

1. **Introduction:** When Paul wrote the letter to the Roman Church, he had never been to Rome.
  - Yet, in the letter, he greeted 26 people by name. The Christians in Rome no doubt had heard about Paul, but being able to personally greet so many specific people connected Paul with the audience to whom he was writing.
  - Paul spent the winter of 57-58 AD in Corinth staying with a friend, Gaius, and it was from there he composed the letter (transcribed by Tertius).
  - The Roman Emperor was Nero who ascended the throne in AD 54 at the age of 16. He ruled until AD 68 when he died at age 30. The early years of Nero's rule were relatively free of Christian persecution.
  - Then there was a great fire in Rome in AD 64. Nero blamed Christians and made them scapegoats for the fire. That began a time of vicious persecution of Christians.
  - When Paul wrote in the winter of 57-58, the Roman church was experiencing a time of relative peace. Paul wrote the letter from Corinth, located at a narrow land bridge between Greece and the Peloponnese.
  - Corinth was a pagan city with a diverse population made up of permanent residents plus a continuous stream of transients. It was known far and wide as a center of extensive gross sexual immorality, pagan religious practices, and idol worship.
  - Paul's comments early in the letter about the sinfulness of humanity was something he could witness every day in Corinth.
  - Despite personally observing humanity's sinfulness, Paul was convinced of the power of God's grace to completely change the life of even the worst of sinners.
2. **Importance of the Letter to Rome:** The letter is the clearest and most systematic presentation of Christian doctrine in all the Bible.
3. **Background:** To live in God's presence in His heaven, a person must be "holy and righteous." Salvation's goal is to enable sinners who are neither holy or righteous to be so justified and transformed they are both legally and experientially holy.
  - Holy means spiritually perfect and pure in God's sight; untainted by evil or sin. Righteousness primarily concerns right conduct toward others.
  - The Bible describes a righteous person as being "just or right." Righteousness is contrasted with the wickedness which comes from gross self-centeredness. Wickedness neither reveres God nor respects people.
  - Paul frequently had to differentiate between right and wrong. He had been well trained in the OT view that right and wrong is primarily a forensic or judicial issue.
  - Right or wrong is to be decided by "what the Righteous Judge would say." To a Hebrew, to be "in the right" was as much a legal status as a moral quality. The Hebrew word for righteous (saddiq) means "in the right." Wicked (rasha) means "in the wrong."
  - To be righteous, one must be "in the right" before God and His Law.

- The question is “how can a sinner be in the right before God?”
  - The OT answer is that the Law of Moses must be always perfectly obeyed. In practice that’s impossible. No one was able to fulfill the righteousness requirement.
  - But, in the Gospel, God reveals a righteousness apart from perfect obedience of the Law that is offered to all who will believe in God and His provision.
4. **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. <sup>17</sup>For in the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith, as it is written, ‘The righteous shall live by faith.’*
- This is exceedingly “good news.” The requirement of perfect obedience to the Law that no one could meet has been replaced by Jesus’ vicarious salvation work.
  - Jesus satisfied all the requirements necessary for redemption as a substitute for on behalf of all for whom His salvation work was vicariously accomplished. He was their substitute.
  - Everyone, who believes in God and His provision for redemption, will be declared legally righteous before God.
  - Through the work of the Holy Spirit, they will be set on a path of transformation leading to becoming spiritually “like Christ” in righteousness and holiness.
5. **Begin Romans Verse-by-Verse:** Paul begins with an extended salutation that includes important comments about Paul, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit.
- Paul adds to a simple format used in many ancient letters. The usual format is “*Paul ... to all those in Rome ... grace ... and peace.*”
6. **Romans 1:1-7:** *Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, <sup>2</sup> which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy Scriptures, <sup>3</sup> concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh <sup>4</sup> and was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord, <sup>5</sup> through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of his name among all the nations, <sup>6</sup> including you who are called to belong to Jesus Christ, <sup>7</sup> To all those in Rome who are loved by God and called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.*
- Paul is a servant (or more accurately a slave) of Christ Jesus, that is, a man totally under the authority and direction of Jesus. That is quite an astounding statement from a man who had believed Jesus to be a false messiah and oppressed Jesus’ followers. He was thoroughly transformed by seeing the risen Jesus.
  - Paul writes to those in Rome who are loved by God and called to be set apart for Him. Paul says that he is an Apostle called to be set apart for the gospel of God.
  - From Acts 9:10-19 we know that, after being confronted by the risen Christ, Paul was sent into Damascus to be told what Jesus required of him.
  - God chose Paul for a specific task that needed the authority of an Apostle.

- To be recognized as an Apostle, a man must have known and been commissioned by Jesus. It is the risen Jesus who commissions Paul.
  - In Galatians 1:1, Paul says it is through God's grace that he is an Apostle, appointed directly by the risen Christ and the Father.
  - His commission as an Apostle was to spread the gospel to the gentile nations.
  - For the remainder of his life, Paul faithfully preached the gospel that had been promised through God's prophets concerning God's Son, ***"who was descended from David according to the flesh and was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by His resurrection from the dead."***
7. **Romans 1:8-15:** *First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because your faith is proclaimed in all the world. <sup>9</sup> For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son, that without ceasing I mention you <sup>10</sup> always in my prayers, asking that somehow by God's will I may now at last succeed in coming to you. <sup>11</sup> For I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to strengthen you— <sup>12</sup> that is, that we may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith, both yours and mine. <sup>13</sup> I do not want you to be unaware, brothers, that I have often intended to come to you (but thus far have been prevented), in order that I may reap some harvest among you as well as among the rest of the Gentiles. <sup>14</sup> I am under obligation both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish. <sup>15</sup> So I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome.*
- Though Paul has not yet visited the people of the Roman church, he knows some of them and knows about all of them from their widely acknowledged faith and good reputation.
  - Paul thanks God for the believers in Rome and prays for them regularly.
  - He had asked God to enable him to visit them for their mutual benefit. So far other obligations hindered his visit, but he now expects to see them soon. He yearns to impart things from the Spirit to strengthen them both.
  - He has much to say to them and expects also to learn from them – faith strengthening faith. Paul then writes a dramatic, heart-felt declaration.
8. **Romans 1:16:** *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.*
- Paul knows, and is not ashamed to acknowledge, that the gospel is the power of God for salvation for all who believe. This is truly good news for a hurting world.
  - By "salvation" Paul means God saving people from the personal threat everyone faces for their unrighteous thoughts, words, and deeds, things that are an offense to God's holy nature that cause those who do them to be objects of God's wrath.
  - Of all the bad things you may want to avoid in life, being an object of God's wrath is the worst of the worst. Yet because of our fallen nature, we are and will be objects of God's wrath – unless He saves us!
  - Paul boldly proclaimed the life affirming gospel in all kinds of situations wherever he went – including while being a prisoner of Rome.

- While in prison, Paul wrote Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians and Philemon. Far from being ashamed of the gospel, Paul gloried in spreading the good news.
  - Today, pressure of circumstances often causes people who are Christians to be ashamed of the gospel and people who are not Christians to ignore it.
  - Since the Fall, no one can achieve righteous standing before God without His intervention. No knowledge, work, sacrifice, or self-merit will suffice.
  - How then can anyone become righteous before God? Only by God's gracious intervention. The key that unlocks the door to righteousness before God is "true faith" in the atoning work of our Lord Jesus Christ.
  - How can this "true faith" be obtained? Paul's answer is only as a gift from God. It cannot be earned but is graciously given by God to those whom He chooses.
  - Nonbelievers don't seek God. God seeks them.
9. **Galatians 2:8-9**: *For by grace, you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, <sup>9</sup> not a result of works, so that no one may boast.*
- From Romans 1:17 to 8:39, Paul explains the why and the consequences of God's incredible gift of faith in the gospel, a gift that is the gateway to salvation.
  - Believing the gospel is the power of God for salvation.
10. **Romans 1:17<sup>NIV</sup>**: *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."*
- God's gift of salvation is by His sovereign grace from first to last.
  - In the gospel, God reveals a righteousness He has made available to people through the atoning work of His Son Jesus Christ.
  - God's gracious gift of righteousness endures throughout mortal life and the life to come. "Righteousness is revealed" refers to the gospel revelation that Jesus' perfect life under the Law, lived in His human nature, earned righteousness under the Law that is sufficient for everyone who believes.
  - Based on Jesus' vicarious earned righteousness God declares believers justified or legally righteous before Him (they have met the Law's requirements).
  - To receive God's gift of righteousness, a person must have firm trust in God (faith), believing God is who He says He is. By means of the life, death, and resurrection of His incarnate Son, He has provided a way to "be in the right before God".
  - Who needs the "righteousness" of salvation and why? Paul's answer is "everyone."
  - All people fall short of God's requirements to be "in the right" before Him. All are guilty of sin. All deserve condemnation for ungodly thoughts, words, and deeds.
  - If one is not "in the right" before God, they are "in the wrong" before Him and hence subject to His righteous wrath.



