

A scroll with a dark, textured border and a lighter, textured center. The scroll is unrolled at the top and bottom, with the edges showing a rough, torn paper texture. The text is centered on the scroll.

The Book of
ROMANS

*Experiencing Life-changing Truth
from the Word of God*

Southern Gables Church

Antonius had missed the weekly meal and worship for the past two weeks, and his heart had cooled somewhat toward the little house-group. A spiritual itch in the back of his spirit warned him, cautioning him concerning his loss of perspective; yet, in recent days he had begun to snuff such thoughts from his mind as quickly as they came. Antonius' bitterness over his current circumstances was growing and slowly obscuring the Truth.

That night the believers were to meet for worship and encouragement. Rumor had it the leaders had received a document from back east somewhere. Although discouraged and tempted to skip the meeting again, Antonius' curiosity was aroused, and he decided to travel the short distance to the neighborhood house at which the fellowship was to meet.

Entering the gathering room, he spoke greetings to several friends, who also looked tired from the day's work. The hostess offered something to drink and friendly banter, but dejection hung like a cloud over the room. When the meal was finished, the group's leader, a good and godly man of almost seventy years, finally arrived. Joseph was a bit out of breath, having come from a meeting with the other leaders halfway across the city. He was visibly moved as he stood smiling before the group of about twenty, his hands shaking slightly from advancing age.

After a few words of introduction Joseph took a deep breath and explained he had talked the other leaders into allowing his group the first reading of the scroll. With a twinkle in his eye the elder said, "I believe you will find this quite relevant." He unrolled the first part of the parchment and began to read with vigor: "Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus...To all in Rome, who are loved by God and called to be his saints...."

Adapted from George Guthrie, Hebrews, NIV Series

In recent months abuse of the church had escalated with the amused approval of the emperor himself, and now emotional fatigue was taking its toll. Footsteps in the hall, a scream in the night, meaningless events that, nevertheless, set Antonius' heart racing. He had been told the cost of following the Messiah, but somehow his experience was different than he expected. In the beginning he thought his joy would never be broken, that he would always feel the presence of God. He had been taught that the Lord, the righteous judge, would vindicate his new covenant people. Did not the Scriptures, speaking of the Messiah, say that God had put "all things in subjection under his feet?" But the church had taken a great beating lately, and members of its various house-groups had become discouraged and were questioning whether Christ was really in control. In their hearts they wondered if God had closed his ears against their cries for relief. Some, in their disillusionment, doubted and left the church altogether.

Antonius BarDavid remembered the traditions of the synagogue and the support of the Jewish community, the joy of the festivals, and the solemn celebration of the Jewish calendar. He appreciated the fellowship of Christ's community, but genuinely missed the traditions of his ancestors—and he missed members of his family. He watched them from a distance as they walked together to market by the Tiber River. Some of them still would not speak to him and passed him on the street as they would a Gentile. That was difficult, and today his loneliness closed in around him like a dark, damp blanket.

To make matters worse he was one of the poorer members of the church. When Antonius became a Christian, he lost his job as a tailor's apprentice in the Jewish Quarter. He now spent his days sorting rotting produce, sweeping the floor, swatting flies, and receiving orders from obnoxious Roman slaves shopping for rich mistresses. He stooped so low as to take pieces of rotten fruit home to supplement his meager food supply. Even rich men's slaves fared better. Earlier in the week, Gaius, the kitchen slave of an equestrian who lived in the area, tossed him a handful of over-ripe figs saying, "Here, Christian! Change your cannibalistic diet by taking a bit of good fruit." Laughter hung with the gnats in the air. To be poor and a Christian invited double portions of ridicule.



Themes of Romans

Having a broader perspective of the themes of Romans will lessen the likelihood of taking relatively minor points of the book and making major issues of them. Proper Bible interpretation attempts to understand what the author (Paul, in this case) was attempting to say to his audience (the Roman church) and then saying essentially the same thing to our modern audience.

In our understanding and/or teaching of this book we must never let it become merely an intellectual exercise of searching for the proper exegesis of the text and quibbling over minor details. And in our attempt to avoid a mere intellectual exercise we must also never use the text as a mere illustration of our own favorite agendas. It is imperative that we understand what the author was saying to real people in real life-situations and then apply that to us.

According to John Stott, Paul's letter of reconciliation has two major themes (Stott 35-36):

"Justification is by grace through faith regardless of race, socio-economic status or works. Thus ALL believers are on the same plane – at the foot of the cross – and standing on common ground they are brothers and sisters with no hierarchy.

The second theme is a re-definition of the "people of God". God's people are not determined by birth, circumcision or Jewish culture but only by faith in Jesus. Jewish and Gentile believers are fully equal before the Lord. The church is one."

C. E. B. Cranfield writes that Romans 1:16b-17 are at the same time both an integral part of Paul's expression of his readiness to preach the gospel in Rome and also the statement of the theological theme

which is going to be worked out in the main body of the epistle” (p18 of *Romans A Shorter Commentary*).

Major Themes

- Mankind’s condition without God (lost, condemned, headed for judgment).
- A relationship with God has always been and is now by grace through faith not by the law or works.
- The results and benefits of a relationship with God.
- God’s sovereignty in salvation.
- The place of the Jews in God’s salvation purposes.
- Life as a “living sacrifice” to God.
- Submission to God-ordained authority.
- Serving one another through our spiritual gifts.
- Loving each other as Christians.
- Living with Christians who are different.

Some of the Questions Romans Will Answer

- Will God actually send to hell all those who are not Christians?
- Don’t all religions lead to God?
- How do I become a Christian?
- How does Christ’s death 2000 years ago apply to me today?
- On what basis does a person become a Christian?
- If I’m saved by grace, does it mean it doesn’t matter if I sin?
- How does a person grow as a Christian?
- What does the Holy Spirit do in my life?
- Can I lose my salvation?
- What are “spiritual gifts” for?
- What kind of faith do you need to become a Christian?
- In what way are the Jews still “God’s chosen people”?
- How do we respond to Christians who live differently than we do?
- What is to be the Christian’s response to a godless government?

The Church in Rome

Antonius sat alone in a deteriorating second-story apartment located in a slum on the slope of Esquiline Hill in Rome. As rain pelted the age-worn wall outside, a plate of bread and vegetables and a cup of sour wine rested on the makeshift table. The room had turned dark with the coming of this storm, and Antonius lit a small oil lamp against the gloom. With the light, hungry roaches materialized, scampering to the dark safety of cracks in the wall. In the apartment next door a baby cried, and the infant’s father screamed obscenities at the infant’s mother. An urgent conversation rose and then faded as an unseen pair of business partners walked down the stairs. Somewhere in the muddy street below a unit of Roman soldiers marched past, driven under sharp orders from its commander. Antonius sat alone, thinking.

That morning his employer, a rough, burly fellow named Brutus, once again turned from the task of pricing fruits and vegetables to ridicule this young Christian. The verbal jabs had become as annoying as the gnats darting to and fro in the shop’s pungent air. Brutus was big, obnoxious, and cruel. Antonius cringed against the man’s emotional blows, wishing he could strike back out of his hurt and embarrassment. Each time he “turned the other cheek” it received a slap in kind. Yet, he bit his lip, nursed his wounded pride, and again asked the Lord’s forgiveness for his thoughts.

Persecution of the church in Rome had yet to result in martyrdom, but since the expulsion of Jews under the Emperor Claudius, Christians had continued to be harassed to various degrees by both Jews and pagans. Upon the expulsion some had suffered imprisonment, beatings, and the seizure of their properties. That was almost fifteen years ago now. Antonius had not been part of the Christian church at that time but had heard about the conflict. In fact his own grandfather, ruler of the Synagogue of the Augustenses, had been one of the most outspoken opponents of the Christians. When at seventeen Antonius converted to Christianity the old man almost died, declaring Antonius dead in a shouting match that ended in tears and a tattered relationship.

7. Conclusions, greetings and benediction

15:14-22	Paul reaffirms his mission to the Gentiles
15:23-33	Paul's plan to visit and his appeal to the Romans
16:1-16	Greetings to various individuals
16:17-20	Warning about divisive people
16:21-24	Greetings from various individuals
16:25-27	Benediction

Romans Overview by Jerry Nelson

Chapters 1-11 What IS true by God's grace?

1:1-3:20	The universal need for a savior
3:21-5:21	God's gracious gift of Jesus/Savior
6:1-8:39	Our new relationship to God in Christ
9:1-11:36	God's credibility and the future of the Jews

Chapters 12-16 What SHOULD BE true of our response to grace?

12:1-2	Living Sacrifices to God (intro to remainder of the book)
12:3-8	The believer's place in the Christian community
12:9-21	How to love one another
13:1-7	Submission to authority
13:8-14	Living as expectant people
14:1-15:13	A plea for unity
15:14-16:27	Conclusions, exhortations and benediction

Romans Annotated Outline by Jerry Nelson

Introduction

1:1-17 Why Paul wants to preach the "gospel" to the Romans.

1. Learning that we NEED to become Christians (1:18-3:20): Everyone is sinful, condemned, and helpless.

1:18-32 a. Even though many people do not have the Bible, they have heard enough truth about God from what God created, truth which they reject, that they are without excuse and condemned.

2:1-3:8 b. Even those who had the Bible stand condemned because they have broken the laws of God. And furthermore the "law" cannot make anyone right with God.

3:9-20 c. Everyone stands condemned before God. And furthermore no one will ever be declared righteous by observing the law.

2. Learning HOW we become Christians (3:21-4:24):

Everyone is sinful, condemned, and helpless (1:18-3:20) but God has made a relationship with him possible through faith in Christ (3:21-4:25).

3:21-31 a. A right relationship with God comes about by faith in Christ and what he did on the cross not by trying to obey the law. Christ's righteousness (holiness) is credited to us.

4:1-25 b. Even the Old Testament person of Abraham is an illustration of that truth - salvation is by faith not by obeying the law.

3. The RESULTS of Justification (5:1-21):

5:1-11 a. One of the great results of salvation by grace through faith is that we are now made right with God - no longer under condemnation but now friends of God.

5:12-21 b. How can righteousness be credited to us? Just as Adam's sin affected everyone so Christ's righteousness (life and sacrificial death) affects all who believe in him.

4. Living our lives AS Christians – Part 1 (6:1-8:39)

(Part 2 is #6 below):

a. If our right relationship with God is by grace and not by what we do, does that mean what we do doesn't matter?

6:1-23 NO! We have been united to Christ (vv1-14) and have become slaves to God (vv15-23).

b. What then is our relationship to the law of God?

7:1-6 Since we died in Christ, we have been freed from trying to be good enough for God by keeping the law. We can now serve God "in the new way of the Spirit."

7:7-13 Is the law bad? No. The law shows us how sinful we are. The law shows how much we need salvation by grace.

AND the law shows us, even as Christians, how far we have to go and how dependent we are on the Spirit of God.

7:14-25 Yes, it is a struggle to live as a true Christian. We are ever dependent on the Holy Spirit. Even as Christians we cannot obey God's law, God's will, simply by our own efforts. We are powerless in the face of sin without the power of the Spirit.

c. Living the Christian life is not by the law (as a legalist) but by the Spirit.

8:1-17 Living a life empowered by the Spirit.

8:18-27 Eagerly awaiting a future resurrection.

8:28-39 Living with full confidence in God's sovereign persevering love.

5. The place of the Jews in God's plan (9:1-11:36):

What is God's plan for the Jews?

9:1-33 a. Israel's "fall". Did God's choice of the Jews fail? On what basis does God choose who will be saved? Whose fault is it that the Jews didn't believe?

10:1-21 b. Israel's "fault". A righteousness of their own and a refusal of God's righteousness by grace through faith.

11:1-36 c. Israel's "future". Israel's election is irrevocable and she will yet respond to God's grace. ("fall, fault and future" from Stott 262)

6. "Living Sacrifices" or "Living our lives as Christians" - Part 2 (Part 1 is in chapters 6-8)

What is each believer's role in the Christian community?

12:1-2 Living sacrifices to God

12:3-8 Humble service

12:9-21 Love in action

13:1-7 Submission to authority

13:8-10 Love for one another

13:11-14 Motivation for Christian living

14:1-15:13 Living in peace with others who are different