

ROMANS

Introductory Issues

Authorship

Pauline authorship of Romans is unquestioned. It is one of seven epistles that critical scholarship generally regards as indisputably Pauline (the others are Galatians, 1–2 Corinthians, Philippians, 1 Thessalonians, and Philemon). Not only does the text clearly identify itself as from the hand of Paul (1:1), but alludes to his desire to visit Rome several times, a desire attributed to Paul in Acts (10:10–13, 15; 15:22–32; cf. Acts 19:21). Other internal clues are consistent with what is known about Paul (his Jewishness [9:3–4], his missionary activity [15:15–20], his collection of a relief offering for Judean Christians [15:25–26]). Externally, Romans is quoted or alluded to by early church fathers such as Ignatius (d. A.D. 198–217), Polycarp (c. A.D. 155), Justin Martyr (c. A.D. 165), and Irenaeus (c. A.D. 200). Romans is also included in the Marcionite (A.D. 140) and Muratorian (A.D. 180) Canons. The epistle is also part of the earliest extant collection of Pauline manuscripts (c. 46), a collection usually dated no later than A.D. 200.

Date

Romans is typically dated to A.D. 56 or 57. Key to this identification is correlating Romans 15:26–28 with Acts 20:12. The epistle was probably written in Corinth which fits with the dating and certain internal clues. Namely, Phoebe the likely bearer of the letter was from Cenchrea which was about seven miles from Corinth (16:1–2) and the reference to Gaius a prominent Christian leader at Corinth (cf. Rom 16:23 and 1 Cor 1:14).

Original Recipients

The recipients of the epistle are identified in 1:7, 15 as believers in Rome. The ethnicity of the church appears to be predominantly Gentile (see 1:5, 12–14 and 11:13) although there is some evidence for the presence of Jewish believers (e.g., the use of the Old Testament, the reference to Abraham as “our” father in 2:1 [but see 1 Cor 10:1], the reference to dietary restrictions in chapter 14, etc.).¹ How the church in Rome was established is unclear. It may have been established by Romans who were converted during Peter’s Pentecost day sermon (Acts 2:10). It is possible that Paul was actually addressing several house churches (“all that are in Rome” vs. “the church at Rome, 1:7), perhaps as many as five (Rom 16:5, 10–11, 14–15). In any case, Paul expresses a desire to go to Rome after visiting Jerusalem and before traveling to Spain (Rom 15:22–28).

¹ This tension between Gentile and Jewish recipients is sometimes called the Roman’s debate.

Historical Setting

The city of Rome was the capital of the Roman Empire and thus arguably the most important city in Paul's day. But Paul had not yet visited the city before writing.

Purposes

While there is general agreement that Paul wrote to generate interest in his intention to travel to Spain, the other purposes (if any) are less clear. The issue is complicated by the fact that Paul appears to take a very Jewish approach to a primarily Gentile audience and the content itself which some have understood as occasional while others as more general compendium of Paul's theology. Guthrie has identified no less than five suggestions regarding the purpose.² However, we suggest that Paul wrote for three major reasons. First, Paul wanted Rome to serve as his base of operations for his forthcoming mission to Spain. Paul probably envisioned the church in Rome providing him both spiritual and material support (15:24). Second, Paul desired to outline significant aspects of his theology so that there could be doctrinal understanding and agreement between the Romans and himself. Third, Paul sought to ease tensions between Jewish and Gentile believers that appear to have been present in Rome (cf. 3:1–2, 29–30; 9–11; 14:1–15:13).³

Literary Features and Structure

Romans is an epistle,⁴ beginning with a salutation (1:1–17), followed by the body of the epistle (1:18–15:13), and a conclusion (15:14–16:27). This basic structure is generally agreed upon. Although we will follow a more exegetically-worded outline, some use a more thematic or theological approach (see the following table for two examples).

	Theological		Thematic
I.	Salutation (1:1–17)	I.	Righteousness Introduced (1:1–17)
II.	Sin (1:18–3:20)	II.	Righteousness Needed (1:18–3:20)
III.	Salvation (3:21–5:21)	III.	Righteousness Imputed (3:21–5:21)
IV.	Sanctification (6:1–8:39)	IV.	Righteousness Imparted (6:1–8:39)
V.	Sovereignty (9:1–11:36)	V.	Righteousness Delayed (9:1–11:36)
VI.	Service (13:1–15:13)	VI.	Righteousness Practiced (13:1–15:13)
VII.	Salute (15:14–16:27)	VII.	Righteousness Extended (15:14–16:27)

One of the most difficult literary issues relates to the unity of the epistle, in particular the end of the epistle (i.e. chapters 15–16). Some have concluded that the chapter 16 was not original part of the epistle. The number of personal greetings in the chapter appear to be out of place given the

² Donald Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction*, 4th ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1990), 408-12.

³ Some suggest that there was actually some anti-Semitism present.

⁴ Some classify Romans as an essay-letter. See Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *Romans: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, ed. William Foxwell Albright and David Noel Freedman, Anchor Bible, vol. 33 (New York: Doubleday & Co., 1993), 69.

fact that at the time Romans was written Paul had never visited Rome and thus would not likely be acquainted with so many in the church there. Also, some manuscript evidence suggests that there was more than one version of the epistle. Different manuscripts place the doxology at the end of chapter 16, at the end of chapter 14, at the end of chapter 15, at the end of chapters 14 and 15, and some do not include it at all. So, some have suggested that a shorter form that lacked the two final chapters (except for the doxology in 16:25–27) was in circulation at least by the second and third centuries. While this is certainly formidable textual issue, major Greek manuscripts appear to support the unity of the letter and this will be our approach as well.

Message

The message of Romans is, “The righteousness of God is theology to be understood and practiced.”

Basic Outline⁵

- I. Paul introduces his epistle with a greeting, thanksgiving, and a declaration of the theme of righteousness (1:1–17).
- II. Paul details the need for God’s righteousness (1:18–3:20).
- III. Paul discusses the imputation of God’s righteousness (3:21–5:21).
- IV. Paul declares that the imputation of God’s righteousness unto sanctification is a work of God (6:1–8:39).
- V. Paul demonstrates God’s righteousness in light of the problem of Israel (9:1–11:36).
- VI. Paul defines the practice of God’s righteousness (12:1–15:13).
- VII. Paul concludes his epistle by expressing his ministry and travel plans, making extended greetings, and offering a concluding wish-prayer (15:14–16:27).

Exposition

- I. **Paul introduces his epistle with a greeting, thanksgiving, and a declaration of the theme of righteousness (1:1–17).**
 - A. Paul declares his apostolic commission to preach the Gospel of God and greets the believers in Rome (1:1–7).
 1. Paul declares his apostolic commission (1:1–6).
 2. Paul greets recipients of the epistle, the believers in Rome (1:7).
 - B. Paul thanks God for the Roman believers and expresses his desire to visit them (1:8–15).

⁵ Certain portions of this outline are indebted significantly to the work of Harold Hoehner.

1. Paul expresses his thankfulness for the Romans and prays that he might come to them (1:8–10).
 2. The reason (γάρ) that Paul wants to visit the Romans is to experience mutual edification and to fulfill his mission of preaching the gospel to all peoples (1:11–15).
- C. Paul expresses the theme of his epistle, namely God’s righteousness is revealed and is received by faith (1:16–17).

II. Paul details the need for God’s righteousness (1:18–3:20).

- A. God’s righteousness is needed because man is unrighteous because they have rejected the knowledge of God (1:18–32).

The Universal Need for Righteousness: Four Groups ⁶			
Unrighteous	Moralist	Jew	World
1:18–32	2:1–16	2:17–3:8	3:9–20

1. God’s wrath is revealed from heaven (1:18).
 2. Knowledge of God is evident so people are without excuse (1:19–20).
 3. Rejection of the knowledge of God led to foolishness and idolatry (1:21–23).
 4. Rejection of God results in God’s deliverance of man to his own depraved desires (1:24–32).
- B. God’s righteousness is needed because the self-righteous stand condemned (2:1–16).
1. God judges the hypocritical (2:1–5).
 2. God’s judgment is impartial and commensurate to one’s works (2:6–11).
 3. God’s judgment is according to man’s response to the revelation he has been given (2:12–16).
- C. God’s righteousness is needed because even the Jews are under condemnation because they do not keep God’s law (2:17–3:8).

⁶ Modified from Harold Hoehner’s notes.

1. The Jew's possession of the Law is not sufficient for justification because they did not keep it and actually caused God to be blasphemed (2:17–24).
 2. The Jew's possession of circumcision is not sufficient for justification because disobedience to the law results in uncircumcision (2:25–29).
 3. The problems raised by the Jews are because of their misconception of their relationship to God (3:1–8).
- D. God's righteousness is needed because the world is condemned since all are under sin (3:9–20).
1. Both Jews and Gentiles are all under sin (3:9).
 2. Scripture demonstrates that all men are under sin (3:10–18).
 3. The Law demonstrates that all the world is guilty before God and that the Law is not the source for justification but the means for the full knowledge of sin (3:19–20).

III. Paul discusses the imputation of God's righteousness (3:21–5:21).

Justification: The Imputation of Righteousness ⁷			
Explanation	Illustration	Expectation	Amplification
3:21–31	4:1–25	5:1–11	5:12–21

- A. God's righteousness which comes to all by faith in Christ results in justification (3:21–31).
1. The manifestation of God's righteousness apart from the Law is available to all who believe in Jesus Christ (3:21–23).
 2. The provision of God's righteousness in Jesus Christ's death has satisfied God for sins past and present (3:24–26).
 3. Paul defends justification by faith alone (3:27–31).
- B. Abraham's life is an illustration of justification by faith (4:1–25).
1. The righteousness reckoned to Abraham was by faith not by works (4:1–8).

⁷ Modified from Harold Hoehner's notes.

2. There was a promise to believe before there was circumcision to practice (4:9–22).
 3. Abraham’s justification was recorded so that everyone who believes in the One who raised Jesus from the dead can also be justified (4:23–25).
- C. One benefit of justification is that it instills hope of final salvation (5:1–11).
1. The believer’s present peace and hope of exultation is grounded in justification (5:1–2).
 2. The believer’s tribulations are not defeating but serve to strengthen his hope in God through the Spirit (5:3–5).
 3. The believer’s hope is confirmed by God’s love demonstrated in Christ’s work in behalf of both sinners and believers (5:6–11).
- D. The imputation of God’s righteousness overcomes Adam’s imputation of death (5:12–21).

Views of Romans 5:12		
Example View	Solidarity Views	
The human race follows Adam’s example and sin and therefore are guilty for their own sins	Seminal View (realism)	Federal Headship (representationism)
	The whole human race was in Adam	The whole human race was represented by Adam

1. Sin’s entrance into the world by Adam resulted in death for all men (5:12).
2. The effects of Adam’s act is surpassed by the effects of Christ’s act (5:13–17).
3. The representative act of one brings consequences on all (5:18–19).
4. The entrance of the Law revealed the sinfulness of man’s sin but this is surpassed by the sufficiency of God’s grace and results in eternal life (5:20–21).

IV. Paul declares that the imputation of God’s righteousness unto sanctification is a work of God (6:1–8:39).

Sanctification: The Impartation of Righteousness ⁸		
Romans 6	Romans 7	Romans 8
Believer and Sin	Believer and the Law	Believer and the Holy Spirit
1. The believer's freedom from sin's domination (vv. 1-14) 2. The believer's enslavement to God's righteousness (vv. 15-23)	1. The believer's freedom from the law (vv. 1-6) 2. The law's relationship to sin and death (vv. 7-25)	1. The believer's freedom in Christ (vv. 1-11) 2. The believer's responsibility in Christ (vv. 12-30) 3. The believer's security in Christ (vv. 31-39)

A. The believer's relationship to sin is that he died to it and is alive unto God through Christ (6:1-23).

1. The believer has died to the principle of sin (6:1-14).
2. The believer has died to the practice of sin (6:15-23).

Romans 6:15-23 ⁹				
Category	Master	Service	End	
Unbeliever	Sin	Lawlessness	Wages→	Eternal Death
Believer	Righteousness	Sanctification	Gift→	Eternal Life

B. The believer's relationship to the Law is that he is free from it and its domination (7:1-25).

1. The believer is free from the Law because he has died to it (7:1-6).
2. The Law being holy reveals sin, and sin not the Law, is the cause of death (7:7-25).
 - a. The Law being holy reveals sin (7:7-12).
 - b. Since the Law is good, sin not the Law brings death (7:13-25).

C. The believer's relationship to the Holy Spirit offers assurance of victory in his Christian walk (8:1-39).

⁸ Modified from Harold Hoehner's notes.

⁹ Modified from Harold Hoehner's notes.

The Emphasis on the “Spirit” (Pneuma) in Romans 8
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Romans 1–7: “Spirit” is used 5 times • Romans 8: “Spirit” is used 21 times • Romans 9–16: “Spirit” is used 8 times |
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1. The Spirit delivers the believer from the power of the flesh (8:1–11).

Romans 8:5–11: Spirit vs. Flesh
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 Realms: in the flesh vs. in the Spirit • 2 Masters: sin/flesh vs. indwelling Spirit • 2 Mindsets: on the flesh vs. on the Spirit • 2 Results: death vs. life and peace |
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2. So the believer’s responsibility in Christ is not to live according to the flesh but to endure suffering with the aid of the Holy Spirit (8:12–30).
 - a. The believer is not to live according to the flesh but to put to death the deeds of the body by the Spirit is (8:12–17).
 - b. The believer is to endure the present sufferings in light of the incomparable future glory in which he will partake (8:18–30).
3. The believer’s security in Christ is grounded in God’s love regardless of trials and tribulations experienced by the believer (8:31–39).

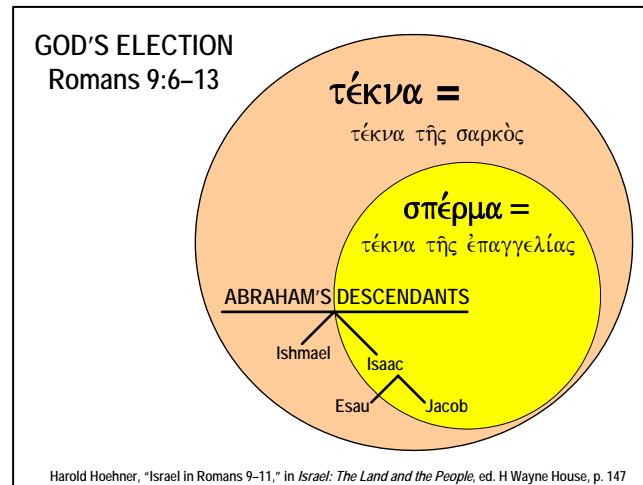
Realm Transfer in Romans 5–8 ¹⁰	
The Old Realm (The Non-Christian)	The New Realm (The Christian)
In Adam	In Christ
Old Man (5:12–21)	New Man (5:12–21)
Slaves to Sin (6:17, 20; 7:14)	Slaves to Righteousness (6:17, 20)
Doomed to Eternal Death (5:12–21; 7:5; 8:3)	Destined to Eternal Life (5:12–21; 8:1–13)
Ruled over by Law (6:14; 7:7–25)	Ruled over by Grace (6:14; 8:1–39)
Dominated by the Flesh (7:5, 7–25)	Dominated by the Spirit (7:6, 7; 8:1–39)

V. Paul demonstrates God’s righteousness in light of the problem of Israel (9:1–11:36).

- A. Israel’s rejection of God’s righteousness is not to be considered inconsistent with God’s promise or God’s justice (9:1–29).

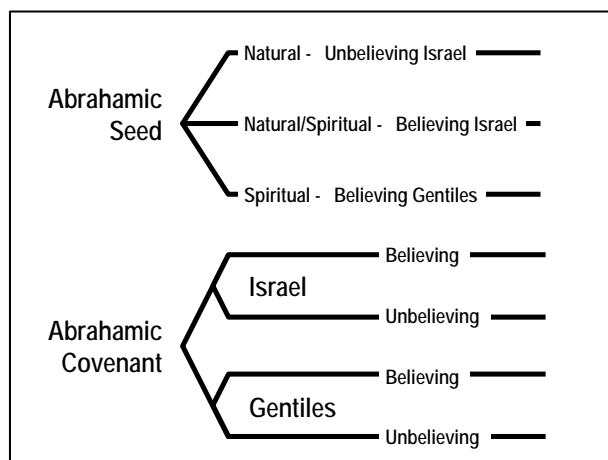
¹⁰ Douglas J. Moo, *Encountering the Book of Romans: An Theological Survey*, Encountering Bible Studies, ed. Walter A. Elwell (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002), 115.

1. Paul's grief is continually over Israel who rejects God's righteousness (9:1–5).
2. God's rejection of Israel is not inconsistent with God's promises as demonstrated by two lines of proof (9:6–13).



3. God's rejection of Israel is not inconsistent with God's justice (9:14–29).
- B. Israel's rejection is culpable because of her own failures (9:30–10:21).
1. Israel's rejection is culpable because Israel repudiated God's righteousness by faith (9:30–10:4).
 2. Israel's rejection is culpable because Israel ignored the Old Testament teaching on God's righteousness by faith (10:5–13).
 3. Israel's rejection is culpable because Israel refused the opportunity of accepting God's righteousness by faith (10:14–21).
- C. Israel's rejection is not complete or final because God will always have a remnant (11:1–36).
1. Israel's rejection is not complete because God has always had a remnant as seen in Paul and Elijah (11:1–10).
 2. Rejection of Israel is not final because God's blessing of Gentiles is to provoke Israel to jealousy to bring them back as the future channel of blessings (11:11–24).
 3. Israel's restoration is certain because of God's covenant with the nation (11:25–32).

4. God is to be praised not because one can understand all that God does, but because of who He is (11:33–36).



VI. Paul defines the practice of God's righteousness (12:1–15:13).

- A. The one who possesses God's righteousness practices total dedication to God (12:1–2).
- B. The one who possesses God's righteousness is to be characterized by humility and love (12:3–21).
1. The believer is to walk humbly because God has given each member spiritual gifts to practice within the church (12:3–8).
 2. The believer is to practice love (12:9–21).
- C. The one who possesses God's righteousness is to act righteously toward the government (13:1–14).
1. The believer's submission to government indicates his submission to God (13:1–7).
 2. The believer's love to his neighbor fulfills God's laws (13:8–10).
 3. The believer's godly conduct is motivated by the nearness of judgment day (13:11–14).
- D. The one who possesses God's righteousness is to act responsibly toward the weak and the strong concerning *adiaphora* (14:1–15:13).
1. Do not condemn one another (14:1–12).

2. Do not cause your brother to stumble (14:13–23).
3. The strong believer is to help the weak believer (15:1–6).
4. Since Christ has accepted both the Jews and the Gentiles, believers should accept one another (15:7–13).

VII. Paul concludes his epistle by expressing his ministry and travel plans, making extended greetings, and offering a concluding wish-prayer (15:14–16:27).

- A. Paul’s motivation for writing the letter is to justify his boldness because he was appointed a minister of Christ to the Gentiles (15:14–21).
- B. Paul’s intention of visiting the Romans is finally being realized although he must first go to Jerusalem in order to deliver the offering of the believers of Macedonia and Achaia (15:22–33).
- C. Paul greets various believers in Rome (16:1–23).¹¹
- D. Paul offers a concluding wish-prayer for the believers in Rome (16:25–27).

A Fitting Conclusion: The Doxology and the Rest of Romans ¹²	
Doxology (Rom 16:25–27)	Rest of Romans
who is able (power	1:4, 16
establish you	1:11
my gospel	1:1, 9, 16; 2:16
revelation	1:17; cf. 3:21
prophetic writings	1:2; cf. 3:21
all nations (Gentiles)	1:5
believe and obey	1:5
only God	3:29–30
wise God	11:33–36

¹¹ Note the best manuscripts do not contain 16:24.

¹² Moo, *Encountering the Book of Romans*, 209.