

NAME

Halley (page 691)

Paul was chosen by God to be the chief explainer of the Gospel to the world, and his letter to the Romans is Paul's most complete explanation of his understanding of the Gospel... Paul wrote to the Roman Christians to let them know that he was on his way to Rome (hence the name of the epistle). This was before God told Paul that he would be His witness in Rome (Acts 23:11), and Paul did not yet feel sure that he would get out of Jerusalem alive (Romans 15:31).

WCBS Notes:

"Epistle" originally meant "letter," but theologically it means a letter: 1) With a divine authority (written under apostolic auspices); 2) Containing theological teaching (teaches about God); and 3) For general circulation (not limited to the addressees) e.g. Philemon.

T.W. Manson (Rylands Professor of Biblical Criticism and Exegesis at University of Manchester from 1936 until his death in 1958) suggests the title "St. Paul's letter to the Romans - and others" (Studies in the Gospels and Epistles, pp. 225 ff.)

AUTHOR

From the postapostolic church to the present, with almost no exception, the Epistle has been credited to Paul. This is based on statements in chapters one and fifteen, on the style and arguments put forth in the intervening chapters and on the testimony of all from ancient times who quote the epistle. Paul dictated his letter to an amanuensis (secretary), Tertius by name (16:22); therefore, Tertius actually penned Romans, though Paul authored it under divine inspiration. By common consent, Romans is the greatest of Paul's letters.

DATE

This epistle was written by Paul from Corinth toward the end of his third missionary journey probably during the years of 55 - 58 A.D. (Acts 20:3). Paul is wintering with Gaius in Corinth (Romans 16:23; 1 Corinthians 1:14). When he wrote Romans the fund for the Jerusalem church seems to have been finally completed (15:26ff.). This may indicate a date in early 57 rather than late 56 for the writing of the letter. The fund was completed when Paul, on the way from Ephesus to Corinth wrote 2 Corinthians 8-9. Paul had misgivings about reaching Rome. He was preparing to leave Corinth for Jerusalem. But, he had also received a number of warnings that a visit to Jerusalem might mean imprisonment or even death (Acts 20:22,23; 21:4-11). With that uncertainty he writes to the believers in Rome. Phoebe's earlier visit to Rome probably provided Paul with a carrier for this letter (16:1,2). At the time Romans was written Paul had not yet been to Rome. He arrived there three years after Romans was written.

THEME

Halley (page 44): "*Nature of Christ's Work*"

Mitchell: God's Complete Plan Of Redemption Provided Through Jesus Christ.

Paul gives a logical and comprehensive treatment of this most basic doctrine. Paul develops this theme from five major points of view. He unfolds in a series of successive steps the logical nature of God's plan of redemption.

Roland: *"Keep The Faith Baby"*

NIV Ryrie Study Bible - Introduction to Romans:

More formal than Paul's other letters, Romans sets forth the doctrine of justification by faith (and its ramifications) in a systematic way. The theme of the epistle is the righteousness of God (1:16,17). A number of basic Christian doctrines are discussed: natural revelation (1:19,20), universality of sin (3:9-20), justification (3:24), propitiation (3:25), faith (chapter 4), original sin (5:12), union with Christ (chapter 6), the election and rejection of Israel (chapters 9-11), spiritual gifts (12:3-8), and respect for government (13:1-7).

Halley (page 692):

Paul's main point in Romans is that an individual's justification before God rests fundamentally on the mercy of Christ and not on the Law of Moses. It is not a matter of law at all, because no person can ever fully live up to God's Law, which is an expression of God's holiness. We are justified solely because Christ, out of the profound goodness of His heart, forgives people's sins. In the final analysis, a person's standing before God depends not on what that person has done or can do; rather, it is based completely on what Christ has done for him or her and each person's acceptance of His gift of salvation by grace. And therefore Christ is entitled to the absolute and wholehearted allegiance, loyalty, devotion, and obedience of every human being.

Paul's quote (key verse below), *"The righteous by faith shall live,"* or as it can be stated, *"The righteous shall live by faith"* is from Habakkuk 2:4: *"Behold, as for the proud one, his soul is not right within him; but the righteous will live by his faith."* In the Old Testament context—Habakkuk questioned God's seeming silence in the midst of great wickedness. God's response is to make known that He is doing something and that eventually the corruptors will be destroyed. In light of God's revelation about how and when He is working, His people are to wait patiently and live by faith - trusting in their sovereign God. In the New Testament the quote is used to support the teaching that people are saved by grace through faith and should live by faith (see also: Galatians 3:11; Ephesians 2:8; Hebrews 10:38,39).

Key Word (Nelson's): The Righteousness of God - The theme of Romans is found in 1:16,17: God offers the gift of His righteousness to everyone who comes to Christ by faith.

Key Verses (Nelson's):

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

"But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it—the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction: for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by His grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by His blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in His divine forbearance He had passed over former sins." (Romans 3:21-25)

Key Chapters (Nelson's): Romans 6-8 - Foundational to all teaching on the spiritual life is the central passage of Romans 6-8. The answers to the questions of how to be delivered from sin, how to live a balanced life under grace, and how to live the victorious Christian life through the power of the Holy Spirit are all contained here.

Integrity

WCBS Notes:

Of the editions found in circulation, there is: 1) One ending at 15:33 (omitting Roman greetings); 2) One ending at 14:23 (under Marcion's influence?); One lacking the term "in Rome" at 1:7; and yet 4) The Roman version was long cherished (see Clement c. 96 A.D.) as the original edition from Paul.

1. Five doxologies are questioned: 15:13; 15:33; 16:20; 16:24; 16:25-27. Were they edited in? Each has its own purpose. Some are addressed to Christ and others to God. Each is the result of religious fervor not different and careless editors.
2. Chapter 16 is questioned.
 - a. It greets known Ephesians and some have suggested that it could belong to Paul's letter to the Ephesians, which has no greeting. (Prisca and Aquila 16:3-5; Acts 18:18,19; Epaenetus 16:5 - an Asian). In other words, why would Paul extend such extensive greetings to a significant number of people in a church he had never visited verses extending greetings to people in a church he had visited (Ephesus).
 - b. Also chapter 16 is omitted in some editions (Greek MSS) of Romans suggesting perhaps that it was a later addition.
 - c. However, it is best to maintain the integrity of Romans 16: 1) Most editions contain chapter 16; 2) Prisca and Aquila (as well as others) traveled to various areas (cf. Acts 18:2 where they were in Rome), thus, they could have returned to Rome; 3) Paul tended to include greetings in those epistles addressed to churches where he had not been (few greetings if any are in 1-2 Corinthians; 1-2 Thessalonians, Philippians, etc.; but see the greetings in Colossians and Romans - two churches Paul had never visited).

Outline (adapted from the Expositor's Bible Commentary)

- I. Introduction 1:1-17
 1. Salutation 1:1-7
 2. Paul And The Church At Rome 1:8-15
 3. Theme: God's Complete Plan Of Redemption Provided Through Jesus Christ 1:16,17
- II. The Need For Salvation / Redemption / God's Righteousness: The Plight Of Mankind 1:18-3:20
 1. In The Pagan World 1:18-32
 - a. The evidence against pagan mankind 1:18-20a
 - b. The verdict against pagan mankind 1:20b
 - c. The consequences for pagan mankind 1:21-32
 2. Principles Of Judgment 2:1-16
 - a. Absolute truth 2:1-5
 - b. Deeds 2:6-10
 - c. Unbiased assessment 2:11-16

3. Specific Guilt Of The Jews 2:17-20
 - a. The boast of the Jews 2:17-20
 - b. The sin of the Jews 2:21,22
 - c. God's name dishonored among the Gentiles 2:23,24
 - d. The emptiness of ritual 2:25,26
 - e. The absence of inward circumcision 2:27-29
 - f. The justice of God's condemnation 3:1-8
 4. Summary - The Whole World Indicted 3:9-20
 - a. No one is excluded from sin 3:9-12
 - b. Sin is complete 3:13-18
 - c. All are guilty before God 3:19-20
- III. Justification: The Imputation Of Righteousness (The Provision Of Redemption By Faith) 3:21-5:21
1. The Description Of Justification 3:21-26
 2. The Availability Of Justification Through Faith Alone 3:27-31
 3. The Illustration Of Justification From The Old Testament 4:1-25
 - a. The case of Abraham 4:1-5
 - b. The case of David 4:6-8
 - c. The promise to Abraham - apart from circumcision 4:9-12
 - d. The promise to Abraham - apart from the law 4:13-17
 - e. Abraham's faith - the standard for every believer 4:18-25
 4. The Benefits Of Justification 5:1-11
 5. The Universal Application Of Justification 5:12-21
- IV. Sanctification: The Impartation Of Righteousness (The Effect Of Redemption: Freedom) 6:1-8:39
1. The Believer's Union With Jesus In Death And Resurrection Life 6:1-14
 - a. The statement of the fact 6:1-10
 - b. The appeal based on the fact 6:11-14
 2. Union With Jesus Viewed As Enslavement To Righteousness 6:15-23
 3. Union With Jesus Viewed As Deliverance From Law 7:1-6
 4. The Relationship Between Law And Sin 7:7-25
 5. The Blessings Of Life In The Spirit 8:1-39
 - a. Liberation by the Spirit from the law of sin and death 8:1-13
 - b. Additional ministries of the Spirit 8:14-27
 - c. The security and permanence of the life of the redeemed 8:28-39
- V. The Problem Of Israel: God's Righteousness Vindicated (The Scope Of Redemption) 9:1-11:36
Israel's rejection of God's righteousness and her now and future judgment
1. Paul's Sorrow Over Israel's Condition 9:1-5
 2. God's Choice Of Israel Based On Election 9:6-13

3. God's Freedom To Act In His Own Sovereign Right 9:14-29
 4. Israel's Failure To Obtain Righteousness 9:30-10:21
 5. Israel Not Entirely Rejected 11:1-10
 6. Israel's Temporary Rejection And The Salvation Of The Gentiles 11:11-24
 7. Israel's Future Salvation 11:25-32
 8. Praise To God For His Wisdom And His Ways 11:33-36
- VI. Our Spiritual Service: The Practice Of Righteousness (The Fruit Of Redemption) 12:1-15:13
The obligation of the believer to live in obedience.
1. The Appeal For Dedication Of The Believer 12:1,2
 2. Varied Ministries Of The Church (The Body Of Christ) 12:3-8
 3. Principles Governing Christian Conduct 12:9-21
 4. The Duty Of Submission To Civil Authority 13:1-7
 5. The Comprehensive Obligation Of Love 13:8-10
 6. The Purifying Power Of Hope 13:11-14
 7. Questions Of Conscience In Which Christians Differ 14:1-15:13
 - a. Brethren/sisteren must refrain from judging one another 14:1-13
 - b. Brethren/sisteren must avoid offending one another 14:14-23
 - c. The unity of the strong and weak in Jesus 15:1-13
- VII. Conclusion (Greetings To Those Who Are Righteous) 15:14-16:27
1. Paul's Past Labors, Present Program, And Future Plans 15:14-33
 2. Personal Greetings, Warnings Concerning Schismatics, And Doxology 16:1-27
 - a. Paul's personal greetings 16:1-24
 - b. Paul's closing doxology 16:25-27

RECIPIENTS

There was a group(s) of believers in Rome whom Paul had never seen, but he had a great desire both to see them and to minister to them. It is Paul's desire to come to Rome with gifts (15:25ff.) and to pioneer the gospel in new areas (15:20), more particularly Spain (15:24). The journey to Spain would carry Paul through Rome for the visit he had always wanted (Acts 19:21; 23:11). It is to these believers in Rome that Paul writes.

The Roman church became one of the major centers of Christendom and yet nothing is known about the circumstances surrounding the founding and early history of this church especially how the gospel spread to the Gentiles (Acts 10). External evidence says that no apostle visited Rome before 60 A.D. According to Ambrosiaster (name given by Erasmus [1527] to anonymous 4th century commentator on the epistles of Paul [with the exception of Hebrews] often attributed to St. Ambrose [died 397],

bishop of Milan), the Roman church was not established by an apostle (which removes Peter from consideration - note also that Paul never addresses Peter in his letter) but by unnamed Hebrew Christians [Acts 2:10; 10]. Paul claims that he did not build on other apostolic foundations (15:20). Ambrosiaster says that the Romans “*had embraced the faith of Christ, albeit according to Jewish rite, without seeing any sign of mighty works or of the apostles.*”

Acts 2:10 includes Jews and proselytes from Rome who were converted at Pentecost. Probably ordinary Jewish Christians both brought the Gospel to Rome and shared it with the gentiles there. It is probable that by the fifth decade of the first century the Christian faith had gained a foothold in the capital of the empire.

In the 28 plus years since Pentecost, many Christians had migrated to and from Rome (see chapter 16). By the time Paul wrote, it had become famous far and wide for its faith (1:8). The Roman church was a mixed group(s) of Jews (1:16; 2:9,10,17; 4:1; 9-11) and gentiles (1:5,6,13; 11:13,18; 15:15,16). Romans was written to prepare the readers for Paul’s visit and to set forth the gospel in advance.

Composition of the Roman Church

The Roman Church was a mixed company (often disharmonious) of Jews and Gentiles

1. Jewish Element: Jews were in Rome as early as the 2nd century B.C. They were expelled by Tiberius in 19 A.D. but soon returned. Later they were expelled by Claudius in the late 40’s A.D. Acts 18:2 - Aquila and Prisca were removed (as Jewish Christians). Suetonius (c. 120 A.D.) says that Claudius “*expelled the Jews from Rome because they were constantly rioting at the instigation of Chrestus (impulsore Chresto)*” (Life of Claudius 25:2). The Jews soon returned, for Paul clearly addresses Jews in Romans (see 1:16; 2:9,10,17; 4:1; 9-11).
2. A Gentile Element is also addressed (see 1:5,6,13; 11:13,18; 15:15,16). Probably these were Gentiles living in Rome who had been converted through the witness of ordinary Jewish Christians who had brought the Gospel to Rome (post Pentecost) and shared it with the Gentiles there. Paul seems to give indication that these Gentiles came from various political and economic levels.

CONTRIBUTION TO CANON

Mitchell:

Although begun as a personal letter, this epistle was undoubtedly intended by the writer to serve as a systematic presentation of the Gospel which he preached. It has been heralded as the most complete single systematic presentation of the great theme of justification by faith. Of all the Pauline epistles, Romans has exerted the most influence on Christian thought.

Martin Luther: “*It is the chief book of the New Testament.*”

Benajah Harvey Carroll (B.H. Carroll - 1843-1914 - Baptist pastor, theologian, teacher, author): “*It is the most fundamental, vital, logical, profound, and systematic discussion of the whole plan of salvation in all the literature of the world.*”

RESOURCES

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As general resources I've relied on my class notes from various professors at Biola University (especially those of Dr. Curtis Mitchell), Western Conservative Baptist Seminary (WCBS), and Talbot Seminary as well as notes shared with me by Annie Kartoizian.

Additional reference material has come from the study Bibles of the English Standard Version, New American Standard Version, and The New Living Translation.

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