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Οι Ρωμαίοι είναι η πρώτη επιστολή της Καινής Διαθήκης που έγραψε ο Απόστολος Παύλος προς τις εκκλησίες της Ρώμης. Τον πρώτο αιώνα μ.Χ., τα γράμματα ήταν μια κοινή και πολύτιμη μορφή επικοινωνίας. Ο Παύλος περίμενε την επίσκεψή του στην εκκλησία της Ρώμης και έτσι έγραψε αυτή την επιστολή ως προοίμιο για το ταξίδι του. Έγραψε κυρίως για να αντιμετωπίσει μερικά ζητήματα σχετικά με τις εντάσεις μεταξύ των χριστιανικών κοινοτήτων, έτσι ώστε να προσδιορίζουν την ταυτότητά τους μόνο από την πίστη τους στον Χριστό και όχι σε οποιαδήποτε εθνότητα, πλούτο, τάξη ή πίστη. Η επιστολή γράφτηκε όταν ο Παύλος ήταν στην Κόρινθο (57 μ.Χ.).

Το βιβλίο των Ρωμαίων μελετάται από την εκκλησία ανά τους αιώνες όχι απλώς ως επιστολή αλλά ως «αγνότερο έγγραφο για τη σωτηρία». Είναι η πιο ξεκάθαρη και συστηματική παρουσίαση του χριστιανικού δόγματος σε όλες τις Γραφές. Το μήνυμά των Ρωμαίων είναι διαχρονικό, παρόλο που ιστορικά είναι γραμμένο σε μια



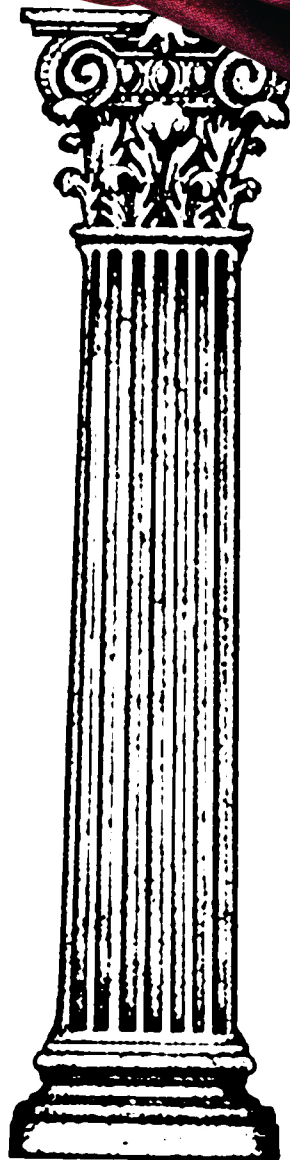
A STUDY ON THE BOOK OF ROMANS

INTRODUCTION

The Book of Romans is the first letter in the New Testament. It was written by Apostle Paul to the churches in Rome.

In the first century AD, letters were a common and valued form of communication. Paul wrote the letter in anticipation of his journey to the city, where he planned to visit their churches. He primarily wrote to address a few issues that created tension between the Christian communities. It was Paul's desire for them to define their identity by their faith in Christ alone and not through their ethnicity, wealth, class or creed. The letter was composed when Paul was in Corinth (AD 57).

The book of Romans is studied by the church through centuries, not just as a letter, but as the 'purest document for salvation'. It stands out in the Holy Bible for its clear and systematic representation of Christian doctrine. The message carried by the book is timeless, though historically it was written to the Christian community in Rome that comprised of several house churches with both Jews and Gentiles in their gatherings. (Romans 16:5).



PAUL THE APOSTLE

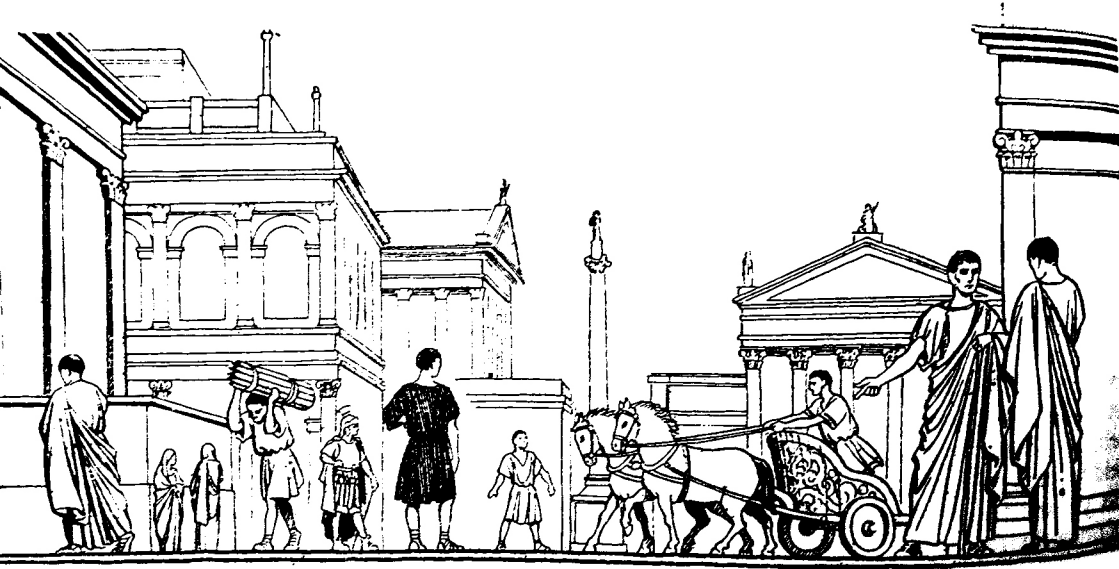
After the Lord Jesus, one of the most influential leaders of the early church was Paul (also known as Saul). Saul was his Hebrew name, while his Roman name was Paul as he was a citizen of Rome.

Born into a Jewish family from the tribe of Benjamin, his zeal for the God of the Bible was exemplary. However, he persecuted Christians because he did not believe that Jesus is the Messiah.



Paul became a follower of Jesus when he encountered the resurrected Lord Jesus on the way to Damascus. The event transformed him into a believer – from being a persecutor of Christians to a proclaimer of the gospel.

THE ANCIENT CITY OF ROME



Ancient Rome during Biblical times was one of the most glamorous cities in the world. Their wealth, (Greek) culture, military supremacy, philosophy and politics made the Roman Empire one of the greatest civilizations in history.

During the first century, Rome was highly influenced by Greek mythology and the practice of Emperor worship (also known as the Imperial Cult). Thus, most inhabitants of Rome were polytheistic - they worshiped several different gods and demigods depending on their situations and preferences.

WHY PAUL WROTE A LETTER?

Paul wrote many letters to address certain issues that were emerging in churches. He also used these letters to encourage individuals to keep their focus on Christ and taught them how to live for Him.

The first thirteen letters in the New Testament were written by Paul. Some scholars also assign the authorship of the book of Hebrews to Paul. The addition of Hebrews results in fourteen letters. The first nine are addressed to the churches – Romans, 1 Corinthians, 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 Thessalonians and 2 Thessalonians. The other four are addressed to individuals – 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus and Philemon. These are also known as pastoral letters.

The study of the letters in their entirety results in the understanding of the author's intentions and purpose. Historically, these letters influenced much of the church's doctrines and practices.

These letters are not random historical artefacts. The message they carry is alive and relevant to every era. God's people still hear God speaking to them through these letters.



THE BIG IDEA

IN THE BOOK OF ROMANS



The overarching theme of the Book is Salvation by Grace alone. We receive this Salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. The impact of salvation is experienced through the Holy Spirit.

The Book highlights the fact that pilgrimages, good works, religious rituals, alms and sacrifices cannot bring forgiveness of sins. Only Jesus' sacrifice on the cross can give us the gift of salvation. Also, this message of salvation (good news / gospel) brings Jews and Gentiles together as people of God. Paul strives to change the indifference of Gentile Christians towards the Jewish minority. He also tries to show that Jews need not impose ritualistic Jewish laws on the Gentiles. Today, as a follower of Jesus, one needs to be transformed in the mind by the Spirit to live practically in unity with God's people.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

Chapters 1-3

Condemnation

Romans 3:23,
“For all have
sinned and fall
short of the glory
of God.”

Chapters 9-11

Vindication

Romans 10:12,
“For there is no
difference between
Jew and Gen-
tile—the same
Lord is Lord of all
and richly blesses
all who call on
him, for, “Every-
one who calls on
the name of the
Lord will be
saved.”

Chapters 4-5

Justification

Romans 5:8,
“But God demon-
strates his own
love for us in this:
While we were still
sinners, Christ
died for us.”

Chapters 6-8

Sanctification

Romans 6:13,
“Do not offer any
part of yourself to
sin as an instru-
ment of wicked-
ness, but rather
offer yourselves to
God as those who
have been brought
from death to life;
and offer every
part of yourself to
him as an instru-
ment of righteous-
ness.

Chapters 12-16

Application

Romans 12:1,
“Therefore, I urge
you, brothers and
sisters, in view of
God’s mercy, to
offer your bodies
as a living sacri-
fice, holy and
pleasing to
God—this is your
true and proper
worship.”

KEY TAKEAWAYS FROM THE BOOK OF ROMANS

Chapters 1-11 forms the foundation of Christian living.

Chapter 12-16 forms the application of Christian living.

Romans 1-5

Two basic themes emerge from these chapters:

- Our foundation is in Christ
- We are justified by faith



Christ - Our Foundation

The Book of Romans is one of the longest letters written by Apostle Paul. It emphasizes that our Christian foundation is in Christ alone and not on race, gender, ethnicity or economy. God's work in Christ is the center of history, the point from which both past and future must be understood.

With Christ as the climax of history, it can be divided into two eras – each with its own founder – the era of Adam and the era of Christ.

- The era of Adam is the 'old era' with sin, the law, flesh and death. All people start out in the old era but can be transformed and transferred into the 'new era' by believing in Christ and becoming joined to Christ's death, burial and resurrection (Romans 6:1-6).

- The 'New Era' in Christ is filled with life, grace, righteousness and the Spirit. The bulk of Romans focuses on how God has acted in Christ to bring every individual sinner into a new relationship with himself (Romans Chaps. 1-4), to provide for that individual's eternal life in glory (Romans Chaps. 5-8), and to transform that individual's life on earth now (Romans 12:1 - 15:13).



• The Gospel

Romans 1:16-17, “For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile. 17 For in the gospel the righteousness of God is revealed—a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: “The righteous will live by faith.”

For everyone who believes, the Gospel provides:

- God’s saving power (Romans 3:22; 4:11; 10:4; 11)
- God’s righteousness (Romans 1:17, 3:5, 21, 22, 25, 26; 10:3)

We have a right hand standing with God through our position in Christ because He sacrificed His life for our sins and called us righteous. This also indicates God’s faithfulness in fulfilling His promise of salvation and redemption to His chosen people.

God’s righteousness is indicative of His character as a God who will always do what is right. In Romans, righteousness is always linked to faith and is given as a gift to those who believe (Romans 5:17).

• Justification by Faith

To justify in judicial language is to acquit a guilty person and declare him or her righteous. For Paul, it is always God who justifies and the human being who is justified. Justification takes place by faith and not by works (Romans 4:2) or works of the law (Romans 3:20,28).

The words ‘faith’ and ‘believe’ are keywords in Romans.

- The object of our faith is Christ.
- To believe is to put our full trust in God who justifies the ungodly by means of the cross and resurrection.

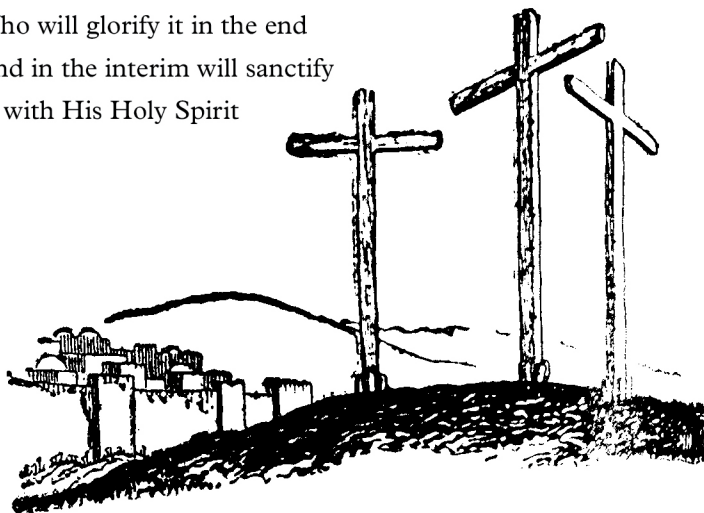
All who respond to the justifying work of God will become ‘just’ before God. The quality of New Testament faith is the absolute reliance on God and His Word rather than on human abilities or activities. Romans 4 explains how Christians are to exhibit the “Faith of Abraham.”

God’s righteousness in the gospel reveals God’s desire to bring people into a right relationship with Himself. 2 Corinthians 5:21, “God made Him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God.”

Romans 6-11

The essence of these chapter is the confidence in a God:

- Who initiated our spiritual life
- Who will glorify it in the end
- And in the interim will sanctify us with His Holy Spirit



- God Offered Himself to us,
so Let’s Offer Ourselves to God.

Romans 6:22-23, “But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the benefit you reap leads to holiness, and the result is eternal life. 23 For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Death to sin is part and parcel of becoming a follower of Christ. “Once” they were slaves of sin, doing shameful things that led to death; but “now” they are slaves of God and of righteousness and do things that lead to holiness and life.

Our old sinful life is crucified with Christ, so that the body of sin is rendered powerless, with the purpose that we should no longer serve sin.

Paul makes it clear that the believer has been transformed and transferred from the old age of sin and death to the new age of righteousness and life. He also indicates that the “powers” of that old age continue to influence the believer and must be continually resisted.

Being “dead to sin” and “alive to God” is a state achieved only in union with Christ by faith. Baptism of a disciple symbolizes this new union as we are dead to sin, buried, and alive to God in the newness of life.

Since sin is no longer our “ruler”, we must stop letting it “reign” over us and stop serving as if it were ruling over us. Those natural capacities and abilities that God has given us are weapons that must no longer be put in the service of the evil master from whom we have been freed.

In Adam	In Christ
Old Man	New Man
Old Life	New Life
Life of Sin and Death	Life of Righteousness
Slave to Sin	Slave to God
Spirit of Slavery	Spirit of Adoption
Fruits bringing shame	Fruits bringing eternal life

Sanctification is the process of becoming holy by continually committing ourselves to God and doing what is right before Him. This leads to a life of service in righteousness.



• Holy Spirit with Us – Our Agent of Liberation

To walk according to the Spirit (Romans 8:5) is to live under the control and influence of the Holy Spirit through a transformed life. Paul reminds his readers that the life-giving power of God's Spirit is effective only in those who continue to let the Spirit change their lives.



How does the Holy Spirit work?

- The Spirit's indwelling presence and life-giving power works in the life of a believer until the end to transform mortality into immortality on the day of resurrection.

- The same Spirit that set us free from the law of sin and death takes up residence within us, producing a "mind-set" which leans towards the doing of God's will and resists the ways of the flesh.

Paul affirms that believers are transformed from slaves to sons of God by the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit.

This new status through "adoption" makes us deeply aware that we now belong to God. We are His dearly loved children and we can call Him "Abba".

As the children of God, we become His heirs (Romans 8:14-17).

• God's Love Never Fails

God's love for us is active and nothing can separate us from the love of God.

Romans 8:38-39, "For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, 39 neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

• God keeps His Promise to His Chosen Ones

Throughout the Chapters 9 – 11, Paul is solving the mystery of how all of Israel will be saved.

Paul uses the example of an olive tree, often a symbol for Israel, and explains how the gentiles were grafted into this tree. Therefore, the gentile believers should not consider themselves superior to those other branches. Israel is the “root” of the church and it continues to have a place in the plan of God.



• Hope in Sufferings

Hope in God will not put us to shame.

All sufferings in the world involves an attack on our relationship with Christ. If met with an attitude of doubt in God’s goodness and promise, or bitterness toward others or even resignations from this new life, it can bring spiritual defeat to the believer.

But if met with the attitude of “confidence and rejoicing”, which Paul encourages here, these sufferings will produce valuable spiritual qualities that Paul lists in Romans 5:3-5, “...*And we boast in the hope of the glory of God. 3 Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; 4 perseverance, character; and character, hope. 5 And hope does not put us to shame, because God’s love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit.*”

Romans 8:18, “For I consider that the sufferings of the present time are not worth comparing with the glory that shall be revealed to us.”

Romans 12 -16

Paul focuses on the practical applications of living out the gospel that governs the conduct of God's people.

• Worship is all About Surrender

Romans 12:1-3, "Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. 2 Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will."

Renewing of one's mind comes from surrender and immersion in Christ-oriented thoughts. Often, this leads to sacrificial living.



The effects of a renewed mind:

- A person with a renewed mind is able to discern what God's will is – His good, pleasing and perfect will.
- A renewed mind wants to please God and progress towards perfection.

What does Paul have to say about living in love and harmony?

- Paul teaches us to use our gifts to serve one another like Christ served his disciples with love. Love recognizes that people have different gifts and urges us to rely on each other, while honoring others above ourselves.
- Paul urges the Roman Christians to live in harmony with one another and be of one mind, a situation that is only possible when there is an absence of pride (Romans 12:16).
- Practicing true love (loving God and loving one another) is so important because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed (Romans 13:11). Here salvation is about Christ's return or the end of the world. Christ did not set out to please Himself but gave His life to love others.
- Paul urges the Roman Christians to clothe themselves with the Lord Jesus Christ (Romans 13:14). Paul uses the imagery of putting on Jesus as if he were a piece of clothing (Galatians 3:27; Colossians 3:10).
- Baptism is the first step in this process. However, we also need to put on Jesus everyday with the help of the Holy Spirit. As we do this, we will gradually change and become more like Him.

Conclusion

The Book of Romans is written to reveal the mystery of God's plan of salvation for all humanity. What has been revealed is that:

- Gentiles can now have salvation in Christ
- Everyone (both Jew and Gentiles) is included in the family of God by faith in Christ and obedience to Him.

Paul concludes his letter by saying the gospel allows no place for personal or collective pride, both of which can quickly lead to a fall. Only God has the power to keep the believer and a church steady in faith and salvation!



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