Introduction to the Book of Romans

Pauline Authorship

The book of Romans is the greatest and most influential of all the Pauline epistles. Throughout the history of the church, lives have been radically transformed through the impact of Paul’s epistle to the Romans.

For example, Augustine, in 386, was sitting in the garden of a friend, weeping, as he considered making a radical change in his life. The words of a young neighborhood child singing a tune reached his ears, words which invited him to “Take up and read.”

He took up the scroll nearby, a scroll which contained these words from Paul’s Roman epistle: Romans 13:13-14, “Let us behave properly as in the day, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual promiscuity and sensuality, not in strife and jealousy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts.”

Augustine later wrote about his response to these words from the pen of the apostle Paul: “No further would I read, nor had I any need; instantly, at the end of this sentence, a clear light flooded my heart and all the darkness of doubt vanished away (Confessions, viii. 29).”

Then, in November of 1515, Martin Luther, an Augustinian monk who was a professor at the University of Wittenberg, began to expound the Book of Romans to his students. The more he studied Romans, the more he recognized that the Pauline doctrine of justification by faith was central and crucial to the argument of the epistle but he found himself struggling to understand it.

He describes his struggle with Romans and his dramatic conversion when the message came clear to him, he writes, “I greatly longed to understand Paul’s Epistle to the Romans, and nothing stood in the way but that one expression, ‘the righteousness of God,’ because I took it to mean that righteousness whereby God is righteous and deals righteously in punishing the unrighteous … Night and day I pondered until … I grasped the truth that the righteousness of God is that righteousness whereby, through grace and sheer mercy, he justifies us by faith. Thereupon I felt myself to be reborn and to have gone through open doors into paradise. The whole of Scripture took on a new meaning, and whereas before ‘the righteousness of God’ had filled me with hate, now it became to me inexpressibly sweet in greater love. This passage of Paul became to me a gateway to heaven.” (F. F. Bruce, The Epistle of Paul to the Romans; Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, [photolithoprinted] 1969, p. 58. Cited from Luther’s Works, Weimar edition, volume 54, pages 179ff., by Bruce, page 59.)
Luther, in his preface to the Roman letter, wrote, “This Epistle is the chief book of the New Testament, the purest gospel. It deserves not only to be known word for word by every Christian, but to be the subject of his meditation day by day, the daily bread of his soul … The more time one spends in it, the more precious it becomes and the better it appears.” He spoke of it as “a light and way into the whole Scriptures.” (Cited by David N. Steele and Curtis C. Thomas, Romans: An Interpretive Outline; Phillipsburg, New Jersey: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, page 1)

Over two-hundred years later, John Wesley was transformed by this same epistle, he wrote in his journal that he “went very unwillingly to a society in Aldersgate Street, where one was reading Luther’s Preface to the Epistle to the Romans … About a quarter before nine while he was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone, for my salvation; and an assurance was given me that he had taken my sins away, even mine; and saved me from the law of sin and death.” (Cited from Works, volume 1, page 103, by Bruce, page 59)

Calvin said of it “when any one understands this Epistle, he has a passage opened to him to the understanding of the whole Scriptures.” (Cited by David N. Steele and Curtis C. Thomas, Romans: An Interpretive Outline; Phillipsburg, New Jersey: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, page 1).

In this study of Romans, we will present the introduction to the book of Romans in five installments and will deal with the following subjects: (1) Authorship of Romans (2) Recipients of Romans (3) Date and Place of Origin of Romans (4) Occasion and Purpose of Romans (5) Thematic Overview of Romans.

First of all, let’s note the Pauline authorship of the book of Romans. Now, as was the common practice in letter writing in the first century, the epistle to the Romans opens with a statement identifying the author.

Romans 1:1, “Paul, a bond-servant of Christ Jesus, called as an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God.”

Romans has been credited to the apostle Paul from the post-apostolic church to the present day since the language and style of the epistle is consistent with that of Galatians and 1 and 2 Corinthians, which are accepted as being written by Paul.

The early church fathers regularly included Romans in their list of authentic documents. For example, Marcion, the Muratorian fragment, and a steady stream of patristic writers beginning with Ignatius, Polycarp, Justin Martyr, and Irenaeus all assume its Pauline authorship without defense.

The epistle of Romans echoes much of what Paul wrote in his earlier writings. For example, the doctrine of justification by faith appears in both Galatians 2:16 and Romans 3:20-22, and the church as the body of Christ representing Him and
serving Him through the function of various spiritual gifts is taught in both Romans 12 and 1 Corinthians 12.

Also, the collection for the destitute believers at Jerusalem is referred to in Romans 15:25-28 and 2 Corinthians 8-9.

Paul makes more references to himself and his readers in 1 and 2 Corinthians and Galatians since he founded those churches whereas in Romans he makes fewer references to himself and his readers because he did not establish that church. Though Paul makes only one reference to himself by name, the internal evidence supports Pauline authorship.

First of all, he claimed to be from the tribe of Benjamin in Romans 11:1, which is confirmed by Philippians 3:5. Then, he sent greetings to Priscilla and Aquila in Romans 16:3 whom Paul met at Corinth according to Acts 18:2-3 and left Ephesus on his second missionary journey according to Acts 18:18-19.

Paul referred to his journey to Jerusalem with a gift from the churches in Macedonia and Achaia according to Romans 15:25-27, which is confirmed in Acts 19:21, 20:1-5, 21:15, 17-19 and in 1 Corinthians 16:1-5 and 2 Corinthians 8:1-12 and 9:1-5. He mentions several times his desire to visit Rome in Romans 1:10-13, 15; 15:22-23, which is confirmed in Acts 19:21. Therefore, a comparison of these passages supports Paul as the author of Romans.

The only legitimate question about the Pauline authorship of Romans is related to the role of Tertius who in Romans 16:22, writes, “I, Tertius, who write this letter, greet you in the Lord.”

We know that in the first century an “amanuensis” was employed in letter writing, which refers to someone who was hired to write from dictation and write it down in longhand immediately. At other times they would use a form of shorthand (tachygraphy) to take down a letter and then later write it out in longhand.

Sometimes, the amanuensis would get the gist of what a person wanted to say and then be left to relate the ideas in a letter without any help. This third option would not apply to the work of Tertius in Romans unless he was the amanuensis for all of Paul’s unquestioned letters.

The stylistic and semantic similarities with Paul’s other letters calls for a stricter control on what was written down and so it is very doubtful that Paul would have turned over such an important task to Tertius.

The name “Paul” in the Greek is the proper name Paulos (Παῦλος), which means, “little.” Paul had two names, his Jewish name “Saul” and his Roman name “Paul” and he was born and raised in the city of Tarsus.

Tarsus was the principal city of the Roman province of Cilicia in southeast Asia Minor, which is now Turkey (Acts 9:11; 22:3) and was located on the Tarsus River and 12 miles from the Mediterranean coast. The city also welcomed Gaius Julius Caesar with open arms when he visited it in 47 B.C. and after the assassination of
Caesar, Antony gave Tarsus the status of a free city in 42 B.C. and it was also the scene of the famous meeting between Antony and Cleopatra. Its free city status meant that Roman citizenship was to be given to the leading citizens of the community, which of course meant many of the Jews.

Tarsus was a center of Greek culture, ranking next to Athens and Alexandria and the people of Tarsus were known for the zeal for learning and philosophy surpassed only by Athens and Alexandria. Tarsians who studied in their own city were known for completing their education abroad and then making their home in Rome or elsewhere rather than returning to Tarsus.

Paul was born a Roman citizen so therefore his father was a Roman citizen. His father probably acquired his Roman citizenship through his trade as a tentmaker and quite possibly his father or grandfather was granted Roman citizenship by one of the Roman generals, namely Pompey or Antony. A skenopoioi, “tentmaker” was very useful to a Roman general such as Pompey or Antony.

Paul’s native Cilicia fell within the province of both Pompey and Antony during the 1st Century B.C. Both these generals were invested with imperium by Roman law and could grant Roman citizenship to whom they desired to give it to, thus, we can deduce that this probably was the case with Paul’s father or grandfather. His Roman citizenship was quite useful in his ministry and he appeals to his rights as a Roman citizen on more than one occasion during his ministry.

Because Paul was born a Roman citizen, his father would make a declaration in the appropriate record office that his child was a Roman citizen. This was called civem Romanum esse professus est in the Latin and was recorded in the official register and his father would receive a copy in diptych form, which was more than likely certified by witnesses. Paul more than likely carried this declaration around with him in written form to substantiate his claims of Roman citizenship.

Paul’s excellent education in Tarsus and in Jerusalem coupled with his tremendous study habits and genius IQ made him a great scholar. He was fluent in Aramaic, Hebrew, Greek and Latin and his genius can be deduced from his tremendous vocabulary, which he displays in his epistles along with a complete command of the Greek in all its dialects.

Paul communicated in Doric Greek, Ionic Greek, Aeolic Greek, Attic Greek, Hellenistic Greek, and the Koine Greek and his epistles also display Hebraicism’s and Latinism’s. He was a classical Greek scholar as witnessed to the fact that he quotes 2 minor Greek poets in Acts 17:28 and a Cretan poet in Titus 1:12. Quoting Plato or Homer was not significant but quoting minor poets reveals a comprehensive knowledge of Greek literature.

Paul was also a Hebrew scholar and studied alongside the greatest Rabbi in Israel in his day, Gamaliel, who taught in the famous Hillel school according to Acts 22:3.
In Philippians 3:5-6, the apostle Paul gives a composite character sketch of himself prior to salvation, which marked him out as the top young rising star in Judaism.

Philippians 3:1, “Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things again is no trouble to me, and it is a safeguard for you.”

Philippians 3:2-6, “Beware of the dogs, beware of the evil workers, beware of the false circumcision for we are the true circumcision, who worship in the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh, although I myself might have confidence even in the flesh. If anyone else has a mind to put confidence in the flesh, I far more: circumcised the eighth day, of the nation of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the Law, a Pharisee as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to the righteousness which is in the Law, found blameless.”

Here is my corrected translation of Philippians 3:4-6.

Philippians 3:4-6, “Although I myself having confidence in the flesh, if anyone of the same race (i.e., Jewish) claims to have confidence in the flesh and some claim to have confidence in the flesh, I more. With respect to circumcision: eighth day, descended from the nation of Israel, a member of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew (speaking Jew) from Hebrews (Hebrew speaking parents), legalistically: a Pharisee, zealously persecuting the church, self-righteously religious: I conducted myself irreproachably!”

The first four pre-salvation distinctions were inherited by Paul through physical birth and the last three were the result of his own actions. The 1st credential mentioned is “with respect to circumcision: eighth day” demonstrates that Paul’s parents were neither proselytes nor descendants of Ishmael. It refers to the literal ritual surgical procedure performed on a Jewish boy 8 days after his birth and signifies that Paul and his parents were members of the new racial species called the Jews.

The 2nd credential mentioned is “(descended) out from the nation of Israel” demonstrates that Paul was a member of the nation of Israel and emphasizes that he is a direct descendant of Jacob and is a title of nobility and denotes Paul’s theocratic privileges as a citizen of the nation of Israel.

The 3rd credential mentioned “a member of the tribe of Benjamin” denotes the fact that Paul was a member of one of the greatest warrior tribes from the nation of Israel, which also produced the first king of Israel, “Saul”.

The 4th credential mentioned “a Hebrew (speaking Jew) from Hebrews (Hebrew-speaking parents)” denotes the fact that Paul was an orthodox Jew and that he spoke Hebrew, which distinguished him from his fellow Hellenized countryman and also denotes that his parents spoke Hebrew as well.
The 5th pre-salvation credential mentioned “legalistically, a Pharisee” denotes the fact that Paul was an interpreter of the Mosaic Law.

Webster’s New Universal Unabridged Dictionary defines the noun legalism, “strict adherence, or the principle of strict adherence, to law or prescription, especially to the letter rather than the spirit.”

Paul’s pre-salvation experience as a Pharisee was that of strict adherence to the letter of the Law rather than the spirit of the Law. He was Parash or a Rabbi and thus a mark of distinction among his countrymen. Paul pursued a relationship with God through legalism because He did not know the Lord Jesus Christ Who is end of the Law for everyone who believes in Him (Rm. 10:4).

He did not know the Lord Jesus Christ as His Savior; therefore, he was opened to the deception of the kingdom of darkness resulting in his zealous persecution of the church of Christ.

The Law cannot justify an individual before God (Rm. 3:20-28; Gal. 2:16) and could not provide eternal salvation for men (Gal. 3:21-26) and could not solve the problems of the old sin nature (Rm. 8:2-3). Faith alone in Christ alone is the only means of providing salvation for all men (John 3:16, 36; Acts 4:12; 16:31; Eph. 2:8-9).

The 6th pre-salvation credential “zealously persecuting the church” indicates before salvation Paul or Saul of Tarsus belonged to the strictest sect of the Jews, the Zealots and thus reveals his uncompromising patriotism.

Acts 7 presents Paul as leading in the execution of Stephen, the first martyr of the church and Acts 8 records Paul heading to Damascus Syria with authority from the Jewish leaders to persecute Christians and imprison them.

The 7th pre-salvation credential “self-righteously religious: I conducted myself irreproachably!” denotes that Paul was a religious person prior to salvation meaning that before salvation, the apostle Paul was scrupulously faithful and conscientious in adhering to the oral traditions of the Pharisees.

Theologically, religion is the antithesis to Biblical Christianity in that it is the ignorant, presumptuous, vain and arrogant attempt by man to gain the approbation of God by depending upon a legalistic, meritorious system of human works rather than the impeccable Person and Finished Work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul’s conversion to Christianity took place on the road to Damascus. Acts 9:2 records that he had letters of extradition signed by the high priest and was bent on arresting Jewish Christians and taking them back for trial and punishment.

Paul thought he was serving God by persecuting Christians (1 Tim. 1:14). His plans to go to Damascus to persecute Christians were upset when he encountered the risen Jesus (Acts 9:1-16).

He was called as an apostle to the Gentiles by the Lord Himself and not the other apostles (Acts 9:15; 22:21; Rom. 1:1; Gal. 1:16) and he knew the other
apostles (Gal. 1:17) and knew Peter and John by name (Gal. 2:9). He knew our Lord’s brother, James (Gal. 1:19) and he saw the risen Christ on the road to Damascus therefore qualifying him to be an apostle and was blinded by the Lord for three days and Ananias took him into his home.

Paul recovered his sight and spent several days with the disciples in Damascus (Acts 9:18-19) and he immediately began preaching Jesus in the synagogue that He is the Son of God (Acts 9:22).

The Jews then plotted to kill him and he had to be let down in a basket outside the walls of the city so that the Jews would not see him leaving (Acts 9:23-25). In Jerusalem, he tried to associate with the disciples there but they were afraid of him because of his reputation as a violent persecutor the church (Acts 9:26) and Barnabas finally acted as a mediator and brought him to the disciples (Acts 9:27).

He did not go to the other apostles to receive instruction upon his conversion but went to Arabia where he studied the Scriptures (Gal. 1:16-17). He received direct revelation from the Lord Himself (Gal. 1:12) and in fact, he was caught up to the third heaven and saw things that no human being has ever been privileged to see (1 Cor. 12:1-10) and because he received such tremendous revelation from God there was a demon assigned to him to protect him from arrogance (1 Cor. 12:7-10).

Paul wrote half the New Testament and is the principle expounder in the Greek New Testament of the mystery doctrine for the church age and had four missionary journeys during his ministry. He was the most well traveled man in the Roman Empire not to mention the Church and was responsible for numerous churches rising up throughout the Roman Empire. He studied more than the other apostles and thus knew the mind of Christ better than any of them (1 Cor. 15:10) and suffered more for Christ than any of the apostles (1 Cor. 11:24-33). The apostle who never walked with the Lord turned out to be the greatest.

**Destination and Recipients of the Book of Romans**

Next, we will continue with our introduction by noting the destination of this great epistle and its recipients.

In Romans 1:7 and 15, the apostle Paul indicated that he was writing his letter to believers *en Rhome* (ἐν Ῥώμη), “in Rome.”

**Romans 1:1-7,** “Paul, a bond-servant of Christ Jesus, called as an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, which He promised beforehand through His prophets in the holy Scriptures concerning His Son, who was born of a descendant of David according to the flesh, who was declared the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead, according to the Spirit of holiness, Jesus Christ our Lord, through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith among all the Gentiles for
His name's sake, among whom you also are the called of Jesus Christ; to all who are beloved of God in Rome, called as saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.”

Romans 1:8, “First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, because your faith is being proclaimed throughout the whole world.”

Romans 1:9-10, “For God, whom I serve in my spirit in the preaching of the gospel of His Son, is my witness as to how unceasingly I make mention of you, always in my prayers making request, if perhaps now at last by the will of God I may succeed in coming to you.”

Romans 1:11-12, “For I long to see you so that I may impart some spiritual gift to you, that you may be established that is, that I may be encouraged together with you while among you, each of us by the other's faith, both yours and mine.”

Romans 1:13, “I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that often I have planned to come to you (and have been prevented so far) so that I may obtain some fruit among you also, even as among the rest of the Gentiles.”

Romans 1:14, “I am under obligation both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish.”

Romans 1:15, “So, for my part, I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome.”

Even though, Romans 1:7 and 15 indicates quite clearly that Paul was writing to believers in Rome, the issue of the destination of this epistle has been questioned by some scholars.

T. W. Manson thinks that P⁴⁶ reflects the letter as Paul wrote it to the Roman church but that the apostle at the same time sent a copy, minus the indication of Roman destination and with chapter 16 added, to the church at Ephesus indicating that the people mentioned in chapter 16 were Ephesians rather than Romans. More than likely, P⁴⁶ (Paul’s Epistles; A.D. 200) does not contain the prepositional phrase en Rhome (ἐν Ῥώμῃ), “in Rome” due to a tendency by copyists to omit localizing references in liturgical use.

If a copy of Romans was sent by Paul to another church because of the importance of its contents it would not be at all surprising if chapter 16 were omitted as not being of general interest. Someone making a copy of Romans for the use of his own church could have easily omitted chapter 16 since it would be of no interest to his church.

Internal evidence supports the view that Paul wrote specifically to Christians in Rome since he indicates in Romans 15:23-24 that he intended to visit Rome in the hopes that the believers there would support his missionary activities to the West.

Further indicating that Paul was not writing to believers in Ephesus in Romans 16 is that when we compare Romans with his other writings, he appears to refrain
from sending greetings to particular persons in churches he knew. The reason being is that he felt it silly to single out individuals who were his friends whereas in writing to Rome, which he had not yet visited, the sending of greetings to individuals whom he knew would be an obvious way of establishing contact.

It is not surprising that many believers who he met in other places throughout the Roman Empire would have made their way to the capital city, Rome. Therefore, it is clear from internal evidence that this epistle was indeed written to believers in Rome and not Ephesus.

There are several views regarding the establishment of Christianity in Rome. Some have suggested that Christianity was established in Rome by Jewish visitors present in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost (See Acts 2:10, 14) and became believers after hearing Peter preach the Gospel to them (See Acts 2:41).

Upon returning to Rome it is believed by some that these Jewish converts from the day of Pentecost propagated their faith throughout the Jewish and Gentile community. However, the text of Acts 2 does “not” say that the “visitors from Rome” became Christians as a result of hearing Peter’s message on the day of Pentecost.

Paul did “not” establish the church in Rome, nor had he yet been to Rome at the time of the writing of his epistle to the Romans since Romans 1:8 records that he heard reports about the faith of the Romans believers.

Romans 1:10-13 reveals that he prayed for the Roman believers and told them that he looked forward to the day when he could visit Rome to minister to them, as well as to be encouraged by their faith. Further indicating that Paul had a great knowledge of the church in Rome is that Acts 18 records that he crossed paths with Priscilla and Aquila who had just come to Corinth from Rome and who are mentioned in Romans 16:3-4.

Romans 16:1-2, “I commend to you our sister Phoebe, who is a servant of the church which is at Cenchrea that you receive her in the Lord in a manner worthy of the saints, and that you help her in whatever matter she may have need of you; for she herself has also been a helper of many, and of myself as well.”

Romans 16:3-4, “Greet Prisca and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus, who for my life risked their own necks, to whom not only do I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles.”

Acts 18:1, “After these things he left Athens and went to Corinth.”

Acts 18:2-3, “And he found a Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, having recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to leave Rome. He came to them, and because he was of the same trade, he stayed with them and they were working, for by trade they were tent-makers.”
Undoubtedly, Paul gained a great deal of information about the believers in Rome from Aquila and Priscilla. His concern for the believers at Rome grew because of his contact with this couple.

If those named in Romans 16:3-16 are all believers living in Rome, Paul knew a great deal about the individual believers in Rome. Paul expressed his intention of going through Macedonia and Achaia to Jerusalem and from there to Rome when he was at Ephesus according to Acts 19:21.

Acts 19:21, “Now after these things were finished, Paul purposed in the spirit to go to Jerusalem after he had passed through Macedonia and Achaia, saying, ‘After I have been there, I must also see Rome.’”

Paul eventually reached Rome but not in the way he might have expected since he arrived as a prisoner of the Roman government and was appealing his case to Caesar as a Roman citizen. Upon his arrival in Rome, however, he was warmly greeted by the brethren and encouraged, as he had hoped according to Acts 28:14-17.

Paul’s first visit to Rome lasted two full years according to Acts 28:30. While Paul was not free to travel about Rome, he was free to have visitors at his rented quarters, and so he was able to minister to all who came to him (28:30).

Contrary to the teaching of the Roman Catholic Church, the apostle Peter did “not” establish the church at Rome either since if he had founded the church at Rome, Paul would have addressed him in the epistle to the Romans. If Paul failed to acknowledge Peter, then this would be a terrible oversight on the part of Paul. So the absence of Paul greeting Peter in Romans 16 is evidence that Peter was not in Rome at the time.

Further indicating that Peter did not establish the church at Rome is that Paul states in Romans 15:20 his determination to not build on someone else’s foundation, which makes it highly unlikely that Peter started the church in Rome.

Romans 15:13, “Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you will abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.”

Romans 15:14, “And concerning you, my brethren, I myself also am convinced that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge and able also to admonish one another.”

Romans 15:15-16, “But I have written very boldly to you on some points so as to remind you again, because of the grace that was given me from God to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles, ministering as a priest the gospel of God, so that my offering of the Gentiles may become acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit.”

Romans 15:17, “Therefore in Christ Jesus I have found reason for boasting in things pertaining to God.”
Romans 15:18-19, “For I will not presume to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me, resulting in the obedience of the Gentiles by word and deed, in the power of signs and wonders, in the power of the Spirit; so that from Jerusalem and round about as far as Illyricum I have fully preached the gospel of Christ.”

Romans 15:20, “And thus I aspired to preach the gospel, not where Christ was already named, so that I would not build on another man's foundation.”

Romans 15:21, “but as it is written, ‘THEY WHO HAD NO NEWS OF HIM SHALL SEE, AND THEY WHO HAVE NOT HEARD SHALL UNDERSTAND.’”

Romans 15:22-25, “For this reason I have often been prevented from coming to you but now, with no further place for me in these regions, and since I have had for many years a longing to come to you whenever I go to Spain for I hope to see you in passing, and to be helped on my way there by you, when I have first enjoyed your company for a while but now, I am going to Jerusalem serving the saints.”

Another suggestion put forth by many regarding the establishment of Christianity in Rome is that Rome was evangelized by the missionary activities of the church at Antioch but there is no evidence of this. The most reasonable and likely scenario surrounding the establishment of Christianity in Rome is that it was founded by ordinary believers, both Jew and Gentile, who traveled back and forth to the capital city for a variety of reasons or simply had taken up residence there.

The numerous greetings to individuals in Romans 16 reveals the impact of Paul’s ministry in the development of the church in Rome since many of the believers there were converts of Paul or associates in other parts of the Roman Empire. Therefore, Paul had a great interest in the Christian community of Rome and considered the church there his responsibility.

The church in Rome was composed of both Jew and Gentile believers. Aquila was a Jew according to Acts 18:2 as were Andronicus, Junias and Herodian, who are identified as Paul’s relatives in Romans 16:7 and 11. Josephus relates that there was a large Jewish colony in Rome, which Acts 28:17-28 confirms. There were approximately fifty thousand Jews in Rome grouped in synagogues.

The private secretary of the emperor Hadrian, Suetonius wrote that in A.D. 49 Claudius had “expelled from Rome Jews who were making constant disturbances at the instigation of Chrestus” (Life of Claudius 25.2).

“Chrestus” is a corruption of the Greek Christos, “Christ.” This was the decree mentioned in Acts 18:2, which caused Aquila and Priscilla to leave Rome and go to Corinth. Evidently, there were disputes in the Jewish community over the claims of some that Jesus of Nazareth was the Messiah. From the edict of Claudius, the church in Rome became predominately Gentile.
Romans 2:17-24 is clearly addressed to the Jewish contingent in the Roman church but in Romans 11:13 he directly said, “I am speaking to you Gentiles.”

Romans 2:17-21, “But if you bear the name ‘Jew’ and rely upon the Law and boast in God, and know His will and approve the things that are essential, being instructed out of the Law, and are confident that you yourself are a guide to the blind, a light to those who are in darkness, a corrector of the foolish, a teacher of the immature, having in the Law the embodiment of knowledge and of the truth, you, therefore, who teach another, do you not teach yourself? You who preach that one shall not steal, do you steal?”

Romans 2:22, “You who say that one should not commit adultery, do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols, do you rob temples?”

Romans 2:23, “You who boast in the Law, through your breaking the Law, do you dishonor God?”

Romans 2:24, “For ‘THE NAME OF GOD IS BLASPHEMED AMONG THE GENTILES BECAUSE OF YOU,’ just as it is written.”

Romans 2:25, “For indeed circumcision is of value if you practice the Law; but if you are a transgressor of the Law, your circumcision has become uncircumcision.”

Romans 2:26, “So if the uncircumcised man keeps the requirements of the Law, will not his uncircumcision be regarded as circumcision?”

Romans 2:27, “And he who is physically uncircumcised, if he keeps the Law, will he not judge you who though having the letter of the Law and circumcision are a transgressor of the Law?”

Romans 2:28, “For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh.”

Romans 2:29, “But he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that which is of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter; and his praise is not from men, but from God.”

Romans 9:3-5 and 11:17-32 and 15:14-16 clearly indicate that Gentile Christians made up a large segment of Paul’s readership in the letter to the Romans.

Romans 11:26-27, “and so all Israel will be saved; just as it is written, ‘THE DELIVERER WILL COME FROM ZION, HE WILL REMOVE UNGODLINESS FROM JACOB.’ THIS IS MY COVENANT WITH THEM, WHEN I TAKE AWAY THEIR SINS.’”

Romans 11:28-29, “From the standpoint of the gospel they are enemies for your sake, but from the standpoint of God’s choice they are beloved for the sake of the fathers for the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable.”

Romans 11:30-31, “For just as you once were disobedient to God, but now have been shown mercy because of their disobedience, so these also now have
been disobedient, that because of the mercy shown to you they also may now be shown mercy.”

Romans 11:32, “For God has shut up all in disobedience so that He may show mercy to all.”

Romans 1:5 and 13 imply that Paul considered the Christian community in Rome predominately Gentile. Romans 16:3-16 reveals that some believers had been Christians longer than Paul (See Romans 16:7) and some had large houses, which served as meeting places for Christians (See Romans 16:5).

Romans 16:1-2, “I commend to you our sister Phoebe, who is a servant of the church which is at Cenchrea that you receive her in the Lord in a manner worthy of the saints, and that you help her in whatever matter she may have need of you; for she herself has also been a helper of many, and of myself as well.”

Romans 16:3-4, “Greet Prisca and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus, who for my life risked their own necks, to whom not only do I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles.”

Romans 16:5, “also greet the church that is in their house. Greet Epaenetus, my beloved, who is the first convert to Christ from Asia.”

Romans 16:6, “Greet Mary, who has worked hard for you.”

Romans 16:7, “Greet Andronicus and Junias, my kinsmen and my fellow prisoners, who are outstanding among the apostles, who also were in Christ before me.”

Romans 16:8, “Greet Ampliatus, my beloved in the Lord.”

Romans 16:9, “Greet Urbanus, our fellow worker in Christ, and Stachys my beloved.”

Romans 16:10, “Greet Apelles, the approved in Christ. Greet those who are of the household of Aristobulus.”

Romans 16:11, “Greet Herodion, my kinsman. Greet those of the household of Narcissus, who are in the Lord.”

Romans 16:12, “Greet Tryphaena and Tryphosa, workers in the Lord. Greet Persis the beloved, who has worked hard in the Lord.”

Romans 16:13, “Greet Rufus, a choice man in the Lord, also his mother and mine.”

Romans 16:14, “Greet Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermes, Patrobas, Hermas and the brethren with them.”

Romans 16:15, “Greet Philologus and Julia, Nereus and his sister, and Olympas, and all the saints who are with them.”

Romans 16:16, “Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the churches of Christ greet you.”
Many in the Christian community in Rome were undoubtedly slaves and some were from the higher echelons of society in Rome such as Pomponia Graecina, the wife of the Roman general Aulus Plautius who commanded the British expedition in A.D. 43. She was acquitted on the charge of embracing a “foreign superstition,” a reference to Christianity (Tacitus, Annals 13.32).

The majority of Romans viewed Christianity as simply another disgusting Oriental superstition, such as the historian Tacitus.

Tacitus writes, “Christus, from whom the name (Christians) had its origin, suffered the extreme penalty during the reign of Tiberius at the hands of one of our procurators, Pontius Pilatus, and a most mischievous superstition, thus checked for the moment broke out not only in Judea, the first source of the evil, but even in Rome, where all things hideous and shameful from every part of the world find their centre and become popular” (Annals XV, 44).

**Date and Place of Origin of the Book of Romans**

Next, we will determine the place of origin of the book of Romans through a comparison of Scripture with Scripture, which reveals that Paul wrote Romans from the city of Corinth. The first passage we will note is Romans 15:13-29, which describes his situation at the time of writing and laid out his plans for the future, which helps us to determine the date and place of origin of the Roman epistle.

Romans 15:13, “Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you will abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.”

Romans 15:14, “And concerning you, my brethren, I myself also am convinced that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge and able also to admonish one another.”

Romans 15:15-16, “But I have written very boldly to you on some points so as to remind you again, because of the grace that was given me from God to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles, ministering as a priest the gospel of God, so that my offering of the Gentiles may become acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit.”

Romans 15:17, “Therefore in Christ Jesus I have found reason for boasting in things pertaining to God.”

Romans 15:18-19, “For I will not presume to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me, resulting in the obedience of the Gentiles by word and deed, in the power of signs and wonders, in the power of the Spirit; so that from Jerusalem and round about as far as Illyricum I have fully preached the gospel of Christ.”
Romans 15:20, “And thus I aspired to preach the gospel, not where Christ was already named, so that I would not build on another man's foundation.”

Romans 15:21, “but as it is written, ‘THEY WHO HAD NO NEWS OF HIM SHALL SEE, AND THEY WHO HAVE NOT HEARD SHALL UNDERSTAND.’”

Romans 15:22-25, “For this reason I have often been prevented from coming to you but now, with no further place for me in these regions, and since I have had for many years a longing to come to you whenever I go to Spain for I hope to see you in passing, and to be helped on my way there by you, when I have first enjoyed your company for a while but now, I am going to Jerusalem serving the saints.”

Romans 15:26, “For Macedonia and Achaia have been pleased to make a contribution for the poor among the saints in Jerusalem.”

Romans 15:27, “Yes, they were pleased to do so, and they are indebted to them. For if the Gentiles have shared in their spiritual things, they are indebted to minister to them also in material things.”

Romans 15:28, “Therefore, when I have finished this, and have put my seal on this fruit of theirs, I will go on by way of you to Spain.”

Romans 15:29, “I know that when I come to you, I will come in the fullness of the blessing of Christ.”

Notice that Paul conveys to the Roman believers that he had completed his work in the eastern regions in verse 23 and in verse 19 he states “from Jerusalem and round about as far as Illyricum.”

Also, in verse 20, he states that it had always been his ambition “to preach the gospel where Christ was not known” and in verse 24, he states that he planned to go west to Spain and visit the Christian community in Rome as he passed through.

He relates to the Roman church that he would enjoy their company and seek their help for his journey. However, in verses 25 and 26, Paul tells them he had to fulfill the responsibility of taking the contribution from the churches in Macedonia and Achaia to the destitute Christian community in Jerusalem and then he would go to Spain.

This period that Paul is describing corresponds to the period near the close of his third missionary journey, which is recorded in Acts 18:23-21:14 and took place from 53-57 A.D.


During Paul’s third missionary journey, he wrote his main doctrinal letters: (1) 1 Corinthians (written from Ephesus in A.D. 55) (2) 2 Corinthians (written from Macedonia in A.D. 56) (3) Romans (written from Corinth in A.D. 57).

The time of Paul’s departure for his 3rd missionary journey is late summer 53 and the time of arrival in Jerusalem around Pentecost 57. Paul had ministered in Ephesus for two to three years according to Acts 19:1-10. From Ephesus, Paul went through Macedonia and Achaia according to a comparison of Acts 19:21 and 20:1.

He arrived in Greece “where he stayed three months” according to Acts 20:3. It was at this time that Paul wrote Romans but where in Greece did he write the book?

During Paul’s time in Greece he stayed in Corinth or its port city of Cenchrea according to his statements in 1 Corinthians 16:1-8, which was written toward the end of his stay at Ephesus, less than a year before according to 1 Corinthians 16:8.

Paul tells the Corinthians that he might stay with them through the winter and it was during this stay in Corinth towards the end of his third missionary journey that Paul wrote the Roman epistle.

Further supporting Corinth as the place of origin for Paul’s Roman epistle are several statements he makes in Romans 16. For example, in Romans 16:23, Paul passes along the greetings of a man named Gaius, his host who appears to be the same individual Paul baptized in Corinth according to 1 Corinthians 1:14.

Romans 16:23, “Gaius, host to me and to the whole church, greets you. Erastus, the city treasurer greets you, and Quartus, the brother.”

1 Corinthians 1:14, “I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius.”

Erastus mentioned in Romans 16:23 who is identified by Paul as the “city treasurer” indicates that he is the same individual mentioned in a Corinthian inscription as “procurator of public buildings,” which is further confirmed by Paul’s statement in 2 Timothy 4:20 that “Erastus stayed in Corinth.”

Also, in Romans 16:1, Paul commended Phoebe to the church at Rome and he identifies her as “a servant of the church in Cenchrea.”

Romans 16:1-2, “I commend to you our sister Phoebe, who is a servant of the church which is at Cenchrea that you receive her in the Lord in a manner worthy of the saints, and that you help her in whatever matter she may have need of you; for she herself has also been a helper of many, and of myself as well.”
Therefore, we can see from a comparison of passages that Paul wrote to the believers in Rome while residing in Corinth at the end of his third missionary journey.

The book of Romans was written in approximately 56 or 57 A.D.
Robert H. Mounce commenting on the date of the Roman epistle, writes, “We know that it falls between the time when Gallio was proconsul at Corinth (Acts 18:12, 14, 17) and the replacement of Felix by Festus as procurator in Palestine (24:27). The first date is established by an inscription at Delphi that shows that Gallio became proconsul in A.D. 51 or 52. Since senatorial proconsuls held office for one or two years and because we do not know whether the inscription was made early or late in his term of office, the best we can judge is that he served sometime during the period of A.D. 50-54. Since a period of some four years separates the two visits to Corinth (18:1-18; 20:3), Romans apparently was written between A.D. 54 and 58. Numismatic (pertaining to coins) evidence indicates that Felix became procurator of Judea in A.D. 59, at which time Paul was in custody in Caesarea (23:33-27:2). Allowing time for the journey from Corinth to Jerusalem and the subsequent activity prior to his appearance before Festus, a date somewhere around A.D. 56 would be most likely for the composition of Romans.” (The New American Commentary, volume 27, Romans, pages 25-26; Broadman and Holman Publishers)
C.E.B. Cranfield commenting on the date of Romans writes “either the last few days of A.D. 55 and the first few weeks of A.D. 56 or with the last few days of A.D. 56 and the first few weeks of A.D. 57.” (Romans: A Shorter Commentary, page xi. William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, Michigan)

The chart below lists the places and dates of Paul’s epistles.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Book</th>
<th>Place</th>
<th>Date</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Galatians</td>
<td>Antioch of Syria</td>
<td>40-49 after Paul’s 1st Missionary journey</td>
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<tr>
<td>1 Thessalonians</td>
<td>Corinth</td>
<td>50-54 in Paul’s 2nd Missionary journey</td>
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<td>1 Thessalonians</td>
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<td>1 Corinthians</td>
<td>Ephesus</td>
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<td>2 Corinthians</td>
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<td>Romans</td>
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<td>Ephesians</td>
<td>Rome</td>
<td>60, Paul’s 1st Roman imprisonment</td>
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<td>Philippians</td>
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<td>1 Timothy</td>
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<td>2 Timothy</td>
<td>Rome</td>
<td>67, Paul’s 2nd Roman imprisonment</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hebrews</td>
<td>Rome</td>
<td>68-69, Paul’s 2nd Roman imprisonment</td>
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Occasion and Objectives for Writing to the Romans

The specific “occasion” for Paul’s writing this letter to believers in the city of Rome was Phoebe’s projected trip to Rome according to Romans 16:1-2.

Romans 16:1-2, “I commend to you our sister Phoebe, who is a servant of the church which is at Cenchrea that you receive her in the Lord in a manner worthy of the saints, and that you help her in whatever matter she may have need of you; for she herself has also been a helper of many, and of myself as well.”

The apostle Paul had several objectives in writing this epistle to believers in the city of Rome.

The most obvious reason for writing to the believers in Rome was to announce his plans to visit them after his return to Jerusalem and to prepare them for his arrival according to Romans 15:24-29, which can be compared with Acts 19:21.

Acts 19:21, “Now after these things were finished, Paul purposed in the spirit to go to Jerusalem after he had passed through Macedonia and Achaia, saying, ‘After I have been there, I must also see Rome.’”
Paul wanted to inform the Christian community in Rome of his plans and to have them anticipate and pray for their fulfillment according to Romans 15:30-32.

Romans 15:13, “Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you will abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.”

Romans 15:14, “And concerning you, my brethren, I myself also am convinced that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge and able also to admonish one another.”

Romans 15:15-16, “But I have written very boldly to you on some points so as to remind you again, because of the grace that was given me from God to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles, ministering as a priest the gospel of God, so that my offering of the Gentiles may become acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit.”

Romans 15:17, “Therefore in Christ Jesus I have found reason for boasting in things pertaining to God.”

Romans 15:18-19, “For I will not presume to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me, resulting in the obedience of the Gentiles by word and deed, in the power of signs and wonders, in the power of the Spirit; so that from Jerusalem and round about as far as Illyricum I have fully preached the gospel of Christ.”

Romans 15:20, “And thus I aspired to preach the gospel, not where Christ was already named, so that I would not build on another man's foundation.”

Romans 15:21, “but as it is written, ‘THEY WHO HAD NO NEWS OF HIM SHALL SEE, AND THEY WHO HAVE NOT HEARD SHALL UNDERSTAND.’”

Romans 15:22-25, “For this reason I have often been prevented from coming to you but now, with no further place for me in these regions, and since I have had for many years a longing to come to you whenever I go to Spain for I hope to see you in passing, and to be helped on my way there by you, when I have first enjoyed your company for a while but now, I am going to Jerusalem serving the saints.”

Romans 15:26, “For Macedonia and Achaia have been pleased to make a contribution for the poor among the saints in Jerusalem.”

Romans 15:27, “Yes, they were pleased to do so, and they are indebted to them. For if the Gentiles have shared in their spiritual things, they are indebted to minister to them also in material things.”

Romans 15:28, “Therefore, when I have finished this, and have put my seal on this fruit of theirs, I will go on by way of you to Spain.”

Romans 15:29, “I know that when I come to you, I will come in the fullness of the blessing of Christ.”
Romans 15:30-32, “Now I urge you, brethren, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to strive together with me in your prayers to God for me, that I may be rescued from those who are disobedient in Judea, and that my service for Jerusalem may prove acceptable to the saints so that I may come to you in joy by the will of God and find refreshing rest in your company.”

Also, another objective for writing to the believers in Rome was to solicit their material and financial support for his journey to Spain according to Romans 15:24. He evidently hoped that Rome would become a base of operations and support for his pioneer missionary work in Spain and the western portions of the empire that he had not yet evangelized. His full exposition of the gospel in this letter would have provided a solid foundation for their participation in this mission.

In Romans 15:23, Paul conveys to the Roman believers that he had completed his work in the eastern regions and then in Romans 15:19 he states “from Jerusalem and round about as far as Illyricum.”

Also, in Romans 15:20, he states that it had always been his ambition “to preach the gospel where Christ was not known” and in Romans 15:24, he states that he planned to go west to Spain and visit the Christian community in Rome as he passed through.

In Romans 15:25-26, Paul tells the Roman believers that he had to fulfill the responsibility of taking the contribution from the churches in Macedonia and Achaia to the poor in Jerusalem and then he would go to Spain.

The believers in Rome had long been on Paul’s heart and prayer list for along time according to Romans 1:9-10 and he had long desired to visit them but had not done so according to Romans 1:11-15 and 15:22-32.

Romans 1:1-7, “Paul, a bond-servant of Christ Jesus, called as an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, which He promised beforehand through His prophets in the holy Scriptures concerning His Son, who was born of a descendant of David according to the flesh, who was declared the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead, according to the Spirit of holiness, Jesus Christ our Lord, through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith among all the Gentiles for His name’s sake, among whom you also are the called of Jesus Christ; to all who are beloved of God in Rome, called as saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.”

Romans 1:8, “First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, because your faith is being proclaimed throughout the whole world.”

Romans 1:9-10, “For God, whom I serve in my spirit in the preaching of the gospel of His Son, is my witness as to how unceasingly I make mention of
you, always in my prayers making request, if perhaps now at last by the will of God I may succeed in coming to you.”

Romans 1:11-12, “For I long to see you so that I may impart some spiritual gift to you, that you may be established that is, that I may be encouraged together with you while among you, each of us by the other's faith, both yours and mine.”

Romans 1:13, “I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that often I have planned to come to you (and have been prevented so far) so that I may obtain some fruit among you also, even as among the rest of the Gentiles.”

Romans 1:14, “I am under obligation both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish.”

Romans 1:15, “So, for my part, I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome.”

Romans 1:12 also reveals another objective that Paul had for writing to the Christian community in Rome, which was to minister to them and to be ministered to by them.

Another purpose Paul had for writing to believers in the city of Rome was to present a complete and detailed statement of the gospel message he was proclaiming throughout the Roman Empire as we read in Romans 1:15.

Paul wanted to give a detailed statement regarding his gospel message that he communicated throughout the Roman Empire in anticipation of his opponents, the Judaizers, who had misrepresented his message and vilified his character wherever he went (See Acts 15:1-2; 2 Corinthians 10:10; Galatians 4:17). Therefore, it was important for Paul to lay down in writing for the church in Rome the message that he proclaimed everywhere.

The Judaizers were composed of both regenerate and unregenerate Jews who taught strict adherence to the 613 mandates found in the Mosaic Law as well as the oral traditions of the Rabbis, which are now, documented in the Mishna and the Talmud as well.

Many of the Judaizers were believers since Acts 6:7, 15:5 and 21:20 state that many of the priests and Pharisees who were teachers of the Mosaic Law believed in Jesus Christ for salvation but after salvation they still adhered to the Mosaic Law rather than the mystery doctrine for the church age that Paul was teaching.

The Judaizers followed Paul throughout his missionary journey’s seeking to discredit and destroy his ministry (Acts 13:45; 17:5). Paul denounces the teaching of the Judaizers in the book of Galatians since they taught a “different gospel” according to Galatians 1:6 and “distorted the gospel of Christ” (Gal. 1:7).

The Judaizers taught that one had to observe and practice the Mosaic Law in order to get saved whereas Paul taught that salvation by grace through faith in Christ and not through the works of the Mosaic Law (Eph. 2:8-9; Gal. 2:16).
Galatians 2:16, “Nevertheless knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the Law but through faith in Christ Jesus, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, so that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the Law; since by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified.”

Ephesians 2:8-9, “For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God, not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.”

In Philippians 3:1-3 Paul issues a warning to the Philippians to beware of the Judaizers and their legalistic teaching, in which they taught that man must be circumcised in order to be saved.

Philippians 3:2, “Beware of those dogs, beware of those evil workers, beware of the mutilation.”

The Galatians, who were Gentiles, fell victim to the teaching of the Judaizers regarding circumcision and that one must keep the Law in order to be saved and thus justified before God (See Galatians 3 and 5). Therefore, Paul wrote to the believers in Rome because the believers there needed a systematic statement of the gospel as Paul communicated it, which would serve to protect them from the false teaching of the Judaizers.

Another objective for writing this epistle was to establish his position on the relationship between the Gentile Christians and the Jewish Christians and deal with any possible tension between the two (See Romans 14-15). Evidently, Paul’s statements in Romans 14-15 reveal that Jewish Christians were being rejected by the larger Gentile group in the church because the former felt constrained to observe the various dietary laws and sacred days in the Mosaic Law.

In relation to establishing his position on the relationship between the Gentile Christians and the Jewish Christian community, Paul emphasized that the gospel must go to “the Jew first and then to the Gentile” in Romans 1:16, which can be compared with Romans 2:9-10. He stressed the advantages of being a Jew in Romans 3:1-2 and 9:4-5. On the other hand, Paul emphasized that God is the God of the Gentiles as well as the Jews in Romans 3:29-30.

He taught in this epistle that both Jew and Gentiles are guilty before a holy God in Romans 3:1-10 and are all saved by the same means, namely, faith in Jesus Christ (See Romans 3:21-31).

In Romans 9-11, Paul also taught the Roman believers in this epistle that God has temporarily suspended His program with Israel in order to incorporate the Gentiles into His program of salvation.

Romans 11:25, “For I do not want you, brethren, to be uninformed of this mystery so that you will not be wise in your own estimation -- that a partial hardening has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in.”
Thematic Overview of the Book of Romans

An “overview” is a general idea or outline of a subject whereas the term “thematic” pertains to a theme and so a “thematic overview” is a general outline of a particular theme of a book. Therefore, we will study the general outline of the theme of the book of Romans.

The introduction to the epistle of Romans is contained in Romans 1:1-17 and deals with the revelation of God’s righteousness. The salutation of the letter is contained in Romans 1:1-7, which identifies the writer as Paul (verse 1) and the recipients of the letter as being believers in Rome (verses 6 and 7) and the subject as being Jesus Christ (verse 1:2-5). Romans 1:8-13 reveals the purpose of the epistle, namely to benefit the believers in Rome and preach the gospel there.

Romans 1:1-7, “Paul, a bond-servant of Christ Jesus, called as an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, which He promised beforehand through His prophets in the holy Scriptures concerning His Son, who was born of a descendant of David according to the flesh, who was declared the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead, according to the Spirit of holiness, Jesus Christ our Lord, through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith among all the Gentiles for His name's sake, among whom you also are the called of Jesus Christ; to all who are beloved of God in Rome, called as saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.”

Romans 1:8, “First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, because your faith is being proclaimed throughout the whole world.”

Romans 1:9-10, “For God, whom I serve in my spirit in the preaching of the gospel of His Son, is my witness as to how unceasingly I make mention of you, always in my prayers making request, if perhaps now at last by the will of God I may succeed in coming to you.”

Romans 1:11-12, “For I long to see you so that I may impart some spiritual gift to you, that you may be established that is, that I may be encouraged together with you while among you, each of us by the other's faith, both yours and mine.”

Romans 1:13, “I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that often I have planned to come to you (and have been prevented so far) so that I may obtain some fruit among you also, even as among the rest of the Gentiles.”

In Romans 1:14-17, Paul informs his readers that the theme of his letter is that the gospel reveals the righteousness of God to all mankind and is the power of God for salvation, which is appropriated by faith in Jesus Christ.
Romans 1:14, “I am under obligation both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish.”

Romans 1:15, “So, for my part, I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome.”

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 for in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, ‘BUT THE RIGHTEOUS man SHALL LIVE BY FAITH.’”

In the Greek New Testament, the word for “righteousness” is the noun *dikaiosune* (δικαιοσύνη), which was used as a general term for “virtue” and “integrity” of character.

Webster’s New Universal Unabridged Dictionary defines “integrity”: (1) Soundness of and adherence to moral principle and character; uprightness; honesty (2) The state of being whole, entire, or undiminished (3) A sound, unimpaired, or perfect condition.

Webster’s New Universal Unabridged Dictionary defines “virtue”: (1) Moral excellence; goodness; righteousness (2) Conformity of one’s life and conduct to moral and ethical principles; uprightness, rectitude.

In the Greek New Testament, the noun *dikaiosune* was used primarily to denote an attribute of God and to describe His relationship to both Israel and the Gentiles.

The Bible teaches that there are 2 categories of righteousness: (1) Absolute righteousness originating in the essence of God revealed by the Spirit in the Word of God and in the Person of Christ (2) Relative righteousness, which is rooted in man’s comparison of himself with other men.

In relation to the Christian, the noun *dikaiosune*, “righteousness” refers to fulfilling one’s obligations to love both God and men, doing right to both God and men.

Also, in the Greek New Testament, the noun *dikaiosune* is used in relation to the righteousness of Christ that is reproduced by the Spirit in the believer who is obedient to the Word of God, which constitutes living in the new Christ nature.

The Lord Jesus Christ is the believer’s righteousness.

1 Corinthians 1:30, “But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption.”

The Word of God trains the believer to live in the righteousness of Christ.

2 Timothy 3:16-17, “All Scripture is God-breathed and is profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.”

Now, in Romans 1:18-3:20, the apostle Paul demonstrates to his readers that both Gentile and Jew have a need for the righteousness of God. In Romans 1:18-
In Romans 2:1-3:8, he teaches that the Jews are also unrighteous before a holy God. He points out the basis for Gentile guilt in Romans 1:18-23 and the results of that guilt in Romans 1:24-32. Whereas in Romans 2:1-16, Paul teaches that the Jews are stubborn in clinging to their own relative self-righteousness, which does not measure up to the perfect righteousness of God.

In Romans 2:17-29, he discusses the hypocrisy of the Jews but in Romans 3:1-8, he discusses the privileges that were bestowed upon the Jews by God. Then, in Romans 3:9-20 he summarizes his statements in Romans 1:18-3:8 by stating that there is a universal need for the righteousness of God.

Next, in Romans 3:21-5:21, Paul addresses the subject of justification through the imputation of divine righteousness at the moment a person exercises faith alone in Christ alone. He points out to his readers in Romans 3:21-26 that the righteousness of God is imputed through faith in Christ and that is available to both Jew and Gentile as he states in Romans 3:27-31.

The righteousness of God is imputed or in other words, credited as a gift to the spiritual bank account of the person who exercises faith alone in Christ alone. At the moment of spiritual birth, God imputed His righteousness to the believer so that he is “positionally” the righteousness of God meaning that God views the believer as righteous as Him, which in turn sets up the potential for the believer to experience this righteousness in time.

Romans 3:21-27, “But now apart from the Law the righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe; for there is no distinction for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith. This was to demonstrate His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed for the demonstration, I say, of His righteousness at the present time, so that He would be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus. Where then is boasting? It is excluded. By what kind of law? Of works? No, but by a law of faith.”

Then, Paul presents an example of this spiritual principle in Romans 4 with Abraham who he states was justified by faith and not works (4:1-8), nor circumcision (4:9-12) and neither by the Law (4:13-17) but rather was justified by faith in the promise (4:18-25).

In Romans 5:1-11, Paul discusses the results of faith by stating that there is peace with God (5:1-5), the believer becomes an object of God’s love (5:6-8) and is reconciled to God (5:9-11) and receives righteousness as a gift through faith in
Christ (5:12-21). Then, in Romans 6:1-8:39, Paul transitions from teaching about how to receive God’s righteousness through faith as to how to experience the righteousness of God in one’s life after salvation, which he identifies as “sanctification.”

He talks about the basis for sanctification in Romans 6:1-4 and teaches his readers that they are dead to sin and alive to Christ (6:5-14) and now slaves of righteousness (6:15-23).

**Romans 6:1**, “What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin so that grace may increase?”

**Romans 6:2**, “May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it?”

**Romans 6:3**, “Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death?”

**Romans 6:4**, “Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.”

**Romans 6:5-7**, “For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin for he who has died is freed from sin.”

**Romans 6:8**, “Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him.”

**Romans 6:9**, “knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, is never to die again; death no longer is master over Him.”

**Romans 6:10**, “For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God.”

**Romans 6:11**, “Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus.”

**Romans 6:12-13**, “Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its lusts and do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God.”

**Romans 6:14**, “For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law but under grace.”

**Romans 6:15**, “What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? May it never be!”
Romans 6:16, “Do you not know that when you present yourselves to someone as slaves for obedience, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin resulting in death, or of obedience resulting in righteousness?”

Romans 6:17-18, “But thanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed and having been freed from sin, you became slaves of righteousness.”

Romans 6:19, “I am speaking in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you presented your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness, resulting in further lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness, resulting in sanctification.”

Romans 6:20, “For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness.”

Romans 6:21, “Therefore what benefit were you then deriving from the things of which you are now ashamed? For the outcome of those things is death.”

Romans 6:22, “But now having been freed from sin and enslaved to God, you derive your benefit, resulting in sanctification, and the outcome, eternal life.”

Romans 6:23, “For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

He informs his readers that they are dead to the Law as a result of their faith in Christ in Romans 7:1-13 and then he relates to them the conflict that takes place in them between the old sin nature and the new divine nature in Romans 7:14-25.

In Romans 8:1-17, Paul teaches that obedience to the Spirit will enable them to experience sanctification and therefore the righteousness of God and victory over personal sin (8:1-8), spiritual death (8:9-11) and the sin nature (8:12-17). He then lists the goal of sanctification in Romans 8:18-25 and informs his readers that the Spirit intercedes for them during the process of sanctification in Romans 8:26-27.

In Romans 8:28-39, Paul closes this section on experiencing the righteousness of God, which he calls “sanctification” by guaranteeing that his readers will all experience sanctification in an ultimate sense since it is the Father’s will from eternity past.

Next, in Romans 9-11, the apostle Paul teaches his readers that the righteousness of God is vindicated in His relationship to Israel. In this section, Paul expresses great love for the nation (9:1-3) and the great privileges that God bestowed on the nation of Israel (9:4-5) and that they have been elected by God (9:6-13) and discusses God’s right to elect them out of all the nations (9:14-18). He speaks of the mercy of God towards Israel in Romans 9:19-29 and His mercy towards the Gentiles in Romans 9:30-33.
In Romans 10, Paul talks about Israel’s present rejection by God and that she has been temporarily set aside for the sake of saving many of the Gentiles (10:1-7) and he teaches them that the remedy for their being rejected by God is faith in Christ (10:8-15) and talks about their continued unbelief (10:16-21). Then, he talks about Israel’s future salvation in Romans 11, teaching that Israel’s rejection is not total (11:1-10), nor is it final (11:11-24) and that her restoration is assured in the future (11:25-32) and then he completes the section dealing with Israel by praising God’s wisdom and plan (11:33-36).

In Romans 12:1-15:13, Paul discusses God’s righteousness being manifested in believers in the local assembly (12:1-21) and by their dedication to God (12:1-2) and in their use of their spiritual gift (12:3-8) and in the sincerity of their love for each other (12:9-21).

In Romans 13:1-14, Paul teaches his readers that the righteousness of God is manifested in the believer’s conduct in relation to civil government (13:1-7) and towards the unbeliever (13:8-10) and their conduct in view of their eschatological confident expectation (13:11-14).

Romans 13:1, “Every person is to be in subjection to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God.”

Romans 13:2, “Therefore whoever resists authority has opposed the ordinance of God; and they who have opposed will receive condemnation upon themselves.”

Romans 13:3-4, “For rulers are not a cause of fear for good behavior, but for evil. Do you want to have no fear of authority? Do what is good and you will have praise from the same for it is a minister of God to you for good. But if you do what is evil, be afraid; for it does not bear the sword for nothing; for it is a minister of God, an avenger who brings wrath on the one who practices evil.”

Romans 13:5, “Therefore it is necessary to be in subjection, not only because of wrath, but also for conscience' sake.”

Romans 13:6, “For because of this you also pay taxes, for rulers are servants of God, devoting themselves to this very thing.”

Romans 13:7, “Render to all what is due them: tax to whom tax is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honor to whom honor.”

Romans 13:8, “Owe nothing to anyone except to love one another; for he who loves his neighbor has fulfilled the law.”

Romans 13:9, “For this, ‘YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT ADULTERY, YOU SHALL NOT MURDER, YOU SHALL NOT STEAL, YOU SHALL NOT COVET,’ and if there is any other commandment, it is summed up in this saying, ‘YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.’”
Romans 13:10, “Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.”

Romans 13:11, “Do this, knowing the time, that it is already the hour for you to awaken from sleep; for now salvation is nearer to us than when we believed.”

Romans 13:12, “The night is almost gone, and the day is near. Therefore let us lay aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light.”

Romans 13:13, “Let us behave properly as in the day, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual promiscuity and sensuality, not in strife and jealousy.”

Romans 13:14, “But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts.”

Then, in Romans 14:1-15:13, he instructs his readers that the righteousness of God is manifested in their conduct in relation to Christian freedom. He instructs them to not judge each other in relation to eating and drinking and teaches them the principle of Christian freedom (14:1-12) and exhorts stronger believers to not put up stumbling blocks for weaker believers by what they eat or drink and exhorts them to walk according to the principle of love (14:13-23). He closes this section by prohibiting selfishness and challenges them to imitate Christ (15:1-13).

The final section of the Roman epistle is contained in 15:14-16:27 where he discusses his ministry to the Gentiles (15:14-22), and his intention to visit Rome (15:23-33).

Also, he commends Phoebe (16:1-2), and sends greetings to several believers (16:3-16) and warns against false teachers (16:17-20) and ends with a doxology (16:25-27).