EXPOSITION OF ROMANS
(Introduction Part 2)

Message #2

There is a church that received a letter that literally _changed_ the _world_. Of all the letters written to N.T. churches, none were more impacting in history than the letter written to the church of _Rome_. Douglas Moo called Romans - “The greatest theological document in the history of Christianity.”

Of all the churches in the N.T., there was one church that Paul wanted to visit before he died - Paul longed to visit the church at _Rome_ (Acts 19:21; Romans 1:10, 13; 15:23). For years Paul had an _intense_ desire to visit this one church and therefore as we introduce the book of Romans, it is important to understand as much as we can about it.

QUESTION #1 – What was the city of Rome like at the time Paul wrote?

When the books of the New Testament were written, no city on the face of the earth was greater than _Rome_. It was even more important than Paris of France or New York of the United States or London of England or Moscow of Russia because Rome was the capital city of the _world_.

Fact #1 - Rome was the most _important_ city in the world.

1) Rome was the _capital_ of the whole Roman Empire.

2) All roads literally ran _to_ and _from_ Rome.

3) Rome totally _dominated_ the entire Mediterranean world.

There was no city more _important_ or _magnificent_ at the time Paul wrote than the city of Rome.

Fact #2 - Rome was the _largest_ city in the world.

Very conservative figures estimate the population to be _two_ million. An inscription from N.T. times was found in 1941 which listed the population at _4.1_ million.

Some people hate big cities; not _Paul_; he was drawn to them by God. Big cities need the _Word_ of God. Big cities need the _church_ of God. Big cities need the _Gospel_ of God. I am convinced that today every big city needs a church that truly knows God’s _Word_ and God’s _doctrines_ and can unlock it for the people.

Fact #3 - Rome was ideally _located_ and _masterfully_ constructed.

Rome was a spectacular city to see in _Paul’s_ day.
1) Rome was situated on both sides of the __Tiber__ River.

2) Rome was __20__ miles in circumference.

3) Rome was a city that contained __30__ gates.

4) Rome contained __420__ religious temples.

5) Rome was a city that had __5__ theaters.

6) Rome was a city that contained __2__ amphitheaters.

7) Rome was a city that contained __7__ circuses.

8) Rome had __16__ marble baths.

9) Rome had several __palaces__ and public halls.

Rome was the biggest and best city that man could build. But just like anything man builds or works to achieve, without God it will end up in __ruins__. Romans tells us our works cannot save us; it will leave us in ruins and that is precisely why we need the Gospel of God.

**Fact #4** - Rome was under the control of the Emperor __Nero__.

When Paul wrote Romans, __Nero__ was the Emperor of Rome. Nero reigned from A.D. __54-68__.

*(Phase #1)* - His __peaceful__ and __mild__ phase from A.D. 54-59.

*(Phase #2)* - His __tyrannical__ and __insane__ phase from A.D. 60-68.

Severe persecution against Christianity began in A.D. __64__. Paul writes Romans in Phase __#1__.

Any way you slice it, Nero was a __maniac__. Nero's bizarre personality can be directly linked to his __ancestry__. When one studies Nero's ancestry, one can soon see that his gross ambition, his immoral sensuality and his evil cruelty were all part of his __natural__ nature. He just lived out his __natural__ pedigree.

Nero's grandfather was a “__savage__ and heartless man.” Otto Kiefer writes: “He (Nero's grandfather) presented beast-hunts which were popular amusements at that time, not only in the circus but in every possible part of the city; he loved the __cruel__ gladiatorial games and conducted them so cruelly that he had to be stopped by a __deecree__ of Emperor Augustus” (Kiefer, p. 319).

Nero's father (Domitius Ahenobarbus) was even __worse__. According to Suetonius, Nero's father was on a tour of the East with Caligula and had one of his own freedmen who was traveling with him put to __death__ for not drinking as much as he thought he should. Nero's dad deliberately killed a __child__ by purposely driving too fast and hitting him. It is said of Nero's dad that if anyone argued with him, he would have his __eye__ removed.
Nero's mother, Agrippina, (the sister of Caligula) was no _better_ than his grandfather or father. Agrippina was highly ambitious, immorally sensual and the mistress of many different men. It is suggested that Nero's own _mother_ had an incestuous relationship with him.

It is no wonder that Nero turned out to be a _lust_-crazed, _power_-crazed, bisexual who was given over to "tyranny and cruelty." It is no wonder that Nero ended up _marrying_ a boy named Sporus and carried on one of the most _immoral_ relationships ever recorded in history with Sabina Poppaea.

In many ways, Nero was a sad byproduct of his _parents_. As Michael Grant said, “Nero’s genetic heritage was atrocious” (The Twelve Caesars, p. 151). Nero became a _savage_ and heartless man himself. He was immoral and _cold_. He was a _mad_ cynic who ruled the world when Paul wrote this letter to the Romans. He was a lot like his _mom_ and _dad_. What should the Christians living in Rome think about Nero? What did Paul think? How should they respond to a government that was so evil? **Paul's answer is given in Romans 13:1-2.** If the Apostle Paul never demeaned Nero, we should never ever demean our president.

**Fact #5** - Rome was "the" major center for _religious_, polytheistic worship.

Many of the false systems of religions that were headquartered in Rome show up in the book of _Acts_. Rome had _420_ different religious temples devoted to various “gods.”

1) _Acts 14:12_ - The Greek name is Zeus, the Roman name is Jupiter.

This was supposedly the “god of _weather_,” the “_ruler_ of all gods.”

2) _Acts 14:12_ - The Greek name is Hermes, the Roman name is Mercury.

This supposedly was the “god of _heralds_.”

3) _Acts 17:22_ - The Greek name is Ares (from which Areopagus is taken), and the Roman name is Mars (from which Mars Hill is taken).

This supposedly was the "god of _war_" or the one who _protected_ in war.

4) _Acts 19:21-40_ - The _Greek_ name is Artemis, the _Roman_ name is Diana.

This supposedly was the “goddess of _fertility_.”

It is no wonder that Paul saw such a great opportunity for the Gospel to reach into the heart of _heathenism_, the city of Rome. There is no place too dark for the power of the _Gospel_ of God.

**Fact #6** - Rome was an _immoral_ city.

At the time Paul lived, there was no city on the face of the earth more _immoral_ than Rome. It started in the leadership (Nero) and worked itself right down into most who lived in this _depraved_ society.
Perhaps no better description of this has ever been written than by the famed historian Philip Schaff:

“There is scarcely an age in the history of the world in which so many and so hideous _vices_ disgraced the throne, as in the period from Tiberius to Domitian ... the _cruelty_ and voluptuousness of Tiberius; the ferocious madness of Caius Caligula, who had men tortured, beheaded, or sawed in pieces for his amusement, who seriously meditated the butchery of the whole senate, raised his horse to the dignity of consul and priest, and crawled under the bed in a storm; the bottomless vileness of Nero, 'the inventor of _crime_,' who poisoned or murdered his preceptors ..., who in sheer wantonness set _fire_ to Rome, and then _burnt_ innocent Christians for it as torches in his gardens ... the swinish gluttony of Vitellius, who consumed millions of money in mere _eating_; the refined wickedness of Domitian, who, more a cat than a tiger, amused himself most with the torments of the _dying_ ..., the shameless revelry of Commodus with his hundreds of concubines, ferocious passion for butchering men and beasts in the arena; the mad villainy of Heliogabalus, who raised the lowest men to the highest dignities, dressed himself in women's clothing, married a boy, in short inverted all the laws of nature and decency ..."

Rome was a godless and immoral city and culture. What could possibly change it? **The power of the _Gospel_ of God!** If ever there were a place that needed the _Gospel_ of God, it was _Rome_!

It has always been a question among the historians as to what caused the "Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire." Let me give you seven _reasons_ why the Roman Empire fell:

The immediate cause was the Germanic invasions of the _5th_ Century. But how did the most powerful empire reach a level of conquer ability in _4_ centuries?

1) An empire committed to an uncontrollable, _immoral_ lifestyle.

2) _Leadership_ that was corrupt and monstrous.

3) Heavy _taxation_ and taxation laws especially over the lower classes.

4) A lack of enthusiasm from the populous to _defend_ their empire.

5) Diluted _military_ comprised of foreigners and mercenaries.

6) An avalanche of barbaric attacks from _outside_ enemies.

7) The conquering of _major_ cities.

One thing that has always been listed was the uncontrollable _immorality_ that was promoted from the leadership down. When leadership is _immoral_ and promotes people to be immoral, it is just a matter of time until history is repeated - that nation _declines_ and eventually _falls_.


Notice Paul alludes to immorality (Romans 1:24-28) but he then leaps into heavy theology about God. Just harping against sin will never save anyone - presenting God's Word saves people. It is not a picket or protest march that will save a morally corrupt world, it is an accurate presentation of the Gospel of God.

**QUESTION #2** – Who founded the church of Rome?

**Fact #1** - The church could not have been founded directly by the Apostle Paul.

It is clear that Paul had never been to Rome to preach or teach and he was looking forward to the time when he would be able to fulfill his great desire to go there (Romans 1:10-15).

**Fact #2** - The church could not have been founded by the Apostle Peter.

The Roman Catholic Church claims the Apostle Peter was the founding father of the church. However, there are at least three Biblical reasons why it could not be Peter:

1) Paul would never interfere with the ministry of another apostle (Romans 15:20; II Corinthians 10:16).

2) Paul knew many people in Rome and he certainly would have said something to or about Peter if he had been there (Romans 16).

3) Had Peter founded the church, Paul would have never been questioned by the Jews about the meaning of Christianity when he finally arrived in Rome (Acts 28:22).

The church was not founded directly by Paul or Peter.

**Fact #3** - The church could have been founded by Jews who were in Jerusalem who did respond to the Gospel at Pentecost some 20 years earlier (Acts 2:10).

1) No other major city in the Roman Empire had a church founded by new converts.

2) If the Jews founded the church, why would Paul have to explain Christianity to Jews? (Acts 28:17, 22)

**Fact #4** - The church probably was founded by Gentile believers who had been influenced by the ministry of Paul.

Gentile Christians were saved everywhere Paul went. This would explain why there is such a massive list of Latin and Greek names found in Romans 16. Many came to faith under Paul's ministry at other places - they moved to Rome and started a church.
QUESTION #3 – Was the church at Rome comprised more of Jews or Gentiles?

Fact #1 - There are definite references to Jewish people (2:16-17; 3:1, 9; 4:1). There are also definite references to God’s relationship with the Jewish people (Romans 9-11).

Fact #2 - There are several references to the Gentiles, and Rome would have had a vast majority of Gentiles in the city (Romans 1:5, 6, 13; 11:13; 15:9-12, 15-16).

Although there were some Jewish believers in the church at Rome, more than likely the majority were Gentile believers. One of the main reasons for this is because Claudius had expelled the Jews from Rome (Acts 18:2) about 10 years before Paul wrote this letter to the Romans (A.D. 49).

QUESTION #4 – What is the theme of Romans?

The powerful theme of Romans which has been so greatly used by God to shake the entire world is this: God's way of righteousness for all of mankind - from heathen sinners to religious moralists, for Jews and Gentiles - is found only and totally by faith in Jesus Christ. Most commentators believe this theme is clearly stated in Romans 1:16-17. Romans is the first Bible book to actually explain the Gospel.

A relationship with Jesus Christ by simple faith is the only way to righteousness in the sight of God. Without a relationship with Christ, you cannot ever be righteous in the sight of God.

It doesn't matter who you are or what you have. Without a relationship with Jesus Christ, you cannot ever be right with God or righteous in His sight. This relationship is developed by faith in Christ and not by our human works (i.e. Romans 3:26-28).

QUESTION #5 – How does the book of Romans unfold?

Heading #1 - Paul's introduction to Romans. (1:1-17)

1. Introduction of Paul. (1:1)
2. Introduction of the Gospel of God. (1:2-6)
3. Introduction of this letter's recipients. (1:7)
4. Introduction of Paul's personal concern. (1:8-15)
5. Introduction of Paul's powerful theme. (1:16-17)

Heading #2 - All humanity is guilty before God. (1:18-3:20)

1. All heathen sinners are guilty before God. (1:18-32)
2. All moral people are guilty before God. (2:1-16)
3. All religious people are guilty before God. (2:17-3:8)
4. All the world is guilty before God. (3:9-20)
Heading #3 - God's righteousness is only **found** in Jesus Christ. (3:21-5:21)

1. God's righteousness is clearly **defined**. (3:21-31)
2. God's righteousness is practically **illustrated**. (4:1-25)
3. God's righteousness is personally **applied**. (5:1-11)
4. God's imputed righteousness is **contrasted** with God's imputed guilt. (5:12-21)

Heading #4 - Every believer is completely **identified** with Jesus Christ. (6:1-8:39)

1. This identification delivers a believer from **all** **sin**. (6:1-23)
2. This identification delivers a believer from **God's** **law**. (7:1-25)
3. This identification gives a believer **God's** **Spirit**. (8:1-39)

Heading #5 - God's righteousness is still **associated** with Israel. (9:1-11:36)

1. Israel's present relationship with God is perfectly consistent with God's **sovereignty**. (9:1-33)
2. Israel's guilt is perfectly consistent with God's **righteousness**. (10:1-21)
3. Israel's present condition is perfectly consistent with God's **program**. (11:1-36)

Heading #6 - God's righteousness is to be **demonstrated** in the Christian life. (12:1-15:13)

1. God's righteousness is demonstrated through Spiritual **gifts**. (12:1-8)
2. God's righteousness is demonstrated through Spiritual **attitudes**. (12:9-15:13)

Heading #7 - Paul's **conclusion** to Romans. (15:14-16:27)

1. Paul talks about his personal **ministry**. (15:14-33)
2. Paul sends his personal **greetings**. (16:1-16)
3. Paul gives his personal **conclusion**. (16:17-27)

Romans is a well organized, highly systematized letter. As we journey through it, it is our prayer that God will cement in our minds and hearts **the righteousness of God that is only found by faith in Jesus Christ.**