-25 what would you say the role of the law was?

In what way can people today think that obedience to law can enable them to enter or maintain a relationship with God? What practical things can we do to avoid that thinking?

# The Best is Yet to Come

## Study 6 – Romans 8:18-39

### Getting Started

“You'll get pie in the sky when you die -- that's a lie”

*Joe Hill, Socialist & Songwriter  
Industrial Workers of the World Little Red Songbook 1911.*

How would you respond to the accusation that the Christian idea of ‘heaven’ does more harm than good.

### Looking at the Bible

#### ***Romans 8:18-27***

In the table below, write down what Paul says about the present and future

“the present time”	“still to come”

How do we experience the ‘groaning’ of creation?

What is our ‘hope’?

How does our hope, and the Spirit of God, help us in the struggles of life?

### ***Romans 8:28-39***

What is the good that God says he is always at work doing in our lives?

What sorts of things in life might cause us to imagine that God is against us?

Why can we be confident 'no matter what'?

### **Thinking Practically**

How could you use Romans 8:18-39 to bring comfort to someone who was suffering?

**and**

How can this chapter prepare you for your own suffering?

How should Romans 8:18-39 affect how you pray and what you pray for?

# Notes