

# Introduction to Romans

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## Where is it in the Bible?

Romans is the sixth book in the New Testament and the first of the epistles. It is found between Acts and 1 Corinthians. This is also the first of the Pauline epistles to churches, which come before those written to individuals and are in order of length from longest to shortest.

## Who wrote it?

According to Romans 1:1, the apostle Paul is the author of the letter, and this has never been seriously disputed. It is the only epistle that Paul wrote to a community of Christians that he had not founded.

## When was it written?

This epistle was written to believers in Rome while Paul was in Corinth, probably sometime between 56 and 58.

## What is it about?

Romans is often regarded as Paul's most important epistle from a theological standpoint. In a nutshell, "Paul's Letter to the Romans is about God's saving work in Christ for Jew and Gentile alike, both of whom fall short of doing the will of God yet receive grace and mercy from God."<sup>1</sup> It has had a huge impact on Christianity not only because of its message but also because of its influence on the lives and work of St. Augustine, Martin Luther, and John Wesley.

## How is it structured?

- I. Introduction (1:1-17)
  - a. Greetings (1:1-7)
  - b. Thanksgiving (1:8-15)
  - c. Summary of Paul's Gospel (1:16-17)
- II. All Are Unrighteous (1:18-3:20)
  - a. The Gentiles (1:18-32)
  - b. The Jews (2:1-3:8)
  - c. Judgment on All (3:9-20)
- III. God's Righteousness (3:21-4:25)
  - a. Righteousness by Faith for All (3:21-31)
  - b. The Example of Abraham (4:1-25)
- IV. Life in Christ (5:1-8:39)
  - a. Fruits of Righteousness (5:1-11)
  - b. Adam and Christ (5:12-21)
  - c. Freedom from Sin's Tyranny (6:1-23)
  - d. Freedom from the Law's Condemnation (7:1-25)
  - e. Life in the Spirit (8:1-39)

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<sup>1</sup>Arland J. Hultgren at <http://www.enterthebible.org/newtestament.aspx?rid=6>

- V. Israel and God's Plan (9:1-11:36)
  - a. The Rejection of Israel (9:1-29)
  - b. All who Turn to God will be Saved (9:30-10:21)
  - c. Rejection of the Jews is not Final (11:1-36)
- VI. Righteousness in Daily Christian Life (12:1-15:13)
  - a. In the Church (12:1-21)
  - b. In the World (13:1-14)
  - c. With Other Christians (14:1-15:13)
- VII. Paul's Travel Plans (15:14-33)
- VIII. Greetings and Closing (16:1-27)

### What are some things to look for?

- **Justification by faith:** This is one of the key themes of Romans. Being justified means to be in right relationship with God. Paul says that we are justified by faith in God and God's promises, not by our own works.
- **Righteousness of God:** Paul uses this phrase several times in Romans, for example in 1:17 and 3:21-22, and in other letters. This refers to God's saving work and is demonstrated by the life and death of Jesus Christ which make salvation available to all, both Jew and Gentile.
- **Sanctification:** This is a process of making something holy. As a result of justification by faith, believers are sanctified in two senses. First, they are holy because they have been justified by Christ and are now counted as righteous. But sanctification is also a process which transforms a Christian and enables him to live in accordance with the will of God through the power of the Holy Spirit. This is what Paul calls "the obedience of faith" (1:5).
- **Universality of Salvation:** Another theme that runs through the book is Paul's message that salvation is promised to all people. In recent years, some scholars have suggested that this is the main point of the letter. The theme of justification by faith has traditionally received more emphasis; however, both of them appear in 1:16-17, verses which have been identified as stating the theme of the letter.