

ROMANS 1:1-17: INTRODUCTION to THE BOOK OF ROMANS

I. Introduction

The Book of Romans, written by the Apostle Paul, is believed to have been written around A.D. 57 to the Christian community in Rome while Paul was in Corinth on his way to Jerusalem. It is considered to be one of the most important and profound theological writings in the New Testament. The purpose of the letter was multi-faceted: Paul wanted to introduce himself to the Roman Christians (a church he had not visited) to explain his gospel message and address some theological issues within the early church.

The church in Rome was made up of both Jewish and Gentile (non-Jewish) Christians, and this was a source of tension. Jews had lived in Rome for centuries, even before Christianity. However, when Emperor Claudius expelled Jews (including Jewish Christians) from Rome around A.D. 49, the Gentile Christians became the predominant group in the Roman church. When the Jews were allowed to return a few years later, the balance of power created division, with Jews and Gentiles having differing views on the Law of Moses, rituals, and the relationship between faith in Christ and Jewish traditions. Paul wrote to address these tensions and present a unified understanding of the gospel. The Book of Romans became a way to explain how both Jews and Gentiles could be reconciled to God through faith in Jesus Christ.

In verses 1-17, Paul introduces himself to the Romans and lays the foundation for his message about the gospel. He opens with a declaration of his calling to spread the good news of salvation, which was promised in the Old Testament and fulfilled in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. He emphasizes that Jesus is both fully human and fully divine, and through His resurrection, He is established as the Son of God, empowering believers to have faith in Him.

He emphasizes that the gospel is the power of God for salvation, available to everyone who believes—first to the Jew, then to the Gentile. Through this, salvation comes righteousness, which is revealed from faith to faith. Paul quotes Habakkuk 2:4 to support the idea that "the righteous will live by faith." The passage concludes with Paul's statement that he is not ashamed of the gospel. His deep conviction in the power and universality of the gospel sets the stage for the theological arguments that will follow in the letter.

II. Study the Scriptures: Read the Passage Romans 1:1-17

Note your thoughts as you read:

Write down any questions that come to mind as you read:

III. Think Through the Following Questions:

1. How does Paul describe his calling in Romans 1:1-6? What does this reveal about his relationship with Jesus and his mission?
2. In verses 3-4, how does Paul's description of Jesus as both fully human and fully divine impact your understanding of His role in salvation?
3. What does Paul mean when he says in verse 16, "I am not ashamed of the gospel"? What challenges might Christians face that could lead them to feel ashamed of the gospel today?
4. Romans 1:16-17 emphasizes that salvation comes through faith. How does this idea of salvation by faith challenge or reinforce what you may have believed about earning salvation through works or personal effort?
5. Paul speaks of the gospel as "the power of God for salvation" (v. 16). What does it mean for the gospel to be "the power of God"? How have you personally experienced the transformative power of the gospel in your life?
6. Why does Paul say the gospel is "first for the Jew, then for the Gentile" (v. 16)? What significance does this order have, and how does it reflect God's plan throughout Scripture?
7. In verse 17, Paul writes that "the righteous will live by faith." What does this mean in practical terms for the life of a believer? How can we apply this truth to our daily lives?

IV. Lessons Learned: Are there any new things you learned from this passage today?

V. Application: How Do You think this will impact your thinking and/or actions going forward?