

Notes & Outlines

ROMANS

J. Vernon McGee

ROMANS

WRITER: Paul

Just a word concerning the apostle Paul. Paul made this statement:

Nevertheless, brethren, I have written the more boldly unto you in some sort, as putting you in mind, because of the grace that is given to me of God, that I should be the minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the gospel of God, that the offering up of the Gentiles might be acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Spirit. (Romans 15:15, 16)

Paul made it very clear that he was the apostle to the Gentiles. He also made it clear that Simon Peter was the apostle to the nation Israel. For instance, in Galatians 2:8, 9 he said:

(For he that wrought effectually in Peter to the apostleship of the circumcision, the same was mighty in me toward the Gentiles) — and when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship, that we should go unto the Gentiles, and they unto the circumcision.

Therefore, you see that Paul was peculiarly the apostle to the Gentiles. When you read the last chapter of Romans and see all those people that Paul knew, you will find that most of them were Gentiles. The church in Rome was largely a gentile church.

He was fully qualified for this office by background, training, and experience. Dr. Griffith Thomas has succinctly stated:

His antecedents formed quite a striking combination. His Jewish birth, his Hebrew language, his Roman citizenship, His Jewish training, and his Greek culture, all helped to make him the man he was.

Paul possessed a giant intellect, having been trained in the Jewish faith, Greek culture, and Roman ways. He is the Moses of the New Testament.

DATE: A.D. 57-58

PLACE: Corinth

This epistle was written during Paul's 3rd missionary journey, at Corinth where he spent 3 months (January to March, A.D. 57). He had just come from Ephesus where he had spent 3 strenuous years.

Dr. Griffith Thomas makes an interesting observation: "Certain names point clearly to Corinth as the place whence this Epistle was written." The picture of the gross immorality of the Gentiles in Rome is a picture drawn from the Corinth of Paul's day.

OCCASION: This letter was brought forth by natural reason. Paul wished to visit Rome on his way to Spain. The letter was taken by Phoebe, deaconess of Cenchrea (Romans 16:1).

FOUNDER OF THE CHURCH AT ROME: Paul had not visited Rome when he wrote this epistle. In this respect it is different from all others, with the possible exception of the Epistle to the Colossians. No apostle had preceded Paul to Rome; obviously, Simon Peter had not. The Roman church was largely a gentile church, and Peter was not the apostle to the Gentiles (Galatians 2:7). Paul's method was not to follow another apostle, and it is not likely he would have gone to Rome had another apostle preceded him.

Yea, so have I strived to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build upon another man's foundation. (Romans 15:20)

In a very definite sense, Paul was the founder of the church at Rome. This great metropolis drew men to its streets and market-places from all over the empire as if it were a magnet. Many whom Paul had led to Christ in other places made their way to Rome and witnessed there. The church in Rome was the assembly of these folk. This is not mere speculation, as Priscilla and Aquila are examples.

Greet Priscilla and Aquila, my helpers in Christ Jesus.
(Romans 16:3)

Paul had first met them in Corinth and led them to Christ (Acts 18:1-3). Later they returned to Rome.

Paul mentions 35 individuals by name in chapter 16. Of these,

27 were living in Rome at this time. These he must have met elsewhere in the Roman Empire. Paul established the church in Rome by “long distance” and used the “remote control” of an apostle to write and guide its course.

As Christians congregated in this great metropolis, a visible church came into existence. Probably no man established a church in Rome. Converts of Paul and the other apostles from the fringe of the empire went to Rome, and a local church was organized by them.

Certainly, Peter did not establish the church or have anything to do with it, as his sermon on Pentecost and following sermons were directed to Israelites only. Not until the conversion of Cornelius was Peter convinced that Gentiles were included in the body of believers.

Paul knew Rome although he had not been inside her city limits at the time of the writing of Romans. Rome was like a great ship passing in the night, casting up waves that broke on distant shores; her influence was like a radio broadcast, penetrating every corner and crevice of the empire. Paul had visited Roman colonies such as Philippi and Thessalonica and had seen in those places Roman customs, laws, language, styles, and culture on exhibit. He had walked on Roman roads, had met Roman soldiers on the highways and in the marketplaces, and had slept in Roman jails. Paul had gone before Roman magistrates and had enjoyed the benefits of Roman citizenship. You see, Paul knew all about Rome although he was yet to visit there. From the vantage point of the world’s capital he was to preach the global gospel to a lost world — that God loved so much that He gave His son to die, that whosoever believed on Him might not perish, but have eternal life (see John 3:16).

SUBJECT: The righteousness of God

Deissmann, in his study of the Greek papyri found at Oxyrhynchus, makes a distinction between literary and non-literary documents. He places the epistles of Paul in the latter, including the Epistle to the Romans, thereby making them letters rather than epistles. There is a personal note running through all the epistles of Paul, including Romans. Nevertheless, Romans contains the great gospel manifesto for the world. To Paul, the gospel was the great ecu-

menical movement and Rome was the center of that world for which Christ died. Sir William Ramsay said:

St. Paul had early grasped the importance of the Roman Empire as a vehicle for the dissemination of the Gospel.

Let me state in subdued language that Romans is an eloquent and passionate declaration of the gospel of Jesus Christ by a man who made an arduous but productive journey to die for Christ, the One who died for him. Romans is more than cold logic; it is the gospel stated in warm love.

KEY VERSES:

For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ; for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For in it is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, The just shall live by faith.
(Romans 1:16, 17)

These verses set before us the subject of the epistle. Although each word in the epistle is important, these are significant in their marvelous unfolding of the entire epistle. These words are keys on a mighty organ which, if played, give forth the music of the whole masterpiece. These are the high notes:

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|---------------|---------------------|---------------|
| (1) gospel | (6) everyone | (11) revealed |
| (2) Christ | (7) believeth | (12) faith |
| (3) power | (8) Jew | (13) just |
| (4) God | (9) Greek (Gentile) | (14) live |
| (5) salvation | (10) righteousness | |

These words form the subject matter of the epistle. Perhaps some might want to add:

- | | | |
|-----------------|--------------------|-----------------|
| (1) Holy Spirit | (5) identification | (9) service |
| (2) sin | (6) sanctification | (10) separation |
| (3) imputation | (7) security | |
| (4) law | (8) predestination | |

However, all of these are included in the first list found in the key verses of the book. The righteousness from God is the major theme.

Dr. Griffith Thomas has given us a fitting word:

We must never forget that the term “righteousness” is much wider than justification, though this is, of course, included. Righteousness really covers all that is necessary to reinstate a sinner as right with God, and therefore includes his position, his character, his privileges, and his prospects. It embraces the past, present, and future, and it means “the state of being right.”

On this thesis he gives the following outline of the epistle:

- (a) Righteousness needed by sinful men (1:17 — 3:20)
- (b) Righteousness provided by God (3:21-26)
- (c) Righteousness received through faith (3:27 — 4:25)
- (d) Righteousness experienced in the soul (5:1 — 8:17)
- (e) Righteousness guaranteed as permanent blessing (8:18-39)
- (f) Righteousness rejected by the Jewish nation (9 — 11)
- (g) Righteousness manifested in practical life (12 — 16)

DEFINITIONS:

Cunninghame:

Under law God required righteousness *from* man; under grace He gives righteousness *to* man. The righteousness of God is that righteousness which God’s righteousness requires Him to require.

Hodge:

That righteousness of which God is the Author; which is of avail before God; which meets and secures His approval.

Brooks:

That righteousness which the Father requires, the Son became, the Holy Spirit convinces of, and faith secures.

Moorehead:

The sum total of all that God commands, demands, approves, and Himself provides.

The righteousness of God is secured by FAITH not WORKS.

ESTIMATION:

The reading of Romans is one of the most rewarding experiences in the life of a Christian. This is not to say that it should be read as a magazine article that is put aside and dismissed from the mind. The continual reading of this epistle brings a stream of benefits to the believer. The investment of a great amount of time pays handsome dividends on the spiritual market. Griffith Thomas wrote:

The Epistle should be studied with all possible intellectual attention and concentration. It is important that the whole Epistle should be read right through in the Revised Version at one sitting, and that this should be done, if possible, day by day for a month...the advantage will soon be immense. It should be studied with earnest prayer and personal trust. Intellectual attention alone is insufficient. The Epistle should be regarded as a personal letter to ourselves.

This is the epistle that changed Martin Luther and brought to pass the Protestant Reformation. It is not strange that Luther expressed his mind in such strong language:

It is the true masterpiece of the New Testament, and the very purest Gospel, which is well worthy and deserving that a Christian man should not only learn it by heart, word for word, but also that he should daily deal with it as the daily bread of men's souls. For it can never be too much or too well read or studied; and the more it is handled the more precious it becomes and the better it tastes.

Romans requires all the mental make-up we have, and then it must be bathed in prayer and supplication before the Holy Spirit can teach us.

This epistle is the greatest document on our salvation! William Newell says that Romans *is* the gospel. Every Christian should make an effort to know Romans, for this book will ground the believer in the faith.

READ ROMANS REGULARLY — REALLY READ ROMANS

These 3 features will become dominant in the life of one who constantly reads Romans:

UNDERSTANDING of the basic facts of salvation;

UNUSUAL CONVICTION about matters pertaining to the faith;

USEFULNESS in practical Christian service.

OUTLINE (in brief):

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|-----|----------------------|-------------|
| 1. | Salutation | 1:1-17 |
| 2. | Sin | 1:18 — 3:20 |
| 3. | Salvation | 3:21 — 5:11 |
| 4. | Sanctification | 5:12 — 6:23 |
| 5. | Struggle | 7 |
| 6. | Spirit-filled living | 8:1-27 |
| 7. | Security | 8:28-39 |
| 8. | Segregation | 9 — 11 |
| 9. | Sacrifice & service | 12, 13 |
| 10. | Separation | 14, 15 |
| 11. | Salutation | 16 |

OUTLINE:

I. Doctrinal, “Faith,” Chapters 1 — 8

A. Justification of the sinner, Chapters 1:1 — 5:11

1. Introduction, 1:1-17

- a. Paul’s personal greeting, 1:1-7
- b. Paul’s personal purpose, 1:8-13
- c. Paul’s three “I am’s,” 1:14-17

Key verses 16, 17 — the revelation of the righteousness of God.

2. Revelation of the sin of man, 1:18 — 3:20

This is “Sinnerama.” Universal fact: Man is a sinner. Ecumenical movement is away from God. Axiom: World is guilty before God — all need righteousness.

- a. Revelation of the wrath of God against sin of man, 1:18-32
 - 1) Natural revelation of God (original version), vv. 18-20

- 2) Subnatural response of man (reversion), vv. 21-23
 - 3) Unnatural retrogression of man (perversion), vv. 4-27
 - 4) Supernatural requital of God (inversion), vv. 28-32
- b. Revelation of the sin of good people, 2:1-16
Respectable people need righteousness.
 - c. Revelation of the sin of Israel under the Law, 2:17 — 3:8
 - d. Revelation of the universality of sin, 3:9-20
 - 1) Judge's verdict of guilty against mankind, vv. 9-12
Man cannot remove guilt.
 - 2) Great Physician's diagnosis of mankind, vv. 13-18
Man cannot change his nature. Man has an incurable disease.
 - 3) Purpose of the Law, vv. 19, 20
Law reveals sin, not salvation. Last word is "sin" (v. 20).

3. Revelation of the righteousness of God, 3:21 — 5:11

Righteousness provided.

Righteousness of God defined — not the character of God nor self-righteousness of man.

- a. Justification by faith explained, 3:21-31

DEFINITION: Justification is the act of God that declares a sinner righteous by faith on the merit of Christ's sacrifice. It is the addition of the righteousness of Christ as well as the subtraction of sins.

Propitiation — "mercy seat" (Hebrews 9:5)

Redemption — to pay a price for deliverance

Propitiation is toward God.

Redemption is toward sin.

- b. Justification by faith *illustrated*, 4:1-25
(Demonstration — Abraham and David)

c. Justification by faith — *results derived*, 5:1-11

Eight benefits:

- 1) Peace, v. 1
- 2) Access, v. 2
- 3) Hope, v. 2
- 4) Patience — fruit of tribulations, v. 3
- 5) Love, v. 5
- 6) Holy Spirit, v. 5
- 7) Deliverance from the Great Tribulation, v. 9
- 8) Joy, v. 11

Reconciliation is toward man. Definition: Change from enmity to friendship. Justification by faith is an act of God which is permanent.

B. Sanctification of the saint, Chapters 5:12 — 8:39

1. Potential sanctification, 5:12-21

Federal headship of Adam and Christ

a. Headship of Adam, vv. 12-14

Death — sin

b. Headship of Christ, vv. 15-17

Life — righteousness

c. Offense of Adam vs. righteousness of Christ, vv. 18-21

Disobedience vs. Obedience

Judgment vs. Free Gift

Sin vs. Grace

Condemnation vs. Justification

2. Positional sanctification, 6:1-10

Union with Christ in His death and resurrection is the basis of deliverance from sin.

3. Practical sanctification, 6:11-23

Obedience to God leads to the experience of deliverance from sin.

4. Powerless sanctification, 7:1-25

a. Shackles of a saved soul, vv. 1-14

Spiritual emancipation

b. Struggle of a saved soul, vv. 15-25

Civil war (No good in old nature, no power in new nature)

5. God's new provision for sanctification, 8:1-39

(Powerful sanctification)

- a. New law: Holy Spirit vs. Law, vv. 1-4
- b. New struggle: Holy Spirit vs. flesh, vv. 5-13
- c. New man, son of God: Holy Spirit and spirit of man, vv. 14-17
- d. New creation: old vs. new, bondage vs. liberty, vv. 18-22
- e. New body: groaning vs. redeemed body, vv. 23-27
Holy Spirit helps us in our present bodies.
- f. New purpose of God, vv. 28-34
God's purpose guarantees the salvation of sinners.
- g. New security of the believer, vv. 35-39
God's love guarantees the security of the believer.

II. Dispensational, "Hope," Chapters 9 — 11

A. God's past dealings with Israel, Chapter 9

1. Israel defined, vv. 1-5
2. Israel identified, vv. 6-13
3. Choice of Israel in the sovereign purpose of God, vv. 14-24
4. Choice of Gentiles in the scriptural prophecies of God, vv. 25-33

B. God's present purpose with Israel, Chapter 10

1. Present state of Israel — lost, vv. 1-4
Reason: Christ is the end of the law for righteousness.
2. Present standing of Israel — same as Gentiles, vv. 5-12
"For there is no difference."
3. Present salvation for both Jew and Gentile — hear and believe the gospel, vv. 13-21

C. God's future purpose with Israel, Chapter 11

Remnant regathered as a nation and redeemed.

1. Remnant of Israel finding salvation, vv. 1-6
2. Remainder of Israel blinded, vv. 7-12
3. Reason for setting aside the nation Israel — salvation of the Gentiles, vv. 13-21

4. Restoration of nation Israel — greater blessing, vv. 22-32
5. Reason for restoring the nation Israel, vv. 33-36
Locked in the riches of the wisdom of God.

III. Duty, “Love,” Chapters 12 — 16

A. Service of “the sons of God,” Chapters 12, 13

1. Relationship to God (“present — yield”), 12:1-2
2. Relationship to gifts of the Spirit, 12:3-8
3. Relationship to other believers, 12:9-16
4. Relationship to unbelievers, 12:17-21
5. Relationship to government, 13:1-7
6. Relationship to neighbors, 13:8-14

B. Separation of “the sons of God,” Chapters 14 — 16

1. Relationship to weak believers, 14:1 — 15:3
Three principles of conduct for Christians
 - a. Conviction, 14:5
 - b. Conscience, 14:22
 - c. Consideration, 15:1-3
2. Relationship of Jews and Gentiles as believers, 15:4-13
(Racial relationships)
3. Relationship of Paul to Romans and Gentiles generally, 15:14-33
(The gospel and Gentiles, v. 16)
4. Relationship of Christians to one another demonstrated, 16:1-27
Thirty-five individuals mentioned by name — mutual love and tender affection.

These notes, prepared by J. Vernon McGee, are for the purpose of giving assistance to the listeners of the THRU THE BIBLE RADIO program. They are to be used with the Bible and will be more meaningful as you look up all the Scripture references. Due to the necessary brevity of both notes and broadcasts, a list of recommended books is included for those wanting a more detailed study. These books may be obtained from a Christian library or bookstore or ordered from the publishers.

RECOMMENDED BOOKS:

- Barnhouse, Donald Grey. *Romans*. 4 volumes. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1952-1960.
(Expositions of Bible doctrines, taking the Epistle to the Romans as a point of departure.)
- DeHaan, Richard W. *The World on Trial: Studies in Romans*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1970.
- Epp, Theodore H. *How God Makes Bad Men Good: Studies in Romans*. Lincoln, Nebraska: Back to the Bible Broadcast, 1978.
- Hendricksen, William. *The Epistle to the Romans*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1980.
- Hodge, Charles. *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1886.
- Hoyt, Herman A. *The First Christian Theology: Studies in Romans*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1977.
(Good for group study.)
- Ironside, H. A. *Lectures on Romans*. Neptune, New Jersey: Loizeaux Brothers, n.d.
(Especially fine for young Christians.)
- Jensen, Irving R. *Romans: Self-Study Guide*. Chicago, Illinois: Moody Press, n.d.
- Johnson, Alan F. *Romans: The Freedom Letter*. Chicago, Illinois: Moody Press, 1974.
- Kelly, William. *Notes on Romans*. Addison, Illinois: Bible Truth Publishers, 1873.
- Luther, Martin. *Commentary on Romans*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Kregel Publications, n.d.
- McClain, Alva J. *Romans: The Gospel of God's Grace*. Chicago, Illinois: Moody Press, 1942.

- McGee, J. Vernon. *Reasoning Through Romans*. Pasadena, California: Thru the Bible Books, 1959.
- McGee, J. Vernon. *Romans*. Vols. 1 & 2. Nashville, Tennessee: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1976.
- Moule, Handley C. G. *The Epistle to the Romans*. Fort Washington, Pennsylvania: Christian Literature Crusade, n.d.
(See note below.)
- Moule, Handley C. G. *Studies in Romans*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Kregel Publications, 1892.
(Originally appeared in the Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges. These two books by Moule complement each other and are both excellent.)
- Murray, John. *Romans*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1965.
(For advanced students.)
- Newell, William R. *Romans Verse by Verse*. Chicago, Illinois: Moody Press, 1938.
(An excellent study.)
- Philips, John. *Exploring Romans*. Chicago, Illinois: Moody Press, 1969.
- Stifler, James. *The Epistle to the Romans*. Chicago, Illinois: Moody Press, 1897.
- Thomas, W. H. Griffith. *The Book of Romans*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1946.
(Fine interpretation.)
- Vine, W. E. *Romans*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1950.
- Wiersbe, Warren W. *Be Right. (Romans)*. Wheaton, Illinois: Victor Books, 1977.
- Wuest, Kenneth S. *Romans in the Greek New Testament for English Readers*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1955.

SAMPLE SUMMARY FOR EACH CHAPTER
(for your personal study)

1. Theme of chapter —

2. Most important verse —

3. Most prominent word —

4. Teaching about Christ —

5. Command to obey —

6. Promise to claim —

7. New truth learned —

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