

**INTRODUCTION**

1. As we begin a 12 week study of the book of Romans, let me invite you to open your Bible to the first chapter.
2. The letter to the Romans consists of 16 chapters, and tonight we're going to look at the first.
3. There has been no other book in history that has had an impact on a person's life like the letter to the Romans.
4. For example, in 386 A.D., Augustine was converted after reading Romans 13:13-14.
5. R.C. Sproul shares his story in his book, *Before the Face of God*.
6. He writes, “Augustine, a young man living in the fourth century, was distinguished for his brilliant mind, but he lived a life of unbridled immorality and licentiousness and had given himself to the exposition of pagan philosophy. But one day he heard some children playing. As part of their game they repeated the refrain—*tolle lege, tolle lege*—literally, “Take up and read; take up and read.”

These words grabbed Augustine, and he walked to where he could find a manuscript. The first that his eyes fell upon was of the New Testament. The pages fell open randomly, to a portion of Romans: ... *not in sexual immorality and*

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*debauchery, not in dissension and jealousy. Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature (Rom. 13:13–14).*

Augustine was seized with a sense of conviction for his sin as the Holy Spirit used those words to cut into the young man's heart. This was the conversion experience of the man many regard as the greatest saint of the first thousand years of the church."<sup>1</sup>

7. Another man that was transformed by this letter was a man named Martin Luther.
8. Many of you know that in 1517 the Protestant Reformation was launched when Martin Luther finally understood the meaning of God's righteousness, and that "the just shall live by faith."
9. Do you also know that the Wesleyan Revival that swept England came because of this letter to the Romans?

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<sup>1</sup> R.C. Sproul, *Before the Face of God : Book 1: A Daily Guide for Living from the Book of Romans*, electronic ed., Logos Library System; *Before the Face of God* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House; Ligonier Ministries, 2000).

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10. In 1738 John Wesley was saved after he heard the reading of the preface to Martin Luther's commentary on Romans.
11. He later wrote in his journal, "About a quarter before nine, I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone, for salvation; and an assurance was given to me that He had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the Law of sin and death."
12. Wesley had originally went to America to convert the Indians but wrote in his diary, "Who shall convert me?"
13. That evening his question was answered.
14. John Calvin wrote in his commentary on Romans that "When anyone understands this Epistle, he has a passage opened to him to the understanding of the whole Scripture."<sup>2</sup>
15. If you'll notice, Romans appears in the NT as the first of Paul's letters even though it was not the first letter he wrote.
16. The first letter he wrote was Galatians in A.D. 49-50..

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<sup>2</sup> William MacDonald and Arthur Farstad, *Believer's Bible Commentary : Old and New Testaments* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1997).

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17. Romans wasn't written until A.D. 56.
18. The reason why Romans appears first is because of the importance of the work both in its theme and in its content.<sup>3</sup>
19. No wonder Fredric Godet said of the letter to the Romans that it was “The cathedral of the Christian faith.”
20. Everything about the Christian faith is found in this book.
21. It speaks to the issues we face today morally for it speaks about adultery.
22. It speaks about homosexuality.
23. It speaks about perversion.
24. It speaks about killing and hating and lying and civil disobedience.
25. It speaks to us intellectually.

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<sup>3</sup> John F. Walvoord, Roy B. Zuck and Dallas Theological Seminary, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary : An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1983-). 433–435.

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26. It tells us why man is so confused because he possesses a reprobate mind.
27. It speaks to us socially.
28. It tells us how we are to relate to one another.
29. It speaks to us psychologically.
30. It tells us where true freedom comes to deliver men from guilt.
31. It speaks to us spiritually for it answers our despair with a hope in the future.
32. It speaks to us internationally for it tells us the ultimate destiny of the earth and specially the plan for the nation Israel.
33. It speaks to us nationally for it tells us our responsibility to the government.
34. It speaks to us supernaturally for it defines for us the infinite power of God.
35. And it speaks to us theologically because it teaches us relationships between flesh and Spirit, law and grace.

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36. But most of all, it brings God to us profoundly.
37. The letter to the Romans also answers many questions for us, like, what is the good news of God?
38. Is Jesus really God?
39. What proves He is God?
40. Why did He come?
41. What is a saint?
42. What is God like?
43. How can God send people to hell?
44. What will happen to people who have never heard the gospel?
45. Why do men reject God and Christ?
46. Why are there false religions and idols?
47. What is man's biggest sin?
48. Why is there sex perversion, hate, crime and those other things and why are they so rampant?

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49. What is the standard by which God condemns people?
50. How can a person who has never heard be held responsible?
51. Are Jews more responsible to believe than Gentiles?
52. Who is a true Jew?
53. Is it any advantage to be Jewish?
54. How good is man?
55. How bad is man?
56. Can anyone keep God's law?
57. How do we know we're sinners?
58. How are we justified and forgiven?
59. How is a Christian related to Abraham?
60. What is the importance of Christ's death?
61. What is the importance of His resurrection?
62. What is the importance of His present life?

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63. For whom did Christ die?
64. Where can men find real peace and hope?
65. How are we related spiritually to Adam and how are we related spiritually to Christ?
66. What is grace?
67. And what does it do?
68. How does a person die spiritually to be reborn?
69. What is the Christian's relation to sin?
70. How important is obedience?
71. How are law and grace related to one another?
72. Why is it such a struggle to live the Christian life?
73. How many natures does a believer have?<sup>4</sup>
74. Let's begin looking at chapter one.

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<sup>4</sup> John MacArthur, online sermon transcript on Romans 1:1, <http://www.gty.org/Resources/Sermons/45-01>



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75. It begins with an important name, “Paul.”

76. Paul is the author of the letter to the Romans.

**I. Authorship**

Romans 1:1 says, “Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God.”

As we look now at the author we see that this letter is the most remarkable production of the most remarkable man.

It is his heart. It contains his theology, theoretical and practical, for which he lived and died.

It gives the clearest and fullest exposition of the doctrines of sin and grace and the best possible solution of the universal dominion of sin and death in the universal redemption by the second Adam.”

All throughout chapter one, at least the first 16 verses, we see that this letter was written by “Paul” as verse 1 says.

Notice the personal pronouns used beginning at verse 8.

Paul says, “First, *I*.”

He does that also in verse 9 where he says, “For God, whom *I* serve.”

Personal pronouns like this appear in vv.10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16.

Herman Hoyt writes, “Vocabulary, theological argument, logic, passion, movement, and the grand theme of the

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epistle point to none other than the greatest of the apostles.”<sup>5</sup>

That Paul is the author of this letter is denied by almost no one.

Even the ancient heretics admitted Romans was written by Paul.

So do the modern (19th century and later) radical German critics, who deny many other facts in the Scriptures.<sup>6</sup>

In fact, the heretic Marcion is the first known writer to *specifically* name Paul as author.

The book is quoted by such orthodox Christians as Clement of Rome, Ignatius, Justin Martyr, Polycarp, Hippolytus, and Irenaeus.

The Muratorian Canon also lists the letter as Pauline.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Herman A. Hoyt, *The First Christian Theology: Studies in Romans* (Winona Lake, IN: BMH Books, 1977). 11.

<sup>6</sup> John F. Walvoord, Roy B. Zuck and Dallas Theological Seminary, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary : An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1983-). 433–435.

<sup>7</sup> William MacDonald and Arthur Farstad, *Believer's Bible Commentary : Old and New Testaments* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1997).

The Muratorian Canon is an ancient list of canonical books drawn up in Greek, ostensibly in the late second century due to the reference to Pope Pius, and surviving in a single copy in poor Latin discovered by Muratori. Some have redated the canon to the fourth century.<sup>8</sup>

## II. **Background on Paul**

Verse 1 begins with “Paul.”

That wasn't always his name. That was his new name. His old name was Saul. And he was a good Jewish boy named for a good Jewish king...Saul.

He was born in Tarsus. Tarsus because his father, though a Jew, was involved in the Roman culture as a Roman citizen.

Tarsus was also a university town. It was a center of Greek culture.

Tarsus was located in Cilicia and that is at the northeastern corner of the Mediterranean Sea.

You go east by Spain and north Africa as far as you can go toward the coast of Israel and up in that northeast corner was Tarsus.

He also received a portion of his education in Jerusalem under the most distinguished doctor of the law, a man by

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<sup>8</sup> <http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/muratorian.html>

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the name of Gamaliel who was, by the way, the grandson of perhaps the most famous rabbi who ever lived, Hillel.

He studied under this very distinguished doctor and so he was not only erudite in matters of Greek culture and philosophy but also in the matters of Jewish law.

It is said in those times that there were three great universities in the Greek world, one at Athens, one at Alexandria and one at Tarsus.

They were the Harvard, Yale and Princeton of their day. And he was educated at Tarsus and then further educated in the Jewish school of Gamaliel.

Now also in keeping with the tradition in a Jewish family, he had to learn a trade.

And so he grew up learning the trade of his father. He was taught to work with hides, to be a leather worker, a tent maker.

And history tells us that that was a rather common occupation in Tarsus.

He was educated up until the age of about 13 and apparently at 13 was packed off to Jerusalem to study with Gamaliel who, by the way, was called "The beauty of the law," because he so personified the law, the Mosaic and the traditional law of Israel.

Now the kind of education he would have had under Gamaliel would have been a memorizing and interpreting of Scripture between he and Gamaliel in a question and answer format.

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So from the time of 13 he was in an interchange with this greatest of Jewish minds. Since he never met Jesus in his earthly life, he probably completed his education and then returned back to Tarsus. And some historians believe he became probably the leader of a synagogue there.

No matter where he was he always became the leader...didn't matter where. And it seems very obvious that that is what would have happened in Tarsus.

And so, there he is in Tarsus.

He's had a consummate Greek education. He's had a consummate Jewish education. He's got all of the credentials to move around in the Roman world. His father is a Roman citizen and that makes him one and yet he has all the Jewishness that gives him access to that whole area. And so he is marvelously prepared. And he becomes a zealous Jew, extremely zealous, utterly zealous, utterly committed to the Judaism that he was given. In fact, in Philippians 3:5 it says he was circumcised the eighth day. He was of the stock of Israel. He was of the tribe of Benjamin. He was an Hebrew of the Hebrews. As touching the law, he was a Pharisee. And you couldn't get more committed than that. He had zeal to the place where he began to persecute the church. And as touching the righteousness which was in the Jewish law, he was blameless. He was a first-class legalist...kept the law.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> <http://www.gty.org/Resources/Sermons/45-01>

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Acts 7:58 records his involvement in the persecution of Stephen and 8:1 says he was “in hearty agreement with putting him to death.”

**Acts 8:3 (NASB)** He *began* ravaging the church, entering house after house, and dragging off men and women, he would put them in prison.

When you get to chapter 9 he is “still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, and asked for letters from him to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any belonging to the Way, both men and women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem” (vv.1-2).

From verse 3-19 Luke records what happens next.

It is completely unexpected.

Paul gets saved.

I’m not going to take the time to read this but let’s suffice it to say it was dramatic.

\*\*\*\*Class Assignment (Tell what happened to Paul in Acts 9 – due at the next class)\*\*\*\*

Paul describes his relationship to Jesus Christ in Romans 1:1.

He says, “Paul, a bond-servant of Christ Jesus, called *as* an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God.”

### III. **Paul’s Relationship to Jesus**

He describes himself as “a bond-servant...an apostle...set apart for the gospel of God.”

A Bond-Servant – This is the Greek word *doulos*.

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Some have translated this as “a servant” or “bondslave” but the best word that describes *doulos* is *slave*.

“A *doulos* was not a hired servant who could come and go as he pleased. A *doulos* was a person who had been purchased, and once purchased he became his master’s possession.”<sup>10</sup>

This idea of *doulos* in Scripture is always connected to another descriptive word, *kurios*.

*Kurios* translates the OT *Adon* or *Adonai*, which means “The sovereign one,” a name in the OT that was reserved for God.

In the NT the title lord or *kurios* is used in three ways.

There is the simple, common usage, where calling someone *kurios* is like addressing him as “sir,” a polite form of address.

The supreme use of *kurios* refers to the sovereign God, who rules all things.

*Kurios*, the “name which is above every name” (Phil.2:9), is the name given to Jesus, whom the Father calls the King of kings and the Lord of lords.

There is yet a middle usage of the term *kurios* in the NT.

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<sup>10</sup> R.C. Sproul, *Romans* (Kindle Book).



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It is used to describe a slave owner, which is an apt description of Jesus, and it is from this that Paul describes himself. He is not just a servant but a slave.

Paul, in addressing believers, said in **1 Corinthians 6:20 (NASB)** For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body.

We have been purchased by the blood of Jesus Christ (Acts 20:28).

R.C. Sproul says, “There is...irony here: when Christ sets us free from slavery to the flesh, he calls us to the royal liberty of slavery to Him. That is why we call Him Master. We acknowledge that it is from Him that we get our marching orders. He is the Lord of our lives. We are not our own. We are not autonomous or independent. Unless people understand their relationship to Christ in these terms, they remain unconverted.”<sup>11</sup>

**Paul also says he was “called as an apostle.”**

There are two uses of the word “apostle” (apostolos) in the NT.

The first is as it is used here. The word literally means “One who is sent.”

In order to be an “apostle” you had to meet certain requirements: You had to be a disciple of Jesus Christ and

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<sup>11</sup> R.C. Sproul, *Romans*, (Kindle Edition, locations 217-21).

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an eye-witness of the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Peter said in **Acts 1:21-22 (NASB)** <sup>21</sup> "Therefore it is necessary that of the men who have accompanied us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us— <sup>22</sup> beginning with the baptism of John until the day that He was taken up from us—one of these *must* become a witness with us of His resurrection."

Notice the two qualifications are listed here.

Paul met the qualifications of an apostle according to Acts 9.

He was not a disciple of Jesus during Jesus' time on earth nor did he see the resurrected Lord but according to Acts 9:15 Jesus told Ananias "Go, for he is a chosen instrument of Mine, to bear My name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel.

He spent 3 years in Arabia (Gal 1:17-18) being taught the gospel "through a revelation of Jesus Christ" (Gal.1:12) and **2 Corinthians 12:12 (NASB)** says he possessed the signs of an apostle. He says, "The signs of a true apostle were performed among you with all perseverance, by signs and wonders and miracles."

He was directly and personally called by Jesus Christ to be an apostle.

Throughout the NT he uses this designation about himself:

He mentions it 3 times in Romans, 9 times in 1

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Corinthians, 5 times in 2 Corinthians, 3 times in Galatians, 4 times in Ephesians, 1 time in Colossians, 1 time in 1 Thessalonians, 2 times in 1 Timothy, 2 times in 2 Timothy, and 1 time in Titus for a total of 31 times.

The general use of this term occurs in **Acts 14:14 (NASB)** But when the apostles Barnabas and Paul heard of it, they tore their robes and rushed out into the crowd, crying out...

**Finally Paul says he had been “set apart for the gospel of God.**

The next thing we learn about Paul is that he had been **separated to the gospel of God** (v. 1). In Latin *separated* means “segregated,” set apart from the multitude to a specific, sacred, consecrated task. The phrase Paul uses involves a part of speech in the Greek language called the genitive, which indicates possession. He is not saying, “I have been commissioned to announce a message or good news about God.” Rather, he is saying that the gospel he has been separated and called to proclaim is God’s gospel. God is the author and owner of it. Paul is simply the messenger whom God has called and set apart to proclaim to people a message that comes from God himself.

**IV. Overview of Romans**

**QUICK OVERVIEW**

- I. Greetings and Introduction (1:1–15)
- II. Theme (1:16–17)
- III. Condemnation: The Need of God’s Righteousness (1:18–3:20)
  - A. Unrighteous Gentiles (1:18–32)
  - B. Unrighteous Jews (2:1–3:8)
  - C. Unrighteous Humankind (3:9–20)
- IV. Justification: The Provision of God’s Righteousness (3:21–5:21)
  - A. The Source of Righteousness (3:21–31)
  - B. The Example of Righteousness (4:1–25)
  - C. The Blessings of Righteousness (5:1–11)
  - D. The Imputation of Righteousness (5:12–21)
- V. Sanctification: The Demonstration of God’s Righteousness

(6:1–8:39)

- VI. Restoration: Israel’s Reception of God’s Righteousness (9:1–11:36)
- VII. Application: The Behavior of God’s Righteousness (12:1–15:13)
- VIII. Conclusion, Greetings, and Benediction (15:14–16:27)<sup>12</sup>

V. **Overview of Romans 1**

**vv.1-7 – The Greeting**

It follows the normal custom of a letter in Paul’s day. It consists of the writer, readers, and greeting.

We have already been looking at the writer (v.1).

Paul unfolds the phrase “the gospel of God” in vv.2-6.

The Readers is in verse 7, “To all who are beloved of God in Rome, called as saints.

The Greeting is at the end of verse 7: “Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.”

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<sup>12</sup> John MacArthur, *The MacArthur Quick Reference Guide to the Bible*, Student ed. (Nashville, Tenn.: W Pub. Group, 2001). 213.

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### vv.8-15 – The Thanksgiving and Desire

In verses 8-10, he thanks God for them because their “faith is being proclaimed throughout the whole world” (v.8).

That sets his heart to pray for them and for God to allow him to come to them so that he could “impart some spiritual gift” to them so that they “may be established” (v.11).

He wanted mutual encouragement while they were together—“each of us by the other’s faith, both yours and mine” (v.12).

This was his desire and he “often...planned to come to [them]” but had “been prevented so far” (v.13).

He wanted to “preach the gospel to [them]” (v.15).

### vv.16-17 – The Theme

Paul says in **Romans 1:16-17 (NASB)** <sup>16</sup> 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. <sup>17</sup> For in it *the* righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "BUT THE RIGHTEOUS *man* SHALL LIVE BY FAITH."

The theme is “the gospel.”

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content. The word for “gospel” is the word *euangelion*. It has that prefix *eu-*, which comes into English in a variety of words. We talk about euphonics or euphonious music, which refers to something that sounds good. We talk about a eulogy, which is a good word pronounced about someone at his funeral service. The prefix *eu-* refers to something good or pleasant. The word *angelos* or *angelion* is the word for “message.” Angels are messengers, and an *angelos* is one who delivers a message.

This word *euangelion*, which means “good message” or “good news,” has a rich background in the Old Testament. There, the basic meaning of the term *gospel* was simply an announcement of a good message. If a

When we come to the New Testament, we find three distinct ways in which the term *gospel* is used. First, we have four books in the New Testament that we call Gospels: Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. These books are biographical portraits of Jesus. *Gospel* in this sense describes a particular form of literature. During the earthly ministry of Jesus, the term *gospel* was linked not particularly with the person of Jesus but with the kingdom of God. John the Baptist is introduced as one who comes preaching the gospel, and his message is “repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!” (Matt. 3:2).

Jesus did the same in his parables, proclaiming, “the kingdom of God is like . . .” On the lips of Jesus, the gospel was about the dramatic moment in history when, through the long-awaited Messiah, the kingdom of God had broken through in time and space. The good news was the good news of the kingdom. By the time the epistles were written, particularly the Pauline epistles, the term *gospel* had taken on a new shade of understanding. It had become the gospel of Jesus Christ. *Gospel* had a clear content to it. At the heart of this gospel was the announcement of who Jesus was and what he had accomplished in his lifetime.

If you examine Romans, you will quickly conclude that the theme is “The Gospel.”

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First, it is the opening words of the book (Rom.1:1), and is followed to the very end of the book (16:25).

To Paul this message is the “gospel of God” (1:1), “the gospel of His Son” (1:9), which he is ready to preach (1:15) and of which he is not ashamed (1:16).

### vv.18-3:20 – The Condemnation – The Need of God’s Righteousness

Paul begins this section, vv.18-32, by addressing unrighteous Gentiles.

He begins in **Romans 1:18 (NASB)** For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness.

**\*\*\*Assignment:** Note how many times the phrase “God gave them over” is used in chapter 1. What does it mean? Be prepared to talk about it in our next class.

## VI. **CONCLUSION**

It’s no wonder why many were transformed after the study of this powerful letter.

As we study this letter together, allow the Holy Spirit to do his changes in you. Let’s pray.