

THE BOOK ROMANS

“Grace & Peace to You”

Voice of China and Asia

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ROMANS- Lesson 1: **WHY ROMANS?**

ROM 1:1-7 *Paul, a servant of CHRIST JESUS, called to be an APOSTLE, set apart for the gospel of GOD,² which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the HOLY SCRIPTURES,³ concerning his SON, who was descended from David according to the flesh⁴ and was declared to be the SON OF GOD in power according to the SPIRIT OF HOLINESS by his resurrection from the dead, JESUS CHRIST our LORD,⁵ through whom we have received grace and APOSTLESHIP to bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of his name among all the nations,⁶ including you who are called to belong to JESUS CHRIST...*

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.

WHY ROMANS?

ANY Book or passage of the Scriptures is worthy of study. As Paul writes in **2 TIM 3:16-17** *“All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, [so] that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.”*

There is truth, encouragement, correction, education throughout the BIBLE, from cover to cover.

But some parts are so significant they demand our time and meditation.

The **BOOK OF ROMANS** is certainly one of these. It has been called, **“THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO PAUL.”**

Whereas the other **“FOUR”** present the account of **“WHAT”** Jesus did in His life, death and resurrection,

PAUL’S GOSPEL explains the **“WHY, HOW, and WHAT DOES IT MEAN.”**

And this is God’s doing! He would not leave the eternally significant message of the **GOSPELS** open to any (or every) personal interpretation. The Gospels had ONE purpose, ONE goal: *To present the message that God would redeem mankind from his sin by the substitutionary death of His Son, and to grant them “righteousness” through His resurrection.*

ROM 4:23-25 *But the words “it was counted to him” were not written for [Abraham’s] sake alone, but for ours also. It will be counted to us who believe in him who raised from the dead Jesus our Lord, who was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification.*

Paul fills his Letter with powerful truths ...each one calling the Believer to live to the glory of God.

- God’s Righteousness has been revealed to ALL humanity... ALL are accountable
- ALL have been judged “guilty” (Jew and Gentile) ... ALL need “redemption”
- NONE are capable of paying the debt of their sin to a Righteous, Holy God
- There is a justification / righteousness that is NOT obtained by trying to live by the LAW...
- God has chosen Faith NOT Works... Grace NOT LAW ...
- God has made Justification available to ALL through faith in the redeeming work of Jesus Christ
- Through Faith, WE have been raised with Christ to walk in a NEW type of life... with power OVER sin
- The Spirit of God has set us free from the power of sin and death... We can LIVE in righteousness

- God is working all things together for good to those who love Him...
- Through Jesus Christ we can live as “conquerors” ... no longer subject to the powers of this world
- As we offer ourselves to Him, He will transform our lives to His glorious purpose...
- Through the transformed life we can show “true love” to others...
- God has a glorious victory in our future that will be accomplished THROUGH us...

In the eloquence given to Paul, this Letter resounds with the most glorious truths of the New Testament.

A LIFE CHANGING LETTER

***Rom 5:1-2** Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with GOD through our LORD JESUS CHRIST. ² Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of GOD.*

Years ago, this passage became a resonating truth to me. I have found so much truth and inspiration here and have composed numerous messages from these words. Many of us have found a passage from **ROMANS** that seems to speak directly to our spirits, that brings us challenge, one that comforts our minds, arouses a passion to serve, or quiets the fears the enemy is throwing our way.

BRING ME YOUR PASSAGE! I will cover them later as a separate message in our series... Include a brief testimony if you want. Send them to geofj@homechurchok.com

- A) **In the summer of AD 386** Aurelius Augustinus, native of Tagaste in North Africa, and now for two years Professor of Rhetoric at Milan, sat weeping in the garden of his friend Alypius, almost persuaded to begin a new life, yet lacking the final resolution to break with the old. As he sat, he heard a child singing in a neighboring house, *Tolle, lege! tolle, lege!* (Take up and read! take up and read!). Picking up a scroll which lay at his friend’s side, he let his eyes rest on the words: *‘not in reveling and drunkenness, not in debauchery and licentiousness, not in quarrelling and jealousy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires’* (ROM. 13:13–14). *‘No further would I read, nor had I any need; instantly, at the end of this sentence, a clear light flooded my heart and all the darkness of doubt vanished away.’* What the Church and the world owe to this influx of light which illuminated Augustine’s mind as he read these words of Paul is something beyond our power to compute.
- B) **In August 1513**, Martin Luther, Augustinian monk, and Professor of Biblical Theology in the University of Wittenberg, began to deliver a course of lectures on the Psalms. His mind at the time was preoccupied with the agonizing endeavor to ‘find a gracious God’. He was struck by the prayer of **PSALM 31:1**, *‘in thy righteousness deliver me!’* But how could God’s *righteousness* deliver him? Was it not calculated to condemn the sinner and not to save him? As he pondered this question, his attention was more and more attracted to Paul’s statement in **ROMANS 1:17**, that in the gospel *‘the righteousness of God is revealed through faith for faith; as it is written, “He who through faith is righteous shall live”* (“*the just shall live by faith...*” **HAB. 2:4**) Listen to Luther’s words:
- I had greatly longed to understand Paul’s Letter to the ROMANS, and nothing stood in the way but that one expression, **‘the righteousness of God’**, because I took it to mean a righteousness whereby God is righteous and acts righteously in punishing the unrighteous... **Night and day I pondered until ... I grasped the truth that the righteousness of God is THAT righteousness whereby, through grace and sheer mercy, HE justifies us by faith.** Thereupon I felt myself to be reborn and to have gone through open doors into paradise. The whole of scripture took on a new*

meaning, and whereas before “the righteousness of God” had filled me with hate, NOW it became to me inexpressibly sweet... This passage of Paul became to me a gateway into heaven.

C) In the evening of 24 May 1738 John Wesley ‘went very unwillingly to a society in Aldersgate Street [London], where one was reading Luther’s Preface to the EPISTLE TO THE ROMANS. About a quarter before nine’, as he records in his journal, ‘while he was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone, for my salvation; and an assurance was given me that He had taken my sins away, even mine; and saved me from the law of sin and death.’ [ROM 7:7 – 8:11]

That critical moment in John Wesley’s life provided the spark which kindled the ‘inextinguishable blaze’ of the eighteenth-century Evangelical Revival, that ultimate spread to the “Colonies” of America... and from there to the World.

** The above illustrations were taken from F.F. Bruce’s Commentary on Romans

There is no telling what may happen when people begin to study the EPISTLE TO THE ROMANS. What happened to Augustine, Luther, Wesley and so many more has launched great spiritual movements or reformed their lives... leaving their mark in world history.

But similar things have happened, much more frequently, to unbelievers and Believers, as the words of this EPISTLE TO THE ROMANS was heard, read, and received. Truly these “words” come with power.

ROM 1:16-17 *For I am not ashamed of the GOSPEL, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, “The righteous shall live by faith.”*

ROM 10:17 *So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.*

So, be prepared for the consequences of our study.

THE ROMAN CHURCH

THE LETTER

It was for the ROMAN CHURCH that the letter was specifically designed. The copy received by that church was certainly treasured, copied, and circulated, and recopied.

About AD 96 Clement, ‘foreign secretary’ of the ROMAN CHURCH, shows himself well acquainted with the LETTER TO THE ROMANS.

- He echoes its language time and again in the letter which he himself sent in that year on behalf of the ROMAN CHURCH to the CHURCH OF CORINTH.
- The way in which he echoes its language suggests that he knew it by heart; it could well be that it was read regularly at meetings of the ROMAN CHURCH from the time of its reception onwards.
- It is clear from Clement’s letter that by AD 96 some of Paul’s letters had begun to circulate in other quarters than those to which they were sent in the first instance; Clement, for example, knows and quotes from 1 CORINTHIANS.
- Our oldest surviving MS. of the Pauline letters, dating from the end of the SECOND CENTURY.

PAUL’S PASSION

It may seem strange, but we need to frame this Letter by considering material found near the ending. Here Paul bears his heart in regard to his plans, Jesus’ direction, and his contentment.

ROM 15:14–16 *I myself am satisfied about you, my brothers, that you yourselves are **full of goodness, filled with all knowledge** and **able to instruct** one another.*

ROM 15:15-16. *But on some points, I have written to you **very boldly** by way of reminder, because of the grace given me by God ¹⁶ **to be a minister** of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles **in the priestly service** of the gospel of God, so that **the offering of the Gentiles** may be acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit.*

These clauses are full of the language of worship:

- Paul is a **minister** (**leitourgos**)
- his proclamation of the gospel is a **'priestly service'** (**hierourgeō**)
- his Gentile converts are **the offering** which he presents to God

15:17–19 *In Christ Jesus, then, I have reason to be proud of my work for God. ¹⁸ For I will not venture to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me to bring the Gentiles to obedience—by word and deed, ¹⁹ by the power of signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God—so that from Jerusalem and all the way around to Illyricum I have fulfilled the ministry of the gospel of Christ...*

15:20 *...and thus I make it my ambition to preach the gospel, not where Christ has already been named, lest I build on someone else's foundation...*

15:22–24 *This is the reason why I have so often been hindered from coming to you. ²³ But now, since I no longer have any room for work in these regions, and since I have longed for many years to come to you, 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.*

15:25-29 *At present, however, I am going to Jerusalem bringing aid to the saints. ²⁶ For Macedonia and Achaia have been pleased to make some contribution for the poor among the saints at Jerusalem. ²⁷ For they were pleased to do it, and indeed they owe it to them. For if the Gentiles have come to share in their spiritual blessings, they ought also to be of service to them in material blessings. ²⁸ When therefore I have completed this and have delivered to them what has been collected, I will leave for Spain by way of you. ²⁹ I know that when I come to you I will come in the fullness of the blessing of Christ.*

15:30–33 *I appeal to you, brothers, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to strive together with me in your prayers to God on my behalf, ³¹ that I may be delivered from the unbelievers in Judea, and that my service for Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints, ³² so that by God's will I may come to you with joy and be refreshed in your company.*

³³ *May the God of peace be with you all. Amen.*

The chapter closes with a prayer: *“May the God of peace be with you all.”* He is the God of peace in the sense that he alone can give peace. As Paul wrote elsewhere, it is a peace that “transcends all understanding” (PHIL 4:7). I may NOT understand...I don't need to... BUT His peace fills me!