

An Epistle to the Romans

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Bi 208-OL Romans and Galatians, Professor Armstrong

Paul's letter to the church in Rome has been labeled and classified as the gospel of God, that is, the good news of God. Indeed, the book of Romans is good news. The book of Romans is the most comprehensive, linear, leisurely, and systematic presentation of the Christian faith that we can find in any book of the Bible. One important issue about Paul's letters is they were written to address a particular set of circumstances among a particular group of people at a specific time in history.

The letters, or Epistle to the church at Rome, was the first of twenty-one Epistles written in the New Testament¹. It was written around the time frame of 56 to 57 A.D.². There are Internal and External evidence that gives authorship of the book of Romans to the Apostle Paul³, who stands out as being the most prolific in expounding instructions on Christian living, laid claim of having written thirteen Epistles in the New Testament, of which the book of Romans is the sixth⁴.

Let's take a look at this word; Epistle. The word *epistle* comes from the Greek word *epistole*, translated meaning "letter" or "message." Epistles were the main form of written communication in the ancient world, especially during New Testament times. This was a common literary form in the times of Paul. Since many of the New Testament books were originally written as letters to churches or individuals, they are referred to as the Epistles. These letter form were used for purposes larger than mere communication. Paul's letters were designed to be read aloud in churches. Because of the significance of their contents, they are rightfully regarded as the "second Gospel," attracting attention from those that saw themselves as thinkers,

1 Romans through Jude, KJV Bible

2 Written while Paul was still in Corinth.

3 Surname was Saul of Tarsus before his conversion on the Damascus road.

4 Romans through Philemon, KJV Bible

philosophers, and the ordinary faithful people. Even, the Apostles⁵ did not ignore the works of Paul, who was last to convert to Christ, yet equal to them in spirit and sanctified gifts⁶. It is crystal clear that the epistles were written so as to benefit more than the primary recipients. It is in the epistles that the position, privileges, and duties of the church are given.

In the process of research of the book of Romans it is noted that the expositional style of the letter to the Romans gives rise to one of the most debated questions about the letter: What was Paul's purpose in writing and sending so heavy a theological exposition to the Christians in Rome? There are three reasons for Paul writing the letter to the Church In Rome, first, to give a warning against teachings of false doctrine, the need of justification, and the love that God has for us.

Warning of Teachers of False Doctrine

Paul is still in Corinth when he writes this letter to the Church of Rome. Paul was made aware of the spreading of disease throughout the churches. The spreading disease, this cancer known as "Judaizing teachers⁷" had disrupted various churches⁸. To prevent this, and assure that his visit to Rome would be a constructive one⁹, Paul writes this letter so to set straight the design, and nature of the Gospel. In doing so, he demonstrates how the gospel of Christ fulfills what is lacking in the Law of Moses both to the Gentiles and Jews, thereby effectively replacing their religious systems. Such a letter would warn and arm the church at Rome against those

5 The original Apostles.

6 2nd Peter 3:15

7 Aka Judaizer: one who converts Jews to Judaism.

8 churches in Antioch, Corinth and Galatia

9 Romans 15:30-33

individuals or groups who would attempt to pervert the gospel or suggest that it was inadequate by itself.

The Need for Justification and It's Benefits

Paul writes to the Church and informs them on the need for Justification. He states "For I am not ashamed of the gospel: for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is revealed a righteousness of God from faith unto faith: as it is written, But the righteous shall live by faith¹⁰."

In this part of Paul's letter to the Romans he shows that all men are in need of justification. First the Gentiles are in need of justification because they rejected God and went down the pathway of uncleanness, vile passions, and a reprobate mind.¹¹ Then, The Jews are in need of justification because they were violators of God's law and displayed a lack of faith in God's promises¹². In other words, all have sinned and come short to the glory of God¹³. So, if all are under sin how can one be Justified? Paul answers this question in Romans 3:21-31 the Apostle Paul tell us that men can be justified in the sight of God through faith in Jesus Christ¹⁴.

Paul also tell us What are the results of justification? Paul answers this question in Romans 5:1-5. We will have peace with God. See, at one time we were estranged from God and enemies of God because of our evil works. But, because of the sacrifice of Jesus the Christ on the cross we can enjoy reconciliation with God (Romans 5:1)

10 Romans 1:16-17 KJV

11 Romans 1:18-32 KJV

12 Romans 2:17-29 – 3:1-8KJV

13 for we before laid to the charge both of Jews and Greeks, that they are all under sin

14 God is the "justifier of him that hath faith in Jesus

God's Love For Us

The epistle of Paul to the Romans helps us to see the, unconditional, life changing truth and that great love that God has for us as we are, in our sinful state. It is used to open eyes so that we can see the gracious action of God toward us through the cross and resurrection of Jesus the Christ. God has extended His love and grace to all sinners apart from and in spite of anything in them. This means: He wants all of us to be justified. Paul says, "But God commended his own love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being justified by his blood, shall we be saved from the wrath of God through him"¹⁵ This is the power of God for salvation to every one who has faith.

In conclusion, Romans is deeply theological, but it is not abstract. Knowing this will allow us to know that God's salvation is not a concept or hypothesis for an analytical discourse but it is a call to action. The beginning and end of the epistle teach us that we must be obedient to the faith which makes this an epistle of faith. For Faith comes from hearing the word of God; and God's children are those who are obedient to the faith

¹⁵ Romans 5:8-9KJV

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