

1. **Introduction:** Today we begin a study of Paul's letter to the church at Rome.
 - It will be a verse-by-verse study beginning with information about Paul, the church in Rome, and the meaning of some key words used by Paul.
 - Paul was called by God to evangelize Gentiles (non-Jews) in unreached areas of the Roman Empire, bringing to them the good news that Jesus had made it possible for unrighteous, unholy people to become righteous and holy.
 - Paul spent the winter of 57-58 AD in Corinth staying Gaius, a friend.
 - While in Corinth, Paul prayed and reflected on his missionary work. For 10 years he had evangelized areas of the eastern Mediterranean.
 - He was now convinced his evangelization work in those areas was completed.
 - Others could be depended on to shepherd the churches Paul had founded.
 - Paul's goal was to evangelize the Empire's far western edge in Spain.
 - He planned to go there after a visit to Jerusalem. On his way to Spain, he would stop and spend some time in Rome.
2. **The Church at Rome:** The circumstances of founding the church in Rome are unknown. Tradition says it was founded by Peter, but that tradition is not supported by available historical evidence.
 - It seems more likely the Roman church began as several house churches when Jews from Rome who were converted by Peter in his great Pentecostal preaching in Jerusalem returned home.
 - All we know for sure is that when Paul wrote this letter there was a substantial group of Christians in Rome.
3. Romans 16:3-5a: ***Greet Prisca and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus, ⁴ who risked their necks for my life, to whom not only I give thanks but all the churches of the Gentiles give thanks as well. ⁵ Greet also the church in their house.***
 - When Paul wrote Romans, Christian doctrine was not firmly established. All the young churches were in constant danger from distorted versions of the gospel.
 - The Roman church was a mixed group of converted Gentiles and Jews with Jews in the minority. There appears to have been tension between the two.
 - Almost every point of Christian doctrine was under attack. Doctrinal clarification was needed especially for the vital issues like the nature of God (Trinitarian?), the nature of Jesus (fully man and fully God?), the role of the Holy Spirit, and the relationship of Christians to the moral law.
 - In his letter, Paul provided an excellent exposition of true doctrine followed by powerful examples of applications of the doctrine to daily life.
 - Paul had long yearned to fellowship with the believers there and to learn what they understood about the gospel.

- Gentile churches, founded by Paul, had collected an offering for poor believers in Jerusalem. Paul hoped to go to Jerusalem to deliver the offering, then to Rome for a visit, and from there travel to Spain.
4. **Apostle Paul:** A few years after Jesus' birth, Paul was born in Tarsus of the Syrian-Cilicia province. His Hebrew name was Saul.
- Tarsus was known for high-quality educational institutions. Together with Alexandria and Athens, Tarsus produced many well-known powerful people. It was a Greek-speaking city.
 - As he grew up, Saul was exposed to Greek culture and wisdom.
 - Saul's father was a Roman citizen. Saul was a citizen by birth. Roman citizenship was a valuable privilege that proved of great use to Saul.
 - As far as is known, Saul had one sibling, an older sister. Judging from Saul's education, his family was well-to-do and perhaps wealthy.
 - Like most Jews in Greek-speaking areas, Saul had a Greek name (Paul) as well as his Hebrew birth name. Saul's sister and her son are mentioned in Acts 23:16 and other relatives mentioned in Romans 16:7; 16:11-12.
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5. **Saul to be a Rabbi:** Early in his life, it was decided that Saul should be a Rabbi.
- Since Rabbi's were not permitted to either be paid or accept gifts for rabbinical work, every potential rabbi was trained with a non-rabbinical skill to be used in earning a living. For Saul, that was tent-making.
 - Saul's rabbinical studies began in Tarsus but were continued in Jerusalem under the celebrated Pharisee, Rabbi Gamaliel.
 - Unlike most Pharisees, Gamaliel thought it was OK to study Greek literature and wisdom. Thus, in Jerusalem, Saul continued to be exposed to Greek learning.
 - Greek influence is clearly seen in his logical approach to presenting truth, and in the way he always presents the ultimate principle on which a decision depends.
 - Gamaliel obviously had a lasting influence on Saul's learning and personality.
6. **Saul's First Appearance in the NT:** The first mention of Saul is at Stephen's martyrdom (Acts 7:58-60). Saul had become a vigorous persecutor of believers.

- When he heard of the growing community of believers in Damascus, he sought permission to go there to arrest and bring believers to Jerusalem for punishment.
 - After receiving the necessary authority, he quickly set out for Damascus.
7. **Saul Converted:** Nearing Damascus, Saul experienced a great shock (Acts 9:3-9; 22:6-11; 26:12-18). A bright light from heaven dazzled him. He heard the risen Christ ask *“Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?”*⁵ *And he said, “Who are you, Lord?” And he said, “I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting.”*⁶ *But rise and enter the city, and you will be told what you are to do.”*⁷ *The men who were traveling with him stood speechless, hearing the voice but seeing no one.*⁸ *Saul rose from the ground, and although his eyes were opened, he saw nothing. So they led him by the hand and brought him into Damascus.*⁹ *And for three days he was without sight, and neither ate nor drank.*
- In that experience, Saul was converted, became known as Paul and was commissioned by Christ as a missionary to the Gentiles. Though opposition was fierce, he was faithful.
8. **The Gospel:** Paul received the gospel by direct revelation from Christ.
9. **Galatians 1:11-12:** Paul says, *“For I would have you know brothers, that the gospel that was preached by me is not man’s gospel.”*¹² *For I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ.”*
- As with Moses, John the Baptist, and Jesus, God took Paul into desert wilderness to teach him things he could not learn from flesh and blood.
 - Wilderness schooling, along with a good formal education, provided Paul with a superb basis for the incredible task God assigned to him.
10. **Paul’s Profound Letter:** Paul’s letter to the church in Rome has had a dramatic effect on many people’s lives ever since it left Paul’s hand.
- The letter’s powerful message led to the conversion of men important to the faith, including Augustine, Martin Luther, John Wesley, and many others.
 - Romans is rightly famous both for its doctrinal teaching and practical applications.
 - Paul structured his letter around Habakkuk 2:4b, *“The righteous shall live by faith.”*
11. **Romans 1:16-17:** *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.*¹⁷ *For in the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith, as it is written, ‘The righteous shall live by faith.’*
- The concepts of “salvation,” “righteous,” and “faith” are vital to Paul’s theology.
12. **God’s Law:** We are God’s creation. He loves us though we disobey Him. To train His wayward people about what offends and what pleases Him, He established Law grounded in His righteousness and holy character.
- To earn righteousness under the Law, a person must perfectly obey God’s Law all the time. Since Adam and Eve’s sin, no one has been capable of the required perfect obedience. What then is the purpose of Law for us?
 - The Law teaches us to know what offends and what pleases God. That which offends God is called “sin.” Sin is any lack of conformity to God’s moral character.

13. **What Does Salvation Mean:** “To save” a person means to rescue them from personally threatening danger.
- What personally threatening danger do people face that is beyond their power to deal so that they desperately need God’s salvation?
 - The cartoonist Walt Kelly, through Pogo the possum said, “*We have met the enemy and he is us!*” That is the truth about the human condition.
 - The personally threatening danger that, we in our own power, can do nothing to change, arises from our own thoughts, words, and behavior.
 - We are our own enemy, and we need to be rescued.
14. **Provoking God’s Wrath:** God is righteous and holy. We are unholy and unrighteous. Our thoughts, words, and behavior offend God’s holy nature.
- Our offenses provoke His wrath which is the righteous spontaneous response of His nature to ungodliness and unrighteousness.
15. **Romans 1:18:** *For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth.*
- The personally danger causing people to need God to save them is God’s holy wrath directed at our ungodly, unrighteous thoughts, words, and behavior.
 - Ungodly refers to offenses against God. Unrighteous refers to offenses against people.
 - God’s wrath is bad news. It endangers both present life and the life to come.
 - Paul says the wrath of God “is” revealed. That means God’s wrath is present today.
 - There is a day of wrath coming in end-times (Rm 2:5; 5:9; 8:9). But God’s wrath is present and active right now. How is His wrath being revealed?
16. **God’s Wrath Revealed:** Consider three examples.
- (1.) Universal human death reveals God’s wrath as God’s judgment on humanity’s ungodliness and unrighteousness when Adam and Eve disobeyed.
 - (2.) Universal futility, suffering, and misery experienced by humanity reveals God’s wrath. God subjected creation to futility after Adam and Eve disobeyed (Rm 8:20).
 - (3.) God’s removal of His restraining power from individuals, groups, and nations reveals His wrath. Without God’s restraining power, human thinking and behavior sink deeper and deeper into degradation.
 - Romans 1:24-28 shows what happens when God reveals His wrath against sin by giving people over to follow their own desires, removing all restraint to allow them to become even more sinful.
 - Sinners delight in having freedom to sin at will and yet be able to feel they are good.
17. **God’s Grace and Mercy:** God mingles grace and mercy with His righteous wrath.
- He does so for all people, both believers and unbelievers. One example is God’s common grace that blesses everyone alike.
18. **Matthew 5:45:** *He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.*

- Other examples include God’s orderly creation including His gift of human imagination. Together, the two things enable people to develop marvelous things.
- The miracles of modern medicine enable healing impossible to conceive earlier.
- Technology creates more and more wonderful devices for providing light and heat, transportation, communication, and the ever-expanding applications of computers.
- There is kindness and mercy during God’s wrath. His supernatural grace makes salvation available to everyone who believes.

19. **Romans 2:4-5:** *Or do you presume on the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that God’s kindness is meant to lead you to repentance? But because of your hard and impenitent heart you are storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath when God’s righteous judgment will be revealed.*

20. **Christian Salvation:** Our fallen nature makes it impossible in our own power to gain a “self” who will not offend God, but God can and will provide a solution.

- We rightly call God’s solution to our spiritual problems “salvation.”
- God’s salvation saves people from ungodliness and unrighteousness, thereby saving them from God’s wrath. Salvation transforms a person from the inside-out, changing their inner-most being and setting them on a path of pleasing God.
- Christian salvation is wide-reaching and ultimately delivers people from past, present, and future consequences of sin.
- In His great love for His rebellious human creatures, God provides salvation (John 3:16).
- Salvation is not a single event but rather a step-by-step extended process in which God intervenes in the life of sinners eliminating both legal and ontological issues as He makes them new creatures “in Christ.”
- Salvation pardons a person of the penalties of their sins and their inner being is transformed making them righteous and godly.

21. **Next Lesson:** Our first topics will be (1.) “What issues must salvation fix?” (2.) “Making Salvation manifest in our life?” (3.) Legal pardon of unrighteousness and the death penalty.” (4.) Experiential Righteousness.