

INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY OF

Romans

Among Paul's 13 New Testament letters, Romans is the most influential. As the first great Christian theology, no other biblical book presents sin and salvation in this extensive, structured way.

What is it? A letter Paul wrote to Christians in Rome (1:1, 7).

Where is it? Between Acts and 1 Corinthians.

Who wrote it and why? Paul was converted to Jesus and assigned as an apostle to the Gentiles. Paul wrote to give the church in Rome — crossroads of the Empire — fuller understanding of Christ's gospel and to prepare them for his visit (1:1-6, 8-15; 11:13; 15:15, 16-21, 22-33).

Compared with others? Romans shares much with 1 Corinthians, matching its 16 chapters. Its teachings about law and grace are also in Galatians, but condensed and impassioned.

Warning! Studying Romans has brought dramatic, permanent change of thought and life to Augustine, Luther, Wesley, Barth, and many others. There's no telling what may happen if you read and study it!

Its content? A systematic study of the Christian gospel:

- doctrine of sin (1 — 3a)
- doctrine of salvation (3b — 8)
- doctrine of Israel (9 — 11)
- the Christian life (12 — 16)

Sin . . .

- entered through Adam (5:12ff)
- brings wrath from God (1:18; 2:5)
- begins with disbelief (1:19-23; 14:23)
- advances to moral depravity (1:24-27)
- expands into all of life (1:28-32)
- is inexcusable (1:20; 2:1)
- affects the whole person (3:10-18)
- exists with or without law (2:12; 5:13a)
- is defined by law (3:20; 7:7)
- is not imputed without law (4:15; 5:13b)
- uses law to deceive and condemn (7:8-11)
- dwells within as its own law (7:20-23; 8:2)
- makes slaves of people (6:17-22)
- is universal in humans (3:10-19, 23; 5:12)
- damages all creation (8:19-22)
- abounds, reigns, kills (5:12, 20, 21; 6:23)
- is forgiven in God's forbearance (3:25)
- is not imputed to the forgiven (4:8)
- is cleared, condemned by Christ (6:6, 7; 8:2, 3)
- can't continue or rule, under grace (6:1, 2, 14, 15)

Salvation has several close synonyms:

- *atonement* or *reconciliation*: rejoining the separated (5:10, 11; 11:15)
- *redemption*: releasing the enslaved (3:24; 8:23)
- *propitiation* or *expiation*: satisfying the offended (3:25)
- *justification*: acquitting the guilty (3:24, etc.)

Salvation proceeds from justification through sanctification to glorification.

- *Justification* is forgiveness of sin and right standing before God — a gift of His love. God justifies the ungodly not by their lawkeeping, but by His grace through Christ's blood in response to their faith. Justification means God's 100% acceptance now — and at the Judgment! It always looks to Jesus, not to human righteousness (3:20, 24, 28; 4:5; 5:1, 9).
- *Sanctification* is holiness received from God and reflected in human obedience. Holiness grows as we remember baptism, count ourselves dead to sin, refuse sin's dominance, serve righteousness, look to Jesus, and live and pray in the Spirit. Sanctification is the Spirit's unfinished work, requiring human cooperation (6:1-7, 10, 11, 12ff; 7:24 — 8:4; 5-13, 26).
- *Glorification* is the perfect redemption we will receive with all creation on the last great day. In eternity we will share Christ's glory, far surpassing present sufferings. The whole creation will have it, with our bodies; therefore, we hope. Final glory is sure; nothing separates God's people from His love in Christ Jesus (8:17, 18, 21, 23-25, 30, 31-39).

Romans in a sentence: While God's wrath is revealed in the downward spiral of sin and death, His grace is revealed in the gospel of Christ through which Jew and Gentile receive right standing with God, live faithfully by the Spirit, and hope for final glory.

Salvation is summarized in key paragraphs:

- 3:21-28 is the most comprehensive, but difficult to define and untangle. Serious students should work here until this becomes clear!
- 5:1-11 is more easily understood. Starting at 4:23, it contains verses people often memorize.
- 10:9-13 is compact. For fuller thought, begin with 10:1.

Israel

- Advantage rested with Jews (1:16; 2:9, 10; 3:1, 2; 9:4, 5).
- Israel's selection-rejection was God's choice (9:10ff).
- Their failures merited guilt, as did Gentiles' (2:17-29; 3:9).
- God intended salvation beyond Israel (3:29; 9:23-26).
- Israel lived by works of law, not by faith (9:31 — 10:3).
- They had zeal that wasn't well-informed (10:2).
- Israel isn't forsaken; a remnant remains (9:27; 11:1-7).
- Their fall gives salvation to Gentiles (11:11; 3:22, 29; 10:12).
- this can result in Israel's restoration (11:12-24).
- Israel's identity is changed by the gospel (2:28, 29; 9:6-8).
- All Israel will be saved (11:25-32).

Christian life

- its motivation: God's mercy (12:1)
- its opposite: ways of the world (12:2)
- its arena: body of Christ (12:3-5)
- its energy: gifts from God (12:6-8)
- its character: loving service (12:9-21; 13:8-10; 15:1-7)
- its practice: submission to authority (13:1-7)
- its stimulus: Christ's nearness (13:11-14)
- its challenge: unity amid diversity (14:1 — 15:5-7)

Practical portions for easy picking:

- God in nature (1:19, 20)
- psychology of criticism (2:1)
- revealing hypocrisy (2:21-24)

Two basic facts about God:

- God reveals His wrath (1:18 — 3:20). We shouldn't think God's wrath is like human anger: rising tempers, louder arguments, final explosion. God's wrath isn't fickle emotion; it is fixed hatred of sin and active determination to treat humans according to the evil they've done (1:18; 2:5, 8; 4:15; 5:9; 9:22). Modern teaching minimizes this, presenting only God's love.
- God reveals His righteousness (1:17; 3:21 — 8:39). God's righteousness isn't holiness and moral conduct, but His determination to set wrong things right and treat men according to His good will. This understanding released Martin Luther from spiritual bondage and unleashed the Protestant Reformation in 1517. Righteousness and justification are the same, both received by faith (1:17; 3:22, 28; 4:3, 13; 5:1; 10:6)

Consider the goodness and severity of God (11:22). They seem to oppose each other: God's wrath demands sin be punished; God's righteousness demands sinners be received. What will He do? God is holy and just; can He also be loving and merciful?

This "divine dilemma" is resolved by Christ's death on the cross, which fully demonstrated both God's wrath and His righteousness. In God's wrath sin was punished "that He might be just." In God's righteousness a substitute was offered for sinners "that He might be the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus." God's holy justice and His loving mercy met at the cross (3:24-26)!

- living by faith (1:17; 4:19-22; 11:20; 16:22)
- necessity of hope (4:18; 5:4, 5; 8:19-23)
- God's love in us (5:5-8; 12:9, 10; 13:8-10)
- character through trials (5:3, 4)
- marriage for a lifetime (7:2, 3)
- Spirit's intercession (8:26, 27)
- Christ's intercession (8:34)
- faith from the Word (10:17)
- right mindset (12:2, 16; 14:5; 15:5, 6)
- relating to people (12:9-21)
- citizenship (13:1-7)
- fellowship (16:1-16)
- the kingdom today (14:17)
- handling differences (14:1-23)
- older Scriptures (15:4)
- handling schismatics (16:17, 18)
- the Devil's demise (16:20)
- imputed righteousness (4:1-8, 23-25)
- imputed wrath; original sin (5:12-19)
- overcoming sin (6)
- law provokes sin (7:5-10)
- internal struggle (7:14-24)
- saving the creation (8:19-22)
- predestination (8:30; 9:9-18)
- all Israel saved (11:26)

Great final words, doxologies: 8:31-39; 11:33-36; 15:13, 33; 16:25-27

Complete these verses:

Paul's theme - "For I am not ashamed . . ." (1:16).
Universal sin - "For all have sinned . . ." (3:23).
God's initiative - "But God demonstrates His love . . ." (5:8).
Our choice - "For the wages of sin . . ." (6:23).
Assurance - "There is therefore now no condemnation . . ." (8:1).
Holy lives - "I beseech you therefore, brethren . . ." (12:1).

Doctrinal issues for deeper study:

- homosexuality (1:24-27)
- accountability for all (2:12-16)
- twisted gospels (3:5-8)
- law continues (3:31; 7:7, 12; 8:4)
- justification before obedience (4:9-12)