

BIBLE 1110

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II. THE BOOK OF ROMANS

From your review of the doctrine of interpretation covered in the first section of this LIGHTUNIT, you learned that introductory studies, or *isagogics*, should be done to place a passage in its proper historical setting. When studying any passage of the Bible, you should study the writer, his character, his purpose, and his

intended audience. In this section of the LIGHTUNIT, you will apply what you have learned about the whole of the Scriptures to an individual book, Romans. You will focus on the historical backdrop to the book and on the Epistle itself.

SECTION OBJECTIVES

Read these objectives. When you have completed this section, you should be able:

6. To briefly describe the historical circumstances surrounding Paul's letter to the Romans.
7. To describe the purpose, theme, and fundamental doctrines of salvation in the book of Romans.
8. To briefly outline each chapter of Romans.
9. To tell the key verses found in Romans.

VOCABULARY

Study these words to enhance your learning success in this section.



deification
didactic
equestrian order
grace
heathen

impute
Judaizers
justification
pantheism
procurators

propitiation
remission
reprobate
senatorial aristocracy
unfathomable

THE HISTORICAL BACKDROP TO ROMANS

When Paul wrote his letter to the Romans, Rome was the capital center of the civilized world. The Roman Empire was comprised of Germanic tribesmen, cultured Greeks, Jewish scholars, Egyptian farmers, and many other people. The empire encompassed many lands, languages, people, and life styles, was united by the military, and was controlled by emperors. Through the reigns of various emperors, some who were made out to be gods by the Roman Empire, the Roman government became one of the world's greatest empires.

Because the Roman Empire was vast and included many nationalities, the problem of ruling conquered lands and people was solved by having **procurators**, or governors, appointed by the emperor to rule certain provinces. Local officials were permitted to conduct local affairs but had no position or voice in the Roman

government. Rome retained political control but did not disturb the social or religious affairs in each of the provinces. A constant reminder to each province that Rome controlled was taxation and the patrol of Roman soldiers, who maintained peace and safeguarded the people from invasions.

Four main social classes also existed within the Roman Empire. These classes included the **senatorial aristocracy**, or people of noble birth and substantial wealth; the **equestrian order**, or successful businessmen; the freedmen or emancipated slaves who had worked into positions of power; and plebes, who were relatively poor and often competed with the slaves for certain jobs. Slavery was an accepted practice in the empire.

Economic life in the Roman Empire centered around agriculture where a variety of fruits and

vegetables were grown, and livestock was raised. Transportation of goods, services, and people was quick and easy because the Roman road system connected all parts of the empire.

In this setting of diverse cultures, customs, and religions, the Christian faith began. The early Christians found themselves confronted with such beliefs as **pantheism**, Judaism, and the **deification** of emperors like Caligula, Nero, and Domitian. With its policy of toleration of all religions, the Roman Empire proved to be an ally for the early Christians when relations became strained with the Jews. Acts 21:27 through 32 records the incident where Roman soldiers helped Paul to escape a mob of people in Jerusalem who were trying to kill him.

In Paul's salutation to the Romans, he did not address a specific church as he did in First Corinthians. This fact suggested that believers in Rome were not centrally located. Romans 1:13 and 11:13 suggest that some of the believers to whom Paul wrote were Gentiles. The church at Rome is believed to have been formed by believers who were at Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost. The church later added to their numbers when Christians migrated to the capital city from different areas in the empire. Romans, Chapter 16, indicated that some of the believers were friends and converts of Paul.



Match these items.

- | | | | | |
|-----|-------|------------------------|----|--|
| 2.1 | _____ | Rome | a. | a rich businessman of the Roman Empire |
| 2.2 | _____ | procurator | b. | maintained peace within the empire |
| 2.3 | _____ | senatorial aristocracy | c. | governor |
| 2.4 | _____ | Roman soldiers | d. | capital center of the civilized world |
| | | | e. | people of noble birth and substantial wealth |



Complete these statements.

- 2.5 The church of Rome is believed to have been formed by believers who were at Jerusalem on the _____.
- 2.6 The early Christians found themselves confronted by such beliefs as
a. _____ and b. _____ of certain emperors.



Complete this activity.

- 2.7 List the four main social classes that existed in the Roman Empire.
- a. _____
- b. _____
- c. _____
- d. _____



Read Romans, Chapters 1 through 16.

THE STRUCTURE AND CONTENT OF ROMANS

In his letter to the Romans, Paul not only told of his plans to visit Rome and to establish a base for evangelism in Spain; but he provided a groundwork of fundamental doctrines of the faith for the Romans. On his trip to Rome, Paul

also wanted to personally present gifts that he had collected from churches in Greece and Asia Minor to the needy church in Jerusalem. Paul's purposes and intentions for writing the letter to the Romans were centered around informing

the Romans of fundamental doctrines of salvation and to fortify them against the influence of **Judaizers**. When Paul planned to visit the Christians at Rome, he was finishing up missionary endeavors in the east and was now concentrating

on venturing to the west. Rome became a key city to launch an evangelistic outreach in the west.

Before you begin to review the sixteen chapters of Romans, study the following overview of Romans and the outline of Romans.

Overview of Romans

Date of letter:	winter, A.D. 57-58
Written from:	probably the home of Gaius, a wealthy Corinthian Christian (Romans 16:23)
Sent by:	Phoebe, a deaconess in the Corinthian church, who was preparing to sail to Rome (Romans 16:1, 2)
Theme:	Romans 1:16, 17—man's deliverance from sin by the generous outpouring of God's righteousness to everyone who believes in Jesus Christ
Five-fold Purpose:	1. to establish fundamental doctrines of salvation and to fortify the Romans against Judaizers (Chapters 1-8), 2. to explain the unbelief of Israel and the relationship of the Jews and Gentiles in the church (Chapters 9-11), 3. to urge the Romans to maturity (Chapter 12), 4. to reveal to the Romans their relationship to each other and to the government (Chapters 13-15), and 5. to send personal greetings (Chapter 16)

Outline of Romans

Chapter 1, Verses 1-17	Salutation
Chapters 1:18—2:29	Downward spiral of sin
Chapter 3	Universal sin and guilt with emphasis on the Jewish nation
Chapter 4	Abraham
Chapter 5	Justification
Chapter 6	Dead to sin; alive unto God
Chapter 7	Carnal nature versus spiritual nature
Chapter 8	Life in the Holy Spirit
Chapter 9	God's Sovereignty

Chapter 10	Jewish unbelief
Chapter 11	Grafting of Gentiles
Chapter 12	Dedication and Service
Chapter 13	Submission
Chapter 14	Scruples
Chapter 15	Unity
Chapter 16	Salutations

Romans, Chapters 1-8. After establishing a rapport with the Romans in the salutation and thanksgiving, Paul stated his theme (Romans 1:16, 17). Even though he had endured many trials, beatings, and imprisonments, Paul was not ashamed to proclaim the good news of salvation in Jesus Christ. Paul explained how all men need the saving grace of God. He established that the Jew, the Gentile, and the **heathen** are all guilty and condemned before God because of the consequences of sin. Many of the New Testament writers referred to the Old Testament in building their themes or doctrines; Paul used Habakkuk 2:4 to reinforce the principle that faith in God is not dependent upon human righteousness.

After stating his theme, Paul continued to describe the effects of sin. Paul said (Romans 1:24-28) that God gave up, or allowed, the unrighteous to continue in their sin. These verses describe the effects of sin on those who would not honor God (Romans 1:21). These people had come to a point where they practiced unnatural sexual relationships and continued to violate the Word of God. The results of their behavior and of their **reprobate** minds are listed in Romans 1:29 through 31.

Paul stated (Romans, Chapters 2 and 3) that the Jew and Gentile are not exempt from sin. Both the righteous man and the unrighteous man are affected by sin. Everyone is under the power of sin, and no one is innocent. *Sin* simply means *to miss the mark*.

The Jews received the Law of Moses as a standard of conduct; and the Gentiles received the law of conscience written on their hearts; however, both will be judged by God. The four standards that God will use to judge mankind are listed in Romans 2:1 through 16:

1. According to truth (2:2),
2. According to a person's deeds (2:6),
3. According to the law (2:14), and
4. According to God's Gospel (2:16).

Paul, a Jew, described (Romans 2:29) the attitude that the Jewish people should have. This verse explains that God is concerned with the inward attitude of the person. God wants His people to present their hearts for circumcision or spiritual purification by the Holy Spirit and not to depend on their own righteousness.

Paul asked the question (Romans 3:1), 'What advantage then hath the Jew?' If the Jew and Gentile are both guilty before God, why did God choose the Hebrew nation to be an example for other nations and to make a way for God's plan of redemption? Paul answered his own question in the first part of Romans, Chapter 3. Paul realized that the Jews were still God's covenant people and were given the Scriptures (oracles of God). The Jews, however, insisted on living legalistic lives based on the Law of Moses. Paul knew that living a legalistic life was not the way to please God. Paul admitted that the Jews had distinct advantages, but this higher privilege did not mean they were less sinful than the Gentiles.

Paul said (Romans 3:23) that everyone has sinned and has fallen short of the glory of God. The solution to the problem of sin is given in Romans 3:24 through 26. Paul used the following terms to explain how God reconciled man to Himself: **justification**, **grace**, redemption, **propitiation**, and **remission**.

Paul explained that man's justification, or act of being set free from the penalties of sin, was obtained by God's grace through the redemptive work of Jesus. Jesus paid the price that was required to rescue man from his state of condemnation. Christ's death on the Cross *appeased* God's holy anger against human wickedness and provided the way in which a sinner can be forgiven. Through the unmerited favor, or grace, of God and Christ's propitiation, the remission of sins is given. Christ's blood made possible the forgiveness of sins.

Paul used Abraham, “the father of the Jews,” and David as examples to illustrate the Old Testament teaching of righteousness by faith (Romans, Chapter 4). Paul cited Psalm 32:1 and 2 to depict how David realized that God **imputes** righteousness apart from works. Paul showed that Abraham was blessed by God prior to the rite of circumcision, thereby nullifying the teaching that Gentiles who sought to become Christians must first become Jewish proselytes. Paul said that Abraham’s faith in God’s promises resulted in righteousness (Romans 4:3), in an inheritance (Romans 4:13), and in a posterity (Romans 4:17). Paul said (Romans 4:21) that Abraham was “. . . fully persuaded that, what he [God] had promised, he was able also to perform.” Abraham stands as an excellent Old Testament example of how righteousness does not depend upon works, but upon faith in God.



Abraham, A Man of Faith

Romans, Chapter 5, contains the benefits of justification and the contrast of the first man, Adam, with Jesus Christ. In Romans 5:9 and 10, 5:15, 5:17, and 5:20 the words *much more* are used to emphasize the greatness of the work of Jesus Christ.

Paul wrote (Romans 6:1-14) that the “old man” of sin is now identified with Christ’s death and the

“new man” is now alive in righteousness through His resurrection. Paul explained that union with Christ makes a person dead to sin and alive to righteousness. Sin has no dominion over the life that has been saved by grace unto righteousness. Paul says in the remaining verses of Romans, chapter 6, that the Christian has been set free from sin and has become a servant of God.

Paul described (Romans, chapter 7) how Christ’s death cancelled a believer’s relationship to the Law just as death cancels a marriage relationship. The Law is not evil in itself, but was given by God to show men their need of a Saviour. Paul said (Galatians 3:24) that the Law was our schoolmaster leading us to depend on Christ for salvation. Paul also described (Romans, Chapter 7) the warring struggle between the carnal nature and the good intentions of the unregenerate person. As the Christian allows the Holy Spirit to take control, he overcomes the carnal nature and avoids the frustration and defeat of yielding to the carnal nature. One must realize, as Paul did, that right living can be experienced only through the power of Christ.

Romans, chapter 8, begins with some beautiful words. Paul says (Romans 8:1), “There is therefore now no condemnation to them Which are in Christ Jesus. . . .” Those who have yielded to the Lord can be lifted above sin’s dominating control. The Christian is free from condemnation and must realize that God is in control of lives and is transforming believers into the image of Jesus Christ. Paul mentions in Romans 8:18 that some hardships will occur even when a person is filled and empowered by the Holy Spirit. Trials are inevitable, but in the end they cannot be compared to the glory that will be revealed to all believers. Paul wrote (Romans 8:32) that God did not even spare His Son, Jesus Christ, but delivered Him up for our sake. He added that no one can condemn us and nothing can separate us from the love of God.



Complete these activities.

2.8 List two of the five purposes behind Paul’s writing of Romans.

- a. _____
- b. _____

2.9 From memory, write the theme of Paul’s letter to the Romans.

- a. Chapter and verses: _____

b. The theme: _____

2.10 Complete this outline of Romans, Chapters 1 through 8.

Chapter 1, Verses 1-17

a. _____

Chapters 1:18—2:29

Downward Spiral of b. _____

Chapter c. _____

Universal sin and guilt, with emphasis on the Jewish nation

Chapter 4

d. _____

Chapter 5

e. _____

Chapter 6

f. _____

Chapter 7

g. _____

nature

Chapter 8

h. Life in the _____



Answer these questions.

2.11 What does sin mean? _____

2.12 Was Abraham's blessing based on his works or on his faith? _____

2.13 What three things did Abraham receive as a result of his faith?

a. _____

b. _____

c. _____

2.14 What Old Testament verse does Paul use to build his theme upon in Romans?



Complete this activity.

2.15 Memorize Romans 5:1 and 5:8 and write them on the lines.

Romans 5:1 _____

Romans 5:8 _____



Answer true or false.

2.16 _____ The Christian is identified with Christ and His death and Resurrection through faith.

2.17 _____ The Law was given by God to lead us to depend on Christ for salvation.

2.18 _____ In Romans, Chapter 6, Paul described the warring struggle between the carnal and spiritual natures.

2.19 _____ Those who are in Christ are no longer condemned by God.