

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 properly exegeting 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):

1. **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.
2. 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?

***Romans*, Shorter outline by Jerry Nelson**

Chapters 1-11	What <u>IS</u> 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 <u>SHOULD BE</u> 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

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