

## EXPOSITION OF ROMANS (Introduction Part 1)

### Message #1

### Various Texts

There is a book in the Bible that has been uniquely used by God in history to dramatically change lives, universally affect the whole world and completely fill churches - it is the book of Romans.

It was a part of Romans that Augustine read the day he was saved. Listen to his own "confession" (p. 218): "Eagerly then I returned to the place where Alypius was sitting; for there had I laid the volume of the Apostle, when I had arisen. I seized, opened, and in silence read that section, on which my eyes first fell (**Romans 13:13-14**): "Not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual promiscuity and sensuality, not in strife and jealousy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts." No further would I read; nor needed I: for instantly at the end of this sentence, by a light as it were of serenity infused into my heart, all the darkness of doubt vanished away." Augustine was saved by reading two verses from Romans and he went on to become a famed theologian and Bishop of Hippo. When, years later, Pelagius came up against Augustine with his man-centered heretical theology, Augustine refuted him by expounding Romans.

It was Romans that grabbed the soul of the famed German monk named Martin Luther. In 1515, this Roman Catholic teacher decided to give a series of lectures on Romans. Through his careful study and preparation of Romans, Luther was not only saved, but God created such a dynamic boldness in him that he stood against the entire Roman Church. Romans caused Luther to march up to the church door on October 31, 1517 and nail his 95 theses that challenged and stirred the entire Roman Catholic Church. His study of Romans not only shook up Wittenberg, it reformed the whole world.

It was Romans that once again was used by God to touch the life and theology of John Calvin. John Calvin studied every book of the Bible, but it was the great truths from the book of Romans that led to what he called his "sudden conversion" in 1533.

It was Romans that "strangely warmed the heart" of John Wesley and saved his soul one night in 1738 on Aldersgate Street in London. In 1552, Martin Luther wrote a preface to his commentary on Romans. In that preface, he defined the key words of Romans, plus did a capsule breakdown of each chapter. The night John Wesley went to this meeting, this preface to Romans was read and Wesley was saved.

Perhaps no greater example of the power of Romans can be seen than in the testimony of Donald Grey Barnhouse, who began pastoring the 10th Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia in 1927. Dr. Barnhouse describes what happened: "When I first became pastor of Philadelphia church where I serve, I began my ministry by preaching on the epistle to the Romans. My first Sunday in that pulpit found me giving an exposition of the first verse of the epistle. The second Sunday I started with the second verse... For three and one half years I never took a text outside of the epistle to the Romans. I saw the church transformed; the audience filled the pews and then the galleries; and the work

went on with great blessing. But just as important as the transformation of the church, there was the transformation of the preacher. The disciplined necessity of treating every verse in an entire epistle formed habits of study that organized the mind of the preacher for the whole of his task” (Vol. 1, p. i).

There is absolutely no doubt that when one opens the book of Romans one is truly and powerfully hearing, as Dr. S. L. Johnson said, “the voice of God to men.” John Chrysostom, “the golden mouthed orator” and one of the early church fathers, had Romans read to him twice a week before he died.

Romans is a dynamic, world-impacting, church-changing, life-transforming book and in the next several weeks, we would like to take a remarkable journey in a Biblical exposition of these 16 chapters.

**QUESTION #1** – Why study Romans?

**Reason #1** - Because Romans is a very unique book in the Bible.

Carefully notice that Romans sits first in the epistles after Acts, yet it was not the first epistle Paul wrote. The early church believed the first epistle that should be studied is Romans. **This was confirmed by the Canon listings of Bible books** (Marcion - A.D. 140; Muratorian - A.D. 170; Apostolic - A.D. 300; Cheltenham - A.D.360; Athanasius - A.D. 367); and **by the major church council meetings** (Nicea - A.D. 325-40; Hippo - A.D. 393; Carthage - A.D. 397; Carthage - A.D. 419). Early Christianity wanted Romans studied first.

Of all the 66 books of the Bible, none have been used any more powerfully than Romans.

Martin Luther said: “This epistle is really the chief part of the New Testament and the very purest Gospel, and is worthy not only that every Christian should know it word for word by heart, but occupy himself with it every day, as the daily bread of the soul.”

Frederic Godet said: "The epistle to the Romans is the cathedral of the Christian faith."

Heinrich Meyer said: "The epistle to the Romans... is the steadfast divine charter of the Reformation ..."

No other single book of the Bible has influenced the world throughout history like Romans. It is a very unique and esteemed book and it is worthy of careful study.

**Reason #2** - Because Romans reveals the Gospel of God.

When Paul was alive all roads literally ran to and from Rome. When God's Gospel is being considered, all roads of doctrine will lead to Romans. **You cannot be saved apart from the Gospel message presented in Romans.** Much of the problem in distorted theology lies in a neglect to understand the “Gospel of God” clearly revealed in Romans (**Romans 1:1**).

The diagnosis for every man's sin and God's glorious cure for that sin is carefully and systematically developed in Romans, the Gospel of God.

**Reason #3** - Because Romans has been requested by several people.

Romans has always had a powerful impact on the church. This is a book that will challenge and change everyone. Men, women and children, from the deepest and most logical thinker to the most common and simplest of minds, Romans cuts into the soul of everyone.

**Reason #4** - Because Romans exalts God.

Romans is a book that elevates God and His sovereignty as it relates to salvation as no other N.T. book. Romans is a book that will leave us all standing in awe of God, fearful of speaking back to Him or of questioning Him. Romans not only exalts God's sovereignty, but also His “Amazing Grace.”

**QUESTION #2** – Who wrote Romans?

The authorship of Romans has never been in major doubt. The overwhelming amount of evidence, both external and internal, suggests Romans was written by the Apostle Paul. Paul was the writer and Tertius was Paul's secretary or amanuensis (**Romans 16:22**).

**Fact #1** - The author specifically identifies himself as Paul. (**Romans 1:1**)

**Fact #2** - The author is from the tribe of Benjamin, something that fits Paul. (**Romans 11:1; Philippians 3:5**)

**Fact #3** - The author had a close relationship with Priscilla and Aquila, something that fits Paul. (**Romans 16:3; Acts 18:2-4**)

**Fact #4** - The author was taking a major offering to Jerusalem from Macedonia and Achaia, which was a major project of Paul. (**Romans 15:25-27; 1 Corinthians 16:1-5**)

**Fact #5** - The unanimous position of early writers in church history declared that Romans was written by Paul.

- 1) Irenaeus the Bishop of Lyons (A.D. 178).
- 2) Clement of Alexandria the first post apostolic scholar (A.D. 200).
- 3) Tertullian, the famed African theologian and apologist (A.D. 200).
- 4) Origen, the Alexandrian theologian (A.D. 250).
- 5) Eusebius the father of Church history and bishop of Caesarea (A.D. 320).

These are just a few of those who declared Paul to be the writer of Romans.

**Fact #6** - The unique fact that only two men in history have ever denied Pauline authorship:

- 1) Evanson - an English author of the 1700s.
- 2) Bruno Baur - a German writer of the 1800s.

These two writers, in the face of overwhelming Pauline evidence, rejected it, by inventing three ridiculous arguments:

1. Acts does not mention Paul wrote Romans.
2. Paul hadn't yet been to Rome and could not know all of the people mentioned in **Romans 16**.
3. Paul would not write such an important letter to a place he hadn't personally visited.

**Clearly Romans was written by Paul !**

Again notice that Romans stands first in every listing of Paul's writings, but it was actually his sixth letter. The chronology of Pauline letters to Romans is Galatians, I and II Thessalonians, I and II Corinthians and Romans. This shows us the importance of this letter, because this one Epistle opens up the whole Gospel of God. To understand all the other letters of Paul you must understand Romans.

**QUESTION #3** – When did Paul write this letter to the Romans?

**Fact #1** - Romans was written before Paul's first visit to Rome.  
(**Romans 1:10-13; 15:22-23**)

This fact makes our date prior to A.D. 60-62.

**Fact #2** - Romans was written prior to Paul taking a financial gift to Jerusalem from Macedonia and Achaia. (**Romans 15:25-26**)

This fact makes our date prior to A.D. 57-59.

**Fact #3** - Romans was written before Paul's arrest in Jerusalem. (**Romans 15:30-31**)

This fact makes our date prior to A.D. 59.

**Fact #4** - Romans was written near the end of his third missionary journey and before his first Roman imprisonment (A.D. 60-62). (**Acts 18:23 ff / 20:1-3**)

This fact makes our date somewhere near A.D. 57-58.

**Fact #5** - Romans was written before the feast of Pentecost, May or June.  
(Acts 20:6, 16)

Paul wanted to be in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost in May or June.

**Combined, these facts lead us to the conclusion that Paul wrote Romans in early spring of A.D. 57 or 58.**

**QUESTION #4** – Where was Paul when he wrote Romans?

**Fact #1** - Paul wrote somewhere near the home of Phoebe, who lived in Cenchrea, who had been a real help to him. (Romans 16:1-2)

**Fact #2** - Paul was writing from the home of Gaius who was his host. (Romans 16:23)

**Fact #3** - Gaius lived in Corinth. (I Corinthians 1:14)

**Fact #4** - Cenchrea was the eastern harbor of Corinth.

**Fact #5** - Paul spent three months in Greece and Corinth is in Greece. (Acts 20:1-3)

**Based on these facts, it is relatively easy to conclude Paul wrote Romans from Corinth during his three month stay and the end of his third missionary journey.**

**QUESTION #5** – Why did Paul write the letter to the Romans?

**Factor #1** - Paul wanted to build good rapport with the Roman church prior to his visit.  
(Romans 15:24)

**Factor #2** - Paul wanted to gain prayer support of the Roman church.  
(Romans 15:30-33)

**Factor #3** - Paul wanted to reconcile the Jew/Gentile relationship with the whole program of God. (Romans 11:25-26)

**Factor #4** - Paul needed to present a theological treatise on how sinful man could have a relationship with the Holy God.

Such a treatise was needed in Rome for three reasons:

**(Reason #1)** - False doctrines and false teachers were surfacing. (Romans 16:17-18)

**(Reason #2)** - Rome was a city given over to polytheism and each "god" had its own works system.

**(Reason #3)** - Because of the need of this important N.T. book. The New Testament needs Romans!

Jesus Christ had ascended into heaven 22-25 years prior to this writing. Only six N.T. books were in existence: James, Galatians, I and II Thessalonians, I and II Corinthians. More than likely the people in Rome didn't have a copy of any of them. If ever there were a city that needed to hear that you could not be right with God by your works, it was Rome. Rome needed the theological record set straight and today so does the whole world.

**Paul wrote Romans because it was his God- ordained and God- appointed assignment to write and to explain the doctrine of God's Pure Grace Gospel, which clearly teaches that man's righteousness may only come by God's offered grace, which is entered into by faith and not by any false delusional self-righteousness of man's works.**

Paul had been set apart for this purpose (**Romans 1:1**). It was his job to reach the Gentiles for God (**Acts 26:15-18**). He had received the Gospel directly from Jesus Christ (**Galatians 1:11-12**). He had been entrusted by the blessed God to write the glorious Gospel (**I Timothy 1:11**). This is the main reason Paul wrote Romans.

As we journey together, through Romans, you will discover that you cannot ever be justified by your works. Justification is by faith totally and completely in Jesus Christ. Will you believe on Christ? Will you put your faith in Him to save your soul? If you will you shall be saved. That is the gracious message of Romans that has been changing the world ever since Paul wrote it.