Introduction

Paul

Paul wrote the book of Romans around 57-58 A.D. from Corinth (possibly at Cenchrea—an eastern harbor in Corinth [see Romans 16:1]).

Paul was from the wealthy educational city of Tarsus in Cilicia [Turkey] and was born when the city was a province of the Roman Empire. Therefore, he was a Roman citizen (see Acts 16:37–38, 22:25–29, 23:27). However, we have no record of him ever being in the Italian city until late in life. He longed to go to Rome, but years would pass before he would make it there. Even then, his "visit" was not on the terms he had desired (see Acts 23:11, 25:12, 26:32–28:31).

Paul did make a point of avoiding previously visited areas in order to refrain from building on another man's foundation (see Romans 15:20).

The fact that Paul was a Roman citizen aided him in his missionary work (see Acts 22:24–26). This should be noted by Christians in the United States. Being an American has privileges protected by our U.S. Constitution and Bill of Rights. Paul appealed to the law in his defense. Christians in the U.S.A. should do the same. Therefore, we must defend the Constitution and contend for its preservation. It does not provide our God-given freedoms—it protects them.

As a Hebrew of the tribe of Benjamin, he sat under the tutelage of Gamaliel in Jerusalem, was a Pharisee, and thought to be a member of the Sanhedrin (the Jewish "Supreme Court") made up of 71 men (see Acts 22:3 and Philippians 3:3–6).

Paul's Conversion

Paul's conversion is recorded in Acts 9 and recounted when offering his defense of ministry. By the time Paul made it to Rome, he was taken there as a prisoner—for Christ (see Acts 19:21, 23:11, 28:16).

To Whom Written

The letter is addressed to the Roman *"saints"* (see Romans 1:7)—made up of Jew (see Romans 2:17–24) and Gentile believers (see Romans 11:1, 11–18). Some have suggested Paul wrote this epistle *"to all in Rome"* (see Romans 1:7, 15)—to which we should take no offense. The book is a valuable work that will benefit the believer and non-believer alike. However, the address makes clear that his primary audience was the Christ-trusting *"saints,"* living in Rome, during the Church Age.

Some have questioned how Christians emerged in Rome—for it had never been visited by an Apostle. However, we know that there were Romans in Jerusalem on Pentecost (see Acts 2:10b) when the Holy Spirit was given (see Acts 1:15). They believed the Gospel when presented by Peter (see Acts 2:41–42) and were the first Romans to trust Christ for salvation. These early believers were Jews and Gentile proselytes/converts to Judaism. Consequently, other Gentile Romans likely responded to the Gospel through their testimony/ministry.

Paul was specifically called as an Apostle to the Gentiles (see Acts 22:21), but as a Jew (see Romans 11:1) he had tremendous zeal and interest in reaching his Jewish family (see Romans 9:3–5). Therefore, when writing to the Romans he addressed both—and made effort to meet the needs of the *"Jew first"* and then *"the Greek"* (see Romans 1:16).

Purpose

Around 49-50 A.D. Caesar Claudius expelled the Jews from the city (see Acts 18:2b). However, after his death (54 A.D.) they began to return. Caesar Nero reigned from 54 A.D. to 68 A.D. He committed suicide ending his life and, therefore, reign.

During the 4-year span between 50 A.D. and 54 A.D., it seems that Gentile believers had grown boastful against the Jews. Their supersessionism (Replacement Theology) needed address (see Romans 9–11). Furthermore, the Jews were judgmental of the Gentiles and likewise needed correction (see Romans 2:1–24). The common disdain Gentiles had against the Jews and the Jews had against the Gentiles may have been a primary purpose for the writing of this letter. Believing Jews and Gentiles are called to embrace one another as brothers and sisters for whom Christ died (see 1 John 2:2).

Our Christian unity does not make the Jew a non-Jew, but rather, it makes the Jewish believer a recipient of the earlier promised New Covenant (see Jeremiah 31:31–33; Ezekiel 36:26–27). Moreover, Gentiles who trust Jesus for salvation do not become Jews—but are grafted into the "root and fatness" they previously enjoyed (see Romans 11:17). In Christ, we are made one in the Lord—and therefore, one with one another (Romans 3:28–30, 9:22–26; 1 Corinthians 12:13, Galatians 3).

Outline

A simple outline of the book will help us break the letter into segments while keeping the whole in focus.

Chapters 1–3 address the nature of man and sin.
Chapters 4–5 address righteousness attained through Jesus Christ—apart from the Law.
Chapters 6–8 address freedom from sin and life in the Spirit.
Chapters 9–11 address Israel and her relationship to the Gentiles.
Chapters 12–16 address practical living.

As we study the book of Romans (Paul's most comprehensive letter), we will grow in our understanding of God's all-inclusive work.

Theological Terms

Within these pages we explain the nature of man—Anthropology; the judgment we rightly deserve and the salvation God offers, by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone, for the glory of God alone—Soteriology; God's historical, present, and prophetic work with Israel—Israelology; the deeply needed truths required for Jewish and Gentile believers to find common ground in Jesus, along with the how and why Gentile believers are grafted into her blessings through Jesus the Messiah—Ecclesiology; the future glory all believers will experience in the plan of redemptive restoration of all things—Eschatology; and an injunction to Godly living—Orthopraxy.

This book is personal and deeply emotional. It is a grand presentation of the love God has for all of us—as communicated through the pen, paper, anointing, and inspiration of the Holy Spirit—via God's chosen vessel, a bondservant of Jesus, the Apostle Paul.

Every believer should both study and put to memory the truths contained in this book. It is one of my favorites and will be yours too.