

Romans

Original Historical Setting

Author: Paul

Written: ~57 A.D. from Corinth

Audience: Christians worshipping in house churches in Rome

Occasion: Paul greatly desired to visit the Roman church. However, he could not go to Rome because he felt he must personally deliver the collection taken among the Gentile churches for the poverty-stricken Christians of Jerusalem. So instead of going to Rome, he sent a letter to prepare the Christians there for his intended visit in connection with a mission trip to Spain. Also, for many years Paul had wanted to visit Rome to minister there and this letter served as a careful and systematic theological introduction to that hoped-for personal ministry.

Timeline:

- ~35 AD – Paul’s conversion
- ~47-49 AD – Paul’s first missionary journey
- ~50-53 AD – Paul’s second missionary journey
- ~53-57 AD – Paul’s third missionary journey
- ~60 AD – Paul imprisoned in Rome

World Events that occur simultaneously

- 49 AD – Jews expelled from Rome
- 50 AD – China and Rome trade via 4,000-mile-long Silk Road
- 54 AD – Claudius poisoned and Jews return to Rome

Key text(s)

- 1:16-17** – For I am not ashamed of the Gospel
- 3:23** – All have sinned
- 6:23** – Wages of sin is death
- 8:1** – There is no condemnation to those who are in Christ
- 10:9-10** – If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord

Features and Structure

Romans is a comprehensive statement of the Gospel that focuses upon the Righteousness of God.

- I. The Revelation of and Need of God’s Righteousness **CH 1-8**
- II. The Vindication of God’s Righteousness **CH 9-11**
- III. The Practice/Application of God’s Righteousness **CH 12-16)**

Genre/Literary style

A long, formal epistle (letter) written in (Koine) Greek

What to look for

- Notice Paul’s passion for his subject as he asks questions that people were apparently asking in regards to this idea of grace. His answers are peppered with emotional outbursts such as, “Certainly not!”
- In developing his argument, Paul often appealed to Scripture as well as argued with an imagined opponent (called a “diatribe”), using phrases such as, “O man.”

Interesting facts

- By the time Paul wrote this letter, Rome was the greatest city in the world with a population of three to four million people, a majority of whom were slaves.
- After Martin Luther read in Romans that salvation is through faith and not religious and church rituals, the Protestant Reformation was born.
- Augustine was converted after reading Romans 13:13-14. He read about turning from reckless living and embracing Jesus.
- Although Romans was probably the sixth of Paul’s 13 writings, it is the longest. It is placed first among the New Testament letters because it is the longest. The letters were originally arranged from longest to shortest, but that order changed over time.

Memory Verse: Rom. 3:23; 6:23; 5:8; 10:9-10, 13